

Unfolding the *Tres Marias* of Bataan, Philippines

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Abstract

The study emanates from the initial retrieval and documentation of Bataan literature previously conducted by the researchers. The data-gathering process has resurfaced the outstanding contributions of three homegrown lady writers whose works are preserved by digitized online libraries worldwide aside from the National and university libraries. The research framework affirmed that Hilaria Labog (1890-1962), Rosalia Aguinaldo (1892-1962), and Nieves Baens-del Rosario (1902-1986) have produced volumes of works particularly novels, novelettes, and short stories that are worthy of preservation and exploration. They proved to be highly-educated and distinguished authors whose patriarchal orientation failed to hamper their penchant for writing. In a national scope, the revival of the Bataan *Tres Marias* is in response to a pressing need to resurface the works of local writers in support of the Filipinnoation of literature advocated by the National Research Council of the Philippines. The Department of Education, on the other hand, calls for the contextualization of reading materials aptly suited to learners in every region. In a global interest, the revival of Labog, Aguinaldo, and del Rosario's fictions transcend into the era of these remarkable women in the country's period of three-fold conquests; the aftermath of Spanish occupation, the onset of American rule, and the much shorter but horrible Japanese invasion. Their narratives, when examined, are likely to mirror a diverse character of the men and women that shaped the present generation.

Keywords: *fictionists, Filipinnoation, homegrown, humanities, retrieval*

Introduction

The necessity of immersion into the humanities has been a continuous advocacy that merits due consideration in every society. The exploration of human experiences leads to a merging of a race from ancient to contemporary times. Researches have proven that the cultural imprint of mankind can be traced significantly from their language, philosophy, arts, history, and music that are heavily manifested upon delving into one's literary heritage. Literature, thus, is a give-away on a specific group of people's tendencies and character that merits to be restored for further exploration.

The sensitivity to discerning one's cultural context as expressed by the early narratives of local writers is well articulated by the saintly Edith Stein on her maxim "The nation doesn't simply need what we have. It needs what we are". This is likewise proliferated on the NRCPI Inclusive Nation Building agenda that calls for the Filipinnoation of literature. Stein, a philosopher aside

from being a canonized saint, has eloquently enunciated the essence of knowing who the people are in a nation to sustain their needs; materially, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. National and local leaders are expected to adopt policies and provisions exclusively intended for the unique identity of their people which are often expressed in fiction writing. Essentially, one's recorded literature in any form may substantiate to resolve noteworthy societal concerns.

Given the stated premises as well as responding to a pressing petition for action, this study serves as a follow-up on the preceding investigation pioneered by the researchers to retrieve and document Bataan literature. Based on the data-gathering procedure, it was discovered that the early 20th-century local writers, particularly the three outstanding lady writers of Bataan, have contributed greatly to the literary landscape not only of the province but the nation as well. They were cited as the *Tres Marias* of Bataan during the retrieval process of cultural heritage administered from 1951-1953. Further

searches have unfolded the craftsmanship of Rosalia Aguinaldo (1892-1962) a native of Orion, Hilaria Labog (1890-1962) of Samal, and Nieves Baens del Rosario (1902-1986) of Orani. They proved to be strong-willed, educated, and remarkable fictionists who have made significant contributions in their respective field. The focus of the study centers on their legacy in the literary landscape whose narratives had captured the existing cultural imprints of their time.

The study illumines that they produced fictions that engage the character of the suppressed condition of Filipinos who have seen and stomached three extraordinary conquests. Their manuscripts speak of a distinct racial identity resulting from a three-fold dominion of Spain, the United States, and the Japanese conquests. The early lady authors may easily reflect either the suppressed condition or the lenient state of a society that has seen how the global powers of conventional Spain, the liberal United States, and the tyrant Japan, have manipulated the nation through their cunning manipulations. The province may have developed a distinct character mirrored by writers through their stories. It is a challenge that because of the Pandemic travel restrictions, the recovery of the lady writers' fictions have materialized for recognition and documentation.

The world would often memorialize the Bataan Peninsula with the ghastly Death March of WW II where thousands of Filipino and American soldiers, holding on to their last vestige of courage, were tortured to death horribly. Another Bataan hallmark, the Shrine of Valor found at the foot of Mount Samat would always be associated with the spirited and resilient Filipinos who have proven their gallantry in the face of cruel adversaries. Inadvertently, the outpouring of emotions against this stark phase of history could have been captured by authors who were living witnesses of this era. The ladies' literature have inexorably mirrored the reality of those precise situations that will benefit the present generation.

History and literature are often entangled; their connection forms a scientific understanding of mankind that consequently forge a spontaneous attachment to authors and their audience. Literature is often influenced by its cultural and historical contexts and therefore represents history. It is a probability that from a feminine perspective, an exploration of the early writings enables the modern readers to discern the how's and why's of momentous phenomena; the underlying reasons behind the build-up of a particular norm and attitude in a certain society. It is noteworthy that the *Tres Marias* have been well-distinguished not only in the academe but also in the

political arena.

Further, the lady writers' works when investigated would posit the historical underpinnings of the early Bataños. Regretfully though, this may still be considered as an unmapped area of literary research. Garcia and colleagues (2020) cited that Rosalia Aguinaldo has been compared with the likes of Carolina Invernizio and Carlota Braeme, acclaimed novelists of her time. Hilaria Labog is recorded as having written at least 75 short stories all published in weekly magazines. Nieves Baens-del Rosario, the youngest of them, has in her honor the authorship of 240 works; short stories, and poetry excluding her novels wherein the most popular is her 'Erlinda of Bataan'. This account in itself is considered a negation of the myth that there are no accessible copies of Bataan literature and disparage the perception that the province is bereft of commendable writers.

