

**Florentino Valeros and Estrellita Valeros-Gruenberg. *Filipino Writers in English: A Biographical and Bibliographical Directory*. (Quezon City, RP: New Day, 1987; US distributor: Cellar Book Shop, 10090 Wyoming, Detroit, MI 48221) 236 pp., \$11.75 paper.**

With the rise of Filipino nationalism in the sixties and the consequent resort to literature written in Filipino and the vernacular, Philippine writing in English ebbed in importance. At that decisive juncture of national crisis, the verdict was made that Philippine literature in English had reached a dead end. Scholars and critics produced searching critiques of aesthetic orthodoxies and turned their attention to other cultural legacies. This reversal of fortunes for the literature in English after four decades of undisputed hegemony in Philippine cultural life partly explains why its history remains unwritten.

The publication of this important reference work on Filipino writers who handled creative English with various degrees of competence and confidence in their time, changes the picture. Supplementing the two available volumes of the continuing oral history project of scholars Doreen Fernandez and Edilberto Alegre. *The Writer and His Milieu* (Manila, 1982) and *Writers and Their Milieu* (Manila, 1987), this directory lists many writers who are unheard-of or have since languished in obscurity. More than a listing, this directory holds many random but nonetheless provocative clues for researchers or students interested in renewing the national retrieval effort.

Valeros and Valeros-Gruenberg intimate that the directory was “the result of many years of painstaking work” and Alegre and Fernandez reveal that their project was conceived before Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in 1972 and stalled it by ten years. But whereas the Alegre/Fernandez compendia selected those writers whose work was accomplished, *Filipino Writers in English* casts out a wide net, supplying sketches on writers who, whether briefly or extensively, experimented with creative English from the twenties to the present.

The compilers sent questionnaires to surviving writers (or if dead, to their close kin) when they could not send interviewers. We are warned that the harvest is uneven as “many of those sent to relatives returned with incomplete information [and many] replies came too late to be included.” A reader then must be prepared to come across entries where even basic and bibliographic data are missing or excerpts from the pronouncements of critics about the works of concerned writers are used to fill the gaps. One strategy which the compilers used was to insert American or European writers as either models or comparisons, often making rather strained claims about the local writer in question. An entry on a woman writer mentions that her sister also writes, with both receiving prizes for their writing and reminding us “of the Bronte sisters, British novelists.”

But significantly, what the directory by this father-daughter team of literary scholars signals, along with the Fernandez/Alegre volumes, is that 20th-century Philippine cultural history can only be rewritten if the hegemony of English in Philippine life is revalued. In listing educators, historians, sociologists, economists, religious leaders and politicians who were once poets, playwrights, fictionists and essayists, Valeros and Valeros-Gruenberg argue that “they wrote in English and in many ways their works have been enlightening and have influenced the thinking and life of the people.” Truly, all the entries indicated that English as a mode of social hierarchy and thinking for the colonial generation bled, and continues to bleed, into other social realms. One reads about many cases of writers who, with their facility with the language, either eventually abandoned the pen for pelf and power or continued to write from such elevated, if corrupted, positions. (There is an uncritical entry on Ferdinand Marcos, for instance, which doesn’t mention the charge that his writing was mostly the handiwork of ghostwriters and sycophants.)

Perhaps without intending it, the directory’s shorthand descriptions of the twists and turns in the careers of the nearly 500 writers who are listed read very much like artifactual traces of their bygone periods. In short, the directory itself sounds like its own cultural history which may ultimately be the source of its usefulness rather than the often fragmentary, if padded, information it supplies for the writers. For example, Florentino Valeros, himself “a teacher of English [who] followed the growth of Philippine writing in English,” wrote a good number of the entries in the oratorical and bombastic English familiar to his era. In a typical instance, one entry makes a virtue out of a poet-journalist’s earthy troubles and states that “if holy writ is right, he must be well provided now and looking down at us from the balustrade of heaven beaming with happiness and contentment,” adding that: “He may also be discussing the merits of his new poem with his fellow angels.”

The directory shows hints of its long gestation as entries are sometimes not edited to keep them updated or internally consistent. We read that a fictionist died in 1983 but we are also told that, after engaging in journalism, advertising and public relations, “She now writes imaginative literature.” Or someone named Jimena Austria may have “died recently” but her dateline does not reflect the fact. The compilers also could not seem to decide if the bits of trivia which they gathered in the process of research could be helpful or useless. If the American high school teacher of a local colorist once “rewarded him with an ice cream cone for writing remarkable good composition in class,” giving us some idea of the unusual pedagogical practices of English mentors, what does one make of the information that a writer’s “town is well-known for two things: sweet, juicy lanzones and both antique and modern wood-carving”?

Despite its many flaws, the directory is a valuable documentary work

which stakes out the ground for future research while giving us some feel of the ethos, honor codes, concerns, and associational activity of the colonial generation. Conceived as a "directory," this work could only emphasize the personalities and extraliterary achievements of the writers. Perhaps as some sort of encyclopedia or dictionary, it could have included entries on such groups as the "Primitives," "Veronians," "Mandarins," "Barbarians," or "The Circle" or the newspapers, magazines, honor rolls, the summer writing workshops at Silliman University and the University of the Philippines, literary awards and journals which were instrumental in the formation of these writers.

The directory offers us a way of knowing something of the success with which colonialism molded a separate cluster of writers in English in the Philippines but whose writing was never integrated into American literature studies. Scholars and students of Asian American and ethnic literature might also want to consult the entries on a good number of unrecognized writers who lived, wrote and published exclusively in the United States during the period covered by the directory.

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**Lois Weis, ed. *Class, Race, & Gender in American Education*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 329 pp., \$40.50; \$18.95 paper.**

*Class, Race & Gender in American Education* should be read by pre-service and experienced educators and social scientists who are interested in teaching young people who come from different socio-economic backgrounds, represent various racial and ethnic heritages, and those with special needs. School as a major socializing institution often holds the key for many students. It is also important to study the ways individuals and groups prepare for the future. Some students are successful in school settings, but many become discouraged and are pushed out due to the structure and/or culture of the school. This volume seeks to enrich this ongoing debate and dialogue between "structuralist" and "culturalist" perspectives of education.

The book is organized in two parts. The thirteen chapters place class, race, and gender issues within an historical and sociological context. Ethnography is the research methodology utilized in most of the studies. Part I addresses different ways in which knowledge is presented to students, unequal school structures, and unequal outcomes of schooling, each of which results in the continuation of inequalities in the educational experiences of students. School related inequalities in effect