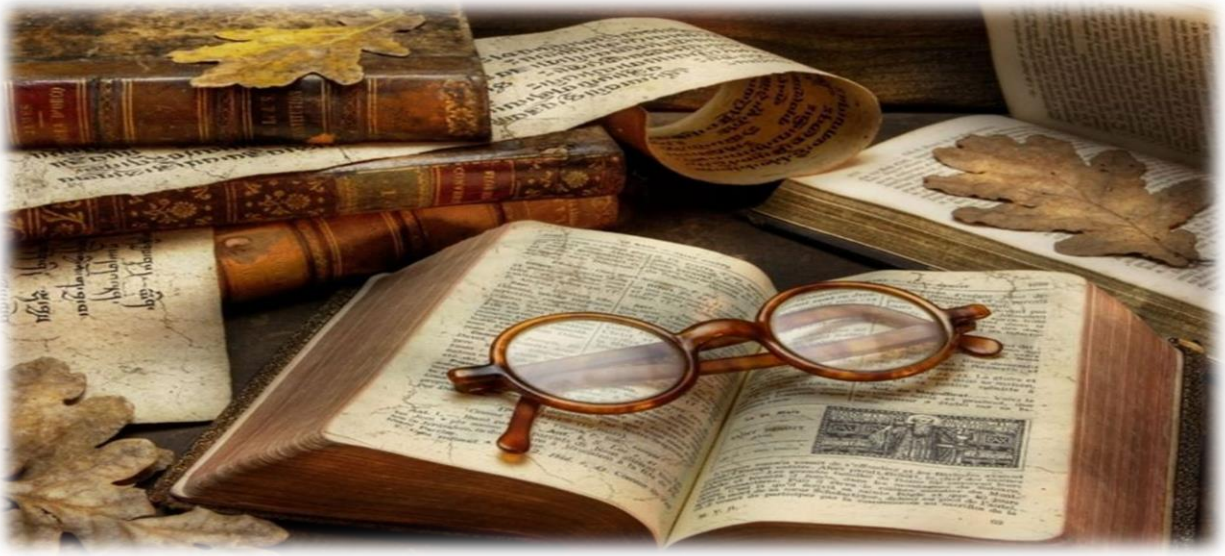
CHAPTER V: LITERATURE IN CENTRAL LUZON AND SOUTHERN TAGALOG

Objectives:

a. Study the historical background of Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog literature.
b. Read literary texts representing Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog.
c. Analyze and evaluate the great literary works from Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog.
d. Write analysis and reflection papers on literary texts.
e. Express appreciation in reading Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog literary texts.



Lesson 1: Literature in Central Luzon

Known as the fertile central plains, the rice basket of the Philippines, Central Luzon produces most of the country's dining staple: rice. And because of this

abundance of rice and vegetables, the cuisine is simply superb—from the Kapangpangan biringhe and sisig to Bulacan sweets!

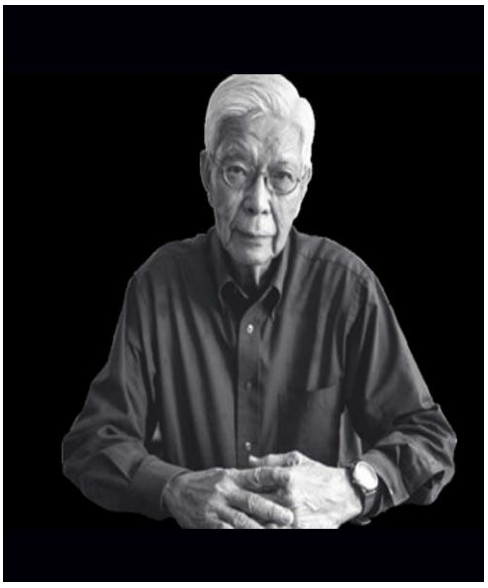
Central Luzon is also one of the earliest areas converted into Christianity by the Spanish 50 years after conquistador Hernando Magallanes first stepped on Philippine soil. Not without a fight though. Pampanga whose original lair extended almost the entire Region 3, was once part of the Kingdom of Tondo, dating back to a bygone era when Rajas ruled. These provinces further gave birth to noble heroes who fought for freedom against oppressors—all three major world super powers in the span of 500 years. You'll find medieval churches here that stand not only as architectural masterpieces, but witnesses to a dramatic history. There is the Baler Church, a 17th century building that served as the last Spanish bastion in the Philippines. And then, there is the Barasoain Church in Bulacan. An earthquake baroque structure honed from adobe and lime, it saw the signing of the Fist Philippine Republic and the first democratic constitution in Asia.

Culture here is number one and there are incredible fiestas that reflect each town's distinct culture, from the Giant Lantern Parade in San Fernando, Pampanga, to the Fertility Rites in Obando, Bulacan. For stunning nature, the province of Aurora has a stunning 328-kilometer coastline where beach and surf rule. In San Jose, Tarlac, right before the Monastario de Tarlac, experience whitewater kayaking in Bulsa river! Mt. Pinatubo, which straddles Pampanga, Zambales, and Tarlac is quite a sight, especially when you get to the neon-blue caldera lake via Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac.

Famous Literary in Central Luzon

- Contemporary literature (1960's): "Faith, Love, Time, & Dr. Lazaro" by Gregorio Brillantes

About the Author



Gregorio C. Brillantes, a Palanca Award Hall of Famer and a multi-awarded fiction writer, is one of the Philippines' most popular writers in English.

Known for his sophisticated and elegant style, he often writes about individuals under thirty, adolescent or post adolescent ones who struggle with alienation from family, society and from themselves. His earlier collection of short stories earned him the title of the "Catholic Writer". But elements of the fantastic also come in his works. In the 2006 Graphic/Fiction Awards, the main local sponsor of the contest, specialty book shop Fully Booked, acknowledged Brillantes as one of the godfathers of fantastic literature in English by naming the first category the Gregorio C. Brillantes Prize for Prose.

Faith, Love, Time, and Dr. Lazaro

by Gregorio Brilliantes

From the upstairs veranda, Dr. Lazaro had a view of stars, the country darkness, the lights on the distant highway at the edge of town. The phonograph in the sala played Chopin – like a vast sorrow controlled, made familiar, he had wont to think. But as he sat there, his lean frame in the habitual slack repose took after supper, and stared at the plains of night that had evoked gentle images and even a kind of peace (in the end, sweet and invincible oblivion), Dr. Lazaro remembered nothing, his mind lay untouched by any conscious thought, he was scarcely aware of the April heat; the pattern of music fell around him and dissolved swiftly, uncomprehended. It was as though indifference were an infection that had entered his blood it was everywhere in his body. In the scattered light from the sala his angular face had a dusty, wasted quality, only his eyes contained life. He could have remained there all evening, unmoving, and buried, it is was, in a strange half-sleep, had his wife not come to tell him he was wanted on the phone.

Gradually his mind stirred, focused; as he rose from the chair he recognized the somber passage in the sonata that, curiously, made him think of ancient monuments, faded stone walls, a greyness. The brain filed away an image; and arrangement of sounds released it… He switched off the phonograph, suppressed and impatient quiver in his throat as he reached for the phone: everyone had a claim on his time. He thought: Why not the younger ones for a change? He had spent a long day at the provincial hospital.

The man was calling from a service station outside the town – the station after the agricultural high school, and before the San Miguel bridge, the man added rather needlessly, in a voice that was frantic yet oddly subdued and courteous. Dr. Lazaro had heard it countless times, in the corridors of the hospitals, in waiting rooms: the perpetual awkward misery. He was Pedro Esteban, the brother of the doctor's tenant in Nambalan, said the voice, trying to make itself less sudden remote.

But the connection was faulty, there was a humming in the wires, as though darkness had added to the distance between the house in the town and the gas station beyond the summer fields. Dr. Lazaro could barely catch the severed phrases. The man's week-old child had a high fever, a bluish skin; its mouth would not open to suckle. They could not take the baby to the poblacion, they would not dare move it; its body turned rigid at the slightest touch. If the doctor would consent to come at so late an hour, Esteban would wait for him at the station. If the doctor would be so kind…

Tetanus of the newborn: that was elementary, and most likely it was so hopeless, a waste of time. Dr. Lazaro said yes, he would be there; he had committed himself to that answer, long ago; duty had taken the place of an exhausted compassion. The carelessness of the poor, the infected blankets, the toxin moving toward the heart: they were casual scribbled items in a clinical report. But outside the grilled windows, the night suddenly seemed alive and waiting. He had no choice left now but action: it was

the only certitude – he sometimes reminded himself – even if it would prove futile, before, the descent into nothingness.

His wife looked up from her needles and twine, under the shaded lamp of the bedroom; she had finished the pullover for the grandchild in Baguio and had begun work, he noted, on another of those altar vestments for the parish church. Religion and her grandchild certainly kept her busy … She looked at him, into so much to inquire as to be spoken to: a large and placid woman.

"Shouldn't have let the drive go home so early," Dr. Lazaro said. "They had to wait till now to call … Child's probably dead…"

"Ben can drive for you."

"I hardly see that boy around the house. He seems to be on vacation both from home and in school."

