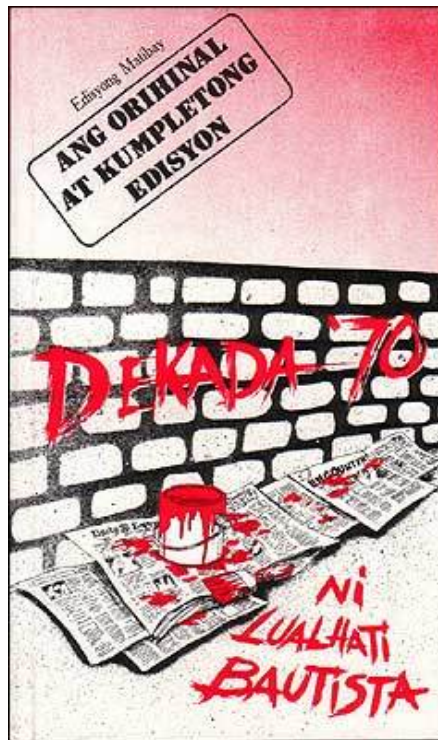




Dekada '70 (Ang Orihinal at Kumpletong Edisyon)

Lualhati Bautista

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"Definitely a political novel. More than the individual story of a mother watching her sons grow and plunge into real life, Dekada '70 is an indictment of martial law, and here, Lualhati minces no words." - Female Forum, November 21, 1983

Dekada '70 (Ang Orihinal at Kumpletong Edisyon) Details

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Author : Lualhati Bautista

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Jnz says

endless struggle.

woman's oppression in the society, dilemma of teenagers trying to prove that they have something to say, tyranny of the fathers at home. girl power...

Jr Bacdayan says

Note: This review was written as a course requirement for my class: History of Women and Feminism in the Philippines.

“Dahil sila’y mga babae... at imposible para sa babae na kalabanin ang lalaki. It’s a man’s world.”

(Translation: It’s because they are women... and it is impossible for women to oppose men, it’s a man’s world.)

These are the words of Julian, a husband, a father, to her wife on why women should not get irritated with him. This is a prime example of a patriarchal man. Contemptible words, yet somehow, are sadly true. How did his wife, Amanda, respond? She rolled her eyes, but she kept quiet. She discerned that to contest this would be futile. Why? Because she didn’t know any better. She was a woman molded in a society that conformed to this belief. Yes, she existed in a nation where men dominated, but she will learn that she was not in a man’s world.

“Maghubad ka na, sabi niya. Ni hindi niya tinanong kung gusto ko nga ba maghubad. Basta ‘maghubad ka na,’ period. Kailangan sakín mismo manggaling ang natitirang pamproteksiyon sa dignidad ko. Puwede bang magpatay muna tayo ng ilaw? Na sinagot niya ng maikli, walang damdaming ‘oh’. No’ng unang gabing ‘yon, ni hindi niya tinanong kung hindi ba ko nasaktan. Basta ng matapos na siya, natulog na siya. Naghilik na siya.”

(Translation: Take off your clothes, he said. He didn’t even ask me if I wanted to take it off. He just said ‘take it off’ period. I had to be the one to protect what little dignity I had. I asked ‘Can we turn off the lights?’ He answered with a short and empty ‘oh’. That first night, he didn’t even ask if it hurt. He just slept when he was done. He snored.)

“Kakulangan. Sa loob ng dalawampu’t pitong taon ng pagiging asawa ko’y hindi ako ganap na umunlad bilang tao. Nanganak lang ako’t naging ina at wala na. Tumigil na ‘ko sa pagiging ganon. Nawala na ko pagkatapos nyon. Nagsilbing bantay na lang ako sa paghanap at pagkatagpo ni Julian ng katuparan niya bilang tao, sa paglaki ng mga bata’t pagtuklas ng kanilang kakayahan at kahalagahan. Sa proseso nito, walang nag-abalang magtanong kung ano na kaya ang mga kaangkinan ko naman. Ni ako, hindi ko alam kung ano pa ako liban sa asawa’t ina. Madalas ngayon ay hinahanap ko ang sarili ko sa harap ng naging papel ko sa buhay...”

