

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Ang Dagling Tagalog: 1903–1936

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Philippine Studies vol. 57 no. 3 (2009): 455–457

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The question that needs to be asked is: Were the ilustrados patriotic and nationalistic only in their cause, their writings, and their speech? Is this sense of nationalism reflected in their tastes in women, in clothing, and in sports? By showing preference for fencing to some native Filipino sport, preference for foreign women over Filipino women, preference for European clothing, were they in fact asserting national identity or were they simply imitating their condescending Spanish colonial masters in order to be seen as equals and not as inferior, effeminate, uncivilized indios? It seems that, under the cloak of developing one's character in the context of a changing world, these men maintained they were raising and developing themselves to the level of civilization of the colonialists, even if this level of civilization too was determined and defined by the latter who claimed to be racially superior.

Through the accounts in this work, the author seems to have unintentionally emphasized what may be less obvious—the ilustrados abroad practiced not only gender discrimination but racial bias and moral confusion as well. Their actions or “exploits” in Europe reflected a tension between the version of morality they were taught in the Christianized and Hispanized Manila where they came from and the freedom they had and were enjoying in Europe—a tension between “passion and religious morality” (26).

Although they demanded fidelity, gentility, respectability, domesticity, and self-control from the Filipino women who shared their elite status, they demanded so little from the women with whom they had actual relationships. Rizal, for example, showed preference for women with distinct European features even if they were inferior in their intellect and even if their backgrounds were often questionable. Josephine Bracken with whom Rizal had a relationship was in fact described as “flighty, unreliable, undomesticated and superficial” (189). The desires of the flesh often superseded the desires dictated by their minds and intellect. While Rizal admired the modernity and sophistication of European women, the same level of modernity and sophistication among *Filipino* women were perceived as threatening.

In this book some ilustrados are overrepresented while others are mentioned only in passing. Of the six chapters, one chapter focuses on Juan Luna, his art, and his troubled domestic life; another chapter is on Antonio Luna and his writings; and two chapters are on Rizal and his use of medical metaphors. This work is not representative of the Filipino ilustrado community in Europe.

Overall the materials used in this book are interesting, provocative, even controversial. Given the nature of the subject matter, this work is written

with eloquence, with attention to detail and accuracy. One can also see the author's careful use of a variety of sources, from newspapers to photographs, from essays to paintings and sculptures, from published and unpublished books to documents and journals. This is a scholarly work on the subject of love, sex, and passion in Philippine history.

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ROLANDO B. TOLENTINO AND
ARISTOTLE J. ATIENZA, EDS.

Ang Dagling Tagalog: 1903–1936

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007. 267 pages.

In the early 1900s, as American colonization was taking root in the Philippines, popular Tagalog newspapers featured short prose pieces called *dagli*. These stories, read by a wide audience, covered quite a range of subjects, some of them risqué or risky. That is perhaps the reason why most of the authors opted to hide behind pseudonyms.

As the heyday of the Tagalog newspaper passed, the *dagli* vanished with it. For many years the *dagli* was all but forgotten. However, there has been a recent resurgence of interest among Filipino writers and scholars in the *dagli*, perhaps owing to the increasing interest in the Western short story and in prose poetry and to the search for a local tradition of the short prose form. Among the latest additions to the literature on this short literary form is *Ang Dagling Tagalog: 1903–1936*, edited by Rolando B. Tolentino and Aristotle J. Atienza.

In his introduction, Atienza lays down the book's intentions of making sense of the *dagli* as a literary form and of making the generally harried reader of literature read the *dagli* and reconsider its value as story.

The *dagli* collected in *Ang Dagling Tagalog* are not likely to satisfy the modern reader. Their value as specimens in the continuum of the evolution of Philippine prose writing, however, is obvious. The judicious selection allows the reader an adequate sampling of the variety of *dagli* that were written. *Ang Dagling Tagalog* brings together ninety-four *dagli* culled from

close to thirty newspapers that came out between 1900 and 1940. These are classified into five categories: (1) “Ang Ipinagmaktol” features romantic dagli; (2) “Siyang Tunay” features nationalistic and anti-imperialist dagli; (3) “Atrasado!” features dagli that dwell on the everyday societal issues and the strengths and weaknesses of the colonial bureaucracy; (4) “Bagong Buhay” features dagli that express the “new morality” that Filipinos aspired for in the process of engaging with the liberal democracy of American colonialism; (5) “Independinti” features dagli that directly discuss the desired independence that will come about through reform.

The strength of *Ang Dagling Tagalog* lies not in the collected dagli themselves but in the two introductions that come with the collection. Aside from explaining the process behind the collection, Atienza’s introduction provides interesting detail on the literary form and the writers that made it flourish. For instance, on the issue of pseudonyms, Atienza reveals that many of those who chose to use pseudonyms were respected writers of Tagalog and national literature. We learn, for instance, that “ginamit ni Iñigo Ed. Regalado ang talipanpang Tengkeleng, samantalang inakda ni Jose Corazon de Jesus ang ilan niyang likha sa pangalang Puso, at Matanglawin naman ang ginamit ni Rosauro Almario na gumamit din ng talipanpang Ric A. Clarin” (Iñigo Ed. Regalado used the pseudonym Tengkeleng, while Jose Corazon de Jesus wrote a number of his works under the name Puso, and Rosauro Almario used the pseudonym Ric A. Clarin) (7). We discover, too, that “Pedro Manibat” was Patricio Mariano and that “Diego Bantil” was Francisco Laksamana. Lope K. Santos wrote as “Perfecto Malaya.”

The efficient groundwork laid out by Atienza’s introduction allows the reader to appreciate the more philosophical introduction by Tolentino. In his essay, Tolentino discusses the role played by the dagli during the early days of American colonization of the Philippines. On the premise that history itself creates the literary form that will represent it, he asserts that the writers and readers at that time in Philippine history responded best to the dagli because of the circumstances that they were in. As a short and simple literary form, the dagli reflected the level of sophistication of the writers and readers. Tolentino says that the demise of the dagli came with the rise of public education and the increase of college-educated Filipinos whose reading preference was geared toward the Western short story form. He also discusses the formal characteristics of the dagli. His account positions the dagli within the evolution of the short story in the Philippines.

Ang Dagling Tagalog is an important contribution to the study of Philippine prose and should be read by anyone who wants to know more about the early stages of the short story in the country.

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