All the foregoing would serve as a contribution to the present-day resolve of the Department of Education to provide indigenous literary materials to contemporary learners. The massive reading materials authored by Bataño *Tres Marias* are likely to establish familiarity with the texts and form attachment to early writers. Specifically, in the senior high school curriculum, the course on the '21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World' not only intends to engross students in appreciation of Philippine literature but likewise to conduct a critical study on their variety, contexts, and traditions. The description of the course mandates clearly that writings should come from the region where the school is located. It is also of prime importance that the literary history identified commence from pre-colonial times. The recovery and proper dissemination of Bataan literature will respond to this call and enable students to recognize diverse literature when compared with other regional texts.

An interesting study that has been secluded for almost three decades is the unpublished master's thesis at the UP (University of the Philippines) Diliman of Maria Romina Barros del Rosario, a granddaughter of Nieves Baens-del Rosario whose thesis was about the author's select short stories. Nieves Baens-del Rosario is one of the subjects of the current research. Romina Barros del Rosario's study was titled *The Concept of Pagpapakasakit in the Short Stories of Nieves Baens-del Rosario*, finished in 1991 but has long been conceptualized before the death of Nieves in 1986. It covers ten popular short stories in Tagalog that were all translated into English apparently by Maria Romina much to the approval of Nieves herself. These stories alone could comprise a select collection on

the prominence of grandmom Nieves as a short story writer. The thesis delved into the concept of willing self-sacrifice manifested by the main character of each short story. Based on the given plots and twists of the fiction, more angles can be examined for literary analysis using appropriate approaches. The stated short stories may be used for preliminary readings on Nieves Baens-del Rosario's early fictions in the 20th century.

Furthermore, the unpublished master's thesis paves way for a working anthology on del Rosario's works as she has been acclaimed as producing a huge collection of poetry, plays, essays, and novels. Her reputation as a fictionist though has been known in the university and elite literary circle but failed to reach her hometown. Maria Romina asserts that her grandmother has penned about 218 published and unpublished short stories since 1923. This is confirmed by some records that Nieves's fictions have been collected by university students and her biography has been studied in Tagalog courses. The UP Filipiniana section keeps the synopsis of del Rosario's early works sourced from her manuscripts. There is likewise a biographical sketch about the author that lists down details from her family tree to her most recent works that undoubtedly show her distinction. Later in 1987, the UP Creative Writing Center has awarded del Rosario a post-humous citation on her literary achievements. This alone would prompt a scholar to probe deeper not only into her works but also into other Bataeno writers whose accomplishments are yet to be uncovered.

Meanwhile, the literary achievements of Hilaria Labog, whose initial seventy-five short stories have been widely published in various weekly magazines, have been relived by Dolores Taylan, a literary scholar, and professor. Taylan (2002) has recreated the legacy of Labog in her paper *Pagbuhay kay Hilaria Labog, Isang Hakbang Tungo sa Feminismo* (Reliving Hilaria Labog: A Step to Feminism). The scholar contends that Labog needs urgent attention; the author has left so much that needs to be assessed and be valued by the present generation. She sustains that Labog has started the concept of feminism in the early 20s; long before a name has been tagged about powerful women. Her short stories greatly contained an exceptional female much ahead of her time. The women of Labog's stories are firm, powerful, independent, and decisive; far from the stereotyped weaklings, those male authors have accustomed to portraying women.

Taylan (2006) has further persisted in reviving Labog's legacy through her follow-up paper on Labog titled *Reklamasyon ng Alaala at Kapangyarihan: Biograpiya at Antolohiya ng Apat na Dekada ng Pangangatha ni Hilaria*

Labog (Reclamation of Memory and Power: Biography and Anthology of Hilaria Labog's Four Decades of Writing). Taylan has emphasized the four-decade story writing expertise of Labog where the former observes that the author was able to place herself along with her distinguished male counterparts in the literary backdrop. The scholar contends that Labog has started writing her short stories from 1927 until 1959. She has also provided a detailed biography of Labog which could serve as a foundation to trace not only her roots but her chronological works as well. Notably, Taylan has observed the significance and effectiveness of a retrieval process in refreshing the legacy of Hilaria Labog. This process has been found operative during the preliminary effort to unfold Bataan literature. The current study likewise devised its research procedure in the long-overdue recovery of Bataan literature.

Rosalia Aguinaldo's prominence as a fictionist was disclosed by the literary critic Soledad Reyes (2003) in her anthology of the early women storytellers. Reyes consistently noted the contributions of Aguinaldo as a storyteller for three decades from the 1920s to the '50s. From 1927 to 1935, only Aguinaldo's story 'Ay, Ay' was shortlisted among female nominees and won the best story of the year. It is yet to inspire researchers to examine her extant stories confined in leading university and library archives to be able to enter into the worldview of Rosalia Aguinaldo. The lack of studies about her stories needs to be resolved through an initial process of retrieval and documentation. This does not demerit the contributions of Aguinaldo whose first novel in 1922, on the other hand, is published in full copy by digital libraries worldwide. Some of these include the University of the West Library, Concordia College Library, Morningside College, Hathi Trust Digital Library, University of Michigan, and Dallas Theological Seminary. The 117-page novel in the Tagalog language manifests the literary craftsmanship of Aguinaldo at a time that Filipino women novelists were unheard of. The complete copy of the novel serves as a prelude to more of the author's works that are yet to be made available for local readers. Despite the inaccessibility of her other works, the digital libraries offer optimism on the possible release of Aguinaldo's fictions.

