

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Francisco Arcellana**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Francisco Arcellana(6 September 1916 - 1 August 2002)

Francisco "Franz" Arcellana (Zacarias Eugene Francisco Quino Arcellana) was a Filipino writer, poet, essayist, critic, journalist and teacher. He was born in aka Frank V. Sta. Cruz, Manila.

He is the fourth of 18 children of Jose Arcellana y Cabaneiro and Epifanio Quino. He was married to Emerenciana Yuvienco with whom he has six children, one of whom, Juaniyo is an essayist, poet and fictionist. He received his first schooling in Tondo. The idea of writing occurred to him at the Tondo Intermediate School but it was at the Manila West High School (later Torres High School) that he took up writing actively as staff member of The Torres Torch, the school organ.

In 1932 Arcellana entered the University of the Philippines (UP) as a pre-medicine student and graduated in 1939 with a bachelor of philosophy in degree. In his junior year, mainly because of the publication of his "trilogy of the turtles" in the *Literary Apprentice*, Arcellana was invited to join the UP Writers Club by Manuel Arguilla – who at that time was already a campus literary figure. In 1934, he edited and published *Expression*, a quarterly of experimental writing. It caught the attention of Jose Garcia Villa who started a correspondence with Arcellana. It also spawned the Veronicans, a group of 13 pre-WWII who rebelled against traditional forms and themes in Philippine literature.

Arcellana went on to medical school after receiving his bachelor's degree while holding jobs in *Herald Midweek Magazine*, where his weekly column "Art and Life" (later retitled "Life and Letters") appeared, and in *Philcross*, the publication of the Philippine Red Cross. The war stopped his schooling. After the war, he continued working in media and publishing and began a career in the academe. He was manager of the International News Service and the editor of *This Week*. He joined the UP Department of English and Comparative Literature and served as adviser of the *Philippine Collegian* and director of the UP Creative Writing Center, 1979- 1982. Under a Rockefeller Foundation grant he became a fellow in creative writing, 1956- 1957, at the University of Iowa and Breadloaf Writers' Conference.

In 1932 Arcellana published his first story. "The Man Who Could Be Poe" in *Graphic* while still a student at Torres High School. The following year two of his short stories, "Death is a Factory" and "Lina," were included in Jose Garcia Villa's honor roll. During the 1930's, which he calls his most productive period, he wrote his most significant stories including, "Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal" cited in

1938 by Villa as the year's best. He also began writing poetry at this time, many of them appearing in Philippine Collegian, Graphic and Herald Midweek Magazine.

He is considered an important progenitor of the modern Filipino short story in English. Arcellana pioneered the development of the short story as a lyrical prose-poetic form within Filipino literature. His works are now often taught in tertiary-level syllabi in the Philippines.

Some of his works have been translated into Tagalog, Malaysian, Italian, German and Russian, and many have been anthologized. Two major collections of his works are: *Selected Stories*, 1962, and *The Francisco Arcellana Sampler*, 1990. He also edited the *Philippine PEN Anthology of Short Stories*, 1962, and *Fifteen Stories: Story Masters 5*, 1973. Arcellana credits Erskine Caldwell and Whit Burnett as influences. From 1928 to 1939, 14 of his short stories were included in Jose Garcia Villa's honor roll. His short story "The Flowers of May" won second prize in 1951 Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature. Another short story, "Wing of Madness," placed second in the Philippines Free Press literary contest in 1953. He also received the first award in art criticism from the Art Association of the Philippines in 1954, the Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinangan award from the city government of Manila in 1981, and the Gawad Pambansang Alagad ni Balagtas for English fiction from the Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipino (UMPIL) in 1988. He was conferred a doctorate in humane letters, honoris causa, by the UP in 1989. He was proclaimed National Artist in Literature in 1990 – L.R. Lacuesta and R.C. Lucero

# I Wait For You

I wait for you  
ready to leap at you  
from every corner  
at every turn  
gathered to spring at you  
from the shadow  
of every tree  
this is an ambush  
but I am not the assassin  
I wait, not with a knife,  
but love, heavy, dripping in my hands.

Francisco Arcellana

# Prayer

Close all open things, Lord.  
Open all closed things.

All those who have long received, let them give.  
All those who have long given, let them receive.  
All those too long apart, let them come together.  
All those too long together, sunder them.

Let the wise be fools for once, Lord,  
And let the fools speak their minds.  
Affirm the long-denied, Lord.  
Fulfill the unfulfilled.

Francisco Arcellana

# The Other Woman

I have watched her in stillness,  
how still and white and long.  
I have followed her about with my eyes,  
how silent and swift and strong.  
When she is still, it is musical.  
When she moves, it is a song.  
I have looked at her fearlessly,  
openly, and without shame:  
it is quite true that I desire you,  
it is quite true that lust is my name.  
I know, I always know where she is,  
when she is around and about:  
it is in my body like a shout.

soft hair, white brow, eyes young  
nose fine, sweet lips, sweet mouth, tongue  
proud chin, neck white, graceful, long  
downy nape, smooth, shoulders strong  
under the arms soft, arms long  
sweet and exquisite, white and strong  
wrist small and supple  
hands neat, exquisite  
fingers - petals of the lotus  
breasts like apples  
white body shining, sweet and long  
hips broad and ample, wide and strong  
thighs like pillars, white and long  
legs like cedars, firm and strong  
feet that are sweet  
toes like the rose

I know her name, I have called to her  
but she does not hear, she will not listen.  
I call to her but she does not come.  
The Lord is my shepherd but I want.

Francisco Arcellana

# To Touch You

TO touch you  
to kiss you  
to press against you  
anywhere

to break open your lips  
to drink deep from your mouth  
to feed long on your tongue

to root between your breasts  
to brace against your body  
to thrust between your thighs  
powerfully

long  
to die deep  
and then to sleep  
my right hand resting lightly on your left hip

Francisco Arcellana