

Definitive Voices in the Local and International Literary Scene

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The revival of the UST Center for Creative Writing and Literary Studies (UST CCWLS) in 2011 saw the promise of the Pontifical University's restoration to its former glory as an institution known for its exemplary and distinctive literary tradition. It is common knowledge in local literary circles that UST has been the home of many National Artists for Literature, as well as the country's premier poets, fictionists, essayists, playwrights, and literary scholars for many decades, if not centuries.

The first step to stage this comeback was to resurrect and revitalize *Tomás*, the UST CCWLS's official literary journal. Rev. Fr. Herminio V. Dagohoy, O.P., the Rector Magnificus of the University and a true Renaissance man, said in his inaugural address during his installation as the 96th Rector, that his immediate goal was to develop a multi-disciplinary approach to all the different disciplines. Fr. Dagohoy believes that no discipline, no matter how lucrative, must be considered so important as to lord it over the other fields of expertise which are not so financially remunerative. True to his word, the Fr. Rector indeed provided the impetus and inspiration for the literary climate in the University to become once again alive, exciting, and flourishing.

The first two issues of *Tomás* featured exclusively the works of Thomasian writers, both established and emerging voices in the literary scene, which proved that UST is indeed becoming a fertile breeding ground for writers. *Tomás* generated great interest from writers everywhere, so that in its third issue, it included contributions from well-acclaimed Filipino

American writers, Cecilia Manguerra Brainard and R. Zamora Linmark. In *Tomás 4*, the latest issue of the journal, we continue to raise the bar by including the following contributions by writers, both national and international:

Tim Tomlinson's *Runaway* captures very subtly the raw power of youthful angst, the possibility and the inevitability of escaping, and that it is only a matter of time before we leave or "run away" from home to attain that fleeting prize called freedom.

Nikki Alfar, one of the finest contemporary Filipino writers of fantasy, weaves a tale about the true worth of love and loyalty in her story "The Dog, the Devil, and the King of Heaven." Using man's best friend as a metaphor for what is true and good, Alfar fashions a fable that serves as a genuine testament to the importance of ideals and age-old values, as well as to the true meaning of love.

Cyan Abad-Jugo's "The Never-Ending Island" is a haunting story about love in its simplest and purest form. Jugo creates a mythical place which, like Atlantis, was claimed by the ocean.

"Oscar" by Kat Del Rosario is a Kafkaesque story that tells in fairytale-like fashion of how greed and crass materialism can be man's greatest pitfall, and how genuine love can conquer all.

Fresh from being declared National Artist for Literature, Cirilo F. Bautista's poems powerfully conjure the beauty of everyday scenes and encounters, the anguish of memory, the patterns of suffering, the futility of war and heroism, and the unending quest for an authentic self.

The poet Rita Gadi reveals her highest aspirations and deepest yearnings concerning love, time, and memory in her suite of lyrical verses, "Ancient Love and Other Poems."

Dennis Haskell's "On the Eve and Other Poems" impeccably and exquisitely portray man's diurnal exigencies. With a sharp eye for detail, Haskell surprises and beguiles the reader with his clear vision and elegant form.

"Breakpoint and Other Poems" by Isabella Banzon immortalizes in vivid verses the problematics of misgivings, meanderings, and memory. Banzon probes into the most personal of spaces and the most hidden of desires.

Eugene Gloria's new suite of poems skillfully distills, like a beautiful still life painting, snippets of everyday existence. Gloria delves deeply into our most simple yet profoundest truths.

Reme Grefalda's poems take us deep down into her musings about life's most difficult struggles, the revolt of the human spirit, a commuter's nightmare in a crowded metropolis, the pain of knowing, losing, and remembering, as well as the inevitability of death.

Finally, Rowena T. Torrevillas' series of evocative essays takes us on a fulfilling journey that speaks of simple joys which have an overwhelming and lasting impact in one's life.

Tomás 4 showcases the distinct voices of both local and foreign writers which is an indication of the journal's blossoming international presence. The next issues of *Tomás* promise to feature more important works from renowned writers abroad as well as the finest in the local scene.