

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON PHILIPPINE LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

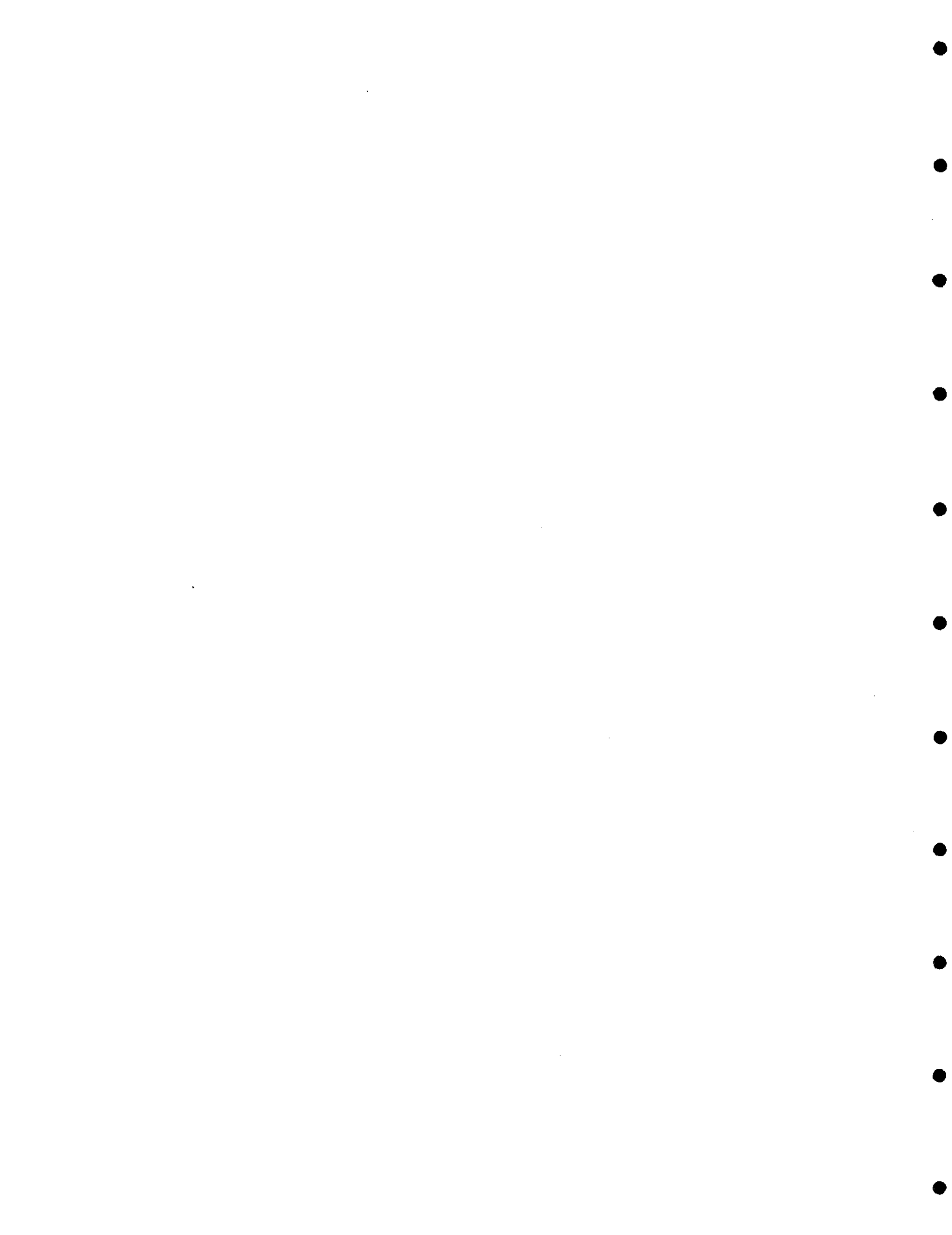
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EPIFANIO SAN JUAN, JR.**

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Editor**

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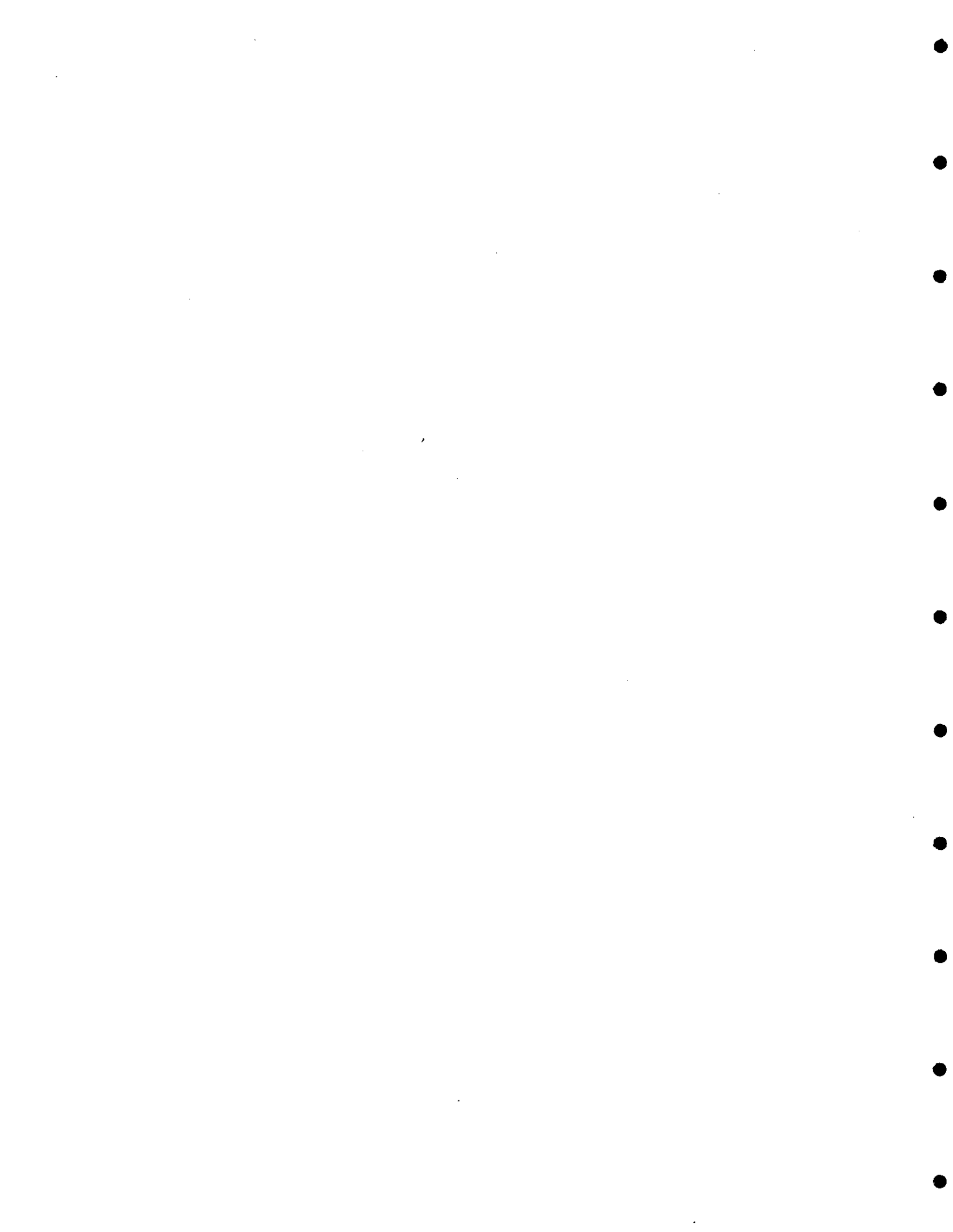
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PREFACE

This publication was put together from two sets of essays written by Luis V. Teodoro, Jr. and Epifanio San Juan, Jr., both accomplished Filipino writers currently residing in the United States. They represent much of the progressive thinking that has animated Philippine literature in recent decades and offer a lot of significant insights into the state of Philippine society today.

Mr. Teodoro's monograph evolved out of his personal experiences as a young, struggling writer at the University of the Philippines where he also taught English and other courses for a number of years. He gives a thoughtful and sensitive account of the Philippine literary scene in the sixties and seventies which witnessed some of the more turbulent times in contemporary Philippine society. He examines the major issues that have confronted Philippine literature during this period of ferment, such as the use of native languages that more accurately capture the essence of the Filipino psyche, the writing of "committed" literature, and the need to forge a new social consciousness out of the intellectual shackles of the past. These issues need to be addressed and resolved, otherwise, as Teodoro notes in his final chapter, we shall be looking only at continuing irrelevances in our national life and "the light of dead stars."

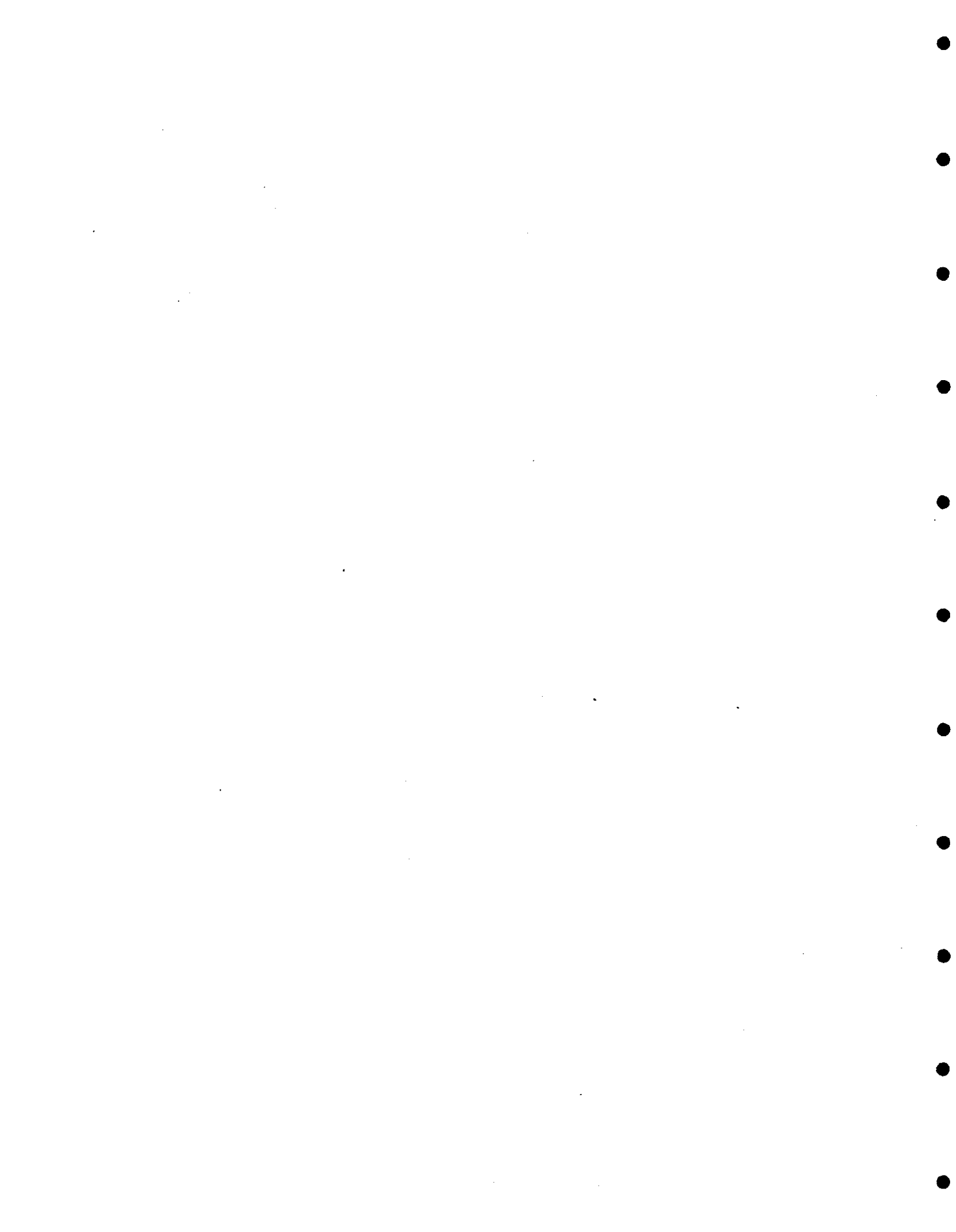
The second essay was written by Dr. San Juan who teaches English and Comparative Literature at the University of Connecticut and author of numerous books, the latest of which is Only By Struggle: Literature and Revolution in the Philippines. In this work, San Juan challenges the validity and usefulness of Establishment paradigms in these times of escalating crises and tensions in Philippine society. He maintains that the current martial law regime in the Philippines embodies the forces of American imperialism and that the only meaningful alternative for Filipinos today is national democratic liberation. His main thesis in this essay is that Philippine literature should transcend its traditional narrow formalism and reflect the goals of that liberation.

This publication is part of a continuing series of occasional papers on the Philippines or Filipinos that is being put out by the Philippine Studies Program of the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Hawaii. The Program was established in the fall of 1975 to promote academic instruction on various aspects of Philippine studies at the university and a more thorough understanding of Philippine society and culture through instruction, research and publication, seminars, and other activities. This publication series aims to provide an outlet for serious writing on Philippine-related topics. We have no strictly defined criteria for publication but it is expected that manuscripts submitted should be the products of research on Philippine themes. They could also touch on various aspects of the Filipino experience in America or elsewhere.

Inquiries regarding the publication series and the Philippine Studies Program may be directed to: Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Moore Hall 315, Honolulu, Hawaii.

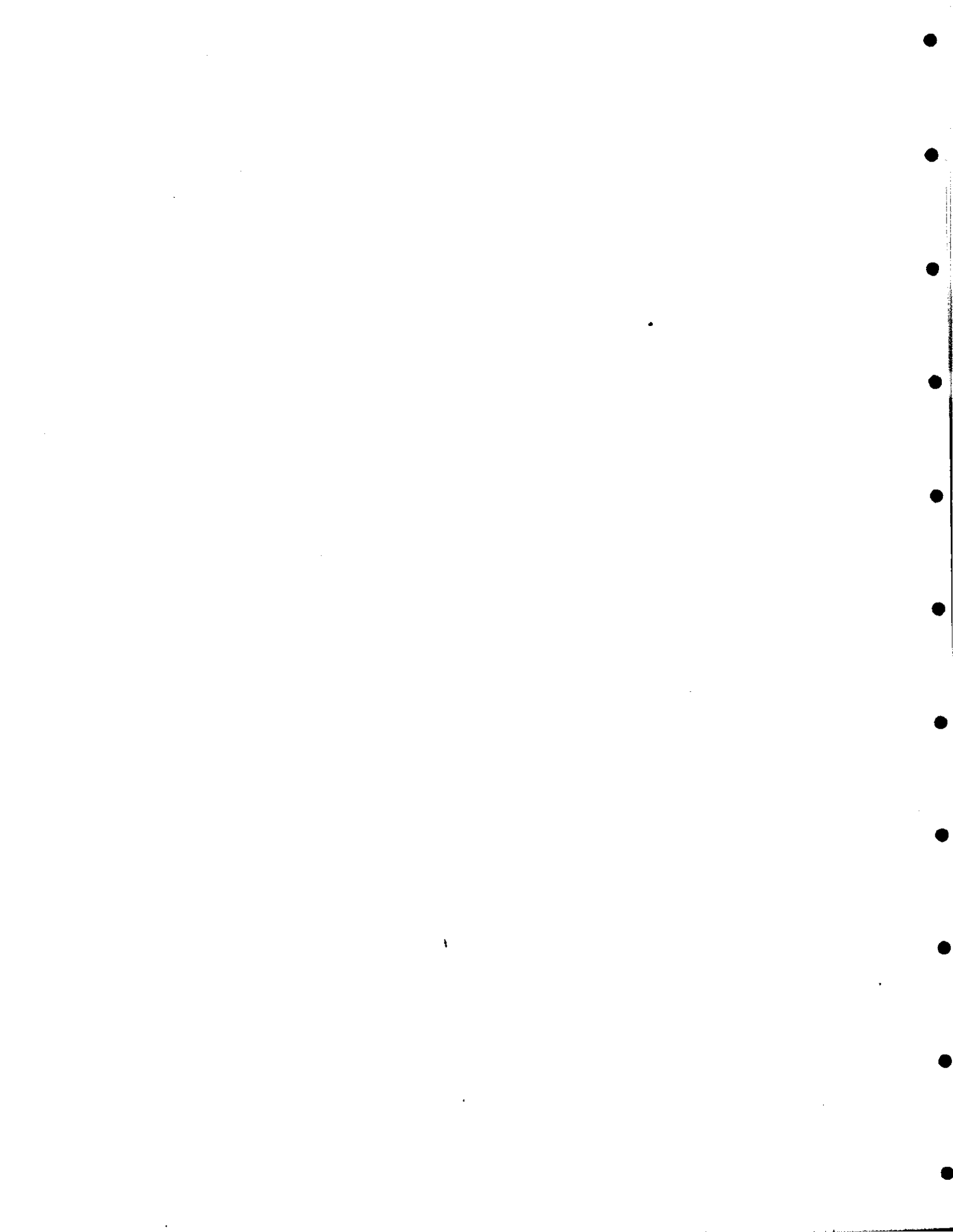
BELINDA A. AQUINO
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A. TOWARD THE INSURGENT SEVENTIES

By Luis V. Teodoro, Jr.



