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Ang Awit bilang Remix

Katutubo, Wika, at Pilosopiya

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Abstrak

Pakay ng sanaysay na ito na ilarawan ang mga hakbang ng pamimilosopiya sa Filipino. Pinapanukala ng papel na posibleng tignan ang *Ibong Adarna* bilang akdang pilosopikal. Pinapanukala ng papel na ito na ang pagsusulat ng mga awit at korido, mga popular na teksto, ay impormado ng pilosopikal na hinagap. Naglalarawan ito ng limang hakbang tungo sa pakay na ipaliwanag ang kamalayang iyon. Sa unang hakbang, ipapakitang posibleng unawain ang *Ibong Adarna* nang pilosopikal at nakikipag-diyalogo sa Europeong Modernismo. Sa ikalawang hakbang, tatanungin kung may konsepto ng pilosopiya sa Pilipinas na iba sa konstruksyon niyon sa kanluran. Sa ikatlong hakbang, tatanungin kung ano ang lugar ng ala-ala, pagbalik, at katutubo sa pilosopiya ng *Ibong Adarna*. Sa ika-apat, ipapaliwanag na ang katutubo sa abot tanaw din ng mga awit at korido ay ang boses ng *subalterno* o nasa-isang-tabi (peripero). Ang Filipino bilang wika ng pilosopiya ay kilos at pagbibigay boses sa walang boses. Sa wakas, ang subersibo at naka-gagambalang kilos ng pagbubuo ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya ay nauunawaan ito bilang Inobasyon hindi lamang paglikha kungdi bilang remix.

Mga Susing Salita

Ibong Adarna, awit at corrido, poskolonyal na pilosopiyang Filipino

Introduksiyon

Kapag nababanggit na tinuturo ko ang pilosopiya sa Filipino sa mga salu-salo, halos hindi makapaniwala ang mga kaibigan ko. Tulad ng tingin sa salamangkero, tinatanong ng kanilang mga mata, “Paano mo nagagawa iyon? At bakit? Hindi ba mahirap?” Mula’t sapol, isa lamang ang kundisyon upang mamilosopiya sa Filipino—ang kahandaan at katapangan na lumusong sa karagatan nito. Kahandaan, dahil ayon sa kasabihan: “Kung gusto may paraan, kung ayaw, may dahilan.” Katapangan kasi sa mismong paglusong lamang matutunan ang paraan ng pamimilosopiya sa sariling wikang katutubo. Mahirap lamang ito sa simula, ngunit, napakadali sa kalaunan.

Gayopaman, pakay ng sanaysay na ito na ilarawan ang mga hakbang ng pamimilosopiya sa Filipino. Tatalakayin kung paanong ang isang akdang popular tulad ng awit at korido, ay masasabing namimilosopiya na sa Filipino. Pinapanukala ng papel na posibleng tignan ang *Ibong Adarna* bilang akdang pilosopikal, at sa ganitong paraan matalakay kung paano naging posibleng mamilosopiya sa Filipino.

Mulat ang pag-aaral na literaryong akda ang *Ibong Adarna*, at mabuti at kailangang gumawa ng genealohiya ng mga literaryong pag-aaral niyong; ngunit hindi ito ang proyekto ng papel. Nais nga lamang nitong magsimula sa mga simpleng tanong upang magabayan ang mga nagsisimula:

- a. Ano ang mga kundisyon ng posibilidad ng pilosopikal na pagbabasa sa awit, halimbawa sa *Ibong Adarna*?
- b. Paano gagawin ang pagbabasa sa pilosopikal na paraan ng mga popular na anyong Filipino?
- c. Sa anong paraan mapapatunayan na ang akdang ito ay pilosopiya sa Filipino?