The most recent attempt to revive interest in Bataan literature has been initiated by Garcia and colleagues (2020) in their paper *Revitalizing the Existent but Forgotten Bataan Literary Legacy*. The research which has been a product of an initial retrieval has highlighted the notable contribution of Bataan authors in the 20th century. It has reintroduced the notable *Tres Marias*

of Bataan in the persons of Rosalia Aguinaldo, Hilaria Labog, and Nieves Baens-del Rosario. These famed lady writers, apparently, with their volumes of works have greatly contributed to the literary accomplishments of the province. The published study only mentioned very scant materials authored by each ladies that prompted the present paper to explore their works through online searches. Fortunately, Nieves del Rosario's granddaughter has been contacted and she provided some relevant materials for the study. Similar to Garcia and colleagues' approach is the retrieval process but the current research focuses on all the gathered fictions of the *Tres Marias* which bird's eye view has been provided. Both researches were able to recapture the interest of local government units who are looking forward to reviving the *Tres Marias* legacy for the present-day audience.

Taking into consideration the ostensibly unenthusiastic interest in Bataan literature, the ongoing retrieval and documentation procedure intends to resurface the literary legacy left behind by the early 20th century writers. It is in this process that literary scholars may be prompted to conduct the further examination to enhance the value of the texts for the benefit of the local academe and concerned government units.

Materials and Methods

Research Framework

The paper intends to highlight the contributions of the *Tres Marias* of Bataan in the fictional literary field. Specifically, it aims to recover the short stories, novels, and novelettes that the three lady writers have bestowed during the onset of the 20th century made available by local digital libraries and online sources. The analysis or examination of the fiction is not covered by the study as it is hoped to be conducted as follow-up explorations. Only bird's eyeviews of each collected fiction have been provided to present their scopes. The documentation method is limited to the encoding of materials as most of them have been old, tattered and overused. There was no attempt of any archival research process that has been conducted due to the constrictions of the present CoVid pandemic. The research is focused in collecting and retrieving available materials as a preliminary study for the *Tres Marias* of Bataan. The result of the study is meant to be cascaded to the Basic Education and the provincial Government of Bataan as they serve as external agencies in the research. This will be coursed through a community project to the DepEd teachers and learners in support of the contextualization of the curriculum.

Scope and Delimitation

The extant novels and short stories are delimited to accessible files that the researchers were able to gather before and during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. As most countries have been taken aback by the onslaught of the unknown virus, the researchers' attempt to gather materials was heavily hampered by quarantine and safety protocols. Academic institutions restricted physical research activities until the present. Researchers, therefore, were limited to gather materials from online libraries, worldwide digital libraries, previously photocopied magazine files of fictions, and materials sent online by correspondences from municipal personnels. The succeeding diagram is used specifically for the study:

Figure 1 shows the process conducted to recover and document the fictions of the most prominent lady writers of Bataan in the past century. They are identified as Rosalia Aguinaldo (1892-1962), a native of Orion, Hilaria Labog (1890-1962) from the town of Samal, and Nieves Baens-del Rosario (1902-1986), a homegrown of Orani. It is noticeable from the given framework that the ladies in focus are contemporaries and thus had been into similar cultural, political, and social conditions of their time. The inquiry is centered on re-introducing them and their works particularly in the academic institutions of Bataan.

In data-gathering, researchers gathered excerpts and a few full copies of their works through online searches and magazine files. Digital libraries and journals came very handily in retrieving essential studies that opened some avenues for a broader opportunity in recovering documents. Leading university library archives and their Filipiniana sections have kept the nearly century-old manuscripts that were digitized for examination. Serial magazine files that have been reproduced and later digitized have been an excellent source of information. The town-to-town visits intended for an additional data-gathering process were replaced by telephone inquiry and social media correspondences. The National Library, which primarily chronicles the country's literary heritage, is yet to be visited when protocols allow. Its website, however, proves to be a good start in tracking the lady writers' works that greatly deliver their outstanding contribution.

Aguinaldo, Labog, and Nieves Baens-del Rosario have produced a good collection of novels and short stories. Their works that dominated leading serial magazines speak of their dexterity as renowned writers that are worthy of reintroduction and preservation.

