

## TRIBUTES TO DOREEN FERNANDEZ



### Editor's Note

This section of *Kritika Kultura* honors Doreen G. Fernandez (1934-2002). She was a prodigious writer, literary scholar, and cultural historian, and a much-beloved teacher.

Fernandez earned a PhD in Literature in 1976 at the Ateneo de Manila University, where she was mentored by Bienvenido Lumbera, the “dean of Philippine Studies.” Her dissertation, not surprisingly, was a pioneering study on the *sarswela*, an indigenized form of the Spanish zarzuela. Fernandez relates its rise and fall to the changing socioeconomic conditions in Iloilo, particularly the fortunes of the sugar industry. It was eventually published as a book (*The Iloilo Zarzuela: 1903-1930*) by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. Much of her work on Philippine drama since then were later collected in *Palabas: Essays on Philippine Theater* (1996).

With her late husband Wili Fernandez, she started a food column, which she eventually continued singly and which was to be the germ of her research into Philippine food and food culture. With co-writer Edilberto Alegre, her output in this field were the following books: *Sarap: Essays on Philippine Food* (1988), *Kinilaw: A Philippine Cuisine of Freshness* (1991) and the Lasa series of restaurant guides. She also authored *Tikim: Essays on Philippine Food and Culture* (1994), *Fruits of the Philippines* (1997), and *Palayok: Philippine Food through Time, on Site, in the Pot* (2000).

Her work on Philippine literature includes the two-volume oral history *Writers and Their Milieu* (1984, 1987). This important work contains interviews with members of the first two generations of Filipino writers in English, and is the first of its kind in Philippine literary scholarship, providing primary data on many aspect of these writers works and life, data unavailable elsewhere and otherwise irretrievable.

The scholarly spirit is manifest in Fernandez's “Research in the Highways and Byways: Non-Traditional Sources for Literary and Other Research,” a professorial chair lecture she delivered at the Ateneo de Manila University. In it, she shares with the prospective researcher in Philippine culture the unlikely places where scholarly gems lie buried. It is here being published for the first time.

In 2000, she was honored with a festschrift entitled *Feasts and Feats* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University), the contributors to which includes Philippine National Artists Nick Joaquin, Jose Garcia Villa, and N. V. M. Gonzalez, and revered Philippine literary scholars-mentors, later colleagues and friends—Bienvenido Lumbera, and Nicanor G. Tiongson.

Her full resume—the above is merely a sketch—is certainly impressive, but it does not reveal the person behind the works. The short pieces that follow her lecture reveal aspects of her character and show why she was much loved by the folks with whom she came into contact, as teacher, writer, colleague, critic, friend, or comrade. The writers represent different sectors: the academe, the media, the cultural establishment, even the anti-establishment Left.

## DOREEN, THE REVOLUTIONARY

**Teddy Casiño**

**Fast Forward, *Business World***

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### About the Author

When not busy marching in the streets as secretary general of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Teddy Casiño writes a weekly column for *Business World* where he tackles a broad range of subjects, from existential angst to the protracted people's war. He was president of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines from 1991-94. Teddy finished sociology at UP Los Baños in 1993, where he was editor in chief of the student paper, *The UPLB Perspective*, from 1989-1991. Right after college, Teddy worked for the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May 1 Movement) Labor Center from 1994-1998.

We all knew Doreen Fernandez, the food critic. Her weekly column in the *Inquirer* served as an infallible guide for many of us looking for a good place to dine.

We also knew Doreen, the respected and multi-awarded teacher, prolific writer, author and editor of many books, historian, journalist, literary critic and sought-after lecturer on food, theater and Philippine culture.

But the gracious and ever-smiling Doreen as a radical and closet revolutionary? A supporter of the Communist Party (CPP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF)?

Well, why not?

Doreen Gamboa-Fernandez died of pneumonia last June 25 while vacationing in New York. She was 67. Her death came as a shock to many at home, especially her friends, students and fellow writers whom she had inspired and supported through the years.

Last Tuesday, it was the turn of Doreen's "comrades" to give her a tribute.

Organized by the UP (University of the Philippines) Faculty of Arts and Letters and the Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP), the "Luksang Parangal" was held at the UP Faculty Center and was attended by a hundred and so activists, professors, cultural workers, artists and writers.

UP Professor Edru Abraham, who emceed that evening's affair, opened the program by noting that many write-ups on Doreen failed to mention her activism. Thus, that night's task of bringing to light this significant part of her life.

The entire evening was filled with the militant and nationalist music and rhetoric commonly associated with the Left, punctuated from time to time by Doreen's words herself, written by her and read by one of the performers.

Describing her transformation from housewife and teacher to activist, she had this to say: “I came to the Ateneo in the ‘70s a housewife—the kind who went to Inner Wheel Club meetings. The activists wondered what I was doing there—was I serious? I did receive some criticism for not being politicized at that time. I joined a few discussion groups, though it was mainly to learn since I was so ignorant. There were some friends who said, ‘How can you sit there and do the *burgis* (elitist) things you do?’ So I said to them, ‘Teach me.’ And they did.”

Martial Law did not stop Doreen from pursuing her newfound activism. She involved herself in theater and founded the theater group Babaylan which dared to stage plays critical of the Marcos dictatorship.

She was also instrumental in organizing the Cultural Research Association of the Philippines which advocated studies on nationalist culture. Both organizations dared to challenge the repressive culture being imposed by the fascist regime.

Again, in Doreen’s own words: “That was the time of political theater—our political theater was very advanced. Theater was a fighting weapon: you could say things in theater that you couldn’t in a novel.”

Even Doreen’s articles on food bore the stamp of her patriotism. She often wrote about food consumed by the common *tao* (person)—the worker, the peasant, the fisherman. She introduced her readers to their tastes and, in so doing, introduced them to values and ways of life of the ordinary Pinoy (Filipino).

“(W)ith politicalization came the idea that food doesn’t have to be the way it is in the best restaurants of Europe. One should put food in the context of the culture,” she once wrote.

Thus, Doreen wrote not only about food, but about the distinctly Filipino in food. She treated the subject with apt reverence. “Food punctuates Philippine life, is a touchstone to memory, a measure of relationships with nature and neighbors, and with the world,” she wrote in a yet unpublished essay.

Doreen herself loved to cook. Among those who enjoyed her cooking were members of the NDF and other underground personalities who frequented her house during those dangerous years till the late ‘80s.

In a letter read during last Tuesday’s tribute, NDF’s Mela Castillo Zumel remembers Doreen as a warm and gentle lady comrade who welcomed to her home those who resisted the fascist terror. Among her most frequent visitors was then CPP secretary Rafael Baylosis, who shared with the audience his group’s delight as Doreen always served them a minimum of five delicious viands per meal.

In one of the most poignant parts of the program, Mr. Baylous narrated how touched he was when, during one of his clandestine visits to the Gamboa residence, Doreen asked his permission to clean his fresh bullet wound, which he suffered in an encounter with government soldiers.

Doreen valued and nurtured her relationship with the revolutionary movement, taking on special tasks in the resistance movement against the Marcos dictatorship and helping out till the late '90s.

She even took such small tasks as inputting into the computer Jose Maria Sison's [founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines] ten lectures, which were delivered at the UP Asian Center from April to May 1986.

In 1999, Doreen helped prepare the menu for the NDF's 25th anniversary celebration which was timed with the return to the Philippines of NDF leaders Luis Jalandoni and Coni Ledesma. She wanted to be sure the food served was in keeping with the nationalist and democratic aspirations of the revolutionary movement.

In a message read during the tribute, Coni Ledesma remembered spending an afternoon with Doreen last January, where Doreen expressed keen interest in the NDF's work, especially among overseas Filipinos. A few weeks before her death, she sent Coni several of her books on Philippine food and culture to help in the work among Filipino compatriots abroad.

In return, Doreen was well respected as an intellectual, patriot and kind comrade by the progressive people's movement. She was a sterling example of a transformed *burgis*, with her quiet but strong conviction for a Filipino culture that is at once democratic and liberative.

Her gentle presence will be sorely missed.

## DOREEN FERNANDEZ

**Patricia B. Licuanan**  
**Ateneo de Manila University and Miriam College**

### About the Author

Patricia B. Licuanan was the Vice President of the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU). For many years she was a faculty member and Chair of the Psychology Department of ADMU. She is currently the President of Miriam College. She has occupied various important positions in civic organizations and has been in the forefront of national and international movements focusing on women's issues. Patricia Licuanan is a dear and long-time friend of Doreen Fernandez.

We had put off our regular lunch. "Let us wait until after the end of the school rush," we said. And summer was travel time so "let's do it when we get back" we said again. "Life is short" lunches we called them. But we didn't realize how short.

Our last lunch together was typical of lunches with Doreen and I know many in this room have shared this experience: Doreen introducing us to the specialties of the house; the owner or the chef coming out to make recommendations that would be prepared specially for us. And indeed the food was great.

But it was not just the good food that characterized the lunches with Doreen. More than anything else, it was the wonderful, comfortable food for the soul. There we were, Doreen, Honey Carandang and I— three mature women, women of substance we like to think, in what Honey and Erik Erikson would call our "generativity" years—sharing something read or a place traveled by or yet another endearing or infuriating *Pinoy* trait and of course some exciting discovery—usually a person doing great things or someone with tremendous potential.

And the gossip! Doreen always had the latest juicy morsels (and I am not referring to the cuisine) on the rich and famous and pretentious. This was probably the part of Doreen that Danton Remoto would fondly refer to as "acerbic, sly and wicked."

