

## Enriching Knowledge by Publishing in the Regional Languages<sup>1</sup>

Ricardo M. de Ungria<sup>2</sup>  
University of the Philippines in Mindanao

### Abstract

Literary publishing in the Philippine regional languages – such as Iluko, Cebuano, Kapampangan, and Bikol – have existed since the sixteenth century. In recent years, the development of literature in the regions was largely helped by writers groups, independent publishers, and writers workshops. Publication in Manila also helped popularise these works – but for this, the writers had to write in either English or Filipino. Books published in the regions are generally available only in these places and have a very limited circulation. There is a need to sustain writing in the regional languages, and to encourage the writing of criticism and critical frameworks for each regional literature. The absence of a critical consciousness in literature could be an indication of a lack of a passion for truth and a viable intellectual climate in the country. In this situation, the work of the publishing industry in creating new knowledge gains new meaning and value.

### Keywords

Regional publishing, writers groups, writers workshops, Manila, criticism, truth

This is a topic I initially found interesting and lively. But later, I discovered that the more thought I gave to it, the more crestfallen and sad I became – however vibrantly challenging its future may be. And I will be discussing it from my default page that is literature, so that the topic will consequently be refracted, for the better part, as “literary publishing in the regional languages” – or better, as *notes* towards literary publishing in the regional languages. This move conveniently limits the scope of my paper and assumes as a given the fact that there is publishing activity in the regions, except that these are in English and in Filipino and are mostly in the form of textbooks, the bread-and-butter of the publishing business.

The records show that there *is* literary publishing in the regional languages. In the Ilocos region of Luzon, writing in the Iluko language and publishing has had a

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<sup>2</sup> Ricardo M. de Ungria served as Chancellor of the University of the Philippines in Mindanao for two terms (2001-2006). A founding member of the Philippine Literary Arts Council, he has been to writing residencies in Hawthornden and Bellagio and has published seven books of poetry that earned him National Book Awards. At present, he serves as Commissioner for the Arts at the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

long illustrious history since the coming of the Spanish friars in the sixteenth century and Pedro Bukaneg wrote the first Ilocano poem *Pampanunot ken Patay* (Meditations on Death), which, however, the late historian Dr. Marcelino Foronda Jr. attributed to the Augustinian friar Andres Carro (Gruenberg 83). Subsequent translations of mostly religious tracts into the language, as well as original writings in the religious and secular veins, including vocabularies and numerous studies of the language itself, kept the language alive. The publication of newspapers at the turn of the century, and later of magazines and journals and books sustained the intellectual development of the language. *Bannawag*, the literary magazine established in 1930, gave birth to generations of distinguished writers in Iluko. And then there was GUMIL, an organisation of writers in Iluko, that evolved from Gimong dagiti umiiluko (Association of Iluko Writers) of 1923 to Gimong dagiti Mannurat nga Ilukano (Ilokano Writers Association) of 1947 to Gunglo dagiti Mannurat iti Iluko (Association of Iluko Writers) of 1964 and finally to Gunglo dagiti Mannurat nga Ilokano that accepted Ilokano writers in Iloko, English, Filipino, Spanish, and other languages. GUMIL holds conventions almost regularly and publishes books of member writers. It also sponsors awards for writers who are male (the Pedro Bukaneg Award), female (the Leona Florentino Award), or dead (the Pamulinawen Award), and for any individual who has helped further the cause of Iluko writing (Cornelio Valdez Award). To date, it has published some fifty books in Iluko, both here and abroad. In the past five years, it has published anthologies of Iluko poems and stories from its local chapters in the region, like *Addang* (Step-Forward), edited by Baldovino Ab. Valdez, Franklin P. Macugay et al, and published in year 2003 by GUMIL Isabela; *Bunubon 1, 2, and 3* (Rice Seedlings 1, 2, and 3), which are collections of short poems published in 2005 and 2006 by Herminigildo A. Vilorio, a member of GUMIL Ilocos Sur; and *Panaglupos* (Strip off a bark or skin; new look), edited by Rodelito F. Ramos and Demosthenes D. Mauricio, and published in 2006 by GUMIL Isabela, among many others.