(Translation: Emptiness. In the span of twenty-seven years of being a wife I never grew as a person. I gave birth and became a mother then nothing. I stopped there. I was lost after that. I served as a caretaker to Julian as he searched and fulfilled his life’s work, to the growth of my children as they discovered their strengths and importance. In the process, nobody asked me what I have achieved. Even I, I do not know what I am

aside from a wife and a mother. Often now, I search for myself in spite of all the roles I have played in life...)

“Ibig kong sabihin, ayoko nang maging doormat mo lang. Taga-abot ng tsinelas mo, taga-timpla ng kape mo! Sa kagaganon, nawala tuloy ako, naging walang klaseng tao ko! Habang panahong nanay na lang! Habang panahong asawa mo lang! Pinaghubad pag gusto, ginanon kung kelan mo gusto! Napaiyak na ko... Bakit hindi pag gusto ko?”

(Translation: I mean I do not want to be just your doormat. Someone whose role is just to pick up your slippers, someone who's there just to make your coffee! Being that person, I lost myself, I became nothing! Forever just a mother! Forever just a wife! Stripping when you tell me to, being fucked only when you want to! I started to cry... why not when I want to?)

These are the thoughts, the experiences of Amanda, wife of Julian, a mother of 5 boys, a Filipina. This shows the suffering of a typical woman experienced in our country back then and still even in a lot of homes today, she is expected to become a housewife, nothing more. She is boxed, her growth as an individual stunted, she is not given a chance.

The '70s was not a kind time to the Filipino people, more so to the Filipino women. Lualhati Bautista's Award-Winning novel about the awakening of a country and the struggles of a mother, a woman is a gut-wrenching eye-opener to anyone who is willing to hear its angry screams, its searing pleas. The parallelism between the two intertwined stories, the mother and the motherland is truly captivating. The two, the woman and the country are subdued, without true freedom. Dominated, manipulated, chained, one by imperialism and a dictator, the other by a husband and a patriarchal culture. At the start both were as ignorant as babes, as silent as mutes about their rights, about what is theirs. Both were taken for granted, taken advantage of. But slowly, steadily, they progressed. The country was awakened, its people flooded the streets, the masses, the students, priests, nuns, militants full of outrage and passion with shouts of revolution against a dictator that violated their rights and mistreated their countrymen, against a neocolonialist power that stole their lands, raped their livelihood and picked their pockets. The woman, the mother, the wife learned to fight back, to answer, to think for herself. She realized her worth as a woman, as a person, through her own simple way of supporting the revolution because of her children. She realized that to protect her children, her family, she must learn to protect her country. The motherland empowered her; in turn the shackled motherland was empowered equally because of her. Their plights are more connected to each other than it seems, the success of one spelled the success of the other.

“Pero ang babae, talian man ang katawan o suutan man ng chastity belt, ay may uri ng kalayaang hindi mananakaw ng kahit na sino: ang kalayaan niyang mag-isip.”

(Translation: But a woman, you may tie up her body or force her to wear a chastity belt; there is a type of freedom that nobody can take away from her: the freedom to think.)

This passage from the novel reminds me of a particular quotation from one the greatest Feminist writers, someone named Virginia Woolf. “Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.” And it is true, women cannot be restricted, as long as their minds are working, nobody can suppress them. But to really utilize it, this is where education comes in. Women need to be educated about their rights, they must learn to identify the shackles of patriarchy and its brother capitalism, reject their biased culture, spit on these concepts that taught them to be submissive, that taught them to keep quiet and told them they were inferior, these controlling concepts that masks itself as religion, tradition, and good-conduct. But before that, they must first think, and realize that they are in-chains. For how can you set free someone who does not consider themselves as slaves? How can you liberate someone who considers oppression as a state of normalcy? You show them their chains, you rip the veil around their

eyes, you educate.