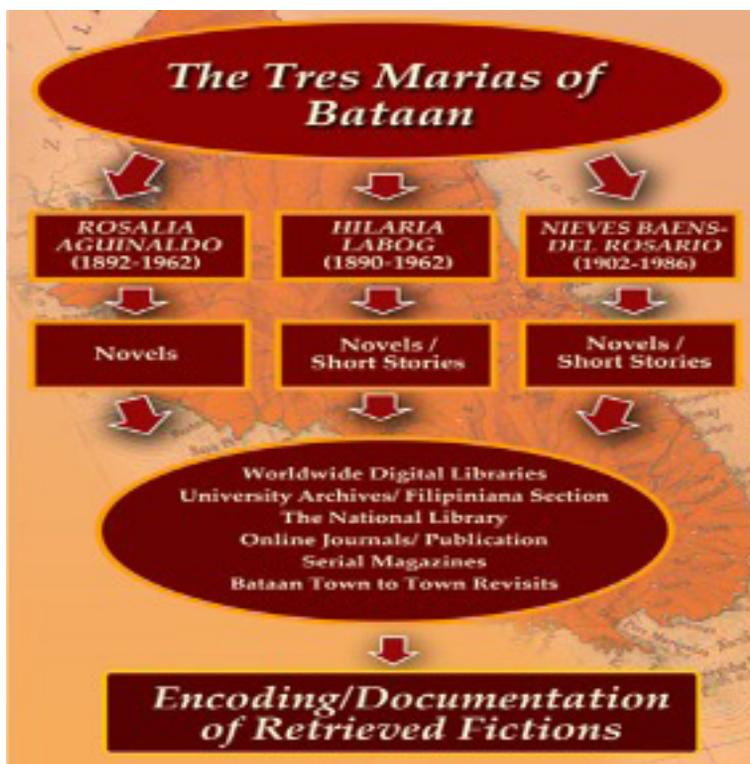


Figure 1. The research process of retrieval and documentation.

Results and Discussion

The Tres Marias of Bataan and their Fictions

The succeeding presents the short biography of the lady fictionists of Bataan. Their retrieved and documented fictions are likewise presented which Tagalog titles were translated into English by the lead author. The translation of the title was made using any of the literal, modulation, and adaptation techniques. The narrative titles of Aguinaldo were not translated into English because of the inaccessibility of their full copies. The dates of publication once identified were specified; no detail was given on unknown dates; thus, they are marked as n.d (no dates).

All data were gathered from online sources like the digital worldwide libraries, online reputable journals, archived files previously gathered before the pandemic state, also from local sources elicited from town-to-town visits and online library transactions. They were later encoded for documentation. The list shows only a limited volume of works authored by the early homegrown lady writers of Bataan but they serve as initial data to circulate their contributions in literature.

Nieves Baens-del Rosario (1902-1986)

Born on July 24, 1902, in Orani, Bataan, Nieves Baens-del Rosario led a meaningful 84 years of her life. She was a manifestation of a woman's intellect, virtues, and strength. She was married to an equally famed lawyer, the Bar second-placer, and the former Civil Service Commissioner Amado T. del Rosario of Tondo, also an eloquent writer, with whom she had two sons, Benjamin and Florentino, both lawyers, and daughter Lourdes, a physician.

Attorney Nieves Baens-del Rosario cum brilliant fictionist has been in the world of letters since she could remember. The lead researcher was able to communicate with her granddaughter, Maria Romina, who according to her, aims to be her grandmother's literary historian. Back in 1991, she disclosed in her unpublished thesis at UP Diliman that her '*Lola Ebeng*', by age eight, was already reading the *awit* and the *corrido* and already knew the *Pasyong Mahal* (the Lord's Passion) by heart. By age eleven, she had written three poems and a play. It is no wonder that despite her career in the Bureau of Labor, Nieves has managed to get into her passion for writing. She wrote hundreds of poems, six novels, and several novelettes,

most of which were published in local magazines likewise her articles, and essays both in English and Tagalog, Garcia and colleagues (2020) affirms that del Rosario's essay, *Si Valeriano Hernandez Pena at ang Kanyang Nena at Neneng* (Valeriano Hernandez and His Nena and Neneng) which was published by the *Surian ng Wikang Pambansa* (Institute of National Languages), is published digitally by worldwide libraries.

Nieves Baens-del Rosario is no ordinary woman of the 20th century who was typically submissive, reserved, and compromising. A resolute woman of her time, she worked her way to fight for the laborers' rights and to uphold the dignity of women. She was an active board of director of the Women Civic Assembly, the vice-president of the 'League of Women Voters,' vice president of the Women Lawyers Association and the committee chairman of the 'Women's Rights Movement.' In the 1962 issue of a woman's magazine, *Career Women*, Nieves graced the cover page which featured her as 'the champion of the masses.' She was cited as 'the woman who every woman employee should meet and acknowledge with a deep sense of gratefulness.'

During the early years of her career, Nieves started as a clerk in the Bureau of Labor until she became Deputy Commissioner then Director of the Workmen's Compensation Commission, a position unheard of for a woman during her patriarchal time. Her concern for workers led her to write one of her plays, *Ang Lider ng Manggagawa* (The Leader of the Workers) which was made into a documentary by the National Information Board in 1940 publicly shown in the provinces. Hectic with the workload and familial concerns, Nieves was never hindered by any pressures to settle instead on her present achievements. She could do more and proved that she was a 'Jane of all trades.' She was able to produce two hundred and three short stories released by various publications, the earliest one being: *Ang Dalangin ng Isang Ina* (A Mother's Prayer) which was published in *Liwayway* magazine in 1923. Two of her novels were co-authored with other Tagalog writers specifically Hilaria Labog, also a Bataña. Her most distinguished novel *Erlinda ng Bataan* (Erlinda of Bataan), written in her senior years of age, was published in a book form in 1970 and circulated online by global digital university libraries.

One of del Rosario's short stories *Ang Mangingisda* (The Fisherman) was published in *Liwayway* magazine in March of 1927, portrayed the rural life in Bataan. The story represented the idyllic local picture in her birthplace. The story was showcased in December of that year as a zarzuela, a musical drama by the theater group, *Samahang*

Sarsuela Gabriel, and was brought to the province for performance. It was also included in the 1939-published Tagalog anthology as short stories, *50 Kuwentong Ginto ng 50 Batikang Kuwentista* (50 Golden Stories of 50 Popular Storytellers), which was edited by Pedrito Reyes. Her last short story was *Walang Linamnam* (Without Relish) which was published in *Tagumpay* magazine on September 20, 1972, while her last essay during her 80th year, titled 'At the End of the Tether' (a piece on the elderly) was published in *Philippine Panorama* magazine on July 4, 1982.

