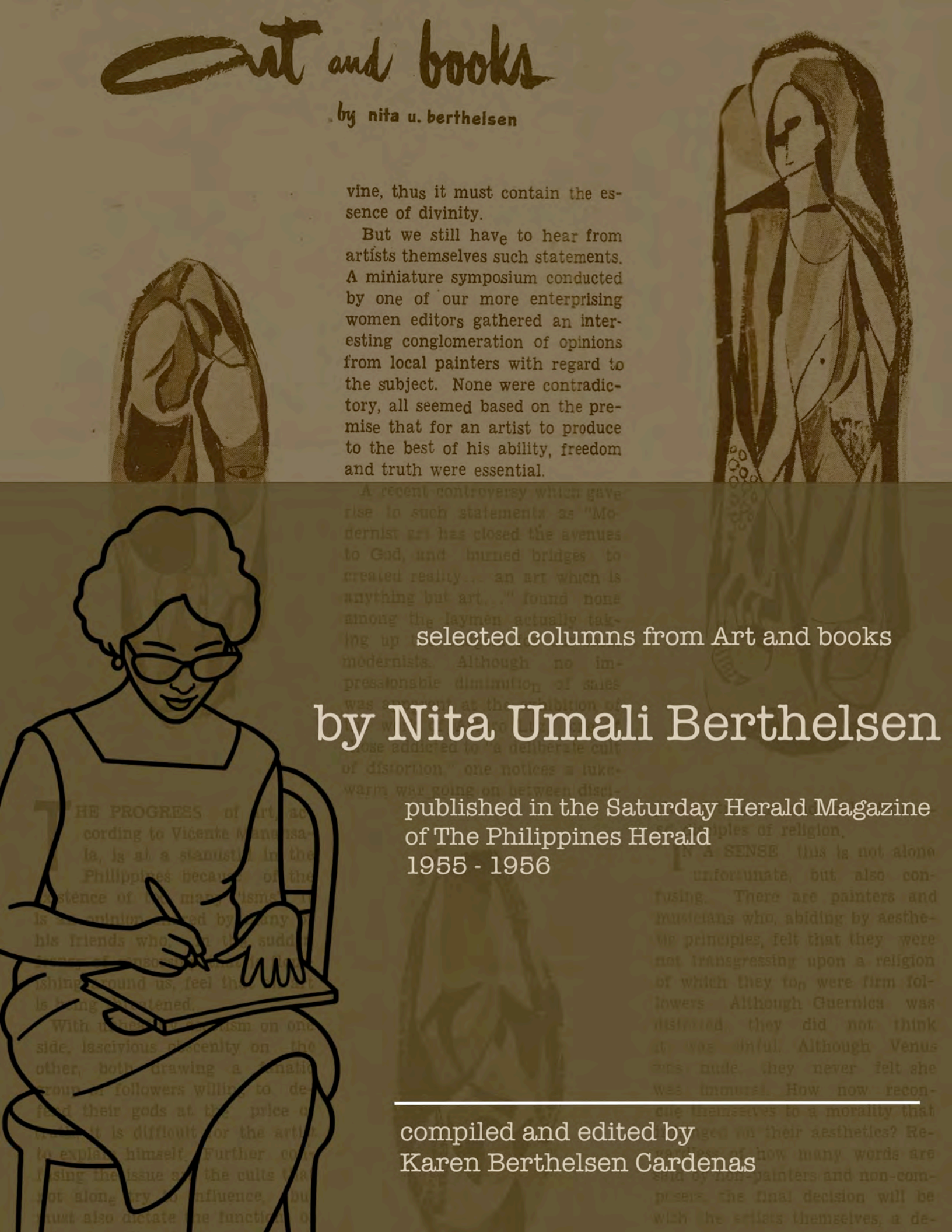

Art and books
by nita u. berthelsen
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selected columns from Art and books
by Nita Umali Berthelsen
published in the Saturday Herald Magazine
of The Philippines Herald
1955 - 1956
compiled and edited by
Karen Berthelsen Cardenas

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Art and books

published in the Saturday Herald Magazine
of The Philippines Herald
1955-1956



by Nita Umali Berthelsen

compiled and edited by Karen Berthelsen Cardenas

Some notes before you go further . . .

This compilation remains as true as possible to the original text of the columns with very minor corrections.

The first selections are from clippings Nita kept, but without indicating the dates. The latter ones were retrieved by a hired researcher, and the dates are noted.

When deemed necessary footnotes on some of the people mentioned have been included in case some readers may not be familiar with writers or celebrities of the 1950s. The persons or events are noted at first mention.

While newspaper columns generally had no titles, titles have been included in this compilation as a means of directing the reader to a particular topic or personality that may be of interest.

There is no review or analysis of mom's writings as this is meant as a primary source—a compilation of some of the articles that I have been able to track down, for archival purposes for my grandkids and also so that they can become readily available for any researcher, either of my mom's work or the type of writing in the 1950s, or tidbits on personalities and events of that time.

Thank you for your interest and I hope you enjoy a glimpse into the world of Manila journalism in the 1950s.

The Philippines Herald

The Philippines Herald, established in Manila on August 8, 1920, was one of the important English-language newspapers of the American colonial period and postwar Philippines. Its founding was associated with Manuel L. Quezon, who recognized the importance of an English-language newspaper that could articulate Filipino political interests at a time when much of the country's English-language press was American-owned.

Conrado Benitez was its founding editor, and Carlos P. Romulo was among the distinguished journalists who subsequently directed its editorial direction. The newspaper became an important forum for political reporting, commentary, and public debate, particularly on questions of Philippine independence and national identity.

Beyond its political role, the *Herald* helped foster the development of Philippine literature in English.

The newspaper and accompanying weekend and mid-week magazines provided opportunities for Filipino writers to publish fiction, poetry, essays, and cultural criticism. This was especially significant in the 1920s and 1930s, when Philippine writing in English was developing its own literary identity.

One of the most important figures associated with the newspaper's literary development was Paz Márquez Benitez, herself a pioneering fiction writer and educator. As literary editor of the *Herald Magazine*, she encouraged emerging Filipino writers and helped establish the magazine as a venue for creative writing.

Several works now considered important in the history of Philippine literature in English appeared in the *Herald* or its supplements. These include "Dead Stars" by Benitez, "Desire" by Paz Latorena, "Benediction" by Franz Arcellana, and "Caps and Lower Case" by Manuel Arguilla.

The *Herald* published literary and illustrated supplements under different titles during its history, including the *Philippine Herald Magazine* and, by the late 1930s, the *Herald Mid-Week Magazine*. The latter was edited for a period by writer and painter Hernando R. Ocampo, whose work exemplified the close relationship between literature, journalism, and the visual arts in prewar Manila.

The *Saturday Magazine*, published with the postwar newspaper, continued the broader tradition of illustrated newspaper supplements that combined creative writing with journalism. Its contents included literary pieces, personality profiles, cultural commentary, and features on Philippine life.

It formed part of a lively magazine culture that included the *Sunday Times Magazine* of the *Manila Times*, *This Week* of the *Manila Chronicle*, and the *Philippines Free Press*. These publications gave Filipino writers an audience beyond literary journals and helped sustain a community in which journalists, fiction writers, poets, critics, and artists frequently worked across several publications.

Following its interruption during World War II, the newspaper resumed publication in July 1949, entering a new period in Philippine journalism. The restoration of the independent press after the war coincided with the growth of a new generation of writers and journalists addressing the country's political, social, and cultural transformation.

The newspaper continued until September 1972, when the declaration of martial law led to the closure of numerous Philippine newspapers, including the *Herald*.

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Artists: integrity vs existence

The defense of the Artist against Society, and the offense of Society against the Artist, has, like every other thing today, not escaped from cliches. In the struggle of the arts to win support from the wealthy and understanding from the middle classes, set words and phrases have been used, symbols of the set principles which art has formulated for itself in much the same way that every other struggle has to make up some basic party platform to rightfully motivate it.

It is true that art gets its true support from the society which it reflects. We do not say deserves, unless in the same necessity of deserving as a baby in its mother's womb deserves the food with which it is nurtured. It is a natural course, one that cannot be forced. Society's main and most important function is life and its preservation. The prime necessities, even the artist knows, is not art, but food, clothing and shelter. Life comes first, art, where life is full, follows.

Certain historical periods record a so-called flowering of the arts, when patronage was at its most generous and recognition granted from a full purse. Yet a deeper delving into the past will bring out the fact that it was not all a bed of roses for the Mozarts and the Dantes, the Lord Chesterfields and the Beethovens. If the PROs of today decry their status, their subservience to bosses whose matters and manners may not be the same as theirs, these artists probably felt the same way. Bach, after all, had to depend on a large number of funerals to make more money, in much the same way as a muralist now depends on the number of large buildings with art-inclined owners to survive.

From the status of mere employees, artists have slowly graduated to more respectable positions and we find them now for the first time demanding what in the past they merely had asked for. To understand these demands one has first to understand the needs of the artist, which in the complicated society of this century becomes also correspondingly complicated. As mere hirelings of noblemen, musicians, writers, and painters were addressing individuals, or at worst, a select group of people with well-defined tastes and limitations. In the service of the state these artists still fulfill their function with the same limits which, while on the one hand shackle their freedom, on the other make their obligations a simple affair. Please one group, the paying group, and you live.

But the present Society, and in our particular instance, the Filipino Society, is not one cohesive, single-minded entity with same likes and dislikes. Even in the most discriminating strata of taste-makers there are disagreements. And when we try to cover the whole field of citizenry, which is after all what makes our society, confusion arises. And the artist whose

life's needs depend upon the varying elements of our democracy, finds himself at a loss as to whom to address his work. Will he paint for the museums or the Rotarian contest or the lady's bedroom whose interior decorator dictates that landscapes are out, flowers should be the motif, and anything that is slightly modern too-too drastic? Should he write his short stories in the manner which he learned at school, in the style which impressed him in the last copy of the Kenyon Review, in his own new-fangled and rather ambiguous manner, or should he write for magazines with good intentions whose readers however dictate that plots be clear, stories be chaste, and endings be happy?

It becomes a matter of the artist and his integrity versus the artist and his existence. In the last few years, however, a new function has been given to him, which if not fulfilling, is partly satisfactory. The artist has become the teacher. That portion of society which recognizes his role in a democracy has given him, besides his craft, a subject in the university curriculum. In the production of a youth who will understand the "higher" things In life, the artist becomes utilitarian.

