

The People's Warrior

by Emmanuel Lacaba

The people's warrior is an athlete:
A mountain-climber, not because it
Is there, but because the masses are there.
He is an acrobat: balancing himself
On fallen trunks of trees that bridge rivers
And monstrous waterfalls of certain death,
Like a tightrope dancer. The people's warrior
Is an actor of sincerity, for the masses
Are the best critics, can read faces and bodies
And know when you speak the truth, or are just
Hamming. The people's warrior is, oh yes,
A comedian: making the masses see the paradoxes,
The irony, of their condition –
The contradiction between him who is ruled but
 sweats
And him who rules without a sweat from his
Cushioned car and office and marble toilet seat;
The people's warrior inspires the masses to march
Forward to battle cheerfully, but with all
Determination; he clowns, to make the masses feel
At home with him, who is of them
And for them – for the first time one armed
But not abusive, the people's warrior.

- from *Brown River, White Ocean: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Philippine Literature in English*, Luis H. Francia (editor), Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1993.