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## Aspects of Philippine Writing in English

Petronilo Bn. Daroy

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## Aspects of Philippine Writing in English

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PETRONILO BN. DAROY

OUR Literature in English is an expression of the Filipino middleclass. English was made the medium of instruction in our system of education in 1900, and as the official medium of communication in the bureaucracy. So that in the social dispensation established by the United States, English became an instrument for the acquisition of status and a requirement for employment. It is possible to say, therefore, that it was the English language that created the new middleclass in the Philippines, just as it was Spanish, in a sense, that created the *ilustrado* in the previous colonial regime. The instrument for the conferment of this status was the educational system, and it was also in the classrooms of our colleges and universities that Philippine literature developed, in the pages of student publications like *The College Folio*, *The Philippine Collegian*, the *Green and White*, *The Varsitarian*, *The Quill*, etc. The authorship and readership of the literature, therefore, were bound together in the same social class, although they did not necessarily share the same "culture."

This intimate connection between literature and the new middleclass explains the preoccupation of Filipino writing in English and also defines its canons. It has been observed that our literature in English is an aspect of a colonial culture;

I think it is more accurate to say that it closely derives from middleclass consumption. Just as the Filipino middleclass derived their fashion, cosmetics, architecture, entertainment (the movies), books and magazines from America, the early writing in English borrowed and imitated from the conventions or techniques of Anglo-American authors, especially those taken up in the school and college curriculum. This also accounts for the indiscriminate imitativeness of our early writing in English. "They knew nothing," declared Frank Laubach, referring of course to the Filipinos, "of the English language prior to the American occupation. Their attempts at composing prose and poetry in English have been so full of grammatical errors and mis-use of words. . . ." He might have added that they were also full of pilferage, either of classroom jingles or the more formal poetry included in textbooks.

Consider this verse by Juan F. Salazar, published in the *Philippines Free Press* in 1909, and included in an anthology of poetry edited by Rodolfo Dato (*Filipino Poetry*, 1924): "Vacation days at last are here/And we have time for fun so dear/All boys and girls do gladly cheer/This welcome season of the year." In Fernando M. Maramag's "To the Southwind" published in 1912, we find Shelley's "West Wind" indeed not so far behind: "Bare to me thy secrets/Thou truant wind." Three years later, Mauro Mendez virtually repeats the first line of Thomas Gray's *Elegy*: "Soft fades the glimmering April day/Behind the hills. . . fades like a scene. . . ." In 1924 we hear the tone of Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sara Teasdale or Elinor Wylie. "I knock at the gate of your heart/Only the hollow rustling of dead leaves answers my call/," says Ana Maria Chavez in "The Stranger at the Gate." The best of the early poets, I think, was Angela Manalang Gloria who published her own book of poems in 1940. Here is Emily Dickinson in one of her poems: "I cannot love with a love/That outcompares the boundless sea,/For that were false, as no such love/And no such ocean can ever be./ But I can love you with a love/As futile as the wave that dies/And dying holds from crest to crest/That blue of everlasting skies."

Like the early poems, the early novels in English were clumsy in the handling of language and showed absence of literary craftsmanship "in the tradition of Henry James and Flaubert," says Josefa Lava in her study of the Filipino novel in English. The fact is that the cultural basis of the literature was as yet too thin to support a sustained, complex tradition of the novel. In Zoilo Galang's *Child of Sorrow*, the first Filipino novel in English, published in 1921, or in *Visions of a Sower* (1924), or *Nadia* (1929), or in Luis Serrano's *The Man Who Waited* (1932), the relationships of characters are too simple, usually centered around love and jealousy without any other problem to complicate situations, or the presence of sufficient details to support verisimilitude and credibility. The writer in English had to wait, as it were, for a greater complication in the culture of the middleclass, and for that culture to absorb the texture of Anglo-American literary and intellectual traditions, before he could define his middleclass values against the realities of the national society.

