

CRITICISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

Criticism, or the systematic and rigorous study of literary texts, has only recently been attempted in the Philippines. What have previously been passed off and accepted as criticism are essays and reviews in journals and periodicals; theses and dissertations surveying and “overviewing” certain literary works, themes, or periods; or various prefaces and introductions to books and monographs, largely written by Filipino teachers and graduate students of literature, as well as critics who also happen to be poets, novelists, short story writers, dramatists, and essayists. The critic as a dispassionate, objective individual tasked with studying texts with erudition and scholarship is a concept that has dawned upon public and academic consciousness only within the last few decades. The idea that a critical perspective carries with it certain basic assumptions and presuppositions through which a text is analyzed and evaluated has not been generally accepted in local literary circles. For a long time, especially in the first half of the 20th century, criticism has been largely perceived as synonymous with literary history, a view that has to be contextualized against the country’s history.

The Spanish Colonial Period: 1703-1898

Spanish Augustinian Fr. Gaspar de San Agustin, in his *Compendio de la lengua tagala* (Summary of the Tagalog Language), 1703, relates that fellow missionary Fr. Francisco de San Jose had shown some natives various poems written according to the rules of Spanish rhyming, and one of them remarked: “Magaling, datapoua hindi tola” (It is good, but it is not poetry). This was the first published critical statement on literature known to have been made by a Filipino. The greater significance of this statement, however, is that it indicates that the indigenous Filipinos had their own criteria for defining poetry, distinct from those defining Spanish, or European, poetry.

Although San Agustin’s *Compendio* is actually a grammar book, the final chapter is a discussion and illustration of Tagalog versification. Here, he covers its three aspects: rhyme, meter, and genre. He also divides Tagalog poetry into two types: the dramatic, like the *soliranin*, and the *dalit*, which is serious in theme. He further enumerates other types: *diona*, *oyayi*, and *auit*.

Other missionary poets, grammarians, and compilers of sample folk poems codified the conventions of native poetry. In the mid-18th century, the state of Tagalog poetry had two commentators. Fr. Melchor de Oyanguren’s *Tagalysmo elucidado, y reducido [en lo posible] a la Latinidad de Nebrija* (Tagalism Elucidated, and Reduced [Where Possible] into the Latin of Nebrija), 1742, confirmed San Agustin’s earlier description of Tagalog poetry. The second commentator was Francisco Bencuchillo, whose *Arte poetico tagalo* (Tagalog Poetic Art), written circa 1775, published 1895, is a more extensive description of Tagalog versification. It follows San Agustin’s classification of rhymes but

observes more possibilities for Tagalog rhyme than San Agustin did.

At the turn of the 19th century, Fr. Joaquin Martinez de Zuñiga described Tagalog poetry in *Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas* (Status of the Philippine Islands), 1893, based on his personal observation during poetry declamations and dramatic presentations. He gave the number of lines for various types of stanzas, the rhyming scheme, and the number of syllables per line for types of poems. The poems were invariably lyrical, usually about love or “some minor matters pertaining to their farms.” Among the other cultural forms that he saw were native dances accompanied by singing. These provoked his remark that the Fathers had set certain “limits of modesty,” a statement that explains to a great extent the absence of erotic poetry in the anthologies of the period and the lack of published secular poetry until the 19th century.

One of the last of the missionaries to make a commentary on Tagalog poetry was Fr. Joaquin de Coria in the last section of his *Nueva gramatica tagalog teoretica-practica* (New Theoretical-Practical Tagalog Grammar), 1872. In seven chapters, he gives a general description of types and functions of Tagalog poetry, as well as the manner in which each type is recited. The three most important chapters in this book are “Reglas del tayotay na tagalog” (Rules of Tagalog Metaphor), “De la poesia en idioma tagalog” (Of Poetry in the Tagalog Language), and “De los metros del verso tagalog” (Of Meter in Tagalog Verse). Coria focuses his attention on rhyme and meter, using these as basis for defining the *tanaga* (four-line stanza, with seven syllables per line) and the *comedia* (which he also described to be imitations of *comicos latinos*)