Nieves has been a consistent leader. She had been the president of the *Bahaghari* (Rainbow), a pre-war society of vernacular short story writers and novelists. The *Kalipunang ng mga Manunulat na Babai* (Association of Women Writers), another Tagalog organization, the *Panitik ng Kababaihan* (Women Writers Group) she led for seven years, the *Kababaihang Rizalista* (Women Rizalists), and the *Pamana ng Panitikang Pilipino* (Legacy of Filipino literature).

In 1950, she was selected by the Department of Education as one of 20 living prominent Tagalog writers whose biographies were to be studied in the public schools because of her outstanding contributions to language and literature. She won prestigious awards since 1940 and was accorded the title 'Mother of Vernacular Literature.'

Romina further disclosed that until the time of her death, grandma Nieves was 'semi-retired,' from writing. She found great joy in rereading her works and in reminiscing with her grandchildren on her past which she considered as 'glorious.' She passed away on December 10, 1986. Nieves del Rosario's 84 years of writing, inspiring, and mentoring are indeed 'glorious'.

del Rosario's Retrieved Fictions

It is clear from the retrieved fictions that del Rosario has started her writing career from the first two decades of American rule. Her stories (table 1) greatly mirror the milieu of her time which can be a historical source of information on the three colonial conquests that she has gone through. The author's worldview is heavily manifested in all her works.

Del Rosario rightfully deserves her post-humous recognition which should have been bestowed to her long before her death. Her massive volumes of short stories, novels, novelettes, poetry, essays, and journals need to be reintroduced in the academe. Her granddaughter Maria Romina's master's thesis from the University of the Philippines reveals del Rosario's closeted ten

Table 1. Del Rosario's retrieved fictions.

Year	Title
1926	<i>Kaya Lamang Naging Mapalad</i> (Being Blessed)
1927	<i>Ang Mangingisda</i> (The Fisherman)
1920	<i>Ang Puso ng Isang Ina</i> (A Mother's Heart)
1930	<i>Ang Magkaagaw</i> (The Rivals)
1939	<i>Nang Siya ay Magbalik</i> (When He Came Back)
1940	<i>Nang Muling Magkita</i> (Reunited)
1946	<i>Ang Aming Kasal</i> (Our Wedding)
1948	<i>Ako ang Magnanakaw</i> (I am the Thief)
n.d.	<i>Ang Lumang Bandila</i> (The Old Flag)
n.d.	<i>Mula sa Bilangguan</i> (From the Prison Cell)
n.d.	<i>Dahil Sa Pag-Ibig</i> (Because of Love)
n.d.	<i>Limang Saglit ng Pag-ibig</i> (Five Moments of Love)
n.d.	<i>Na Kay Neneng ang Ligaya</i> (Happiness is with Neneng)
n.d.	<i>Sabay Ng Lumayo</i> (Left with No one)

short stories. Romina's concept of 'pagpapakasakit' in her grandmother's short stories can be explored in a much wider scope. Nieves del Rosario's fictions aptly manifest what it was like to live in the post-Spanish era, in the aftermath of the US invasion, and in the psyche of Filipinos who agonized during the short-lived Japanese tyranny. Her legacy as a writer should be relived and her works are resurrected.

Hilaria Labog (1890-1962)

Hilaria Labog was born on January 14, 1890, and a native of Lalawigan, Samal Bataan. She was a well-educated woman at a time when girls of her age were seen in the background awaiting orders from men. Raised from an affluent family, Labog was privileged to be educated at Tondo Grammar School, Tondo Elementary School, and Escuela Municipal as cited by Taylan (2002). She has been acclaimed as one of the first three women employed in the Bureau of Education upon getting eligibility from the Civil Service Examination in 1907. Out of the ordinary during her time, she has also managed to enter the Bureau of Customs along with only five female employees. Her intellect extended in battling for a cause: women's suffrage. Labog was recorded as an active advocate of women's right to vote alongside famous female personalities like Pilar Hidalgo Lim, Josefa Llanes Escoda, Minerva G. Laudicio, Nieves Tuazon, and Asuncion Perez.

Labog's professional career and bold advocacy advanced her further into exploring her writing prowess. Her getting married in 1910 to her first husband, Benigno Zialcita Sr., auditor of the Public Service Commission, didn't hamper her desire to indulge in her passion for writing. She was into contributing her articles to newspapers and magazines without being paid initially. Labog started writing for Muling Pagsilang dailies then for the magazine Liwayway and the Taliba. All her articles were done during her respite from the office and household chores. Labog's private issues like being widowed in her 30s only fueled her passion for creative writing. A strong woman who rejects giving up, she remarried to Dr. Jose Morales of Insular life.

Moving forward, Labog spent her time joining varied literary organizations where she has enjoyed her position as secretary and treasurer. She could have headed the organization had it not been for the patriarchal orientation of her contemporaries. As a relentless storyteller, Labog has won literary awards from the Commonwealth, Liwayway Literary Award, and Palanca which placed her in equal recognition with her more respected male counterparts. Her four-decade stint as a short story writer from the 1920s to the 50s recorded at least a hundred publications in leading magazines. Her name has been a familiar sight to every avid follower of her upcoming stories. This excludes her novels and novelettes preserved by leading libraries in the country. Some of these have been fortunately gathered by the present researchers.

