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Likhaan I

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a nonexistent "annotation on page 28." Unsolved problems in the preparation and/or printing of the book are apparent. The bulk of the book was based on a part of Serifa's Master of Library Science thesis presented at the University of the Philippines. The original coverage of the thesis was 1901-1975 (p. x); its updating to 1979 took its toll. The "Chronological Listing of the Literature" (pp. 143-66) reaches only up to 1976. Even the listing for that year is incomplete. (A quick glance easily reveals nos. 81, 153, 154, 387, and more were published in that year and yet are not listed.) To know how many were published from 1977 to 1979, the reader has to do his own counting. (Just skimming over the pages, this reviewer has counted at least fifty.)

More serious than the mechanical and technical defects of the work is the fact that "children's literature" is not defined; thus it is not known by what criteria the publications therein listed are properly speaking "children's literature," or "elementary" or "high school" materials.

It is a pity that this book was not prepared more carefully. Nevertheless, since it is the only volume at present on the subject, it serves a real purpose.

Florentino H. Hornedo

LIKHAAN I. Edited by Alejandrino G. Hufana. Manila: University of the Philippines Creative Writing Center, 1979. 150 pages.

Two recent publications — *Literature and Society: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Roger Bresnahan (Eleventh American Studies Seminar, Los Baños, Philippines, 1976) and *Salimbibig: Philippine Vernacular Literature*, edited by Joseph A. Galdon, S.J. (Quezon City: The Council for Living Traditions, 1980) — have drawn critical attention to Philippine writing in the vernacular. On the other side of the coin, *Likhaan I* is a collection of contemporary creative writing in the Philippines' vernaculars, as well as in English. It is the first volume in a series of semi-annual publications to be produced (hopefully) by the U.P. Creative Writing Center. The various contributors, "in the languages of their competence," give witness, editor Alejandrino G. Hufana says in his Introduction, to "linguistic plurality" and the "verbal variety of Philippine Writing." "Whether traditional or experimental, the ways of the imagination here put together support what *Likhaan* aims initially at doing: to provide contributing writers a needed, and hopefully welcome, publication venue."

During the Fourth Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Manila in 1975, President Ferdinand Marcos directed that the creative writing center of the University of the Philippines "be established immediately." "Immediately" was interpreted somewhat loosely, for it was not until 7 December 1978 that the Board of Regents of the University approved the U.P. Creative Writing Center. The Center began operations on 1 June 1979 under the Board of Regents' mandate which specified: "(1) the conduct of courses

and workshops on creative writing for students and other invited participants and auditors; (2) the institution of literary scholarship as a necessary part of the writing discipline and critical assessment of results; and (3) the orientation of writing to its audience, which is much neglected." *Likhaan I*, published in December 1979, is one attempt of the Center to give concrete expression to that mandate. This reviewer and the careful reader of this first volume, would have to conclude that both the Center and the editor have succeeded remarkably well in their initial efforts.

The collection includes nine poems in Pilipino, Bikol, Iloko, and Hiligaynon (many with translations into English by the authors) which I cannot comment on for lack of competence. Among the twenty English poems are poems by Gemino Abad, Tita Lacambra Ayala, Federico Licsi Espino, Jr., Dominador Ilio, and Ricardo Demetillo, as well as Edgar Maranan, Ricardo M. de Ungria, Domingo de Guzman, and others. Except for an occasional line or image like Abad's "But time present is time past / And gifts not with speech the superfluous need" (p. 14), or Maranan's "Misery is welded into a meshwork/of dreams, like an indispensable alloy" (p. 27), the poems do not ring any bells.

There are two short scenes from plays on Rizal in Pilipino, one by Alberto S. Florentino, and the other, "Josephine," by Isagani Cruz, which the editor describes as "English-Spanish-Pilipino," and which Cruz himself says may not even be a play (p. 53). Cruz' play reminds one of Joaquin at his rhetorical best, although Cruz is clearly living in the present, not in the Spanish past. The play makes good reading. Cruz' mind is always a challenge, but I wonder how the play would act on stage. It would certainly win no awards from the Knights of Rizal.

In the longest essay in *Likhaan I*, Hufana traces "Some Roots of Our Writing" in leisurely and sometimes meandering fashion, from the writers of the 1896-98 Revolution through the Philippine Writers' League (1939), the Commonwealth Literary Awards (1940), the 1959 Philippine P.E.N. conference in Baguio, the Fourth Afro-Asian Writers Symposium on Literature and New Generations (1975), the 1977 local P.E.N. Conference, and, presumably, to the U.P. Creative Writing Center (1979). Although there are some references to vernacular and Spanish literature, the chronicle is largely restricted to Philippine writing in English. Along the way Hufana recounts much useful information on all the literary genres—novel, short story, poetry, drama, biography, criticism, even anthologies—and has some very good critical comments on Joaquin, Arguilla, Rotor, Litiato, and Arcellana. One of Hufana's insights—the recurrence of the Pasig, and its analogues in lake, river, and seacoast, as theme—is particularly striking. Hufana's essay is an excellent summary of Philippine writing in English and a rich source of leads for the literary scholar.

