

THE ELEMENTS OF SATIRE IN THE BUTCHER,  
THE BAKER, THE CANDLESTICK MAKER

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A Thesis  
Presented To  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of San Carlos  
Cebu City

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Literature

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by  
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June 1969

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APPROVAL SHEET

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature, this Thesis entitled: "THE ELEMENTS OF SATIRE IN THE BUTCHER, THE BAKER, THE CANDLESTICK MAKER," has been prepared and submitted by Danielita B. Santos who is hereby recommended for Oral Examination.

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ELEMENTS OF SATIRE IN THE BUTCHER, THE BAKER, THE  
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of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature is  
hereby accepted.

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Danielita B. Santos

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE PROBLEM

The present age has not produced literature as bitter as those of the 19th century which may be called the age of satire in Philippine literature. However, now and then, some contemporary writers portray with unkind humor absurd social situations and idiosyncracies of people. The late Carlos Bulosan has contributed to satirical literature his book of short stories The Laughter of My Father. At present Mrs. Gilda Cordero-Fernando is the only writer the bulk of whose short stories can be studied in the light of satire. The Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick Maker, her first and only book has established her as a writer of distinction.

Father Jaime Bulatao and Father Frank Lynch S. J., two of the leading sociologists specializing on Philippine scene, have made significant contributions to Philippine sociological studies. Their essays on Philippine values are fruits of extensive and intensive studies of the Filipinos and their culture from the top echelon of Philippine society to the grass-roots. What Fathers Bulatao and Lynch have presented in theories, Mrs. Fernando has rendered in the concrete. For indeed,

fiction is the most popular vehicle by which social phenomenon can be presented in solid simple terms.

Creative artistic literature provides an indication of the relation between man and society. It presents a wealth of sociologically meaningful details which acquire greater significance when the type of literature happens to be satire for, according to James Thurber, one of the most eminent satirists of the twentieth century, "without satire no civilization can be truly described or benefited."<sup>1</sup>

It is not always pleasant to take a good frank look at oneself. It takes courage to do this. It takes courage too to tackle problems that arise in urban and suburban living. It takes the same mettle to face deprivation to our social status. The biting truth becomes bearable when seasoned with humor. Truth thus presented is satire.

Mrs. Fernando tells her reader how far from perfect the world and the people in her stories are. She shows the discrepancy in a way that one can only laugh or smile or, at least, never condemn.

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<sup>1</sup>James Thurber, Credos and Curios (New York: Harper Row, 1963), p. 91.



A study of her works as satirical fiction would ask: what has she done? This question would beget a second: how has she done it? In a study of a literary work, the first question would be immaterial without the second. The answer to the second provides the mode of looking at things. It is this mode, the manner of taking life, that provides the pleasure.<sup>2</sup> It is this pleasure that one wishes to keep or at least to prolong.

This thesis, therefore, aims to point out and discuss the elements of satire in the short stories of Gilda Cordero-Fernando. The above questions should be formulated in simpler, more meaningful terms, thus: What traits of people and aspects in society does she satirize? How does she expose the objects of her satire? This thesis attempts to answer these questions.

One may also ask: To what purpose does Mrs. Fernando satirize people and things? It is a common belief that satirists write satire for a moral mission. But that satires have been written for the good of society has not been agreed on by all satirists and scholars. For Frances Russel "the real stimulus of

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<sup>2</sup>Quentin Anderson (ed.), Henry James: Selected Short Stories (New York: Halt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), intro. v.

the satirist is his temperament, not his morality."<sup>3</sup>  
 Some practitioners of the satiric craft have admitted they do not write for some lofty motives. Horace's reason for writing satires was "because he couldn't write epics."<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Fernando has admitted that her book, The Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick Maker abounds with satirical elements. However, she has claimed that in her fiction she is an "unconscious reformist,"<sup>5</sup> probably in the same rank as John P. Marquand who "was never by intention a satirist."<sup>6</sup> When she chooses to "reform"<sup>7</sup> she resorts to newspaper and magazine articles like her now defunct biting column, "Tempest in a Teapot," in The Woman and the Home, the Sunday magazine of the Manila Chronicle.

It is almost impossible to suppress satiric temper such as Mrs. Fernando's. It is this temper

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<sup>3</sup>Leonard Feinberg, The Satirist (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1963), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted from her letter.

<sup>6</sup>John Gross, John P. Marquand (New Haven: College University Press, 1963), p. 131.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted from her letter.