In April 1887, Jose Rizal delivered a paper in German entitled “Tagalische Verkunst,” which he read before the Sociedad Etnografica in Berlin. He later translated this into Spanish, entitled “Arte metrica del Tagalog” (The Metrical Art of the Tagalog). This was the most thorough description of poetic conventions thus far written, noting details like the following: that a serious poem uses the dodecasyllabic line with a caesura on the sixth or seventh syllable; that a syllable may be added or removed as dictated by the meter; that, within one stanza, the monorhyming scheme may be adopted but another stanza must have a different rhyme; that a quatrain, generally composed of dodecasyllabic lines, is used for lyric poetry, and Francisco Baltazar’s poetry may serve as model; and, finally, that the *quintilla*, which generally consists of five hepta or octosyllabic lines, is used for long narrative poetry that does not require rhetorical flourishes or imaginative elements, and the *pasyon* is a typical example. Stressing that “free verse is not recognized” by the Tagalog, Rizal then lists 12 kinds of rhyme, which he asserts are what distinguish Tagalog rhyme from that in any foreign literature, especially Spanish. To this date, this list of rhyming patterns still applies to Tagalog rhymed poetry.

By the 19th century, the rise of the *ilustrado* (elite) class had also given rise to the desire for conformity. In literary criticism, this desire was translated into concern

for orthodoxy and style. *Manga Puna* (Criticisms), written in the early 19th century and published in 1907, by Filipino priest Aniceto de la Merced, pointed out doctrinal errors and weaknesses of style in the *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal ni Jesucristong Panginoon Natin na Sucat Ipag-alab nang Pusong Taong Babasa* (Narrative of the Holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ That Will Inflame the Heart of the Reader), 1814. Verisimilitude, or the concept of literature as a “mirror of life,” was used as a basis for the debate between Spanish scholars, who wrote critical commentaries of Philippine literary forms, and the propagandists in Madrid, foremost of whom were Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar. Spanish critics who denounced Rizal’s *Noli me tangere* (Touch Me Not), 1887, were Vicente Barrantes, who dismissed it as full of lies, and Spanish friar Jose Rodriguez, who, in his “Caiingat Cayo!” (Beware!), called it heretical. Defenders of the novel were Marcelo H. del Pilar, whose satirical response “Caiingat Cayo!” (Hunt for the Eel), 1888, affirmed the truthfulness of the *Noli*, and Ferdinand Blumentritt, who proved its truthfulness by citing the oppression then existing in the country.

The American Colonial Period: 1900-1940

The adjustment from the Spanish past to Anglo-American presence shaped much of contemporary Philippine literature. A new sensibility was being formed by the continuous and systematic effort at making the people susceptible to various influences from the West. There were a number of consequences that manifested themselves in the critical works of the period.

Among the earliest critics to appear on the scene during the first decade of the American colonial period were those who decided to study Tagalog literature, which had opened itself up to genres other than the *awit/korido* (metrical romance), religious poetry, and lives of saints. With a growing number of literate Filipinos looking for other reading fare, the novel and the short story emerged to answer the need for works that depicted familiar worlds. Poetry itself had to diversify and to take into account other topics and issues that were being discussed during this period of intense colonization.

In the past, drama derived much influence from the awit and korido (in the case of the *komedya*) and from the *pasyon* (in the case of the *sinakulo*), both in a nonrealist mode. Now it had to contend with the new demand for a more realistic representation of the world.

On the one hand, there were calls to reject the past, in this case the literary types identified with the discredited Spanish regime and found wanting in their failure to approximate the real world of a subject people. Severino Reyes’ *Ang Dulang Tagalog* (The Tagalog Drama), 1938, a scathing attack on the popular *komedya*, was a clear example. The critic’s argument focused on the *komedya*’s predisposition toward a highly idealized, thus false, rendering of experience. This

critical position would find its most extreme manifestation in the series of works written by both American and Filipino writers which reduced the rich variety of Philippine literature in Spanish and the vernaculars into a collective nonentity, and at the same time argued that the texts being written in English were the only significant productions of the first two decades of American rule. In addition, critics such as Leopoldo Yabes would make the fearless forecast that the great Filipino work could be written only in English.

