

Filipino Satire: Expression of Needs from Early Philippine Novels to Contemporary Works

SHERILL ASIS-GILBAS

Sorsogon State University, School of Graduate Studies Sorsogon City, Philippines

ABSTRACT: This paper intends to present the Filipino Satire used as an aesthetic expression of needs relative to socio-cultural and political issues and concerns from the Early Philippine Novel in English to the contemporary works of expatriate writers. Defamiliarization and Humor theories, including Social Criticism, are used as the main frameworks of this paper, which are descriptive, analytical and qualitative. In this paper, Filipino satire is grouped into five: (1) domestic/marital satire, (2) cultural satire, (3) satire on religion, (4) political satire, and (5) satire on Filipinism. The aesthetic expression lies in the tone and form. This paper concluded that Filipino satire appeals to the intellect and culturebased despite its being underrated. It reveals societal issues in a lighter manner that conceals the darker side of the issue. It differs from comedy because it uses ridicule as a corrective measure while comedy mainly evokes laughter to amuse or entertain. It is recommended to consider the signification of language, which reveals historical and cultural background in literary works and in conveying lived experiences of an individual, or the community in general.

KEYWORDS: *Filipino satire, defamiliarization, humor theory, social criticism*

I. INTRODUCTION

Satire is a form of literature. Its primary role is to ridicule or criticize any subject, idea, institution or mankind in general. The satirist's objective is to expose some representative vices that are considered threatening or harmful to the society. It also aims to point out human behaviour that is despicable and needs to be changed. Its goal can be either destruction or reform but mainly for the general benefit or betterment of humanity.

Abrams (1999) further discusses satire as an incidental element within many works where overall mode is not satiric—in a certain character or situation, or in an interpolated passage of ironic commentary on some aspect of the human condition or of contemporary society. The aesthetics of satire comes through the theme and tone of the literary pieces that carry its object of ridicule.

Accordingly, biographical and psychoanalytic critics inspired by Freud tend to look at satire through the author's perspective, reading it as a product of the author's fears, hates or grudges, or as a manifestation of personality disorder. Others view satire as persuasive rhetoric, with a moral goal to correct folly and to lash vice. Satirists justify its practice as a corrective of human vice and folly. The claim is to ridicule the failing rather than the individual, and to limit its ridicule to corrigible faults, excluding those for which a person is not responsible.

The theories on humor can be associated with the idea of satire. Mulder (2002), in his article disclosed the conventional humor theories. Such theories are superiority theory, relief theory, and incongruity theory. Meanwhile, sociology theories provide insight on the social and cultural context of a joke or any other humorous event. They focus on the way the joke is contextually interpreted. It means the understanding of a joke is part of many different social actions.

Satire and Comedy

Satire differs from comedy because the former ridicules and is used as a corrective measure while the latter mainly invokes laughter as to amuse or entertain. People laugh at different things, thus, there is so-called high comedy which evokes "intellectual laughter," or the thoughtful laughter from spectators who remain emotionally detached from the action at the spectacle of folly, pretentiousness, and incongruity in human behavior. This is similar to satire. Low comedy, on the other hand, has no intellectual appeal. It arouses laughter by jokes, and by slapstick humor and boisterous or clownish physical activity. The laughter that appeals to the intellect is the characteristic of satire; while the comic provides humor that can easily be perceived by the senses. The Filipino type of satire is a creative presentation of the societal angst since time immemorial through

the literary material, specifically, a novel. The use of satire reflects the biting realities of life yet is revealed in a humorous manner.

Socio-cultural and Political Issues

Social forces refer to the factors that may influence the behavior of an individual or groups in the society. These may include culture and politics. The former is a composition of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities or habits acquired by the member; while the latter may reflect authority or power of an individual or group inherent from the societal aspects. Colon (2010) explains culture as associated with the sociological point of view. It is “an organization of phenomena that are dependent upon symbols; phenomena which include acts (pattern of behaviour), objects (tools and things), ideas (beliefs, knowledge), and sentiments (attitudes, values)” (p.4).

Societal problems are always associated with culture and are political in nature. Literary articles, particularly prose narratives, contain stories that discuss socio-cultural and political issues. This paper considers that narratives provide societal conglomeration of experiences in various ways and styles. The researcher posits that Filipino satire is an artistic expression of the lived experiences of people in a literary or fictive form.

The Material

The novel, which rose with the influence of Western culture, was brought by colonization. Mojares (1983) defines novel as a fictional prose narrative of a certain extent. He emphasizes that the word *narrative* requires the presence of a story and a storyteller. Early Filipino novels have clear manifestations of said influences such as those of Paterno's and Rizal's. The works of these two Filipino novelists in Spanish generally served as outstanding legacy of the novel in the Philippines from which the modern novel of today can trace its theme and form. Hence, novels serve as a good material of the satirists. Thus justified, this paper utilizes the novel as the main tool of Filipino satire as aesthetic manifestation of socio-cultural and political concerns.

