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Main Trends in the Criticism of Epifanio San Juan, Jr.

SOLEDAD S. REYES

Literary criticism as a distinct art arrived late in Tagalog literature. Only in the early sixties did modern critics, mostly university-educated, try their hands at analyzing literary works by following a definite critical methodology. Of this batch of critics, Epifanio San Juan, Jr. seems to have the widest area of interest and the most prolific pen.

San Juan apparently started writing on Philippine literature in 1964, while he was still pursuing a doctorate degree at Harvard.¹ He has since written numerous articles which appeared in the *Dawn*, *Panitikan*, and *Asia-Philippines Leader*. Some were published in foreign journals like *East-West Review*, *Comparative Literature*, *Books Abroad*, and *Journal of Asia*. A few of his works deal with the history of Philippine literature; some present theories on the nature of poetics; and others, particularly those in his various "Introductions" and those published in *Panitikan* and *Dawn* combine literary theory and criticism.

As a whole, his works show that he has drawn ideas from Richard Blackmur (poetry as structure), Kenneth Burke (psychology of form), T. S. Eliot (the idea of tradition and the individual talent), I. A. Richards (the relationship between literature and language), and from other writers conveniently labelled the New Critics.² His indebtedness to this group of critics is especially obvious in his works published between 1965 and 1969. In his works written between 1970 and 1975, his heavy Marxist leaning suggests that

1. His first article seems to have been a textual analysis of Amado V. Hernandez's poem, "Sa Wakas ng Halakhak" published in *Katas*, July 1964. Unless otherwise indicated, all works cited in the footnotes are by San Juan.

2. The New Critics or Formalists are English and American critics noted for their critical theories and practise, stressing the need for a careful scrutiny of the text and a conscious exploration of the world of the poem as something abstracted from other external data pertaining to the author's life, to history, and other background material.

he has been influenced by such theorists as Hegel, Marx, Mao-Tse-Tung and Lukacs. The notion of literature as a study of form and structure has been displaced in favor of the view that the work must be situated within a specific milieu and that it is a product of the historical process.

THE EARLY PERIOD (1964-69):
FORMALISM AS AN APPROACH

In an essay written in 1965, San Juan asserts that all literature is rooted in a definite milieu and therefore reflects particular aspects of the private or public world. Philippine literature can become universal only if it shows the diverse realities of Philippine life.³ This idea is crucial to an understanding of the early period in his career as critic. He has apparently never subscribed to the belief that literature can be abstracted fully from life and treated purely in an ontological manner. Hence in spite of drawing on the different schools of thought associated with formalism, San Juan nonetheless never conceived of himself as a rigid formalist. It is inaccurate to label his critical approach at this stage as strictly formalistic, a fact which becomes clearer in his articles dealing with the whole of Philippine literature, in which he uses a combination of historical-sociological and formalistic approaches.

His theory, however, does not seem to coincide with his way of analyzing a given text. His formalist orientation comes out strongly even as he insists that the only way to capture Philippine realities is to explore and enrich the language constantly. Corollary to this is his belief that the development of Philippine literature can be evaluated in terms of the artist's response to the human condition that he articulates through a conscious use of language:

Ano ang panitikan kundi porma ng wika; ang wika ba'y permanente o nababago? Kung nababago, natural na nababago rin ang porma ng diwa. Pagkat walang pagkakaiba ang porma ng diwa at porma ng salita.⁴

What is literature but a form of language; is language fixed or changing? If it is changing, then even the form of its sensibility changes. For there is no difference between the form of its sensibility and the form of language.

Preoccupation with language and its changing characteristics can be interpreted as San Juan's reaction to traditional criticism

3. "Poetika Pilipina: Traktatus Tungo sa Pagbubuo ng Sining ng Tulang Pilipino," *Dawn*, 14 May 1965, p. 6.

4. *Ibid.*

which tended to sanctify certain works like *Florante at Laura* and use these as the only standards against which to evaluate later works.

His first attempt at analyzing a Tagalog poem projects the view that a literary work is autonomous and has its own generative laws and impulses. The poem can therefore be studied through a scientific study of its verbal structure. In his explication of Amado V. Hernandez's "Sa Wakas ng Halakhak," he notes:

Maganda ang tula . . . Ang tensiyon ng tula na mistulang isang balada, gaya ng mga tula ni Heinrich Heine na nagbibiro sa mga kabulastugan ng lipunan at mga pinuno ng pamahalaan, ay nagbubuhay sa kakaibang mga bagay-bagay na sa unang tingi'y hindi dapat pagsamahin . . . ngunit kung liliripin ay siyang sariling kahulugan ng tula: ang hindi pagkakaparepareho ng realidad o katotohanan sa mundo.⁵

The poem is beautiful . . . The tension of the poem, which resembles a ballad, like the poems of Heinrich Heine that make fun of the foibles of society and of leaders of government, springs from the use of disparate images which at first glance should have been fused . . . but which when mulled over give the poem its unique meaning: the infinite diversity of reality and truth in the world.

The significance of the poem lies in its ability to reconcile in its world of formal structure the apparently irreconcilable forces of society. This first published textual analysis charts the course that San Juan will take in his exploration of Tagalog poetry.

THE SURVEY ARTICLES: PHILIPPINE LITERARY HISTORY

To prove that San Juan did not tread on a purely formalistic path early in his career, several related essays he wrote should be mentioned. In some articles, as literary historian, he presents a panoramic view of the different periods of Philippine literature, using a combination of historical and formalistic approaches. He tries to show the "quiet and sublimated yet often obsessive persistence of the concern with the self and the world." This means that the Filipino writer knows that his vocation "answers not only the deep dark claims of the daemon but also the needs of men in crisis."⁶ With this promising thesis, San Juan attempts to demonstrate how writers have responded to the flux of experience.

Such essays as "Panitikan: A Critical Introduction to Tagalog

5. "Sa Wakas ng Halakhak": Isang Ekpikasyon," *Katas*, July 1964.

6. "Cultural Resurgence in Tagalog Literature," *East-West Review* 9 (Winter, 1965):16.

Literature," "Cultural Resurgence in Tagalog Literature," "Mga Tagahawan ng Landas," and "Social Consciousness and Revolt in Tagalog Poetry" try to show in varying degrees the relationship between history on the one hand, and literature and language on the other. Except for the third article, the rest have been published in foreign journals, serving therefore as introductions for non-Filipinos to the history of Philippine literature.

Although historians and scholars are utilized to provide the background for the literature of the time, history and literature are not fully integrated. San Juan does not appear to be interested in the historical events and personages as they have given rise to crucial literary works but in literature itself as an independent principle. In a welter of disparate details, he seems to have failed in creating a real historical perspective; there is imbalance even in his discussion of the different periods. These essays do not succeed in clarifying the evolution of Philippine literature.

One study asserts that folklore and the epic reveal a tradition of continuity and harmony with nature; the same can be said of proverbs and riddles. These forms of early literature represent "a mode of reflection which assumes the prevalence of fixed habits and cultural norms as the center of an organic community."⁷ The *ladinos* (early Tagalog poets who used both Spanish and Tagalog) were the first group of writers who realized the importance of language as a tool for conveying their perceptions of the world. Pinpin, Bagongbanta, and Ossorio are to be considered pioneers in clearing the path for subsequent Tagalog poets.⁸ Consciousness of themselves as a distinct group with definite aspirations as a people made possible a moving away from the religiously didactic to the polemic rhetoric of the Propagandists in the nineteenth century.⁹

Twentieth century literature, especially Tagalog poetry, is analyzed in terms of the tradition that preceded it. However, nowhere in his numerous articles does San Juan try to define what he means by "tradition." Nevertheless, for him *Florante at Laura* (1838) serves as a strong proof that Balagtas, though working within a certain historical and literary framework, produced a work that was a definite advance over the earlier romances. In

7. "Prolegomena to Philippine Poetics," *Comparative Literature Studies* 7 (June 1970): 184.