On the other hand, a number of critics thought that there was a need to preserve what had been handed down from the past not only for the future generations to enjoy, but also for the world to know that the country had its own rich and varied literature. Colonialism was a powerful force that had led the natives to believe that they had not produced any significant body of literature. The first attempts at writing various “literary histories” would prove to the skeptical ones that indeed numerous writers had contributed to their country’s literary heritage.

Lope K. Santos, in his *Peculiaridades de la poesia tagala* (The Peculiarities of Tagalog Poetry), 1929, would continue the work on Tagalog poetics where Rizal left off. Already the concern for placing one’s theoretical statements in historical context is signified by Santos’ first chapter, which consists of a survey of the work done by the missionary critics like San Agustin, Bencuchillo, Martinez de Zuñiga, and De Coria. The purpose of this survey is to demonstrate their failure to capture the essence of Tagalog poetry. Here, Santos declares that the missionary poets’ stress on religious versification and their own badly written verses, which they held up as models of good poetry, were largely responsible for the deterioration of Tagalog poetry, which, before Spanish intervention, had been vigorous in both content and technique. He adds that the rhyming scheme of Tagalog poetry is also to be observed in that of Cebuano, Ilocano, Ilongo, Pampango, and other Philippine languages. This was a step toward giving a national scope to the study of Philippine poetry that Rizal had begun. At the end of his paper, Santos suggests the four periods into which the history of poetry may be divided: the prehispanic, religious or mystical, revolutionary, and contemporary or philosophical.

Hermenegildo Cruz’s *Kung Sino ang Kumatha ng Florante* (On Who Authored the Florante), 1906, and Epifanio de los Santos’ *Balagtas y Su Florante* (Balagtas and His Florante), 1916, broke new ground in the choice of issues and methodology. These two studies of Francisco Baltazar or Balagtas’ classic poem *Florante at Laura* (Florante and Laura), circa 1838-1861, served as models for a critical approach combining historical data, biographical materials, sociological insights, and reader response. What these works established at this point was the need to situate the text against its context—the society from which it emerged, the functions of the text, the manner in which the work is received, and the role of the writer in the production of meaning.

In both critical works, the relevance of Balagtas’ poem to the generations being

educated under the American colonial regime was stressed, its value as a source of moral values and patriotic fervor emphasized. This didactic view of literature shaped the thinking of a large number of critics who would perceive in literature and literary analyses a powerful and effective means to teach the reader how to be a good citizen, a morally upright person, and a God-fearing individual. In this early phase of criticism, when critics were dependent on established truisms aptly summarized in the classic formulation *dulce et utile* (“sweet and useful”) as the proper function of literature, the polemical and political thrust of the critical project was to defend native culture in the face of a massive assault against it.

Variations on these aforementioned concepts on the nature and function of criticism appeared in various prefaces and introductions to a large number of Tagalog novels published in the first two decades and in poetry books written by the likes of Lope K. Santos and Pedro Gatmaitan. In the 1930s, the Institute of National Language sponsored a series of lectures on the different aspects of Tagalog literature. The result was perhaps the first systematic compilation of essays that dealt directly with specific literary genres, such as poetry, novel, drama, short story, and specific writers and works like Valeriano Hernandez Peña, Modesto de Castro, and the popular korido *Ibong Adarna* (Adarna Bird).

Among these texts that provided a diachronic view of the genre were Iñigo Ed. Regalado’s *Ang Pagkaunlad ng Nobelang Tagalog* (The Development of the Tagalog Novel), 1938, Lope K. Santos’ *Tinging Pahapyaw sa Tulang Tagalog* (A Cursory Look at Tagalog Poetry), 1938, and Fausto Galauran’s *Ang Maikling Kathang Tagalog* (The Tagalog Short Story), 1938. These attempts at constructing a history of the literary type were generally uneven in scope and depth. Nonetheless, they provided the impetus needed for the development of the critical perspective concerned primarily with establishing a framework against which the development of a particular genre could be viewed. Moreover, the critical essays have remained to this day invaluable sources of data, especially on the different stages in the development of the genre in the last decade of Spanish rule and the first decades of American rule.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a new group of writers started to take upon themselves what they perceived was a critical task: to shape the directions that literary productions ought to follow. The group, headed by Alejandro G. Abadilla and Clodualdo del Mundo, saw literature as being too beholden to the legacy of traditional writing best exemplified by the works of Balagtas. They looked at themselves as principal agents for creating a new generation of writers more attuned to developments in Western literature. In their newspaper columns, Abadilla’s “*Talaang Bughaw*” (Blue Lists) and Del Mundo’s “*Mula sa Parolang Ginto*” (From the Golden Lighthouse), they evaluated the poems and short stories being written during this time and, based on their criteria, selected what they deemed to be the best of the lot.