Another language which has a long history of publication and writing is the Bikol language. After Mariano Perfecto established the Imprenta de Nuestra Senora de Penafrancia in Nueva Caceres in 1880, writing gained impetus – with Perfecto himself writing and staging his plays and *comedias*, and with two literary magazines, *Sanghiran nin Bikol* and *Bikolnon*, that featured poems, stories, and essays. As Dr. Lilia A. Realubit put it: “The period from the 1880s to about 1940 comprised the golden years of Bikol literature. Poetry flourished together with folk plays, the comedias and zarzuelas, which were so popular that people would watch performances all night; and corridos and stories in Kalendariong Bikol provided the people’s main reading fare” (Realubit 143). After WW II, stories and plays continued to be written, as well as translations into the language. Dr. Realubit counted nine to ten novels written during this period that have been recovered only in parts, but she has been unable to identify the writers since the magazine ceased publication in the sixties and the publishers had died (Realubit 147).

In recent years, however, literary activity was helped through the initiative of Kabulig Bikol Writers Association founded, among others, by Dr. Lilia Realubit in

1993. Writing picked up with some of Bikol writers garnering prizes in local and national contests, though mainly in the English language, such as Luis Cabalquinto, Carlos Aureus and Merlinda Bobis. Fortunately, some kept the faith in writing also in Bikolnon, which spirit was kept alive by small publications like the Canada-based Godofredo Calleja's one-page *Burak, an Dahon Panrawitdawit* (which he started in the late nineties and began publishing in batches of 50 leaflets in 2003), and the 12-page journal *Bangraw kan Arte, Literatura asin Kultura*, edited by Estelito Jacob, Honesto Pesimo Jr., and Marissa Casillan in 2004. Bikol writings both in the original and in translation were featured in the CCP publication, *ANI 18*; the NCCA's *Mantala Literary Journal*; and in anthologies edited by Dr. Realubit. Recently, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pagsurat Bikolnon conference in 2004, the Premio Tomas Arejola para sa Literaturang Bikolnon was established, the first and only literary contest in the region. It gives awards with modest cash prizes in seven categories, including a writer of the year award. For this pioneering effort, the Premio Tomas Arejola received the Gawad Pedro Bukaneg, from UMPIL in 2008.

In the last five years or so, there was an impressive number and variety of publications in the Bikol region – twenty-eight books and journals from fourteen publishers, excluding seven more books published outside the region – dealing with poetry, biography, and philosophy. Notable literary works published were: *Mga Tulang Tulala* (2004), *Santigwar: Mga Rawitsawit sa Bikol asin Filipino* (2006), and *Pusuanon: Mga Bersong Bikol* (2008) by Kristian S. Cordero; *Antisipasyon asin iba pang rawitdawit sa Bikol asin Ingles* (2007) by Victor Dennis T. Nierva; *Ragang Rinaranga* (poems in Bikol Rinconada and English, 2006) by Frank V. Penones Jr.; *Gibsaw sa Salakab* by Bernardo Miguel Aguay Jr., and *Durungan* (poetry collection in Bikol Albay, 2003) by Raffi Banzuela and Rafael Belgica, Jr.

Kapampangan also has a storied past, starting with the publication of Friar Diego Bergano's *Arte de la Lengua Pampanga* in 1729 and *Bocabulario de Pampanga en Romance y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango* in 1732, and through a Golden Age of a kind in the 1800s, from Padre Fajardo's Kapampangan commedia, *Gonzalo de Cordoba*, in 1831 through the plays, zarzuelas, poetry, and fiction of Juan Crisostomo Soto late in that century. However, as one scholar has pointed out, disputes in the orthography of the language spelled the doom of Kapampangan writing:

Kapampangan publications became the first casualties. Newly published works were publicly attacked merely for the orthography they used and not by their literary merits. Kapampangan publications were attacked by one group or the other for supposedly favouring this or that orthography. New writers were being forced to join one writing faction over the other. There was a marked decrease in output in Kapampangan writing by the mid 1970s. By the early 1980s, there were no more Kapampangan publications in circulation. No new Kapampangan writers appeared on the scene since then. Hardly any works from the old group of writers were also known to have been produced or published. For the past twenty years, Kapampangan literature has stood still.

Today, majority of Kapampangan speakers below the age thirty are illiterate in their own AMANUNG SISUAN ‘mother tongue.’ (Pangilinan)

The author then goes on to cite the proliferation of Filipino in the everyday life of the Kapampangans as a significant factor in the disuse of the Kapampangan language.

