

Amado v hernandez works



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Amado V. Hernandez lived in a nationalist milieu that witnessed a range of Filipinos that were determined to prove to colonizers that they were capable of governing themselves. Hernandez was born on September 13, 1903, Ka Amado as he is called, together with the nationalist leaders and intellectuals in government, the academe, and among the Filipino masses perceived in the postwar agrarian problems in Central Luzon the powerful roots of “ social alienation” that would lead to discriminating pressures.[1]He was married to zarzuela actress and queen of kundiman Honorata “ Atang” dela Rama and began his writing career as a journalist, and later, editor of several pre-World War II Tagalog news papers.[2]

Moreover, Ka Amado was known for his active participation in the socio-political realm through his literature and his political involvement. During WWII, he served as intelligence officer for the resistance.[3]The discussion of his involvement and participation pre, during and post war will be traced

through an account of his life and works, his writings, the Congress of Labor Organization, his wife Atang dela Rama, and the essence of Philippine and Hernandez's literature.

Life and Works

From 1926 to 1932, Amado V. Hernandez wrote Sariling Hardin a column in verse which was a calendar of happenings and observations on human weaknesses and social background. Meanwhile in 1928, he had a running balagtasán in his column Pagkakaisa against Jose Corazon de Jesus, Huseng Batute in Taliba. Ka Amado defended independence movement and Huseng Batute called him the “ poet of the administration” and was included by Julian Cruz Balmaseda among the “ poets of the heart”.^[4]

Instead of serving under the Japanese administration, Hernandez chose to leave for the hills. He was a major when the American forces returned in October 1944. He was appointed by President Osmeña as councilor of the City of Manila and in 1947, he ran for councilor in the first post-war local elections and won in all four districts of the city. At this time, he was popular for being a pre-war poet laureate and journalist as well as an organizer of the Philippine Newspaper Guild of which he became vice-president. He also helped organize and later on became acting national chairman of the progressive Congress of Labor Organizations or CLO which he said the objective was “ to help the worker achieve economic security and to help in his cultural uplift.”^[5]

In 1955, Hernandez wrote prison and detention center poems when he was transferred to Muntinlupa from Camp Murphy while waiting for the final

ruling of the Supreme Court in his pursuit of the Lower Court decision of lifetime imprisonment due to “rebellion complexed with other crimes.” His appeal lasted for thirteen years before he was totally acquitted.[6] Even before he was acquitted, Ka Amado was already writing for the vernacular magazines, particularly Liwayway.

He wrote Bayang Malaya which is a historical poem that he started and finished inside the little detention room in jail which is commonly called bartolina. It is a historical account of defending the nation and the ordinary citizens against the dominance of the Imperial Japanese Army. When the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) was overpowered in Bataan and Corregidor and were compelled to surrender, guerrillas emerged from the country and continued the strife and defense (Hernandez). USAFFE broke into several minor “commands” and waged guerrilla war against the invaders.[7] The main characters of this poem although not real personas, were symbols of real constructs of the war that created a history in its time. [8]

Ka Amado was imprisoned for five years and six months in Muntinlupa and five other military camps namely: Camp Murphy, Camp Crame, Fort McKinley, Panopio Compound and another camp which he did not know due to a forcible arrest at midnight while he was blindfolded with shackled hands. He has several reasons as to his in-jail poetry and literature. One, he writes to exclaim the greatness of the Filipino guerrillas which were the glory of World War II (MSB) for he believes that if this splendor would soon be long forgotten by the contemporary heroes, history won't. Another reason that he

posited as to why he pursued his literature is that he wanted to prove that the real essence of a poet cannot be incarcerated.

Hernandez has a body of literature that stretches nearly three generations of Philippine literature[9]. He wrote in the introduction *Isang Dipang Langit* that he was able to write over 170 poems in different periods and in different situations. Some he wrote before 1930, others during his life as a journalist and some he wrote after the war where he was in the middle of different movements in politics and labor.

Writing about Hernandez in 1947, journalist Jose A. Lansang, observed that Hernandez had fine speaking styles in Tagalog which developed during his pre-war poet laureate days which goes over with working class audiences. Lansang notes that Hernandez had “ aptness in anecdote and fire of delivery” which shows Hernandez’s being well-read in the English language especially in progressive literature and had developed knowledge of the labor mobilizations in various nations through intensive reading.

The novel *Mga Ibong Mandaragit* which was first written by Hernandez while in prison is the first socio-political novel that, like Jose Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*, exposes the grave social cancer achieved in society post-war to the early open conflicts in Central Luzon in the 1950s.[10]

The Congress of Labor Organization

Amado V. Hernandez sponsored ordinances aimed at promoting worker’s rights and freedom. As he immersed himself in the labor movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hernandez’s compassion for the working class grew into a strong empathy for their struggle for social justice and liberation.

