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Keeping the Flame Alive

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nant religious view that thrusts the narrative into a world where time almost stands still, as in a frieze.

Maganda Pa ang Daigdig, on the other hand, takes on more qualitative aspects of contemporary life—the pervasive social unrest, the emergence of the Huk movement, the proliferation of private armies, corruption in the government, and other social realities. Such characters as Lino, Padre Amando, Miss Sanchez and Don Tito are types, but the novelist succeeds in endowing them with individuating traits. The mode of representation is made to approximate the reader's notion of everyday reality, for which reason the characters and situations are rendered more believable. The final thrust is basically Utopian, but there is an awareness that the real liberation of the farmers needs more than just a change of heart. The individualistic outlook of *Ama* has given way to the socialistic view of *Maganda Pa ang Daigdig*.

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KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE: ESSAYS IN THE HUMANITIES (A Diamond Jubilee Publication). Edited by Pacita Guevara-Fernandez. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1983. 225 pp.

A collection of essays by faculty members of the University of the Philippines' Division of Humanities and edited by its Associate Dean, this book is divided into five parts: The Poet and Poetry, Literature as Statement, Literature as Sensibility, The Other Sister Arts: Music and Painting, and Literature as Performance -- Live Literature.

The Poet and Poetry contains Gemino H. Abad's "A Poem's Making," which is worth purchasing the book for, even without considering the considerable virtues of other essays. This is a look at a poem in the making, and Abad, being both poet and critic in consummate doses, is probably the only one who could have done the job so well. Being teacher as well, he knows the importance of the complete honesty with which he details the evolution of the poem "Candles."

Starting with the intention to sit down and write a poem, he chronicles the moment of birth, the instant when the imagination names one of "those things that flit about and vanish," that might "free the mind of its weight and pain" (p. 14). From then on, the reader is taken on a high-flying ride through memory, imagination, association, creation, revision — a flight as exciting and cliff-hanging as that of a light plane doing barrel rolls — till at the end there is "Candles":

All Souls' Day again,
 And children must keep their time holy,
 And all our streets meditate
 And keep their dust. (p. 31)

and the reader has felt the birth-pains, understands somewhat the creative process, or at least what Jimmy Abad means when he says: "The poet imagines, he does not think . . . The poet's revisions are acts of the imagination; his working drafts are documents of the mind's hinterland" (p. 29).

In this same section, Francisco Arcellana's essay is entitled "Poetry and Politics II," referring to the fact that an earlier professorial chair lecture had been called "Poetry and Politics I." The text of this lecture is from Plato, who had gone to the poets to ask what their poetry meant and found that

. . . there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers, who also say many fine things but do not understand the meaning of them. (p. 38)

Reminding the reader that poetry in English written by Filipinos is original in matter and manner, but derivative because it is written in English, and "because modern English poetry is always deriving from the poetry of the English language of the last 600 years" (p. 39), Arcellana proceeds to comment on Manuel Viray's *Where Blood with Light Collides*, Ricaredo Demetillo's *Lazarus Troubadour*, and Gemino Abad's *In Another Light*. In his inimitable fashion, what seems like casual chatting about the poems in each book becomes concentrated, erudite, witty, often devastating criticism by a master and an oracle.

In the section called "Literature as Statement," Professor Leopoldo Yabes discourses on tradition in literature in South, Southeast and East Asia; Patricia M. Cruz examines (in Pilipino) ideology as literary perspective; and Sylvia M. Ventura, who has herself written a biography of Ambassador Mauro Mendez, writes of biography as literature.

Petronilo Bn. Daroy's "Philippine Literature on the Eve of the First Quarter Storm" sweeps through the concerns and events of the late sixties and early seventies, and examines how these affected the consciousness and perception of the writers, and thus the literature they produced. He sees the works of three writers — Amado V. Hernandez, Renato Constantino, and Amado Guerrero — as standing out and becoming "a reference source of the discussion and terminology of this period" (p. 85). The Filipino writer in English, dependent on Western literature, "ignorant of his country's history because of miseducation; unequipped with a theoretical framework with which to analyze the crisis of his own society," was "bereft of any strong literary and philosophical tradition in which he could find affinity" (p. 87).

The Filipino writer in Tagalog had begun to assimilate modernism only towards the sixties, had gained the sophistication necessary to compete with literature in English, but had lost his own audience. It was expectable therefore, Daroy concludes, that literature on the eve of the First Quarter Storm should be irrelevant.