"He's downstairs," his wife said.

Dr. Lazaro put on fresh shirt, buttoned it with tense, abrupt motions, "I thought he'd gone out again… Who's that girl he's been seeing?...It's not just warm, it's hot. You should've stayed on in Baguio… There's disease, suffering, death, because Adam ate the apple. They must have an answer to everything… "He paused at the door, as though for the echo of his words.

Mrs. Lazaro had resumed the knitting; in the circle of yellow light, her head bowed, she seemed absorbed in some contemplative prayer. But her silences had ceased t disturb him, like the plaster saints she kept in the room, in their cases of glass, or that air she wore of conspiracy, when she left with Ben for Mass in the mornings. Dr. Lazaro would ramble about miracle drugs, politics, music, the common sense of his unbelief; unrelated things strung together in a monologue; he posed questions, supplied with his own answers; and she would merely nod, with an occasional "Yes?" and "Is that so?" and something like a shadow of anxiety in her gaze.

He hurried down the curving stairs, under the votive lamps of the Sacred Heart. Ben lay sprawled on the sofa, in the front parlor; engrossed in a book, one leg propped against the back cushions. "Come along, we're going somewhere," Dr. Lazaro said, and went into the clinic for his medical bag. He added a vial of penstrep, an ampule of caffeine to the satchel's content's; rechecked the bag before closing it; the cutgut would last just one more patient. One can only cure, and know nothing beyond one's work… There had been the man, today, in the hospital: the cancer pain no longer helped by the doses of morphine; the patient's eyes flickering their despair in the eroded face. Dr. Lazaro brushed aside the stray vision as he strode out of the whitewashed room; he was back in his element, among syringes, steel instruments, quick decisions made without emotion, and it gave him a kind of blunt energy.

"I'll drive, Pa?" Ben followed him through the kitchen, where the maids were ironing the week's wash, gossiping, and out to the yard shrouded in the dimness of the single bulb under the eaves. The boy push back the folding doors of the garage and slid behind the wheel.

"Somebody's waiting at the gas station near San Miguel. You know the place?"

"Sure," Ben said.

The engine sputtered briefly and stopped. "Battery's weak," Dr. Lazaro said. "Try it without the lights," and smelled the gasoline overflow as the old Pontiac finally lurched around the house and through the trellised gate, its front sweeping over the dry dusty street.

But he's all right, Dr. Lazaro thought as they swung smoothly into the main avenue of the town, past the church and the plaza, the kiosko bare for once in a season of fiestas, the lam-posts shining on the quiet square. They did not speak; he could sense his son's concentration on the road, and he noted, with a tentative amusement, the intense way the boy sat behind the wheel, his eagerness to be of help. They passed the drab frame houses behind the marketplace, and the capitol building on its landscaped hill, the gears shifting easily as they went over the railroad tracks that crossed the asphalted street.

Then the road was pebbled and uneven, the car bucking slightly; and they were speeding between open fields, a succession of narrow wooden bridges breaking the crunching drive of the wheels. Dr. Lazaro gazed at the wide darkness around them, the shapes of trees and bushes hurling toward them and sliding away and he saw the stars, hard glinting points of light yards, black space, infinite distances; in the unmeasured universe, man's life flared briefly and was gone, traceless in the void. He turned away from the emptiness. He said: "You seem to have had a lot of practice, Ben."

"A lot of what, Pa?"

"The ways you drive. Very professional."

In the glow of the dashboard lights, the boy's face relaxed, smiled. "Tio Cesar let me use his car, in Manila. On special occasions."

"No reckless driving now," Dr. Lazaro said. "Some fellows think it's smart. Gives them a thrill. Don't be like that."

"No, I won't, Pa. I just like to drive and – and go place, that's all."

Dr. Lazaro watched the young face intent on the road, a cowlick over the forehead, the mall curve of the nose, his own face before he left to study in another country, a young student of full illusions, a lifetime ago; long before the loss of faith, God turning abstract, unknowable, and everywhere, it seemed to him, those senseless accidents of pain. He felt a need to define unspoken things, to come closer somehow to the last of his sons; one of these days, before the boy's vacation was over, they might to on a picnic together, a trip to the farm; a special day for the two of them – father and son, as well as friends. In the two years Ben had been away in college, they had written a few brief, almost formal letters to each other: your money is on the way, these are the best years, make the most of them…

Time was moving toward them, was swirling around and rushing away and it seemed Dr. Lazaro could almost hear its hallow receding roar; and discovering his son's profile against the flowing darkness, he had a thirst to speak. He could not find what it was he had meant to say.

The agricultural school buildings came up in the headlights and glided back into blurred shapes behind a fence.

“What was that book you were reading, Ben?”

“A biography,” the boy said.

“Statesman? Scientist maybe?”

It’s about a guy who became a monk.”

“That’s your summer reading?” Dr. Lazaro asked with a small laugh, half mockery, half affection. “You’re getting to be a regular saint, like your mother.”

“It’s an interesting book,” Ben said.

“I can imagine…” He dropped the bantering tone. “I suppose you’ll go on to medicine after your AB?”

“I don’t know yet, Pa.”

Tiny moth like blown bits of paper flew toward the windshield and funneled away above them. “You don’t have to be a country doctor like me, Ben. You could build up a good practice in the city. Specialized in cancer, maybe or neurosurgery, and join a good hospital.” It was like trying to recall some rare happiness, in the car, in the shifting darkness.

“I’ve been thinking about it,” Ben said. It’s a vocation, a great one. Being able to really help people, I mean.”

“You’ve done well in math, haven’t you?”

“Well enough, I guess,” Ben said.

“Engineering is a fine course too,” Dr. Lazaro said. “There’ll be lots of room for engineers. Planners and builders, they are what this country needs. Far too many lawyers and salesmen these days. Now if your brother—” He closed his eyes, erasing the slashed wrists, part of the future dead in a boarding-house room, the landlady whimpering, “He was such a nice boy, doctor, your son…” Sorrow lay in ambush among the years.

“I have all summer to think about,” Ben said.

“There’s no hurry,” Dr. Lazaro said. What was it he had wanted to say? Something about knowing each other, about sharing; no, it was not that at all…

The stations appeared as they coasted down the incline of a low hill, its fluorescent lights the only brightness on the plain before them, on the road that led farther into deeper darkness. A freight truck was taking on a load of gasoline as they drove up the concrete apron and came to a stop beside the station shed.

A short barefoot man in a patchwork shirt shuffled forward to meet them.

“I am Esteban, doctor,” the man said, his voice faint and hoarse, almost inaudible, and he bowed slightly with a careful politeness. He stood blinking, looking up at the doctor, who had taken his bag and flashlight form the car.

In the windless space, Dr. Lazaro could hear Esteban’s labored breathing, the clank of the metal nozzle as the attendant replaced it in the pump. The men in the truck stared at them curiously.

Esteban said, pointing at the darkness beyond the road: “We will have to go through those fields, doctor, then cross the river,” The apology for yet one more imposition was a wounded look in his eyes. He added, in his subdued voice: “It’s not very far…” Ben had spoken to the attendants and was locking the car.

The truck rumbled and moved ponderously onto the road, its throb strong and then fading in the warm night stillness.

“Lead the way,” Dr. Lazaro said, handing Esteban the flashlight.

They crossed the road, to a cleft in the embankment that bordered the fields, Dr. Lazaro was sweating now in the dry heat; following the swinging ball of the flashlight beam, sorrow wounded by the stifling night, he felt he was being dragged, helplessly, toward some huge and complicated error, a meaningless ceremony. Somewhere to his left rose a flapping of wings, a bird cried among unseen leaves: they walked swiftly, and there was only the sound of the silence, the constant whirl of crickets and the whisper of their feet on the path between the stubble fields.

With the boy close behind him, Dr. Lazaro followed Esteban down a clay slope to the slope and ripple of water in the darkness. The flashlight showed a banca drawn up at the river’s edge. Esteban wade waist-deep into the water, holding the boat steady as Dr. Lazaro and Ben stepped on the board. In the darkness, with the opposite bank like the far rise of an island, Dr. Lazaro had a moment’s tremor of fear as the boar slide out over the black water; below prowled the deadly currents; to drown her in the dephts of the night… But it took only a minute to cross the river. “We’re here doctor,” Esteban said, and they padded p a stretch of sand to a clump of trees; a dog started to bark, the shadows of a kerosene lamp wavered at a window.

Unsteady on a steep ladder, Dr. Lazaro entered the cave of Esteban’s hut. The single room contained the odors he often encountered but had remained alien to, stirring an impersonal disgust: the sourish decay, the smells of the unaired sick. An old man greeted him, lisping incoherently; a woman, the grandmother, sat crouched in a corner, beneath a famed print of the Mother of Perpetual Help; a boy, about ten, slept on, sprawled on a mat. Esteban’s wife, pale and thin, lay on the floor with the sick child beside her.

Motionless, its tiny blue-tinged face drawn way from its chest in a fixed wrinkled grimace, the infant seemed to be straining to express some terrible ancient wisdom.