“Naiisip ko... naiisip ko lang naman... wala sanang magalit sakin pero naiisip ko... na kailangan na nga yata natin ng rebolusyon!”

(Translation: I am thinking... I'm just thinking... I wish nobody would get mad at me but I'm beginning to think... that we need a revolution!)

Yes, we have revolted and won the battle for our country to some extent, we brought but down the dictator. Still, we still have a lot of work to do in terms of neo-colonialism though we have achieved great strides. Now, the revolution we need is the revolution against patriarchy. We need a revolution against this entity that paralyzes about half of the people not only in this country, but in the world. We need to revolutionize our way of thinking through education into a more egalitarian one.

Naiisip ko din... na kailangan na natin ng rebolusyon! I am thinking... that we need a revolution. Gender Emancipation! Equality for all!

“Lalakas pa ang tinig ng paghihimagsik, iigting pa ang tapang ng masang Pilipino... hanggang sa makamit ng sambayanan ang tunay at ganap na kalayaan!”

(Translation: The shouts of revolution will get louder; the bravery of the Filipino masses will intensify... until the people achieve true and utter freedom!)

Our country will never achieve true and utter freedom unless its women are free from the chains of patriarchy. After all, it's a woman's world too.

Jyanna Galamgam says

I chose this book to read for our Tagalog book review in our Filipino subject. I was a bit hesitant on reading this mainly because I'm more comfortable reading English novels....but this book, I swear.. was surprisingly (not just good but) great. I really did enjoy it and understood more about Philippines' history and how the right ones are oppressed, and the women, while they play a GREAT role in the community, is usually treated like a servant.

All in all, this book is really great. It captured a lot of things that happen in a common household not just during the '70s but also nowadays.

I HIGHLY recommend it to anyone who can understand Tagalog.

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

While I'm on a classic reading binge, I thought it only fair to include a Filipino classic novel (written in Filipino). [Book:Dekada '70] translated in English as “Decade '70” is an account of a woman living in a “man's world” during those difficult years when Martial Law was declared in the Philippines. Narrated by

Amanda, a mother of five boys, the novel strongly portrays the struggles of a woman during those times when gender equality wasn't a well-known concept yet and women were seen as subordinates of men.

The story realistically portrays this as Amanda dutifully does her best to meet what the six men at her home, especially her husband, expect of her. It becomes a greater challenge to fulfill a woman's predefined roles for Amanda due to familial, political and social difficulties at that time but it's also because of these impediments that Amanda found a way to earn long overdue respect and acknowledgement as a woman.

With the strong feminist approach, tragic tone and emotionally intense and heart-wrenching plot, it's no surprise that the novel won several literary awards. It's a historically and socially significant novel that I believe requires more attention. The book was also adapted into a movie released in 2002. I'm sure there'd be English subtitles.^^

Nenette says

Madalas na nabanggit ang mga katagang "it's a man's world" sa akda, ngunit ganoon nga ba? Sa bandang huli'y binawi din ang mga katagang ito ng "...it's a woman's world, too." Ako ay naniniwala sa pagkakapantay-pantay ng mga kasarian. Ganon pa man, hindi ko maisantabi ang malinaw na malinaw na pangingibabaw ng kababaihan sa obrang ito ni Lualhati Bautista: **Ina** ang may-akda. **Ina** rin ang tagapagsalaysay ng kuwento ng kanyang mag-anak, sa gitna ng mga kasakitan ng **Inang** Bayan. Ina ng tahanan, Inang Bayan - parehong unti-unting namulat sa kalagayan ng kanilang kasarinlan.

Isa nga itong obrang maituturing, sa dami ng parangal na tinanggap, na kahalintulad na rin ng dami ng mga nadaanang pagsubok. Higit sa lahat, isa itong obra sapagkat may kapangyarihan itong magpamulat kundi man magpakilos o magpabago sa mambabasa. Hindi lamang isa o dalawang beses na nangilid ang aking luha, sa pakikisimpatya kay Amanda at sa bayan. Karapat-dapat nga lang na ito ay maging takdang babasahin sa ating mga paaralan.