And we discussed projects, not so much what we were doing (although there was that as well) but what else we could or would do. For Doreen was always the best support for any project. Dreams and schemes that were merely a glint in our eye, an idea struggling for clarity or support was greeted by Doreen with encouragement, suggestions and offers of help. Always upbeat, even enthusiastic, Doreen was the perfect partner in an endeavor

as not only was she interested and positive, she was hardworking, fast and always delivered.

Her columns in the *Inquirer* continued to appear during periods when she was critically ill and recently even after she died. In the *Philippine Journal of Education*, a magazine for teachers which I edit and to which Doreen has been a regular contributor for almost two decades, the August issue will still carry her column, “Book Talk.” You see, Doreen, unlike you and I (well, I anyway), was always ahead of her deadlines.

We had a project we were working on, Doreen and I—an edited collection of my grandmother’s essays. Paz Marquez Benitez may be best known as a short story writer, but in fact she wrote only a few stories. She however wrote hundreds of essays as editor of the *Philippine Journal of Education*. Doreen and I were collecting and sorting through these essays and we planned to put them together in a book. I guess I will have to work on this project without Doreen’s help. Incidentally, I remember that my grandmother, although somewhat of a loner and recluse in her later years, always welcomed and enjoyed Doreen’s visits.

At this last “life is short” lunch I referred to, I recall expressing my feelings of inadequacy and regret at not having written a book. Here I was with Doreen and Honey, both such prolific authors, and I was sadly unpublished and bookless. Doreen in typical fashion offered to help by conducting a workshop for an intimate group of friends who needed an extra push to write. Or just collect and show her what I had written she said, and she would help find the book in them. That too was put off. There is no book as yet but Doreen’s encouragement felt so good.

Yes, Doreen had such a way of making people feel good. Not in the superficial pleasantries fashion but in the deep affirming way as she found something to genuinely appreciate in most people—particularly her students. Both my children Carlo and Andrea had Doreen as a teacher at the Ateneo. When she had them in class and even after, she would always have nice observations and accounts about them—little vignettes to warm a mother’s heart. I always thought my two laid-back children were so fortunate to have Doreen as a teacher. But listening to Doreen, bless her generous heart, you would think *she* was the lucky one.

But we were the lucky ones. We are lucky, for having had Doreen in our lives. And I thank God for that blessing.

## **DOREEN: A WELLSPRING OF GOODNESS**

**Carolina. A. Nuñez**  
**Department of English**  
**Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**  
***cnunez@ateneo.edu***

### *About the Author*

Carolina A. Nuñez is currently doing her PhD at the University of the Philippines. She was an active member of the Philippine English Language Teaching (PELT), a project of the British government in cooperation with the British Council. Carolina Nuñez is a dear friend of Doreen Fernandez.

5:55 a.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Doreen would honk the horn once, I'd go out of the gate, and we were off to school, good weather or foul. I had offered to wait for her across the street from our house so that she would not have to turn left and then maneuver to go back to the right lane. But she refused, assuring me that it did not bother her at all. I felt uneasy. Wasn't it asking a bit too much? I wondered. She was providing me with such a convenience that I figured the least I could do was to make things easier for her by crossing the street and waiting there. Doreen seemed to think nothing of it at all.

Doreen had offered to pick me up because my house was exactly on her way to school. Actually, it was a common friend of ours who had asked Doreen for a ride home after a faculty meeting in June 1996 and we happened to be walking together on our way out. This friend knew where I lived and invited me to join them in the car. I was hesitant. He had not even asked Doreen if I could hitch a ride too! He simply assumed she'd say yes, which she did. Although I felt embarrassed at what I thought was an impropriety, the practical person in me nevertheless welcomed the convenience. Little did I know it would be the birth of a deep and lasting friendship.

Inside the car, Doreen asked where I lived. After giving her the information, she asked further, "What time do you go to school?" "About 6 a.m.," I replied. She probed, "how do you go?" "I commute." Then came the unexpected. "If you don't mind leaving a little earlier, I can pick you up at 5:55 a.m. and then we can go to school together." I was flummoxed! Why would she do that?

At the beginning, I was overwhelmed. Here was my former teacher, a well-known scholar, writer, and administrator, and now a revered colleague, driving me to and from school! Yes, she herself was at the wheel. It would take two full years before she decided to

have a driver and only because her body was telling her to slow down and give up control over some aspects of her life, especially driving.

Not only did Doreen pick me up; she also took me home unless there were some pressing reasons that made her leave school early. For instance, she had to attend board meetings either at the Cultural Center of the Philippines or at the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation, both of which were at the other end of the metropolis. Or else, she had a dinner engagement and had to prepare herself. Whatever it was, she would apologize that she couldn't take me home. During those times I felt so little in front of such greatness. I was always at a loss for words. She was already doing me an immense favor of getting me to school on time and yet she'd be sorry if she could not be of further help for obvious reasons.

People may wonder why Doreen took the trouble of picking me up three times a week early morning and taking me home in the afternoon almost as often. She was not obliged to do so. The only reason I can think of is that "*the heart has its reasons that reason does not know.*" What made Doreen's gesture more admirable was that it didn't last only for a few weeks or months but for almost five years, from June 1996 to December 2000. Only her near-fatal illness in December 2000 stopped our MWF morning habit. When she resumed teaching in June 2001, she had to change her schedule to Tuesdays and Thursdays, the exact opposite of mine. Nevertheless, we still managed to ride together whenever I had to be in school on those days for some meetings or consultations with students.

It took sometime before I could adjust to seeing Doreen as a simple person, down to earth, fun to be with, and genuinely concerned for my welfare and those of others. I had put her high up on a pedestal. She was like a distant star that shone brightly, inimitable, and beautiful to admire, but that was all. When she became my teacher in graduate school, she was already a household word because of her popular column. In the academe she was a highly respected scholar and critic with a string of books to her name. Who would not feel in awe before her? Yet here she was, doing many little acts of kindness hidden from the public eye. As weeks turned to months, I discovered the bundle of goodness in Doreen. Up close, I saw and experienced the love of a woman who provoked love in return.

When Doreen died in New York last June 24, 2002, some of my friends extended their condolences to me. They knew it was a big blow. I lost somebody very special, not just a treasured friend, but an affectionate second mother.

I cannot recall when I began reading Doreen perhaps because I was not a devoted follower of her columns. Neither am I a gourmet and I hardly eat out. At that time I saw only the descriptions about food and restaurants. I didn't see the cultural insights that



Doreen put into those writings. She herself admitted in an interview two or three years ago that when she began to write, she thought she would tell “them” (i.e., the restaurant owners/managers/chefs) how things should be. Only when she became older and “less arrogant” that she realized the need to put things in context, to make people aware of how everything fits into the culture, the way food is prepared, decorated, arranged on a table, served, and eaten. That was vintage Doreen, always willing to learn, and just as eager to transmit this attitude to her students.

Doreen I first met in 1988 when she became my teacher in literary research at the Ateneo graduate school. I didn’t know she had just undergone a kidney transplant the previous year. Aside from a face unusually puffed up, she did not look like someone in danger of death from probable transplant rejection. She was always cheerful in class and gave research another name: fun! Her enthusiasm opened for us new vistas of Philippine literature. She devised an exciting library activity that made research no different from detective work! It was ingenious. And we, her students, discovered how library research could be intellectually stimulating, challenging, and enjoyable.

Doreen demolished my stereotype image of a VIP. Where other VIPs made lesser mortals feel insecure, she put everybody at ease. Where they expected others to be at their beck and call, she was always ready to lend a hand. She was so simple, very friendly and accommodating to everyone. But somehow the teacher’s table acted as a barrier. Or perhaps it was only I who interpreted it as such. And so, I was pleasantly surprised to find a note from her in my mailbox at the English Department when I came back from a 3-month course in England in January 1996. Dated early November 1995, it was inserted inside a Mass card for my father. Doreen noted that my father died on her birthday and because she didn’t have my address in the UK, she decided to simply put her words of condolences in my pigeonhole to wait for my return.

I had been teaching with the English Department for about two years then, but apart from the usual hellos during departmental meetings or chance encounters in hallways—very seldom—we did not really talk much to each other. Maybe I still played the role of a student reticent before her teacher, especially a prominent figure like Doreen. And she was perhaps too busy over at the Communications Department together with all her commitments to pay any attention to a newcomer like me. Until that touching note revealed to me a yet hidden aspect of Doreen’s personality.

As our friendship deepened, Doreen also started taking me along to watch plays, listen to concerts, and, of course, to eat out. It did not always happen, but often enough the past six years to fill a lifetime of memories.

When I had major surgery in July 1999, Doreen helped to look for a substitute teacher. During my convalescence, she came to visit and brought me some food and books. My doctor told me I had cancer and needed to undergo chemotherapy. This made Doreen more attentive than ever. She took me out to eat a day or two before my chemotherapy session because afterwards, eating became a real struggle. Then the drug took its toll on my body. I lost my hair and my skin turned ashen. Doreen gave me a wig, a make-up kit, and some fancy earrings to enhance my looks. She was not exceptionally pious, but when she visited San Francisco in June 2000 for a speaking engagement, she brought me back a small vial of oil from the shrine of St. Jude in California. Maybe it will help, she said. She meant a cure for my cancer.

Many other people drew from Doreen's seemingly inexhaustible treasure chest of goodness. Last February, she wanted to honor Bien Lumbera's invitation to the *zarzuela* "Hibik at Himagsik nina Victoria Laktaw" at the Guerrero Theater in UP. It meant taking the stairs, a daunting challenge to someone whose ambulatory powers had been vitiated by various illnesses. Doreen gingerly negotiated some 80 steps up Palma Hall, clinging to the balustrade with her right hand and leaning on her nurse with the left. She was determined to give joy to her friends in theater. That evening I saw the face of true friendship.