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He represented the Newspaper Guild of the Philippines in the country's largest and most militant labor federation, the Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO) and in 1947, he was elected president of CLO.[11]

In 1948, Labor Day witnessed one of its largest rallies of workers under CLO, the People's United Peasant and Labor Organizations held at Plaza Sta. Cruz. The mobilization was said to have been attended by 15, 000 workers. Conversely, a rally that was held on the same day was attended by only 10, 000 government workers in Rizal Stadium addressed by President Quirino. [12]

CLO kept organizing workers in the years that followed and at the same time, opened up health clinics and nurseries in Manila as a social action project. As councilor, Hernandez retained the regard for him by the workers but at the same time, as the acting national chairman of the CLO, he gained the distrust and doubt of the political authorities faced with the problems of insurgency in Central Luzon.[13]

The CLO headquarters was raided by the military authorities on the 20th of January 1951 and Ka Amado was held incommunicado in Camp Murphy on charges of “ rebellion” complicated by several other charges such as arson, robbery and murder.[14]

The Literature

There have been a good number of discussions about Filipino poetry and literature, it has made for itself a good reputation but have received as well criticisms. Hernandez writes about literature always as a rising up or revolt from a generation put behind except for fanatic conformist.[15]

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Julian Cruz Balmaseda, poet, researcher and editor of the *Surian ng Wikang Pambansa* who considered Hernandez as among the “poets of the heart” divided the Tagalog poetry into three: *Panahon ng Dalit*, *Panahon ng mga Pagbabago* and *Panahon ng Pagpapalaganap*. He used not just the ages and personalities of poets in these divisions but as well as the kind, topic and outline of their poems.[16]

Balmaseda acknowledged that there was a significant development of the Filipino poetry during the third period. This was caused by the manner by which Filipinos were more or less capable of mention and we will not be embarrassed to say that our poems could be at par with other remarkable poems in different languages.[17]

During the period of conquest (1942-1945) up to this particular moment, poetry has been affected by the paralysis caused by its weakening. Amado V. Hernandez is questioning why is it that when we now have reached the fulfillment of a lifelong objective which is to have our language, the Filipino poetry started declining?[18]

One of the major problems that Philippine literature has according to Hernandez (especially poetry) is sentimentalism and he recognizes that not even the famous Balagtas was able to avoid it. He quotes and agrees with a critic who said that [sentimentalism] is the greatest fault of art. The straightforwardness of expressing one's feelings is not just a bygone phenomenon but is also “vulgar” and rough as it is.[19]

Meanwhile, the historian Teodoro A. Agoncillo described the prison (where Hernandez's poetry flourished) as crucible of the new Filipino poetry. He was

imprisoned for five years and six months and he was able to write 40 poems, one long narrative poem Bayang Malaya and the draft of the novel Mga Ibong Mandaragit within that period.[20]All of these have contributed to the “ social consciousness” that Amado V. Hernandez was pushing for through his works as noted by Agoncillo himself: “...ngunit gayon ma’y dapat tanggapin na mabibilang sa daliri ng isang kamay ang mga manunulat na may budhing talusaling o nag-aangkin ng tinatawag na “ social consciousness” (we should accept that the number of authors who own what we call “ social consciousness” can only be counted by the fingers of one hand).[21]

Agoncillo remarks the war that made the world succumb and set long-standing stagnant minds in motion weren’t even sufficient for our authors to be moved even after the 1941-1945 tragedy. Even after this, they remained complacent and trusting in their own hopeful motherlands. This land for Agoncillo is a sterile land and Hernandez’s literature particularly his Bayang Malaya is likened by the former as a surprising growth and emergence of a strong-willed kind of literature with sturdy branches that sprouted out of these barren soils.[22]

Amado V. Hernandez’s literature, whether poem or prose, in a few ways deliberately presents themes that are socio-political in nature or that which are capable of raising social consciousness. Some of the titles of his poems that clearly represents this are as follows: “ Sariling Hardin” (My Own Garden), Isang Dipang Langit (A Stretch of Sky), “ Panata sa Kalayaan” (Oath to Freedom), “ Bartolina” (Solitary Confinement), “ Ang Dalaw” (The Visit), “ Kung Tuyo Na ang Luha Mo Aking Bayan” (When Your Tears Dry Up, My

