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The Road to Mawab and Other Stories

Review Author: Robert M. Picart

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the heights of intellectualism to the plains of daily life. This may, in effect, drag the plot and make the characters melodramatic. However, the author's technique deserves due recognition. Plunging into the depths of psychoanalysis, he unwinds the kaleidoscope of events showing the fragments of a mirror that gradually form the whole image of the distressed spirit. Indeed, Tiempo presents the mirror of nature, complete with the ever-present "blind spots" that unconsciously dominate the strivings of the central character. The novel illustrates the effectiveness of art as analysis, when it is profoundly and skillfully executed.

Robert M. Picart
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University

THE ROAD TO MAWAB AND OTHER STORIES. By Leoncio P. Deriada. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984. 154 pages.

Leoncio P. Deriada's first volume of stories shows his intimate knowledge of the people of his region. He captures the mannerisms, viewpoints, and aspirations of simple folk confronting the harsh realities of life. In most of the stories, his characters almost lose the fight for survival, but ultimately affirm their determination to live on in spite of seemingly insurmountable odds. If they die, they are not defeated, but by their deaths, protest deceit and injustice.

Both serious and light themes are enhanced by a skillful interplay of symbol, image and irony. "The Day of the Locusts" interweaves calamity, fanaticism and survival. Locusts swarm over a barrio at sunset, and while Asun claims that they are "God's punishment for our sins . . . to kill those creatures is to defy God's will" (p. 2), Bernardo has a more practical remedy: to gather the locusts and eat them. "A Woman in the War" depicts Ana Corita's coming to terms with a gruesome past, in which she witnessed the killing of her mother and father. She realizes, however, the urgency of the present, when as a guerilla fighter her task is to wreak vengeance on the Japanese. "Manong Paeng" utilizes a youthful narrator whose hero worship of an older brother turns to disgust when he learns that the latter has wronged, but doesn't do right by, Minyang — who yet survives, hardened and firmed by her misfortune.

The central character in "Ramonina," betrayed "long ago in Davao del Norte" (p. 52), becomes a madwoman dancing in the streets, who goes to the school campus, curses a teacher ("you destroyed me . . . Devil, Devil" p. 55), then jumps from a bridge and drowns, to signify the triumphal end to her misery and the eternal torment of the wrong-doer, who will live to

remember his misdeed. "Pigpen" is a starkly realistic portrayal of Inocencia's revenge on an incestuous father and brother. She kills her child, "a freak . . . its eyes . . . [glowing] like a snake's" (p. 41), and squirms away from the touch of father and brother: "Don't touch me! Pigs! Pigs!" (p. 151).

Deriada's craftsmanship is at its best in his stories on social themes. "Daba-Daba" dramatizes the problem caused by land-grabbing Christian lowlanders. The durian tree that stands proudly on the cliff, "so tall that it almost touches the sky" (p. 24) is the symbol for the Bagobo elders' decision to fight for their land and heritage and affirm their freedom. The sureness of highland justice is emphasized by the homemade, workday weapons used to hack the intruders to death: the *panumbahay*, a blade used to cut abaca trunks, and the double-edged *taksyay*. In "Ati-Atihan," the Atis are ridiculed by well-dressed lowlanders. In ironic juxtaposition, Sibukaw and Kainyaman are amused when they find "remote kinship with the lowlanders made up to look like them . . ." (p. 66), but their illusions are shattered when the latter tear the dress Sibukaw has bought for Kainyaman.

"Zoo" is a satire on the treatment of a lowly police sergeant, "a pain in the ribs of a dozen councilors . . . shuffled . . . from one precinct to another" (p. 79) simply because he is frank and doesn't steal nor commit adultery. Escaping his walled-in existence, he goes to the zoo and witnesses the seeming joy of a monkey encaged, then in obvious identification sets an eagle free. "The Coin Divers" of Zamboanga cause intense personal conflict in Bahnarim, a city-bred Muslim. The tinkling of coins in his pocket, which had soothed him, presages the throwing of coins to the Zamboanga divers by his fellow passengers, which he sees as an indignity: ". . . you sons of a bitch . . . you throw them coins. You think you are helping them . . . see how you have destroyed human lives" (p. 97).

"The Loneliness of a Linotypist" recalls Manuel Arguilla's "Caps and Lower Case." Its lowly hero "has spots in his lungs and his coughing competed with the click of the metal slugs of the machine" (p. 99). Lancelot Sanchez takes revenge on a pseudo-poet by pouring molten metal (words melted down) on his right foot, and in a Kafkaesque ending, is engulfed by the darkness of the night, falls and crushes his skull. "The Road to Mawab" also illustrates the theme of social protest, but in a lighter manner. The youthful narrator, unused to deprivation, goes to collect a debt under the pretext of a visit, and finds that there is no rice to eat at noontime. He is perplexed when Atang, who cuts trees, says: "It's hard working like this. But we are happy. We have no enemies here" (p. 138).

"Summer in Ventura" and "Lunacy" take a different mood and tone. In them the author skillfully paints scenarios of childhood and memory. "Summer in Ventura" turns to the frolics of childhood, focusing on a gripping carabao fight intently watched by the townsfolk. The two animals are stopped by a kerosene-soaked rag thrust under their noses, and the young narrator

and his friends realize that the fight is not enjoyable after all. "Lunacy" is a somnambulistic chronicling of the past and present of a teacher of grammar and economics. The past flashes by, and he recalls his friends: "... where were they now? ... the moon was now on the other side of the eaves. The piano notes sounded loud but far and haunting like a memory ... outside, the moon painted the world with white silence" (p. 52).

Leoncio Deriada's stories entertain as they provoke thought. The familiar, the problematic are candidly presented by characters who pulsate with life as they face their respective purgatories. Although some narration (in the title story, "Summer in Ventura," "The Coin Divers," and "Lunacy") tends to lag at moments, symbols are unlabored, images highly suggestive. But always, Deriada has an insight to share.

The stories in this collection have appeared in various national and campus publications. Gathering them together into an anthology has been a service not only to the student and the teacher in search of new Philippine short stories to study, but also to the critic interested in the development of a talented writer of short fiction, and to the reader who will be won by the range of Philippine experience unfolded, and the array of characters who struggle and survive.

Robert M. Picart
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University

MORE THAN CONQUERORS. By Edilberto K. Tiempo. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1981. 132 pages.

With the present clamor for freedom and justice, the second edition (revised and re-set) of Edilberto K. Tiempo's prize-winning novel, first published in 1964, is apropos. In *More Than Conquerors*, Tiempo writes of the Philippine resistance movement against the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War, of the problems of resistance and collaboration, of heroism. With masterful craftsmanship, he presents characters in the arena of choice, or in the darkness of prison cells, groping for reasons to withstand torture, deception or intimidation. To what extent, then, can the human spirit withstand anguish and ordeals? What strengthens men to endure unspeakable agony? These are the questions to which the novel addresses itself.

The resistance or guerilla movement is upheld by the sturdy and committed men who refuse to acquiesce to an uneasy peace through collaboration, choosing the life of guerillas in the hills over realtive comfort in the towns. Exemplar and leader is Señor Miguel Alonzo (Nyor Miguel), a lawyer and the editor of the anti-Japanese paper, the *Guardian*, in the last issue of which he