Some people thought Doreen had the luxury of time, which explains her prodigious output—at least a dozen books, numerous scholarly and popular articles in international and local journals, plus unpublished manuscripts read at different conferences, not to mention her weekly food column. On top of these were her multiple roles as teacher (12 hours a week!), administrator, and member of various committees and boards inside and outside the Ateneo. How did she manage? By choosing her options. This meant, among other things, giving up movies and television, and getting up at 4 a.m. either to write, to edit, or to check papers. Reading fiction was her only luxury. Given Doreen's increasingly fragile health, it's a wonder how she survived those days "thinly sliced," as she put it. Discipline? Hard work? Talent? Commitment? Perhaps all these together and more. I think she was able to achieve what she did because she loved and enjoyed what she was doing.

If anybody ever thought of calling Doreen "mother of perpetual help" I would agree. She had a tremendous capacity for empathy and compassion. In fact, she was like a one-woman charitable institution, ready to give time or money or both to anybody in need. There was one Filipino writer, a long-time resident of the US, who was dying in a nursing home, apparently neglected by family and friends. When this writer died, the nurse remembered Doreen's visit some years back and called her up overseas to give her the news. Doreen felt bad that she could not even do anything for that person.

Another friend, a historian who lived abroad, had gathered a lot of data on Philippine history, but these were inadequate to complete a book. Doreen suggested he try writing fiction. He was surprised because he never thought of it, but thrilled at the idea. Do you think I can do it? He asked. Of course, said Doreen. I'm not sure how far this historian has gone into his fiction writing, but when his novel or story comes out, I'm almost sure he would acknowledge Doreen.

Doreen's generosity knew no bounds. She had a heart so big that so many people could fit in it. And yet each one she treated in a unique fashion. Ironically, the childless mother left behind numerous orphans so much so that Doreen's death triggered an outpouring of grief in print and in cyberspace. Even her very own family was overwhelmed. Doreen had woven an incredibly extensive network of relationships in her nearly 40 years of teaching and writing. She loved well and was well loved in return. As one Spanish writer put it, *amor con amor se paga*. Love is paid by love alone.

## **HOMILY: A FUNERAL MASS FOR DOREEN FERNANDEZ**

**Fr. Bernardo Ma. Perez**  
**Cultural Center of the Philippines**  
**July 5, 2002**

### *About the Author*

Fr. Bernardo Ma. Perez, OSB is the Prior of Montserrat Abbey and has served as the Rector of San Beda College for 24 years. He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the CCP and of the Archdiocese of Manila's Committee on Liturgical Environment and Art. He is also on the Committee on Monuments and Sites of the NCCA.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Beloved family and friends of Doreen, dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

On Tuesday last week I was told that Doreen had passed away, and since then I have been haunted by that passage from the Book of Job in slightly altered form, "The Lord gave us Doreen, and the Lord has taken her away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

For all of us who are gathered here this afternoon and for many more who are not here with us, Doreen was a precious, irreplaceable gift from the Lord.

She was a gift to her family. As daughter, sister, aunt, wife, and foster mother, she was an embodiment of devotion: loving, caring, affirming, helping, and encouraging. She was loveable and she was loved.

She was a gift to the schools where she taught: St. Scholastica's College, where she graduated from high school and college, and where she began her career as a teacher, and the Ateneo de Manila University, where she taught for close to thirty years. There she handled a wide range of subjects, then undertook research, became an administrator, and with all these, continued to teach.

In an interview she said, "I think I am basically a teacher. Basically, completely, and thoroughly a teacher." And what a great teacher she was. In 1998 she was one of the twelve Outstanding Teachers of the Philippines named by the Metrobank Foundation. But Doreen was not only an outstanding teacher; she was outstanding in many other ways. She was, to quote Belinda Aquino, "writer, editor, critic, mentor, speaker, lecturer, expert, judge of various contests, board trustee or director, cultural icon, literary figure, and more."

She was a gift to writers: the young, budding, struggling writers whose talent she recognized and whom she led towards excellence and renown, and the venerated elders whose distinguished history she lovingly recorded.

She was a gift to her friends and it's amazing that she could make so many feel so

special. One of them wrote: "I feel so fortunate to have met you! You shine with so much great goodness, modesty and intelligence ... Of all my Filipino friends, you are the Friend I Most Want To Keep." Those words came from Jose Garcia Villa.

Doreen was a gift to Filipino culture. She was an indefatigable, constantly exploring scholar. She wrote books, papers, and articles on literature, theatre, education, and of course, food. She was the editor of and one of the major contributors to the volume on theatre of the Encyclopedia of Philippine Art published by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. For her outstanding contribution to the development of Filipino culture in the twentieth century, she was named one of the 100 recipients of the Centennial Honors for the Arts conferred by the CCP in 1999.

Doreen was an immensely gifted and totally committed person, yet she was modest, gracious, amiable, good-humored, and dependable. She was, to use what might be a contradiction in terms, an even-tempered genius, with no trace of eccentricity or egotism. A wonder that she could be so cheerful in spite of all she suffered – diabetes, the effects of a kidney transplant, and virus infections.

We are told that illness and advancing years are the time when God takes back little by little the gifts that he has given us – good health, abundant energy, and even memory. Yet in her last years, Doreen continued to produce. Her last published book was *Palayok*, a work of scholarship and a work of art, and her last word on Filipino food. Early this year she began work on a book on architect and interior designer Wili Fernandez, her devoted husband and her guru in gastronomy. Doreen acknowledged that Wili was the master and she the disciple. But in this case the disciple became greater than the master.

The Lord gave us Doreen, and the Lord has taken her away, not to deprive her of the blessing of life but to give it to her in its fullness and splendor. Holy Scripture tells us that what appears as death is really the passage to eternal peace. Since in Baptism we share in the death of Christ, we shall also share in the glory of his resurrection. And because we believe in Christ as Lord and Savior, we shall, by the power of his dying and rising, conquer death. For Doreen, God's promise of eternal life has now been fulfilled.

In her last moments Doreen humbly surrendered herself to the Lord. She knew she was dying, and she was prepared for it. Like the servant in the parable, she had been given five talents, and at the final accounting, she gave back ten talents.

She was God's gift to us, and because she willingly gave herself back to him, we too should give her back to God in faith and love. As we celebrate this Eucharist for her, let us thank the Lord for the gift that she was to all of us, and let us offer her now as our gift to God, a gift most precious and pleasing to him, the gift of a complete life, rich in beauty and joy and honor and wisdom.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

## MOTHER DOREEN

**Danton Remoto**  
**Department of English**  
**Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**  
***danton\_ph@yahoo.com***

### About the Author

Danton Remoto has published books of poetry and of essays, and writes critical essays and book reviews for national publications. He is currently in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on a Ford Foundation Asia Fellowship grant for a research project on Malaysian and Philippine poetry. He and Doreen were colleagues in the Department of English and in the Manila Critics Circle.

I first read Doreen Gamboa Fernandez when she wrote a review of Nick Joaquin's *An Almanac for Manileños*. It was published in *Philippine Panorama* in the late 70s. I liked the style of writing, light but not lightweight, and the sensibility rooted in Philippine history and culture.

I first heard of Doreen as a teacher when my friend and neighbor, Erwin Rommel Dalisay, became her student in the Freshman Merit class at the Ateneo. Rommel told me how he got a B in his first composition and thought it was a bad grade, until Doreen passed around mimeographed sheets of the students' best essays, and saw his work there. Doreen marked the essays, typed them herself, and discussed them in class, workshop style. Her point was that students learnt best from reading the finest work written outside the classroom—and the finest work of their peers.

In 1979, I became a Business Management major at the Ateneo, where I belonged to the regular Freshman English section. One day, my teacher passed around a mimeographed essay written by Doreen. It was about Van Cliburn playing at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, about how the First Lady, Imelda R. Marcos, had flown tulips from Holland especially for the occasion, the pomp, the hypocrisy, the madness of it all. It was, as usual, a well-written piece. But it was 1980, and the Marcos dictatorship was still regnant in the land. So my teacher asked us to return copies of the essay to her after we had read it.

When I became the editor-in-chief of *Heights*, the Ateneo's literary journal, I changed our bulletin board into a poetry board. I typed the poems of the campus writers, asked our artists to illustrate them, then pasted them on the board. We changed the poems and the

illustrations every week. To our surprise, it became a hit. Every Monday, students would crowd in front of the *Heights* Poetry Board and read the new poems and look at the new drawings we had put up. Doreen donated delicate and beautiful Japanese paper for our board, and told the UP Writers' Workshop that summer of what we had done.

I also started the Ateneo Writers' Club and we had a poetry-writing contest. Being president also meant being fund-raiser, and with my begging bowl I did the rounds. One of our donors was Doreen. Afterward, I would run to her, when I needed help with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride March. Later, I would call her up or e-mail her when I needed advice about what another writer called "the shipwrecks of the heart."

My friendship with Doreen deepened when we went on teacher-training workshops, when we banded together against an unfair administrator, when we went to the meetings of the Manila Critics Circle, and when we went out to eat. Once we went to the Central Luzon State University in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija to give a workshop under the Ateneo Center for English Language Teaching. Her driver, Arsenio, drove Doreen, the poet Rofel G. Brion, and myself all the way to San Jose.

"Now we know the way to San Ho-say," I sang as Rofel and Doreen giggled. Oh, how I remember Doreen giggling, then laughing that trademark laughter of hers: low and rolling, her lips smiling widely, her eyes full of light.