INTRODUCTION

HAS LITERATURE IN THE PHILIPPINES A FUTURE?

As a student of NVM Gonzalez and admirer of Nick Joaquin*, I was convinced while still at the University that writing would be my profession -- and writing was, at the time, exclusively taken to mean *les belles lettres*. Not that we had any strong prejudices against other certainly no less valid forms of writing, but the entire intellectual ambience at the University of the Philippines (UP) held literature to be somewhat more redeeming than, let us say, writing a newspaper column. Most of my contemporaries, classmates in literature and writing courses (fiction under NVM Gonzalez, poetry under Jose Garcia Villa,**) were therefore writing poetry and fiction with the firm conviction that what they were doing was noble and right. No one raised any questions about literature's social value; the writing of it was simply held to be personally ennobling, setting its practitioners apart from the more mundane professions of engineering, chemistry, medicine, law, or selling memorial park lots.

In keeping with what was generally believed was expected of writers -- or at least of people on the verge of writing -- most of us were eccentric and afflicted with neurotic tendencies, whether real or affected. One classmate was specially fond of the idea of suicide and could stand for hours on a ledge four stories above the ground debating with himself, in the manner of Hamlet, the pros and cons of ending it all. Another had the habit of screaming Yeats! in the middle of a lecture and then, for no discernible reason, walking out of the classroom in a huff. There were perhaps more madmen per square mile of UP soil than anywhere else, since one out of every ten UP students was a writer or trying to be one. Most of us, however, were sane enough to believe the common literary prejudices: the pinnacle of achievement was held to be publication in This Week, the Sunday Times Magazine, or, a sign that one had really arrived, the Philippine Free Press -- magazines whose literary pages were edited by Johnny Gatbonton, NVM Gonzalez and Nick Joaquin, respectively. And it did not matter either if one's poetry were squeezed in between a Kotex ad and a funeral parlor's. Within the campus, those who could call themselves Campus Writers earned the title by being elected to the UP Writers Club, an honor that meant, among others, that one could rub elbows with luminaries like Purita Kalaw-Ledesma, a Filipina art critic, and call Francisco Arcellana, a Filipino fictionist in English, "Franz" instead of "Professor."

*Filipino novelists in English. Joaquin is a National Artist of the Philippines. Gonzalez teaches creative writing at the California State University at Hayward.

**Filipino poet in English. Villa is much-awarded and also a National Artist.

In general, though everyone condemned the "outside world" for being crass and Philistine, few of us had any clear notion of what it was like, for other people as well as for writers, to leave the University and make a living. Many had the suspicion that writing could keep them at least in cigarettes and coffee while they gathered the material or wrote the twenty-third draft of the Great Filipino Novel. This starry-eyed view of the world was perpetuated by the coterie system, of which Virginia Moreno was the grand mistress for what seemed like decades. The system was essentially an expression of that destructive inbreeding created by the elitist assumptions that had informed the Club (founded in 1927 for the expressed purpose of "improving the English proficiency of Filipinos") through the years of its existence. The Club was a closed society in many senses, and it proved unable to cope with events in Philippine society, particularly with the rise of student activism and consequent development of social awareness among many writers. The writer who had tried to shut off the world outside the University from his consideration, like Ibarra, soon found himself forced to confront it.

The UP Writers Club therefore quite simply died. Though there were repeated efforts to revive it, the most recent (in 1969) being an attempt by no less than S.P. Lopez* to resume publication of the Literary Apprentice (the Club's publication), nothing came of those efforts because the Club's traditions had always been hostile to "committed literature."** The dominant view, something accepted, unquestioned as fact, had always been that form was primary to content -- a view prevalent in all the arts in the Philippines where technical perfection is held to be the supreme artistic value. This kind of technicism made it easy for fraudulent "writers" to become members of the UP literary crowd.

In spite of its passing, however, the coterie system did not spare those who had gone through it the shock of having to live in a society they did not understand but whose nature they suspected. Many of them were rapidly absorbed into advertising agencies, the newspapers or the universities -- and the novel or poem or short story that would make so much difference gathered dust in some desk drawer as the writers immersed themselves in the economic struggle.

Immediately after graduation, I joined the faculty of the University of the Philippines with two published short stories behind me, and with the intention of writing, if not The Great Filipino Novel, at least, The Great Filipino Short Story, an ambition I thought was modest and realizable enough within the limits of my story-telling talents.

Lecturing twenty-one hours a week, however (I was immediately given a teaching load of seven courses), left me little energy to even think of writing anything, and the short stories that I knew had to be written kept receding further and further into the horizon with every theme, term paper

*Salvador P. Lopez is the author of Literature and Society (1940) which initiated the discussion of committed literature in the 30s and 40s.

**It was successfully re-established in 1974, after abandoning its 47-year commitment to English.

and examination I corrected. It was not until 1968 that I managed to write a short story again, and that only after I had succeeded in getting myself underloaded, teaching three subjects instead of five or seven a semester.

The reader who suspects by now what all this is leading up to is cautioned that this is not meant to be a personal *apologia* for one's inadequacies. One can, of course, mention the example of Dostoyevsky who had to write between epileptic seizures and holding off his creditors, in order to support the argument that one can always find the time and the means to write. The answer to that would be the lame statement that we are not all Dostoyevsky or even shadows of one, and that, while some do manage to continue, the conditions in which our writers must pursue their calling nevertheless account for (1) the fact that many soon "run out of steam"; i.e., cease writing altogether except on the rarest of occasions, and settle down as henpecked husband or successful PR man, and (2) the predominantly "campus literature" quality of much of Philippine literature in English.

One can, without much effort, mention at least five writers of my generation who have ceased writing altogether, and I suspect that what happened to me was, with a few differences in detail, essentially what happened to them. I ceased to be a writer in the *belles lettres* sense and became a critic. I find myself still related, though somewhat distantly, to literature, but cannot seem to write it. The reason for this perhaps lies in the simple fact that reading a novel and criticizing it -- in many ways an extension of the classroom experience -- is, between the lecture before the 9 a.m. class in literature and the discussion of two short stories in the 3 p.m. fiction workshop, infinitely easier than writing one. And, because of the proliferation of magazines in Manila in those days and the sinking rate of the peso, it was more immediately rewarding in a mercenary sense.

The key word is "mercenary": the writer who begins as an *enfant terrible* soon ends up using his skill with language in pursuits often only faintly associated with literature, such as pounding a police beat, writing toothpaste copy, or ghost-writing for one or even several politicians, if he* is to keep himself and his family on a certain accustomed level of existence. Since a reasonably defensible short story or poem (the novel is often out of the question, unless, like Thomas Mann, one has a wine merchant for a father, or has acquired a ₱10,000 grant) takes time to write and often fetches a ridiculously low price in the market, asking a writer to live on his writing is practically asking him to starve.

It need not be stated that literature requires a degree of leisure to write -- and this few writers in the Philippines have. At the same time, the constant run in the rat race distorts the perceptions somewhat and limits experience to the routine of daily survival. This is particularly true of Filipino writers in English who are, by inclination and often by necessity, *petit-bourgeois* and paradoxically, often anarchist at the same time. This is a reflection of two opposing demands: one made

*For lack of a pronoun that includes male and female writers, he is used in this publication in a generic sense to include both.

by the "respectable" side of Philippine society, where middle class existence is an unmitigated virtue, and the backwash of "cafe society" tradition -- itself an expression of rebellion against middle-class life -- which seems to ordain that the writer should, in the Hemingway fashion, wench and wine himself to death.

Why this should be specially true of writers in English and not of writers in Pilipino or Hiligaynon or Iloko is traceable to the fact that English is the vehicle of "respectable" existence. It is also the conduit of those anti-middle class attitudes that characterize literary circles in the West. Writers in the languages, in contrast, have not come into intimate contact with the ambience of decadence which is the hallmark of cafe society, and at the same time, they often live proletarian lives -- which accounts, to a great degree, for their capability to sympathize with the masses and therefore, their relative preparedness in writing militant literature.

It would seem, therefore, given the historical period in which we find ourselves, that it is the literature of the languages which will sustain Philippine literature, since the mode of existence of the writer in English and the traditions he has absorbed lead to the writing of a literature of limited value. It might be argued that there may be writers willing to forego their mode of existence as *petit-bourgeois* and to deny those traditions. But it is clear that the writer who is able to do both ceases to be a writer in English, since elitism is inseparable from the nature of Philippine literature in English, both because of the language as well as its essentially formalist traditions.

The writer in the languages, immersed as he is in the lives of the many, is in a position to continue writing and to write far more significantly. There is little doubt that many of the younger writers writing in English today will eventually abandon that language as events develop, and express themselves instead in the "native" languages. The writer in the languages is not subject to the same pressures as the writer in English, whose Western "traditions" demand that he maintain his middle-class existence. And because he addresses himself to a far larger audience in the languages that, unlike English, will remain viable in the Philippines, he will eventually write the literature that will make so much difference.

This does not mean that literature in English in the Philippines has no future. It would be more accurate to say that it has only an immediate future, since the writer in English must, considering the nature of his audience, record the middle-class experience in a language that cannot remain pre-eminent in this country, quite simply because it is not the language of the many.

To a certain degree, middle-class life is a legitimate area of exploration for literature -- the conflicts, the fears and the vacillations of this class, for example, need to be understood since it is a potentially vital force in the making of a just society.

But we need not think that the great literature of the Philippines will be written by writers who have yet to transcend their *petit-bourgeois*

origins and who continue to write of the middle-class experience -- for this is what, essentially, the question of language is all about. Sooner or later, the initiative -- and the future -- shall pass on to other hands.

That literature in English in the Philippines is fast approaching a dead-end is discernible from the repetition, like a broken record, of the mistakes of the past: the centrifugal quality of fiction and poetry, the in-bred, elitist tone of much that is being written, the increasing bankruptcy of literary workshops meant to develop Philippine literature in English, but which end up discussing the same tired clichés, the same hoary themes. The forward surge of events will surely leave that literature by the wayside.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Made in U.S.A. and frankly imitative of Breadloaf and Iowa, the writer's workshop came to the Philippines via the Tiempos (Edith and Edilberto)*, mainstays of the Silliman University workshop. It is an annual undertaking amply funded with the help of the Asia Foundation and, the latest word from the grapevine has it, Ford Foundation. The Filipino workshop's spiritual lights are the New Critics, as these have been interpreted by the Tiempos, Franz Arcellana, NVM Gonzalez, Bienvenido Santos.** Any workshop worth its salt has been expected to assume that consummate attention to craft and refinements of form should be the first if not the sole concern of the writer.

These assumptions, however, have been in constant assault. The new writers are beginning to demand, if not something else, at least something more. The UP workshop (which began only in 1965 with nothing more than the respectable intention of contributing to the development of Philippine literature -- assumed to be in English) was attended in 1971 by a predominantly activist group of beginning writers, one of whom at one point and after a talk on the more technical aspects of writing a short story by a guest lecturer, expressed "profound disgust" at what he called the "emphasis" of the workshop on the demands of craft.

Most of the older participants took exception to the charge. Though the UP workshop, at its inception in 1965 had threatened to be nothing more than a lesser, poorly endowed, held-every-two-years carbon copy of the Silliman workshop, it took a different complexion in 1969, the last time it was held in Iloilo City, and with a difference. Among the fellows were a number of writers in Pilipino, including Rogelio Ordóñez, Ricardo Lee, Virgilio Almarino and the late Emmanuel Lacaba.***

S.P. Lopez, who had then ascended to the UP presidency, delivered the keynote address, appropriately enough entitled "Literature and Society." He reaffirmed the broad principles of his book of the same title published nearly thirty years before. Among others, Lopez affirmed that the same principles he had discussed in his book still hold today, "because our society has not changed fundamentally since then." The late Amado V. Hernandez**** was a resident lecturer and delivered his lecture in Pilipino before an enthusiastic audience of writers in Pilipino and English. The proponents of formalism were severely trounced in the discussions and were subsequently compelled to agree with S.P. Lopez and Hernandez that the writing of a relevant literature was necessary.

*Filipino poet and fictionist in English.

**Filipino writers in English.

***Emmanuel Lacaba died in an encounter between Philippine government troops and the rebel New People's Army in 1975.

****One of the most important writers in the Philippines, Hernandez was a partisan of committed literature. He died in 1971.

Apart from this, the then workshop chairman, Elmer Ordoñez, had initiated, in the first place, the practice of having lectures on certain social questions delivered by critics such as Leonard Casper, and poets such as Amado V. Hernandez, instead of simply going into discussions of individual works immediately. At least one sociologist was also present to share his sociological insights with the workshop participants.

The usual business of a workshop, that of discussing manuscripts, was taken care of by a panel of poets, critics and short story writers which included Leonard Casper, Ricaredo Demetillo and Rony V. Diaz.

The 1971 workshop proceeded from the same assumptions that had been, as it were, defined by the 1969 workshop, and which events then taking place in Philippine society had indicated were not only valid but indispensable. The discussants therefore included Bienvenido Lumbera, critic and poet, and *engagé* professor at the Ateneo de Manila; Gelacio Y. Guillermo, Jr., whose socially committed poems are among the most beautiful one can find in Philippine poetry; Ninotchka Rosca, whose book of stories, Bitter Country, demonstrated the invalidity of the assumption that relevance and competence are exclusive of one another; and Ricardo Lee, whose Pilipino short stories are not only triumphs of technique but of social insight as well.

It was pointed out to the "disgusted" participant, a UP student who wrote committed poems and short stories in English and Pilipino, that there is a compelling need for any writer, but most particularly for the committed, to hone the tools of his craft as finely as he can if he is to fulfill most effectively the educative function of the literature that he hopes to practice. "*Kung tatagpas ka ng ulo,*" Gelacio Guillermo was compelled to ask at one point, "*di ba ihahasa mo muna ang iyong gulok?*" (If you plan to chop heads off, wouldn't you hone your axe?)

The question as well as the answer to it were expressed in other ways in the course of the ten-day workshop.

Twenty-five participants -- nine of the ten staff members and sixteen of the seventeen fellows -- boarded the UP College of Fisheries fishing boat, the M/V Pampano, off Pier 2 on the morning of May 7, 1971. During the two days and nights of the journey to Cebu -- in squalls that drenched sun-bathing workshoppers, amid efforts to keep from leaning over the rail before the onslaught of 15-foot high ocean waves, as well as in the middle of one bright lazy day when the sea was as still as glass and the Pampano had intercepted a fisherman's boat in a futile attempt to buy some fish to relieve the monotony of the *adobo* and *tosino* fare that was being served for lunch and dinner -- the question and the answer were already undercurrent.

