

# UNITAS

SEMI-ANNUAL PEER-REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL ONLINE JOURNAL  
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH IN LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Collaboratively Translating  
Katwiran: A Note on *Reason  
Has its Reason*, an English  
translation of Rolando  
S. Tinio's *May Katwiran  
ang Katwiran*

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Public Reason and  
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Metonymies of Ethnobotany  
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Women Wage War: Anger  
in Contemporary Cebuano  
Women's Poetry  
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# Women Wage War

## Anger in Contemporary Cebuano Women's Poetry

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### **Abstract**

Women's anger has been the subject of academic debates. The "angry woman" is often seen as irrational and acrimonious. Most women claim anger to be their only reasonable response to oppression. How anger functions alternatively outside the frame of this debate has not been studied. This paper explores how anger complicates binary logic and connects it to domestic violence in contemporary Cebuano women's poetry.

### **Keywords**

women's anger, Cebuano poetry, feminism, textual vehemence, normative frame

The trope of the enraged feminist reminds us that women who show their anger like the madwoman in the attic are seen as uncontrollable deviants who should be silenced and shut away. The “angry woman” stereotype contributes to the derogatory description that marks “aberrant” not only women but also the organizations that validate their outrage. This stereotype extends to others who cast her as a “bitch” or “termagant” who cannot be silenced and exemplifies the reality that women have to control their anger when engaging in public debate.

For the purpose of this paper, I will postulate other meanings for anger as they come within the purview of contemporary Cebuano women’s poetry. Within the parameters of this discussion, I understand anger to be an emotional response that is both cognitive and physical as a reaction to a specific set of circumstances. Anger can take many forms, can erupt suddenly, fade quickly, or can operate as a constant emotional presence. Anger is also an affect that has many origins and functions. It is an unconscious force or the result of substantial mental consideration, or a reaction to injustice. It works together with other emotions and can be connected to sadness, compassion, yearning, and more. My aim, like that of feminist thinkers whose work is integral to this research, is to illustrate that anger is one of the many ways of interacting with and responding to the world. It is important to note that although this paper explores alternative meanings of anger, it is not an exhaustive study.

Binary logic<sup>1</sup> is the basis of the stereotype of women and their ongoing oppression. It situates people into distinctive categories based on their seeming difference from each other. They become “fundamentally different entities related only through their definition as opposites” (Collins 77). These ideas also imply unequal hierarchical relations that mesh with race, gender, and class oppressions. As such, there is a need to rethink bodies and subjectivities outside the binary logic so new ways of understanding can be developed and explored especially of marginalized groups.

The binary thinking that informs many canonical beliefs concludes in a construction of men as being aligned with reason and women as being aligned with emotions.<sup>2</sup> As a result, women are less rational and less moral.

Although this way of thinking about women are naturalized and used to justify the inequitable distribution of power, this divided way of thinking impact representations and social understandings of women's fury. In the Filipino context, males are traditionally considered dominant and superior over women. Philippine data on violence against women show quantitative evidence of physical injury as being the highest crime committed, followed by rape and acts of lasciviousness (Bernarte et al. 120). Scholarship on women studies highlight material conditions of a broad spectrum of women from various sectors to address their different concerns in order to empower them in many ways.<sup>3</sup>

Women's anger has been traditionally understood as inconsequential or unimportant. Frye discusses this as "a tiresome truth of women's experience that our anger is generally not well received. . . . Attention is turned not to what we are angry about but to the project of calming us down and the topic of our 'mental stability'" (85). Frye explains further that a woman's anger is acceptable if this is within spaces that are perceived as her domain such as the kitchen or the home. Amaryllis Torres and Rosario del Rosario note that although different family factors that affect violence against women are marital instability, conflict with partners that lead to physical abuse, and the lower economic status of women leading to financial dependence, another strong factor is the portrayal of women in media as sex objects (9).

Despite feminist critiques of the entrenched ways of thinking about women, it is difficult to recognize women's anger as a legitimate response to oppression. Feminists and activists have given considerable effort to addressing the problems that women confront when they express anger.<sup>4</sup> Audre Lorde in *Sister Outsider* declares that anger makes way for political strength and focuses structural oppression within feminist organizations (124). This kind of intervention is suggestive of the bigger trend where feminist activists explore anger and its links with oppression. Sara Ahmed also reminds us that the combination of feminism and anger is not new; rather, it is politically significant given the reading of the feminist initiative as "a form of anger [that] allows the dismissal of feminist claims, even when the anger is a reasonable response to social injustice" (177). For Ahmed, anger



is a fitting political and ethical feminist response to historical violence and suffering. Anger is

a movement that interprets and transforms that historical violence and suffering; it is a way of moving from pain, to recognizing that such pain is wrong, to acting to transform the social and political conditions that gave rise to that pain. As such, anger is an attachment worth holding onto.<sup>5</sup>

Feminists have been perceived negatively and have been charged with being “men haters.” This situation calls for the following questions to be raised: What are the meanings of women’s anger that are concealed or obliterated in the debate on whether or not it is good to express such anger? How can anger be discussed if women did not have to be defensive about this reaction from the start?

In contemporary Cebuano women’s poetry, I read each poem as an example of “textual vehemence,”<sup>6</sup> explain the ways the persona positions anger within the text, and explore how this anger transects with other emotions (Tomlinson 89-90). Tomlinson states that textual vehemence may emerge in arguments of social critique maintaining that current conditions are not equitable but damaging:

[T]extual vehemence can convey a sense of moral responsibility—and of moral revulsion—demonstrating the importance of the stakes of the debate. It can operate as a battle cry or rallying cry, drawing together into action those who already agree or who have been swayed by the argument. It can appeal to those who have not been reached by other methods. (110)

The significance of this “textual vehemence” is evident in the writings of women about the causes of their antagonism and fury. It is also a source of bonding and strength for them. This is specifically manifest in the Cebuano context as women poets wrote and expressed their fears, and to call attention to practices that oppressed women. For these writers, poetry was a vehicle for their political agenda and writing allowed them to create a strong community in the face of the huge challenge of speaking out. Within the constraints of the bigger feminist movement, the consciousness-raising activity gave

women the space to articulate their anger side by side with other women who would do the same. In the Philippines, Executive Order 348 also known as the Philippine Development Plan for Women was established in 1989 and its special concerns section addressed violence against women. This mandate was further strengthened by Republic Act 9262 Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act created in 2004, in response to the violence women and children experience due to unequal power relations, charging hard-hitting penalties for abusive husbands and men.

Judith Butler in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* explains that normative frameworks shape how we see our bodies, how others perceive us, and how governments allocate resources and protections. For Butler, hegemonic notions of normalcy establish which bodies the government works to protect, offers resources to, and which aberrant bodies pose a threat to their normative peers and ultimately to the state itself (53). She further delineates that ideologies of normalcy eventually produce some bodies as real and worthy of resources, protection, and in the event of death, deserve mourning. In contrast to these real bodies are abnormal Others, whose injury or death goes unnoticed, or is even celebrated when these bodies pose a threat to hegemonic norms. In her book “Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence”, she expands her discussion, and goes on to explain that this negation of unreal subjects is a continuous process:

If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. But they have a strange way of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again). They cannot be mourned because they are always already lost, or, rather, never ‘were’ and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness. (33)

The violence endured by these unreal subjects, the innate violence of this erasure, the continuing dismissal of unreal subjects from normative frames, and the deep attachment these subjects have to normative frames are prominent themes in the poems of Cebuano women writers. For example, in Cora Almerino’s “*Unsaon Paggisa sa Bana nga Manghulga sa Asawang Dili Kahibalong*

*Moluto* [“How to Saute a Husband Who Threatens His Wife Who Doesn’t Know How to Cook”],<sup>7</sup> the persona details the steps to be taken to deal with such a husband:

1. *Inita ang mantika sa kaha.*
2. *Gisaha and sibuyas bombay ug ahos.*
3. *Ilunod ang iyang kumo nga iya kunong isumbag sa imong nawong*
4. *Isunod ang iyang mga tiil nga iyang ipatid nimo.*
5. *Isagol’g apil ang ubang bahin sa iyang lawas.*
6. *Pabukali.*
7. *Tuslok-tusloka sa tinidor. Mas maayo kon kutsilyo.*
8. *Timplahi dayog pamalikas ug maldisyon.*
9. *Tilawi*
10. *Hauna*
11. *Kan-a. Kon way lami, ilawog sa iro.*

Given the hegemonic norms that function to allow women to speak only in a domain considered hers, my analysis of Almerino’s text explores debates surrounding normal behavior. The persona’s relationship to the construct of matrimony and normalcy forces her into the realm of unreal subjectivity which repeatedly erases the violence she suffers. Trauma as the place of affect is an important theme in this poem, as the persona responds to violence, to the ongoing re-articulation of social norms, with expressions of anger that range from indirect to overwhelming. The rage she expresses not only calls attention to what seems as the invisible process of putting social norms in another way, but it foregrounds histories of violence against women (read: housewives) and oppression that otherwise are glossed over.

The persona is unable to adhere to what her husband believes is a normal wifely duty—that is, to prepare the meals. As a consequence, she becomes vulnerable to abuse, the difference being inscribed on her corporeal entity as wife. Day in, day out, she needs to prepare the meals so there is repeated assault. She is caught in a self-perpetuating cycle until she fights back. Her anger brings her into view, and thus, we can start to make sense of the reasons why we receive the lives of those who suffer with indignation.

Butler explains that socially-produced norms play a key role in framing some lives as worthy of sympathy but she also asserts that these norms are continually in flux, and figure significantly in the process through which some subjects are recognized and others ignored (*Frames of War* 4). Butler argues that these frames are not static, but rather,

the frame that seeks to contain, convey, and determine what is seen [...] depends upon the conditions of reproducibility in order to succeed. And yet, this very reproducibility entails a constant breaking from context, a constant delimitation of new context, which means that the ‘frame’ does not quite contain what it conveys, but breaks apart every time it seeks to give definitive organization to its content. (10)

Within the continuous process of breaking from context in order to rearticulate their own parameters, these frames continuously change (11); the evolving frame is a little bit different from the one that preceded it. Butler explains that within this ongoing process, we can catch quick glimpses of the people and places that have been concealed by the frame as it breaks from itself to be reformed (12). In this case, the moments where the normative frame goes through this process of breaking and re-articulation, unreal subjects become visible, even if it is only momentarily. Butler goes on to explain that the question of whose lives are regarded as deserving of mourning, and which are included into the frame of what is visible, returns us to the question of the regulation of affect. If we accept that emotional responses are regulated through interpretive frames, then we can begin to make sense of the reasons why we greet the condition of some lives with sadness or rage, and others with indifference or even righteousness (42). As normative frames break and re-form, the anger that is expressed foregrounds experiences, histories, and identities that otherwise might be ignored.

The next poem follows the tone of the first poem. The title “*Nganong Naghilak si Loida nga Nagbatil sa Itlog*” [“Why Loida is Crying while Beating the Eggs”]<sup>8</sup> describes the condition of “Loida”:

*Dili tungod sa sibuyas Bombay nga  
Gihiwa-hiwa niyag gagmay.*

*Anad na man siya niini.  
 Anad na pod siya manluto.  
 Anad na siyang mohiwag mga lamas  
 Ug sa uros sa init mantika inig pusak  
 Niya sa iyang lutuonon.  
 Anad man gani siya sa tuasik nga  
 Komo ni Larry. Nakubalan na god  
 Iyang nawong. Busa di siya mahadlok  
 Mosilaab ang gasul. Hanas na ang  
 Iyang mga tudlo mosagang-sagang  
 Sa kayo, morag madyikiro.  
 Naghilak siya kay karong buntag  
 Inig kaon ni Larry sa itlog mangidlap  
 Ang mga mata niini sa kahinam.  
 Magpanilap sa kalami morag bitin.  
 Unya di madugay mobula pod iyang baba.  
 Motindog siya aron mokuhag tubig.  
 Mobarag padulong sa banggira.  
 Pero di kaabot si Larry sa banga.  
 Mosulirap iyang mata  
 Ug dayog kirig.*

Similar to the previous poem in terms of a battered wife's condition, Loida's continued oppression in the normative frame becomes the condition upon which the normative identities of Larry and Loida as a "perfect wife" rely. At the beginning of the poem, Loida's eyes water not because of the sting of onion juice from slicing them up, but rather from her rage at being beaten again. The logic of repetition: slicing onions, cooking, the sizzle of the cooking oil, her avoidance of the fire, suggests that these activities are an indicator of what her normal life is. The lines are followed by "She was even used to the dash of / Larry's fist. Her face had thickened to a / callus" and thus show that Loida seems to be a deserving target of her husband's brutishness. This abuse has a tremendous psychic impact on Loida because she already orchestrates her husband's demise in poisoning his food.

As Loida "avoids the fire . . . like a magician," and sees herself cry when Larry will die after eating the eggs, the frame that denotes normative femininity breaks. No longer is she the dutiful wife; thus we can read Loida's

act of “killing” her husband as the instant when the frame reforms, forcing Larry out of the frame as the spectacle of her rage, and the assumptions that surround her taking center stage. In this sequence of events, Loida’s anger while she cooks signals the moment when the normative frame rearticulates to exclude her and foregrounds Loida’s experiences that have, to date, been erased. As her preparation proceeds, Loida is determined to get out of the situation and the frame breaks.

Like those at play in the previous poems, normative frames are continuously in flux throughout “*Tambag kang Bertang Pakyas sa Gugma ug Uban Pa*” [“Advice to Berta, Unfortunate in Love, Etc.”].<sup>9</sup> Like Loida, Berta feels anger at the sharp words directed at her. This anger points toward the moment when normative frames re-form at her expense. However, due to the complexity of her suffering, Berta’s rage also foregrounds alternative forms of handling such strong emotion:

*Ayaw itisok, Berta,  
Ang maidlot niyang mga pulong  
Sa gikapoy ug gikutasan mong dughan  
Kay unya mag-ani kag mga bungang  
Taya ug lansang  
Matitanus ka pa  
Maunsa.*

*Hinunua, Berta, tiguma sila  
(Ayaw ikagut ang bag-ang)  
Ug haggpati ginamit ang gwantis  
Dayon ihapnig sa kolon ni Lola  
Timplahi, ayuha  
Pabukali, hulata  
Pabugnawa, sala-a  
Ang unod lubka  
Isambug sa yutang luspap  
Patambuka  
Tamni  
Mayana, yerba Buena  
Gabon, sabila  
Bahala ka.*

*Dayon bisbisi*  
*Sa gipabugnaw pinabukalang tubig*  
*Resulta*  
*Malingaw, mahupay*  
*Ka pa.*

For example, the advice is to gather all these sharp words and to select carefully with a gloved hand what to place inside the claypot to boil and cool to filter later. This concoction is to be used to water the pale earth where powerful herbs may be planted and make Berta happy. In this frame, what a disenfranchised woman can do has been broken and rearticulated to empower Berta. Where hegemonic markers of femininity allow some women to make a claim to normative female subjectivity, working to replicate these markers foregrounds the “quiet” woman as oppressed. Berta could have “killed” like Loida but she is not motivated by a desire to do this. As a means of survival and the culmination of anger following years of failure, her anger when normative frames reform to exclude her also point toward alternative successes, such as feeling pleasure with the growth of better things.

Although writing poems of alternative successes is an important part of social justice projects, Judith Halberstam also focuses on the probable weaknesses of this strategy. Telling unknown narratives and their ensuing memorialization has the tendency to tidy up “disorderly histories” by choosing what is important for public memory, and reorganizes muddled and conflicting events as linear stories of victory (15). Instead of participating in this effacement, Halberstam promotes a form of forgetting that actually paves the way for new memories that are complex and contradictory, instead of replicating accounts of oppressed lives (15). These poems call attention to significant narratives and histories of abuse that must not be forgotten. Not only do these examples and feelings destabilize the frames of normalcy that most take for granted, they also underline the tensions among women who continue to fight for gender equality.

Taken together, these poems illustrate the distressing violence that happens when individuals cannot follow hegemonic ideas of the ideal “wife” in these cases. It is important to note that as these angry women seek out

conditions of equality through domesticity, they question the unequal power relations that exclude them from normative frames from the outset. The three texts show that anger can call attention to this social inequality, and these stories foreground the political impact of effacing this affective response. While anger allows them to become recognizable when normative frames shift, the visibility on its own does not solve social inequities. The social construction of the oppressed subject will continue to threaten their truthful recognition. Visibility without social reform does little to alleviate the plight of oppressed women and those who suffer from discrimination (Harris-Perry 38). However, recognition can function as a meaningful beginning for social justice and anger as a means through which the disenfranchised becomes visible.



## Notes

1. The logic that informs this debate is both based on and reflects binary thinking that creates and reinforces distinctions between reason/emotion, mind/body, higher/lower order, and ruler/ruled. This rationale functions as the ground upon which the binary male/female relies. Binary thinking is integral to many social institutions, and is the basis for the dominant model for sexual difference. The assumption that women are inherently more emotional than men by virtue of their bodily differences is a hallmark of a larger philosophical trend where men occupy the privileged part of the gender binary, and are aligned with mind and reason, and women become the repository for emotional traits.
2. The distinctions between reason and emotion, men and women, mind and body were articulated first by Aristotle then Descartes. The Cartesian view continues to inform the devaluing of women's anger. By explaining that the mind must rule over the emotions, Descartes legitimizes the subordination of individuals who are believed to be prone to emotional excess compared to their rational opposites.
3. Studies that have been undertaken in relation to the topic are the following: Amaryllis T. Torres and Rosario del Rosario, *Gender and Development, Making the Bureaucracy Gender-responsive: a Sourcebook for Advocates, Planners, and Implementers* (United Nations Development Fund for Women, National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, and HR Specialists) Manila, 1994; Jurgette Honculada and Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, *Transforming the Mainstream: Building a Gender-responsive Bureaucracy in the Philippines, 1975–1998* (United Nations Development Fund for Women) Bangkok, 1998; Jeanne Frances I. Illo, *Workshops as Fora for Gender Advocacy: the 1991–92 IPC-CIDA Workshops* (Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University) Quezon City, 1994; Jeanne Frances I. Illo, editor, *Gender in Projects and Organizations: a Casebook* (Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University and National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women), Quezon City and Manila, 1996; Jeanne Frances I. Illo and Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, editors, *Carrying the Burden of the World: Women Reflecting on the Effects of the Crisis on Women and Girls* (Center for Integrative and Development Studies, University of the Philippines), Quezon City, 1999; Jeanne Frances I. Illo and Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, editors, *Beyond the Crisis: Questions of Survival and Empowerment* (Center for Integrative and Development Studies and University Center for Women's Studies, University of the Philippines), Quezon City, 2002; Odine De Guzman, editor, *Body Politics: Essays on Cultural Representations of Women's Bodies*, Gender, Reproductive Health, and Development Project Book

Series (University Center for Women's Studies, University of the Philippines), Quezon City, 2002.

4. Women have been pathologized as unstable, deceitful, and irrational.
5. Betty Stoneman, "Sara Ahmed's Feminist Attachment to Anger." *For the Love of Wisdom*. 1 Apr. 2017. <https://bettystoneman.wordpress.com/2017/04/01/sara-ahmeds-feminist-attachment-to-anger/>. Accessed: 10 Jan. 2021..
6. Textual vehemence is a term used by Barbara Tomlinson to describe "the tactical deployment of what often registers in public rhetoric as anger" and the ways this anger foregrounds the impossibility of objective knowledge.
7. The English translation by the author follows:
  1. Heat oil in frying pan.
  2. Saute onions and garlic.
  3. Immerse the fists that he will punch your face with.
  4. Do likewise with the feet that he will kick you with.
  5. Mix in the other parts of his body.
  6. Bring to a boil.
  7. Pierce with fork. Better with a knife.
  8. Season with curses and maledictions.
  9. Taste.
  10. Remove from the fire.
  11. Eat. If no good, throw to the dogs.

8. My translation into English follows:

It was not because of the onion that  
She had sliced so thinly.  
She was used to this.  
She was also used to cooking.  
She was used to cutting up spices  
And the sizzle of oil when she added  
The other ingredients.  
She was even used to the dash of  
Larry's fist. Her face had thickened to a  
Callus. So she would not be afraid  
When the gas flared up. Her fingers  
Were very experienced in avoiding  
The fire, like a magician.  
She was crying this morning because  
When Larry ate the eggs his eyes  
Would sparkle with desire.

Like a snake's, his tongue savoring the taste.  
And not long after, his mouth will foam.  
He will stand to get water.  
His steps will falter as he goes to the kitchen window.  
But he will not reach the jar.  
His eyeballs will move to the forehead  
Then he will go into a violent convulsion.

9. The English translation by the poet follows:

Don't plant, Berta  
His sharp words  
In your tired and gasping breast  
You'll only harvest  
Rusty nails  
That can give you  
Tetanus  
Or whatever.  
Instead, Berta,  
Hather them  
Don't gnash your teeth  
And pick out with gloved hands  
Then arrange them in Lola's earthen pot  
Mix with condiments well  
Let boil, wait  
Let cool sieve  
Pound the meat  
Scatter on pale earth  
Let it grow stout  
Plant with the herbs *mayana*, *yerba Buena*  
Gabon, sabila  
Whatever.  
Then sprinkle  
With cooled boiled water  
Wait, don't hurry  
The result  
Will delight, and heal  
You then.

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# Metonymies of Ethnobotany and the Fellowship Discourse of *Sagrada Familia* Healers in Irosin, Sorsogon, Philippines

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## Abstract

The study explores the metonymies of plants and spirits in the ethnobotanical rituals of the *Sagrada Familia* healers in the village of Patag in Irosin, Sorsogon, Philippines. It exposes how these metonymies construct a fellowship of discourse that represents the cultural models of surviving poverty, sickness, and disasters in the calamity-stricken town. It explores the interdisciplinary focus on language, culture, history, and plants in the field of Philippine cognitive ethno-botany. Using grounded theory methodologies, the study relies on five months of field research with participant observation and digital documentation (November 2017-March 2018). It employs substantive language coding focusing on metonymies and on theoretical coding which links the functions of metonymies to preservation of traditional ecological knowledge and cultural models of survival. The paper links language codes to culture to fill gaps in the technical and utilitarian studies in Philippine ethno-botany. In the *Sagrada Familia* group, mediums called *luklukans* invoke spirits that provide instructions on the medicinal use of plants. These spirits manifest metonymically through the sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste of plants and communicate directly to sick people through the voice of possessed mediums. Material practices and oral literatures containing the metonymies exist in the whole group as doctrines that unite them as members of a fellowship of discourse. This

plant-centered fellowship perpetuates a discourse on happiness in simplicity, kinship, other-centeredness, acceptance of fate, and oneness with nature in the disaster-prone town of Irosin located inside a caldera.

### **Keywords**

Metonymy, Ethnobotany, *Sagrada Familia* , Irosin

## Background

### *Irosin, Sorsogon, Philippines*

Located at the southeastern end of Luzon Island in the Philippines, Irosin in the province of Sorsogon is the only landlocked town inside a caldera in the Bulusan volcanic complex. A caldera is formed when a summit of a volcano collapses into its empty magma chamber (Okuno et al. 734). According to 2017 municipal records and oral history, the Irosin caldera has been rich in flora and fauna since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, attracting migrants from other towns of Sorsogon (“History: a Brief History of Irosin” 2). However, Irosin is prone to the lahar flow from a neighboring active volcano—Mt. Bulusan. Furthermore, the presence of waving rivers crisscrossing from the mountains down the caldera causes flood and riverbank erosion. Its location makes Irosin a town that is most vulnerable to natural disasters and calamities in the whole province of Sorsogon (Ramos 1). According to records of Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHILVOCS), Mt. Bulusan erupted 39 times from 1852 to 2017 (Volcano Information Materials 1).

## The Oral History and Culture of *Sagrada Familia* in the Village of Patag

The reliance on plants and spirits to survive poverty, sicknesses, and disasters is a cultural trait of the town of Irosin. Moreover, of the twenty eight villages in the town, the village of Patag can be a representative of this trait. Patag is situated at 12.7274, 124.0572, in the island of Luzon. Elevation is at 255.9 meters or 839.6 feet above mean sea level. It shares boundaries with four barangays-santo Domingo, Bagsangan, Mapaso, and Cawayan (Patag, Irosin, Sorsogon Profile-Phil Atlas 2). There are healers in other villages practicing their craft as individuals; but Patag has a group of organized healers: the *Sagrada Familia*. In the belief of some sick people in Patag, these healers can cure physical ailments by using plants recommended by spirits.

During focused group discussion with the researcher, members of *Sagrada Familia* who did not wish to be identified, narrated their oral history. They claimed that the group started in the 1980s when Lolo Empinito, a

spirit residing in the cave of Marilag as a hermit, pitied a poor and sick single mother in the village of Patag. They believed that Lolo healed the woman and made her his *luklukan* or medium. The group claimed that since then, the spirit of Lolo enters and controls the body of the *luklukan* to perform healing rituals. This made the *luklukan* one of the most popular healers in the town. Under the supervision of the *luklukan*, some of her patients coming from different villages became permanent apprentices with the role of mixing parts of different healing plants.

The same informants claimed that two spirits of dead people named Dr. Jose Rizal and Dr. Felipe Salvador started to possess the *luklukan* to help Lolo Empinito heal more patients. The spirit of Jose Rizal, an eye and kidney doctor, is believed to perform operations using the body of the *luklukan* who is assisted by some apprentices. The other spirit, the dentist Dr. Salvador, also performs some surgical procedures. The *Sagrada Familia* members did not give the researcher the permission to know the difference between Rizal and Salvador and to witness surgical operations.

After some time, the *luklukan* and the apprentices decided to call themselves *Sagrada Familia* or sacred family because they have developed a strong kinship with each other. When the *luklukan* died in 2013, Lolo Empinito chose her daughter, now in her thirties, to become the new *luklukan*.

At the time of the research from November 2017-March 2018, *Sagrada Familia* had thirty members. The cultural influence of the group, however, extends beyond the members. The families of each member and the sick people healed by the group over several decades share the belief in the powers of plants and spirits to help people survive disasters, poverty, and illnesses. This belief is articulated by oral narratives and material practices.

The problem is that there is no publication on the culture of *Sagrada Familia*. The ways the *Sagrada Familia* relies on plants and spirits through metonymic narratives and material practices provide examples and models of survival culture. A research methodology in ethnobotany that explores how figurative language articulates and perpetuates herbal healing practices and reliance on spirits is a way to explore this culture of survival with details and depth. The bigger problem is that this methodology has not yet



been done in Philippine ethnobotany. It is this research gap that this study attempts to probe.

The study aims to describe the function of metonymies of plants and spirits in the ethnobotanical rituals of the *Sagrada Familia* healers; expose how these metonymies construct a fellowship which survives poverty, sickness, and disasters through the reliance on plants, supernatural beings, kinship, and oneness with nature; and link metonymic language codes to culture to fill gaps in the technical and utilitarian studies in Philippine ethnobotany.

## Metonymy

This paper describes metonymy as a trope perceived by multiple human senses (Orden 5); as a part of collective knowledge in a particular culture (Surrete 557-575); and as material practice determined by particular world-views (Paradis 245-264).

According to Orden,

in metonymy, a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., is functionally replaced with “a word or phrase denoting one of its properties or something associated with it. . . . Any medium that bears an icon—take the women’s and men’s restroom signs, for instance—is inherently metonymic: these crude sets of lines—either triangular, for women, or rectangular, for men, each topped by a circle—convey through logic . . . the image of a woman’s or a man’s body. . . .

The bygone days of radio plays introduced . . . the sound effects artist, to the world of image-making. In a sense, the . . . artist deals exclusively in tropes; sound effect produced on radio is at heart a metonymy; the audible parts—clapping hooves, or thunder—each signify a real whole: horses at a gallop, a storm blowing in. . . . As a final example, consider the remarkable medium of perfume advertisements. In these, fragrance is given an image. . . . Metonyms are more grounded in our experience than metaphors, since they involve direct associations. (5)

Metonymy is perceived by multiple human senses. The examples given are visual, auditory, and olfactory. The perception happens since the language of metonymy is associated with collective knowledge that has been established

even before the modern technology of the mass media. Loza et al. (1589-1592) show this collective perception of metonymy in the village of Caglilig in Tinambac town, Camarines Sur province, Philippines. In Caglilig, residents believe in the presence of supernatural beings called the *Tawong Lipod*. Invisible to human senses, the *Tawong Lipod* manifest themselves to people and control beliefs and practices through representative metonymies like sounds of animals, dreams, and physical and mental ailments.

Metonymy is part of epistemic community knowledge. In fact,

[t]he epistemic is what we believe ourselves to know. . . . It is in a sense primitive knowledge prior to socialization of categorized knowledge or the verification of theory formulated knowledge. Metonymy is an association of meanings determined by culture. Semantics are the meanings of symbols or terms—their sense of reference. (Surrete 560)

Metonymy transcends academic semantics since it is both epistemic or relating to knowledge, and encyclopedic. It is encyclopedic for it is associated with multiple meanings—cultural objects, material practices, and beliefs. The association is constructed and perpetuated by the culture of a community and not simply a semantic definition by scholars (Surrete 564).

Metonymic knowledge is not primarily a linguistic ornament; it is a basic cognitive process that is pervasive in language and thought (Paradis 245). The function of metonymy is determined by ontology or how human beings view the world. Ontologically, human beings view the world as three orders of entities. The first order includes physical objects like people, plants, animals, and natural objects; the second are events, processes, and states; and the third are abstract entities that are outside both space and time. Entities under the first order have the deepest manifestation of existence; they exist at any point in time and are publicly observable (Paradis 248).

This paper relies on the theory of metonymy to describe the ethnobotanical practices of *Sagrada Familia* and to relate these practices to culture and history. Following Orden (5), this paper describes the cultural practices of *Sagrada Familia* articulated through metonymies of images, sounds, smell, taste, and touch. Using Surrete's theory, it relates these multiple metony-

mies to various cultural practices that are part of community knowledge. *Appropriating Paradis* (245-264), it explores how these metonymic practices reflect the *Sagrada Familia*'s three ways of seeing the world: objects, events, and abstract entities.

This research documented, described, and analyzed metonymies through grounded theory methodologies.

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is “a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area” (Glaser qtd. in Evans 37). It is a qualitative research design that permits “the researcher to get close to the data, to know well all the individuals involved and observe and record what they do and say” (Mintzberg qtd. in Evans 37).

### **Participant Observation**

The main study design under grounded theory is participant observation. According to Filipino folklore scholars E. Arsenio Manuel (22-35) and Florentino Hornedo (1-10), participant observation is the researcher's deep immersion in his or her research locale. He or she is able to participate in the cultural activities like a member of the community.

The researcher has been married for nineteen years to Maria Aurora Azurin Conde, a native of Irosin, Sorsogon. During long vacations from his teaching work in Ateneo de Naga University, he lives in Irosin. For this particular project, the researcher was introduced by members of the Azurin clan to the leaders of the Patag-based *Sagrada Familia*. With the consent of the *Sagrada Familia* members, the researcher participated as an observer in the rituals that were held during the five-month duration of the project.

The rituals of the *Sagrada Familia* are held every Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday in Barangay Patag, Irosin, Sorsogon. The researcher, with the help of native assistants, documented rituals and oral narratives with digital cameras and recorders. *Sagrada Familia* members, however, did not give permission to publish either digital or printed pictures.

After his constant presence in various gatherings from healing rituals to parties, the *Sagrada Familia* members eventually allowed the researcher to converse with the spirit of Lolo Empinito, whom they believed to be inside the body of the *luklukan*. The *luklukan* called the name Lolo Empinito. Then the *luklukan*'s body shook convulsively, a sign, according to the group the spirit of Lolo was already inside her. Then, the *luklukan* interrogated the researcher about the objectives of the project. Responding that he was aiming to share with the academe the benevolent practices of the group, the researcher was allowed by the *luklukan* to record the latter's voice. Prohibiting the use of any camera, the *luklukan* talked to the researcher about the history of the group and the uses of healing plants.

Nevertheless, the researcher was not allowed to witness the surgical operations allegedly done by the spirit of Dr. Jose Rizal while inside the body of the *luklukan*. *Sagrada Familia* members believe that Rizal is another spirit that possesses the body of the *luklukan* simultaneously with Lolo to perform surgical operations. According to the group, only the most senior members are allowed to witness the operations. These senior members claimed that all operations were successful and they themselves were patients who have undergone these procedures. They refuse, however, to reveal details.

The researcher conducted interviews and engaged in spontaneous conversations with the members of the *Sagrada Familia*. The interviews were done inside the home of the *luklukan* in Patag which serves as a rendezvous for the group. Additional interviews were done in the homes of several senior members who act as main assistants of the *luklukan* during rituals.

The researcher transcribed and translated the data from Irosin language to English with the help of an English teacher who is a native of Irosin. In some instances, the translation is not word for word. The peculiar meanings of key words are discussed elaborately in paragraphs in varied sections of the paper.

### **Grounded theory coding**

This paper uses the coding method in classical coding theory (CGT). CGT employs substantive and theoretical coding:

In substantive coding, the researcher works with the data directly, fracturing and analyzing it, initially through *open coding* for the emergence of a core category and related concepts and then subsequently through theoretical sampling and *selective coding* of data to theoretically saturate the core and related concepts.” (Holton qtd. in Evans 40)

Employing substantive open coding, the researcher read all of the transcribed data in the Irosin language to look for patterns of communicating meanings that can lead to the emergence of a core category and related concepts. The open coding unveiled the presence of metonymy as an essential form of communication that defines the nature and functions of the *Sagrada familia* group.

Theoretical coding follows through three steps. The first step links the metonymies of ethnobotany to the core category of fellowship of discourse (Foucault 225). The whole group of *Sagrada Familia* healers as well as their patients who come from different villages in the town of Irosin belong to a fellowship of discourse with a hierarchy of leaders and particular roles of members. The paper further discusses the power relations between the *Sagrada Familia* group and the town community in general, particularly the other religious groups and the local government. Metonymies about the powers of plants and benevolent spirits implant beliefs in the members of the fellowship. These beliefs solidify into discourses with corresponding material practices.

The second step relates the ethnobotanical metonymies of fellowship of discourse to the role of oral literature in the preservation of traditional ecological knowledge (Berkes 1251) and cultural models (Borchgrevink 226). Preserved by oral literature and material practices, cultural models of traditional ecological knowledge are ways of surviving poverty, sickness, and disasters in the Irosin community.

The third step compares and contrasts the ethnobotanical metonymies of fellowship of discourse with studies of ethnobotany in the Philippines. It further compares this research with studies on Philippine culture that directly or indirectly show the social function of metonymies. It ends by

recommending the expansion and deepening of Philippine ethnobotany by appropriating related language and culture methodologies.

### **Fellowship of Discourse**

The open coding unveils the functions of multiple metonymies that lead to the emergence of related core categories of fellowship of discourse and ethnobotany. In the *Sagrada Familia* group, metonymies of ethnobotany construct, preserve, and reproduce a fellowship of discourse with its own cultural models and worldview. Discourse is a way of thinking articulated through verbal and non-verbal language; it reflects, creates, and perpetuates thoughts, feelings, actions, and relationships of people (Keller 1-28; Foucault 215-254).

The French theorist Michel Foucault (215-254) states that a group of people controlled by discourse functions as a fellowship that preserves and perpetuates the discourse through language and material practices. Inside the fellowship, there are doctrines, rules and regulations, secrets, and exclusion and rejection mechanisms. To quote Foucault:

A rather different function is filled by 'fellowships of discourse', whose function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations. . . .

The speaking subject is involved through . . . rules of exclusion and the rejection mechanism . . . . Doctrine links individuals to certain types of utterance while consequently barring them from all others. (225)

### **Cognitive Ethnobotany**

By exploring the functions of metonymies in a fellowship of discourse, this paper focuses on the cognitive ethnobotany of the *Sagrada Familia* group in the village of Patag in the town of Irosin, province of Sorsogon, Philippines. In broad terms, ethnobotany is the study of the relationships between plants and people. The two fields labeled "ethno" and "botany" cover a spectrum of interests, ranging from archaeological investigation of ancient civilization to bioengineering of new crops. Most studies are concerned with the ways

indigenous people use and view plants. Those uses and views can provide deep insights into the human condition (Balick and Cox 1-10).

Based on Balick and Cox (1-10), studies in the field of ethnobotany can be classified as utilitarian and as cognitive. The utilitarian approach involves the collection and identification of plant species used for different reasons in a particular community. It also elucidates the methods used in the production and processing of these plants. In contrast, cognitive ethnobotany focuses on the cultural symbolism and social structure to examine the ways plants are perceived in a particular community.

### **The Functions of Metonymies in the *Sagrada Familia* Worldview**

The researcher has observed that the worldview in general of *Sagrada Familia* is grounded on metonymies. They believe that supernatural beings intervene in human affairs through metonymic representations. Below is a table of these entities, their representing metonymies, and their roles in the *Sagrada Familia* fellowship.

Table 1. The Entities, Roles, and Metonymies in the *Sagrada Familia*

Supernatural Entity	Representing Metonymy	Role in the Fellowship of Ethnobotanical Discourse
Lolo Empinito	<p><i>Auditory</i></p> <p>The tik-tik sound of a lizard</p> <p>The voice of a medium called <i>luklukan</i></p> <p><i>Visual</i></p> <p>The trembling of the <i>luklukan</i></p> <p>The fierce expression in the eyes of the <i>luklukan</i></p>	<p>Chief Herbal Doctor</p> <p>Prescribes healing plants through the medium <i>luklukan</i></p> <p>Provides power to the <i>luklukan</i> to drive away negative spirits causing illnesses</p> <p>Gives lectures about service, other-centeredness, peace in fatalism</p> <p>Gives direction about places of rituals</p> <p>Locates missing persons through clairvoyance</p> <p>Articulates prohibitions (taking pictures and videos)</p> <p>Predicts calamities and disasters</p> <p>Leads and prescribes rituals against calamities and disasters</p>
<i>Luklukan</i>	<p><i>Visual</i></p> <p>Changing voice INTO WHAT?</p> <p>Trembling OF THE BODY?</p> <p>Sharp expression of the eyes</p>	<p>Is the medium of spirits;</p> <p>Leads healing rituals through powers from spirits</p> <p>Performs x-ray ritual of <i>himagat</i></p> <p>Promotes unity and camaraderie through social and spiritual activities.</p>
Spirit of Dr. Jose Rizal	<p><i>Visual and Touch</i></p> <p>Skill of hands of <i>luklukan</i> to perform medical operations</p>	<p>Ophthalmologist, Nephrologist, and Surgeon</p> <p>Possesses the body of <i>luklukan</i> to perform medical operations.</p>
Spirit of Dr. Felipe Salvador	<p><i>Visual and Touch</i></p> <p>Skill of hands of the <i>luklukan</i> to perform dental procedures</p>	<p>Dentist</p> <p>Possesses the body of <i>luklukan</i> to perform dental missions</p>
<i>Tawo sa lipod</i>	<p><i>Touch</i></p> <p>Various illnesses</p>	<p>Main enemy of the fellowship of <i>Sagrada Familia</i></p> <p>Cause of various illnesses</p>



*Sagrada Familia* members depend on spirits to survive sickness, poverty, and disasters. In the table above, the presence of these spirits is articulated by various metonymies of sight, sound, and touch. This metonymic presence is a core element that binds the members of *Sagrada Familia* as a fellowship of discourse.

*Sagrada Familia* members believe that the spirit of Lolo Empinito is their leader. During healing rituals, they claim that Lolo Empinito enters the body of a medium called *luklukan*. The spirit of Lolo provides the *luklukan* the power to detect illnesses of patients through various rituals and to prescribe herbal treatment.

As observed by the researcher, the *luklukan* invites Lolo to enter her body. After a few seconds, the *luklukan*'s body trembles. Her facial expression changes and her eyes become fierce—signs or non-verbal metonymies representing Lolo Empinito possessing a human body. I decide to delete the preceding sentence in blue letters because I was in a state of fear in the observation and my description in this part may not be very accurate. Then, the female *luklukan* speaks with a high-pitched voice that seems to be genderless. With this voice, the *luklukan* faces a patient, provides diagnosis, and explains how to use different plants for treatment.

If the patient suffers from severe ailment that needs an operation, the *luklukan* calls the spirit of Dr. Jose Rizal to enter her body and perform the operation. In case of dental problems, the *luklukan* invites the spirit of the dentist Dr. Felipe Salvador.

The members of *Sagrada Familia* have the minor roles of preparing concoctions of medicinal plants prescribed by the *luklukan*. They also give hope to patients by sharing stories of how they were healed by spirits and plants. The *luklukan* chooses a few most trusted members to assist in the operations done by Dr. Jose Rizal or Dr. Felipe Salvador.

*Sagrada Familia* members believe that Lolo Empinito, functioning through the body of the *luklukan*, is a great source of hope. The *luklukan* predicts the coming of calamities and recommends the ritual of eggs to make spirits prevent disasters. She instructs *Sagrada Familia* members to go to

the nearby forest, enter the cave near the waterfalls, put some eggs on the ground, and light some candles. Then she silently prays to the spirits.

Furthermore, according to *Sagrada Familia* members, Lolo is omnipresent. Anybody anywhere in the world who believes in Lolo can ask him for help. The believer should just call the name of Lolo Empinito three times, orally or silently. Then, if a lizard answers with its peculiar sound, it means Lolo is present.

The general observation of the researcher is that Lolo Empinito and the other spirits cannot be perceived by the human senses except in the metonymies representing them. The main metonymy is verbal and auditory: it is the changed voice of the *luklukan* representing Lolo Empinito. The sound of the lizard and the other metonymies of sight like the dexterity of her hands during surgical operations are subordinate metonymies which augment the power of the voice.

Finally, the benevolent social power of the voice is mainly dependent on the medicinal plants that it prescribes. According to the voice, some of the ailments of humans are caused by malevolent spirits called *Tawo sa lipod*, but most illnesses are caused by too much intake of animal meat and lack of vegetables and fruits in the daily diet.

### *Metonymies of Sight*

Visual metonymies have essential functions in the rituals of *Sagrada Familia* group. The changes in the appearance and movements of the body of the *luklukan* are metonymies of sight of the three benevolent spirits. The thirty-three-year-old *luklukan* lives in her simple home in a neighborhood populated mostly by relatives and friends. Though her shoulders slightly stooped in a gesture of humility, she has friendly smiling eyes. However, when she calls the name of Lolo Empinito, her whole body begins to tremble. The *Sagrada Familia* believes that the trembling is the first sign, a metonymy that the spirit of Lolo Empinito is entering the human body. After the trembling, the lips of the *luklukan* grows a bit thicker and the eyes becomes fierce. The *luklukan* sits on a special chair that can only be used by Lolo. Then she faces the researcher in an erect, confident posture and starts the conversa-

tion. The group believes that the presence of Lolo Empinito depends on these visual metonymies.

Moreover, there are two other benevolent spirits that manifest metonymically through the body of the *luklukan*: Dr. Jose Rizal, a surgeon, and Dr. Felipe Salvador, a dentist. When there is a need for surgery or dental operation, the *luklukan* calls the spirit of either Rizal or Salvador to possess her body. However, only a few selected members of the group can witness and assist in the operation, which is done in an enclosed area in the home of the *luklukan*.