Bagaman popular na teksto, ang mga awit ay may matayog na intelektwal na pinag-uugatan, at kung gayon, may higit na matayog na intelektwal na hinaharap. Balikan ang talatang ito mula sa aklat na *Tagalog Poetry* ni Bienvenido Lumbera:

Jose de la Cruz (1746-1829), better known as Huseng Sisiw (Jose the Chick), left no published works, although he is said to have authored a good deal of poetry. Taught the alphabet and the catechism by some neighbors, he broadened his education by teaching himself, so the story goes, philosophy and canon law, courses that served as the core of higher education during his time. The story cannot be pure legend, for the available works of the poet, as presented in fragments of Jose Ma. Rivera's biography *Huseng Sisiw*, lend credence to the claims for de la Cruz's learning (72).

O ito namang sinabi ng mga historyador hinggil kay Balagtas (1788-1862):

When he was 11, he was sent to Manila to work as a houseboy for the Trinidad family of Tondo. His master sent him to the Colegio de San Jose, where he took up humanities, theology, philosophy, and canon law. One of his professors was Father Mariano Pilapil. He finished his studies in 1812 at age of 24 (Villegas qtd. in Diokno and Villegas 189).

Sa dalawang talambuhay pa lamang na ito ng bantog na manunulat ng mga awit, malinaw na inuugnay ang mga manunulat ng mga awit at korido sa mga nakapag-aral ng pilosopiya at batas ng simbahan. Tinuring din Rizal ang mga sulating bilang bukal ng kanyang kaisipan: "Rizal carried Florante at Laura with him in his travels across Europe, and drew from it much of his portrayal of Ibarra in *Noli me tangere*" (190). Kinakailangan pa ngang ipakita sa susunod na mga pag-aaral ang patunay na "nag-aral" nga ng pilosopiya ang mga sumulat ng mga awit at korido[lalo na ng *Ibong Adarna*; bagaman hindi kilala ang sumulat niyon], at kung anong pilosopiya ang inaral nila, at sa kung anong wika [may alamat na nagsasabing marunong si Huseng Sisiw ng Latin at Griyego]. Gayonpaman, sa papel na ito, nais nating gawin simple ang metodo—na mapangahas na basahin ang mga akda sa *pilosopikal* na paraan. Nararapat na matagpuan sa teksto ang ebidensya ng pagkapilosopikal nito.

Inklusibong Depinisyon ng Pilosopiya

Bago pa man, paano mapapatunayang pilosopikal nga ang isang pagbasa at ang pagbasang ito? Aling pagbasa ang magiging sapat upang tawagin nga itong pilosopikal? Ngunit baka ang tanong din ay nagmumula sa isang

depinisyon ng pilosopiya na di-naaartikula. Kailangang ilagay ang buong talakayan sa tanong kung paano ang mga nasakop ay nagtanong kung posibleng gawin ang pilosopiya sa paraang *iba* sa paraan ng mananakop. Maaaring tawagin itong “poskolonyal na pilosopiya,” o sa higit na malawak na katawagan—“di-tradisyunal na pilosopiya.”

Ang pakay ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya ay magkaruon ng higit na inklusibong depinisyon ng pilosopiya. Ang pagtutol na hindi pilosopiya o pilosopikal ang pagbasa ay baka nagmumula sa isang *prejudice* o diskriminasyon laban sa iba pang uri at paraan ng pag-iisip at mga teksto. Ang salaysay ay nakita sa kasaysayan ng pilosopiya. Masasabing ang poskolonyal o di-tradisyunal na pilosopiya ay nagtatangkang isagawa ang pilosopiya sa isang higit na inklusibong paraan. Ibig nitong sabihin, nais nitong tanungin ang pagbibigay depinisyon sa pilosopiya na hindi isinasama ang mga anyong maaaring sabihin o hindi moderno o hindi kanluranin. Sa ganitong paraan laging lalong mabuting isagawa muna ang pilosopiya kaysa bigyan ito ng depinisyon, na laging mahirap.