Towards the 1940's something changed, in the way of looking at culture and in the manner of expressing it. Even Angela Manalang Gloria was to neglect her ecstasies for a while to write "1940 A.D.," something like St. Vincent Millay writing about the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Although she continued to retain the lyric voice, her poems became more and more chilling presentiments of what Rafael Zulueta Da Costa, in poetry, and Manuel Arguilla, in fiction, were to write about. "We hear it whirring from above," she says in "1940, A.D.," and then continues to write of proletarians, labor, politics, etc.

The change, no doubt, had something to do with the aspects of culture itself. Shifts in intellectual and literary attitudes and in the conventions and manner of writing usually come as responses to realities in culture itself. The old way of saying things, of expressing culture, was no longer tenable. Besides, as I have indicated, the early models were those Anglo-American writers who, at the turn of the century, were no longer vital in American culture itself. Besides, new in-

fluences were beginning to be felt; new forces and ideas beginning to impinge upon the consciousness and institutions of the 20th century: the first World War which Teodoro Kalaw characterized as having destroyed "the sanctity of individual rights"; the economic collapse of the United States and the resulting New Deal — forces which compelled a shift in the superstructure of the United States and found expression in such works as *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, *The Octopus* by Frank Norris, *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Drieser; the novels of Jack London, and the works of the Muckrakers.

In the Philippines, the attitude towards culture too had to change. The American dispensation had failed to settle the agrarian question and the expropriation of large landed estates; the Sakdals had compelled Quezon to declare a policy of social justice, something like the New Deal in the United States. Industrialization, declared the *New Leader* in an editorial, is hardly being attempted, and where timid attempts are being done, it is concentrated in the city (Manila), whereas, the editorial continued to say, the national problem is to change the feudal economy of the country and extend liberties to the agricultural workers. A new assessment of history was required, and the new middleclass was to employ the equipment they derived from the new educational system and from the colonial culture.

The assessment was initially done by Maximo Kalaw in *The Filipino Rebel* (1932). American colonial policy in the country provided for the participation of Filipinos in civil affairs. This created a condition of society in which the political aspirations and economic ambitions of the middleclass were partially satisfied, although it did not resolve the question of political authority in the country. It did not transfer political power from the American government to the Filipinos; on the contrary, it created "a check", declared Teodoro Kalaw, "placed by the [American] administration upon the people."

In *The Filipino Rebel*, Kalaw dramatizes the implications and ambiguities of this situation. Juanito Lecaros, the central character of the novel, saw the possibilities for his

social ambitions in the new dispensation and took advantage of it by collaborating with the Americans. This precipitated a conflict in his personal relations with Don Pedro Ricafort, who was committed to the cause of independence for the country. The conflict gradually took a larger dimension and presented itself in cultural terms: the issue between the old Hispanic and aristocratic culture versus the materialism of the new generation. (The same conflict is presented in the stories of Nick Joaquin.) On this issue, Ricafort exiles himself to Hongkong while Juanito gradually decays morally. He is elected to the National Assembly, and later becomes a senator and accepts a retainer from the Mindanao Development Company, an American corporation; he is exposed, and later dies.

*The Filipino Rebel* is a bad novel; its failure derives from the fact that Kalaw, as he states in his Preface, is not interested in his characters or in the independent action of the narrative but in reconstructing the political history of the Philippines. Juanito typifies the new generation: ambitious, opportunistic, and flawed by an obsessive materialism. Substantially, as Kalaw himself claims, *The Filipino Rebel* is accurate in portraying the new forces in Philippine society. One of the characters, for instance, is Josefa, a country girl whom Juanito marries during the Revolution but abandons after peace is restored in order to marry the daughter of Don Ricafort. In Josefa, Kalaw breaks the Maria Clara syndrome, the stupid, neurotic woman who cannot decide her own destiny and who submits passively to institutional authority. Josefa has the qualities which Rizal endorsed in his letter to the women of Malolos: instead of being broken by Juanito's desertion, she educates herself, goes to the United States and, on her return to the Philippines, becomes an aggressive leader in the women's suffragette movement, organizing clubs "in every barrio and every town."

