

The Philippine Short Story in this War

By SALVADOR FAUSTINO

TWENTY-ONE ISSUES OF THE PHILIPPINE REVIEW have given us a total of around forty pieces of excellent fiction. Out of these Filipino short stories in English we have selected what may be grouped (perchance for the inspection of any enterprising book publisher, as well as for the lay reader who is interested in the art of the short story) under the title of "The Twenty Best Short Stories of 1943-1944."

There will be writers and readers of a few other publications (like the *Pillars* and the ertwhile literary section of *The Tribune Magazine*) who would claim incompleteness in the listing hereunder. We are aware of the excellence of one or two pieces that appeared in the parenthesised magazines (for example: "The Bamboos" by Francisco Arcellana, two or three stories by Juan Trinidad and Ruben Adriano, and a story by Narciso G. Reyes about a town-rambling painter—that appeared in the *Sunday Tribune Magazine*). Such stories we have regretfully omitted from the present listing because of the nature of our survey: which is a review of REVIEW stories, not a critical survey of the whole field of the Filipino short story.

The initial issue of the PHILIPPINE REVIEW augured well for the renaissance, or the continuance, of the art of the short story. The Filipino short story has been one of the best-

thriving literary art forms in the Philippines long before war came.

Volume One, Number One of the REVIEW carried two stories "A New Day for Filomena" by Juan C. Laya and "The Woman Who Felt Like Lazarus" by Nick Joaquin. It was—if we may say so—enough fictional art to boost up a newly cropping-up magazine; and the two stories are certainly in our list.

"Rendezvous At Banzai Bridge" by Manuel E. Arguilla is one of the cleverest (and in this sense, refreshing) short stories to come out in Philippine publications. Although it is not impeccable as "form", the nostalgic tang of its subjective expression is sufficient to rate it an asterisk. The piece it appears with,—in the April 1943 REVIEW—"Miguel Comes Home" by the veteran story writer Paz Latorena, takes the lead in the fictional section of Volume One, Number Two. The Latorena story is in the author's wellknown serene manner, and the story tells itself, being of the "straight narrative" kind.

When we come to the second REVIEW story of Nick Joaquin, "It Was Later Than We Thought", we almost succumb to the temptation to quote; there are so many excellent passages from the letters of his fictional "priests, publicans, and sinners". The piece itself as a whole is a successful "story-in-letters"—of the type which many local writers have tried

even before the war. It is not an easy feat; it is not just dashing off an assemblage of personal letters in chronological order that would form an authentic short story; there remains the problem of the art of deliberate irregularity that must be worked over, comparable to the irregularity of a brook that sings—purling and falling in irregular ruffles over pebbles now large, now small, and varidistant.

Before putting forth the list, we wish to make a hurried remark upon the changing spirit of the Filipino short story, its growing aliveness to the raw passions aroused by the war, the increasing maturity and mellowness of the Filipino short story writer who, like all his brothers in whatever field or capacity, has aged in the searing flames of war experience. In fine, we observe an increased vitality in the art, which is as it should be, considering the best of art cannot escape a reflexion of life, particularly a life like ours today, although we would say it does not just reproduce it. One has only to skim through "City of Grass" by Pedroche and Kerima Polotan's "Gallant Men—Gallant Ways" to realise what a dynamic artistic impetus war can be, whatever men may say of its destructive aspect.

We would like to indulge in further critical disquisitions on the merits of the stories in our list of twenty and in the Roll of Honour of seven, but already "the critical listing, without the critical word, reveals."

THE TWENTY BEST PHILIPPINE REVIEW STORIES

(From the initial issue March 1943 to that of November 1944.)

ARCELLANA, FRANCISCO
**How to Read—Sept. 1944

ARGUILLA, MANUEL E.
*Rendezvous At Banzai Bridge—Apr. 1943

CRUZ, EMILIO AGUILAR
*THE RIDERS—Feb. 1944

DE CASTRO, FIDEL
** Street Scene—May 1944

HIZON-CASTRO, NATIVIDAD
** Parting—May 1943

JOAQUIN, NICK
**The Woman Who Felt Like Lazarus—Mar. 1943

*** It Was Later Than We Thought—July 1943

LATORENA, PAZ
** Miguel Comes Home—April 1943

LAYA, JUAN C.
*A New Day for Filomena—Mar. 1943
**River Story—Sept. 1943

MONTES, VERONICA L.
** Nocturne—Sept. 1943

PEDROCHE, CONRADO V.
** The Ladder Boy—April 1944
** City of Grass—Aug. 1944
** For the Brave and the Good—Oct. 1944

POLOTAN, KERIMA
*** Gallant Men—Gallant Ways—Nov. 1944

RAMOS, MAXIMO
** The River—Oct. 1944

REYES, NARCISO G.
*** The Long Wind—June 1944

TUBOI, SAKAE
** Song of the Chopping Board (.. by Kin-Iti Isikawa)—Jan. 1944

VICTORIO REYES, LIGAYA
** A Peace Like Death—Aug. 1943
** Christmas Visit—D 1944

THE ROLL OF HONOUR

(Out of the 20 Best Short Stories selected in the above list, seven have been found worthy of inclusion in the exclusive Roll of Honour; these seven stories are comparable in excellence to the very best hundred or so stories published in the Philippines in the whole history—up to the present—of the local short story as an art form; they are of a "more

or less permanent literary interest"
—in short, excellent literature.)

ARCELLANA, FRANCISCO

** How to Read—September 1944

JOAQUIN, NICK

*** It Was Later Than We Thought
—July 1943

LATORENA, PAZ

** Miguel Comes Home—April 1943

PEDEOCHE, CONRADO V.

** City of Grass—August 1944

POLOTA, J. KERIMA

*** Gallant Men—Gallant Ways—
Nov. 1944

REYES, NARCISO G.

*** The Long Wind—June 1944

VICTORIO REYES, LIGAYA

** Christmas Visit—December 1943



Patriot And The Traitor —

TRIBUNE Editorial: Acts considered as crimes against the safety and security of the Republic, as listed by the Minister are:

Spreading of false rumours; wilful obstruction of governmental activities; sabotage, such as destruction or damaging of facilities; arson; sheltering of enemy airmen or parachute troops; harbouring of enemy spies; aiding of elements hostile to the Republic; communicating with the foe; and listening to enemy broadcasts.

Those who commit any of these acts will be subjected to the severest penalties, needless to say. There could never be any hope for leniency in base crimes against the state. The authorities have given sufficient warning on the heavy punishment which the government will impose on the disquieting elements that plot to undermine the stability of the state. There is no room for a traitor in these crucial times of war when the whole Philippines is under martial law. There is no excuse which a traitor to one's country, could offer.

The treasonable acts listed by Minister Sison are definite and clear, and the criminal laws of the land will take care of the rumor-monger, the saboteur, and those who assist the enemy. But, there are others—the misguided and the weak-willed that still cling to their mental reservations. They are on the fringe of treason, on the margin of anti-state behaviour.

We would urge them to sit down alone and contemplate deeply their position as members of the Filipino race. A man who has forgotten his country's history and traditions, his racial consciousness and pride is an outcast, ignored by his own countrymen and slighted by his country's enemies—a stigma more dishonourable than a traitor's death.

After all, there could never be treasonable acts against the state in a nation of patriots. The question is whether we love our Republic of the Philippines less and our country's enemies more.