In the book note at the end of *Likhaan I*, Professor Hufana writes of the roots of the Philippine literary tradition beyond the *awit* and the *corrido* in the native epics and folktales. Hufana also pays tribute to Gonzalez' technique — his theory of moral triangulation, and the emphasis on what Joaquin calls "the heritage of smallness." One perceptive comment of Hufana: reviewing the early and late stories in *Mindoro and Beyond*, he calls Gonzalez a "formal conservative," "not tinkering with the form" as Joaquin has done (p. 149). "Composition, in Gonzalez' hands, is never lush; in fine, it skirts intricacy. Yet while concealing its motive a Gonzalez story is confident with its lyrical turns, as whistling is sure to impart lightness felt or mocked" (p. 149).

In the most profound essay in *Likhaan I*, Gemino Abad manages a rather remarkable description of the poem he refuses to define: a poem is an artifact of language and experience, the shape of the poet's sensibility, the form and structure of his imagination. It is "not only an artistic object . . . but also, if the poet so wills it, an instrument for political uses, ethical ends, other noble purposes" (p. 106). Abad describes the poet's use of language:

What makes the poet is *finally*, not his own distinctive recreation of a natural language called English or Filipino, nor his subject, be it ever so deeply personal or poignantly relevant to his times, but only his poem, the finished product, whatever any poem may be (p. 99) It does not matter which language is used; in fact, the poet does not use a natural language like English or Tagalog, he only *adopts* it. He masters its resources in order to recreate it for purposes of his art (p. 101) No one then need dictate — no one can — the writer's language (p. 102).

Abad's comments on language need much thoughtful reflection. Equally worthy of study are his comments on sensibility:

My idea about sensibility is that, first, it is a particular sensibility, and second, it is strictly or in the final analysis, without nationality. I think of any individual sensibility as a refinement in essential humanity, as an attunement of the human spirit to its deepest satisfactions. No sensibility exists, but only a particular individual sensibility. It is not a mass commodity; such is only its perversion, whether it is called an ideology or herd instinct. It is not propagated, it only infects, but in whom it resides, it is transformed. There is only individual sensibility, and it is the root of one's freedom as an individual. The Filipino sensibility is, finally, a myth; hence our unhappiness as we search our past for signs of "the Filipino soul" and look to the future for a "New Society." Yet the function of myth in our own time is to make us unhappy. The myth which appeases dies quickly. One truth about the myth that we live by . . . is that it makes us unhappy with our little reality, unhappy with the limited paradise of the present (pp. 103-4). This is criticism of the highest sort, for it makes us evaluate our suppositions.

Likhaan I represents an auspicious beginning for the Creative Writing Center of the University of the Philippines. It is a commendable book, and represents a much needed outlet for creative writing in the Philippines. Let us hope that *Likhaan*, like so many impressive ventures in the past, will not be stifled in childhood by financial or critical constraints.

Joseph A. Galdon, S.J.

ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, EMERGING THEMES. Edited by Douglas J. Elwood. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980. 342 pages.

I wonder why Prof. Elwood did not simply edit a second volume of his previous work. He calls this book a revised edition of *What Asian Christians Are Thinking* (published in 1976). Actually only eight of the twenty-nine articles in this book come from the previous volume (which itself had thirty articles). Even the Foreword by Kosuke Koyama has been entirely rewritten. (The companion Foreword by Charles West has merely been revised; so has Prof. Elwood's Introduction.) As for authors, seven of the previous volume's sixteen authors have been dropped, and nine new ones have replaced them.

The classification of articles has been mainly retained from the previous volume. The seven sections of this book cover most of the areas of theological thinking. The first part deals with the rethinking of Christian theology itself, to meet the needs of the Church in Asia. Then follow sections on Man, Christ, Christian Mission, Religious Pluralism, Development, and Liberation. The final section gives us five "Statements" of various conferences, bearing mostly on the political situations in South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

The articles in this book have been chosen from among hundreds of others. They are the works of living Asian theologians, written mostly within the last ten years. They are theological reflections conceived within the Asian context; they address themselves to the actual questions that Asian Christians are asking in the midst of their world, their problems, and hopes; and they answer these questions from the viewpoint, strengths, and biases of Asians. The articles have been chosen for their successful attempt at presenting Asian theology. (Needless to say, the authors do not always agree among themselves concerning the meaning and implications of "Asianizing," or indigenizing, or inculturating, or contextualizing Christian theology.)

At the risk of oversimplification, I would like to point out certain themes that recur in these articles.

(1) Some articles voice out a general appeal for freedom to work out theology in the Asian way, since this is the only way Christianity can really incarnate itself into the Asian context. Some guidelines are added for the fashioning of a truly Asian theology. Under this heading I would class the articles written by Emerito Nacpil, Kiyoko Takeda, Cho, Saphir Athyal, Choan-seng Song, and the 1965 statement of the Christian Conference of Asia.