Nabanggit ng may-akda ang mga alok na isalin sa ibang wika ang aklat na ito, ngunit hindi na sinabi kung ano ang kinahantungan ng mga mungkahing ito. Sana nga ay matuloy (kung hindi pa natutuloy), nang sa gayon ay hindi lamang tayong mga Pilipino ang makinabang sa walang-kakupasang kwentong ito.

W says

"Habang nakagapos sa kaapihan at kahirapan ang malaking bilang ng mamamayang Pilipino, hindi tayo malaya."

Matapos basahin ang Dekada, napagpasyahan ko na basahin pa ang iba pang libro ni Lualhati Bautista, gaya ng Bata, bata... at Desaparesidos. Natapos ko nang basahin ang Gapo.

Tahasang pagsusulat. Walang takot. Bulgar.

Habang binabasa ang libro, naiisip ko ang aking Ina. Ang pag-aaruga niya sa amin ng Kapatid ko. Kung ano na nga ba'ng gusto niyang gawin sa buhay bukod sa pag-iintindi sa amin ng kapatid ko.

Papanuorin ko rin ang Pelikula. Sana di ako maiyak. . .

Dominic Dayta says

Minsan lang kung magbigay ako ng 5 stars sa isang libro. Minsan lang din naman kung makabasa ako ng librong talagang deserving ng 5 stars. Laging may kulang, o may sobra. Pero dito sa nobelang ito ni Lualhati Bautista, tamang tama. Nasa tren ako nung huli kong sinara ang pabalat nito, at tanda ko pag-unat ng ulo ko mula sa pagkakayuko sa libro, wala akong masabi, at walang pumapasok sa isip. Tubig kung pakuluin ni Lualhati ang bawat tagpo sa libro. Simula sa pagiging ina ni Amanda Bartolome, sa mga kapangahasang naganap noong mga taon ng dekada 1970, at ang kaniyang unti-unting pagkamulat sa hungkag na kalagayan niya bilang babae, bilang Pilipino, at, higit sa lahat, bilang tao.

Librong dapat pa rin basahin ng lahat ng taong may pakialam sa kalagayan ng kaniyang bansa. Lalo na ng mga nasa puwesto, at ng mga loyalistang hanggang ngayon ipinipilit pa rin ang kahunghangang maayos daw ang panahon noong sumailalim tayo sa batas militar ni Ferdinand Marcos. Paano tayo nagkaroon ng limpak-limpak na utang sa IMF at World Bank? Bakit naghihirap ngayon ang Pilipinas? Bakit noong 1945 dalawang piso lamang halos ang halaga ng isang dolyar, at ngayong 2016 ay halos singkuwenta pesos na? Paano tayo bumagsak, at bakit atrasado pa rin ang Pilipinas hanggang kasalukuyan?

Hindi rin matatawaran ang pagsisiwalat ni Bautista ng mga isyu patungkol sa mababang katayuan ng kababaihan sa patriyarkal, piyudal, at materyalistikong lipunang ating ginagalawan. 'Ika nga ng isang tauhan sa nobela, "It's a man's world." Paano na'ng mga babae? Hindi ba't may karapatan din sila sa mundo?

Simple ang wikang gamit ni Bautista sa librong ito. English-Tagalog, magaan, ngunit mabigat ang dala. Parang asidong tila tubig kung umagos, pero hayop kung manglapnos. Basahin at matuto.

