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## **Dulaang Hiligaynon, edited by Lucero**

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While the study is generally very well reasoned out, certain points raised by Vergara remain on the level of speculation and cannot be satisfactorily confirmed. For example, the notion that the possession of photos was construed by individuals as a way of possessing the Philippines is a provocative thought. But how does one validate such a claim? Did the individuals who bought the travel books actually say that they equated the possession of photos with actual possession of the islands?

Moreover, in his conclusion, Vergara presents an alternative reading of the photographs as a reminder of death. This he bases on the remarks of one particular colonial official who expressed regret over the destructive effect of colonization on the Filipinos' culture. These were the sentiments of one colonial official. Vergara, however, does not determine whether these sentiments were also shared by others.

Not all the photos discussed by Vergara were reproduced in the book. The reader may also find the quality of the photographs' reproduction rather disappointing, as some of these were too blurred to be appreciated. Considering that the photos are what this book is all about, then this is a major shortcoming of the book.

These deficiencies notwithstanding, Vergara has effectively used his anthropological and communications backgrounds to provide new insights into the nature of the American colonial enterprise in the Philippines. The academic community looks forward to more works from this promising young historian.

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**Dulaang Hiligaynon.** Edited by Rosario Cruz Lucero. Translated by Ricardo Oebanda Jr. and Rosario Cruz Lucero. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996.

The study and enjoyment of Philippine literature would be incomplete without the works in the different vernacular languages. Unfortunately, a large number of these works remain uncollected or untranslated, left to perish in some moldering *baul* (wooden chest), or else filed in remote and cavernous archives for only the itinerant specialist to peruse. *Dulaang Hiligaynon*, then, edited by Rosario Cruz Lucero, comes as a welcome addition to anybody's collection of Philippine titles, whether one is a literary scholar, historian, critic, creative writer, or simply a "common reader."

The book comes with an introduction written by Doreen G. Fernandez and translated into Filipino by DM. Reyes, in which one reads an historical overview of Hiligaynon drama from the indigenous rituals of the precolonial

past to the more consciously "artful" forms of the present. The book itself is an anthology of four Hiligaynon plays, each with a translation by Lucero and Ricardo Oebanda, Jr. Each of them is a testament to the vigor of Hiligaynon literature.

The first, *Tanikala* (Talikala), by Serapion C. Torre, is a domestic drama. Soledad is unhappily married to a feckless, violent, and perennially inebriated husband, ironically named Graciano. Her well-meaning but uninformed friend Rosario suggests divorce, while Gaudencio, a childhood friend, confesses to her his long-withheld love for her, despite his marriage to a Pampango woman. Soledad moves in with Graciano to a secret place, and while enjoying romance also earns the label *maruming babae* (unclean woman). When she finally learns that divorce is illegal and suspects that Gaudencio has merely taken advantage of her vulnerability, she shoots herself.

*Cusug sang Imul* (Lakas ng Mahihirap) by Miguela Montelibano, the only woman writer of the *sarswela*, and *Bunal nga Ualay Labud* (Hambalos na Walang Pasa) by Leopoldo Alerta are *sarswela* tackling social issues. The first affirms that with diligence, study, and collective action, the poor can prosper. Jose is a young man who dreams of higher education. With financial help from the *samahan* joined by his father Carlos, Jose leaves for the city and returns to the town six years later, a lawyer. There is a note of tension before the play ends, as a *kumpare* of Carlos lands into a dispute with Don Ramon over a piece of land. One senses, however, that the *samahan* will again be up to the occasion. The play ends with a party in Jose's honor where one sees the source of the *lakas ng mahihirap* (strength of the poor): hard work, honesty, and cooperation.

*Bunal* is a satirical look at the corrupt ways of the avaricious. Gerundio returns from Havana an inept lawyer and a snob, a stranger to the native tongue and an ignoramus in any form of employment. Felicuda is his equally indolent and haughty sister who abuses the helpers. Intermittently out of work, Gerundio wastes his father's wealth, amassed through theft and usury. With his father's resources dwindling, he hatches a crooked plan with his father, but the fraud is exposed. The father becomes a poor man and falls ill; on his deathbed he tells his children to repent. Ranged against them is the family of Pacifico Prudente, an honest workman, an affectionate father, and a kind master, whose fortunes—despite initial odds—turn out rather well.

*Balay ni Bilay Hilay* (Bahay ni Bilay ay Hapay) by Joel R. Arbolario is a comico-allegorical piece of street theater criticizing Philippine-American relations. The tottering *bahay ni Bilay* (Bilay's house) stands for the Philippines; the *Among Babae* (Nyora Inday Luisita Vda. de Mia) is the local leader doing big business with the "guwapong Kano" (the Americans) and the Heneral (the military). Lalaki and Babae (the moneyless Filipinos), at one point addressed as "the shits of our society," are forcibly driven out of their barangay for a factory, because as Nyora Inday's servant Menggay says: "We need more dollar money, money / So that our utang we can pay" (377).

