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Sinaglahi

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serve both for the use of the beginners in Chinese and students of Chinese poetry, and for the enjoyment of English verse.

Harold Naylor

SINAGLAHI. Edited by M.L. Santaromana. Quezon City: Writers Union of the Philippines, 1975. 284 pages, P70.

In 1975 the Writers Union of the Philippines played host to the Afro-Asian Writers Symposium held in Manila. In celebration of this event, they published an anthology which they entitled "Sinaglahi." *Sinaglahi* is a coined Pilipino word that may be loosely translated as "reflections of heritage." It is a felicitous title for an anthology of Philippine literature, especially for one that aspires "to define the Filipino writer as artist, as man and, louder now than ever, as spokesman to the world . . . on what has been and should be Philippine."

The table of contents reveals that the anthology's scope is not as comprehensive as it tacitly claims to be. In fact, all of the selections are drawn from modern Philippine writing in English. The singular exception is a group of five poems by Amado Hernandez, originally written in Pilipino and later translated into English by Epifanio San Juan, Jr. This exception raises several disturbing questions: did the editors think vernacular literature so insignificant that they admitted into the anthology only five of these? Or is it that they deemed Ka Amado the only vernacular writer worthy of participating in this "gathering of eagles . . . of committed writers"?

How can an anthology that claims comprehensiveness ignore, or worse, discriminate against vernacular writings, which constitute the greater as well as the more significant part of our national literature? What is there to keep the foreign reader — to whom this anthology is primarily addressed — from concluding that Philippine literature in English is adequately representative of our national heritage? The question of representativeness, i.e., of whether an authentic national literature can be written in a foreign language, is a critical issue today. I do not intend to raise that controversy here, but I feel compelled to raise an objection to the lightness with which the editor, M.L. Santaromana, dismisses this vital issue of language. "Feel free though to decry the English of this book. Filipino [sic], you see, has a limited audience; to reach a larger audience, say, the universe, one . . . must write in a universal language. Could you conceive of Villa or Virginia in Filipino?" The tone of condescension ("you see") is irritating. To the flippant question "Could you conceive of Villa or Virginia in Filipino" one is tempted to reply in kind, "*At sa palagay ba ninyo'y naging tapat kayo sa pagsasalin kay Ka*

Amado sa Inggles?" Such flippancy betrays an insensitivity to the critical issue of language.

This issue of language, as well as its implications for representativeness, put aside, what principle of selection was used in compiling this anthology? Neither the foreword nor the editor's notes are articulate on this point. The foreword by Virginia Moreno, the chairman of the editorial board, begins

Because to the atom bomb, this black fruit of death's tree, we in the Islands (after the fall) were not its Hiroshima martyrs but not even now its innocents, the Tahitians, on whom a playmate is shaking its skulls in a life and death game, so that being neither martyrs nor innocents nor (capable of being) Frankensteins of the holocaust, we felt chosen.

The rest of the foreword is as obscure as this opening sentence. The editor's notes are not helpful either. The editor immediately concedes that this is not a definitive anthology. He confides that he himself would have preferred these rather than those selections. He even anticipates the reader's disappointment at not finding the younger writers represented: "Go ahead and say it: *Sayang*." (*Sayang nga*.) He concludes with this note: "In closing, I might say without fear of contradiction from the publishers that while this book may not be a definitive anthology of Philippine literature, it is a proper definition of it." What is the reader to make of this play of words, or for that matter, of these sketchy notes?

It is difficult to detect the principle of inclusion from the selections themselves. The essays (11) are an odd assortment, by whatever norms. The essay whose inclusion is bound to baffle readers is E. Aguilar-Cruz's "Myths and Realities of Philippine Democracy," which concludes with the assertion that "In a genuine sense, therefore, martial law in the Philippines has been a liberating and not a repressing force for the individual and society." What is likely to raise eyebrows is less the political content of that conclusion than the fact that this article was written barely eight months after the imposition of martial law and that it was originally printed as the prologue to the Philippines Investment Information folio. How this essay could have found its place within the restricted quota of 11 essays is anyone's guess. The short stories (15) appear to constitute a more balanced set of selections, though individual readers will inevitably wish some stories substituted for others. The set of poems (21), while the most homogeneous, for that very reason, is the least representative. The choice of drama (a one-act play, *Glass Altars* by Virginia Moreno) is not unexpected.

By this time, the reader will have concluded that the anthology is not representative in any sense of the word. What then does it have to offer the reader, especially the foreign reader for whose sake it was presumably prepared? The foreign scholar will find the documentation deficient in several respects, not the least of which is the omission of data regarding the places and dates of first publication. (An exception is made in the case of three

essays but why these merited exception to the rule is not explained. The list of acknowledgments mentions the sources of the individual selections but curiously omits all dates, except again for two.) The lay reader who is concerned only with the texts themselves and cares nothing for their historical-social context, will have the least complaints to make about the book. Besides, it is a decidedly handsome book, finely designed and professionally printed.

The title page announces that *Sinaglahi* was issued in celebration of an event hosted by the publishers. Is this perhaps what the anthology really is: a collection of works of, by, and for a select group of writers? Is this why our needs as readers are so little attended to: because we are intruders on a very exclusive party? If so, let us take our leave quietly and let them be. *But let them not presume to speak for all of us.*

Edna Zapanta-Manlapa:

AMERICA'S COLONIAL DESK AND THE PHILIPPINES: 1898-1934.
By Romeo V. Cruz. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974.
ix, 247 pages.

This book was originally a dissertation presented by the author to the University of California for his doctorate in history. It gives an account of the Bureau of Insular Affairs (BIA) created in the Department of War, during President McKinley's administration, to deal with the affairs of government of the territories acquired from Spain in the Spanish-American War.

As its title indicates, the work studies the bureau's activities in relation to the colonial government established by the United States in the Philippines. Its main topics are: the genesis of the Bureau of Insular Affairs; the BIA's general functions and responsibilities; its organizational structure and personnel; and the threats to its existence in the form of proposals to replace it with another department or to transfer it either to the Department of State or to the Department of the Interior. There is an introductory chapter containing an exposition on the subject of imperialism and a statement on the character and tendencies of the American brand of imperialism and its impact on the Philippines.

The Bureau of Insular Affairs began as a division in the office of George Meiklejohn, assistant secretary of war, who created it on 13 December 1898, three days after the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Under the name "Division of Customs and Insular Affairs" (DCIA), it was headed by Robert E. Parker, Meiklejohn's chief clerk. John J. Pershing, military aide of the assistant secretary, replaced Parker on 10 March 1899. Pershing, however, remained