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Country). His Short Stories include: “ Wala ng Lunas” (No More Remedy), “ Kulang sa Dilig” (Needs Watering), “ Langaw sa Isang Basing Gatas” (Fly in a Glass of Milk), “ Dalawang Metro sa Lupang Di-Malipad ng Uwak” (Two Meters in Land That Stretches Forever), “ Ipinanganak ang Isang Kaaway sa Sosyedad” (An Enemy of the Society is Born), “ Isang Ulo ng Litson” (Head of a Roast Pig), “ Kislap ng Utak, Pawis ng Noo” (Sparkle of Brain, Sweat on the Forehead).[23]

His experiences as a guerrilla, labor leader, and a political detainee were shaped into the novels Mga Ibong Mandaraggit (Birds of Prey), 1969, and Luha ng Buwaya (Crocodile’s Tears), 1972

Bayang Malaya

One of the major works of Amado V. Hernandez was the epic Bayang Malaya and he wrote the said piece while he was behind bars. It is a historical poem which, according to the historian Teodoro A. Agoncillo, is a strong piece of art that sprouted out of the barren soils that is our literature and it opened the blinds that were blocking the beauty of the East. Ka Amado was painting a picture not just of a single town but of the Philippines.[24]

The main characters of this piece although as mentioned are not real personas, they were symbols of real constructs of the war that created history. Some of the main characters were Tala and Magtanggol among others. It narrated the news about the emerging World War and the Japan-U. S. conflict that was surfacing as well as the start of the war itself when Japanese forces started entering Manila which caused the entire nation to be enveloped in fear. A concept like the Co-Prosperity Sphere was tackled in

Bayang Malaya although those engaging were mere fictional characters. The epic also tackled the different oppression mechanisms being employed by the Japanese as well as the punishments that one receives in the event of revolting.[25]

Issues like the emergence of guerrillas were also described in Bayang Malaya. Attempted rapture of Tala for example led to her taking of the hills and joining of guerrilla groups.[26] Amado V. Hernandez was indeed changed by his imprisonment and in Agoncillo's words, the poet of hopes in Hernandez died in prison but the same prison gave birth to the critical poet and author who was just and was for workers' rights.[27]

Atang dela Rama

The wife of Ka Amado; this queen of Kundiman and zarzuela in the same way as her husband, used her craft in promoting nationalism through the art that was performing. Honorata "Atang" dela Rama did not perform only for a living or for the good pay she received for her talent. She held a strong belief that the zarzuela and the kundiman expressed the Filipino identity and she did her best to popularize these among her fellow Filipinos.[28]

She believed that kundiman contained the heart and soul of the Filipino especially if she gets to introduce the art to foreign audiences. Atang's enduring faith in the Filipino heritage and the sariling atin was intensified and deepened when Amado V. Hernandez became part of her life. The columnist and poet who was to become a labor leader in the future, pursued the actress for three years. They were married in 1932 and the actress was integrated into a whole new world with Ka Amado.[29]

Because of Ka Amado's involvement in the guerrilla movement during the Japanese occupation, his generous support of the labor movements in his writings and organizing of activities, and his unjust detention for five years and six months for the alleged rebellion complex, Atang developed a social consciousness that opened her eyes to the reality of the oppression in society.[30]

Later on in her life, she remained to show that her real purpose is not yet over. She hoped that young artists and intellectuals will wake up and realize the necessity of having a culture that is genuinely Filipino which colonial regimes had made us abandon. Furthermore, she gave lectures to young actors and groups that wish to study the past in order to shape Filipino drama that would mean more in the contemporary period. She has also been invited many times by militant organizations of youth, women, writers and workers to speak and help promote the nationalist cause and strife that not even Ka Amado's death in 1970 could put into an end.[31]

Conclusion

Amado V. Hernandez is an important figure in the Philippine literature. He wasn't just simply a writer but also, he was a work leader and a freedom fighter. He used the literary art as a means to fight for social consciousness and liberation. His master pieces are encircled in the different socio-political beliefs which were considered to be due to brought about by his experiences as an intelligence officer during the Japanese regime in the Philippines.[32]

He was not just a guerrilla who chose to take it to the hills, but he was as well a labor leader who exerted his energies towards the betterment of the

Philippine work force after the war. He was a significant icon who fought for freedom and social equality and a poet and a writer who used his craft in increasing awareness and social involvement in the country.[33]He wrote based on prison experiences and just like how his wife emulated his principles, in these works, he uncovered what he perceived to be the neocolonial nature of Philippine Society and pushed for “ nationalist and progressive agenda to end the long history of the workers’ and people’s oppression.”[34]He was able to expose the social cancer that was taking over the Philippines during his time and both his and his wife’s craft helped transform literature and performing arts respectively.

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