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## **Awit and Corrido, by Eugenio**

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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

projected is still the universe aspired to in a large number of texts written in the romance mode.

Indeed, the awit and corrido have remained an important influence in the people's consciousness, a presence that time cannot destroy, a voice that nothing can still.

Although admittedly an important group of texts, the awit and corrido were for a long time considered unworthy of scholarly studies. In the past, articles written on the genre generally offered information on the origins and common themes of the local romances. But because of their exploratory nature, these works did not achieve the comprehensiveness of other studies on various genres. It is against this context that we should view Damiana Eugenio's *Awit and Corrido, Philippine Metrical Romances*, which seeks to "relate Philippine Metrical Romances to their probable foreign sources and to other analogues to determine their place in the popular literature of the world" (p. xv).

It is clear, therefore, that Eugenio aims not only to explain the distinguishing characteristics of the local romances but also to contextualize these works against a much wider context. Toward this end, she selects fifty local works which she breaks down into their component parts in order to clarify possible influences between these awit and corrido and similar texts produced elsewhere by different cultures. Thus the main part of the study presents a discussion of each of the fifty texts in terms of the following: the subject matter, an illustrative excerpt from the text, a summary, the possible sources, and the dominant motifs.

The range of materials covered in the discussion is quite wide, since the author situates the particular awit or corrido against existing texts in the Charlemagne Cycle, the Arthurian Cycle, Spanish and Portuguese history and legend, Oriental didactic tales, and miscellaneous tales, among others. It is also important to note the stress placed by Eugenio on the differences between the local text and its foreign analogue which she believes are rooted in certain cultural considerations which affect the production of local texts. For example, in her analysis of *Bernardo Carpio*, the author traces the possible influences of Lope de Vega's play "Las Mocedades de Bernardo Carpio" on the local composition, and shows how faithful the latter has been to the original Spanish text, especially in the account given of Bernardo's parentage and birth. But as the narrative progresses, the local version seems to diverge radically from the original text until it reaches a point when Bernardo Carpio becomes "nationalized," since the folk mind believes him to be in the depths of the mountains from where he will emerge someday to save his people from oppression.

As significant as the main portion of the study is the Introduction which gives a bird's-eye view of the material—the themes, characters, narrative structures, possible origins, the language used, among the elements analyzed. This discussion is also worthwhile for the extensive review of existing studies on the Philippine romances such as those done by Dean Fansler, E. Arsenio Manuel and

other scholars. Also of great value for researchers and scholars are the book's appendices. Appendix A is a listing of the Philippine metrical romances unearthed so far, while Appendix B is the complete text of a typical Tagalog metrical romance, *Salita at Buhay na Kahabag-habag na Pinagdaanan ng Pitong Infantes de Lara at nang Kaabaabang Kanilang Ama sa Reinong Española*.

When this book's thesis is examined in the light of what the author has actually accomplished, then the reader can only conclude that the study dovetails with the proposed project. And for this achievement—a clear exposition of fifty texts and their contexts in world literature—Eugenio must certainly be commended. For the first time in Philippine literary scholarship, largely neglected awit and corrido have been made the object of a formal study, the results of which go a long way to clarify the structure and design of a large number of popular texts, and the way local writers of romances have appropriated certain characters, themes and motifs from foreign sources.

What should be done in the face of such an achievement is intimated in the Introduction, in which Eugenio posits certain views which subsequent studies ought to pursue in more depth. Firstly, crucial factors which should explain the major differences between the foreign and local texts should be more thoroughly analyzed and situated against socio-cultural contexts. This would mean a systematic oscillation between the local romances and the different contexts which gave rise to them, from the aesthetic to the political and ideological. Secondly, Eugenio remarks on the phenomenal popularity of the awit and corrido and deals lengthily with the values and attitudes that are reflected in the texts. Perhaps future studies making use of certain theoretical perspectives from reception theory should attempt to find out the relationship that existed between the text and the audience and the structure of meaning which the texts had for the reader. In this way, the reader returns to the scene as an active, creative participant in the generation of meaning.

Such future studies, if carried out systematically, should complement the impressive research that the author of *Awit and Corrido* has done. As this pioneering study has shown, such texts as the local romances are as significant as any body of works that have been traditionally regarded more highly. By writing this book, Eugenio has affirmed the importance of popular literature as cultural artifacts to which countless readers have responded.

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