"The Nationalist Struggle and the Filipino Writer," (first published in the *Cultural Research Bulletin*, 1981) is an important essay, in which Bienvenido Lumbera shows how those same – and analogous – events produced relevant literature. Tracing the literature produced by nationalist struggle from the Propaganda Movement, the Revolution, American colonial control, the Pacific War, the fifties, the sixties and the Martial Law Era, Lumbera sees a cycle: "The suppression of nationalist aspirations drove writers to employ tactics of circumvention in their art. They re-made popular and traditional art forms by charging these with new content" (p. 81). He cites works, and shows how the writers of the seventies have, over those of the first decade, an arsenal of methods which they "have learned to accumulate in order to survive and perhaps prevail" (p. 82).

Many literature teachers and scholars will be grateful to Dolores Feria for so succinctly defining the Third World in reference to literature, and literature in reference to the Third World, in her piece "The Third World: The Literature of Refusal" (first published by the Third World Studies Center, UP, 1978). Many, dependent because of educational circumstance on Anglo-American literature for models, references, associations, and even a world view, will discover not only the literatures of Third World Asia and Africa, but also that of the Philippines with a Third World consciousness (in English, in Mrs. Feria's samples; in the vernaculars, even more plentifully).

The section on "Literature as Sensibility" starts with Edilberto N. Alegre's work, in which the Japanese sensibility is explained not only in terms of literature but pan-culturally – in terms of language, conversation, economy, management practices, folk (papercutting, bonsai, basketry) and high (black-ink paintings) art, hedonism, religion and, of course, poetry ("His endless concern for the concrete has produced beautiful literature but his scale is not the epic. His metier is the lyric" [p. 135]). Helen Mendoza explores "The Female Psyche in Henry James' Fiction," and Lilia Hidalgo Laurel some aspects of Mexican contemporary literature.

Music and Painting are given attention in Pacita Guevara Fernandez's "Some Reflections on the Nature of Art," and ethnomusicologist Jose Maceda's "Sources of Musical Thought in Southeast Asia" ("Music in the tropical belt – in Southeast Asia and around the world – has a philosophy . . . It resides in a constant balance of life with nature, which accounts for a profound sense of well being, and depicts an instinct much wiser and more secure than a reasoned thought of modern man" (p. 172).

Alice Guillermo, whose body of art criticism has shown her readers the

sense, reason and historical-social underpinnings of Philippine art, writes (in Pilipino) on visual art in the Philippines. Her survey and analysis show how artists search for the Philippine in art – through Philippine subject matter, through voyages into the past, through ethnic motifs, and through a dynamic melding of art and society.

The final section of the book starts with Patricio Lazaro exhorting the reader to “Perform Literature!” with such enthusiasm that one wishes for samples, ways, methods to actually do this (besides interpretative reading, of course). Nicanor G. Tiongson’s “Toward a Filipino National Theater” (first published in *The Review*, February 1981) is an important definition of “Filipino” and “National” with respect to theater – not necessarily a state-subsidized theater, or even a building, but a theater relating to the Filipino, and one in Tiongson’s estimate, still in process of formation. Amelia Lapeña Bonifacio’s account of grassroots experience with her puppet theater, UP Teatrong Mulat ng Pilipinas, has conclusions not only about “The Role of Children’s Theater in Our Society” but also about theater spaces in schools (suggesting space and theater expectations), and the nature of educational theater, Behn Cervantes’ “Ganyan Lang Talaga Yan,” a clear picture of the state, status and situation of moviemaking in the Philippines (“... the number of Filipinos going to the movies is about 1,200,000 a day . . . a large market that can be redirected in its tastes and attitudes so that they can dictate what types of movies should be made” [p. 213]) completes the collection.

The essays in *Keeping the Flame Alive* vary greatly in style and quality, a situation inevitable in an anthology, especially one put together not for a theme but for an occasion, and bound together not by a purpose but by a common origin. Perhaps more rigid copy-reading, however, could have brought about more editorial unity (and eliminated the rather noticeable typos as well).

Still and all, the editor and the Division of Humanities are to be complimented for having made accessible landmark works on the creative process, poetry, theater, nationalist and Third World literature, music and visual art, and for having brought together in one volume several of the most original thinkers and scholars in Philippine academia.

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