The teachers recognized her from her columns. Aside from writing a food column for a newspaper, she also wrote a monthly column on teaching for the *Philippine Journal of Education*, which has a wide readership. When my mother was still teaching, she was also a regular subscriber to the *PJE*. The teachers in Nueva Ecija were charmed by Doreen's humility and her common sense. "When we teach composition," she said, "we should not ask our students to write about Greece or Rome. We should ask them to write about things close to home, like their family, their friends, why, even the market."

And so the next morning, after a breakfast of Tagalog beef steak, garlic rice and a glass of Milo ("this glass of Milo reminds me of my childhood," Doreen said), we went to market. Doreen was an enthusiastic observer. She asked about the name of a fish she did not know, and then we listened to a vendor singing sweetly, to entice the customers to her table of freshly-caught fish. The next week, that vignette was already in her column.

In the mid-90's an Ateneo administrator fired three teachers up for permanency. But we thought the whole procedure was rigged, and so the whole department was in an uproar. Doreen saw the injustice of it all, and in her own way, helped us press our case. The case has since gone to court so I cannot talk about it. But I remember the time Doreen, Fr. Galdon, the administrator and I were having a meeting. The administrator had a clumsy

grasp of the English language. That day, she said, “Okay, let’s have a *quickie* meeting now.”

And Doreen, who disliked inelegance in language, clapped her hands and said, her eyes, sparkling: “Oh, how delicious!”

The administrator snapped: “We should be serious!”

And Doreen, bless her witty soul, opened her sleek, black bag and said, while putting the contents one by one on the table: “Okay, let’s be serious now. Who’s not serious?” And one by one, the table was filled with her pen, her small notebook, her memo pad, the syringe she used for her diabetic shots. And one by one, she returned these things to her sleek, black bag.

I wanted to burst out laughing.

Doreen would also drive to the meetings of the Manila Critics Circle. She would pick me up in the English Department, and we drove to Café Ysabel or the University of Santo Tomas or wherever it was the MCC would be meeting. Our group read dozens of books and chose the best books of the year for our National Book Awards. On the way, Doreen and I would update each other.

She would be reading the new novel by John Le Carre or Gabriel Garcia Marquez. She read novels voraciously, preferably newsprint because they were cheaper and lighter to carry. There would be one novel in her car, another on her work desk, and another beside her bed. She would tell me how she watched this historical play (“How atrocious, Danton!”) and how she fled during the break, taking a circuitous route so as not to meet the playwright on her way out.

She never liked giving a bad review, whether of a play, a book, or a restaurant. Instead of giving a bad review, she just ignored it. On hindsight, I thought it would be better to get a negative review than to be totally ignored. But Doreen’s point is that it was a waste of space—and psychic energy, I suppose—to talk about the unwatchable, the unreadable, or the inedible.

But boy, this woman had spine. During the meetings of the Manila Critics Circle, she would argue clearly, coolly, but firmly against a book or an author’s style of writing or his/her documentation or the inclusion of a person in the MCC. “She writes like a schoolmarm,” or “His Spanish is mistranslated,” or “That social-realist novel is full of clichés,” or “He needs to know more about Philippine literature!” Then we would eat—and eat well, after which, Doreen would open her bag, get her syringe, and inject herself with her diabetic shots. The macho men of the MCC would cringe.

Shayne Lumbera also told me how Doreen would visit Bien Lumbera at the Bicutan Detention Center during the early years of Martial Law. One apocryphal story went that



since only nuns and priests could go in and out of Bicutan, Doreen dressed herself as a nun so she could visit her friends. She would bring drinks, food (Doreen = food, in our collective memory), and cigarettes for Bien and company. One time, when the writer Ricky Lee collapsed from a lung problem, Doreen brought her own personal doctor—the best lung doctor in the Philippines—to Bicutan. Aside from ministering to them, Doreen also told them stories on what Ferdinand Marcos and his extravagant wife Imelda were doing to the country, on what the people are doing, in their own ways, to subvert this darkness over the land.

Doreen, of course, is not a saint. Or was now; it's still hard to talk of Doreen in the past tense. Oh the many other stories she told me about writers and artists, matrons and politicians, pretenders to the throne and mistresses of illusion. But they were so acerbic, so sly, so wicked I am reserving them for my memoirs—which I will write 50 years from now. And she told me these stories when we went out to this or that restaurant to eat. She needed a male companion to check out the men's bathroom for her restaurant review. Like my father, she knew how to eat the head of fish, savoring the gelatinous part; or nibble even the eye of a fish. She knew the pleasures of the table and the text.

I will write about these stories later, but not the catalogue of books Doreen had written. They include *The Iloilo Zarzuela: 1903-1930, In Performance*, and with Edilberto Alegre, *The Writer and His Milieu, Vols. 1 and 2*, *Sarap: Essays on Philippine Food*, *Kinilaw: A Philippine Cuisine of Freshness*, and the *Lasa* series of restaurant guides. She also wrote a book on how to conduct interviews, *Palabas: Essays on Philippine Theater, Fruits of the Philippines*, and *Palayok*. She also wrote video scripts on culture: *Tikim*, *Panitikan*, and *Dulaan IV: The American Colonial and Contemporary Traditions in Philippine Theater*. Moreover, she translated into English the plays of Valente Cristobal, Tony Perez, Rene O. Villanueva, and Cris Millado.

Because she had given us a universe of words, I thought that we, too, owed her a *hommage* in words. So in 1999 I asked Jonathan Chua of the Ateneo to edit a festschrift for Doreen for the Office of Research and Publications, which I used to manage. Called *Feats and Feasts*, the handsome book gathers together essays, stories, poems and interviews done by Doreen's friends. It was launched when I was studying in the U.S., and I was happy that the ORP donated the hardcover editions of the book for the launching of the Doreen G. Fernandez Chair, which would fund the training of new teachers.

I was asked to write a script for the Tribute to Doreen, Jason Lorenzana of the Communication Arts Department directed it, and the video documentary was shown during the launching of the DGF Chair. Our video documentary was brisk and breezy, full of vintage photographs bridged by Doreen's favorite songs. And I still remember Doreen's smile that night: it was shimmering with light, the eyes of the Mother Doreen we all love.

## TRIBUTE TO DOREEN GAMBOA FERNANDEZ

### BAYAN Public Information Department

#### About the Author

The Concerned Artists of the Philippines is an organization of critically oriented artists, critics, and scholars. It sponsors symposia and discussions on the socio-political dimensions of art and aesthetic forms and values. It also participates in rallies and various mobilizations with basic sectors concerning pressing national and international issues.

Following is the text of a message of condolence read during the tribute to Doreen Gamboa Hernandez organized by the Concerned Artists of the Philippines.

We are deeply saddened by the death of our dear friend Doreen. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to her mother, Alicia, her sister Della and brother Nil, to all her nieces and nephews, and to her colleagues and friends.

While we grieve Doreen's leaving us, we celebrate her life and her achievements. We are inspired by her fruitful and meaningful service to the people.

We all knew Doreen. Some of us knew her since childhood. Others since the '60's, '70's, '80's and '90's, meeting and working with her in one or more of her numerous activities and in organizations to which she belonged.

Doreen had a high sense of patriotism, manifested in her various forms of participation in the struggle for national independence and democracy. This was especially so in the field of culture.

She was a literary and cultural critic; a scholar and a promoter of the national cultural heritage. She took pride in our people and nation; she used her numerous skills to make known their admirable aspects, and in a didactic and pleasant way, to point out their weaknesses.

We admire her acute sense of social justice, profound sympathy for the poor and oppressed, and her readiness to stand up for their rights and interests.

Julie remembers approaching her for help in 1974. Doreen readily agreed to take on special tasks in the service of the people and in the resistance movement against the Marcos fascist dictatorship. Julie is grateful for the advice and assistance she gave to the Free Jose Maria Sison Committee from 1982 to 1986.

Joma has always admired Doreen's progressive activism in the field of art and

literature since the early 1970s. He was elated when soon after his release from military detention in 1986, he met her and she treated him and Julie to a delicious lunch of *pagkaing masa* [food of the masses] that she loved in an Intramuros restaurant.

He felt honored when Doreen attended his lecture series on the Philippine crisis and revolution at the UP Asian Center from April to May 1986, and she subsequently compiled his ten lectures. He fondly remembers Doreen coming to Utrecht in the early 1990s to tape his narrative of experiences for her collection of oral history on the Philippine revolutionary movement. He regards Doreen as an outstanding scholar enriching the memory of our people.

Doreen, says Coni Ledesma, was part of her childhood. She was one of the older cousins Connie looked up to. They did not get to see much of each other in their adult years, but Coni would hear of her achievements, read her columns and somehow keep in touch with her that way. Doreen too continued to be interested in what Louie and she were doing. They connected again, and bonded when Doreen came to Utrecht in the early '90's, and they spent the whole day together. They were again able to spend an afternoon together in January this year, when Coni was back in Manila for a visit. She was ever interested in our work, especially in the work among overseas Filipinos. A few weeks before her death, Coni received several of her books on Philippine food and culture. She sent these to help in the work among our compatriots abroad.

Mela Castillo Zumel remembers Doreen as a warm and gentle lady *kasama* (comrade), welcoming to her home those who resisted the fascist terror. She made her home available to them not only for meetings but also for rest and recreation both for them and for their children. She remembers accompanying Doreen to a trip in Central Luzon. On the way, they talked about social relevance in paintings and how hard it was for social realist artists to gain acceptance in the mainstream world of art.

Doreen will always live in the hearts and minds of those who had the privilege of knowing and working with her. She will live on among the many Filipinos who have read her books and who, through her, will learn and be proud that they are Filipinos.