In the end, the play exhorts everyone to join hands and rebuild the "bahay ni Bilay" and keep it free.

Seven decades separate the first play from the last—*Tanikala* was written in 1916, *Balay*, in 1988—and almost a decade separates us from the last play. However, all of the plays anthologized and translated raise issues as relevant and contemporary as any dramatic piece being staged today. The domestic distress of Soledad is familiar to us, as is the naturalization of the unequal relations between men and women, as crystallized in this exchange:

**Soledad:** Humiwalay? Madaling sabihin iyan dahil ikaw ay lalaki ngunit sa tulad kong mahinang babae...ay, ang yungib ang tiyak kong patutunguhan.

**Graciano:** Iyan ang patunay na ikaw ang masama dahil kung ako ang masama, tiyak na matagal ka nang sumibat. (55)

The two *sarswela*, written in the twenties, overflow with the formula and elements of traditional dramaturgy: black-and-white characterization (e.g., the rich are greedy, the poor are guileless), flowery speeches interspersed with song, occasional slapstick provided by the servants, reversal of roles, romance, stock characters (the tight-fisted *senex*, the trickster *serous*), symbolic names (e.g., Pomposo, Prudente, Paciente), and traditional moralizing and sententiae (e.g., "Ang kaalaman ay palamuti ng mayaman ngunit kayamanan ng mahihirap." "Lilipas tayong lahat sa kalibutang ito, kaya kahit mahirap ang tao dapat niyang pangalagaan ang kanyang pangalan.") However, if they are not the incisive social analyses of social scientists, the two *sarswela* nonetheless reveal—and how vividly—real societal ills that need addressing through collective action, through individual initiative, through familial solidarity.

The street play perhaps strikes closest to home. There are allusions to broken promises made at EDSA, military witch-hunting, tenancy problems, unemployment, and spouse abuse. The effect is heightened by the use of children as indirect commentators, quite oblivious to the interconnections between the actions of the foreigners and their own hardships.

The translation of these plays, according to the translators' note, highlights the differences between Tagalog and Hiligaynon in retaining the cultural context of the originals. In this, the translators have succeeded. Lucero and Oebanda retain many Hiligaynon expressions such as *balitaw*, *gid*, *ambot*, *daku*, *abaw*. In some cases, they combine Tagalog words with popular Hiligaynon affixes, e.g., *ginsabi*, *nagahangad*, etc. In place of typical Tagalog phrases like "Tuloy," the translators used "Panhik" to stress the vertical movement of visitors entering a house. The result is a translation engaging for the textured and sometimes quaint combination of the familiar and the strange: e.g., "Abaw na tao ka! 'Yan kasi at ayaw mo gid making sa akin kanina. Kain ka pa rin nang kain ng bayabas," reproaches a character to his friend with a stomach ache. The Glossary contains Tagalog equivalents of some 60 Hiligaynon words and expressions.

In *Dulaang Hiligaynon*, readers get a modest serving—perhaps only a little bite—of vernacular drama, but a bite delectable enough to whet the appetite for more of the various flavors—sometimes tangy, other times bitter, but always tasty—of Hiligaynon literature in general. Perhaps, it will invite others to retrieve old texts or else to concoct new ones. As it is, the book certainly forms a promising part of the complete *carte du jour* of the banquet yet to be served that is Philippine literature.

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**The Huaqiao Warriors: Chinese Resistance in the Philippines, 1942–1945.** By Yung li Yuk-wai. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996. 224 pages.

The Philippine Chinese community has often been recognized as an important and influential sector in the economic life of our country. However, hardly anything is said about their contribution in the shaping of the socio-political dimension of the emerging Philippines. Little is known or written about their activities outside the area of commerce. It is a prevalent perception among Filipinos that the Chinese immigrants are far removed from the crucial struggles that helped shape the identity of our country. Hence "[the Chinese immigrants] tend to disappear when it comes to political history, especially those great crucibles in which the nation's identity was forged, the Revolution and the Second World War" (ix).

Yung Li Yuk-wai's work fulfills, to a certain extent, the need of the Philippine Chinese community to articulate their particular role in one of the most destructive and painful moments in the history of our nation, the Japanese Occupation during the Second World War. The book is a welcome addition to the short list of literature dealing with the Chinese resistance in the wartime Philippines. But before giving an account of the military expeditions of the "Huaqiao Warriors" from 1942–1945, the author first analyzes the situation and the characteristics of the Chinese community prior to the war. This information is important because it sheds light on the varied responses of the different groups within the Chinese community when the war came. The term "Huaqiao" refers to the "Overseas Chinese," which implies continued (Chinese) nationality" (xii).

In the preface, the author states the difficulties she faced. The first was the scarcity of source materials, and the second, the abundance of primary materials written after the war whose reliability was questionable. Despite these limitations, she claims that "research value exists in the study of materials of these types" (xiv). The author approaches the subject in an analyti-