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## Edith Tiempo's Definition of Poetry: 1950-86

MARIA ELENA BARRETTO-CHOW

Philippine literary criticism is a rich but unexplored field. This is not to suggest that there exists a paucity of critical works which undertake the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of Philippine literature, but rather, that there is a need to multiply and intensify efforts toward a study of the critical works themselves. In other words, there is a need for a criticism of the criticism.

This article examines the critical works of one Philippine critic—Edith Tiempo—who has produced a significant number of critical essays which have appeared in various publications and which present her insights on the art of creative writing.<sup>1</sup> Eighteen of these essays present Tiempo's perspective of poetry as a distinct genre and discuss the nature and proper use of specific poetic elements and/or devices (e.g., metaphor, irony, tone, etc.). They prescribe standards and criteria for use in the process of poetic creation and evaluation. Tiempo's criticism of fiction explores concerns of form and content relevant to the short story and the novel, but also reiterates fundamental principles explicated in the critiques of poetry, principles deemed applicable to all three literary forms because they refer to the essential nature of all creative writings, as Tiempo conceives it to be.

### THE NATURE OF ART

In the essay "Limits—or Chaos" Tiempo describes art as being "not only inspiration and idea but largely rules," a statement which emphasizes the existence of a set of limits, a group of standards which govern the creation and presumably the evaluation of an artistic work.<sup>2</sup> By fulfilling a regulatory and a restraining function, these criteria

1. The bibliography lists thirty-five critical essays, the earliest of which was published in 1948, and the latest in 1988.

2. Edith L. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos" *Comment* (Fourth Quarter, 1962): 109.

provide the polarity to inspiration or thought. The nature of these rules and their relationship with the artist himself are delineated in a second essay which states that "art is not really art where the creator has not become involved in craftsmanship and techniques."<sup>3</sup> Clearly then, art is viewed primarily as a tension between two forces the creator must contend with: the influence of the Muse on one hand, and the demands of a craft that is governed by rules.

It must be noted, however, that the exact nature of these rules is further specified by Tiempo in the following manner. The "nature and procedure of all art," she states, is "suggestion; indirection; richness and preciseness of meaning through ambiguity and ambivalence and understatement."<sup>4</sup> Foremost in this statement is the prescription of ambiguity and suggestion as requisite characteristics of an artistic work, a standard fraught with implications for the work itself, the artist and his audience.

To hold up these techniques as requisites implies that the work of art should consist of at least two levels of meaning: the apparent statement and the thought and/or emotion implicit therein. This procedure of indirection would require deliberate work on the part of the creative artist: careful planning and construction; discipline, time and effort in the exercise of his skill. The advantage to be drawn from this is obviously the richness of meaning that it makes possible. However, the statement contains a clear warning: ambiguity and suggestion are not to be used as excuses for obscurity. Tiempo specifies that the meaning to be created by way of these techniques must be both rich *and* precise. Hence, there are even greater demands for conscious artistry on the part of the creator who must work to achieve precision through ambiguity.

This situation affects the audience in a similar fashion. If art is not to consist of direct statement but of levels of explicit and implicit meaning, then it becomes the task of the audience to work its way through these levels in order to achieve a full understanding of the intention of the work. This task of unlocking the meaning behind and beyond apparent statements would make similar demands of time, effort and patience on the part of the audience. The understanding and appreciation of art becomes a creative effort in itself.

These observations are of a highly-debatable nature especially considering the tone of absoluteness employed. They are likely to provoke vehement objections from proponents of spontaneity in both

3. Edith L. Tiempo, "When Music Sings in the Hearts of People," *Silliman Journal* 8 (First Quarter, 1961): 21

4. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos," p. 109.

the creation and appreciation of art. However, they are central to Tiempo's poetics and must be given serious consideration if one is to fully understand her view of poetry.

Turning attention to a specific art-form, Tiempo defines literature as "the necessary expression of both head and heart."<sup>5</sup> Corollary to this statement is Ricaredo Demetillo's observation that at the Silliman University Writers' Workshop, participants are led to "discover that artistic writing is a deeply humanistic act . . . a challenge to one's verbal skills and to one's awareness of the total human condition, in its myriad aspects."<sup>6</sup> Significant in these descriptions are the following insights. First, art—in this case, literature—is once again viewed as a tension of polarities. Not only is it created through the interplay between inspiration and craft, its content is also a matter of tension: between reason and passion. Literature is man's vehicle for expressing both idea and emotion. The conjunction is vital precisely because it calls attention to the state of coexistence. Literature is neither solely intellect nor solely passion. In its vastness, it is properly both.

The concept of the twofold nature of literature is further refined when the latter is described as a challenge not only to the poet's verbal skills but also to his vision of life. This is important because immediately a boundary or limit is set to what may become an obsession with mere form and a consequent neglect of content and meaning. Literature is the yoking of the two. It is form, yes; it is skill. But it is also meaning—visions of the world and human experience. This concept of the interplay between substance and form is a crucial one.

Second, it would be wise to call attention to three other ideas found in the above quotations. Literature is, first, necessary; second, deeply humanistic; and third, challenging. These terms are excellent foreshadowings of concepts to be subsequently introduced. In succeeding sections, they shall recur as descriptions of poetry itself. The notions of necessity and humanism point to the value and function of literature; while the notion of challenge echoes the familiar concept of art as difficult but exciting work which demands much from those who undertake it: not only as refinement of technical skill but a maturity of vision as well which Tiempo describes as "a responsive awareness [which] intensifies our appreciation of peak experiences . . . deepens our feelings for the abysmal . . . and merges the sharpened qualities of the heights and the depths in a single context of perception."<sup>7</sup>

5. Edith L. Tiempo, "A Bright Coherence: The Outlook of the Modern Poet," *Silliman Journal* 3 (Second Quarter, 1956): 103.

