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Baka Sakali, by Brion

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within conservative limits; instead of political education, it fosters a form of political illiteracy."

Marjorie M. Evasco's essay, "Weekly Smorgasbord Of Feminine Pleasures" speaks of how women's weekly magazines tend to reinforce certain stereotypes of the role of women. Evasco's essay presents statistical facts to support her contention that women's magazines distort the image and the role of women in the Philippines.

A dominant theme of feminism and women's roles can be seen in several of the essays in this book. Aside from Ms. Evasco's essay, Ruth Elynia Mabanglo's "Mula sa Altar Nina Huli At Maria Clara: Imahen ng Babae Sa Ilang Dramang Pilipino," Rosario Lucero's "Romancing the Otherness of Woman," Soledad Reyes' "Women on Television," Benilda Santos' "Idol, Bestiary and Revolutionary: Images Of The Filipino Woman In Film (1976-1986)," and even Isagani Cruz's "Ang Kabastusan ng Mga Pilipino," underline the various roles of Filipino women, then and now, which, in the analysis of most of the authors are mandated by the patriarchal society in the Philippines.

It is also noteworthy that Ruth Mabanglo, Isagani Cruz, and Prospero Covar ("Tatlong Sanaysay: Pagkatao at Paniniwala") wrote their essays in Pilipino. Though the book is obviously published for the learned readers in academe, their effort is a sincere gesture of reaching out to the masses who are more at home with the native language, and at Filipinizing the message of the volume.

The use of various media forms in the proliferation of popular culture; the analysis of the Philippine social structures; and the theories of literary criticism used in analyzing the social structure should be of interest to communication, literature, and sociology students in their pursuit of understanding the Filipino People and Philippine Society as a whole. Hopefully, the insights that they gain from this book will inspire them to help in building a better Filipino society in the future.

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Baka Sakali. By Rofel Brion. Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1989. 80 pages.

As one reads, rereads and savors Rofel G. Brion's poems in *Baka Sakali*, he may wonder what is the best way to review the book. To interpret each poems would take reams of paper, for each poem is rich in meaning. To review the work according to some single theme is equally difficult because, though each poems brims with richness in message, the themes are many.

The *reader-response* approach is perhaps the best way to review Brion's magnificent poetry.

The book is divided into three main parts entitled, "San Pablo," "Loyola Heights," and "Kung Saan-Saan Pa." The poems comprising each part were written either during those times when the author lived in each of those places, or the poems are a product of memorable lessons learned, of past friendships, or of ordinary things that have taken on more profound, less ordinary meanings, social or political implications, or even spiritual reflections.

The poems in "San Pablo" succeed in evoking a countryside scenery flavor. Brion uses settings like the country fair ("Tara Na Sa Perya"), an old cathedral repository of "old angels, Virgin and Christ, some mute bells, and a big box . . . [of] old books . . . with yellowing pages . . ." ("Isang Hapon"), an ancestral home ("Grandma Isn't Home"), or simply a field of grass roofed by nothing but the stars ("Pagtingala"). More importantly, Brion's poems in the first part of the book tell of the stirrings in a young mind that views the world around him; stirrings like the joy in the presence of friends ("Tara Na Sa Perya, Takbo, Bilis, Takbo") and loneliness when the familiar company of friends is gone ("Pagtingala"); the ambivalence one feels about complicated human relationships especially family life ("Si Hugo; Kay Andoy, Anak ng Tampalasan; Ang Aming Kapitbahay"); and the real emotional conflict springing from a young man's close ties with his family as opposed to his pressing desire for independence. "Hating-Gabi," "Pahimakas," and "Aling Nena" are three gripping poems that tell of the disturbing, collective unconcern of the human society over another's plight (a sick man who eventually dies unnoticed, and a cabaret dancer gone to destitution).

The "Loyola Heights" poems move from the story-telling tone and candor of the "San Pablo" poems to what one may call *commentaristic poetry*. As the name suggests, the poems in the second part of Brion's book are commentaries on various problems that society poses to a man in the modern, third world, the Philippines. The poem "Pagbababad," for example, comments on the social-concern thrust of a university education and its dismal lack of follow-up on such a thrust when the student has gone on from school to pursue his own dreams. "Huli Ka Na Naman, Misty" sheds light on the very real tragedies befalling the children of the rich, who are materially well-endowed but who are psycho-emotional and moral disasters. Brion also writes about the different nuances of the poverty that human beings suffer—the poverty of hunger ("Kuskos Balungos"), the poverty of desire for freedom that transcends the physical and the temporal satisfaction of needs ("Naiinggit Ako Sa Iyong Pagkapiit"), or even the poverty of being a human person who has to contend with realities in a world far larger than he is ("Kay Ignacio de Loyola," "Bago Maghating-gabi," "Paano Na?") Through verse, Brion enfleshes the relativism of beauty ("An Afternoon, Nagsimula Isang Hapon") and the overwhelming human passion that

comes with admiration and love for the beauty of fellow-beings ("Love Song"), which may naturally be erotic ("One Morning Beside a Pond").