In what was a favorite expression of the late Paz Latorena* — "Those who can, do, those who can't, teach" we now find a contradiction. The finest artists in their field are teaching and perhaps earning more than they ever would if they were to devote their time solely to their art. How the artists themselves take to this new role we cannot say. The students, perhaps charmed by the vision of themselves being one day the standard bearers of culture, will never realize the loss that they have suffered, the pleasure of discovering an art and the talent for it by one's self and its fulfillment through manner and medium dictated, not by an expert, but by one's own experience.

———————

* **Paz Latorena** (1908-1953), one of the notable writers of the first generation of Filipino writers in English. She was a poet, editor, author, and teacher.

November: election and the supernatural

With election practically on our necks, we recall another one of those aborted short stories which never saw the light of creation. We give the story here in capsule form for anyone to take at its worth, which may not be very much, or a lot.

We have as hero, or villain, take your choice — one of those deluded men who thought they could be honest politicians and come out winners. The man had a lot of ideas, and being young, quite a number of illusions. Having come from a religious school, he had a smattering of piety. Born of a good family, he had the grains of education. And being by nature a man-of-the-people type, he had a good following.

All these things together brought him victory, and quite surprised himself at the ease with which he achieved one of the most important positions in the country, he figured he could push through his projects with as great facility.

But he had not figured on some of his followers, on the men who campaigned for him, and as they themselves claimed, put him into power. His ideas and theirs did not tally. His plans were the kind you find in school children's citizenship textbooks. Theirs came from Machiavelli's The Prince. Naturally a rift was inevitable.

That was the stage where he made his first serious mistake in judgment. He over-estimated his power. Honest enough, he was not sufficiently humble to realize that there were some things even he could not fight. One of these was corruption. His greatest fault was his lack of foresight, his overabundance of faith.

Naïveté has a charm of its own. But in politics it may spell misfortune. That it did for him.

That is the end of the story. It was intended for fiction. But it has been repeated a hundred times in fact. Now that a new crop of candidates seek positions, promise honesty, integrity, efficiency, the story will perhaps find new protagonists. But when the bug bites a man, it's there to stay, and politicians, who have it in their blood, are an obstinate lot.

There are people like Thoreau who refuse to pay taxes on a matter of principle. We do not wonder either that there are people who on principle do not vote.

With All Saint's Day around the corner and tales of the supernatural going the rounds among the young, a question or rather request we received from one of our readers we here relay to our readers who may be able to give him a satisfactory answer. We ourselves have a vague idea of the story he is referring to, but can't quite place it, unless it was one or those in a collection published for GIs during the war,

Our correspondent asks, "… would you recall for me the title of a story, as well as the author, which tells of a fanciful man who seems to be a victim of the supernatural? One day he goes to the cemetery, and there meets a pale, waxy looking individual who looks more dead than alive and who extends his arm to shake his hands. Trembling with fear, he is polite and takes the proffered hand. It is cold and clammy and soft, like slugs from inside the earth. In terror he quickly draws his own hand away, sure now that he is faced with a corpse risen from the grave. But instead of getting rid of the hand, he finds that the fingers have remained stuck to his own hand…"

We hope there will be somebody who can help identify this story. And since we are a little curious ourselves, we would like the answer to be sent our way.

Such tales have always been favorites, and many a rainy day have we spent telling them, or listening to them. Gruesome, perhaps; morbid, yes. But anyone who wants to swap such tales or books, they are welcome. As those horrid Horrible Comics say, Meet you in Grave Number Three.

Vicente Manansala: too many isms

The progress of art, according to Vicente Manansala*, is at a standstill in the Philippines because of the existence of too many "isms". It is an opinion shared by many of his friends who, in the sudden frenzy of censorship that is flourishing around us, feel that all art is being threatened.

With unhealthy asceticism on one side, lascivious obscenity on the other, both drawing a fanatic group of followers willing to defend their gods at the price of truth, it is difficult for the artist to explain himself. Further confusing the issue are the cults that not alone try to influence, but must also dictate the functions of art. According to one group, art must serve a purpose, the purpose of the people. According to another, art by its very nature is divine, thus it must contain the essence of divinity.

But we still have to hear from artists themselves such statements. A miniature symposium conducted by one of our more enterprising women editors gathered an interesting conglomeration of opinions from local painters with regard to the subject. None were contradictory, all seemed based on the premise that for an artist to produce to the best of his ability, freedom and truth were essential.

A recent controversy which gave rise to such statements as "Modernist art has closed the avenues to God, and burned bridges to created reality... an art which is anything but art..." found none among the laymen actually taking up the cudgels for our local modernists. Although no impressionable diminution of sales was apparent at the exhibition of the work of Arturo Luz*, one of those addicted to "a deliberate cult of distortion," one notices a lukewarm war going on between disciples of true art and truly dedicated disciples of religion.

In a sense this is not alone unfortunate, but also confusing. There are painters and musicians who, abiding by aesthetic principle, felt that they were not transgressing upon a religion of which they too were firm followers. Although Guernica was distorted, they did not think it was sinful. Although Venus was nude, they never felt she was immoral. How now reconcile themselves to a morality that infringed on their aesthetics? Regardless of how many words are said by non-painters and non-composers, the final decision will be with the artists themselves, a decision subject to interpretation. Because there will never be a flagrant, or at least direct expression of their stand, there will always be some vagueness about the issue, which has to resort to words and even semantics for some semblance of clarity for the layman.

The problem with writers is slightly different, hence the exception taken by some to the statement that it would need a very dedicated writer to write a book in a language invented all by himself and understood by himself alone. Writing uses words, and words, whether they want to or not, communicate. There is no beauty in words when separated from their meaning, unlike line and color combinations or harmonious chords of music which can stand alone, with no dependence on an audience,

A writer (we do not talk here of poets) will not go through the arduous task of inventing a language to convey his thoughts. But a writer may write in English even if he be in Jutland, where none but a few will be able to read what he writes. There is some difference between the functions of writers on the one hand and artists and musicians on the other. Also, it is easier to judge a writer's moral, or amoral values, from what he writes, than it is to make pronouncements about artists and musicians. The latter have their own genre of expression, and that is their best defense.

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* **Vicente Manansala** (1910–1981), a Filipino cubist painter and illustrator and one of the first Abstractionists on the Philippine art scene.

* **Arturo Luz** (1926–2021), a Filipino visual artist and a founding member of the modern Neo-realist school in Philippine art. He was also a printmaker, sculptor, designer and art administrator. He received the Philippine National Artist Award in 1997.

Graham and Churchill

Welcome news to those who have been fearing that their loyalty to their faith would be an obstacle to their being part of the Martha Graham* audience when she comes to Manila next month is the report that for practically all the dances she is going to perform, she will be covered practically from neck to toe.

Her arrival in the Philippines will give most dance enthusiasts an opportunity to see something different in the field of this terpsichorean art. Actually the modern dance, which Graham will introduce here for the first time, was well on its way in the early nineteen hundreds, forming part of a resistance movement against dance forms dictated by the Russian Imperial Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet.

Martha Graham was a student of the school founded by Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, who along with Isadora Duncan were among those to first break from the traditional style of dancing in America. She was one of the most controversial figures ever to be produced by the school, and anyone who has seen her perform, although he may not actually be impressed by the aesthetic qualities of her dance, will not be able to deny that the feeling aroused by her performances are never mild.

Tortured, passionate, fiery, her dances have been called both decadent and religious. The ceremonial gestures which accompany … [*missing paragraph*]

… on classical ballet, have danced and viewed both with unflagging enthusiasm — will they be able to appreciate this new form of dance, enough to keep coming back to see Graham, and enough to allow the start of a new trend in modern dancing in the country?

And how will our local dance schools take it? Will Graham leave some sort of stamp—a Kilroy-was-here influence on our native instructors, enough to make them try to adapt any of the new dance feeling into our own national art?

Whatever happens, though, we intensely hope that Martha Graham will find a good audience in Manila. Newness and strangeness can cause either applause or criticism. One has to go slow on either. Much that is not understood tends to appear undesirable. The much vaunted Filipino sense of rhythm, harmony, motion, will be put to a test, so to speak. Is it a musicality and sense of form that reaches only the superficial senses, and which true, may, produce aesthetic forms, even without meaning, or is it something that goes farther, beyond the rumba and the samba?

BOOKS: Not usually inclined to reading biographies, Assignment Churchill has still provided us with some pleasant reading. Written by Inspector Walter Thomposin of Scotland Yard, who for nineteen and a half years was both bodyguard and factotum of the painter-writer-adventurer-statesman and everything else, it gives some intimate, often humorous glimpses into the life of the already well-publicized Churchill, worst driver and dancer of Britain.

One of the best encounters related was that of Churchill and a clubwoman, at the time when Churchill was trying to develop a moustache. The matron was said to have approached him, waved her umbrella before his face, and said, "Mr. Churchill, I neither like your ideas nor your moustache." His quick retort, "Don't worry yourself, Madam, it is not likely that you will ever come close to either."

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* **Martha Graham** (1894–1991), an American modern dancer, teacher and choreographer responsible for creating the Graham technique.

Santha Rama Rau, Ed and Edith

Leisure, and especially leisure in the tropics, as travel folders would have us believe, consists mostly of sitting under palm trees or lolling on the beach, or in the evening, dancing under the stars. Considering that the daily pace of many a Filipino citizen's life has changed vastly over the past few years, it is quite understandable that the way he spends his free time has also undergone a metamorphosis.

Since the war, it would seem that the average Filipino has become a busier man. He has now less time to really relax, and his choice of what form this relaxation should take has to a degree been conditioned by this time limitation. To the city dweller the movie still ranks first among choices for leisure spending. It becomes doubly appealing by virtue of the air-conditioning in the theaters, which he goes to both to escape from reality and escape from heat. Quite unconsciously, he now toes the line which some scholars of leisure recommend everyone should follow – productivity even in leisure. It is this line which Santha Rama Rau* (and who does not know her by now) scolds about, in reference to Americans.

"I am wondering," she says, "why leisure is a problem at all. Surely, nowhere else in the world do people fuss about what to do with their spare time. I think it is rather sad that some kind of guilt has been built up in this particular society so that people feel that they should be productive even in their spare time . . . what is wrong with lying on the beach and relaxing?"

