Modern Literary Criticism in the Philippines: Brown Heritage

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on the other. The socio-logically-oriented agree that human factors (values) have blocked economic progress; the agricultural experts place the blame on lack of technical knowledge (techniques) readily available to the mass. Fr. Francisco Claver, S.J., has done a fine piece of work in turning the analytic tools of social science upon the respondents themselves and their assessments of the Background Paper.

Seminar participants of varied backgrounds — from Nick Joaquin in journalism to Lourdes Lapuz in psychiatry — help to keep the conference deliberation from being the sacred preserve of social scientists and agriculturists alone. The section on “Psychological and Psychiatric Aspects of Rural Development” is a significant addition to the Culture and Personality literature in the Philippines.

Two years have passed since the seminar completed its deliberations — yet there seems to be little evidence that the excellent product, Human Factors in Philippine Rural Development, has reached many hands beyond those within academic walls.

JIM GILL

MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE PHILIPPINES


One evening in May 1967, addressing the Asia Society in Manhattan on the subject of "Philippine Literature: the Unexplored Potential," I outlined for an hour the basic defects of literary criticism in the Philippines. My concern was that the national culture would continue to be analyzed—by sociologists, political scientists, and historians—without serious reference to the creative accomplishments of its writers, as if such contributions were negligible or irrelevant. I had no way of knowing that, even as I spoke, a massive response to this challenge was in the press.

Brown Heritage is a monumental work, not simply because it represents several annual seminars at Ateneo's Institute of Philippine Literature, nor because it contains over forty essays by thirty experienced lecturers; but because it dares to break all rules of an interpersonal society by requiring Philippine literature to meet objective formal tests. There is only a trace in this volume of the typical substitutes
for disciplined criticism: rosters of undifferentiated book titles and authors' names; emotional appeals to the mystique of the vernacular; the clutching at culture heroes. Instead there emerges, under the editorial direction of Antonio Manuud, a proper exposition of thematics: the mutual illumination of texts and contexts.

First, the social scientists demonstrate how the Philippines has come to terms with its complex and sometimes conflicting influences, through selective adaptation. Father Bulatao writes, for example, of the simultaneous reverence for and rejection of local priests, in a secularized society neither wholly Christian nor animistic. Felipe Landa-Jocano explains how patterns such as blood and ritual kinship, or ka'ingin cultivation, have survived imposition of Spanish/American folkways. The same provision of continuity disguised as change—a most subtle form of pakikisama—is traced by Dacanay in Muslim art and by Alfredo Roces in Spanish colonial architecture, and again by Father McCarron and Emy Pascasio, discussing linguistic acculturation.

If any correlation between such a multiplex society and its literature exists, one should find a literature complicated not only by folklore intrusions and inter-imbedded languages, but also by a sophisticated sense of inversion, concealment and irony, responding to divergent values. Which Philippine language best approximates this national experience? The weight of analyses provided suggests that Tagalog—perhaps because it is a folk language, as venerable and slow-changing as the way of life it communicates—is inadequately aware of importations into the general culture; and its literary formulations, thus far, lack the sort of extra-dimension that at least defensively they might have assumed. Although Lumbera predicts flatly that "Pilipino literature is the only literature with a future in the Philippines," neither he nor Clodualdo del Mundo is naive enough to be complacent about that future, given the tastes of the mass media in which vernacular works typically appear. Lumbera's complaint against the lack of dramatic irony in Balagtas could be lodged against too many modern writers as well. During the war, the quality of Tagalog literature improved simply because writers accustomed to standards of literature in English temporarily turned to the vernacular. A more recent resurgence occurred with the poetic inventions of Abadilla and through his quarrel with Hernandez over the proportionate value of self and society. The question remains, how to make such exceptional writers the rule. The answer is provided only in part by writers in other languages.

