

of contemporary times” and who are thus able to access and convey, in subversion of “traditional representations” and “generic itineraries,” allegedly authentic experiences in the City of Pines (44, 56); and a review of *The Gaze: Poems* (2004) by Arvin Abejo Mangohig begins by suggesting that desire is “seldom tackled in Philippine poetry with such a great amount of candor and charisma” (91), overlooking the long and lively lineage of erotic writing in the Philippines.

It must be noted, further, that while the book is interested in the writings of women and voices feminist sympathies, its politics are questionable: “poetess” is used without qualification to refer to Tiempo, Dimalanta, and Nerisa del Carmen Guevara, and one of the better developed studies in the volume declares that it would like to prove that Isabel Allende deserves to be incorporated into the male-dominated Latin American literary canon. The goal is perhaps not ignoble, but, considering that the paper professes to come from a socialist feminist perspective, which sees the various forms of oppression in capitalist society as interwoven and mutually reinforcing, it is problematic. Why be concerned with inserting a marginalized figure into a pantheon of masters when the mechanisms of canon formation—indeed, the very idea of a canon—are themselves necessarily implicated within capitalism and cry out for interrogation?

The book directs more than one appeal to “the sensitive reader,” but whatever the strengths it capitalizes on or the opportunities that it takes advantage of, it does not benefit from its looseness—whether its readers will come away satisfied is, finally, a matter of discernment.

Jaime Oscar M. Salazar
Department of Literature
De La Salle University Manila
jaime.salazar@dlsu.edu.ph

Jack G. Wigley. *Falling into the Manhole: A Memoir*. Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012. 140 pages.

There may be no better way to get acquainted with Jack G. Wigley’s *Falling into the Manhole: A Memoir* than to read the first entry, “A Writer’s Journey to Memoir Writing.” As Wigley expresses his love for reading and writing, he also uncovers the main hurdle in his life: growing up poor, fatherless, and different, because he is the illegitimate gay son of an American serviceman and a Filipina. In the same essay he also classifies the sixteen narratives as drawn from his interest and experiences in

“film (Nora Aunor and Meryl Streep), music (Madonna and Lea Salonga), Broadway Musicals (Miss Saigon), pageants (Miss Universe), and stage (the CCP)” (9). The narratives are relatable, accessible, and broken into bite-sized fragments, rather than presented as one long, whole and organic narrative. Wigley offers his own definition of the memoir as “literary representations of memory” (7), and because memory is not linear or progressive, he presents his memoir as a series of roughly chronological “vignettes—fragments of a perceived life story” (10).

There are, of course, other narratives that digress from his interest in pop culture. “Bui Doi in the City of Angels” and “The Missing Link” dwell on the father who had never wished him born, who had abandoned him soon after his birth, and whom Wigley had never met. In “Bui Doi,” Wigley reveals the mixed curse and blessing of growing up Amerasian in Angeles City. He is called names like “mestisong bangus, singaw ng Kano, and Daddy Joe Mommy Ago-go,” while his friend who had an African-American father was called “Ita, kampon ng kadiliman, barkada ni Dark Vader” (18). On the other hand, because of his status as a son of an American serviceman, he could apply to the Pearl S Buck Foundation, Inc. for schooling and provisions to benefit himself and his family. In “Missing Link,” Wigley speaks of the search for his father on a trip to California at the age of thirty-four, all the time that he wished for his father’s own “epiphany,” a literary term he had learned in literature class, defined by his professor, Ophelia Dimalanta, as “a reversal of attitude, a heightening of an old awareness, and a sudden realization about the truth about oneself.” But perhaps, he writes, “epiphanies don’t happen in real life.” Wigley’s own epiphany is that there are “no illegitimate children in the world. Only illegitimate parents” (95).

Other narratives dramatize Wigley’s experiences which generated some kind of epiphany or reflection at different stages in his life: moving houses at least fourteen times in a span of ten years in “Houses”; falling in love with a boy for the first time at age sixteen in “The Princess and the Cockroach”; training for a part-time job at Pizza Hut in “Grease Trap”; getting trapped and completely humiliated in “Falling into the Manhole”; suffering through traffic, rain, flood, hunger, filth, and loss of self-esteem in the worst typhoon in “Surviving Ondoy”; applying for a teaching job at UST in “Classroom Jitters”; and finding the traces of his old mother lost to Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s in “Coping with an Old and Sick Parent.”

The most enjoyable and remarkable element in Wigley’s memoir is his humor. It is most obvious in “Student Bloopers,” where he laughs at his students, as well as in “Teacher Bloopers,” where he laughs at himself. Humor also appears with the recollection of innocence in “Bui Doi” when he admits to thinking Pearl S Buck as “just a good-natured lady who once visited the Philippines and took pity on children who never knew their American fathers. I thought that she might have been filthy

rich because her first name was a gem and her last name meant money” (19). Humor can be found in the strong character of his mother in “Sine Paraiso,” when she locates their inferior seats at the movie house and realizes they would have to watch “my idol Nora from the tower of Babel,” so that like “a bull charging at a red cloth, she screamed at the old box office lady” (14). Finally, there is humor too, despite the worst circumstances, as when he falls into a manhole and gets stuck without anyone to help him in “Falling into the Manhole:”

Tawa kayo ng tawa diyan. Ikaw, ano’ng nakakatawa? Ha? Me nakakatawa ba? Ha?
Mga Pilipino nga kayo! Mga laitero!

My peroration had no effect. I was still stuck in the manhole like a crazy street urchin. Nobody had been moved by my speech. Worse, nobody lifted a finger to help me. Why would they, after listening to that pompous litany from a hysterical clown, stuck in a grimy ditch? (72)

Wigley makes use of the manhole as a metaphor. He claims to be “deeply fascinated about the concept of falling, and the steps people take in getting up from the mire.” The manhole metaphor corresponds to frightening, bewildering experiences of stumbling, collapsing, and failing, of getting swallowed by darkness; but it is also about picking oneself up afterwards, and struggling back into the light. The manhole is a pit of self-hate, but also the first step to get out of it (10). The many manholes into which Wigley has fallen have also become the wellspring, the source of rich material which he needs for writing, as well as the source for a “voice” to tell his stories and to challenge “the silence that has enveloped [him] for many years” (6). In this memoir—a collection of witty and touching, self-revealing and brave narratives—Jack Wigley’s voice emerges from the darkness of the pit, surfaces from the manhole, rises up clear, shining, and refreshing from the mire.

Celeste Aida Abad Jugo
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University
cjugo@ateneo.edu

Macario Pineda. *Halina sa Ating Bukas*. With an Introduction by Soledad Reyes.
Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2012. 136 pages.

Sa kasalukuyang panahon, inihahanap ng lugar muli sa kamalayan at kalagayan ng Pilipinong mambabasa ang nobelang *Halina sa Ating Bukas* ni Macario Pineda