6. Ricaredo Demetillo, "Confrontation at Silliman," *Graphic*, July 1972, p. 13.

7. Edith L. Tiempo, "Carlos Angeles: Landscape as Reflexion," *Manila Review* 2 (March 1976): 58.

## THE DEFINITION OF POETRY

The logical starting point for a discussion of Tiempo's poetics is her definition of the genre. Found in the essay "Limits—or Chaos," this definition reads: "Poetry is insight or idea rendered through a special use of language and launched from a special slant or point of view."<sup>8</sup>

## THE CONTENT OF POETRY

The introductory section of the definition identifies poetry as insight or idea and is, therefore, a clear reference to the substance of a work. This has come to be known by various terms: *content*, *meaning*, and a word often used by Tiempo, *intention*. Tiempo describes poetic content as being first, all inclusive; second, humanly meaningful; and third, universally and timelessly relevant.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of the all-inclusiveness of poetic content strikes one as being more of an expansion than a limitation. It actually widens the scope of poetry by destroying what Tiempo considers a misconception: the idea that poetry deals only with such limited subject matter as " 'beautiful' or 'sad' objects like flowers . . . sunsets and lovers parting."<sup>10</sup> One may recognize in this mistaken notion an imprint of Romanticism in its narrowest and most superficial sense. This is precisely what Tiempo would wish to set aside. In this regard, she clearly states that although the belief in the all-inclusiveness of poetic substance is not "necessarily a contemporary one [since] great poets in past centuries recognized . . . that there are no exclusive poetic objects and situations,"<sup>11</sup> the return to such a conviction ought to be attributed to a twentieth-century literary group, the Imagists, "who . . . broke away from the fettering concepts of the Victorian brand of Romanticism."<sup>12</sup>

The concept itself is a significant one because it correlates with the wholeness of vision which Tiempo believes to be a requisite for good artistic writing, an awareness of the multiplicity of the world and of human experience. However, one may be tempted to bring such an expansion to extremes by insisting that, consequently, poetry is unselective of its matter. Tiempo quickly sets limits to such a possibility by emphasizing the idea of human relevance and meaningful-

8. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos," p. 105.

9. Edith L. Tiempo, "The Nature of Poetry," in *Introduction to Literature* (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 271-73.

10. *Ibid.*, p.271.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos," p. 106.

ness, which requires that the meaning communicated by a poem be in some way related to human life. Thus, while an artist may choose to create a sonnet cycle on various species of vegetation or write a verse on condors or goldfish, he would still be expected to use his insight to "transform these things into matters that reveal the landscape of the human condition."<sup>13</sup> Only by establishing its human relevance can a poet endow his material with serious value or meaning. This requisite emphasizes not only the poet's skill but also his use of insight, the combination of which transforms matter into meaning.

It is possible to consider these three statements on the nature of poetic content as stages of a process, the culminating point of which involves the requisite of universal and timeless relevance. A poet begins with the potential material for his work, which includes practically all things since, as stated earlier, his range of subjects is all-inclusive. He must move a step beyond, however, and establish that the subject he has chosen is relevant in a human context.

The third stage of the process involves still another step forward. The writer who wishes to create a truly serious poem must widen the relevance of his insight so that it becomes applicable not only to a specific historical period, place or human group but to mankind as it has existed through time. Only then will the human truth which the poet wishes to convey become *poetic* truth, which Tiempo cites as a requisite for true art:

To be truly artistic and effective, a poem should not only have human relevance, it should also be universally relevant. That is, there are truths which are limited to certain places and periods of history; these may be human truths, but may not necessarily be poetic truths. They become poetic only when this limited application is expanded by the poet's insight into a universal and timeless relevance for man.<sup>14</sup>

The distinction between human truth and poetic truth is clarified in the textbook *Introduction to Literature* through the analysis of an anonymous medieval English ballad entitled "Edward." This poem narrates the story of a young man who slays his father presumably upon the urgings of his mother. The latter is revealed to have expected a share in the inheritance due the surviving members of the family; but she discovers that her son leaves her only the "curse of hell" for having counselled him to such a dastardly act.<sup>15</sup>

13. Tiempo, "The Nature of Poetry," p. 272.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 273-74.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 274-75.

In her analysis, Tiempo points out that the motivation of the mother is a consequence of the inferior status of women during the period and within the social milieu depicted in the poem. That is, the woman was most likely driven by her hopelessly inferior social position to take action that would ensure her financial stability. This accounts for the series of questions she asks her son regarding the manner in which he intends to dispose of the property.<sup>16</sup>

In this light, the character is seen as having been motivated to action by a peculiar set of circumstances: the social structure which existed in England during the Middle Ages. Hence, what the poem reveals about the woman is, according to Tiempo, "a human truth, but not a poetic truth . . . true only for the time and the social circumstances in which the characters lived."<sup>17</sup>

However, Tiempo does acknowledge a universal truth communicated by the poem. The woman's actions may be attributed to the workings of greed; or, they may be seen as the consequences of an individual's desperate grasping for that which he or she does not possess. In this case, the motivation is a universally relevant one; it knows neither time nor place and is real and meaningful in the twentieth century as well as in the fifth, in Europe as well as in other parts of the world.

Therefore, Tiempo's concept of poetic truth involves the poet's ability to speak about basic needs, drives and impulses common to all men regardless of time, race or creed; his ability to depict

. . . motives that have to do with the timeless needs of man to survive and to express himself. These are basic and primary needs. They drive men to feats of courage and self-sacrifice, or to ignominy and selfishness and evil. These primary needs are expressed in literature in the recurring themes of love, greed, ambition, pride, sacrifice, fear . . . trust, faith.<sup>18</sup>

#### THE FUNCTION OF POETRY

The description of poetry as the expression of truth is an appropriate introduction to the discussion of the poetic function. Tiempo's concept of this function echoes the basic notion of polarity mentioned earlier, for she perceives it to be the interplay of entertainment and education; or, to use a more traditional phrase, "dulce et utile."

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-76.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

Poetry is not intended merely to entertain. It also has a very useful and serious commitment; to embody the deep truths that reveal to us the complex living organism known as the human being . . . the function of poetry is twofold: 'to delight and to instruct.'<sup>19</sup>

Tiempo traces this concept of duality to its source. Horace spelled out quite clearly the twofold nature of the poetic function, but Tiempo says that Horace simply echoed the sentiments of the Greek classicists, particularly Plato and Aristotle. She then states that since this idea has existed for centuries and is reflected in contemporary criticism as well, it has thus been tested by time and proven to be valid.<sup>20</sup>

The first function of poetry, which has to do with pleasure and entertainment, involves the more readily-perceptible aspects of the work: "three aspects of form . . . the story or the situation that is presented, the euphonious sound of its verses, its vivid array of details and images."<sup>21</sup> Delight may be experienced vis-a-vis these elements in a relatively immediate and spontaneous manner.

