

philippine studies

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

Halimuyak Edited by Valeriano

Review Author: Buenaventura S. Medina, Jr.

Philippine Studies vol. 28, no. 3 (1980) 375–377

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

the stories to a crackling halt. ["Hugging the black sand, they [the crabs] surveyed a seamless universe." (p. 34) "Both [mother and child] were sleeping peacefully." (p. 42) "'They're taking his body away,' the stevedore said." (p. 51) "'Just look at that chain,' he mused." (p. 75) "I held the centipede before her like a hunter displaying the tail of a deer, save that the centipede felt thorny in my hand." (p. 92)]

Besides powerful themes and impeccable form, Diaz has a sprinkling of features that readers of Filipino short stories in English expect to find, like some sex and some *angst* as in "A Voyage by Raft to Easter Island," "Ballast," and "The President of the Tribe," and a masturbation scene that pulls the curtain down on "All Others Are of Brass and Iron." There are side comments about the idealistic rebellion against, and disgust over, a sick status quo as in "Voyage." There are realistic images of boredom, violence and decay in most of the stories. There is psychological analysis or a peep at a bit of psychodrama in "The Centipede." And, of course, no matter how short and haphazard, there is a discussion of, and reference to, the identity-roots syndrome in "Treasure" and "Voyage."

In addition to these, the stories also have neat surprises in store for the patient reader. "Voyage," for instance, contains quite a number of clichés that can easily bore the reader. However, a closer reading of the story shows that, consciously or unconsciously, Diaz has chosen clichés to be the language of the pseudo-intellectuals in the story, which only adds to its realism. "Black Sand," on the other hand, presents an eerie atmosphere through a prose that almost mesmerizes. In "Ballast," the comparison between the technique of guiding a *batel* through strong river currents, and the ways of satisfying the strong passion of a woman can be rather entertaining. "Lumber Camp" has its own positive quality, too. It can be read as a fictionalized version of the language issue.

All in all, Diaz' *Death in a Sawmill and Other Stories* is a fine collection of meticulously written short stories. They reflect Diaz' care and competence as a craftsman. Unfortunately, the stories are a mere handful. One is tempted to hazard the guess that had Diaz devoted more years to his literary career, there would have been more of his fiction to choose from, a wider range of themes in his stories, and a perspective and point-of-view free from the confines of the merely personal.

Beni S. Santos

HALIMUYAK: KATIPUNAN NG MGA PILING TULA NI JOSE CORAZON DE JESUS. Edited by Antonio B. Valeriano. Malolos, Bulacan: Reyvil Bulakeña Publishing Corp. Inc., 1979. xxxviii + 256 pages.

TO RELISH the poetry of a master in one comfortable reading is to penetrate

purposefully the poet's world without much difficulty. Lovers of Tagalog poetry have come to know the masters, including Balagtas, Jose Corazon de Jesus, and Amado V. Hernandez, but especially the first, through reading their works made popular because assigned in schools. Balagtas has been entrenched in the minds of the people for having attained the stature of an illustrious Filipino along with the other intellectuals of the nineteenth century. Hernandez was proclaimed National Artist in 1973 posthumously, significantly though. The remaining master, Corazon de Jesus or Batute (1894-1932), has yet to be accorded such critical recognition. For one to appreciate Corazon de Jesus' poetic prowess, one has to probe into the works of the poet during the period between 1912 and 1932. To assess Corazon de Jesus' poetic achievement, one may relate his own critical judgment with the honors given the poet as "makata ng pag-ibig" (poet of love) and "makata ng bayan" (poet of the people) — awards given by readers of the leading Tagalog periodicals in the twenties. Fortunately for the student of Tagalog poetry, clues to a definitive evaluation of Corazon de Jesus' creative work have been made available by an assiduous reader of the poet. Antonio B. Valeriano selected 163 poems and compiled them into a neat collection, *Halimuyak*. Valeriano classified the collection into poems to wife and parents, to motherland and on the mother tongue, on the great heroes, on love, on nature, and on life. Valeriano chose chronology as the logic of this latest collection of Corazon de Jesus' poetry.