Ricardo Lee wondered if it were not self-defeating for "relevant writing" not to pay too much attention to certain formal demands when it is the fulfillment of those demands which could make a story or a poem effectively educative. For it was clear that the issue of whether committed or engaged literature was valid had already become an assumption, perhaps because of the succession of events that have shaken the country since 1969. The majority of the manuscripts submitted were "activist" poems and stories,

and -- again an indication of the temper of the times -- were predominantly in Pilipino. Four of the five stories for discussion were in Pilipino; all five dealt with more or less "relevant" themes. More than half of the approximately 60 or more poems were in Pilipino, and like the stories, dealt with themes one could immediately detect as "contemporary."

The first workshop lecture, "The Poet and the Age," by Gelacio Guillermo, Jr., aroused questions that accepted the workshop's assumptions. One participant asked if "relevant" poetry, which would appear to be necessarily topical, would not be too ephemeral. Ateneo's Bien Lumbera suggested that it might be valid to assume that there could exist such a thing as "disposable" poetry, while Ninotchka Rosca suggested that the very "topicality" or particularity of a poem competently executed, i.e., one concerned with the problems that attend existence in a society at a particular historical stage -- might be the very source of its potential for "universality": The assumptions of the statement being that literature is an attempt to make the human condition in a particular time and place understandable, and that, being therefore concerned with the particulars of human existence at a given moment in history, it might precisely be a means for later generations to fully realize the human dimensions of the struggle for freedom at a given time.

The actual discussions began on the same morning, May 10, with a long poem in English, moved on in the afternoon to consider a long activist poem. Ricaredo Demetillo, Bien Lumbera and Gelacio Guillermo agreed that the form that had been used for the expression of a politically "active" content was inadequate and misleading. The poet had adapted T.S. Eliot's method in The Wasteland, a form fitted for that poem's suggestion of sterility and immobility. The religious imagery in T.S. Eliot, which the poet had also adapted, is suggestive of the ritualizations of existence, at least in the advanced industrial societies of the West, and therefore is incompatible with the sense of energy and movement that the poem's content would communicate. Perhaps the lesson to be drawn from the poem, one panelist suggested, is the need to develop new forms and to refine and modify old ones for the expression of new content.

Bien Lumbera's lecture the next day on "Realism in Pilipino Literature" provoked an equally impassioned discussion. Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio, the playwright and a member of the discussion panel, suggested that the Filipino mass audience may not be ready for the realism that Lumbera was advocating, to which he replied that they had been ready for a long time, citing the case of the *bomba* film* as an example.

It was suggested that the Filipino audience had been, in spite of wide-spread belief to the contrary, actually hungry for "realism" all these years as evidenced by the immediate popularity of the *bomba* -- an example which proved to be unfortunate, as Ninotchka Rosca was later to observe, precisely because the *bomba* is essentially escapist in content. Perhaps, she suggested, the revival of peasant songs -- most of them unsentimental and imbued with a realist outlook that does not blink the facts of life

*Soft-core pornographic films which became popular in the late 60's. They are still mainstays of the Filipino film industry.

in the countryside -- would be a better example. She indicated at the same time that the masses themselves participate in the creation of realist forms, since most of the peasant songs have a collective character, having been composed not by one man but by several.

Edith Tiempo took the rostrum the next day to deliver her lecture on poetry, accompanied by mimeographed snatches of the *Haiku* and the *Tanka* and two lines from Ezra Pound. She castigated the presumption of those who would inflict their "vomitings" upon the reader without knowing what poetry should be, and in effect took issue with the idea of committed literature by warning that the writing of poetry should not be an experience similar to going to the bathroom. "There is relief, but only temporarily." In the open forum, Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio asked what was wrong with that and suggested that perhaps that was what the times called for, considering their uncertainty -- "disposable" poetry, as Bien Lumbera had suggested earlier. Dr. Tiempo had alluded to the need to create poetry that would be far from "disposable", poetry that should be able to last because it is founded on "universal values."

Resil Mojares, a prize-winning writer of short stories and assistant professor of literature at the University of San Carlos attended the conference as an observer. He asked if the writer ever really thought of the future, except as an exercise in arrogance: if he did not, in reality, have to be concerned with the things that immediately surround him. He asked if "this looking into the misty future, while at the same time being concerned with the present because that is the source of his material, would not result in a sort of cross-eyed vision?" Well, it was in the nature of human beings, Dr. Tiempo said, this hankering for immortality, for things that would survive the flesh. Amelia Bonifacio suggested that there might not be, in the first place, anyone left later to remember anyone else: there was the Bomb, the problem of pollution and overpopulation, etc., which all threaten to destroy the human race forever. Someone suggested that it might not necessarily be the case that there is a conflict between being concerned with the present and being capable of writing something that would survive it. He did not share the pessimism of Amelia, he said, and was confident that there would be some sort of future. Perhaps, the fact that committed literature is essentially concerned with the struggle for freedom may be the key to resolving the problem. That struggle is a permanent and universal theme; the writer, by writing of the present, the core of which is the human struggle for freedom, may thereby be contributing his insight into the long history of man's struggle for freedom.

It was the lecture of the other half of the Tiempo team, Edilberto, which provoked the outburst earlier mentioned, and which brought the discussion to the issue of the dichotomy that some of the workshop participants assumed existed between relevance and good writing. Ninotchka fumed, but managed to ask, when it was suggested that the committed writer "had no time" to pay attention to his craft, if Maxim Gorky had used the same excuse though he was deeply involved in the Russian Revolution.

Bien Lumbera wondered if the over-concern for craft, which had dominated Philippine literature for a long time, had not served to immobilize the writer, serving in effect to blind him from the perception of

the truths of his time. Dr. Tiempo said it should precisely accomplish the opposite: the full utilization of the techniques available should enable the writer to more fully realize what he would most like his readers to understand. Resil Mojares agreed with Lumbera and said that "craftiness" could prevent the writer from ever really recognizing the nature of his surroundings.

The afternoon sessions were battles in which the panelists had to constantly defend the thesis that both craft and relevance were necessary, if one were to do justice to the other. The panel, indeed, sought to demonstrate in its discussion of individual works that the discussion of formal matters necessarily involved content and vice-versa. This did not, however, prevent some degree of nervousness among some of the participants, a few of whom were soon digging into their Manila-bought supply of tranquilizers.

Particularly interesting, however, were the discussions of the poems in Pilipino, out of which emerged the consensus that the traditional forms of Filipino poetry had first to be mastered before being experimented on. One poem in Pilipino particularly intrigued the panel, for it seemed to be a parody but was not actually one. Bien Lumbera put his finger on the problem: the form had not been adequately mastered, he said, the meter was broken and uneven; the poem itself was laden with clichés. Again, he warned, the old forms must be handled with great care; as means for expressing critico-realist content, many of them could prove inadequate, and worse, could precisely convey the opposite of what the poet intended.

Commissioner Adrian Cristobal* of the Social Security System arrived the day before the last workshop day, at Balili Beach, in the Municipality of Naga, about thirty minutes from Cebu City. He was introduced by Manpower Development Council Director Rony V. Diaz -- who had, one remembered, introduced the name of the Hungarian critic Georg Lukacs to his students at the University. Commissioner Cristobal's lecture was short and to the point, argued eloquently for committed literature, bared the bankruptcy of art for art's sake and the self-proclaimed "apolitical" schools of writing.

On the last day of the workshop, playwright Amelia Bonifacio extended an invitation to the participants to write in the form that was "one of the most social of all, the drama." Paradoxically, though the workshop was prepared for it, there was not a single play submitted for discussion. Amelia noted the demand and the concern for social commitment and relevance, and pointed out that the drama could best fulfill this and in an intense and immediate manner, as indeed the street dramas of the student movement have proven. At least three of the student-participants expressed the same view and vowed to explore the form as a means of expression.

Was there, finally, something that had been gained from this coming together of seventeen young writers, only one of whom (Artemio Tadena of Dumaguete) was not relatively unknown, and a dozen critics and practitioners

*Now a Philippine government bureaucrat, Adrian Cristobal was once an angry young man of Philippine Literature.

of the short story, poetry and the drama? "The workshop," one student remarked, "taught me that I am not yet a writer." Perhaps it also taught the other participants that, by committing themselves to the writing of a literature that would aid the Filipino struggle for freedom, the demands that will be made of them will be many and varied, proceeding from the twin commitment to activism and to writing.

That, of course, would be reason enough for a workshop -- if it succeeds in grappling with precisely those questions that are inevitably arising with the development and growth of a literature that would serve the valid purpose of defining the human dilemma as it is expressed in the Filipino experience in a time of crisis.

(Postscript: It is an ironic comment on the importance of this workshop that upon the declaration of martial law in 1972, nearly half of those mentioned in this article were arrested and detained, or sought by the military.)

LANGUAGE AND LIBERATION

Apolinar B. Parale's The Case for Pilipino (Manila: MCS Enterprises, 1971) is, in the first place, badly edited and horribly proof-read and seems to have been put together with very little regard for the most elementary rules of organization. But its inadequacies do not detract from the validity of its arguments; it is, in fact, an important book, insofar as it is able to illumine for us the viability of Pilipino as a national language.

Parale patiently, exhaustively, and painstakingly hacks through the tangle of arguments advanced by those who oppose Pilipino. If we are as patient as he is, if we are willing to ignore the number of typographical errors which his editor missed, and if we could abandon at least temporarily the temptation to judge the validity of the case for Pilipino on the basis of the quality of his prose (which is, after all, in English -- a language Parale appropriately enough treats with contempt), we shall read his book and be convinced that Pilipino is and must be the national language. And, most important of all, of the imperative to resist its enemies, whom Parale identifies as "alien interests in the Philippines and their Filipino hirelings; the Filipino regionalists and the alienated products of our colonial education; those who deliberately propagate falsehood in order to discredit Pilipino; and even those who honestly mistake their ignorance of Pilipino for the inadequacy of the national language."

Parale confirms what every perceptive teacher or college professor has suspected for a very long time: that the continued use of English as the medium of instruction in Philippine schools has become a barrier to learning, contributing to the decline of standards, to bad teaching and the spread of semi-literacy.

A study conducted by the Research Division of the Bureau of Public Schools is one of the many studies Parale cites to support this thesis. Tests conducted by the Division among grade school children revealed that those taught in Pilipino were more literate than those taught in English. The literacy rate of the former was 74.25 per cent, while it was 65.09 per cent for the latter.

Why this should be so derives from a relatively simple fact: English is still, despite our pretensions to the contrary, a foreign language. What this means in day-to-day terms for the average Filipino student is a constant adjustment and re-adjustment in his mental processes each time he enters the classroom. From the very real world of parents, friends and relatives -- from the world he knows from the time he wakes up, takes a bus to school, meets schoolmates on campus, dates his favorite girl -- he enters, in effect, a world which, because he has to use a foreign language in order to communicate in, abstracts itself from reality. Learning itself becomes alien and esoteric, and school creates among many people the unexpressed assumption that education has little or nothing to do with understanding the realities, whether social or personal, they have to cope with. Those we call "educated" Filipinos are more often than not alienated not only from the rest of the millions of Filipinos who have not had the same "opportunity" to pursue college degrees, but paradoxically, even from the

traditions of the English-speaking world. Like some creature from a twilight world, poorly-equipped to deal with the problems of his society by curricula which are themselves derived from other societies, and unable to communicate with the great majority of his people, the "educated" man in the Philippines is, except in rare circumstances, a terrible misfit who very often ends up as just one more of those eager to make a fast buck and/or migrate to better climes.

In this sense, the language question is, as Parale points out in his first chapters, closely linked indeed to the question of national freedom. The use of English in our schools is no doubt contributory to the creation of a consciousness that recognizes no other responsibility and value except itself, no higher good except self-advancement. It is a consciousness colonial and selfish in the profoundest sense.

As has been repeatedly pointed out, the official policy propagating Pilipino is one of the hopeful developments in the Philippines. In spite of this, however, many continue to oppose Pilipino, often for the flimsiest and most ridiculous reasons.

The alleged inadequacy of Pilipino is a perennial argument. The Institute of National Language (INL), however, has answered this charge before by pointing out that Pilipino has "a potential vocabulary of three million words. Because of the richness of the Pilipino idiom, Pilipino root words can take an average of 100 forms because of their compounding, reduplicating and affixing powers and other peculiarities." In Chapter VI of his book, Parale demonstrates this capacity by deriving 400 words from the single root-word *bato* (meaning stone).

The INL also points out something which the critics of Pilipino seem to have neglected: that a language responds to the demands made upon it. If Pilipino were to be used in the teaching of science, for example, a vocabulary will have to develop, though much of it will have to be adapted from the languages of societies at an advanced stage of development. This is, of course, merely a normal process in the development of language. The Industrial Revolution and the impetus it gave to science forced English and the European languages, hitherto without technical terms in their vocabularies, to borrow from the Greek and Latin, and eventually, even from each other.

The INL therefore has always affirmed that there is no and there can never be a "pure language", which the "Anti-Purists" claim Pilipino is. The leader of the Anti-Purists is Geruncio Lacuesta whose arguments Parale tears to pieces.

Lacuesta's arguments can be summarized as consisting of: (1) his claim that a national language does not yet exist because INL "has not yet made a phonemic survey of the Philippine tongues"; (2) that a language cannot be developed through "legislative fiat"; (3) that language must evolve and cannot be prescribed; (4) that Tagalog, the basis of Pilipino, is distinct and separate from the national language; and (5) that the practice of spelling borrowed words in Pilipino orthography is "bereft of any linguistic reason or justification."

Parale notes that Lacuesta had, on other occasions, claimed that "Filipino (meaning the "language" he has chosen to use which retains the original spelling of borrowed words and uses many foreign words for which there are Pilipino equivalents) is the national language although no phonemic survey has been made of it. Pilipino, Parale points out, "at least enjoyed a linguistic study by an official committee of linguists and scholars which declared the existence of the official orthography and phonetics of the language" while Filipino did not.

Lacuesta's second argument, on the other hand, is no argument at all quite simply because Lacuesta has often argued precisely for the implementation of the law -- the existence of which does not necessarily mean that the development of the national language would be advanced solely through "legislative fiat." Again, Parale points out, languages do not necessarily develop solely on their own, through evolution. It has sometimes been necessary to prescribe some changes that a language can take precisely because some order has to be imposed on its development.

As for Tagalog being distinct from the national language, Parale convincingly points out that it cannot be separated from the language of which it is the base. And Tagalog, Parale also points out, achieved some sort of predominance over the other languages of the Philippines through a normal process: this is the reason why it is the basis of the national language.

The "Anti-Purist" insistence on bodily lifting borrowed foreign words without changing their spelling and pronunciation, Parale points out, just has never happened with other languages. Japanese, for example, has changed the pronunciation and spelling of many English words. For example, *chuin-gamu* for chewing gum, *apetaiza* for appetizer, *hosutesu* for hostess, etc. Bahasa Indonesia has done the same thing: the Indonesian would say *Ingerris* for English, *tilpun* for telephone. Should the Filipino therefore say English in his national language rather than *Ingles*, telephone instead of *telepono*, jeepney instead of *dyipni*?

Parale takes on other critics: former Senator Camilo Osias, who represents that generation of Americanophiles who were most instrumental in the spread of English; Dean Isidoro Panlasigui, who once made the startling claim that English is "a unifying element" in the Philippines, and one J.C. Orendain. This, of course, is not to mention former Congressman Inocencio Ferer, the nemesis of Pilipino, who once advocated the adoption of English as the national language.