Tiempo offers a concrete illustration of a poem that achieves this function. The work, Robert Frost's "A Semi-Revolution":

I advocate a semi-revolution.  
 The trouble with a total revolution  
 (Ask any reputable Rosicrucian)  
 Is that it brings the same class up on top.  
 Executives of skillful execution  
 Will therefore plan to go half-way and stop.  
 Yes. Revolutions are the only salves,  
 But they're one thing that should be done by halves.<sup>22</sup>

In her analysis of the piece, Tiempo endeavors to show how the work, despite its rather serious and provocative subject, leads its reader to the primary experience of enjoyment by the use of poetic techniques. The almost playful rhythm of the poem, the skillful use of rhyme and cadence result in a flippancy which attracts the reader to the verse, where a more solemn, sententious tone might have frightened him away. The poem "works" in the sense that not only has it attracted the reader to itself, it has also allowed him the two-pronged experi-

19. *Ibid.*, p.266.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-69.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

22. Robert Frost, "A Semi-Revolution," quoted in Tiempo, "The Form of Poetry," *Introduction to Literature*, p. 282.

ence of enjoying euphony and meter while absorbing the meaning being conveyed.<sup>23</sup>

The educative function, on the other hand, is more complex for it consists of the fashioning of meaning and value on a deeper level. In this regard, Tiempo delineates two fundamental functions of poetry. First, it instructs man as to that which is—the state or reality in himself, among other men and in the world. Such instruction is achieved in various ways. Poetry may be a means for the ordering of reality: "It is a poem's business to create order out of chaotic experience, to present an experience in all its complexity and try to wrest coherence and meaning out of it."<sup>24</sup> This implies that human experience is multiple, complex and, due to the simultaneous occurrence of various and often contradictory events, chaotic. The value of poetry, therefore, lies in its capacity to freeze, as it were, one moment or a series of moments in a situation and to reconstruct its elements so that its picture may be clearer and easier to understand.

One aspect of reality that poetry recreates is human nature. Poetry reflects the manifold nature of man—his needs, drives, weaknesses and strengths. On one hand, it functions as a stimulant, capable of startling and awakening man to the negatives of his being and existence: "By its surprising because ambiguous terms, it forces man to wake from his stupor of habit and indifference, and to concentrate once again on the vital truth he has taken for granted."<sup>25</sup> Notice that Tiempo links the technique of poetry (ambiguity) with its function. Poetry does not restrict itself, however, to pointing out that which man must correct in himself. It also offers insight into his goodness, his potential nobility; "through the medium of its own specialized structures, poetry's aim is to reveal to us the best in us, the god-like and the God in man."<sup>26</sup> In doing so, it moves beyond a reflection of "what is" to an indication of "what can and should be," thus becoming an even richer source of instruction.

The recognition of the dual function of poetry has some noteworthy implications. First, it suggests that a truly serious artistic work is one that goes beyond the first function in order to achieve the second. This echoes the concept of art as a challenge—to both artist and reader. The first is called upon to ensure that his poem possesses more lasting value than that which inheres in pretty sounds, a clever turn of phrase, or a handsomely fashioned image. Tiempo insists that there be more to a poem than this so that there may be more to a reader's response

23. Tiempo, *Introduction to Literature*, p. 282.

24. Edith L. Tiempo, "Suggestion and Irony in Poetry," *Sands and Coral* (1950): 59–60.

25. Tiempo, "A Bright Coherence," p. 109.

26. *Ibid.*

than mere enjoyment. She suggests that there must be a challenge in the reading of a piece. The creation of such a work inevitably demands a greater and more careful exercise of craft on the part of the poet.

This concept of poetry correlates with Tiempo's view of and respect for the reader. She states that the latter be acknowledged as someone capable of "self-created thinking . . . [of] formulating his conclusions and reactions by thinking them out himself as guided by the inclusive outlook" of the work.<sup>27</sup> Capable of decision and analysis, the reader is able to do more than just swallow a poem whole. This leads to the second implication of the poetic function; that is, that some degree of craftsmanship is required of the reader himself. Obviously, the kind of reader Tiempo has in mind is one who has had some education to prepare him for the task required and has the opportunity to undertake it.

Third, the dual function of poetry also implies that a particular approach is necessary to do it justice. This approach is itself multilevelled, beginning with the simple and immediate aspects but also moving toward the deeper complex of meaning. It is based on the recognition that much more "is involved in the content [of a poem] than the bare situation, just as there is much more to the *execution* than an abstract paraphrasing."<sup>28</sup> Thus, the proper approach to poetry refuses to content itself with the apprehension of the bare minimum.

Tiempo defines the essence of this approach in the following way: "serious poetry is appreciated only through an understanding of the subtle aspects of poetic form."<sup>29</sup> It is crucial to remember, therefore, that this approach takes into account not only the insight conveyed by the work but the mode of presentation as well; thus, it is really an approach to poetry *as an art*. "Reading poetry at the higher level of enjoyment ultimately means regarding poetry as a creation of art. That is, we take into account the way a poem articulates itself through its chosen form."<sup>30</sup>

#### THE FORM OF POETRY

This section focuses attention on the second idea expressed therein: "Poetry is insight or idea *rendered through a special use of language* . . ." (italics mine). The essential points established are: first, the concept of rendition and second, the use of language in a special manner. The

27. Edith L. Tiempo, "The Wet Ruffles," *Sands and Coral* (1954): 84.

28. Edith L. Tiempo, "Psychological Revelation in a Poem," *Diliman Review* 1 (April 1953): 161.

29. Tiempo, "The Nature of Poetry," p. 283.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

former refers to what might be called the process inherent in poetry, the latter, to the fundamental tool employed in the said process. Both are involved in the "how" of the genre: its form, its structure, its of manner communication.

Certain fundamental concepts regarding artistic form must be clarified at this point. First, form is commonly understood to be "the way the content is articulated,"<sup>31</sup> hence the often repeated description of content as the "what" and of form as the "how" of an artistic work. Various critics (Tiempo among them) would, however, opt for a more accurate description of these two aspects, one which does not, in fact, consider them as two aspects but which establishes a kind of equational relationship between them. Consider the four following statements:

1. Poetic form and poetic content are one and the same thing. That is to say, we cannot separate one from the other.<sup>32</sup>
2. . . . substance dictates the form, but in the long run you cannot say "substance" without thinking of form because substance already has the form in it.<sup>33</sup>
3. No longer do we think of the word, *form*, in terms solely of the more external poetic qualities as in the sonnet (14 iambic lines) . . . form is the transmutation of the manner of utterance into the utterance itself.<sup>34</sup>
4. The substance is the structure itself, to be found in the organic union of the elements . . . around a core which is the abstract theme.<sup>35</sup>

An analysis of these statements reveals several important insights. The first statement explains that the relationship of sameness that exists between form and substance lies in their inseparability. There is a need, however, to clarify what this inseparability means. Statement Two offers the idea that form and substance are inseparable because the latter dictates the former, because form is "in" the substance. This is just one way of saying that form inheres in substance; that is, given a particular artistic insight or intention, there is a structure that is the most natural mode of expressing it, that is most capable of communicating its full meaning and impact in as clear and convincing a manner as possible.