We are bound to agree with Miss Rau on that last sentence. However, it is not given to everyone to lie on the beach and relax and especially not in the Philippines. Although no real fuss is made over here as to the choice of one's leisure spending, it is still clear, and natural that different classes of people follow varying patterns of relaxation,— from the aristocratic form which may be casual, sportsmanlike, even unexciting, or verging on vice, from cockfighting to unmentionables; to the middle class pattern of leisure which picks the movies, window shopping, and gambling.

For those who spend seventy per cent of their waking hours working in the office or factory, the relative freedom that leisure time gives is too precious to spend doing nothing.

Right or wrong, excitement is still sought by the worker who is temporarily freed by the clutches of dull routine. And this excitement comes from a fulfillment that few find staring at the sun through dark glasses. Pleasure is an adjunct of leisure, and if it means the pleasure of solving a mathematical problem or conquering the pinball machine, why quarrel with it?

The news that Ed Tiempo* has been granted a Guggenheim award has reached me and I cannot but feel glad about it, despite some protestations from certain quarters that there are more deserving individuals around town who might have gotten it instead. On the matters of deserving or not-deserving. I have nothing to say, since the creative output in the recent months has neither been plentiful enough from any one particular writer, nor familiar enough to me, to warrant any critical dissertation.

However, having known Ed, and his wife Edith*, for some time, and having at one period in our student days spent much of our leisure (here comes that word again) time together (productive leisure too!) I cannot but feel prejudiced in their favor. Days when visits to their trailer home, which was half an hour's walk from where I lived across the Iowa river, meant a meal of rice and adobo, peppered with frivolous talk on letters from Cesar Amigo* and his "poetic vibrations," Dmitri Mitropolous*, be-bop and our latest sad stories, still remain in my memory.

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* **Santha Rama Rau** (1923–2009), an Indian-born American writer.

* **Edilberto Tiempo** (1913–1996), a Filipino writer and professor. He and his wife, **Edith L. Tiempo** (1919-2011) are credited by Silliman University with establishing a tradition in excellence in creative writing and the teaching of literacy craft at that university. Edith was conferred the National Artist Award for Literature in 1999.

* **Cesar Jalandoni Amigo** (1924–1987), a Filipino poet, fiction writer, journalist, and award-winning screenwriter who co-founded Silliman University's literary journal *Sands & Coral* in 1948.

* **Dmitri Mitropolous** (1896–1960), a Greek and American conductor, pianist, and composer.

Bohemianism, Sherlock Holmes, Fredric Wertham, Dolly Benavides, and Angelo Castro

First time I came across Bohemia was in a tale of Sherlock Holmes. It did not enlighten me much and did not prepare me for what was to come, when a short spell in an American university taught me the finer points on the subject.

In the beginning it was just a strange word bandied about with eager abandon. I thought that if you can smoke a cigarette, lighted end in the mouth, you are eligible for the select ranks. Since I had learned that trick from our laundrywoman when I was still a child, I considered myself a Bohemian of good standing.

But my brush with bohemianism was short, and I am afraid I flunked out in the end. I was asked to attend the party of some people called the Grunbergs, and even allowed to bring my own companion, who fortunately was about as strait-laced as I was compared to the rest of the crowd.

The apartment was painted an audacious black in the farthest wall, chartreuse on the wall to the right, gray on the wall to the left, and cerise on the wall nearest the door. Masks hung all over the place, of Tragedy and Comedy, of Sappho and Lesbos, and even one of Achilles, although how I ever identified that one I still do not know, unless it was because someone hinted to me that the guy had been something of an awful heel.

Anyway this party of frankly self-termed bohemians were all sprawled on the floor when we arrived, the girls with long hair falling half over their face, or hair so short they all looked almost like members of the Yale senior crew. The men all wore green or red corduroy and drank beer without stopping, So did the girls, by the way. There were no electric lights, only candles, and smoke filled the room which was ventilated only by two narrow windows covered by venetian blinds, the slats of which were falling all over the place. The party got more and more boring as the night wore on, the talk going around being about Freud, Picasso, existentialism, and the merits of the cauliflower (how that got in I don't know). Later I found out the high point of the evening was when each couple strolled away from the party and went into their own private haunt.

I decided Bohemia and I had nothing in common after that, not even when later I read an essay on the same subject by Fredric Wertham*, explaining that it was really not as bad as it sounded. No, it was not for me. And I thought that I had heard the last of the word at that time.

But its ghost came to haunt me again last week, when Dolly Benavides* told me the story of a passably mysterious phone call she received at about three in the morning. It went like this: Ring. RRRRRR IIIII NNNNN GGGGGGGG …. RRRRIIIIINNNNGGGGGG on and on till Dolly, half asleep, walked to the phone.

D: Hello (It really sounded like Hou…lll…ooooo - yawn)
Voice: (Low, like a gorilla in love) Hello, Dolly, this is George.
D: George? George who?
Voice: George, a friend of Vic.
D: (Still sleepy) Vic? Vic who?
Voice: Why, Vic (and he gave the last name) Wait, I'll call him.
(Same voice) Hello, this is Vic.
D: Oh, Vic! You're also George.
V: Hough . . . . (a gentle growl)
D: Well, what do you want?
V: Well . . . . you see… I'm here at the radio station, and it's three o'clock and I have nothing to do.
D: So you called me.
V: Yes. What were you doing?
D: Sleeping, of course.
V: (Astounded) Sleeping!!!
D: What else would I be doing at this time? Why did you have to choose me anyway to call up, Vic?
V: Well, Dolly, because I know you are a bohemian.
D: What! What makes you think I am a bohemian?
V: Well, you are, aren't you, Dolly?
D: Oh . . oh. well . . . Did you call up anyone else besides me?
V: Yes, Angelo Castro*, he is also a bohemian. But he was asleep.

At least I know something more now about bohemians. There are two kinds, those who sleep at three in the morning, and those who wake up.

---

* **Fredric Wertham** (1895–1981), a German–American psychiatrist and author, who is infamously known for his theory that comic books cause juvenile delinquency. His work has since been discredited.

* **Dolly Benavides** worked with This Week magazine of The Chronicle in the 1950s, and later was with Lyceum of the Philippines University

* **Angelo Castro** (1914-1994), a broadcaster, former Philippine Information attaché to San Francisco, and former Press Undersecretary. Known in his early day on radio as the "Good Time King" (Angelo Castro Jr was his son.)

Calendars, Pete Padilla, the Nuguids take on Horacio Borromeo

One of the most attractive calendars for this year came as a Christmas gift – an amply illustrated loose leaf of modern art masterpieces. The collection includes Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and any other of the group one can think of. On the same mail we received an Esquire calendar, the like of which, by some perhaps Jorgensenian twist of givers' tastes, we have received year by year. And so now we have two date-keepers, one to record our Dr. Jekyll days, the other our Mr. Hydes. For those who may be interested in the art calendar, they are for sale at the Philippine Education*, at a quite moderate sum of five pesos and a little over, which is very reasonable, we think.

And speaking of time keepers, an ad in the papers during the pre-Christmas season had us not a little mystified and constantly resolving to go and see this place which distributed the product, a pocket size diary exclusively for women, giving a service which only physicians with knowledge of particular women's histories would give, all at the owner's fingertips. Though not going as far as promising their owners that the diary could avert childbirth, it did say that it would help a lot in finding out when a woman could most likely succeed at maternity.

One finds literary critics among the most unexpected sources. Take Pete Padilla* of the Bullseye*, for one. To him, there is only one criterion of literature – if it "registers". All that talk about beginning, climax, end, matter, form, climax, is plain bull, as far as he is concerned. Does the reader like what he reads?—that is what makes a piece good or not good, says Pete. Many agree with him, and certainly local magazine editors have to agree with him.

A recent issue of a foreign weekly, we forget which one, had us pop-eyed with an account of all the gifts being sold, and bought, in the States, to wit: $200,000 minks, $100.00 neckties. Compared to it, the mythical four-carat diamond which was advertised as changing hands within the Nuguid matrimonial compound was peanuts. But what hurts, according to Nati*, in the article which appeared by-lined by her and Caring*, and which was really written as a joke by Horacio Borromeo* in one of the local weeklies, is the principle of the thing. By principle, we suspect she meant the style. "Hon, me call Caring hon?" Nati glowered. "And Caring says that when I squeeze him he melts inside and figures he loves me after all—why that's most unliterary. And to top it all, I don't even get a four-carat ring, or even a one-carat one. Closest I ever got to owning a diamond was a dubious half-carat job, which a friend borrowed and never returned."

* **Philippine Education Company** (**PECO**), a historic bookstore and publishing firm founded in 1901 by Verne Miller, a Thomasite schoolteacher. Starting as a magazine publisher and dictionary distributor on Escolta Street in Manila, PECO grew into a major retail bookstore and educational supplier. In the 50s and 60s it was the go-to bookstore and had moved to 1104 Castillejos Street, Quiapo.

* **Pedro "Pete" Padilla,** a prominent post-war Manila journalist, columnist, and tabloid publisher/editor active during the 1950s.

* **Bullseye,** a Manila-based newspaper/tabloid called The Bullseye (also indexed simply as Bullseye) active throughout the 1950s

* **Zacarias P. "Caring" Nuguid Jr.** (1917-1999), a Filipino journalist, editor, and publisher who later served as president and chairman of the Philippine Press Institute. He was also publisher of the People's Journal.

* **Natividad "Nati" Nuguid** (1921-2006), a Filipino writer active in Manila's literary and journalistic circles in the 1950s. She was married to journalist and publisher Zacarias "Caring" Nuguid.

* **Horacio "Teban" Borromeo,** a Filipino journalist and columnist known for his political commentary and satire. He wrote the column On the Record and was associated with the Manila Chronicle in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

A censor, three geniuses in New York, a new tabloid

The position left vacant by one of the members of the Philippine Board of Censorship has been filled by Mabini Centeno*. And therein lies an interesting tale, we have been told. True, it was only a minor skirmish that followed the announcement, but nevertheless interesting, not because of the personalities concerned, but because it brought up the question of that old, Mendelian bogey-man, Heredity.

It seems that there were two schools of thought with regards to the filling of the position. One believed that the new appointment should be based on sensory and censorship merit, the other that it was a matter of heredity. One does not have to go into a long discourse on genes and traits inheritable. Either choice, whether it was Mab or one of the daughters of the absent censor (who probably does not know she was a candidate for the position) would have been good since both have had experience in the field and are considered more than capable movie critics.