Kalaw accepts the myth about education as the great transformer in the democratic order, opening unlimited possibilities for the individual in society. In our literature, the myth was established by Crisostomo Ibarra, although Rizal

properly destroyed it in *El Filibusterismo*. Carlos Bulosan had the same illusions, but his *America is in the Heart* is actually about the destruction of the illusion. Kalaw allows the myth to remain unshattered: rather, at the end of *The Filipino Rebel*, education is accepted as the vivid instrument in reshaping the world.

Juan C. Laya, in *His Native Soil* (1940), a novel which won the Commonwealth Award for Literature, takes up the same theme. *His Native Soil* may be compared to Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* in its presentation of the mediocrity of village life against which the sensibilities and intelligence of the main character, Martin Romero, are pitted. But in a different sense Martin Romero is also Crisostomo Ibarra. He has the same sense of family pride. After an absence of many years he comes back to the country and, finding the society unchanged, decides to transform it through the introduction of liberal ideas. But central to Ibarra's liberalism in the *Noli* is the idea of political reform. Martin, on the other hand, is largely motivated by economic ambitions. If Ibarra gives us the impression of having read Rousseau or John Locke, Martin Romero impresses us as having read Adam Smith and is decided on acting out the ethics of capitalism. In the end, however, he is defeated.

Martin Romero and Juanito Lecaros are spiritual cousins. Juanito openly avows his materialism, but Martin disguises it in terms of a civic concern to change the viewpoint of his people. Laya and Kalaw are divided in their sympathy towards their respective characters. Kalaw condemns Juanito. In Laya, we are to understand that the failure of Martin Romero's economic schemes is a tragedy, that the inert masses are to blame for it.

F. Sionil Jose, in *The Pretenders* (1962), and Bienvenido Santos, in *Villa Magdalena* (1965), continued the chronicle of the Filipino middleclass in post-World War II society. From these two novels we find the middleclass heroes virtually deprived of alternative. What they confront is a world of scarcity, unqualified by any large dimension of alternatives. These no-

vels are characterized by their perception that society is not a context for tragedy, because it offers no possibility of choice. Human relations are sometimes gratuitous, thereby robbed of any moral dimension. Even marriages are not contracted on the basis of love or high passion; they are calculated partnerships. It is easy, therefore, to pervert them into relationships of convenience. Tony Samson, for instance, in Sionil Jose's novel, really intends to marry a cousin, but because of the taboo against incest, leaves the girl, already with child, to go to the United States. The pattern seems to repeat what Kalaw presents in *The Filipino Rebel*: an intelligent young man betraying kinship in his ambition to better himself. Later on we learn that the betrayal is also personal: it is a turning away from one's roots and history. Tony Samson, in *The Pretenders*, marries the daughter of a rich man, but at the moment he finds himself identified with high society, he also discovers its decadence. Actually, his father-in-law is nothing more than a dummy of Chinese, Japanese, and American businessmen. The more Tony Samson comes to know of this society, the more he finds it detestable. It is not only corrupt, but also possesses the power to corrupt others. His highest moment of moral sensitivity comes when he decides to go back to his sister, to his place of origin, after he discovers the infidelity of his wife. He learns, however, that he no longer belongs to it. Rejecting the corrupt world of the elite, he is in turn rejected by his class. He dies symbolically, crushed by a train, the extension of his father-in-law's steel industry.

In *Villa Magdalena* corruption also pervades the aristocratic Conde family, like the smell of the leather tannery, a family concern. The central character is adopted by Don Magno, the husband of one of the Conde sisters, who now manages the family interests. But even before this, we find Alfredo related to Don Magno symbolically: he is a Medallada although he is not actually a kin of Don Magno. But like Don Magno, the narrator is a peasant. His doom, therefore, is defined right at the very beginning of the novel: he shall find acceptance at Villa Magdalena like his name-sake, but he shall also be contaminated by its decay.