Dr. Lazaro made a cursory check – skin dry, turning cold; breathing shallow; heartbeat

fast and irregular. And I that moment, only the child existed before him; only the child and his own mind probing now like a hard gleaming instrument. How strange that it should still live, his mind said as it considered the spark that persisted within the rigid and tortured body. He was alone with the child, his whole being focused on it, in those intense minutes shaped into a habit now by so many similar instances: his physician’s knowledge trying to keep the heart beating, to revive an ebbing life and somehow make it rise again.

Dr. Lazaro removed the blankets that bundled the child and injected a whole ampule to check the tonic spasms, the needle piercing neatly into the sparse flesh; he broke another ampule, with deft precise movements , and emptied the syringe, while the infant lay stiff as wood beneath his hands. He wiped off the sweat running into his eyes, then holding the rigid body with one hand, he tried to draw air into the faltering lungs, pressing and releasing the chest; but even as he worked to rescue the child, the bluish color of its face began to turn gray.

Dr. Lazaro rose from his crouch on the floor, a cramped ache in his shoulders, his mouth dry. The lamplight glistened on his pale hollow face as he confronted the room again, the stale heat, the poverty. Esteban met his gaze; all their eyes were upon him, Ben at the door, the old man, the woman in the corner, and Esteban's wife, in the trembling shadows.

Esteban said: "Doctor.."

He shook his head, and replaced the syringe case in his bag, slowly and deliberately, and fastened the clasp. There was murmuring him, a rustle across the bamboo floor, and when he turned, Ben was kneeling beside the child. And he watched, with a tired detached surprise, as the boy poured water from a coconut shell on the infant's brow. He caught the words half-whispered in the quietness: ".. in the name of the Father.. the Son… the Holy Ghost…"

The shadows flapped on the walls, the heart of the lamp quivering before it settled into a slender flame. By the river dogs were barking. Dr. Lazaro glanced at his watch; it was close to midnight. Ben stood over the child, the coconut shell in his hands, as though wandering what next to do with it, until he saw his father nod for them to go.

"Doctor, tell us –" Esteban took a step forward.

"I did everything;" Dr. Lazaro said. "It's too late –"

He gestured vaguely, with a dull resentment; by some implicit relationship, he was also responsible, for the misery in the room, the hopelessness. "There's nothing more I can do, Esteban," he said. He thought with a flick of anger: Soon the child will be out of it, you ought to be grateful. Esteban's wife began to cry, a weak smothered gasping, and the old woman was comforting her, it is the will of God, my daughter…"

In the yard, Esteban pressed carefully folded bills into the doctor's hand; the limp, tattered feel of the money was sort of the futile journey, "I know this is not enough, doctor," Esteban said. "as you can see we are very poor… I shall bring you fruit, chickens, someday…"

A late moon had risen, edging over the tops of the trees, and in the faint wash of its light, Esteban guided them back to the boat. A glimmering rippled on the surface of the water as they paddled across; the white moonlight spread in the sky, and a sudden wind sprang rain-like and was lost in the tress massed on the riverbank.

"I cannot thank you enough, doctor," Esteban said. "You have been very kind to come this far, at this hour." He trail is just over there, isn't it?" He wanted to be rid of the man, to be away from the shy humble voice, the prolonged wretchedness.

"I shall be grateful always, doctor," Esteban said. "And to you son, too. God go with you." He was a faceless voice withdrawing in the shadows, a cipher in the shabby crowds that came to town on market days.

"Let's go, Ben" Dr. Lazaro said.

They took the path across the field; around them the moonlight had transformed the landscape, revealing a gentle, more familiar dimension, a luminous haze upon the trees stirring with a growing wind; and the heat of the night had passed, a coolness was falling from the deep sky. Unhurried, his pace no more than a casual stroll, Dr. Lazaro felt the oppression of the night begin to life from him, an emotionless calm returned to his mind. The sparrow does not fall without the Father's leave he mused at the sky, but it falls just the same. But to what end are the sufferings of a child? The crickets chirped peacefully in the moon-pale darkness beneath the trees.

"You baptized the child, didn't you, Ben?"

"Yes, Pa." The boy kept in the step beside him.

He used to believe in it, too. The power of the Holy Spirit washing away original sin, the purified soul made heir of heaven. He could still remember fragments of his boy hood faith, as one might remember an improbable and long-discarded dream.

"Lay baptism, isn't that the name for it?"

"Yes," Ben said. I asked the father. The baby hadn't been baptized." He added as they came to the embankment that separated the field from the road: "They were waiting for it to get well."

The station had closed, with only the canopy light and the blobed neon sign left burning. A steady wind was blowing now across the filed, the moonlit plains.

He saw Ben stifle a yawn. "I'll drive," Dr. Lazaro said.

His eyes were not what they used to be, and he drove leaning forward, his hands tight on the wheel. He began to sweat again, and the empty road and the lateness and the memory of Esteban and of the child dying before morning in the impoverished, lamplit room fused into tired melancholy. He started to think of his other son, one he had lost.

He said, seeking conversation, "If other people carried on like you, Ben, the priests would be run out of business."

The boy sat beside him, his face averted, not answering.

"Now, you'll have an angel praying for you in heaven," Dr. Lazaro said, teasing, trying to create an easy mood between the. "What if you hadn't baptized the baby and it died? What would happen to it then?"

"It won't see God," Ben said.

"But isn't that unfair?" It was like riddle, trivial, but diverting. "Just because.."

"Maybe God has another remedy," Ben said. "I don't know. But the church says."

He could sense the boy groping for the tremendous answers. "The Church teaches, the church says…." God, Christ, the communications of saints: Dr. Lazaro found himself wondering about the world of novenas and candles, where bread and

wine became the flesh and blood of the Lord, and a woman bathed in light appeared before children, and mortal men spoke of eternal life; the visions of God, the body's resurrection at the tend of time. It was a country from which he was barred; no matter – the customs, the geography didn't appeal to him. But in the care suddenly, driving through the night, he was aware of an obscure disappointment, a subtle pressure around his heart, as though he had been deprived of a certain joy…

A bus roared around a hill toward, its lights blinding him, and he pulled to the side of the road, braking involuntarily as a billow of dust swept over the car. He had not closed the window on his side, and the flung dust poured in, the thick brittle powder almost choking him, making him cough, his eyes smarting, before he could shield his face with his hands. In the headlights, the dust sifted down and when the air was clear again, Dr. Lazaro, swallowing a taste of earth, of darkness, maneuvered the car back onto the road, his arms exhausted and numb. He drove the last half-mile to town in silence, his mind registering nothing but the grit of dust in his mouth and the empty road unwinding swiftly before him.

They reached the sleeping town, the desolate streets, the plaza empty in the moonlight, and the huddled shapes of houses, the old houses that Dr. Lazaro had always knew. How many nights had he driven home like this through the quiet town, with a man's life ended behind him, or a child crying newly risen from the womb; and a sense of constant motions, of change, of the days moving swiftly toward and immense revelation touched him once more, briefly, and still he could not find the words. He turned the last corner, then steered the car down the graveled driveway to the garage, while Ben closed the gate. Dr. Lazaro sat there a moment, in the stillness, resting his eyes, conscious of the measured beating of his heart, and breathing a scent of dust that lingered on his clothes, his skin. Slowly he merged from the car, locking it, and went around the towere of the water-tank to the frontyard where Ben stood waiting.

With unaccustomed tenderness he placed a hand on Ben's shoulder was they turned toward the cement-walled house. They had gone on a trip; they had come home safely together. He felt closer to the boy than he had ever been in years.

"Sorry for keeping you up this late," Dr. Lazaro said.

"It's all right, Pa."

"Some night, huh, Ben? What you did back in that barrio" – there was just the slightest patronage in this one –" your mother will love to hear about it."

He shook the boy beside him gently. "Reverend Father Ben Lazaro."

The impulse of certain humor – it was part of the comradeship. He chuckled drowsily: "Father Lazaro, what must I do to gain eternal life?"

As he slid the door open on the vault of darkness, the familiar depth of the house, it came to Dr. Lazaro faintly in the late night that for certain things, like love there was only so much time. But the glimmer was lost instantly, buried in the mist of indifference and sleep rising now in his brain.

Lesson 2: Literature in Southern Tagalog

Geographical Area

Tagalog literature has been born, cradled, nourished and peaked into fruition in the provinces of Southern Luzon, Central Luzon and the present Metropolitan Manila or the National Capital Region.

Among the Southern Tagalog provinces are Cavite, Batangas, Laguna, Quezon, Aurora, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Palawan and some towns of Rizal province. In Central Luzon, there are three provinces where Tagalog is predominantly used and these are the provinces of Nueva Ecija, Bataan and Bulacan. Metro Manila is comprised of cities composing the national capital region namely Manila, Quezon City, Pasay City, Caloocan City, Mandaluyong City, Pasig City, Marikina City, Muntinlupa City and suburban towns of Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, Pateros and Taguig. Some parts of the provinces that are not originally Tagalog cannot escape the onslaught of Tagalog language and culture, like some parts of the Bicol region and Pampanga.

The Cradle of Culture

Tagalog region is the birthplace of a rich tradition of Philippine culture in language, politics, economy and literature.