The skill of the hands of the *luklukan* in performing operations is a metonymy of Rizal and Salvador. However, since witnessing the acts is prohibited, the metonymies function as oral narratives that inculcate beliefs. A seventy-seven-year-old female informant narrated how her daughter suffering from a disease was healed through the operation performed by Dr. Jose Rizal in the body of the *luklukan*:

*Nag-usli an kaniya lubot. Diri man po nag-aayad sa doktor. May orasyon na hinimo, pero wara sin hiwa nan dugo an klase san operasyon. Pagkatapos, naayed na an bata ko.* (Female Informant, 77 years old).

[Her anus protruded. Doctors could not heal it. A ritual was done and there was no blood during the operation. Afterwards, my daughter got healed.]

Operations exemplified by the narrative above begins with diagnosis through the ritual of *tawas*. Before calling spirits that will recommend healing plants or a surgical operation, the *luklukan* and her assistants perform some rituals to diagnose the problem of the patients. The *luklukan* narrates how the *tawas* is performed:

*Gusto ko lang po i-share saindo an tungkol sa pagtawas. Kami ay naggagamit sin kandila na puti, lana (hali sa lana san niyog), papel o sa iba naman puti na pinggan o sa saday na planggana na may tubi kaupod po an pangadyion. Sa kaso po sin paggamit san papel nan kandila, pagkatapos pugkutan an kandila, Paagihan sin kalayo an likod san papel, upudan ini san pangadyion. Maiimod mo sa harap o sa atubangan kan papel an mga bagay o pagkakataon o kaya kapwa tawo o maging epiritu o mga nilalang na diri nato naiimod parehas san mga*

*dwende o iba pang mga elemento, na mao an dahilan san pagkahapdos o naging kamutangan san amo pasyente. Didto kami madesisyon kun anong ritual o klase san pagbulong an amo ihahatag sa pasyente* (Female Informant, 77 years old).

[I just would like to share with you what we do in the ritual of *tawas*. We use white candle and coconut oil, paper or ceramic plate, and sometimes basin with water. While praying, we use the fire from the candle to burn the back of the paper. We see figures on the front part of the paper—things, people, or spirits that are the causes of the malady of the patient. Then, we decide the appropriate treatment.]

The researcher observed that the ritual of *tawas* is generally used to determine the cause of the ailment or physical discomfort of the patient. However, when the healers want to know more accurately details of the sickness, they resort to the ritual of *himagat*. A thirty-two-year-old female informant described the *himagat* thus:

*Nagdesisyon ako na magpahimagat na lang. Yuon baga na naggagamit sin manok. Sa pamamagitan sada naiimod kun nano na parte san lawas san pasyente an may hapdos, kun nano yada na hapdos* (Female Informant, 32 years old).

[I have decided to undergo the ritual of *himagat*. In the ritual, the healer examines the parts of the body of a dressed chicken to detect the sickness in the body of a patient.]

In this ritual, the chicken functions like an ultrasound machine, which provides details about the sick organ. The *tawas* and *himagat* are ritualistic visual metonymies of spirits. The findings in the rituals sometimes result in the collaboration with more spirits. Aside from herbal prescription, Lolo occasionally collaborates with other spirits for healing. This is evident in the words of an eighty-year-old informant:

*Si lolo an haputon mo. Aram mo may doktor kami doon, doktor talaga pero mga espiritu man. Nakaopera man siya.... An doktor na nagluluklok... si Dr. Jose Rizal nan si Dr. Felipe Salvador. Ini si Dr. Salvador sa ngipon man siya. Mao si Dr. Jose Rizal sa intero siya- sa mata, sa puson, sa kidney. Nakaopera ngani siya* (Female Informant, 80 years old).

[You ask Lolo. You know, we have some doctors here who are also spirits. They are Dr. Jose Rizal and Dr. Felipe Salvador. Dr. Salvador is a dentist. Dr. Jose Rizal is a generalist, for the eyes, bladder, and kidney. He also performs operations.]

Interestingly, however, in contrast to benevolent spirits, there is a negative entity that manifests through metonymies—the *Tawo sa Lipod*. *Sagrada Familia* members believe that the *tawo sa lipod* means any invisible supernatural entity that causes various illnesses and physical discomfort. Thus ailments are usually believed to be metonymies of *Tawo sa Lipod*. A sixty-nine-year-old female informant talked about sicknesses caused by the *Tawo sa Lipod*. These maladies were healed by the *Sagrada Familia*, persuading the woman to become a member of the group:

*Mga pilay san ako mga apo, mga nagkaurumngan san mga tawo sa lipod. Intiro man sira nag-arayad didi kaya ngani mao ini an daku-dako nako na rason kun akay yadi ako niyan bilang sayo sa miyembro nira* (Female Informant, 69 years old).

[My grandchildren had some injuries inflicted by the *tawo sa lipod*. They all got well. This is the very big reason why I became their member.]

### *Metonymies of Sound*

The metonymies of sound add more power to the metonymies of sight in representing spirits. The most important sound in the culture of the group is the changed voice of the *luklukan*, which represents Lolo Empinito.

After a few months, the researcher was granted the opportunity to converse with Lolo Empinito through the *luklukan*. With a voice that sounds genderless, the female *luklukan* was surprisingly using another language, Tagalog, a language seldom used in the area. Below is the explanation of Lolo about herbal healing rituals and his collaboration with the spirit of the surgeon Dr. Jose Rizal:

*Tinignan ko po siya. Tapos may isa pong doctor na lumuluklok... si Dr. Jose Rizal. May herbal kami, may doktor din po kami, so iyong Dr. Jose Rizal espiritwal din po siya. Nagsasagawa din... ng mga operasyon. Pero hindi po naming pwedeng ipakita sa inyo (Luklukan).*

[So I attended to her (the patient). Then, there was another doctor in the body of the *luklukan*; we prescribe herbs, but we also have doctors. The spirit of Dr. Jose Rizal is also performing operations. However, we cannot let you see it.]

The connections of Lolo Empinito is not limited to Rizal and Salvador; the great spirit is also associated with lizards. The *Sagrada Familia* group believes that the sound of a lizard can represent Lolo Empinito anywhere. The voice of Lolo spoke to the researcher about it:

*Kung halimbawa ay nasa isang lugar kayo at kailangang kailangan ninyo ang tulong ni lolo, tawagin niyo lamang po si lolo ng tatlong beses. Lolo Empinito o kaya ay lolo lang at sasagot ako sa inyo sa pamamagitan ng butiki. Pero gusto ko ay taos sa puso niyo ang pagtawag sa akin at hindi iyong sinusubukan lang ako (Luklukan).*

[If for example, you are in another place and you need the help of Lolo, just call Lolo Empinito or Lolo three times and I will answer through the sound of a lizard. However, you have to call me with sincerity and faith in your heart and not just to test me.]

### *Metonymies of Touch*

The metonymies of sound and sight are further strengthened by metonymies of touch. A seventy-four-year-old female informant narrated how the healing touch of the *luklukan* works:

*Mao maski and doctor talagang give-up na sila. Dalawang espesyalista sa kidney at saka isa sa dugo ang tumitingin sa kaniya, So nang makahale an doctor, pumasok na kami tapos pumasok si lolo kay Luklukan, hinawakan niya an apo ko, dinasalan niya tapos sabi ni lolo gagaling ka na. Sige na an ihi niya. Sabi noong dalawang doctor na espesyalista, it's a miracle! (Female Informant, 74 years old).*

[Yes, even the doctors have given up. Two specialists were treating my grandchild, one for the kidneys, and another for the blood. When the doctors left, we entered the hospital room and Lolo possessed the body of the *luklukan*. The *luklukan* touched my grandchild and prayed. Then, afterwards, my grandchild was urinating normally. The two doctors said, “It’s a miracle.”]

Furthermore, the touch of the water of Dancalan Beach in the neighboring town of Bulusan also functions as metonymy of the powers of Lolo Empinito to drive away malignant spirits from the body of a patient. A sixty-nine-year-old *Sagrada Familia* female member spoke about the healing power of the sea water of Dancalan:

*Sa Dancalan an karigos mi pag may kulam. An Dancalan an may basbas ni lolo na dapat karigusan san pasyente na hale kaniya* (Female Informant, 69 years old).

[We let a bewitched patient bathe in the water of Dancalan. Dancalan has the blessing of Lolo as the bathing place for his patients.]

Another metonymy of touch, shared by a female informant in her fifties, is the sacred container called *praskera*. It is a small circular metal jar with a cover, with a height of around six inches, and size the length of two inches in diameter. Blessed by Lolo Empinito, this jar is believed to be miraculous by *Sagrada Familia* members. The touch of the jar is a metonymy of the great Lolo. The informant, who was crippled by an accident, claimed that it made her walk:

*Yuon na praskera saday lang yoon na sulodan na saday, diri yuon inbubutangan sin lana, pag inhuhuyop niya yuon nabutwa an lana. Yadto lang binilin niya yuon sa ako na praskera inpapairarom ko lang sa pi-ad ko. Pinalakaw ako* (Female Informant, 58 years old).

[The *praskera* is just a small container. We do not put oil in it. We just blow some air into it and it is suddenly filled with oil. The group lent it to me and I put it under my buttocks. It made me walk.]

In addition, a fifty-four-year-old female informant described the healing touch of the concoction called *banyos*, as recommended by the voice of Lolo Empinito:

*Binulong ako niya sin dinikdik na luya nan yung mga pamahid o banyos na tina-tawag nila. Mga pinaghalo halung dahon na tinitimpla sa lana san niyog, alcohol, menthol crystal, alkampor* (Female Informant, 54 years old).

[He healed me with *banyos*, a mixture of ground ginger, leaves of various plants, coconut oil, alcohol, menthol crystal, and camphor.]

### *Metonymies of Taste*

Members of *Sagrada Familia* as well as their patients savor the taste of healing plants as metonymies of benevolent spirits. Examples of these are the fruits of *malunggay* and the leaves of *mangosteen* and *rambutan*. The words below are from the conversation with Lolo Empinito who is believed to be speaking through the body of the *luklukan*:

*Kung may sugat din po, o doon sa mga taong may sakit na diabetes, ang gamot naman po dito ay bunga ng malunggay. Ang bunga po ng malunggay, kunin ang buto, ibilad sa araw tapos isasangag at kinakain po siya. Para siyang mani (Luklukan).*

[For the treatment of wounds and diabetes, eat the fruits of *malunggay*. Take and dry the seeds under the sun. Then, fry and eat them like peanut.]

*Sa kidney, ang mangosteen po ang mainam para dito. Pwedeng prutas o dahon. Kung sa prutas, kinakain po lamang ito kasama ang buto niya. Ang dahon ng rambutan, nilalaga din po siya. Twenty one na piraso ng dahon ang ilalaga mo sa 1.5 liters na tubig at uminom ng dalawang baso isang araw sa loob ng anim na buwan. Mamimili ka lang po dito sa dalawa kung alin ang iinumun mo (Luklukan).*

[For the kidneys, *mangosteen* is good, both the fruits and the leaves. The fruits must be eaten, including the seeds. In addition, boil twenty leaves of *rambutan* in 1.5 liter of water and drink one glass of this water twice a day for six months.]



The fellowship of *Sagrada Familia* is centered on metonymies of plants. All *Sagrada Familia* members use plants as remedy for physical ailments, as prescribed by Lolo Empinito. The benevolent function of Lolo Empinito in the human world is largely dependent on metonymies of healing plants. The leaves of all the plants are metonymies of sight since their green leaves are a representation of healing power. The soothing touch of leaves on a painful body part and the taste of varied medicinal concoctions are metonymies of the supreme supernatural herb doctor.

Below is a table of metonymies of plants representing Lolo Empinito's different spirits.

Table 2. Lolo Empinito's Spirit as represented in various plants

Name of Plant (Spelling is based on the pronunciation of natives)	Common Name	Scientific Name	Kind of Metonymy	Manner of Metonymic Representation	Entity Represented
<i>Ninu</i>	<i>Ninu</i>	<i>Barringtonia sp.</i>	Visual, touch	<p><b>Anti-inflammatory:</b></p> <p>Put leaves on the aching, inflamed body part.</p> <p><b>Anti-Cancer:</b></p> <p>Heat and grind the fruit, add some oil and apply on the part of the body with cancer.</p>	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>

<b>Malunggay</b>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Malunggay</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Horse reddish tree</p>	<b>Moringa</b> <i>loeifera lam</i>	<b>Visual,</b> touch, taste	<p><b>Antibiotic:</b> Grind the leaves and green stem, add some water, and put the juice on the wound.</p> <p><b>For fever:</b> Mix the juice with one teaspoon of water and drink the concoction 3 times a day.</p> <p><b>Cure for diabetes and food supplement:</b> Dry the fruits under the sun, and fry them like peanuts. Maximize the intake of fruits.</p>	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>
<b>Suwa</b>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>kalamansi</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Chinese Orange</p>	<b>Citrus micro-</b> <b>carpa Bunge</b>	<b>Visual,</b> touch, taste	<b>Anti-poison:</b> Mix lemon juice with oil and ginger and let the poison victim drink the concoction.	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>

<i>Luy-a</i>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>luya</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Ginger</p>	<p><i>Zingiber officinale</i> <i>Roscoe</i></p>	<p>Visual, touch, taste</p>	<p><b>Anti-poison:</b></p> <p>Mix ginger with lemon juice with oil and let the poison victim drink the concoction.</p> <p><b>Cure for cramps, rheumatism, inflammation, and hypertension:</b></p> <p>Grind the ginger and put it on the body part experiencing pain.</p>	<p>Lolo Empinito</p>
<i>Anonang</i>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Anonas</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Custard apple</p>	<p><i>Anona reticulata</i> Linn</p>	<p>Visual, touch</p>	<p><b>Pain reliever for body pain due to child birth or too much work:</b></p> <p>Put the leaves on the body part to ease the pain.</p>	<p>Lolo Empinito</p>
<i>Dusol</i>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Dusol</i></p>	<p><i>Kaempferia galanga</i> Linn</p>	<p>Visual, touch</p>	<p><b>Cure for wounds and infection:</b></p> <p>Heat the leaves with fire and out them on wounds.</p>	<p>Lolo Empinito</p>

<b>Sabilaw</b>	<b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Sabila</i>  <b>English:</b> <i>Curacao aloe</i>	<i>Aloe bar- badensis Mill</i>	<b>Visual, touch</b>	<b>Cure for burns:</b>  Cut the stem and put the juice on the affected body part.	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>
<b>Mangosteen</b>	Mangosteen	<i>Garcinia mangostana</i>	<b>Visual, touch, taste</b>	<b>Cure for kidney ailment:</b>  Eat the fruit including the seeds.  Boil the bark of the stem and drink the liquid one glass in the morning and one in the evening.	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>
<b>Rambutan</b>	Rambutan	<i>Nephelium Lappaceum</i>	<b>Visual, touch, taste</b>	<b>Cure for kidney ailment:</b>  Boil twenty one leaves in 1.5 liter of water and drink the liquid twice a day for six months.	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>
<b>Mais</b>	<b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Mais</i>  <b>English:</b> Corn	<i>Zea mays L.</i>	<b>Visual, touch, taste</b>	<b>Cure for kidney ailment and prostate cancer:</b>  Boil the hair of corn and drink the liquid.	<b>Lolo Empinito</b>

<i>Lagundi</i>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Mais</i></p> <p><i>Lagundi</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Five-leaved Chaste tree</p>	<i>Vitex negindo</i> <i>L.</i>	Visual, touch, taste	<p><b>Cure for cough and cold:</b></p> <p>Boil 21 leaves in seven glasses of water and drink the liquid.</p>	Lolo Empinito
<i>Kulitis</i>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Kulitis</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Amaranth</p>	<i>Amaranthus spinosus</i> <i>L.</i>	Visual, touch, taste	<p><b>Cure for too much air in the body, allergies, insomnia, and low blood pressure:</b></p> <p>Boil <i>kulitis</i> leaves with leaves of <i>artamisa</i>, <i>sambong</i>, and <i>guyabano</i> and drink the liquid.</p>	Lolo Empinito
<i>Artamisa</i>	<i>Artamisa</i>	<i>Artemisa vulgaris</i>	Visual, touch, taste	<p><b>Cure for too much air in the body, allergies, insomnia, and low blood pressure:</b></p> <p>Boil <i>artamisa</i> leaves with leaves of <i>kulitis</i>, <i>sambong</i>, and <i>guyabano</i> and drink the liquid.</p>	Lolo Empinito

<b>Sambong</b>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Sambong</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Elumea</p>	<b>Blumea</b> <i>balsamifera</i>	Visual, touch, taste	<p><b>Cure for too much air in the body, allergies, insomnia, and low blood pressure:</b></p> <p>Boil <i>sambong</i> leaves with leaves of <i>ku-litis</i>, <i>artamisa</i>, and <i>guyabano</i> and drink the liquid.</p>	Lolo Empenito
<b>Guyabano</b>	<p><b>Tagalog:</b> <i>Guyabano</i></p> <p><b>English:</b> Soursop</p>	<b>Annona</b> <i>muricata</i>	Visual, touch, taste	<p><b>Cure for too much air in the body, allergies, insomnia, and low blood pressure:</b></p> <p>Boil <i>guyabano</i> leaves with leaves of <i>ku-litis</i>, <i>sambong</i>, and <i>artamisa</i> and drink the liquid.</p>	Lolo Empenito
<b>Cogon</b>	Cogon grass	<b>Imperata</b> <i>cylindrica</i>	Visual, touch, taste	<p><b>Cure for urinary tract infections:</b></p> <p>Boil the roots and drink the liquid.</p> <p><b>Cure for sore eyes:</b></p> <p>Put the ground roots on the eyes.</p>	Lolo Empenito

<b>Kangkong</b>	<b>Tagalog:</b> Kangkong  <b>English:</b> Potato Vine, Swamp Cabbage	<b><i>Ipomea aquat-</i></b> <b><i>ic Torsk</i></b>	<b>Visual,</b> <b>touch, taste</b>	<b>Cure for</b> <b>diarrhea:</b>  Put the ground roots on the eyes.	<b>Lolo</b> <b>Empinito</b>
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## The Metonymies and the Fellowship for Survival

Members of *Sagrada Familia* survive the stress of poverty and disasters by depending on plants and spirits. The words of an eighty-year-old female informant show this dependence:

*Habuonon ako magpa-doktor kay apisar na magastuson, deri man namo kaya an magpa-doktor kay pira man hamok an inkikita namo. . . Sa albularyo . . . wara pa mga side effects kay an mga ginagamit nira mga herbal plants. Nan dine kami nagkakaarayad (Female Informant, 80 years old).*

[I do not want to consult a doctor for it is very expensive and we only have very little earnings. Herb doctors cure us without side effects because only plants are used and we get healed.]

Mountains and bodies of water are believed to be the dwelling places and metonymies of benevolent spirits. Lolo Empinito is believed to be more powerful if he leads rituals against disasters in the natural habitat of the other positive spirits.

A fifty-four-year-old female informant talked about the ritual against disaster:

*Kun halimbawa ...may baha na maabot, kun haen yuon na aagihan sin dako san tubi kinakadto namo yoon. Nag-aalay kami san bonay. Tapos naaaraman mi kun matuga an bukid, sinasabihan na kami ni Lolo. Mag-ingat, mangadyi. An sabi ngani sa amo ni Lolo an pinaka primero na sandata nato an mag-pangadyi (Female Informant, 54 years old).*

[If flood is coming, we go to the place where the water passes and we offer eggs. We also know if the mountain (referring to Bulusan Volcano) would erupt, because Lolo tells us. Lolo also tells us to be cautious and to pray to spirits, because prayer is the best weapon.]

## Metonymies and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The metonymies perpetuate traditional ecological knowledge that serves as cultural models in surviving poverty, sickness, and disasters. These cultural models bind the members of the *Sagrada Familia* healing group as well as their patients into a fellowship of discourse on survival.

Berkes et al. define traditional ecological knowledge as a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down for generations by cultural transmission. Articulated through material practices, this knowledge is centered on the relationship of human beings with one another and with their environment:

Interest in Traditional Ecological Knowledge has been growing in recent years, partly due to a recognition that such knowledge can contribute to the conservation of biodiversity (Gadgil et al. 1993), rare species (Colding 1998), protected areas (Johannes 1998), ecological processes (Alcorn 1989), and sustainable resource use in general (Schmink et al. 1992; Berkes 1999). Conservation biologists, ecological anthropologists, ethnobiologists, other scholars, and the pharmaceutical industry all share an interest in traditional knowledge for scientific, social, or economic reasons (1251).

Borchgrevink stated that:

The interplay of knowledge, practice and belief in traditional ecological knowledge produces cultural models that determine the way people live. A cultural model is the collective organization and application of cultural knowledge done by community members. "Cultural models . . . organize or encode cultural knowledge, as opposed to individual knowledge." (226)

Cultural models are grounded on social institutions that overlap in their functions and collectively produce and perpetuate worldviews (Berkes et al. 1251-1262). These institutions are folklore and knowledge carriers



and the mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Within the community of the *Sagrada Familia* group, folklore and knowledge carriers are leaders, elders, and supernatural beings in the local culture. The leaders are the *luklukans*. The elders are the trusted members of the group who assist in mixing parts of different plants to be used in secret surgical operations. The supernatural beings are Lolo Empinito, Dr. Jose Rizal, Dr. Felipe Salvador, and the *tawo sa lipod*.

In the culture of *Sagrada Familia*, there are two main mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. First is the oral narrative tradition carrying metonymic styles of language that articulate and transmit culture. Second is the non-verbal form of language that preserves cultural models through actions of members of a fellowship of discourse and revered objects. In the *Sagrada Familia* group, the actions are the healing rituals; the revered objects are the plants recommended by Lolo Empinito.

Of the two main mechanisms, oral narrative is the more powerful. Actions and revered objects articulate and preserve discourses; their actual powers, however, are limited to the duration of rituals. It is the oral narrative about the rituals and revered objects that transmit cultural models to the next generation of the fellowship. The oral narratives, the actions in rituals, and the revered objects are all parts of deeply implanted community knowledge.

Following Surrete (557-575), the multiple metonymies and the corresponding cultural practices are articulations of this deeply implanted community knowledge. The collective knowledge in metonymic presence of spirits is deeply etched in the history and culture of the village of Patag, the haven of *Sagrada Familia*. Patag, which means “plain”, was part of a thick forest until the eruption of Bulusan Volcano created a habitable clearing in 1779 which became the home of settlers from Bulusan (*History: A Brief history of Irosin* 1-10). Elders and healers from the village narrated that some early settlers were from Albay province. They also claim that reliance on benevolent spirits manifesting through different metonymies has been a part of the culture of Patag from the time of the early settlers up to the present.

This reliance on spirits blending with Christian practices was a way of the early settlers to survive the stress of calamities, sickness, and poverty.

*Sagrada Familia* healers are devout Christians; their ritual place is decorated with a crucifix and images of saints. They can represent this hybrid belief of Patag. For concerns related to government laws and regulations, people rely on the local politicians of the village. However, to survive the stress of sickness and calamities believed to have been caused by negative spirits, many residents, including some politicians, turn to the healers.

Paradis (245-264) argues that metonymies articulate three ways of seeing the world: objects, events, and abstract entities. These three ways overlap in the fellowship of *Sagrada Familia*. The spirits cease to be abstract entities when they possess the *luklukan*. The *luklukan*, a human vessel controlled by spirits becomes the center of ritualistic events and spiritual survival of the village.

### **The Cultural Models of Survival**

The ethnobotanical metonymies in rituals and oral narratives articulate four cultural models of survival in the fellowship of discourse of the *Sagrada Familia*.

First, as previously discussed, is the reliance on spirits and plants to survive sickness, poverty, and disasters.

Second is other-centeredness. The discourse of serving others is articulated in the verbal and non-verbal language of the fellowship, from the spirit-leaders to the ordinary members. The main metonymy, the voice of Lolo, speaks through the *luklukan* and prescribes healing plants to help the sick and the poor without demanding any fee. Patients give a small amount of money, usually twenty to fifty pesos, as an act of gratitude. Healers voluntarily give patients revered leaves of plants gathered from the surrounding. The group did not ask for anything from the researcher. The research team, though, regularly brought some food to the group to establish rapport.

The third cultural model is peace in fatalism. Lolo Empinito stresses peaceful surrender to fate if neither plants nor his spiritual powers can cure the ailment. This is evident in the story of a fifty-four-year-old female healer:

*Sabi niya sa ako deri ka mahadok ha, tatapaton ta ikaw, kahon na an naimod ko sa asawa mo. Siguro ko ngaya mga saro pa kasemana, deri ka mabigla kay kuku-waon na siya, mamamatay na siya. Mao man ng gayod, pakalipas nin sayo kase-mana namatay na siya. Pero diri na ako nabigla. Diri na ako nagkuan sin ang pagkamatay baga niya gare an pahaunon nanggad ako sa kaniya, dahil apisar san tanggap ko naman siya, insasabi man sa ako ni lolo na an buhay talagang irog sada dapat handa ka (Female Healer, 54 years old).*

[He told me (referring to Lolo Empinito), do not be afraid. I say to you that I have seen the coffin of your husband. Do not get shocked, for he will be taken and he will die. It really happened. After one week, he died. I was no longer surprised. I did not crave for him with intense depression, because aside from my acceptance of fate, Lolo was telling me that we must be ready to accept the adversities in life.]

The fourth cultural model is happiness in kinship, simplicity, and nature. Despite poverty and frequent disasters, members of *Sagrada Familia* find happiness in kinship. The group is like a big extended family. They give comfort to each other through herbal cure and the telling of oral narratives about the benevolent powers of spirits. They are contented with material simplicity.

The spirits inherent in all cultural models just exist through metonymies and cannot be verified scientifically. However, the reliance on healing plants, kinship, other-centeredness, simplicity, and acceptance of fate, are positive virtues useful for survival; these are cultural models that can be adopted by other groups in harsh environments.

### **Philippine Ethnobotany through the Lens of Language and Culture**

There are few studies in Philippine ethnobotany and most of these are utilitarian. Rotor (18-70) focused on the Ilocos region; Prigge et al. (1-4) on the foothills of Mt. Pangasugan on the island of Leyte; Buot (1-10) on the biodiversity of Mt. Mayon in Albay; Angagan et al. (31-38) on Apayao, northern Luzon; Olowa et al. (1442-1449) on Higaonon tribe in Rogongon in Iligan City; Blasco et al. (166-172) in the province of Surigao del Sur in Southern Mindanao; Morilla, et al. (38-43) in the three (3) Barangays of Dumingag,

Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines; Ong, et al. (228-242) on the Ati Negrito indigenous people in Guimaras Island; and Pinarok et al. (101-108) at the Samar Island Natural Park.

The researches mentioned above focus on collection and identification of plant species used for utilitarian reasons like food and cure for physical ailments. They also elucidate on the methods used in the production and processing of these plants. These researches are significant for pharmacological, medicinal, and economic reasons; they provide avenues for cheap yet effective traditional healing and survival. However, they have not deeply delved into cognitive ethnobotany to explore the cultural symbolisms and social structures and examine the symbolic ways plants are perceived in a particular community.

A way to cognitive ethnobotany is to examine how the system of beliefs, language, and material practices of a group of people show the role of plants as mediators in the power relations between human beings and supernatural entities.

In 2007, Jesus Cyril M. Conde, Maria Aurora Azurin-Conde, and Ramona Renegado published *Hybrid Christianity in the Oral Literature and Ethnobotany of the Agtas of Mt. Asog in the Bicol Region of the Philippines*. With the methodology of descriptive research design combining participant observation, interviews, and questionnaires, the paper has 40 informants from 8 *Agta* tribes on Mt. Asog in the Bicol Region. The findings reveal a hybrid culture consisting of indigenous pre-colonial beliefs and Christian elements. This culture shows the indigenous belief in the role of plants as mediators in the power relations between people and invisible beings. This mediating function is traced from pre-colonial time to the present in the Bicol region of the Philippines (255-272).

This 2007 paper argues that the power of plants is still present among tribal people on Mt. Asog. Negative supernatural beings manifest as animals or plants and possess the bodies and minds of people. However, people can also use the power of some plants to drive away the spirits and cure the sick. Nevertheless, although grounded on primary data from oral literatures and medicinal plants of eight tribes on Mt. Asog in Camarines Sur and historical

documents, the paper does not employ a coding method for the systematic analysis of the functions of language and culture.

In 2017, Jesus Cyril M. Conde and Maria Aurora A. Conde (1-33) extended the study by purposively focusing on a single tribe on Mt. Asog which was not covered in the 2007 research. This tribe called *itom* or “black” is the rendezvous of spirit-guided herbal healers from different tribes on the mountain. This study first employed the metonymic codes in language that construct and perpetuate fellowships of discourse. It unveiled the roles of plants as metonymies of the benevolent supernatural *Tawong Lipods* and *Diwatas*. These supernatural beings are believed to be the sources of positive power of plants as food, cure for physical ailment, and instrument to drive away negative spirits. The metonymies construct an ethnobotanical fellowship of discourse that includes all the members of the tribe.

The present study extends the 2017 project by employing the same coding methodology on a different cultural group, which was also purposively chosen: the *Sagrada Familia* of Irosin, Sorsogon. Both studies show that styles of languages like metonymies are contained in material practices and oral literature that construct cultural models and fellowships of discourse. These fellowships rely on plants, spirits, kinship, and nature for survival and happiness.

The functions of metonymies in Philippine history and culture can be traced from the belief in *anito* spirits, to religious groups on Mt. Banahaw, to contemporary folklore in the Bikol region.

In early Philippines, supernatural beings called *anitos* were represented by both natural and man-made metonymic objects. Tomas Ortiz (qtd. in Sturtevant 24) provides details of these metonymies of *anitos*:

Volcanoes, precipices, chasms, waterfalls, caverns, pools, forest glens, gnarled trees, eroded rocks, and surf swept reefs were all regarded as the habitation of gods and ancestral phantoms. . . . Great and minor denizens of the underworld were all recognized in religious observances. Barangay people fashioned wood and metal images in their honor, placed the idols in houses and fields, and regularly paid homage to them. No effort was made to distinguish between the spirits and their material world. Both were called *anitos*. (24)

In the belief of people on Mt. Banahaw, blindness is a metonymy of the power of the mountain to prevent somebody from returning to the lowland. Agripino Lontok, a rebel against Spanish colonial authorities became blind when he went to the mountain to acquire *anting-anting* or “talisman.” Lontok got supernatural powers but he maintained his rebel lair on the mountain. The mountain also revealed its secret places and powers to Lontok through a metonymic voice popularly known as *santong boses*. The *santong boses* is the spirit of the mountain believed to have given powers to Lontok. (Gorospe 205-206).

Little birds are also believed to be metonymies of the power of Mt. Banahaw. Members of the Mt. Banahaw-based religious group, *Samahang Tatlong Persona Solo Dios*, believe that their founder Agapito Ilustrisismo got his supernatural powers from seven tiny birds that entered his body (Marasigan qtd. in Del Pilar-Garcia 13-14).

In the Bicol Region of the Philippines, Loza et al. (1589-1592) expose the function of metonymy in the village of Cagliliog in Tinambac town, Camarines Sur province. In Cagliliog, supernatural beings called *Tawong Lipod* manifest to people and control beliefs and practices through representative metonymies like sounds of animals, dreams, and physical and mental ailments.

The works of Ortiz, Sturtevant, Gorospe, Marasigan, and Del Pilar-Garcia cited above have revealed how supernatural powers in Philippine culture are represented by metonymic symbols. Nevertheless, they have not directly used the term “metonymy.” In contrast, Loza et al. used the term “metonymy” in cultural analysis. These studies are admirable in unveiling the role of language in the articulation of culture and perpetuation of corresponding material practices. However, these papers did not focus on the role of symbolic language in general and metonymy in particular in the relationships between plants, people, and culture. This present study attempted to explore this relationship through the focus on language and culture in the study of Philippine ethnobotany.

Using grounded theory methodologies of participant observation, substantive coding, and theoretical coding, this study can be expanded by

exploring the ethnobotany, oral literature, language, and history of groups of healers in the rest of the Philippines. These healers have their own oral history, culture, and ethnobotany. They belong to the silent parts of Philippine history and culture.

In addition, the language and culture of ethnobotany in other forest and agricultural areas of Bicol and the Philippines can be studied in bigger interdisciplinary projects.

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# "Under Western Eyes"

Rereading the Landscape of Ruins in Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City*

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## Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the subject position of the narrator in Orhan Pamuk's celebrated *Istanbul: Memories and the City* who is shaped by his preoccupation with the Western gaze, and its role in shaping the landscape of Istanbul through the language of ruins, poverty, and decay. On this note, the main problem that this paper seeks to address is: How does Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul* respond to, or react against, the way Istanbul has been perceived and described under Western eyes? To guide my analysis of Pamuk's memoir, I will be borrowing the definition of "ruins" from Wu Hung's essay, "Ruins, Fragmentation, and the Chinese Modern/Postmodern", where ruins are defined as "memory sites". Through his memoir, Pamuk extends the discourse of ruins as memory sites to the problem of how these sites become a contested space for reconstructing a subject's relationship with his past.

## Keywords

ruins, memoir, Orhan Pamuk, subject formation, memory

## Introduction

Orhan Pamuk is possibly the most famous Turkish novelist today. In 2006, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, the first for any writer from Turkey. He was honored by the Nobel Committee for Literature as a writer who “in the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2006”). But even before winning the Nobel Prize, Pamuk already had a strong following both in his native country and in the international scene. His novels are bestsellers in Turkey, and his readers range from housewives to members of the academe. Moreover, his works have been translated into more than forty languages and have been critically acclaimed. Because of his popularity, his opinion on Turkey and its modern day problems has been sought after by local and international publications like *The New Yorker* and *The Paris Review*.

In his works, the discourse about Turkish identity is no longer centered on the “clash of civilizations” as most of his predecessors have done. Instead, what we find in the works of Pamuk is the attention given to the central role of fiction in shaping the way we perceive the world and our place in it. In a world destabilized by the loss of tradition, he writes stories where characters find a sense of center in the narratives that they read.

Pamuk’s novels meditate on how artists use their work to respond to the way the adoption of Western practices and ideals crucially shift the way they see the world. In his novel *My Name is Red* (2001), Ottoman miniature artists suffer through a crisis when they realized that the commissioned artwork that they are working on forces them to commit blasphemy. To respond to this crisis, one of the artists supplants the center piece of the commissioned work, the image of the Sultan, with his own image to assert a sense of autonomy. Meanwhile in the novel *Snow* (2005), an exiled Westernized novelist named Ka returns to Turkey and visits a remote city called Kars to find inspiration that may help him write once again. As a Westernized artist tagged as “godless” by the locals, Ka attempts to bridge the distance between him and the people of Kars by writing his novel *Snow*.

On this note, Pamuk as a writer seems to be quite preoccupied with the issue of perspective, which may explain his interest in artists as outsiders. In Pamuk's body of work, one of his dominant themes is Westernization and how it shifts the way Turkish artists see the world—a source of conflict that drives the story of his protagonists. We can further understand the roots of Pamuk's preoccupation with perspective and the Turkish artist's distinct way of seeing the world in his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2005). For this paper, I aim to analyze the subject position of the narrator in Pamuk's celebrated *Istanbul* who is shaped by his preoccupation with the Western gaze, and its role in shaping the landscape of Istanbul through the language of ruins, poverty, and decay. The main problem that this paper seeks to address is: How does Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul* respond to or react against the way Istanbul has been perceived and described through Western eyes? I aim to answer this question by focusing on two selected chapters from *Istanbul*, "Gautier's Melancholic Strolls through the City's Poor Neighborhoods" and "Under Western Eyes." These two chapters are representative of Pamuk's struggle to understand his perspective on Istanbul as a writer vis-à-vis the writings of his literary predecessors, be they Turkish or European.

To guide my analysis of Pamuk's memoir, I will be borrowing the definition of "ruins" from Wu Hung's essay, "Ruins, Fragmentation, and the Chinese Modern/Postmodern", where ruins are defined as "memory sites" (60). This definition is a key point for this paper because the work of Pamuk meditates on the concept of Istanbul as a city of ruins both as imagined and as constructed by the Western gaze. Through his memoir, Pamuk extends the discourse of ruins as memory sites to the problem of how these sites become a contested space for reconstructing a subject's relationship with his past.

This paper will be divided into three sections. I will start with a brief discussion of Turkey's modernization program and how it has shaped current concerns regarding modern Turkish identity. I will then proceed with profiling Orhan Pamuk as one of Turkey's writers whose works effectively captures Turkey's modern dilemmas. Finally, I will focus on Pamuk's *Istanbul* to analyze his reflections on Istanbul as a city of melancholy.

## I.

### **Modern Turkey and the European Dream**

Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), a military officer who became the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, initiated drastic changes to modernize his country. One of the changes he instituted was the deliberate and systematic separation of church and the state, as guided by the principles of secularism. The systematic changes introduced by Kemal Atatürk have been called “Kemalism” by some critics. Kemalism is largely influenced by laicism in France, which Kim Shively defines as policies intended to “bring religion under the control of the state” (684). Accordingly, the citizens of Turkey had to note the changes in the boundaries between private and public spaces as it would affect their religious practices. Nuri Eren thinks that Atatürk wanted “to direct the genius of his people into the stream of Western civilization, from which they had been excluded primarily because of their narrow, persistent refusal to allow a new interpretation of orthodox Muslim dogma in the light of man’s growing knowledge of the universe” (91). Consequently, to modernize in line with the vision of Atatürk is seen by some critics as taking a path to “progress” that is not dependent on nor inhibited by religious beliefs. Aside from confining religious convictions and practices to the private space, an individual’s outlook on time, relationships, and lifestyle choices were changed by Kemalism as well. The Western calendar was adopted, civil marriage and divorce were introduced, and even European manners of fashion choices were considered models in order to project a modern Turkish identity (Barzilai-Lumbroso 56).

The changes in the social system in Turkey also correspond to the way Turkey wanted to be seen in the international scene. There have been repeated attempts by the country to be recognized as a member of the European Union (EU). Nilufer Gole states that the “Turkish candidacy to join the European Union seemed, in the eyes of many Turkish citizens, to be an almost natural culmination of processes of Europeanization since the Ottoman empire” (“Decentering Europe” 665-666). In other words, there is a prevalent assumption that the “natural culmination” of Turkey’s future

leads to the Europeanization of the country. The seeming inevitability of this direction indicates an apparent civilizational shift for Turkey, although its numerous applications to be a member of EU led to strong opposition from “European publics on the basis of civilizational differences” (“Decentering Europe” 666).

Ahmet Kuru explains in *Secularism and State Policies Towards Religion* that one of the difficulties faced by Turkey in its application to the EU is the assertion that membership should be based on the applicant’s realization of a common European vision: political liberalism. Turkey is perceived to have fallen short of that standard because of its treatment of minorities such as the Kurds. Moreover, Turkey’s refusal to address accusations about the Armenian Genocide during the early 1900s (“The Armenian Genocide”) is still a point of controversy to this day. The secularist policies of the state have also initiated the marginalization of groups and communities who refuse to abandon their right to practice their religious beliefs in public and private spaces. For instance, some Turkish Muslims consider state policies as repressive of and controlling over their private lifestyle choices. In the 2000s, one issue that brought further attention to the politics in Turkey is the issue of the headscarf girls. The protests and refusal of young Islamic girls to adhere to the secularist policies have resulted in the politicization of the headscarf which escalated into an issue about “the collision between Kemalism and Islam” (“Turkey: The Battle of the Headscarf”). The response of the state over the issue of the headscarf girls is an example of what Merve Kavakci observes as “a means of state hegemony and control over religion and freedom of expression” (Kavakci 164). The regulations and impositions of the state are considered by Turkish Muslims as private lifestyle issues that should not be dictated upon by the state. Moreover, Shively also explains that “decisions about clothing, education, and forms of social interaction” (687) are deemed as constraints to one’s freedom.

Interestingly, Gole also points out that the arguments against the membership of Turkey are not mainly focused on the issues that the public had anticipated such as, “human rights violations, the recognition of Kurdish claims, the Armenian past, the diminution of the role of the army in the polit-



ical life, the crafting of a constitution, and so on” (“Decentering Europe” 676). The question, rather, is centered on defining what Europe is. Some of the debates regarding Turkey’s application were grounded on “geographical and civilizational differences with respect to Turkey” (676). Kosebalaban shares that “there are two opposing perspectives in Europe about Turkey: Turkey as an integral part of Europe, and Turkey as the essential historical other of Europe” (101). The application of Turkey to the EU then surfaces the questions about the nature of European cultural heritage and values. Kosebalaban also writes that the debates about Turkey’s membership to the EU shows that “European cultural heritage” reads as “Christian heritage.” He then points out that if one follows this widely held view, “Turkey is not a member of Europe’s cultural heritage based on Christianity and Enlightenment values and thus is doomed to remain outside its boundaries” (101).

Despite the opposition of some members of the European Union and the divisive conflict produced by the modernization of Turkey, Gole explains that majority of Turkish citizens’ “desire to belong to Europe extends back to the cultural transformations of the late Ottoman Empire and the creation of a secular republican state in 1923” (“Decentering Europe” 676). Then again, the arguments against Turkey’s membership were related to resisting imposition made by “European political fathers” while others “feared that Turkey is a ‘Trojan horse’ [that] would bring Muslims to invade Europe” (676). Gole also emphasizes that what the whole process of application made clear is that the desire to possess a European identity “meant ‘othering’ Turkey” (“Decentering Europe” 676).

Nonetheless, in 2004, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s Prime Minister, stated that,

[to have] a country like Turkey, where the cultures of Islam and democracy have merged together, taking part in such an institution as the EU, will bring harmony of civilizations. That is why we think it is the project of the century. We are there as a guarantee of an entente between the civilizations. The countries that want to exclude us from Europe are not playing their roles in history. (Kosebalaban 95)

This statement emphasizes that even a leader of Turkey's ostensibly secular government insists that Islam is not a hindrance to Turkey's chances of becoming a part of the EU. Erdogan is not alone in having such sentiments about Turkey's future.<sup>1</sup> Among the many supporters who firmly believe in Turkey's dream of becoming identified with Europe is Orhan Pamuk. Though Erdogan and Pamuk's views on politics may be different, they share the same view in terms of insisting that the influence of Islam in their country is not just what Turkey is all about. According to Pamuk,

[t]rue, most of my countrymen are Muslims. But if you truly wish to understand my country, you have to look at its history and our consistent orientation toward Europe. The Turks have a love-hate relationship with European culture, Turkey is a part of Europe. ("Spiegel")

It is not unusual for people like Pamuk and Erdogan to have an ongoing reflection on their relations with Europeans. They live in a country that exists between the boundaries of Europe and Asia. The geographical location of Turkey allows it to access multicultural entry points from both Asia and Europe. Because the Turks were socialized in the ways of Europe through Kemalist modernization, one understands why many of them may identify with European ways.