Dr. Juliet Mallari attributes the Kapampangan writers “lack of apparent vitality and limited development” to

their circumscribed ethnic existence as well, i.e., their being isolated in time and space. While the other regional writers are given all the opportunities to enhance their creative genius through workshops and other forms of training, Kapampangan writers are hardly exposed to new literary concepts due to lack of support or interest among their possible sponsors such as the local government or educational institutions. They are also unable to integrate themselves with the mainstream of national literature as they fail to relate their art to the prevailing issues of their time. (Mallari)

In 2002, the Holy Angel University in Angeles City sponsored the First International Studies on Kapampangan Studies and established the Juan D. Nepomuceno Centre for Kapampangan Studies “to preserve, study, and promote Kapampangan cultural and historical heritage.” The Centre has published, with a certain degree of regularity, books on Kapampangan studies and a quarterly called *Singsing*; however, most of these books, including the quarterly, are written in English.

In the Visayas, the Cebuano language started its own distinguished history in publication and in writing in the late nineteenth century through a number of periodicals that published *sugilanon* or short stories, poetry, and essays in Cebuano. As Dr. Erlinda K. Albuero puts it: “With the proliferation of publications, e.g., *Bag-ong Kusog*, *Nasud*, and *Babaye*, more and more poets emerged, producing around 13,000 poems before the war.... Of the many publications before the war, only *Bisaya* has survived as literary outlet of Cebuano. Because of the rise in prestige of English and later Tagalog, postwar Cebuano literature was relegated to third class although Cebuano was still the language of home and street” (Albuero, “Cebuano Literature in the Philippines”). Despite this, however, literature continued to be written, sustained – as with Iloko and Bikol literatures – by writers workshops, writers groups that published their own works, and sundry publications mostly by writers in English. There are the Cornelio Faigao, Bathalad, WILA, and Tarantula Writers Workshops in Cebu, the Dumaguete Writers Workshop in Dumaguete, and IYAS Writers Workshop in Bacolod – not to mention small workshops held in any of the UP campuses in Iloilo or Tacloban. Literary publications in the early eighties – like *Bloom*, edited by Erma Cuizon, and the mimeographed *Little Finger*, edited at various times by Vicente Bandillo and Simeon Dumdum Jr., among others – introduced the early works in English of such writers as Alfredo Navarro Salanga Marjorie Pernia, Lilia Lopez-Chua, Wenzl Petrak Bautista, and Christine Godinez Ortega. Writing in the Cebuano language, however, continued to be mostly seen in the periodicals and a handful of books published by an undaunted few, like WILA’s *Sinug-ang: A Cebuana Trio*

(1999) that came with English translations, and *Haling* (2006) that was a mixture of English and Cebuano; or with the support of the NCCA, like three of the six chapbooks of WILA members Jocelyn Pinzon, Corazon Almerino, and Dindin Villarino published in 2003. Hope Yu had published four books of poetry in Cebuano, with English translations, in Canada from 2000 to 2003. There were, of course, any number of books by Cebuano writers in English (like Erma Cuizon, Elsa Coscoluella, Marjorie Evasco, Renato Madrid, or Simeon Dumdum), or else of anthologies (like *Fern Garden* edited by Merlie Alunan in 1998), but these were published mostly in Manila. Academic publishing is done only by the University of San Carlos that puts out the *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* and the *Philippine Scientist*, although the other universities also have their own in-house publications. But these, like the ones published by the Cebuano Studies Centre, are mostly, if not entirely, in English.

East Visayan, or Waray literature had been documented as far back as 1668 by Fr. Ignatio Francisco Alzina, who wrote about the poetic forms (like the *candu*, *haya*, *canogon*, and *ambahan*), narratives (like *posong* and *susumaton*), and the dances and rituals of the region (Sugbo, “The Literature of Eastern Visayas”). But it flourished only in the 1900s with the appearance of local publications such as *An Kaadlawon*, the first Waray newspaper, and *An Lantawan*, and magazines like *Eco de Samar y Leyte* which published works in Spanish, Waray, and English. This was bolstered by the organisation of Waray writers called Sanghiran San Binisaya, headed by Norberto Romualdez Sr., which produced writers like Iluminado Lucente, Casiano Trinchera, Eduardo Makabenta, and others. But the increasing use of English in the twenties forced Waray poetry to move from the newspapers to radio stations. As Dr. Victor Sugbo points out:

