

He Who Sleeps on My Lap

LIT001 - PHILIT

A short introduction

WHO IS RONALD BAYTAN?

RONALD BAYTAN

Ronald Baytan holds a Ph.D. in English Studies (Creative Writing) from the University of the Philippines. He obtained his MA in Language and Literature, with High Distinction, from De La Salle University-Manila in 1996. He is currently the Chair of the Department of Literature of De La Salle University-Manila where he teaches creative writing, Philippine literature, gay/lesbian literature and world literature; and holds the Charles Lui Chi Keung Professorial Chair of China Studies. He co-edited *Bongga Ka 'Day: Pinoy Gay Quotes to Live By* (Milflores Publishing) with J. Neil C. Garcia and Ralph Semino Galan. He published *The Queen Sings the Blues: Poetry 1992-2002*. He is a member of the ALON Collective.



And now, his work

HE WHO SLEEPS ON MY LAP

My friend	
Who sleeps on my lap	
loves someone else.	that I am here
He says he is a man	slaughtering
and a man needs a woman	one wicked wish
and I disagree.	that when he wakes up
We argue until he grows	I shall be his dream.
Tired of talking	
and sleeps on my lap,	
innocent, not knowing	

An analysis

HE WHO SLEEPS ON MY LAP

The poem knitted by Ronald Baytan has obvious homosexual manifestations. The persona who clearly poses himself as a heterosexual man badly desires for his male friend. He is upset of his friend's homocentric ideologies. The heterosexual relationship which is being pursued by the persona's friend tries to wreck the homoerotic possibilities in the text. Nonetheless, the homosocial bonding which is strongly existent between the two male characters promises us a jubilant gay jamboree. We can sense from the tone of the poem that the persona is very determined to succeed in his political agenda to discredit the homophobic tendency of his friend.

He made mention of his wicked wish to become his friend's dream. The word 'sleep' in this poem refers to the heterosexist blindfold which makes people overlook the existence of other forms of love. When we sleep, we usually are in the state of not being awake. When we are asleep, we are unaware of what is happening in our milieu. Same thing happens when someone's mind is narrowed by his restricted ideology- he or she becomes unaware of other aspects of reality. The friend is asleep because his mind is still not open to other sexual possibilities. He has to be awakened first and this is what the persona is planning to achieve. This is his wicked wish.

No matter how deep the friendship is a heterosexual guy will never show his weakness to anyone. The friend in the poem has shown weakness when he slept on the lap of the persona. This very gesture is an act of surrendering or succumbing oneself to someone. It is a silent way of saying, 'Let's not argue on this matter. It's time to have a 'truce' so we can go back to what we were used to.' They both have built emotional ties which made both of them dependent on each other.

Although it is quite risky to claim that there is homoerotic coding in the poem, it is also absurd not to heed the obvious sexual attraction the two persons have for each other.

