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## Philippine Short Stories, 1925 - 1940

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The study notes that the unsatisfactory condition of peace and order in Iloilo necessitated passage of more laws on this aspect—something that was not necessary in Bacolod. It also notes that an Iloilo ordinance providing for citizen night patrols (*rondilla*) shows how the policy content of Iloilo differs from that of Bacolod. Bacolod has no *rondilla* system. It does not make clear, however, to which aspect of the Iloilo political regime is the decision to create a *rondilla* system traceable.

In the brief discussion of policies that aim to regulate moral behavior, a somewhat unconvincing relationship is established between Iloilo's middle-class politicians and the ordinances dealing with minors, beggars, and movies. It simply declares that the policies are a manifestation of the politicians' "concern with the dignity and protection of the common man" (p. 97).

Like other local governments in the Philippines, Iloilo and Bacolod have little independence with regard to revenue legislation. As a consequence, no significant relationship can be expected between local political regimes and revenue legislation. Leichter, however, hypothesizes that in areas of tax collection where autonomy can be exercised, the local political regimes wield an important influence. He also hypothesizes that a relationship exists between types of political regime and corruption in the administration of tax collection. In this connection, he hints that there is more corruption in Iloilo than in Bacolod.

In terms of public expenditure, the study observes differences between Iloilo and Bacolod. It shows that in general administration, especially in the filling up of bureaucratic posts, Bacolod spends less than Iloilo, whose politicians treat this area as a political investment.

On the whole, the monograph is a significant contribution to the limited literature on Philippine urban politics. The hypotheses presented here and the exposition of interesting cause-effect relationships offer a good starting point for studies that would employ a sophisticated methodology.

Lydia N. Yu

PHILIPPINE SHORT STORIES, 1925-1940. Selected and edited by Leopoldo Y. Yabes. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975. xiv, 544 pages.

Before this book was published in 1975, it already had an interesting history. It was originally intended to be book two of *Readings in Philippine Literature*, a comprehensive anthology of Filipino writings in English scheduled for publication in 1940. The outbreak of the Pacific War aborted this plan. In 1946, Leopoldo Yabes was persuaded by Carlos Bulosan to prepare book two for separate publication by an American press. Bulosan accepted co-editorship of the volume. Apparently the manuscript was not marketed,

and it was found among Bulosan's private papers when he died in 1956. Professor Yabes recovered the manuscript and finally succeeded in having it published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1975. According to Professor Yabes, a companion anthology, covering the years 1941-55, is being prepared for publication.

Many other books have suffered a similar fate of having to wait many years for publication; what makes this case of special interest is that the delay has occasioned an unusual set of preliminary matter. A brief prefatory note gives the history of the book, besides the usual acknowledgments. The preface proper is the draft of the one which was to have appeared in the American edition of 1947, printed here for "reasons of bibliographical history." At the same time, it serves the purpose of stating the anthology's objectives and of outlining its organizational plan. Among the declared objectives of the 1947 anthology are "to give a better chance for these writers to be known and appreciated abroad; and to help promote better understanding between the Filipinos and other peoples." The editors showed themselves attentive to the needs of this foreign audience in a number of ways. They provided an introductory essay designed to give a comprehensive view of the subject. (The essay is left unidentified; it is not clear whether Professor Yabes's "Pioneering in the Filipino Short Story, 1925-40" is referred to here.) They arranged the stories in order of chronology to enable the reader to trace the development of the Filipino short story during these years, giving the place and date of first publication at the end of each selection. They appended notes on the individual contributors, updated for the present anthology. They provided a glossary of vernacular terms not commonly found in international dictionaries.

The last two essays that make up the preliminary matter are a pair of complementary articles that serve as bifocals through which the reader may view the writings of this period. "Pioneering in the Filipino Short Story in English (1925-40)" was originally written in 1941 but is reprinted in the present anthology. (It first appeared in the November 1945 issue of *The Monthly Post* and was later reprinted in the 1966-67 first-semester issue of *General Education Journal*. At first glance, the reader may suppose that this essay was included merely for purposes of bibliographical completeness but it actually serves a vital purpose — to provide insight into contemporary criticism. Though the present-day reader may find it critically naive in parts, he will find the essay a highly informative account of the temper and trends that shaped the short stories of the period.

Though 35 years is not really a long period of time, it is sufficient to make that 1941 essay appear almost as "dated" as the stories in the collection. Yabes attempts to bridge this gap in time and sensibility by writing "Postscript: Thirty-five Years After." In this new essay, Yabes reveals that his reactions, both to the stories themselves and to his own critical essay, have

been substantially modified. He concedes that he may perhaps have been "a little too assertive" about the high quality of these stories and that, being a young man then in his middle twenties, he was "not exempt from the euphoric feeling" prevalent at the time. The present-day reader, more sober for not having been similarly intoxicated, will likely blush at some of the claims that the youthful Yabes made in that early essay, e.g., that the 1947 anthology "would not be undistinguished beside a similar anthology of British or American short stories" or that the Filipino short story in English was "Athena-like, . . . born full grown." A critic passing judgment on contemporary literature is extremely susceptible to this type of myopia. The passage of time is usually required to check this shortsightedness. Yabes's postscript thus serves as a corrective lens, as it were, through which the reader may review these stories.

What of the stories themselves, of which there are 66? Does Professor Yabes still hold to his earlier claim that at least a dozen of these stories would be of enduring interest to the later generation? His answer is cannily candid: "I have no reason to change my opinion thirty-five years or so later. Except maybe as to the dozen stories themselves." For instance, although he had earlier judged Villa's "Footnote to Youth" as a greater story than Arguilla's "Caps and Lower Case," Yabes now reverses his judgment on the grounds that while the former reaffirms life as lived in an impoverished iniquitous society," the latter "calls attention to the injustices in that iniquitous society." In another instance, he reevaluates three stories dealing with the common theme of hunger. Now he dismisses Loreto Paras's "The Bolo" as romantic, because it is not consonant with the stark realities of life; he finds N.V.M. Gonzalez's "Hunger in Barok" disappointing, because the unexpected ending evades dealing with the problem of hunger; but he commends Hernando Ocampo's "We or They," because "this story goes into the core of the economics of living." These reevaluations make clear that for Yabes today, the norm of significance is to be equated with social consciousness. His change of mind — and heart — revives the Villa-Lopez controversy of the 1930s, with Yabes now staunchly allied with Lopez.

At this point, one may well ask why Yabes did not simply assemble a new anthology and then write an entirely new introductory essay. It is not difficult to conjecture why he declined this option. First, this comprehensive, if not exhaustive, collection is the only one of its kind and renders the valuable service of preserving these stories in a form more permanent and accessible than the periodicals in which most of them originally appeared. Secondly, the last two essays in the preliminary matter of the present volume — the bifocals referred to earlier — enable the reader to trace more distinctly the direction in which Philippine literature has been moving during the last 35 years. For instance, one smiles wryly at the optimism with which the two editors expected to find ready publishers for the 1947 anthology. It was an

optimism based on an overestimation of the quality of the short stories and of their attractiveness to an American audience. Moreover, one cannot get over the uncomfortable feeling that the 1947 anthology was being offered the American public as a proof that their little brown brothers had learned their English lessons very well and as a plea to be accepted by them as peers. It is significant that, in his postscript, Yabes omits mention of a foreign audience, as if perhaps to affirm that Philippine literature – at least, the kind he considers significant today – should be concerned less with what it can put on display for other peoples to admire than for what it can reveal to a people about themselves.

*Edna Zapanta-Mantapaz*