## II.

### Orhan Pamuk, the Novelist from Istanbul

One of Turkey's writers who addresses the conflict produced by Turkey's desire to be viewed as Western and yet remain undeniably indebted to the influences of its Islamic past and imperial history is Orhan Pamuk. Born in 1952, Pamuk has lived a privileged life in Istanbul. He recalls the rich lifestyle of his family in his memoir, *Istanbul*. In this work, he details how his family can be described as part of the "secular bourgeoisie"—"a wealthy family with a taste for Western culture and a lack of commitment to the religious practices followed by traditional Muslims" (*Istanbul* 160). His father had often travelled to Europe and brought home with him books that filled the family's library. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he describes how his father's library introduced him to French writers, Turkish encyclopedists, and the classics from Persia to the West. Aside from his upper-class secular upbringing, he had also been educated in Robert College, a secular American school in Istanbul. Because of his social position, he had better access to the various literary works—local and international—that influenced him to "[discover] new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures" ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 2006").

When Pamuk talks about his literary influences to the international press, he always mentions Western writers who have shaped his writing style. He has been very vocal about his admiration for Faulkner, Woolf, and Proust—writers celebrated for their modernism (GurrÃa-Quintana 2015). Pamuk tries to distance himself from Turkish writers whom he considers as social realists because this kind of "literature produced in the sixties and seventies was becoming outmoded" (GurrÃa-Quintana 2015)—Pamuk had feared that he had been influenced too much by Leo Tolstoy or Thomas Mann, but he realized that no matter how much he was influenced by the stylistic techniques of his favorite Western writers, he lived

[in the] part of the world, so far away from Europe or at least it seemed so at the time—and trying to attract such a different audience in such a different cultural and historical climate, [such that using those techniques] would

grant [him] originality, even if it was cheaply earned. But it is also a tough job, since such techniques do not translate or travel so easily. (GurrÃa-Quintana 2015)

But some critics think that he is able to capture interest and attract intrigue because of his style of making two very different worlds meet in his works. As Guneli Gun writes, Pamuk's work "translates into English like a dream" ("The Turks are Coming"). What he means is that Pamuk's style of writing has a consciousness of how it will "fall into place abroad" ("The Turks are Coming").

Orhan Pamuk has written extensively on the ironies produced in living both in the shadow of the Ottoman Empire and under the powerful influence of European ideas. Considering this point, Erdag Goknar emphasizes that writing about history is a key characteristic of the novels of Pamuk. He shares that the Turkish novelist usually focuses on four major areas: "Ottoman history in a European context, the transition from Ottoman Empire to modern Middle East, the early-twentieth-century Kemalist cultural revolution, and the legacy of all three on present-day Turkey" (Goknar 34).

Pamuk's first novel, *Cevdet Bey and His Sons* (1982), revolves around the story of three generations of a wealthy family living in Nisantasi. The novel uses the family saga to discuss the Westernization of Turkey from the perspective of three different generations. His second novel, *The Silent House* (1983), also received acclaim, garnering the 1991 *Prix de la d couverte europ enne* [Prize for European Discovery]. But the novel that is considered to have propelled Pamuk to international fame is *The White Castle* (1985). It tells the story of a Venetian slave and an Ottoman scholar who find their doppelg nger in each other. After the novel's publication, Pamuk went to New York as a visiting scholar at Columbia University. During his stay in America from 1985 to 1988, he wrote and finished the elaborate detective or mystery novel, *The Black Book* (1990). The novel tells the story of a lawyer's attempt to investigate the disappearance of his missing wife. In the process of his search, he discovers a haunting labyrinth of mysteries found in the city of Istanbul. Thereafter, Pamuk's fame continued with the publication of

*The New Life* (1997), which is one of the most widely read books in Turkey (“Biography”). Afterwards, *My Name is Red* (1998) led to the recognition of Pamuk as one of the most relevant and talented writers in the world. Because of his stature, Pamuk has been constantly asked about his views on human rights and freedom of speech despite his claims to take little interest in politics. It is only with the novel, *Snow* (2002), that he purposefully expressed his desire to address the politics of his country. After *Snow*, Pamuk wrote a sentimental love story, *The Museum of Innocence* (2009), which later on inspired him to put up an exhibit called “The Innocence of Objects.” The museum exhibit has received acclaim for its profound meditation on love and loss.

The novels of Orhan Pamuk have been translated into forty-six languages, including English, French, Czech, Catalan, and Italian (orhan-pamuk.net). Aside from receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006, he was awarded The Peace Prize in 2005, a prestigious award in the field of culture from Germany. *TIME* magazine also chose him as one of the 100 Most Influential Persons of the world for 2006. But in contrast to his willing reception of international prizes, he declined to receive the award of “state artist” from his own country because of his refusal to be used in politics (“The Armenian Genocide”).

But being the most-widely read novelist in Turkey comes with certain problems. As his popularity increased, so did the pressure of becoming the face of Turkish literature in the international scene. His reputation was propelled further when during one of his interviews with the Swiss newspaper, *Der Tages-Anzeiger*, he was quoted as saying something about a very controversial issue in his country: “thirty thousand Kurds and a million Armenians were killed in these lands and nobody but me dares to talk about it” (GurrÃa-Quintana 2005). Thereafter, Pamuk calls this period as the end of his “honeymoon phase” with the press. Eventually, as a result of the interview, “he was charged under the Article 301/1 of the Turkish Penal Code with ‘public denigration’ of Turkish identity—a crime punishable by up to three years in prison” (GurrÃa-Quintana 2005). This controversy was widely covered in the international press as well as attracted protests from members of the European Parliament.

In the aforementioned case, the primary issue faced by Pamuk was accusations about insulting Turkishness, which is an offense punishable by imprisonment. Aside from Pamuk, there are also other Turkish writers who have been accused of being “projects” that are “[developed] by western powers to criticize the Turkish government”—accusations that have caused some to state that Pamuk and other “projects” were “not human” (“Turkish novelists”). One of “Western stooges” tagged by pro-government Turkish press is the internationally-acclaimed Turkish novelist, Elif Shafak. Writers like Pamuk and Shafak are claimed to be “controlled by an ‘international literature lobby’” that monitors the Turkish government (“Turkish novelists”). Meanwhile, other critics are dismissive of Pamuk’s works because of his privileged position. He is viewed as “someone who hasn’t ‘sweated enough’” (Shatz, “Wanting to Be Something Else”) thus is unable to know the story of Turkey’s people.

Pamuk stated in his memoir *Istanbul* that the possible criticism of and indifference to his works were already communicated by his mother to him when she passionately protested against his decision to become a writer:

There are a lot of people in Europe who become artists because they’re proud and honourable . . . . But do you really think you can be an artist in a country like this and still keep your pride? To be accepted by people here, who understand nothing of art, to get these people to buy your art, you’ll have to toady to the state, to the rich, and worst of all, to semi-literate journalists. Do you think you’re up to this? (*Istanbul* 328)

But it appears that Pamuk has been able to meet his mother’s challenge because he has continued to write everyday since his decision to become a writer (“Spiegel Interview”). In various interviews, Pamuk relates how he continues his routine of writing in his room in the Pamuk Apartments that overlooks the Bosphorus Sea. He has often claimed that he will continue to write in Turkish because he thinks doing so is as an expression of pride about his national identity: “I stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view. Istanbul’s fate is my fate: I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am” (*Istanbul* 6).

### III.

#### Hüzün and the Haunting of Modern Turkey's Past

Pamuk's *Istanbul* is widely read and celebrated because the work converses with local and foreign writers in shaping its perspective about the city's history. The memoir is described as "an amalgam of memoir, literary reminiscences, and anecdotes of Istanbul history" (Mucignat 1271). Through *Istanbul*, Pamuk weaves together the story of his life with the history of his city.

Pamuk asserts that it is only during the beginning of the twentieth century that writers from Istanbul began to write about the city as a living creature that is "rich [in] variety" (279). Pamuk shares that he often finds European writers from the middle of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century to be discussing with passion and interest the following subjects:

the harem; the slave market (in *Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain fantasized that the financial pages of big American papers might report the price and vital statistics of the latest crop of Circassian and Georgian girls); the beggars in the streets; the unimaginably huge burdens carried by hamals (during my childhood we were all uneasy when European tourists photographed the fearsome hamals I'd see crossing the Galata Bridge with tin piled high on their backs, but when an Istanbul photographer like Hilmi Şahenk chose the same subject, no one minded in the least); "dervish lodges (one pasha told his friend and guest Nerval that the Rufai dervishes who ran around piercing themselves with skewers were "crazy" and advised him it was a waste of time to visit their lodges); and the seclusion of women." (212)

As a result, when Pamuk looked for "an image of the city and a literature in which Istanbul could see themselves", he is confronted with the aforementioned images.

Majority of critical works on Pamuk's *Istanbul* focus on how the memoir writes about the Western gaze and how it shapes the narrator's perspective and the reader's expectations on Pamuk and his city. In Rosa Mucignat's "Perspective and Historical Knowledge: Magris, Sebald, and Pamuk", she

emphasizes that although “a big part of *Istanbul* is about seeing the city, and in particular about the gaze of Western travelers” (1271), he does not “reject the gaze of this overbearing ‘Other.’” (1271). In his reflections about Istanbul, Pamuk describes in detail how the works of European and Turkish writers shaped his understanding of melancholy and the city. Mucignat reads this a way of engagement with “Western representation and embraces the possibility they give of complementing or reversing the autochthonous point of view” (1271).

On this note, Pamuk then asks, why does he, and the four melancholic writers that he looks up to, care so much “about what Gautier and other Westerners have to say about Istanbul?” (272). In Pamuk’s memoir, we see that the predilection of the narrator to take on the Western gaze to make sense of his position as an outsider in his own city seems to be an inevitable choice for him to take. This is because the dominant voices that shaped what Istanbul is came from European artists. As John Berger emphasizes in *Ways of Seeing*, “[t]he way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (8). Without the writings of European artists, Pamuk believes that chronicling the life and history of Istanbul as a city would not exist as its local residents did not know “what to read into what they see” (213). How then does Pamuk begin to articulate his own perspective about his own city if the ways of seeing his own world has been learned from foreigners or outsiders?

Pamuk believes that the longing to establish an “authentic” Turkish identity is a result of the haunting presence of the “glorious Ottoman past” that challenges Ataturk’s vision of a secular Europeanized Turkey. From architectural sites to road pavements, the feeling of being haunted by the past is what Pamuk identifies as “*hüzün*.”

*Hüzün* is a “feeling of deep spiritual loss”, a word with an Arabic root which appears in the Koran (*Istanbul* 81). But the term has developed into a philosophical concept in the tradition of Sufism where it refers to “a spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world” (*Istanbul* 81). The presence of *hüzün* in a person’s life brings anguish, but at the same time it is a presence



that is desired; the absence of *hüzün* would mean an emptiness that renders life futile and meaningless.

The concept holds a significant place in Islamic culture because it is a “cultural concept conveying worldly failure, listlessness and spiritual suffering” (*Istanbul* 82). As Pamuk aptly notes, “‘*hüzün*’ is the smoky window between him and the world. The screen he projects over life is painful because life itself is painful” (*Istanbul* 93). Moreover, *hüzün* explains why there are artists who give “their resignation an air of dignity, but . . . also explains why it is their choice to embrace failure, indecision, defeat and poverty so philosophically and with such pride” (*Istanbul* 93). *Hüzün*, according to Pamuk, “is not the outcome of life’s worries and great losses, but their principal cause; ‘*hüzün*’ gives them poetic license to be paralyzed” (93).

In her essay “The Chronotope of Istanbul in Orhan Pamuk’s Memoir *Istanbul*,” Sibel Erol questions treating Pamuk’s memoir as a “reference text in discussing both melancholy in general and Turkish *hüzün* in particular” (656). Erol takes issue with the manner of how “Pamuk transforms his personal experience of sadness into a collective and typical one by creating a prehistory for it in Istanbul through a chain of influences and developments that explain it and derive it from that past” (656-657). She explains that because of the “personal nature” (656) of *Istanbul*, the “argumentative evidence that might be treated skeptically in a discursive presentation is absorbed into the subjective logic of the autobiographical narrative, all the while according it factual support” (656). Furthermore, Erol reads Pamuk’s “attribution of the prevalence of *hüzün* in Istanbul to a collective sense of loss experienced by the city over the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire seems only to reinforce the connection between Istanbul, sadness, and Pamuk by offering a historical explanation” (655). This explains why Erol is alarmed by the “unquestioning and even eager acceptance of the . . . sweeping connections by all kinds of readers” (655) of how Pamuk interrelates melancholy, *hüzün*, and his life story. On this note, we are reminded that the memoir is written from the perspective of a narrator who professes to his audience his unreliability as a narrator—both of his personal story and even of his city’s history.

Perhaps it is better to understand Pamuk's style of writing by describing it as a "pseudo-memoir" and a "Kuntsler-roman":

[the memoir] contains black and white photographs of the city scattered throughout the volume along with other visual components (sketches, engravings, and paintings) which provide an in-depth look at what for many Westerners is an unfamiliar urban landscape. The placement of the pictures appears to have little connection with the narrative, which is based on the author's account of his childhood as well as his meditations on the city's past. The parallel narratives blend together to unveil Pamuk's subjectivity both as a typical Istanbulu and as an artist: 'Istanbul's fate is my fate. I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am'. (Santesso 153)

The unreliability of Pamuk's memoir then may be read in relation to the formation of the narrator's subjectivity. He tries to form his own critical gaze from the things that he knows about his native city—a body of knowledge shaped by the writings of European and Turkish writers. It is interesting then to note that Pamuk believes that all Turkish writers, were or will always be "at one point in their lives, dazzled by the brilliance of Western (and particularly French) art and literature" (*Istanbul* 99). Being taken in, and influenced by, Western ideals seems to be, as Pamuk suggests, a fact of life. How does this claim by Pamuk then influence how the Turkish modernists he discusses in his memoir look at Istanbul under Western eyes?

In two chapters of the memoir, "Gautier's Melancholic Strolls through the City's Poor Neighborhoods" and "Under Western Eyes", Pamuk attempts to use *hüzün* as a framework to explain why four of the Turkish writers he admires, the memoirist Abdülhak Sinasi Hisar (1887-1963), the poet Yahya Kemal (1884-1958), the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962), and the journalist-historian Resat Ekrem Kocu (1905-1975), have become masters of capturing the essence of the city's melancholic ruins through the influence of European artists. He explains that as these writers wanted to write like Frenchmen, they were also divided by the thirst for a sense of originality. They faced the very same problems confronted by Dostoevsky's heroes—"to be Western, and yet at the same time to be authentic" (*Istanbul* 100)—but with a longing that is religious in character, which further compounds their

sense of anguish. On this note, Sibel Erol argues that the Turkish modernists that Pamuk mentions “converted the individualistic artistic melancholy they admired in their predecessors into a shared social sensibility caused by the loss of a 600-year-old empire” (668).

Without a doubt, ruins are one of the most tangible reminders of the loss of the 600-year old Ottoman empire and the historical changes in Istanbul. In reading Pamuk’s *Istanbul*, there seems to be a gap in analyzing the presence of ruins and how the ways of seeing these ruins “under Western eyes” (as Pamuk calls it) influence the subject position of the memoir’s narrator. Pamuk respond to, or react against, the way Istanbul has been perceived and described through Western eyes by reading ruins as a memory site that become a contested space for reconstructing the narrator’s relationship with his past.

Michel Baridon’s essay “Ruins as a mental construct” articulates that the “creative imagination of the eighteenth century seems to have attributed a great power of stimulation to ruins” (84). The European travelers who write about the ruins of Istanbul may have imbibed this disposition. From a Western perspective, Baridon claims that “[r]uins were indeed an essential element of the landscape of sensibility; they gave it an element of nostalgia which was part of its essence” (84). Citing Baridon’s work, Wu Hun’s “Ruins and Fragmentation and the Chinese Modern/Postmodern” argues that “ruin culture”—the West’s fascination with ruins so much so they were “thought so indispensable that substitutes (sometimes even cardboard) were erected in the parks which provided destitute of authentic ‘relics of the past’ (Baridon 84)—influenced how ruins are conceived in modern Chinese art and photography. Hun explains how the “aestheticization of ruins [in China] took place mainly in poetry; visual images of ruins virtually did not exist” (59-60). In premodern China, preserving and portraying ruins was taboo: “although abandoned cities or fallen palaces were lamented in words, their images, if painted, would imply auspiciousness and danger” (60). Hence, “[w]hen this Chinese tradition encountered European ‘ruin’ culture, two things happened: on the one hand, this encounter led to the creation of ruin images in Chinese

art and architecture; on the other, these images, as modern memory sites, evoked the calamities that had befallen the Chinese nation” (60).

In the case of Pamuk’s *Istanbul*, the Turkish modernists’ perspective on seeing ruins in their city “under Western eyes” have also created an impact on they produce their art. In the chapter “The *Hüzün* of the Ruins: Tanpınar and Yahya Kemal in the City’s Poor Neighborhoods”, Pamuk highlights Tanpınar’s affinity towards writing about Istanbul’s ruins:

On every page, Tanpınar repeats the phrase ‘as we’ve all known since childhood’; he describes a neighborhood...The melancholy Tanpınar first discovered in Nerval’s and Gautier’s arresting observations about the poor neighborhoods, the ruins, dingy residential districts, and city walls, he transforms into an indigenous *hüzün* through which to apprehend a local landscape and, most particularly, the everyday life of a modern working woman. (222-223)

For Pamuk, Tanpınar and Kemal’s interest in ruins were motivated by a political agenda: “[t]hey were picking their way through the ruins looking for signs of a new Turkish state, a new Turkish nationalism” (225).

In his body of work, we can see how Pamuk’s *Istanbul* sheds light on how ruins, or what he calls as “the melancholy of the ruins”, are among the ways he navigated the consequences of the abrupt westernization of his country. The conflict experienced by his memoir’s narrator translates a sense of dislocation as he grapples with the power brought by the words of European writers in looking at his city—thus, the narrator seems always to perceive his life and his city “under Western eyes”. Through his memoir *Istanbul*, Pamuk memorializes the images described in the writings of Western writers and legitimizes their contribution by crediting their influence on how one imagines the following elements associated with Istanbul:

The Janissaries, those elite troops of great interest to western travelers until the nineteenth century, were the first to be dissolved. The slave market, another focus of western curiosity, vanished soon after they began writing about it. The Rukai dervishes with their waving skewers and the Mevlevi dervish lodges closed with the founding of the Republic. The Ottoman clothing that so many western artists painted was abolished soon after

André Gide complained about it. The harem, another favorite, also gone. Seventy-five years after Flaubert told his beloved friend that he was going to the market to have his name written in calligraphy, all of Turkey moved from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet, and this exotic joy ended too. Of all these losses, I think the hardest for İstanbulus has been the removal of graves and cemeteries from the gardens and squares of our everyday lives to terrifying high-walled lots, bereft of cypress or view. The hamals and their burdens, noted by so many travelers of the republican period—like the old American cars that Brodsky noted—were no sooner described by foreigners than they vanished. (218)

The act of reading an outsider's perspective of his own city forces the narrator of *Istanbul* to discover “the same destitute and not yet westernized quarters (which, sadly, fire and concrete would soon obliterate)” to no longer be as “exhausting” (206) as he would have seen it before. Moreover, Pamuk insists that for a writer like him, he can find helpful answers in Western accounts concerning his city because:

The living, breathing city—its streets, its atmosphere, its smells, the rich variety of everyday life—is something that only literature can convey and for centuries the only literature our city inspired was penned by Westerners. We must look at du Camp's photographs and the engravings of Western artists to see how the streets of Istanbul looked in the 1850s and what sorts of clothes people wore; if I wish to know what was going in the streets, avenues, and squares where I have spent my whole life, a hundred, two hundred square was then just an empty field, and which of today's empty fields were once colonnaded squares; if I want to have some sense of how the people made their lives—unless I am prepared to spend years in the labyrinthine Ottoman archives, I can find my answers, however refracted, only in Western accounts. (216)

At the same time, the narrator grapples with how his heroes, the Turkish modernist writers like Tanpinar and Kemal, were able to shape their own critical gaze and look at their city anew despite being preceded by European writers who have dominated the discourses about Istanbul as a city of melancholy. The writings of his Turkish predecessors and how they attempted to see the politics behind the ruins not only serve as a site to express melan-

cholic woes but also as a site that shows the persistence of memory. Looking at ruins as memory sites is indeed a political act in Ataturk's Turkey because they not only show the former glories of their Ottoman past, but they also undermine, through their presence, the "cultural" or "ethnic cleansing" involved in Turkey's modernization:

After the founding of the Republic and the violent rise of Turkification, after the state imposed sanctions on minorities—measures that some might describe as the final stage of the city's 'conquest' and others as ethnic cleansing—most of these [minority's] languages disappeared. I witnessed this cultural cleansing as a child, for whenever anyone spoke Greek or Armenian too loudly in the street (you seldom heard Kurds advertising themselves in public during this period), someone would cry out, 'Citizens, please speak Turkish!'—echoing what signs everywhere were saying. (*Istanbul* 215-216)

As Kader Konuk emphasizes in his reading of *Istanbul*, Pamuk is "not concerned with disclosing a 'true Istanbul' through a sort of archaeological search. Rather, the dialectic ordering of the title expresses the connectedness between Pamuk's own memories and the many faces of the city preserved in the literature and art by travelers and citizens alike" (252). As the Westerner's gaze becomes "indistinguishable from the narrator," (254) the narration turns into a form of internalization that may be "the result of reforms that were based on the conviction that the only way to modernize was to Westernize" (254). To read Istanbul's ruins as memory sites then becomes a political act in the context of Istanbul's history because it highlights how the ruins create a sense of continuity between the past and the present, ties that Ataturk's modernization program sought to limit, if not end.

For the narrator of *Istanbul*, to juxtapose his life story with Istanbul's history as a city riddled with melancholic ruins positions him into an understanding that ruins are not only found in the landscape of Istanbul, but also in the landscape of the mind. Ruins as memory sites create what Baridon calls as "mental constructs" that feed, for the memoir's narrator, from Eastern and Western accounts of a lost totality. The landscape of ruins then become crucial in the formation of the narrator's subject position because these sites

evoke memories that continue to contest any narrative that speak of modern Turkish identity as homogenous, uncompromisingly secular, blindly devoted to Western values.

Before this paper ends, I would like to share Walter G. Andrews perspective why he celebrates Pamuk's novels:

In Orhan's novels, I am brought face to face with the fact that memory is important. It becomes far more than harmless nostalgia. It is not just the museum we once visited on a class trip or during a sojourn abroad. It is not just the Topkapi Palace or the Ottoman treasury. It is not the buried or sunken detritus of lost civilizations or junk at the bottom of an apartment air shaft. It is the *stories* we are going to tell ourselves about all this stuff. Those stories are what enable us to know ourselves, our place in the world, to approach the mystery of why we are here ...And I am also reminded, over and over again, that memory—all memory—is a matter of creation and imagination, not of truth...He empowers us to constitute our own memories, to listen to the objects of memory as they tell their own stories and take confidence in our own abilities to remember actively. (29)

On this note, we should perhaps read the accounts of the *Istanbul's* narrator as an investigation of memories. These memories after all are pivotal in shaping how the narrator has connected his story with that of his city. Again, in the words of Pamuk: "Istanbul's fate is my fate: I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am" (*Istanbul* 6).

## Note

1. As of January 2021, Turkey's relations with the EU has become more problematic due to disputed territories and other issues. See [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/12/turkeys-erdogan-eyes-eu-reset-wants-ties-back-on-track](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/12/turkeys-erdogan-eyes-eu-reset-wants-ties-back-on-track).



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# Public Reason and Catholic Philosophy in the Post-Thomistic Age

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## Abstract

The term “public reason” came to public attention for the first time when Kant published in 1784 his celebrated essay, *What is Enlightenment?* In the said piece, Kant described enlightenment as “man’s emergence from his self-imposed nonage” and underscored the exercise of public reason as the best demonstration of one’s enlightened thinking.<sup>1</sup> Kant sharply distinguished *public reason* from *private reason*. Public reason is characterized by one’s ability to think freely whereas private reason is a form of thinking that comes with an external mandate like an office or civic post. For Kant, religion, or for that matter, any form of religious thinking, always involves nonage which, he suggested, must be overcome. My aim in this paper is to rethink Kant’s insight on Enlightenment by showing that the exercise of his version of public reason does not exhaust the human person’s rational potential and that nonage, that is, dependence on another’s guidance, is not an impediment to the flourishing of thought. To make my case, I will rehearse the philosophic practice of Thomas Aquinas to illustrate how advancement in thinking can be achieved even within the confines of religious discourse and the structures of nonage. I argue in this paper that thinking as a public activity always works within the context of normativity, that is, tradition and that intellectual progress can be achieved if the same normative context itself is sustained and constantly re-thought.

This paper is configured in three parts. In the first part, I shall retrieve Thomas Aquinas' philosophic practice to justify how nonage, that is, thinking within tradition, can itself be a stimulus to improve both the intellectual tradition and the quality of discourse which shapes it. In the second part, I will clarify the idea of "post-Thomistic age" by extending my discussion of Aquinas' philosophic practice but transported to a context which claims to have overcome the kind of intellectual tradition that Aquinas represents. In the third part, I will return to Kant's *What is Enlightenment?* essay in order to underscore my claim that an enlightened thinking in the mode of Kant's public reason is incompatible with the factual normative situatedness of any thinking process. By way of conclusion, I will sketch a route out of the Kantian distinction between public and private reason by reinforcing my argument concerning the indispensability of normativity in any intellectual enterprise. The rest of the discussion will be guided by the question: Is it possible to conceive of public reason beyond Kant by doing a Thomist philosophy beyond Thomism?

### **Keywords**

enlightenment, post-Thomistic age, public reason, religion, tradition

## Introduction

It is not easy to dovetail the idea of “public reason” with the Catholic philosophic tradition given the former’s Kantian provenance and the latter’s acrimonious history with modernity. With the evolution of Catholic philosophy, however, we are able to see today an improving rapprochement between Catholic intellectuals and the proponents of secular thought. Nothing gives clearer testament of this development than John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.<sup>2</sup> In the said encyclical, John Paul II affirms and reframes at the same time the Catholic Church’s traditional allegiance to Thomistic philosophy. In a way, we can say that *Fides et Ratio* is a chronicle of Catholic philosophy’s transition to post-Thomistic age, an age where the vitality of Aquinas’ philosophic thought is acknowledged simultaneously with the recognition of the need to engage other philosophic views. It goes without saying that besides the task of integrating faith with rational discourse, the challenge faced by Catholic practitioners of philosophy today also includes an updated appropriation of Thomist philosophy against the background of an ever-shifting intellectual landscape. In the context of this paper, this challenge also suggests the possibility of rethinking both Kant’s idea of public reason vis-a-vis the contours of Aquinas’ philosophic legacy, hence the title of the paper, *Public Reason and Catholic Philosophy in the Post-Thomistic Age*. I will argue in this paper that Aquinas’ philosophic practice embodies a public reason that can serve as an alternative to the prescription of Kant. Unlike the Kantian model which sought to quarantine religion from rational public discourse, engagement in public reason in Aquinas’ fashion pursues public debate without abandoning religion in its core agenda. Religion is integral in Aquinas’ intellectual normative context and in his case, reasoning is just as effective when the said intellectual normative context is not set aside. Aquinas is well aware that thinking as a public activity is operative only within the context of normativity or in MacIntyre’s term, “tradition.”<sup>3</sup> As the seedbed of intellectual progress, tradition itself needs to be sustained, cultivated, and constantly rethought or it dies a natural death. These important points will be further worked out in the three segments of this paper. In the first part, I shall rehearse Thomas Aquinas’ philosophic practice to illus-

trate how nonage, that is, thinking within tradition, can itself be a stimulus to improve both the intellectual tradition and the quality of discourse from which it is derived. In the second part, I will clarify the idea of “post-Thomistic age” against the background of an age which claims to have overcome the kind of intellectual tradition that Aquinas represents. In the third part, I will return to Kant’s *What is Enlightenment?* to further clarify the incompatibility of Kant’s proposal with the factual normative situatedness of any thinking process. By way of conclusion, I will reinforce my argument that neither nonage nor religion is inimical to the advancement of philosophic practice.

### **Thinking as Conversation: Aristotle, Aquinas, and the Medieval Tradition**

A person who can think on his own, unfettered from any tutelage, unhinged from the bondage of intellectual dependence is, in Kant’s estimation, a figure of Enlightenment. Thinking, for the enlightened person, is an act of freedom: “This enlightenment requires nothing but freedom—and the most innocent of all that may be called ‘freedom’: freedom to make public use of one’s reason in all matters.”<sup>4</sup> Kant’s challenge therefore to “dare to know” is not just a call to anyone to turn up his brain cells but to make sure that he does so without any prompting from another. This attitude toward thinking however would have been found “unthinkable” if not outright superfluous by Aquinas and his medieval peers. In medieval context, thinking is never a solitary act but a collective engagement. Students were mentored in apprenticeships. Young professors were honed in disputations. Masters challenged each other via lectures and written treatises. The ancients were commented and debated on. Even the medieval literary genres bear witness to this symposium-approach to thinking. Back then, the mark of scholarship was inked in disputations, commentaries, sentences, letters, and sermons. A scholar was esteemed not so much for his ability to stand above the rest but for his skill to blend his voice with others, in particular, his betters. The said genres were not just documents of conversations; they themselves were conversations awaiting continuity if the reader was willing enough

to join in. How else should one make sense of Augustine's *The Confessions*, Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Anselm's *Proslogion*, Abelard's *Sic et Non*, Lombard's *Sentences*, or Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* except as conversations in print where the reader is not just a passive eavesdropper but a potential participant in an exchange unfolding before him? Both the Islamic and Jewish scholars also had the habit of bringing in their masters and peers in their works regardless of their agreement or disagreement with them. Whether the material was written in Africa, Cordoba, Persia, Athens, or Paris, the same spirit of dialogue can be found in these philosophic treatises. That the Middle Ages had this peculiar literary and philosophic culture is an important consideration in understanding the importance of nonage in the dynamics of medieval intellectual tradition. Acknowledgment of this fact is necessary if one must appreciate and see in proper context the role of Aristotle in fostering a tradition of thinking descriptive of the intellectual history of the Middle Ages.

Aristotle was a relatively medieval novelty. It was not as if he was completely unknown before the high Middle Ages; his mystique probably came from the fact that, among the ancients, his was the only philosophic system that figured prominently in the Greek, Jewish, and Islamic civilizations and in the thirteenth century, Aristotle was already at the doorstep of the Christian world. Historically, the thirteenth century marked the boundary between the Middle Ages and the proto-modern period or Renaissance. The thirteenth century therefore was a crossroad where a lot of things intersected; the new ones on their way in and the old ones on their way out. Conflict was therefore inevitable and as I will point out in the ensuing parts of this paper, the consequences would be more gravely felt by those on the frontlines of this so-called "clash of civilizations." For the medieval Catholic intellectuals, he was either a breath of fresh air or a portent of an impending doom. Either way, no one among them thought he could be ignored. There is no other way through Aristotle but *through* Aristotle.

Aquinas was keenly aware of what a conversation with Aristotle would entail. His first encounter with the Greek philosopher started at the University of Naples where the Aristotelian corpus was a staple of the



curriculum. It was at Naples where he met the two Dominican masters who would later recruit him into the Order of Preachers. The two Dominican brethren, Master Martin and Peter of Ireland, were themselves learned readers of Aristotle.<sup>5</sup> It is not difficult to imagine how these Dominicans' way of teaching the Stagirite might have been a factor in Aquinas' decision to become a friar preacher like his professors. This radical career detour did not of course sit well with his family who was hoping for the young Aquinas a future far better than becoming a mendicant friar. Hoping his decision could still be undone, he was locked up at the Aquinas' residence at Rocca Secca for almost a year as the family employed various schemes to persuade him to think otherwise. Eventually, his family let him have his way after seeing the futility of their efforts. Upon his release from house arrest, Aquinas was taken in for a discipleship by Albert the Teutonic who himself was a reputed lecturer on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>6</sup> The extent of Aquinas' serious interest on Aristotle could also be gleaned from two important opuscula, *On Being and Essence*<sup>7</sup> and *The Principles of Nature*.<sup>8</sup> Both pieces were believed to have been written in the middle of the 1250s, that is, after he obtained his master's degree in theology at the University of Paris and before he started writing any of his major works.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle would have a sustained presence in the rest of Aquinas' oeuvre—in his employment of vocabulary, in the texture of his arguments, in the principles of his discourse. The said treatises serve as veritable testaments to an intellectual kinship with Aristotle that would mark Aquinas' scholarship throughout his life.

The height of this Aristotle-Aquinas colloquium, that is, conversation, would reach its summit in the period 1268-1272 when his Dominican superiors sent him back to the University of Paris to serve as regent master for the second time and to intervene as well in the brewing controversies spawned by the so-called Latin Averroism.<sup>10</sup> Two important works that would illustrate the extent of Aquinas' involvement in these controversies were the opuscula *On the Uniqueness of Intellect against Averroists*<sup>11</sup> and *On the Eternity of the World*.<sup>12</sup> Leading the names of the masters from the Faculty of Arts who likewise figured in this high-profile intellectual conflict were Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia.<sup>13</sup> As the phrase itself suggests, Latin

Averroism represents a brand of scholarship which drew from the influence of Aristotelian commentator, Averroes. A native of Cordoba in Spain, Averroes, whose original name is Abu'l Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd, was a judge by profession and a fierce advocate of a fusion between Islamic religion and Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>14</sup> His position was directly opposed to those who insisted on the polarity between religion and philosophy like the Islamic theologian al-Ghazali. The disparity between the two thinkers was such that in response to al-Ghazali's *Incoherence of Philosophers* (Tahafut al-Falasifah) where the latter demonstrated the inherent inferiority of rational speculation in resolving matters of faith, Averroes came up with his own *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Tahafut al-Tahafut) in an obvious attempt to rebuke al-Ghazali's dismissive misreading of Aristotle and two other dominant Islamic Aristotelian interpreters, al-Farabi Abu Nasr and Ibn Sina.<sup>15</sup> Averroes believed that reason and faith, philosophy and theology were complementary systems and that one should see the tension between the two as one of historical contingency. In an important remark, Averroes explained:

Therefore the learned who were instructing the people in Alexandria became Muhammedans when Islam reached them, and the learned in the Roman Empire became Christians when the religion of Jesus was introduced there. And nobody doubts that among the Israelites there were many learned men, and this is apparent from the books which are found amongst the Israelites and which are attributed to Solomon. And never has wisdom ceased among the inspired, i.e., the prophets, and therefore it is the truest of all sayings that every prophet is a sage, but not every sage a prophet; the learned, however, are those of whom it is said that they are the heirs of the prophets.<sup>16</sup>

Averroes was known as “the Commentator” in recognition of his dedication and substantial contribution to the furtherance of Aristotle's intellectual legacy. His scholarly output amounted to a total of thirty-eight commentaries on most known treatises of Aristotle, with roughly two or three commentaries per opus.<sup>17</sup> Aquinas himself acknowledged Averroes as “the Commentator”<sup>18</sup> a number of times as one would see in *de Veritate* 10.8<sup>19</sup> or

*Summa Theologica* 76.1<sup>20</sup> or *De ente et essentia* 5.<sup>21</sup> Such deference however would turn to outright rebuke, when, at the height of the said intellectual disputes, Aquinas derided the esteemed Commentator as, in fact, “the perverter of Peripatetic philosophy.”<sup>22</sup>

Latin Averroism represented a heterodox strand of the Western appropriation of Aristotle in the thirteenth century, specifically at the University of Paris. On account of the widespread interest on Aristotle’s corpus made possible by the increasing availability of translations in Latin from Greek and Arabic, the ecclesiastic authorities of Paris instituted a series of restrictive measures to ensure that the Catholic culture of the Parisian academe was insulated from Aristotle’s pagan thought and the influence of his Islamic interpreters. These measures ranged from synodal decree to a censure of a papal legate to a papal letter all aiming at keeping Aristotle at bay. Towards the middle of the thirteenth century however, the censure was relaxed to a certain degree when a letter from Pope Gregory, issued on May 10, 1231, implicitly allowed the masters at the Faculty of Arts to teach selected works of Aristotle free from the threat of excommunication.<sup>23</sup> By the 1250s, in stark contrast to the early decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the University of Paris had adopted a completely Aristotelian curriculum. Within that period, besides the lifting of the prohibition, additional Aristotelian texts, not to mention commentaries and translated versions, were also made more accessible to scholars and enthusiasts alike. Whereas previously, only *Posterior Analytics* and *Ethics* were given imprimatur from the 1240s onwards, Aristotelian materials like *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, and other texts on natural science had likewise been delisted from the index of prohibited books. The accessibility of these additional texts provided the academics of Paris new incentives to explore and experiment with the new approaches to science and rational thinking. This was the incipient stage of liberal education medieval-style. The masters at the Faculty of Theology however were rather skeptical about this trend. Consequently, the pockets of tension were further heightened, straining the relations not just between theologians and philosophers but more so, between faith and reason themselves.<sup>24</sup> This is the context against which one can size up the pivotal role of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of

Dacia and their head-on confrontation with Aquinas on two pressing philosophical issues: *the unicity of the intellect* and *the eternity of the world*. To get a better grasp of Aquinas' intervention on these issues, a brief review of the aforementioned debates is in order.

### *On the unicity of the intellect*

At the heart of the issue concerning the unicity of the intellect was the question whether or not there was only active intellect. The active or agent intellect refers to the faculty principally responsible for acquiring knowledge. Medieval opinions were torn between positing the existence of the active intelligence outside the human mind and the affirmation of its operation solely within the sphere of human cognition. Some commentaries went as far as identifying the active intellect with God. The resolution of this question was crucial in the interest of the Catholic faith for to think that there was only one active intellect the way Siger of Brabant would have his readers believe, was to seriously undermine Catholic core tenets concerning the origin of ideas, the integrity of the human person, and the formal union between body and soul.<sup>25</sup> The intense intellectual debates on this issue among the Parisian academics stemmed from a claim made by Aristotle in *De Anima III.5*. In his account, Aristotle claimed that active intellect is “superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter which it forms.” He likewise described it as “immortal and eternal.”<sup>26</sup> What drew the attention of later scholars, in particular the Islamic commentators, was not so much the allusion itself to the active intellect but its surprising appearance at that particular juncture of Aristotle's discourse. He began his discussion in *Book I* by problematizing the relation between body and soul.<sup>27</sup> In *Book II*, he attempted to formulate a working definition of the soul.<sup>28</sup> In the initial paragraphs of *Book III*, Aristotle continued to explore sensation as well as the soul-body interaction until that paragraph where he suggested the distinctive nature of active intellect. The shift from the level of biological and material to something that he said was “immortal and eternal” was so drastic it could not but call the attention of later commentators. Reminiscent of Neoplatonic cosmology, Alfarabi considered Aristotle's active intellect as

the tenth intelligence from which all material things emanated. As a form of intelligence, the tenth itself emanated from the ninth which governed the lunar sphere. Despite being the last in the chain of intelligences, Alfarabi thought that the active intellect occupied a legitimate place in the celestial domain.<sup>29</sup> Avicenna for his part went beyond Alfarabi by considering the active intellect “to be the cause of the matter as well as the forms of the sublunar world, and to be the cause of the four elements as well as the forms of more complex beings.”<sup>30</sup> On top of this, he also attributed to the active intellect the origin of “the first principles of thought, which are propositions; with abstract human concepts; and with certain other propositions.”<sup>31</sup> Among the medieval Islamic thinkers, none however dealt with the topic of the active intellect more extensively than Averroes as shown by his seven commentaries dealing with the subject matter. Three of the said commentaries dealt with Aristotle’s *De Anima*.<sup>32</sup> Averroes’ controversial position on the active intellect vis-a-vis material intellect could be found in *The Long Commentary on De Anima* where he was said to have asserted, against the interpretation of other Aristotelian commentators like Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and Ibn Bajja, in fact, against his own earlier interpretation, that human beings do not possess individual material intellect.<sup>33</sup> During the thirteenth century, the same opinion would be mistakenly brandished by Siger of Brabant as Aristotle’s orthodox opinion on the strength of Averroes’ own testimony.<sup>34</sup> In his contentious *Quaestiones in tertium de anima*, Siger asserted that the active intellect has no part in the human substantial form and functions only as the cause of human cognition.<sup>35</sup> This doctrine was also known as *monopsychism* and was one of the central themes of the medieval Averroist controversy.<sup>36</sup> For the theologians, Siger of Brabant’s position was highly contentious due to its bias against the fundamental principles of the Catholic faith. As early as the 1250s, key intellectual figures of the time like Albert the Great and Bonaventure, by appealing to Averroes’ own authority, had already dismissed the Averroist position that Siger adopted.<sup>37</sup> For his part, Aquinas rebuked Siger of Brabant for a blatant misreading of Aristotle’s key philosophic insights. In a polemical treatise entitled *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, Aquinas publicly called out both Averroes’ and Siger of

Brabant's intellectual gaffe and refuted their claims point by point.<sup>38</sup> The work was published in 1270 and, though rather short by the standards of Thomistic literature, was doubtless an important material. One may read the said piece as an extension of the same arguments affirming the integrity of the human person clearly stipulated in his other earlier and larger works such as Book II of his *Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences* (1255), *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1259-1261), *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* (1265-1268) and *Summa Theologica*, which at the height of the Averroist debates, was yet to be completed. By providing an exegesis of Aristotle's text, Aquinas was able to untangle both Averroes' and Siger's erroneous claims. In his arguments, Aquinas carefully demonstrated how the intellect may be seen as separate on account of its non-dependence on any corporeal organ and at the same time not as a totally separate substance isolated on its own. Aquinas explained: "The human soul exists in its own right and is to a degree united with a matter that does not wholly capture it—this form is greater in dignity than to be a capacity for matter. Nothing prevents its having some operation or power to which matter does not attain."<sup>39</sup> Aquinas' intervention was by no means an arbitrary rebuttal of the opposite arguments. He knew he had the backing of generations of his fellow Aristotelian interlocutors such as the Greek Themistius, Theophrastus, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, and the Arabic Avicenna and Algazel. All these thinkers were rejected by Averroes and Siger, paying no heed to their common claim that the intellect was a potency of the soul and not a separate substance. Aquinas chided Siger and his fellow Averroists for preferring "to err with Averroes" than "to think correctly with other Peripatetics."<sup>40</sup> At the latter part of the *De unitate intellectus*, as he customarily did in his other writings, Aquinas would echo Aristotle to underscore the uniqueness of each individual person against the Averroists' mistaken notion: "A thing is one in the way it is a being, as is said in Book Four of the *Metaphysics*; therefore, for the soul to be is to be in the body as its form, nor is it prior to body, nonetheless it remains in existence after the body is destroyed: thus each soul remains in its unity and consequently many souls in their manyness."<sup>41</sup> Like a true master of disputation, hence, an advocate of public reason, Aquinas concluded his piece by directly

addressing Siger and his cohorts, to come out in the open and publicly engage him should they find his arguments wanting. In a rather emphatic and emotional tone, Aquinas issued this challenge:

If anyone glorying in the name of false science wishes to say anything in reply to what we have written, let him not speak in corners nor to boys who cannot judge of such arduous matters, but reply to this in writing, if he dares. He will find that not only I, who am the least of men, but many others zealous for the truth, will resist his error and correct his ignorance.<sup>42</sup>

Aquinas had always been open about his sentiments for Aristotle and his reverence for Averroes but he was not one who would buy an argument merely because it carried their names. His calling out of Siger of Brabant was yet another manifestation of such partiality towards inquiry and his commitment to a discursive pursuit of truth. As it turned out, what befell Siger of Brabant was not so much his erroneous reading of Aristotle but his blind allegiance to Averroes notwithstanding his gall to brandish as the final word what was in fact a patent mistake. This was not the only time that Aquinas would find himself at the center of a high-profile academic maelstrom.