In 1958, poet-teacher Teodoro Gener edited, with the fondness and devotion of a peer and friend, Corazon de Jesus' selected poetry, *Mga Tulang Ginto*, providing it with sets of critical questions for the students of poetry. Gener offered later anthologists a logic and a format. Valeriano must have taken inspiration from Gener's effort, for he, much like Gener, dwelt on categories like love and life, but added some more. Valeriano also set up for his collection a panel of poet-critics, some of whom had already appeared with the same critical remarks in Gener's "hapag na bilog" (round table). The Valeriano edition must have been what Corazon de Jesus' widow, Asuncion Lacdan, alluded to in the 1958 anthology when she said that a second book, following Gener's, was being prepared. The Valeriano edition definitely contains more poems than Gener's. In logic and format, however, *Halimuyak* may well be an expansion of Gener's. Valeriano, though, happily ignored one objective of the Gener book: he did not prepare questions one could ask about the poems he read. Gener must have intended *Mga Tulang Ginto* to be used primarily in the classroom. The 1979 anthologist, however, offers his work simply to reacquaint (or should one say, acquaint?) the Tagalog lover of poetry with the poems of a master.

It is the simplicity of the compiler's purpose that makes *Halimuyak* an unpretentious book. Without any claims to scholarliness, the book offers the scholar a key to data that are needed for a meaningful study of Corazon de Jesus' work. For one, the poems are dated; many, like some in Gener's, con-

tain information on the source of publication. The literary historian may use such data in tracing the growth of Corazon de Jesus' poetic genius. On the other hand, teachers of literature will find *Halimuyak* a treasury of poems that illustrate the assertion of traditions, both formal and thematic, in Tagalog poetry. *Halimuyak* becomes an invaluable aid to a study of Corazon de Jesus, which to a scholar or teacher could be a tremendous labor of love.

Books on Corazon de Jesus' poetry that are to follow should contain what both Gener and Valeriano missed: a critical introduction to the poems that make up the anthology.

Buenaventura S. Medina, Jr.

SCENT OF APPLES. By Bienvenido N. Santos. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1979 xxi + 178 pages.

Filipino writers in English have been enjoying a renaissance of sorts in recent years, both here and abroad. The University of Queensland Press has reprinted the stories of Nick Joaquin and Antonio Enriquez, and Heinemann in Hongkong has published Edith Tiempo's *A Blade of Fern*. New Day has published Sionil Jose, Edith Tiempo, Linda Ty Casper; Alemars has reprinted Javellana, and National Book Store has reprinted a number of Philippine writers in English (Joaquin, Mig Alvarez Enriquez and Bulosan). The University of Washington Press has published Bulosan, and has now given us the collected short stories of Bienvenido Santos.

Santos' first published work was a collection of short stories, *You Lovely People*, published in Manila in 1955, which dealt with the lives of Filipinos in the United States, "adrift in a world that can never quite feel like home." A second collection of short stories, *Brother, My Brother*, was published in 1960. Leonard Casper describes the stories in this collection as "recollective of an original flight from the Sulucan slum of Manila to the greater opportunities in the less crowded prewar barrios of Albay under the shadow of Mount Mayon." (p. xii) Santos' two major works, both novels, were published in 1965, the same year that he received the Republic Cultural Heritage Award in Literature. *Villa Magdalena* is the first and better of the two novels and echoes the theme of search for roots evidenced in *Brother, My Brother*. Critics have been impressed with *Villa Magdalena* [see Soledad Reyes in *Essays on the Philippine Novel in English*, edited by Joseph A. Galdon, S. J. (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979)], though it is clear to me that Santos is not fully at home in the novel. *The Volcano* is even more contrived than *Villa Magdalena*. Both novels are top heavy with labored symbolism and Santos is not always in control of language and idiom, particularly in *The Volcano*. Santos is much more subtle and his touch is surer in the narrow confines of the short story, particularly in *You Lovely People*. *The Day the Dan-*