Labog's popularity is not only confined to print media. Her novels have attracted film producers and were showcased via the big screen. Old movie posters attest to the fame of Hilaria Labog as she is acknowledged as the author of Tagalog movies adapted from her stories. Garcia and colleagues had listed these films as *Lihim ng Lumang Simbahan*, *Tinangay ng Apoy*, *Bagong Sinderela*, *Damit Pangkasal*, *Ulilang Kalapati*, and *Bulaklak na Walang Pangalan*. Hilaria Labog's legacy needs to be resurrected especially in her province where so little is remembered of her. She passed away on May 13, 1962.

Labog's Retrieved Fictions

Labog's recovered published narratives (table 2) are all manifestations of her worth as a popular and eminent storyteller. Taylan, in 2002 and 2006 has explored about 100 volumes of Labog's short stories. Citing her sources from previous papers, she stated that Labog's stories are all serialized from popular leading magazines; Liwayway, Silahis, Ilang-Ilang, Alitaptap, and others. Taylan's thesis

was geared toward the concept of Feminism displayed by Labog in her works. So much can be explored when scholars start to delve deeper into her narratives.

Labog's novels and novelettes, on the other hand, not only speak of a courageous woman unflinching by political and social restrictions of her time. She divulges the historical demeanor of her fiction about the conventional culture of Filipinos instilled by Spain. She also reveals the American commercialization scheme that affects society. Finally, she exposes the Japanese cruelty where Filipinos greatly suffered. Labog's narratives are all-encompassing, from her themes of love, loyalty, devotion, to her themes of revenge, unfaithfulness, ungratefulness, deceit, and social stratification. Readers may find her fiction a journey of seeing the present in the past.

Table 2. Labog's retrieved documents.

Year	Genre	Title
1939	short story	<i>Walang Maliw</i> (Unfaded)
1940	novelette	<i>Nadaya</i> (Cheated)
1945	novelette	<i>Sa Landas ng Kaligayahan</i> (Path to Happiness)
1945	novelette	<i>Salamin ng Buhay</i> (Life's Mirror)
1946	novel	<i>Kasal na Walang Pag-Ibig</i> (Loveless Marriage)
1947	novel	<i>Naglahong Liwanag</i> (Faded Luster)
n.d	novel	<i>Anak ng Gobernador</i> (Governor's Child)
n.d	novel	<i>Ang Suliranin ng Kanyang Pagibig</i> (The Conflict of Her Love)
n.d	short story	<i>Bukang Liwayway</i> (Dawn)
n.d.	novelette	<i>Bumagsak na Dambana</i> (Fallen Shrine)
n.d	short story	<i>Kuwintas</i> (Necklace)
n.d	short story	<i>Namatay sa Gutom</i> (Died of Hunger)
n.d	short story	<i>Pangarap Lamang</i> (Just A Dream)
n.d	novel	<i>Ulilang Kalapati</i> (Orphaned Dove)

Rosalia Aguinaldo (1892-1962)

The genealogy record of Rosalia de-Leon Aguinaldo informs that she was born in 1892 and died in 1962 at the age of 70. Her parents were Jose de Leon and Bartola Velasquez de Leon. She was married to Manuel Hernandez Aguinaldo and they had children named Ida de Leo Aguinaldo, Rizalina de Leon Dizon, and Benigno Aguinaldo. Some of her descendants that the researchers hoped to get connected with are found to be deceased and attempts to verify the whereabouts of Rosalia's descendants are yet to be realized. Internet searches leading to Aguinaldo's kins reveal their whereabouts outside the country. The Municipality of Orion, Rosalia's hometown likewise struggles to provide her biography for the prime reason that municipal and parochial records were burnt and destroyed in 1942. However, the researchers are optimistic that the re-emergence of Rosalia Aguinaldo's name sparked awareness of one of the town's pride.

Rosalia's personal life can be considered noteworthy. She has surely been well-educated like her contemporaries Hilaria Labog and Nieves Baens-del Rosario to belong to the circle of elite writers of her time. From her lineage, it is assumed from her hometown that she must have come from a prominent family. During the Spanish occupation, only affluent families could send their children to school and very few could afford exclusive schools for girls. The Pilar Encyclopedia points out to her, the former Rosalia de Leon, as the wife of Manuel Aguinaldo, the tenth governor of Bataan from the nearby town of Pilar who served his office from 1923-1925. The information states that both husband and wife are vernacular writers. Provincial governor Aguinaldo was personally chosen by President Ramon Magsaysay as his technical adviser in the national language. It was also recorded that both Rosalia and her husband wrote the translation of the Municipal Code of Pilar town.