8. "Mga Tagahawan ng Landas ng Larangan ng Tulang Tagalog," *Dawn*, 15 January 1966, p. 7.

9. "Prolegomena," p. 18.

perspective, the critic claims that whatever Balagtas achieved as an innovator became "mechanical touchstones, and static formulae to the later scholiasts."¹⁰ Iñigo Ed. Regalado, Ildefonso Santos, Teodoro Gener, and Aniceto Silvestre, who rallied around the figure of Lope K. Santos, are poets who indulged in hackneyed themes of love and death. The use of mellifluous cadence and manipulation of sound and sense are crystallized in Jose Corazon de Jesus's *Mga Tulang Ginto* (1958). What prevented the latter from indulging in "maudlin decadence and empty dandyism" was his involvement in public affairs, perhaps best concretized in publicly held poetic jousts or *balagtasan*.¹¹

By taking to task such major Tagalog poets as Lope K. Santos and Iñigo Ed. Regalado, both of whom emulated Balagtas in theme and technique, San Juan demonstrates his belief that tradition, at least in Tagalog poetry, should not be equated with the achievements of Balagtas. What was novel in the nineteenth century has become old-fashioned and useless by the twentieth century; poets trying to work within a literary tradition other than that crystallized in Balagtas should be allowed a free hand to experiment. There is a genuine need for more innovation and openness to foreign literary influences. For criticism to remain dynamic and functional, it must recognize "Western critical theory and practise as universally applicable, qualified, of course, by the unique linguistic characteristics . . . evidenced by the best compositions."¹²

The change in the sensibility brought about by exposure to modern poetic trends is perceived in the younger poets — Rogelio Mangahas, Lamberto Antonio, and Rio Alma, among others. As late as 1970, the formalist San Juan asserts the necessity of form and craft for Tagalog poetry to develop fully:

His only salvation lies in his craft. The ritualistic patterns of Pilipino, its potential for lucid definition, ennobling tone, and circumstantial density, may be construed as a force for initiating a paralyzing mood or a radical transformation. What is needed is for the poet to expand his repertoire of situations by finding or inventing dramatic, flexible ways of manipulating his verbal resources in order to get rid of the sentimental residue of life and loosen the rigid fixture of speech in the face of the endless flux of actuality.¹³

10. "Cultural Resurgence," p. 18.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

13. "Prolegomena," p. 191.

In some sections of his essays, San Juan also makes tentative evaluations of the achievements of writers in the other genres. Using Rizal's novels as archetypes, he seeks to show their influence on the novels of Lope K. Santos, Faustino Aguilar, and Amado V. Hernandez. The theme in *Ibong Mandaragit* (1957), "transcends mere ideology in its concern with *la condition humaine* by Pascal and Christian humanists."¹⁴ He believes, however, that the novel is still saddled with moralism and melodramatic situations that prevent it from objectifying the facets of experience.

The short story writers have been more successful than the novelists in being more objective and less sentimental. Some fictionists like Brigido Batungbakal, Pedro Dandan, Macario Pineda, and Serafin Guinigundo are praised for their subtlety in delineating facets of experience and sensitivity to the nuances of lived life.¹⁵

His evaluation of Philippine drama is quite generalized. He mentions the nationalistic orientation of the early plays of Tolentino and Abad, but beyond this makes no further comments. Amado V. Hernandez, actually a minor playwright, is commended for successfully showing the "confrontation of historical reality and myths of transcendence" in the play *Magkabilang Mukha ng Bagol*.¹⁶

As critical surveys of Philippine literature, these works of San Juan do not quite succeed in shedding light on the historical forces which served as impetus for the rise and decline of the different literary genres. He seems overly concerned with specific groups and individual writers whose works appear in his descriptions dissociated from certain quantifiable givens in history.

THE PANITIKAN ESSAYS: EXERCISES IN EXPLICATION

A conscious application of the poetic theories mentioned in the survey articles is evident in a series of articles San Juan wrote in 1965 and 1966 for *Panitikan*, a literary magazine edited by Alejandro G. Abadilla. The importance of these studies springs from the manner — objective, textual, analytical — in which he subjects different poems to diverse poetic theories. His analysis does not

14. "Cultural Resurgence," p. 17.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

hinge principally on the experience chosen by the poet but on the form that poetic exploration finally takes in a given text. More than in the survey articles, it is in these *Panitikan* essays that San Juan stakes his claim as one of the Formalist critics of the 1960s.

Federico Licsi Espino, Jr., Gonzalo K. Flores, Manuel Principe Bautista, Manuel Santiago, some of the poets San Juan has chosen to discuss, belong to the younger generation of Tagalog writers who have been exposed to English and American poetry. Apparently, their poems lend themselves more easily to the sophisticated critical tools that the critic intends to use in order to discover form and meaning. Situated against the history of Tagalog poetry, all these poets can be considered minor; his choice of them as fitting materials for a critical study unnecessarily heightens their significance. In fact, their similarity lies in their deliberate veering away from the tradition of Balagtas and his successors who lorded it over in the first half of the twentieth century.

In his essay on the poetry of Manuel Principe Bautista, San Juan presents what is perhaps his most telling belief regarding the role of criticism in the native context:

Sa panunuri ng tulang Pilipino, kinakailangang ipangibabaw ang masusung pag-aaral ng kabuuan o ng buhay na pagkakaugnay-ugnay ng diwa at salita na siyang porma ng tula, sa halip na palagiang paghahambing ng anumang tula sa mga "klasikong" akda nina Balagtas o Lope K. Santos. Sa ganitong paraan mababatid ang tunay na uri at katuturan ng daigdig na napapaloob sa tula.¹⁷

In analyzing poetry in Pilipino, a careful study of the whole or the dynamic relationship between sensibility and language, which is the form of poetry, should be stressed, instead of the usual comparison of any poem with the "classical" work of Balagtas or Lope K. Santos. In this manner, the real nature and meaning of the world contained in the poem may be comprehended.

He sees in the poems an artist creating a concrete situation which approximates the root of the idea or the emotion that has given rise to the poem. In other words, he observes in Bautista's works the utilization of an idea that closely resembles T. S. Eliot's concept of the "objective correlative." In his analysis of such poems as "Dama," "Ako ang Tula," and "Bagui," he seeks to discover the *persona*, describe the dramatic situation, explain the

17. "Damdamin at Talinghaga sa Mga Tula ni Manuel Principe Bautista," *Panitikan* (October 1964): 21.

various images used; he also insists upon the need to project the source of intuition.

Manuel Car. Santiago's conscious exploration of the different nuances of words and his reconciliation of opposing forces in experience are the main assets of his works. Because he realizes the power of language, he is able to explore the mysteries of life and death. San Juan, in his analysis of "Buhay," emphasizes the poet's use of opposition — life and death, joy and sadness, movement and stillness. Any literary criticism based on a phenomenological approach seeks to know the impression or belief that not only informs, filters, and evaluates language but also attempts to discover the structure, in order to help the reader discern the idea embodied in the concatenation of images.¹⁸

Two other poets — Espino and Flores — are also included in this series. Flores is praised for his ability to create order out of chaos by using his senses, through which color, touch, movement, and taste in nature are woven into a poetic fabric.¹⁹ Espino's art, on the other hand, displays the poet's ability to create a formal structure that reflects the flux of experience and flow of consciousness through which meaning is dramatized.²⁰

Teo Baylen, although strictly speaking not a modern poet, appears in another *Panitikan* essay. The analysis of Baylen's poems is significant because it pinpoints the traits that the critic believes weaken poetry. San Juan criticizes those works which deal with war, the force of rapacity, violence in the modern world as poems that tax the imagination. Nothing artistic may be discerned in them because nothing distinguishes these protest poems from any tract or treatise written in prose. There is a need for detachment and irony and even for comic elements.²¹ Some poems of Baylen that respect the limitation of the material and yet manage to transcend this through craft are considered significant. Indeed, early in his career, San Juan is an advocate for poetry with no ideology.