#### *On the eternity of the world*

Another thorny question on which Aquinas felt compelled to intervene was the issue concerning the eternity of the world. The tenuous contention ascribing eternity to the world did not actually originate from Aristotle. It dates back, said Aristotle in *Physics* 8.1, to Plato whom he singled out as the lone ancient thinker who thought of time as created while subscribing to the possibility that both time and motion may exist eternally. In his account, Aristotle explained:

Further, how can there be any 'before' and 'after' without the existence of time? Or how can there be any time without the existence of motion? If, then, time is the number of motion or itself a kind of motion, it follows that, if there is always time, motion must also be eternal. But so far as time is concerned we see that all with one exception are in agreement in saying that it is uncreated: in fact, it is just this that enables Democritus to show that all things cannot have had a becoming: for time, he says, is uncreated. Plato

alone asserts the creation of time, saying that it had a becoming together with the universe, the universe according to him having had a becoming. Now since time cannot exist and is unthinkable apart from the moment, and the moment a kind of middle-point, uniting as it does in itself both a beginning and an end, a beginning of future time and an end of past time, it follows that there must always be time: for the extremity of the last period of time that we take must be found in some moment, since time contains no point of contact for us except the moment. Therefore, since the moment is both a beginning and an end, there must always be time on both sides of it. But if this is true of time, it is evident that it must also be true of motion, time being a kind of affection of motion.<sup>43</sup>

Aristotle must have had in mind Plato's account in *Timaeus* which featured the latter's speculative narrative of the beginning of time and his description of it as the moving image of eternity.<sup>44</sup> In late antiquity however, what was formerly a purely cosmological question acquired a more theological tone. From the fourth century onwards, time was equated with motion, that is, with an episode bound by a beginning and an end. Medieval theorists distinguished *time* from *aevum* or perpetuity which might have a beginning but has no end and *aeternitas* or eternity which neither has beginning or end. For the Judeo-Christian tradition, following the testimony of the first chapter of the book of Genesis, the universe had a beginning. Augustine further refined this in *The City of God*<sup>45</sup> as well as in his *Confessions*<sup>46</sup> where he maintained that time and the world were created by God simultaneously and that neither preceded the other in existence. Against Augustine however, Boethius would claim that while "God indeed is eternal," "the world" nonetheless is "everlasting." In Book V of *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius posited the possibility of the present, that is, time coinciding in the eternity of God's mind, hence, suggesting the apparent overlap between two spheres commonly perceived as contradictories if not mutually exclusive.<sup>47</sup> This seeming tension between Augustine and Boethius would have a significant bearing on the shape of philosophic and theological debates among the academics of the thirteenth century. As early as 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council had decreed creation in time as an article of faith.<sup>48</sup> This was further bolstered by the doctrinal inputs by the acknowledged official theo-



logical sourcebook of the day, Peter Lombard's *Sentences* which dismissed either theories of Plato or Aristotle as incompatible with Christian faith. There was, he said, a huge distinction between creator and maker or creation and making. A creator makes possible the existence of something from nothing whereas a maker produces something out of a pre-existing entity.<sup>49</sup> Against Plato, he asserted that creation is distinguished from making since the former involves a radical transition from non-existence to existence whereas the latter merely involves transformation of a thing into something else. Against Aristotle, he maintained invoking Bede that the creation of the world marked the beginning of time hence the world itself is subsumed within the temporal domain.<sup>50</sup> The Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris, in other words, had very serious reasons why it had to proscribe the study of any of Aristotle's newly translated texts within its hallowed walls. It goes without saying that, among Aristotle's other philosophic concepts, his theory of the eternity of the world gravely undermined the integrity of the doctrine of creation which was at the heart of fundamental Catholic teaching. By the time Aquinas returned to Paris in 1269, the intensity of the conflict on this raging cosmo-theological question had climbed up to a new high.<sup>51</sup> One side, counting the likes of Bonaventure, Matthew of Aquasparta, and Henry of Ghent as its advocates, thought that the world had a definite beginning. The other side, which upheld the eternity of the world, included the likes of Boethius of Dacia, William of Ockham, Giles of Rome, and Thomas Aquinas.<sup>52</sup> If Aquinas therefore was identified on the same side with Boethius of Dacia in this matter, in what way can one consider his opinion an alternative to the perspective represented by the latter? To capture the full import of Aquinas' participation in this debate, one needs to return to the context that gave rise to this thorny and highly divisive intellectual skirmish. The material that could serve as reference to this would be *On the Errors of the Philosophers* by Giles of Rome.<sup>53</sup> In the said treatise, Giles of Rome, an Augustinian monk and a student of Aquinas, identified and enumerated what he thought were erroneous conclusions of Aristotle appropriated by his Islamic commentators and their Parisian interlocutors, the so-called Averroists. Giles' work was important as it served as the basis of the 1277

condemnation issued by Bishop Stephen Tempier, the Bishop of Paris, of the 220 propositions found in the writings of various intellectuals at that time. Seven years earlier, on December 6, 1270, the same Bishop Tempier had already condemned 13 articles deemed injurious to Catholic faith.<sup>54</sup> Once again, one could only make sense of this aggressive doctrinal cleansing against the background of the increasing influence of Aristotle's philosophic and scientific texts across European universities. The opprobrium was so extensive that it did not spare even the likes of Thomas Aquinas nor Giles of Rome whose very work served as the stimulus in carrying out the all-out offensive against heretical opinions.<sup>55</sup> Aquinas, in his discourse on the eternity of the world, made no attempt to conceal his sympathy with Aristotle as he did on the topic *On the Unicity of the Intellect* referred to earlier. At first glance, it would appear as if Aquinas was making too large a concession in these debates in favor of Aristotle. Most of his colleagues at the Faculty of Theology, the so-called neo-Augustinians, were cognizant of this and they did not particularly approve these excursions into philosophy by their fellow master. Bonaventure, for example, short of identifying Aquinas by name, called out those theologians who had been guilty of diluting the wine of the Sacred Scriptures by blending it with the wine of secular thought.<sup>56</sup> That Aquinas upheld Aristotle's opinion on the question of the eternity of the world is a known fact.<sup>57</sup> That he compromised his credal commitment in doing so however is a claim that might be way off the mark. Basically, Aquinas' main contention against Boethius of Dacia stemmed from the latter's failure to recognize Christian faith's inherent openness to rational discourse. His remarks therefore were meant to address, not just the explicit cosmological and metaphysical undertones of the matter at hand but also, the question of whether or not theology could constitute itself as a science.<sup>58</sup> As far as Aquinas was concerned, to posit the probable eternity of the world hardly undermines neither the power of God nor the integrity of Christian faith, saying, "we ought to admit that God could have made something that has always existed, for it would be clearly derogatory to the divine omnipotence, which exceeds every thought and power, to say that we creatures can conceive of something that God is unable to make."<sup>59</sup> This important remark

represents a radical departure from Aquinas' own earlier work, the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, where he showed from three different perspectives—from the standpoint of God, from the point of view of things made, from the point of view of the making of things—the impossibility of maintaining the notion of an eternal world.<sup>60</sup> The same is found in the disputation *De Potentia Dei* where Aquinas clearly asserted, “I answer that we must not hesitate to hold that, as the Catholic faith teaches, the world has not always existed.”<sup>61</sup> Most emphatic of all was Aquinas' pronouncement in *Summa Theologica* where he stipulated in no uncertain terms that:

Nothing except God can be eternal. . . . It is not therefore necessary for God to will that the world should always exist; but the world exists forasmuch as God wills it to exist, since the being of the world depends on the will of God, as on its cause. It is not therefore necessary for the world to be always; and hence it cannot be proved by demonstration.<sup>62</sup>

Given the testimony of these texts, is it fair to say then that Aquinas, in *De Aeternitate Mundi*, conceded his faith to Aristotle after all? This is indeed a tempting proposition but one that is difficult to sustain without cautiously considering the nuanced complexion of Aquinas' arguments. A careful reading would suggest that Aquinas' acknowledgment of the theoretical, that is, logical possibility of the eternity of the world was part of Aquinas' overall strategy to secure the discursive integrity of Christian faith. As one commentator pointed out: “The controversy was not over the truth of faith that the world was created. It was over the scientific problem of whether this could also be demonstrated - that is to say, between the respective competencies of theology and philosophy”<sup>63</sup> There seemed to be a growing number of intellectuals, particularly from the Faculty of Arts, who thought that philosophy should enjoy greater autonomy from theology. Siger of Brabant, who figured earlier, and Boethius of Dacia were representatives of this emerging trend. To their minds, faith and reason, theology and philosophy, were domains walled off by their respective boundaries. This was not the same with Aquinas' notion of distinction between faith and reason. Though autonomous in their respective aims and methods, faith and reason for him were not mutually

exclusive domains. The way Aquinas saw it, “it is impossible that the truth of faith should be opposed to those principles that the human reason knows naturally.”<sup>64</sup> Hence, when Boethius of Dacia put forward a bold claim that neither the world’s co-eternity with divine will nor the eternity of the world itself could be demonstrated rationally, Aquinas had to issue a reply arguing the contrary.<sup>65</sup> His aim was not so much to engage Boethius in a verbal tussle but to secure the credibility of faith from the threat of fideism. The attempt by Aquinas therefore to show that the eternity of the world or its co-eternity with the divine will is rationally tenable was a strong statement that proves rationality is not an impediment to faith and that faith itself is never just a compromise to an intellectual deficit.

What I tried to show in the foregoing is an illustration of the integral role of nonage or thinking with others in the entire intellectual landscape of the Middle Ages, in particular, in the sustained conversation between Aristotle and Aquinas. That Aquinas depended on Aristotle to flesh out his core ideas is an understatement. Contrary to Kant’s injunction however, in Aquinas’ experience, nonage proved to be an empowering rather than a debilitating means of intellectual growth. As pointed out at the outset, thinking for Aquinas and his medieval counterparts was never just a solitary process. It always was a discursive exercise within the bounds of tradition where participants, both from the past and the present, converged in pursuit of a matter in question. In the medieval intellectual context, every thinking process was set into motion by a question and this question was the animating element which stirred the discussion to its direction. No medieval thinker therefore would have the audacity to think on his own or for himself, conscious as he was of the preeminence of the tradition whose normative context made it necessary that a question be addressed with a concerted response. It was this kind of intellectual culture that Thomas Aquinas demonstrated masterfully in his opus *Summa Theologica*. Despite the avowed theological aims, the treatise no doubt qualifies as every inch a philosophical work. That it was philosophical was warranted not so much because Aristotle was everywhere in it but because Aquinas attempted, relentlessly and rigorously, to make faith discursive, that is, to make it a subject matter of exchange or nonage. If

the charge that Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* merely baptized Aristotle were true,<sup>66</sup> it might also be correct to say that, in doing so, he likewise Hellenized Christianity. The result, as history bears witness, had become beneficial to both traditions of thought. Kant might have missed it but there could be something potentially creative in nonage; yes, even nonage in religious discourse.

### **Catholic Philosophy in the Post-Thomistic Age**

The challenge hence for any Catholic practitioner of philosophy is how to carry on Aquinas' philosophic practice in an age that has lost sight of any tradition or in a very Kantian sense, that had been detached from the activity of thinking within a tradition. Apparently, the overcoming of nonage that Kant proposed was contingent upon the revocation of adherence to any intellectual norm. Besides Kant, there were also other voices like Descartes, Nietzsche, Russell, Heidegger, Lyotard among others, who consider repudiation of tradition as the necessary condition of maturity in thought. Yet as I tried to demonstrate in the preceding paragraphs, following an important insight from Alasdair MacIntyre, a rational practice unhinged from a particular tradition is virtually next to impossible. There is no way anyone can make a claim for a presuppositionless presupposition.<sup>67</sup> The term *post-Thomistic age* is hence a reference to a hermeneutic space which recognizes the imperative to do Catholic philosophy in the fashion of Thomas Aquinas while recognizing the contemporary predilection against a tradition-bound philosophic discourse. Post-Thomism, in other words, is related, albeit remotely, to kindred terms such as Thomism or Neo-Thomism. The latter stands for specific embodiments of philosophic insights of Aquinas whereas the former suggests an intellectual context which Catholic philosophic thought, in dialogue with other philosophic perspectives, may inhabit. In employing this term, I shall adopt three assumptions which I shall develop in the ensuing discussion. These assumptions are as follows: 1) that faith has an important place in public reason; 2) that the relation between faith and metaphysics may not be an impediment in the exercise of such; and 3) that Thomas Aquinas remains the paradigm of contemporary practice of Catholic

philosophy. These assumptions will be given further elaboration in the paragraphs that follow.

### *On faith and public reason*

That one has to insist on the place of faith today in the exercise of public reason might seem strange to a scholar a millennium ago who, conversely, considers it an oddity for anyone to argue for the importance of reason in the discussion of matters of faith. This radical reversal of intellectual paradigm, however, is by no means an accident of history but an outcome of major ideological conflicts which eventually led to the wholesale displacement of faith in what is now known as modernity. Quite ironically, this escape from the theological, says Michael Allen Gillespie, has, in fact, theological roots. Gillespie explained:

... while modern metaphysics began by turning away from both the human and the divine toward the natural, it was able to do so only by reinterpreting the human and the divine naturalistically. However, both were thereby incorporated within the naturalistic perspective. In incorporating them in this manner, however, the earlier conflict between the human and the divine was not resolved but concealed within the new metaphysical outlook.<sup>68</sup>

This reverse sublation from supernatural to natural renders the theological inescapable in the reckoning of secular matters just as it makes the inclusion of the secular standpoint an imperative in addressing questions of faith. Instantly, this perspective overcomes the divide between secular civilization and salvation history suggested either by Augustine in favor of the latter or by the likes of Sam Harris, a fierce advocate against religion and theism, in favor of the former.<sup>69</sup> Augustine represents the belief that everything culminates in and is subsumed under the sacred hence the primacy of the theological. Harris, on the other hand, devalues the holy so as to elevate the human, hence, the reference, secular.<sup>70</sup> Dichotomy as a cultural problem, in other words, is ever ancient as it is ever new. Aquinas had likewise confronted dichotomies similar to this and in his philosophy offered a way to repair the gaps which divide believing and knowing, matter and form, matter and spirit, heaven

and earth. Despite what he had achieved, the lure of dichotomy continues to persist until today. This is not to suggest that synthesis is a useless task; it only underscores the fact that it is a historically contingent necessity and, on account of its fragile nature, requires constant re-configuration and re-calibration. Not all dichotomies however are the same. Augustine for example posited a sharp demarcation between the city of man and the city of God to separate the decadent civilization of Rome and its civic religions from the Christian civilization on whose foundation the reign of God shall come. This is different from Harris' dichotomous proposal by which he wished not to delineate Christian civilization from a rival socio-political order but to banish religion, Christianity, and Islam in particular, from humanity itself. In Harris' contention:

Religious faith represents so uncompromising a misuse of the power of our minds that it forms a kind of perverse, cultural singularity—a vanishing point beyond which rational discourse proves impossible. When foisted upon each generation anew, it renders us incapable of realizing just how much of our world has been unnecessarily ceded to a dark and barbarous past.<sup>71</sup>

Harris conflated religion with religious extremism and, like what Rome did during Augustine's time, pinned the blame for societal decay on the very existence of Christian and, by extension in his book, Islamic faith. He cited the episodes of violence, intolerance, and barbarism propagated in the name of religion and used them to argue for its outright banishment from modern human civilization. For him, it was religion that bred these manifestations of human degeneration. Consequently, besides creating a polarity between the religious and the human, Harris likewise insisted on yet another duality, that is, between the past and the present or between the ancient and the modern.<sup>72</sup> In a contrary fashion, Augustine found Rome in the same predicament and used what he saw to make a case for the city of God on account of Christianity's more superior moral vision. Augustine remarked, "But what kind of gods were these, pray, who declined to live with a people who worshipped them, and whose corrupt life they had done nothing to

reform?”<sup>73</sup> In a contest between a purely civic polity and a Christian society, he picked the side of the latter conscious of the fact that a civilization inclusive of authentic Christian faith is more conducive to the attainment of human flourishing. He called upon the Romans to “[l]ay hold now on the celestial country, which is easily won, and in which you will reign truly and for ever. . . . Incomparably more glorious than Rome, is that heavenly city in which for victory you have truth; for dignity, holiness; for peace, felicity; for life, eternity.”<sup>74</sup> Augustine, in other words, resorted to the dichotomy attributed to him as a discursive strategy to illustrate the possible overcoming of the radical contrast between a civilization where God is absent and a civilization founded on God’s reign. For Harris, in contrast, it was the futility of such overcoming that he sought to underscore via his vision of human civilization, if indeed a civilization bereft of religion may qualify as human.

Harris’ position is representative of the so-called “new atheism,” a strand of anti-religious thought which gained traction in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the writings of its leading voices which, besides Sam Harris, included Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett.<sup>75</sup> These four thinkers are the main proponents of the updated, re-branded version of atheism which they distinguish from its older forms by accentuating religion’s incompatibility with the scientific orientation of the contemporary modern culture. There is of course nothing new to this story. What is probably new is the way this recent strand of atheism capitalizes on science which, for the most part, has gained control of much of our civilization today. Science has become a rival of traditional normative resources like religion from which values, norms, even incentives for human fulfillment are derived. The “new atheism” views religion as science’s anti-thesis and aspires to establish a new world order purged of religion’s impurities. In explaining its features, the author Stephen LeDrew described “new atheism” as “an extension and manifestation of the modern project of the scientific mastery of the world and the rationalization of society, and its critique is ostensibly only about religion.”<sup>76</sup> Unlike therefore the Psalmist’s fool who thought in his heart there was no God or the existentialist who spurned providence



weighed down as he was by his existential angst, the new atheist turns to religion as an object of inquiry and rejects it for being unscientific. On this account, new atheism extends and at the same time departs from scientific atheism bannered by Enlightenment thinkers like Diderot and Voltaire and the humanistic atheism of anti-Enlightenment philosophers like Marx and Nietzsche. The former was a rejection of religion as an obstacle to social and scientific progress while the latter was a refusal of the decadent ground of a dysfunctional moral order. Despite their initial popular success however, the said new atheists, or the “brights” as they proclaimed themselves to be, contributed very little to elevate the faith and reason debate. Observers trace the reversal of the once progressive momentum of the so-called “atheist spring”<sup>77</sup> to the conceit, intolerance, and hubris of its high priests besides their shameless dogmatism. In the end, the new atheists’ tirades against religion became the very thing that undermined their case. The irony of the situation did not escape the likes of Terry Eagleton who, in his review of *God Delusion* in the *London Review of Books*, practically leveled Dawkins’ work to smithereens. In his scathing piece, Eagleton described rabid rationalists like Dawkins as “the least well-equipped to understand what they castigate, since they don’t believe there is anything there to be understood, or at least anything worth understanding.”<sup>78</sup> Eagleton likewise wrote:

Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the Book of British Birds, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology. . . . What, one wonders, are Dawkins’s views on the epistemological differences between Aquinas and Duns Scotus? Has he read Eriugena on subjectivity, Rahner on grace or Moltmann on hope? Has he even heard of them? Or does he imagine like a bumptious young barrister that you can defeat the opposition while being complacently ignorant of its toughest case?<sup>79</sup>

The new atheists’ obsession to topple religion led them to a misconception that they could do so without paying attention to the intricacies of theological discourse. It goes without saying that atheism, whether in the form of old or new, could only thrive if it engages the anti-thesis it is seeking to dismiss. As James Wood put it, belief and unbelief are “structur-

ally related”<sup>80</sup>—the possibility of one requires the existence of the other. Any critique, whether for or against faith, presupposes the dialectic configuration of their confrontation. Having seen its intellectual deficit, very few reputable scholars today align themselves with the new atheists’ proposal to banish faith or religion completely from rational discourse. The preceding discussion shows precisely why and how this tact cannot flourish. Faith indeed is a distinct domain but it is no doubt a rich moral, cultural, and intellectual norm. If only for this, Aquinas will remain a thinker to contend with. No less than Habermas himself recognizes the extent of his influence when he wrote:

Reading Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I am struck by the complexity, the sheer degree of differentiations, the gravity, and the stringency of the dialogically constructed argument. I am an admirer of Aquinas. He represents a form of spirit that is able to ground its authenticity from out of its own resources. It is simply a fact that there is no longer this kind of firmament in the morass of contemporary religiosity. In a homogenizing media society, everything loses its gravity, perhaps even institutionalized Christianity itself.<sup>81</sup>

The quote cited above represents the most recent evolution of Habermas’ thought concerning religion. What is suggested in this fragment is an apparent recognition on his part of the potency of religion and its singular role in shaping the contemporary ethico-political discourse. The acknowledgment of the enduring relevance of Aquinas’ intellectual legacy is also noteworthy. There is nothing gratuitous nor arbitrary in this so-called Habermasian theological turn.<sup>82</sup> This dramatic shift in his interpretive horizon is in fact an outcome of Habermas’ sustained reflection on the role of religion in public life. It is to such theme that I wish to turn in the next segment.

### *Between faith and metaphysics*

One would recall Habermas in his early work *The Theory of Communicative Action* described how “the socially integrative and expressive functions that were at first fulfilled by ritual practice pass over to communicative action; the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved

consensus.”<sup>83</sup> Further, he likewise wrote that “[r]eligion serves only to interpret existing ritual practices in concepts of the holy; without a strictly cognitive content, it has not yet taken on the character of a worldview.”<sup>84</sup> Although not directly dismissive, Habermas’s tone in this text may be qualified as minimalist in its approach to religion. Religion is not necessarily devalued but the recognition of its worth is constrained by a perspective which tends to confine it to a particular, determinate role and within a specific, restricted context. In this phase of his intellectual itinerary, Habermas’ reading of religion remained opaque caught as he was between isolating religion for lack of “cognitive content” and recognizing its potential to ascend to a “worldview.” He would however recalibrate his tone in latter works like *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* which detailed the parameters of his proposal for a discourse ethics. In the said work, Habermas suggested that “[o]nly those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse.”<sup>85</sup> One may detect two important implications in this recommendation: either Habermas is leaning towards a more hospitable approach to religion which, as a norm, stands a chance of securing legitimacy in the public sphere if it meets the approval of all those involved in practical discourse, or, he is actually raising the bar which would make it impossible for exclusive and conservative norms like religion to secure a public validation. Judging however from the succeeding phase of the evolution of his philosophic thoughts, one may securely infer that Habermas’ ties with religion did indeed grow warmer as the book *Postmetaphysical Thinking* seems to indicate. He wrote and with no small surprise to his readers:

Viewed from without, religion, which has largely been deprived of its worldview functions, is still indispensable in ordinary life for normalizing intercourse with extraordinary. For this reason, even postmetaphysical thinking continues to coexist with religious practice—and not merely in the sense of the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous. This ongoing coexistence even throws light on a curious dependence of a philosophy that has forfeited its contact with the extraordinary. Philosophy, even in its post-metaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is a bearer of semantic content that is inspiring

and indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophic language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses.<sup>86</sup>

The text cited above conveys a dramatic shift in both tone and direction of Habermas' perspective on religion. More than mere conciliatory, the text evidently shows a more sober stance of philosophy vis-à-vis religion. It also renders an account of religion's inherent potential in a clearer and more positive light. Attached with this altered perspective however is a new problematic that comes with the dawn of what Habermas describes as "postmetaphysical thinking." Chronologically, postmetaphysical thinking qualifies as the aftermath of metaphysical thinking but in Habermas' description, the sequential conjunction between the two does not appear as neatly as it should. For one, Habermas himself, at least in the essay "Themes in Metaphysical Thinking", is rather ambivalent in saying whether we have really arrived at a juncture where metaphysical thinking has been completely overcome.<sup>87</sup> In other words, the irreplaceability of religion alluded to by Habermas is not really a cause of relief if it included: a) the continuous identification of faith with metaphysics; and b) as a result of the former, the persistent marginalization of religious language from public discourse. While Habermas therefore seemed ready to concede the possible transition of philosophy from metaphysical to postmetaphysical thinking at some future indefinite point, he appeared unconvinced that a similar development would yet take effect in the domain of faith. However, given the complex dynamics between metaphysics and religion, one must approach this metaphysical imputation to faith, something widely shared by most thinkers of postmodernity, with careful consideration.<sup>88</sup> There is therefore a need to go beyond perfunctory reading of Nietzsche's death of God or Heidegger's dismissal of onto-theology if the question of religion's complicity with metaphysics must be dealt with squarely. The triumphalistic defense of the perennial validity of metaphysics likewise will no longer do. Currently, there are already attempts to explore the possibility of developing a discourse either on faith or God without acceding to the architectonics of metaphysics. One may locate the

efforts of Gianni Vattimo<sup>89</sup> and Richard Kearney<sup>90</sup> in this campaign together with such authors like Eric E. Hall & Hartmut von Sass<sup>91</sup> and Kevin W. Hector.<sup>92</sup> Adjacent to the Thomistic tradition is Jean-Luc Marion's rendition of a God beyond being which radically uprooted theological discourse from its traditional metaphysical ground.<sup>93</sup> If one refers to contemporary literature therefore, it is evident that faith remains a potent resource of intellectual discourse. What is sidelined by the postmodern conversations on belief is not so much faith per se but its metaphysical baggage. Given this predilection, a Catholic philosopher may hence find himself hindered from actively engaging in the exercise of public reason considering the Catholic faith's historic entrenchment with its metaphysical heritage. Faced with this quandary, he may then experiment with any of the following possibilities: a) to preserve the foundational character of Catholic metaphysical tradition against the contemporary postmetaphysical temperament; b) to abandon such tradition in keeping with the current persuasion against metaphysics; or c) to be creative in appropriating the Catholic metaphysical tradition while pursuing the requisites of public reason. The first possibility is represented by the figure of a self-styled Thomist who erroneously perceives Aquinas as an architect of a metaphysical system. This is the case of those of unknowingly mistake Aquinas for Francisco Suarez, the modern propagator of Scholasticism who was credited for having transformed metaphysics into a distinct science. The second possibility is represented by the figure of an avant-garde Catholic thinker who reads philosophy in a linear fashion. For him, ideas and concepts are constantly mutating and are prized not so much for their longevity as for their novelty. His philosophic views are contingent upon the trendy and the latest. A philosophic thought, he believes, is as good only as its update like a fashion style or fancy gadget. He categorizes ideas according to the names of those who most recently mouth them. He will take Zizek over Plato anytime simply because Plato is long dead and Zizek isn't. The third possibility is represented by no less than Thomas Aquinas himself. He remains the paradigm of Catholic philosophic practice despite being a professional theologian thanks to his exceptional acumen to make distinctions when resemblance is too close and to harmonize what appears

to be remotely dichotomous. Aquinas is the embodiment of what Habermas refers to as “the epistemic ability to consider one’s own religious convictions reflexively from the outside and to connect them with secular views.”<sup>94</sup> On account of this ability, Aquinas succeeds in utilizing metaphysics without ever confining himself to its rigid structure.

*Aquinas as paradigm of Catholic philosophic practice*

The equation between faith and metaphysics is an important issue not just in postmodern philosophic discourse but also in Thomistic scholarship. Aquinas’ employment of metaphysics as shown by his indebtedness both to Plato and Aristotle is well documented.<sup>95</sup> The million-dollar question however is whether Aquinas’ recourse to metaphysics qualifies him as a metaphysician. The same question may be asked in another way: As a thinker, does Aquinas’ instrumental recourse to metaphysics automatically make his thought metaphysical?

An affirmative answer to this query automatically suggests that anyone who maintains a collection of books is a librarian or any person who can play a guitar is a musician. An approach as simplistic and counterintuitive as these examples suggest certainly will not help in confronting the complexity of the matter. That the question requires a serious and repeated consideration is an understatement. What is at stake after all is not just the reputation of Aquinas as a philosopher but the whole complexion of Catholic philosophic tradition. If Aquinas then is the acknowledged mouthpiece of Catholic philosophy, whatever is said of him resonates as well with what he stands for. In this paper I put forward a claim that the description “metaphysical” in reference to Aquinas’ thought is problematic precisely because the perspective on which this claim is based, that is, the perspective which judges the Catholic philosophic tradition as metaphysical, is itself problematic. By making this claim, I am placing myself in a position directly opposed to Heidegger who famously defined metaphysics as onto-theology.<sup>96</sup> For Heidegger, the character of metaphysics as onto-theology is an outcome of the deity’s advent into philosophy. As Heidegger puts it: “Metaphysics is theology, a statement about God, because the deity enters into philosophy.”<sup>97</sup> Metaphysics needs

to be re-thought, says Heidegger, for it is only in such re-thinking that one can trace how Being comes into thought. In response to his self-formulated problem, Heidegger explained that the deity or Being enters thought “in the nature of the ground.”<sup>98</sup> One gains access to the deity or Being by conceiving of it as ground; only by recognizing it as such does thinking of beings becomes possible. At this point, one may ask whether this description of metaphysics coincides with Aquinas’s own project. Three important questions therefore may be asked related to this matter: first, whether Aquinas considers “Being as ground” as the subject matter of metaphysics?; second, whether Aquinas considers such Being as the “ground of beings?”; and third, whether Aquinas considers Being as an object of thought?

Concerning the first question, Aquinas was rather explicit in the preface of his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* that the subject matter of metaphysics was not Being nor any particular being but being in general or *ens commune*.<sup>99</sup> Being in general or *ens commune* is an expression that Aquinas used to refer to the question of existence. When he engages hence in a metaphysical investigation, Aquinas concerns himself not with any existing Thing or things but with the problem of existence itself. Metaphysics is differently known as divine science or theology or first philosophy but this is so, explains Aquinas, only because the problem of existence ultimately has bearing in the study of particular existing things. The lament therefore of Heidegger regarding philosophy’s prejudice for the question of beings rather than Being may not apply to Aquinas. His engagement with Aristotle’s metaphysics shows how the matter had been anticipated by him long before Heidegger considered it as the ultimate phenomenological problem.

Concerning the second question, Aquinas indeed considered God as the author of creation thus making the suggestion that the latter might be, in a sense, the ground of its being. It is arguable however whether the Being as ground extrapolated by Heidegger is comparable with God as propounded by Aquinas. For one, strictly speaking, God as suggested by Aquinas is not even a being. Strictly speaking, since God is not a being, God does not exist, that is, in the fashion of some existing thing. Aquinas explains that God “does not have a quiddity or essence, because his essence is not other than

his existence. And from this it follows that he is not in a genus, because everything which is in a genus must have a quiddity which is other than its existence.”<sup>100</sup> Aquinas refers to this as his notion of God’s simplicity.<sup>101</sup> That God is simple means God is radically different from any part of creation. In *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas went as far as saying that “God is not the being of all things, we can likewise show that He is not the form of any thing.”<sup>102</sup> This is Aquinas’ way of describing the infinite distance between any created nature and God. In the disputatio *De Potentia Dei*, in his reply to the ninth objection of Question 3, Article 4, he alludes to how between “God and the creature there cannot be a generic or specific likeness, there can nevertheless be a certain likeness of analogy, as between potentiality and act, substance and accident.”<sup>103</sup> Instead of ground, Aquinas is more inclined to consider God as *cause* on account of its being existence itself, that is, pure act.<sup>104</sup> Nothing is ever really *sui generis*. Such for Aquinas is a logical, ontological, and cosmological abomination. Everyone, everything is a participant in such an existence just as every fish, every coral, every sodium molecule is a participant in the vast ocean. “Every other being,” says Aquinas, “is a being by participation.”<sup>105</sup>

Concerning the third question, it is rather clear for Aquinas that Being, in the sense of deity as conceived by Heidegger, is something that cannot be thought. While Heidegger problematizes the advent of Being to philosophy, quite ironically, for Aquinas and his medieval peers, the main concern was the encroachment of philosophy into the realm of the deity. Aquinas is one with the great minds of medieval thought, from Augustine to Meister Eckhart, in the notion that God is the utterly other of human comprehension. Anselm’s description of God in the *Proslogion* as a being *than which nothing greater can be thought* is an enunciation of a clever scheme which simultaneously affirms and denies human thought’s ability to foray into the realm of the divine. While maintaining a similar apophatic stance, Aquinas’ view regarding such ability is comparably more moderate than that of Anselm. He concedes that reason may know God by virtue of his effects but it “cannot reach up to simple form, so as to know ‘what it is’; but it can know ‘whether it is.’”<sup>106</sup> In preserving God’s unknowability, Aquinas effectively sets the limits



of metaphysics. In doing so, he succeeds in sustaining Aristotle's project of developing a rational and systematic approach to know what lies beyond the world of change while he identifies what cannot be attained by this metaphysical experiment. If metaphysics as understood by Heidegger as the site in which the deity comes to thought, then Aquinas is not the metaphysician that most people thought he was. As pointed out in the preceding part, the grave concern of most medieval thought leaders was not so much the deity's arrival to thinking but the presumption of thinking that it can get near the divine. This was the scandal that Aquinas sought to avoid.

The recognition then of Aquinas as the paradigm of Catholic philosophic thinking stems not just from his ability to secure for Catholic faith a rational demonstration but also from his ingenious way of presenting Catholic faith as an intellectual resource which shaped the content and direction of intellectual debates inside or outside the Catholic circle. Not only did Aquinas participate actively and aggressively in these debates; he in fact personified via his vast corpus of works the gravitas and complexity which attended the fermentation of Catholic philosophic thought during the Middle Ages. Catholic philosophy, in particular, its medieval episode, has been unfairly caricatured in most accounts of the history of philosophy as a flatline owing to its deep entrenchment in metaphysics. Bertrand Russell went as far as describing Catholic philosophy as a terrain within which "intellectual activity was almost non-existent."<sup>107</sup> Obviously, Russell did not or had very little appreciation for an intellectual engagement which included and depended on faith. His reading typifies a hermeneutic which grossly ignores the tensions and turns underlying what appears in the surface as a lifeless narrative showcasing a string of theological terms. What it fails to take into account is the fact that Catholic philosophy, far from being a terrain hemmed in by metaphysics, is actually a site in which metaphysics is both sustained and restrained as shown by the literature produced by the leading intellectual figures of the time. Given a close attention to the texts, there is no way anyone can miss their vigorous exchanges all with the intent of outdoing each other in framing better the thorny relationship between faith and metaphysics. This is the kind of dynamics embodied by Thomas

Aquinas both in his philosophic practice and body of works. Aquinas is a metaphysician in the sense that he was a scholar who endeavored profoundly to examine metaphysics and its bearing on Catholic faith but not in the sense of a dogmatic thinker who confined himself with the strictures of metaphysical thinking. The former evokes the kind of intellectual dexterity which allowed Aquinas to move in and out of both faith and metaphysics so as to simultaneously affirm and challenge their claims. This agonistic approach helped Aquinas to articulate the dynamism between faith and reason which enables them to remain autonomous while remaining in conjunction with one another. Faith and metaphysics are traditions in which Aquinas is competently and equally conversant. His is what may be characterized as a creative fidelity by virtue of his ability to act both as custodian and critic of these two streams of thinking. I suppose this is the kind of epistemic ability which Habermas claimed is necessary for a believer to engage in the exercise of public reason. Tradition, fidelity, creativity—these are the operative terms which can best describe Aquinas' engagement in responding to the critical questions of his day. They also evoke the same attitude that one must imbibe to practice public reason in the post-Thomistic age.

### **Kant, Public Reason, and Enlightenment**

In the foregoing discussion, I have tried to provide a sketch of Aquinas' philosophic practice of thinking within a specific intellectual normative context or tradition. What this practice amounts to is a sustained conversation among participants who create and re-create a tradition's narrative structure and content. During the medieval ages, this kind of conversation was pursued by Aquinas with his academic peers at the Faculty of Arts along with his Greek and Islamic predecessors. Such exchanges demonstrate the indispensability of critique and tolerance both of which are key dispositions instrumental in preserving the hermeneutic space through which the relentless quest for truth can be carried out. In participating in these exchanges, Aquinas managed to bring Catholic faith and non-Catholic thought at a juncture where their critical interface became possible. The result of these efforts, as some scholars would say, was a Christianized Aristotelian philos-

ophy which emerged essentially via the grammar of a Hellenized Christian theology. Embedded within Catholic philosophy then is a dynamic intellectual tradition built on the foundation of a constructive dialogue and self-critique. In this context, nonage, frowned upon by Kant in his aforementioned essay, not only may be considered a virtue but more an enabling process to animate the practice of public reason. To do philosophy then in what I described as post-Thomistic age, adherents of a Thomist philosophic practice must imbibe this intellectual orientation as well as the critical competencies required by this enterprise be it in the form of a dialogue on the problem of new atheism or post-metaphysical thinking or the reconfiguration of the problem of metaphysics as illustrated above. It remains to be seen, however, whether the arguments put forward against Kant's dismissal of nonage and his conservative take on the nature and function of public reason can be validated by perspectives drawn from a parallel intellectual normative context. It is for this reason that I now turn to the German intellectual culture that gave rise to the question concerning Enlightenment which in turn paved the way for the celebrated Kantian essay.

It is hard to pin down where exactly the first stirrings of Enlightenment came to be.<sup>108</sup> What is certain is Enlightenment is a European phenomenon cultivated by the greats of the Dutch, Scottish, English, French, and German intelligentsia. Two major themes characteristic of the aims of Enlightenment are rationalism and emancipation.<sup>109</sup> With the former, one can easily identify the likes of Leibniz and Wolff; with the latter can be aligned the French *Encyclopaedists* led by Diderot and, by virtue of his singular piece on the theme, Immanuel Kant. In the essay, as pointed out earlier, Kant defined in no unclear terms his understanding of enlightenment as freedom from tutelage and rejection of nonage in any form. He likewise singled out religion as inimical to public reason. Kant's answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" is probably one of the philosophical themes fiercely debated and copiously commented on through the centuries.<sup>110</sup> That this is so, I suppose, is due not so much to any distinct aspect of his remarks but because Enlightenment itself, the main motif of his address, is a highly contested subject matter.

It should be pointed out that Kant's essay was but one of the many attempts to answer the same question. In the same year, 1784, two other works dealing with the same topic of Enlightenment were published in Germany: Moses Mendelssohn's *On the Question: What is Enlightenment?* and Karl Leonhard Reinhold's *Thoughts on Enlightenment*. A year before that, Johann Karl Mohsen's *What Is to Be Done toward the Enlightenment of the Citizenry?* came out.<sup>111</sup> Within the last two decades of the eighteenth century, most leading German intellectuals including the likes of Fichte, Hamann, and Jacobi among others, also took part in grappling with the impact of this cultural ferment which had taken hold of Europe and in the tail end of the eighteenth century had likewise swept Germany. All the aforementioned thinkers, along with their peers, were at the forefront of public debates on the different features of Enlightenment. Each wanted to contribute something to the public understanding of a number of great changes in European culture which the Enlightenment symbolized. Kant's was but one of the many voices in this public exchange. As such, his essay matters not so much due to any distinct insights but due to certain commonalities that his remarks share with other views. Here is a case where the posing of the question exceeds in importance any particular answer. This is not to say that Kant has nothing compelling to offer in his piece. What I simply wish to suggest is that his discussion of the Enlightenment question should be seen as part of an unfolding larger conversation. What counts above all is nothing else but the question, "What is Enlightenment?"

If the Enlightenment question generated such varied reactions from the leading thinkers of the eighteenth century, it was mainly because of its public character. The debates drew their inspiration from the discourses of French intellectuals, also known as the *philosophes*,<sup>112</sup> who were looking for a way to re-think citizenship amidst an environment transitioning from the dominion of the *ancien regime*.<sup>113</sup> Habermas identified this distinct historical juncture as the period which paved the way for the "genesis" of the public sphere. He describes it thus:

A few years before the French Revolution, the conditions in Prussia looked like a static model of a situation that in France and specially in Great Britain

had become fluid at the beginning of the century. The inhabited judgments were called “public” in view of a public sphere that without question had counted as a sphere of public authority but was now casting itself loose as a forum in which the private people come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion. The *publicum* developed into the public, the *subjectum* into the (reasoning) subject, the receiver of regulations from above into the ruling authorities’ adversary.<sup>114</sup>

Kant’s predilection then for freedom in the exercise of public reason is informed by his participation in the growing clamor for an expanded role of citizens in the political arena. Mendelssohn’s thoughts on the matter are comparatively more conservative given his emphasis on culture, education, language, and the essential destiny of citizens. He has none of Kant’s radical proposals, specifically on the matter of promoting Enlightenment as a counter-culture, but his thoughts are considered important since they formed part of the larger intellectual context which shapes Enlightenment discourses.<sup>115</sup> Almost approximating Mendelssohn’s points are those made by Mohsen.<sup>116</sup> He too believes that the work of Enlightenment can be facilitated by the existing mechanisms of culture and education. These views of course are countered by Kant as shown by his partiality against tutelage. It has likewise been noted that Kant has tremendous reservations against religion on account of the latter’s tendency toward absolutism and obscurantism. On this matter however, Kant is rebuffed by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi who considers religion as indispensable in securing the general welfare of humankind. Without religion, says Jacobi, this can only be effected by an “utmost power” albeit in an “inadequate manner.”<sup>117</sup> Although in his later work, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant would expand and further amplify his religious views, he remains uncompromising when it comes to the preeminence of reason when dealing with matters of faith. He claims,

Friends of the human race and of what is holiest to it! Accept what appears to you most worthy of belief after careful and sincere examination, whether facts or rational grounds; only do not dispute that prerogative of reason

which makes the highest good on earth, the prerogative of being the final touchstone of truth.<sup>118</sup>

Kant's partiality towards reason is shown in no unclear terms in the above-cited excerpt. He is convinced that the human impetus to be free along with the natural receptivity to truth can only be fulfilled when one embraces what he imagines as the reign of an enlightened rationality. This regime of reason, in the Kantian vision, must be free from the encumbrance of past intellectual or cultural sympathies. Traces or remnants of these sympathies must be seen as impediments to the attainment of emancipation and must hence be overcome. This is Kant's way of picturing the culture of Enlightenment as the great re-set.

What I have endeavored to demonstrate up to this point is a portion of the philosophic conversations which shaped the intellectual tradition called Enlightenment. It can be safely argued, I suppose, that despite Kant's explicit claims against it, the participants themselves of the Enlightenment movement were engaged, to a certain degree, in nonage by virtue of their complicity in the cultivation of the same tradition they were all seeking to foment. This nonage took the form of vigorous exchanges which allowed the current of thought among and between the Dutch, Scottish, English, French, and German Enlightenment proponents flowing freely. If repudiation of nonage is a statement against thinking within a tradition, the foregoing account shows how Kant himself is guilty of self-contradiction which can invalidate his claim. Kant was right in making freedom of thought the leitmotif of the Enlightenment age but the suggestion that such freedom of thought can only be secured via a total abdication of tradition may be untenable even if one measures it against the Enlightenment's norms. Moreover, Kant's presumption that religion is incompatible with the exercise of public reason is likewise arguable given a number of Enlightenment thinkers who maintained their creedal commitments without abandoning their adherence to Enlightenment values. It turns out it is not tutelage nor nonage nor religion that impedes the practice of public reason but rather the failure to

recognize the plural nature of perspectives and the excessive confidence of thinking for oneself exclusive of self-critique and deliberative discourse.