Vincent Samaniego says

First book ko from Lhualhati Bautista ang 'Dekada '70 at napaka laki ng naiambag sa aking kamalayan ng librong ito. Pano nga ba tutugon si Amanda Barlome sa hamon ng panahon na kung saan ang mga katulad n'ya ay nakatali lang sa pagiging isang ina(ng 5 lalaki) at may bahay ni Julian Bartolome. Kung toto'usin napaka simpleng obligasyon lamang ito sa kanya gayong siya at ang kanyang pamilya ay naka ririwasa sa buhay. Pero sa loob n'ya lagi n'yang kinukustiston ang kanyang sarili kung ano ba talaga ang silbi at kapakinabangan sa buhay dahil sa higit sa pagiging isang simpleng may bahay lamang ay marami syang nais gawin tulad ng pag ta-trabaho, pero sa isip ko pano ang mga babaeng mas pinili ialay ang sarili at itali ang buhay sa pagiging may bahay (hindi kya sila tulad ng karakter ni Amanda). Kayat ng matapos ko ulit ang librong ito sa ikalawang pag kakataon ay mas lalo akong hinangaan at mas lumalim ang aking respeto sa aking ina at iba pang ina na mas pinili ang sagrado nilang tung kulin.

Pero hindi lamang ito kwento ng pagiging isang ina at asawa, kwento ito ng madilim na bahagi ng ating kasaysayan ang 'Rehimeng Marcos at ang Martial Law. Bilang isang mam babasa na galing sa henerasyon ng

90's na kung saan na miss ko ang pag ka van ng Voltes V, ang mga subersibong babasahin, "in" ang pagiging Jologs kaysa sa mga Conyo, uso ang awit na makabayan at pagiging makabayan kayat napaka laking bagay na mabasa ko ang akda na nag pakilala sa madilim na yugto ng ating kasaysayan. Ang tanging tumatakbo lamang sa isip ko ay 'bakit sa kabila ng kapangahasan ni Lhualhati Bautista at ang kanyang akda ay ni hindi itinuring na "subersibo" gayong napaka selan at istrikto sa panahon na nailimbag ito. Hanga din ako pag kaka sulat ng nobela dahil ang karakter ay base sa mga toto'ong tao at ang mga pangyayari sa kwento ay ibinase ni Bautista sa mga toto'ng pangyayari sa buhay. Ito rin pala ang pag kakataon na nakabsa ako ng 'feminine na akda sa katunayan ay hindi ako naging iritable.

Nabigyan lahat ng boses ang mga pangunahing karakter lalong-lalo na si Julian Bartolome. Lalake ako at dapat kampi ako sa kanya supposedly, oo ngat "Its a mens word" ika nga niya pero bilang lalake pinahahalagahan ba natin ang nararamdaman ng mga babae?, sa tingin ko mismong nag lilitanya ni si Bautista sa katauhan ni Amanda. Pero may pag kukulang din si Amanda sa tingin ko dahil nga sa ugali nyang pagiging "kimi" at laging sinasarili ang mga bagay-bagay, akala tuloy ni Julian ay masaya sya at akala nya rin na kuntento, nice ending sa opinyon ko. Hindi maluluma at malalao ang akdang ito dahil sa may ilang paksang panlipunan ang hindi parin nawawala, oo ngat wala na si 'Marcos at kasama nyang nahimlay ang 'Martial Law, pero hindi parin tayo (talaga) tunay na nakakalaya at ni hindi makatindig sa sariling paa ang ating 'Inang Bayan, pero kumpara sa henerasyon nya ay mas malaya na tayo ngayon at mas may boses kumpara noon. Bibigyan ko to ng 5 stars dahil mag kapantay lang sila ng 'Bata, Bata, Pa Ano Ka Ginawa?, although mag kaibang senaryo sila at salungat na mga babae ang bida.

K.D. Absolutely says

Hindi ko namalayan nang nagkaroon ng Martial Law sa Pilipinas. Hindi dahil bata pa ako pero dahil noong panahong iyon, 1972-1981 ay nakatira ang aming pamilya sa isang isla sa Dagat Pacifico. Ang natatandaan ko lang ay may mga araw na walang pasok at si Ina at Ama ay nakikinig ng radyo halos buong hapon. Nauulinigan ko pa ang boses ni Marcos: malumanay, mabagal at parang pagod. Sabi ni Ama, ganoon daw talaga ang matatalino, mabagal magsalita.

