

philippine studies

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

Barlaan at Josaphat, edited by Almario

Review Author: Alvin B. Yapan

Philippine Studies vol. 50, no. 4 (2002): 579–580

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Fujita-Rony, finally, does not deserve to be castigated for her errors. More than anything, her example demonstrates the danger that confronts us in our continuing struggle with, and understanding of, the fatal art of the invisible. The historian's inadequacies are, hence, futures for us who, like her, endeavor to change the world we continue to interpret. The scandal of insufficiency is always instructive.

Charlie Samuya Veric
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University

Barlaan at Josaphat: Modernisadong Edisyon ng Salin ni Fray Antonio de Borja. Edited by Virgilio S. Almario. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003. 402 pages.

In this edition of *Barlaan at Josaphat*, Virgilio S. Almario fills in another lacunae in the country's collective memory, which has relied heavily on works put out by popular publishing houses. The book is a welcome addition to the number of critical editions of Philippine literary classics, already among which are *Urbana at Feliza* and *Si Tandang Basio Macunat* (the latter also edited by Almario), both part of the Bulawan series published by the Sentro ng Wikang Filipino of the University of the Philippines.

Almario's latest effort would undoubtedly generate interest on the history of the novel or prose literature in the country and raise questions literary and historical, from e.g., the actual hegemonic hold of the Spaniards on eighteenth-century Philippines to the influence of Indianization, a pervasive theme in Southeast Asian historiography. Here lies the importance of the publication of the *Barlaan at Josaphat*: the renewal of interest on a field of literary scholarship which has long been neglected because of the inaccessibility of texts. The edition includes, aside from the text of *Barlaan and Josaphat* itself, two essays by Almario on the work, a glossary of words no longer part of contemporary speech, a copy of the original title page and the preliminaries (permits from the censors, a complimentary poem by Don Felipe de Jesus, etc.).

The essays are important for the light they shed on *Barlaan at Josaphat*. Of interest are Almario's correction of errors in previous scholarship on de Borja's work. He states that the book first saw print in 1712, not 1708 as previously held, the year that a permit for its publication was secured. Previous studies also say that Don Felipe de Jesus lived in Bulacan. Almario proves that he was actually a Manileño. Further, while it is generally believed that de Borja's work is a translation of a work in Greek by San Juan Damasceno, Almario warns readers that this is merely conjectural. De Borja's source text could have been some other work. He further laments the lack of familiarity with the Spanish language among contemporary Filipino scholars, their reli-

ance on secondary sources for their conclusions, the problems of cataloguing in libraries, and the care for rare Filipiniana in general.

Almario's work as editor also deserves comment. His choice of copy text was determined, it seemed, solely by expedience. Almario explains that even though the de Borja's work has often been cited as a major historical document, no copy of it seems to exist. His search, he says, led him to two copies of the work: one at the Far Eastern University and another among materials in the private collection of Ildefonso Santos, later donated to the University of the Philippines library. Almario does not give the publication dates of these two copies, although it may be inferred that both are the 1837 edition, not the first edition, which was published, according to Almario's own account, in the eighteenth century. Confusing, therefore, is Almario's claim that he attempts to preserve the rhetorical style, vocabulary, and flavor of the 1712 text when he is using the 1837 edition as copy text. The assumption, of course, is that the 1837 edition did not depart from the 1712 text despite a gap of more than a hundred years—an assumption that is not without its problems.

As the subtitle of the book claims, Almario's edition is a modernized one. That is all in order, given that he is addressing, he says, the contemporary reader. The editorial principles that he followed, however, could have been spelled out in greater detail. Sentences are rewritten; the orthography, corrected; and drawn-out paragraphs, shortened. While the editorial emendations, as is the pagination of the 1837 text, are indicated in the current edition by brackets, one wonders how extensively Almario retouched de Borja, specially with regard to the lengthy paragraphs. It seems that the book should be called an abridged and not just a modernized edition of *Barlaan at Josaphat*.

This edition of *Barlaan at Josaphat* would definitely be important to a reader who is reading for the plot of the classic text but perhaps not for the actual rhetorical structure and diction of the original work. The writers of theses and dissertations, who surely will be inspired by this edition, will want to go back to the originals which Almario has taken much pains to recover and to preserve. The Bulawan editions of *Urbana at Feliza* and *Tandang Basio Macunat* solved the problem by publishing both the original text and the modernized text on opposing pages. The device does not alienate the contemporary reader from the exigencies of an old text; it also allows him or her to check the original as the need arises. Sadly, this edition of *Barlaan at Josaphat* does not offer that luxury to the curious reader, perhaps owing to the length of de Borja's book.

Still, Almario's edition remains significant if only for making available the text of *Barlaan at Josaphat*, for generating interest on de Borja's work, and for serving as reference on Philippine literature during the Spanish colonial period.

Alvin B. Yapan
Department of Filipino
Ateneo de Manila University