

mga iskolar sa wika, panitikan, at kasaysayang Aleman. Hindi natin garap na mabubungkal ang reperensiya ni Rizal bilang nobelista at palaisip kung hindi natin lilipagin ang kaniyang kaalaman sa wika, panitikan, at kasaysayang Aleman.

Hindi naman dapat isipin na nahilig lamang sa Aleman si Rizal dahil sa matalik niyang pakikipagkaibigan kay Ferdinand Blumentritt. Kung binasa lamang nating mabuti ang *Doña Perfecta* ni Perez Galdos at sirasabing may malakas na impluwensiya sa pagsulat ng *Noli at Fili* ay mahihiwatigan natin mismo doon ang bighani ng Alemanya kahit sa mga kabataang Espanyol. Ayon sa nobelari Perez Galdos, ngayong puntahan na noon ng mga kabataang nais magkaroon ng ibang uri at radikal na edukasyon ang Alemanya. Hindi ba tkahit ang planong paaralan ni Ibarra sa San Diego ay nakapadron sa edukasyong Aleman? Bago pa o magmula sa panahon nina Herder ay sadyang namulaklak ang kulturang Aleman at kaya isang sentro na ito ng gawaing intelektuwal pagpapit ng ika-19 siglo. Ipinagmamalakinan ito ang mga Hegel, Nietzsche, at ngayong Marx bago namalagi doon si Rizal upang tapusin ang kaniyang nobela.

At rais koring sabihin na hindi sumusulong ang ating pagpapahalaga kay Rizal sapagkat hindi sumusulong ang iskolarsiyong tulad kay Rizal. Inulit-ulit lamang sa mga libro, artikulo, at alumpa-tuwing Araw ni Rizal ang mga isyung tinalakay nina Daroy, Ricardo Pascual, Palma, Redo, De la Cruz at ibang Rizalist a noong dekada 60. At para sa akin, sintomas din ito ng pagkabalaho ng buong adyenda sa saliksikat intelektuwalidad sa mga lumang tunguhin at paradigma. Marami pang dapat gawin ang mga Rizalist a. Tulad din ng pangyayaring marami ding dapat gawin ang mga iskolar natin at guro sa akademya upang iligtas ang pagtuturo mula sa kumunoy ng nakamihansang kaisipan.

Maaaring ayong magsimula sa pamamagitan ng pagmuni sa isang popular na pahayag ni Herder: "Hulog ng langit ang kaisipan, biyaya ng lupa ang salita." Napakaraming ibig sabihin. Bihira ang gustong mag-aral ngayon kay Herder dahil hindi malinaw magulat. Mahiwaga ang "Hulog ng langit ang kaisipan, biyaya ng lupa ang salita." Ngunit isang natitayak kong ibig sabihin nitong ay hindi natin kailanman makikita ang biyaya mula sa ating sariling lupa kung lagit ayong nakatingala.

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*The Poem Is The Real: A Poetics**



The real is the poem. To write the poem is to get real. The real is what we call "our world." But our world is only our experience of it. If so, the world is only for each one, that little time-space where we stand out as conscious beings; the world is only our consciousness of it in our experience of it. It is our only world; we have no other. As each world is its own; we have no access out to the living of it.

What we call reality is only, and forever, a human reality: what we are able to perceive. The world of matter is our science; the world of spirit is that of our world's religions.

And who are "we"? - Not I, not you, not the other; it is in their inter-connectedness that we are hence, you and I and the other, and thereby we are

"To experience" anything, in consciousness of it, has from its etymology in Greek, *enpeiran*, and Latin, *experiri*, both an active and a passive sense: it is "to try or attempt to pass through, to undergo." The word in both Greek and Latin is associated with going on a journey, faring, meeting with chance and danger for in setting forth nothing is certain. Such is the meaningfulness of our English word "experience"

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But then, it is only with words and words that, after the event – “that fundamental entity/the experience – we again try and undergo and pass through what we call our world. This other journey is verbal; it may end nowhere, the trial fail, the experiment pall. But working our language – soil and fallow of all human thought and feeling, our only ground – we invest our words with a power to evoke, to call forth to our mind and imagination a meaningfulness that we seem to have grasped in that human event or experience: indeed, whether that event did happen, or had only been dreamed or imagined, or is only an inextricable conflation of fact and fiction; indeed, too, that we call an “event” or experience may only be a thought that seeks a bearing or a feeling that haunts. And in that finished weave of words – the very text – our aim is to apprehend, to understand, the living of it; the full consciousness of the event or experience its very sensation.