The oldest university in the Philippines, University of Sto. Tomas is located in Manila. The first printing press was established in Manila. This gave way to the publication of the first book, Doctrina Cristiana in xylography in 1593, written in Spanish and Tagalog versions. The bible was first translated into Tagalog in Barlaan and Josaphat in 1708 and 1712. The life of Christ in epic tradition known popularly today as Pasyon was written in Tagalog by various writers like Gaspar Aquino de Belen and Fr. Mariano Pilapil.

The literary tradition in the Tagalog regions specially outstanding in the field of oral literature like bugtong(riddle), proverbs, native songs. These oral literatures are always in poetic forms, usually seven-syllabic rhymes, so Asian in form and perspective.

Considering this rich and invigorating cultural matrix, it is not surprising that it is the Tagalog region that was destined to be the birthplace of historic men in Philippine politics, culture and literature that includes Francisco Balagtas Baltazar, Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Apolinario Mabini, Emilio Jacinto, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Jose P. Laurel, Claro M. Recto, Amado V. Hernandez, Lope K. Santos, Lazaro Francisco, Faustino Aguilar, Jose Corazon de Jesus, Alejandro Abadilla, Modesto de Castro.

It is not noticeable that such men are not only man of history that played a great role in Philippine independence movement but men of letters as well.

The Literary Tradition

It is the pens of these men that shaped the political consciousness of the Filipinos.

Balagtas could be said to have voiced out the first concept of nationhood in Philippine politics and literature in his epic poem, Florante at Laura. Says Balagtas:

Sa loob at labas ng bayan kong sawi
Kaliluha'y siyang nangyayaring hari
Kagalinga't bait ay nilulugami
Ininis sa hukay ng dusa't pighati.

In and out of my miserable country
Repression is the dominant king
Goodness and well-meant intention are suppressed
Doomed in the grave of sufferings and grief.

Although Balagtas used Albania as an allegory, the situations clearly spoke of the Philippines. This epic poem of Balagtas had inspired a generation of young writers of the period, like Marcelo H. del Pilar, who spearheaded the Propaganda Movement in Europe and Jose Rizal, whose novels, Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo set the conflagration of revolutionary spirit and movement.

While Rizal was living in banishment in a far-flung town of Dapitan in Mindanao Island, a man of the masses, Andres Bonifacio founded the Katipunan, a revolutionary organization that sought total independence from the Spanish yoke.

Even the revolutionary struggle of the people was guided by the light of literature. Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto, his close associate in the revolutionary struggle were men of letters, both writing nationalist essays and poems.

Jacinto in his essay, "Liwanag at Dilim" (Light and Darkness) discoursed on the spirituality of man's natural desire for freedom. On the other hand, Bonifacio spoke of the dimension of love of country in his poem, "Pag-ibig sa Tinibuang Lupa" (Love for the Native Land). He says:

Aling pag-ibig pa ang hihigit kaya
Sa pagkadalisay at pagkadakila
Gaya ng pag-ibig sa tinubuang lupa
Aling pag-ibig pa, wala na nga, wala.

Which love can be more powerful
More pure and noble
Than the love for one's native land
Which other love, there is no such.

This tradition of Tagalog literature has been bequeathed upon the national consciousness of the Filipinos all over the Philippines. Manila being the center of the country in all aspects of national life of the Filipinos becomes the logical conduit of national consciousness emanating from the literary legacy of the region's gifted minds.

During the long period of Philippine subjugations by foreign dominations — Spanish, American and Japanese — vigorous literary traditions have been nurtured.

In the contemporary Philippine society, Tagalog literature is continuing its role bequeathed upon it by historical development.

However, Tagalog literature now, more and more is given a new name — Filipino literature. But this is another story.

Famous Literary in Southern Tagalog

- American period (Short story): “Dead Stars” by Paz Marquez Benitez
- Ancient literature (Folktales): “Stories of Maria Makiling”

About the Author

Born in 1894 in Lucena City, Quezón, Márquez Benítez authored the first Filipino modern English-language short story, Dead Stars, published in the Philippine Herald in 1925. Born into the prominent Márquez family of Quezón province, she was among the first generation of Filipinos trained in the American education system which used English as the medium of instruction. She graduated high school in Tayabas High School (now, Quezón National High School) and college from the University of the Philippines with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1912. She was a member of the first freshman class of the University of the Philippines, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1912.

Two years after graduation, she married UP College of Education Dean Francisco Benítez, with whom she had four children.

Márquez Benítez later became a teacher at the University of the Philippines, who taught short-story writing and had become an influential figure to many Filipino writers in the English language, such as Loreto Paras-Sulit, Paz M. Latorena, Arturo Belleza Rotor, Bienvenido N. Santos and Francisco Arcellana. The annually held Paz Márquez Benítez Lectures in the Philippines honors her memory by focusing on the contribution of Filipino women writers to Philippine Literature in the English language.

Though she only had one more published short story after “Dead Stars” entitled "A Night in the Hills", she made her mark in Philippine literature because her work is considered the first modern Philippine short story.

For Márquez Benítez, writing was a lifelong occupation. In 1919 she founded "Woman's Home Journal", the first women's magazine in the country. Also in the same year, she and other six women who were prominent members of Manila's social elites, namely Clara Aragón, Concepción Aragón, Francisca Tirona Benítez, Carolina Ocampo Palma, Mercedes Rivera, and Socorro Márquez Zaballero, founded the Philippine Women's College (now Philippine Women's University). "Filipino Love Stories", reportedly the first anthology of Philippine stories in English by Filipinos, was compiled in 1928 by Márquez Benítez from the works of her students.

When her husband died in 1951, she took over as editor of the Philippine Journal of Education at UP. She held the editorial post for over two decades.

In 1995, her daughter, Virginia Benítez Licuanan wrote her biography, "Paz Márquez Benítez: One Woman's Life, Letters, and Writings."

DEAD STARS

by Paz Marquez Benitez

"Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez, first published in 1925 in the Philippine Herald, is said to be the first Filipino modern short story in English. Marquez Benitez was born in 1894 in Lucban, Quezon, and was among the first generation of Filipinos to have been trained under the American system of Education. Together with six other women, she founded what would become Philippine Women's University (coincidentally, the next-door neighbor of Philippine Christian University on Taft Avenue, Manila).

I

1. Through the open window the air-steeped outdoors passed into his room, quietly enveloping him, stealing into his very thought. Esperanza, Julia, the sorry mess he had made of life, the years to come even now beginning to weigh down, to crush--they lost concreteness, diffused into formless melancholy. The tranquil murmur of conversation issued from the brick-tiled azotea where Don Julian and Carmen were busy puttering away among the rose pots.
2. "Papa, and when will the 'long table' be set?"
3. "I don't know yet. Alfredo is not very specific, but I understand Esperanza wants it to be next month."
4. Carmen sighed impatiently. "Why is he not a bit more decided, I wonder. He is over thirty, is he not? And still a bachelor! Esperanza must be tired waiting."
5. "She does not seem to be in much of a hurry either," Don Julian nasally commented, while his rose scissors busily snipped away.
6. "How can a woman be in a hurry when the man does not hurry her?" Carmen returned, pinching off a worm with a careful, somewhat absent air. "Papa, do you remember how much in love he was?"
7. "In love? With whom?"
8. "With Esperanza, of course. He has not had another love affair that I know of," she said with good-natured contempt. "What I mean is that at the beginning he was enthusiastic--flowers, serenades, notes, and things like that--"
9. Alfredo remembered that period with a wonder not unmixed with shame. That was less than four years ago. He could not understand those months of a great hunger that was not of the body nor yet of the mind, a craving that had seized on him one quiet night when the moon was abroad and under the dappled shadow of the trees in the plaza, man wooed maid. Was he being cheated by life? Love--he seemed to have missed it. Or was the love that others told about a mere fabrication of perfervid imagination, an exaggeration of the commonplace, a glorification of insipid monotonies such as made up his love life? Was love a combination of circumstances, or sheer native capacity of soul? In those days love was, for him, still

the eternal puzzle; for love, as he knew it, was a stranger to love as he divined it might be.