For those who have bewailed the total absence of geniuses in the Philippines comes this welcome news — there are geniuses from this country even if at the time they were gathered together in one place. They were in New York.

Scene was at a cafeteria, characters Garcia Villa Garcia*, Nick Joaquin*, and David Cortes Medalla* (the very same one who now gives poetry readings in a place in Mabini with a French sounding alias, also the one who cheers Estrella Alfon* on to writer-hood and woman-hood). Statement of the meal by Garcia Villa Garcia —or is it Villa Garcia Villa— (who incidentally was once also Doveglion and Jose Garcia Villa, which approaches our own Jose Villa Panganiban* too close for comfort either way): "The three geniuses of the Philippines are now gathered here." Which is as memorable a statement as one can quote in a long time.

Of course there will be those who will argue the act that these three are geniuses, and the only ones at that, from the Philippines. But morally, I am behind the statement. Which should lead to a long discourse on what is moral and what is not. Tactful at last, we avoid the subject.

Justification of a cartoon we saw in Collier's about three or four years ago comes in the form of an incident which happened quite recently to one of our more renowned writers-newspapermen. The drawing shows one of those streets in the suburbs of New York where one apartment follows another, identical in size, shape and color, a man knocking on each of them to find out which one was his. Our own Philippine counterpart has the writer

traveling the byways and pathways of the Phil-American compound looking for his own home. Some storytellers claim it took him two hours to finally get there, others say three hours, while he himself is said to have claimed a measly five minutes.

A new tabloid has hit the streets — the name eludes us at the moment — with a column on art and the theatre which we would welcome as one specie would another. Its presence on a paper which deals mostly on economics, and which is supposed to catch fire along business circles, puzzles us somewhat though.

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* **Mabini Rey Centeno** (1922–1986), a Filipino fiction writer and journalist prominent in the 1940s and 1950s. He wrote for Liwayway and Mabuhay, served as president of the Malacañang Press Club, and was a founding member of the National Press Club.

* **Garcia Villa Garcia** (**pseudonym**) **for Jose Garcia Villa** (1908–1997), an internationally acclaimed Filipino poet, short-story writer, and literary critic, known for his experimental poetry and distinctive use of punctuation. He was named National Artist for Literature in 1973.

* **Nick Joaquin** (1917–2004), a Filipino novelist, short-story writer, playwright, and journalist, widely regarded as one of the country's greatest literary figures. Writing also under the pen name Quijano de Manila, he was named National Artist for Literature in 1976.

* **David Cortes Medalla** (1942–2020), an internationally acclaimed Filipino artist, poet, and pioneer of kinetic and participatory art.

* **Estrella D. Alfon** (1917–1983), a Filipino short-story writer, playwright, and journalist, known for her pioneering contributions to Philippine literature in English and as the only female member of the influential prewar literary group, the Veronicans.

* **Jose Villa Panganiban** (1903–1972), a Filipino writer, poet, playwright, linguist, lexicographer, and educator. A leading advocate of the national language, he served as director of the Institute of National Language and was a prolific author of dictionaries and works on Philippine literature. He also founded *The Varsitarian*, the student newspaper of the University of Santo Tomas, in 1928.

The limits of language

The limits of language have given birth to words difficult to translate into other and for perhaps every nation there, thrives a set of expressions which can find no equivalent in other countries. Thus for France's *cherchez la femme* there is the Spanish es mi hombre, distant in meaning, but close in emotional nuance. Conventional vocabulary scholars who would try to stop the flow of new terms, in fear of the power of the colorful and slangy, often termed the vulgar and the low, have had to take the back seat, and in the case of America as well as the Philippines, given in with grace if not with graciousness.

It is easier to believe that the word follows the fact, as it is hard to imagine the creation of the word alembong one hundred years ago, when our grandmothers had to hide even their own teeth behind fans, let alone their wiggle underneath multiple voluminous skirts. Siga-siga, born in the early nineteen fifties, when the rat-race was an accepted fact, and a golden mean between the toughie and the slow-poke meant a clever go-getter, is pure. unadulterated Philippine product, as national as the bibingka and the makapuno, and as palatable.

Di katalo, kampon, sagpi, bati, kasali, brod, form a group which reflects a situation equaled in some other countries only by fraternities, clubwomen (at the start of their organization) and the Ku Klux Klan. But perhaps in no other country is the acceptance so absolute, the loyalty so un-questioning, as it is here.

One for all, and all for one, and never mind whether the deed performed, the thought voiced defies one's own personal beliefs —personal belief, does not count when the group's satisfaction demands action that runs contrariwise to one individual's principle. Individualism pertains only to the choice of one's mate (even then subject to a set of standards dictated by a more universal approach to goodness) and to practically little else.

This extremely clannish attitude is perhaps, more greatly felt outside the cities. What used to be harmless cliques, stemming from compadre-comadre relationships, social clubs, blood relationships, have turned into Machiavellian institutions that have found power in numbers; numbers behind force, and force behind achievement. The masses are great as long as they retain their individuality with each mind thinking for itself, deciding for itself, and at worst following standards and slogans which may be cliches but which had honest motivations behind them. If the end result becomes one common decision, it is still a free one. There is a difference between a man boarding a car and driving to a woodland for relaxation, there to meet with many others with the same idea on how best to pass their time, and the man who gets into a car, puts his hand on the wheel, goes through all the motions of propelling the vehicle, when actually it is some higher force, a magnet, that draws the metal contraption and

the man to the same woodland spot where others also are going. That there is a certain amount of freedom is undeniable. In fact a basic principle, the choice of what to join, is involved. It is the only choice, a few times free, oftentimes dictated by circumstances outside one's personal feelings, that is made alone. From then on the kasagpi, the kampon, the brod, come into the picture.

Extreme individualism may be impractical at a time when man pits his mind and body against fate, nature, and other men. But individualism by all means has to thrive, if we want to give birth to a generation whose left hand will know what its right hand doing, and who will care which hand does which job.

Advice columns and how Doroy did not become a short story writer

It was by mistake, I am certain, that a letter was sent to me by a young girl, asking for advice. The address should have been Dorothy Dix*, or Aling Something-or-another. But not being one to forego the pleasure of telling sweet young things what they should do, say, or think, I now sink my clay toes where angels would turn away.

Her question goes something like this: My boyfriend no longer tells me he loves me. He still comes and visits me regularly, takes me out, is as thoughtful as ever, in fact I could not complain about him except for the fact that he never says the words "I love you" anymore. What should I think?

What should she think? There are those among our friends who would answer with one word: Semantics! Others with a more serious turn of mind will ponder the problem lengthily, will probably end up advising our young heroine to talk about the subject with her boyfriend frankly, pose the question bluntly: Do you or don't you love me?

Us, we think the latter course the best. And the best answer she could get would be: No, I don't love you. That would settle things once and for all. Regardless of what sophisticates may claim, words have not lost their value at a certain level, and it makes a world of difference whether they are spoken or not spoken. What the difference is, and which the better and which the worst we do not aim to settle here.

But the problem does remind us of a certain story read about ten years ago in some unidentified magazine. Once upon a time there existed a nation, with green fields, rich valleys and fertile mountains. Its people were looked upon with special favor by the gods, because of their industriousness and their honesty. Their harvests were rich, their granaries always full. There was nothing that they could ask for. And the people were happy.

But gradually discontent crept in. Where envy was not known in the past, its shadow now overcast the otherwise carefree hearts of the people. Little by little people tried to outdo each other, and when even that was not sufficient, they began to resort to cheating. It was inevitable that quarrels should follow. And before long there was chaos. The gods, looking down, shook their heads. There was enough for everyone, and yet there was no peace. How best to secure it?

They dug through their files, at the long records of man's wars. Remedies that had been used in the past and found useless were discarded. Finally a novel way was hit upon. They would

take away from this nation the power to speak three words, steal away even the memory of it. The words chosen were "I love you

In the midst of all the petty jealousies, the more serious misunderstandings, there still existed the ability to love. And with it, in the past the ability to express it. But suddenly the populace found themselves groping, literally at a loss for words. Outpourings of affection expressed in actions followed. If they could not say what they meant, a more intensive campaign by deeds was needed. People went out of their way to be even more loving. Before much time had passed the wars were forgotten, so busy was everyone trying to put into action what he could not say in words. And so once more peace was brought about.

The next problem, which faced the gods up above, was whether to return the words or not. The story, which we think is in some ways superior to that Stockton classic, "The Lady or the Tiger," ends right there.

New twist to the Valencia story of his career as a short story writer. After the twenty-nth story, it seemed the then young Doroy* was asked by Marquardt* to go to the Free Press office for a personal interview. The budding writer thought that for sure, this time, the story was now in the bag. But it turned out that what Marquardt had to tell him was this. "Young man, you have not yet lived enough. Go, live first and then come back with your story. In the meantime we shall use this one."

So off Doroy went and lived. The cup overflowing, he then became a newspaperman, and now considers himself the greatest contributor to the history of short-story writing in the Philippines. Someday, he still hopes, the right circles will recognize his contribution and pin a medal on him for his Resolution not to be a Short Story Writer.

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* **Dorothy Dix** was the pen name of pioneering journalist Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer (1861–1951). She dispensed blunt, common-sense advice on love, marriage, and domestic life to millions of readers. Originally titled "Sunday Salad" in 1895–1896, her feature was soon renamed "Dorothy Dix Talks".

* **Teodoro "Doroy" Valencia** (1913–1987) was a prominent Filipino journalist, newspaper columnist, and civic leader, best known for his influential column Over a Cup of Coffee in the Manila Times. He was also noted for his philanthropic work and civic campaigns in Manila

* **Frederic S. "Fritz" Marquardt** was an American journalist born in Manila who served as associate editor of the Philippines Free Press before World War II. He later headed US wartime information operations in the Southwest Pacific and became editor of the Arizona Republic.

The Doroy prequel

A friend has just finished giving me a course on the art of telling the truth. He figured I needed it because he claimed, (1) I am a writer, (2) writers always tell the truth, (3) writers like to keep their friends.

There was no point in arguing with him on all three points. He is a firm believer in Dale Carnegie and most probably would have let me say my say, and even have the last word, but remain unconvinced.

