

Classic Poetry Series

Cirilo Bautista
- poems -

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Cirilo Bautista(1947 -)

Cirilo F. Bautista is a multi-awarded Filipino poet, fictionist, critic and writer of nonfiction. He received his basic education from Legarda Elementary School (1st Honorable Mention, 1954) and Mapa High School (Valedictorian, 1959). He received his degrees in AB Literature from the University of Santo Tomas (magna cum laude, 1963), MA Literature from St. Louis University, Baguio City (magna cum laude, 1968), and Doctor of Arts in Language and Literature from De La Salle University-Manila (1990). He received a fellowship to attend the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa (1968–1969) and was awarded an honorary degree—the only Filipino to have been so honored there.

Bautista taught creative writing and literature at St. Louis University (1963–1968) and the University of Santo Tomas (1969–1970) before moving to De La Salle University-Manila in 1970. He is also a co-founding member of the Philippine Literary Arts Council (PLAC) and a member of the Manila Critics Circle, Philippine Center of International PEN and the Philippine Writers Academy.

Bautista has also received Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards (for poetry, fiction and essay in English and Filipino) as well as Philippines Free Press Awards for Fiction, Manila Critics' Circle National Book Awards, Gawad Balagtas from the Unyon ng mga Manunulat ng Pilipinas, the Pablo Roman Prize for the Novel, and the highest accolades from the City of Manila, Quezon City and Iligan City. Bautista was hailed in 1993 as Makata ng Taon by the Komisyon ng mga Wika ng Pilipinas for winning the poetry contest sponsored by the government. The last part of his epic trilogy *The Trilogy of Saint Lazarus*, entitled *Sunlight on Broken Stones*, won the Centennial Prize for the epic in 1998. He was an exchange professor in Waseda University and Ohio University. He became an Honorary Fellow in Creative Writing at the University of Iowa in 1969, and was the first recipient of a British Council fellowship as a creative writer at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1987.

Bautista works include *Boneyard Breaking*, *Sugat ng Salita*, *The Archipelago*, *Telex Moon*, *Summer Suns*, *Charts*, *The Cave and Other Poems*, *Kirot ng Kataga*, and *Bullets and Roses: The Poetry of Amado V. Hernandez*. His novel *Galaw ng Asoge* was published by the University of Santo Tomas Press in 2004. His latest book, *Believe and Betray: New and Collected Poems*, appeared in 2006, published by De La Salle University Press.

His poems have appeared in major literary journals, papers, and magazines in the Philippines and in anthologies published in the United States, Japan, the

Netherlands, China, Romania, Hong Kong, Germany and Malaysia. These include: excerpts from *Sunlight on Broken Stones*, published in *World Literature Today*, USA, Spring 2000; *What Rizal Told Me* (poem), published in *Manoa*, University of Hawaii, 1997; *She of the Quick Hands: My Daughter and The Seagull* (poems), published in *English Teacher's Portfolio of Multicultural Activities*, edited by John Cowen (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

Aside from his teaching, creative and research activities as a Professor Emeritus of Literature at the College of Liberal Arts, De La Salle University-Manila, Bautista is also a columnist and literary editor of the *Philippine Panorama*, the Sunday Supplement of the *Manila Bulletin*. He is also a member of the Board of Advisers and Associate, *Bienvenido Santos Creative Writing Center* of De La Salle University-Manila and Senior Associate, *The Center for Creative Writing and Studies* of the University of Santo Tomas.

Awards, Prizes and Honors

First Prize in Epic Writing English Category, of the National Centennial Commission's Literary Contests, 1998, sponsored by the Philippine Government. The judges in this prestigious contest, held to commemorate the Centennial of our freedom, gave the prize to Bautista's *Sunlight on Broken Stones*, the last volume in his *The Trilogy of Saint Lazarus*. This epic of 3,050 lines concludes his monumental work on Philippine history.

In 1999, *Sunlight on Broken Stones*, published by De La Salle University-Manila Press, garnered the National Book Award given by the Manila Critics Circle and the Gintong Aklat Award given by the Book Development Association of the Philippines

Hall of Fame of the Palanca Awards Foundation for achievements in the field of literature, 1995. This is given to Filipino writers who have distinguished themselves by winning at least five First Prizes in the Palanca Literary Contests.

Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature nine (9) times for poetry, fiction and essay. His prize-winning works include: *Philippine Poetics: The Past Eight Years* (essay), 1981; *Crossworks* (collected poems), 1979; *Charts* (collected poems), 1973; *The Archipelago* (epic poem), 1970; *Telex Moon* (epic poem), 1975; *The Cave and Other Poems* (collected poems), 1968; and the short stories *Ritual* and *The Man Who Made a Covenant with the Wind*.

National Book Award given by the Manila Critics Circle five (5) times, for *The*

Archipelago, Sugat ng Salita, Sunlight on Broken Stones, The Trilogy of Saint Lazarus and Tinik sa Dila.

Diwa ng Lahi, Gawad Antonio Villegas at Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinangan in the field of literature by the City of Manila. This award is given to outstanding Manila artists who have contributed to the advancement of arts and culture. 430th Araw ng Maynila, June 22, 2001, Bulwagang Villegas, Manila City Hall.

Gawad Balagtas in 1997 by the Unyon ng mga Manunulat ng Pilipinas for Bautista's achievements as a poet, fictionist, and critic.
Included in Who's Who in the World, 1996, New Providence, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Makata ng Taon 1993, sponsored by the Komisyon ng mga Wikang Pilipinas with the poem Ulat Buhat Sa Bulkan. With this and his Palanca award for Tagalog poetry and his winning the First Prize in the Poetry contest sponsored by the Dyaryo Filipino with his poem, Ilang Aeta Mula Sa Botolan, Bautista affirmed his importance as a bilingual writer.

Included in The Oxford Companion to the English Language, edited by Tom MacArthur, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Included in The Traveller's Guide to Asian Literature, 1993.

Knight Commander of Rizal by the Order of the Knights of Rizal, December 1998, in recognition of Bautista's literary works that helped propagate the ideas and achievements of the national hero. His The Trilogy of Saint Lazarus has the national hero as the main character and focal point in the author's poetic recreation of the development of the Filipino soul from the beginning of our history to the present.

Adopted Son of Iligan City, 1997, by virtue of Executive Order #98 signed by Mayor Alejo Yanes, for his contribution "in the development of creative writing in Mindanao, for serving as a role model among young writers, as well as his tireless promotion of Iligan City as a center for literary arts in the Philippines." Bautista was instrumental in the founding of the Iligan Writers Workshop and was its primary mover in attracting young writers to congregate in Mindanao and learn the craft of writing.

Gawad Manuel L. Quezon in 1996 by the Quezon City Government in connection with the Quezon Day Celebrations for Bautista's outstanding achievement as writer, editor and teacher.

Certificate of appreciation from the Benigno Aquino, Jr., Foundation for his literary works that helped perpetuate the memory of the late senator St. Miguel Febres Cordero Research Award, SY2002-03 given by De La Salle University-Manila, 2002. This award was given to Bautista in recognition of his achievements in research and creative writing.

First Annual Dove Award by the College of Liberal Arts, De La Salle University-Manila, February 14, 2001. An alumnus of the Graduate School of the University, Bautista was honored for the contributions he had in energizing the writing life in campus through his co-founding of the creative writing programs in the University and activities as Writer-in-Residence for fifteen years.

Most Outstanding Achievement Award in Literature by the Philets-Artlets Centennial Alumni Association of the University of Santo Tomas, 1996.
Most Outstanding Alumnus Award for Literature, Mapa High School Alumni Association, 1983.

Pablo Roman Prize for his Novel-in-Progress entitled Reconstruction, 1982.

Most Outstanding Alumnus Award for Literature from the Alumni Association of the College of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas, 1982.

Fernando Maria Guerrero Award for Literature, University of Santo Tomas Alumni Association, 1980.

Most Outstanding Alumnus Award for Literature, Graduate School, Saint Louis University, 1975.

British Council Fellowship as Visiting Writer, Trinity College, Cambridge, England, 1987. Bautista was the first Filipino writer to be invited to attend the Cambridge Seminar on Contemporary Literature.