10. Sitting quietly in his room now, he could almost revive the restlessness of those days, the feeling of tumultuous haste, such as he knew so well in his boyhood when something beautiful was going on somewhere and he was trying to get there in time to see. "Hurry, hurry, or you will miss it," someone had seemed to urge in his ears. So he had avidly seized on the shadow of Love and deluded himself for a long while in the way of humanity from time immemorial. In the meantime, he became very much engaged to Esperanza.
11. Why would men so mismanage their lives? Greed, he thought, was what ruined so many. Greed--the desire to crowd into a moment all the enjoyment it will hold, to squeeze from the hour all the emotion it will yield. Men commit themselves when but half-meaning to do so, sacrificing possible future fullness of ecstasy to the craving for immediate excitement. Greed--mortgaging the future--forcing the hand of Time, or of Fate.
12. "What do you think happened?" asked Carmen, pursuing her thought.
13. "I supposed long-engaged people are like that; warm now, cool tomorrow. I think they are oftener cool than warm. The very fact that an engagement has been allowed to prolong itself argues a certain placidity of temperament--or of affection--on the part of either, or both." Don Julian loved to philosophize. He was talking now with an evident relish in words, his resonant, very nasal voice toned down to monologue pitch. "That phase you were speaking of is natural enough for a beginning. Besides, that, as I see it, was Alfredo's last race with escaping youth--"
14. Carmen laughed aloud at the thought of her brother's perfect physical repose--almost indolence--disturbed in the role suggested by her father's figurative language.
15. "A last spurt of hot blood," finished the old man.
16. Few certainly would credit Alfredo Salazar with hot blood. Even his friends had amusedly diagnosed his blood as cool and thin, citing incontrovertible evidence. Tall and slender, he moved with an indolent ease that verged on grace. Under straight recalcitrant hair, a thin face with a satisfying breadth of forehead, slow, dreamer's eyes, and astonishing freshness of lips--indeed Alfredo Salazar's appearance betokened little of exuberant masculinity; rather a poet with wayward humor, a fastidious artist with keen, clear brain.
17. He rose and quietly went out of the house. He lingered a moment on the stone steps; then went down the path shaded by immature acacias, through the little tarred gate which he left swinging back and forth, now opening, now closing, on the gravel road bordered along the farther side by madre cacao hedge in tardy lavender bloom.
18. The gravel road narrowed as it slanted up to the house on the hill, whose wide, open porches he could glimpse through the heat-shrivelled tamarinds in the Martinez yard.
19. Six weeks ago that house meant nothing to him save that it was the Martinez house, rented and occupied by Judge del Valle and his family. Six weeks ago Julia Salas meant nothing to him; he did not even know her name; but now--

20. One evening he had gone "neighboring" with Don Julian; a rare enough occurrence, since he made it a point to avoid all appearance of currying favor with the Judge. This particular evening however, he had allowed himself to be persuaded. "A little mental relaxation now and then is beneficial," the old man had said. "Besides, a judge's good will, you know;" the rest of the thought--"is worth a rising young lawyer's trouble"--Don Julian conveyed through a shrug and a smile that derided his own worldly wisdom.
21. A young woman had met them at the door. It was evident from the excitement of the Judge's children that she was a recent and very welcome arrival. In the characteristic Filipino way formal introductions had been omitted--the judge limiting himself to a casual "*Ah, ya se conocen?*"[So, you know each other already?--Ed.]--with the consequence that Alfredo called her Miss del Valle throughout the evening.
22. He was puzzled that she should smile with evident delight every time he addressed her thus. Later Don Julian informed him that she was not the Judge's sister, as he had supposed, but his sister-in-law, and that her name was Julia Salas. A very dignified rather austere name, he thought. Still, the young lady should have corrected him. As it was, he was greatly embarrassed, and felt that he should explain.
23. To his apology, she replied, "That is nothing, Each time I was about to correct you, but I remembered a similar experience I had once before."
24. "Oh," he drawled out, vastly relieved.
25. "A man named Manalang--I kept calling him Manalo. After the tenth time or so, the young man rose from his seat and said suddenly, 'Pardon me, but my name is Manalang, Manalang.' You know, I never forgave him!"
26. He laughed with her.
27. "The best thing to do under the circumstances, I have found out," she pursued, "is to pretend not to hear, and to let the other person find out his mistake without help."
28. "As you did this time. Still, you looked amused every time I--"
29. "I was thinking of Mr. Manalang."
30. Don Julian and his uncommunicative friend, the Judge, were absorbed in a game of chess. The young man had tired of playing appreciative spectator and desultory conversationalist, so he and Julia Salas had gone off to chat in the vine-covered porch. The lone piano in the neighborhood alternately tinkled and banged away as the player's moods altered. He listened, and wondered irrelevantly if Miss Salas could sing; she had such a charming speaking voice.
31. He was mildly surprised to note from her appearance that she was unmistakably a sister of the Judge's wife, although Doña Adela was of a different type altogether. She was small and plump, with wide brown eyes, clearly defined eyebrows, and delicately modeled hips--a pretty woman with the complexion of a baby and the expression of a likable cow. Julia was taller, not so obviously pretty. She had the same eyebrows and lips, but she was much darker, of a smooth rich brown with underlying tones of crimson which heightened the impression she gave of abounding vitality.

32. On Sunday mornings after mass, father and son would go crunching up the gravel road to the house on the hill. The Judge's wife invariably offered them beer, which Don Julian enjoyed and Alfredo did not. After a half hour or so, the chessboard would be brought out; then Alfredo and Julia Salas would go out to the porch to chat. She sat in the low hammock and he in a rocking chair and the hours--warm, quiet March hours--sped by. He enjoyed talking with her and it was evident that she liked his company; yet what feeling there was between them was so undisturbed that it seemed a matter of course. Only when Esperanza chanced to ask him indirectly about those visits did some uneasiness creep into his thoughts of the girl next door.
33. Esperanza had wanted to know if he went straight home after mass. Alfredo suddenly realized that for several Sundays now he had not waited for Esperanza to come out of the church as he had been wont to do. He had been eager to go "neighboring."
34. He answered that he went home to work. And, because he was not habitually untruthful, added, "Sometimes I go with Papa to Judge del Valle's."
35. She dropped the topic. Esperanza was not prone to indulge in unprovoked jealousies. She was a believer in the regenerative virtue of institutions, in their power to regulate feeling as well as conduct. If a man were married, why, of course, he loved his wife; if he were engaged, he could not possibly love another woman.
36. That half-lie told him what he had not admitted openly to himself, that he was giving Julia Salas something which he was not free to give. He realized that; yet something that would not be denied beckoned imperiously, and he followed on.
37. It was so easy to forget up there, away from the prying eyes of the world, so easy and so poignantly sweet. The beloved woman, he standing close to her, the shadows around, enfolding.
38. "Up here I find--something--"
39. He and Julia Salas stood looking out into the she quiet night. Sensing unwanted intensity, laughed, woman-like, asking, "Amusement?"
40. "No; youth--its spirit--"
41. "Are you so old?"
42. "And heart's desire."
43. Was he becoming a poet, or is there a poet lurking in the heart of every man?
44. "Down there," he had continued, his voice somewhat indistinct, "the road is too broad, too trodden by feet, too barren of mystery."
45. "Down there" beyond the ancient tamarinds lay the road, upturned to the stars. In the darkness the fireflies glimmered, while an errant breeze strayed in from somewhere, bringing elusive, faraway sounds as of voices in a dream.
46. "Mystery--" she answered lightly, "that is so brief--"
47. "Not in some," quickly. "Not in you."
48. "You have known me a few weeks; so the mystery."
49. "I could study you all my life and still not find it."
50. "So long?"
51. "I should like to."

52. Those six weeks were now so swift--seeming in the memory, yet had they been so deep in the living, so charged with compelling power and sweetness. Because neither the past nor the future had relevance or meaning, he lived only the present, day by day, lived it intensely, with such a willful shutting out of fact as astounded him in his calmer moments.
53. Just before Holy Week, Don Julian invited the judge and his family to spend Sunday afternoon at Tanda where he had a coconut plantation and a house on the beach. Carmen also came with her four energetic children. She and Doña Adela spent most of the time indoors directing the preparation of the merienda and discussing the likeable absurdities of their husbands--how Carmen's Vicente was so absorbed in his farms that he would not even take time off to accompany her on this visit to her father; how Doña Adela's Dionisio was the most absentminded of men, sometimes going out without his collar, or with unmatched socks.
54. After the merienda, Don Julian sauntered off with the judge to show him what a thriving young coconut looked like--"plenty of leaves, close set, rich green"--while the children, convoyed by Julia Salas, found unending entertainment in the rippling sand left by the ebbing tide. They were far down, walking at the edge of the water, indistinctly outlined against the gray of the out-curving beach.
55. Alfredo left his perch on the bamboo ladder of the house and followed. Here were her footsteps, narrow, arched. He laughed at himself for his black canvas footwear which he removed forthwith and tossed high up on dry sand.
56. When he came up, she flushed, then smiled with frank pleasure.
57. "I hope you are enjoying this," he said with a questioning inflection.
58. "Very much. It looks like home to me, except that we do not have such a lovely beach."
59. There was a breeze from the water. It blew the hair away from her forehead, and whipped the tucked-up skirt around her straight, slender figure. In the picture was something of eager freedom as of wings poised in flight. The girl had grace, distinction. Her face was not notably pretty; yet she had a tantalizing charm, all the more compelling because it was an inner quality, an achievement of the spirit. The lure was there, of naturalness, of an alert vitality of mind and body, of a thoughtful, sunny temper, and of a piquant perverseness which is sauce to charm.
60. "The afternoon has seemed very short, hasn't it?" Then, "This, I think, is the last time--we can visit."
61. "The last? Why?"
62. "Oh, you will be too busy perhaps."
63. He noted an evasive quality in the answer.
64. "Do I seem especially industrious to you?"
65. "If you are, you never look it."
66. "Not perspiring or breathless, as a busy man ought to be."
67. "But--"
68. "Always unhurried, too unhurried, and calm." She smiled to herself.
69. "I wish that were true," he said after a meditative pause.