18. "Lakas ni Dionysis sa mga Tula ni Manuel Car. Santiago," *Panitikan*, (October 1965): 23.

19. "Ang Daigdig ng Pandama: Mga Obserbasyon sa Ilang Tula ni Gonzalo K. Flores," *Panitikan* (April 1966): 8.

20. "Mga Tula ng Pagkatao sa mga Tula ni Federico Licsi Espino," *Panitikan* (October 1965): 25.

21. "Si Teo Baylen: Ang Estilo ng Propeta," *Panitikan* (October 1966): 9.

FORM AND MEANING IN TRADITIONAL POETRY

It is not surprising that among the *Panitikan* articles, no study of Jose Corazon de Jesus is to be found. This major poet (perhaps the most influential after Balagtas) represents what the critics of the sixties disliked intensely — sentimentalism, didacticism, ignorance of irony and the comic spirit. While other critics, like Virgilio Almario and Pedro Ricarte, have not minced words in finding fault with the alleged excesses in de Jesus's poetry, San Juan shows a willingness to take the poem with an open mind.²² In his critique of "Sinapupunan ng Dilim" he merely points out that de Jesus has failed to follow up the very promising idea given in the first few lines of the selection because he hewed too closely to certain conventions.²³ This failure to liberate the poem from the deadening effect of tradition should be decried;

Kailangan tayong lumikong papalayo sa mga landas nina Balagtas, Jose Corazon de Jesus at iba pang laos na manunulat. Kailangan ng sining ang walang-patid na paghihimagsik sa nakaraan taglay ang matalas na kamalayan tungkol sa kakulangan at kabutihan ng tradisyon.²⁴

We have to veer away from the path trodden by Balagtas, Jose Corazon de Jesus and other writers who have outlived their usefulness. Art demands an unceasing revolution against the past, even as it cultivates a deep awareness of the negative and positive aspects of the tradition.

San Juan's exegesis of de Jesus's popular poem "Ang Pagbabalik" is a lucid illustration of his willingness to take a poem on its own terms. A clear product of traditional poetics, the poem is subjected to a textual analysis. With this he succeeds in making it yield a complex of meanings. Instead of forcing it to conform to his own poetic theories, he grapples with its form and content, and through a dexterous manipulation of critical tools, formulates his own interpretation.

What other critics have looked upon as a simple, almost mawkish, love poem becomes in San Juan's careful study a highly complex creative work. He discovers a series of dramatic oppositions between disparate forces — life and death, object and subject,

22. See, for example, Virgilio Almario's analysis of de Jesus' "Isang Punong Kahoy," in his *Ang Makata sa Panahon ng Makina* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1972) for a kind of criticism that differs from San Juan's approach.

23. "Ilang Puna sa 'Sinapupunan ng Dilim'" in *Mga Sanaysay sa Panunuring Pampanitikan* (Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Publications, 1975), p. 43.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

flight and return, appearance and reality — all of them deftly interwoven in a tight structural pattern. This is one example of how Philippine literature in general can benefit from some understanding and use of a Western mode of criticism.

Another example of how criticism can enrich literature is in the explication of some of the eighteenth-century lyric poems of Jose de la Cruz, or Huseng Sisiw. This poet has a profound respect for language, which is in the ultimate analysis the only vehicle through which the poet reveals his identity.²⁵

What should interest the student of literature is the method employed to explain certain poems which, by virtue of their creators' conceded pre-eminence, have been considered "classics." Undaunted by such an image, San Juan has gone ahead using formalism to reveal other perspectives from which these works may be viewed. "Integrity, clarity and harmony of form" have become the primary concern.²⁶

ABADILLA AND HERNANDEZ: TWO TRADITIONS IN TAGALOG POETRY

Any study of modern Tagalog poetry has to contend with the works of Amado V. Hernandez, a poet noted more for his social consciousness than for his use of Western technique; and Alejandro G. Abadilla, the poet-iconoclast who has tried almost single-handedly to change the direction of Tagalog poetry in theme and technique. San Juan's evaluation of their poetry is indicative of his critical thinking in the early stage.

The assessment of the two widely differing poetic sensibilities displays a remarkable degree of tolerance; never does he insist that one body of poetry is superior to the other. This approach would allow for a diversity of poems that poets working within different poetic traditions can create. The works of these two writers illustrate the two traditions operative in Tagalog poetry. They "exemplify two different commitments, one oriented toward the purely personal meditation of life, the other toward social satire and public commentary."²⁷

25. "Ang Halimbawa ni Jose de la Cruz (Huseng Sisiw)," *Dimensions* (November 1968): 18-19.

26. "The Form of Jose Corazon de Jesus' 'Ang Pagbabalik,'" *General Education Journal* 2 (1966-67): 7.

27. "Cultural Resurgence," p. 16.

In a lengthy essay, San Juan tries to justify Abadilla's concern with the self by admitting that the poet's decision to withdraw from the world of recognizable reality is an act of revolt preceded by a confrontation with actual historical reality. From this reality where everything has grown dull and stale the poet escapes in order to create his own world where there is "justification of word and deed."²⁸ It does not matter if in this gesture there are suicidal implications; the primary responsibility of the poet is to his calling. Consequently, he answers only the demands of his chosen profession.

At first glance, Abadilla's poetry fits the pattern of a highly formalized mode of perceiving reality. San Juan repeatedly points out the poet's possession of *virtu*, defined as "the power that motivates the quest of an image of the self through which the world resolves the conflicting elements of experience."²⁹ He also praises Abadilla for his ability to transcend the laws of scientific-religious determinism; the poet succeeds in doing this because of his integrity to the self. But the more the poet withdraws into his private self, the more limited his poetry becomes, for his themes necessarily revolve around the restricted world of the ego. In the final analysis, Abadilla's poetry is not qualitatively different from the narcissistic poetry of contemporary Western poets like e. e. cummings and Ezra Pound.

The poetry of Amado V. Hernandez, the poet at the opposite end of the pole, is perfect material for a perceptive analysis of content; his works articulate the need to improve the quality of lived life. Seriousness and genuine concern for the people characterize his works; no dazzling display of technique lures the reader away from the main ideas of the poems. San Juan chooses to explain these works in terms of formal structure rather than the significance of content. He pays close attention to the styles used by the poet — the sublime, the pleasing, and the grotesque. The analysis shows how the poet's use of a certain style reinforces the theme; for example, most of the longer poems in *Isang Dipang Langit* (1961) make use of a sublime tone comparable to that employed in the biblical psalms or Whitman's poetry. However, he does not disregard the material and the poet's fidelity to the

28. "The World of Abadilla," in Alejandro G. Abadilla, *Piniling Mga Tula ni AGA* (San Juan: Limbagang Pilipino, 1965), p. 12.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

complex facets of experience. Instead of escaping from that deep, dark void, Hernandez has chosen to confront it and to grapple with the forces of injustice and greed:

Isang maliwanag na katibayan ang kanyang palagiang pagtingin sa karanasan bilang banyuhay, o metamorphosis, isang pagsulong ng mga kabaligtaran, isang *dialectical process*.³⁰

A clear proof is his abiding view of experience as *banyuhay*, or metamorphosis, a forward movement of the different contradictions, a dialectical process.

