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Tropical Nature and Entangled Invisibilities in *Tingle*: *Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing*

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Abstract

In the introduction to *Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing* (2021), the editor, Jhoanna Lynn B. Cruz, points to the absence of lesbian literature and the marginalization of lesbian writers in mainstream narratives in the Philippines, as well as to a lack of critics interested in the works of lesbians, thus contributing to these writers' "invisibility." She suggests that this invisibility is a result of their inability to enter literary discourse, "thus rendering them mute." It can be argued, however, that the same anthology not only highlights "mute" women-loving-women writers but does so by calling attention to other voices typically overlooked: those of nature. The connection between women and tropical nature as represented in *Tingle* is evidenced by this study's ecofeminist reading of several works from the anthology through the lens of "emancipatory strategies," as coined by ecofeminist Patrick Murphy and expounded by Gretchen T. Legler.

Keywords: Philippines, tropical nature, environment, lesbian literature, lesbian writers, ecocriticism, ecofeminism

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Introduction: Entangled Invisibilities

Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing (2021) is a book whose cover instantly calls to mind tropical nature—an underwater seascape in a mixture of blues and greens, with fish mingling among anemones, corals, and seaweed. This color scheme contrasts what are typically perceived as masculine tones, with a feminine slash of bright pink lettering announcing the anthology's title. The anthology's cover art comes from the painting *Aquamarine* by Manila-based visual artist Katrina Pallon. *Tingle* editor Jhoanna Lynn B. Cruz was quoted as saying they chose that specific painting because the "anemones, corals, and fish in the art look like *yoni* elements—icons representing the female genitalia" (Licsi 2021). On her website, Pallon's art is described as emphasizing "the voices of truths of women" while bridging "time and geography." The decision to use Pallon's art thereby sets the scene for a renewed understanding of the feminine through the anthology.

In *Tingle*, Cruz alludes to the connection between Pinay lesbianism and the tropical environment when she writes of some of the pieces in the anthology:

> Even in an essay about meeting the anonas fruit for the first time, Villar is 'lesbianing' when she writes, 'What were the chances that I was going to find it, on this day, this time, this place, in its fruition, if not for a reason?'....Or in Katherine Madlangbayan's story revolving around a woman marrying a man, where, without mentioning anything about being a lesbian, the character's reluctance is a kind of recognition that like the hapless butterfly at her wedding, she has 'fallen out only to stay grounded there until it dies … which is soon.' In these pieces, the tingle is expressed in the frisson created by what is elided. (2021, p. 10)

Considering this invisible-made-visible of both women-loving-women and tropical nature—whether it be an anonas fruit or an injured butterfly[1]—as portrayed in *Tingle*, this paper sets out an ecofeminist reading of some of the 49 works, making visible the connections between lesbian women and tropical nature as represented in the anthology. The paper aims to highlight the environment in the text and examine how concepts of gender and nature are represented in the writings of Filipina lesbians, revealing how these non-heteronormative perspectives perpetuate or deconstruct ecological beliefs in the Philippines as a particularly tropical country.

[1] The anonas is a tropical fruit that requires a hot and dry climate to thrive. The Philippines is no stranger to butterflies, as 90% of these lepidoptera reside in the tropics (Philippine Clearing House Mechanism, 2019).

A Short Tradition of Queer Anthologies

Conceptualized in 2015, the anthology possesses a title that sounds similar to "*tinggil*," the Tagalog word for "clitoris." *Tingle*'s publication by Anvil Publishing marks a milestone for lesbian literature in the Philippines. On the first page of the anthology, poet and critic J. Neil Garcia (2021) writes:

> Long have we waited for this, a robust and well-curated compendium of Philippine lesbian writing that at once represents and evokes, describes and inscribes, defines and complicates the lived truths and experiences of Filipino women-loving-women, despite or precisely because of the fact that their identities are not exactly reducible to this or that term… (p. 1)

Garcia's description of the works in *Tingle* is high praise considering he, along with fellow writer and professor Danton Remoto, edited *Ladlad: An Anthology of Philippine Gay Writing* (1994), which paved the way for other queer anthologies like *Tingle* to follow.

