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Children's Literature in the Philippines

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE PHILIPPINES: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FILIPINO AND ENGLISH WORKS, 1901-1979. By Loreto M. Serifa and Fe Aldave Yap. Metro Manila: National Book Store, 1980. x + 166 pages.

More than any previous decade in this century in the Philippines, the seventies was probably the most consciously productive of children's literature. NCP Publishing Corporation's *Aklat Adarna* had at least nineteen in its series. Nick Joaquin alone produced at least seventeen volumes (only twelve are listed in the book under review). That decade, too, celebrated the "International Year of the Child" in 1979, and inaugurated the "Decade of the Filipino Child," 1977-87. It is hard to say how much these celebrations did to focus attention on the Filipino child's need for reading materials both in school and at home. Even the participants in the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference held in Manila in 1975 had expressed deep concern regarding the need for more and better children's literature.

To assess the quantity and quality of children's literature in the Philippines, and to provide scholars and the general reader with a handy guide, Loreto M. Serifa and Fe Aldave Yap have come up with a timely tool — a comprehensive annotated bibliography of children's literature in the Philippines. The book lists 547 volumes published between 1901 and 1979. These are divided according to the language in which they are written: Part I, Filipino (198 volumes), and Part II, English (349). The Filipino works, the book indicates, are not only much fewer, they also came late in time. The first children's books in Filipino were the *Pamana ng Lahi* by the Rizal Center Sorority, University of the Philippines, and *Ang Palaisip ng Maharlikang si Don Quixote de la Mancha*, a translation by Dionisio San Agustin, both published in 1940 — the first fruits of Manuel L. Quezon's campaign for the development of a Tagalog-based national language during the second half of the 1930s.

The annotations and the indication of grade or school level for which the book is prescribed are generally helpful. For this reason the reader misses annotations for books like Teodoro A. Agoncillo's *Ang Maikling Kuwentong Tagalog* (p. 22, no. 97), and all entries from nos. 179 to 186 and 535-544, and more. Annotations like "A collection of humorous modern poems" referring to Jose F. Lacaba's *Mga Kagilagilalas ng [sic] Pakikipagsapalaran* (p. 28, no. 125) are misleading. The poems are "humorous and modern" but more importantly, they have a sharp political and social message. Evaluation of the quality of the translations is sadly lacking. In fact many have no annotation at all (see pp. 111-12).

Cross references in a book of this kind are very helpful, and in this, the book generally succeeds, but it has several confusing features. For example, an unnumbered entry between nos. 534 and 535 (p. 111) refers the reader to

a nonexistent "annotation on page 28." Unsolved problems in the preparation and/or printing of the book are apparent. The bulk of the book was based on a part of Serifa's Master of Library Science thesis presented at the University of the Philippines. The original coverage of the thesis was 1901-1975 (p. x); its updating to 1979 took its toll. The "Chronological Listing of the Literature" (pp. 143-66) reaches only up to 1976. Even the listing for that year is incomplete. (A quick glance easily reveals nos. 81, 153, 154, 387, and more were published in that year and yet are not listed.) To know how many were published from 1977 to 1979, the reader has to do his own counting. (Just skimming over the pages, this reviewer has counted at least fifty.)

More serious than the mechanical and technical defects of the work is the fact that "children's literature" is not defined; thus it is not known by what criteria the publications therein listed are properly speaking "children's literature," or "elementary" or "high school" materials.

It is a pity that this book was not prepared more carefully. Nevertheless, since it is the only volume at present on the subject, it serves a real purpose.

Florentino H. Hornedo

LIKHAAN I. Edited by Alejandrino G. Hufana. Manila: University of the Philippines Creative Writing Center, 1979. 150 pages.

Two recent publications — *Literature and Society: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Roger Bresnahan (Eleventh American Studies Seminar, Los Baños, Philippines, 1976) and *Salimbibig: Philippine Vernacular Literature*, edited by Joseph A. Galdon, S.J. (Quezon City: The Council for Living Traditions, 1980) — have drawn critical attention to Philippine writing in the vernacular. On the other side of the coin, *Likhaan I* is a collection of contemporary creative writing in the Philippines' vernaculars, as well as in English. It is the first volume in a series of semi-annual publications to be produced (hopefully) by the U.P. Creative Writing Center. The various contributors, "in the languages of their competence," give witness, editor Alejandrino G. Hufana says in his Introduction, to "linguistic plurality" and the "verbal variety of Philippine Writing." "Whether traditional or experimental, the ways of the imagination here put together support what *Likhaan* aims initially at doing: to provide contributing writers a needed, and hopefully welcome, publication venue."

During the Fourth Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Manila in 1975, President Ferdinand Marcos directed that the creative writing center of the University of the Philippines "be established immediately." "Immediately" was interpreted somewhat loosely, for it was not until 7 December 1978 that the Board of Regents of the University approved the U.P. Creative Writing Center. The Center began operations on 1 June 1979 under the Board of Regent's mandate which specified: "(1) the conduct of courses