

**THE LITERARY-CRITICAL ESSAYS OF RESIL B. MOJARES  
IN CEBU PERIODICALS**

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**A Thesis**

**Presented to the**

**Faculty of the Graduate School**

**University of San Carlos**

**Cebu City, Philippines**

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**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts in Literature**

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**by**

**Rosemarie Cerbito - Abocot  
May 1998**

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Abocot, Rosemarie C "The Literary – Critical Essays of Resil B Mojares in Cebu Periodicals", A Master's Thesis, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, May 1998

#### ABSTRACT

Based on sixty-three essays by Resil B Mojares in Cebu periodicals, this study is undertaken to trace the author's development as literary critic, to know his concerns in literary production, literary consumption, literary research, literary theory and criticism, literary history and literary pedagogy; and to appreciate his contribution to Cebuano literature and Philippine literature as a whole

Mojares emphasized the need for publication of more literary, critical and translation works, recognition of the role of the academe, holding of writer's contests, conferences and workshops. He proposes the revival of drama as a means of cultivating the rich Cebuano and Philippine literary heritage. He discusses literary issues and concepts, points out limits and concerns in the development of Cebuano literature, provides direction for future research development in literature, anthropology and history, and suggests the strengthening of regional researches.

As literary critic, Mojares started with the formalistic approach, and later used the theories of sociology and symbolic action, and structuralism in literature, simultaneously developing an interdisciplinary approach due to his exposure to various disciplines.

His works show a need to appreciate the Cebuano native psyche, and to preserve and promote the rich Cebuano literary heritage. Through these literary – critical essays, Mojares has greatly contributed to the field of Philippine literature in general and Cebuano literature in particular. These works will be treasured because of their literary, cultural and historical value.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many people have contributed much to the realization of this research study. No words can convey the heartfelt gratitude the researcher has for the following people:

DR. RESIL B. MOJARES, for the permission given to study his works, for his unselfish assistance during the interview, and for providing ample materials for the study;

DR. ERLINDA K. ALBURO, Director, Cebuano Studies Center, her adviser, for her encouragement and invaluable criticism for the betterment of this research;

THESIS COMMITTEE AND THE PANEL OF EXAMINERS, for their helpful suggestions;

DR. GREGORIO T. dela ROSA, President, Leyte Institute of Technology, for allowing her to enjoy a one-semester scholarship grant;

DR. DENAH G. FIJI, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, for her support and encouragement;

DR. ROSARIO V. OLIVA, DR. SOCORRO C. GICAIN, DR. ELMA D. BADUYA, ENGR. EVANGELINE Z. HIDALGO, MRS. MYRNA D. KUIZON, and her colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences, for their loving concern;

MISS LIBERTY B. CERBITO, sister, for gathering data at Dela Salle University and National Library in Manila;

SR. MA. AUXILIADORA S. SOMOSOT, A.R., MISS MARVIC C. RATCLIFFE, MRS. LUCIA C. TABANG and MR. VALENTIN "JUNJUN" CERBITO, for their unconditional support;

MR. & MRS. ALIPIO Y. ABOCOT, parents-in-law, Ate Baby, Marlou, Inday, sisters-in-law, Irene Joy, niece, Ken-ken, nephew, for the "space" provided during her absence;

MR. & MRS. VALENTIN A. CERBITO, parents, for their prayers and inspiration;

And above all, the LORD GOD for granting her the gift of understanding and humility, and guiding each step of her way.

ROSEMARIE CERBITO-ABOCOT

**This research study  
is lovingly dedicated**

**to**

**my husband**

**DANIEL ANG ABOCOT**

**and**

**my son**

**DARYL CERBITO ABOCOT**

**who have been my interminable**

**sources of inspiration**

**to bring this work to reality.**

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- A Letter and Interview with Resil B Mojares
- B Interview with Cebuano Writers

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

#### Rationale

The contribution of literary criticism to the development of Philippine literature is really significant. Crucial issues in modern life and literature are presented before the readers. According to Lumbera (1982: 236) this results in the reader's awareness of the invaluable relationship between craftsmanship and the effectiveness of the literary work.

Pioneers in Philippine literary criticism had already produced a body of criticism like those by Fr. Miguel Bernad, Ignacio Manlapaz, Salvador P. Lopez, Alfredo E. Litiatco and Jose Garcia Villa. Also deserving mention in this field are the *Tiempos* of Siliman University, Ricaredo Demetillo, and Manuel A. Viray of the University of the Philippines whose stream of fresh ideas helped a lot in proving that literary growth is keeping a rapid stride (Roseburg, 1966: 183).