Ladlad: An Anthology of Philippine Gay Writing, also published by Anvil Publishing, is a collection of stories, poems, essays, and plays that delve into the lives of gays in the Philippines. Like Cruz, Garcia likened the state of the anthology's writers and those they represented as being threatened by erasure: "We want out of the closet that could kill, if not is already, slowly, progressively, killing us by rendering us unreal" (1994, p. 17). He continues, "Homosexuality in the Philippines as elsewhere has largely been demonized and obsessively rendered into an unsuitable topic for any serious discussion, literary or otherwise" (1994, p. 19). While the main thrust of the first *Ladlad* anthology dealt with being closeted in the Philippines and the goal of penetrating public discourse, Garcia argued that "the concerns of the contemporary gays who constitute its authors and characters are at once singular and plural in styles, persuasions and themes" (1994, p. 20). It is this same singularity and plurality, or, in other words, similarity in difference, that also exists in *Tingle*.

Not long after the first *Ladlad* came *Ladlad 2: An Anthology of Philippine Gay Writing* (1996), released by the same editors and publisher. If the first *Ladlad* placed an emphasis on coming out of the closet and allowing "writers to imagine an identity for which homosexuality and literariness didn't cancel each other out," the second *Ladlad* represented "a proof of this awakening" for the gay writer hoping to express their homosexuality through excellence (Garcia, 1996, p. 16). By the third *Ladlad* (2007), the famed anthology had formed a movement. In his introduction, Remoto writes:

> Goethe once said that there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come. We have come, as National Artist Jose Garcia Villa said, and we are here. Brandishing *Ladlad* and our many other books, waving our words like flames in the wind, we will stun the country in the 2010 elections. (2007, p. 17)

In his own introduction to *Ladlad 3*, Garcia (2007) echoes Remoto's description of community as he states:

> [B]y choosing to write about their own specific situations and libidinal experiences, Filipino gay writers are in fact grounding themselves in the local, and addressing its variously urgent needs and concerns, even as they may be said to be imagining, exactly by the same token, increasingly diverse forms of collectivity and/or community. (pp. 23-24)

While gay literature seems to have flourished in the Philippines, as evidenced by the evolution of the *Ladlad* series and its reception, Cruz points to the absence of lesbian literature and the marginalization of lesbian writers in mainstream narratives in the Philippines, as well as the lack of critics interested in the works of lesbians, thus contributing to their "invisibility." According to her, the *Tingle* anthology published in 2021 "is so belated that some of our lesbian writers have either stopped writing or stopped being lesbian" (p. 6). In the anthology's introduction, Cruz cites a 2009 preliminary historical survey of lesbian literature in the Philippines that concludes that "lesbians are invisible even within the feminist movement" (p. 7). While there have been other published writings of lesbians in the Philippines, such as *Tibok: Heartbeat of the Filipino Lesbian* (1998), edited by Anna Leah Sarabia and also published by Anvil Publishing, women-loving-women in the country have struggled to gain visibility in national literature. Cruz explains that the problem is not just the lack of representation of lesbians in Philippine literature but also the lack of critics' interest in lesbians' works, thereby preventing lesbian literature from entering local literary discourse and "thus rendering them mute" (2021, p. 8).

Tingle has been touted as a solution to this invisibility, with the featured writers "taking our stories of women loving women into our own hands and making ourselves visible on our own terms" (Cruz, 2021, p. 12). They are able to do this by responding to the prompt, "What makes you tingle as a lesbian?" This question led to the publication of 49 pieces of prose, poetry, and art, categorized into seven threads of feeling or phases: How It Begins, Family Matters, Passion, Unrequited, Consummated, Struggle, and How It Ends. Amidst all this talk about visibility, however, it is interesting to examine the voices of those who have typically been rendered mute and dig further

into the aspects that are often portrayed only in the background: the environment. This study, specifically, aims to look into the portrayal of the inherently tropical nature and sense of environment in the texts included in *Tingle.*

A Consideration of Voices

The subject of voice, muteness, inclusion, and exclusion is a recurring issue on the topic of anthologies. As early as 1922, Philip H. Churchman wrote of the use of anthologies in the study of literature: "Instead of an intense intimate friendship with the choicest flowers in the garden of literature, it is felt that they give us the bird's eye view from the far-off airship that takes in everything and penetrates nothing" (p. 149). In the third *Ladlad*, Garcia admits to similar criticism against their anthologies*:* that there is a lack of further inclusivity and consideration of the myriad Filipino gays (such as hairstylists and manicurists), in terms of theme and even authorship. In response, he writes, "As is probably the case with most feminist anthologies, none of our *many* calls for manuscripts could apparently alter the refractory fact that writing itself is class-specific, and that in our country in particular, writing is ultimately a matter of privilege—to be more precise, of leisure" (2007, p. 21).