In 1935, the group consolidated their strength when they founded Panitikan,

which had among its members university-educated writers with some knowledge of Western literary trends and familiarity with such writers as Katherine Anne Porter, Sherwood Anderson, and Theodore Dreiser. Calling themselves both “sakdalista” (an allusion to the peasant group protesting the social conditions of the period) and “aristokrata” (an unbiased posture of superiority), they proceeded to do a critique of traditional ways of writing. One of the more influential members of the group, who would exert tremendous influence on the short story, was Teodoro Agoncillo. He became the chronicler of the literary era that witnessed the first wave of modernism.

The issues in the debate between the traditional and younger critics surfaced more clearly in the discussion of the prizewinning entries in the contest sponsored by *Liwayway* in 1943. The anthology, *25 Pinakamabuting Katha ng 1943* (25 Best Stories of 1943), 1944, showcased works which had a consciousness of the modern short story from the West. Clearly, the young critics had by this time learned to valorize texts that utilized techniques learned from the West and to deprecate writing that seemed steeped in sentimentality and didacticism.

In perspective, the move initiated by Agoncillo and company in their attempt to chart the directions of Tagalog literature during the American period should be seen partly as a reaction to the perceived gains being made by Filipino writers in English. By the 1930s, literature in English had consolidated its strength to constitute a major discourse in Philippine society, and to a great extent, a highly favored and privileged body of writing that traced its heritage to the Great Tradition in the West that ran from Homer to Matthew Arnold.

The act of nurturing Philippine literature in English should, however, be contextualized against certain interrelated historical events. A crucial policy was the decision to make English the medium of instruction in the whole country together with the institution of public education for all. This meant the introduction of a whole new curriculum that certainly encompassed more than what the few educated *indio* (native) had gone through during the Spanish period, as well as the wider dissemination of a foreign language not possible earlier. A centerpiece in this curriculum was English as a subject with both the grammar and the literature components.

Among the more famous teachers during this period were Dean S. Fansler and his wife Harriet Ely Fansler, George Pope Shannon, Tom Inglis Moore, Harold P. Scott, and C.V. Wicker. They taught not only the rudiments of English grammar but also, and more importantly, the works of such English writers as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, John Donne, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Lamb, and such American writers as Edgar Allan Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Bret Harte, and William Cullen Bryant. What was inculcated therefore was not merely the use of English to communicate with one another and to understand the lessons being taught in that language, but a whole way of looking at a world that was not at all familiar to the students. In literature classes,

Romantic and Victorian writers were taught and their works eventually emulated as models for writing. The result was impressive: students wrote and their works saw print in a number of magazines in English, such as *Philippines Herald*, *Philippine Education Magazine*, and *Graphic*. The new culture was further strengthened with the founding of such groups as the Philippine Writers' Association, 1925, the UP Writers' Club, 1927, and the Philippine Writers' League, 1939.

Preoccupied in the first three decades with mastering a foreign tongue, the writers had little time for criticism. The works in the first decades were imitative of popular texts, in theme and technique. But what was incontrovertible was the enthusiasm of young writers for the new language perceived as their bridge to the world. They were guided by the likes of A.V.H. Hartendorp and other American critics whose knowledge of criticism was based on what they learned at the turn of the century. But even early on, such qualities as sentimentalism, didacticism, excessive lyricism, and stereotyped characters were viewed as detracting from the quality of any work. Thus, the foundation was laid for criticism that eschewed precisely those qualities which characterized much of vernacular literature. Works which explored new dimensions in literary expression were consequently privileged over those that did not. More than anything else, the skillful use of technique assured discovery and renown. Federico Mangahas, Jose Garcia Villa, Alfredo Elfren Litiatco, and their contemporaries articulated the principles of fine writing or *belles lettres*.