This involvement in life is humanism at its best. Hernandez's poetry never becomes doctrinaire because the ideas cannot be summed up in some preaching statements. The only doctrine in his poetry is the belief that everything changes; this concept that informs his poetry makes the poet worthy of being called an artist.³¹

PHILIPPINE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH: IN CRISIS?

It is a mistake to think that San Juan has shown interest only in Tagalog literature, specifically Tagalog poetry. In two articles he turns his attention to Philippine literature in English, a body of writing on which all kinds of critics have expended their effort, probably in the hope of making the majority still addicted to vernacular literature shift their loyalty. For a long time, this collection of works in English has prided itself in being far more advanced than its counterpart — vernacular writing — in terms of craft, technique, and even in having writers and critics schooled in the most advanced literary and critical trends. Nevertheless, San Juan dwells on the deplorable condition of writings in English. He attributes this situation to the lack of competent critics willing to practise their craft objectively, intelligently, and consistently. This dearth of responsible critics has further abetted a tendency among writers to produce amateurish works. Critics like Armando Manalo, Arturo B. Rotor, and Salvador P. Lopez have abandoned their task of providing some coherence and order to the chaotic state of literature in English.

Furthermore, he notes the absence of a "satiric intelligence that is able to portray people from the outside by dispensing with inner

30. "Ang 'Isang Dipang Langit' sa Panulaang Daigdig," *Mga Sanaysay*, p. 46.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

psychology for the purpose of crystallizing certain attitudes into types."³² The amateur quality of literature during the Commonwealth era is traced to the fact that the writers thought of themselves as geniuses who had no need for discipline and exposure to other forms of literature. The so-called socially committed writers of the 1930s are credited with nothing but a "large supply of anger, of passion, of a well-intentioned humanitarian protest."³³ Arguilla is criticized as severely limited, for there is little complexity in his stories.

Other authors receive their share of negative criticism. Those mentioned as lacking in both craft and sensibility are Juan C. Laya, Stevan Javellana, Bienvenido Santos, and Nick Joaquin. Carlos Bulosan is taken to task for believing that "peasants are always helpless victims of the city exploiters"; his work *America is in the Heart* is dismissed as "that masterpiece of Gothic self-pity," and as a "picaresque testament to our romance with a Platonized America."³⁴

As pictured by San Juan, Philippine literature in English is nothing but a grim landscape. What is needed is a comic spirit in the tradition of James Joyce or Henry James — that satiric distance that enables the writer to ridicule society for its weaknesses and follies. This art should be capable of ushering in that detachment called *Verfremdung-effect*. Once this is achieved, certain excesses in literature, like sentimentalism and melodrama, can be curtailed. It is only Nick Joaquin who seems to exhibit this comic spirit. He is called revolutionary because he is an "accurate portraitist of general decadence of society addicted to parodying itself."³⁵

The pattern followed in the analysis of this body of writing shares some affinities with that used in analyzing Tagalog literature. Both seem to opt for literature that is objectified through a conscious exploration of appropriate techniques. It is only by applying this view — that technique is the only means to discovery — that the Filipino writer can ever hope to perfect his craft and thus serve as his nation's artificer.

32. "The Decline of Philippine Writing in English," *Dawn*, 5 September 1969, p. 7.

33. "Philippine Literature in English in Crisis: An Interrogation," *Saint Louis Quarterly* 6 (June 1968): 158.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

THE SECOND PHASE (1970-75): THEORIA AND PRAXIS

Although a Formalist critic in the early phase, San Juan did not abstract literature from life fully. He did show, however, a marked tendency to look at literature primarily as a structure or design that reflects the writer's perception of reality. This approach was conditioned not only by his exposure to various schools of Formalism but also by the prevailing mode of criticism in Philippine literature. By focusing his attention on the text itself, he showed many critics one methodology for elucidating a given work. The first phase, therefore, should be seen as a reaction to the impressionistic, unstructured, personalistic orientation of both traditional and modern critics.

In general, San Juan's criticism sought to relate poetry to the world of the individual, apprehended as an omniscient creator preoccupied with his craft. Even the poetry of Hernandez, the most social of the poets, was analyzed in terms of structure and texture of language. To determine the exact relationship between the writer and life is to succeed in clarifying the poetic process. He insisted, though, on the need for the poet to realize that life is a dialectical process, a metamorphosis. His manner of analysis exhibited his acute awareness of this quality of life; such words as "tension," "opposition," "conflict," "paradox," and "irony" — all of which suggest some form of contradiction — appeared frequently in his essays. Through a complex process, Formalism, which is a twentieth century phenomenon, admits its indebtedness to the Coleridgean dictum (the notion of "reconciliation of opposites") that drew heavily on German philosophy.

In the seventies, San Juan's shift from formalism to something akin to a historico-sociological perspective came as a logical culmination of his realization that no work of art can exist by and for itself alone. The early mode of criticism lacked a historical perspective through which literature is revealed as emerging from concrete situations in reality. By emphasizing literature as mere linguistic artifice, the critic fails to present an honest representation of reality: the individual artist as a product of, to use Taine's famous phrase, "race, moment, milieu."

It is not easy to pinpoint when San Juan decided to switch to another critical approach. The turning point seems to be 1969-70,

for during these years he wrote an increasing number of articles discussing literature not only in terms of form but of content and history. In two separate prefaces, he tries to account for his early Formalist orientation and the reason he has decided to turn against this methodology:

Sanhi sa pagkakatangil sa E.U. pansamantala ng panahong iyon, ang pamamaraan na tinaguriang "New Criticism," naluna ang masinop na pag-analisis ng istruktura o porma ng tula tiwalag sa kalagayang panlipunan at pangkasaysayan ng akda, ang namayani sa ilang pag-aaral na kalakip nito.³⁶

Because of my temporary stay in the United States at that time, the method called "New Criticism," especially the careful analysis of structure and form of the poem, dissociated from the social and historical conditions of the work, prevailed in some of the studies included here.

In another preface, he makes the following admission:

Gradually I soon learned that without a historicist and materialist grounding, the partially valid insights of existentialism, Freudian rationalism, archetypal speculations, phenomenology, and other idealist styles of thought, would never lead to an objective revolutionary understanding of life — of the reality of one's specific time and place judged in concrete perspective.³⁷

His essays during the second phase go into both literary theory and literary criticism with ideas culled from Hegel, Marx, Mao Tse-Tung, and the Hungarian critic, George Lukacs. These are marred by his own inability to decide whether he wants to discuss Marxism under the guise of literary theorizing or to concentrate on actual literary works and analyze them using the Marxist approach. One feels that it is the first alternative that fascinates San Juan more; sometimes the work being studied gets lost in a maze of ideas taken from various thinkers and theorists.

THE RADICAL TRADITION IN PHILIPPINE LITERATURE

Drawing his new standards and theories from Marxism, San Juan examines Philippine literature and asserts that the tradition of Philippine literature is essentially progressive and revolutionary. This tradition is defined as "an agent for transforming reality with a radical critique of actual conditions."³⁸ The continuity of this

36. "Paunang Salita," *Mga Sanaysay*, p. v.

37. "Preface," *The Radical Tradition in Philippine Literature* (Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Co., 1971), pp. ii–iii.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

tradition is proved in the works extending from Balagtas through Rizal, Lope K. Santos, and Carlos Bulosan, to Amado V. Hernandez, who, each in his own way, have affirmed the "fidelity of the imagination to the historical truth of life."³⁹

In another selection, the same idea is more thoroughly explored by including the whole of Philippine culture. The article, "Radicalism in Contemporary Philippine Culture," later appeared as an appendix in his *Radical Tradition in Philippine Literature* (1971). Although the Revolution failed to universalize its coercive powers, he asserts, nevertheless it "succeeded in mobilizing the resources of the imagination to destroy, construct, to criticize and elucidate, for the purpose of synthesizing heterogeneous elements in an organic whole."⁴⁰

If one were to look for an equivalent of the survey articles written in the early period of Formalism, there is only this one article attempting to present a panoramic view of culture from a different perspective. Where before, literature was perceived as the tangible result of an artist fashioning his material to produce an artifact, now, literature is seen as a reflection of the discords that exist between the individual and society. In this rather rambling essay, the critic touches on the different aspects of culture — literature, music, painting, sculpture — to prove his thesis.

RADICALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: BALAGTAS AND RIZAL

It is in other articles that San Juan clarifies what he really means by the radical tradition through simultaneous utilization of literary theory and practical criticism. Although fewer articles during the second period actually deal with Philippine literature, they present a more formidable task because of the language, the tone, and the general pose assumed by the critic.

In *Balagtas: Art and Revolution*, probably the first long study making use of a Marxist approach, San Juan tries to disprove the claims of some critics that the *awit* is simply a pastiche of traditional motifs derived from *comedias* and *moro-moros* contemporaneous with the author. On the contrary, the work shows that

39. *Ibid.*

40. "Radicalism in Contemporary Philippine Culture," *Diliman Review* 17 (October 1969): 324.

the poet "is engaged in a confrontation with the ambiguity of action, the problematic of will and the diabolic propensity in the self."⁴¹ In 1969 when he wrote this book, San Juan seemed to be grappling with his own personal demon; he was not yet the committed Marxist thinker that he would be later. This is evident in the slightly Marxist framework, but with a great deal of influence from sociology and existentialism, in his articulation of the poem's theme:

Florante is a sustained poetic interrogation about the nature of justice, truth, and the human commitment to socio-political equity. It concerns the meaning of oath and contract, promise and betrayal, individualism and solidarity. It concerns historical relations: between father and son, between lover and beloved, Christian and Muslim, man and woman. Love (piety) and force (heroism), passion and society, are counterpointed to the mutable responses of the characters. Balagtas wrestles ultimately with the dialectic interaction between reason and reality, being and consciousness, what is actual and possible.⁴²

It is important first to discuss briefly the fields explored by the early San Juan and the later San Juan. For the most part, the kind of poetry studied in the early period belonged to the category of lyric poetry — the field of explication where Formalism may reign supreme. Men in concrete action cannot be featured prominently in this kind of literature. Among the genres, it is the novel (in the past, it was the epic) that can depict men set against a definite historical milieu. It is also one genre where the narration of events supersedes mere static description of people and place. Consequently, in this second phase, San Juan deliberately refrains from using lyric poetry as illustrations of his tenets; instead he chooses the longer works — the *awit*, the novel, the short story, and the poetry of Rio Alma, Rogelio Mangahas, and Amado V. Hernandez.

Balagtas's long narrative poem lends itself readily to this kind of historical criticism. Thus, although at times the critic seems to show his indebtedness to the other critical perspectives, notably the psychological (Freudian), formalistic (in his linguistic analysis of some sections), archetypal (victim-hero-redeemer motif), his basic approach is historico-sociological. For him the narrative is a reflection of the individualistic spirit threatening the system of monarchy and feudalism. Adolfo and Ali Adab of Persia are negative

41. *Balagtas: Art and Revolution* (Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Co., 1969), p. 3.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4

examples of individualism while Aladin and Florante are positive illustrations. In the long run, *Florante* fails:

Balagtas certainly envisaged the conflict and subsequent struggle of social groups to resolve the inner contradictions of life. But since he subscribes to a charismatic solution, he is unable but obliquely to project the class as an economic unit. . . . Balagtas's notion of class is at best existential, somewhat analogous to Malraux's Faustian martyrs of the Absurd.⁴³

Despite its limitations the significance of the poem lies in the fact that Rizal might have been influenced by this first narrative secular poem when he envisioned his novels.

In another long essay, San Juan turns his attention to the two novels of Rizal — *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. He calls Rizal the "typical bourgeois of his time, an *ilustrado* of the rising merchant-proprietor class that collided with the feudal theocratic system of Spanish imperialism."⁴⁴ His novels were written not merely to create a beautiful artifice but to delineate the conditions of a given historical epoch.

Noli is an analysis of the forces of society. It shows how the experiences of men in society are determined by the class positions they are identified with. These determinants are shown in the ideas which underlie the actions of Elias, Ibarra, Padre Damaso, Maria Clara and other characters. Although there is a real attempt to particularize them, they never lose their typical physiognomy (in the words of Lukacs), which only goes to prove that the characters are made secondary to the actions unfolded in the novel. However, in the final analysis, the novel "unfolds the impotence of the ego to fulfill its autonomous project in a milieu where large collective forces are at war."⁴⁵

San Juan reduces the unity of events recorded in *El Filibusterismo* to an obsession in Simoun's ego to bring about the destruction of the whole system in order to be reconciled once more with Maria Clara, his sweetheart. As the novel ends, there is nothing but nihilism. The main argument that informs the novel is the "fate of the bourgeois subjectivist will as it swiftly deteriorates into irrational absolutism."⁴⁶

What then is the significance of Rizal's novels? To isolate certain

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

44. *The Radical Tradition*, p. 9.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

parts from the novels and extract dogma or prescription is fatal. The works are to be seen in their totality; they are an acute reflection of the "dialectical mode of conceiving the material of social-historical life and the dynamic contradictions and the law of motion of social experience."⁴⁷

COMMITMENT IN SANTOS, HERNANDEZ, ALMA,
AND MANGAHAS

Unlike in the early phase when San Juan chose only minor writers for explication, in the second phase he studies all major figures. The common denominator used is the high degree of social consciousness that informs most of their works; theirs is a literature of protest in the tradition of Bonifacio and Del Pilar. Their works may be technically wanting, for an exquisite perfection of form is not an outstanding trait of these pieces. Yet they are probably the kind of literature that communicates those facets of experience that have particular relevance to the lives of the majority. San Juan uses the writings of these men to prove that the radical tradition begun in the nineteenth century is the reason for the existence of significant Philippine literature in the twentieth century.

From among the novels written not only during the so-called "Golden Age" (1905–1921), but in the whole history of the Tagalog novel, only Lope K. Santos's *Banaag at Sikat* (1906) is picked out as illustrative of Marxist dialectics. In rather extravagant terms, the novel is called "the first literary work of magnitude by a Filipino writer which amply renders in dramatic terms the inner contradictions of a specific socio-economic formation and the dialectic of class forces which governs the development of the whole society and its fabric of ideas, tastes, values and norms."⁴⁸ San Juan defends the novel from adverse criticism which faults it as being too discursive and therefore anti-literary by contending that a genuine representation of reality can only be done through characters whose thinking and orientation as they are articulated may help clarify the forces that affect the individuals' lives in a given society.

It is too easy to look at the novel as a detailed story of the lives

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p. 48.

of the rich and the poor or as a series of pictures of early customs and mores in the tradition of *Costumbrismo* or even of Paterno's *Ninay* (1885). But San Juan insists the novel should be regarded as a critique of a definite system through an exhaustive analysis of class relations. Its particular relevance to the contemporary period derives from its success in rendering concrete social types common at the turn of the century.⁴⁹

The case of Amado V. Hernandez is interesting in relation to San Juan's evolution as a critic. The ideological framework underlying the poet's works which the early San Juan did not really consider fitting material for his exegesis becomes in the second phase the object of scrutiny. Now it is content — the consciousness, the sensibility, actual experiences — that determines the form that literature takes:

It will be sufficient to note that the artistic consciousness which manipulates the techniques and the formal resources of language is oriented towards a socialist realism born from personal experience, from the pangs of human transactions, from the anguish of class struggles and confrontations, from hope in man's reason and intelligence.⁵⁰

Among the writers studied by San Juan, it is probably Hernandez who lends himself best to that kind of analysis that seeks to show that the artist's real mettle is displayed in an actual participation in and commitment to life. His strength springs from his ability to emerge triumphant despite the vicissitudes of fate and the sufferings inflicted by the system.