31. Edith L. Tiempo "The Nature of Poetry," p. 304.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Edith L. Tiempo, "Discussions at the Forum on Poetry," *Comment* (Fourth Quarter, 1962): 131.

34. Tiempo, "The Nature of Poetry," p. 304.

35. Edith L. Tiempo "The Short Stories," Introduction to *Philippine Writing*, ed. T.D. Agcaoi (Manila: Archipelago Publishing House, 1953), p. xii.

It is crucial to remember, however, that while substance may dictate form, the latter is also responsible for shaping the former. Hence, the relationship of inseparability is also one of interaction. For instance: given an artistic intention A, expressed in Form A-1 and Form A-2. Intention A in Form A-1 ceases to be one and the same as Intention A in Form A-2. What happens is that this intention finds two sides of itself, two distinct perspectives of itself through having been embodied in the two structures. Thus, one might begin with one abstraction (for instance, *Pride*) and proceed to formulate one statement of theme (that *Pride* can become a man's greatest enemy). Two poems written on that same theme, despite the sameness in genre and in intent, would still be two distinct end-products. Tiempo states: "You take an idea . . . expressed by one person . . . and ask another person to express it, it won't be the same thing. What made the difference is the form."<sup>36</sup>

These distinct end-products are seen to be unified wholes, an idea implicit in Statement Three which refers to the transformation of form into the substance itself and ultimately into the entire work. This echoes the idea of inseparability by asserting that the end-product is the form *and* the substance as one. Statement Four explains the concept of wholeness by contributing yet another component to the equation. Hence, that substance is structure is the organic union of the elements of the work. This state of organic unity accounts for the unique identity of the work and shall be discussed in a subsequent section as a requisite for good poetry.

Tiempo makes several statements regarding the nature of poetic structure in particular. First, she describes it as a matter of interplay, this time between external and internal limits. External limits are those elements commonly associated with poetry, such as the choice and arrangement of words and of other details of the material (e.g. poetic situation), rhythm, meter, rhyme, etc. These elements are recognized as limits because they embody the poetic content, help to endow the piece with a regularity of form and act as controlling factors vis-a-vis the reader's reactions.<sup>37</sup>

Internal limits on the other hand primarily involve the intention of the work and center largely on the exercise of restraint. Tiempo declares that: "The salvation of the young poet . . . is in seeking and understanding the *internal* limits of his art . . . one has freedom only within the recognized and accepted framework of inner restraint."<sup>38</sup> There

36. Tiempo, "Forum on Poetry," p. 131.

37. Tiempo, "Psychological Revelation," p. 161.

38. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos," p. 109.

are two levels of restraint referred to here. One involves the controlled presentation of thought through order, logic and clarity. The other consists of a control of emotion that safeguards the poem from being mere cathartic outpouring. This twofold restraint facilitates, if not altogether achieves, the compact and condensed presentation of experience that poetry is expected to be.

The interplay between the external and internal limits exists because the former are manifestations of the latter and are controlled by them.<sup>39</sup> This is well-illustrated in Tiempo's discussion of the use of rhyme, during the 1962 Forum on Poetry. The analysis involves four lines from W.B. Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium":

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress.<sup>40</sup>

On the use of rhyme therein, Tiempo comments:

I am talking of the rhymes "unless" and "dress." Ordinarily, if you were not following any external limit, you would say: "A tattered coat upon a stick,/Unless soul clap its hands and sing and louder sing/"But because the poet was following an external limit, he stops . . . with "unless" because it better rhymes with "dress." That's not the only reason . . . the external. He uses that also for an internal limit because "unless" is a binder to the idea of the whole stanza . . . the opposition of soul and body . . . [the latter] is a tattered coat *unless* there is spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Two crucial ideas are contained in this passage. First, Tiempo points out that rhyme is used as an external limit that fulfills the requirement of euphony (notice that it also affects the structure, the cut-off points of the two lines in question). Second, she notes that it is also simultaneously linked with an internal requirement: the need to focus attention on an integral aspect of the stanza's meaning.

Tiempo also makes clear the central value of these limits to poetry by celebrating the work of the French Symbolists of the nineteenth century. What is admirable in the poetic practice of this group is the successfully maintained interplay between external and internal limits. This is concretized in Tiempo's analysis of Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Hunger" from which she quotes the following lines:

39. Ibid.

40. W.B. Yeats, "Sailing To Byzantium," in *Reading Modern Poetry* (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Co., 1955), p. 138.

41. Tiempo, "Forum on Poetry," p. 129.

Eat the pebbles that one breaks,  
 Churches' old stones;  
 Gravel of ancient deluge taste,  
 And loaves scattered in grey brakes.<sup>42</sup>

These lines illustrate the Symbolist technique of creating a series of "mixed or disparate metaphors,"<sup>43</sup> each of which is precise and concrete in itself but apparently lacks a sense of logical relatedness with the others. The metaphors in this case (pebbles, gravel, church stones and loaves) create a stanza marked by apparent chaos that results from the fact that its poetic elements seem rather difficult to reconcile.

However, more careful thought on the part of the reader may lead him to discover the logic on the poem's internal plane. Reconciliation is achieved when each metaphor is seen to possess a symbolic significance that fits in, logically and precisely, with respect to a larger vision which all the images combine to create. Tiempo explains this internal system in terms of the intention of the work:

The broken pebbles and the old stones of churches and the gravel from the ancient deluge and the calcified wood . . . could very well stand for the debris of old orders, the deposits from the crumbled foundations of old credos and faiths—an interpretation that is justifiable when one remembers that the French Symbolists were also known as the *Decadents*, so named for their predilection for writing on the tattered vestiges of social systems fallen into decay . . .<sup>44</sup>

What Tiempo finds so praiseworthy in Symbolist poetry is again a matter of conscious craftsmanship: the juxtaposition of apparent chaos with internal logic; and, moreover, the ability to use vagueness as a vehicle for the apprehension of precision, disorder, for the appreciation of logic.

Tiempo emphasizes the value of limits not only by noting their presence in the poetry she presents as models but also by describing what poetry would be like without these limits. She outlines several undesirable effects that the absence of limits has on the poem and its creator.

First, poetry without limits (especially without emotional restraint) is described as "the cathartic mouthings of any transported man, not the works of a responsible artist."<sup>45</sup> The use of the word "cathartic"

42. Arthur Rimbaud, "Hunger," quoted by Tiempo in "Limits — or Chaos," p. 107.

43. Edith L. Tiempo, "The Influence of the French Symbolists on Contemporary Poetic Procedures," *Silliman Journal* 11 (1974): 316.

44. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos," p. 107.