According to Lumbera, (1997) reading a literary work requires one to engage with its language as the social practice of individuals, groups and institutions. He refers to Philippine literature as that which “may be produced in the capital city of Manila and in the different urban centers and rural outposts, even in foreign lands where descendants of Filipino migrants use English or any of the languages of the Philippines to create works that tell about their lives and aspirations” (p2). This goes to show that the novels though written in another country and in a foreign language may still serve as good sources of material on Philippine studies. Furthermore, Lumbera says:

The forms used by Filipino authors may be indigenous or borrowed from other cultures, and these may range from popular pieces addressed to mass audiences to highly sophisticated works intended for the intellectual elite.
(p. 2)

Galdon(1985), enumerates women writers who have played significant roles in the development of Philippine writing in English. In his essay which was also published in the book that he edited, *Essays on The Philippine Novel in English*, he identifies nostalgia as one of the more frequent themes of contemporary Philippine writers in English. In addition, he has observed that Philippine writing often highlights the idyllic nostalgia or longing for home in the provinces, which he considers either gentle or bitterly satiric. Specifically, Lumbera(1997) defines nostalgia this way:

Nostalgia is the melancholy longing for home, or the wistful and often sentimental yearning for a real or romanticized past that cannot be regained. It is often characterized by innocence, even by naivete in ironic conjunction with manipulative cleverness, authentic simplicity and a quality of frustrated aspiration which characterizes dreamland(pp. 96-97)

Indeed, novels are intended to arouse emotions by allowing readers to make intellectual discoveries of ideals creatively embedded in the writer's artistry through thematic presentation, form, style, and general structure of the work. These discoveries also lead them to decipher ideas, which can enlighten, inspire, or simply inform them accordingly.

This paper anchors on the defamiliarization and humor theories and the use of social criticism. As Abrams (1999) explains, when applied in literature, defamiliarization works in three levels—on the level of language, on the level of content, and on the level of literary forms. The novels under study therefore have the application of the three levels.

One of the techniques in defamiliarization is magic realism. It is when the author uses realism in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myths and fairy tales. Another technique is the use of social realism, which refers to novels reflecting social reality stressing the oppression of workers by bourgeois capitalist, where the virtues of the proletariat and the struggle between economic classes are the essential dynamics of the society.

Meyer (2000) asserts that humor is used to unify as well as to divide. He cites *tease* as an example where it is viewed as humorous and aggressive at the same time. The recipient's prior relationship with the teaser will decide whether the message is "primarily a tension-relieving mood lightener or a lightly disguised critique" (p310)

Social critics, as explained by Makaryk (1993), is a term used to distinguish literature that addresses specific political, social, economic, cultural, or religious issues. The writers whose works contain social criticism hope to do more than merely entertain readers. Social critics are individuals who present by-products of a larger activity, the cultural elaboration and affirmation of their collective reflection of the community or society they represent as a collective life. Their reasons for addressing political and social problems may vary, but most of them feel a responsibility to make readers aware of certain facts.

Background of the Filipino Novel

Mojares (1983) studies the Filipino novel with historical approach and arrives at a "diachronic as well as a synchronic estimation" (p2) of the Filipino novel. He concluded that a novel acquires its own kind from its specific society. Culture and history are important contributory factors where the narrative evolves. He summarily describes the background of Filipino novel in the following statements:

There is a complex background to the Filipino novel. While it reflects its indebtedness to the Western novel, it also has its roots in native soil, in a local tradition of narratives: on one hand, epics, ballads, tales and other folk narratives; on the other hand, the inchoate mass of narratives or 'proto-novels'-metrical romances, lives of saints, moral and social tracts, and others which, while inspired by foreign models, had in the course of time been naturalized on the home grounds. (p.367)

The Early Novels in the Philippines (Spanish regime)

According to Hornedo (2004), the first concept of novel in the Philippines came through the *Urbana at Felisa* of P. Modesto de Castro in 1864. It was followed by *Ninayin* 1885 by Pedro A. Paterno. This novel is intended to expose ignorance, superstition, and oppression in the Philippines. Two years later, the first novel of Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, was published in 1887, followed by its sequel, *El Filibusterismo* in 1891. Critics have noted the similarity of the *Nolito* the work of Benito Perez Galdos' *Doña Perfecta*, which Hornedo describes as "a strong social satire."

In the book *Ideas and Ideals*, Hornedo clarifies that the Filipino novel in Spanish appears only after the first novelists had left their native Philippines and had stayed for a while in Spain. In the same book, Hornedo enumerates the elements of the Spanish literary tradition that have influenced the birth of the Filipino novel in Spanish. They are: *The costumbrismo in Spanish narrative; Social criticism; The novel as genre; and Krausismo.*

Costumbrismo refers to both genre and movement. It is an important aspect of romanticism that must be clearly distinguished from earlier depiction of customs and manners. Accordingly, the general features of costumbrismo are difficult to characterize because of their wide variety of both Spanish and European forms. It can be traced back to Spain's history. During the 19th Century, the Imperial Spain was sharply divided between conservatives and liberals, as well as rural and urban society. The Provincial Spain, where the Philippines was one of the provinces, totally lost its support from the Imperial Spain in 1815. Thus, the Spaniards became acquisitive and greedy. According to Mojares, Rizal's novels contain references to the comedia and moro-moro, Baltazar, and such works as *Urbana and Feliza* and *Tandang Basi* Macunat.