*Villa Magdalena* is a very bad novel; it does not rise to the quality and seriousness of Santos' other works, and so there is no point in discussing it at length. But what I cannot understand in this novel and in *The Pretenders* is the uniform way with which wealth is judged: it is necessarily corrupt, ill-gotten, and those who possess it are philistines, vulgar, and they all started poor. In this sense these novels are not too different from *The Filipino Rebel*. The characters who succeed materially later on in their lives, were actually impoverished once, as if this revelation constitutes a moral unmasking, the satisfaction of some latent vindictiveness on those who do not succeed as well. Indeed, the novels do not hesitate to state their moral deductions. In *The Filipino Rebel*, Kalaw states the conclusion explicitly in the Epilogue. In *The Pretenders*, Tony Samson's American friend, Lawrence Bifogel (why does his name sound German?) delivers the epiphany by his exclamation to the business associate who cuckolded Tony: "All of you -- you conspired, you killed Antonio Samson. Why—the poor guy didn't have a chance!" In *Villa Magdalena*, Alfredo's pining for a breath of air signalizes his decision for freedom from the fetid atmosphere of the mansion: "I felt a cool breeze, fresh and sweet, like the touch of a new season." In these novels the class structure of our society has been reduced into a morality play: poverty vs. wealth, with principles on the side of impoverishment. Wealth is corrupt and must be avoided at all cost; in *The Pretenders* even charity is corrupting. Tony's cousin, Emy, refuses his offer of help to educate their child; his sister refuses to accept anything from him while he is identified with the rich, and we are made to understand that these gestures are right. Kerima Polotan, in her essays, shows this same uncritical attitude. Actually, the position is neither an intellectual nor a moral one. We are not told how wealth has become associated with corruption. On the other hand, it is assumed that wealth is absolutely evil. This is debatable. What it amounts to is a simple irritability over a situation which the writer cannot thoroughly comprehend. And the inability of the Filipino

writer in English to understand the reality of scarcity, corruption, wealth, and power which has been the condition for the success or failure of the Filipino middleclass since the Commonwealth — this inability, I say, has also robbed our literature in English of cogency and relevance.

In the more ambitious works, it is the nature of Philippine history and culture which the Filipino writer in English attempts to investigate: the nature of Filipino-American relations (Bienvenido Santos' *The Volcano*), or the implications for the Filipino character of our Hispanic past (Linda Ty Casper's *The Peninsulars*). In *The Filipino Rebel* Kalaw did not thoroughly understand the import of Rizal's statement in his letter to Blumentritt about the *Noli* "containing" the "history of the country in the last ten years." *The Filipino Rebel* is about the history of the country too, as Kalaw indicated in his "Preface" to the novel, but it is a work which remains on that level alone.

In *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, Nick Joaquin assimilates history into the texture of the narrative, rather than allows it to remain a passive backdrop, as it were, as in Kalaw's novel. Connie Vidal finds herself within the grip of two competing forces, the claims of two birthrights—the imaginary two navels — which she tries to resolve desperately. This cultural ambiguity is here presented as a pathology that touches not only Connie Vidal but almost all those with whom she comes in contact, except for an old aristocratic veteran of the Revolution who refuses to leave his room. At one point in the novel, Connie Vidal feels that her "cure" (or expiation) could come from him. But he remains remote—like our European Hispanic past — partly rendered glamorous by distance, partly ugly, partly terrifying. So that Connie Vidal has to seek her own salvation in an independent act of will.

In *The Bamboo Dancers*, the duality of culture manifests, once more, in a neurosis, the homosexuality of Ernie Rama. N. V. M. Gonzalez deals with the more vulgar middleclass. Ernie Rama is akin to Tony Samson in *The Pretenders* and

to Juanito in *The Filipino Rebel*. He is a peasant whom education has catapulted to a status in the middleclass superstructure.

Ernie Rama thinks of himself as a part of a "generation" and this generation has been shaped by the American pocket-book editors, the foundation grants, and the workshops and art or literary seminars of the United States. He indulges in, but does not acknowledge his love for Herb Lane, an American. Later, the American goes to bed with a Filipina, Helen Reves, who seems to be perpetually pregnant with a novel. Neither literature nor child issues from the relationship. It is sterile and doomed by fallout and political riots. Ernie Rama returns to the province and from that rural perspective, begins to fashion art.