When we speak, write, or read a word, we begin to create our world again – our world in our image, in our language; this is so because it is with words that we connect to reality with each nerve of perception – a filament of feeling, a spare of thought: we have no other means but our words; with our words, we give a meaningful form to the feeling or thought that pulses with our grasp or apprehension of the world in our experience. And that apprehension sows our mind with images of the encompassing reality and thereby shapes us, forms us within. We are informed, we are formed within.

To understand our experience then is with words and words to stand under a cloud broken by shafts of light from a makeshift sun. To understand, to stand under for the immense reality of creation is essentially, if initially mysterious. Here is the poem, this poem, and that poem: we journey from sun to sun, then past to night again. What we understand is not a meaning fixed and stable, but a meaningfulness of the living of it, the very sensation of it.

Yet the living of it is only one human being's memory of it as Eduardo Galeano says, “to remember is to pass through the heart.” And the reader, another human being, also remembers what he may have lived or passed through: the living of it as he now imagines it himself. And thus, as he reads alive, he dwells where all things live – that universal plane where his humanity is always for that moment, achieved. Here, indeed, on that plane, is that vibrant interconnectedness of the human community: a history, a culture, and a natural environment, all change transformation, energy. The words chosen, to convey that vibrancy of interconnectedness, are *cathected*: that is to say, invested with mental and emotional energy.

Poems are forms of thought and feeling wrought from language by an individual mind and imagination. Feeling is deeper and wider than thought; it is also the most honest part of oneself. And, as Derrida suspects, *peut-être*, “perhaps, there may be forms of thought that think more than doesthat thought called philosophy!” The poem leaps over Derrida's *perhaps* for what is wrought there is what has been lived as *imagined*. We may see only what our words allow us to see, and yet, with imagination, we are enabled, also with words and words, to see beyond them other worlds, other possibilities.

Poems are forms of the imagination; the imagination has infinite possibilities of understanding what has been gone through or undergone. What is most imagined is what is most real.

A POETICS

So here then is my own poetics, in response, it may be to present and future critics of my own critical standpoint whereby to engage with the various colored forms of the imagination. I would much prefer for my standpoint not to be pinned by any label on the critical board, I would much rather go by what Wallace Stevens says of “the nobility of the imagination.” All labels are constrictive: formalist, feminist, Marxist, deconstructive, poststructuralist, postmodern, postcolonial, other “posts!” I would much rather be free to draw from all sources of possible enlightenment for revelation. In any critical approach, from any standpoint, it is in fact much simpler, and more honest, to say just what you mean. You need only choose your words with care and respect for their freight of meaningfulness.

Only for convenience of overview, I here encapsulate certain assumptions about language, about the literary work and its form, about the writer's playing field, and about a country's literature as its image. The “field work” in research – that is the reading of the poet's texts themselves over the last century, our poetry from English since *Man of Earth* through *A Native Clearing* to *A Habit of Shores*; our short stories through English, 1956 to 1989 so far in my field work, from *Upon Our Own Ground* to *Underground Spirit* – all that field work enabled me to clarify to myself, chiefly by the inductive method, those assumptions. The argument is as follows:

1. Particularly when the work is literary, linguistic usage is essentially translation. The word “translation,” is from Latin *transferre*, *translatus*, meaning “to carry over/across.” When we write, we carry across our words our perceptions of reality. Such working or tillage of language is work of imagination: it makes things real to the mind, for it is the mind that has the imaginative power. This implies that the sense of or language is the basic poetic sense. It is intimately bound with one's sense of reality. As I said earlier, *What is most imagined is what is most real.* “When the imagination sleeps,” says Albert Camus, “words are emptied of their meaning.” The same tillage or cultivation of language implies that the meanings of our words do not come so much from the words themselves as from lives lived. We translate a feeling or an impression into the words of a language; the translation could fail. We choose the right words in the right order, we invent or reinvent our words, or transform or even subvert their accepted syntax, in order that we might carry across them our own soil's freight without hurt.