The presence of a seductive foreign language and literature did not completely overwhelm the native consciousness of social reality. Wielding the newly acquired articulateness in English, some Filipino writers took issue with the direction that fine writing was taking their English-besotted colleagues. The result of this literary critique was a body of social commentaries in which the craft of writing is prized, not for its intrinsic value of self-expression, but for its power to interpret and change the world.

It was during this period that a kind of polarization took place in criticism. The first tendency was represented by Jose Garcia Villa, and simplistically perceived as hewing closely to the doctrine of *ars gratia artis* (art for art's sake), where the aesthetic qualities held preeminence. The second tendency was manifested in Salvador Lopez, who was influenced by the sociological approach shaped by Marxism, then asserting itself as a critical school of thought and a political movement in the United States. The crucial question addressed by these two polar tendencies was: What is the nature of literature and what is its role in Philippine society?

In perspective, criticism as it manifested itself in the first half of the 20th century in both English and in the vernacular employed a number of presuppositions culled from existing critical perspectives. For the critics in the vernacular, literature was always a text or a theme with which the ordinary reader could

identify: thus, the mimetic theory appeared to be the central source of insights. The text's linkages with history, the writer, and the audience were never in doubt, even as the critics displayed a deep historical sense. This tendency was to be challenged by the young critics who were members of Panitikan in the 1930s.

Criticism in English, on the other hand, shaped by the romantic theory of art as creation, stressed the autonomy of literary texts and emphasized the relationship between the author and the piece of work. This notion, rooted in the expressive theory of art, found its most powerful defender in Jose Garcia Villa. But this position was roundly criticized by the group headed by Salvador P. Lopez as irrelevant, especially in the context of specific historical experiences, in particular the two colonial periods which had followed each other only a generation earlier.

The Contemporary Period: 1946-1990

Very little criticism was done during World War II, although it was obvious that the debates going on between the traditional critics and the modern critics in the vernacular had already borne fruit. A number of well-crafted short stories and poems, written in Tagalog, but obviously bearing the influence of Western literature, appeared on the pages of *Lidayway*. This fact was ample proof that elements of modernism had seeped into the production of local texts. But the phenomenon could be partly explained by the fact that the English-writing Filipino "moderns," compelled to write in Tagalog due to the outlawing of English, brought to *Lidayway's* vernacular pages their acculturated world view and techniques.

The area in which much effort was expended was related to the need for textbooks in Philippine literature classes. These textbooks in general carried with them the historical-sociological orientation of traditional criticism, having been written as surveys of Philippine literature. Teofilo del Castillo's *A Brief History of Philippine Literature*, 1937, was one of the earliest literary histories. Some other notable works were *Panitikan ng Pilipinas* (Literature of the Philippines), 1954, by Jose Villa Panganiban and Consuelo T. Panganiban and *Philippine Literature From the Ancient Times to the Present*, 1964, by Teofilo del Castillo and Buenaventura Medina Jr.

Other anthologies in English were Arthur Roseburg's *Pathways to Philippine Literature*, 1966, Asuncion David Maramba's *Philippine Contemporary Literature*, 1965. In Filipino, Juan Laya published his series *Diwang Kayumanggi*, begun in 1946, while Alejandro G. Abadilla came out with his *Parnasong Tagalog* (Tagalog Parnassus), 1949. Other notable literary historians during the 1950s and 1960s were Teodoro Agoncillo, who published his history and anthology, *Ang Maikling Kuwentong Tagalog, 1887-1948* (The Tagalog Short Story), 1949, and Clodualdo del Mundo who collected his critical essays in *Mula sa Parolang Ginto*, 1969, the same title as his newspaper column.