Her death is heavier than the Sierra Madre.

## REMEMBERING DOREEN

**Bienvenido F. Nebres, S.J.**  
**Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**

### About the Author

Bienvenido F. Nebres, S.J. is a member of the National Academy of Science and Technology and of the Governing Council of the Philippine Council for Advanced Science and Technology Research and Development. He is also Vice President of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania, and President of the Ateneo de Manila University. He holds a PhD in Mathematics from Stanford University and degrees in Theology Studies and Philosophy. Father Nebres was awarded the *Order de Palmes Academiques* by the French Government in 1981 and the Rank of Officer in the National Order of Merit of the French Republic in 2001.

Last Saturday on coming back from a workshop in Davao with our Graduate School of Business, I was jolted somewhat on finding on top of my incoming correspondence a letter from Doreen. An intimation of her continuing presence among us. It was dated May 28, but only got to me on that day. In the letter she told me she was leaving for the US the next day and would be back June 26, in time for her classes. "I signed up for the Boston College seminar on Jesuit Art and Culture," she said. And she had promised the conference organizers a report on Jesuit Music and Theater in the Philippines for a future conference. The main reason for her letter, however, was to give me a progress report on a project we have been discussing for a couple of years: A history of the Ateneo de Manila in time for our sesquicentennial, our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 2009. She attached an outline and preliminary table of contents for the history. "The Ateneo: 1859-2009, Ang Ateneo: Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas" [Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow]. We started discussing these topics in detail after her previous long illness and confinement and we will treasure her notes as an inspiration for us to carry on her commitment and dream.

Doreen is an important person in that history. She started teaching at the Ateneo in 1972, a legacy of 30 years of teaching, mentoring and leadership. I was Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences in her early years and we went together through the transitions of martial law, Filipinization (including sitting together in Filipino classes), and social conscientization at the Ateneo. We kept in touch through the years when I was away as Jesuit Provincial and President of Xavier University. She was one of the professors I saw

most often upon my return as President in 1993. How can we capture these years at the Ateneo in a few words? Let me sketch them in terms of gifts that are among her legacy to us.

First, her gift of writing and the word. Generations of Ateneans, from freshmen in her creative writing classes, to the staff of the *Guidon* where she was moderator, to graduate students and faculty and staff who had her as mentor in writing workshops, are heirs of her gift and legacy of the word. In evoking from each one the power of the word, she also helped us find ourselves and all testify to the beauty and wonder she helped them discover in people, in the world around them, in their own inner selves, in God. I thank her in a very special way for her teaching and mentoring of our Jesuit scholastics through the years, she was much loved by them and she will live on in their own ministry of the Word.

Second, her gift of our culture and people. Doreen's research and writing interests have been about us as a people: the Iloilo Zarzuela, essays on Philippine food and culture, essays on Philippine history. She has been on the editorial board of *Philippine Studies* and was recently appointed Editor-in-Chief. She would bring students, among them our Jesuit scholastics, to Angono to meet musicians and artists and be introduced to traditional foods—re-introducing us to ourselves. In our Mass for her last week—the first to be celebrated at the Church of the Gesu—I spoke about Doreen and her essays on food and culture. I was reminded of a research project of Catholic Universities some years past on “Food and Love”, in French “Nourriture et Amour”. When we come to think of it, we first learn love and bonding and trust at our mothers' breasts. Even in her 90s when her memory grows dim and confused, the first greeting to me of my mother is, “Have you eaten?” And, of course, how often Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels at a meal and when he wanted us to remember Him, He gave Himself to us as our Food. The Mass was especially to thank the workers who have been building the Church. In the *salu-salo* [gathering] afterwards, they said the food was especially good and asked if it was from Miss Doreen. I think Doreen would have loved that. Thank you, Doreen, for revealing us to ourselves as a people in our food and culture.

Finally, I would like to thank Doreen for her gift of wisdom and centering. Doreen was Chair of the Departments of Communication, English and Interdisciplinary Studies, a member of the University Board of Trustees, a key leader in numerous University committees through the years. As Dean in the 1970s and President in the 1990s I could always depend on her as a colleague for wise counsel, for a view to the common and the greater good, for equanimity and calmness in turmoil. In the life of an administrator, this is a priceless gift from a colleague.

When I was interviewed for a forthcoming issue of the *Ateneo Guidon*, for a tribute to Doreen who was their moderator, and was asked what would be my most lasting memory of her, I said that I was reminded of a passage from Anne Morrow Lindbergh's "Gifts from the Sea". There, she speaks of her multiple roles, as a career woman, writer and journalist, wife to a national icon, mother. In reflecting on the pulls and demands in her life she chooses the image of wheel – the many spokes are these multiple roles and demands of those around her and she herself, her most central role, to be the steady and unmoving center that holds these spokes together and allows the wheel to carry on its task. Amidst the multiple gifts and roles that Doreen has played at the Ateneo, I will remember her most for being a strong steady center in our life and our work: teaching us and mentoring us, reminding us of our legacy and values, always there for us in our need, in our work, and in our life.

Thank you, Doreen, for everything.

## **PARANGAL KAY DOREEN BAYAN TRIBUTE FOR MS. DOREEN GAMBOA FERNANDEZ**

### **Editor's Note**

This piece is read by Dr. Carol Pagaduan-Arullo, vice-chairperson of BAYAN in a tribute organized by the Concerned Artists of the Philippines on July 9, 2002 at the conference hall of the Faculty Center, University of the Philippines.

On the surface, Ms. Doreen Fernandez seems an unlikely recipient of a tribute by militant national democratic mass organizations allied under the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN). Most people, including political activists and social reformers alike, only knew about Doreen as a connoisseur of the best table spreads in town. She also happened to write about food in a most delectable and engaging style that did justice to her subject matter.

But she was more than that. Even as she wrote about the delights of eating creatively and exquisitely prepared food, she also seriously researched and wrote about the distinctively Filipino in the culture of food. She did not disdain to write about what ordinary Filipinos, the *masa*, ate; thereby introducing their tastes and thus, their worldview and values, to students and the general reading public.

Of course, Doreen was an accomplished writer, a literary critic and an esteemed and beloved teacher to several generations of young people. Her writings bear the stamp of meticulous as well as insightful scholarship and always, a sense of what is Filipino and what is of and by the still emerging Filipino liberated culture. Her body of work constitutes an invaluable contribution to preserving our people's rich cultural heritage and passing this on to future generations.

On top of a lifetime of outstanding achievements in the relatively sedate world of the academe combined with her popularity as a "foodie," Doreen contributed her share to the life-and-death struggle against the US-Marcos dictatorship in various ways, discreet and open, big and small.

In later years, she continued to render assistance to the progressive movement. An example of this was her help in providing access to Filipiniana material in the Ateneo de Manila University for the video documentary, "Sa Liyab ng Libong Sulo" [From the Flames of a Thousand Torches]. She also willingly commented on the appropriateness of the menu for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the National Democratic Front

(NDF) that was timed with the return to the Philippines of NDF leaders Coni Ledesma and Luis Jalandoni. She wanted the food served to be in keeping with the nationalist and democratic aspirations and traditions of the NDF/ CPP/NPA [Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army].

BAYAN salutes Ms. Doreen Gamboa Fernandez. We are honored that she was part of our people's national democratic struggles, contributing her talent, skill, time and graciousness in the service of our people. Our people are diminished by her early passing. We extend heartfelt sympathies to her family and friends who grieve at the loss of a Filipino patriot we can all be proud of.



## **IN HIS OWN WORDS: AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCISCO ARCELLANA ON JOSE GARCIA VILLA**

**Jonathan Chua**  
**Department of Interdisciplinary Studies**  
**Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**  
***jchua@ateneo.edu***

### About the Author

Jonathan Chua sat in Doreen Fernandez's class on literary research and wrote a thesis on Villa with her as adviser. He is editor of *Feasts and Feats*, a festschrift for Doreen Fernandez.

### Editor's Note

Portions of this interview appeared in *Pen and Ink* 1 (1997): 18-22.

When Doreen G. Fernandez and National Artist Francisco Arcellana passed away earlier this year, Philippine Literature was left the poorer. Dr. Fernandez, about whom more is written elsewhere in this issue, was a chronicler of its theater and output in English; Mr. Arcellana, a creator of that literature and a bearer of its memories. Between them significant chapters of the story of Philippine Literature, its gaps and cruxes, were laid bare and glossed.

Mr. Arcellana, born 6 September 1916, was the leader of the Veronicans, a group of thirteen writers formed in 1934 who broke away from traditional themes and forms in short-story writing. Among its members were Narciso Reyes, N. V. M. Gonzalez, Estrella Alfon, and Hernando Ocampo—all of them important names in Philippine writing in English. Their stories were deemed too controversial (that is, too sexually explicit, too violent) to be published in the national magazines, so the group started its own publication called *Expressions*, with Arcellana as its editor.

Mr. Arcellana's stories, many of which were written and published in the 1930s, are known for their lyricism. The stories are collected, rather belatedly, in *Selected Stories* (1962) and *The Francisco Arcellana Sampler* (1990). In their terseness, intensity, and mystery, they are almost poetic. In such stories as "Robin in the Reading Room" and "The Trilogy of Turtles," Mr. Arcellana resorts to repetition, stream of consciousness, and startling imagery, the better to impress his insights into love and death.

These stories caught the attention of Jose Garcia Villa (1908-1997), fictionist, poet,

and critic—the most important Filipino writer in English of his generation. By the time the Veronicans were formed, Mr. Villa had already made a mark in the United States as a short-story writer and had been issuing an “annual selection” of the best Filipino short stories. Mr. Arcellana’s were regularly in his honor roll. The two wrote to each other, met, and remained friends.