Similar criticism could be made of *Tingle*. In her introduction, Cruz explains that she first conceptualized the anthology with other younger writers in 2015. They then released an open call for submissions in 2016, but the submissions they received "were too few and uneven in quality" (2021, p. 9). By 2018, Anvil Publishing had set the creation of *Tingle* in motion, and yet Cruz writes, "Most of the works in the book were specifically solicited from the writers I know…" (2021, pp. 9-10). At the same time, Cruz ensured that her anthology would be as inclusive as possible:

> We have writers from across the country and across different age groups, with the youngest in their 20s. And because Anvil requested only writing in English, I translated the work of Neri and Melinda Babaran, to somehow also represent our lesbian writers in Filipino. Andyleen Feje, who usually writes in Filipino, offers a sample of her writing in English in a delightful meta-essay about 'how to write a pseudo-lesbian story.' I tried to get all the lesbian writers I know together here (including my daughter), but some constraints proved too difficult to breach. (2021, p. 11)

The publisher's insistence on English as the only language allowed to be included in the anthology is reminiscent of the late French literary critic Pascale Casanova's theories in *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), in which she wrote that through literary capital's "essential link with language—itself always national, since invariably

appropriated by national authorities as a symbol of identity—literary heritage is a matter of foremost national interest" (p. 34). The decision to use English instead of other Philippine languages is a choice inherently linked to the publisher and the anthology contributors' identities in relation to the nation. From Casanova's point of view, the writer "stands in a particular relation to world literary space by virtue of the place occupied in it by the national space into which he has been born" (1999, p. 41). Though these are factors out of the writer's control, Casanova suggests that a writer's position "also depends on the way in which he deals with this unavoidable inheritance; on the aesthetic, linguistic, and formal choices he is led to make" (1999, p. 41).

Even with the constraints Cruz and the anthology contributors had to overcome, these anthologies, with their "unavoidable inheritance," offer representation not many other mainstream bodies of work do. Speaking of tropical environmental writing, Rina Garcia Chua, in her introduction to *Sustaining the Archipelago: An Anthology of Ecopoetry* (2017), suggests that the inclusion of literature, prose, and poetry in an anthology is "one of the most potent ways of remembering our environmental history" (p. xxxviii). Inclusion in an anthology aids in the representation and remembrance of the voices published and the topics into which they delve.

Listening to the Ecofeminine

Ecofeminism, a term introduced by the French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974), has come to hold many different definitions across the globe. Theoretically, critically, and practically, ecofeminism is an umbrella term that encompasses the relationship between women and nature, the complexities surrounding their oppression, domination, and exploitation, and how all of this interconnects with environmental crises. Studying the interconnection of women and nature means acknowledging the existence of various races, classes, and all categories in between; in other words, women share the same perspectives, advantages, and disadvantages of their respective groups as well as with other women. Ecofeminism can be viewed as an intellectual and activist movement, and it is not uncommon for lesbian-feminist activism to respond to the challenges faced by their own group in their own environmental contexts. Ecofeminist readings, a hybrid of ecocritical and feminist readings of literary texts, aim to identify the cultural constructions of women and the nonhuman or more-than-human natural environment as representations of power and "othering."

The interdisciplinary field of ecocriticism has come to recognize the complicated relationship between culture and environment through feminist perspectives. Though few in literature followed in d'Eaubonne's footsteps immediately after the coining of

the term “ecofeminism,” it has since become a lens through which to view and “reveal the oppressiveness of patriarchal, dualistic thinking” (Vakoch, 2012, p. 12).