## Conclusion

The phrase *post-Thomistic age* is a testament to the plurality of hermeneutic horizons surrounding the relation between faith and reason inside and outside the Catholic philosophic circle and to the possibility as well of reading Aquinas differently. Kant's original prescription to isolate faith from public reason as a requisite of Enlightenment and Habermas' initial acquiescence with such a proposal provides the context for this re-reading. As shown by his philosophic itinerary however, Habermas himself gradually realized such an isolationist attitude toward faith and reason can in fact be counter-productive. It took a Kantian like Habermas himself to clarify why, on the issue of faith and reason, Kant himself should be read differently. Habermas described post-Enlightenment culture as post-metaphysical to suggest not necessarily an anti-metaphysical stance but an occasion to re-think metaphysical thought. In this new intellectual environment, neither a token affirmation nor a rejection of metaphysics is no longer adequate. The practice of Catholic philosophy then in the post-Thomistic age may include transcending metaphysics within metaphysics as in the case of Aquinas just as the exercise of public reason may also involve surpassing tradition within tradition as in the case of Kant. In other words, the translation of discourse proposed by proponents of public reason should be organic and bilateral unlike the prescriptive and one-sided conversion advocated by key liberal thinkers like John Rawls. This kind of reconstructive thinking is what, I suppose, would create the necessary hermeneutic space through which Catholic philosophy can secure itself a hearing in the public sphere. That thinking is by nature bound by tradition is something every practitioner of Catholic philosophy is cognizant of. That it should be confined within a privileged tradition or within a privileged reading of a certain tradition, Thomistic or otherwise, is a temptation that must be overcome. Aquinas himself showed through his philosophic example how this might be carried out and, in the process, demonstrated his own rendition of public

reason. He incorporated faith in his philosophic discourses convinced of its inherent potential to enrich rational process and worldview formation. In the post-Thomistic age, a practitioner of Catholic philosophy has the responsibility of affirming this natural proclivity of faith. The courage to think and read differently, just as either Aquinas or Kant or any philosopher did for that matter, is instrumental in fulfilling this mandate.



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# Marcos' Agrarian Reform\*

## Promises, Contradictions, and Lessons

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### **Abstract**

The paper is a reexamination of Presidential Decree 27, the agrarian reform law signed by Pres. Ferdinand Marcos on October 21, 1972. Previous studies of the topic proved to be critical of its outcomes but failed to mention the innovations made by Marcos' agrarian reform program. A month earlier, Marcos signed Presidential Decree 2 which abolished sharecropping or tenancy in rice and corn lands in the country and Presidential Decree 27 further advanced tenurial relations by introducing the concept of land ownership to peasants. In addition, the program included technical and financial support to ensure productivity and the program's viability. Moreover, the program required peasants to bond themselves into cooperatives as a way of weaning them from dependence on landowners. Notwithstanding the beneficial intent and design of the program, it was hobbled by succeeding laws and directives that contradicted its aims and objectives. Finally, the non-inclusion of coconut and sugar farms in agrarian reform only highlighted the disparity between these groups of farmers with those in rice and corn areas, a stark difference that became a rallying issue against the Marcos regime as well as an advocacy in the post-Marcos era that aspired for a more inclusive agrarian reform coverage.

## **Keywords**

Martial law agrarian reform, Presidential Decree 27, Marcos land reform, Samahang Nayon, Masagana 99

## Introduction

Land reform<sup>1</sup> implementation in the Philippines prior to 1972 was done mostly under conditions of market-economy and democratic rule. The Marcos era was the exception. From 1972 to 1986, the Marcos regime implemented agrarian reform by way of Presidential Decree (PD) 27. Unlike previous land reform programs, this was different for a number of reasons. One, martial law suppressed opposition to the state and targeted oligarchs and landlords, making implementation much easier compared to all other similar programs under different administrations. Two, this land reform program was not only a social reform agenda aimed at curbing agrarian unrest or rebellion in a specific region but also a part of a broader strategy in improving production and addressing food shortages nationwide. Marcos' land reform program was the offspring of the so-called Green Revolution, a project that addressed the issue of hunger by way of new plant varieties and its attendant technologies. Three, this land reform program enjoyed enormous government support in credit and extension services as well as the creation of new institutions.

More importantly, PD 27 deviated from previous land distribution schemes—homesteading, resettlement, and leasehold—and advanced into land ownership. For the first time, it was now possible for tenants to own lands. This altered the age-old tenurial relations between landlords and peasants. Furthermore, land reform was by now a key element or ingredient in a developmental paradigm designed to sustain growth as envisioned by technocrats. This agricultural development strategy, initially formulated by scientists and researchers and funded by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations through the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), comprised a technological package that included the intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides, the introduction of new and high-yielding rice varieties, water control, and social reengineering (Cullather 259). This was to be complemented by the export of select agricultural products, then the country's top dollar earner (Boyce 9). Finally, for the model to become effective, social reorganization at the local level became indispensable. Thus, the rationale behind agrarian reform lay not only in solving hunger but more so as a bold

attempt at modernizing Philippine society. By introducing so called “miracle-seeds,” the motive behind PD 27 was to “draw farmers into the mainstream of modern economic life.” (Cullather 266).

This development approach deviated radically from the debate in the late 50s and early 60s on whether to pursue agrarian reform or industrialization. Sen. Claro M. Recto, who championed the cause for nationalist industrialization, believed that agrarian reform was a step backwards from genuine development. Emphasis on land reform was seen or criticized as keeping the Philippines dependent on American industrial products; or neocolonial, as colonial economic practices were preserved in spite of political independence. His arguments became even more credible as agrarian reform and rural development were being advocated by American policy makers. By the late 60s, however, this dilemma was no longer seen as an “either/or” proposition but as complementary for they now formed part of a wider strategy in fighting poverty. This type of modernization would be criticized later for its emphasis on productivity and therefore evading the root cause of poverty—land ownership (Boyce 9). By this time, the contradictions in the design of PD 27 had started to appear. The ill effects of the technology behind the Green Revolution on rice lands had become apparent. The spiraling costs for petroleum and its by-products made fertilizers beyond the reach of farmers so that planting the miracle seeds that the government promoted was no longer a profitable enterprise. Fertilizers, too, made the land acidic, needing more time to recover. At the policy level, Marcos’ decision to introduce corporate farming, i.e., giving business and private corporations the right to acquire agricultural lands and utilize them to supply grains to their employees, came in conflict with peasants’ rights.

In hindsight, peasants under the scope of PD 27 proved to be fortunate than those whose crops were outside the coverage of land reform. Peasants and farm workers in the coconut and sugar industries suffered the brunt of predatory capitalism and landlord resistance to reforms. Coconut farmers were levied four types of taxes which came to be known as the coco levy fund. These tax farming schemes were so profitable that they were used to acquire corporate shares and then privatized for personal use. Seasonal sugar workers,

or *sacadas*, became the symbol of rural poverty when demand for sugar in the international market plummeted, a dire result of sugar planters' insistence on monocropping. Farm workers' demands for decent pay were met by resistance and intransigence by the state and landowners who insisted on a tripartite regional wage board instead of the mandated national wage increase.

Thus, if land reform was designed with the end in view to nip discontent in the bud and extinguish radicalism, Marcos achieved this goal in areas covered by the program. Yet at the same time, Marcos had unwittingly stoked the flames of discontent and radicalism in areas outside its coverage. The growth of radical peasant organizing now shifted to coconut and sugar producing areas in the Southern Luzon, Bicol, and Western Visayas regions.

This paper looks at the development of agrarian reform from the inception of PD 27 in 1972 until the end of the Marcos regime in 1986. It discusses PD 27's underlying rationale, mechanisms, achievements, and failures. Starting with the shift in tenurial status, i.e., from share cropping to leasehold system, it then looks at how agrarian reform fits into the modernization narrative to frame this unique agrarian reform. It then enumerates the accomplishments of PD 27 as well as its shortcomings and contradictions. Finally, the paper examines the state of peasants in agricultural areas not covered by PD 27 to highlight the need for a more radical version of agrarian reform in the post-Marcos period.

## **Stages of Agrarian Reform in the Postwar Era**

To appreciate agrarian reform under the Marcos regime, it is worthwhile to trace its development over the years. The 1935 Constitution contained specific provisions on social justice and expropriation (Art. II, Sec. 5; Art. XIII, Sec. 4). In concept, the law stipulated that large haciendas were to be expropriated and sold to tenants. The Rice Share Tenancy Act (Act No. 4054), promulgated during the American colonial period was amended, meaning landowners and tenants were encouraged to enter into contracts not contrary to laws and public policy. To augment this policy, the Court of Industrial Relations (CIR) was established to mediate in conflicts arising between landowners and agricultural workers through compulsory arbi-



tration. This reform measure, however, was met with stubborn resistance by Quezon's political allies. Quezon resorted to a compromise by way of creating the National Land Settlements Administration (NLSA) by way of Act. 441.

Since Quezon's allies were themselves landlords, reforming the agrarian situation was out of the question. But the Sakdal rebellion of the 30s shook the foundations of the new Commonwealth; the Solomonic solution lay in giving rebellious peasants lands to own—but not in their locality. The property would be in Mindanao. Homesteading, or resettling landless peasants from Luzon and the Visayas to frontier areas in Mindanao, became the new policy of the Quezon government except that this so called “win-win solution” would set in motion a conflict with Muslim and *lumad* communities. The same predicament would occur in the 50s as the *Huk* rebellion threatened not only landlord interests but also to national security itself. These waves of migration would blossom into a full-scale rebellion in the late 60s and early 70s. Thus, what seemed like a judicious solution became an atrocious problem for the next generation of leaders to solve.

In other words, earlier measures to alleviate agrarian unrest focused on public land distribution. But as the challenge to landlord authority increased, policies regulating share tenancy relations emerged with either purchase or expropriation of large estates. This may be considered as Phase I of agrarian reform which occurred between 1954 and 1963. Phase II was marked by emphasis away from share tenancy toward leasehold. This was the type of agrarian reform from 1963 until the implementation of PD 27 on October 21, 1972. Phase III came after which required full conversion to ownership of tenanted land to rice and corn farmers in privately-owned farms.

The following legal measures are hereunder enumerated to trace the evolution of agrarian relations: Republic Act (RA) 34 of 1946 provided the 70-30 sharing arrangements and regulating share-tenancy contracts. RA 1160 of 1954 established the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Program (NARRA) to resettle dissidents/rebels and landless farmers. In that same year, RA 1199 was passed to govern the relationship between land-owners and tenant-farmers by recognizing two systems, namely: share-ten-

ancy and leasehold. Finally, RA 1400 (The Land Reform Act) of 9 September 1955 created the Land Tenure Administration (LTA), responsible for the acquisition and distribution of large private agricultural lands.

Phase II started with President Macapagal's campaign promise to introduce reforms and ended just before the start of Martial Law. RA 3844 (Agricultural Land Reform Code) was passed into law on August 8, 1963 after a long and tumultuous battle in Congress. Share tenancy was outlawed and the leasehold system became the official state policy towards land reform. However, Macapagal's landmark law became ineffectual due to lack of funds and stiff opposition from landowners. Nevertheless, outlawing share tenancy and making landlords to comply with the leasehold system was a step forward, a small but nonetheless overdue victory.

The last phase introduced a radical concept at that time—ownership who tilled the land. PD 2, proclaimed on 27 September 1972, or six days after the declaration of martial law, placed the entire country under land reform and was implemented on October 21, 1972. Known as the Tenants' Emancipation Act, PD 27 instituted Operation Land Transfer (OLT) which aimed to make tenants full owners of the land they till and provide the necessary support systems to make ownership viable.

### **Marcos' Agrarian Reform**

Marcos' land reform program may trace its roots in the Green Revolution. In the early 60s, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) was established at the University of the Philippines at Los Baños campus in Laguna to undertake extensive research to produce new rice varieties. While the Philippines hosted and supported the Institute, its funding came from the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and companies that were interested in the use of oil and chemical by-products, essential supply in the production of fertilizers and pesticides. Not long after, IRRI came up with the so-called "miracle seeds" such as IR-8, IR-15, and IR-20.

It is not accidental that the introduction of new rice varieties rapidly increased fertilizer production. From 101.2 million metric tons in 1956, total fertilizer consumption reached 563 million metric tons in 1972. This

would reach to almost 780,000 metric tons in 1978 when the Masagana 99 Program ended, up by 15% from the 1977 total of 636,590 metric tons. Soon, foreign companies that included Esso Atlas Fertilizers, Union-Hikari and BASF entered the booming market. Esso partnered with local businessmen led by Alfredo Montelibano and established Planters Products, the largest in the industry with a network of over 400 stores nationwide. In 1973, Planters Products cornered 63.8% of the total market and at its peak in 1979 sold 983.3 million pesos worth of fertilizers (LUSSA 32-33).

PD 27 may be considered a novelty, even revolutionary. For the first time, large numbers of peasants can now own the lands they tilled. Land transfer was possible only if peasants had the rare chance of having an altruistic landlord willing to sell them the land voluntarily. PD 27 provided the state the upper hand in forcing landowners to relinquish their holdings. Thus, PD 27 sought to transform tillers into owner-cultivators and establish economic family-size farm as the basis of Philippine agriculture.

At the same time, PD 27 was cautious and restrained as it covered only two types of crops—rice and corn. And only those lands that were tenanted and privately-owned. Originally, the retention limit was set at 7 hectares (has.) maximum. But this was revised later. The maximum area that a tenant can own is 3 has. if irrigated and 5 has. if unirrigated. Alienable and disposable lands were likewise covered as part of the resettlement component of the law.

The rationale for the retention limit may have to do more with the notion that many of the farms with small landholdings were owned by ordinary citizens (government employees like teachers and policemen among them) that make up the core of a community. Making the retention limit lower than seven hectares would mean that in many cases, the tenant would acquire more land than the dispossessed owner. Thus, the more plausible explanation was to stave off potential opposition from small landowners who comprise a sizable majority of the population. Despite the strong rhetoric behind PD 27, Marcos demonstrated his persona as more a pragmatic politician.

However, PD 27 excluded farmlands and plantations devoted to traditional export crops such as sugar, copra, bananas, tobacco, pineapples, and so forth. As would be pointed out by scholars later, the Marcos regime's rhetoric on agrarian reform did not match its actions since the retention limit of 7 hectares deprived 55% of tenants in rice and corn lands the right to own lands they tilled. (Tadem 406).

The truth is that the scope of PD 27 covered less than 14% of all cultivated lands. Out of a total of 9.7 M hectares of cultivable lands nationwide, rice and corn lands totaled 4.2 M hectares while non-rice and corn areas amounted to 4.5 M hectares. Of the 4.2 M hectares devoted to rice and corn, only 1.42 were tenanted and fell under the scope of the land reform program. These were further divided into Operation Land Transfer (OLT), 822,000 has.; Lease Hold Operations (LHO), 562,000 has.; and, Land Emancipation Patents (LEP), 88,000 hectares. (DAR, 1987). The value of the land transferred to the tenants was assessed at 2 ½ times the annual harvest of three normal crop years. The total cost of the land was to be paid by the tenant over a period of 15 years in equal amortizations. Established in 1963 thru PD 251, the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) was tasked to provide adequate financial support in all phases of the agrarian reform program.

Aside from land tenure, PD 27 had four other components as support services: institutional development, physical development, agricultural development, and human resources development. Land tenure improvement included compact farming, cooperative farming, land consolidation, and the formation of agro-industrial estates. Institutional development includes the formation or creation of support organizations such as the Samahang Nayon, farmers' cooperatives or associations, and farmer-oriented financing institutions. Physical development refers to infrastructure; and agricultural development includes management services and technology such as the Masagana 99 and the Green Revolution Project.

The argument that PD 27 was a conservative agrarian reform program may be bolstered by the fact that its backbone, providing credit and financing its operations, was given to Finance Secretary Cesar Virata. A former banker and consultant on agriculture who saw agrarian reform more as an issue

of productivity, Virata's policies were shaped by his close association with the World Bank and like-minded consulting groups in the 1960s when the concept of Green Revolution was fast gaining ground among policy makers. Virata held the view that since many of the small landowners were ordinary employees like teachers and soldiers, there was no need to put them under the compulsory coverage of agrarian reform. Virata's recollection of this orientation is recorded thus: "Rather than for the landowners to lose their lands to the NPA [New People's Army], we better have agrarian reform for the farmers so that they will be with us." (Sicat 404).

In a way, Virata echoed Marcos' cynical but benign view of agrarian reform—"the answer of communism is the abolition of private property. By this we mean nothing but that wealth and property shall not be utilized in such a manner that it constitutes the new barbarism...We have promised by the proclamation of martial law, we have committed our very lives, our future and our dreams to two objectives. The first, the eradication of the armed force of the rebellion of the communists. Number two, we must now remove the social roots of grievance and rebellion. The first root of grievance and rebellion is the feudal land system in the Philippines. It must therefore go" (Marcos 31, 34).

Marcos' rapport and close association with the biggest peasant federations at the time—Montemayor's Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), Luis Taruc's Agrarian Reform Movement and the Federation of Land Reform Farmers—reflected his efforts to strengthen martial law's support base. Not long after, Montemayor's and Taruc's views of agrarian reform as a social justice issue were shattered in 1977 when both called for the expansion of coverage of agrarian reform to include sugar, coconut, and bananas following the near completion of Operation Land Transfer. With their call for the expansion of coverage came the instruction of Marcos to DAR Sec. Estrella "to tell those two not to rock the boat" (Kiunisala 18).

### *Operation Leasehold*

Leasehold tenancy is the practice wherein a farmer (lessee) pays the landowner (lessor) rental in the form of money or produce or both in

exchange for cultivating the land. The DAR encouraged the execution of a written contract between both parties. This formed part of the Land Tenure Improvement Program which aimed to transform farmers into farm managers, thus getting more for his labor. Operation Leasehold is a program designed to convert share tenants into lessees on lands not covered by PD 27. Thus, two types of land relations regimes existed in rice and corn areas—land ownership and leasehold. The lessee however can be ejected from the land for infractions that may be deemed strict such as planting of crops not specified in the contract; failure to adopt proven farm practices; damage to property due to negligence; failure to pay lease rental; land conversion; and employment of a sub-lessee. A lessee has the option to own the land if there is a Voluntary Offer to Sell (VOS) on the part of the owner.

### *Operation Land Transfer*

OLT, as it is also known, is the orderly and systematic transfer of ownership of tenanted rice and corn lands. This is the flagship program of PD 27 and was first launched in November 1972 on select farms in Luzon and the Visayas. Thereafter, OLT was introduced to the whole country starting in 1973. Below are the steps required for farmers to own lands. An Emancipation Patent (EP), the title to the land, is then issued to the Farmer Beneficiary (FB) once all the requirements have been complied. By compliance, it is meant that the FB has satisfied 15 requirements, among which are the following:

1. Full payment for the land, the FB is given 15 years to complete payment or if full payment is made before the prescribed length of payment;
2. Membership in the *Samahang Nayon* or a duly-recognized or authorized cooperative; and,
3. Actual use (cultivation) of the land.

### *Resettlement*

The DAR's Bureau of Resettlement oversees the relocation of landless tenants to identified resettlement areas. Origins of resettlement work may

be traced to the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) during the time of Pres. Manuel L. Quezon whose Social Justice Program oversaw the resettlement of landless peasants, mostly from Central and Northern Luzon as well as from the Visayas to Cotabato and Isabela provinces. After the Second World War, the NLSA was reconstituted into the Land Settlement Development Corporation (LASEDECO) during the incumbency of Pres. Elpidio Quirino. The next president, Ramon Magsaysay, replaced LASEDECO with the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA). One of the key elements of resettlement was to provide support services which was manifested through the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR). Pres. Diosdado Macapagal signed into law the creation of the National Land Authority (NLA) which incorporated the government's land resettlement program. Finally, on 10 Sept. 1971 all agencies and programs related to land reform were centralized into the Department of Agrarian Reform with the signing of RA 6839.

### *Samahang Nayon*

In his 1972 treatise titled "Land Reform is the Fundamental Foundation of all our Efforts", Marcos declared that "land reform, under the philosophy and the approaches we have adopted since the beginning means, first, the conversion of share cropping from leasehold to ownership. But ownership has many concepts. It is my hope that before we shall transfer ownership to the tenants, they shall first organize cooperatives...The program envisions the need for field technicians, servicing of farmers in the supervised credit system" (Marcos 34).

The rationale for this statement is that the history of cooperative development prior to 1972 has been marked by failures. Cooperative development in the Philippines may be traced to the establishment of the Farmer Marketing Cooperatives (FACOMA) that was introduced in the 1950s and financed heavily by the USAID to defray huge capital outlay on rice milling and storage facilities. This was also meant to mitigate the practice of usury that indebted peasants heavily (Jensen 11). While many cooperatives were plagued by technical and financial problems, the most important factor

however was lack of enthusiasm on the part of peasants. It was striking that cooperatives failed not because of lack of support but rather the lack of commitment and sense of ownership on the part of the peasants.

In 1974, Orlando J. Sacay,<sup>2</sup> the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) undersecretary for Cooperatives Development, proposed the creation of the New Cooperative Development Program or the *Samahang Nayon* (SN), a nationwide cooperative system designed to hasten rural development. Learning from the lackluster performance and defects of cooperative formation from the past, Sacay placed more emphasis on members' education, capital build-up and discipline. Among the objectives of the SN were: to prepare farmers to become better producers; to ensure timely payments of land amortization; to enforce savings among farmers; to encourage farmers to perform activities collectively; and to develop marketing outlets for farm products. In summing up, Dr. Sacay said that the members would have nothing to do but "learn, save and practice discipline." (Sacay 112). It must be said that there was a more compelling reason for the creation of a nationwide network of cooperatives other than to ensure payment of amortizations. Dr. Sacay believed that the rationale behind the SN was more for the long-term—for cooperatives needed to be a vehicle to facilitate the distribution of wealth.

The educational process that Dr. Sacay envisioned for the efficient and scientific management of cooperatives was divided into two parts. Phase I was designed to be a pre-membership course which included lessons on agrarian reform, history and principles of cooperatives and the SN's rationale, organizational set up, policies and requirements. Phase II, or Manpower Development, was devoted to management training for both officers and members, training of agricultural workers, and technical lessons for SN members. For both phases, Dr. Sacay designed a sixty-five-week training schedule.

Capital buildup or capital mobilization on the other hand are forced or compulsory savings mechanisms which were meant to extend credit from their own savings. Dr. Sacay believed this was the only way to solve the perennial problem of repayment. Another underlying principle behind these



forced schemes was premised on the concept of “strength in numbers.” In addition, these funds were designed to provide farmers the capital to engage in business and finance with the view of forming community-based rural banks (or farmers’ banks). The rationale for this was to create a new funding window as traditional rural banks run established by well-to-do families became inflexible in servicing the farmers.

The following are the Funds outlined in the program:

1. General Fund — The money for this fund consisted of an initial payment of 10 pesos as membership fee and annual dues amounting to 5 pesos, and other incomes that may be derived from matters such as collection of loans from different borrowers. This fund is intended to cover the expenses that may accrue in the performance of the SN’s functions.
2. Barrio Savings Fund (BSF) — The money for this Fund came from farmers themselves. A deduction of 5% from members was taken upon the release of their loans from either the Philippine National Bank, the Agricultural Credit Administration, or rural banks. Those who did not borrow loans were required to pay 5 pesos for monthly contributions. The BSF was intended to purchase government equity in rural banks and had the option to purchase shares of stocks and control the rural bank’s policies. Should this scheme not materialize, the BSF may be used to capitalize a cooperative rural bank with the same subsidies and assistance provided by the Central Bank.
3. Barrio Guarantee Fund (BGF) — The money for this Fund was derived from the member’s (i.e., beneficiaries for land transferred under PD 27’s OLT) contribution of 1 cavan/hectare/season. This Fund acts as a guarantee for land amortization payments being paid by members, to pay for insurance premiums of all members as well as to finance the establishment of full-fledged marketing cooperatives in SN units.

The rise of SN organizations and membership (see Table 1) was due to many factors. It may be due to its compulsory membership, a precondition for being a beneficiary of the land reform program. However in Castillo's book titled "How participatory is participatory development? : a review of the Philippine experience", it was discovered that many farmers were enticed to join SN because it offered good information and advice on farming, offered lower priced farming inputs and gave higher market prices for their produce based on a survey conducted among SN members.

From a savings standpoint, the SN was able to generate a total of 95M pesos over a five-year period for an average of 100 pesos per member and 5,200 pesos per SN. The SN was successful as far as scale is concerned. Even with only 20 pesos per member per year, it was possible to generate a substantial amount over a short-term period for a national savings project. But at the same time, loan repayment was the most problematic. In some instances, farmers evaded membership to the SN due to its financial obligations.

**Table 1. Samahang Nayan Organizations and Members**

Region	1974		1975		1976		1977		1978		1979	
	SN	Members	SN	Members	SN	Members	SN	Members	SN	Members	SN	Members
I	1,704	78,534	1,787	85,141	2,002	90,552	2,038	94,953	2,041	97,560	2,089	97,820
II	598	34,155	755	42,676	813	47,877	877	51,037	912	53,014	914	53,014
III	1,485	83,520	1,608	97,432	1,763	114,636	1,892	125,190	1,898	126,836	1,909	127,263
IV	1,365	60,043	1,590	74,026	1,749	83,763	1,833	86,162	1,871	86,442	1,879	86,535
V	864	40,177	1,000	47,046	1,095	51,238	1,169	57,759	1,196	59,409	1,201	59,516
VI	1,379	54,644	1,542	63,410	2,178	94,917	2,205	100,072	2,254	100,755	2,256	100,780
VII	1,084	45,967	1,152	51,949	1,269	59,718	1,327	68,138	1,339	68,772	1,390	69,557
VIII	629	20,035	1,230	45,244	1,501	55,114	1,753	65,124	1,784	66,898	1,825	69,684
IX	381	17,082	462	21,563	507	25,491	576	28,864	587	29,415	612	31,511
X	1,212	67,057	1,362	72,332	1,499	97,909	1,584	99,589	1,716	107,192	1,720	107,869
XI	874	44,368	837	48,436	1,187	61,879	1,247	69,298	1,278	74,476	1,290	75,321
XII	-	-	786	37,546	928	47,854	1,054	50,522	1,080	53,589	1,095	54,666
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,575</b>	<b>545,582</b>	<b>14,111</b>	<b>686,801</b>	<b>16,491</b>	<b>828,948</b>	<b>17,555</b>	<b>896,708</b>	<b>17,956</b>	<b>924,358</b>	<b>18,180</b>	<b>933,536</b>

Source: LUSSA 1982

### *Masagana 99*

The Masagana 99 Program was launched in 1973 as a Program of Survival to address the acute food shortages and later to increase rice production. The target was to achieve a yield of 99 cavans (or 4.4 tons) of unmilled rice per hectare. *Masagana 99* was anchored on two service provisions—a credit program and the transfer of technology. It was an innovative supervised credit program and the first of its kind in its time. To emancipate farmers from usury and onerous conditions set by banks in extending loans to farmers, the government guaranteed 85% of all loses on Masagana 99 loans. This warranty induced rural banks to forego of its traditional practice of requiring collaterals. Even the rediscounting policy was revamped to make them easy, at the least cost to the farmer-creditor. Thereafter, some 420 rural banks and 102 branches of the Philippine National Bank agreed to provide loans on such conditions.

Loan applications were processed quickly and on the spot. Bank employees, together with farm technicians, processed the farm plan and budget for farmers' *seldas*<sup>3</sup> or cooperatives. An individual farmer with a collateral to offer may also obtain credit. The maximum allowable loan reached the equivalent of US\$100 per hectare with one percent (1%) monthly interest. Once approved, many of the loans were sent to the farm sites by foot, motorcycle, jeeps and even pump boats. The Philippine National Bank called this program “Bank on Wheels” (see Figure 2). Part of the loan was given in cash to cover labor costs while the balance was given in Purchase Orders which could be exchanged for fertilizers and pesticides at participating stores.

If the credit program was innovative, so too was the transfer of technology. Farmers were now introduced to new rice varieties called high yield varieties (HYVs), radically different from the ones they previously planted. These varieties required extensive preparation and use of fertilizers and pesticides so that the farmer, with the aid of farm technicians, would have to follow the method specified by the program.

To ensure coordination and cooperation of all farm-related initiatives, local chief executives were drawn into the program. Governors were designated chairs of the Provincial Action Committees while mayors were made

heads of Municipal Action Teams. Both officials were responsible for coordinating various agencies—banks, millers, traders, farm input dealers, local radio networks, the Department of Agriculture, DAR, and Department of Local Governments and Community Development—at their respective levels.

On its first year, Masagana 99 was a huge success. Because of the prevailing political conditions, implementing actors performed their mandated tasks, perhaps grudgingly. Moreover, the country generally enjoyed good weather in 1974 so that losses to agriculture were minimal, unlike in the last three years. Furthermore, as fertilizer prices in 1974 increased sharply due to the turmoil in the Middle East and as price dictates imposed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the government cushioned its impact through subsidies, amounting to about 21% of retail price. Lastly, the government provided a guaranteed farm gate price of US\$6 per sack, relieving farmers of severe losses when market prices fell during harvest time.

As far as attaining self-sufficiency in rice is concerned, Masagana 99 was a huge success. In fact, after only two years of its implementation, the Philippines exported rice in 1976. It is estimated that the savings from the non-importation of rice and the income realized from the sales of surplus rice amounted to US\$647M (approximately 4.7B pesos).

**Table 2. Status of Masagana 99 Credit Program after Expiration (30 April 1978)**

Phase	Term	# of Borrowers	Area (hectares)	Loans Granted (in M pesos)	Repayment Rate (in %)
I	May–October 1973	401,461	620,922	369.5	-
II	November '73–April '74	236,115	355,387	230.7	94
III	May–October 1974	529,161	866,351	716.2	94
IV	November '74–April '75	354,901	593,609	572.1	84

V	May–October 1975	301,879	558,330	572.9	82
VI	November '75–April '76	151,862	255,882	255.9	76
VII	May–October 1976	144,265	244,477	274.3	81
VIII	November '76–April '77	89,623	148,763	164.3	80
IX	May–October 1977	131,842	222,622	250.5	81
X	November '77–April '78	92,476	155,095	176.1	74
XI	May–October 1978	116,624	202,606	236.9	80
XII	November '78–April '79	85,401	157,521	158.0	68

Source: Alix 1978

### *Accomplishments*

**Table 3. Land Distribution Accomplishment**

Year	Target (in hectares)	Total	Accomplishment (100%)
1972–1986	70,178	70,178	100
1987	44,081	44,081	100

**Table 4. Operation Leasehold**

Target (Farmer – Beneficiaries or FBs)	No. of Leasehold Contracts	Coverage** (in hectares)
538,758 FBs	727,849	567,078

\*Target date of completion was 1978 but was finished only in June 1986

\*\*Covering rice and corn lands

**Table 5. Operation Land Transfer**

No. of Certificates of Land Transfer (CLTs)	No. of Farmer – Tenants (FTs)	Coverage (in hectares)	Accomplishment rate (%)
657,623	440,239	755,172	104.3

**Table 6. Emancipation Patents**

Distribution	Emancipation Patents	No. of Farmer Beneficiaries	Coverage (in hectares)
Targeted	54,912	373,100	11,087
Actual	22,187	13,590	719,700
Accomplishment Rate (in%)	39%	4%	1.5%

**Table 7. Compensation Claims to Landlords**

Distribution	No. of landlords to be compensated	Coverage (in hectares)
Targeted	37,173	642,775
Actual	12,391*	262,357
Accomplishment Rate (in %)	33%	39%

\*Only 4,339 landowners have been paid in full by June 1986

**Table 8. Settlements\***

Distribution	Resettlement Sites	No. of beneficiaries (in families)	Coverage (in hectares)
Targeted	46	106,020	746,000
Actual	46	58,662	746,000
Accomplishment Rate	100	56%	100

\*A total of 2,667 kilometers of roads, 327 bridges, 468 school buildings, 73 health centers, 116 irrigation dams, 989 irrigation pumps and 127 motor pools were built in settlement sites

Source for tables under “Accomplishments.” Reyes 2003: 11–12.

## Peasant support for PD 27

Two of the largest peasant federations supported Marcos' agrarian reform—those formerly aligned with the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) and those from the non-communist, Catholic-inspired Federation of Free Workers (FFF). How two seemingly diametrically opposed ideological groups ended up on the same side may be explained by unforeseen events. The factional split inside the PKP in 1954 between the Lava brothers and Luis Taruc led to its eventual demise. By 1974, the PKP had capitulated to the Marcos regime by way of a negotiated settlement. On the one hand, for peasant groups within the former PKP, collaborating with the government to pursue agrarian reform was a pragmatic strategy. On the other hand, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) under the leadership of Jeremias Montemayor came into existence after the demise of the PKP. In a way, the FFF filled the void left by the PKP as agrarian relations were no better even after Magsaysay had crushed the Huk rebellion.

Montemayor was the most likely person to lead a peasant organization founded on Christian principles and Catholic social teachings. Raised in a conservative family in Pangasinan, Montemayor was educated at the Ateneo de Manila University and even had the Jesuit Fr. Walter Hogan as his mentor. In effect, FFF became one of the two mediums in the Jesuits' work for the basic sectors, the other was the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) led by another Atenean and Montemayor's contemporary, Juan (Johnny) C. Tan.

Picking up the pieces after the decline of the PKP in 1954, the FFF's work was boosted with the election of Ramon Magsaysay to the presidency. Using his connections with fellow Ateneans who became aides to the president, Montemayor convinced Magsaysay on the need to improve agrarian relations, including the strategies required as well as the identified target areas. Among the interventions that may be credited to the FFF during the Magsaysay administration were the expansion of the resettlement program (homesteading), and the support for rural communities such as provision for water supply and livelihood. More could have been done had Magsaysay not met his untimely demise in 1957. What this incident instilled in Montemayor is that for agrarian reform to succeed, it would need a champion, a bold and

decisive leader persistent enough to push through with the travails and challenges of implementing land reform. Montemayor would see this champion again with the election of Marcos eight years later.

The FFF led many mass actions during Marcos' first term until the declaration of martial law in 1972. One of these was a stay-in rally and protest at the Agriculture and Finance or the AGRIFINA Circle that lasted a hundred days. In 1971, the FFF led an 84-day picket at the old Congress Building (presently the National Museum) to demand for the passage of RA 6389, or the Code of Agrarian Reforms of the Philippines. This law amended RA 3844 (Agricultural Land Reform Code of the Philippines), which made tenancy illegal in rice and corn areas, thus ushering leasehold as the preferred mode of agrarian relations.

At that time, FFW enjoyed the support of militant youth organizations such as Khi Rho, National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), and Lakasdiwa. Likewise, as a Church-oriented organization, the FFF enjoyed extensive support from the Catholic Church. But what made the FFF successful was also Montemayor's rapport with Marcos. The reasons why both became close to one another may be explained by their many similarities. Regional affiliation (both Marcos and Montemayor hailed from the Ilocos region) and being brilliant lawyers added to the attraction. In fact, Montemayor even became Dean of the Ateneo Law School for a time. And while Montemayor needed a champion for land reform, Marcos on the other hand needed popular support for martial law to rationalize his attack on oligarchs. Likewise, Montemayor's relations with the government was made easier with the appointment of Conrado Estrella, a Pangasinense, as secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform. Provincial relations made both Sec. Estrella and Montemayor work as a team which had Marcos' ears.

Montemayor's account of the era gave insights into how he persuaded the military to support agrarian reform. As retold by his son, Montemayor asked Marcos for the military to support PD 27. Accordingly, Marcos asked him to meet with Defense Sec. Enrile. When asked why the military should even dip its hands into agrarian reform, Montemayor explained that if the peasants saw the military as agrarian reform supporters, this would mitigate



insurgency. Convinced of the idea, Sec. Enrile ordered Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, Philippine Constabulary chief, to issue subpoenas to landlords for meetings with provincial commanders and then ordered to submit a listing of lands covered by PD 27 within their respective jurisdictions. This aided the DAR greatly in determining the number of hectares available for coverage.

Acquiring crucial government support did come with a price. For years, many of FFF's frontline workers were activists, radicalized by Marxist ideology and attracted to the revitalized communist party. All this was not lost on Montemayor who had to walk a tight rope between keeping workers within the bounds of legal organizing and at the same time not to lose face in establishing good relations with government. Little did the radicals know that a "Faustian bargain" had been made in 1974 during the FFF's annual convention in Tacloban, Leyte. Radical FFF organizers were arrested upon arrival at the airport and were immediately placed in the Constabulary stockade for several months on charges of planning to assassinate President Marcos. In his book "How Rich is my Journey", Montemayor would vehemently deny this. Those arrested believe that he may have known of the plan but did not act to stop it (Bulatao).

What did the FFF get in return for supporting Marcos? Ironically, the FFF was able to lobby for legal protection: PD 316 which granted added protection and sanctions against the harassment of tenant-farmers; PD 583 which made judges, fiscals, and members of the armed forces criminally liable for the unlawful ejection of agricultural tenants; and, PD 946 established new rules of procedure in agrarian courts. In addition, Letter of Instruction (LOI) 474 reduced the retention limit or area to zero if the landowners owned other agricultural lands; and, LOI 1260 established the social forestry program (Montemayor 353). Furthermore, the government enacted a Montemayor proposal—crop protection for farmers in times of natural disasters, resulting in the creation of the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC). Lastly, FFF members benefitted from its close working relations with DAR when it came to processing their application papers for land ownership (Montemayor 354).

However, the FFF's objective of covering areas aside from rice and corn for land distribution were not met. Marcos eventually placed greater emphasis on other concerns, and as the years wore on, Marcos lost interest in land reform.

### **Contradictions in the Marcos agrarian reform program**

Not even two years into the implementation of PD 27, General Order (GO) 47 and Presidential Decree 472 were signed which gravely undermined land acquisition and tenure. GO 47 required all corporations with over 500 employees to provide for the rice and corn needs of their employees either through importation or direct production. On the other hand, PD 472 required all logging concessionaires and lessors of pasture lands to develop areas for rice and corn production for their workers. Concerned parties were given incentives like financial packages, access to credit from Land Bank and other commercial banks, and suspension of the ownership requirements. With this, Marcos launched what was to be called corporate farming.

While the rationale for corporate farming may have to do more with food self-sufficiency, this scheme inadvertently deprived potential agrarian reform beneficiaries of available cultivatable land. By 1978, approximately 250 corporations that went into rice production were operating on 58,450 hectares of land. Other foreign firms like Caltex, Shell, Del Monte, Dole, and many others expanded production into soybeans, sorghum, mung beans; and by 1981, lands occupied by multinational corporations (MNCs) had reached 86,000 hectares. This made the average size of a corporate farm reach up to 402 hectares. For example, banana plantations expansion rapidly rose from only 3,400 has. in 1969 to 19,600 has. in 1983. MNCs did not buy or own lands, they just leased them or had joint ventures with government corporations (Putzel 411).

To aggravate the problem, rather than acquire idle, abandoned, or unexploited lands, many corporations encroached on farms already cultivated by tenants, small farmer-settlers and owner-cultivators. In effect, the productivity-oriented goals of corporate farming came in conflict with the equity-oriented goals of the agrarian reform program. Thus, rural poverty

incidence rose from 55.6% in 1971 to 63.7% in 1985 while the number of landless rural workers rose from 47% of the total population in 1975 to 50% in 1985. At the same time, rice production diminished by 39% between 1970 and 1981 due to the high cost of production (Putzel 412).

**Table 9. GO 47 Corporate Farms by Region**

Region	No. of Corporate Farms	Area (in has.)	No. of Firms Served
I	2	1,800	5
II	4	1,751.91	7
III	22	6,900.54	33
IV	24	25,354.5	64
V	1	790	9
VI	10	6,664.52	29
VII	None	None	None
VIII	3	10,509.7	10
IX	None	None	None
X	8	8,704.5	37
XI	21	23,542.0	73
XII	None	None	None
TOTAL	95	86,017.67	267

Source: LUSSA 1982, Annex A, Summary I, p. 303

**Table 10. Corporate Farms by Region and Clientele (Selected)**

Region	Participating Corporate Farms / Agro-Service Corporations	Clientele / Firms Served
I	MERALCO	MERALCO, PCI Bank, Phil. Electric Co.
II	Tabacalera , Central Azucarera de Bais, La Suerte Cigar, Monterey Farms	Keng Hua Paper Products, London Biscuits, Artex Dev. Corp., Pacific Banking, Carnation Phils.
III	Delgado Bros., Itogon-Suyoc Mines, BANCOM, Phil-Am Insurance, RCPI, Republic Bank, Universal Mills, Universal Robina, SGV, Vitarich	Hooven Comalco, Smith-Bell Co., Red V Coconut, Cummins Diesel, Bancom, United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB), La Suerte Cigar, Goya Products, Mercury Drug, Colgate- Palmolive, Bataan Cigar and Cigarettes.

<b>IV</b>	Benguet Agri. Corp., Foremost Farms, PLDT, PHIVIDEDEC, Republic Glass, San Miguel Corp.,	Benguet Consolidated, RFM, Consolidated Foods (CFC), United Laboratories, Fortune Tobacco, Litton Mills, Delta Motors (Toyota Phils.), Land Bank, Consolidated Bank, Family Savings Bank, Philippine Veterans Bank, San Miguel Corp. ANSCOR, Atlas Consolidated, Atlas Fertilizers, Phelps-Dodge, J&P Coats.
<b>V</b>	Royal Rice	Caltex Phils., Filipinas Shell, Marcopper, PAL, Kimberly-Clark, Consolidated Mining, Purefoods.
<b>VI</b>	Highgrain Farms, Agricultural Needs Inc., Mobil-Oil Phils., Victory Liner, Visayan Electric Co.	Liberty Flour Mills, Lopez Sugar Corp., Passi Sugar Central, Phil. Daily Express, Insular Lumber, Lepanto Mining, Equitable Banking.
<b>X</b>	CDCP Farms Corp., Mandala Agri Dev. Corp. etc.	CDCP, General Rubber, Franklin Baker, Phil. Veterans Bank, Reynolds Phils., BF Goodrich, Ford Phils., AG&P, Elizalde and Co., Tanduary Distilleries, Jardine-Davies, Negros Navigation,
<b>XI</b>	Alcantara and Sons, Davao Grains, Ace Farms, General Milling Corp., Golden Farms, Mindanao Rice Corp., TADECO	Holland Milk Products, Goodyear Tires, Standard Fruits, Dole Phils., Mariwasa, Philex Mining, Marsman Corp., Victorias Milling, Rustan's, Davao Fruits, Banco Filipino, Traders Royal Bank, Metrobank, California Manufacturing Corp.