Both were eventually interviewed by Dr. Fernandez for the series *Writers and Their Milieu* (1984 and 1987), Villa in the first volume and Arcellana in the second. In her interview with Mr. Arcellana, Dr. Fernandez emphasized his prodigious memory—for he recalled even middle initials—and thus his value as a source of literary history. “He is the only one,” she wrote rightly, “who could write the still unwritten history of contemporary Philippine literature in English.”<sup>1</sup> However, it was Dr. Fernandez who finally put his words down for posterity—the gossip, analyses, reveries, middle initials and all.

I could not, therefore, as a graduate student writing a thesis on Jose Garcia Villa reasonably skip the opportunity to get Dr. Fernandez as thesis adviser or to interview Mr. Arcellana about his longtime friend and admirer Mr. Villa. The following is a transcript of the interview, only slightly edited, that Dr. Fernandez and I conducted. The main subject is, of course, Mr. Villa. However, in the course of the interview, Mr. Arcellana inevitably mentioned other Filipino writers and his own writings. It may be taken as an extension of his interview in *Writers*, inspired and informed by it, as informative and, I would like to believe, as faithful to its aims: “to retrieve material for literary biography” and “to lay foundations for the literary history still to be written, and to support the literary criticism ongoing.”<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, is a bit of Philippine literary history, prepared and presented in a form that Dr. Fernandez pioneered in locally, containing data on two of the country’s most important writers in English.

\* \* \*

JC: How did your correspondence with Villa begin?

FA: He wrote to me first. Because of *Expressions* number one.<sup>2</sup>

JC: I notice that your stories are lyrical, which quality Villa seems to like.

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1 *Writers and Their Milieu* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1987), 35.

2 The first issue was put out in 1934.

FA: I think he is the same kind of writer. Maybe he was partial to lyricism, that kind of writing.

DGF: But did he say so to you?

FA: Yes, he did. DGF: In writing? verbally?

FA: Both. But I think ... how do you put it? We just like each other, you know. As far as each other is concerned, I was probably the person closest to him in the islands.

JC: There's a letter he wrote about you that got published....

FA: He was trying to explain something that he wrote about me which was not meant for publication, which he wrote to N. V. M. [Gonzalez], which Teddy Locsin<sup>3</sup> published in *Free Press*. It was a beautiful letter.... He was writing about my prose. He thought it was too loose ... Everything bad about prose he found in my prose. And I believed him.... And so he wrote that letter to N.V.M. and somehow Teddy got hold of it and then he printed it in the *Free Press*.... I didn't mind.<sup>4</sup>

JC: But he [Villa] explained to you.

FA: Yes. Villa felt so badly about it. He wrote to me about it. I wish I had that letter. He was writing me a lot of letters. He was a very good letter writer, *eh*. Very good. Very good letter writer. And I was able to collect maybe this much letters. And then Estrella [Alfon] borrowed them—she was staying at the YWCA. Before I knew it, the thing was lost. *Si Estrella*. [That's Estrella.]

JC: His letter to N. V. M. appeared in an essay you wrote. He says: "I wonder if he will pursue prose or poetry. One must make a choice. I believe that he is essentially a poet and therefore should work hard at poetry...."<sup>5</sup>

FA: Ah, that's the one! That's the letter! Yes.

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3 Teodoro M. Locsin, Sr. (b. 1914) was the editor of the *Philippines Free Press*.

4 But see below and note 6.

5 Villa, epigraph to Francisco Arcellana, "The Via Villa," *Literary Apprentice* (1948-49): 62. Did Arcellana confuse the *Literary Apprentice* with the *Free Press*?

JC: *You* wrote about Villa in that essay. And your thesis was: “But never before until now have we had a poet who first wrote prose that was the very prose and then prose that tended to poetry and was sometimes prose and sometimes poetry....”<sup>6</sup> And then you said, “Now....”

FA: “Mar pacifica.”

JC: “... for the purest blue in the mar pacifica of poetry, now for purity in poetry, now for the purest poetry.” This was before *Volume Two*.<sup>7</sup> Do you think that Villa ever reached that blue?

FA: I think Villa achieved being a pure poet. But here’s the problem. He has always remained self-absorbed. Yah. His poems are self-absorbed. Beyond himself there was nothing, which of course was not true. Beyond ourselves is the world! Yah, and he never broke through.

JC: Do you think he would have become a better poet if he had broken through?

FA: The trouble is [it is] a matter of temperament. He simply wasn’t capable of breaking through. *You* [pointing a finger at DGF] met him.

DGF: Yah.

FA: *O* [Well], he simply wasn’t capable of breaking through. In other words, he was like a child. And he is *still* a child.

JC: You wrote an essay in the *Brown Heritage* on the short story and you said that Villa “helped define [the short story], gave it direction.”<sup>8</sup>

FA: Because you know, he made annual selections [of the best short stories]. And

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6 Ibid.

7 Villa’s second volume of poetry published in the United States (by New Directions, 1949), where are found the “comma poems.”

8 Francisco Arcellana, “The Short Story,” in *Brown Heritage*, ed. Antonio Manuud (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1967), 609.

everybody was trying to make it into the selection. You know, he gave three stars—three asterisks, two asterisks, and one asterisk.... He really directed [us], although we weren't aware of it.

JC: And was the direction good or bad?

FA: You see, we were an American colony, and Villa was doing for us what Edward J. O'Brien was doing for the American short story. It's that. Only that.... Of course, [at] hindsight, oh boy, I would have all the advantage. I'd say that he is a very small tributary. For one thing, I think maybe better work was being done in Tagalog. Well, I say maybe because I haven't read enough.

JC: There's a short story by Marcel Navara, Cebuano writer, in which the main character follows Villa's advice on writing stories by imitating the stories listed in the roll of honor.

FA: Nothing like that happened to us. What you described...a deliberate, conscious.... Nothing like that happened to us. For example, *ako* [in my case]—I can only speak for myself, no—I was really writing like myself. And that, I felt, was what you would call the individual voice. Villa was very full of that, *eh*. He would speak of a writer achieving his voice. And there are not too many of us who he felt had achieved what he calls voice.

JC: Who might these be?

FA: Narsing [Narciso Reyes], N. V. M. Gonzalez, Manuel Arguilla.<sup>9</sup> *'Yan*. [There you go.]

JC: Were *you* influenced by Villa?

FA: Ah, yes. I mean, for a long while I couldn't tell myself apart from Villa. I mean, even writing— even speaking—you might say have traces [of Villa].

JC: So do you call yourself an angel?

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9 Manuel Arguilla (1910-1944), Filipino short-story writer, most popularly known for his use of "local color" as in "How My Brother Brought Home a Wife."

FA: Well, not to that extent. I think this angel thing he got from William Blake. Yeah, he got that from William Blake. At that time I was reading Blake, too.

JC: Villa's favorite Filipino writer is Nick Joaquin, is that right?

FA: This is very interesting. Villa wanted to be close to Nick, and Nick just rebuffed him! Yes. Nick just snubbed him.... *Naawa ako kay Villa*. [I felt sorry for Villa.] He wanted, he really wanted very much to be close to Nick. He admired him [Joaquin] so much.

JC: Although Nick would write an essay about Villa.

FA: Very good essay.

JC: But I wonder how accurate it is with regard to biographical information, because he has a tendency to dramatize....

DGF: He's a very good reporter so I would suspect they are accurate.

FA: Nick interviewed F. V. R. [Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos] and published the interview in the *Graphic*, which everybody admired for being accurate, objective, precise.

JC: Do you remember Liam Kreeps?

FA: No.<sup>10</sup>

JC: But you mentioned him in your article.

FA: I'm losing my memory!

JC: What about your poetry?

FA: My poetry?

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<sup>10</sup> Kreeps was an Irish janitor in New York who gave Villa four dollars to help pay the rent. He died before *Have Come, Am Here* was published. Ironically, his story appears in Arcellana's essay "Fifty Years of Jose Garcia Villa," *Philippines Free Press*, 23 May 1959, 46-47.

DGF: You want to know what Villa said about Franz's poetry?

JC: Yes.

DGF [to FA]: Did Villa comment on the poems?

FA: He called my poetry—this is his exact words—“elementary verse.” Elementary verse! He thought that I was *essentially* a poet. See, there's a world of difference. He thought I was essentially a poet and therefore should move to poetry. I tried to but couldn't get there. That is the situation. Yah, I tried to...but I just couldn't hack it.

JC: He says the same of Angela Manalang Gloria's poems.

FA: Angela is a very fine poet. I'm really flattered.

JC: Were you affected by his choices?

FA: The thing is, there was a need for me to say these things [the content of his poems] and so I sat down and said them as I always did. And maybe Villa was right that they were elementary.... When I was given the National Artist for “Flowers of May” I believed them [the committee], because I was saying to myself if C. P. R. [Carlos P. Romulo] can be named National Artist for “I saw the rise, I saw the fall” whatever, then I said I have the right to be named National Artist for “Flowers of May.” See? Yah. You know that story, don't you? It's about this family....

JC: No. I've only read “The Mats.”

FA: No wait, I'm talking about “The Mats”! I'm talking about “The Mats.” Why did I say “Flowers of May”?

DGF: That's good too.

FA: No, I think “Flowers of May” was my favorite. I'm talking about “The Mats.” Joaquin calls it [“The Mats”] an archetype. An archetype...whatever that means.

JC: And what did Villa say?

FA: Villa loved that story. He did.<sup>11</sup>

JC: It was translated into Filipino.

DGF: Where?