Simultaneous with the publication of these historical surveys and anthologies of Philippine literature were attempts by the younger critics to continue what they had begun before World War II. Agoncillo founded and edited the short-lived *Malaya*, which became the venue for the more artistically crafted works after the war years. Del Mundo also had his magazine *Daigdig*, which likewise died after a few issues. Alejandro G. Abadilla realized that commercial magazines could not subsist on artistic texts. In 1938, he founded his own literary magazine, *Panitikan*, to which both established and aspiring young writers and critics contributed. *Panitikan* was the first serious venue for critics to express their ideas. This magazine published the works of such young critics as Bienvenido Lumbera, Virgilio S. Almario, Epifanio San Juan Jr., Pedro Ricarte, and Efren Abueg, who would subsequently make a name for themselves in various literary genres.

Apart from these literary histories and anthologies, other critical texts appeared in the 1960s which significantly altered the landscape of Philippine criticism, especially in English, which by this time had strengthened its position as the intelligentsia's language of discourse. Courses in Philippine literature in English were initiated in a number of colleges and universities, making this subject a regular part of the curriculum. With this institutionalization, there were demands not only for anthologies and surveys but critical texts which would explain the primary texts.

Foremost among these critical texts were Ricaredo Demetillo's *The Authentic Voice of Poetry*, 1962; Leonard Casper's *The Wayward Horizon: Essays on Modern Philippine Literature*, 1961, and *The Wounded Diamond: Studies in Modern Philippine Literature*, 1964; Antonio Manuud's *Brown Heritage*, 1967; Lucila Hosillos' *Philippine-American Literary Relations*, 1969; and Joseph Galdon's *Philippine Fiction*, 1972, and *The Philippine Novel in English*, 1979.

With the exception of *Brown Heritage*, all the above-mentioned works dealt with the various genres in English. Generally, the texts followed a basic formalist orientation, as the analysis focused principally on the formal characteristics of the texts. The approach was both descriptive and evaluative, except in Hosillos' work, which used a comparative and historical approach. But in general, books published in the 1970s showed a formalist orientation as seen, for example, in Ophelia Alcantara-Dimalanta's *The Philippine Poetics*, 1976, and in Gemino Abad's *In Another Light: Poems and Essays*, 1978, and *A Formal Approach to Lyric Poetry*, 1978, which were some of the more significant critical works of the period.

The privileged position of Philippine literature in English as the only type of literature worth formal studies was eventually challenged in the 1960s and 1970s with the appearance of critical texts analysing literature in the vernacular. Though written in English, a number of key articles in *Brown Heritage* by Bienvenido

Lumbera, Clodualdo del Mundo, and other writers were devoted to the study of the short story, poetry, and literary criticism in Tagalog. In the same decades, the journal *Philippine Studies* published Lumbera's dissertation on the development of Tagalog poetry from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Moreover, a series of lectures on the major writers of Tagalog literature was also held in the late 1960s.

Filipino was used in a number of influential essays. Through this gesture, Filipino gained stature as a language for the academe and ceased being associated only with popular literature. This tendency to employ the native tongue, a political move against the ascendancy of English, was reinforced with the publication of a series of essays in university journals and newspapers published by the Manuel L. Quezon University, the University of Santo Tomas, and University of the East. These institutions nurtured the likes of Virgilio S. Almario, Rogelio Mangahas, and Lamberto Antonio, each of whom defined the meaning of modernism in the contemporary Philippine context, and became its major influential practitioners.

Distinctly formalist in orientation, these young critics viewed traditional writing and criticism associated with the older critics as sorely in need of openness to Western literary influences. Well read in the criticism of the formalist school and exposed to the modern techniques of such writers as Pablo Neruda, John Steinbeck, W.H. Auden, the French Symbolists, among many others, this group proceeded to do a critique of the existing modes of literary analysis. They found fault with the moralistic, historical approaches of the older critics and criticized the dependence of Iñigo Ed. Regalado and company on literary theories already supplanted by the more vigorous and powerful formalist doctrines. The major work of criticism written in Filipino in the early 1970s was Virgilio Almario's *Ang Makata sa Panahon ng Makina* (The Poet in the Machine Age), 1972, a compilation of his essays published in the 1960s. In this work, Almario challenged some of the well-entrenched beliefs of traditional criticism by exposing what he considered the excesses and flaws of traditional poetry, which he described with characteristic acerbity as "preserved information."