The most telling parts of his book, however, have to do with the American effort to subvert Pilipino. Parale mentions a nationwide language survey sponsored by the Ford and Asia Foundations, and the Philippine Center for Language Study undertaken "at great cost and with well-oriented, highly qualified and expensive fieldmen and supervisors." This survey, Parale contends, was undertaken because "Pilipinization of our school instruction would mean the decline of the Filipino appetite for American products and way of life, which account for more than forty per cent of the total bulk of our imports (sic). This would mean the weakening of the American hold on Filipino mentality and consequently, an equivalent rise in the

Filipino appreciation of native values and patronage of local products and industry, and the beginning of the true emancipation of the Philippines from the political, economic and military stranglehold of the United States."

The survey, Parale says, recommended that Pilipino be given prestige, and that one way of achieving this is for it to be used "for the most serious business at the highest levels." But the survey, nevertheless, warns against making Pilipino the language of instruction. What the survey recommended was the continued use of English for this purpose -- how then can Pilipino gain "prestige" in the first place if it is not given the opportunity?

The Philippine Center for Language Study, which Parale states is "American-sponsored", also conducted an experiment in the province of Rizal. This experiment, "according to sources, was one-sided(ly) in favor of English." Among other things, the experiments claimed that teachers of English were carefully screened and prepared while the contrary was true for Pilipino teachers, and that grade school pupils in Rizal were more at home with English than Pilipino. Parale argues, however, that Rizal is only one province in the Philippines and as such cannot be used as a gauge for all the provinces because it is "the major metropolitan area in the Philippines." Again, Parale drags out his statistics to show just how at home the Filipino is in English: in tests conducted by the Bureau of Public Schools in 1964 in the six non-Tagalog regions of Bicol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Pampanga, Ilocano and the Waray, the rate of literacy in Pilipino was considerably higher than in English.

The most important point, of course, about the need for all Filipinos to resist the enemies of Pilipino is the fact that Pilipino is well on the way to becoming a national language in the truest sense of that phrase. And this is indispensable to the imperative of liberating the Filipino mind from the shackles of its colonial past.

THE SMITHY OF EVENTS

My mail following the workshop yielded three copies of *Manunulat: Mga Piling Akdang Pilipino* (Manila, 1970) edited by Efren Abueg, a reminder to all concerned with the literature of this country of the unrecognized efforts of Mr. Abueg. One does not recall in any review any appreciation of Abueg's having succeeded in putting between covers these translations into Pilipino of our literature in English, Iloko, Cebuano and Hiligaynon as well as original stories in Pilipino. This is a pity, since, whatever axe one may have to grind with Abueg, his volume does deserve more than passing mention, for a variety of reasons.

This volume should, for one thing, demolish the off-repeated prejudice against what is disdainfully called "the literature in the dialects," and teach a few lessons to those who dismiss the ferment in these literatures as insignificant -- nay, merely a creation of "nationalist propaganda." The facts speak for themselves here: there is none of the "nguni't Papa" ("But Dad. . .") sentimentalism of traditional literature; there is instead an open-eyed awareness of the Filipino reality, whether that be in the Tagalog-speaking areas, in Cebu, the Ilokos regions, or the Visayas.

There are occasional lapses, and Abueg's choice of such stories as "Hulaw", "Alamat ng Isang Bayani" and "Kamatayan" may be faulted. Since there are thirteen stories in this collection, however, Abueg's having scored in ten of them may be said to be a fairly good batting average.

The greater pity, however, is that few of the younger writers are represented, for the coming into the scene of such writers as Ricardo Lee, Rogelio Ordoñez, Domingo Landicho, Rogelio Sikat, Rogelio Mangahas and others marked the beginning of an exciting stage in the development of Pilipino literature. For a very long time, literature in the "native" language was immobilized and sterile, primarily because of the stylization of language and content that decades of being a second-class literature encouraged. Filipino literature in English therefore reigned because it seemed to develop by leaps and bounds, to a degree of craftsmanship that the other literatures obviously lacked.

The increasing politicization of the intelligentsia, however, inevitably made itself felt in the search for new content, and consequently, the search for new forms. The tradition-bound conventions, the formula stories, were abandoned and the social outlook that involvement taught compelled the breaking of outworn habits of thought and the shattering of the myths that surround Filipino life. The result was the birth of a totally new literature resonant with the language of the streets and the Filipino anguish, written by a generation with a totally new outlook, whose examination of the human dilemma necessarily compelled an examination of the social circumstances that surround it.

Manunulat is a reminder of how it all began, as well as a gauge of the demand for competence that it asked and the awareness that it demanded. Older writers like Dominador Mirasol, represented by his story "Makina", and Edgardo Reyes, represented by "Daang Bakal", who had been writing a

number of years prior to this volume, apparently forged their political sensibility in the smithy of intellectual ferment in Philippine literature over such questions as the role of the writer in the making of a just society, his relationship to other men, and the nature and purpose of literature. This ferment made writers aware of worlds they had yet to explore: for the debate over the above questions involved nearly everyone concerned with writing, thus making them aware of the need to break free from the shackles of tradition. The beginnings of social awareness which one sees in many of the stories in *Manunulat* are a response to the questions raised by the committed writers of the mid- and late-Sixties. Far from being the strait jacket that aesthetes claim it to be, politicization, therefore, is actually a creative process for the Filipino writer, liberating him from the fetters of outmoded outlook and the deadening technicism that characterize the literature of reaction.

In his foreword to the book, Andres Cristobal Cruz speaks of a unity among Filipino writers on the basis of a struggle against certain traditional modes of thought as already a reality. Such a unity is patently absent in the stories in *Manunulat*, but we can see in them the potential realization of a literature that would not only unite Filipino writers on the basis of that cultural need but also on the basis of a common realization of the role of literature in the present stage of Philippine historical development.

What does exist in the present volume that immediately impresses is the existence of a common Filipino reality, whose various aspects the writers deal with. The translation of these stories into Filipino tears down the language barriers that give the illusion of several Philippine literatures. Instead, we discover that there exists a national literature, the discovery of which can be achieved only with the full development of the national language.

The Filipino dilemma is there, for example, in Wilfrido Pa. Virtusio's "*Ang Silindro ni Doy*", where imprisonment is made a little more bearable by a harmonica that the narrator's cell-mate constantly plays. Though it ends on a passive note, Virtusio's story nevertheless suggests the injustice in the situation of Doy, whose only crime was his refusal to surrender his land to those who would seize it, after he had hewn it out of the wilderness.

It is present in Juanito Marcella's "*Taghoy*", a Hiligaynon story where the tenant farmer finds himself being evicted after he has served one family for decades simply because, Reyes implies, officialdom has become such a vast cancer of corruption that there is no longer any place in it for those who would be true to their conscience.

It is there in Domingo Mirasol's "*Makina*", where the machine becomes the symbol of the social apparatus that feeds on the blood and flesh of men, and which spits them out after it has sucked the last ounce of value from them.

It is there, finally, in Domingo G. Varga's "*Sa Aking Mga Kapatid, Requiem*", where the struggle for existence in a society that knows neither honor nor law crushes each life on the anvil of need.

The literature that one finds in *Manunulat* is Filipino -- and the statement applies, though with less vigor, to those stories which one cannot call "social" but which are nevertheless included in this volume.

Abueg apparently was aware of the uneven quality of the collection, primarily because of three stories written more or less in the traditional manner. His introduction apologizes for this, citing as mitigating circumstance his lack of knowledge of the other languages. Perhaps one can add that there was, at the time the volume was put together, still much of the feudal past weighing down on the stories from some of the non-Tagalog regions, thus making it difficult to choose stories which would conform to the "common theme" that Abueg says he tried to use as the basis of his selection.

It cannot be denied, however, that the effort at translation will be of value, as translation will be of value for some years to come, while regional differences and the battle between English and Pilipino remain with us. The differences over language are revealed by this volume to be superficial: those who write in English and those who write in Pilipino, for example, are all Filipino writers, and their nationality is assured by the common realization of their duty towards their society. For in the final analysis, it is not the language that each writer uses that sets him against or with other writers, but his outlook towards the reality that every Filipino must grapple with. The division between writers -- as it is increasingly becoming clear in nearly all the arts in the Philippines as well as in criticism -- is essentially political, resting finally on the question of whether one has committed one's self to the forces that would perpetuate the unjust order of society that corrupts, perverts and brutalizes, or with those forces that seek to create a humane order.

This does not mean, of course, that the question of language does not matter. Abueg is right when he states that the continued use of English as a medium, whatever it may be attempting to communicate, is a form of brainwashing, alienating the writer from his audience, his consciousness from reality: the medium is, insofar as language is concerned, the message. And this is amply demonstrated by the sudden awareness that ought to come to any reader who has only a slight acquaintance with the literatures of the Philippines that literature is indeed capable of re-creating for us the experience of Filipinos whose language we may not speak, but whose experience is still our own.

This realization is vital to the imperative of achieving true national emancipation. And this imperative will only be a reality once national unity is achieved. The Filipino must cease to think of himself as a Cebuano, as an Ilokano or as a Tagalog, but as a Filipino -- and hopefully, that consciousness will come with the continued development of the national language.

We can expect the national language -- Pilipino -- to continue its rapid development, as it is fired and hammered in the smithy of the events that are rapidly taking place in contemporary Philippine society. We can expect, as well, these events to continue forging the consciousness of yet many Filipino writers towards the depiction, the criticism and the condemnation of Philippine social reality. For the hastening of both these

processes, it is certain that the work of translation -- whether from English to Pilipino, from Cebuano, Iloko or Hiligaynon to Pilipino -- would be invaluable. Abueg's pioneering effort, therefore, deserves recognition and ought to encourage others to continue, not only for the sake of Philippine literature but also for the sake of this unhappy land.

THE FILIPINO PREDICAMENT

The novel as maker of revolution is a tradition in the literature of many nations. Emile Zola's Germinal fanned the prairie fire of strikes and riots that raged through post-revolution France in the late nineteenth century; Dostoyevsky's The Possessed, though politically reactionary, heralded the Socialist Revolution in Russia; our own Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, in spite of their vacillations, were instrumental in the creation of those conditions of mind without which the Revolution of 1896 would not have been possible.

The same results could not have been as tellingly accomplished in a shorter form such as the short story. The novel's very length permits an examination of human existence far more thorough, far more ruthless: with it the writer re-creates an era -- and can help bring about a new. The *Noli* and the *Fili* revealed to all who read them a society that Rizal saw as inept, ruthless and corrupt, and therefore only made explicit what many Filipinos hitherto merely suspected and vaguely understood.

Though their intentions were reformist, Rizal's novels helped set into motion that process of understanding that led to Revolution. It might be argued that they were read only by a relatively few, the who had both the leisure and the education, the temperament and the money to spend in reading novels, but their message was nevertheless transmitted to many more Filipinos than had actually read them, via the First Propaganda Movement.

Great novels are, therefore, born out of social crisis -- quite simply because a novel cannot be written out of nothing nor can it be solely concerned with the introverted concerns of the novelist precisely because of its very breadth. (One might bring up James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake of which, however, we might ask: is it, in the first place, a novel at all?) Inevitably, therefore, the Filipino novel in English has always been concerned with the social crisis that throughout Philippine history has always seethed beneath the surface tranquility of events, often exploding into open social conflict and therefore denying the illusion of social peace.

Wilfrido D. Nollado's But for the Lovers (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1970) is the latest in the series of novels written in English by Filipinos that seeks to examine, and to provide a key to the understanding of, the Filipino dilemma. That dilemma, the basic lineaments of which are poverty, illiteracy, disease and brutalization, manifests itself in the thousand and one ways in which the Filipino finds himself limited, curtailed, alienated -- and in that metaphysical maze whose name has been worn into a cliché: the crisis of identity.

Nollado's book, like NVM Gonzalez' The Bamboo Dancers, Stevan Javellana's Without Seeing the Dawn, Bienvenido Santos' The Volcano, etc., is concerned with that crisis, and the question that has haunted generations aware of the tension between brown skin, Castilian tradition and Yankee aspiration: who, what is the Filipino?

Nollado's Filipino is a pair: a girl, Maria Alma, who wanders through the novel like a ghost without roots, without biography, and Molave Amoran,

through whose infinite variety of thievery, scavenging and other picaresque talents both the girl and Amoran's master survive the war (though the latter dies, in the middle of a valiant effort to resist Tira Colombo, in a rain of American bombs during the battle of "Liberation").

The boy's master is a Spaniard, Hidalgo de Anuncio, a defunct harlequin no longer capable of surviving by himself and who lives under the perpetual threat of being bedded down by his landlady, Tira Colombo. All three -- boy, girl and old man -- co-habitate in room thirteen of the run-down boarding house of Mrs. Colombo on Ojos Verdes Street, a house that the Japanese officer Major Shigura, sadist commandant of Fort Santiago, subtle torturer of Filipinos, murderer of babies and undefeated sex champ, feels to be "the scrotum to which all his toxic faculties properly belonged" -- and to which he is irresistibly drawn. For the hour is the Japanese occupation of Manila, and survival the objective of all: except Tira Colombo, whose objective is to lure as many partners into her basement bed as possible, and who sees her boarding house as one huge rotting stud farm: boarders unable to pay the rent could settle accounts with her in the martyrdom of copulation with a mountain of fat.

The girl Maria, trailed constantly by Major Shigura, wanders into Hidalgo de Anuncio's life in the lobby of a theater. De Anuncio takes her to his room, there to meet Molave Amoran, whom de Anuncio had picked up from scavenging in garbage cans and made his Sancho Panza. De Anuncio is that pitiful -- and, among the Spanish in Manila, typical -- throwback: a Don Quixote reliving an irretrievable age of glory, tilting at the implacable windmills of poverty, martial law and his own decay. While he peoples the musty drawing rooms of his past with the ghosts of his memories, hugs Ruben Dario and Cervantes (his favorite poet) to his breast in the squalid room where he later dies in the foetid embrace of Tira Colombo (all-consuming death herself, whose rotting household is the very opposite of the structures her dead husband, Bienvenido Elan, once built), Molave Amoran tests his inexhaustible ingenuity in procuring for himself, de Anuncio and the girl, the means of survival.

Amoran is a descendant of the European picaresque, the lovable scoundrel, but he is also the inexhaustible people with their infinite capacity for suffering, for survival and for endurance. In the end, as the house of Tira Colombo -- that house where all dead hopes reside and from which Amoran and Maria flee -- crumbles, the squire has become the master, and like Aeneas bearing his gods out of the burning city of Troy, escapes from the doomed Colombo household and, with Maria Alma, survives both Japanese Occupation and American "Liberation".

Within this chronicle of survival are other lives, principally those of Captain Jonas Winters, the god out of a P-38, in whose person resides the myth of American invincibility, who, like a travelling circus sideshow, is clandestinely exhibited in several places for Filipino adoration and to keep morale and loyalty up; Lt. Deogracias, the Marxist apostle of Revolution; Vanoye, the tough UST internee, predominantly English, hated by his American co-prisoners and who hates them in return and who sees Maria, when she first looks through the barbed wire of the UST compound, as "emergence" -- the Filipino spirit awakened at last, unspoilt and, four centuries of conquerors' boots notwithstanding, incorruptible (pp. 74-76).

All of them die, as Major Shigura -- who has pursued Maria with some vague understanding of what she is -- dies, suggesting that it is neither in the American Dream nor in Revolution; neither in the sugary and false sympathy of others as alien and as rapacious as the Filipino's conquerors: Spanish, British, American, Japanese. Though she sneers at American conquests of the Philippines, her sneer is the sneer of imperial covetousness: Vanoye, formerly of the British consulate, talks of Maria of vultures, of the eagle in the sky -- a P-38 piloted by an American god -- with sharp talons, waiting to nest on her. But Vanoye too waits. Neither in the nightmare of an oriental hegemony over the Pacific will the Filipino fulfill himself. He will never do so -- he should not expect paradise -- but he will continue; Molave Amoran, with Maria on his back, endures -- the filthy, ugly Molave Amoran whom Maria had chosen, not as lover but as saviour, brother, friend.