Ecofeminist literary critics have long made use of “emancipatory strategies,” as coined by ecofeminist Patrick Murphy and explored by Gretchen T. Legler, “as antidotes, asking what our lives might be like as those strategies become increasingly successful in overcoming oppression” (Vakoch, 2012, p. 12). It is possible that these emancipatory strategies, these antidotes, could positively impact women’s day-to-day lives or, at the very least, encourage more positive narratives involving women and nature.

In her essay “Ecofeminist Literary Criticism,” Legler enumerates seven emancipatory strategies women writers have used and could use when portraying the connection between humans and land and reimagining the relationship between humans and nature:

> 1. "Remything" nature as a speaking, "bodied" subject.
>
> 2. Erasing or blurring of boundaries between inner (emotional, psychological, personal) and outer (geographic) landscapes, or the erasing or blurring of self/other (human/nonhuman, I/Thou) distinctions.
>
> 3. Reeroticizing human relationships with a "bodied" landscape, or the introduction in EuroAmerican texts and the reconfiguration in some Native American texts of ritual sexual intercourse as a means of speaking with the land.
>
> 4. Historicizing and politicizing nature and the author as a participant in nature.
>
> 5. Expressing an ethic of caring friendship, or "a loving eye," as a principle for relationships with nature.
>
> 6. Attempting to unseat vision, or "mind" knowledge, from a privileged position as a way of knowing, or positing the notion that "bodies" know.
>
> 7. Affirming the value of partial views and perspectives, the importance of "bioregions," and the locatedness of human subjects. (1997, pp. 230-1).

These emancipation strategies are meant to help one reimagine "what nature is and what kinds of relationships can exist between humans and the nonhuman world" as "part of the elimination of institutionalized oppression on the basis of gender, race, class, and sexual preference and part of what may aid in changing abusive environmental practices" (Legler, 1997, p. 228).

The institutionalized oppression Legler refers to is what Neelam Jabeen explores in-depth in her essay on the embodiment of women and land, in which she argues that "women are symbolically naturalized, and nature is symbolically feminized" because of the ability of both to reproduce (2020, p. 1906). However, women's lived experiences—at least in postcolonial South Asian societies as studied by Jabeen—exhibit a connection between women and nature that extends past the symbolic (2020, p. 1907).

The analysis of the cultural construction of nature vis-à-vis the cultural construction of women can be accomplished in reading *Tingle*, with many of the writers giving nature a voice as they voice their own women-loving-women narratives. Some of the emancipatory strategies as described by Legler and present in *Tingle* are more evident than others, such as the strategy of erasing or blurring boundaries or re-eroticizing landscapes. Throughout the anthology, the association between lesbian women and the tropical environment is apparent in each piece, inscribing a rich and varied textual ecosystem.

Tingling Lesbianism and Tropical Ecology

Conditions of Cuisine

Perhaps the most evident emancipatory strategy in *Tingle* is that of erasing or blurring self-other distinctions and the boundaries between inner and outer landscapes. This is best seen through the use of food and analyzed through the lens of material ecocriticism, which posits that "the world's material phenomena are knots in a vast network of agencies, which can be 'read' and interpreted as forming narratives, stories" (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014, p.1). In *Tingle*, where stories arise from the Philippines, this is also "tropical materialism." In their introduction to "Tropical Materialisms," Christian Benitez and Anita Lundberg explain that "it is imperative to recognize the crucial role that nonhuman materials also perform in the tropicality of this ecology" (2022, p. 2). From this angle, everything, from the air characters breathe to the food they eat, is worth analyzing. In material ecocriticism, the human body is not viewed as a closed "self"; the human body instead exists "among other bodies, enmeshed, and intra-acting trans-corporeally with all sorts of substances, including food, water, air, and a full range of industrial chemicals" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 92). While

all of this happens mostly without human knowledge, eating "is a way through which bodies are reciprocally transformed," as it is a "mutual hybridization of bodily matters" (Iovino, 2014, p. 101). This hybridization of bodies and food, according to ecocritic Simon C. Estok (2012), is raced, classed, and also gendered.