70. She waited.
71. "A man is happier if he is, as you say, calm and placid."
72. "Like a carabao in a mud pool," she retorted perversely.
73. "Who? I?"
74. "Oh, no!"
75. "You said I am calm and placid."
76. That is what I think."
77. "I used to think so too. Shows how little we know ourselves."
78. It was strange to him that he could be wooing thus: with tone and look and covert phrase.
79. "I should like to see your home town."
80. "There is nothing to see--little crooked streets, bunut roofs with ferns growing on them, and sometimes squashes."
81. That was the background. It made her seem less detached, less unrelated, yet withal more distant, as if that background claimed her and excluded him.
82. "Nothing? There is you."
83. "Oh, me? But I am here."
84. "I will not go, of course, until you are there."
85. "Will you come? You will find it dull. There isn't even one American there!"
86. "Well--Americans are rather essential to my entertainment."
87. She laughed.
88. "We live on Calle Luz, a little street with trees."
89. "Could I find that?"
90. "If you don't ask for Miss del Valle," she smiled teasingly.
91. "I'll inquire about--"
92. "What?"
93. "The house of the prettiest girl in the town."
94. "There is where you will lose your way." Then she turned serious. "Now, that is not quite sincere."
95. "It is," he averred slowly, but emphatically.
96. "I thought you, at least, would not say such things."
97. "Pretty--pretty--a foolish word! But there is none other more handy I did not mean that quite--"
98. "Are you withdrawing the compliment?"
99. "Re-enforcing it, maybe. Something is pretty when it pleases the eye--it is more than that when--"
100. "If it saddens?" she interrupted hastily.
101. "Exactly."
102. "It must be ugly."
103. "Always?"
104. Toward the west, the sunlight lay on the dimming waters in a broad, glinting streamer of crimsoned gold.
105. "No, of course you are right."

106. "Why did you say this is the last time?" he asked quietly as they turned back.
107. "I am going home."
108. The end of an impossible dream!
109. "When?" after a long silence.
110. "Tomorrow. I received a letter from Father and Mother yesterday. They want me to spend Holy Week at home."
111. She seemed to be waiting for him to speak. "That is why I said this is the last time."
112. "Can't I come to say good-bye?"
113. "Oh, you don't need to!"
114. "No, but I want to."
115. "There is no time."
116. The golden streamer was withdrawing, shortening, until it looked no more than a pool far away at the rim of the world. Stillness, a vibrant quiet that affects the senses as does solemn harmony; a peace that is not contentment but a cessation of tumult when all violence of feeling tones down to the wistful serenity of regret. She turned and looked into his face, in her dark eyes a ghost of sunset sadness.
117. "Home seems so far from here. This is almost like another life."
118. "I know. This is Elsewhere, and yet strange enough, I cannot get rid of the old things."
119. "Old things?"
120. "Oh, old things, mistakes, encumbrances, old baggage." He said it lightly, unwilling to mar the hour. He walked close, his hand sometimes touching hers for one whirling second.
121. Don Julian's nasal summons came to them on the wind.

122. Alfredo gripped the soft hand so near his own. At his touch, the girl turned her face away, but he heard her voice say very low, "Good-bye."

II

123. Salazar turned to the right where, farther on, the road broadened and entered the heart of the town--heart of Chinese stores sheltered under low-hung roofs, of indolent drug stores and tailor shops, of dingy shoe-repairing establishments, and a cluttered goldsmith's cubbyhole where a consumptive bent over a magnifying lens; heart of old brick-roofed houses with quaint hand-and-ball knockers on the door; heart of grass-grown plaza reposeful with trees, of ancient church and convento, now circled by swallows gliding in flight as smooth and soft as the afternoon itself. Into the quickly deepening twilight, the voice of the biggest of the church bells kept ringing its insistent summons. Flocking came the devout with their long wax candles, young women in vivid apparel (for this was Holy Thursday and the Lord was still alive), older women in sober black skirts. Came too the young men in droves, elbowing each other under the talisay tree near the church door. The gaily decked rice-paper lanterns were again on display while from the windows of the older

houses hung colored glass globes, heirlooms from a day when grass pith wicks floating in coconut oil were the chief lighting device.

124. Soon a double row of lights emerged from the church and uncoiled down the length of the street like a huge jeweled band studded with glittering clusters where the saints' platforms were. Above the measured music rose the untutored voices of the choir, steeped in incense and the acrid fumes of burning wax.

125. The sight of Esperanza and her mother sedately pacing behind Our Lady of Sorrows suddenly destroyed the illusion of continuity and broke up those lines of light into component individuals. Esperanza stiffened self-consciously, tried to look unaware, and could not.

126. The line moved on.

127. Suddenly, Alfredo's slow blood began to beat violently, irregularly. A girl was coming down the line--a girl that was striking, and vividly alive, the woman that could cause violent commotion in his heart, yet had no place in the completed ordering of his life.

128. Her glance of abstracted devotion fell on him and came to a brief stop.

129. The line kept moving on, wending its circuitous route away from the church and then back again, where, according to the old proverb, all processions end.

130. At last Our Lady of Sorrows entered the church, and with her the priest and the choir, whose voices now echoed from the arched ceiling. The bells rang the close of the procession.

131. A round orange moon, "huge as a winnowing basket," rose lazily into a clear sky, whitening the iron roofs and dimming the lanterns at the windows. Along the still densely shadowed streets the young women with their rear guard of males loitered and, maybe, took the longest way home.

132. Toward the end of the row of Chinese stores, he caught up with Julia Salas. The crowd had dispersed into the side streets, leaving Calle Real to those who lived farther out. It was past eight, and Esperanza would be expecting him in a little while: yet the thought did not hurry him as he said "Good evening" and fell into step with the girl.

133. "I had been thinking all this time that you had gone," he said in a voice that was both excited and troubled.

134. "No, my sister asked me to stay until they are ready to go."

135. "Oh, is the Judge going?"

136. "Yes."

137. The provincial docket had been cleared, and Judge del Valle had been assigned elsewhere. As lawyer--and as lover--Alfredo had found that out long before.

138. "Mr. Salazar," she broke into his silence, "I wish to congratulate you."

139. Her tone told him that she had learned, at last. That was inevitable.

140. "For what?"

141. "For your approaching wedding."

142. Some explanation was due her, surely. Yet what could he say that would not offend?

143. "I should have offered congratulations long before, but you know mere visitors are slow about getting the news," she continued.
144. He listened not so much to what she said as to the nuances in her voice. He heard nothing to enlighten him, except that she had reverted to the formal tones of early acquaintance. No revelation there; simply the old voice--cool, almost detached from personality, flexible and vibrant, suggesting potentialities of song.
145. "Are weddings interesting to you?" he finally brought out quietly
146. "When they are of friends, yes."
147. "Would you come if I asked you?"
148. "When is it going to be?"
149. "May," he replied briefly, after a long pause.
150. "May is the month of happiness they say," she said, with what seemed to him a shade of irony.
151. "They say," slowly, indifferently. "Would you come?"
152. "Why not?"
153. "No reason. I am just asking. Then you will?"
154. "If you will ask me," she said with disdain.
155. "Then I ask you."
156. "Then I will be there."
157. The gravel road lay before them; at the road's end the lighted windows of the house on the hill. There swept over the spirit of Alfredo Salazar a longing so keen that it was pain, a wish that, that house were his, that all the bewilderments of the present were not, and that this woman by his side were his long wedded wife, returning with him to the peace of home.
158. "Julita," he said in his slow, thoughtful manner, "did you ever have to choose between something you wanted to do and something you had to do?"
159. "No!"
160. "I thought maybe you had had that experience; then you could understand a man who was in such a situation."
161. "You are fortunate," he pursued when she did not answer.
162. "Is--is this man sure of what he should do?"
163. "I don't know, Julita. Perhaps not. But there is a point where a thing escapes us and rushes downward of its own weight, dragging us along. Then it is foolish to ask whether one will or will not, because it no longer depends on him."
164. "But then why--why--" her muffled voice came. "Oh, what do I know? That is his problem after all."
165. "Doesn't it--interest you?"
166. "Why must it? I--I have to say good-bye, Mr. Salazar; we are at the house."
167. Without lifting her eyes she quickly turned and walked away.
168. Had the final word been said? He wondered. It had. Yet a feeble flutter of hope trembled in his mind though set against that hope were three years of engagement, a very near wedding, perfect understanding between the parents, his own

conscience, and Esperanza herself--Esperanza waiting, Esperanza no longer young, Esperanza the efficient, the literal-minded, the intensely acquisitive.

169. He looked attentively at her where she sat on the sofa, appraisingly, and with a kind of aversion which he tried to control.

170. She was one of those fortunate women who have the gift of uniformly acceptable appearance. She never surprised one with unexpected homeliness nor with startling reserves of beauty. At home, in church, on the street, she was always herself, a woman past first bloom, light and clear of complexion, spare of arms and of breast, with a slight convexity to thin throat; a woman dressed with self-conscious care, even elegance; a woman distinctly not average.

171. She was pursuing an indignant relation about something or other, something about Calixta, their note-carrier, Alfredo perceived, so he merely half-listened, understanding imperfectly. At a pause he drawled out to fill in the gap: "Well, what of it?" The remark sounded ruder than he had intended.