Curfew pagdating ng hatinggabi? Sa isla noon, nakahiga na ang mga tao pagdating ng takipsilim. Wala pang kuryente noon. Tanging mga gasera't patundut lang ang nagbibigay liwanag sa mga kabahayan. Kung hindi ka rin lang pumapasok pa sa paaralan, ano naman ang gagawin mo kapag wala nang araw?

Ano nga ba ang nangyari sa Maynila noong panahon ng Martial Law ni Marcos?

Sa mga nabasa ko na at napanood, parang itong aklat na ito ni Lualhati Bautista ang pinakamahasag na paglalahad ng mga halimbawa ng mga pangyayari noong panahong iyon. Sinakop nito hindi lang ang level na pang-personal na pananaw kung hindi ang pang mas malawakang pang-pamilya, pambansa at internasyonal na perspektibo.

****SPOILER ALERT****

Si **Amanda Bartolome** ay malapit nang mag-singkuwenta. Siya ay isang simpleng maybahay ng kanyang kaniyakin na inyenhero na si **Julian, Sr.** Sa simula ng kuwento, ang pagpasok ng dekada '70, ang kanilang mga anak na sina **Jules, Gani, Em, Julian, Jr.** at **Bingo** ay mga bata pa. Matatapos ang kuwento sa pagkamatay ni Sen. Benigno Aquino (1983) at ang maliliit na bata ay malalaki na o di kaya'y patay na: Si Jules, matapos magkaasawa't magkaanak ay nakulong dahil sa pagiging miyembro ng NPA ay muling

namundok. Si Gani, matapos pumunta sa Amerika bilang US Navy at iwan ng asawa ay muling nag-asawa. Si Em ay naging manunulat at aktibo sa mga sulating pampulita. Si Julian, Jr. ay patay na matapos malulong sa droga at i-salvage ng militar at si Bingo na lang ang natitira sa poder ng mag-asawa.

****SPOILER ENDS****

Mahusay at matapang ang pagkakalahad ng kuwento. Para mo lang isang kaibigan (o Nanay, o Tita, o Lola) si Amanda Bartolome na nagtsi-tsika tungkol sa kung ano ang dinanas na pamilya nila noong mga panahong iyon. Hindi ito pagtuligsa sa mga mali ng Martial Law. Hindi nito sinasabing demonyo si Marcos o ang rehimen ng US-Marcos. Bagkus, ipinakita lang nito ang kung ano ang epekto ng mga polisiya ng rehimeng iyon an gang mga pagmamalabis ng militar upang masuportahan ang maganda sanang intensyon ng dating pangulo.

Ang pinakamahusay na bahagi ng nobela, sa aking palagay ay ang transpormasyon ng mga tauhan hindi lamang sa kamalayang pampulitika kung hindi sa mga pagbabago upang maiiyos ang kanilang mga relasyon at sariling pagkatao. Sa unang tinggin, ang masasabing sukdulan o *climax* ng nobela ay ang pagkamatay ni Julian, Jr. Pero sa akin, bilang isang may-asawa, ay ang paghahamon ng paghihiwalay ni Amanda kay Julian, Sr. Paanong ang isang simpleng maybahay na ni minsa'y hindi naman nagreklamo ay biglang makakaisip ng ganoon? Nguni't pinalayog pa ni Bautista ang tagpong iyon nang sinabi ni Julian, Sr. na hindi rin daw siya masaya sa "*ganun*" nila.

Napakalakas ng dating sa akin ng tagpong iyon. Isang mag-asawang nagsasama ng tahimik. Nagpapalaki ng mga anak. Sa isang gabi, sa isang paguusap. Nanganib na magwakas ang lahat sa isang hiwalayan. Ang naging solusyon? Mag-usap sila bilang mag-asawa. Dalas-dalasan. Yong usap na sinasabi nila ang kanilang iniisip o nararamdaman.