45. Edith L. Tiempo, "On Swirls of Impasto," *Sands and Coral* (1951): 41.

here suggests that the purpose of the work is restricted to the purging of emotions presumably to enable the creator to cleanse himself of a surfeit of passions. This runs contrary to the concept of poetry as the interplay of emotion and thought for it tilts the balance unfavorably in one direction. The situation is compounded by the introduction of the notion of "transport" which suggests something close to rapture and, perhaps, even frenzy, a state in which an individual is actually carried away by his emotions.

Tiempo clearly expresses her negative evaluation of such work: "our aesthetic feeling is revolted at such lack of restraint."<sup>46</sup> Her repulsion is based on the fact that such poetry contradicts her fundamental principles of literature and art. To her mind, there is no excuse for such a lack of limits, not even the choice of disorder and chaos as the subject of a piece. Once an individual selects poetry as the vehicle for his intention, he is bound to fulfilling the requirements of the genre:

The man has chosen to cast his ideas into poetry . . . and should, therefore, be held to the requirements of that form . . . he chooses to depict confusion and obscurity, and since he has chosen to do so in artistic form, there should be order in the confusion, definition in the obscurity, method in the madness—or he is not privileged to poetry at all . . .<sup>47</sup>

These statements obviously emphasize the containing and restraining functions or form, an idea Tiempo describes as an integral aspect of poetry. She states: "the poem should not overflow and become diffused but must, *being a poem*, have solid form to contain itself" (Italics mine).<sup>48</sup> The function of form as a container is integral to the creative process and ensures the balance between thought and passion. Note John Crowe Ransom's rather graphic explanation of this concept:

Given an object, and a poet burning to utter himself upon it, he must take into account . . . the form into which he must cast his utterance (. . . the body he must give to his passion) . . . [this] delays and hinders him. In the process of "composition" the burning passion is submitted to cool considerations . . . the thing expressed there is not a hundred percent passion at all.<sup>49</sup>

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p. 40.

49. John Crowe Ransom, quoted by E.K. Tiempo in "The Impact of New Criticism in the Philippines," *Solidarity* 5 (December 1970): 52-53.

Having been thus delayed, the poet is, in fact, hindered for his own benefit and allowed to exercise control over his emotions. Thus, he avoids the exaggerations and melodrama that often result from a lack of restraint.<sup>50</sup>

A second consequence of the poet's indulgence of his need to release private urgings is obscurity of idea and expression. A poet who is unaware of the need for limits runs the danger of not delineating carefully and clearly enough the dividing line between his private self and his poet-self. Such a failure has negative effects on the work, leading it towards an excessive subjectivity that would deter a reader from comprehending it. In such a case

symbols and images become too private; the man dominates, the poet forgets the fine distinctions between private and shared associations. He becomes too engrossed in his visions to bother to interpret, to organize, to dramatize for his reader.<sup>51</sup>

Here, Tiempo defines the function of the poet in terms of interpretation, organization and dramatization. All these activities require that the poet be able to order and arrange his material with deliberateness and care.

#### THE REQUISITES OF POETIC STRUCTURE

Having defined the nature of poetic structure as the interplay between external and internal limits and having established the value of these limits to the genre, it is now possible to list and explain the norms or requisites for a successful poetic structure.

Tiempo lists four characteristics in this regard. The first involves the manner in which the intention of the poem is communicated. It has been repeated often enough that the poet is duty-bound to search for the form which will convey his insight in the most effective manner possible. Such a structure is that which allows the intention to be justified or proven.<sup>52</sup> A few definitions of the word "prove" will yield the key to this concept. The term is defined in the following manner: "to show to be correct, valid, or genuine"; "to establish the truth of, by argument, and/or evidence." These definitions imply that a process must be undertaken, a crucial point in the context of the requisite mentioned above.

50. Tiempo, "The Short Stories," p. xvii.

51. Tiempo, "On Swirls of Impasto," p. 39.

52. Tiempo, "Suggestion and Irony," p. 52.

In poetry, justifying or proving the intention means developing it through and within the structure of poetic elements. The intention must not, if the poem is to succeed, be presented in a bald generalized statement which a reader would be forced to swallow whole. Rather, "a genuinely poetic conclusion . . . should be inherent in the situation, detail or character operative in the poem."<sup>53</sup> This quotation brings to the fore the idea of the special nature of the poetic conclusion/intention. In order to be genuine, it must be presented through a gradual working-out of its truth, through the use of various elements employed in the work.

This is so for several reasons. First, there is a need for conviction. Tiempo states that: "the idea of a poem to be effective and convincing, should be dramatized with the poem. *Stating* the idea is weak . . . we accept as reasonable an idea that is worked out in front of our mind's eye."<sup>54</sup> If a poet were simply to state his insight, the reader would have all the option to reject it, since the former would have given him no reason to believe it to be true. However if a writer is to take his function as poet seriously, he carefully selects his material, orders this into a whole and fleshes out the idea in his poem.

Second, justification also endows the presentation with greater intensity by lending it the strength of climax that is absent in a mere series of generalized, rhetorical statements. Finally, the gradual working out of the concept is also stimulating because it affords the reader the opportunity to participate in the creative discovery of the intention behind the poetic details. This ties in perfectly with the idea that serious poetry makes some demands on the reader himself.

The actual process employed in the justification of the intention is called rendering (which, one recalls, is the second major term of the functional definition of poetry.) The process of rendering is achieved through imaging, a step-by-step transformation involving three primary components: the abstraction, the statement of the theme and, the most important device of poetry, the image. Tiempo describes this transformation in the following terms: "We often think of *meaning* and *truth* as abstractions, and indeed they are. . . . Poetry takes these abstractions and turns them into themes or controlling ideas . . . [then] gives body and form to these themes by a proper use of images."<sup>55</sup>

The word "image" may refer to two similar, interrelated yet distinct entities. First, it may refer to the overall pictorial framework of the poem; that is, an entire complex of smaller pictures which is used to

53. Tiempo, "The Nature of Poetry," p. 298.

54. Tiempo, "Suggestion and Irony," p. 52.

55. *Ibid.*

objectify or embody the theme. But, it could also point to the smaller pictures themselves (which are, technically speaking, the representation, through language, of sensory impressions or experiences.) The creation of images requires the proper use of poetic elements. The choice and arrangement of words are crucial in this regard. Moreover, special auditory effects may be recreated not only through the sounds of words but also through the ingenious employment of rhythm, meter and syntax. Other types of imagery include the visual, the olfactory, the tactile, etc.

This entire concept of imaging may be illustrated through the use of one of Tiempo's own poems, "The Pane," which she analyzes along these lines in an article published in 1949, entitled "Looking Through The Pane."