And so I became a recipient of a one-hour free scholarship on the art of telling the truth. It went something like this:

Approach your subject through a totally different subject. Say, you want to tell a person that she is a lousy actor. Well, tell her first she has such a pretty face, that she should become a beauty queen. Embroider around this truth. Say she has poise, she has intelligence, perchance she has money. The function of women in the world is to adorn it. A female's prime duty is to be beautiful. Quote a poet for added weight to your statements. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Then belittle the profession of acting. Belittle it especially where women are concerned. Cite the theatre of Shakespeare's time, when the part of women was played by young boys. Shakespeare was a genius, you say with authority. No one can argue that. And the theatre men of his time knew what they were about. They knew that women's place was not on the stage (my mentor said nothing about women's place in the theatre pits).

Now you have established a point. Go back to the original subject, the person whom you think should not be an actor. If she is not dull by this time she should anyway know what you are driving at. But if she is, you still do not tell her pointblank how bad she is. Instead tell her that her time and beauty is wasted in acting. Tell her that acting is only for people who have no other way of legitimately showing off their faces to the public. Then finally tell her that very seldom are beautiful people good actresses. Take Bette Davis, take Tallulah Bankhead, take Julie Harris. And then the truth.

If properly prepared, she will take it with joy, seeing new vistas opening before her, new horizons beckoning towards a future that best fits her qualities and for which there can be nothing but glory and fame.

The educator however, did not teach me to sell the other side of the coin, the telling of a truth that concerns oneself, and making it sound as complimentary as is possible. The lesson, this time, came from no less than the hi-fi-famous Doroy Valencia, also known for his coffee, his presidency, and lately his short stories.

For, like Nick Joaquin, Doroy says, he is also a short story writer, steeped in the background of Intramuros, with a love for it as warm and as deep as has our incomparable writer on old Philippines.

Short story writer? Some asked with eyebrows raised. Why, yes, and even published once in the Philippines Free Press. And in case you have problems of publishing, here's Doroy's sure-fire formula. Like all beginners he had his troubles. His first story came back rejected. His second story came back, rejected. His third story came back, rejected. His fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, up to the twenty-first. The twenty-second came back with a note though. Yes, it would be published! But on one condition: Valencia was not to send in any more short stories.

Nose-picking and writing for the masses

Yesterday we went down to the corner store to get a pack of cigarettes and were served by a Chinaman with a sleepy look decorated by a furrowed forehead. Having just finished a feature on dope addiction, we are inclined to look at everyone who seemed sleepy as a possible addict. But before we could complete the symptom-search our Chinaman did something that threw us completely off our investigation. Fixing us with a somber eye, he lifted his right hand, extended the little finger, then picked his nose, a nostril at a time. It took at least one minute to complete the operation, and one minute is a very long length of time when what you are watching is nose-picking and when the gaze of the nose-picker is nailed on your own face.

When I tried to figure it out later, though, I was quite sure his actions were entirely separate from his stare. His cleaning habits were a thing apart from his cigarette-selling, and if I had picked up the pack a little gingerly, I am sure he could not have noticed it, he was too busy enjoying the pleasures of his own peculiar catharsis.

Only time I ever saw the same operation performed by an adult, with the same air, was in a French movie. A big executive, in conference with a prospective customer of his firm, first picks a rose from the flower vase on his desk, sniffs it in a most Chaplin-way, puts it down again, and listens to the barrage of words from the rather garrulous caller. Then, unable to put in a word edgewise, and with nothing else to do, he proceeds to pick his nose. The performance is complete, to the flicking off of the pickings from his fingers, accomplished most artistically with a graceful curving of the fingertips. Here, obviously, was an aristocrat of sorts, doing what every aristocrat—and plebe—does. (Proving again that Death is not the only leveler.)

Should the writer write for the masses, who read mostly mediocre stuff, or should the writer produce only quality work—which 90% of the readers do not understand or care for? This seemed to be the question posed at the writers' conference held in Manila recently, according to a belated account we got of the event.

Defenders of the former argument believe that since it is the readers who pay for the magazines which print the stuff, they have a right to enjoy it. On the other hand, what would happen to writers of good, literary standing if they were driven to the pauper's corner by the taste of the masses? Actually, we think the problem is not as big as it is being made out.

Most magazines are making an honest effort to include both really good writing, mostly through the medium of short stories, and the kind of writing that comes out in feature

articles. That more literary essays, criticisms, and "little magazine" works are not used is only reasonable.

Weekly magazines are not supposed to cater to the intellectuals. It would certainly be wonderful for the writer if one could envision a magazine which runs advertisements of cooking oil, cosmetic soap, and kiss-guaranteed lipsticks, and which at the same time runs articles a la Barzun*, Trilling*, and Riesman*. Unfortunately people who are concerned about body odors, schoolgirl complexions, and non-smear paints prefer to read on Monroe*, Rosa Rosal* and the private lives of political moguls.

Should we then pamper this kind of mentality? the question is asked. Pamper, no. But let us not be banner-waving reformers, either, out to change the tastes of the masses. With a really good body of literature coming out regularly, perhaps between the covers of a literary magazine, or such as Katha* was, and with some kind of aid from government and private patrons, our local writers might still see the day when they could sit down to writing a good short story every three or six months, and not be hounded by the shadow of poverty four-fifth of the time.

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* **Jacques Barzun** (1907–2012) was a French-born American historian, cultural critic, and educator, noted for his writings on Western intellectual and cultural history. He was a longtime professor and dean at Columbia University.

* **Lionel Trilling** (1905–1975) was an American literary critic, essayist, and professor at Columbia University, known for his influential studies of literature, morality, and culture. He was a leading figure among the New York Intellectuals.

* **David Riesman** (1909–2002) was an American sociologist, educator, and social critic, best known for his influential 1950 book The Lonely Crowd, which examined changing American social character and conformity.

* **Marilyn Monroe** (1926–1962) was an American actress, model, and singer who became one of Hollywood's most celebrated stars and enduring cultural icons of the 1950s, known for films such as Gentlemen Prefer Blondes and Some Like It Hot.

* **Rosa Rosal** (1928–2023) was an acclaimed Filipino film actress and humanitarian, celebrated for her dramatic performances in postwar Philippine cinema. She starred in films such as Anak Dalita (1956) and Badjao (1957) and was widely recognized for her decades of volunteer work with the Philippine Red Cross.

* **Kathá** was an anthology of Philippine writing in English launched in 1955 by the Philippine Writers Association under the editorship of J. C. Tuvera. It featured fiction, poetry, and essays by prominent Filipino writers of the postwar period.

Books: Restless House by Emile Zola

Few writers have met with as much personal and professional abuse in their life-time, and been given so much praise and appreciation after their deaths, as has Emile Zola. His political career, and especially his defense of Dreyfus, gained him countless enemies. His literary output, and particularly his publication of three novels, — P*ot¬Bouille*, *La Terre*, and *La Debacle*, won for him endless adverse criticism. The last came from a group of highly righteous, paradoxically moral Frenchmen whose three chief ideals he had attacked in turn in the three novels – The Sanctity of the Middle Class Marriage, The Honest Virtue of the Peasantry, and The Honour of the Army.

It is difficult for contemporary writers to understand the violence of critical attack which ended in the trial and imprisonment of Vizetelly, translator of Zola's *La Terre*, in the face of the present comparative freedom of artists. It was this trial which was the direct cause of the limited number of translations of Restless House (*Pot-Bouille*). Only three hundred and ten copies were printed by the Lutetian Society, for a small group whose admiration for Zola was greater than their faith in French bourgeois society.

Restless House was written at a time when Zola himself was suffering from unhappy circumstances in his own domestic life. Eleven years of sterile marriage was telling on the nerves of his wife, Alexandrine. and affecting the peace of the house. Although never intentionally patterned after his own home life the subject of the novel having appealed to Zola long before trouble crossed his doorstep, one may well suspect echoes of his own discontent in this book.

Zola had long been of the belief that while poverty drove women into prostitution, education of the French upper middle class girls led to adultery. A prudish censorship on the physical realities of life and the false romantic view derived from clandestine novel reading was, he believed, the worst preparation for the brutalities, or dullness, of marriage. It is this thesis which he dwells on at length in the Restless House,

The action of the novel takes place in a large block of apartments in the Palais Royal, in the heart of Paris, and in that period in which the book was written, the center of the fashionable.

A young, handsome adventurer from Provence, Octave Mouret, comes to live in this most choice of quarters. He wins his way right into the core of the middle-class heart, his polished charm his passport,, his desire to make his way in the wealthy Paris of the Second Empire his motivation. He is the answer to the meaningless dreams of middle-class wives and maidens,

the young man who enjoys love-making with no desire for love, assignations with no emotional involvements.

Through his life we get a broad glimpse of the lives in the respectable apartment houses of women who get their nourishment by reading fifth-grade novels, women hysterical with emotional dissatisfaction, women who regard their husbands as robots to help them ascend the social ladder, daughters who scheme for profitable marriages, daughters who scheme against their mothers who are scheming for profitable marriages for them. The scenes of the novel are mostly flimsy, even shimmering—polite social chattering, tea parties, musical evenings, formal receptions—but the chain that links them, the Big Lie, is tough.

The men are no less involved. For if the women are the active falsifiers, the men are no less at fault, with their heavy middle-class blindness, their lack of imagination, or their brutality. It is, however, in the great agony of the maid-of-all work, Adele, who suffers birth pangs amidst all this hypocrisy and ribaldry, that the Impact of Zola's irony is at its strongest. She is the Innocent who suffers in this dark world, but a world which the writer paints blackly, not because of the characters of his various protagonists, but because of circumstances. There, are no villains in Zola's books, there are only victims of circumstances. Had he supplied the "bad" and the "good," Zola would probably have suffered from less invectives. It was in the generalized condemnation of the state of affairs, from which no reader could find exception for his own station, for which he could not be forgiven. The ending, for those who wish to call it so, is even "happy," but to Zola, as it was to Octave, "no, change had come into his life; today was yesterday, with neither pause nor stop."

It is the same translation of Percy Pinkerton—which so well preserves the rich narrative of Zola, so full of irony and comedy, that is now available to the less prudish public of 1955. It makes excellent reading matter, especially at such a time when there seems to be a dearth of really good novels.