Nolledo's celebration of the "Filipino spirit" and of the "Filipino people" invites immediate echoes of Dostoyevsky's The Possessed and its paeans to "the Russian spirit" and the "Russian soul" and its rejection of the liberal and Marxist ideas of its time. Nolledo's novel is governed by the same populist metaphysics, and it is therefore a novel of optimism, of a non-rational faith in "the people." This faith is carefully camouflaged by the gallows humor of his Spanish-Pilipino-English prose, the intricacies of which would perplex a reader without the *Ilustrado* Filipino's credentials.

But For the Lovers, though powerful and sad, complex and yet simple -- and though concerned with the Filipino epiphany -- is, nevertheless, itself an ironic comment on Philippine literature in English. Nolledo's novel is characterized by the bi-lingual dilemma: the Filipino writer in English knows the essential fraudulence of the medium he is compelled by training to use, its incapacity to accurately mirror the nuances of the Filipino reality. He must, therefore, appropriate Filipino.

One can look at Nolledo's novel as a transition towards a development which, in the context of events in the Philippines, seems inevitable: the Filipino novel in *Pilipino*, fashioned according to the demands of the craft of the novel as it has developed in the West. There is, indeed, something symbolic in Nolledo's novel's having been published at this time, when a growing number of Filipino writers have recognized only one solution to their English-created predicament, which is simply to write in Filipino.

For the truth is that English has become a fetter to the development of Filipino literature. Schooled in a language essentially colonial in content and therefore raised in a culture whose main result is a consciousness hostile to the objective examination of reality, the Filipino writers in English have mastered the intricacies of craftsmanship but have not even begun to understand the even more compelling need to master reality.

The novel should therefore warm the heart of the *literateur* in search of complexity and virtuosity, offering as it does a veritable treasure-trove of literary possibilities for exploration: the affinity, for example, between Nolledo's legend of Maria Alma and the native legend of the sleeping woman.

But these are peripheral concerns. Nolledo's work is a step forward in the making of a relevant, living literature, and that merits some celebration.

THE LIGHT OF DEAD STARS

Philippine Short Stories, 1925-1940, contains not one but several introductions. By the time we get to the first story, Paz Marquez Benitez's "Dead Stars," all of 55 pages have been expended on a "Preliminary Note," a "Preface," (to an American edition which never materialized), a "Critical Introduction," and a "Postscript." All are by Professor Leopoldo Yabes, the compiler, holder of a professorial chair in Philippine literature at the University of the Philippines, and long famous as a dogged and voracious collector of Filipiniana.

The peculiar literary cannons of Yabes have been largely unchallenged in the last 40 years, and to challenge those cannons now would be to detract from his objective achievement: his having preserved in a permanent form works which, having originally appeared in popular magazines, would otherwise have been lost to students of that peculiar genre, the Filipino short story in English. Readers, therefore, are urged to ignore Yabes' ventures into critical writing. His achievement in compiling these stories is beyond question -- but his critical statements are only short of disastrous. Read the stories instead.

One of Yabes' fondest sentiments, however -- a sentiment he has voiced elsewhere, in print as well as in speech -- the reader is urged to consider.

"The Filipino short story in English," he concludes in his introduction, "is a definite cultural force in our national life. We will find more proofs of its importance, and of that of its practitioners, in the years to come."

The fate of Philippine Literature in English as a whole -- and, therefore, of the Filipino short story in English -- being pretty much in doubt these days, the optimism of Yabes deserves commendation. It also deserves serious study, however, for the question of that literature's survival and viability is inseparable from the question of what it has been and what it can still be to us insofar as our understanding of that laughable condition known as living is concerned.

The task of the critic in the Philippines, apropos that literature, is to subject it to serious study, to suggest where and how it may be lacking and how it may improve itself. It is not a simple matter of proclaiming the colonial origins of that literature and consigning it to the dustbin of history. It is there, like Mt. Everest, and it has claimed the allegiance and even the passionate commitment of many Filipino writers.

The present anthology -- the stories themselves -- therefore deserves close scrutiny. These were the pacesetters in the Filipino short story in English; it was upon these foundations that later writers tried to build.

The "youthful enthusiasm" of Yabes' judgment in his introduction -- that "the question of language and the question of technique . . . are no longer the Filipino writers' chief problems" -- has suffered with the passage of time. Even "Dead Stars," a story superior for its time and until today justly considered a milestone in the development of the Filipino short story

in English, strains with the burden of having to express itself in English. Only in its latter part -- the last paragraph of which sounds disconcertingly like the last paragraph of James Joyce's "The Dead" -- does the story succeed in achieving a lyricism which sets off even more starkly the clumsiness of its earlier sections.

Language is the least of the problems, on the other hand, of Casiano T. Calalang's "Soft Clay," whose constant shifts in point of view constitute one of its many technical deficiencies. The stilted quality of its language, the awkwardness in phrasing, are best illustrated by one sentence: "The hour was approaching midnight, yet the earth had not given off all the heat in its possession."

The stories in this anthology abound with this kind of clumsiness, a clumsiness which reaches dazzling heights in Jose Garcia Villa's "The Fence." In this story, the American critic Leonard Casper cites the phrase "the matutinal moonlight" as proof of the level of talent Villa displays in his outrageously overrated stories. Like "Untitled Story" and "Footnote to Youth," this story is distinguished by an incredibly inept handling of the short story form, a painful striving for elegance in language, and a sentimentalism not far removed from soap opera.

In the majority of instances, in addition, the "stories" fail to realize themselves as stories: the authors must have recourse to statement and the same striving for language. Loreto Paras' "The Bolo", Paz Latorena's "The Small Key", A.G. Ner's "Life's By-Road", Fernando Leaño's "Coward", Amador T. Daguió's "The Woman Who Looked Out The Window", Cornelio S. Reyes' "Yesterday's Tomorrow", T.M. Locsin's "Veteran of the War" -- these are incidents and not yet short stories.

Three-fourths of these "stories" have a rural setting -- the "local color" Professor Yabes casually drops as characteristic of them, as if by so saying the existence of the stories is automatically justified and their quality established. Many of these stories, indeed, display "local color" in its most pedestrian sense: the countryside here is merely a setting for sentimental love stories -- of which there is an inordinately large number -- or some other excuse for an exercise in semi-profundity. It is backdrop; it is "a moon caught in the branches of trees"; it is "a breeze whispering softly."

There is a disturbing mendacity in this kind of indolent, starry-eyed and juvenile romanticism, a mendacity thankfully lacking in the truly moving stories of Hernando R. Ocampo ("We or They") and Delfin Fresnosa ("Tragedy at Lumba's Bend"), where the countryside is not merely a pretty backdrop for adolescent love and its people picturesque creatures decorating the landscape.

The Ocampo and Fresnosa stories are among the nuggets in this collection, along with Sinai Hamada's "Tanabata's Wife", N.V.M. Gonzalez's "Far Horizons", Arturo B. Rotor's "Zita" and "Convict's Twilight", Manuel E. Arguilla's "Caps and Lower Case", Nick Joaquin's "Three Generations" -- stories with which every student of Philippine literature in English is familiar. That it is these stories which invariably emerge as superior in any anthology --

and that they are so very, very few, indeed -- should by now have shattered one of the most dearly held myths in Philippine literature: that Philippine literature in English is head and shoulders above the literature in the other languages.

If indeed the above stories are superior, they are exceptionally rare in a vast wasteland wherein adolescent striving, intended-to-be-ironic O. Henry endings, particularly infelicitous, affected writing and other abominations abound.

Bad writing is obviously not a monopoly of what is derisively referred to as "vernacular" literature, and to claim that language and technique were no longer, in 1941, the problems of Filipino writers in English is to ignore -- or to fail to recognize -- the obvious.

Language was, and still is, a major problem in Philippine literature in English, and not only in terms of its practitioners' lack of mastery of it. It exists also in terms of its being conceived of as a substitute for technique, in which indirection, subtlety, and irony are surrendered in favor of flights of lyrical prose, and often to conceal the additional and basic failure of sensibility: the inability to understand human motives and emotions, to examine reality in all its complexity, and to thereby create stories reflecting that complexity. What we have in Philippine fiction in English is a failure of understanding, so that in the place of insight is substituted language (or the disastrous and obvious striving for it). Instead of discovery, statements; instead of the shock of recognition, forced conclusions inflicted upon the unsuspecting reader whose judgment is often beclouded by the sheer fact that these works are written in English.

This tendency is, parenthetically, even more pronounced in academic Anglophiles: a work in Pilipino or the other languages is necessarily inferior; one in English is necessarily excellent. In a situation where the use of English is held to be by itself a sign of excellence, it is difficult for critics and writers to have a relationship other than mutual admiration. The "cliquism" of Philippine literature in English is, as a consequence, merely logical in these circumstances, though far from desirable.

The point is that the use of English was and continues to be a disaster for Philippine literature. There is always a compulsion to display mastery in that language -- a self-conscious striving to prove one's capability, for writing in English inevitably becomes some kind of test of one's "excellence." As a result, language has become a major concern in Philippine fiction, when it should not be. It is in this, as well as in other senses, that Philippine literature in English is truly a colonial literature.

It is significant that the best stories in this collection are not self-conscious about language, and instead use it naturally and with the awareness that it is merely a vehicle of expression, not a substitute for insight, for understanding, or for craftsmanship.

The lesson must not be lost on those who insist on writing in English, in addition to the even more pressing imperative to look around, to examine reality as honestly as possible, to constantly assess and understand human experience.

It will not do, as Yabes does, to make glib and easy remarks about Philippine fiction in English, or to seek solace in the extra-literary refuge of its "promoting international understanding" and similar irrelevances. The fundamental thing is that fiction, like all art, should move us, change us, enlighten us -- free us. Great fiction, to paraphrase Peter Weiss, enables us to look at the world with fresh eyes -- and to do this for us, the writer must have turned himself inside out and must himself have seen anew this world, which in the majority of instances most of us are wont to regard with half-closed eyes.

Otherwise, we shall be looking constantly only at "the light of dead stars": at fiction from other times and places, past and distant, because ours has not been as adequate.

B. FOR WHOM ARE WE WRITING -- THE FORCES OF U.S. IMPERIALISM OR
THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION?

By E. San Juan, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing,' 'perceiving,' and 'feeling' (which is not the form of knowing) is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes.

-- L. Althusser, "A Letter on Art"

. . . All too often I cannot listen to music. It works on one's nerves. One would rather babble nonsense, and caress the heads of people who live in a dirty hell and who nevertheless can create such beauty. But today one should not caress anyone's heads -- one's hand would be bitten off. One must beat heads, beat unmercifully -- although ideally we are against all violence.

--V. Lenin, quoted by Gorki, "Recollection of my Contemporaries"

A turbulent storm-center in the Third World today, the semi-feudal and semi-colonial Philippine nation serves for all of us -- for who is not on one side or the other? -- the all-encroaching arena where two diametrically opposed world-outlooks are locked in combat: the ideology of market individualism which rationalizes U.S. business society and its clients, versus the ideology of national democracy, of national liberation struggles in the Third World countries.

We are witnessing the intensifying war between progressive and reactionary classes; between the landlord-comprador-bureaucrat-capitalist camp led by the Marcos clique subsidized by the U.S. ruling elite and the alliance of Filipino peasants, workers, patriotic businessmen, and middle strata -- 99% of 47 million Filipinos. We are witnessing the convulsions of the moribund exploitative system inherited from the past and the birthpangs of the newly emerging national democratic order -- the emancipation and ascendancy of the majority.

Let us reflect at this moment on the rhetoric of our discourse so far: Are we cranking out hackneyed Left slogans and sociological platitudes, as the apologists of imperialist domination habitually charge us? Where is the connection?

THE CONTEXT OF PARTISANSHIP

I reply by first citing one of the numerous documented researches of the Washington-based Center for International Policy: "The Philippines today has more desperately poor people than anytime in its history. While Marcos and his high-living entourage are among the richest elites in Asia, at the bottom the poorest 20 percent gets only 3.9 percent of the national income."* U.S. News and World Report (March 24, 1980) quotes an Asian Development Bank study that "rates Filipinos as the worst fed people in Asia, trailing even the dirt-poor people of Bangladesh." By the end of 1979, 1,500,000 young Filipinos suffered mental retardation due to malnutrition. Eighty percent of the entire population are malnourished.

Since 1972, the cost of living has more than doubled, according to the San Francisco Examiner (February 17, 1980) while inflation soared to 30% this year, aggravating the already severe hunger and privations of the majority of the citizens. With all strikes outlawed and independent union activities proscribed, wages in the Philippines are the lowest throughout Southeast Asia: \$1 - \$1.50 a day, although an average family needs at least \$1.70 a day for only a minimum diet, according to the government.**

To compound this havoc and misery, the brutality of the militarized type of development Marcos is implementing has yielded over 60,000 political prisoners since 1972; at least 200 "salvaged" (kidnapping and killing of suspects after interrogation) persons; over one million refugees in Mindanao, and 75,000 displaced persons in north and central Philippines; 45,000 cases of military abuses; and other gut-wrenching atrocities committed by administrators of official law and order.***

We can go on cataloguing the statistics compiled by the Association of Major Religious Superiors, Amnesty International, International Commission of Jurists, United Nations, and other monitoring humanitarian groups. But this landscape of oppression and torment will perhaps remain a sorry fragment of the totality if we did not answer the question: Who benefits?

*Jim Morrell, "Our Philippine Colony," Commonweal (23 November 1979), reprinted by the Center for International Policy, Washington. Two other Center reports by Jim Morrell which gather a vast amount of recent data are: "The Challenge of the Philippines," Current Issues (March 1980), and "Aid to the Philippines: Who Benefits?" International Policy Report, V, 2 (October 1979).

**See "The Philippines: Human Rights and the Role of the United States," Country Profile Series #1, NARMIC (Philadelphia 1978); Resource Center for Philippine Concerns, Human Rights in the Philippines (Hong Kong, 1980), pp. 84-86, and passim.

***Report of an Amnesty International Mission to the Philippines: 22 November - December 1975 (September 1976); Task Force Detainees, Association of Major Religious Superiors, Philippines, Political Detainees in the Philippines, Books I, II and III (Manila, 1976, 1977, 1978); International Commission of Jurists, The Decline of Democracy in the Philippines (Geneva, Switzerland, 1977).

Of all foreign interests, U.S. transnational corporations control at least 50% of total investment assets, approximately \$4 billion. Research made by the University of the Philippines Law Center (issued in June 1978) found that U.S. investments have earned \$3.58 for every dollar invested, of which two dollars have been repatriated. This confirms other data cited by Alejandro Lichauco in his Imperialism in the Philippines (1973) and Renato Constantino in his The Nationalist Alternative (1979). In 1976-77, U.S. business earned profit rates of at least 15% while the average profit rate in the developed world was 7-1/2%. A secretly circulated study prepared by Filipino businessmen a few months ago, entitled "Some Are Smarter than Others," surveyed how the Marcos family and their cronies have amassed incredible wealth. It concluded that the New Society is the "epitome of all the corruption and graft of pre-martial law days."*

Professor David Wurfel of the University of Windsor observes that in collusion with transnationals and U.S. policymakers, the Marcos dictatorship "is pursuing policies to force open the closed family corporations that dominate the entrepreneurial landscape. . . ."** In contrast to the wealth monopolized by Marcos and his alien patrons, consider how (based on government statistics) 83% of Filipino families earn less than 8,000 pesos a year, and another 12% earn less than 15,000 pesos -- the subsistence minimum. In a speech last May, Senator Jose Diokno, chairperson of the Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines, trenchantly asserted that "we have 95% of our families earning less than the minimum required to lead a decent life. I submit to you that society that fosters a situation like this cannot be called a 'New Society.' It is a decadent society."***

*"New Oligarchs Control RP Economy," The Philippine Times (October 29, 1979), pp. 1-9.

**Quoted in Severina Rivera-Drew, "Update on the Philippines," Friends of the Filipino People (May 1980). See also the important study by Professor Robert Stauffer, "The Political Economy of Refeudalization, Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines," ed. David Rosenberg (Ithaca, 1979), pp. 180-218.