In the Philippine literary perspective, the idea of costumbrismo refers to literary or pictorial interpretation of local everyday life, mannerisms, and customs, primarily in the Hispanic scene in the 19th Century. It is related to artistic realism and Romanticism, often satiric and even moralizing. At times, its approach deals on quaint folkloric tale and often has a romanticizing aspect.

Hornedo describes costumbrismo as short sketches of types and customs. They were vignettes and short pictorial descriptions. Plots were often mere excuses for the description of the country customs; and even

when the plot was the main interest, it was often interrupted by the description of peculiar customs rendered in objective detail". The traces of the early literary forms in the novels of the Filipino writers in Spanish showcase the idea of costumbrismo.

II. OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to identify and analyze the use of Filipino satire as an aesthetics expression of needs related to socio-cultural and political issues and concerns. Specifically, it probes on the basic influential factors to the Philippine novel from the Spanish to American and to the contemporary period, giving focus on the three contemporary novels of Merlinda Bobis. It intended to cite the presence of satire in the works of Filipino writers as their artistic way of presenting the society's political and cultural concerns. This paper also posited that Filipino satire is different from the other known types of satire, such as Horatian and Juvenalian.

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a descriptive-qualitative presentation of ideas. It also makes use of literary criticism and analytical approach to decipher the use of defamiliarization and humor theories as well as social criticism.

The researcher traces the use of satire in the Filipino novels from the early Philippine novel in Spanish and in English to the contemporary works of the expatriate writers. The selection of novels does not basically deal on the author but on the materials that were published during the Spanish Regime and those early novels written by Filipinos. Representative materials during the American period were provided to identify the presence and use of satire in every work. They were chosen as representative of the period in terms of its societal recognition. The background of the Filipino novel is also discussed for a holistic comprehension.

The works of expatriate writers after the American regime were also analyzed to show that satire is still of use in contemporary works. The three novels of Bobis¹—*Banana Heart Summer*, *The Solemn Lantern Maker*, and the *Fish Hair Woman*—were used to identify the use of Filipino satire as aesthetic expression on societal, cultural, and political issues. The theme and tone expect to reveal in the general form of the three novels a critique of the society with the use of tropes and signification.

The traditional satirical techniques are exaggeration, incongruity, parody, reversal, and defamiliarization. From the analyses of the said novels, the particular types of Filipino satire were named based on the identified characteristics as a result of this paper.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Satire in the Filipino Novels in Spanish

Rizal's two novels are satirical, employing two different but complementary satirical approaches. The first refers to the writing of characters or types of people to whom one ascribes in exaggerated caricature humorous and ridiculous patterns of behavior. The second form is not focused on the characters but in the depiction of typical scenes or situations that serve as representation of unhealthy status of existing social relations. *Don Tiburcio*, the quack doctor, and the nostalgic relations of the students and their life in Manila are examples of how Rizal employed satire. His use of satire in the novels was considered a non-violent protest against the current state of affairs in his home country.

The novels of Rizal, as one of the pioneers in this field as a Filipino novelist in Spanish, show his native background and the influence of European literary tradition. In his novels, Rizal uses the treatment of issue as element to introduce social criticism. While Paterno's *Ninay* features the then-contemporary Filipino society, romantically exhibiting players inside and outside the politico-religious authority structure of the colonial order, Rizal, on the other hand, criticizes Philippine culture through political analysis. *Noli* brought to bear the fact that Spain had failed to recreate a humanist society out of its colony.

Furthermore, Hornedo posits that the two novels of Rizal are *jeremiads*. They are intended "to warn the Spain to right the wrongs and save the Philippines from the freebooters who were trying to rob her of her colony and of the Filipinos their dignity and liberties."ⁱⁱⁱ They reflect the fears and interests of the *ilustrado* class who, accordingly, has little understanding of the "real and potential for action" of the non-*ilustrado* class. It was clarified that the novels' theme highlights the "Philippine inefficient government dominated and manipulated by greedy friars" that creates "ineffectual and unproductive citizenry," thus, may be unhealthy to the part of Spain. The criticism does not actually favor the Philippines, but the novels were treated the other way around.

Satire in the Early Philippine Novels in English

Zoilo M. Galang was the first Filipino novelist in English. His *A Child of Sorrow* published in 1921 is the first Philippine novel written in English. He wrote both in English and the vernacular. Galdon (1969) identifies three romantic themes in the fiction of Galang, such as, imagination and mystery, the happy throb of the tender passions, and didacticism. His other novel called *A Novel of Filipino Life* with the original title, *Visions of the Sower*, published in 1924, has the main theme of labor, success, and patriotism.

It can be deemed that *A Child of Sorrow* is pioneer in the field of novels in English in the Philippines. Continuing this literary tradition with the English language, Galang used scriptural aphorisms, name symbols, and social moralizing. There are also flashes of social criticism that can be somehow regarded as satire.

