

TRIBUTES TO DOREEN FERNANDEZ



Editor's Note

This section of *Kritika Kultura* honors Doreen G. Fernandez (1934-2002). She was a prodigious writer, literary scholar, and cultural historian, and a much-beloved teacher.

Fernandez earned a PhD in Literature in 1976 at the Ateneo de Manila University, where she was mentored by Bienvenido Lumbera, the “dean of Philippine Studies.” Her dissertation, not surprisingly, was a pioneering study on the *sarswela*, an indigenized form of the Spanish zarzuela. Fernandez relates its rise and fall to the changing socioeconomic conditions in Iloilo, particularly the fortunes of the sugar industry. It was eventually published as a book (*The Iloilo Zarzuela: 1903-1930*) by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. Much of her work on Philippine drama since then were later collected in *Palabas: Essays on Philippine Theater* (1996).

With her late husband Wili Fernandez, she started a food column, which she eventually continued singly and which was to be the germ of her research into Philippine food and food culture. With co-writer Edilberto Alegre, her output in this field were the following books: *Sarap: Essays on Philippine Food* (1988), *Kinilaw: A Philippine Cuisine of Freshness* (1991) and the Lasa series of restaurant guides. She also authored *Tikim: Essays on Philippine Food and Culture* (1994), *Fruits of the Philippines* (1997), and *Palayok: Philippine Food through Time, on Site, in the Pot* (2000).

Her work on Philippine literature includes the two-volume oral history *Writers and Their Milieu* (1984, 1987). This important work contains interviews with members of the first two generations of Filipino writers in English, and is the first of its kind in Philippine literary scholarship, providing primary data on many aspect of these writers works and life, data unavailable elsewhere and otherwise irretrievable.

The scholarly spirit is manifest in Fernandez's “Research in the Highways and Byways: Non-Traditional Sources for Literary and Other Research,” a professorial chair lecture she delivered at the Ateneo de Manila University. In it, she shares with the prospective researcher in Philippine culture the unlikely places where scholarly gems lie buried. It is here being published for the first time.

In 2000, she was honored with a festschrift entitled *Feasts and Feats* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University), the contributors to which includes Philippine National Artists Nick Joaquin, Jose Garcia Villa, and N. V. M. Gonzalez, and revered Philippine literary scholars-mentors, later colleagues and friends—Bienvenido Lumbera, and Nicanor G. Tiongson.

Her full resume—the above is merely a sketch—is certainly impressive, but it does not reveal the person behind the works. The short pieces that follow her lecture reveal aspects of her character and show why she was much loved by the folks with whom she came into contact, as teacher, writer, colleague, critic, friend, or comrade. The writers represent different sectors: the academe, the media, the cultural establishment, even the anti-establishment Left.