2. The literary work itself, without Theory, isn't mute. The word "theory" is from Greek *theoria*, meaning "a way of looking." Any theory is only a way of looking, and essentially heuristic; none has monopoly of insight. Now then, for me, a literary work's chief appeal is to the imagination, and the basic requirement for intimate engagement with a work of imagination is a sense for language. There in any literary work a human action, a human experience as *imagined as lived*, is feigned or mimicked in language; but that human action or condition only someone's mood or train of reflection, as in a lyric poem, if it is then shaped or endowed with form, it becomes meaningful. Not a fixed meaning, but meaningfulness. That meaningfulness is its moral or ethical dimension. And that moral dimension raises it to a universal plane. That plane is the site of eternal verities, it is the clearing of everlasting questioning.

3. Granted a fair enough sense of language to read an essay or a poem is first to interpret the text on its face to deal with it by and on its own terms. The text after all has some terms within itself. That to be reading, attending to the form of the literary work, is the antidote to the text's predestination, that is the privileging of Theory over text, such that the text is read to conform to the theory one prefers. Such theory-bound dealing with the text is *eisegesis*: that interpretation of the text by reading into it one's own ideas. The critic aspires to a reading of the text that isn't beholden to any theoretical or ideological commitment.

When we read a story or poem, we need to imagine the human action, the human experience that is mimicked or simulated there. That is the form of the literary work. It is that which must direct and validate the interpretation of its content. For the form that has been wrought is that by which the content is achieved that is, endowed with a power of meaningfulness by which we are moved. Form is the matter of art, content the matter of interpretation. When Jose Y. Dalisay, Jr., was asked whether his story is *retrue*, he said, Yes, of course, because "on the page" where the story is, "is the life that matters." That life is achieved by the story's form.

4. The writer's playing field is the field of imagination. For the writer, poem or short story is only a convenient label; when they write they do not adhere to any fixed criteria or yardstick of the literary work. They only aspire to creating something unique in their playing field *they make things anew or make new things*. Without a masterful use of language, no literary work can rise to the level of art. For that thing made anew, or that new thing, is the very form of the human experience as *imagined as lived* that has been simulated by a particular use of language, a particular style. Albert Camus speaks of such style as "the simultaneous existence of reality and of the mind that gives reality its form."

We should not forget that the word "poem" is from Greek *poiein*, "to make." The poem or short story is a thing made of words, an artifact. It may sometimes be claimed that "in English, we do not exist." But of course, nor indeed in any language except in and through the poem, where – as the poet Isabela Banzon says, "the lights must be from artificial ore."

5. A country's literature is its own imagination of how its people think and feel about their world and so justify the way they live. In short, its literature is its lived ideology. In that light, our writers and scholars create our sense of country. Our writers and scholars do not proclaim their nationalism, their love of country; their works proclaim it – but of course, as with everyone else, not only their writings, but all the other things that they do.

Let me make myself clearer by stressing the obvious. The things that a people do make their country. Writing is also doing, and more those who write create a people's sense of their country.

For one's sense of country is basically how one imagines her essentially then, a poetic sense: an imaginative perception of our day-to-day living in the very element of our history and culture. While it may be shared through education, the mass media, the arts and other means and institutions, our sense of country is, in the first place, personal and subjective, but that doesn't make it any less real. It is more image than concept, more feeling than thought. Which of course is why that sense is more readily apprehensible in the artistic media – painting, film, theatre, song, the literary text. The literary text, as language purposefully worked, may be the clearest expression of one's sense of country; in that light, a poet's sense of language – whatever the language he has mastered – may be his most intimate sense of his country's landscape and his people's lived lives. For the writer, one's country is what one's imagination owes allegiance to.

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