Source: LUSSA 1982, Annex A, pp. 285–302

One contributing factor to the failure of the agrarian reform program was a crucial sub-component—banking. Because banks’ financial orientation and practices did not converge with the spirit of land reform, the mechanics of the program focused greatly on compensation to the landowner. As a result, the process of land acquisition became tedious and burdensome for the targeted beneficiaries. Because of Virata’s conservative views and corporate training, the option the Land Bank employed in compensating dispossessed landlords was to pay them in cash. Sixto K. Roxas, creator of the concept of an agricultural bank, argued that “monetizing land and that this capital transfer transaction does not create new wealth.” (quoted in Tadem 407). For Roxas, the Philippines should have followed instead the Taiwan model

wherein dispossessed landowners were given government shares in publicly-listed corporations, making them capitalists and generating wealth beyond the agricultural sector, perhaps in a regime wherein financial instruments could be used by landowners to finance industrial ventures so long as they are related to agriculture, such as post-harvest facilities, processing plants etc. This proposed scheme could thus strengthen the country's agro-industrial sector. In this manner, land ownership conversion was complemented by wealth conversion (LUSSA 407-8).

Indeed, observers and analysts point the finger on the LBP for the dismal accomplishment record of PD 27. Of the six stages in Operation Land Transfer, the fourth or land valuation, was where the process bogged down continually and where the largest backlogs were recorded (Putzel 140). In the end, landowner compensation became the "overwhelming preoccupation of the implementing agencies" (Valencia 78). As Valencia further notes, the high repayment default rate by Emancipation Patent (EP) holders reached 90% due to the burdensome amortization payments and high costs of production. Land valuations were overpriced by as much as 72% so that land transfer became just another market transaction, and there was a subsequent and inevitable loss of control over awarded lots by CLT and EP holders (Valencia 67).

The same observation was also made by the United Nations-Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) sponsored World Congress for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD). After a field visit to the country shortly after the downfall of the Marcos regime, WCARRD noted that agrarian reform was hampered by strong landlord resistance and the lack of political will on the part of the government. Specifically, the Report noted that OLT was hampered by problems with land valuation, a complicated payment system and a lack of a nationwide cadastral survey. The Report also noted that while PD 27 exempted other crops due to the Philippine government's obligations to the international market, this exemption failed to provide intervention to 340,000 tenants cultivating 705,800 has. of sugarcane, coconut, tobacco, and other and other lands that could have benefitted from agrarian reform (WCARRD 79).

Another contradiction had to do with the coverage of PD 27. Why cover only rice and corn? Why not other crops such as coconuts, sugar, bananas? This debate reflects the tension between proponents of agrarian reform and those who oppose it. Covering only rice and corn made Marcos' agrarian reform vulnerable to criticisms that the real intent was to target oligarchs but at the same time protecting cronies such as Benedicto, Cojuangco, Enrile, Lobregat etc. For one, Marcos' main opponent, Ninoy Aquino, and the Cojuangco clan, had interests not in rice but sugar. Also, rice and corn were essentially for domestic consumption and any shortfall may be augmented by imports. On the other hand, bananas, sugar, and coconuts were mainly for export and were top dollar earners. Because production of these crops required economies of scale, land reform would place production quotas at risk while rice and corn may be planted on small, individually titled lands without effect on the country's traditional export earnings. State intervention could then be focused only on support services—technology, irrigation, farm extension, and infrastructure to make the program viable. In short, land reform in rice and corn areas became feasible as these crops did not threaten foreign exchange receipts from the so-called cash crops (Kiunisala 19).

The Samahang Nayon received full support from government financial institutions, especially the Central Bank. However, the financial scheme designed by Dr. Sacay and the Cooperative Development Program was too complicated for peasants. When introduced, the scheme sounded good on paper and was a concept well ahead of its time. But the program's design and rationale were beyond the peasants' grasp. SN's design required a great deal of organizational cohesion, financial talent and unwavering commitment on the part of the farmers. In retrospect, SN implementation could have been done in stages. While changes or reforms do come in waves, there was a tendency to maximize what could be done at the shortest possible time.

The Masagana 99 Program was also a novelty as the program introduced an entirely new system of credit. Lender–creditor relations via the banking system were changed not only via massive government intervention but also with the entry of a new player—the farm technician—who helped design and implement the farmer's work plan. His signature was necessary to

process the loan. Previously, farmers only had to think of repaying his loan to one particular lender; this time the farmer had to come up with a detailed work plan, join the *Samahang Nasyon* and complete the requirements. Also, the farmer had to learn new techniques and methods that were unknown to him. If farmers were used to planting traditional varieties that required less effort to plant, the introduction of new hybrid or high-yielding varieties (HYVs) proved difficult for the farmers as it took time to master this new technology. Eventually, the farmer had to undertake this double burden in so short a time to qualify as a beneficiary.

### **Coconut, sugar, and opposition to Marcos' agrarian reform**

Albert Hirschman's theory of "highway effect" states that token land reform may result in heightened resentment and exasperation from non-beneficiaries of land reform. The theory likened non-beneficiaries to being on a two-lane highway and who found themselves on one lane where traffic is not moving while on the other lane, for beneficiaries, traffic has a smooth flow. Initially, both lanes were not working so everyone felt they were on the same predicament. But when the traffic on the other lane moved, motorists on the opposite lane expected the same. And when it did not, they suspected something foul (Kiunisala 22-23). Token land reform in countries in countries where land reform failed only aggravated social tensions and radicalized land reform non-beneficiaries. The same may be said of the Philippines.

Insurgency had shifted away from rice and corn lands prior to 1972 to sugar, coconut, and banana plantations. Peasants and farm workers in these areas became easy targets of radical peasant organizing. Indeed, peasants outside the coverage of agrarian reform suffered more than those in coconut farms and sugar plantations. Raging issues such as the coco levy fund imposed on small coconut farmers, the ill-effects of mono cropping, and the dismal conditions of sugar farms workers are hereunder highlighted as a way of comparing these areas with those under PD 27.

The biggest issue of tenants and small farmers in coconut producing areas was the so-called coco levy funds. Coco levy, or more correctly levies, was a series of tax measures imposed on farmers to develop or modernize

the coconut industry. There were four levies that were enacted into law between 1971 and 1981—the Coconut Investment Fund (CIF), the Coconut Consumers Stabilization Fund (CCSF), the Coconut Project Development Fund (CPDF) and the Coconut Industry Stabilization Fund (CISF).

Its history may be traced to a federation established by landlords from Quezon Province in 1947 called the Coconut Planters Association. In March 1956, the name was changed to Philippine Coconut Producers Federation and since then had been popularly known as COCOFED. Membership in the Federation consisted mostly of prominent landlords, many of whom happened to be big politicians. Its finances, though, were constrained as financing was based entirely on contributions. In 1968, the Cocofund Project was launched to raise 100 million pesos aimed to modernize the Philippine coconut industry by way of congressional lobbying. In 1971, Congress passed RA 6260<sup>4</sup> which was to take effect the following year. The law authorized the collection of the Cocofund from coconut farmers at a constant rate of 55 centavos per 100 kgs. of copra produced starting from 1972 until 100 million pesos was realized. Of the 55 centavos collected, fifty centavos went into the Coconut Investment Fund (CIF), to be held in trust by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and deposited with the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP). The remaining 5 centavos were to be used for administrative and operational costs of the PCA and COCOFED.

At the onset, COCOFED controlled the PCA by nominating three of the seven seats in the Board. By law, the CIF was to be owned by the farmers though they were represented by COCOFED. Once the Fund reached its goal of 100 million pesos, shares of stocks were to be distributed to the farmers in proportion to their contributions (or levy) to the CIF and determined by the receipts issued to them during delivery to oil mills or their sales agents. By the end of 1979, the coconut farmers' total contribution had breached the target with 110,395, 905.76 pesos including interests.

On August 20, 1973, another levy, the Coconut Consumers Stabilization Fund (CCSF), was imposed on coconut farmers with the signing of PD 276. The rationale behind the CCSF was for producers and exporters to draw subsidy to cover their losses from fluctuating copra prices in the world



market. Coconut farmers were levied 15 pesos per 100 kgs., and increased to 100 pesos the following year. Unlike the CIF however, receipts were not issued to farmers. From its inception in 1973 until 1978, the CCSF collected around 5.5 billion pesos, of which 1.65 billion pesos or approximately 30% were disbursed for subsidy. However, the rest of the funds could not be accounted for and became the subject of complaints and criticisms that led to its suspension in 1980.

Because the coco levy was an efficient and very profitable tax farming scheme, two more derivatives were implemented—the Coconut Development and Production Fund (CDPF) from June 1980 to September 1981 and the Coconut Investment Support Fund (CISF) from October 1981 to August 1982. In the meantime, President Marcos in 1975 authorized the PCA to buy First United Bank. The bank was later renamed United Coconut Planters Bank and PCA Board member Eduardo “Danding” Cojuangco was named bank president and chief operating officer. Money collected from the levy was deposited to the UCPB free of interest payments. With this money, Cojuangco bought 14 holding companies which held numerous assets including twenty-seven percent ownership of San Miguel Corporation, majority or controlling shares in shipping and insurance firms, a cocoa plantation, a management company, ten general trading companies and seven copra trading companies.

**Table 11. Uses of CCSF Levy**

Use	Amount (pesos / MT)	Share (in %)
Coconut Industry Development Fund (CIIF)	200	33 1/3
Subsidy	120	20
Coconut Farmers' Refund (CFR)	150	25
Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF)	80	13 1/3
Philippine Coconut Authority (PHILCOA) Coconut Research	20	3 1/3
COCOFED (scholarships, operations, projects etc.)	30	5
Total Levy Rate	600	100

Source: LUSSA 1982, 71

Table 12. Distribution of the Philippines' Sugar Exports, 1971–1977 (in 000 MT)

Destination	1971 / % share	1975 / % share	1976 / % share	1977 / % share	1978 / % share
Algeria	-	-	-	-	-
China (PROC)	-	-	-	199.3 / 16	283.8 / 11.8
Indonesia	-	-	-	10 / 1.1	-
Iran	-	53.9 / 5.5	-	-	-
Iraq	-	-	-	104.1 / 8.1	-
Japan	-	476.2 / 49	32.5 / 3.7	62 / 5.3	236.6 / 9.9
Korea (South)	-	-	-	71.7 / 6.6	5.3 / 0.3
Malaysia	-	-	-	42.2 / 3.6	40.2 / 1.7
Singapore	-	-	-	8 / 0.6	-
United Kingdom	-	51 / 5.2	32.5 / 3.7	-	-
United States	1,344.7 / 100	328.7 / 33.8	480.3 / 55.6	625.9 / 58.7	1,223.9 / 50.6
Soviet Union (USSR)	-	-	195.7 / 22.6	-	608.2 / 25.2
Others	-	62.4 / 6.4	123.2 / 14.3	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,344.7</b>	<b>972.2</b>	<b>864.0</b>	<b>1,124.2</b>	<b>2,419.0</b>

Source: LUSSA 1982, 95

Table 13. Production and Domestic Allocation of Sugar, 1973–1974 (in MT)

Region	Production	% of Production	Allocation	% of Allocation
Luzon	513,560.04	21	623,114.64	70
Visayas	1,662,956.31	68	160,229.49	18
Mindanao	273,992.32	11	106,819.64	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,450,508.67</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>890,153.77</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: LUSSA 1982, 96

**Table 14. Distribution of Sugar Output, 1974–1975, 1979–1980, 1980–1981 (in % share)**

Allocation	1974 – 1975	1979–1980	1980–1981
Domestic Consumption	30	46	44
Export	65	50	52
Reserve	5	4	4
Total	100	100	100

Source: LUSSA 1982, 114

**Table 15. Daily Average Wage Rates of Farm Workers by Farm Operations, 1975–1979 (in pesos)**

FARM OPERATION	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Plowing	6.92	9.61	10.34	11.53	11.64
Planting / Transplanting	5.46	8.19	10.65	11.40	11.50
Weeding	6.11	6.80	7.34	7.36	7.42
Fertilizer Application	5.45	6.66	9.84	10.09	10.18
Spraying / Dusting	8.24	8.30	8.88	9.65	9.20
Harvesting	6.00	9.32	11.59	11.65	11.76
Average	6.36	8.13	9.77	10.28	10.28

Source: LUSSA 1982, 107

## Post PD 27 Agrarian Reform

Operation Land Transfer (OLT) even if totally implemented, would benefit only 45% of tenants, 12% of landowners and 56% of all rice and corn areas. PD 27 disqualified tenants and agricultural (farm) workers in other croplands and non-owning workers in all croplands. OLT coverage is 5% of the total rural labor force, 31% of all tenanted farmland areas, and 8% of all farmlands. Thus, the exclusion of plantations and farms planted to export crops which in 1971 comprised nearly 40% of all agricultural croplands missed the larger source of land inequality. (Tadem 401)

In an interview with farmer-beneficiaries in Magalang, Pampanga (Alfaro) insights on the gains made by PD 27 provided interesting insights in

land reform. Ninety percent (90%) of all farmer-beneficiaries have completed their amortization requirements with Land Bank and their respective farm lots (with an average size of 3–4 has.) are now titled to their names. In some farms, planting rice three times a year became possible, while some farms can manage only two times a year. The rice planting seasons were interspersed with corn and vegetables (okra, string beans and bird’s eye chilies). Rice is now commercially profitable but risky as during the rainy season. Corn may be considered the profit-maker as it is planted during the dry season and is more resilient to flooding. In addition, sweet or golden corn fetched attractive prices at the market, averaging 2–3 pesos per piece. Chilies too have provided good income because of the huge demand in restaurants and home use.

If previous notions of the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) phenomenon was that Filipinos were driven to migration due to poverty, the interview with these farmer beneficiaries from Magalang, Pampanga indicate otherwise. Because the farmers now earn bigger from the land they own, this enabled them to send their children to school. In turn, the education their children attained enabled them to seek employment in the provincial center (Angeles), Manila, and abroad. The farmer beneficiaries pointed out that becoming an OFW required skills and an initial sum of money for application. These expenses can now be covered from the earnings made through planting. This departure from previous practices required them to pawn or sell lands. The improved living conditions that were accrued, as evidenced by dwellings and other material possessions, became possible because of land ownership, later complemented by employment by other family members in urban centers or abroad. Land thus became the foundation in improving the lives of peasants.

Is agrarian reform more on productivity or social justice? The answer is not either/or. It may be both but also it cannot be used as the sole criterion for either objectives. Agrarian reform is not a panacea for poverty reduction. Rather it is but one of the many instruments to eliminate or alleviate poverty. As shown above, agrarian reform improved the living conditions of peasants, though limited in number. From this asset, farmers were able to earn more and send their children to school or short-term training courses, which enabled

their children to work outside the farm and be employed in non-agricultural work which translated into more earnings or income for the family.

Studies have consistently shown that agrarian reform beneficiaries are better off than non-beneficiaries (Philippine Journal of Development & WCARRD 82). Even if PD 27 was limited to rice and corn farmers, this program created a positive impact on the lives of several thousand farmers, raised their social status and provided a strong basis for their social and economic independence. PD 27 may thus be said to be an accomplishment for rice and corn farmers in Central Luzon and those near Manila. But this only underscores the stark reality that elsewhere, peasants bore the brunt of predatory capitalism so malevolent during the martial law years.

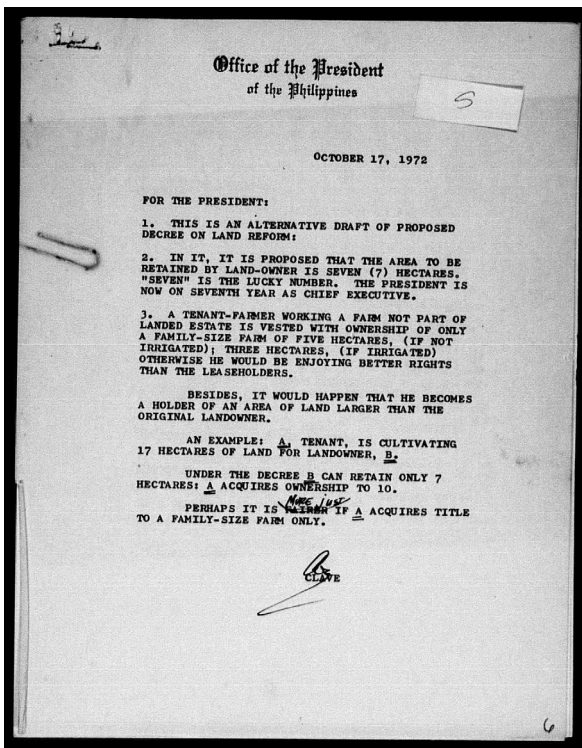


Fig. 1. On Retention Limit.



Fig. 2. Philippine National Bank's (PNB) Bank on Wheels Program designed to supplement the Masagana 99 Program by way of providing loans and even delivering them to the farmers in the fields.



Fig. 3. President Lyndon B. Johnson's visit to IRRI on 26 October 1966, the year the Green Revolution was launched with the introduction of the IR8 variety or the "miracle rice". Source: <http://irri.org/blogs/irri-history/this-month-in-irri-history-october>. Accessed 1 September 2016 4:57 PM (EST).

## Notes

- \* Portions of this article are found at this website of the Martial Law Museum in commemoration of Martial Law under the Marcos Regime in the Philippines: <https://martiallawmuseum.ph/magalar/the-marcos-agrarian-reform-program-promises-and-contradictions/>
1. For this paper, land reform shall mean land distribution while agrarian reform shall include the host of many support services in support of land distribution.
  2. Dr. Orlando Sacay worked as a consultant for rural development in many agencies prior to his appointment as undersecretary. His unit, the Cooperative Development Program, was later transferred to the Department of Agriculture as part of government streamlining and restructuring.
  3. *Selda* or cells or groupings. Farmers were encouraged to partner with other 5 to 15 farmers based on contiguity to access the loan jointly. Like the *Samahang Nayon*, group liability for the loan became the guarantee of lenders.
  4. Entitled “An Act Constituting a Coconut Investment Fund and Creating a Coconut Investment Company for the Administration Thereof.”

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# Collaboratively Translating *Katwiran*

A Note on *Reason Has its Reason*,  
an English translation of Rolando S. Tinio's  
*May Katwiran ang Katwiran*

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## Abstract

This preamble gives an account of how a director and two actors collaborated in translating Rolando S. Tinio's *May Katwiran Ang Katwiran* from Filipino to English. Our method was intuitive and inductive, finding the rules of translation as we went along. We first agreed to treat the play as a *Lehrstücke*, or a learning play, the aim of which is to demonstrate a dialectical way of reasoning. This kind of thinking, expressed in arguments and debate, shapes the lines and songs of the play. In turn, actors and audiences must listen to the arguments or reasons, assess them, and make a conclusion rather than engage emotionally with the lines. This “objective” intention of the play, coupled with an appreciation of its cultural context, guide the translation. We chose not to follow any

translation theory and instead asked three questions: Does the English translation convey the general Filipino meaning? Does it make sense in English? Does it work on stage? A yes answer to all three questions meant that the translation was workable. Some remarks on the reception of the play in an international theater festival in Yogyakarta, Indonesia conclude the essay.

### **Keywords**

*May Katwiran Ang Katwiran*, Rolando S. Tinio, *Lehrstücke*, Filipino-English Translation, Asia-Pacific Bond of Theater Schools, Filipino play, Brechtian approach, Ricardo Abad, Cholo Ledesma, Gabriel Tolentino

## Background

We staged *Reason Has Its Reason*, an English translation of Rolando S. Tinio's *May Katwiran ang Katwiran*,<sup>1</sup> for the 11th Asia-Pacific Bond of Theater Schools (APB) Theater Festival and Directors' Meeting, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in September 2018. The APB, founded in 2006, is a consortium of 27 theater schools from 19 countries in the region. The Ateneo de Manila University became a member in 2007.

We thought that showing a critically acclaimed and widely performed Filipino play would give APB member schools, notably its faculty and student delegates, a glimpse of Filipino cultural realities through drama—in this case, a study of the relationship between the poor and the rich, and more concretely, the relationship between the tenant and his landlord. Because we were performing for an international audience, and because *Katwiran* makes debate as its central motif, we reasoned that audiences would better appreciate the play in English. We considered, too, that some of the delegates, notably students who were not too conversant in English, would benefit from seeing English subtitles shown on stage during the actual performance. We decided to do so, however, only for the songs and for reasons of stagecraft: the lights could be dimmed, the lines would flash, and we can cue the audience that a shift in the play's action has taken place (see next page).

Rolando Tinio has an English version that he himself wrote. Or so we believed. We looked everywhere but could not find a copy. We thus decided, boldly, to do the translation ourselves—a collaborative translation between the director (Abad) and two actors (Ledesma and Tolentino).

## A Sense of the Play

Central and crucial to this translation process was getting a sense of what the play was all about in terms of narrative, structure, and intent. Here is what we summoned.

*May Katwiran ang Katwiran* falls in the tradition of the *Lehrstücke*, a “lesson play” or “learning play” in German (“*Lehrstücke*”). Didactic in form, the play is associated with Bertolt Brecht whose own *Lehrstücke* took on a political color, the color of Karl Marx. Brecht's aim, however, was not



Fig. 1. The tenant sings about the tribulations of being poor, his voice out of reach from the landlord Both characters on a raft shaped by a light. Notice the English subtitles at the back.

to teach Marxism but to encourage among actors and audiences a kind of dialectical thinking that he hoped would benefit an emerging socialist state (Hughes). No such hopes for a socialist state looms in *Katwiran's* horizons, but the benefits of dialectical (or critical) thinking, would seem to Tinio to be an important disposition to possess among those who wish to debunk an oppressive feudal system.

The characters in a *Lehrstücke* execute critical life-changing decisions. In *Katwiran*, the landlord (Señor), who is fleeing the law for murder, seeks the help of a tenant (Kasama) to go to a far-away spot in the mountains where he can catch a plane that will fly him to safety. The conversations between the landlord and the tenant in the course of this journey is the main action of the play. Their exchange consists mainly of explanations—or reasons. Why, for example, did the characters make the decisions they did? Why did they act in

one way but not in the way they would really like? How did they feel about each other? Why did they feel the need to explain their side to the audience, and sometimes in song?

Most of the time, the actors direct their explanations to each other, and it is in these exchanges that the dialectic of reasons surfaces. Every now and then, however, actors direct their lines (or songs) to the audience when their character desires a personal moment to reflect or to share a thought with the audience. These “informal” or “private” conversations reveal another dialectic, an internal one that operates under the “formal” or “public” dialectic of explanations taking place on the surface. In Scene 5 of *Katwiran*, for example, the landlord tells the audience how difficult it is to deal with tenants whom he sees to be dull, lazy, and opportunistic. He calls the tenant an “animal.” Yet the landlord must hide his “private” feelings in “public” interaction lest the tenant, in the landlord’s estimation, abandon him in the mountains or slay him with the aid of an accomplice.

Actors and audiences must consider informal and formal levels when they listen, assess and for the actors, perform the arguments. Only in this way can they think and act in an “objective” manner. By not siding with anyone, by not letting one’s feelings cloud thoughts, and by focusing on the need to evaluate positions, audiences and actors are able to exercise their critical faculties while watching the play. To achieve this kind of critical appreciation in performance (rather than simply upholding aesthetic targets) is the goal of a learning play. To quote Mueller (1994:84, cited in Hughes 2015: 198), “the *Lehre* is to be understood not as ‘recipes for political action,’ but as the teaching of dialectics as a method of thinking.” (Mueller 198).

Tinio’s version of a *Lehrstücke* is a play about class inequality in the Philippines. It posits that the persistence of this inequality over generations stems from the way people continuously exercise the socially patterned relationship between the rich and the poor. Both are at fault, so to speak, because it is the relationship, not simply individual factors, that embeds class inequality in a society. It is a relationship that manifests itself in language, demeanor, sentiment and thought, all of which comes into play when the

characters explain, in words and song, their positions regarding work, money, obligations, food, faith, trust, and the treatment of others.

### The Actual Translation

How, then, did we actually translate Tinio’s learning play?

We divided the 18 scenes in two parts, with about half going to the director (Abad) and the rest for the two actors (Ledesma and Tolentino) to work on together. Each of us had the task of translating the text from Filipino to English based on our understanding of *Katwiran* as a *Lehrstücke*. At one point, one of us observed that the English translation he was doing resembled the tone of the English appearing in Wilfredo Ma. Guerrero’s plays, i.e., formal and studied, the way Filipinos speak English. That observation made us realize that whether or not we followed Guerrero’s style (and we made no conscious effort to do so), the English text we produced felt “natural” when spoken by Filipinos. The bias coming from our cultural DNA, i.e. being Filipinos translating a play from Filipino to English, helped to assure that our translation becomes “Filipino English”.

We noted this point as we reviewed each other’s drafts and made revisions. We eventually completed a draft of the performance text that Abad reviewed for continuity. Vincent de Jesus, the musical designer and composer, added some changes in the lyrics to align them with the tempo he had in mind. Actors, in turn, memorized the English lines and during rehearsals, added slight changes to produce a more natural delivery. We also simplified some English words to accommodate an international student audience, many of whom do not speak English confidently. The actual performance also yielded improvised words and phrases, some of them in Bahasa Indonesia, but these do not appear in the translation found in this issue.

*Katwiran* is a play with songs, so the text adds poetry to the prose. The prose part contains two sections. The first covers the “formal” or “public” exchanges between the landlord and the tenant as well as the conversations among the landlord, the tenant, and the three rebels. The second section encompasses the character’s “asides,” the “informal” or “private” expressions of personal thoughts that enable a character to explain his actions to



the audience. This breaking of the fourth wall is typical in Brechtian plays. In both prose parts, the language is rational, direct, and more specifically, instrumental since the characters have their own axes to grind in conversation, each one seeking to manipulate the other (or the audience) to satisfy a personal agenda. Both sections of the text also exposes its own dialectic, with the informal section, the substructure so to speak, standing in a dialectical relationship to the superstructure, that is, the formal exchanges between and among the characters.

Part of this “substructure“ is the character’s awareness of his class position and how this position surfaces in body, heart, and mind during social interaction—specifically, in the performance of social interaction. In this cultural context, the landlord will express himself in a superior, snobbish, and confident manner. The tenant, in turn, will be earnest but less direct as his actions and utterances arise largely from a cultural obligation to please the master. The tenant may feel aggrieved, but cannot retaliate with direct force, preferring instead to gripe in private, insult on the side, and mock behavior in humorous ways, acts consistent with what James Scott calls the “weapons of the weak.” Taken all together, and true to the *Lehrstücke*, the play discourages us to sympathize with any of the characters. We should neither romanticize to poor nor ridicule the rich. Rather, the play invites us, as sung in the opening song, to “look, observe, reflect.” and to consider “If the reasons are right/If the reasons are just, and to “Judge for yourself, you must.”

We had to internalize this advice in translating the text, most especially when the translators are also the actors who would enact the text and a director who would guide the performance in the spirit of a learning play. Thus, while we translated these lines literally as a first pass, we heeded to the demands of a dialectic as well as to the socio-cultural context of the original Filipino play in choosing the precise word, phrase, or image. As expected, we could not translate all words and phrases, idiomatic expressions in particular, and in these cases, we sought equivalences, if they were available, or paraphrased the line. Thus, “*mahal na langit!*,” a popular expression, which in the play was also used to allude to the steep price of getting to heaven, could not

be directly translated, and wound up as “Good Heavens!” in the English text. Always, something gets lost in the translation. At other times, we simplified heavy Filipino words in English translation to make the lines more intelligible. This was how *kadiwaraan* in Filipino became “principles” rather than “maxims” or “scruples.” Readings and performances further smoothed the translation, making sure that each actor clearly understood the line so he could react on stage in a truthful (and Brechtian) manner.

The songs, in turn, demanded a poetic or symbolic aspect to the translation. These vocal interludes, also typical of Brechtian plays, served as devices to “alienate” or “distance” the audience from the ongoing action of the performance and to learn something new about the character or the situation at hand. We hear, for example, about the landlord’s need to escape from the law and his plan to murder the tenant at destination. We hear of the tenant’s personal difficulties of serving an arrogant master. And also recognize the amorality of the three rebels in the irreverent way they sing about angels and God.

We translated the poetry of the songs as we did the prose, i.e., as faithfully as possible given an understanding of these interludes in the context of a learning play and in the cultural context of a feudal system. But the constraints on translation were greater. Constraint one: the songs came in rhyme and meter, and these were very difficult to transpose literally into English. We resorted instead to follow a rhythm (and a rhyme scheme if possible) that works in English. The composing genius of our composer, Vincent de Jesus, helped establish that rhythm. Constraint two: we could not always translate the images or idiomatic expressions alluded to in the songs. We again looked for equivalent expressions in English, or chose images that implied, rather than corresponded with, the Filipino. Our rules of thumb were a trio: does the translation convey the general Filipino meaning? Does it make sense in English? Does it work on stage? A yes answer to all three questions meant that the translation is workable.

## Reception

The festival audience in Indonesia received the play very warmly. Staged on a space without a set, but with a rectangle of light serving as a raft (see photo above), a few props, and basic costumes, the production and the performance drew many favorable comments from the international audience. It also generated, quite surprising to us, greater volumes of laughter compared to what we heard when we performed the same English version in the Philippines after the Yogyakarta conference. Incidentally, we also heard less laughter in Filipino versions of the play that we, the translators, have seen or joined in the past.

An immediate explanation might be the degree of alienation produced among audiences in different socio-cultural settings. Watching the production in the Philippines, Filipino audiences would find it hard to laugh, as it would be difficult to disassociate oppressive images of landlord-tenant relationships while watching a play. Filipinos may chuckle at the ironies, the play of words, and the body movements but may feel awkward to respond with greater glee because the topic of the play is very serious and very real.

These cultural associations are virtually absent in the Yogyakarta performance where the audience laughed heartily even in parts of the play that the performers did not find funny. This reflects, we surmise, a greater degree of alienation of the international audience from the socio-cultural moorings of the play. In Yogyakarta, *Reason Has Its Reason* was seen, in our view, as a comic satire of the poor and the rich, thus humorous, but one that, á la Jonathan Swift, has an underlying serious critique. In turn, several members of the audience who have seen a production of *May Katwiran ang Katwiran* and then saw *Reason Has Its Reason* when we restaged it in the Philippines post Yogyakarta remarked that while the English version has an interesting take, they prefer the original Filipino version because it was more relatable to them. We decline to comment further, only to suggest that the English version will produce varying receptions when it is shown abroad with an international audience or when Filipinos, especially those who have viewed or performed in a production using the original text, watch the play.

## **Conclusion**

Translation theories emphasize different aspects of the work (Mathieu). The sociolinguistic approach, for example, suggests that the social context defines what is and is not translatable. The communication model points out that meaning, not language, must be translated. In turn, the literary approach argues that translation is not a linguistic project but a literary one. Moreover, language has a built-in “energy” that in translation is drawn from the culture itself. We followed none of these approaches strictly, but in hindsight, shades of these three approaches guided our intuition as we worked on Rolando S. Tinio’s brilliant play.

## Notes

1. Tinio, Rolando S. “May Katwiran ang Katwiran,” *May Katwiran ang Katwiran at iba Pang Dula*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001.

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# My Two-Timing Love for Two Languages

Or: My Practice of Translation

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## Abstract

A kind of creative writing which is often overlooked is literary translation. Though translation might be a self-evident activity requiring little reflection given the need to communicate between cultures, there seems to be a lacuna between translation theory and praxis in this realm in which the literal and the literary often blur, at least from the Philippine perspective. It is in this light that I share my ideas both as a translator and a poet in this essay, in which I reflect on the practice of translation and the experience of editing a translation of a play written by the highly esteemed creative writer, stage director, translator, actor, and National Artist, Rolando S. Tinio. Originally written in Tagalog, *May Katwiran ang Katwiran*, had been translated into English for a stage production with a foreign audience by the talented stage director, actor, scholar, and translator, Ricardo Abad, who had collaborated with a team on the initial English translation. With the title *Reason Has Its Reasons*, the work was edited like polishing a gem, as may be gleaned from the edited version that follows this essay which became the occasion for this reflection.

## Keywords

Translation, Poetry, Writing Workshops, Translation Theory, Philippine Theater

Asked often about my “process” of translation as a longtime translator mainly of poetry, but later also of prose; and mainly of literary translation but more frequently now of technical translation (I have been requested to translate into English or Filipino senate and congressional bills, resolutions and position papers), I have been quite hesitant to explain even to myself what this “process” is or might be. I thought it was enough that I was in the praxis and was not obliged to talk about the theory.

But I guess one can never really avoid these things—an academic friend reminded me that even the most hesitant, informal, but obliged explanation was a theory in itself—since I have been requested to share my experience in various literary and translation workshops. And, in fact, let me recall now a recent engagement: I have been asked to actually *teach* translation to senior high school students as part of their creative writing course at the Philippine High School for the Arts. (The students were actually two in number, one for each semester, as there were dwindling enrollees in creative writing compared to the performing arts, such that after two semesters the attrition had taken its toll with zero enrollees. Since I actually found the one-on-one classes quite exhilarating and I hope my two students did as well, the eventual absence of students put a stop to my more or less relaxing Monday afternoons in Makiling.)

Thus I found myself scrambling to read up on what I was just actually doing, to explain myself to me, and to my student. I found some friendly, practical descriptions from fellow poet practitioners—Norman Thomas di Giovanni, Ben Belitt, Nathaniel Tarn, and Alastair Reed, to name a few—but also the critical theorists like Walter Benjamin, apart the translated poets themselves like Borges when he was meditating on the incarnations and mutations of his poetry in translation.

Recalling my “career” of translation, the first “hint of fate” that I was going into this direction apart from writing my own poetry was that when I submitted my first poems in Tagalog to the GAT (Galian sa Arte at Tula) workshop in early 1988, Rio Alma’s first remark was that they sounded like translations. Of course they were because they were originally written in English (after college I quite seriously took up writing poetry with English



as my writing language). I wanted so much to write in Filipino but my “translations” wouldn’t do. To be brief, the twists of fate were that I became the unofficial translator of GAT poets who were published in international anthologies, one who attended the Iowa Writers Workshop, and the GAT poet-singers who went into international concert tours (e.g., Heber Bartolome, Jess Santiago, and later friends like Pendong Aban of Grupong Pendong and the late Susan Fernandez) who needed translations of their songs for their program notes.

The feedback was encouraging when they returned—the translations were well appreciated and they kept being asked who their translator was. So the requests became more frequent and my next and first major translation assignment was to edit and translate, together with Mike L. Bigornia and Alfredo Navarro Salanga (both late and much lamented and missed) Rio Alma’s first bilingual *Selected Poems*. And so I went into a parallel “career” of literary translation from Filipino into English while I attended the UP National Writers Workshop in 2004 as a writer in English. The workshop was experimental as it involved only one genre, poetry.

And so goes my little back story of how I came into literary translation. Now I came to reflecting on this as I finished helping edit and hopefully enhance an existing translation of Rolando Tinio’s *May Katuwiran ang Katuwiran* which can be found after this essay. This, as I completed the 40th chapter of the 45-chapter novel, *Ilaw sa Hilaga* by Lazaro Francisco. So what have I learned so far as my work of translation literally ran parallel to my own work of poetry over more than three decades? Quite a few, actually.

Languages have different habits, different ways of creating meaning. And this is most pronounced between two languages from much disparate and different language families, such as the Germanic, Anglo-Saxon English, which came to us by way of colonization from the opposite side of the world, and Tagalog (the basis of Filipino, the national language), which is part of the huge Austronesian family whose speakers populate the territory stretching from Madagascar at the coast of Africa to Polynesia in the Pacific. (Languages of the same family, and much more in the “cousin” or “filial” rela-

tionship like Filipino native languages, have all the similarities you can think of, not really much difference/s.)

So translating between languages of such disparate families as English and Filipino, is really no easy task unless you love both languages. It is a task like transplanting meaning between two soils of different islands separated by oceans. It is an acrobatic act of close reading, deep understanding, and necessitating much manipulation and maneuver to render, especially literary works, in the literal, idiomatic, figurative, symbolic, emblematic, and metaphorical modes of the target language. Indeed, it is an act of love for both languages because the translator must intimately know either and both the source and the target language.

There is something perfidious about it, the act of translation is both artful and manipulative, but at the same time authentic and other-seeking. As the Italian adage so ambivalently states, “*Traduttore, traditore*” (translator, traitor), translation betrays the meaning of the source language only to reveal it and generate understanding and ultimately, appreciation. That is why there is really no accurate or perfect translation because there are many new ways of transplanting meaning as there are translators, from different places and lexicons, from different times (the Bible is translated continually, there are newer and newer translation editions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, there are a variety of ways of rendering idiomatic phrases in a different language and culture that constructs idioms differently, and there are numerous and endless amusing examples of untranslatable words).

Translation is the imperfect art, says Umberto Eco, but it is also the independent *afterlife* of a work of language, according to Walter Benjamin. In the relatively new field of Translation Studies, one of its advocates, our one-time conference speaker Lawrence Venuti, describes translation as both a process of “domestication” and “foreignization.” The translating or target language “domesticates” the source language by minimizing its strangeness through a transparent and fluent style; it “naturalizes” the source language and the process is sense-for-sense, free, and consists of dynamic equivalents (Venuti). “Foreignization” seeks to preserve the original cultural context in

terms of setting, names, and values literal, faithful, and formal equivalents and is often alienating (Outi Paloposki).

In my own estimation, the foregoing styles or methods of translation overlap and combine in practice depending not on the translator's preferences but on the necessities and ultimate literary goals and context. In my own case as a practicing translator, this becomes a "two-timing" love for my two writing languages, English and Filipino as I intimately know them. Rendering them intelligible to each other (or to their speakers and readers) is the only motivation for me to translate what I consider to be the best literary works, the supreme exemplars in the use of both languages or either language.

In another context, I am a victim as much of the English hegemony and American colonization when I love Robert Frost or T.S. Eliot or W.H. Auden or Seamus Heaney or W.B. Yeats. Just as I am impelled by my own Filipino-ness when I insist on the importance of a national language and express that love by translating into English—the language that has become my writing and creative language—the exemplars of our language, from Francisco Balagtas and Emilio Jacinto to Ildefonso Santos, A.G. Abadilla and Lazaro Francisco, and Rio Alma, Rogelio Mangahas, Lamberto Antonio, Ruth Elynia Mabanglo and numerous others of my contemporaries writing in the national language.

It is the same reason I admire our "regional" (for want of a better term) writers who persist in writing in their own language and in building their own bodies of literature (or works in the other areas or *larang* of knowledge), while acknowledging the need for Filipino because there is a Filipino nation being built out there. Many of these older and younger writers are bilingual and trilingual right at the start of their writing vocations, and have no compunctions about it. They are simply Filipino writers practicing out of a multicultural and multilingual nation. That is what we are, where we are now, more or less, as I estimate it in the development of the national language and in our engagements with our second "official" language.

And that is why, in the end, as I seek to explain myself to myself in my literary work, I find that I translate because I desire to partake in this engage-

ment of languages, in the act of transplanting, cultivating, and resurrecting meaning in and among the archipelagos of culture, as it were, and across the gulf of relative ignorance and non-understanding.

Makati South Hills  
Parañaque

# Reason Has Its Reasons

English translation of Rolando S. Tinio's "May Katwiran ang Katwiran"  
by Ricardo Abad, Cholo Ledesma, and Gabo Tolentino  
for the 11th Asia-Pacific Festival of Theater Schools  
September 2018, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

## Prologue

*Scene: In some province at the present time*

## Opening Song

*Look, observe, reflect  
Consider carefully  
The course of a life  
You already know.*

*Each of the characters  
Play a role  
In a society  
That no one can refuse.*

*When conflicts arise  
Don't take it personally  
It's class and point of view  
That go toe-to-toe.*

*Look, observe, reflect  
Consider carefully  
Does it make sense at all  
Does reason have a reason at all*

ONE ACTOR: In this play, we will not attempt to move your heart. Rather, we ask that you exercise your critical faculties. We'd like you to take a second look, so to speak, about the way certain people reason out their beliefs, their taken-for-granted, common sense understanding of their world. Do not simply agree to what the characters are saying, and say "Oh well, that's life." Rather, ask: "Should it be that way?" So scrutinize what they are saying, and assess if their reasons are reasonable at all. And reflect on your own experience.

*Don't ever assume  
That the life you have  
You cannot avoid  
And you have to accept it all*

*Do consider carefully  
If what you consider  
By your own judgment  
Is reasonable at all*

*Imagine that life  
Can be changed  
If there's something wrong  
Set it right, my friend.*

*Look, observe, reflect  
Consider carefully  
Is the reason you hold on to  
The reason of a fool?*

## Scene One

### The Agreement

SEÑOR/HACIENDERO/LANDLORD

I need somebody who I can trust to bring me to the plain  
[pasture/pasture lands] on the other side of the mountain.  
Can you recommend anybody?

KASAMA/FARMER/TENANT/SERF/PEON/WORKER

You can trust me, sir. I'll be ready in a week.

SEÑOR I'll be delayed if I have to wait a week.

KASAMA If I rush my work in the field, or if I'm lucky enough to find  
a nephew or cousin who can take my place, I can go with  
you in three days.

SEÑOR Don't you understand that I'm in a hurry? I cannot waste a  
day, not even half a day.

KASAMA Sir, my father and brother need my help in farming across  
the cliff. I prepare them food and bring them home at noon.  
I plough the fields before I go home to prepare dinner.

SEÑOR If I offer you five pesos, can you find a replacement in five  
minutes?

KASAMA Everyone here is (busy) sowing. My cousins and nephews  
are in the town center. Maybe if it were August or  
September...

SEÑOR Will fifty pesos solve your problem?

KASAMA I'm not asking you to raise the price, sir.

SEÑOR Okay, five hundred. I won't go higher!

KASAMA Five hundred...that's a lot of money, sir, but you don't have to. You—your father, your clan—we owe you our lives. It's an honor to help you as much we can. But unfortunately—

SEÑOR I mean, look—and it's a good thing you know who I am—we'll understand each other fine. I'll test you. Ready?

KASAMA Yes, sir.

SEÑOR Would you be able to live, to make a living, if you didn't work in our lands?

KASAMA No, sir.

SEÑOR Are we obliged to support you?

KASAMA [after thinking hard] No, sir. I think.

SEÑOR You *think*? Can you be sure of your answer? *I think* it's hard if you just *think* and *think*.

KASAMA Eh...

SEÑOR Let me help you. It is not actually our responsibility to support you—or anyone who lives here with you. Correct?

KASAMA That's correct, sir.

SEÑOR Okay, now... Do we treat you well?

KASAMA Oh, very well, sir!

SEÑOR There is nothing wrong with the way we treat you?

KASAMA None at all, sir!

SEÑOR Really?

KASAMA I swear, sir.



SEÑOR                    Okay, I believe you... Now, understand this. If not, you might expose your stupidity. This is the question. If I ever struggle—and remember this rarely happens—if I ever run out of money, and you are the only person I can ask for help—but because of whatever reasons and excuses that may be important to you, but obviously don't mean anything to me—because of these excuses, you cannot help me—what do you think will happen?