Up to the present time, poetry sent to these stations are written mostly by local folks – farmers, housewives, lawyers, government clerks, teachers, and students. A common quality of their poetry is that they tend to be occasional, didactic, and traditional in form. The schooled writers in the region, unlike the local folk poets, do not write in Waray nor Filipino. Most of them write in English although lately there has been a romantic return to their ethnic mother tongue as the medium for their poetry. (“The Literature of Eastern Visayas”)

He concludes:

Fiction in Waray has not flourished because it lacks a venue for publication. Cebuano literature produced in Eastern Visayas is still undocumented terrain. To the writers from the Cebuano speech communities in the region, Cebu City is their centre. It is thus not surprising if much of the literature from these communities, particularly fiction and poetry, have found their way into Cebu City’s publications. Known Cebuano writers of Leyte like Eugenio Viacrusis, Angel Enemecio, Enemecio Fornarina, and Fernando Buyser first published their fiction and poetry in Cebu publications, and their works have afterward formed part of the literary anthologies in the Cebuano language. (Sugbo, “The Literature of Eastern Visayas”)

What we know of Waray literature can be found in the anthologies published by Divine Word University Press in Tacloban and edited by Fr. Raymond Quetchenbach (1974), Gregorio C. Luangco (1982) and Clarita Filipinas (1991), and two others edited by Jaime Biron Polo (1994) and Victor N. Sugbo (1995), published in Manila.

West Visayan writing uses Hiligaynon (the lingua franca of the region), Kinaraya, and Aklanon. As Dr. Leoncio P. Deriada explains:

The mother language of West Visayas is *Kinaray-a* or *Hiraya*, the language spoken by the central and southern towns of Iloilo, all of the province of Antique and most of Capiz. *Hiligaynon* is spoken in Iloilo City, in all the coastal towns north of Iloilo City, in all of Guimaras, in most of Roxas City in Capiz and in Bacolod City, and most of the towns of Negros Occidental. The language is also spoken in South Cotabato, in Mindanao, where many West Visayans have migrated. The northern towns of Negros Occidental speak Cebuano or *Sugbuanon*, the *lingua franca* of Central Visayas. The province of Aklan speaks *Aklanon* which, like *Hiligaynon*, developed from *Kinaray-a*. (Deriada, "Hiligaynon Literature")

Its written literature began in the late nineteenth century with the Libreria y Imprenta de Panayana in Iloilo City, which published *Almanake Panayanhon* (Panayan Almanac, which still comes out to this day) as well as corridos, novenas, zarzuelas, dramas, short stories, and novels of the early Hiligaynon writers. Many newspapers and magazines were published later and supported the writing, including *Hiligaynon* and *Yuhum* (the latter closing shop at around 2001), effecting a kind of Golden Age before WW II and producing writers such as the poets Delfin Gumban and Serapion Torre, the novelists Angel Mangahum, Magdalena Jalandoni, and Ramon Musones, the zarzuela writers Jose Ma. Ingalla and Jose Ma. Nava, and many others. In the past thirty years or so, the writing in the languages was sustained through radio dramas and broadcasts, writing workshops, writing grants and competitions in marginalised languages like Kinaray-a and Hiligaynon, and publications such as *ANI* of the CCP, and *Mantala Journal* of the NCCA that brought many of the young writers into national consciousness. These include Alex de los Santos, John Iremil Teodoro, Maragtas S.V. Amante, Melchor Cichon, Melecio Turao, Alice Tan Gonzalez, and many others. The University of San Agustin, through its Libro Agustino, has taken up publishing works, albeit in English but with Karay-a texts, like the *SanAg* journal (2003), *Folk Poetry: The LO-A* by Amorita C. Rabuco (2003), and *The Rise of Kinaray-a* and *Mga Kanta ni Datu Lubay* by Alex de Los Santos (2003).