One of the novels that followed Galang's is Maximo Kalaw's, *The Filipino Rebel*, published in 1930. Doreen Fernandez claims that Kalaw has the same consciousness of Rizal in his *Noli* and *Fili* although the former lacks the texture, details, and scope of the latter's novels. To quote Mojares, "the *Filipino Rebel* is in the tradition of Rizal, but lacking in the force and finesse in terms of imagination, falters in the formal integration of factual and historical material."ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, considering the novel's limited literary lineage, the novel may have some hints of satirical device focusing on the political, social milieu.

Another novelist is Juan C. Laya. His first novel made him an instant celebrity when *His Native Soil* won for him first prize in the First Commonwealth Literary Contest in 1940. Emmanuel Torres describes the tone of Laya's novel that somehow works in a disarmingly naïve way to serve the cultural setting, the rural/folk culture of his Ilocano characters, descendants of several generations of farmers in Pangasinan. He made effort at writing the novel with many, big subjects (customs, history, current events, cultural ideas) going on at once. Torres concluded that by writing Laya's two novels, he kept alive the tradition of socially conscious literature, of which Rizal's *Noli* and *Fili* are the classic prototypes.

Indications of satire are present in his characters such as the corrupt, philandering Abogado Murcia and the flirtatious but harmless American-mestiza Virginia Fe. It is also evident in Martin, the main character who returns to Pangasinan after acquiring formal education in the United States. He has difficulty speaking in his native language, Ilocano, and disappoints everyone when he switches to English during the reception for high school graduates.

In addition, Mojares (1983) opines that *His Native Soil* echoes the interest in social problems of the 1930s and is expressive of two themes that preoccupied writers of Laya's generation. These two themes are: the tensions of a society in the throes of modernization, and the need for a viable accommodation of Western values and native mores.

Stevan Javellana's *Without Seeing the Dawn* published in 1947 can be likened to Paterno's *Ninay*. Soledad Reyes^{iv} notes that while Paterno had the Spaniards of the nineteenth century, Javellana had the Americans of the twentieth century. It is a story of local color, of customs and scenes meant to show that Filipinos have a culture of their own. The novel tries to shed light on unionism more than any other institution in the city. It reveals some sordid aspects of city life, unrelieved poverty, loss of traditional values, the prevalence of vice, and an overwhelming sense of decay and death. His protagonist Carding is depicted as naturally resilient, endowed with almost boundless optimism, despite a series of frustrating setbacks such as betrayal, death, destruction, loss of land—a pathetic victim of life. His name, Ricardo Suerte is ironic of what life offers him, which is an implication of a satirical technique.

F. Sionil Jose's *The Pretenders* in 1962 belongs to the post-war novels, which portray the image of the Filipino as a wanderer. It has an abundance of stories and novels depicting the lives of expatriates and their terrible sense of isolation in foreign lands. The novel is set in the city and talks about the memory of an idyllic barrio life, which sustains the main character Tony Samson, a historian who wants to retrieve the lost past that the barrio represents. The satirical flavor in the novel is the reversal of the traditional growth from innocence to experience, or from the barrio to the city. It is an account of how the protagonist attempts to redeem himself by returning to his roots.

A Season of Grace, released in 1963 by N.V.M. Gonzales, also suggests a streak of satire through the use of malevolent symbols that can be taken as a defamiliarizing technique—the fresh fish, screeching owl, the shell, the hawk, the rats, and the tall *daotree*. The year of grace in the novel showed the absence of fresh fish except when the rats came. Quite similar to the Filipino rebel, the theme of this novel seems to be the all-enduring man and nature.

But for the Lovers by Wilfrido Nollo, a novel published in 1970 in New York, uses a conglomeration of language such as English, Tagalog, *Chabakano*, Ilustrado Spanish, Japanese, and *kanto boy lingo*. It is the first in a projected trilogy of novels about the Philippines. The novel is described by Georgina Reyes as having a "phantasmagoric quality resulting from the counterpointing and juxtaposition of reality and illusion, actual incident and dream, memories and hallucinations." The satirical hint in the novel is reflected in the Filipino life during the occupation years, which include haunting images of wraithlike figures desperately roaming the streets in search of food, images of Luneta and Intramuros, accounts of torture in Fort Santiago, enactments of rituals, catalogs of Filipino delicacies, and *haranas*.

Satire in the Contemporary Novels of Merlinda Bobis^v

Tone: Tone indicates the mood or attitude of the persona in the narrative. It helps identify the message or the purpose of the author in writing the story. The general tone of the three novels is satiric. They all present societal problems that need attention and solution. They all call for immediate help. Though blatantly satirical, the tone can be categorized into degrees, with the first novel having subtle satire, the second novel, moderate and the third, bitter satire.

All the three novels have satirical tone loaded with Filipino customs and practices. The Filipino culture is used as the object of satire where the beliefs on superstitions, traditions, religious practices, myths and legends are the focal point. The socio-political aspect is also exposed through the representation of the characters as officers in the government. Bobis uses cultural and socio-political aspects as vehicles to ridicule practices that people in other places and even in the Philippines may either find helpful or destructive.