In terms of her narratives, Rosalia Aguinaldo's novel was published as early as 1922, and more of these had been subsequently circulated. She has been highly recognized since then as one of the most sought-after fictionists. Garcia and colleagues (2020) cited that the artistry of Aguinaldo has been compared with the Spanish writer Carlota Braeme and the Italian novelist Carolina Invernizio, both renowned novelists. The digital libraries worldwide and the Google books present her novels *Mutyang Itinapon* Forsaken Lady (1922), *Tanikala ng Pagtitiis*-Chain of Misery (1923) *Higanti ng Pagibig*-Love Vengeance (1933), *Ang Babaing Mahiwaga* (Mysterious Lady) (1934), and *Ang Pag-ibig ng Isang Ina* (A Mother's

Love) (1935). This account alone shows that Rosalia had produced one novel every year aside from her other writings. Auspiciously, the novel *Mutyang Itinapon* (1922) is downloadable in full from the University of Michigan digital library. The National Library confirms the existence of the stated novels as they are included in their list of Aguinaldo's works. In addition to her novels are two of her novelettes titled *Walang Dalawang Langit* (No Two Glories) (1934) and *Salawahan* (Unfaithful) (1935).

Rosalia Aguinaldo's fame in fiction writing extends to her recorded short stories. She has won awards in story writing and one of the few women who succeeded in getting face to face with her male counterparts. Some of Rosalia's narrowly available stories are lifted from old dailies and periodicals particularly the longest-running *Lidayway* magazine which are yet to be recovered. Considering her extant works, it is indeed a big challenge to regain her glory as a writer. It is with optimism that researchers will explore her fictions and relink the literary intellectual lady whose political background during the first decades of the American regime may have been ingrained in her fictions.

Aguinaldo's Retrieved Fictions

Aguinaldo's list of available works (table 3) was initially cited in a compilation of fifty golden stories of women writers in 1998 by the renowned literary critic Soledad Reyes. Prompted by her discovery, Reyes has explored her thesis of the existence of lady short story writers in her 1982 paper about the Tagalog short stories then continued her citation on Aguinaldo's works in her collection of women writers' fictions in 2003. Regrettably, Aguinaldo's volumes of works were untouched by researchers. The given list can be used as an initial step to recover her narratives when restrictive protocols allow. The researchers are optimistic that literary scholars may examine the works of a lady novelist since 1922; a challenging era for a lady fictionist in the country to publish her fiction in a male-dominated landscape.

Aguinaldo's first and downloadable novel, *Mutyang Itinapon* (Cast off maiden) (1922), is centered on the bittersweet love story of childhood friends Elino, a medical doctor and only son of an affluent and influential family in Imus, and Consuelo, a seamstress and an orphan, and they both ended up marrying someone else they never loved. Due to social stratification, the supposed marriage of Elino and Consuelo was halted because of the opposition of the overbearing Elino's mother Ikang whose desire materialized when Consuelo finally tied the knot to Antonio, a low-born pharmacist. Unable to forget

Table 3. Aguinaldo's recorded novels, novelettes, and published short stories

Year	Genre	Title
1923	novel	<i>Tanikala ng Pagtitiis</i>
1929	Short story	<i>Lumura sa Langit</i>
1929		<i>Nang Siya'y Umibig</i>
1933	novel	<i>Higanti ng Pagibig</i>
1934	novel	<i>Ang Babaing Mahiwaga</i>
1934	novelette	<i>Walang Dalawang Langit</i>
1935	novel	<i>Ang Pagibig ng Isang Ina</i>
1935	novelette	<i>Salawahan</i>
1937	Short story	<i>Basang Sisiw</i>
1940	Short story	<i>Ay, Ay!</i>
1946	Short story	<i>Kalayaan</i>
1949	Short story	<i>Dalawang Katawan</i>
1949	Short story	<i>Kasal-hari</i>
1949	Short story	<i>Nasinungalingan</i>
1950	Short story	<i>Lalaking Marangal</i>
1950	Short story	<i>May Awa ang Dios</i>
1950	Short story	<i>Panyolitong Sutla</i>
n.d.	Novel	<i>Ulilang Tahanan</i>

his former sweetheart, the 40-year old Elino loses interest to even practice his profession and remained single until his mother finally finds a suitable wife for him. Reflecting the readers' preference for happy endings, Consuelo and Elino reunited but opted to make each marriage work and stay blessed with each spouse.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Rosalia Aguinaldo (1892-1962), Hilaria Labog (1890-1962), and Nieves Baens-del Rosario (1902-1896) have proven their worth as celebrated storytellers of the early 20th century. Their writing careers lasted for more than four decades which have earned each of them their recognition in the literary landscape of the country. Their stories need to be resurfaced to give due credits to these outstanding women whose accounts and biographies speak of their high education and prominence in society during their time.

Rosalia Aguinaldo was termed as the '*gobernadora*' being the wife of the tenth governor of Bataan and

released her first novel in 1922, a time where females would rather let their male counterparts dominate the new genre. Hilaria Labog has proven as early as 1907 that she could do the tasks usually accorded to males. She was able to enter the Bureau of Education after passing the Civil Service Examination and later gets access to the Bureau of Customs. Finally, Nieves Baens-del Rosario, a celebrated female lawyer has spent all her brilliant eight decades not only fighting for her rights but for others as well. Her massive collection of works in different forms indicates her artistry as a writer.

Regrettably, Aguinaldo, Labog, and del Rosario have been applauded in Manila but not in their respective hometown; Orion, Samal, and Orani, respectively, in the province of Bataan. This is unfortunate because the Bataña writers have been loyal to their hometown as expressed in their writings. Del Rosario's *Ang Mangingisda* published in 1927 used the fishermen of Bataan as her setting. Fishing, up to contemporary times, remains a prime source of income in her Orani hometown. She also used in her story *Kaya Lamang Naging Mapalad*, the town of Samal as her character's hometown. Labog likewise uses the town of Hermosa to portray the local customs of the place. She makes use of Leda's character who was hailed as 'Miss Hermosa High School' to explore the tradition in the town which will prove to be relevant to the present readers. The name of the school still exists today and students will be able to relate their present experiences with that of the past. It is a big challenge to re-surface their works and introduce them as learning materials to be explored in the academe.