Despite its rich history fed by streams of peoples with different cultural and religious beliefs and backgrounds, Mindanao has been poor in terms of publication opportunities for the many languages that found their home in this second largest island of the country. What little had been published were writings mostly in English, which were either published locally or in Manila. Examples of the former are found mostly in Davao and Iligan, like *Davao Harvest* edited by Tita Lacambra Ayala and Alfredo Navarro Salanga (Midtown Press, Davao City, 1979), the Road Map Series

edited by Tita Lacambra Ayala in Davao since 1981 until today (which should make it probably the longest-running independent literary publication in the country published in the region), and the books in the Tubao New Writers Series of the Davao Writers Guild, namely *Qontrapuntal* by Don Pagusara (2003, in English, Cebuano, and Filipino), *Sky Rose and Other Stories* by Macario Tiu (2003), *Frankie Goes to Town* by Jo Bacani-Angeles (2004), and *The House on Calle Seminario & Other Stories* by Josie Carballo Tejada (2007). Ateneo de Davao's ORP also published *Sikami'n Lumad: Bagong Panitikan ng Katutubong Mindanaw* (2007) and other books on history and social sciences. MSU-IIT in Iligan regularly puts out the proceedings of its annual writers workshop in book form, which is the only one of its kind in the country, as well as journals and assorted books in the social sciences. Examples of those published in Manila are: *Mindanao Harvest 1* and *2* edited by Jaime An Lim and Christine Godinez-Ortega (1995 and 1996 respectively) and *ANI 14* and *22* that featured writings from Mindanao. As well, the university press of Western Mindanao State University published books like *Chavacano Folk Music Literary Pieces* by Dr. Sonia S. Sicat, *Velvet Dreams and other Plays* by Prof. Clemencio M. Bascar, and others in the social sciences.

The bulk of the books in Mindanao are in the social sciences and published by any number of NGOs and foreign agencies like ADB, Asia Foundation, or the Konrad Adenauer Foundation as part of their completed projects. The annual inventory of books on Mindanao by the news agency Mindanews reveals the following information: seven books in 2000, eight in 2001, eighteen in 2002, nineteen in 2003, twenty-nine in 2004, thirty-two in 2005, twelve in 2006, and thirty in 2007, for a total of 155 books and journals published from 2000 to 2007. Of the thirty publications in 2007, twenty-one were books, seven journals and two monographs. Lean harvest, but promising in a land full of promises.

There are, of course, any number of books that were self-published in the regions, like Arnel Salgado's *The Fireless Inferno* published in 1991 by Royal Printers in Baguio City, Celedonio Aguilar's *Time and Sunken Sun* published by Rex Printers in Legazpi City in 1971, Vellysarius de la Cruz's volumes of poems like *With Hope Undying* published by MACAR Enterprises in Aklan in 1988, Agustin Misola's novels like *We Can Survive* published by Misola Press in 1987 in Iloilo, Roman de la Cruz's *Song of the Ati-Ati and other Poems* published also by MACAR Enterprises in 1973 (with a third printing in 1995), and Jose L. Angliongto's novel *The Sultanate* published by Eden Publishing House in Davao City in 1969. But this only means that if the author can pay for it, the printer will print it.

There is no doubt that publishing houses in Manila played an important role in pointing at the existence and significance of regional literatures and making these accessible in their original languages with translations into English and/or Filipino. Ateneo de Manila University Press brought out a number of these marginalised literatures in publications like *Panulaang Cebuano* (eds. Don Pagusara and Erlinda Alburo), *Dulaang Hiligaynon* (ed. Rosario Cruz Lucero), *Maikling Kwentong Kapampangan at Pangasinan* (eds. Lourdes Vidal and Ma. Crisanta Nelmidia), and *Panulaan at Dulaang Leytenhon-Samarnon* (ed. Jaime Biron Polo). The CCP's ANI

had special issues devoted to regional literature, like ANI 4 on Cebuano literature, ANI 7 on Iluko literature, ANI 10 Hiligaynon, ANI 13 Samarnon, ANI 14 Mindanao, ANI 17 Cordillera, ANI 18 Bikol, ANI 19 Kinaray-a, ANI 20 Pangasinan, ANI 21 Aklanon, and ANI 22 Mindanao II. There were also the NCCA's three issues of *Mantala Literary Journal* on Bikol and Western Visayas literatures, and books such as *Patubas: Anthology of West Visayan Poetry 1986-1994*, edited by Leoncio P. Deriada (1995); *Tinipigan: An Anthology of Waray Literature*, edited by Victor N. Sugbo (1995), and *Haliya: Anthology of Bikol Poets and Poems*, edited by Ma. Lilia Realubit (n.d.). The *Mithi* literary journal of the Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas should also be mentioned here as another populariser of regional literatures.