Both *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* and *The Bamboo Dancers* follow the tradition of Rizal in their perception of the condition of culture as "pathological." The idea of society as diseased is, however, not properly integrated into the framework of the *Noli*. In Joaquin and Gonzalez pathology is presented in Freudian terms: the individual embodying the social neurosis. Gonzalez, more than Joaquin, is able to project the controlling idea of his novel in terms of social and cultural correlatives: the cross-eyed secretary in the Philippine consulate in Tokyo, the freak carp, the students' riot that killed Herb Lane, and the gathering menacing forms, the atomic holocaust — the mushroom cloud that broods over the entire sophisticated civilization. Against this is contrasted the possibilities of feudal life, the intimacy of familial objects and relationships in the province.

In an extended sense, therefore, N. V. M. Gonzalez works with certain elements of the zarzuela on the Tagalog novel: the drama between farm and urban values, but brings into this theme a high level of seriousness and craftsmanship. In the end, however, he succumbs to the simplification of the values and implications of the conflict in the Tagalog novel: man, defeated by the impersonal and disintegrative forces of the city, goes back to the farm to affirm his personal integ-

rity and humaneness. The whore, in the traditional Tagalog novel becomes, in Gonzalez the lures and blandishments of civilization, its tempting glamour, its fascinating decadence which, in the end, threatens those who succumb to it.

Our literature in English is intimately related with the middleclass culture. Written by middleclass writers, it has principally been pre-occupied with the Filipino middleclass. Sometimes it functions as a chronicle of the history of the middleclass as in *The Filipino Rebel*; sometimes it takes the function of defining middleclass values against a society of increasing complexity and opportunities as in *The Pretenders* and *Villa Magdalena*, or against an inert native society resistant to modernization as in *His Native Soil*; sometimes it investigates the colonial culture in relation to the role of middleclass intelligence and sensibilities as in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* and *The Bamboo Dancers*. Even the books of short stories published after the War have been almost exclusively of the middleclass: Aida Rivera's *Now and At The Hour* (1957), Gregorio Brillantes' *Distance To Andromeda* (1960), Estrella Alfon's *Magnificence* (1960), Gilda Cordero-Fernando's *The Butcher, The Baker, The Candlestick Maker* (1962), Edith L. Tiempo's *Abide, Joshua* (1965), Bienvenido Santos' *Brother, My Brother* (1959), and Kerima Polotan's *Stories* (1968)—the list is not intended to be exhaustive. The very poor are getting fewer in our literature, in inverse proportion to their statistical growth in our society. The books that deal more or less with underpaid workers, tenants, farm laborers, slum dwellers are relatively few and scattered over a number of years: *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife* (1940) by Manuel Arguilla; *The Laughter of My Father* (1944) and *America Is In The Heart* (1944) by Carlos Bulosan; *Seven Hills Away* (1940), *Children of the Ash-Covered Loam* (1955) and *A Season of Grace* (1959) by N. V. M. Gonzales; *Tondo By Two* (1961) by Pacifico Aprieto and Andres Cristobal-Cruz and *White Wall* (1962) by Andres Cristobal-Cruz. Beside this exhaustive listing of non-middleclass fiction, we have more novels of the type mentioned earlier: *Without Seeing the Dawn* (1947) by

Stevan Javellana, *This Barangay* (1950) by Juan C. Laya, *A Watch In The Night* (1953) by Edilberto Tiempo, *The Volcano* (1964) by Bienvenido Santos, *The United* (1951) by Carlos P. Romulo.

