

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## **Deconstructing Sadness** **EB**

Donna L. Batongbacal

*Philippine Studies* vol. 53, no. 2&3 (2005): 362–363

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

DONNA L. BATONGBACAL

## Deconstructing Sadness

*After Kabuki # 7*

In an attempt to deconstruct her sadness, Ukiko releases the locks on the creases of the square sheet of paper, believing that by doing so she corrects the mistakes spawned by its bad geometries.

Dismantled, the frail paper creature now defies the boundaries of classification. It is Lepidoptera, but is it butterfly or moth?

Determined to uncover its provenance, Ukiko seeks to define its existence through her memories. What are the particulars of its flight, for instance? Does it choose to take to the wind by day, or at dusk, perhaps in the midst of inky darkness? At rest, does it hold its wings together, or does it flaunt them, spread? Lastly, what are the qualities of its defenses: does it use its colors to arrogantly display its variegated designs, or does it rely on its conspicuousness to disappear?

Deconstructed, the frail paper creature refuses to unfold, defies the measures Ukiko applies to its fragile architectures.

Flapping its wings, it renders itself invisible.

“What does it matter, really, if it’s a moth?” she asks quietly. Yet she knows, for at the back of her mind, a voice says plainly, “Life or death. It matters.”

In the looming silence Ukiko hears a distant thrumming—the slow, steady rhythm of a moth’s wing beat.

*For akemi, invisible friend back in the fold*

**EB**

He looks around,  
eyes the vestiges  
of a cluttered life

half-lived,  
notes her leavings:  
cigarettes, gum,  
stale bread.  
Catches a whiff  
of caffeine  
from the stained  
ceramic mug perched  
near the tabletop edge.  
Spies the bookmarked rooms,  
windows stacked,  
and waiting  
to be called.  
Fingers graze  
the well-worn keys,  
eyes blink  
as the screensaver  
comes on.  
Sighs and gets up,  
having taken  
his fill.  
All set and hemmed  
in a world with  
too much light,  
too much noise  
and not enough space,  
only one to talk to  
and nothing left  
to say.