***Jose Diokno, "U.S. Policy and Presence in East Asia: An Insider's View," Friends of the Filipino People Bulletin (Spring 1980).

QUESTIONING ESTABLISHMENT PARADIGMS

At this juncture, the reader might inquire: What have all these data to do with literary-aesthetic issues?

Everything, or nothing. Nothing if we subscribe to the narrow formalist doctrine that style or technique constitutes the essence of what is artistic. Nothing if we adhere to the reigning dogma in the Philippines and elsewhere stipulating that literature (*belles lettres*) occupies a privileged space divorced from politics, economics, and other mundane preoccupations.

Everything if we rejected that fragmented and reductive metaphysical view, and instead conceive literature as an integral cultural expression of human praxis. For it is precisely in re-grounding a particular novel, poem, drama or short story, as the concrete expression of an author whose identity can only be defined as a manifold ensemble of given social relations, can we grasp the intricately mediated structure and meaning of any single image, paradox, or polysemous concatenation of devices traditionally designated "objective correlatives," "concrete universals," etc.

Let me suggest in a rough sketchy way the point of departure for a dialectical approach.* We can begin, for instance, by characterizing Jose Garcia Villa as a modernist writer representing the norms and life predicament of the Filipino rentier class in the Twenties and Thirties (reminiscent of Flaubert, Baudelaire, etc. with their *pour epatér les bourgeoisie* tendency), an intellectual revolting from his class origin through exile and the adoption of subjectivizing modes of introspective withdrawal and other anarchist psycho-dramatizations. Villa then tried to sublimate his class alienation in art-forms belatedly derived from the parallel American movement of the "Lost Generation" (Gertrude Stein, Anderson, Cummings), rejecting the conventional premises of the Genteel Tradition and commercialized art in favor of abstract experiments and expressionist/nihilist devices of estrangement. All these theoretical formulations must of course be grounded and mediated by Villa's peculiar idiom, his modes of stylization, his individualizing linguistic practice. If we thus analyze closely the verbal texture and larger pattern of his poems, and eventually synthesize them with the overarching historical determinations constituting Villa's sensibility and its multi-faceted manifestations, we shall arrive at a scientific (in the Marxist sense) description of his art both as a relatively autonomous creation of a personal life dilemma, and as a functional mode of expression of a specific embattled group.

Through this self-critical method we can also describe the import and efficacy of the writings of New Society functionaries like Juan Tuvera, Kerima Polotan Tuvera, E. Aguilar Cruz, Adrian Cristobal, Alejandrino

*For more systematic expositions of recent Marxist critical theory, consult: Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton, N.J., 1971), pp. 306-416; Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology (London, 1976); Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford, 1977); Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production (London, 1978).

Hufana, Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil, who all consciously or unconsciously serve the interests of monopoly-subsidized authoritarianism, vis à vis the antithetical voices of oppositional writers who have sacrificed their lives for the emancipation of workers and peasants, the genuine producers of society's wealth, such as, Maria Lorena Barros and Emmanuel Lacaba, to name only two of countless heroic spirits.

An initial attempt to explore and prove in a schematic manner the links between New Society ideology and its implications in the cultural sphere can be found in the paper I read recently at a Philippine Studies Conference.* There I had occasion to delineate the conceptual apparatus, the categories and criteria of American New Criticism as illustrated by a certain Leonard Casper whose predictably self-serving opinions are still echoed by a diminishing coterie of admirers, among them Tiempo and Demetillo. While in general the New Criticism and its eclectic variants no longer exercise their once stultifying and terrorist stranglehold on Filipino intellectuals, their assumptions still heavily influence the thinking of New Society technocrats subservient to the cult of profit-impelled Technology and Foreign Investment. I am referring to the functional significance of bourgeois literary theorizing as an instrument of reification, with its mechanisms of displacement and occlusion, in the uneven Philippine milieu of consumer capitalism coalesced with medieval habits, sentiments, and sensibility.

*"Culture and Ideology in the 'New Society,' paper read at the First International Philippine Studies Conference, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 30, 1980. This paper will be included in the Proceedings to be put out by the conference sponsor, the Philippine Studies Committee of the Association of Asian Studies.

FROM PLURAL TO SINGULAR

It would be instructive, especially for comrades in the cultural battlefield, to reformulate our critique of imperialist ideology in the realm of literary theorizing, using as object lesson Casper's recent essay, "A Pluralist View of Filipinism in Literature" in Philippine Studies, 27 (1979), pp. 38-52. An inveterate peddler of chauvinist metaphysics, Casper this time assumes the stance of the speculator of goods in the fabled "marketplace of ideas," appreciating in a seemingly disinterested way the plurality of critical fashions only to castigate "extremists" (a cliché of anti-communist propaganda) like P.B. Daroy, San Juan, and even the old S.P. Lopez for their alleged "irresponsible demagoguery" which makes their position a bad mirror-image of Marcos authoritarianism. One wonders if Daroy and S.P. Lopez are the ones controlling State power, not Marcos. In any case, for Casper, both Marcos and Marxist critics (in jail, dead, or in the underground) are guilty of "reduction." To avoid that Original Sin, Casper advocates the emulation of writers whose concern for others "lodges less in ideologies (text) than in people (texture) -- or, more accurately, in persons differentiated without divisiveness." "Differentiated without divisiveness" -- this may be considered the apt formula for the politics of the parasitic elite who can indeed differentiate themselves from the workers but are mightily scared of them if the toiling masses begin to demarcate themselves from the property owners. This privileged few wants to hide the very unequal division of labor, the inequitable appropriation of wealth (surplus value), in order to maintain their domination. It is axiomatic that state power of the elite is sustained not just by guns but also by control of minds, by ideology.

It becomes clear then that the canon of writing Casper dogmatically elevates as the model -- the Establishment pantheon of Nick Joaquin, N.V.M. Gonzalez, F. Sionil Jose, Edilberto Tiempo, etc. -- seeks to abolish by an obscurantist sleight-of-hand (analogous to the GNP figures the Marcos bureaucrats invoke to explain away the reality of hunger and massacres), the ferocious ongoing class exploitation inflicted by landlords, capitalists, military, foreigners on the people. After all, aren't those executioners human too: Thus Casper strives to legitimize an iniquitous and conflict-ridden status quo by endorsing writers who describe the ruthlessly oppressed -- women, children, etc. -- by exposing "not their victimization but the dignity of their durability that emerges." Echoes of Faulkner?

Yes, indeed, the poor and victims we shall have with us always in their durability, Casper muses as he approves of writers (like Andres Cristobal Cruz) who not only ignore or deny the objectively intensifying class antagonisms due to the exacerbation of imperialist profitmaking, and the resistance of the masses, but who also try to conceal them by portraying the exploiter as equal or no different from the exploited. Do we not behold here, for the nth time, a banal reflex, that is, the miraculous levelling of classes by utopian wish-fulfillment at the expense of the oppressed, duping the victims with illusions and falsifications as to the cause of their oppression? Note the revealing passage which completely demystifies Casper's "pluralistic view" and unmask its essentially reactionary motivation: "Not the raising of class consciousness so much

as the crossing of class lines in an appeal to the conscience of the wealthy and powerful recreates, within urban structures, patterns of patronage once dominant in the rural areas" (p. 44). With their *noblesse oblige*, Casper speculates, plantation owners are able to compensate their inequities to their tenants. To resolve the complex problems of malnutrition, hunger, repression to which I alluded earlier, Filipinos should (Casper recommends) depend on a "basic Christian/Filipino postulate: from those who have more, more is expected."

THE CRITIC AS APOLOGIST FOR THE STATUS QUO

I need only quote two more passages to make patent Casper's self-indictment as a cynical defender of the privileged and barbaric elite whose gesture of charity/philanthropy is, it should be public knowledge by now, an insidiously deceptive trick that we should distinguish from the sentimental naiveté of the philistine "do-gooder" or the mimicry of a pious hypocrite deluded by the cheap notion of the "Profiteer with a Golden Heart."

It is obvious how Casper harbors an all-consuming hatred of the unlettered masses side by side with an impassioned glorification of old and new oligarchs, evidenced by such statements as: "writers of the caliber of Gilda Cordero-Fernando, Gregorio Brillantes, F. Sionil Jose have in fact gone beyond mere description of the middle and upper classes, to requiring them to account for their stewardship, their obligation to God and man" (p. 50). Moreover: "It is not class-consciousness that Cordero-Fernando provides -- that might merely provoke more hostility and frustration [which Casper fears most] -- but social consciousness, awareness of the shared condition, the reliance of person on person, across class lines, for the strength required for resilience and renewal. The only hope lies in love."

To be sure, Casper's brand of "holier-than-thou" preaching does not envisage love coming from bloodless phantoms but from the moneyed few (one percent of the population) because literature written in English is most likely to be bought and read by the rich, and consequently, "The implication of that likelihood is that writers in English, by appealing to the conscience of well-off readers rather than to class-consciousness, nourish a faith that division and conflict are not inevitable; that those who sometimes have abused their authority by excess or negligence, can still be appealed to and turned around, without resort to barricades and assassinations." Here in its most blatant form then, bourgeois idealism with its concomitant pettybourgeois fear of radical change (because, for this class, ideas and attitudes ultimately cause historical change, not the action of the masses) apologizes for the existing reality of fascist violence and the truth of neocolonial exploitation.

Even the most superficial inspection of Casper's text (not a unique specimen but typical and representative of bourgeois literary theorizing) will show that on the basis of an openly prejudiced ignorance and outright dismissal of Marxist concepts of class and class consciousness, Casper propagates the problematic doctrine of Christian "conscience" so dear to fascist sympathizers like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, etc. He fantasizes that Philippine literature in English, whose exponents are mostly self-centered opportunists alienated from, and profoundly contemptuous of, the masses below them, "conceives of a diversity without divisiveness." This key idea, a central theme in Nick Joaquin's fiction, is at best a form of daydreaming that reflects more the actual behavior of the class to which Casper belongs or identifies with, than the truth of Philippine literary theory and the conduct of its practitioners.

A phenomenal homology may be detected between literary theorizing and actual political-diplomatic practice. Just as the Carter administration

deploys the tactical weapon of "human rights" to obviate if not neutralize criticism of its callous support of Third World dictatorships (witness Carter's military aid increase of 138% for this year, from \$31 million to \$76 million), Casper and others of his persuasion perform a tactical retreat from the orthodox position of New Critical formalism. In fact he seeks to differentiate (but not "divide", to use his jargon) himself from Villa's aesthetic cult, lumping together the "egotists" (Villa) with the "didacts" (his pejorative term for Marxists) so as to glamorize himself as the magnanimous and sophisticated pluralist. His pluralism, however, turns out to be a bankrupt specimen of corporate utilitarianism -- bankrupt because it refuses to question its own foundation, hence monopoly crisis, imperialist war, total degeneration. It is a simplistic quantitative assortment of variants of idealism, reflecting the bourgeois notion of society as a mere aggregate of atomized individuals with supposedly equal exchange value as exemplified by the freedom to sell one's labor power, to extract profit, and so on. There is no doubt that underneath the pluralist facade of empathy for "Filipinism" hides a rigid casuistry that feels no scruples in lifting out of context and so distorting a statement from S.P. Lopez's 1978 lecture against Marcos' press censorship and repression of writers. Unable to accept didactic or allegorical genres as equally valid as mimetic or representational modes, Casper's phoney pluralism even on the mere question of form alone, not to speak of value-systems, exposes itself as the most hidebound dogmatism of a diehard Cold Warrior fanatic masquerading as a post-Vietnam era liberal.

THE TREASON OF THE CLERKS

Since I am analyzing a complex dynamic whole in which the multi-leveled contradictions of antagonistic world-views are temporarily unified, a stasis possible only as a moment in the continuous process of unfolding the presuppositions of critical judgments like Casper's, it might be useful to note that with the bankruptcy of corporate liberalism and its fetishism of circumstance and empirical detail, critics of Casper's school have been forced to make begrudging and qualified concessions to the primacy of art's cognitive value and the necessity of interpreting texts as symbolic acts that both directly render and indirectly subvert normal appearances. This concession is, I propose, what the national-democratic cultural workers have won in the battlefield of the 1970 First Quarter Storm and during the underground since 1972: to rewrite texts as mediating action, demonstrating in the process the ideological (defined by Althusser as "a 'representation' of the Imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence") function of all cultural expressions. This is the delayed impact, the decisive rupture and reversal, that PAKSA (Literature for the Masses) and other mass, united front organizations, and critics like Bienvenido Lumbera, Nicanor Tiongson, Dolores Feria and others, have achieved in the interval between the Anti-Summit demonstration of 1966 and the crisis of 1972.

Given the fundamental insight of the activist theoreticians in foregrounding the dialectical primacy of content defined in one aspect as the "causal nexus" in the socio-historical process, and the cognitive function of art as a contradictory, overdetermined unity of essence and appearance, it seems a drastically sudden regression to encounter Edilberto K. Tiempo's "The Role of the Arts and Literature in Society" (Asia and Pacific Quarterly, Spring 1980, pp. 12-19) and his crude recapitulation of devalued New Critical clichés.

In that article, Tiempo posits as his governing premise Henry James's tenet that "questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution." Misinterpreting James (as well as Longinus), Tiempo then categorically asserts that the Mona Lisa, just like Sophoclean tragedy, "have little or nothing ultimately to do with political or social problems," by which he means that they are not equivalent to didactic or pedagogical tracts -- a view that only vulgar or mechanical materialists (not Marxists by any means) can take exception with.

Another critic who shares with Tiempo a reified consciousness produced by the capitalist transformation of labor-power (the practical-sensuous creativity of the human species) into commodity or cash, and of all human interaction as market-exchange transactions, is Ricaredo Demetillo.* Cherishing a metaphysical view of the world like Casper, Joaquin and other, Demetillo compartmentalizes life and hypostasizes the dynamic movement of social experience. Politics and economics are reduced by Demetillo to the

*See Demetillo's contribution to the "New Society" volume Sinaglahi, ed. M.L. Santaromana (Manila, 1975), pp. 59-67; and also his pitiful polemics, "Kill the Father(s) to Go to Bed with Mao, or Eqifanio San Juan, Jr. as Critic," Solidarity, VIII, 7 (January 1974), pp. 67-76.

crassest Darwinian cannibalism. The "compadre" politics in Silliman University and the University of the Philippines, of which Demetillo is a product, projects itself in reverse by the gesture of universalizing art and the artist's vocation as transcendent and superior to all other human activities. This is a familiar symptom of the alienated intellectual's malady in the decline of consumer capitalism.

To displace the threat that he might be accused of narrow formalism, Demetillo resorts to what I have called a tactical shifting of gears: he maneuvers to elevate a universal human condition as the subject-matter par excellence of all the great writers, from Homer and Shakespeare to Joaquin. But this is futile. Demetillo could not help but disclose his counter-revolutionary intent when he accuses proletarian critics as "shrill, extremist, oversimplified, beauty sacrificed to expediency" -- nervous echo of The God That Failed and J. Edgar Hoover?

It must also be pointed out that although Demetillo enumerates about fifty or so model writers, his canon does not allow a single Marxist writer or critic to creep in, nor can he tolerate mentioning even one progressive or radical writer in any of the several Philippine languages. Even as Demetillo in his September 1974 professorial lecture calls for criticism, as one of its tasks, "to invigorate and improve the climate where both creators of fiction, drama, poetry and the critics can work,"* reality has already demolished his thoughts by a devastating irony: the imprisonment of his colleagues in the University of the Philippines (Feria, Daroy, Teodoro and others), of hundreds of writers and critics. Even now, as Demetillo persists in belaboring moldy doctrines from Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren, military agents and spies police the "sacred halls of learning." His professor's salary is sharply deflated by IMF/World Bank policies imposed by Marcos. Absolute censorship and prohibition of dissent prevails. Criticism of the administration is penalized; revolutionary writers are stigmatized, killed, or languish in the stockades of a regime which allows critics like Casper, Demetillo and their ilk to propagate their unmitigatedly callous and cynical elitism, with the stark obscenity of fascist violence mocking all their pontifications about pluralism, freedom and personal vision, and so forth.