Fernando Maramag, in an early essay "A Call for Critics" in the *College Folio*, remarked that one should be aware of the vital mission of literary criticism — to let the reader know and discover the aesthetic excellence that conform with the literary laws. Thus, to instill further in the Filipino literary critic the essence of his task, Maramag states that

He is to conclude whether the ideals and aspirations of the race can fully be expressed in English and yet remain distinctly native. He is to elicit the wealth of materials to be met within things Filipino — whims to be satirized, characters to be portrayed and natural beauties to be sung (Yabes, 1954: 7-9)

In the biographical essay of Fr. Miguel Bernad, Roseburg (1966: 183) agreed that Fr. Bernad's comment on the Philippine literary situation helps prove that there is already ample local writing in English to warrant serious literary criticism. Also, Isagani R. Cruz



cites the need of literary criticism to gain an increasing international attention on Philippine literature in general

Today, critics such as Consolacion Alaraa, Virgilio Almarino, Doreen Fernandez, Edel Garcellano, Lucila Hosillos, Priscelina Legasto, Helen Lopez, Bienvenido Lumbera, Ruth Elynia Mabanglo, B S Medina, Jr, Resil Mojares, Elmer Ordoñez, Soledad Reyes, Epifanio San Juan, Jr., Nicanor Tiongson, and Maria Luisa Torres are often invited to attend conferences, to read papers and to give lectures in different places around the world. International demand for Filipino theory is at an all-time high, recalling Rizal's own wide reputation in Spain, Germany, and England as a genius in the fields of fiction and criticism (1992: 19)

Consequently, Filipino critics are called upon to offer more authentic readings and develop new perspectives on the study of native literature. This is a need even as one observes a growing international recognition of Philippine literature in general. In original or translation, the literary works of several Filipino writers like Jose Rizal, Amado Fernandez, F Sionil Jose and Bienvenido Santos are widely available in English-speaking countries. Likewise, the works of Mila Aguilar, Carlos Bulosan, Celso Alcarunungan, Marjorie Evasco, NVM Gonzales, Jessica Hagedorn, Nick Joaquin, Wilfredo Nolleto, Carlos Romulo, Ninotchka Rosca, Jose Garcia Villa and other Filipino writers in English are published in foreign countries (1992: 19)

Mr Cruz's call for critics to offer more authentic readings has been heeded by contemporary critics who have felt the need to develop new perspectives on the study of native literature. One such critic is Resil B. Mojares. Mojares' literary pursuit has gained distinction both in the national and international literary scene. In the critical essay, "The Value of Resil Mojares' Cebuano Literature" Teresita Gimenez-Maceda (1976: 12) acknowledges Mojares' scholarly endeavor

There is no doubt that Resil Mojares' Cebuano Literature will be of immense help to the scholar and researcher who now can more easily locate materials to examine, writers to study

When Isagani R. Cruz (1986: 10) reviewed Mojares' book Theater in Society / Society in Theater: Social History of a Cebuano Village, 1840-1940, he affirmed that

When fictionist Resil B. Mojares of Cebu City started to try his hand at cultural history in 1983 with two scholarly masterpieces — Origins and Rise of Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel Until 1940 (University of the Philippines Press, 1983) and Casa Gorordo in Cebu: Urban Residence in a Philippine Province, 1860-1920 (Ramon Abantay Foundation, 1983) — he shook the academic world with his masterly application to the latest structuralist theories to Philippine aesthetics. Never before had a Filipino scholar blended together such a large reservoir of traditional, empirical research and such a broad command of speculative, advanced critical theories. In his latest book, Theater in Society / Society in Theater, Mojares consolidates his position as our country's leading structuralist critic.

An American reviewer, Bruce Cruikshank (1991: 441), writes on the same book by Mojares:

What a wonderful example of scholarship at its best! In theory, focus, methodology, style, research, strategies, and (with some reservations) substance, Resil B. Mojares has produced a superb example of Philippine scholarship.

In the light of a growing interest in and an appreciation of the importance of Philippine literary criticism, this study — by focusing on the essays of an important literary critic, hopes to delve into some literary problems affecting literary studies and attempts to discover much-needed insights to enable literature readers to understand Philippine literary studies better. Resil B. Mojares has written a collection of essays in Cebu-based periodicals, both for popular and scholarly audiences, which are designed to motivate writers, encourage readers, and challenge scholars.