172. "She is not married to him," Esperanza insisted in her thin, nervously pitched voice. "Besides, she should have thought of us. Nanay practically brought her up. We never thought she would turn out bad."

173. What had Calixta done? Homely, middle-aged Calixta?

174. "You are very positive about her badness," he commented dryly. Esperanza was always positive.

175. "But do you approve?"

176. "Of what?"

177. "What she did."

178. "No," indifferently.

179. "Well?"

180. He was suddenly impelled by a desire to disturb the unvexed orthodoxy of her mind. "All I say is that it is not necessarily wicked."

181. "Why shouldn't it be? You talked like an--immoral man. I did not know that your ideas were like that."

182. "My ideas?" he retorted, goaded by a deep, accumulated exasperation. "The only test I wish to apply to conduct is the test of fairness. Am I injuring anybody? No? Then I am justified in my conscience. I am right. Living with a man to whom she is not married--is that it? It may be wrong, and again it may not."

183. "She has injured us. She was ungrateful." Her voice was tight with resentment.

184. "The trouble with you, Esperanza, is that you are--" he stopped, appalled by the passion in his voice.

185. "Why do you get angry? I do not understand you at all! I think I know why you have been indifferent to me lately. I am not blind, or deaf; I see and hear what perhaps some are trying to keep from me." The blood surged into his very eyes and his hearing sharpened to points of acute pain. What would she say next?

186. "Why don't you speak out frankly before it is too late? You need not think of me and of what people will say." Her voice trembled.

187. Alfredo was suffering as he could not remember ever having suffered before. What people will say--what will they not say? What don't they say when long engagements are broken almost on the eve of the wedding?
188. "Yes," he said hesitatingly, diffidently, as if merely thinking aloud, "one tries to be fair--according to his lights--but it is hard. One would like to be fair to one's self first. But that is too easy, one does not dare--"
189. "What do you mean?" she asked with repressed violence. "Whatever my shortcomings, and no doubt they are many in your eyes, I have never gone out of my way, of my place, to find a man."
190. Did she mean by this irrelevant remark that he it was who had sought her; or was that a covert attack on Julia Salas?
191. "Esperanza--" a desperate plea lay in his stumbling words. "If you--suppose I--" Yet how could a mere man word such a plea?
192. "If you mean you want to take back your word, if you are tired of--why don't you tell me you are tired of me?" she burst out in a storm of weeping that left him completely shamed and unnerved.
193. The last word had been said.

III

194. AS Alfredo Salazar leaned against the boat rail to watch the evening settling over the lake, he wondered if Esperanza would attribute any significance to this trip of his. He was supposed to be in Sta. Cruz whither the case of the People of the Philippine Islands vs. Belina et al. had kept him, and there he would have been if Brigida Samuy had not been so important to the defense. He had to find that elusive old woman. That the search was leading him to that particular lake town which was Julia Salas' home should not disturb him unduly Yet he was disturbed to a degree utterly out of proportion to the prosaicalness of his errand. That inner tumult was no surprise to him; in the last eight years he had become used to such occasional storms. He had long realized that he could not forget Julia Salas. Still, he had tried to be content and not to remember too much. The climber of mountains who has known the back-break, the lonesomeness, and the chill, finds a certain restfulness in level paths made easy to his feet. He looks up sometimes from the valley where settles the dusk of evening, but he knows he must not heed the radiant beckoning. Maybe, in time, he would cease even to look up.
195. He was not unhappy in his marriage. He felt no rebellion: only the calm of capitulation to what he recognized as irresistible forces of circumstance and of character. His life had simply ordered itself; no more struggles, no more stirring up of emotions that got a man nowhere. From his capacity of complete detachment he derived a strange solace. The essential himself, the himself that had its being in the core of his thought, would, he reflected, always be free and alone. When claims encroached too insistently, as sometimes they did, he retreated into the inner fastness, and from that vantage he saw things and people around him as remote and alien, as incidents that did not matter. At such times did Esperanza feel baffled

and helpless; he was gentle, even tender, but immeasurably far away, beyond her reach.

196. Lights were springing into life on the shore. That was the town, a little up-tilted town nestling in the dark greenness of the groves. A snub-crested belfry stood beside the ancient church. On the outskirts the evening smudges glowed red through the sinuous mists of smoke that rose and lost themselves in the purple shadows of the hills. There was a young moon which grew slowly luminous as the coral tints in the sky yielded to the darker blues of evening.

197. The vessel approached the landing quietly, trailing a wake of long golden ripples on the dark water. Peculiar hill inflections came to his ears from the crowd assembled to meet the boat--slow, singing cadences, characteristic of the Laguna lake-shore speech. From where he stood he could not distinguish faces, so he had no way of knowing whether the presidente was there to meet him or not. Just then a voice shouted.

198. "Is the abogado there? Abogado!"

199. "What abogado?" someone irately asked.

200. That must be the presidente, he thought, and went down to the landing.

201. It was a policeman, a tall pock-marked individual. The presidente had left with Brigida Samuy--Tandang "Binday"--that noon for Santa Cruz. Señor Salazar's second letter had arrived late, but the wife had read it and said, "Go and meet the abogado and invite him to our house."

202. Alfredo Salazar courteously declined the invitation. He would sleep on board since the boat would leave at four the next morning anyway. So the presidente had received his first letter? Alfredo did not know because that official had not sent an answer. "Yes," the policeman replied, "but he could not write because we heard that Tandang Binday was in San Antonio so we went there to find her."

203. San Antonio was up in the hills! Good man, the presidente! He, Alfredo, must do something for him. It was not every day that one met with such willingness to help.

204. Eight o'clock, lugubriously tolled from the bell tower, found the boat settled into a somnolent quiet. A cot had been brought out and spread for him, but it was too bare to be inviting at that hour. It was too early to sleep: he would walk around the town. His heart beat faster as he picked his way to shore over the rafts made fast to sundry piles driven into the water.

205. How peaceful the town was! Here and there a little tienda was still open, its dim light issuing forlornly through the single window which served as counter. An occasional couple sauntered by, the women's chinelas making scraping sounds. From a distance came the shrill voices of children playing games on the street--tubigan perhaps, or "hawk-and-chicken." The thought of Julia Salas in that quiet place filled him with a pitying sadness.

206. How would life seem now if he had married Julia Salas? Had he meant anything to her? That unforgettable red-and-gold afternoon in early April haunted him with a sense of incompleteness as restless as other unlaid ghosts. She had not married--why? Faithfulness, he reflected, was not a conscious effort at regretful memory. It

was something unvolitional, maybe a recurrent awareness of irreplaceability. Irrelevant trifles--a cool wind on his forehead, far-away sounds as of voices in a dream--at times moved him to an oddly irresistible impulse to listen as to an insistent, unfinished prayer.

207. A few inquiries led him to a certain little tree-ceilinged street where the young moon wove indistinct filigrees of fight and shadow. In the gardens the cotton tree threw its angular shadow athwart the low stone wall; and in the cool, stilly midnight the cock's first call rose in tall, soaring jets of sound. Calle Luz.
208. Somehow or other, he had known that he would find her house because she would surely be sitting at the window. Where else, before bedtime on a moonlit night? The house was low and the light in the sala behind her threw her head into unmistakable relief. He sensed rather than saw her start of vivid surprise.
209. "Good evening," he said, raising his hat.
210. "Good evening. Oh! Are you in town?"
211. "On some little business," he answered with a feeling of painful constraint.
212. "Won't you come up?"
213. He considered. His vague plans had not included this. But Julia Salas had left the window, calling to her mother as she did so. After a while, someone came downstairs with a lighted candle to open the door. At last--he was shaking her hand.
214. She had not changed much--a little less slender, not so eagerly alive, yet something had gone. He missed it, sitting opposite her, looking thoughtfully into her fine dark eyes. She asked him about the home town, about this and that, in a sober, somewhat meditative tone. He conversed with increasing ease, though with a growing wonder that he should be there at all. He could not take his eyes from her face. What had she lost?
215. Or was the loss his? He felt an impersonal curiosity creeping into his gaze. The girl must have noticed, for her cheek darkened in a blush.
216. Gently--was it experimentally?--he pressed her hand at parting; but his own felt undisturbed and emotionless. Did she still care? The answer to the question hardly interested him.
217. The young moon had set, and from the uninviting cot he could see one half of a star-studded sky.
218. So that was all over.
219. Why had he obstinately clung to that dream?
220. So all these years--since when?--he had been seeing the light of dead stars, long extinguished, yet seemingly still in their appointed places in the heavens.
221. An immense sadness as of loss invaded his spirit, a vast homesickness for some immutable refuge of the heart far away where faded gardens bloom again, and where live on in unchanging freshness, the dear, dead loves of vanished youth.

Stories of Maria Makiling

Ancient literature (Folktales)

Maria Makiling

Maria Makiling is a diwata (fairy) associated with Mount Makiling, Laguna, and is seen as the mountain's protector. In all accounts she is described as "breathtakingly beautiful" often wearing white. It is said that the mountain, when viewed in a certain way, presents a profile of Maria.