The "Loyola Heights" poems give the reader a chance to taste the nationalistic flavor very real in the time frame within which they are written (clearest in "Miranda," "Mendiola," "Pinakamarikit na Bituin") while supporting such commentaries with enough life-events that vivify the poet's message. A positive factor of Brion's poetic commentaries is the levity of his tone. Unlike the heavier, more directly accusatory and judgmental poems of older contemporary nationalistic writers, Brion does not turn the reader off by sloganeering or *rah-rah-rah*.

The poems in the last part of Brion's book, entitled "At Kung Saan-Saan Pa" are poems of solitude; the loneliness of it all ("Nanunukso Ang Kama"), its sweetness ("Para Kay Bubbles"), its exhausted acceptance of realities greater than its own ("Mapapalad Ang Mga Pabo"), its uncanny character of making thoughts go back to youthful memories of a happier solitude ("Pagnanasa"), and even its ability to open one's eyes to transcendent harmonies seen in what may, at first sight, be inharmonious ("Tae-Kwon-Do: The Way of Punching and Kicking").

One may consider Brion's poems not as literary works made from outside the realities of life. They are not words put together on some ancient parchment by an eremitic poet cocooned in some dark corner of a far-away fortress; nor are they the product of ideas gleaned from lofty intellectual political, spiritual, and psycho-emotional theories. Rather, Brion's poems are products of *contemplatio simul in actione*, reflecting about life while living life. The reader of his poems does not need to plumb the depths of his own understanding, or read through levels of symbolic language in order to savor the richness of the poetry. Brion's language is contemporary yet literary, soothing yet critical, tasteful yet goal-oriented. His verses are short, his ideas limpid and unpretentious. His words are exact and purposive. His backdrops and settings are familiarly and strikingly Filipino. In other words, Brion's poems reveal the intimate contact the poet has with himself. How may a person present his ideas with clarity, credibility, and awareness of the social situations of his time if he is not aware of his own needs, the bitterness and sweetness of his own solitude, the indispensability of his freedom and his God, the darkness of poverty, and the beauty of his life?

Baka Sakali is a title loaded with meaning. When translated into English, the translation denies the original Filipino word its deep meaning: "*just in case*." The title itself is a poem; and whichever way it comes and affects the reader becomes its interpretation. Very much like the poems of Brion that prescind from *preachiness*, *Baka Sakali* (both as title of the book and as a meaningful Filipino phrase) embodies the relativity of interpretation of reality, in this case, the reality painted and sung in Brion's verses. *If by chance*, or, *just in case* (I can hear the author say through his title) the reader's view coincides with that of the poet, it is full of wonder. *If by chance not*, then

the very nature of his poems offers the reader the freedom to weave his own tunic that will dress what he perceives as the reality the poet wishes to convey. *Baka Sakali* is a title that captures the essence of the quality of Rofel G. Brion's poems: captivating yet freeing!

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Mahal na Passion ni Jesucristong Panginoon natin na Tola ni Gaspar Aquino de Belen. By Rene B. Javellana, S.J. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990. 209 pages.

Why publish the 1760 edition of a book in 1990? The publisher believes that Gaspar Aquino de Belen's *Mahal na Passion* is one of the most important Filipino literary works that a serious scholar of Philippine literature and culture ought to read (p. vi). Javellana echoes the same belief in his preface:

Kung hindi sana sinasalamín ng pasyong katha ni Aquino de Belen ang mga damdamin at kamalayang patuloy na humuhubog sa mga Pilipino, ang akdang ito'y dapat na sanang ibaon sa limot. Ngunit mamamangha ang babasa ng pasyon sapagkat makikilala niya ang sarili sa kuwento't tauhang inilalarawan ng makata. (p. ix-x)

The *Mahal na Passion* is an important Filipino literary work because it mirrors the emotions and consciousness that continue to fashion Filipinos. Javellana contends that reading it is recognizing one's self through the story told and characters portrayed by Aquino de Belen. This recognition of self when it involves a Filipino reader enables him to recover an authentic sense of his being Filipino. In turn, this "recovery of culture" links him with his fellow Filipinos, especially the masses who still intone the *Mahal na Passion* in its enchanted version—the *Casaysayan ng Pasiong Mahal*—during Holy Week. This dynamic spells out the cultural and literary value of the *Mahal na Passion*.

This 1990 edition is more than a modern rendition of the 1760 fifth edition. In this present edition, Aquino de Belen's masterpiece is scrutinized by the critical eyes of socio-historical and literary analysis used by Javellana, who divides his work into three main parts.

Javellana begins with the history and an analysis of the *Mahal na Passion*. This he does, first by giving a brief biography of Aquino de Belen. He then analyzes from a socio-historical perspective the milieu in which Aquino de Belen wrote his *pasyon*: the markedly Christian Philippine society under