JC: In Sol [Soledad Reyes]'s book.<sup>12</sup>

FA: I think the story *is* Filipino. I think that is its strong point. It's really a Filipino story.

DGF: It's a best-selling children's book.<sup>13</sup>

FA: Right!... Maybe they're doing well because of the nice artwork. Beautiful.

JC: What norms do you follow when you write?

FA: I just write the story. I don't bother about what you call norms. It's just a story. It's a matter between me and the story. It's the story that I'm trying to tell. I think it is for that reason that I have been able to write.... The stories that I want to write ... ah, I just can. I mean, it's a kind of wrestling. I find myself pinned to the floor. Instead of me pinning the story, it's the story pinning me.

DGF: That must be heavy.

FA: Very heavy. Now, there's another thing. Some people say I should write a novel.

DGF: You once said you would.

FA: Well, it seems that the only way I can write now is by dictating it. I don't have a dictating machine.

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11 The story is in Villa's Roll of Honor for 1938.

12 Isagani Cruz and Soledad Reyes, *Ang Ating Panitikan* [Our Literature] (Manila: Goodwill, 1989)

13 *The Mats*. Illustrated by Hermes Alegre (Manila: Tahanan, 1995).



DGF: I have one.

JC: Let's go back to literary norms. Were you writing with a conscious set of norms in your head?

FA: No, no notions of writing a great story or even writing a story *a la* American stories ... like what's the name of this guy who writes in Cebuano?

JC: Marcel Navara.

FA: Nothing like that.

JC: Did you ever talk to Villa about the short story?

FA: He talked about voice, about the story where you hear the voice of the writer. So it can be anything. It can be ... like "My Old Man" by Ernest Hemingway. You know that story? It's written in illiterate English, but that's the voice of the old man there.... It's his [Hemingway's] greatest short story. Not many people know this.

JC: I thought it was "The Killers."

FA: No, no. It is the story called ... Edward J. O'Brien thinks this is his [Hemingway's] finest story.... This is drawn from a character who appears in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. This is the old man on the bridge. That is the character from which this character is drawn. What I'm saying is...Nothing technical. The way Villa selected short stories [has] nothing to do with norms. Not even technique, *eh*.... It's really a matter of feeling.... When we came up against classics like Nick's, *a, wala 'yan* [no technical norms]. I mean, no question about it. When he comes out with a statement about Nick—"the finest writer" ...short stories like "Fathers and Sons" ... "Three Generations" — that story, for example. That's the way I look at it. I think it's a natural thing. Villa could identify with the story. He was having problems with his own father. He could identify. It made him more comprehensible to himself. That's it. That really throws criticism out of the window. No really, the way we react to literature ... I mean, there is no sense in deceiving ourselves. We don't like it because it's a great piece of work. No! We like it because it touches us. It moves us. It enables us to understand

ourselves. It makes us a better person. Nothing to do with the way it is written. Nothing to do with technique. Absolutely not.

JC: Did Villa share the same views?

FA: Ah, he thought ... you know, he was talking about the test of substance and form, which he got from O'Brien. That's a lot of bull. No really, that's a lot of bull.

JC: Do you think he didn't follow these standards?

FA: I don't.

DGF: Do you think *he* did?

JC: When he was making those selections?

FA: According to his likes, I guess. According to his likes. Now, there's another thing about Villa. This is the thing I've wondered about. He really can't be as good as when he sits down to write what it is he wants to say vis-à-vis a work. I'm talking about criticism. A letter that he wrote to Carling [Carlos] Angeles<sup>14</sup> had an analysis of a poem by Hart Crane called "At Melville's Tomb." It is the finest thing I've ever read, I've ever seen. You know Hart Crane? This American poet? It's a short poem, maybe about twelve lines [long]. The first line is "Monody shall not wait the mariner." That's the first line. It's "At Melville's tomb." You know *Moby Dick*? The guy who wrote *Moby Dick*? "Monody shall not wait the mariner." Villa wrote *galing* [very good] about this lyric poem. Oh boy! Sharp, sharp.... Incidentally, you try to get hold of this controversy. Villa had a debate with Edmund Wilson about reversed consonance.

DGF: Really?

FA: Oo. [Yes.] Villa wrote me about this.

DGF: A written debate?

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14 Carlos Angeles (1921-2000), Filipino poet.

FA: Yah, yah.... Well, it's like this. Villa said he invented reversed consonance in his poetry.... Edmund Wilson claims the same thing to discredit [Villa]. He claimed he had invented the same thing, and that essay by Wilson appeared in the *New Yorker*. Naturally, Villa had to....

DGF: Answer?

FA: No, he lost out. My goodness, the *New Yorker* and Edmund Wilson! You're not going to do anything.

DGF: Villa wrote you?

FA: He wrote me about it. He felt awful about it, of course.

DGF: So he wrote you.

FA: Yes, about that.

JC: But he never responded to Wilson?

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A: No. He just called my attention to it, and I looked up the Wilson essay. Villa calls it "reversed consonance" and Wilson calls it by the Latin equivalent of reversed consonance. That was what convinced me...because Villa's profession of it happened much before [Wilson's]. That's how this guy Wilson is, and I think that is in keeping with Wilson's character.<sup>15</sup>

JC: And Villa's character?

FA: When I met Richard Wilbur for the first time, he asked me, "Ah, you're Filipino?" He had a look I couldn't stand, and I understood it only recently when I was reading an account—I don't know whose account it was. He [Wilbur] was really manifesting an ... the impression he had of Villa, his prejudice against Villa. "Oh, you're Filipino," and then he

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<sup>15</sup> But Villa did write a letter exposing Wilson. The letter was published in *Western Review* (1949) and reprinted in *The Critical Villa* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), 307-309.

gave me a look. Then, I understood. It was only this past year when I read this account about these people—about Wilbur, about Villa. And then I learned Wilbur’s attitude towards Villa. It’s like this. When Wilbur started to write poetry, Villa panned him. Yah, very savagely! Yah, Villa really panned Richard Wilbur.

DGF: Where? Was he writing specifically about his contemporaries?

FA: Villa had a school [a creative writing class]. He was teaching poetry, and he really swept the floor with Richard Wilbur.

DGF: And it got back to Wilbur?

FA: I think so.

JC: This was never published.

FA: No. But as I was saying, Wilbur gave me a look that I did not understand until I learned about this [incident]. And that was in character, because Villa was panning everyone. The only poet he cared for was William Carlos Williams who called him Little Joe. He got very close with William Carlos Williams. A lot of his letters were about William Carlos Williams. He got very close to William Carlos Williams. You know, Villa wrote me a lot of letters about William Carlos Williams.

JC: What did he say? Did he like his poetry?

FA: Yah! It was Villa who published William Carlos Williams as a fictionist for the first time...in *Clay*. Saroyan, too, and a guy by the name of Eugene Joffe. These were the guys that Villa discovered in *Clay*.... He put out three *Clay*'s.... You must read them. My copies were destroyed. There was the fire and after that there was this typhoon.<sup>16</sup>

JC: Villa seemed to have read H. L. Mencken a lot. He quotes from Mencken....

FA: Mencken was knocking down people.

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16 Williams and Saroyan were published in issue number 2 of *Clay*, notes on which journal are in the *Critical Villa*, 56-57.

JC: That quality he got from Mencken.

FA: Not really. I think Villa was really that way. Villa *was* really that way. He was knocking down people. He sort of enjoyed it. He's really *kuwan, eh* [like that]... a gossip, *eh*. He's a gossip. He's a gossip.... Bitchy! What I really would like to see is his *poetica*....

JC: Let's talk about the "essential difference" between prose and poetry, as Villa put it.

FA: There's poetry, of course, and then there's prose. Suppose you can write poetry. Do poetry. Really poetry. I suppose it can be done.... Have you tried reading Blake's prose? Awful! I read Milton. Awful! What I'm saying is this. That notion is correct, but there is also this other thing where you develop from prose to poetry. I do believe that poetry is the summit of language. Jimmy [Gémino] Abad<sup>17</sup> says that in an essay. So it is! So you work up to that. Prose is the lowest low. I mean, we can't kid ourselves. I mean, poetry is the highest possible utterance. Don't you agree? This notion of Villa is a lot of bull. If you're gifted, yeah, maybe, you can open your mouth and poetry comes out. But I think really, you work on the poem and really achieved it.

JC: What do you think of Villa's experiments? Reversed consonance?

FA: I can understand reversed consonance but this matter of sound, this matter of manipulating consonants and vowels. I think that's ... gobbledygook. To make the thing very impressive, to make it a secret language to lock you out ... Talk about melodies ... the theme of Scheherazade. Will someone try to explain to me why I react the way I do? What he was saying about the sound of words ... Sound doesn't make sense. You think sound makes sense? That's what he wants to believe. Not only do sounds make sense, they also express emotion. No, no. That is a lot of bull.

JC: The commas?

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17 Gémino Abad (b. 1939), Filipino poet and critic, editor of the series of anthologies chronicling the history of Philippine poetry in English: *Man of Earth* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1989), *A Native Clearing* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1993), and *A Habit of Shores* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999).

FA: He speaks of the comma achieving the quantitative pause that he wants. That's a lot of bull. I mean, you're not going to read it the way he feels it. You're going to read it the way you want. I mean, the way you feel.

JC: Have you ever heard him read a comma poem?

FA: Villa's voice is not for reading. It's not even for talking, least of all, for singing. I heard him sing. Oh wow! Remember I told you he was singing this song "A Farewell to Arms"? And he was half a tone off. Half a tone off! He could follow the melody but he was half a tone off. I think he was tone deaf.

JC: The adaptations?