In the piece "Here Come the Women" by Rayji De Guia, the protagonist, Emilia Malan, comes home to Maragondon after her husband's death. She and her three sons then live with her parents, Luisa and Atanacio Hilario. Emilia gets by with the help of her *carinderia* or eatery, where she is often described as slicing tomatoes, chopping onions, and generally cooking. Her love interest, Amanda Pareja, forms a bond with her every morning after Amanda drops off her child at school. She orders lumpia, rice, and tocino—typical Filipino fare. Then, Emilia offers to cater an event for Amanda:

> Tuna steaks topped with caramelized onions; tender shrimps in a sweet and spicy glaze; thick slices of tripe simmered in tomato sauce; sticky rice boiled in coconut milk, chicken broth, and safflower; those were some of the dishes Emilia prepared for the feast. (de Guia, 2021, p. 25)

The use of coconut milk, in particular, situates the text in a tropical landscape: one in which coconuts grow in abundance due to heat, humidity, and rainfall. At the event, Emilia gains satisfaction and happiness from the women complimenting her work. Then, Amanda brings a bowl with an egg to place at the foot of an ornamented statue of the Virgin Mary. The story ends with Emilia and Amanda in a lovers' embrace; the food acting as a bridge between the women in a story where not much is said of love or romance between the two main characters. This strong emphasis on food in the text calls attention to the link between food and the self. Sociologist Pasi Falk, in his analysis of food, body, and the self, writes that "[f]ood can act as a text to be interpreted and eating can turn into rhetoric" (1994, p. 40). Literary scholar Natalia Andrievskikh takes this a step further and suggests that "metaphors of consumption act as a major symbolic vehicle to both convey and shape concepts of sexuality, agency, and gender identity (2014, p. 137).

Similar scenes of the entwinement of women and food can be found in the story "Dalandan Season (An Excerpt)" by Kate Pedroso, in which the narrator describes her friend and neighbor Natalie as having eyes "twinkling like she'd just been shown the most amusing thing, like a mango on the verge of ripening, or a perfectly shaped macopa fruit" (2021, p. 33). Macopa fruits thrive in tropical countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Natalie has been living on fast food, "having the same McDonald's meal for the past couple of nights" (Pedroso, 2021, p. 36). What the narrator offers Natalie is a full meal—a carefully planned homemade dinner to be

digested slowly. On the other hand, “The Right Choice” by Diandra Ditma Macarambon focuses not on what could be digested but on what could be purged. The narrator says, “I sipped on my coffee, realizing for the first time, after many years of drinking coffee, how bad coffee tasted” (2021, p. 68). This feeling of distaste lasts throughout the story, as she has difficulty eating at a restaurant. She asks herself, “Why was my beef randang as dry as paper? Why didn’t they have ice cubes?” (Macarambon, 2021, p. 69). As she contemplates her decision to stay with her husband, she finally throws up” (Macarambon, 2021, p. 75).

In several of the pieces in *Tingle*, the connection between women and food takes on a more maternal role than romantic. In “Daughter,” for example, Selina and her partner Jules own an eatery/boarding house, and her mother’s cancer prevents her from eating solid food. Selina thus has to spoon soup into her mother’s mouth. The narrator’s mother in “The Venus Flytrap,” describes making coffee as a ritual of love. She mentions marinade, soy sauce, meat, olives, onions, garlic, capers, liver spread, vinegar, red bell peppers, potatoes, eggs, ampalaya (also known as bitter gourd, native only to tropical and subtropical areas in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean), and tomato sauce; “I stewed a prayer. The hope for understanding” (del Carmen Guevara, 2021, p. 91). Motherhood and food go hand in hand as Andrievskikh suggests “food symbolism carries a particular importance for women due to the culturally determined association of women with cooking and nourishment” (2014, p. 137).

Then again, food is often used in Tingle to articulate the erotic. In “Losa,” Lena washes a *losa* by hand, and as soon as Narcisa calls her name, she “catches her breath and feels a thirst for another cup of coffee” (Neri, 2021, p. 126). In “The Forgotten Anonas,” the anonas fruit or sugar apple is eaten by the narrator in a visceral way: “Forget the spoon. This is primal. Teeth plow in between skin and flesh” (Villar, 2021, p. 129). In “Mango Avenue,” the narrator states she is starving when spoken to by her love interest. This hunger can also be observed in “Footnotes to a Mixtape,” in which two girls have a routine of eating at a burger stall, “wolfing down our meals wordlessly, overtaken by our grumbling stomachs” (Pedroso, 2021, p. 164). In “What I Think About While I Am Going Down On You,” the persona says she thinks about food such as saffron threads, beef shank bulalo stewed for six hours, and chicharon dipped in spiced vinegar. None of this would be a surprise to Michael Jones, the former president of the American Folklore Association, who, in 2005, cited “cross-cultural research that shows instances when demonstrating healthy appetite in women is interpreted as ‘acting up’ and giving in to passions” (as cited in Andrievskikh, 2014, p. 142).