KASAMA                [smiles, but doesn't answer]

SEÑOR                    Why aren't you answering me?

KASAMA                Sir, I'm confused with your question—it's so long. Can you repeat it, sir?

SEÑOR                    Aba, of course not! It's your responsibility to listen to what you're asked. If you had a problem with the question, you should have said it earlier. It's too late now! The only thing you can do is to think and to pray that you'll somehow be able to answer, whether or not you understood the question.

*In this world  
There are two kinds of people  
Those who question  
and those who answer  
Who of these will falter and break?*

*If it is the poor who ask  
It is harder to ask the question  
You must ask and be exact  
But to answer you might mess up*

*So never complain  
If it's your turn to answer  
Someone must always answer  
Or we'll be bored waiting  
Unlucky you, boy, what a mess  
But you've no choice but to answer*

KASAMA Ah, I know what you mean now, sir! If I cannot help you in your struggle, by all means, punish us!

SEÑOR Oh?

KASAMA You can tell your farmhands not to give us anything to sow.

SEÑOR Really?

KASAMA You can take our carabao to make up for our debt that is long overdue.

SEÑOR What else?

KASAMA Is there anything else?

SEÑOR You're forgetting one very important thing.

KASAMA [after thinking hard] You can kick us out of your land!

SEÑOR Very good! Siyento por siyento.

KASAMA Just one thing, sir. May I know why you're in a hurry? It will help me weigh things out.

SEÑOR Unfortunately, I've told you everything I can tell you.

KASAMA [after thinking] If that's the case, sir, I cannot do anything but go with you right now. I will just prepare. One moment, sir. [exit]

SEÑOR

[to the audience] I knew that's how our conversation would turn out. I just made it longer so that he won't complain that he wasn't given enough time to make up his own mind. But I have him by the neck, because I am Totoy del Prado y Ejercito, the son of a landlord from the Spanish royal bloodline.

My father sent me here to escape...because I killed some woman. [She was married but separated and she wanted me to marry her.] Now, a helicopter is coming to get me on the other side of our mountain, there. I will be brought to our island somewhere, where I will be transferred to our airplane that will bring me to our hotel in South America. Of course, I did not reveal this to the person I was just talking to, because I'm sure he will take advantage of me and my status, and find out about the one hundred thousand dollars I've hidden here.

Of course, when the helicopter gets here—and so that it doesn't get complicated—we'll get rid of him. Here is the scenario...I'll let him on the helicopter and drop him head first into the Pacific. If he dies, just think about the suffering he won't have to go through anymore. If he lives, then it's a divine miracle that even I cannot claim.

*Be kind and be good  
To whom you owe  
So you won't capsize  
When it's time to pay*

*You must know  
There is no escape  
You'll be finished  
If you resist*

KASAMA            Let's go, sir.

SEÑOR             Why do you have a bolo?

KASAMA            We might run into some snakes.

## **Scene Two**

### **We Must Cross the Lake**

KASAMA            We'll save a lot of time if we can cross this lake instead of walking around it—we'll have to walk ten kilometers.

SEÑOR             I'm tired. Go build a raft.

KASAMA            We don't have supplies. I only brought this bolo, it's not even sharpened. We were in a hurry, I wasn't able to prepare.

SEÑOR             There are lots of bamboo and vines out there. Find a way.

KASAMA            It might get dark. It might take us longer.

SEÑOR             You can build the raft in two hours, if you use your brain. Put it in your mind that I have a desperate need! If I don't make it to the other side of the mountain on time, my life might be in danger.

KASAMA            We'll find a way, sir!

### Scene Three The Raft Has a Deadline

- SEÑOR            Sun is going down, you're not yet done chopping wood?
- KASAMA        How, sir? I had to get some vines. I climbed high trees. There were three snakes that almost bit my leg—I killed them one by one.
- SEÑOR        I'll time you. I'll give you...let's see...exactly one hour to chop wood...and one more hour...no...half an hour...to tie them together.
- KASAMA        Sir, I think three hours is too little even just for gathering wood. We need to choose the right wood, older wood. And we'd be lucky to build the raft in two hours. We cannot rush it, sir—waves are strong at night, it might break.
- SEÑOR        One hour for the wood, half an hour to build the raft.
- KASAMA        Sir, I'm alone and the blade isn't sharp.
- SEÑOR        It isn't the blade that's not sharp. But, okay, I can be reasoned with. I'll give you a fifteen-minute extension. But I'm telling you—if you don't finish in an hour and forty-five minutes... [deliberately cuts the sentence]
- KASAMA        What will happen, sir?
- SEÑOR        You'll see.

## Scene Four

### I Need a New Deadline

- SEÑOR            You know you only have a minute left.
- KASAMA        I've chopped three bamboo. There were so many hornets in the trees.
- SEÑOR            Forty-five seconds...
- KASAMA        Sir, I still need three more, so that the raft isn't too narrow. And we need supports in the middle and on both sides—I'm planning to split one bamboo into three for this. That makes four, right sir? Well what do we use to row? Sir, it seems like we need to chop five more bamboo. I have one hour and forty-five minutes for three bamboo. That makes it thirty-five minutes for each one. We need five. If I add it up, let's see...[marks in the dirt to aid in his computation] I need three more hours.
- SEÑOR            Two hours and fifty-five minutes, idiot! Even with math, you'll take advantage of me.
- KASAMA        Sir, I just gave myself a tiny bit of allowance.
- SEÑOR            Who gave you the fucking right? Start tying the wood together. If you don't finish in half an hour... [deliberately cuts the sentence]
- KASAMA        What will happen, sir?
- SEÑOR            Oh, you'll see when the time comes. Half an hour, ha! I'm going to take a nap because I'm so fucking tired of waiting.

## Scene Five

### What The Landlord Really Feels

SEÑOR

I'm running out of patience! How are we not going to take forever? He's a lazy shameless fool! He's like a... chisel, you know? If you don't hammer it, it won't cut... He keeps making excuses, he has no imagination. How are people like that ever going to lift themselves? It's so hard, mind you, I have to weigh myself against this animal. If I don't, I might be killed. I don't know this place. What if he's waiting for an accomplice, which is why he's delaying me on purpose? What if he's spotted the money I have with me? I need to be extra careful! I didn't even try to nap. I just said that to see if he has an ulterior motive. I gave him some extra time but I advanced my watch. So he has little time left. The monkey is clever, as they say, but you can monkey with him in the end!

## Scene Six

### What the Tenant Really Feels

KASAMA

[after placing the raft aside] Poor son of Don Fulgencio—he has no tolerance for hardship! He's not used in traveling by foot, especially under the burning sun—that's why he's all hot headed! I have got to finish this. Surely his needs are severe, that's why he's full of complaints. Honestly, I am not afraid of his threats. I didn't finish cutting the bamboos on time earlier but he didn't do a thing to me. He's all words. Once you get used to them, they enter one ear and go the other.

*God sees and knows all  
You can do and take on  
Even the impossible  
If not how can one  
Do anything at all  
Or shoulder everything  
Suffer the fullest*

*Do you think  
It's easy to make it through  
When there is drought  
When there are floods  
Where is the food?  
Where is the hope?  
Only God knows*

*Doesn't God find a way?  
He doesn't doze off  
Heaven, to us  
Is oh so good  
But the land has no mercy  
But we can make it through  
Though we may  
Suffer the fullest*

## **Scene Seven**

### **The Reckoning**

SEÑOR                      It's 4:10. Your time is up. No more extensions. This is the reckoning.



KASAMA I've tied all the wood I can, but we're short on bamboo. The raft is too narrow, it will capsize. And we don't have anything to row with.

SEÑOR I'm a generous man. I'll give you one more minute to find something we can use to row. Go!

[KASAMA exits]

SEÑOR: [to himself] Thank God he doesn't have any ulterior motive. I gave him one more minute as thanks for being free from harm.

## Scene Eight The Raft Is Ready to Launch

KASAMA I can row with this staff. I loaded your bags already. I pushed the raft into the water.

SEÑOR Let's go! We've wasted too much time.

KASAMA But sir, I would not advise to use the raft. Let's just walk, it's all right if we go around far.

SEÑOR Are you out of your mind?! I've lost one whole afternoon—and now you still want to waste time?

KASAMA The raft isn't steady!

SEÑOR Does it float?

KASAMA It floats, sir.

SEÑOR Then it floats!

KASAMA            Because we're not yet aboard, sir. When we go on it, when we reach the middle of the lake, if the waves get stronger—

SEÑOR             I'll handle it.

KASAMA            It's too dangerous!

SEÑOR             I said I'll handle it! [Brings out a pistol.] Go, go! [To the audience.] If only I didn't need him until I get to the other side of the mountain, I really would have shot him by now. I'm going to die of exasperation! [To the KASAMA.] Go!

## Scene Nine The Raft Has Gotten Far

SEÑOR             You see? We've reached the middle of the lake without any problem!

KASAMA            [sings to the audience]

*We should really learn to trust  
The one who's educated  
The vision's limited  
Of the ignorant like me*

*If it's our bird-brain  
We solely depend on  
What will happen  
To the life we have?  
What will happen  
To the life we have?*

*Don't ever mistrust  
The one who knows the science  
If all one's ever had was the brain  
Of the beast of burden*

*Where else will our fortune  
Fall if not soaked  
In the spoiling soup  
Of pain and misery  
In the spoiling soup  
Of pain and misery*

## **Scene Ten**

### **The Raft Is Nearly Destroyed**

[Thunder and lightning.]

SEÑOR                    Why is the raft wobbling?

KASAMA                The waves are getting bigger! The winds are getting stronger! There's a storm coming!

SEÑOR                    Row faster so that we won't get caught in it mid-sea!

KASAMA                The wood is creaking! The vines are coming loose! The raft is coming apart!

SEÑOR                    Do something, you animal!

KASAMA                We're too heavy. Let's throw your bags overboard so that we get lighter!

SEÑOR                    Have you lost your mind? My stuff is in there! We're near the bank anyway, jump into the water and swim!

KASAMA           The waves are too harsh, how will I get to shore?

SEÑOR            You're a good swimmer, aren't you?

KASAMA           Yeah, I can swim, but my body can't take it now. I'm exhausted from what I had to do earlier. What are the chances I'll make it to shore alive?

SEÑOR            A greater chance than if I shoot you to save myself!

KASAMA           Sir, if only my body can—

SEÑOR            The Lord has mercy, He will not forsake you! Just think that you are putting your life on the line for my own good. (You'll be inspired and your body will be reinvigorated! And don't worry, while I'm rowing to shore, I'll pray for your success!) [Spurns the KASAMA, who will scream as he falls into the water.]

## Scene Eleven

### The Tenant is Free From Harm

[On the other side of the lake.]

SEÑOR            Where is that animal! I've been waiting and waiting! It's dark. There might be bandits around here. That imbecile is putting me in danger!

[The KASAMA appears, out of breath and limping.]

SEÑOR            Why did you only get here now! I've been worrying about you!

KASAMA        The Lord loves me, and continues to bless me! I thought I was out of strength, but I was able fight through the waves. Something struck the back of my neck and I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I was on the shore, the storm subsided. Thank you, dear sir, for your prayers! I may be weak, hungry, and my ankles hurt a little but here I am, safe and sound!

[The actors will sing in praise to two very important qualities of people: Perseverance and Willpower.]

*When you want something  
Make yourself strong  
Do not be afraid  
If it all goes wrong*

*As long as you're not scared  
And you persevere  
Wherever you will go  
You will not falter*

*You'll always get your way  
If you have the will  
You'll only ever fail  
If you're stupid and full of fear*

*Always remember this:  
You hold in your hand  
The fate you will have  
It's all up to you*

## Scene Twelve

### Dialogue About the Division of Food

- SEÑOR                    We need to save food. If not, we won't have anything for tomorrow. Our ration today is...four pieces of lemon bread and three slices of cheese. The division needs to be fair.
- KASAMA                That's easy, sir! We each get two slices of bread and one slice of cheese, and then let's split the last slice into two equal halves.
- SEÑOR                    Is that fair?
- KASAMA                According to the principle of arithmetic that I learned in grade one, sir.
- SEÑOR                    But should the principle of arithmetic be used in this situation?
- KASAMA                Shouldn't it, sir?
- SEÑOR                    We are facing a moral situation. There's a far greater principle that covers these kinds of situation.
- KASAMA                What, sir?
- SEÑOR                    The principle of SOCIAL JUSTICE.
- KASAMA                What a nice name!
- SEÑOR                    Let me explain... According to the principle of social justice, the distribution of life's comforts needs to be fair/just. And it is only fair/just when each person receives what is apt, I repeat, what is apt to their own needs. Thus, everyone's comfort is equal, not because what they strive for is equal, but in the end, the happiness they feel is equal.

- KASAMA           What a great principle...
- SEÑOR             Now...it is clear everybody has different needs. Someone with long limbs, needs a larger mosquito net. Someone who easily gets cold needs a thicker blanket. Someone with crippled legs needs a cane to walk properly. Here... I got you a walking stick. I don't need it because nothing is wrong with my legs. You're the one limping, which is why it is only fair for me to offer you the walking stick [offers the stick]. Is that example clear?
- KASAMA           Crystal, sir. What a great example!
- SEÑOR             Now, let's discuss the question about the four pieces of bread and three slices of cheese. I'll test you again.
- KASAMA           Sure, sir, so that I will learn.
- SEÑOR             Are you used to physical hardship?
- KASAMA           *Naku*, yes sir.
- SEÑOR             Why is that?
- KASAMA           Oh, that's a given when you're poor. When did we ever have a taste of ease?
- SEÑOR             Very good! Therefore, you usually run out of food?
- KASAMA           Naturally, sir. As long as there's drought, storms, or floods, or if the locusts devour our crops, then we're low on rice, the vegetables are rotten, the fish in the streams drift to wherever, and even salt is as expensive as gold. We are lucky if we can have a taste of food once a day. And that is not unlikely to happen, sir!
- SEÑOR             Your observation is very good! But how do you survive?

KASAMA           By the mercy of God! Even if we run out of food, even if we lack sleep and rest, look at us—still as strong as a boar!

SEÑOR            You poor people are really amazing. On the other hand... there are people like me. In your opinion, am I used to fate being cruel to me?

KASAMA           You? *Naku*, of course not, sir!

SEÑOR            Why do you say that?

KASAMA           E how would you get used to that, when you are surely rich in everything?

SEÑOR            You have a very sharp mind—you should have been a scholar!

KASAMA           I just got lucky, sir.

SEÑOR            Then let's see... According to the principle of fairness that I outlined to you earlier, how would you divide the four pieces of bread and three slices of cheese. Be careful. Consider what I asked, and what you answered...

KASAMA           That's easy, sir. You're used to being full, I'm used to being hungry. Your needs are twice as much compared to mine. In this situation, three pieces of bread is to one piece bread; two slices of cheese is to one slice of cheese. Is that right, sir?

SEÑOR            Your intellect is outstanding! Just one thing..you're forgetting one thing.

KASAMA           Is that so?

SEÑOR            Okay, think about it.

KASAMA           [thinks hard]



SEÑOR                    Got it?

KASAMA                I don't get it, sir. My brain is not used to challenges like this. That's why I didn't finish grade school.

SEÑOR                    You give up?

KASAMA                I give up, sir.

SEÑOR                    Think about this. Who brought the bread and cheese? In fact, who *bought* the bread and cheese? Who is the true and sole owner of the bread and cheese?

KASAMA                Oh, forgive me, sir! In my ignorance, I did not consider that. I have no right to the food you brought.

SEÑOR                    Your deduction is spot-on.

KASAMA                You can have it all, sir. I'm not that hungry anyway!

SEÑOR                    Tsk, tsk, tsk... that's not what I wanted to say. I need to give you something.

KASAMA                But that will go against the principle of SOCIAL JUSTICE!

SEÑOR                    Yes, and no. Because there is an even greater principle in the life of society—the Law of Generosity—what the theologians refer to as Charity—the most beautiful trait that can live in the heart of man! How could I even bear to eat and eat in front of you, while you just stare and watch me chew? If the rich do not take care of the poor, wouldn't that be disgusting? Yes, it is our responsibility, I repeat, our responsibility to open our hearts to the likes of you. It is said in Scripture, “Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” So accept these alms...half

a piece of lemon bread. Take it, and if you wish to reward my kindness, pray for me to St. Peter.

KASAMA [reaches for the bread] To St. Peter, St. Joachim, St. Isidore, St. Martin, and St. Barbara, the patron saint of my late mother!

[eats the bread as if extremely hungry]

SEÑOR A favor please! Take it easy when you eat your bread. I don't want your food to be finished while I'm not even halfway!

[Actors sing about Social Justice]

*The world order*

*Is based on one*

*Primary rule*

*Social Justice*

*All you lords and ladies*

*Just make sure*

*That your Social Justice*

*Isn't false justice*

*When there's danger*

*Look to the rich*

*How will you be refused*

*By Social Justice*

*All you lords and ladies, etc.*

*Those without rights*

*Won't be ignored*

*So that they can put in place*

*Social Justice*

*All you lords and ladies, etc.*

*The poor have the upper hand  
They won't be in the cross-hair  
When it is compromised,  
Social Justice*

*All you lords and ladies, etc.*

### **Scene Thirteen**

#### **We Must Avoid the Bandits**

[The two are sleeping under the tree.]

SEÑOR [suddenly wakes up] Wake up! Something's rustling in the bushes!

KASAMA Probably birds, or lizards.

SEÑOR Can you be sure they're not bandits spying on us?

KASAMA It might be bandits.

SEÑOR Aren't you scared?

KASAMA They're easy to talk to.

SEÑOR If they slit your throat, how will you talk to them?

KASAMA They don't kill people just like that. More often than not, they stand up for the oppressed against the oppressors.

SEÑOR It seems like you're friends with them. Tell me the truth.

KASAMA I know some of them. Don't worry.

SEÑOR You brought me here to betray me, haven't you?

KASAMA No sir!

SEÑOR Prove your loyalty to me.

KASAMA Okay sir.

SEÑOR [waits]

KASAMA [waits]

SEÑOR O?

KASAMA O what, sir?

SEÑOR Where's your proof?

KASAMA Aren't my words enough?

SEÑOR Are you fucking stupid? What use are your words to me?

KASAMA What would you like me to do, sir?

SEÑOR Like this... let's exchange clothes. So that when they get us, you'll be the target.

KASAMA Yes sir.

SEÑOR If they're easy to talk to, you have nothing to worry about, right?

KASAMA Yes sir.

SEÑOR And then I'll be at peace.

KASAMA Yes sir.

SEÑOR You agree?

KASAMA        Yes sir.

SEÑOR         Yes sir?

KASAMA        Yes sir, sir. I'll clean up our mess. [exit]

SEÑOR         [to the audience] That animal is playing with me! He didn't even hesitate. Now I'm even more suspicious. Would anyone in his right mind be so gullible?

[Sings.]

*Steer clear of people  
Who always say yes  
Don't be so sure  
They're on your side*

*When he says yes  
Be vigilant  
If you're not wary  
You'll be caught off-guard*

*Is there a fellow  
Who'll let himself be fooled  
If he hasn't talked to the devil  
To be bait for you*

*Look closely and ask why  
He acts like a fool  
Watch him bare his fangs  
The idiot is a snake*

*Life is so hard  
When you're a landlord  
Such great danger*

*You'll surely encounter*

## **Scene Fourteen**

### **The Disguising of the Landlord and Tenant**

[IMPROVISED SCENE. The landlord wears the tenant's jacket, which is a little tight and very smelly. The tenant wears the landlord's coat, which is a little loose and smells good. The landlord teaches the tenant to fix his posture, as if he were rich. The tenant is scared and nervous with pulling off the disguise.]

[One sequence of dialogue missing or excised in the translation]

SEÑOR            Just take a deep breath. Your breathing has to be relaxed. Hold your head up high. And stand your ground. You're not unlike a giant of legend that makes the mountains quake and the rivers and seas tremble when you place your mighty footstep on the earth.

KASAMA        Other people...won't they be jealous of me? Won't they resent me?

SEÑOR            Be proud if you want to be looked up to! Be firm if you want to be worshipped!

KASAMA        But Heaven, sir, Heaven! The angels in heaven will be appalled. They might punish me because of my excessiveness.

SEÑOR            In the name of the entire hierarchy of heaven, I tell you there is nothing to worry about.

KASAMA        Is that true?

SEÑOR            They're easy to talk to.

KASAMA            If you're being struck with burning daggers and being sent to the very depths of hell, how will you talk to them?

SEÑOR            They won't forsake you just like that. Actually, they stand up for whoever has something to say/influence.

KASAMA            It seems like you're close to them, sir!

SEÑOR            Of course! The masses and processions I offer up are non-stop. I memorize fourteen different novenas! I've read the lives of all the saints on the calendar! If only girls didn't love me so much, I would have been a monk and put up my own church!

KASAMA            Good heavens!

[Actors will sing about the utility of Power.]

*You cannot estimate  
The extent of their power  
It is such a mystery  
The virtue that they hold*

*When there's money and a name  
And an inherited brain  
It's like a jeepney you can't stop  
When it's revved up and running*

*Only the law of the jungle  
Rules over everything  
What is Right and Wrong  
Is one and the same*

## Scene Fifteen

### The Miracle of the Lemon Bread

- SEÑOR            Stop first, I'm hungry again.
- KASAMA        But you just ate.
- SEÑOR            That's why I'm hungry again. When the stomach is awakened, you get hungrier. That's the law of nature!
- KASAMA        Those that must endure, while suffering can endure more. Which is good, because the Pit of Grief is bottomless.
- SEÑOR            What is the opposite?
- KASAMA        The wealthy can never get enough wealth.
- SEÑOR            For example?
- KASAMA        Those who are educated need to study further. Those who own a lot need to gain more. Those with power need to expand their empires.
- SEÑOR            You now know life's most important principle. There, you'll find the key to Changing the World—the Matrix of Human Civilization!
- KASAMA        I understand everything! It's like there's something that sparked my consciousness...and suddenly...I saw a glimpse of the Meaning of All Life...the Mystery of Fate...the Knowledge of Universal Light! How many pieces of bread do we have left?
- SEÑOR            Ten. I'll eat two now. Eight will be left for tonight and tomorrow morning.
- KASAMA        [in a different tone] Eat what you will! Just leave one!



SEÑOR           What? I'll die of hunger!

KASAMA        Que Tonteria! Give me the bread!

SEÑOR           What will you do with it?

KASAMA        Just give it to me! [The landlord is forced to give the bag of bread. The tenant will throw all the bread except for one. The landlord is stunned.] Watch! Look at this piece of lemon bread. I will multiply it! Don't blink or you'll miss the miracle I'm about to perform! [The tenant closes his eyes and offers the bread to the universe. There's a mysterious ritual performed. After a while, he opens his eyes.] Why did nothing happen?

SEÑOR           I don't know with you!

## Scene Sixteen

### The Bandits Arrive

[They hear the galloping of horses.]

SEÑOR           The ground is shaking.

KASAMA        The steps of my mighty feet.

SEÑOR           No—horses! One... two... three... Let's hide!

KASAMA        Hide if you want to! I will face them.

SEÑOR           Are you sure you can take them?

KASAMA        You'll see!

[The landlord hides. THREE BANDITS arrive, armed and on horseback.]

BANDIT ONE [to the tenant] Partner, it seems like you're lost in our territory. Is there something we can do for you?

KASAMA Well, it's like this...I need to reach the other side of the mountain as soon as possible.

BANDIT TWO We'll take you on horseback.

KASAMA Just show me the way.

BANDIT THREE It's far, my friend. It looks like you're not used to walking under the sun.

KASAMA Esta bien.

[The tenant gets on the horse. The landlord shows himself.]

SEÑOR Friends, bring me with you!

BANDIT ONE Don't be so ambitious! With how you look, you're more fit to walk and crawl!

## SCENE 17

### The Landlord's Regret

SEÑOR [to the audience] Why did I ever exchange clothes with that idiot? I didn't realize the bandits here are such kind people. They know how to respect people who wear good clothes. What a shame! So I had to walk all afternoon. I didn't get lost though because I followed the horse's hoof

prints. But I'm dead tired and dying of hunger. I tried eating a guava that I picked from a tree along the way, and my stomach grumbled right away. Sensitive stomach, with a lining as thin as silk. What a hard life this is!

*(Sung to the audience)*

*Don't be scared of bandits  
People good and kind  
Dress well even if you look  
A fool, you're a saint in their book*

*Drum this into your head:  
If you're poor like me  
And in desperate need  
Who will save you when you bleed?*

*That's why, my friends  
Keep your pockets full  
So you won't have much to worry  
When trouble comes in a hurry.*

*God may bear  
The hands of fate  
Just be sure, when tomorrow comes  
You have always the upper hand*

## Scene 18

### What the Landlord Saw When He Reached the Plain

[The tenant is sprawled on the ground.]

SEÑOR                    Hey, what's this? Where's my suit? [Kicks the tenant.]  
Hey, are you asleep?

[Open's the tenant's eyelids wide.] Are you dead, you fool? [Hears someone approaching.] The bandits! And one of them is wearing my suit! [The three bandits enter, mounted on horses].

BANDIT ONE            Killed him because he made a fool of us.

BANDIT TWO            Questioned him, then brought him here on the plain.

BANDIT THREE        A well-dressed man, but no money.

BANDIT ONE            Isn't that enough to kill someone?

BANDIT TWO            It's a mortal sin to pretend you're someone else.

BANDIT THREE        You lose your trust in other people.

SEÑOR                    In that case, I'll be honest with you. That man is only a tenant in our land. I am the true landowner. I only changed clothes with him because...well...

BANDIT ONE            Your kindness is admirable!

BANDIT TWO            Your kindness must be rewarded.

BANDIT THREE        Your kindness must serve as an example to others.

BANDIT ONE            May we ask you some questions?

BANDIT TWO            To smoothen our relationship even more.

BANDIT THREE To foster dialogue among us.

SEÑOR All right, my friends. My life is an open book.

BANDIT ONE Did this tenant freely and willingly accompany you to the mountains?

BANDIT TWO Think well before you answer.

BANDIT THREE Be up front with us, you hear?

SEÑOR I will be up front with you. Please repeat the question.

BANDIT ONE I will repeat the question. Did this tenant freely and willingly accompany you to the mountains?

BANDIT TWO Did he freely and willingly serve you?

BANDIT THREE Did he freely and willingly exchange clothes with you?

SEÑOR Well...Let's just say that he did not get a chance to say no.

BANDIT ONE Because you held him by the throat.

BANDIT TWO Because you have the power to pin him down.

BANDIT THREE Because he will always say yes to anyone whose position is higher than his own.

SEÑOR That's the way it is.

BANDIT ONE That's the law of nature.

BANDIT TWO A chicken is no match for an eagle.

BANDIT THREE The survival of the fittest.

SEÑOR I believe we understand each other in many matters of life.

BANDIT ONE But wait, sir... Do you have any proof to show that you are what you say you are?

SEÑOR Aren't my words enough?

BANDIT ONE Papers are needed.

SEÑOR What kind of papers?

BANDIT TWO Just papers, no need to elaborate.

SEÑOR Papers, huh? [Will remove his money belt.] There! Have all the papers you want! [Throws the money on the ground.]

BANDIT ONE [Picks up the money and examines them.] You are truly a noble person!

BANDIT TWO Noble and Honest.

BANDIT THREE Honest and Reliable.

SEÑOR Thank you, my friends.

BANDIT ONE But we still have to kill you.

SEÑOR But why is that?

BANDIT TWO Because you take advantage of people who are beneath you.

SEÑOR But you yourselves said that this is the law of nature.

BANDIT THREE We were just leading you on.

SEÑOR Well, look at it this way, can I buy my freedom for a thousand dollars?

BANDIT ONE Well, look at it this way, your life is in our hands, your money is in our pockets.

BANDIT TWO What then can you sell?

BANDIT THREE Yes, what then can you sell?

BANDIT ONE You have nothing to sell, nothing!

BANDIT TWO You have nothing to bargain with, nothing!

BANDIT THREE You have nothing to count on, Mister Zero.

SEÑOR [Drawing out his gun.] But I do, my friends. And don't reach out for your weapons. Now give me my money!

[Bandit One will throw the money on the ground. When the landlord bends down to pick up the money, the three bandits pounce on him. They kick him until the landlord lies prostrate on the ground.]

BANDIT ONE You see, sir? This is the real fight—not the rich against the poor, not the wise against the ignorant. That's cheating! The strong versus the strong, that's the proper kind of fight! Skill against skill!

BANDIT TWO The eagle may devour a chicken, but the python will gobble the eagle!

BANDIT THREE And that sums up the law of nature!

SEÑOR In that case, who has the real power?

BANDIT ONE God, sir, God!

BANDIT TWO Even us three, we surrender to God!

BANDIT THREE For on Judgment Day, what good is our strength, our skills, and our weapons?

BANDIT ONE      Sir, get ready, the hour is near.

BANDIT TWO      Sir, sharpen your eyes and gaze at the clouds.

BANDIT THREE    Sir, closely watch the vastness of the sky and start to tremble.

SEÑOR            [falls into a kneeling position while watching the heavens] I see a reflection of something which looks like wings.

BANDIT ONE      The Archangel of Judgment Day!

BANDIT TWO      Sir, cock your ears and listen to the music of the heavens!

SEÑOR            [closing his eyes] I hear a swooshing sound.

BANDIT THREE    The flapping of His Holy Wings!

                         [The three bandits sing.]

*When down he comes  
the Archangel on Judgment Day  
What will happen then  
Peace and good will to all men.*

*When down he comes  
The Archangel on Judgment Day  
Sinners all the way  
A heavy price they'll pay*

*When down he comes  
The Archangel on Judgment Day  
Everyone will know  
Nature's secret high and low*



[The sound of an approaching helicopter is heard. A machine gun fires from above. The three bandits fall to the ground. A rope ladder descends from above. The landlord rises. He will pick up his stuff and climb up the ladder, and will head towards the heavens.]

The final song of the actors:

*In art the opposite  
Of reason can be true  
So never emulate  
A logic so hollow*

*Our way of life  
Ought to be changed  
We must turn our back  
To our exploitative ways*

*Wealth that comes  
From cheating must go  
Wisdom instead must be  
Knowledge pure and holy*

*What the country needs  
New rules, new ways  
A new social order  
A new covenant, no other*

*The educated among you  
Who judge all things  
Can you find the discipline  
To change your skin?*

*Can you manage  
To forego luxury  
So you do not swim like fish  
In a life so smug and selfish*

*Can you forsake  
Even for a while  
The worship of gold  
Can you put it on hold?*

*Can we align  
Our thoughts and our deeds  
And make Utopia a living dream  
Not theory, or thesis, or monograph  
For reading, only fit for kindling*

*Or to wrap a sandwich in  
For the annoying truth  
Is like an aching tooth  
We are so full only of ourselves  
Up to our neck in each other*

*-End-*

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# Book Recommendation

Jorge Mojarro's *More Hispanic than We Admit 3: Filipino and Spanish Interactions Over the Centuries, Quincentennial Edition, 1521-1820*

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## Abstract

The Jorge Mojarro-edited book, *More Hispanic than We Admit 3* (2020), takes a look at Filipino-Spanish engagements during the first 300 years after the Magellan arrival in the Philippines. This latest installment of the *More Hispanic than We Admit* series continues with examinations of interactions between the colonized (Filipinos) and colonizer (Spaniards) began in the first two books that came out in 2008 and 2015, respectively. The essays in the recent collection provide various perspectives in the treatment of different topics. While the two earlier books explicitly focus the reader's attention on the country's cultural history, all three nevertheless zoom in on Filipino agency inside a colonial context, posing the idea that Filipino-Hispanic culture was the eventual result of engagements between the natives and the Spaniards, not a top-bottom transmission.

## Keywords

Filipino-Spanish interactions, Filipino Hispanic culture, Philippine intellectual history, Filipino-Hispanic identity, Spanish colonial period.

Academic publisher Vibal Foundation's latest addition—the third—to its *More Hispanic than We Admit* series under its *Academica Filipina* collection comes as a timely read with the commemoration of the quincentennial anniversary of the Spanish arrival on Philippine shores. Edited by Manila-based Spanish scholar Jorge Mojarro, the book purports to discourse on “Filipino and Spanish interactions over the centuries,” as its subtitle proclaims.

The subtitle is nothing new. Five years earlier, Vibal Foundation released the Richard Chu-edited *More Tsinoy Than We Admit: Chinese-Filipino Interactions Over the Centuries*, and a quick survey of the publishing house's released titles will show its fascination on “interactions.” Mojarro's volume follows *More Hispanic Than We Admit 1: Insights into Philippine Cultural History* (2008) and *More Hispanic Than We Admit 2: Insights into Philippine Cultural History* (2015), edited by compatriots Isaac Donoso and Gloria Cano, respectively.

Despite having a different subtitle, the first two books hardly differ from the third one. While the two earlier books explicitly focus the reader's attention on the country's cultural history, all three nevertheless zoom in on Filipino agency inside a colonial context, posing the idea that Filipino-Hispanic culture was the eventual result of engagements between the natives and the Spaniards, not a top-bottom transmission.

In the last decade, scholarship on Philippine identity, especially those by non-Filipinos, has been shattering the idea of a monolithic Filipino self. The discourse is particularly on peripheral aspects—hyphenated, if one will—of this selfhood. This is seen in Donoso's explorations of the rich Muslim dimension—with traditions from the Middle East and Spain—of Philippine intellectual history in *Islamic Far East: Ethnogenesis of Philippine Islam* (2013) and *More Islamic than We Admit* (2017); in the essays in the aforementioned works, Richard Chu edited the 2015 volume, and those found in *More Pinay than We Admit* (2010), was edited by historian Maria Luisa Camagay.

In 19 essays, the foreword included, *More Hispanic than We Admit 3* aims to show the dynamics of Filipino-Spanish political and cultural cohabitation from the 1521 arrival of the Magellan expedition to 1820, three centuries later. Three of the essays—one from American historian William Henry

Scott (1921-1993), the lone foreigner to teach Philippine history at the post-war University of the Philippines, and two from psychiatrist-genealogist Luciano Santiago (1942-2019)—are posthumously reproduced in this collection, suggesting the importance given to them by the book’s editor in reconstructing the story of Spain’s first 100 years of colonial rule in Asia.

Scott’s 1986 piece (“Why did Tupas Betray Dagami?”) delves on how *Adelantado* Miguel Lopez de Legazpi’s 16th century version of gunboat diplomacy influenced the dynamics of relationships between native chieftains. On the other hand, Santiago’s two contributions—“The Houses of Lakandula, Matanda, and Soliman (1571-1898): Genealogy and Group Identity” and “The Brown Knight: The Rise and Fall of Don Nicolas de Herrera (1614-1680)” —tackle genealogical narratives. The first, published in 1990, shows how the Manila *lakans*’ pursuit of their self-interest juxtaposes with the Spaniards’ desire to solidify control of their Luzon outpost in the late 1500s. Santiago’s short but well-researched biography of Nicolas de Herrera, published in 1991, displays the late genealogist’s typical practice of teasing out the story of individuals from bare-bone facts found in archival documents. In taking a second look at Scott and Santiago’s essays, the old “Great Men” (or “Women” ) theory in historiography comes to mind, and one wonders whether, in reconstructing Spain’s first century in Asia, Mojarro is unconsciously showing a belief on the need to plot the milestones of those initial 100 years through the lives of the individuals who are the subjects of the three earlier-published works.

Overall, the essays provide a diversity of perspectives with which to view the colonial engagements (though there was no colonial situation to speak of during the half-century 1521-1571). Pieces on the historiography of religious encounters dominate, accounting for a fifth of the collection. It should also be interesting to note that the adjective “colonial,” which appears in a fourth of the titles, functions like a double-edged sword semantically: not only is it used to indicate historical period, it also describes the relationship status prevailing during that era (one party is colonized; the other is the colonizer), thus further nuancing “interactions” found in the subtitle.

The essays cover a wide range of topics: from literary texts written by Spaniards in the Philippines to Spanish missionaries' imagining of Asia (and the Philippines within it); from religious issues (evangelization, indigenous pagan religious leaders like the *catalonan*), to the economic construction of empire; and from the emergence of the local mestizo elite, *los criollos*, to the birth of Philippine artistic expression as a function of the intersection of Islamization, Hispanization, and the native resistance to the latter. In all of them, one can see hints of attempts to lay out a field of vision alternating between the local and the global.

The third *More Hispanic* installment is a logical continuation of the first two titles, but with a difference: Mojarro's volume specifies a time frame which the essays should cover. Donoso and Cano's editions do not do this. Hence, this most recent one is tighter in terms of historical time, making it much easier to establish chronological intertextualities.

There is, however, a confusing part in the book's title. Who is the subject "we"? Filipino readers, taking a cursory glance at the cover, would immediately think one of them, or a group of them, is addressing fellow Filipinos. Yet a quick check on the section "About the Contributors" would reveal more non-Filipino than Filipino essayists. The phrase "more Hispanic than we admit" thus gives the impression that non-Filipino Hispanists are telling Filipinos about their own Hispanic-ness, instead of Filipinos themselves (the purported "we") realizing that there is more to this identity than has been "admitted." The inclusion of non-Filipino authors renders the "we" problematic, especially in the case of the *españoles*, who cannot go any more Hispanic than they really are. Taking the cue from the two earlier titles from the series, the "we" refers to Filipinos—Filipinos who have yet to realize the full extent of how much Hispanic their identities are.

The book's subtitle should have been its title. For the most part, the essays are, indeed, about Spanish-Filipino interactions. Discussion of Filipino Hispanic-ness is largely relegated to the pieces of Marya Svetlana Camacho ("The Beaterios and Recogimientos in Manila in the Eighteenth Century: Religious Accommodation and Social Contribution"), Gaspar Vibal ("Philippine Art and Architecture Between Islamization, Hispanic

Colonization, and Resistance”), and to a certain extent, Santiago’s de Herrera genealogical tracing.

The potential confusion that can be caused by the “we” in the title gets amplified by the denomination for certain things happening during the Spanish era as “Spanish Philippine.” A case in point: Mojarro’s use of the label “colonial Spanish Philippine literature” in two of his three contributions (the third is his Introduction to the book, being its editor)—“The Defense of Indigenous People in Colonial Spanish Philippine Literature (1569-1581)” and “Colonial Spanish Philippine Literature between 1604 and 1808.”

With three cumulative adjectives preceding the word “literature,” and “Philippine” appearing as the third in the sequence, Mojarro locates the corpus as originating and produced in the country, that is, literature in Spanish written in the Philippines during the colonial era. This is inevitably a Spanish perspective, not a Filipino one—because when one talks about literature, one has to account for authorship (or “ownership,” if one will), world view, and target readership, not to mention purpose. A Spanish missionary writing in his language about Philippine matters during his nation’s imperial possession and occupation of the archipelago was not producing “Philippine literature”—and with ownership/authorship not Filipino, neither were perspective nor target readership—but Spanish letters. An analogy can be the case of Carlos Bulosan’s *America is in the Heart* published in 1943, was not considered “American” literature despite having been written in the United States, but “Asian American,” a literary work of hyphenated origin,

The years Mojarro marked (1569-1581 and 1604-1808) were clearly years of Spaniards writing in the Philippines for a Spanish readership. Filipino (read: native-born, not *peninsulares* or *insulares*) writing in *castellano* with the sophistication that would match that of Spaniards’ texts and destined for Filipino readers, would have to wait until the late 19th century to emerge. True, Ladino writers, with Fernando Bagongbanta and Tomás Pinpin as principal representatives, would appear sometime in the early 17th century, but their works have come down to our time as samples of early writing, mainly religious in tone and didactic in nature. In the case of Bagongbanta’s oft-cited *Salamat nang ualang hanga*, its bilingual text (the



Filipino line followed by a Spanish translation) reveals its *raison d'être*: a tool to help in learning Spanish, no different from the American period children's song which goes: "One day/isang araw; I saw/nakita ko; One bird/isang ibon; flying/lumilipad."

Whatever texts in Spanish appeared in the Philippines—prior to the clamor for political reforms during the 1880s-1890s Propaganda Movement—was clearly Spanish writing, or Spanish literature produced by Spaniards for Spaniards in the Philippines. It was, by no means, Philippine literature, as Mojarro himself reveals in the works he enumerates in his essays. Unfortunately, his definition of "colonial Spanish Philippine literature" takes out the element of struggle and critique of colonial rule present in the writings of Filipinos themselves—"we define 'colonial Spanish Philippine literature' as primarily the literature produced in the Philippines by any author from 1521 until...the second half of the nineteenth century." (459) [emphasis mine].

Fil-hispanic literary bibliographies list, among others, aside from Jose Rizal's two novels, his contemporaries Graciano López Jaena's *Fray Botod* (1874), Marcelo del Pilar's *Soberanía Mónacal* (1888), and Antonio Luna's *Impresiones* (1891)—works that tackle native [read: Filipino] identity politics in Spain's colony in Asia and which, at the same time, attack the colonial set-up there. Denunciations of Spanish colonization is one attribute principally absent in Mojarro's inventory of literary oeuvres. In short: "colonial Spanish Philippine literature" (writings by the colonizers) is not Philippine literature in Spanish (writings of the colonized).

Mojarro is correct, however, in batting for a balanced historiography, a "universal history that is viewed with consensus everywhere" (xi), as he says in his Introduction. He elucidates this narrative-making as a three-dimensional task, one that goes beyond a) "Spanish interpretations done in the context of colonialism"; b) "interpretations framed by Filipinos who tried to ignore any foreign influence or contribution to their own history" and c) "all prejudices resulting from American interpretations that have reproved the Spanish regime in the Philippines in order to justify their own intervention in the islands" (xi).

In the search for this “universal history,” he notes—with the quincentennial apparently in mind—that

much prevarication has greatly contributed to obscuring this three-hundred epoch, thus discouraging scholars from engaging with this past due to misguided notions [he calls them ‘fossilized preconceptions’ a few lines later] that equate it as nothing more than the history of foreigners in the archipelago. (xxiv)

Mojarro’s remarks call to mind historian Teodoro Agoncillo’s statement which shocked local academia in the 1950s: that there was no Philippine history to properly speak of before 1872 (the year of the Cavite Mutiny and execution of the Gomburza priests) because any history prior to that time was the history of Spaniards in the Philippines (Ocampo; Iletto, 497; Zafra, 454)

While Agoncillo might dispute Mojarro’s assertion of “misguided notion” the former’s claim, the latter is correct in arguing for a wider—global, that is—perspective in viewing Philippine historical events. He is right in saying that there is a much bigger context with which Spanish actions in the Philippines, even Filipino responses, should be examined. But there should be a caveat: it is easy to fall into the trap of Western metanarratives, where non-Western peoples, or the former colonized, are subsumed under the label of “the rest of the world,” and are seen as just acting in concert with, or merely following the lead of principal Western (read: former colonizer or now neo-imperialist) countries in the march of history.