*"Dimensions and Responsibilities of Literary Criticism," The Literary Apprentice (November 1974), pp. 57-67. The now classic restatement of the national democratic position before martial law is by former political detainee Edgar B. Maranan, "The Silliman Confrontation: A Postscript," Graphic (August 30, 1972), pp. 34-35.

WHO IS NICK JOAQUIN?

To demonstrate how the class theoretical positions embedded in the criticism I have commented on reproduce themselves in the way the narrative apparatus is shaped by ideological schemata, let us examine three of Nick Joaquin's short stories.*

National artist of the martial law dispensation, Joaquin has been widely acclaimed as a master-technician of English prose -- of a specific rhetorical genre, the quasi-historical romance. In this type of discourse, Joaquin's idiosyncratic gesture, the repertoire of his signifying practice and its limitations can be described as an attempt to recover the integrity of the modern psyche, a putative self extrapolated from a sense of Christian beliefs involving free will, passion and death. Like Graham Greene and other religious writers, Joaquin's anti-bourgeois stance wrestles with, and criticizes, the symptoms and effects -- depersonalization, privatizing egotism, etc. -- not the systemic or structural source.

"May Day Eve": Eros and Aristocracy

Consider "May Day Eve." Here Joaquin grapples with the problematic capacity of humans to grasp in a totalizing knowledge continuities and discontinuities in experience, the ephemeral and permanent, what is novel and what is recurrent. In other words, how can humans act morally if they cannot know fully, if the whole truth is inaccessible or forbidden?

Joaquin conceives the ritual celebration of May Day eve as the nodal point or crux, the Wordsworthian "spot of time" which transfixes the process of living in and through time, endowing this illusory web with a self-redeeming pathos. Collapsing three phases of experience -- Agueda's childhood (1847) where Anastasia and the cathected mirror provides access to the future; Doña Agueda as mother interrogated by her daughter, expressing her failure to distinguish between the corporeal embellishment of the devil and the truth of the father's patriarchal tyranny (circa 1870) and finally, Don Badoy's exchange with his grandson (1890) as he confesses the truth of his perception of the unity between temporal appearance and its immutable matrix, Joaquin stages his characters as victims of youthful self-deception and a willing surrender to the seductive, falsifying texture of the phenomenal world -- the surface reflected by the mirror. But because the protagonists resort to a subjectivizing and psychologizing diagnosis, the escape through inwardness typical not just of Joaquin but of the entire modernist aesthetics, they are unable to grasp the profound essence of personality as a total ensemble of social relations -- our previous definition. This tendency is exacerbated by Joaquin's conception of the unrelentingly destructive conflict of the sexes accompanied by the explosion of the coherent psyche, its disintegration by the nihilating incursions of desire.

*All quotations from Nick Joaquin's stories are from his volume Tropical Gothic (Queensland, 1972).

What Joaquin in effect conveys through his skillfully spliced montage of scenes is the idea that we cannot really and fully understand one another because the ambiguous violence of passion and the limitations of knowledge locks us into a past (usually identified with youthful love or obsession) where all hope, innocence, spontaneous joy and vital beauty reside and are forever frozen.

The symbolic cluster for that idea may be located in the fates of Agueda and Don Badoy. Although married, both are disjoined by that social system which takes the objective laws of nature as predetermining (the body ages and dies), laws which can only be modified or transcended by the spirit. Joaquin describes the irreversible transformation of Agueda's life in a visionary turning-point: from that moment when, in 1847, she saw how "a bright mask with two holes gaping in it -- bloomed into her living face," to that instance when, queried by her daughter, she saw her face, "an old face -- a hard, bitter, vengeful face, framed in greying hair, and so sadly altered, so sadly different from that other face like a white mask, that fresh young face like a pure mask that she had brought before his mirror one wild May Day midnight years and years ago...." Doña Agueda remembers the miraculous passage from impersonal mask to animate flesh, only to recover the inexorable discrepancy between past and present.

In contrast, sixty-year old Don Badoy, returning from a meeting of revolutionary conspirators in the 1980s, has ceased caring to remember -- the original sin. He is romantically fascinated by the speeches, "his patriotic heart still exultant...." The wife's death, her absence, has engendered a healing amnesia. But the sight of the mirror (suggesting the falsity of a static apprehension of life) forces him to remember; and in this fatal moment the reflection of his body, as it were, revives memory and eclipses the present, the momentary but false visage of time, by the flood of the past with its submerged happiness. His grandson's question, a synoptic condensation of matriarchal voices, quickly induces an epiphanic jolt, a vision of death and the passage of time as liberating in its finality, in its absolute presentation of life as discrete fragments that can only be re-integrated by sudden, impulsive, fortuitous acts of the private imagination. Paroxysms of grief succeeded by shame and bitterness -- desire entangled in the short-circuiting of consciousness -- paralyze Don Badoy and enables the return of the repressed:

Don Badoy started. For a moment he had forgotten that she was dead, that she had perished -- the poor Agueda; that they were at peace at last, the two of them, and her tired body at rest; her broken body set free at last from the brutal pranks of the earth -- from the trap of a May night; from the snare of summer; from the terrible silver nets of the moon. She had been a mere heap of white hair and bones in the end: a whimpering withered consumptive, lashing out with her cruel tongue; her eyes like live coals; her face like ashes... Now, nothing! -- nothing save a name on a stone; save a stone in a graveyard -- nothing! Nothing at all! was left of the young girl who had flamed so vividly in a mirror one wild May Day midnight, long, long ago. (pp. 107-108).

What redeems Don Badoy's life is not the commitment to popular,

anti-colonial revolution but the realization of his youthful desire and its object, less a particular female body than a culture and a milieu: the cathexis of the Hispanized Manila aristocracy of the 1840s. That is Joaquin's real hero.

We find then, given this example, a habitual and insistent will-to-closure that can be verified in Joaquin's writings. This feature signifies not so much the affirmation of a particular ego in command of the situation as of a primordial, collective subject whose coherence cannot be detached from a society centered on Christian faith and the Spanish Empire. For it is curiously striking to observe how Joaquin's characters when they pursue merely private or secular interests suffer eventual disintegration, only to be interpellated and reconstituted as subjects by the ideology of what one may tentatively call late 19th-century folk Catholicism (a manneristic blend of mysticism and obsession with the flesh) invested in, and validated by, a feudal hierarchic ethos.

Thus the closure in "May Day Eve," as well as in "Guardia de Honor" and other stories by Joaquin may be deemed a symptom of the need to prematurely salvage the aristocratic ego torn by intense class turmoil. While "May Day Eve" outlines a metaphysics of passion (passion filtered by the grid of memory approximates Casper's formula of "conscience") where desire of the infinite, as the Self narcissistically replicates itself in the Other, emasculates, "The Summer Solstice" resolves the heroine's quest for self-definition by permitting her momentary triumph in the end, this victory itself ironically cancelled by the process of her being converted into a fetish.

"THE SUMMER SOLSTICE": ADUMBRATIONS OF MARTIAL LAW?

For the first time, Joaquin seems to grapple with the imperative of a collective solution to the Woman Question: Don Paeng is almost lynched by female celebrants when, pursuing his wife, he traps himself in the womb of the chapel at the climax of the Tadtarin procession. The final scene confronts us with Doña Lupeng asserting her right to "self-determination" with sadistic, if somewhat, theatrical bravura. Accused by her husband as behaving "like a lewd woman," she retorts: "How I behaved tonight is what I am. If you call that lewd, then I was always a lewd woman and a whipping will not change me -- though you whipped me till I died." She is able to defy male authority, in this juncture, because first she has experienced the singularly exalting and self-dissolving rite of the Tadtarin cult which, for Joaquin, performs the function of re-integrating the mutilated female psyche; and second, Don Paeng has been chastised and even chastened by the terror he went through in thwarting the savage horde of women: "Her eyes were upon him and the shameful fear that had unmanned him in the dark chapel possessed him again."

Joaquin seems to attack the formidable apparatus of male supremacy associated here with the Age of Victoria, Darwin and evolution, by the strategy of counterposing the Romantic creed of Napoleon and Revolution personified by the young Guido. This is the surface binary opposition he plays with. However, in reality it is not romanticism that symbolically castrates Don Paeng; it is the resurgence of an archaic layer of consciousness, a primitivism partly syncretized in Catholic practice but left still free to exercise its spell on both male and female subjects. But this valorizing of the irrational serves in turn to evoke the desideratum of Order and Authority, as we shall see.

Amid the Tadtarin festival, Doña Lupeng begins to question the subordination of her sex: "Women had built it up: this poise of the male." Later she exposes Don Paeng's protestation of love and respect as a self-indulgent performance: the Other's subservience accords integrity to the Self that dominates. Underneath Don Paeng's authority, Joaquin senses a welter of violent sensations and impulses demanding fulfillment and release in the worship of the female body and what it stands for: Order, Tradition, Discipline. Hence Don Paeng's crawling to kiss his wife's feet is not meant to indicate the wife's liberation, to be sure, since this terminal image functions as the imprimatur in the reader's consciousness of the social system (semi-colonial, semi-feudal) as a juxtaposition of oppressor/oppressed.

We can now posit the conclusion that if Joaquin, in "May Day Eve," has successfully deflected in our consciousness the anxieties of adolescence over an unpredictable future and the prospect of impending old age and death by the impact of a seemingly endless because recurrent May Day saturnalia, a context in which revolutionary conspiracy occurs only as one episode in the long sequence of mundane affairs -- "the heart grows old....the memory perishes..." -- that is because the rhythm of inwardness where moral crisis is resolved coincides with the cycle of religious festivals. This is Joaquin's imaginary resolution of real life problems.

In "The Summer Solstice," a permutation of that narrative apparatus this time concentrates on one time-space interval -- the "pastoral countryside that was the arrabal of Paco in the 1850s," fixing for us the space of Joaquin's libidinal concern. But this time a reversal of position is staged. For, analogous to May Day Eve, the Tadtarin cult (Nature in its cyclic or seasonal transcendence) functions as one term of a binary opposition, to which is counterposed the mode of social production based on private property which implicitly sanctions patriarchal domination.

Rejecting historical complexity and complication, Joaquin invokes an archetypal stratum of consciousness prior to Biblical legend, the worship of a pre-Sumerian Earth Goddess which survived in the Eleusinian mysteries, the medieval Madonna cult and its counterpart, St. John the Baptist, to whose spell everyone -- whether the servant Entoy and his wife Amada, or the *ilustrado* couple -- is vulnerable. But the missing third term necessary to mediate the polarities, namely the dimension of history as incarnated in work or social production, never appears in its own right in Joaquin's linguistic practice.

To read Joaquin, to plunge into the disturbed but stabilizing maelstrom of Joaquin's consciousness, is to be immersed in a reified world not of commodities so much as of May Eve superstitions, the mystique of Europe/Spain undergoing the upheaval of a bourgeois revolution, carnival perversities and provocations, human creativity immobilized in conspicuous luxury, the latter suggested by the "big antique mirror with a gold frame carved into leaves and flowers and mysterious curlicues." We are lodged in a labyrinthine but circumscribing text inscribed with a code that can be deciphered only by memory or by the Church. It is a text marked by foreshadowed and anticipated repetitions signaled by this paradigmatic beginning: "The Moretas were spending St. John's Day with the children's grandfather, whose feast day it was."

In "May Day Eve," the Tadtarin cult dominates the scene, occluding the tension of class conflict and reducing it to the ambivalent mystery of sexual laceration. For the occasion of the summer solstice feast, male domination is suspended and momentarily punished by coaxing out its masochistic or self-destructive drive. But on the whole, idealism permeates the narrative method, as Don Paeng's utterance points out with anticipatory force: "A gentleman loves and respects Woman. The cads and lunatics -- they adore the women." And while this father-husband figure prostrates himself and grovels animal-like before his wife, the last two paragraphs of the story have annihilated Doña Lupeng's social role as wife/mother and transposed her melodramatically into an agonizing and anonymous priestess through whom the vicissitude of a dying and self-renewing cosmic Nature is pursued and charted.

But the Tadtarin festival, to be sure, occurs only once a year just like May Day Eve, affording periodic release for tensions of repressed needs that could otherwise shatter the equilibrium, the precarious balance, of the polarized social structure. But what underlies Doña Lupeng's revolt? Is it simply a wild upsurge of self-assertion contaminated by mass hysteria which instantly overleaps class boundaries? We suspect that that is indeed how Joaquin presents Doña Lupeng's challenge to male supremacy and the tradition (St. John, grandfather, Pope) it sanctions.

But beyond the ritual manifestations, like an invisible and immanent law of nature whose absence becomes more urgently felt in its overdetermined effects, we apprehend the operations of a system of class relations which categorizes the female as household keeper, childbearer and sex-object, and which predestines her to a position below that of St. John, Lord of Summer and Light and Heat. And it is precisely this law of class hierarchy based on historically-determinate material conditions, absent but everywhere present, which Joaquin's fiction unfolds for us to see in spite of his prudential moralizing over aristocratic excesses which are in the final reckoning deemed not intrinsic to the system as such, for they are the eternal givens of the Human Condition.

"GUARDIA DE HONOR": INDIVIDUAL CAPRICE AND SOCIAL PREDESTINATION

When we come finally to scrutinize "Guardia de Honor," our argument becomes confirmed in its fundamental proposition that the controlling insight or principle underlying Joaquin's artifices is the world-outlook of idealism where a permanent human nature (whose corollary is an unchanging ego or subject defined by institutional faith) subsists behind the bewildering flux of phenomena. From this perspective, historical progression seen as the dialectic of contradictions between classes becomes simply an illusion. If there are changes on the surface, the essence, however remains the same, pivoting around categories of the Fall, Redemption through Grace, etc. energizing the logic of the narrative.

Against the thematic background and formal pretext of the annual October feast celebrating the Virgin's rescue of the city of Manila from foreign invaders, Joaquin articulates the Christian concept of free will, the freedom to sin or not. This is the central category here around which all elements gravitate. Josie, the errant daughter who sells her mother's psychologically invested earring and flees to Hong Kong with her lover, embodies the dilemma of choice, which in turn is contained and resolved in the mother's advice:

...What makes the life of a Christian so hard...is that he must choose at every step, he must choose, choose, choose, at every moment; for good and evil have such confusing faces -- evil may look good, good may look evil -- until even the most sincere Christian may be deceived -- unless he chooses. But that is one of his greatest glories too -- that he chooses, and knows he can choose. (p. 138)

On second thought, we ask: Why has Josie (or the post-World War II generation) lost faith in quasi-tribal ceremony and succumbed to money-centered hedonism? The act of choosing problematized by the story, when stripped of its mystifying aura, becomes a ruse to hide a universe of absolute determinism where even chance or accident can be attributed to the humanly incomprehensible fiat of God, the "cunning hunter."

For example, when Natalia Godoy chooses in spite of her premonition of disaster to ride with Mario instead of Esteban, it is a choice determined by her "kindness" and innate "stubbornness" which are in turn dictated by Joaquin's characterological formula and reinforced by social custom and rank. The miracle that brought together Natalia and Andong (who ascribes his presence at the accident to "a lover's premonition") illustrates the working of a hidden Plot or Scheme also realizable through the qualities of character. Ultimately, in spite of her foresight rendered in the prefiguration of the future as the superimposed presence of Josie, Natalia's pride, reduplicated by Josie's, insists itself against the lover Mario's impetuous jealousy. Thus Providence works it subterfuge through impulse and caprice.