Books: Cards of Identity by Nigel Dennis

No book that we know of in child psychology reads as well as Nigel Dennis's several passages in "Cards of Identity" published by Vanguard late last year For example:

> What fun it was in those dear, bygone days, to hear mother and father talk about sex! "Let's always," my father told her, "speak frankly about sex before the child, so that we don't give society a maladjusted dwarf."

These words are my earliest recollection: I think I was about three at the time. They impressed me because I hated the thought of becoming a maladjusted dwarf, and it seemed that conversation about sex, whatever that might be, was the one thing that would make me grow. And again:

> ....Whenever felt lazy or vapid and put on a moon-face, my father always bellowed at the top of his voice: "Just look at him! With the other children you always know where you are, but you never know with him what's at the back of his mind!" It had not occurred to me before that I had a back to my mind, but once this area had been brought to my attention as the place where admiration was found, I took a life-lease on the premises. When my parents said: "Well, boys, we have a surprise today: we're going to take you to the circus," I never turned a hair. While my brothers cat-called and hurrahed, I sat with a pudding-face, looking, if anything, more depressed than pleased. My father was enthralled. "Just look at the little b---!" he would shriek, not a squeak out of him! I wonder what's going on inside — at the back?" My mother would tousle my hair, and murmur fondly: "A mother always knows. He's more thrilled than all the rest of them put together – that's why he's so quiet."
>
> Just as the children's crusade may be said to typify the Middle Ages, precocious children are typical of the present age. In fact, one is tempted to ask whether there is a single man left who for once commits an outrageous folly. Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and carefully that he literally chokes with thought.

The beautiful thing about "Cards of Identity" is that in spite of being a novel, supposedly having a beginning, middle, and end, one can open the book on almost any page and meet with self-contained nuggets. These reflect the twentieth century's political behaviour, sexual relationships, culture and general attitudes in much the same vein as does sociologist David Riesman's books. Only in the case of Mr. Dennis, a sober subject is lightened by a humorous style.

It is a skillful, and jolly farce, perhaps inheriting the problems of life that were in the past discussed by such as Kafka and Dostoyevsky. But the treatment is purely British, and contemporary twentieth century, the century of society as foreseen by the nineteenth century figures like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Thus, in another passage that practically asks to be quoted: [The quotation was inadvertently deleted from the column.]

February 29 at hand, wooing customs deserve some mention. At this instance, fireflies in love are what keep us busy nights. Since they are supposed to woo by means of lights, it is interesting to follow the progress of courtship by the frequency of the greenish flashes that fill the dark. A male firefly flashes, a lady answers back. There follows something akin to our own Morse code, and before we poor blind mortals are aware of it, they are living happily ever after.

25 February 1956

Nick Joaquin touring America, Abe Cruz buying hats

In the twentieth century rage for realism, the art of imagination has suffered some setback. Even the surrealistic fantasies are actually emotional realities — so their creators say — and if it is argued that imagination has actually progressed, then it is mainly in the realm of the intellectual and psychological. But the Barmecide* kind of making-up things, or the poor matchstick girl's, has gone out of fashion.

Perhaps it is a mark of infantilism to still like fairy-tales and exchange a good Christian Andersen any time for say, William Dean Howells*. Some psychologists claim that such tales are not good for children, does not prepare them for reality. But then it would be wise for them to take a peek at a hundred other books being used in schools, private and public, and then speak again.

A letter from Jim Austria Manalo* (who claims we're exploiting her—how true!) informs us that Nick Joaquin is now in Butte, Montana, where he may be spending the loneliest Christmas he ever had (obviously Jim figures that out from the premise that Christmas away from the Austria-Manalo menage is a catastrophe, at least for the P.I. outstanding young man in literature). Nick is touring the country – New England (we can see Nick in an NE summer under the old old trees, only Nick won't be there during summertime), the deep south (we can hear Nick struggling with the southern drawl, only he probably has mastered it by now), the Mid-west (and now Nick eating Iowa corn, only there really isn't much corn this time of the year, there's only Iowa snow, and the odor of oats from a Cedar rapids factory), the west (and him in a cowboy suit only there really aren't any such things visible for miles, only movie stars), Mexico (here he is in his element … perhaps), and New Orleans (one has but to think of Streetcar, Tennessee Williams and know that he might probably feel almost at home).

And more from Jim on Nick: he has finished his novel.

On Abe Aguilar*, Armando* writes of lunch together somewhere downtown, shopping at Brentano's where he bought Seven Lively Arts (someone snickers: and the eighth: where does he buy it? We'd say, somewhere around the 57th, or around 47th, in fact anywhere, even in the best of avenues.)

Anyway, from what we hear, he is more worried about hats the any art. Already the proud, warm possessor of one, he was out again in the cold when he had to leave it at the cleaners. He shivered through the period, and when Armando said, it really did not matter much, look

at him (Armando) he never wears one, the rejoinder was as to be expected, "*Hindi bale ikaw, meron ka pang buhok.*"

Looking back on the year 1955, we'd say that the most memorable event in the literary summary of the time is the coming out of the Katha. Overshadowed for fanfare by the visit of Faulkner, the influence of the book will be much more than the genial words of the great author can ever accomplish. But maybe a comparison is not warranted. Only one can't help thinking of the sponsorship behind the two events, and the more effective of them.

Old-new book, out The Honorable Picnic, by Thomas Raucat. A translation from French we are still doing our best to wangle a copy of the selection from some friends abroad, and may have it come next week, in which case. we'll be ready to talk about it and better still lend it out.

From what we hear, it's the kind you force on people you like.

27 January 1956

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* **Barmecide** (adjective) means imaginary, illusory, or offering the appearance of something substantial without the reality.The word comes from the tale of the Barmecide's Feast in The Arabian Nights, in which a wealthy host pretends to serve an elaborate banquet to a hungry beggar, but all the dishes are imaginary.

* **William Dean Howells** (1837–1920) was an American novelist, literary critic, and editor, regarded as a leading advocate of literary realism in the United States. As editor of The Atlantic Monthly (1871–1881), he championed writers such as Henry James and Mark Twain. His best-known novels include The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885) and A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890).

* **Jim Austria Manalo** (1921 –1961) was known as one of the best journalists before her early death at the age of 38. She was married to Armando D. Manalo in 1951 and accompanied him to New York in 1954, where she later covered the United Nations General Assembly for Philippine newspapers. She is the mother of Ambassador and former Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Enrique Manalo.

* **Emilio "Abe" Aguilar Cruz** (1915–1991) was a Filipino painter, journalist, writer, editor, art critic, and diplomat who edited the Sunday Times Magazine and Daily Mirror and later served as Philippine ambassador to UNESCO.

* **Armando Manalo** (1919? – 2008) was a Filipino journalist, essayist, and diplomat known for his polished writing on literature, culture, and public affairs in publications. He served as Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs and as an alternate Philippine representative to the United Nations in New York City.

Philippines is missing and books of the year

That the Philippines hasn't gotten there yet was obvious even from the children's literature which flooded the markets during the recent gift-giving season. An attractive coloring book with more than a hundred pages, Children of Other Lands, printed in the U.S. carried sketches of Bolivia, Denmark, New Zealand, Africa. There were children from Burma and Thailand and the Maoris. But there were none from the Philippines. Offhand we cannot think of any other country that was not represented.

A beginner's library, containing a couple of dozen small books, each book, the story of a child from some particular land and which carried countries as China and Mexico and Siam, again did not include the Philippines.

But the children's world was not all where the country seemed forgotten. A well-known whisky which recently has adopted international arts and crafts to advertise its products quite attractively, has missed us too. The first group which served as background for the bottle drink were colored pictures of chess pieces from different lands. Beautifully carved things, the objects were really collectors' items, representing mostly the countries where they came from. The Philippines could have been included, since twice already we have seen whole chess sets made to order, with all Philippine figures instead of the conventional knights and kings and men.

The last ad of the whisky played up international Christmas cards — India, Austria, Norway, Canada, Malaya, and several others were represented. Again the Philippines was absent. Considering the quite attractive local Christmas cards which are being produced here, and by well-known Filipino artists who could even better the cards used in the advertisement, it is obvious that there is something lacking in the Philippine international public relations. Which is quite surprising for a country where every man who pays an income tax employs a PRO and every other who does not is a PRO.

One of the Ten Top Books of year, according to Newsweek (the others are Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man, by Thomas Mann; Band of Angels, by Robert Penn Warren; The Solitary Singer, a study of Walt Whitman by Gay Wilson Allen; The Call to Honour, first part of the memoir of de Gaulle; Ten North Frederick, a novel by John O'Hara; Hiroshima Diary by Michihiko Hachiya; Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Vol 1; The King's Peace, a history of the Puritan revolt in England by Wedgewood; and the Dead Sea Scrolls by Millar Burrows) is the second volume of Ernest Jones, "The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud." This work is judged by the magazine's reviewer as one of the most breath-taking books of the time.

Written by an intimate associate of the great man, Ernest Jones had the distinct advantage and disadvantage of knowing in full detail the daily work of Freud. While able to supply the reader. with the most minute accounts of the man's activities, he has however escaped the danger of too great closeness, i.e., getting emotionally involved while writing on the man.

Possessing both knowledge, love, and detachment, Jones has succeeded in painting a brilliant portrait of Freud, human enough to be understandable, and great enough to be noble. The reader gets glimpses of the man through Jones who has been the listener to such remarks as "The great question, that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is: "What does a woman want?" In more sober vein he says, "A man should not strive to eliminate his complexes but to get into accord with them; they are legitimately what directs his conduct in the world."

To those who have requested us to review books that are "readable," our apologies for not having attended to their wishes immediately. We have been quite busy digesting some books which we received for Christmas, and in between reading children's books which we also received for Christmas. Both kinds not falling under the category of readable, we shall have to take time off this week to look up our Erle Stanley Gardners and perhaps Faith Baldwins, which seems to be the choice of so many, as against the more recent, and definitely younger Françoise Sagan.

Writing as a job, plans for a national theater

The Philippines is a many-toed country. Step on one toe – and it is almost impossible to avoid doing so, there's one on every foot of ground—and you make an enemy. To quote, again, our friend Armando Manalo: "It's a rat race. It's no longer the best man that wins. It's the faster one."

But to date the world of art has escaped or avoided, this cut-throat it's-either-you-or-I, fight, and artists are able to live in relative peace, if not harmony. Closest active demonstration of disagreement was the walkout of a group of conservative artists on a Rotary-sponsored exhibit last year. But even in that instance the incident did not have connotations of destruction. Whether mistaken or not, nonetheless, it was an effort rather to survive.