Honorary Fellow in Creative Writing, University of Iowa, U. S. A., 1969

Visiting Professor at Waseda University, Japan and Ohio University, U.S.A.

Addressed To Himself

How hard I have made life for you, Cirilo,

Who wrestle with words to free my mind;
Your various battles, you do not know,

Poise at me the same buckle, the same wind
That eagles in anger hotly ride on.
Yet like buckles you never break, though blind

At times you pine and pine for beauty gone -
Ah, never take the same courage, mon ami,
Wisdom and the past are never one.

But learn to distrust language that we
In constant dreams deem the only fact,
Kill it in seduction or heraldry

So eagle-like you may invent your act;
Then think you walk in a world of thrall,
Where Beauty walks too but does not look back,

Crossing the foggy fjords of the skull.

Cirilo Bautista

Being Blue in Switzerland

I walk along the shore of Lake Lucerne
The sunlight glimmers on the water
and pigeons eat crumbs under the trees.
The wind is cold, so I button my black jacket and tighten my woolen mufflers.
Dew still clings to the red and yellow tulips.
Lovers embrace on the wooden piers while slowly
the boat from Gotthard sails into port.
Two swans and a duck float near
the piers, seeking the bread a man has thrown
into the water, there under the blue sky.

I feel lonely by the shore of Lake Lucerne.
I hold my head high and whistle a tune.

Cirilo Bautista

Offering For Picasso

This poem
is for Picasso
who didn't have hair and looked like cheese.

He divided up
the bodies of people
and a new form of art was born in the world.

A circle of yellow
became the sun
a rainbow sprouted in an intestine exposed,
a lost bicycle
when pounded and earrings thrown
let grow in the world to a thousand green beans:

Now that he's gone
Picasso, what machine
would keep order in our dreams? What charm
would vaccinate
against the blood of war and abandonment
so that the tattered world would again be beautiful?

Cirilo Bautista

Oh How To Find Silence In The World

Being spotted in the color of skin,
why I take care in San Francisco,
waiting for the bus to Iowa.
They say racial prejudice is strong,

Negros and not whites kawawa,
and because of this they will revolt.
I shiver and shiver from fear and hunger
because I just landed from Tokyo.

A Negro came into the station—
naka-African hairdo; he holds a small
whip: it's scary to look, so
I did not look at him. Kumakalansing

the metal on the strings of his shoes
and he shouts, "Peace, brothers!" Smiled showing
white teeth. Looked at me—
maybe he laughed at what he saw—

a tiny dayuhan, dark and from
some lupalog. Upside down
my insides went in fright and pulled
a cigarette so the redness of my face

wouldn't show. I nahalata
that the Whites there too were quiet
so quiet, unable to speak in front
of that Negro. Only when he left returned

the normalcy in the station—others
read again, neighbors gossiped again,
laughter, the janitor swept again.
After a while that Negro passed again

two white Americanas on each arm,
blonde, their beauty with no equal.
The janitor stopped sweeping.
I thought, "So this is racial prejudice."

Cirilo Bautista

Patalim

Cirilo Bautista

The Fountains At Villa D'Este, Tivoli

As if he owned the ocean.
Here, one man's dream explodes in
water, carved in splashing splendour
by lion teeth, angel mouth, breasts
of virgins that do not rest. Day
and night the liquid sizzles, channeling
the dream from terrace to terrace,
from stone to stone, till it gathers to a pool
that caresses the fish. My brain swims
with the fish as they trace their antique
silence to a thousand spouts
and fountains, then back to the pool again....
One dies again, also, bursting through
the skin, and flings his wingless wars
to the sun, broken and raining sadness
on the soul; but just for a moment,
like spumes in air, or the swing of swans
to shore, no longer, no better. Bodies
bloom and reel in space, juggled and spun by
light, by water, to flash a brilliance,
no longer, no better. Was this what he
thought, he who planned the garden of his mind,
to freeze that brilliance? Did he, in despair,
command the water to move his mind
to each crevice, each pool, each silent
sibilance, each flowing,
each song of many endings, each murmur,
while he slept, as if he owned the ocean?

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