It is not only food that makes an impression in Tingle; drink is used in both “Toward Coffee” and “Be(d)side” to signify the building of a bond. In “Toward Coffee,” the narrator switches between drinks based on lovers—from jasmine green tea to ginger

tea—but learns to love coffee with her current partner. In "Be(d)side," the persona waits for her partner to wake up for morning coffee, emphasizing the "words and thoughts" they exchange as they drink (Linsangan Cantor, 2021, p. 200). And yet, as much as the characters in "Bedside" love to talk over coffee, the narrator makes it clear that the ultimate recipe for their passion is made of "love and respect" (Linsangan Cantor, 2021, p. 204).

All these examples of the use of food derived from the tropical environment illustrate how, as in the works on fruits by National Artist of the Philippines Jose Garcia Villa, these pieces "redraw the boundaries conventionally made between matters of the flesh and matters of the spirit, between quotidian realities and sublime art" (Chua, 2000, p. 80).

Animality and Myth

Love and respect, or the lack thereof, can also be observed in the depiction of animals and lesbian animality in *Tingle*. These rich descriptions also act to erase or blur the binaries between human animals and nonhuman animals in the process, creating lesbian more-than-human microcosms.

In the poem "Brrroom," the persona describes a moth being crushed like roadkill between the legs of her love interest as mosquitoes ravage their skin, perhaps signifying the passion between the lovers despite their uncomfortable environment. This same passion can be found in the story "Beep Beep," in which the narrator speaks of her hand and herself as various insects and critters. After touching a woman's breast, the narrator writes:

> You brushed my hand away as if it were an insect descended on your outer bust. A mosquito, a cockroach, or maybe a gecko that dropped off the ceiling. You didn't get angry. You were damn quiet like nothing happened. (Rodriguez, 2021, p. 133)

Still dwelling on her possible molestation of the woman, the narrator, whose love seems to border on obsession, asks her:

> Do you know that mayflies die after they have sex? Like a mayfly, I could die making love to you because my life started and I know would end with you. (Rodriguez, 2021, p. 134)

The boundary between the human narrator in “Beep Beep” and the mosquito-cockroach-gecko-mayfly version of herself is lost by the end of the text, erasing the self/other distinctions in the story.

Women in *Tingle* are also frequently compared to animals by other characters. At one point, in “Rebirth,” a man implies that a married woman is as easy to catch as a “leashed chicken” (Bughaw, 2021, p. 58). The narrator compares herself to prey, and the men to predators. Jon in “The Gift of a Soul” echoes these sentiments as he describes having tamed his wife’s wildfire; the wife, Nana, commiserates with a white butterfly, injured and unable to fly, when a flutter was released during their wedding.

On the other hand, the prey-predator dynamic is flipped in the story “The Venus FlyTrap,” in which the narrator is willing prey to a woman-god of a hunter. The persona describes her mother as a liberal figure, keeping the plants in her garden netless and free. Thus, she is free. The Venus flytrap in the story is revealed to be her pubic area, but the persona also describes the bed in which she and her lover, a woman much like the hunter Artemis, have sex as “a soft mouth of an exotic flesh-eating flower” (Guevara, 2021, p. 89). She says, “This chase is primordial. Butch hunter and sweet prey” (Guevara, 2021, p. 88).

Sometimes, the link between human and nonhuman animals depends largely on the specific environment in the story. In “Double O,” two women swim with dolphins in Ozamis, having stayed at the Misamis Occidental Aquamarine Park and visited Dolphin Island. Their time at an enclosure for marine animals parallels their own closeted relationship.