In the 1960s, therefore, formalism in its various manifestations seemed to be a promising enterprise in both vernacular and English criticism. Although the historical sense was not totally lost, as exemplified by the texts of Lumbera and Hosillos, the dominant theory which won over many adherents was what is termed as the organic theory, or the emphasis on the autonomy of the text perceived as generally abstracted from history. But also at that point, a certain rigor had begun to characterize literary criticism, particularly in the close reading or analysis of text. Although largely untheorized, a large number of critical works during this period seemed to have benefited from the critics' deepening realization of the nature and function of criticism as a separate discipline. By using formalist canons with understanding, the critic's task became clearer: the exegesis of the text with a view to providing an intelligent interpretation of its meaning. Thus were Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, 1961, N.V.M. Gonzalez's *A Season of Grace*, 1956, Gregorio Brillantes' *The Distance to Andromeda*, 1960,

Alejandro G. Abadilla's "ako ang daigdig" (i am the world), 1940, and Jose Garcia Villa's poetry analyzed.

The ascendance of formalism in literary criticism would not go unchallenged as the nation found itself increasingly and more deeply politicized in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A number of crucial texts at this period were published by Epifanio San Juan Jr.—*Balagtas: Art and Revolution*, 1969, and *The Radical Tradition in Philippine Literature*, 1971. In his studies of such major writers as Balagtas, Jose Rizal, Lope K. Santos, and Amado V. Hernandez, San Juan turned his back on formalism in favor of a dialectical-historical approach. With these works, the debate was no longer exclusively between traditional and formalist modes of analysis, but between formalism and Marxism.

San Juan continued to publish critical works which not only were critiques of the formalist position but were, in the 1980s, elaborations and applications of Marxist theory as it had been shaped by some categories from poststructuralism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and other contemporary European theories. His subsequent works include *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of the Class Struggle*, 1972, *Toward a People's Literature*, 1984, and *Subversions of Desire*, 1988.

It was also within the Marxist framework that the works of such critics as Bienvenido Lumbera and Nicanor G. Tiongson were written. Lumbera's *Revaluation*, 1984, is a collection of essays where the critic most fully articulated a nationalist literary tradition. Tiongson, on the other hand, chose to study two popular genres—the *komedya* and the *sinakulo*—and examined the intricate relationship between the texts and society's material conditions that shaped these works in his pioneering *Kasaysayan at Estetika ng Sinakulo at Iba Pang Dulang Panrelihiyon sa Malolos* (History and Aesthetics of the Sinakulo and Other Religious Drama in Malolos), 1975, and *Kasaysayan ng Komedyang sa Pilipinas: 1766-1982* (The History of the Komedyang in the Philippines: 1766-1982), 1982.

The historical approach also shaped the studies made by Lucila Hosillos, whose *Originality as Vengeance in Philippine Literature*, 1984, was one of the more self-consciously theoretical works in this period. The same approach could be seen in Almario's landmark study of Tagalog poetry in the 20th century, *Balagtasismo vs. Modernismo*, 1984. Almario also published *Taludtod at Talinghaga* (Verse and Metaphor), 1985, a study of poetic form and structure; and *Jose Corazon de Jesus: Mga Piling Tula* (Jose Corazon de Jesus: Selected Poems), 1984, his analysis of the contribution of Jose Corazon de Jesus to the art of Tagalog poetry.

It was also during the 1970s that Filipino scholars and literary historians focused their attention on the different vernaculars and specific literary genres. To the first category belonged Edna Z. Manlapaz's *Kapampangan Literature: A Historical Survey and Anthology*, 1981, Rosalina Icban-Castro's *Literature of the Pampangos*, 1981, and Gregorio C. Luangco's *Waray Literature: An Anthology*

of Leyte-Samar Writings, 1982.