The trauma of colonialism remains unhealed in these former colonies, evidenced by their economic underdevelopment. Part of the healing process for these now-independent developing nations is the telling of their stories in their own words. While there is a need to see local events from a much bigger field of vision for a much deeper understanding, these countries’ histories, the Philippines’ record of past national life included, should be told in their own voices. In the case of the Philippines, the task of striking a balance between looking from a bigger viewpoint and narrating national

experiences should be the responsibility of Filipino historians, present and future.

To conclude: *More Hispanic than We Admit 3* continues with the coverage of Philippine cultural and intellectual history initiated by its first two predecessor volumes. It also highlights Filipino agency within the colonial context and, like the first two, suggests that Filipino Hispanic culture/identity is less a matter of top-down transmission and more the result of engagements happening between Filipinos and Spaniards. But unlike the two, this latest collection applies a strict time frame in which these engagements are boxed—the 300 years after the Magellan arrival in the Philippines.

As a postscript: is the publisher pulling a prank on Mojarro, or are both conspiring to pull one on an unsuspecting reader by substituting the face of Sebastian Elcano (1486-1526) with Mojarro's on page 2?

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# Book Recommendation

Victor Merriman's *Austerity and the Public Role of Drama: Performing Lives-in-Common*

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## Abstract

What role does drama play in a society that is so thoroughly structured and governed by the logics of neoliberalism that even people who suffer the effects of Deficit Culture and the doctrine of Austerity cannot see through the dominant rhetoric and ideology? The author and dramatist Victor Merriman critically identifies the erosion of public discourse and politics as a key reason and places drama in the important role of reinstating the public and rebuilding democracy. My review of the book takes a transnational perspective, acknowledging my own positionality coming from the Global South in relation to the author's own context as a British scholar and artist in the Global North writing mainly on the British experience, but attentive to the book's exposition on and about drama as public art in the generic and universal sense.

## Keywords

drama, theatre, performance, public, counterpublic, public art, limits of liberalism, democracy

Contrary to the view that neoliberalism embodies the democratic ideals, the book *Austerity and the Public Role of Drama: Performing Lives-in-Common* argues that democracy and the public discourse that manifests and supports democracy have been steadily eroded in the neoliberal social order. The discourse of Austerity and the rhetoric of Deficit Culture have come to dominate all aspects of life to such an extent that even people who suffer their dire effects have come to accept that “there is no alternative”. The idea of the public, so crucial to democracy, has lost to the logics of an ideology that blames the ills of society on its victims, who are thereby rendered unable to speak up and assert themselves. This is the context in which Victor Merriman locates the important role of drama in reinstating the public and rebuilding democracy.

In eight chapters progressively organized one after another to lay down premises and build a case for the book, Victor Merriman convincingly argues for the role of drama as public art in light of the disappearance of public discourse and its consequent displacement of politics in what he calls “Deficit Culture” and the banner call for Austerity under the neo-liberal political economic order. The book has two parts: Part I, titled “Neo-liberalism’s Political and Moral Economic Project: The End of Public Life?” and Part II, “Performance, the Academy, and the Politics of Austerity”, which ends with the essay “Beyond Repair: A Critical Performance Manifesto”.

Part I begins with “Austerity and Drama’s Public Role”, which serves as an introduction to the book, describing what it intends to do and how the discussion is laid out, and, as an elaboration of the context within which the book emerged and for which it is written as a response. What follow are two chapters: Chapter 2, “The Public World: An Idea Under Pressure” and Chapter 3, “Drama in Public Worlds.” The second chapter parses the literature on “the idea of a public” as being the crucial underpinning of liberal culture from the late eighteenth century and on the threats to liberalism itself by its erosion in recent history (*Austerity* 13). Such a review reveals a “liberal spectrum” from classical liberalism to neo-liberalism and a “bifurcated” post-liberalism that has radical and conservative forms (15). What is evident across this spectrum is the “mutation” of the public as liberal idea in its origins and as “[foundation of] both a political economy and a social

contract”, how this has been “degraded” but “not destroyed” by neo-liberalisation’s telling of “a new human story” (13) that justifies the call to austerity and shapes how individual citizens of liberal democracies see themselves and their lives and what they should strive for—as homo economicus and not/anymore as homo politicus. This new human story is hegemonic and invokes religion for efficacy, casting it in the language of a morality play where the sin is named, the sinner identified (inevitably the individual citizen who lives beyond his means or depends on social welfare), and the penance given: austerity. “Deficit Culture” is therefore also pedagogy deployed as social drama, “with recognizably dramatic features: character, personality, belief, moral conflict, and heroic vision” (16). In Chapter 3, the point of the erosion of ideas of the public under neo-liberalism is carried forward with a discussion of how “[public acts have been displaced] by performative acts in the neo-liberalisation of everyday life” and deployment of the trope, “There Is No Alternative (TINA)’ in contemporary critical communication as performance” (7).

Part II has the remaining five chapters: Chapter 4, “Drama Worlds as Public Worlds”; Chapter 5, “Confronting Corporate Neo-liberalism in Jim Nolan’s *Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye* (2016)”; Chapter 6, “(Re)Public Worlds: Drama as Ethical Encounter”; Chapter 7, “Beyond Deficit: Conceptualising Collectives”; and Chapter 8, “Beyond Repair: A Critical Performance Manifesto.” These chapters further build on the argument set out in the first three by means of performance analyses of Dario Fo’s *Francis: The Holy Jester* (2009) from Italy; the corpus of activist performances by Reverend Billy Talen and the Church of Stop Shopping Choir from the United States of America; Jim Nolan’s *Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye* (2016) from Ireland; and three works of the author’s own company, the One Hour Theatre Company at Edge Hill University: *Half Measures* (2016), *Lear in Brexitland* (2017), and *A Pound of Flesh* (2017). In addition, in Chapter 8, there is a discussion of the *Guardian Brexit Shorts* (2017).

These works demonstrate how artists are speaking to and against the dominant narrative of TINA (“There Is No Alternative”) and making possible the involvement and action of audiences who otherwise would go about

their lives as they would in the order established by the “governmentality” of neoliberalism. In all of these, the message is clear: drama is a public art form that can and should instantiate the creation of a public that can engage in difficult public discourse and in so doing embody democratic ideas/ideals. As Merriman says, “. . . [T]he importance of ideas of the public in shaping lived experiences of democracy cannot be overstated” (*Austerity* 6), since democracy is not just an idea but a real experience of being heard, enjoying freedoms—according to political scientist Paul Hutchcroft, “true democracy” is a system that enables the actual enjoyment of individual freedoms by citizens, including freedom from hunger and freedom of creative expression—in short, the kind of human flourishing Merriman talks about in the book. For Merriman, the ideas of a public and its very existence “shape” the experience of democracy, that is to say, publicness or the existence of a public sphere and public discourse is a necessary condition for and embodiment of democracy. People’s participation in a/the public is conditioned by understandings of publicness or being in public, but these are the very ones threatened under neoliberalism: “What is at stake . . . is not only the existence of socio-political practices by means of which a public sphere, public realm, public man or woman, or public intellectual has been constituted, sustained, and evolved, but the very capacity to imagine them” (citing Wendy Brown 2015, *Austerity* 6). Drama has the capacity to do so and actually makes this happen. And Merriman does not only declare this but puts forward a Manifesto of how it can be done, with a matrix of problems and solutions for action in the last chapter.

The tone is urgent and passionate. But what makes the book engaging is a style of writing that deploys rhetorical devices that one may find in dramatic texts of satire and black comedy, perhaps speaking of the author’s background as a dramatist himself, helped along by generous excerpts from the performances referenced and analyzed. There are parts that are almost hilarious, except that my amusement/bemusement stemmed mainly from an ignorant outsider perspective, as when Merriman talks about *UK plc* as a long running, crisis-driven soap opera that “chronicles the vicissitudes of its central couple, TINA (There Is No Alternative) and the Taxpayer” (16)—



almost hilarious if not for the fact that “even government publications and trade campaigns refer without irony to an entity called *UK plc*” (49), which the Internet defines as “The commercial organizations or interests of Britain or the UK considered collectively; the British or UK economy” (Lexico).

The discursive review of literature, referencing relevant key texts on liberalism, neo-liberalisation, and post-liberalism, like those of Lloyd and Thomas (1998), Klein (2007), Goodhart (2014), Pettit (2014), Brown (2015), Milbank and Pabst (2016), McFalls and Pandolfi (2012), Alexander (2011), and Wainwright (2018), among others, makes the book a good resource for further reading. In addition, there is a plethora of references to interviews and statements (mainly from *The Guardian*) made by key personalities from Margaret Thatcher to David Cameron, that provides documentary evidence for what is argued as a descent from social democracy to neo-liberalism and the consequent abandonment by the state of the citizens now cast as “degraded denizens” (68), with the white working class people becoming increasingly xenophobic and racist and the immigrants getting further pushed to the margins of British society. The analyses of the plays that make up most of the book provide compelling support and work not only as illustrations but as a fleshing out of the main ideas. Moreover, what makes the book invaluable as reference and resource material is the way the chapters begin with an abstract and end with a summary, which aid the reader in following the premises and argument, and how the Manifesto of the last chapter concludes the book. Merriman goes beyond polemics and provides a way forward—as he says it in the conclusion, an alternative to “serfdom” (168).

What made the reading initially difficult for me was the very British context. I am not saying this is a flaw of the book, only that a non-British reader should be alerted to this point early on, perhaps in the introduction. There was a sense sometimes that I was peeping into a room where the people conversing knew the topic of conversation but I did not, since I am from a different place. But this is also the reason I am/was able to tune in to the conversation. I am from/with the Global South, who represent the reciprocals of what are experienced now in the Global North under Deficit Culture—“those who have suffered in a systematic way because of

the injustices, dominations, and oppressions of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy” (quoting Santos 159). I am of “the Third World” spoken about as beset by “oppressive . . . conditions now distributed globally, across all countries” (137) and the site/s of “epistimicide” that was the consequence of

Liberalism’s colonial adventures . . . the destruction of the knowledge of subjugated populations and their cultures, memories, ancestries, and all the ways they relate to each other and to nature . . . [with] their legal forms, political forms, organization—everything—[destroyed] and put at the service of the colonial occupation (159).

But, also, I am of the Global South that Merriman cites as the source of many practices of drama as public art, practices of resistance to the continuing depredations of the cultures and lives of people who oftentimes figure in the colonial imaginary—“the brutal colonialist practices of differentiation” as “subhuman” (159).

It can be asked why I chose to review this book with its very British context. There is a background story here, which provides a practical explanation. I was asked to respond to a keynote talk by the author who spoke mostly of what he propounds in this book, and writing the review essay was just a step further. Having said that, however, I insist that the book offers a challenge to thinking through the idea of drama as public art in a transnational context, in a way that rejects or disavows what the philosopher Alain Badiou calls the “predicates” of place and identity. The response to the book from a transnational perspective would inquire into the public role of drama in its “universal” sense, and by this I also refer to Badiou’s notion of the universal—truth—as being so because of its address: it is addressed to all, in this case, whether British or Filipino or a totally different nationality: “Truth is diagonal relative to every communitarian subset; it neither claims authority from, nor constitutes, any identity. It is offered to all, or addressed to everyone, without a condition of belonging being able to limit this offer or this address” (*Saint Paul* 14). The overarching argument of the book is an assertion of drama’s public role *sui generis*, one that any reader of any nationality is invited or challenged to receive as such, even if

the author scaffolds his assertion with material experiences mainly from his local context and especially from his own work with the One Hour Theatre Company (OHTC). And Merriman does bring in other/non-British experiences, with the excellent examples from Ireland, Italy, and the United States, as well as a mention of works from “the Global South”, including the Philippines. Importantly, Merriman cites Badiou when speaking of “identitarianism”, which forms an “ideal [that] represents the most primitive, the most fundamental product of state repression” (quoting Badiou 2012, 36), as when citizens are called to conform to notions of Englishness (or, in our case, Filipinoness?). I read this as a movement precisely away from the particularity of British experience and towards a “horizontal” connection with other experiences in order to affirm a commitment to a generic sense of drama as public art. As Badiou declares, “[T]he central dialectic at work in the universal is that of the local, as subject, and the global, as infinite procedure” (“Eight Theses” 2006). Merriman keeps to this “infinite procedure” with his declarations on the public role of drama, which the reader would interpret as possibly including his/her own experience of drama/theater, and those of infinite others, especially and possibly because they, too, could have been struck by the same “lightning bolt” of Theatre with a capital “T”. As Merriman quotes from Badiou’s “Rhapsody of the Theatre”: “Theatre[:] a heresy in action [that] detaches itself from ‘theatre’ as a rather implausible lightning bolt (190) . . . where the “Spectator’ . . . is a witness, with real, though latent, capacity to act, should lightning strike” (*Austerity* 142). It is important to note here that Merriman invests the term “Drama” with special significance, using it throughout the book with a capital “D”, not as a matter of style perhaps but after Badiou’s “Theater” with a capital “T”. It is also clear that while Merriman uses “Drama”, he means more than merely the text or dramatic script that is usually denoted by the term as opposed to “theatre” which is conventionally used to refer to performance. And so the public role of Drama is also really the public role of Theatre as performance. He signals this in the introduction: “. . . Drama—or Performance, conceived more broadly” (*Austerity* 3) and in the manifesto on “Drama’s potential as critical performance of lives-in-common” (9).

The book initiates a discourse on Drama as public art that draws us, the readers, in, and therefore performatively enacts the creation of a public. I am thinking of Michael Warner's famous book *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005) where Warner defines "public" as "the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" (90), elaborated as "a space of discourse organized by discourse" (68) and as a relationship among strangers (74), its requirement for membership being an "active uptake" in the minimal form of attention (87). As Warner points out at the beginning of his book, I became part of the public of his book because I read it. In a similar way, I have become a part of the public of Merriman's book by virtue of having read it—which is to say that Merriman is performing a double act: firstly, initiating a discourse on drama as public art with his book and, secondly, "performing public" with his own work as dramatist in the OHTC and amplifying this along with the work in public by the other artists and works he features in the book. I use here "performing public" with a nod to an issue of the journal *Performance Research*, "Performing Publics", the theme of the annual conference of Performance Studies international (PSi) in 2011, with many of the contributions drawn or developed from papers presented in the conference, as well as to an essay by Gigi Argyropoulou also titled "Performing Publics" in a later volume (Argyropoulou 214-218). The 2011 conference and journal issue were "[responses] to Michael Warner's important question about the disciplinary stakes of thinking public" (Levin and Schweitzer 2); the essay by Argyropoulou published seven years later revisits the questions posed in the 2011 issue.

Merriman does not cite Warner at all. I surmise he might not have found Warner's notion of the public useful for his own critical work, bearing in mind that Warner says that "public" is not or is different from "audience" (Warner 71), although he identifies "theatrical public" as the second "sense" of "a public" (66). Neither is there a reference to Nancy Fraser's important essay on "subaltern counterpublics" and performances of protest by the "members of subordinated social groups—women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians" (Fraser 67). Part of my joining this space of discourse on drama as public art instantiated by Merriman's book is a conversation

between Warner's notion of publics and counterpublics and Fraser's naming and critical discussion of subaltern counterpublics. I have a contribution in the 2011 issue cited above, where I talk about a post-colonial counterpublic (Llana 91-96).

It would be interesting to read Merriman's notion of public art against what Warner sets out as the disciplinary criteria of being public, which, however, is a subject beyond the scope of this essay. It is sufficient to say here that I find strong resonances of the notion of counterpublics in the work that drama as public art does as expounded by Merriman. To cite just one connection: both are affective sites of the reflexive circulation of discourse, marshalling the "poetic-expressive" as opposed to the "rational-critical" language and performance of the dominant public, that is to say, the public that comes under "the superintending power of the state" (Warner 116).

In his book, Merriman speaks unequivocally *with* people living at the fringes and underside of society (subalterns) in the Global North, which in his telling has now much in common with the Global South. Like colonized populations, the "denizens" of the neoliberal First World are mired in poverty, debt, unemployment, lack of opportunity (like the character Lee Smith in OHTC's 2017 *Lear in Brexitland* who says he waited for ten years to get a job, only to be robbed of it and languish in the hospital that is the setting of the play's action [see *Austerity* 108-114]) and epistemologically gripped in the fantasy and view of the world and themselves woven by Deficit Culture. This has come about because the "limits of liberal democratic culture and institutions as guarantors of freedom and justice have become all too apparent" ("Scholarship and Human Flourishing" 2019) in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, but the Austerity discourse had been there a long time ago with the institution of neoliberalism as political economy.

In such a context, "Drama" as public art has to go beyond its moorings in liberal thought and fully become a plural relation, an act of two (see the reference to Brecht: "the smallest social unit is not one person, but two people—a view repugnant to Deficit Culture", *Austerity* 160). Merriman's call to exceed the limits of liberalism reminds us that liberalism in its classical

foundations was intended in the first place “for the free” and occluded those who were not free: the women, the slaves, the foreigners. As Merriman shows, the limits of liberalism and liberal democracy are embedded deep in its DNA. Exceeding such limits entails the difficult and painful labor of untangling ourselves from the epistemological bind of liberalism’s idea of the “universality of the human subject” in order to enable and thus constitute, through our work, the appearance of the true Subject. Following Merriman’s prompt, I take this Subject to be the Human in the generic sense present in all of us but hidden or suppressed by conditions like those imposed by Deficit Culture.

Merriman does not say that all drama/theatre fulfils emancipatory work as public art. It is in fact thoroughly embedded and governed by the logic of neoliberalism. There is much to learn from the reflections in the book on the complicity of academia/the university and other cultural and art institutions (theaters and theater organizations included), on the self-styling by artists and intellectuals as “creatives” within the frames of “‘creative’ or ‘cultural’ industries” under the banner of neoliberalism (*Austerity* 152), and the practice of claiming to be “socially conscious but not politically engaged” that Merriman deplores (“Scholarship and Human Flourishing” 2019). The book offers a strong cautionary comment on such complicity.

Drama is a critical ethical practice, an engagement from the bottom up—from the ground, on the ground, immersed in the ways of thinking and practices of “subjugated populations” (*Austerity* 159) or the “practical knowledge of working or would-be working people” (137), or indigenous ways also known by many cultural workers in the Philippines as IKSP: indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices—which is also to say that this practice of thinking and making contributes to the building of true democracy. In the Manifesto, Merriman avers that democracy-building needs committed critical scholarship across disciplines, one that “feeds democratic discourse and institutions by enfranchising those currently excluded” (166). Filipino readers would find much resonance here: such an ethical act contributing to democracy-building is something we gravely need now in the Philippines under President Duterte not only in terms of what we can do and in vigor-

ously resisting our own brand of “TINA”—the “There Is No Alternative” discourse—but also in the investigation of our changing material conditions, including the effects of the contemporary colonization: neoliberalism.

“We can’t do this alone”; there is a need for building “collective strategic intelligence” (136, 143-4, 155) and “horizontal relationships” (52, 167). These calls to action both drawn by Merriman from the work of Hilary Wainwright (44-52) are important insights and prompts for the reader, myself included.

Let me end with the thought that there should be a sequel to this book but one set in the time of the coronavirus pandemic, lockouts, and consequent overturning of everything in our contemporary life, in Britain and elsewhere, everywhere in the world. After actual public gatherings were prohibited or could not happen. After many of the “denizens” were infected and died. After the Brexit trade deal was finalized, four years after the historic vote to leave the European Union, in the midst of the pandemic crisis. After the theaters were forced to close and physical, on-site and live gatherings could not happen, and the subsequent recourse to online forms of interaction and making work that insists it is still theater. In such a sequel, the question might be: in this living dystopia, how can drama continue its role as public art?

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# Book Recommendation

Kenneth E. Bauzon's *Capitalism, The American Empire, and Neoliberal Globalization: Themes and Annotations from Selected Works of E. San Juan, Jr.*

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## Abstract

This critical book review highlights the significance of Kenneth E. Bauzon's *Capitalism, The American Empire, and Neoliberal Globalization: Themes and Annotations from Selected Works of E. San Juan, Jr.* (2019) for Filipinos in the Philippines, the United States, and throughout the diaspora. Bauzon's text (its form and content) builds upon a unique genre of Filipino alter/native writing while it simultaneously inventories the intellectual contributions of prolific scholar and public intellectual E. San Juan, Jr. whose work has bridged Philippine studies, Filipino American studies, ethnic studies, literary studies, and cultural studies for nearly six decades. In order to confront the trauma of history and, at the same time, to move forward collectively, Filipinos must reimagine traditions of anticolonial resistance (part of the process of becoming Filipino). Through its dialogic relationship with San Juan's body of work (positioned as a repository of collective memory of Filipino resistance), Bauzon's text makes a compelling case for the continued relevance of the movement for Filipino sovereignty in the 21st century—a tradition of struggle that speaks specifically to the emancipation of Filipinos everywhere as it is interconnected with the liberation of all oppressed and marginalized peoples in the era of neoliberal globalization.

**Keywords**

US Colonialism, US Racism, Philippine-American War, Filipino Writing, Filipino Resistance, E. San Juan, Jr.

As an act of solidarity with the 2020 global uprising to protest the killing of African American George Floyd at the hands of Minnesota police officers (a manifestation of a long history of anti-Black racist violence in the United States), Filipino American James Juanillo decided to furnish the outside of his home in San Francisco with signs in support of the daily protests. As he was completing a chalking of the phrase “Black Lives Matter” on the retaining wall of his home, Juanillo was accosted by a white couple (Lisa Alexander and Robert Larkins) accusing him of a crime—defacing private property which, the couple claimed, did not belong to him. According to Juanillo, his home is located in “Pacific Heights, an affluent, predominantly white San Francisco enclave... [a neighborhood where] brown people aren’t supposed to be... unless they’re the nannies or the plumbers.”<sup>1</sup> This particular episode reveals, on the one hand, the interconnectedness between anti-Filipino and anti-Black racisms; on the other, it highlights just how destabilizing and threatening interethnic solidarity can be in a society that is historically structured around white supremacy. Juanillo’s act of interethnic solidarity with African Americans was so threatening that Lisa Alexander decided to call the police.

Juanillo’s expression of solidarity with African Americans in the face of white racist hostility taps into a long memory—a history of Filipino/African American solidarity that developed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Philippines. Kenneth E. Bauzon’s *Capitalism, The American Empire, and Neoliberal Globalization: Themes and Annotations from Selected Works of E. San Juan, Jr.* (2019) returns us to a time when Filipino revolutionaries, mobilizing against US colonial occupation of the Philippines, forged solidarity with African American Buffalo soldiers such as David Fagen who defected and joined the anticolonial Filipino movement. Interethnic solidarity is one of many themes of the Filipino experience that Bauzon examines in his new work.

In *Capitalism*, Bauzon traces the unfolding of US empire—specifically the ways in which “manifest destiny... was asserted over the Pacific” to justify US colonization of the Philippines (1899-1946).<sup>2</sup> By using an interdisciplinary approach that centers the Filipino historical experience, Bauzon provides an alternative narrative of US empire—one that not only examines how

Filipinos have been victimized by colonialism but also how Filipinos have collectively responded and resisted as agents of history. The text examines the rise of the American empire in the Pacific (from the Malolo Massacre in 1840 to the Philippine-American War of 1899-1913) and the subsequent neocolonial period in the Philippines (from the Cold War period to the era of neoliberal globalization).<sup>3</sup>

A meditation on the historical linkages between the three keywords that comprise the main title, Bauzon's text enables readers to examine the interconnectedness between the historical development of capitalism (its rise "as a system of accumulation of value"), the establishment of an American empire (at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Philippines), and the rise of neoliberal globalization ("a reincarnation of classical colonialism") with an emphasis on challenging the historical limitations of academic forms of knowledge (from postcolonialism to multiculturalism) that obscure the brutality of each aforementioned stage of global capitalism.<sup>4</sup> An erudite scholar deeply rooted in a progressive Filipino intellectual tradition, Bauzon simultaneously honors the contributions of preeminent and prolific Filipino literary scholar, cultural theorist, and public intellectual E. San Juan, Jr. (one "deserving of recognition as Philippine national treasure") who functions as his interlocutor throughout the study.<sup>5</sup>

Bauzon provides a much-needed intervention in his retrieval of that which has been silenced, suppressed, and dismissed in the study of global capitalism. By utilizing a historical materialist perspective, Bauzon challenges the ways in which various academic disciplines (from sociology and political science to literature) have retreated from the concept of class. In addition, Bauzon centers US-Philippines colonial relations—a topic that is "usually... ignored or papered over by mainstream historians."<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, Bauzon's text meticulously traces how US colonization of the Philippines played a key role in the rise and establishment of American empire and continues to inform our contemporary moment of neoliberal globalization; on the other, it reveals the complexity of class struggle by highlighting the struggle for Filipino self-determination—a movement that

has endured despite its violent suppression by US colonial forces in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A distinguishing key feature of Bauzon's text is its form. Throughout *Capitalism*, annotations from E. San Juan, Jr.'s massive body of writings are utilized to illuminate various dimensions of the history of global capitalism from both a historical materialist perspective **and** an anticolonial Filipino perspective. This particular approach generates a dialogic relationship between two generations of Filipino intellectuals (Bauzon and San Juan) and between *Capitalism* and a unique genre of Filipino writing ("over a century old") that is inextricably intertwined with the process of Filipino becoming—a collective desire for national sovereignty. Bauzon explains that the form of *Capitalism* is inspired by Dr. Jose Rizal's approach to reading and re-envisioning Filipino history:

In 1888, Dr. Jose Rizal, who would be the Philippines' foremost hero, began his search at the British Museum for... *Sucesos De Las Islas Filipinas* (*Historical Events of the Philippine Islands*) written by . . . Dr. Antonio Morga [published in 1609]. Rizal's interest was in learning how Morga, an influential lay historian and colonial bureaucrat . . . , narrated the history of Spanish colonial administration of the Philippine Islands . . . . Based on his own research and accumulated knowledge, Rizal . . . went about the laborious process of annotating the book which, upon completion, he published in Paris in 1889. . . . Rizal deemed his annotations essential to correcting Morga's views about the Filipinos, their pre-conquest civilization up until 1532, the nature of Spanish colonial policies and practices, and how these had contributed to the social and economic backwardness of the Filipinos. Without perhaps intending it, Rizal had, in fact, through his annotations, written the country's first systematic history from the Philippine viewpoint.<sup>7</sup>

Just as Rizal's annotations provided a corrective to Morga's orientalist discourse of European "superiority"/Filipino "otherness", San Juan's annotations in *Capitalism* provide a corrective to mainstream scholarship on global capitalism that has erased class and silenced Filipino subaltern voices of resistance. According to Bauzon, San Juan's interventions within his text "offer an alternative meaning of history that would otherwise be different without such interventions."<sup>8</sup>

Bauzon's *Capitalism* is a significant contribution to a genre of Filipino writing that centers (to borrow a term from San Juan) "alter/native" Filipino voices that (in the words Amilcar Cabral) "return to the source"—voices connected to the collective subaltern struggle for Filipino national sovereignty. By juxtaposing the form of *Capitalism* with Rizal's re-envisioning of *Sucesos De Las Islas Filipinas* in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bauzon has created a text that builds upon (and is in dialogue with) a rich tradition of alter/native Filipino writing which includes works by Delia D. Aguilar, Carlos Bulosan, Renato Constantino, Dolores S. Feria, Amado V. Hernandez, Ninotchka Rosca, E. San Juan, Jr., Jose Maria Sison, among others.

Bauzon, who is formally trained as a political scientist, has produced a text that is interdisciplinary and global in scope. In his examination of the complexity of global capitalism, US empire, and Filipino subaltern revolt, Bauzon engages a wide variety of academic fields and methodologies—philosophy, political science, cultural studies, sociology, history, historical materialism, and discourse analysis. *Capitalism* is comprised of eight chapters that address the historical unfolding of global capitalism with particular emphasis on the history of US empire, the US as racial polity, and emancipatory movements for social justice. Three chapters focus on the US colonization of the Philippines with detailed attention to US atrocities committed in "Mindanao and [the] Sulu region, traditional home of Muslim Filipinos."<sup>9</sup> Bauzon's careful examination of the brutality of the Philippine-American War (1899-1913—considered the "first Vietnam") is a sobering reminder of the following key ideas on the intersection of US empire, knowledge production, and violence:

- 1.) The painful history of the American civilizing (read: genocidal) mission in the Philippines has been silenced, obscured, or distorted (if made visible) within various academic fields of study—from history to postcolonial studies.
- 2.) US colonial suppression of the anticolonial Filipino revolution for national sovereignty paved the way for future counterinsurgency programs within and without the United States, endless US wars through the 20<sup>th</sup> and

into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and the reincarnation of colonialism in the age of neoliberal globalization.

3.) Barbarism, as political scientist Onur Ulas Ince argues, “constituted a dynamic internal to the historical emergence of global capitalist relations within the politico-legal framework of colonial empires.”<sup>10</sup>

Bauzon writes thoughtfully and boldly against historical amnesia by detailing and making visible the horrors of the Philippine-American War—over one million Filipinos and over 4,200 American soldiers lost their lives.<sup>11</sup> Historical amnesia with regard to US colonial genocide in the Philippines is not limited to the world of the academy. When American filmmaker and novelist John Sayles conducted research for his film on the Philippine-American War titled *Amigo* (2010), he was astounded to discover that his film would become “the third movie ever made in the United States about the Philippine-American War.” In an interview, Sayles expresses his deep concern with the profound silence and erasure of a significant historical chapter of the United States and the Philippines:

How come there are no novels about it [the Philippine-American War]? How come it’s not in our history books [in the United States]? And then asking my Philippine and Philippine-American friends what they knew about it, they said, “Well, we kind of know about it, but it was not taught in our schools.” How is something that—that’s like not teaching the American Revolution in American schools. You know, how does a piece of history, where probably a million Filipinos died, get plowed under like that? And why?<sup>12</sup>

Not unlike Toni Morrison’s notion of rememory (the past existing in the present), the historical trauma of US colonial annihilation of Filipino national sovereignty continues to haunt nearly 12 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) scattered across the planet and over 100 million Filipinos in the Philippines, an island nation that continues to exist as a US neocolony.

## Alter/native Return: On Race, Class, and National Liberation

Bauzon's *Capitalism* contributes to the current revival of the Marxist critical tradition which includes recent publications such as Barbara Foley's *Marxist Literary Criticism Today* (2019) and Richard Wolff's *Understanding Marxism* (2019). Emerging within a critical, historical moment that demands critique and sustained mass action against the ruling class of global capitalism, *Capitalism* also contributes to a broad intellectual tradition that has courageously resisted the neoliberal cultural turn (post-ality) within the US academy which came to fruition precisely when mass movements of the New Left period were being dismantled.<sup>13</sup> This intellectual tradition includes writers such as Aijaz Ahmad, Ama Ata Aidoo, Tithi Bhattacharya, Michel Beaud, Vivek Chibber, Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Peter Drucker, Teresa Ebert, Nawal El Saadawi, Marcial Gonzalez, Donald Morton, Cornel West, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, Howard Zinn to name a few. For these writers, class is an indispensable category. In their own ways, they have resisted the retreat from class evident within various spaces of the academy (from the work of Hardt and Negri to the field of postcolonial studies) and within the domain of public intellectual work (see Cornel West's critique of the limitations of Ta-Nehisi Coates).<sup>14</sup>

By returning to class, *Capitalism* contributes to reviving a Filipino Marxist intellectual tradition. Bauzon's text joins recent publications within this tradition such as *Writer in Exile/Writer in Revolt: Critical Perspectives on Carlos Bulosan* (2016); E. San Juan, Jr.'s *Carlos Bulosan: Revolutionary Filipino Writer in the United States* (2017); Penguin Classics edition of Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (2019). In light of the pioneering work of Filipino author Carlos Bulosan (from the era of the Great Depression to the start of the Cold War period) and the prolific output of E. San Juan, Jr., we are able to discern how Filipino Marxism functions as the theoretical spine of the genre of alter/native Filipino writing—a genre of writing interconnected with the process of Filipino becoming.

Bauzon's *Capitalism* serves as companion text to the 2008 San Juan anthology *From Globalization to National Liberation: Essays of Three Decades* (University of the Philippines Press). By providing a magnificently detailed



and insightful inventory of key concepts from San Juan's large body of work (within its body and copious endnotes), Bauzon envisions new possibilities within the field of Filipino Marxist thought. Bauzon's text also functions as a companion to recently published works that have renewed interest in Carlos Bulosan for whom Filipino Marxism was central and vital to exercising, nurturing, and developing a diasporic literary imagination. In his essay, "The Writer as Worker" (excerpted from a 1955 letter), Bulosan states the following:

Filipino writers in the Philippines have a great task ahead of them, but also a great future. The field is wide and open. They should rewrite everything written about the Philippines and the Filipino people from the materialist, dialectical point of view—this being the only [way] to understand and interpret everything Philippines. They should write lovingly about its rivers, towns, plains, mountains, wildernesses—its flora and fauna—the different tribes and provinces. They should write about the great men and their times and works, from Lapulapu to Mariano Balgos. They should compile the unwritten tales, legends, folklore, riddles, humor, songs, sayings. They should illustrate that there was a culture before the Spaniards uprooted it. When these are written, they should extenuate and amplify. The material is inexhaustible. But always they should be written for the people, because the people are the creators and appreciators of culture. . . .<sup>15</sup>

As a Filipino writer in the United States, Bulosan took a resolute stand with the working classes in the United States, the Philippines, and around the globe. His writings (novels, short stories, poems, essays, letters) document the development of Filipino Marxist thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To be sure, Bulosan's central characters (Allos in *America Is in the Heart*, Dante in *The Cry and the Dedication* for example) embody the heart of Filipino Marxism—an affirmation of peasant/worker subjectivity and agency within Philippine colonial/neocolonial society and the Filipino Diaspora.

Since the institutionalization of postcolonial studies within the Western academy, Filipino academics over the past few decades have had to move through the postcolonial field in order to examine the Filipino experience in the United States, the Philippines, and the diaspora—by either simply applying its theoretical concepts (from hybridity/mimicry/interstices to

more recent concepts such as the postnational) or by actually interrogating the theoretical assumptions that undergird the postcolonial enterprise.<sup>16</sup> By far, E. San Juan, Jr. has provided the most durable and sustained critique (for over two decades) of the historical limitations of the field of postcolonial studies—especially in relation to the Filipino experience. For instance, in *Racism and Cultural Studies* (2002), San Juan (leaning upon Mary Louise Pratt) takes postcolonial studies to task for its inability to critique the phenomenon of neocolonialism.<sup>17</sup> Bauzon’s *Capitalism* (in chapters 7 and 8) advances San Juan’s critique of postcoloniality by opening a space for us to imagine new possibilities for a Filipino Marxist tradition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (connecting knowledge production with social transformation).

*Capitalism* illustrates how Filipino Marxism functions as a corrective to postcolonial blind spots, especially with regard to US-Philippines colonial and neocolonial relations. On the one hand, Filipino Marxism recognizes that the Filipino subaltern has always spoken—it affirms the collective agency of the colonial/neocolonial subaltern subject;<sup>18</sup> on the other hand, Filipino Marxism recognizes (not unlike the field of postcolonial studies) the severe historical limits and contradictions of the European Enlightenment—its racist ideologies and history of colonial plunder and genocide. The appeal of Filipino Marxism today, particularly to the global 99%, is its rearticulation of what remains useful from modernity—ideals such as universal human rights (metanarrative of emancipation). San Juan identifies a peculiar aporia within postcolonial studies stemming from its particular reading of the history of capitalism in the following:

The conflation of Enlightenment ideals with the telos of utilitarian capitalism and its encapsulation in the historiographic fortunes of modernity have led to a nominalist conception of subjectivity and agency. Disavowing modernity and the principle of collective human agency—humans make their own history under determinate historical conditions—postcolonialism submits to the neoliberal cosmos of fragmentation, individualist warfare, schizoid monads, and a regime of indeterminacy and contingency. The ironic turn damages postcolonialism’s claim to liberate humanity from determinisms and essentialisms of all kinds.<sup>19</sup>

Blending historical materialist and Filipino alter/native approaches (to generate a Filipino Marxist perspective), *Capitalism* advances San Juan's rigorous critique by focusing on that which the field of postcolonial studies has been unable to critique—the rise/development and global hegemonic position of the imperial US state.

Through its Filipino Marxist optic, *Capitalism* provides a framework for understanding the specificity of Filipino oppression—one that occurs in the forms of racial **and** national subordination. Bauzon's chapters on US-Philippines relations and US racism (specifically 3, 4, 5, and 7) build upon the work of Charles Mills which, according to San Juan, enables us to conceptualize the United States as a racial polity—a nation “founded on the genocidal confinement of the indigenous Indians, the slavery and segregation of blacks, the conquest of Spanish-speaking natives, and the proscription of Asian labor.”<sup>20</sup> It is within this historical context of white-supremacist nation building that the United States colonized the Philippines. As a result, Filipinos have a distinct relationship to the United States. San Juan and Bruce Occena remind us of two historical conditions that distinguish Filipinos from other Asian groups in the United States in the following:

. . . first, the continuing oppression of the Filipino nation by U.S. imperialism; and second, the fact that as a group “Filipinos have been integrated into U.S. society on the basis of *inequality* [US-Philippines colonial/neocolonial relations] and subjected to discrimination due both to their race and nationality.”<sup>21</sup>

The racial-national subordination of Filipinos is dramatized by an American Pacific Orientalist discourse which Bauzon examines by way of Nerissa Balce's recent work. Balce helps us to see how orientalist representations of Filipinos in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (for example the photographs of zoologist Dean Worcester) were used in the service of US “military surveillance, war, and the maintenance of... military rule in the lands.”<sup>22</sup> Bauzon's and Balce's insights are a fine complement to *The Forbidden Book: The Philippine-American War in Political Cartoons* (2004), a powerful repository of American Pacific orientalist imagery in political cartoons produced at the inception of

the American empire. *The Forbidden Book* continues to be an incredibly rich resource for classroom instruction on US-Philippines relations.

### **Solidarity and Filipino Becoming**

*Capitalism's* alter/native approach to Filipino writing provides tools for confronting the wounds of history. It reminds readers that the genuine national liberation of the Philippines is key to the emancipation of Filipinos everywhere. It also sheds light on how the process of Filipino becoming could play a key role in global struggles for social justice. When I was in college, I was fortunate to have Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo as my professor throughout my first year at Oberlin. During one of my many visits to her office hours, she told me of how she and others throughout Africa were watching and cheering the Filipino people as they mobilized to topple the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. She then looked at me and said that I have every right to be proud to be Filipino. I left Aidoo's office with an incredible sense of joy at the thought of the resourcefulness and militancy of the Filipino people. I was also very proud of the way in which the anticolonial movement for Filipino self-determination inspired others around the globe. As Bauzon highlights, interethnic and interracial solidarity has been a long-standing key component of Filipino becoming—from the African American Buffalo soldiers (such as David Fagen) in the Philippines to W.E.B. Du Bois . . . from Paul Robeson to Ama Ata Aidoo.

In his concluding chapter, Bauzon provides an opportunity for us to consider the ways in which Filipino becoming could contribute to and enhance contemporary social movements—from activism in the United States (#BlackLivesMatter, immigrants' rights, #StopAsianHate) to the global environmental justice movement. In many ways, *Capitalism* is in dialogue with recent materials on social justice—Noam Chomsky's *Requiem for the American Dream*, Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Greta Thunberg's (*I Know This To Be True*): *On Truth, Courage & Saving Our Planet*, and Jose Antonio Vargas's *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*.

Here I return to James Juanillo’s story in San Francisco—one that reveals the interconnectedness of anti-Filipino and anti-Black racisms in the United States. Juanillo’s story of interethnic Filipino/African American solidarity has the potential to enhance the global dimension of solidarity embedded with the process of Filipino becoming. While Trump pushed to militarize the police force in the United States in response to anti-racist protests against police brutality (a call for “law and order”), the US State Department approved a two billion dollar arms deal with Duterte—a deal that promises to intensify human rights violations in the Philippines by militarizing the war on drugs and policies to silence political dissent.<sup>23</sup> The intersection of militarized repression of political dissent in the United States and the Philippines requires a collective, global response rooted in solidarity.

As African American activist and philosopher Angela Davis noted recently, the mass uprisings around the globe against the killing of George Floyd provide a direct critique of the neoliberal ideology of individualism.<sup>24</sup> The vibrant multiracial uprisings (in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental degradation, and a global migrant crisis) call for a systemic critique of global capitalism. We are fortunate to have Bauzon’s new book at this historical moment. *Capitalism* is a text that reminds us of the potential of Filipino becoming—it is the key to Filipino self-determination as well as a vehicle for envisioning new forms of global solidarity essential to creating a more humane and just future for all.

## Notes

1. “Filipino American confronted for BLM message sheds light on form of genteel racism, experts say.” [www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/filipino-american-confronted-blm-message-sheds-light-form-genteel-racism-n1231409](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/filipino-american-confronted-blm-message-sheds-light-form-genteel-racism-n1231409).
2. Bauzon, p. viii.
3. For more on the Malolo Massacre, see Bauzon, pp. 33-53.
4. Here I lean upon Raymond Williams’s notion of keywords—his emphasis on the shifting social, historical, and cultural meanings and ideological function of a word. See Raymond Williams’s *Keywords*, Bauzon, p. 18.
5. See “San Juan, Jr./Curriculum Vitae”, *Kritika Kultura*, 2016.
6. Bauzon, p. 18.
7. Bauzon, p. xiii.
8. Bauzon, p. xiii.
9. Bauzon, p. 116.
10. Ince 2018 quoted by Bauzon, p. 8.
11. *The Forbidden Book*, p. 97.
12. “A Moment in the Sun”: An Extended Interview with Independent Filmmaker, Author John Sayles.” *Democracy Now!* [www.democracynow.org/2011/7/4/a\\_moment\\_in\\_the\\_sun\\_an](http://www.democracynow.org/2011/7/4/a_moment_in_the_sun_an).
13. See Vivek Chibber’s “On the Decline of Class Analysis in South Asian Studies.”
14. For Bauzon’s discussion of Hardt and Negri, see pp. 11-14; for West’s critique of Coates, pp. 207-210.
15. Bulosan, *On Becoming Filipino*, p. 144.
16. See Vivek Chibber’s *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*.
17. San Juan, *Racism and Cultural Studies*, p. 278.
18. See San Juan’s *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* and Ebert’s “Women and/as the Subaltern” in *Ludic Feminism*, pp. 283-302.
19. San Juan, *Racism and Cultural Studies*, p. 267.
20. San Juan, *Toward Filipino Self-Determination*, p. 43. See also Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*.
21. San Juan, “In Search of Filipino Writing”, *Asian American Studies Reader*, pp. 450-451.
22. From Nerissa Balce’s *Body Parts of Empire: Abjection, Filipino Images and the American Archive* quoted by Bauzon, p. 158.
23. Amee Chew, “Stop the \$2 Billion Arms Sale to the Philippines”, *Jacobin*, May 17, 2020; “ICHRP-US Demands Accountability for Approved 2 Billion Dollar Arms Sale to Duterte”, *International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines*, May 1, 2020.

24. “Uprising & Abolition: Angela Davis on Movement Building, “Defund the Police” & Where We Go from Here.” [www.democracynow.org/2020/6/12/angela\\_davis\\_historic\\_moment](http://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/12/angela_davis_historic_moment); see also Davis’s *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*.

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