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Manila Ransomed, by Tracy

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Malu S. Marin also contributed two articles here. The first is "The Revolving Door, Realities of our Struggle," which aligns the lesbian-feminist-lesbian discourses. The second is a truly delightful piece called "From Closets to Kitchen: Culinary Lesbian in Control," which has tried-and-tested (I have tasted them) recipes with tongue-in-cheek names. Examples include: Mars and Parsley Potatoes; Hump and Pump-kin; Leeks and Potato Soup; Chicken G-Spotpie and Corn Bread; Tapa Queen; and Lesbian Rice Now.

For this grand spread as well as for this book, my message is dig in, boys and girls, or whatever.

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Manila Ransomed: The British Assault on Manila in the Seven Years War. By Nicholas Tracy. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995. x + 158 pages, plates.

The British occupation of Manila for about two years, 1762–64 was an immediate result of the Family Compact of the Bourbons in France, Austria, Parma, and Spain. Because of poor communication, Manila, whose defenses were quite poor, was unaware of political developments elsewhere. Thus, the farthest colony of Spain was forced to surrender to an enemy that was not much better prepared for a decisive assault. Not only that, personal rivalry between the military command and the officials of the British East India Company responsible for the invasion marred the brief administration of the captured city. Even when the British command in Manila had received the order to evacuate the colony, threats of mutual arrest by the officers delayed the operation. To the disappointment of the planners who had hoped to dig into the reputed wealth of Manila, postwar negotiations failed to produce the entire ransom the British had demanded on first taking Manila.

This, in brief, is Mr. Tracy's thesis in this brief book. Four chapters ("The Plan," "The Siege of Manila," "The Occupation," "The Reckoning") sum up the story in 128 pages, while endnotes and the list of sources occupy 21 pages, a good clue to the substantial research that produced this essay.

The author shows in some detail that the expedition was both ill-planned and ill-supported. But from a wider perspective, he also shows that it revealed the state of British military technology in the middle of the eighteenth century, the corruption and the problems of an "unreformed" British East India Company, and the growth of British imperialist interest in the Pacific—an interest that culminated in the British hold of Hongkong in the north and North Borneo in the south. Had Manila been blessed with capable leaders, whose personal contests, like those of the British, had stymied

positive action, the latter would not have succeeded in setting foot on Philippine soil. Of course, despite the proven loyalty of the Filipinos, local spears and arrows were no match for the stronger war *materiel* the British had brought along.

Though harshly criticized, Manila officials had one redeeming virtue in sending off Anda to head a resistance movement, and keep the millions of Mexican silver from falling into British hands. Considering their mutual mistrust, one wonders what would have happened had the British captured that precious shipment.

As in similar historical episodes, documents are abundant, but they give only partial information. *Manila Ransomed* is perhaps the first book that puts the story as neatly as its author has done. Thus, it is a book I recommend without reservations.

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Working Women of Manila in the Nineteenth Century. By Ma. Luisa Camagay. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995. 197 pages.

This book was published in 1995 but it is still a very relevant summary of Philippine feminism. Traditionally, a woman is considered inferior to men. Her purpose in life is to take care of the home, to be a good and devoted wife to her man, and to be a loving mother to his children. She is considered to be gentle, soft, loving, shy, and coy. But in our present generation, she already has a different and a more radical role in society. Today, all over the world, the rights of the woman have been constantly upheld and fought for by many social groups, especially feminists groups. And in the Philippines, where patriarchy is still being practiced and where man is still the center and the head of the family and society, the struggle to uphold the rights of women is more pronounced. Ma. Luisa Camagay's book is beneficial for this cause, for it presents facts, data, and stories of women in Manila in the nineteenth century who were strong and secured, who had a mind of their own, and who were not dependent on men as opposed to the stereotypical Filipino women who are shy, timid, and subservient. Thelma Kintanar in the foreword comments about this book:

The book contributes to women's studies, not only for the facts it brings to light, but, for the gender perspective it brings to bear on these facts. The author shows how the lives of working women refute the stereotype of the nineteenth century Filipinas as shy, timid, and subservient. According to the author, this was not true of women of the working class who represented the emancipated group of women during the Spanish period.