In the same vein, “Rescue” follows the quest of women trying to save a sea turtle caught by two fishermen. The narrator describes:

> As we chased the fishermen through the barrio’s alleys, I thought about the turtle’s age. It was likely older than the Second World War, older than the age of its captors combined, older than most of the houses and all of the resorts dotting the shore. It was captured, sure, but it knew more about us and everything around it, and was probably laughing. Even if it knew it could become soup or a decorative ornament soon, it was still wiser than all of us, having seen more. It had explored many waters, possibly in different countries. It wasn’t the first time it had encountered determined fishermen, bleeding-heart Caucasian rescuers, or half-hearted Ilocana translators…. (Sison, 2021, pp. 179-180)

The extensive description of the sea turtle, which is known to nest on tropical and subtropical beaches, is an example of re-mything nature according to Legler's emancipatory strategies, treating the nonhuman animal as a "speaking" subject. While the protagonist advocates for the release of the sea turtle, even "when the end is the same" and "even when it's all for nothing" (Sison, 2021, p. 189), she also recognizes that change would be difficult if the fishermen's "fathers and grandfathers had caught their daily sustenance and earned their income" from those same waters (Sison, 2021, p. 181). This recognition of the environmental beliefs of a place coincides with Legler's emancipatory strategy of affirming the value of partial views, perspectives, bioregions, and locatedness of humans.

Those moments of despondency described in "Rescue," when a disappointing yet expected end is the same, are exemplified in several pieces in *Tingle* in relation to the nonhuman animal. In "Rosary Fridays," the narrator's mother agrees that homosexuals are worse than animals. In "We Were," a young couple buys a rabbit named Piper, only for the rabbit to die. In that story, the narrator's mother views homosexuality as a disease. In "To Love and To Lose," the narrator fears that the public views her and her lovers as demons.

Still, there is hope to be found in this anthology of women-loving-women literature. This hope is rooted in the re-mything of nature—in the more-than-human worlds of spirit nature. In "The Jacuzzi Party," the persona speaks of the legend of Maria Makiling—the protector and guardian of Mount Makiling in the Philippine provinces of Laguna and Batangas. Here, while the moon and stars are enchanting, there is "some unnamed desire to be felt" (Santos, 2021, p. 125). In "Ocean Ghost," the narrator describes the first woman she has sex with as having risen from the sea "like Botticelli's Venus," a specter with skin looking "as if she made love to the Sun" (Alvarez, 2021, p. 137).

Living and Leaving the Islands

While not every Filipina will feel a bond with Maria Makiling or Botticelli's Venus, they are familiar with the tropical environments and their challenges felt so intensely in the Philippines. As Chua says, "The sea marks our lives, our relationships are intertwined with the land we live with, and our lives are uplifted or traumatized by our natural experiences" (2017, p. xxix). Writers in *Tingle* describe the Philippines through their own understanding of the environment in which they were raised or lived, which includes their "folk wisdom and beliefs, and the stories that we have been told and have known all our lives about our islands" (Chua, 2017, p. xxxvii).

Throughout *Tingle*, there are recurring issues involving landscaped senses of home. In "Stopovers," the "liberating culture" of the University of the Philippines in Manila helped Manila become a new, LGBT-friendly home to the narrator as opposed to her original home of Davao" (Melgarejo, 2021, p. 63). In "Welts," the narrator says she is forced to leave the country where she felt truly free: Taiwan, whose climate is primarily tropical.

Sometimes, home is a landscape in the form of a body. This is true of "Eloquent Crevices," in which the narrator says:

> Supple and tender, her breasts feel like underdeveloped hills as I look at them, but at the touch of my fingers and at the dance of my tongue, they develop into mountains. Her stomach feels like a plateau. A flat surface amidst mild hill slopes of breasts, hips, and thighs. Her thighs, thin as they are, are shapely. They feel like freshly shaved earth against my kisses, smooth and slightly scented. Her garden appears to me like an oasis amidst barren sands, much like the beautiful deserts of the Sahara. Smooth, windy, gently sloping, and almost flat. Yes, her whole body seems like the Saharan desert most of the time. In heat as I touch it, but ever blowing particles of sand as I leave her. (Pineda, 2021, p. 142).