The range of our literature in English seems to be limited, its main area of investigation being the problems of the middle-class. Proletarian literature in English began to be written in 1940, the period in which, as I have said, the manner of looking at culture and of expressing it changed. Where Laya saw the social crisis as the failure of the native society to accept the ethics of capitalism, Manuel Arguilla and Salvador P. Lopez saw it as having been brought about by capitalism itself. The sanctity of individual rights established by liberal politics encouraged private property and the freedom of contract. This resulted, said Teodoro Kalaw in his Memorandum for Osmeña on the Constitutional Draft for 1935, "in great fortunes, big business, capitalism, in a word, in privileges, whether legalized or tolerated, which were prejudicial to the poor, to the masses." The concentration of wealth in a few, and the monopolism in industries created an ethics of exploitation, in which the division of labor did not mean a division of profits or the distribution of benefits. In the Philippines, the crisis largely derived from the fact that labor did not participate in the administration of the economy, and, therefore, had no large political rights. This was the central theme in *Banaag At Sikat* by Lope K. Santos and constitutes an absorbing interest in the novel. I do not merely refer to the so-called socialistic ideas in *Banaag At Sikat*, but more significantly, to the presence of laborers, working students, their relationship to those who possess the sources of income; the detailed articulation of workers' demands, and the representation of the passion with which they are expressed.

Our literature in English, however, was slow to respond to the general situation in society. The change that took place in 1940 or thereabouts to which I referred earlier, manifested itself in (1) the rejection of the conventions of the Romance derived from American models and, (2) the adoption

of realism as the technique for conveying "social consciousness". The critical formulations of "social consciousness" in literature derived from the canons of social protest in the United States. These vaguely socialistic canons are reflected in Salvador P. Lopez's *Literature and Society* (1940). Lopez, like the American writers and critics of the Left, actually did not define any specialized aspect of the literature of social consciousness. His emphasis tended to be on the end of literature and on the engagement of the writer. According to this formulation, literature has a social character and a social function because its basic interest is communication. "Freedom of expression," (*Herald Mid-Week Magazine*, 1939) means at bottom freedom to publish, and this has both an economic and a political aspect. These aspects have to be worked out in an objective understanding of society and history.

This objective view implies the recognition of the basic relationship of classes in society. Literature must reflect this relationship imaginatively, and show how this relationship impinges directly on human destiny, decisions, and action.

The other aspects of the literature of social consciousness derive from the inescapable commitment of the writer, which is to work for "progress." The writer "believes that civilization, despite evident reverses, is forever picking up and moving forward." "He believes," continued Lopez, "that he has a place and that whatever he can do to help is a worthy contribution to the upward advancement of Life." This identification of the writer with progressive forces of culture necessarily means, explained Lopez in another essay ("What is Proletarian Literature?") that he must present "the triumph of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie." This phrase, derived from Marx and Trotsky's formulation of literary theory has been the cause of flagrant misunderstanding in literary criticism. Reacting to Lopez's statement on the rules of the Commonwealth Literary Awards. Litiatco thought this was a declaration of totalitarianism in literature, and some postwar critics, like Ricaredo Demetillo, think that Lopez was interested in propaganda.

Actually Lopez made it clear that he was not: "We are not forgetting," he said, despite the emphasis on social content, that we are speaking of literature and not propaganda. The challenge which we ask the intelligent writer to meet is not the challenge to beat the drum and to blow the trumpet of progress." "The triumph of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie" was simply the logic which must be assumed if history must be viewed as continuous, and in terms of the conflict of classes. It is for the writer to help indicate the direction of this continuity towards the extension of the area of freedom.

The matter with Lopez is that he is too abstract. He confines himself to mere mention of workers and writers, and does not illustrate his theoretical notions with a concrete analysis of a work; and while he keeps insisting that he is interested in literature, he rates Erskine Caldwell above T. S. Eliot. As a theorist, Lopez is deficient in facts upon which to base his theories. His concept of social consciousness in literature, for instance, does not take into account the complex processes and relationship of culture and society—his "society", as a matter of fact, is an abstraction, so that in *Literature and Society* we fail to confront the texture of assumptions that we find in a similar body of criticism, in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. When Lopez speaks of politics we do not know what he is talking about. He makes no reference, to take an immediate example, to the issue of colonialism which was the immediate fact of our culture at the time.