Though satirical in tone and presented in a nostalgic way in general, every novel suggests a different mood. *Banana Heart Summer* presents a domestic and rural ambiance through the narration of a child. It is full of optimism and hope and focuses on simple pleasures. The second novel, *The Solemn Lantern Maker* is urban centered with some flashes of a farm life that provide obvious contrast and similarity between the two. The desperate hope of those in the city fearing eviction from their “borrowed lands” and their way of life presents a resemblance with that of those in the rural, in the farm, cultivating one’s land for their living. The novel calls for hope despite the traumatic experiences from the societal cancer, the hegemony of power. The third novel, *Fish-Hair Woman* offers a darker and grim mood. The three decades and transcontinental scope are filled with the idea of searching. The search for identity, love, acceptance, and justice is presented through the ideas of insanity, torture, and death.

The satiric tone in the novels of Bobis serves as a corrective of societal folly. Readers are tasked to decode the hidden message in the nostalgic discussion of the writer by exposing the socio-cultural and political journey of her mother country, the Philippines. As Hornedo (2001) puts it in the concluding part of his essay, *Political Jokes: Evasion and Resistance*: “A large number of Filipinos are not happy about how things are being run in this country. The jokes, of course, suggest no alternative program of action. But they can certainly and plainly identify the persons who must own some moral responsibility for whatever is that Filipinos these past years do not like in their national life” (p229). It simply reflects what Bobis, in a way, would like to tell Filipinos and other nationalities.

Theme: Theme, on the other hand, is defined by Abrams as “usefully applied to a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader” (Abrams,p.170).

The three novels’ thematic aspect deals mostly with the issues that arise from socio-cultural and political problems. They are presented in the table below:

Table 1. The themes of the novel

Novels	Themes
<i>Banana Heart Summer</i>	Poverty—material, spiritual, emotional; An appeal for awareness and human interaction
<i>The Solemn Lantern Maker</i>	Freedom—rights to speak, to be heard, to choose, to have peace, to live comfortably
<i>Fish-Hair Woman</i>	Oppression—incidental and intentional; A revolutionary call for justice

From the individual theme of each novel, it can be synthesized that the universal theme of love still prevails. The theme of poverty in the first novel can be traced back to the pursuit of love. The material, spiritual, and emotional poverty may be eased through the fulfilment of each of the characters’ various desires. Parental love is what the protagonist longed to feel while the other characters search for the love that accepts their individual needs and respects their differences.

The theme of freedom and identity in the second novel can also be hinted from the idea of love. This is clearly evident in the major character’s trauma. It resulted in Nolan’s *silence* which can be traced back to his father’s love. The arrival of the American, Cate Burns, who was called the *angel*, was triggered by her love for her unborn child. The love for *peace* of the other characters manipulated their actions and connivance to the extent of sabotage and salvage.

In the third novel, love is also the probable cause of every event and action of the characters. The narrator’s love for her village obliges her to claim herself as the *fish-hair woman*. Her intention is to liberalize the victims of oppression and provide justice through stories written from her memory.

The narratives of Bobis are communicators of Philippine culture and history that emanate from the type of love that the Filipino has to offer and has yet to have. She uses the characters and events, although fictive in

revealing the ugly points of Filipinos. According to Hornedo (2000) in his overview of Anthropology, “every cultural community, large or small, understands itself in the frame of its own narrative or account of itself. All cultures are assumed to have their own narratives of themselves. To understand them is to understand their narrative (Hornedo, pp.70-71).

Moreover, based from his discussion of the theory and the genesis of literary text, it was explained that the creation of a literary work is guided consciously or unconsciously by what the author thinks literature ought to achieve, to be made of, to look like and by whom. Hence, Bobis’ novels appeal to the reading Filipinos to act on their societal problems presented in a literary way through intellectual humor, not only to laugh at their own idiocies. Likewise, she also targets other reading nationalities for possible support.

The Philippine Societal Problems in the Novels

The three novels of Bobis are filled with numerous and various societal problems that are literarily and creatively presented. The analysis of each novel reveals common problems that resulted from political and cultural factors such as poverty, immorality, child labor, corruption, and hegemony of power.

Below is the table that presents the societal problems deciphered from each novel.

Table 2. Socio cultural and political concerns in the novel

Novels	Socio-cultural and Political Issues
<i>Banana Heart Summer</i>	Child abuse/ Child Labor, Poverty, Employment Problem, Corruption, Immorality
<i>The Solemn Lantern Maker</i>	Poverty, Gambling, Corruption, Child Prostitution, OFW Blues, Immorality, Hegemony of Power
<i>Fish-Hair Woman</i>	Abuse of Power, Poverty, Immorality, Corruption, Insurgency

Such hegemony or abuse of power and the corruption of the elected politicians cause poverty, which results in child labor, child prostitution, immorality, gambling, and OFW issues. Likewise, the rebellion or insurgency problem is an offshoot of the government-related concern.

Philippine culture, in general, affects the totality of the societal problems. It is on that thought where Bobis might have anchored her novels. She utilized culture as the object of satire to literarily and creatively unveil the problems that resulted from socio-political agenda. She invokes intellectual laughter to the readers who may or may not be aware of Philippine culture. For instance, the religiosity of the Filipinos against their poverty problem is presented in an incongruous way through the posted reminder in the church which says, “To all dear parishioners, please do not leave your personal belongings unattended; somebody might think they’re the ‘answer’ to their prayers.” The said reminder indirectly reveals that there are Filipino thieves even in a sacred place.