Living in a society with strictly defined and fixed property relations, Natalia Godoy could make herself believe in the capacity of people to shape or affect their destiny. This belief reflects the security of

the family/clan based on possessions, their control of servants, appropriation of surplus value, etc. But in the period between the wars, between the 1929 collapse of monopoly capitalism and the outbreak of inter-imperialist rivalry, the *ilustrado* class felt the terrible impact of the market crash like a literal apocalypse, with their children believing more in the "price tag" of the mother's emerald than in its sacramental virtue. Exchange-value seems to completely supersede use-value, since this use-value paradoxically becomes itself fetishized by substituting for, or displacing, the complex misunderstandings and cross-purposes of human intentions and designs. This transvaluation process is made explicit in the exchange between Josie and Natalia. Josie begins:

"...But when was life ever a question of one's wanting or not wanting? Life is just one pressure after another. Whatever one does one was always bound to do, like it or not."

"Oh, nonsense. One can always stop, or do something else."

"If I did something else, it would still be Josie. If I stopped, Josie would still go on. What is impossible is not to be Josie."

"Well, is Josie not good enough?"

"Oh, poor Josie is not good at all, Natalia -- and what happens to her should not happen to a dog!"

"Happen, happen, always happen! Why let things just happen?"

"What else can you do?"

"You could make them happen?"

(pp. 129-130)

Throughout the story, the moral gravity of the predicament centers on Josie who, given the privilege of shifting herself into the past and then intuiting the future, breaks the circle of tradition at the expense of herself being reduced into, and treated as, a pawn (duplicated by the earring she sells), a will-less object driven less by her sexual attachment than by ghosts of the past invoked by her mother's voice.

But the story does not end with Josie's flight, a denouement which would sanction Joaquin's negative judgment on the unscrupulous profit-oriented individualism of the "middle class," the degenerated *ilustrado* that Joaquin glorifies in his recent article "History as Culture" (The Manila Review, 1977) at the expense of the Filipino workers, peasants, middle strata. The story ends with Natalia Ferrero (married to the readily available surrogate which preserves custom and traditional authority) announcing that her daughter would even without consulting her sustain the tradition of being *guardia de honor* wearing one earring in the Naval procession. Andong Ferrero in the end authorizes a vision of a stable society institutionalized in church-sponsored rituals, submerging the furies of repression and patriarchal tyranny which have helped precipitate the dissolution of the extended family in bourgeois society:

And yes! she should wear that earring as a trophy, as a trophy of battle -- thought Andong Ferrero, seeing in the tranced figure bowed before him -- heavy with the past, heavy with the future -- a Guard of Honor indeed, a warrior scarred but unconquered --

for the Fates had won nothing from her save an earring. Tonight she would walk hieratic among hieratic women -- women equally scarred and equally jewelled: priestesses bearing the tribe's talisman, the clan's hearthfire. (p. 141)

The apostrophe properly crystallizes Casper's concept of "tayo," we who possess and rule based on inheritance and acceptance of class hierarchy for the sake of a spurious unity, a mystical bond whose legitimacy is enshrined in the Power of State and Church.

WHOSE INTEREST DOES JOAQUIN'S FICTION SERVE?

In sum, Joaquin's art can be provisionally characterized as a subtly crafted mode of representation which vigorously projects the need of the individual, dehumanized by the commodifying process of a society where life is nothing but the perpetual exchange of tokens or counters, to regress to a primordial origin, a past where thoughts and feelings are transparent because they spontaneously participate in the organic activities of the whole community. This mode is in one aspect anti-capitalist in looking backward, or vertically, to a mythical community where class divisions are muted if not absent, a tribal stage of social development.

But in the same breath it condemns itself to the reification of human relations in the formalism of ritual which hides or justifies the secular exploitative role of the institutional Church as well as the corporate State. It is also reactionary in its intransigent perception of the future as hopeless unless it recuperates the founding or inaugural moment of redemption by Christ's incarnation. By and large this spells the world-view of obsolete classes: the landlords, compradors, bureaucrat-capitalists at present headed by the Marcos clique, and the corresponding hierarchical institutions of Church and State (including the army).

AFFIRMING THE NEGATIVE

Today this world-view and its articulation in various art-forms is being challenged by the global vision of the insurgent classes, mainly the Filipino workers and peasants, which counterposes the nascent promise of a higher, advanced stage in the development of the collective human potential: national democracy as a transitional stage to socialism.

Of all the writers whose dialectical style and critical mode of thought succeeded in articulating that forward-looking vision, Amado V. Hernandez may be taken as one exemplar. From the massive corpus of his writings, I take one example for the purpose of this essay: "*Nasaan ang Medalya?*" ("Where is the Medal?" included in *Panata sa Kalayaan ni Ka Amado*, Manila, 1970).

Narrated by his twenty-one year old nephew (an observer as well as participant) who has survived the perils of the Japanese Occupation, the odyssey of Tata Amin -- his forced migration to the U.S., the ordeals in the Hawaii plantations, the educational pilgrimage to the Alaskan salmon canneries, his love for a white American woman which leads to violent confrontation with racist and chauvinist forces, his imprisonment, his return and execution by the Japanese -- might be interpreted as mere biographical chronology, the pedestrian unwinding of clocktime, framed by the evolving awareness of the young narrator.

However, it is not, as in Joaquin, history (*chronos*) undergoing the mutation of epiphanic twists of memory, overleaping precisely the realm of alienation which is the chief reason why history (*kairos*) remains aborted. Rather, it is history lived in and through the immediate and intermediate contradictions of the Filipino farm workers in the U.S. and incorporated by the responsive consciousness of a young Filipino facing the challenge of the post WWII era. The maturing sensibility of the narrator benefits from Tata Amin's summation of his discourse, heightening the disjunction between the unacknowledged virtues of Tata Amin and the prevailing hypocrisy and corruption of Philippine society. Within this sympathetic framework, Tata Amin's life subsumes the moment when the sensuous-practical and creative labor-power of the human species encounters the historic alienation of monopoly capitalism and transcends it by an act of active solidarity in union resistance and of proletarian internationalism in opposing Japanese aggression.

Transported from the landlord-usurer's oppression in Central Luzon in the early Thirties to the hellish field factories in Hawaii and the West Coast, Tata Amin experienced first-hand how extraction of surplus value from the peasants-turned-workers proceeded under the most degrading "legal" conditions. Union organizing was then penalized (as now in the New Society), strike leaders jailed. Tata Amin bore the brunt of racist discrimination not only in Hawaii but also in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Stockton, Santa Cruz, Seattle, Salem and Alaska. In Alaska, Tata Amin for the first time met a Japanese co-worker who expressed brotherhood with Filipinos as colonial wards aspiring for independence, a sentiment denied later by Japanese militarists competing with U.S. imperialism for markets and sources of raw materials. Finally, Tata Amin's sojourn in the U.S. culminates in his becoming the object of racist violence and chauvinist

justice, to which he responds militantly -- a sign of the emergent recovery of his authentic humanity, resisting not as a free-floating ego but as part of the besieged Filipino nationality in the belly of the Empire.

In the last six pages of the story, Hernandez exhibits the dialectical unfolding of Tata Amin's life as the emblem of a specific class praxis. The growth of his proletarian consciousness in the U.S. an organizer and activist establishes the context for his act of rescuing Rex Golden, the fugitive, from the Japanese, even though Tata Amin at the outset refuses to get involved in an inter-imperialist war which in principle he repudiates. His commitment and fidelity to an anti-fascist and nationalist creed stands out vividly in contrast to the capitulationist mood of the American GI:

Nang marinig ni Tata Amin ang mungkahi ng sundalong Amerkano na s'ya'y ibigay na sa kaaway kundi maililigtas, sa loob ng ilang iglap nguni at napakatuling paris ng pagsapot ng dilim sa isang silid na inal'san ng ilaw, napansin ko, o sa taya ko'y nakita ko sa mukha at anyo ni Tata Amin 'yon ding simbuyo ng kalooban kung ikinuk'wento n'ya sa 'kin ang mga kaapihan ng mga kababayan natin sa Amerika. 'Yon din ang sulak ng damdamin kung maalala n'ya ang ginawa sa kanya ni Whitey...Nguni at ang mga gunitang 'yo'y karakang naparam at nagbalik ang hinahon sa mukha't anyo ni Tata Amin. Marahan n'yang sinabi sa Amerkano na sa mahigit na dal'wangpung taong inilagi n'ya sa Amerika'y nagtiis s'ya ng lahat ng kaapihan, nagutom s'ya, nagkasakit s'ya, hinalay s'ya, ibinilanggo s'ya. Nguni at hindi s'ya nagpakababa kelan man upang maging esp'ya o magsuplong ng kanyang kapwa.

"Kung du'y di ako naging es'pya, lalo na 'kong di magiging espya dito sa'king sarling bayan," matatag na sinabi n'ya. (p. 108)

(When Tata Amin heard the American soldier's suggestion that he be given up to the enemy if he could not be saved, within the flicker of a moment, as rapidly as darkness enshrouds a room bereft of a lamp's illumination, I noticed, or so it appeared to me, that in Tata Amin's face and posture erupted an inner turbulence that would surface whenever he would recount to me the humiliation of his compatriots in America. That's also the upsurge of feeling that would seize him whenever he recollects what Whitey did to him... But that reminiscence quickly faded, serenity returned to Tata Amin's face and posture. He softly told the American that in his more than twenty years stay in America he endured all the cruelties, he starved, he got sick, he was insulted, he was imprisoned. But in spite of all he never debased himself at any time in order to become a spy or betray his fellowmen.

"If in your country I never became a spy, then the more I shall never turn into a traitor here in my own country," he firmly declared.)

Hernandez, by virtue of his peculiar narrative mediation which dramatizes the process of maturing through learning and cooperation in work, shows how Tata Amin discriminates between the loathsomely arrogant racism

of the white citizens in the U.S. and Rex Golden whose endangered presence makes him appear to Tata Amin as the finest personification of justice, democracy and humanity: *"Isang binatang iniwan marahil ang kanyang maginhawang tahanan, magulang, kasintahan at pag-aaral, upang ipagtanggol ang kalayaan sa lilim ng ibang langit na malayo sa kanila, sa paniwalang ang kalayaan ng mga tao't baya'y di maaaring hatiin"* (p. 109). ("A young man who has perhaps left his comfortable home, parents, sweetheart and schooling so as to defend liberty under distant foreign skies, with the conviction that the freedom shared by peoples and countries cannot be separated.")

Through the united front against fascism, the incommensurable distance between Tata Amin's ordeals and suffering in racist-chauvinist America and the threatened life of an American GI fleeing Japanese imperialism is bridged. The presence of the common enemy interpellates Tata Amin and reconstitutes him, just as capitalist exploitation and racist violence in the U.S. reconstituted him as a conscious agent understanding and answering the demands of historical necessity. This is Hernandez's alternative to the dualistic path -- fatalistic surrender to consumer capitalism or Christian resignation -- Joaquin offers in "Guardia de Honor." Not a recovery of the past through ritual and orgiastic inwardness, through the fetishism of a harmonious accord of hearts and minds within a tribal or feudal mode of social production and reproduction, but rather a thrust by both protagonist and narrator to an enacted future, within history as the present in process of being transformed, an authentic space where feeling, thought and conduct interpenetrate -- this is what Hernandez renders in his art: the problematization of the past through present class confrontation and its revolutionary overcoming.

What precisely does it mean then for the summarizing and dramatizing narrator to declare: *"Ang dakilang alaala n'ya'y 'alang kamatayan kung para sa 'kin... Tata Amin, habang tumitibok ang puso ko'y di kita makakalimutan"* (p. 111). ("His noble life in my memory is immortal for me...Tata Amin, while my heart beats, I shall not forget you.")

It means, I submit, a thoroughgoing and sensitive realization of those implacable contradictory forces that intersect and interrogate our lives at every moment, in their historical concreteness. It means the invention of an art-form, a symbolic vehicle whose primary function would be to articulate these contradictions, to betray their foundation in the idealist paradigms (or in material grounds, as the case may be) that conceal humanly created institutions and the internal possibilities for them to be subverted and qualitatively transformed. I emphasize the need to articulate the contradictions, not to slide them over for the sake of a nominal pluralism legitimizing fascist brutality and imperialist decadence, nor to memorialize a primitive innocence and communal wholeness anchored to a nostalgically resurrected myth. It means finally for the critic a recognition and interpretation of any literary work as a specific linguistic practice, the product of a world-view construed as the theoretical expression of a particular social class

and its praxis.* Indeed, it should be a truism by now that ideas and their signifying capacity always belong to specific individuals definable only within a class and understandable within the limits of a specific historical conjuncture.

*For an earlier version of my views, see Only By Struggle: Literature and Revolution in the Philippines (Connecticut: Philippines Research Center, 1980), Cf. also "Art Against Imperialism," The Weapons of Criticism, ed. Norman Rudich (Palo Alto, 1975); "Literature and Revolution in the Third World," Social Praxis, VI (1979), 19-34; "Introduction," Amerasia Journal (May 1979), pp. 3-29.

TOWARD OPENING THE HORIZON

We return to our beginning then, traversing a spiral and now on a higher plane in retrospect, by inscribing within the signifying parameters of comparative literary assessment the testimony of Sister Marianni Dimaranan, head of the Task Force Detainees of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. This is an endeavor to encapsulate here the tabooed linkage, the hitherto scandalous intercourse, of political and literary questions within the totality of the Philippine social formation.

In her report to the Amnesty International Conference in June 1979, Sister Marianni stated that since the 1972 usurpation of absolute rule by Marcos, 60,000 political prisoners have been arbitrarily arrested and systematically tortured. Today there are at least 2,000 prisoners rotting in known detention centers of the martial law regime. There are at least 233 known cases of "salvaging" (summary execution of suspected subversives) and countless cases of "disappeared" persons similar to those in Chile and other military dictatorships. Sister Marianni strongly emphasized that "U.S. arms, technology and dollars subsidized these atrocities" (Philippine Times, July 31, 1980, p. 7).*

In this light, who can help us understand the present situation in order to act on it: Nick Joaquin or Amado V. Hernandez?

Given this litany of facts drenched in blood and tears (I want to particularly recommend here a collection of cogently moving testimonies by Filipina women, No Time for Crying, ed. Alison Wynne, Hong Kong, 1979), how can we seriously entertain Dr. Salvador P. Lopez's acclamation of Nick Joaquin as "an artist engagé, a writer committed not to any social doctrine or dogma, but to a perception of the Filipino as a warmly sensitive human being moved by powerful sentiments of loyalty and decency, honor and dignity, love and compassion"? (Asian and Pacific Quarterly, Autumn 1979, p. 70). With all due acknowledgment to the progressive role of Dr. Lopez in the anti-fascist united front today, we could hazard the comment here that his remark illustrates the kind of liberal obfuscation and compromise that all those who uphold genuine people's freedom (not as an abstract private right of the wealthy but a collective product, the arduously harvested fruit of revolutionary practice of the masses) are trying to combat in its role as an instrument of fascist propaganda and imperialist hegemony. Joaquin may be engagé but not for all Filipinos at any time.

I must now conclude with the observation that the national liberation struggle against the aesthetically refined but nonetheless dehumanizing manifestations of U.S. imperialist culture in collusion with feudal-comprador culture operates at various levels and it will persist in diverse academic formulations of which this essay is only one. But whatever the

*For a general survey of the "New Society" and people's resistance, see Friends of the Philippines (Holland), Makibaka! Join Us in Struggle (Holland, 1980).

setting one feature will characterize the polemics: Whereas the defenders of the status quo will more and more perfect their disguise as humanists, pluralists, even anti-authoritarian liberals on the side of freedom, dignity and conscience, those who speak and write for the majority -- all the voiceless outcasts, rebels and pariahs at the extremes or margins of sophisticated, respectable society -- will more and more forcefully enact the most decisive rupture in repudiating and overthrowing the system of profit, its reifying ideology and culture. And in doing so they will then more boldly re-situate the imagination at the vital roots in the raging class struggle of our people, in the metamorphosing fires of the national democratic revolution, of people's war today against the vicious and doomed U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.

Anticipating and rehearsing that unprecedented rupture, we ask here: Who are your friends? Who are your enemies?



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