Tiempo identifies the intention of the poem as the desire "to prove a paradox"<sup>56</sup> regarding blindness and sight. This immediately presents the abstraction upon which the work is based. The second step in the process involves the specification of that paradox in the form of a thematic statement: that blindness may, in fact, be a condition safer than the possession of sight.<sup>57</sup> This theme is worked out through the poem by way of rendition and imaging.

The overall complex of imagery involves the picture of a blind man making his way home at night. The character is presented, travelling over a bridge that spans a flooded river and through open fields of cogon grass. One notices that this image correlates directly with the theme and presents the basic poetic situation. However, the justification of the intention is accomplished through the gradual presentation of contributory images. Tiempo gives several examples of these images and shows how each contributes to the meaning the poem wishes to convey. One image, for example, which emphasizes the character's disability is found in the second line of the poem: "His steps steadied only by a cane." Tiempo dissects the line and explains how the alliteration of sounds ties in with meaning and how a skillful use of meter highlights the sense of irony:

The repetition of the sound STE in two consecutive words gives the subtle sense of the shuffling, tapping rhythm of the cane itself. The word "only" receives a spondaic stress on both syllables . . . it needs this emphasis because it is, in a way, an extension of the irony—*only* a cane, and yet it is largely what the man depends on.<sup>58</sup>

56. Edith L. Tiempo, "Looking Through The Pane," *Sands and Coral* (1949): 37.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

The entire analysis shows how each line of the poem either contains or contributes to the creation of similar "helping" images and how, through the structure of the entire work, the intention is justified.

The imaging procedure is what makes for the compact, condensed manner of presentation in poetry. This condensation is made possible because, at the heart of the imaging procedure is the use of the technique of suggestion. Suggestion is implication and indirection, the communication of a thought through subtle hints. It is invaluable in poetry for several reasons. First, since it functions basically on the principle of connotation, it makes possible a richness of meaning not always achieved through denotation. Second, it allows for compactness through economy, through "saying much through little." Finally, it is also a tool for achieving a more intense and convincing presentation. The proper use of suggestion helps one to avoid the repetition of blunt and obvious statements; avoiding such repetition is also an avoidance of the monotony, the boredom and loss of impact which are its consequences.

Tiempo offers an example of the value of suggestion in her analysis of her poem "The Return." Focusing attention on the first line of the poem, "If the dead years could shake their skinny legs and run," she explains how suggestion fulfills each of the functions listed above. Comparing the line taken from the poem with its more prosaic counterpart ("If he were only young again"), she observes:

The difference is almost too obvious for comment. . . . In the first version a host of associations comes into being by the introduction of the concrete image that *suggests* rather than *states*. "If he were only young again" states the idea and presents merely an abstraction . . . "If the dead years could shake their skinny legs and run" does not even mention being young again, yet through the use of suggestive image, [that] thought . . . is made more real and rich, since thinking of skinny legs makes us also think of the boy to whom they belonged; and thinking of that boy reminds us of long activities in the outdoors . . . the connotations are infinite, especially in the subconscious.<sup>59</sup>

Tiempo goes on to analyze still another chain of associations inherent in the word "shakes," levels of emotion striking at the heart of the character who did, in fact, wish that he were young again. The point is clear: having set off this chain of connotations, the poet has achieved richness of meaning, realism and intensity of presentation and economy of expression.

59. Tiempo, "Suggestion and Irony," pp. 54-55.

Tiempo's belief in the value of rendition in poetry results in her vigorous objection to the propagandistic mode of communication. The latter, she states, does not allow the poet to exercise his craft in order to render his insight with imagination and subtlety. Rather, in his consuming passion for and conviction in his idea, the poet is tempted to use generalizations and rhetoric to convey his insight with quickness and some degree of certitude.

In her review of the collected works of W.H. Auden, she states:

Auden's art vitalizes the subjects that possess him, and transforms them; however, it may be properly said too, that his least artistic verses may be found in those works that deal directly with the subjects the propagandists would most quickly seize upon. [Examples given: "New Year Letter"; "Commentary"] Auden inveighing in a direct manner against war or social injustice . . . inevitably foregoes imaginative rendition in favor of statement and rhetoric.<sup>60</sup>

The objection would seem to be directed not at the topics per se (although Tiempo does claim that such sociopolitical issues are decidedly popular among propagandists), but rather at the treatment of those topics. The key word in the quotation above is "inveighing"; it suggests that the poet uses his work to rail against injustice and absurdity and thus, perhaps, loses that control of self so essential to poetic creation. Such railing may be a sign of an overwhelming passion that clouds not only the poet's awareness of the discipline of his art but even reason as well. Once again, the need to balance idea and emotion is underscored.

The use of propagandistic techniques is not limited to works of the sociopolitical inclination. Any poem that does away with rendition and contents itself with rhetoric and simplistic generalizations may be classified as propaganda. Henley's popular "invictus" is a case in point. Lines such as "I am the master of my fate:/ I am the captain of my soul" are illustrative of this situation. The entire piece is a battle-cry, high-spirited and inspirational, but propaganda nevertheless as it communicates "an easy affirmation of man's ability to rouse himself at will,"<sup>61</sup> without ever really proving this to be true. Tiempo describes the piece as an "impulsive and naive declaration"<sup>62</sup> rather than a carefully-considered and thoughtfully-presented insight into the nature and abilities of man.

60. Edith L. Tiempo, "The Positive Tropism," *Sands and Coral* (1955): 83. This is a review of the anthology *The Collected Poetry of W.H. Auden* (New York: Random House).

61. Tiempo, "A Bright Coherence," p. 106.

62. *Ibid.*

In *Introduction to Literature*, Tiempo gives the example of a poem that deals with the issue of social and economic deprivation, with sacrificing the process of rendition through imagery. The piece, entitled "The Golf Links," consists of four lines:

The golf links lie so near the mill  
 That almost every day  
 The laboring children can look out  
 And see the men at play.<sup>63</sup>

Tiempo points to this piece as an example of how poetry renders insight through imagery, without attempting to "state or explain [its] point; . . . [rather, it] presents a picture of the situation and lets the reader understand the picture for himself."<sup>64</sup>

There are three other requisites for a successful poetic structure: first, inevitability, which refers to the poet's choice of poetic elements; second, organic growth, which involves the process of the poem's development; and third, organic unity, which describes the poem's state of being as a finished product. As shall be explained later, these qualities are interrelated.