Another obvious example of how Bobis presents a serious socio-political problem is through symbolic presentation of the characters. The hope of the fatherland, the children are her major characters in the three novels who all desire to help their family. The youth represents hope and cure to the ills of the society. Despite their innocence and young age, they all offer the best service they can to augment their family’s poverty. Nining and Noland tried to help bring food to their families’ tables while Estrella and Luke helped to give justice to their families. Nining became an OFW and gave up schooling while Noland was traumatized and became a victim of a pedophile while Estrella lost her life after killing her own father.

In the article of Hornedo on the conceptual structure of the relationship of theory to literary text, he posits that “the literary text is not a creation in a vacuum, but a contexted creature rooted in a society through the author and shaped by the writer’s philosophy or theory of what literature ought to be and to do.”^{vi} On this premise, the creative works of Bobis intend to reveal the societal problems through invoking laughter that suggests awareness and concern of her readers.

The Techniques and Devices of Satire in the Novels

The three novels are packed with satirical techniques and devices. These devices and techniques include exaggeration, incongruity, parody, reversal, and defamiliarization.

Exaggeration technique is employed by Bobis in the three novels through the description of characters, incident, and overstatement about certain ideas. In the first novel, the exaggeration’s focus is on the characters of TiyaAsun and Senora Ching and the idea that hunger results in the lengthening of the esophagus. In the second novel, it is the “creation of land” at the wave of a hand of the First Lady, and the ordinary notebook of a ten-year old mute was claimed as an evidence of a conspiracy of a terrorist attack. The third novel’s use of exaggeration

is shown in the description of the hair, its length and use. It was said to be twelve meters long and is used to trawl corpses from the river.

The use of incongruity is also observable in the three novels. In the *Banana Heart Summer*, the ironic circumstances are depicted during the time of volcanic eruption and the death by suicide of one of the characters. The time of crisis is still considered as an opportunity to improve the economic situation of the village as foreign aid will abound in the community, making the politician acquire another mansion. The person's death by suicide because of desperation triggers generosity among those who previously withheld their help. In *The Solemn Lantern Maker*, one example of incongruity is presented in the mention of a television show with twenty-five thousand people vying for instant prizes such as cash, car, or even a house. The promise of joy and hope turns out as a tragic incident as many people either died and got hurt during the stampede. In the *Fish-Hair Woman*, incongruity is exhibited when a political figure uses the phrase, "my house" to claim a place that he just "borrowed." Incongruous, too, is the labeling of a dumb person as "the terrible."

Parody is also common in the three novels as a defamiliarizing strategy because of its focus on peculiarities. Bobis works on the dilly song or game of children. She substitutes or changes the lyrics to another. The names of biblical characters are also used as reference to another, which suggests travesty, a type of parody.

The use of reversal is also a technique applied in the novel. The tropes used in the three novels are the opposite of the suggested theme of each novel. The idea of a child who supports the family, instead of the parents is another example.

Bobis' creative use of defamiliarization opens the reader to the possibility of understanding the culture of the community represented by the novel's setting. The aesthetics of satire intends to create realization from the reader's point of view to appreciate the work of fiction, and at the same time to be mindful of the biting realities of life. All the three novels are full of lines that reveal thoughtful concerns presented in a way that the reader shall find amusing yet needs to be changed. The Bicolanos^{vii} are Filipinos whose ideas and ideals may emanate from their inherent desires and their promulgation rooted from the type of culture that they have. Just as Rizal's novels satirize the Filipino's characters and attitudes against Spaniards, Bobis' novel also aims to call for a change and positivity amidst the cultural idiocies of the Filipinos, particularly Bicolanos.

Filipino Satire

Based from the identified satirical techniques and devices in the novels, the researcher regrouped and identified the satirical devices and techniques that can be called Filipino satire.

Bobis' novels are filled with examples of ridiculous ideas and instances that suggest distinct Filipinos' initial source of humor. Said instances after the initial laugh will invoke thinking for a possible remedy to the object, person, or idea being ridiculed. Such problems are rooted in culture and inherent to their local ways of life.

These are the identified types of Filipino satire:

Domestic/Marital Satire:

This type of satire refers to the ideas that reflect humor about married life and the Filipino family's orientation. From the first novel, Maring, Nining's mother is called "rice cooked too soon."^{viii} This is because she eloped with a mason when she was just a 14-year-old, first year high school. This resulted in having six babies "that come out of the armpit."^{ix} Another consequence is the "silence" of her husband, Gable which Nining regarded as "tongue eaten by the devil."^x

From the Filipino family's orientation, the proper marrying age is 20 years old and above, after finishing formal education. It is also a practice that the father supports the family's finances and mainly decides on the family issues. Whenever those expectations are not met, either way, gender roles based on the society's expectations become the object of ridicule and out-of-proportion criticism.

