



## **The Best of Dagmay 2**

edited by Johanna Lynn B Cruz, John Bengan, Dominique Gerald M Cimafranca and Don Pagusara, co published by Davao Writers Guild-Tubao Book Series and the Ateneo de Davao University Publication Office, 138 pp, 5.6” x 8.4”

### **The Best of Dagmay 2 (2010-2012)**

Forty-six of the most promising Mindanawon writers come together in *The Best of Dagmay 2*, a print anthology of literary productions in Cebuano, Filipino, and English, published by the Davao Writers Guild and the Ateneo de Davao Publication Office. The book anthologizes select literary works in genres of fiction, poetry, play, and essay produced between the years 2010 and 2012. In its *Introduction*, co-editor Jhoanna Lynn B. Cruz (herself a multi-awarded writer and UP Mindanao professor of Literature and Creative Writing) relates that the productions featured in this anthology were selected from a total of six-hundred and fifty-five other submissions to *dagmay.kom.ph* by August 2012. Thus, the title of this anthology is no misnomer. Apart from it being the second volume of the guild’s very first print anthology, this anthology features many of the most exceptional works of writers from the region, some academically trained in literature and creative writing, some teachers and writing fellows, and others already fostering careers in diverse fields and overseas.

The collection opens with a comprehensive and insightful Introduction, where a brief backgrounder on the Davao Writers Guild, its literary folio *Dagmay*, and its steadily growing presence in Davao and Mindanao are being recounted. These opening pages do more than preface the entire collection, however, as it also provides discerning commentaries on the showcased works per genre. Cruz writes in these pages how, despite the authors possessing a “shared

geography,” their works tend to veer towards more universal thematic concerns. The pages speak of the ambiguity of relationships, a childhood devoid of fairytales, the pleasing ordinariness of family life, the overpowering undertow of mythical truths, the redefining of a life’s vocation, the ever-expanding infiniteness of a singular moment. But behind these sweeping leitmotifs is a distinctively Mindanaoan consciousness. This is perhaps one of the book’s biggest accomplishments—to have compiled in its pages the voices of Mindanawon writers while conveying to the rest of the world what is at once singular and universal about the human experience.

The featured works are categorized according to genres, and in this order: Fiction, Play, Poetry, and Essay. There are eleven short stories, two plays, twenty-six poems, and nine essays, all of which are rendered in any of these three languages: Cebuano, Filipino, and English. To any Mindanao dweller and native Cebuano speaker, the Cebuano works may exude a certain honesty and familiarity that is at once beautiful and harrowing, but this does not in any way subtract the other works of their linguistic and literary merit. If anything, this trilingual quality of the anthology reflects the diversity of Mindanao and the interwoven experiences of its tri-peoples.

*The Best of Dagmay 2* concludes with a short bio of each of its editors and authors. The four editors of the volume are Palanca award-winning writers and literature and writing professors John Bengan and Jhoanna Lynn B. Cruz, writer, webmaster, and book editor Dominique Gerald M. Cimafranca, and Palanca-winning fictionist, poet, playwright Don Pagusara. As for the authors, a sizable number are graduates of UP Mindanao’s Creative Writing Program, while others are veterans of writing workshops in Davao, Iligan, and Manila and teachers of literature and the other arts themselves. A few others, not surprisingly, have forged careers in other fields—one works as an MTC judge, another as a sheriff, and another as clinical instructor, to highlight a few. ‘Not surprisingly’, because literature — and the capacity to express one’s consciousness through writing—is a hallmark of everyone’s shared humanity.

At 137 pages, *The Best of Dagmay 2* is handy, almost weightless. But within its pages are the intricate, interwoven dreams and

treasures of a southern people finding home in one another. Many, if not all, of the works in the anthology may be studied and taught in the classroom or enjoyed in the solitude of a work desk or a park bench, where one is always transported somewhere else, or back into oneself.

*R~Aimee C Faunillan-Abella*