The primary level on which inevitability is operative is the level of the word. Tiempo devotes an entire essay to the discussion of this concept, which essay she prefaces with an explanation of the importance of words. She explains that language is the very basis of poetry, of all artistic writing, and functions as the embodiment of all other poetic elements, putting these in a form accessible to the reader's comprehension. More than this, however, by their very nature, words are endowed with both denotative and connotative meanings and thus are invaluable in the poetic process of rendition. The proper choice and use of words is one key to successful poetry in the same manner that poor choice and usage can do much to destroy the overall effect of a piece: "the irresponsible use of ONE word can create chaos in the whole poem . . . conversely, a proper word set in its proper place does enrich and clarify and complete the meaning."<sup>65</sup> One notices how much weight is given to the role of each word in a poem, an idea that reinforces the demand for craftsmanship.

It is in this context of the proper word that the concept of inevitability arises for, as Tiempo explains, "It is not enough to use the

63. Sarah N. Cleghorn, "The Golf Links," quoted by Tiempo in *Introduction to Literature*, p. 285.

64. Tiempo, "The Nature of Poetry," p. 285.

65. Edith L. Tiempo, "The Inevitable Word," *Sands and Coral* (1952): 62.

correct word; one must search out the inevitable word for a certain line . . . inevitable in point of sound, force of denotation, richness of connotations, the harmony or tension between all these evoked responses and their appropriateness to the total meaning."<sup>66</sup> Implicit therein is the care to be exercised by the poet in the construction of his work. Each factor must be weighed carefully against all others so that the constituents which eventually make their way into the poem are those which must inevitably be there. The sense of design is quite clear.

Following is an example of inevitability in word choice and usage. It is taken from Tiempo's partial analysis of Carlos Angeles's "The Sale of the Old Homestead" and focuses on two lines of the work:

The shoat entangled, you, freeing the shout  
Of Animal despair, how now forget?<sup>67</sup>

The analysis discusses the use of the word "shoat," comparing it with possible synonyms. The choice of the word is seen to be the most appropriate as far as the required image, connotation and tone are concerned:

Why does the poet choose "shoat" instead of, say, "pig" or "sow" or "barrow" or "swine" or "hog"? The poet finds the inevitable word in "shoat" because of the function of this creature in the poem: it serves as the objective correlative to certain childhood memories treasured by the owner of the homestead . . . a man with a sensitive soul . . . trapped (thus, "entangled") by mundane exigencies into selling the homestead for which he has such an attachment . . . Now, "pig" or "hog" or the other choices would not lend themselves to such a connotation of sensitivity . . . One might ask: why choose a pig at all? The answer lies in the need to maintain a casual tone . . . hardened against sentimentality but not so hardened as to make the correlation odious.<sup>68</sup>

One cannot but marvel at the series of considerations operative in this analysis. Such helps to emphasize the seriousness with which the concept of inevitability is used by Tiempo.

The final requisites for a successful poetic structure are the interdependent qualities of organic growth and organic unity. The use of the word "organic" in both cases suggests that the poem is to be treated almost as a living entity, each of whose parts performs a vital function in making and keeping the whole what it should be. Tiempo

66. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

67. Carlos Angeles, "The Sale of the Old Homestead," quoted in *ibid.*, p. 66.

68. Tiempo, "The Inevitable Word," pp. 66-67.

explains what organic growth is by first describing what it is not: "A poem grows from line to line . . . undergoes an organic, not a synthetic growth. A synthetic growth means the piling up of details after *everything* about the theme has been said in the first few lines. This keeps the poem static."<sup>69</sup>

Tiempo's fundamental objection to synthetic growth is based on the fact that the intention of a poem, in such a case, is contained in one of its sections, presumably the beginning. The rest of the work simply becomes an amplification or an elaboration of what has already been expressed. It seems no accident that Tiempo uses the word "synthetic" to describe this method. With its connotation of artificiality, it implies that this type of growth is false, is not growth at all.

On the other hand, "a poem that grows organically reveals itself in logical and dramatic order, with all its details contributing to the theme and *being* organic parts of the theme. Cut out any portion and you lop off vital parts of the poem, the unified wholeness is lost, and you only have misshapen parts."<sup>70</sup> What does this imply? First, a gradual revelation of the poetic insight is expected, thus adhering to the requisite rendering process. Second, the intention of the poem is not contained in any one section of the work. It is in each part as it coexists with the others. This is the organic unity mentioned above. It simply means that the poem is expected not to contain any unnecessary elements; that, as far as possible, each part is present because the poem requires it to be so. Hence, the endproduct is a tightly constructed whole which will not admit "of a considerable change . . . or a deletion or modification."<sup>71</sup>

It is easy to see, therefore, how the four requisites for a successful poetic structure interrelate with one another. As Tiempo puts it: "the justification of concept . . . lies in how successfully all the elements — meter, rhythm, images, tone . . . thought . . . *unify* to dramatize the effect intended."<sup>72</sup> This effect has been described as the poetic conclusion, the poetic revelation.

Finally, it is this state of organic unity that makes possible the work's sense of identity. Endowed with a compact structure, characterized by order and pattern, the poem "finds its most successful form [and] can be itself in all its parts, only itself and not one iota any different."<sup>73</sup> This observation is an appropriate concluding thought for it brings the

69. Tiempo, "Psychological Revelation," p. 165.

70. *Ibid.*

71. Edith L. Tiempo, "The Short Stories," p. xi

72. Tiempo, "Suggestion and Irony," p. 53. Italics mine.

73. Tiempo, "The Short Stories," p. xi

discussion back to one of the first statements made regarding poetic structure: that substance is structure is the unique union of its elements.

The functional definition of poetry states that it is "insight or idea rendered through a special use of language . . ." Tiempo identifies this special use of language as "directed manipulation and concentration."<sup>74</sup> This phrase is a good summation of all the points covered in this section. The word "directed" implies that some action is being undertaken with purpose. In this case, the action involves manipulation and concentration for the purpose of justifying the intention of the work. Manipulation, in this regard, refers to the deliberate fashioning of the poetic elements — the careful choice and arrangement of words and details in accordance with the principle of inevitability; the deliberate ordering and gradual piecing together of all elements in the growth process of the poem to achieve unity and homogeneity of structure. This leads to the notion of concentration — the compactness that is achieved through imaging and suggestion and which is responsible for "the singularly sharp and immediate communication that one gets only in poetry."<sup>75</sup>

#### THE POETIC OUTLOOK

At this point, what remains to be explored in terms of Tiempo's definition of poetry is its third aspect: : "Poetry is insight or idea rendered through a special use of language and *launched from a special slant or point of view*" (italics mine).

This last idea is a reference to the vantage-point employed by the poet in perceiving his subject and in presenting that perception to the reader. The idea of specialness could mean the selection of a *particular* vantage-point, this particularity affecting the presentation in a significant way.