This probably only means that in different social groups, there exists the most tolerance among artists. Or it could also mean that the financial competition involved in the artists' outputs has not yet become too close, mostly because there is still much room for what is produced.

What seems to be a blessing on the other hand also works towards making a curse. In the field of writing, where the rates are low, competition is almost non-existent and the desire to subsist on what one makes plying the art (at) large, the effect is one of over-abundance of output, usually an abundance that has nothing to do with quality. It is almost inevitable. We would say that the dice is loaded against writers, in particular, who may want to produce nothing but the best.

To earn one's keep one has to get a job. Having permanent employment means the serving of another purpose besides that of writing, and the swerving of the mind to more material thoughts. At his best a really dedicated writer can produce only one good piece in six months, or some such length of time, and perhaps even more.

And if the writer, living true to what he considers the schedule he should keep, gives all his time to his writing, he still cannot produce more than one really good piece in, say, two or three months. Of course these estimates are arbitrary, and may vary according to the genius in an artist, but they hold true for the general run of writers. It is obvious then that he has to produce more if he ever is to get some butter for his bread – that is, if there is bread at all in the house. Before he knows it, he is producing what is known as canned stuff, and more particularized as hack, and lately plain hash.

News that there has been a committee formed to study the project of putting up a national theatre* will surely be welcomed by the theatre groups, and even in other affiliated circles.

Rumors, as of six months ago, before this project was approved by the administration, pointed to the fact that there was some disagreement among actors themselves as to what kind of theatre would do best for local production.

There is the arena theatre group, which would have a circular layout, arena-like, in the style of the old Romans. Seats would be arranged in a circle around the stage with the latter at the bottom of the pit, so to speak, and the seats rising on the sides, with the last row in the highest position, thus eliminating the stretched-neck problem.

The other group, which has more supporters, and which to our mind is the more practical, is the conventional theatre arrangement. Although the arena seems to be the more picturesque of the two, it has quite a number of disadvantages, among them the ease of exits and entrances, the audience's view of the actors, and possibly the acoustics.

But since both groups have their staunch supporters who are all vocal, the rest of Manila will have the benefit of a stage that will really be well-planned, well-executed. For, as in all projects, it is where there are the most critics preceding an execution that there is the best work done.

04 February 1956

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* National Theater: On January 13, 1956, President Ramon Magsaysay issued Executive Order No. 157, establishing a committee to select a Manila site and prepare architectural plans for a National Theater. The committee was chaired by Federico Elizalde and included architect Juan Nakpil, Raul Manglapus, Father James B. Reuter, and others. On June 14, 1956, Republic Act No. 1427 provided for a proposed Jose Rizal National Cultural Shrine, comprising a national theater, national museum, and national library, preferably on one site. The planned location was Luneta, behind the Rizal Monument. The project encountered opposition because of its cost, the loss of parkland, and concerns that the proposed 29.25-meter-high theater would overshadow the Rizal Monument. The plans were revised, and only the National Library was constructed.

Books: The Honorable Picnic by Thomas Raucat

The love affair between Japan and America, which promises to go on for some time yet, has made many a Filipino shake his head, to say the least. But one has to admit certain benefits. Like most liaisons, there are offspring.

In this case, literature has been favored by the relationship which is rumored to stem from no other basis but political and economic. Art had never entered the fundamentals, but nonetheless many a western home is now built with sliding doors, gabled Japanese roofs, wooden floors spread with mats and scattered with tatami. Japanese lanterns with electric light bulbs hang from ceilings, and Oriental paintings hang on walls. All in all, it has added color to the American landscape, and richness to world literature.

For in the last couple of years alone, several translations of Japanese works have come out from the American press, besides the books on cultural Japan, which have been written by visitors to the place. And in spite of whatever the Filipino with a long memory who lost so much in the war may say, or want, we have to agree that Japanese art deserves all that it gets.

The early twentieth century picture of what the Japanese was (at least as far as Hollywood would like to make him out) always showed a small, shiny-faced, mysterious stranger impeccably dressed, bowing as a butler or gardener, a knife up his sleeve, a hiss up his cheek, and s-p-y written all over him. Always he came out a general in the army or some count, in disguise. Always, he was the most sinister of characters.

That was why, when in 1927, a translation of Thomas Raucat's *L'Honorable Partie de Plaisir* came out under the name of The Honorable Picnic it caused a minor flurry among those whose ideas on what Japan was had been crystallized through frequent movie-going.

The Honorable Picnic is the story of a brief encounter, told in eight parts, each of them autobiographical, and with different narrators. This leads to a variety of self-revelations that certainly debunk the standard concept of what a Japanese is like.

A westerner, a Swiss in this case, though easily more credible as French (but funnier as the former, in the converse way of a Filipino being funny in the character of a count) is the hero who tries to seduce a kimono-clad lass. Large, clumsy, coarse-grained, he is beautifully set as the Gulliver to the delicate world of Lilliputians to which his girl belongs. There is no conflict in problem, only a series of tactful evasions of the Orientals whose politeness never deserts them.

Raucat does not pretend to say what the Japanese is. Whether he is courteous or merely selfish, selfless or interested, soft or hard, is for the reader to decide. He gives enough clues. But if the Japanese characters in the book are no longer the mysteries that movies have made them out, one has to know the country much to understand what is going on in its people's minds.

There is delightful confusion created by the medley of characters including attractive and young Japanese women, pompous professors, proud matrons, eager station masters, merchants, geisha girls, and innkeepers. There is a Pickwickian flavor to their types but a Pickwick with a Japan accent.

It would do well for us to forget our prejudices – the hiss and the guttural sounds of an unfriendly language – and read the Honorable Picnic for what It is – a tale of Japan in time of peace. For there is an art of war, and there is an art of peace, and being adept in one may make them more adept at the other.

A passage from the court diary of Murasaki, more familiar to many as the Tale of Genji, describes the royal princess thus: “She is so shy, and retiring that she seems to hide her heart even from herself.” Striking another note, but with the same tone, is the answer of a one-time government employee to the question of what his work was. “Well,” he answered, “I am put down as a Confidential Assistant. But it is so confidential even I don’t know what it is.”

18 February 1956

A short bio

Ines Umali was born on 21 January 1923 to Tomas Recio Umali of Lipa, Batangas, abogado and Concepcion Herrera of Gasan Marinduque, mujer de casa, at the Hospital de San Pablo, Laguna.

She was baptized at the parish of Intramuros on 8 February 1923 as Maria Ines Juliana Umali. Her godparents were Primitivo Recio Kalaw (the cousin of Tomas) and Eufresina Guevarra.

She began her schooling in 1929 at St Scholastica's College Manila as Nita Umali. In 1932, she transferred to Tiaong Elementary School, where she graduated in 1935.

She began first year of high school at Philippine Women's College (later known as PWU) and later returned to St Scholastica's, where she graduated high school in 1939. She began her tertiary education at the University of Santo Tomas, but that was interrupted by World War II. She returned after the war, and continued her studies and was also a member of the faculty even if she had not yet completed her degree. She graduated in 1946. In July of that year, she was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts (AB), Summa cum laude. In November of the same year, she was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Literature in Journalism, Magna cum laude.

She left for the United States in 1947 (her passport indicating Maria Ines Julianita Umali) to study at the State University of Iowa (University of Iowa) where, as Maria Inez Julianita Umali, she obtained a Master of Arts in English in February 1949.

She then returned to Manila.

In December 1949, at age 26, she won third prize in the Philippines Free Press Short Story awards for "The Moneymakers". First prize that year went to Nick Joaquin's "Guardia de Honor" and second prize to Gonzalo Villa's "Death of an Illusion."

From 1949, immediately upon her return from Iowa, she began writing for major Manila newspapers and magazines in both English and Tagalog.

In 1956, at age 33, the National Press Club of the Philippines awarded her a Certificate of Merit for distinguished and significant work in the field of journalism for the year 1955.

I cannot be absolutely certain of the dates, but it appears that from 1961 she began working for Philcoa (Philippine Coconut Administration.) I am not sure in what capacity, but I think it may have been as PRO, and I recall visiting the offices by the Quezon Circle often to submit manuscripts and vouchers.

In 1963, she took the Civil Service Exam for Press Relations Officer, and passed. She began working at the Malacañan Press Office under Jose Aspiras, then Press Secretary. The job also included accompanying the President and First Lady on State Visits, Summits, Conferences, and State Banquets.

In 1970, she was made Project Director of the Population Information Education Office of the National Media Production Center (NMPC), with main offices at Solana Street, Intramuros Manila. In 1971, at the East-West Center in Hawaii, she attended a course which was a Pilot Seminar in Communications in Family Planning. I believe she was the first who used the medium of comics in the Philippines to push an agenda—at the time it was the message of Responsible Parenthood.

In 1973, the family moved to Copenhagen. In 1976, she was assigned as Special Assistant of the National Media Production Center in Europe.

From 1978–1986 she served as Officer in Charge of NMPC offices in Europe and Consultant to the NMPC USA area. In 1978, she was named Honorary Tourism Representative of the Department of Tourism in Copenhagen.

She continued to contribute articles to magazines in the Philippines and newspapers and journals in Denmark.

She married Poul Berthelsen in Manhattan, New York City on 12 January 1952 and then on 23 January 1956 in the parish of San Juan, Rizal.

Nita had three children: Janice born in 1953 and now lives in Milan, Karen Marie born in 1955 and now lives in Vancouver, and Jan Emil born in 1964 and now lives in Edinburgh. She has five grandchildren: Tania and Marc Viarnaud, Thomas Cardenas, Nicola and Sean Berthelsen.

In 2000, she suffered a stroke in Copenhagen, and returned to the Philippines in 2005.

In 2002, she received the National Book Award for Translation for The Tayabas Chronicles: The Early Years (1886-1907) based on Fragmentos de mi Juventud, the memoirs of her mother, Ma. Concepcion Herrera vda. de Umali.

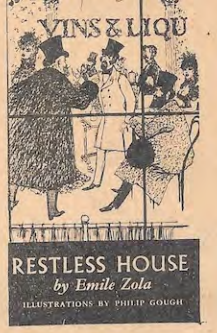
In 2009, she received the Parangal Hagbong, the lifetime achievement award in letters from the University of Santo Tomas, her alma mater.