Of the younger poets who started writing in the sixties, Rio Alma and Rogelio Mangahas have been given tentative evaluations by San Juan. Of Alma's second volume of poetry, *Makinasyon*, he points out:

Ang pagbubunyag ng alienation . . . ay malinaw na pagbubunyag ng kawalan ng kalayaan at pag-iisa ng rason at reyalidad sa buhay ng mga Pilipino. Ang sining ni Rio Alma sa gayon ay tunay na rebolusyonaryo, sapagkat may maigting na dayalektiko ang porma at kalamnan, ang istruktura at tema, ang ayos at mapanuligsang paksa.⁵¹

The revelation of alienation . . . is a clear indication of the absence of freedom and unity between reason and reality in the life of the Filipinos. The art of Rio Alma is hence truly revolutionary, because it shows the

49. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

51. "Sining at Rebolusyon," *Dawn*, 16 May 1969, p. 7.

acute dialectics between matter and form, structure and theme, design and satiric matter.

Comments on the poetry of Mangahas are similar to those on Alma's. His analysis of Mangahas' poem "Tungkol sa 'Mga Duguang Plakard'" uses the work as springboard for discussing his notions on the proper relationship between the revolutionary artist and Philippine society.⁵²

IDEOLOGY AND PHILIPPINE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

According to the early San Juan, the most glaring defect of Philippine literature in English was the absence of the comic spirit. This is not his judgment in his second phase, even as he elects to view this body of writing from another perspective.

One of the earliest attempts to analyze an aspect of Philippine writing in English from a Marxist viewpoint is his carefully formulated study of Laya's prize-winning novel, *His Native Soil* (1940). "Laya's principle is essentially dialectic; his typical characters reveal in their predicaments the momentous collisions of forces and tendencies implicit in society."⁵³ What distinguishes this novel from the stories written by Manuel Arguilla and N. V. M. Gonzalez, both of whom also depicted provincial life, is Laya's understanding of the material bases of social existence and its historical determinism.

Commonly dismissed as sentimental and preachy, *His Native Soil* is revealed as more than just a story of the hero's return from America to his town and subsequent flight because of disillusionment. San Juan painstakingly shows the clash of forces in a typical town in Luzon in the 1920s; the characters themselves appear as distinct types commonly encountered during that time. The novel is a severe indictment of liberal individualism and its futile absurd idealism, as represented by Martin Romero, the novel's protagonist.⁵⁴

Another writer in English who has been largely ignored is Carlos Bulosan, the Filipino expatriate in the United States. In 1972,

52. "Tungkol sa 'Mga Duguang Plakard' ni Rogelio Mangahas," in Rogelio Mangahas, *Mga Duguang Plakard* (Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Co., 1971), p. 23.

53. "Juan C. Laya's *His Native Soil* and the Limits of Bourgeois Liberal Individualism," *Diliman Review* 18 (July 1970): 191.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

San Juan published a full-length book, *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of the Class Struggle*. For the first time, unpublished documents and letters of the writer were included to introduce to his own countrymen this tortured individual hiding behind the facade popularized by his *Laughter of My Father*. By using a biographical-sociological-historical approach, the man is presented never objectively, but as filtered by the consciousness of both the subject (Bulosan) and the critic (San Juan). It is the account of Bulosan's life which makes it succeed more than any of the other critical works belonging to this second period, in illuminating certain aspects of the writer's life without the critic getting too much in the way. Oftentimes San Juan lets Bulosan narrate his own gripping story of dreams and failures in America.

While the analysis of Laya's novel and the study on Bulosan have both been limited to an exploration of the content, viewed from a Marxist framework, two other essays display an attempt to situate Philippine literature in English against a historical background where American imperialism occupies a prominent part. Jose Garcia Villa, the well-known poet in English noted for his individualistic poems that celebrate the self, is described as a writer who "represents this dwindling clique of aristocratic intellectuals and artists who . . . are today caught in a perilous dilemma."⁵⁵ Villa is only one of those writers hampered by their petty-bourgeois individualism. English, the medium used by most of them, merely serves to bind them more tightly to the colonizers; even their much vaunted models of literary excellence come from the West. To this generation (educated in the forties and surviving into the fifties and sixties) belongs N. V. M. Gonzalez. Of this writer's works San Juan says:

His novels project a self-conscious elaboration of artificial subterfuges to satisfy the standards of bourgeois criticism. They were written chiefly for the intelligentsia or the connoisseurs of paradox, irony and symbolism.⁵⁶

Leonard Casper, an American critic who has written several volumes of criticism dealing with Philippine literature in English, is also criticized for perpetuating the fallacies of Formalism.⁵⁷

55. "U.S. Imperialism and Philippine Literature," *Asia-Philippines Leader* (15 September 1972), p. 10.

56. "U.S. Imperialism and Philippine Literature," *Asia-Philippines Leader* (22 September 1972), p. 14.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 424. For Leonard Casper's rejoinder, see "The Critic of Philippine Literature as Provocateur," in *Philippine Studies: Geography, Archaeology, Psychology and Literature*, edited by Frederick Wernstedt et al., Center of Southeast Asian

In these articles, San Juan seeks to clarify the manner in which writers have become, whether consciously or unconsciously, instruments of imperialism. In Philippine literature the use of Western literary works and critical canons against which native literary pieces are evaluated may be an indication of imperialism. Such uncritical openness prevents the Filipino writer from determining what Philippine literature has been so far and what it should be in a concrete historical context.

CONCLUSION

San Juan's earlier period revealed a marked tendency to hew closely to the critical assumptions and theories of leading American and English New Critics. Consequently, his numerous essays stressed the need to begin with the text itself and to evaluate it objectively without resorting to external data (the author's life, the history of the period). This, in perspective, was his reaction to earlier Philippine literary criticism practised by those who tended to discuss everything but the text. With this demand for respect for the work itself came his views on the necessity of freeing modern Tagalog writing, specifically poetry, from a servile attitude to certain outdated and irrelevant poetic conventions. San Juan considered Balagtas and those who followed him, mostly major poets like Jose Corazon de Jesus and Aniceto Silvestre, as having been responsible for the languishing state of Tagalog poetry. The writer must change as does reality, which is in a constant flux; language has to be constantly harnessed and its possibilities explored, since it is the only vehicle that can contain ever-changing reality.

What is the significance of the first phase?

First, San Juan forced the reader-critic to pay close attention to the text itself; the proper field of explication is the material of the work. By discussing and later illustrating what he meant by design, structure, irony, objective correlative, impersonality, and other related concepts, he showed the possibility of creating new poetry which is in the tradition of modernism. He is also one of the few critics who tried to cultivate a healthy respect for language.

Secondly, by actually demonstrating his theories (for example,

in his analysis of the traditional poems of de Jesus and Jose de la Cruz), he paved the way toward making literary criticism an instrument for exploring the rich ambiguity of the text. This proves that a work can be approached in a variety of ways, all designed to reveal the complex nuances of the piece.

Thirdly, taken as a whole, his criticism in the first phase constitutes one definite methodology — formalism — that is structured, coherent, and objective. This methodology is especially relevant to the study of lyric poetry, which is a popular form in Tagalog literature.

There are, however, some weaknesses in San Juan's approach in this phase. In the first place, his survey articles tend to create a vague impression of the exact relationship between history and literature. Despite his intention to show the development of Philippine literature, he seems too much of a formalist — a habit of mind that prevented him from discussing history's impact on literature. His treatment of history and its literary products is sometimes lopsided. Moreover, his extreme modernism has made him blind to some positive benefits to be derived from the literary tradition initiated in the past.

