

International Women's Day

Asian Journal editor is Filipino Poet Laureate 2009

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lives dismember and fragment our lives by exiling our feminine or female energies in the bedroom and in the home and the service of men's needs," Dr. Strobel asserts. "Men are dismembered by cultural values that tell them that they must not cry or show emotions, or that the only way to survive and make it in the world is through aggressive competition," she adds.

She said that the psychology of "kapwa" (self) is geared towards the "babaylan" (ancient healer/shaman) practice that each human embodies male and female energy. "That's what makes a person whole," said Dr. Strobel.

Linda Nietes, owner of Philippines Expressions Bookshop, which organized the event, thanked the men for coming and for reading stories and poems written by Filipino women. The readers were Robert J. Little, Jr. (Linda Nietes' husband); who read *Love 'Em, Leave 'Em and Speak Up Woman!*, *A Dalaga's Debut*, from the book *Twenty-Five Chickens and Pig for Bride*, read by Stephen Adamu; *To the Man Who Thinks He's in the Market*, poetry by Rowena Penaflor Festin and *In the Name of the Mother: 100 Years of Philippine Feminist Poetry, 1889-1989* by Lilia Quindoza Santiago, read by Robert J. Little, Jr., *The Legend of Lola Amonita*, poetry by Elvira S. Mabanglo, and *Silence*, a story by Marianne Villanueva, read by Craig Diamond; and *Beauty and the Brit* by Joselle Concio Harkin, from the book *Speak Up*, read by Steve Austin, and *Fruit Stall* from the book *The Kissing: A Collection of Short Stories* by Melinda Bobis, read by Steven de la Vega.

"Men are present because in our last event last year, we had made it an all-woman activity. Now we thank the men for coming," Nietes said. "This is an advocacy that we women cannot do alone...; to be able to highlight the fact that men and women are partners in their journey in this life." ■

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University of the Philippines Prof. Romulo Baquiran, Jr., Miriam College Prof. Rebecca Añonuevo and Ateneo de Manila University Prof. Michael Coroza, all winners of the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards. The awarding ceremonies were held last April 2 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), attended by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) Chair Vilma Labrador and Executive Director Cecilia Guidote-Alvarez.

First prize winners of the contest are automatically proclaimed Makata ng Taon. The title is the close equivalent of the Poet Laureate of the United States. The Makata ng Taon title is given every April 2 in honor of the birth of premiere Tagalog poet Francisco Balagtas.

In his acceptance speech, Sanchez addressed how poetry has encompassed various aspects of our lives. "What's always on my mind as a writer," he says, "is how little we know. I'm always

reminded that wherever we go, or however successful we could be, our unfathomable knowledge would always hound us."

"Writing is life-long learning, a life of apprenticeship, Sanchez adds. "It's much like life itself, because the world and the universe are vast, and we only have one life to live. We cannot conquer understanding completely, see all things, and hold and examine everything. This is perhaps why poetry, or being poet, is an attempt at all these—in conquering, in seeing, in examining. The poet will write poems, will collect them and publish books, will grow old and die. But he will not completely make sense of the world."

"True, it is foolish to believe in the truth, goodness and beauty of humanity, but there is no other way; there's no way to escape the forest but this: to believe. The world is still beautiful because there are still people who write poems, there are still poets, there are still fools."

The contest, which started in the 1960s, has bestowed the Makata ng Taon title to pillars of Philippine Literature like National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario, epic poet Cirilo F. Bautista, and canonical poets Lamberto Antonio, Teo Baylen, Federico Licsi Espino and Rogelio Mangahas. Two of the three women who have been awarded the title, Ruth Elynia Mabanglo and Lilia Quindoza Santiago, feminist critics and poets both, now teach at universities in the United States.

Sanchez holds an MFA in creative writing from the De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU-Manila), where he taught Literature, Humanities and Creative Writing. He is also a PhD in Lit-



Louie Jon Sanchez poses after receiving the award.

erature student at the same university. He graduated with an AB Major in Journalism degree from the University of Santo Tomas (UST). He is now working on his first book of poetry in Filipino, to be released this year. ■

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