There are many stories about Maria Makiling, some of which persist to the present day. One superstition goes that when a man disappears in the forests of Mount Makiling, the diwata has taken him as a lover. Another story is that if mountaineers or campers leave behind garbage or pick fruits from the trees of Makiling, they would get lost, passing by the same place over and over again. Once they have collected their garbage, or have thrown away the fruit, would they find their way again.

The following are stories of Maria Makiling. Here, she falls in love with a mortal man and despite objections from her parents; she receives his soul after he is killed.

The second story is a retelling by the national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, who is a native of Calamba, Laguna. The first part of the story involves her giving gold ginger (also mentioned in the first story) to a hunter. The second part of the story tells of a young man whose crops are made prosperous by a charm given by Makiling.

The last story portrays Makiling as a spurned lover, making her a mischievous and spiteful spirit of the mountain.

I

The Legend of Maria Makiling

Traditional

According to legend, there was a time when the gods could live like ordinary mortals do. Although these gods were enchanted, they could speak, love, and even go to the market like what people do in our time. This story tells what happened to the daughter of two such deities. This is the story of Maria Makiling.

Two deities, Dayang Makiling and Gat Panahon, had an only daughter name Maria. Because of her beauty and charm, she was the delight of her parents. The source of their joy and strength, Maria was, to them, a jewel, a treasure that made life full of light and laughter.

At that time people could talk with the deities face to face, and even sit with them side by side underneath a tree. People could also ask for help when they were in need, provided that they asked in a solemn manner.

It was the custom of Maria to go to a small market, sometimes called a *talipapa*, on weekdays. Just like other women, she would on such occasions wear clothes made of silk and embroidered with flowers and wide stripes for this was the fashion at that time. Maria had long, black abundant hair which she usually decorated with *pomelo* flowers. When she went to the market, her flowing hair would touch her ankles. As she passed along, gallant men would bow their heads to signify their respect.

When Maria went to the market, she was always accompanied by two Aetas, who served as her servants. These two servants stayed close behind Maria, and they both carried a basket each that was full of golden ginger. These golden ginger Maria would barter for such items needed for the home. There was no money at that time, and instead of buying, people bartered and exchanged their goods for the things that they needed.

On a market day, the residents of the area are not the only ones who would go to the talipapa. Merchants and people from neighboring towns would also go to the market. One day, Gat Dula, the ruler of the kingdom of Bay, came to the talipapa to while away the hours. A piece of animal skin with fine hair caught Gat Dula's eye and he reached out to touch the fur. At the same moment, Maria was also reaching towards the same piece of animal skin and their shoulders accidentally touched. Their eyes met and Gat Dula bowed his head as a sign of respect and apology. And Maria responded with a shy smile as they parted from each other's company.

Since that first encounter, Gat Dula often visited the talipapa but he was not able to see Maria during these visits. One day, he saw Maria at the very place where they first met. He approached Maria and greeted her and Maria responded with a very sweet smile.

That was the beginning of their friendship which blossomed into love as the months passed. As time passed, the love affair between Gat Dula and Maria came to be known to Gat Panahon, Maria's father.

Gat Panahon was angry. Even Dayang Makiling, Maria's mother, was distresssed that her only daughter was in love with a mortal. Maria was then forbidden to go down to the earth. Her parents even took away from Maria the power of enchantment which enabled a deity to look and act like an ordinary mortal. But even though Maria and Gat Dula could no longer meet physically, their love endured. Maria continued to watch over Gat Dula. During a battle with the army of Lakan Bunto, the ruler of a neighboring kingdom who invaded the kingdom of Bay, Gat Dula did not suffer a single wound due to the support of Maria's enchantment.

Unfortunately, Gat Dula's inability to see Maria caused him to fall ill and die. Maria asked the gods to give her the soul of Gat Dula and her request was granted.

II

Mariang Makiling

as retold by Jose P. Rizal

There are many stories woven about this guardian spirit. Most of them deal with her helping the poor and the sick, in the guise of a peasant girl. The precious things she lent the country folk are said to be returned to her, along with the offering of a young pullet with feathers white as milk.

A hunter has recounted a face-to-face encounter with the enigma herself. He was hunting a wild boar, he said, deep into the forest where Mariang Makiling lived. The boar suddenly crashed into some bushes and the hunter, fearing that he would not find it again, dived in after it. When he came to his feet he saw a small hut, and witnessed his prey entering it. He followed the boar into the hut, thinking it deserted, and then he came face to face with a beautiful maiden standing by the boar, who was meek in her presence. The maiden said "This boar is mine and you must not harm it. But I see that you are tired and hurt. Come in, eat, and then go your way."

The hunter felt compelled to obey her. He sat down at her table, and she served him a porridge that he found was unlike anything he had ever tasted. It invigorated him, and after eating, he felt healed. As a parting gift, Mariang Makiling filled his peasant hat, called a *salakot*, with yellow ginger.

The hunter, on his way home from the forest, found that his *salakot* was growing heavier and heavier, and so he broke a few pieces of ginger in half and threw some bits away. Upon coming home, he handed Maria Makiling's gifts to his wife, who found that the *salakot*, instead of containing ginger, as her husband claimed, contained gold. The hunter regretted having thrown away a few bits of gold ginger along the way.

Mariang Makiling is said to be more than compassionate. Once, there lived a young farmer who always seemed to be blessed. His fields were never touched by any calamity, and his livestock were always in good health. The people of his village say he is endowed with a charm, or *mutya*, as it is called, that protected him and his from harm. The young man himself was good at heart and simple in spirit. But he was quiet and secretive, and would not say much of his stranger activities, which included frequent visits into the wood of Mariang Makiling.

But there came a terrible time for him and his family. War had come to his fair land, and army officers came, recruiting unmarried young men who were in perfect health. So that the young man would stay safely in the village, his mother arranged for him a marriage with a most beauteous daughter of a wealthy family. Upon finding this out, the young man became more sullen than ever.

He visited Mariang Makiling's wood one last time, a few days before his marriage. Mariang Makiling lent him a dress and some jewelry, for his wife to wear on their wedding day. "I would that you were consecrated to me," she said sadly, "but you need an earthly love, and you do not have enough faith in me besides. I could have protected you and your family." This having been said, she disappeared. The young man went back to his village with Mariang Makiling's gifts, and presented them at once to the girl he would marry.

But the girl did not care for Mariang Makiling's gifts. Instead she wore the pearls and dresses her mother had handed down.

Mariang Makiling was never seen by the peasants again, nor was her humble hut ever rediscovered.

III

Maria Makiling and her Lovers

Traditional

Makiling is one of the most famous mountains in the archipelago and with that comes a lot of folklore and legends about the mountain and the goddess that lives in the mountain, Mariang Makiling. In fact, people living within the towns under the shadow of the mountains have always described the silhouette of the mountain peak as that of Makiling lying down.

One of the famous stories is about an enchanted woman who lived in the quiet woods at the foot of Mt. Makiling. The people named her Maria Makiling because of where she lived. She was a young and beautiful woman. The beauty abundance and serenity of this enchanted place complimented her rare qualities.

She was kind and compassionate to the town people. She shared the full and rich abundance of her enchanted places; fishes in the lake, food and crops, fruits and trees. All were for free. People could borrow from her whatever they need, whatever they wanted. Her kindness was known far and wide. One afternoon, a hunter came by and wandered into her kingdom. When he saw her beauty, he fell in love with her and she too felt the same way for him. They met and talk every day and promised to love each other forever. Until one day Maria waited for him but he did not come. Maria discovered that he found a real woman and got married. She was very sad and frustrated. She felt deeply hurt and realized that the town people could not be trusted because she was different from them and they were just using her. Forgiving was really difficult. Her sadness and frustration turned into anger that she refused to give fruits to the trees. Animals and birds were no more. Fish no longer abound the lakes. People seldom saw her. It was only during pale moonlit nights that they sometimes see her.

Another story is told by Michelle Lanuza:

Maria was sought for and wooed by many suitors, three of whom were the Captain Lara, a Spanish soldier; Joselito, a Spanish mestizo studying in Manila; and Juan who was but a common farmer. Despite his lowly status, Makiling eventually chose Juan. Spurned, Joselito and Captain Lara conspired to frame Juan for setting fire to the cuartel of the Spanish. Juan was shot as the enemy of the Spaniards. Before he died, he cried Maria's name out loud. The *diwata* quickly came down from her mountain while Captain Lara and Joselito fled to Manila in fear of Maria's wrath. When she learned what happened, she cursed the two, along with all other men who cannot accept failure in love. Soon, the curse took effect. Joselito suddenly contracted an incurable illness. The revolutionary Filipinos killed Captain Lara.

From then on Maria never let herself be seen by the people again. Every time somebody gets lost on the mountain, they remember the curse of the *diwata*. Yet they also remember the great love of Maria Makiling.

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

For further reading please refer to the link provided:

Central Luzon Literature
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccSGY3xbBso

Faith, Love, Time, & Dr. Lazaro by Gregorio Brillantes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_liML0crCw

Dead Stars by Paz Marquez Benitez
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2NrgaJR4Ic

Ang Alamat ni Maria Makiling
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YGNnW8ykmU

Online Source:

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