For an understanding of what Lopez meant we have to go to the stories of Manuel Arguilla and the writings of Carlos Bulosan. In "The Growth of Philippine Culture", for instance, when Bulosan expresses precisely what Lopez tried to say, namely, that the growth of culture is closely linked to political and historical forces, he has the concrete context of Philippine society itself to substantiate his point. Bulosan examines Philippine literature in connection with the history of the country, indicating the relationship between particular literary types (for instance, folklore) with the nature of social organizations and assumptions. He shows how, with the con-

tact with industrialism and economic liberalism, Philippine literature changed in techniques and conventions. In this article, Bulosan urges a broader conception of life that would include not only the middleclass, but also the instrument of production — the laborers — and the base of the social structure — the masses. Unfortunately, in *America Is In The heart*, the middleclass does not exist at all, except by implication.

It is in Manuel Arguilla, a writer closer to Lopez in point of time than to Bulosan that literature and politics properly meet. His stories are well-organized, sensitive to details and the hum and buzz of society, and alive to the implication of politics. "Caps and Lower Case," for instance, starts with "Alfredo Santos, proof reader for the illustrated Weekly, began the long climb up the stairs..." and ends with him, rebuffed in his request for a salary raise, "the pulse and roar of the machine, the presses, pounding in his ears, going down the stairway." For the first time in our literature in English, we come upon peasants reacting to ideology; underpaid workers reading "Das Kapital"; labor recovering its will in its recourse to violence. etc. — something closer to Lope K. Santos' *Banaag At Sikat*, and Amado Hernandez's *Luha Ng Buwaya*. The difference between Carlos Bulosan and Manuel Arguilla on the one hand, and the other Filipino writers in English on the other is not merely on the point of subject matter or the fact that Bulosan and Arguilla go beyond the middleclass to deal with the problem of agrarian unrest, labor unionism and the agitation for change in the structure of society. The main difference lies in the fact that Bulosan and Arguilla see society as it really is: a complex of relationships based on the reality of wealth, property, and production which generates political power, which in turn conditions the liberties, aspirations, actions, decisions and destinies of individuals. The vision is full of tragic possibilities and suggestions and, far from diverting the writer's attention from literature, actually challenges what Lopez calls "The writer's conception of his craft."

Yet it is the element of protest that actually relates our literature in English to the literature in Spanish and the



vernaculars. The delineation of our national literature must, I believe, start with this unifying element. One can, as a matter of fact, make a random listing of the writings in the various languages that are still being read today: *La Loba Negra*, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*; Antonio Luna's *Impresiones*, and *Soberania Monocal* by Marcelo H. del Pilar; *Banaag at Sikat*, *Nena at Neneng*; *Mening* by Mena Crisologo, Pardo de Tavera, Teodoro M. Kalaw, Epifanio de los Santos; *Like The Molave*, *Literature and Society*, *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife and Other stories*; *America Is In the Heart*; Amado Hernandez.

These works were shaped by the writers' responses to the social and political realities of their time. Technique was a discovery of the effort to express objectively the fact of society and the condition of man. The political attitudes of these writers, from Burgos to Hernandez were premised on a negation of the status quo—the colonial regime in the case of Lope K. Santos, Arguilla, Lopez, and Bulosan. The situation in which these writers found themselves, however, required the assertion of facts against the whole social system that either denied them or that was bent on inventing a semblance of rationality for its irrational legal and moral codes. From Burgos to Hernandez, we find a common reliance on the conventions of realism and there has been no perceivable attempt to explore other methods and techniques. The Filipino writer, too, has continued to confine himself to that area of the national culture constituted by the middleclass. Gregorio Brillantes and Gilda Cordero, for instance, in spite of a more competent handling of language, have simply followed the preoccupation of elder writers: the chronicle of the culture of the middleclass.

What is needed in the drama, the short story, and the novel in English is something similar to what happened in poetry: the deviation from tradition, exemplified in Jose Garcia Villa and Alejandrino Hufana. The limitations of realism today are becoming more apparent. The conventions of the traditional novel have become inadequate for the represen-

tation of contemporary reality. In *The Woman Who had Two Navels*, *The Bamboo Dancers*, and *The Season of Grace* for instance, we feel that it had become impossible for characters to assert themselves before the terrifying will of history, technology, or before the immensity of the dimension of economic scarcity in our times. A new mode of survival must be invented, and out of a recognition of this necessity, we can start to create a new literature.