But these efforts were mostly one-way affairs – the publishing road led only to Manila and did not feed back to the region, unless the books found their way in the shelves of National Book Store or the local university libraries. Writers in the regions had to write in English or Filipino and had to look to Manila for the publication of their works. Publication in Manila was and still is a virtual confirmation, if not recognition, of their status and value as writer. After all, the major literary contests were in Manila, the major writers of the country were in Manila, and getting published in any of Manila's dailies or magazines assured one of exposure to an audience well beyond Manila. It was a good thing that – against the odds, and even miraculously – some writers in the regions continued to write in their own languages and publish now and then in *Bisaya* or *Bannawag* or *Hiligaynon* magazines or occasionally in the local daily that has a literary page.

An added aggravation is the fact that the books published in the regions have a very limited circulation and are mostly available only in the cities where these are published. Except, of course, if they are written in English or Filipino (like those published by Libro Agustino of the University of San Agustin in Iloilo or by the Holy Angel University in Pampanga) – in which case they might find their way into the shelves of Solidaridad or Tradewinds bookshops. There remains, therefore, a serious need for a book distribution network and system within a region, across regions, within an island or island group, and even nationwide, in order to develop a community of writers and readers specially within and across regions.

But although there *is*, indeed, literary publishing in the regional languages going on in the regions, there is just *not enough* of it. Resil Mojares decried this fact in 1988 regarding Cebuano poetry (Albuero et al. 1-6). Some years later, the same was pointed out by Christine Godinez Ortega on Mindanao writing (Ortega, 1996), Reynaldo Duque on Iluko literature (Duque, 1998), and Victor Sugbo on Waray literature (Sugbo, 2002). In 2000, Leoncio Deriada had to celebrate the attention West Visayan literature was getting from Manila's literary circles (Deriada, "Seasoned Writers and Beginners Share Stellar Roles" 6-8). The magazines and newspapers are simply not enough outlets for the writers in the regions. Lacking a programmatic support system for writing in the regions, especially writing in the language of the region, outside of writing workshops and occasional readings – like writing grants, annual literary competitions, a regular local literary festival, publication grant, or LGU recognition of their efforts – it is a miracle that the art continues to survive in the regions at all.



However, even if the structural supports are there – even if, say, the NCCA provides such a programme for creative work through grants and competitions and festivals and publications in the regions – there would still be one major problem to confront. And that is the proper valuation of these works not only among writer communities themselves but among the denizens of the region in general. I refer not only to the appalling lack of criticism or critical frameworks by which standards of quality, excellence in craftsmanship, good judgment and taste are defined and observed in the production and appreciation of works. I also refer to a missing value system and critical consciousness that deeply appreciate and do not shun local works and productions. There are two things here. One is that, for good or ill, our country appears to be a place where everybody is or wants to be an artist and no one wants to be a critic. For me, this is an unhappy situation: for without the rigour and passion of critical thought that puts up certain standards of excellence in literary productions and points at directions that our many literatures could take, all we will have would be back-patting and mutually admiring literary coteries producing more of the same year after year, contest after contest. A good ninety percent or more of the literary books published are creative works; the rest, on a good year, would be critical work. To date, despite the initial and singular, because rare studies, in the history of Bikol, Iluko, Hiligaynon, or Cebuano literatures more than a decade ago, we have not fully defined and established the poetics of our literatures in the regions. What are the standards of excellence in Cebuano or Waray or Iluko poetry, fiction, and drama? Can the simplicity or didacticism or sentimentality so denounced in works in the regions be examined and later evolved as possible models for construction? If more publications in the regional languages are to be funded, it should only be to establish a better, if not numerically sound, ground of specimens on which the poetics of a genre could be established. Literature in Filipino – including critical, intellectual, and biographical writings in the language – at least had already picked since Bienvenido Lumbera, Rolando Tinio, and Virgilio Almario, among others, began the intellectualisation of the language in the sixties and seventies.

The other thing about the warped value system we have is that even if we do get more writers to write better, even if we have more and better books to publish, and even if there were more critics to discriminate the literary gold from the dross, but if the people or the audience of the art fail to see the worth and significance of the work in their lives and possibly too in the life of the country, we would have achieved a milestone of monumentally wasted efforts. An indication of this is the current issue among members of the NCCA Executive Committee on Literary Arts of which I am the present head. There were members from the regions who expressed the wish that their works be published in the original languages without benefit of translation into Filipino or especially English because otherwise their readers in the regions will be reading only the English versions. We partly resolved the issue by agreeing that individual collections of authors be published without benefit of translation; regional anthologies for publication, however, where works of these authors will be included should have translations into English. Art might save the language, but if the people care not for the language, the language might not even be able to save the art.