In the two-thirds of Brown Heritage devoted to direct literary study, literature in the vernacular is placed first because it is oldest, and English last because it is more recent. This historical sequence happens to parallel a mounting critical concern with a writer's flexibi-
lity and with the individual variation which makes his work more worthy of minute analysis than are mere literary types and formulas. Consequently, the arrangement is not merely chronological but developmental and dramatic. *Brown Heritage* moves from circumferential socio-political, religious-historical fields of influence, through surveys of literary genres and periods, into the heart of art where so little criticism before has penetrated. One thinks of such exemplary probes as Lumbera's into Andres Cristobal Cruz' novel, *Ang Tundo Man*; or Manuud's into Rizal's poem, "Mi retiro" and Father Bernad's into the more covert aspects of Rizal's prose; or Tinio's into the poetics of Villa, Edilberto de Jesus' into the structure of Gonzalez' *The Season of Grace*, and Laura Oloroso's into the viability of Joaquin's en-crust~l legends.

As the volume nears its end, the intensity of critical penetration increases. Whether or not this fact indicates the superior achievement of Philippine literature in English above that in the vernacular or in Spanish is a problem without solution until the same degree of meticulous analysis is made of the works of Abadilla and Hernandez or of Balagtas and others. One might wish that, in addition to the appendices already provided (among them, selections from Jaime de Veyra's *Hispanidad en Filipinas*, and Father Lambrecht on *hudhud* literature), Agoncillo and Layas' separate critiques of Lope K. Santoses' *Banaag at Sikat* had been made available. But to express such a regret is to recognize the chief contribution of *Brown Heritage*.

The collection is clearly a work of the first magnitude. Merely to list its contents descriptively would exhaust half the space of the most liberal review. Nevertheless, far from pretending to be definitive, its principal function is to pay proper homage to Philippine literature by recovering more fully subtleties of meaning impacted in fiction already in existence but too often overlooked, and thus to stimulate the perpetuation of creativity. In Manuud's words, teachers who participated in the Institute seminars returned "to their several areas in a sort of cultural diaspora, with expectations of redeeming for their own charges the somewhat alienated legacies of Philippine literature." The book is designed to reinforce the techniques of inquiry which they learned, rather than to fix the tentative interpretations made. This intention is confirmed by the occasional conflict of judgment reached (about the success of Florante at Laura, for example) or of standards themselves, if Tinio's suggestion that "bad poems are really good poems written at the wrong time" is placed against the formalist criticism of Demetillo.

*Brown Heritage* is a seminal work. The high character of its own preparations makes imperative publication of at least one more volume, which will demonstrate more precisely the reciprocity of literary and social forms; which will investigate more fully alleged masterworks
in the vernaculars (not only in Tagalog): and which will apply to more writers in English the same demanding measurements used with Villa, Gonzalez, Joaquin and Bienvenido Santos.

Now modern literary criticism in the Philippines has begun.

LEONARD CASPER

THE DIOCESAN PRIEST


Until recent years the secular priesthood was often regarded as "a compromise with the world", or as merely a "clerical religious manque". Many still consider the secular priesthood (Diocesan) as a sort of partial and imperfect edition of the Religious Priesthood (Regular). In other words, the common conception about the secular priesthood is that it is only for those who cannot measure up to the discipline or the rigidity of the religious life. Therefore, the secular priesthood has through the years been pre-judged and looked down as "second-rate".

In the Philippines, the secular clergy's image has not reached the stature which their Regular confreres are enjoying. They are actual heirs of an historical prejudice which was a by-product of Spanish lack of foresight, particularly the now infamous "patronato system" which left no scope for a secular clergy, and condemned it to the essentially false position of a subordinate instrument.

"Secular Priesthood in the New Church" is precisely a kind of book which is a "must" for cleric as well as lay people for a keener insight and deeper appreciation of the pristine nature, mission and destiny of the secular priesthood.

It is a compilation of provocative articles stated with acute candor. In all its chapters experts air their views regarding all aspects of the secular priesthood, doctrinal and pastoral, theoretical as well as practical.

The Church, bound up in a spirit of aggiornamento and drawn by pressures to update its outlook, has enacted more dramatic changes in the last five years than what history relates of its preceding 500 years. Vatican Council II has done much to sharpen the image of the secular priesthood. It has offered a number of insights into the