Secondly, the articles on minor poets like Flores and Bautista can easily lead the reader to believe that the works of these poets are much more significant than the writings of the more traditional poets like de Jesus and Ildefonso Santos. By stressing the need for cultivating qualities one usually associates with the Symbolists or Imagists, he unjustifiably casts doubt on the validity of the writings produced in the tradition of Balagtas.

Finally, too much attention to the text can be fatal, as the critic himself realized later. This preoccupation makes for literature that is dissociated from shared realities; whatever is created may be universal but not necessarily Filipino, as illustrated by the poetry of Alejandro G. Abadilla.

The second phase in San Juan's career is too close to the present to evaluate definitely. However, some comments are in order, if only to clarify the position the critic has assumed in relation to Philippine literature in general.

First, by insisting on the view that literature is essentially a reflection of the lives of men in a particular society, San Juan has sought to correct an imbalance caused by the prevalent belief (subscribed to even now by many critics in English) that literature can be studied in a vacuum.

Secondly, his study of the radical tradition in Philippine literature reveals an area which can still be explored by future critics. Although at times his analysis tends to spill over into vague generalities, his thesis points to a very real presence of this tradition that has informed literature from Balagtas to the writers of the seventies.

It is important to note, however, that most of the articles written during this period are marred by one flaw: a maze of theories and critical concepts hides the work being analyzed. As exercises in literary criticism, they serve to obscure rather than clarify the meaning of the selections being scrutinized. Of the articles written during this period, only those dealing with Laya and Bulosan succeed in elucidating the texts from a Marxist framework; this clarity is traceable to the critic's unobtrusive presence even as he tries to illumine the text through his interpretation.

Furthermore, San Juan gives the impression that he is practising a prejudiced kind of criticism. As one critic pointed out, he approaches the work with a predetermined point of view. His analysis is thus an attempt to make the work conform to this preconceived notion.⁵⁸

Lastly, by resorting to a highly specialized language, obscure references, and positively mind-boggling structure and syntax, San Juan alienates his readers, and not merely those of the masses for whom he is supposed to write. This difficulty posed by his language was evident as early as the first essays and has become more obvious, proving a definite barrier to understanding in his later works.

Still, Epifanio San Juan, Jr., is one of the few significant critics who have devoted their attention to vernacular literature. Any serious student of literature will thus have to consider San Juan in any undertaking that seeks to trace the development of literary criticism as a distinct genre in Philippine literature.

58. Joseph Galdon, S.J., "The Bulosan Odyssey," *Philippine Studies* 21 (1973): 217.

SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SAN JUAN'S
WORKS, 1964-1975

A. Books

1969

Balagtas: Art and Revolution. Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Company.

This is an analysis of Balagtas's *Florante at Laura* (1838) from a definite viewpoint which tries to show how this *awit* is a literary reflection of the disparate forces at work in the country during the first half of the nineteenth century. The whole study makes use of a highly specialized language one would usually associate with philosophy (Hegelian, Sartrian), economics, psychology, and other disciplines. Despite its weaknesses, the discussion is still valuable not only as an index into San Juan's critical beliefs but as an interpretation of a classic in Tagalog literature.

1971

The Radical Tradition in Philippine Literature. Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Company.

This work is an attempt to show the existence of a radical tradition in Philippine literature. San Juan shows the continuity of the tradition in the works of Rizal, Lope K. Santos, Amado V. Hernandez, Carlos Bulosan, Rio Alma, and Jose Maria Sison. The approach is basically Marxist. In general, the works are used as springboards for the critic's discussion of his own theories. Consequently, there is a blurring of distinction between the work's objective reality and the critic's subjective views.

A *Preface to Pilipino Literature*. Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House.

This slim volume contains three essays (all earlier published in journals) that try to show the development of Pilipino literature from the pre-Spanish period to the present. For annotation of the three essays, see bibliography for articles. The book's importance lies in the selected bibliography of Philippine literature provided at the end.

1972

γ *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of the Class Struggle*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Compared to the earlier works, this is a fairly lucid attempt to place Carlos Bulosan, the Filipino expatriate in America, in the proper historical perspective. San Juan allows the writer to reveal himself in the letters that have not been published before.

1975

Ang Sining ng Tula: Mga Sanaysay sa Panunuring Pampanitikan. Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House.

This is so far the most recently published volume by San Juan, but is the most formalistic in approach. The work is essentially a compilation of essays written between 1964 and 1966 and published variously in *Taliba*, *Katas*, *Panitikan*, and other magazines. The articles deal either with San Juan's literary theories (frequently derived from New Criticism) or actual explication of texts, mostly Tagalog poems.

B. Articles

1964

"'Sa Wakas ng Halakhak': Isang Eksplikasyon," *Katas*, July.

This first published article is a detailed analysis of the form and structure of Amado Hernandez's poem. This method will be his principal approach in later essays.

1965

"Traktatus Tungo sa Pagbuo ng Sining ng Tulang Tagalog," *Dawn*, 14 May, pp. 6-7.

His main thesis here is that change informs everything: taste, philosophy, literature, and criticism. This article is perhaps the earliest demonstration of actual literary theorizing with ideas taken from Goethe, Schelling, Eastman, and Eliot. Parts of it deal with the criticism and achievements of such Filipino critics as Lope K. Santos, Regalado, Monleon, and Pedro Ricarte.

"Ang Bagong Panahon at Kinabukasan ng Panulaang Pilipino," *Dawn*, 13 August, p. 7.

This is a part of the Introduction to San Juan's own collection of poetry, *Ang Halaga ng mga Bagay-bagay sa Buhay Dito sa Lupa Ngayon*. The critic argues for the need for the Filipino writer to open himself up to complex reality; the writer does it through craft.

"Ang 'Isang Dipang Langit' sa Panulaang Daigdig," *Taliba*, September.

San Juan asserts that Hernandez derives his significance as a poet from his ability to create a particular structure of symbolic narration or anecdote dealing with a basic truth. This structure contains Hernandez's concept of reality as a dialectical process.

"Ang Lakas ni Dionysus sa Tula ni MCS," *Panitikan* (October): 17-24. San Juan does a formalistic study of Manuel Car. Santiago's *Buhay at Iba Pang Tula*. His thesis is that a Dionysian consciousness enables the poet to work wonders with language so that the most ordinary experience

is endowed with mystery. This is the first of a series of formalistic studies in *Panitikan*.

"Mga Dula ng Pagkatao sa mga Tulang Tagalog ni Federico Licsi Espino," *Panitikan* (October): 22-27.

For San Juan, Espino's achievement lies in his ability to create a form of structure that contains the complex experiences and consciousness that are given their meaning through the use of symbol and dramatic rendering.

"Damdamin at Talinghaga sa mga Tula ni Manuel Principe Bautista," *Panitikan*, pp. 21-24.

A minor Tagalog poet is evaluated in this essay which is notable for its discussion of Eliot's "objective correlative" in the context of Bautista's poems.

"Kaisahan ng Sagisag at Kahulugan sa Mga Tula ni Pedro Ricarte," *Panitikan*, pp. 19-23.

This shows an intelligent reading of the poetry of Pedro Ricarte, a leading poet-critic in Pilipino literature. San Juan shows how the poet prevents his poetry from being too abstract and philosophical by paying attention to the literal meaning of his poems.

"Cultural Resurgence in Tagalog Literature," *Literature East and West* 9 (Winter): 16-26. Also in *Preface to Pilipino Literature*.

This article presents an overall view of Philippine literature in the twentieth century with special emphasis on the poetry of the first fifty years. An important section deals with the state of Philippine literary criticism.

"The World of Abadilla," in Alejandro G. Abadilla, *Piniling Mga Tula ni AGA*. San Juan, Rizal: Limbagang Pilipino, pp. 1-14.