Cultural Satire

This type refers to the customs and beliefs, traditions, and habitual practices of Filipinos that may be considered ridiculous. The ideas on myths, legends, and supernatural and superstitious beliefs that are evident in the narratives are the object of this type of satire. For instance, the itch, which was apparently caused by the spirit in the river called *Onglo*, was the reason for the death of Carmen, the protagonist's mother in the third novel. It was in the river where she met Mayor Kiko, who got her pregnant at the age of fourteen. The coincidental facts are being related to the beliefs of rural people on supernatural spirits to give explanation and point fingers at for someone's misfortune.

Satire on Religion

Some Catholic practices are also subject of satire. They are considered “religious” because they are church/biblebased. For instance, the reminder in the church which read, “Be careful of your belongings, someone may think they are the answers to their prayers,” is a clear manifestation that even churchgoers cannot be fully trusted. The place of worship, such as the Quiapo Church, becomes a center of commerce where everything can be bought, including items that kill unborn children. Those Catholic practices are being criticized in a light and literary manner in this type of satire.

Political Satire

Just like political jokes, this type of Filipino satire functions as a tool to communicate and express people’s sentiments through the ridicule of powerful people, making them subject of humor.

One of the common societal problems in the three narratives is the issue of corruption. The politician characters are used as subject of ridicule, such as the town mayor in the first novel, Senator GB in the second novel, and the mayor-turned-congressman Kiko in the third novel. These three characters all faced life’s turmoil and defeat and eventually had their respective fall out of power.

Satire on Filipinism

This type refers to the English and Filipino words that are either re- defined or assigned different meaning, double meanings, or change of pronunciation. This is the Filipino version of pun.

One of the characters in the *Fish-Hair Woman* is called ‘holarawnd’, referring to being a jack of all trades. It was based from the phrase, “all around.” From the narrative, Pay Inyohas various occupations in the village such as, a ‘herbularyo,’ a gravedigger, a small-time businessman, and even the ‘secret keeper’. Thus, he earned the title of ‘holarawnd’. The criticism is provided in the in-depth meaning of the character’s name. The same thing is true to the ‘sweet potato king’, or ‘Bolodoy da teribol’ a translation of the English title, “the terrible”. His real name, Rizalino, was patterned from the country’s national hero, Jose Rizal. His character manifests a dumb person whose hopes and life were wasted despite his being skilled in raising the sweetest potatoes and catching giant eels. Those character labels illustrate this type of satire.

Works of other Expatriate Writers

Carlos Bulosan and Bienvenido Santos are some of the early expatriate writers in America whose writings are filled with satirical techniques. Their works depict the lives of Filipinos abroad and mirror the rural-urban dichotomy. Their works of fiction, such as *America is in the Heart* and *You Lovely People*, have evidential analysis of sociological values and slice of Filipino life. Accordingly, Bulosan exposed the weaknesses of the Filipinos and pointed out their habitual influence, the insatiable thirst for gambling, their blind acceptance of and admiration for foreign things, and the graft of those in power aside from the greed of the rich.

Another expatriate writer is Alejandro Roces, who is called a ‘writer by accident’ because he wrote thinking only that his stories could be possible materials of his fiction writer friend. Meanwhile, Roseburg examined seven of his stories and found that all of them are humorous. Sy confirms that “Alejandro Roces’ short fiction inherently reveals humor in its formalistic elements that satirize peculiar Filipinism.”^{xi} This is an example of how she discussed that humor was revealed in Roces’ work through conflict:

In “We Filipinos are Mild Drinkers,” the conflict unfolds the drinking contest between the proud American and the unassuming Filipino. Humor, with the utilization of mild satire, irony, simile and allusion, is presented in the form of unexpected effects like the American during the first and second gulp of the native wine thinks that he “has swallowed a centipede” and that “his tie is his tongue.” Because of heavy intoxication, he then falsely accuses the Filipino as the bomber of Pearl Harbor. This humorous depiction of the American is at the same time ridiculing his unwholesome attitude of feeling superior to Filipinos in terms of ability and capacity to drink wine. (p. 95)

Later fictionists like Ninotch Rosca also writes political satire works reflecting Philippine-U.S. relations during the Marcos era. Her first novels, *State of War* in 1988 and *Twice Blessed* in 1992, are both concerned with the experience of the Marcos era and the martial law period.

Another expatriate writer, Jessica Hagedorn is said to have been influenced by Carlos Bulosan. Hagedorn is a Filipina and now an American playwright, poet, and multimedia performance artist. Her first novel, *Dogeaters* published in 1990, illuminates several various aspects of Filipino experience with emphasis on the American influence through media such as radio, television, and movies. Her book, *Danger and Beauty* published in 2002, includes the satirical novella *Pet Food*. It muses about love and sex—probes with wry humor and social satire, the heart and heartbreaks of the immigrant experience. Her other work, *Dream Jungle* published in 2003, is described by The novel *Dream Jungle* published in 2003 portrays the Philippines as a nation in crisis with traces of colonialism legacy, class struggles, family relationships, and responsibilities.

In a similar manner, Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado*, published in 2010, and exposes the country's search for identity over 150 years of history. As a freelance Filipino writer based in America, Syjuco's novel uses a female protagonist's colorful rise to the top of a fictional society. Through satire and parody, he examines his own biases, justifications, and limitations as a male writer to better understand gender politics in developing societies.