Among the books dealing with dramatic forms were Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio's *The "Seditious" Tagalog Playwrights: Early American Occupation*, 1972, Doreen G. Fernandez's *The Iloilo Zarzuela, 1903-1930*, 1978; Wilhelmina Ramas' *Sugbuanon Theater*, 1982; and Resil B. Mojares' *Theater in Society, Society in Theater*, 1985. Studies in fiction were also done. Among them were Soledad S. Reyes' *Ang Nobelang Tagalog, 1905-1975: Tradisyon at Modernismo* (The Tagalog Novel, 1905-1975: Tradition and Modernism), 1982, and Resil B. Mojares' *The Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel*, 1983.

There were studies that sought to give an overall perspective of Philippine literature broken down into its components. This meant the inclusion of ethnic literature, which for a long time had been marginalized by a culture, literature, and discourse rooted in a literate society. The more significant works were Roger Bresnahan's *Literature and Society: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, 1976; Joseph Galdon's *Salimbibig: Philippine Vernacular Literature*, 1980; Damiana Eugenio's *Philippine Folk Literature*, 1982, and her series on its various genres: myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, and songs; Francisco Demetrio's *Myths and Symbols*, 1978; and the ASEAN anthology, *Epics of the Philippines*, 1983. All these made available the richness of Philippine ethnic literature. Still, what was not fully explored and developed was the analysis of ethnic literature, i.e., the oral tradition, using the combined categories of criticism and cultural anthropology, although deep insights are proffered in such works as E. Arsenio's *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, 1975, F. Landa Jocano's *The Epic of Labaw Donggon*, 1965, and Nicole Revel MacDonald's analysis of Palawan myths and epics within a specific culture area of a Philippine ethnolinguistic group.

In general, English was still the language used by a large number of critics. But in several major critical works, Filipino was used to discuss the problematics chosen by the writers. Clearly, this was a political move on the part of some of the critics who understood the need to use the native language to constitute their critical discourse on their own linguistic terms.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in literary criticism and literary theory as separate critical projects. Isagani R. Cruz's *Beyond Futility*, 1984, was probably the first attempt of its kind to assess the achievements of some of the country's major critics. It was in the 1980s, that the Filipino critic realized the need to go beyond what formalism and orthodox Marxist analysis could offer.

The intellectual ferment that has been brewing in Europe and the United States in literary theory started to shape the terms of engagement in the Philippines in the middle 1980s. It was a time for learning what semiotics, structuralism, poststructuralism, modernism, and post modernism, feminism, reception theory, and other conceptual systems were all about. This uncertainty was reflected in

the articles written during this period where the Filipino writers still found themselves grappling with the complex ideas of Anglo-American and European scholars as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Terry Eagleton, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous, Fredric Jameson, Pierre Macherey, Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault, Paul de Man, and other Western leading lights of new theory.

Although there is still a dearth of actual publications that manifest the Filipino scholar's appropriate deployment of categories from contemporary criticism, there are activities going on in various universities, especially those undertaken by graduate students who wish to infuse fresh approaches and methodological rigor into their studies of Philippine culture and history. Some of the areas explored in these studies are the millinerian movements and their dominant themes and structures, the songs of the Hukbalahap movement, protest music, people's theater, semiotics and the novel, media and popular culture, and sexism in literary language. Categories from contemporary Marxism, poststructuralism, linguistic analysis, narratology, feminism, and psychoanalysis have been employed with much enthusiasm, even at the risk of inaccessibility to general readership. Within the next decade or so, the result of these scholarly pursuits will become known to a larger audience when they will have come out with more organized output. It is to be hoped that both the public and academic mind will have been open to and capable of theory reception by then.

At present, the likes of Isagani R. Cruz, Virgilio S. Almario, Buenaventura Medina Jr., Soledad Reyes, Resil Mojares, Epifanio San Juan Jr., Gemino Abad, Ma. Luisa Torres-Reyes and Cirilo F. Bautista, among the established critics, continue to produce critical texts using a diversity of approaches. As more categories are assimilated and internalized by our critics, the terms of the ongoing discourse promise to be more sharply defined and more carefully elaborated. All these critical activities should ultimately redound to the benefit of Philippine literature in whatever language it is written. • S. Reyes, B. Lumbera, with notes from V.S. Almario

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