In a paper on “Language Policy and Local Literature in the Philippines,” Dr. Sugbo gave voice to what could very well apply to literatures other than the Waray literature he was referring to:

Philippine language policy, since its inception, has favoured the English language. By legislating English in the controlling domains, policies have marginalised Philippine languages. Even with the aid of legislation, Filipino/Tagalog, the national language, has assumed secondary status in terms of prestige. Despite its widespread acceptance, Filipino has not succeeded in displacing English in the controlling domains. In the case of Waray, the policy has marginalised the language, the people, and their literature. It has made speakers of Waray look at their own language with disdain. The policy has discouraged local writers from using Waray in their works. It has encouraged the educated Waray speakers to write creatively in English because of the many opportunities for publishing in that language. In short, the policy has left Waray literature in doldrums.

I have dealt at length with literary publishing, which is an aspect of cultural production that is more accessible and less specialised than academic publishing. But both the literary and the academic face the same desperation and share the same dire straits in our country. Our universities turn out thousands of graduates every year, and yet how many of their theses or dissertations (perhaps 98 percent of which are written in English and in Filipino) actually are respectable enough to get published and contribute to the trickle of knowledge in their respective fields? In Mindanao, there are only a number of universities that put out journals to disseminate their researches. And of these journals, only three are refereed ones. In the Visayas, I have been told, there is not one refereed journal from the universities at all. Surely, the funds were not enough to support or try for a standard of excellence in research dissemination. I don't have the data for Luzon nor for NCR, but the fact that of the total number of higher academic institutions we have in the country, only three or four regularly make it to the lower rungs of the top universities in the world should tell us something about the state of affairs in our education sector. Would it be too much to conclude from these that there is no viable intellectual or artistic climate in our country where ideas come freely and are grist for the mill of the mind – except for the political that passes off as an activity of the mind? Would it be too much to put down as a corollary that we don't have an intellectual climate, nor can we bear to support one simply because we have lost the passion for truth because truth has turned out to be manipulable and changeable and undependable? Or perhaps because we have not shaken off our feudal cast of mind and psyche that inhibits us from critiquing the ideas of the “elder statesmen” in our fields as a result of a kind misplaced measure of deference or respect for elders, and that allows us to accept conveniently their word as “law” so we don't have to bother with it anymore as we go on quietly with our own desperate lives? “Nobody threatens me in my own area,” thundered landlordly one such elder statesman recently, echoing perhaps the attitude of his ilk in the other areas of public life. (And why have we refused to accept the depths we have sunk into – morally,

intellectually, aesthetically – while the rest of our Asian neighbours have progressed dramatically and left us in the ditch? Acceptance will mean doing something about the dismal situation we are in. And how many have tried and failed to do something about it?) And when the “landlord” has already thought and spoken about anything, why should I still bother to think and speak about it? And who am I compared to him/her? This appears to be the climate of thought in this typhoon-prone country. So year after year, we hold conferences and workshops on the state of this or that industry in the country, and we end up hearing more or less the same old things being said as if anew. What I am saying here now have been said decades ago, and my saying them again here now in all honesty only points to the painfully anaemic and inconceivably slow development of debate and praxis in this field. The state of this or that industry has practically remained in stasis since we first learned to talk about them. There being no such thing as an intellectual climate in the country, there is little knowledge production going on at all. If we can’t even get our facts down pat, how do we even presume to advance to the next step of knowledge creation? When we debate, we debate with persons and not ideas. Disagreements take on the unhappy form of personal affronts and become desultory and, in some instances, life-threatening. Then again, how can we be assured that the knowledge produced so far is legitimate, given that much of the valuable information about us is in the hands and shelves of foreign funding agencies and foreign scholars?

In a country where there is little interest in truth and truth-telling, and still lesser interest in validating facts, the work of the publishing industry (where most of you here belong) in helping create new knowledge by publishing and disseminating imaginative and intellectual creations remain nothing short of the heroic. If, as with the fate of colonised countries, the colonial language remains the main means of intellectual discourse and knowledge creation, and in our particular case there still appears to be no decent intellectual discourse and knowledge creation in English, or our version of it, even in Manila, and still lesser, though emergent (the word “inchoate” came to mind) discourse has come about in Filipino, how much less of the little left for knowledge creation and discourse in the regional languages remains?

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