Biglang naisip ko: baka napapasobra na yata ang pagbabasa ko't hindi ko na rin nakakausap ang asawa ko.

Ivy Catherine says

3.5

changed to 4 stars yeah... it deserves that +.5

Violeta says

NO to Martial law! It can make and unmake a family towards communism. Hala Ka!

Dennis says

I was born in 1975, Too young to remember the effects of Martial Law which was placed by the "Lord Voldemort" of the Philippines. With this book I learned to appreciate my life. Specially after my parents verified things that were written in this novel which I refused to believe at first.

Alyn says

Ang aklat na ito ay kalimitang ipinapabasa sa mga mag-aaral ng Pre-Law pero sa aking palagay ito ay nararapat mabasa ng bawat Pilipino. Ito ay makatotoong paglalarawan ng buhay sa nakaraang Martial Law at rehimeng Marcos. Kung saan ang babae ay walang layang mag-isip o gumawa ng kahit ano para sa sarili niya.... kung saan ang pagbibigay ng sariling pananaw ay maaring magresulta sa iyong pagkadakip, pagka-salvage o pagkawala na hindi na nakikita ng pamilya at kaibigan... na ang sa salitang Metrocom at PC ay sapat na para manginig sa takot ang mga nakakarinig.

Hindi ko naabutan ang kasagsagan ng panahong ito (maliban na lamang sa pagkabaril na kay Ninoy) ngunit nakapagbukas ito sa aking isipan na pahalagahan ang mga bagay na natatamasa ko ngayon. Mga bagay na pilit ipinaglalaban ng ating mga kapatid ng mga panahong iyon.

Rise says

Walang subersibo dito. Bakit magiging subersibo ang katotohanan?

(There's nothing subversive here. Why will the truth be considered subversive?)

– *Dekada '70*

Lualhati Bautista gained notoriety when *Dekada '70* came out in 1984, after having shared the grand prize for the Palanca Award for Best Novel one year previous. This novel about a Filipino family drastically affected by forces beyond their control was a national narrative of resistance against the Marcos dictatorship, against its repression of individual and societal rights and liberties. The story was told by Amanda Bartolome, wife to a dominating husband, mother to five sons, and – as she learned in the course of the novel – woman of her own mind. We found Amanda contemplating her role beyond her family of men, beyond a traditional patriarchy where a woman is only expected to serve a husband and rear children. This even as her world was being swept by the tides of history. Her strong-willed eldest child, Julian Jr. (Jules), was becoming more and more sympathetic to the ideology of leftist groups even as he increasingly felt alienated to the national government's raw display of totalitarian power. When the President handed down martial law in 1972, civil rights suffered in consequence. Student councils and school papers were closed down; the freedom of the press and the freedom to organize were curtailed; curfews were set; the writ of habeas corpus was suspended. It was only a matter of time before Jules joined the communist insurgency and his mother lost many a nights' sleep over her son's uncertain fate.

Higit kailanman ay ngayon ko nadarama ang mga trahedya ng maging ina. Hindi pala natatapos ang hirap at kirot sa pagsisilang ng anak, may mga sakit na libong ulit na mas masakit kaysa mga oras ng panganganak.

(Now more than ever I feel the tragedies of being a mother. It appears that my pains and sacrifices did not end with my giving birth to my son. There are pains a thousand more painful than the hours of labor.)

What started as a domestic drama suddenly became a politically charged look at the lives of ordinary

individuals in repressive regimes. Bautista dramatized the temper of the times using explicit images, language, and scenes. The action of the novel revolved only around a single family and yet she managed to infuse the domestic conflicts among brothers and parents with conviction. The Bartolomes were a nuclear family that could be viewed as a microcosm of a country descending into chaos. We followed Amanda as she began to question her relationship with her husband and internalize the violence threatening her children. From the seventies until the lifting of martial law in 1981, and even beyond that, we were privy to Amanda's increasing awareness of injustices around her, the socioeconomic and political issues hidden from sight, and her emerging political and feminist principles – these two principles becoming inseparable and closely tied together.