The body as terrain is repeated in Giney Villar's "The Party," in which the narrator describes landing and digging her hands into her lover's "sweet earth" (2021, p. 149). In "Our Bodies, Our Wellness," by the same author, the narrator asks, "Are our bodies made of earth or stardust?" (2021, p. 210). The story "Suppressing the Tingle" paints the mind as terrain, describing it as a "fertile and colorful place" (Callueng, 2021, p. 216), while "Ritual for Two Friends" describes lovers leaving their scent on the earth.

If not land, it is the ocean that calls to these women-loving-women. In "Coming Up for Air," the narrator says her lover tastes like the ocean. The story "All That Remains of Summer" begins with the narrator ditching her open dive at the tourist spot Onse Islas and instead meets up with a woman in Zamboanga. Upon meeting her, she says:

> I see her taking it all in: the streets lined with century-old acacia trees, dilapidated malls proudly standing their ground despite the newly built SM Savemore, the abundant satti and mee-goreng stalls next to the superfluous Jollibee chains, the moss-covered walls of Fort Pilar, then the distant call for prayer coming from the speakers of a nearby mosque. Perhaps she's thinking: this is a city unsure of itself, caught

> in the struggle between new and old! Still, it is the city I choose to live in. The only city where she can find me. (Gayangos, 2021, p. 235)

In *Sustaining the Archipelago: An Anthology of Philippine Ecopoetry,* Chua asserts most of the writers who contributed to the collection had "communed with their natural worlds in an effort to gain traction of their interrelationship and, in turn, their survival with it" (2017, p. xviii). This rings true with the pieces in *Tingle*, in which characters navigate the concept of "home" as women-loving-women and whether they would rather stay or leave these islands and the archipelagic seas surrounding them. It is clear that deep in the in-betweens of land and ocean, old and new, lesbians are living, loving, and leaving their mark.

Conclusion: Lesbian Worlds-within-Worlds

In the 1990s, Edna Zapanta-Manlapaz inquired about the types of worlds-within-words women create for their readers in the Philippines. She wrote, "The answer would have to depend on which writings by which women writing at which times" (2000, p. 76). According to Zapanta-Manlapaz, the late 1960s and early 1970s showcased the politicization of women's writings due to the country's nationalist movement at the time. By the 1990s, "women felt free to put their specific concerns as women at the top of their feminist agenda" (2000, p. 78). Still, outright discussion of female sexuality was taboo, and women who did write about their sexuality faced the stigma of doing so. At the time of her writing, Zapanta-Manlapaz said, "What is still under heavy dispute is women's right to express female desire" (2000, p. 81).

Through the emancipatory strategies popularized by Legler, the writers and artists featured in *Tingle* are able to "engage in the process of 're-visioning' human relationships with the natural world by raising awareness about a whole range of alternative stories about landscape and the natural world" (1997, p. 229).

> While I do not wish to argue that it is the special task of ecofeminism or women writers alone to reimage nature, ecofeminists would argue that this is part of their philosophy and purpose, their specific subject being the interrelated dominations of women and nature. Warren insists that if we aim to undo the oppressive image of landas-woman/womanasland, then feminism must include an ecological perspective and ecology must include a feminist perspective. She describes the task of ecofeminism as "making visible the various ways in which the dominations of women and nonhuman nature are sanctioned and perpetuated under patriarchy, and engaging in

> practices and developing analysis aimed at ending these dominations." (1997, p. 234)

Over two decades after Zapanta-Manlapaz's evaluation of women's writing and Legler's exploration of ecofeminist emancipatory strategies, women-loving-women in the Philippines have *Tingle*, which dedicates an entire section-—if not the whole book—to stories about female passion. Many other texts featuring works by lesbian Filipinas are also available online and from other publishers, such as independent feminist publisher Gantala Press's *Wildfire: Filipina Lesbian Writings* (2021) and the University of the Philippines Press's *Busilak: New LGBTQ Poetry from the Philippines* (2020). As for *Tingle*, the anthology has created a world-within-words made up of flora, fauna, landscapes, and folklore. Through the re-eroticizing and re-mything of nature, *Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing* is able to use ecofeminist emancipatory strategies to their advantage, blurring the boundaries between two aspects often rendered invisible: women-loving-women and their tropical environment.

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