The fictions of the Bataña writers manifest the storytelling conventions prevalent during their time. As observed by Reyes (1982) about the first five decades of Tagalog short stories, they usually follow the 'commercialized' pattern approved by readers. Since their stories are usually published in serial magazines, it is of prime importance that writers cater to what has been proven appealing to the readers, which is a happy ending. Happiness and triumphs are usually sweetest after overcoming conflicts and storms encountered by lead characters. The idealistic type of stories penned by the Bataña writers usually shows a sacrificing lover whose joy emanates from seeing her or his loved one become successful. In the end, good deeds shall be rewarded and evil schemes are thwarted which gives exaltation to the readers. Some recurrent themes in their stories whether in novels, novelettes, or short stories are the narratives of the rich versus the poor lovers set in the province then proceed to the city of Manila. Just like the authors who were born in the province then transferred to the city of

Manila. It would be interesting to scrutinize the details in each story to find out more about the prominence of the fictions.

More than their literary elements, the narratives chronicle the three-fold influences of Spain, the United States, and the Japanese. The social conditions of Filipinos after being held under the power of the religious and conventional Spanish rule are part of every fiction. Characters, especially women, are often portrayed as devoted Catholics whose belief in God is often expressed when faced with difficult situations. Parents and elders often play significant roles to guide youngsters to remain humble and cling to their values taught at home. Even oppressive parents are still to be followed for they are 'heaven-sent' who knew the best for their children. Notably, parents are never to be forsaken otherwise misfortune would befall the offenders.

The only downloadable novel of Rosalia Aguinaldo Mutyang Itinapon represents the submissiveness of children to their parents in 1922. Although Consuelo and Elinio are deeply in love with each other, they preferred to forsake their love to please their parents. Elinio's elite mother looks down on his sweetheart for being just a seamstress while Consuelo's father wants to see her settled and married to her other suitor. Knowing that Elinio's mother disapproves of their love affair, Consuelo decides to follow her father's wish while Elinio agreed to marry the girl chosen by her mother.

The use of Don and Doña is a familiar sight to the reading public for they knew that it is an indication of high social status. Housemaids are usually present to show the distinction among the social classes which are given too much exposure. The impact of the US modernization policy failed to erase the Spanish imprints on the Filipinos in terms of religious and social affairs. The plot of the stories is inevitably webbed into a class dispute among characters.

The American influences are presented on the use of nightclubs, the latest fashion in dresses, commercialization, industrialization, going to restaurants, the automobiles owned by the elites, prompt characters to find a lucrative career in the city and leave their hometown. Some characters are seen going to America to seek greener pasture and come back successful. On top of this, the authors have presented to readers the drastic change of moral values when predisposed to the modern trend. The sanctity of marriage is set aside for the love of money as shown in *Kasal na Walang Pagibig*. Men and women alike go into cheating on their sweethearts, they indulge in

extra-marital affairs, and living-in with their partners. Such incidents may have come as shocking to the early readers but the authors were bold enough to present the situation. Needless to say, an exploration of this detail may bring out a substantial thesis of study. Also, in the novel *Bumagsak na Dambana* (1946), the character of Marcelo as a heavyweight boxer clearly shows the American sports brought into the country. Further, the early Filipinas are warned about the lure of getting romantically involved with Americans who abandon their Filipina girlfriends after impregnating them.

The Japanese era after their occupation in the country has also been demonstrated in the ladies' narratives. The Commonwealth awardee of Labog's novelette *Nadaya* deliberately exposed the cruelty suffered by Filipinos at the hands of the Japanese. Worse is the betrayal from fellow Filipinos-turned Makapili, who assist Japanese soldiers in torturing suspected guerrillas.

Labog's stories showcase the misery brought about by the Japanese forces as personally experienced by the character of Armando who has survived the torture. He and other prisoners were severely hit from time to time and starved until death. In pain, he narrated that they drank their sweat for survival and had been confined in a box-like room where no one can barely move. The business scheme of buy and sell of the Japanese cohorts made the amassed wealth at the expense of the common people. The American take over is also emphasized as they arrested all traitors and supporters of the Japanese.

Labog's novels *Bumagsak na Dambana* and *Salamin ng Buhay* also include the Japanese invasion and World War II which readers surely found informative. The 1945 *Salamin ng Buhay* immediately narrates how the head of the family and his sons are detained in Fort Santiago by the Japanese leaving a physically and emotionally injured mother. Florencia has been confined at the Welfareville after the Japanese invasion where her husband and sons were victims of the conquerors, Her distress is multiplied by her only daughter's indifference towards her partly due to the influence of her American boyfriend and from her maltreatment of her late mother-in-law.

From the foregoing, the narratives of the three lady writers of Bataan when examined would provide a clear picture of the past which the present generation will learn its lessons. They have been living witnesses of what the Filipinos have gone through from the tyrants of the US and the Japanese, Notwithstanding the heavy influence that the Spanish conquest has conferred to the nation. It is, therefore, the campaign of the present research that

follow-up relevant studies be conducted promptly. To conclude, the works of the Bataña writers deserve to be resurfaced not only for further examination but to give overdue acknowledgment to these distinguished women who have spent almost all their life writing their fictions.

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