FA: The only way to describe that is a fellow running dry. I mean, the spring is drying up.

JC: Do the commas make a difference if one read the poems out loud?

FA: I don't know if I ever told you I was reading Gertrude Stein. Well, you know how I feel about Stein. And then one evening, I heard Rolando Tinio<sup>18</sup> reading it and I thought I understood the whole damned thing. Even as he was reading it, I really felt I understood. One thing has to be done about poetry. It has to be read. When Rolando read it I understood it.<sup>19</sup>

JC: How did you regard Villa in those days?

FA: He was a master. I mean we lived in anticipation of his annual selections. We looked forward to it. [A. E.] Litiatco<sup>20</sup> made a very big production of it. About three or four weeks before the thing was published he announced, gave the teasers and something like that.... What I'm saying, Jonathan, is that Villa and I were *not* contemporaries. People tend to think... *Footnote to Youth* was published in 1932, and I did not publish *Expressions* until

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18 Tinio (1937-1997), Filipino poet, playwright, and critic.

19 See Tinio, "Villa's Values: Or, the Poet You Cannot Always Make Out, or Succeed in Liking When You Are Able To," in *Brown Heritage*, 722-738.

20 A. E. Litiatco (1906-1943) was literary editor of the *Graphic* before the Second World War.

1934. He was already a master. We were not contemporaries. He was a master and we...we read him, we worshipped him, we wanted to be like him.... He has a story called "Given Woman." I think it is one of the finest Philippine short stories. It is the story with which Villa broke into *Scriber's*. It's about this woman and this man Ponso...This guy decides to get rid of this woman, and he gives her away! He gave her away, Flora. *At saka si Ponso. Si Ponso yung pangalan nung lalake.* One day, he decides he wants to give her away, so ... "Given Woman."

JC: Your favorite story of Villa's is "Song I Did Not Hear."

FA: Yah! You know why? It is the first gay story in Philippine writing! This is about David...

JC: No, it's Joe, Jack, and "I".

FA: No, I was thinking of another story. There's another story about David.

JC: "Untitled Story."

FA: That too is homosexual. But this one is "Song I Did Not Hear." A homosexual story. Our first one. Don't you agree? Nobody has mentioned this.

JC: They usually anthologize just "Untitled Story." "Father did not understand my love for Vi."

FA: Right. That's standard and traditional unrequited love. Not really unrequited love but love that had a lot of obstacles. But "Song I Did Not Hear" was a story about gays. Beautiful story! Really beautiful. I think it's terrific. Even the title is beautiful. "Song I Did Not Hear." It is the fourth part of the trilogy ["Wings and Blue Flame"].

JC: A tetralogy, then?

FA: Written in the same style—numbered paragraphs.

JC: Did you disagree with Villa's choices?

FA: I did, but we did not really fight.... One thing he felt very strongly about was this. If a story gave you ... made it possible for you to realize, to see, to catch a glimpse of a way of life—he was very strong about that—that a story is a great story if it dramatizes or manifests a way of life. Yah.... Paz Marquez Benitez<sup>21</sup> had a different way of viewing it. If you read a story, she said, and if the story changes you, you become a different person because of that story, then it's a great story, which [idea] I think is more like mine. If a thing changes you and you become different forever afterwards because of the thing that you read, whether story or poem...which is what [W. H.] Auden said about the poem. You read a poem; it is a poem if it changes you, changes the way you look at things ... in other words, you become a different person. You're never the same again after reading the poem.... You've read "Lay Your Sleeping Head, My Love" ...

JC: "Human on my faithless arm."

FA: That's a homosexual poem!

JC: Really?

FA: Ha-hah! That's a homosexual poem. There's a stanza in that poem which gives it away, which you wouldn't understand except with that idea [of homosexuality]. There's a stanza which gives the poem away. That's a homosexual poem.

JC: I'll read it again.

FA: He said so himself.

JC: What else do you remember about Villa?

FA: He's a very proud man.... When I went to America in '56, I was walking up Fifth Avenue and who should I see but Jose Garcia Villa? I went to him and said, "You're Villa!" We went to ...

DGF: Gotham Book Mart?

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21 Paz Marquez Benitez (1894-1983), short-story writer, teacher at the University of the Philippines of an entire generation of Filipino writers in English. Her story "Dead Stars" (1925) is considered the first Filipino short story in English.



FA: No, to Choc'ful of Nuts for coffee.

JC: Did he ever finish his M.A?

FA: I'm glad you asked that. He did an M.A thesis on Browning at Columbia.<sup>22</sup>

DGF: Oh!

FA: He wrote an essay on Browning.

JC: What about his PhD?

FA: He's a very academic man. He could be. He likes teaching.

JC: Where did he say that the short story "humanized" him?

FA: He wrote it in an essay that he wrote about himself. You see he was a visual artist. And then somehow he got hold of Sherwood Anderson. You see how meaningful it is? He gave up visual arts and he went to literature. And the reason? Because Anderson humanized him.

JC: Will he come home?

FA: This is something you should know. Villa was always saying New York is the only place to live in. See, now by implication, he's saying that New York is the only place to die in.

21 May 1996

*Creative Writing Center, University of the Philippines*

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<sup>22</sup> But Villa's resume does not mention an M. A. We read, "Postgraduate Work, Columbia University." According to a letter from Luis Cabalquinto, Villa's friend in New York, "Jose categorically says *no* to getting that Columbia M. A. He says he lasted only a year in the Ph.D. program he registered for. After dropping out he worked at the Columbia U. bookstore, where he met his wife" (Letter to the author, 8 October 1996).

## TRIBUTE TO DOREEN GAMBOA FERNANDEZ

**Baltazar N. Endriga**  
**Cultural Center of the Philippines**

### About the Author

Baltazar N. Endriga was the President and is currently the Chairman of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and Vice President for Academic Affairs of the University of the East. An accounting and business consultant, he is known to be a meticulous and passionate man in his work in the areas of culture and education. Doreen Fernandez was a member of the CCP Board of Trustees.

Doreen was outstanding in whatever she decided to do. Writer, teacher, lecturer, food and literary connoisseur, theater historian, social scientist, etc. But what made Doreen cross the line from being merely outstanding to being great (has to be parallel but now I think with this correction the original meaning has been lost) was the simplicity, humility and efficiency with which she achieved what she did. Ralph Waldo Emerson must have been thinking of someone like her when he wrote, “Nothing is more simple than greatness; indeed, to be simple is to be great.”

I first came face to face with Doreen after I had known her for some time to be an accomplished and famous writer, professor, lecturer, scholar and food and theater connoisseur, when she was invited by Prof. Eric Torres to give a lecture on the Philippine social structure at Sycip, Gorres, Velayo & Co. as part of its Liberal Arts Program. Outside of her 90-minute lecture from which we learned plenty, what impressed me most was the simplicity in her demeanor, language and dress. My reaction then was “Napakasimple naman nitong professor na ito kahit siya’y napakagaling at napakatanyag.” [“She’s so unassuming a professor for someone so capable and famous.”]

I did not know then that she came from a very prominent and wealthy *haciendero* family in Negros. Otherwise, I would have added, “at kahit napakayaman.” [“... and despite her wealth.”]

In the business world where appearance and artifice are essential tools of trade, the simplicity that encapsulated her capabilities and accomplishments was heartwarming if not startling.

I met Doreen next (at my first Board meeting) soon after I was unexpectedly and unceremoniously thrust into CCP’s presidency through the efforts of “Popoy” del Rosario, Jr. and the acquiescence of the then Board Chairman Chinggay Lagdameo.

At Board meetings, Doreen was a quiet presence as she was not given to long-winded perorations on non-consequential matters. But her opinions and contributions, given when necessary or sought, carried a heavy weight.

Her contributions were particularly valuable on matters pertaining to culture and arts policy and in providing a historical perspective on Philippine Art Forms. She had plenty to contribute to the CCP. She wrote the section on “Literature” of the *Tuklas Sining* publication and edited the Volume on Theater of the CCP *Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*.

She shared our light moments and laughed heartily especially at Father Perez’s irreverent jokes and my toneless singing.

Her real mettle was tested when the CCP charter, which every Trustee vows to protect when taking his oath of office, was wantonly violated in the pursuit of political and other non-cultural objectives of the deposed and discredited regime.

Unassuming, simply dressed, sincere, unpretentious but packing a behavioral and intellectual arsenal that could wallop any pretentious cultural parvenu, Doreen, without even being conscious of it, used this arsenal quietly, unobtrusively and so effectively in the long, difficult and costly fight that finally led to the triumph of right over wrong, the preservation of the CCP charter and the return of order and civility to the august halls of this institution.

Unknown to many, the battle was long, hard and painful. And also unknown to many, Doreen played a key role in the process in the manner she knew best. Even before we could discuss the matter, Doreen had already prepared a beautifully crafted statement setting forth the philosophical bases for the defense of the Charter.

In the months that followed, Doreen stood by my side (not behind, mind you) not in challenging the guards physically but by lending me her wordsmithing skills. Doreen’s golden hand worked wonders on my dull and often intemperate text. An additional phrase inserted here and there, a word or two changed, a sentence deleted or rephrased, or added would make my prose so much more elegant, readable and more myself. That was what I admired. Her ability to make my prose sound more like me than I was capable of.

The CCP owes Doreen much and I hope the entire CCP community recognizes her quiet, unassuming behind-the-scenes contributions which served as the laser rockets that ultimately restored the CCP to its rightful place with its charter and its values intact.

Doreen, we thank you for your commitment to a good cause. I thank you personally for the lessons in humility and communication that you taught me and we hope that wherever you are now you will continue to give us your benevolent guidance.

Goodbye.