An experience presented through the eyes of one persona would undergo a change in meaning if presented through the point of view of another. Tiempo's poem on the paradox of blindness and sight, "The Pane," may be used to illustrate this point. The piece in its present form is the perception of an omniscient third person, an observer who seems almost to hover over the situation and is thus able to apprehend it in its entirety. He sees the blind man measuring his way home in the darkness of both the night and his own disability. Moreover, the observer sees the swollen river beneath the bridge as clearly as

74. Tiempo, "Limits — or Chaos," p. 105.

75. Ibid.

he does the python lying in the cogon grass. He perceives all that the central character is able to apprehend only as sounds or through the help of his cane.

It would be interesting to consider how a variation in point of view would alter the meaning of the poem. How the selection of the blind man himself as *persona*, for instance, would cause a change in the insight and the structure of the work. What variations would have to be worked out in terms of the complex of imagery employed? Would it be possible to present the same paradox as that found in the original? Would a blind man be in a position to apprehend the positive irony of his situation? Would such be a realistic, reasonable plan for a poem? These and many other crucial questions would have to be carefully considered by the poet contemplating the said change in point of view.

This insight into the definition of poetry is valuable because it underscores, once again, the coexistence and interdependence of meaning and structure. It shows how point of view, which is a facet of form, is in fact a determinant of meaning.

It is possible, however, to take a broader view of this component. One may interpret it as reference to an aspect of poetry which Tiempo believes essential. This is the outlook — on the world and human experience — which she feels is proper to a serious poet. In at least four of her critical essays, Tiempo explains the nature of this outlook which she refers to as "plurality" and "the bright coherence." Consider the following descriptions:

... the well rounded, undeceived, integrated view of [one's] fellowmen and of the the diversified abstractions that move the world.<sup>76</sup>

... a view of the whole, an undeceived, comprehensive view of the unity in the midst of multiplicity, the bright coherence over the grey diversity.<sup>77</sup>

Implicit in these statements is the belief in the complexity of life. Tiempo's starting point is her own vision, her own perception of human experience. That perception is one that acknowledges that man is a multifaceted creature, that human experience is a complex of shades, levels and dimensions. Nothing and no one is ever really simple. Therefore, the proper poetic outlook, in order to be true to life, veers away from a simplistic view and presentation. It takes serious account of the inherent multiplicity of life and does justice to it.

The approach to one's subject, therefore, must be characterized by roundedness. The poet is expected to set his subject before him and

76. Tiempo "The Positive Tropism," p. 76.

77. Tiempo, "A Bright Coherence," p. 104.

allow his vision to take a circular path around it, examining it from different perspectives. Such an approach helps the poet to achieve a fuller understanding of the subject, which is required for a fair presentation of it in his work.

Such an outlook is an appreciation of polarity, of the tension inherent in most things. Man, for instance, is appraised in terms of the duality of his nature: strength co-existing with weakness; good with evil. Life is also seen in this light: the blending of the pleasant with the unpleasant, the certain with the uncertain. Tiempo describes this outlook as "a true awareness . . . a synthesis of responses to the qualities of both the heights and the depths. Man's very nature dictates the merging since both he and his world are a complicated duality."<sup>78</sup>

This concept of merging requires that the poet possess the capacity for integration. Faced with many complex variables, he is expected not to be overwhelmed by them but to hone his skill of juxtaposition and reconciliation. Thus, he is to *be* "the bright coherence," the light of order and organization in the midst of contradiction and confusion.

Tiempo offers her poem "The Return" as an example of an attempt at such an outlook. The situation in the piece involves a man returning home after years of absence. Standing on the brink of return, the central character hesitates, unable, just yet, to take the first step back into the old world he knows he has grown away from. He is beset by various intellectual and emotional conflicts. He wants to push through the barriers between himself and his past; yet he hesitates to do so. He longs to be welcomed, to be taken in; yet he holds back, fearful that he may not be. He wishes to regale his old friends with breathtaking tales of his years away from home; but his tongue is stilled by the uncertainty as to how the tales would be received. The poem proceeds, through detail and image, cataloguing the contrary forces tangling within the character. The man is presented as a pulsing complex of expectation and hesitation, of wishful thinking and frustration. Moreover, not only is the character experiencing these emotions, he is also acutely aware, intellectually, that he is feeling them, this awareness heightening his internal turmoil.<sup>79</sup>

Tiempo calls attention to the fact that the poem presents the experience of return as a complicated interweaving of emotion and thought. By delineating the character's internal conflict, it avoids the sentimentality that might have resulted had it dwelt only on the sweetness and "wonderfulness" of the experience. Moreover, it re-

78. Tiempo, "Landscape as Reflexion," p. 60.

79. Tiempo analyzes her poem in the article "Suggestion and Irony in Poetry," pp.54-63.

veals a deep insight into human life: that even those situations traditionally thought to be pleasant and beautiful may have touches of unpleasantness and even pain in them.

Tiempo underscores the need for such a multifaceted approach; without it, she states, a poem presents not reality but a distortion of it. The poet's ability to delineate the many aspects of a single experience (their contrariness notwithstanding) constitutes his sense of irony, the quality which lies at the very core of the proper poetic outlook. The exercise of irony is essential for the realistic and reasonable presentation of experience that poetry is expected to be. As Tiempo explains:

. . . irony plays a great part in the full-bodied growth of an idea; without some degree of irony . . . the portrayal is not life-like because life is not made up of only one side to things . . . It is no true picture of life to present only the defeated attitude, or only the brave, or only the desirable, or only the gruesome . . . the whole vision of life is a compound of the desirable and the undesirable, the weak and the strong, and this is the essence of irony.<sup>80</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Tiempo's later works reveal that her poetics has undergone a kind of growth which should not be overlooked. These later works offer proof of Tiempo's willingness to begin widening her perspective of the genre, to take into consideration certain forms left unaccounted for by the poetic criteria she espouses and to relax, to some extent, the firmness with which these norms are adhered to and applied. These works also reveal a growing concern with other crucial issues in the field of poetic criticism, particularly in the area of Philippine literature.

The development of Tiempo's perspective of poetry is concretely manifested in her ability to accept that exceptions may be (and even must be) made to her theories and standards. Implicit in this exception-making is the recognition that her poetic theory is not an absolute; that it is not completely and universally applicable. There is, in all this, the beginnings of a crucial acknowledgement of the need for flexibility; and appreciation for the undeniable influences exerted by *context* on the nature of a work of genre. It must be made clear, however, that this acknowledgement is not "full-blown"; the widening of perspective is still in the process of being achieved.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

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