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Index to Filipino Poetry, compiled by Manlapaz and Abad

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Book Reviews

INDEX TO FILIPINO POETRY IN ENGLISH 1905-1950. Compiled by Edna Zapanta-Manlapaz and Gemino H. Abad. Metro Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1988. xx + 748 pages.

Research in Philippine literature and literary history has long been hampered by the lack of tools for the exploration. Bibliographies are few; indexes cover a few genres, usually in limited periods; bibliographies in theses and dissertations provide scanty clues to specific areas, and may not always be complete or reliable. The enterprise of literary research is thus still in an early stage: that of recovering the literary artifacts from the fields, the heirs, the homes, the dusty trunks and moldy boxes; of retrieving them from out-of-print anthologies and textbooks, from periodicals that no one library has in complete editions, from manuscripts and typescripts. Scholars wishing to focus on one period of poetry, on an individual writer's novels, on one type of essay, cannot usually turn to an index, listing, or author bibliography, but must themselves seek out the texts and contexts, and thus venture into the field.

Ateneo and UP scholars/professors Edna Manlapaz and Gemino Abad have returned from the field, with a treasure for the literary scholar. The *Index* is, as the introduction tells us, "the bibliographical database for a forthcoming work . . . *Man of Earth: An Anthology of Filipino Poetry and Verse from English, 1905-1955*" (p. III). In order to evaluate Philippine poetry in English from its beginnings to the fifties, and to provide representative samples, it was necessary to list the poets writing in those years, to ferret out their works (often unremembered by them) from the publications, to sleuth out the secrets of pseudonymous and anonymous works. Since the compilers were taking untrodden paths, it was not possible to tell how many poems they were looking for. They knew that the listing would probably never be complete, considering the loss of publications and manuscripts from fire and flood, termites and time.

Soon it became obvious that "despite the limitations imposed both by choice and circumstances, the bibliography would easily exceed ten thousand entries." And so the bibliography was computerized, using an IBM-compatible PC, and although it had been planned as "merely ancillary" to the anthology, it assumed

identity as a separate volume. The authors acknowledge the parameters and boundaries of the task, by quoting the late Professor Leopoldo Y. Yabes' preface to his bibliographical survey of Philippine literature in English: "There was an effort to make the list as full as possible, but there is no pretension to completeness. No student who is familiar with the situation will have the temerity to advance that claim."

On hand now is this gift of scholarship: a hefty book listing approximately 16,000 entries of poems by approximately 900 poets. All are poems which were first printed, or written (and are available as holographs, typescripts, mimeo-scripts, microfilm) between 1905 and 1950, as well as poems by the more important poets of the period, even if composed and first published after 1950. The companion anthology will identify the notable poets (from A to Z, Agcaoili to Zulueta da Costa).

The entries are arranged alphabetically by name of poet, or, lacking names, by title of poem. The following items of information are provided: author(s), editor(s), title of publication, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, volume number, issue number, page(s). All these and other instructions on the use of the index are provided in a detailed Plan of the Index (pp. IV-XX).

Research conducted in major libraries and archives and in some private collections yielded the sources for these entries: single-poet collections, anthologies, literary magazines, school publications, popular newspapers and magazines, the landmark *Philippine Prose and Poetry* series, and graduate papers and theses. The listing of these sources in the Plan constitutes a veritable index itself, of publication venues for poetry in the years 1905-50.

Anyone who has ventured on an exploration of any of these poets and poems will appreciate the care and thoroughness that clearly lie behind this painstaking work. And anyone who has found what a singular tool of efficiency, rapidity and ease the computer is in research, will appreciate as well the skill and imagination, credited to Romeo L. Manlapaz, with which the new technology was fitted to the task of bibliography.

The beneficiaries of this work will be the researchers, thesis-writers, scholars, journalists, feature writers, interested readers, who want or need to know who wrote what poems in the first decades of Philippine writing in English. Also the poets themselves, most of whom did not keep lists or copies of their works. And their biographers and interviewers to come, who have had much of their spadework done here for them.

But even the casual browser will find moments of information and interest. Paz Marquez Benitez, for example, whose "Dead Stars" is often called the first Filipino short story in English, is in this *Index* with one poem, found in three different publications: a translation of "The Philippine National Hymn." Her sister Natividad Marquez, who sometimes wrote as Ana Maria Chavez, has two-and-a-half pages of entries.

Jose Garcia Villa, predictably, has one of the longest lists—about sixty-one pages, while his contemporary, Manuel Arguilla, has one entry: "True Love," in

the *Sunday Tribune Magazine*, 1928. Dr. Arturo B. Rotor, who, asked if he had written poems, answered: "I refuse to answer on grounds that it may incriminate me," indeed has no entry in the volume. Among S.P. Lopez's love sonnets, juvenilia that he had almost forgotten about when interviewed in 1981, are titles like "Ages must pass ere once again the moon," "Fate's ordinance you say—then let's be done," and "One moment clasped our wings have disengaged."

Bienvenido Santos's most often reprinted poems are "Age of Flowers" and "Music for One." Although better known as novelist and short story writer, he has 196 entries, some of them written under pseudonyms like "Tomas F. Mendoza" and "Ursulo S. Dabu." Poet and critic Manuel A. Viray hid behind "Robert S. Marino," and Luis G. Dato disguised himself as "Isarog." Pseudonyms which remain unidentified include such indications of the mood of the time as: "Abang-aba," "Corazon Amante," "Faithful E" and "Remember Me."

Even without the forthcoming anthology, the *Manlapaz-Abad Index* provides an indication of the beginnings and growth, the poets and publications of Philippine writing in English in its first four-and-a-half decades. It will definitely occupy a place in public and private libraries which no other book has yet filled.

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AWIT AND CORRIDO. By Damiana L. Eugenio. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1987.

Of the literary types that gained popularity in the earlier centuries, the *awit* and *corrido* easily stood out as the favorite reading fare of countless Filipino readers. As late as the first quarter of the twentieth century, these ubiquitous texts were still being published, especially in the Tagalog-speaking areas. But it was clear that newer and more exciting reading materials were emerging and competing with the *awit* and *corrido* and by the 1930s, the novel and the short story, and eventually film and radio, had supplanted the once formidable body of texts in the hierarchy of popular literature.

Nonetheless, although only a few read the *awit* and *corrido* now, the influence of this type of writing is still very much around, manifested variously in the literary types that currently abound, pointing to the powerful presence which industrialization and technology have not totally vanquished. Stereotyped characters, overly dramatic situations, meandering plots, formulaic language, and various forms of simplification are some of the elements that continue to shape such cultural artifacts as the novel, the *komiks*, and a large number of movies and television shows. Values related to love and marriage, filial piety, love of country, among others, which were first defined in the *awit* and *corrido*, continue to serve as materials for numerous stories. The idealized world which these texts