A long introduction to the poetry of Abadilla, this essay seeks to explain the major strands and influences in the poet's works.

1966

"Mga Tagahawan ng Landas sa Larangan ng Panitikang Pilipino," *Dawn*, 15 January, p. 7.

This is a short essay that tries to prove that the *ladino* poets of the eighteenth century were real artificers. San Juan's analysis of the poems of Bagongbanta and Ossorio is perceptive.

"Ang Daigdig ng Pandama," *Panitikan* (April): 7-10.

Another minor Tagalog poet, Gonzalo Flores, becomes the object of San Juan's critical appraisal. For the critic, the main quality of Flores' works is the use of the senses in recreating inner experience.

"Teo Baylen: Ang Estilo ng Propeta," *Panitikan* (October): 4-9.

Teo Baylen is one of the few traditional poets on whom San Juan writes a whole article. San Juan's critical bias against poetry that preaches a moral truth is quite evident in this study.

"Panitikan: A Critical Introduction to Tagalog Literature," *Asian Studies* 10 (December): 412-30.

A more or less objective presentation of the different movements and trends that have characterized the development of Pilipino literature. It is, however, uneven in its analysis of both periods and genres. This study is similar to another essay, "Cultural Resurgence in Tagalog Literature."

"Introduction," *Rice Grains: Selected Poems of Amado V. Hernandez*. Trans. Epifanio San Juan. New York: International Publishers, pp. 9-12.

The ideas in this introduction have already been discussed in earlier essays on Hernandez in Pilipino. The emphasis is still on structure and form although there is an attempt to show how the poems are reactions not only to deeply felt private emotions but also to some experiences that have public or social significance.

"Translation and Philippine Poetics," *East-West Review* (Summer): 279-90.

This also appears as Appendix in *Preface to Pilipino Literature*. A study of the craft of translation in both prose and poetry, this discussion is especially valuable for those interested in doing some translation. The approach used is heavily influenced by Western books on the craft of translation as a discipline.

1967

"Forms of Experience in Literature," *University College Journal* (xeroxed) pp. 1-7.

This contains a detailed discussion of the linguistic structure of poetry. Drawing from Formalism, San Juan explains what he means by "forms of experience."

1968

"Philippine Literature in Crisis: An Interrogation," *Saint Louis Quarterly* 6 (June): 155-70.

The first article dealing with the basic weaknesses of writing in English. The tone is critical of the whole body of literature written in English. He alleges that the only way to improve the quality of literature is for the writers to cultivate the comic spirit or ironic detachment.

"Social consciousness and Revolt in Modern Philippine Poetry," *Books Abroad* (Autumn): 394-99. Also in *Preface*.

The article traces the development of social consciousness in Philippine poetry. San Juan sees it first in *Florante at Laura*, in Lope K. Santos, and finally in Amado Hernandez.

"Ang Halimbawa ni Huseng Sisiw," *Dimension* (November): 18-19.

This is a clear example of how a modern critic schooled in Western methodologies can use his craft to illumine poetry written as part of another literary tradition. San Juan analyzes some of the poet's extant lyrics.

1969

"Introduksiyon," in Teo S. Baylen, *20 Tulang Tagalog ni Teo S. Baylen*. Cavite: Cavite Printing Press. pp. iv-v.

This study credits Baylen with the ability to fuse two concerns in his poetry: a social or moral consciousness and the highly sensuous and effective manner of conveying the theme. Unlike an earlier essay on Baylen, this discussion does not take the poet to task for moralizing.

"Sining at Rebolusyon: Ilang Puna sa *Makinasyon* ni Rio Alma," *Dawn*, 16 May, p. 7.

This is indicative of the shift in the critic's orientation. There is still emphasis on form, but this is balanced by a deep preoccupation with the poet's material: the sense of alienation that grips contemporary men.

"Parirala at Pabaligho sa mga Tula ni Amado V. Hernandez," *Dawn*, 31 May, p. 7.

This essay presents a study of some of Hernandez's most famous and frequently anthologized poems. The approach is still basically formalistic.

"The Decline of Philippine Writing in English," *Dawn*, 5 September.

The ideas discussed here are the same as those presented in an earlier article, "Philippine Literature in Crisis: An Interrogation."

"Radicalism in Contemporary Philippine Culture," *Diliman Review* 17 (October): 324-42.

This essay presents the different aspects of Philippine culture to prove the thesis that there is indeed a tradition of radicalism in our culture. It is rather impressionistic and rambling in some sections.

1970

"Introduksiyon sa Dayalektika," *Dawn*, 9 January, p. 7.

It is probably his first enunciation of the theory of Marx seen from the framework of Hegelian dialectical idealism.

"Juan C. Laya's *His Native Soil* and the Limits of Bourgeois Individualism," *Diliman Review* 18 (July): 191-231.

Laya's novel has not been accorded the treatment it rightfully deserves. San Juan's lengthy study, made from a definite Marxist point of view, is a genuine contribution toward making this novel a literary work worthy of other studies using diverse approaches.

"Introduksiyon," in Rio Alma, *Peregrinasyon at Iba Pang Tula*. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press.

This introduction is a further illustration of San Juan's involvement with Marxism as framework for critical analysis.

"Prolegomena to Philippine Poetics," *Comparative Literature Studies* 7 (June): 179-94. Also in *Preface*.

A literary survey of Tagalog poetry. This is where San Juan makes his assertion that the Filipino writer's salvation lies in his craft.

"Si Abadilla Ngayon: Weltanschauung at ang Sining ng Tulang Pilipino," *Ang Diwa*, October.

Basically the same as his "Introduction" (1965).

"Introduction," in Jose A. Burgos, *La Loba Negra*. Quezon City: Malaya Books. A study of an alleged work of Father Burgos (proved to be a fraud by historians). For San Juan, this work is a "primer for the radical critique and transformation of human destiny in our time."

1971

"Carlos Bulosan and the Class Struggle," *Solidarity* (September): 17-25. See the book on Bulosan.

This brief article contains the germs of some crucial ideas that San Juan will amplify in his book on Bulosan.

"Tungkol sa 'Mga Duguang Plakard' ni Rogelio Mangahas," in Rogelio Mangahas, *Mga Duguang Plakard*. Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Company. An essay in Mangahas's volume of activist poetry. The critic singles out one specific poem of Mangahas and proceeds to analyze it, using a Marxist framework.

1972

"Introduksiyon," *1 Mayo 1971*. Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Company.

He explains the need for literature to be attuned to the pressing needs of the times. It is through art that an artist may help bring about genuine freedom.

"Ang Sining at Panitikan sa Rebolusyon Kultural." (pamphlet) Manila: Surian ng Wikang Pambansa.

This is actually an address delivered during the commemorative rites for Balagtas. San Juan takes this opportunity to discuss the reasons why Balagtas has lost his particular relevance to contemporary Philippine life: the poet's work was not an accurate mirror of what life was during his time. This is also where San Juan repudiates in very strong terms his former formalistic orientation.

"U.S. Imperialism and Philippine Literature," *Asia-Philippines Leader* (15 September): 10, 43-44; (22 September): 14, 41-42.

In two lengthy articles for a popular magazine, San Juan delivers his tirade against American imperialism and its disastrous effects on Philippine literature in English. He questions the kind of literature produced by some of the major writers in English, like Villa and Gonzalez.

1973

"Reactionary Ideology in Philippine Culture," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 4 (reprint): 414-26.

This the same as the articles published in *Asia-Philippines Leader*.

The only additional material is the conclusion which did not come out because of the declaration of Martial Law.

1975

"Introduction," *Florante at Laura* (xeroxed).

This is a much more coherent presentation of San Juan's beliefs about the real significance of Balagtas's masterpiece.