Nita Umali Berthelsen passed away in 2014 in Quezon City.

STLESS HOUSE

By Emil Zola

Reviewed by
ITA U. BERTHELSEN



V WRITERS have met with
s much personal and prof-
ssional abuse in their life-
me, and been given so
praise and appreciation aft-
r deaths, as has Emil Zola.
itical career, and especially
ense of Dreyfus, gained him
ss enemies. His literary
and particularly his pub-
of three novels, — *Pot-*
, La Terre, and *La Debacle,*
r him endless adverse crit-
The last came from a group
hly righteous, paradoxically
Frenchmen whose three chief
he had attacked in turn in
ree novels—the *Sanctity of*
iddle Class Marriage, The
Virtue of the Peasantry,
he Honour of the Army.

difficult for contemporary
to understand the violence
ical attack which ended in
rial and imprisonment of
le, translator of Zola's La
in the face of the present
rative freedom of artists. It
is trial which was the direct
of the limited number of
ations of *Restless House*
ouille). Only three hundred
en copies were printed by
utetian Society, for a small
whose admiration for Zola
reater than their faith in
n bourgeois society.

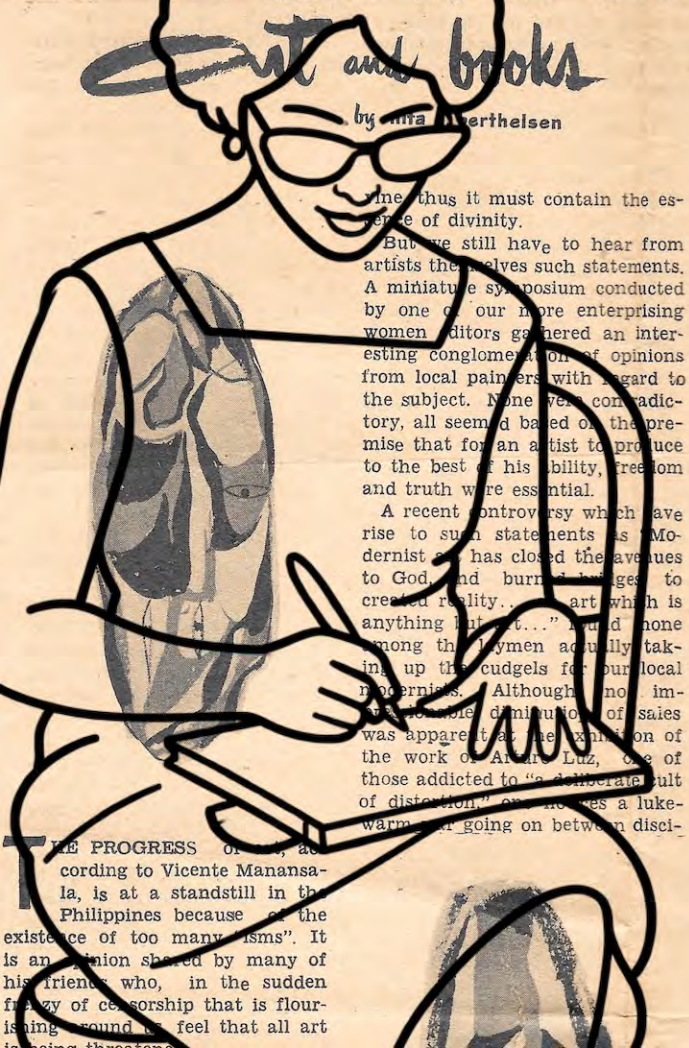
less House was written at a
when Zola himself was suf-
from unhappy circumstan-
his own domestic life. E
ears of sterile marriage was
on the nerves of his wife,
ndrine, and affecti the
of the house. Although in the wealthy Paris of the Second Empire his motivation. He is the answer to the meaningless dreams of middle-class wives and maidens, the young man who enjoys love-making with no desire for love, assignations with no emotional involvements.

Through his life we get a broad glimpse of the lives in the respectable apartment-houses—of women who get their nourishment by reading fifth-grade novels, women hysterical with emotional dissatisfaction, women who regard their husbands as robots to help them ascend the social ladder, daughters who scheme for profitable marriages, daughters who scheme against their mothers who are scheming for profitable marriages for them. The scenes of the novel are mostly flimsy, even shimmering—polite social chatterings, tea parties, musical evenings, formal receptions—but the chain that links them, the Big Lie, is tough.

The men are no less involved. For if the women are the active falsi[fiers] the[m] are no less at fault, with their heavy middle-class blindness, their lack of imagination, or their brutality. It is, however, in the great agony of the maid-of-all-work, Adele, who suffers birth pangs amidst all this hypocrisy and ribaldry, that the

Art and books

by nita u. berthelsen



Art And Books

By Nita U. Berthelsen

YESTERDAY we went down to the corner store to get a pack of cigarettes, and were served by a Chinaman with sleepy look decorated by a furved forehead. Having just fined a feature on dope addiction, are inclined to look at every- who seems sleepy as a possi- addict. But before we could nplete the symptom-search our inaman did something that ew us completely off our inves- ation. Fixing us with a somber , he lifted his right hand, exded the little finger, then pick- his nose, a nostril at a time. took at least one minute to nplete the operation, and one nute is a very long length of e when what you are watch-



is nose-picking, and when the e of the nose-picker is nailed your own face.

When I tried to figure it out stuff, or should the write uce only quality work—whi of the readers do not und or care for? This seemed the question posed at the conference held in Manila ly, according to a belated we got of the event.

Defenders of the former ment believe that since it readers who pay for the ma which print the stuff, they right to enjoy it. On the hand, what would happen ters of good, literary stand they were driven to the p corner by the taste of the r Actually, we think the prol not as big as it is being out.

Most magazines are mak bonest effort to include bot ly good writing, mostly t the medium of short stori the kind of writing that con in feature articles. That m erary essays, criticisms, an tle magazine" works are n is only reasonable. Weekly azines are not supposed t to the intellectuals. It wou tainly be wonderful for th ter if one could envision a zine which runs advertisem cooking oil, cosmetic soap ar guaranteed lipsticks, and wh the same time runs article Barzun, Trilling and Ri Unfortunately people wh concerned about body schoolgirl complexions, and smear paints prefer to r Monroe, Rosa Rosal, and t vate lives of political mogu Should we then pamper ? the q no. But ding ref nge the n a reall



THE limits of language have given birth to words difficult to translate into other languages, and for perhaps every nation there thrives a set of expressions which can find no equivalent in other countries. Thus for France's *cherchez la femme* there is the Spanish *Es mi hombre,* distant in meaning but close in emotional nuance. Conventional vocabulary scholars who would try to stop the flow of new terms, in fear of the power of the colorful and slangy, often termed the vulgar and the low, have had to take the back seat, and in the case of America as well as the Philippines, given in with grace if not with graciousness.

It is easier to believe that the word follows the fact, as it is hard to imagine the creation of the word *aleabong* one hundred years ago, when our grandmothers had to hide even their own teeth behind fans, let alone their wig-

then subject to a dards dictated by versal approach to g to practically little

This extremely tude is perhaps mor outside the cities. be harmless clique from compadre-com ships, social clubs, b ships, have turned vellian institutions found power in nu bers behind force, hind achievement. T great as long as the individuality. with thinking for itself, d self, and at worst fol ards and slogans cliches but which ha tivations behind the result becomes one sion, it is still a fr is a difference bet boarding a car and woodland for relaxa meet with many ot same idea on how their time, and the into a car, puts his wheel, goes through tions of propelling when actually it is force, a magnet, th

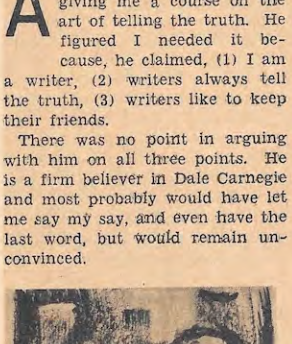


Art And Books

By Nita U. Berthelsen

A friend has just finished giving me a course on the art of telling the truth. He figured I needed it because, he claimed, (1) I am a writer, (2) writers always tell the truth, (3) writers like to keep their friends.

There was no point in arguing with him on all three points. He is a firm believer in Dale Carnegie and most probably would have let me say my say, and even have the last word, but would remain unconvinced.



And so I became recipient of a one-hour free scholarship on the art of telling the truth. It went something like this:

Approach your subject through

on the stage (my mentor said nothing about women's place in the theatre pits).

Now you have established a point. Go back to the original subject, the person whom you think should not be an actor. If she is not dull by this time she should anyway know what you are driving at. But if she is, you still do not tell her pointblank how bad she is. Instead tell her that her time and beauty is wasted in acting. Tell her that acting is only for people who have no other way of legitimately showing of their faces to the public. Then finally tell her that very seldom are beautiful people good actresses. Take Bette Davis, take Tallulah Bankhead, take Julie Harris. And then the truth.

If properly prepared, she will take it with joy, seeing new vistas opening before her, new horizons beckoning towards a future that best fits her qualities and for which there can be nothing but glory and fame.

The educator however, did not teach me to sell the other side of the coin the telling of a truth



THE PROGRESS of [art], according to Vicente Manansala, is at a standstill in the Philippines because of the existence of too many "isms". It is an opinion shared by many of his friends who, in the sudden frenzy of censorship that is flourishing around us feel that all art is being threatened



fine, thus it must contain the essence of divinity.

But we still have to hear from artists themselves such statements. A miniature symposium conducted by one of our more enterprising women editors gathered an interesting conglomeration of opinions from local painters with regard to the subject. None were contradictory, all seemed based on the premise that for an artist to produce to the best of his ability, freedom and truth were essential.

A recent controversy which gave rise to such statements as Modernist art has closed the avenues to God, and burned bridges to created reality... art which is anything but t..." found none among the laymen actually taking up the cudgels for our local modernists. Although no immediate diminution of sales was apparent at the exhibition of the work of Arturo Luz, one of those addicted to "a deliberate cult of distortion," one notices a lukewarm air going on between disciples of true art and truly dedicated disciples of religion.

IN A SENSE this is not alone unfortunate, but also confusing. There are painters and musicians who, abiding by aesthetic principles, felt that they were not transgressing upon a religion of which they too were firm followers. Although Guernica was