As the Bartolomes braved the dark shadows of military rule, vigilante killings, and social unrest, the reader was witness to a freak history. There were some wrenching scenes that seared into the mind, yet there were simple moments in the book that were equally hard-hitting in its emotional tenderness. *Dekada* was squarely in the tradition of José Rizal's 19th century protest novels against Spanish colonialism, the *Noli* and *Fili*, because it dared to question and critique the ruling power and its cohorts, and because it presented a forceful synthesis of abuses, corruption, and violence under martial law. No other novel had so lived up to its titular era as perhaps no other could have proposed its own "truthful", and hence "subversive", aesthetic of resistance against a dictatorship regime.

The family is the basic unit of society, we are taught and constantly reminded in schools. Bautista had shown that its values are also its pillars and that the seeds of resistance to any unjust authority at any time could very well dwell in a family. *Dekada*, arguably *the* defining novel of the period, had set the bar for a martial law novel so high that I shall be reading succeeding Filipino novels on the topic against Bautista's standard. She managed to distill an epoch of madness in those trying times, in that "world of men" that Amanda was starting to reject. For the record, in *her* record, in the words of her protagonist, the novelist defined the role of the writer in those circumstances: "Manunulat ang nagpe-preserb sa katinuan ng lipunan nya." ("It is the writer who preserves the sanity of her society.") Indeed they do, the very best of them, the authentic ones. They restore it to its senses. They slap it so hard that it may wake from its long sleep.

First published in edited form in 1984, *Dekada* anticipated the 1986 EDSA Revolution that toppled President Marcos from power. In one of its deft ironic touches, it was prescient in detecting a major change in the air: *Naiisip ko . . . naiisip ko lang naman . . . wala sanang magalit sa 'kin pero naiisip ko . . . na kailangan na nga yata natin ang rebolusyon!* (I was thinking . . . I was just thinking . . . let no one mind me but I was thinking . . . that maybe it's time we need a revolution!)

The writing style of *Dekada* was considered controversial during its time because some passages in the novel were written in Taglish, a mixture of Tagalog and English words. Language purists must have felt discomfort at the threat to the purity of the Tagalog vernacular and so failed to acknowledge the realist style of Bautista's language. Her writing was also deemed "unpolished" for its straightforward, colloquial dialogue and presentation even if that's how Filipinos talked then and now. The Taglish aspect of the prose is one consideration for the translator should the novel be translated into English.

Read as part of the [martial law fiction reading project](#) .

Francis Mico says

In one of the darkest period of Philippine history where a dictator had led us and brought the government on corruption era; where political interest mattered more than the public welfare; where freedoms were suppressed; and where communist-led movements for ousting Marcos' administration had emerged; and where women were disregarded in the "men's world", have you ever wondered how a woman sees the society?

Portrayed in the Martial Law era, Lualhati Bautista had enveloped me the thoughts most of the women during that era had. In a feminist approach, Bautista had crafted a novel with the finest details Amanda, the protagonist, sees in the society.

Amanda as a wife had been portrayed by Bautista as nothing but a mere tool of her husband; voiceless; held to opine; and constricted by her husband's superiority. As a mother, she was portrayed nothing far from the usual caring mother. What was interesting was her role as an individual of the society.

First part of the novel she was shown as uninterested and not privy in the political situation that the country have been facing; her world revolves in her family.

On the later part of the story her character had matured thanks to Jules, her son, that let her see through the society. Being a member of a communist group, Jules had awakened Amanda to look on the current dictatorship of the government; he had made her skeptic on her belief that what the government do is for the betterment of the people and country itself.

The totality of the novel engaged on the political impediments Philippines had suffered during Martial law, family relations and the role of women in society.