It can be deemed that most of the expatriate writers from the time of Rizal to Bienvenido Santos, Carlos Bulosan, Alejandro Roces, Ninotchka Rosca and contemporary novelists, such as Merlinda Bobis, Jessica Hagedorn, and Miguel Syjuco use satire through nostalgic approach in their works.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are obvious traces of satire that are manifested in the works of Filipinos from the early novels during the Spanish regime, novels in English during the American period, and novels by expatriate writers. The latter uses satire concealed behind the nostalgic accounts of their home country. Their creative works serve as an outflow of emotions that long for their own identity as Filipinos by heart and at the same time discover the ills and flaws of the society. Although different in their individual style, common factors, such as the traces of custombrismo and societal problems, can be easily identified. Their crafts, as Hornedo calls it, signify language in conveying lived experience. Accordingly, "literature tells by the use of words and idiomatic tropes and descriptions/narratives calculated to recall to perception memories or traces of lived experience."

Based on the satirical techniques and devices in the novels, the researcher regrouped those that can be called Filipino satire. The novels are filled with examples of ridiculous ideas and instances that suggest distinct Filipinos' initial source of humor. Said instances after the initial laugh will invoke thinking for a possible remedy to the object, person, or idea being ridiculed. Such problems are rooted in culture and inherent to their local ways of life.

It is therefore suggested to consider Filipino satire in understanding our culture since they are culture-bound and culture-based. Satire can be a good vehicle of how a work of fiction can provide criticisms of the society through its aesthetics.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was supported by the Sorsogon State College (SSC) and research funds were provided by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

ENDNOTES

ⁱMerlinda Bobis. *Banana Heart Summer*. (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2005); *The Solemn Lantern Maker*. (USA: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2009); *Fish-hair Woman*. (Manila, Philippines: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2012).

ⁱⁱFlorentino H. Hornedo. *Ideas and ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History*. (Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing house, 2001), p.124.

ⁱⁱⁱResil Mojares. *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel. A Generic Study of the Novel Until 1940* (Quezon City, Philippines: UP Press, 1983), p.55.

^{iv}Compiled in the book, *The Philippine Novel in English*. Galdon J. , ed. (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1979) p. 73

^vA Filipino-Australian writer, who publishes in three languages across multiple genres and writes about other socio-political problems such as child abuse, migrant workers, poverty in the countryside, militarization, political detainees and imperialism.

^{vi}F.H.Hornedo, . *Culture and community in the Philippine Fiesta and Other Celebrations* (Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House, 2000)p. 51. The article is originally a lecture given at the Institute of Philippine Literature, Ateneo De Manila University in Summer 1978.

^{vii}Bicolanos are the residents of Region V in the Philippines known as Bicol. It is the southern part of Luzon, the biggest island of the country.

^{viii}Rice cooked too soon is a Filipino idiomatic expression referring to an early marriage.

^{ix}That come out of the armpit , another Filipino idiomatic expression which means coming from nowhere or sudden arrival of the baby.

^xTongue eaten by the devil means being silent at all circumstances.

^{xi}M.B. Sy. *Humor in Alejandro Roces' Fiction*. IAMURE International Journal of Literature, Philosophy and Religion. 4, (June 2013), p. 89

REFERENCES

- [1]. Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: 7th ed. Cornell: Cornell University Press.
- [2]. Bobis, M. (2005). *Banana heart summer*. Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing Inc.
- [3]. Bobis, M. (2009). *The Solemn Lantern Maker*. (USA: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2009)
- [4]. Bobis, M. (2012). *Fish-hair Woman*. (Manila, Philippines: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2012)
- [5]. Colon, S. (2010). *General Sociology: A Simplified Approach, Revised ed.* Mandaluyong City, Philippines: National Book Store.
- [6]. Galdon, J. (1985). Nostalgia and the Filipina writer. *Philippine Studies*, 33 (1), 96-105.
- [7]. Galdon, J. ed. (1979) *The Philippine Novel in English*. Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo De Manila University Press.
- [8]. Hornedo, F.H. (2004). *Literatura, Guro, Bansa: Mga Kuwadrang Konseptwal para sa Pagtuturo ng Literatura at Ilang Panayam Tungkol sa Kalinagan at Wika*. Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House.
- [9]. Hornedo, F.H. (2001). *Ideas and ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History*. Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing house.
- [10]. Hornedo, F.H. (2000) *Culture and community in the Philippine Fiesta and Other Celebrations* (Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House.
- [11]. Lumbera, B. (1997). *Revaluation 1997: Essays on Philippine Literature, Cinema & Popular Culture*. Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House.
- [12]. Makaryk, I.R. (1993). *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory. Approaches, Scholars, Terms* in p.144 London: University of Toronto Press.
- [13]. Meyer, J.C. (2000) *Humor as Double-edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication*, *Communication Theory*, 10 (3), 310-331.
- [14]. Mojares, R. (1983). *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel. A Generic Study of the Novel Until 1940* Quezon City, Philippines: UP Press
- [15]. Mulder. M.P. (2002). *Humour Research: State of the Art*. available in <http://purl.utwente.nl/publications/63066>.