Ang pilosopiya, kung gayon ay nakikita hindi bilang isang bagay kungdi isang proseso na sumasailalim ng ebolusyon. Hindi nito sinasabi na imposibleng bigyang depinisyon ang pilosopiya, kungdi na ang depinisyon na iyon, upang maging inklusibo ay kailangang umunlad o sumailalim sa ebolusyon. Ang depinisyon ng pilosopiya ay wala sa simula ng kanyang kasaysayan, kungdi hinunulma ng mismong pagsasagawa nito—lalo na ng mga iba’t ibang lahing nasakop (Halimbawa, India at Aprika [Brown 2004; Coatzee and Roux 2003]). Ang depinisyon ng pilosopiya ay ginaganap pa, hindi pa ito ganap: “It also understands philosophy as an unfinished work of deconstruction and reconstruction, a continuation of the radical questioning that has always been the hallmark of its self-understanding” (Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 20).

Ang pagnanais na ito na palawigin ang depinisyon ay pagtatanong rin kung maaaring lumagpas sa depinisyon ng pilosopiya ng mananakop o ng kanluran. Ang pagbatak sa depinisyon ay paghigit sa abot-tanaw kapwa ng mananakop at ng pananakop. Makikita na ang kilos na ito ay nagsimula pa nuong ika-19 na siglo kung kailan ayon sa mga historyador nagsimulang

makipagdiyalo ang mga nasasakop na bayan sa Modernismo sa Europa (Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 20). Hindi inunawa ng intelektwal na kilusang ito ang pagbalik lamang ang poskolonyal na pilosopiya sa panahon bago ng pananakop kungdi pagtutol at paglampas sa pananakop. Sa simula, hindi rin pagbabalik ang poskolonyal na pilosopiya sa sero bilang simula, kungdi pag-gamit na rin sa kaisipang Europeo para sa mga proyektong nasyunal. Gayonpaman, malinaw sa kanilang mga teksto na kinailangan nilang bumalik sa mga tekstong di-tradisyunal na tinuturing na pilosopikal.

Ang mga kilusang ito, na nagpapatuloy hanggang sa ating panahon, ang sinusundan ng proyektong ito. Malay at intensyunal ang pagbubuong ito ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya, na may malinaw na kahulugan sa mga spesipikong pilosopo; halimbawa, sa pilosopong si Keiji Nishitani o si Sri Aurobindo. Sa Aprika, ang naging ibig sabihin ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya ay ang muling-pagsusulat ng kasaysayan ng pilosopiya. Tinanong kung talaga nga bang sa Gresya nagsisimula ang kasaysayan ng pilosopiya. Hindi nga ba't may mga nauna pang mga sibilisasyon kaysa Gresya, at ang mga ito ay nasa Aprika, na malamang ay naka-impluwensya sa kanila? Sinabi ng mga pilosopo ng Aprika na baka nagsisimula ang pilosopiya sa lahang itim, sa mga taga-Egipto, at sa pigura nila Noah at Moises (Park 2). Kung anoman ang kasalukuyang status ng panukalang ito sa harap ng ebidensya ng arkeyolohiya, ang nais lamang sabihin sa papel na ito ay ang di-tradisyunal na pilosopiya ay humihingi ng muling pagtingin sa kasaysayan ng pilosopiya. Huwag lamang tanggapin ang nakagisnang pagsasalaysay ng kasaysayan ng mga ideya. Sa pagtinging muli na ito sa kasaysayan ng pilosopiya kailangang gamitin rin sa pagsasalaysay ang lente ng lahi (*race*).

Kasabay nito, bumaling din ang mga pilosopong ito sa mga di-tradisyunal na pilosopikal na teksto ngunit naka-ugat sa tradisyon ng kanilang kultura. Kaya nga natuklasan nila na may tradisyunal na konsepto ng pilosopiya sa kanilang kultura. Halimbawa ay ang pag-imbento sa konsepto ng *tetsugaku* ng mga Hapon. Inimbento ito kasi, talos nila na iba ang pilosopiya na may bahid ng Kanluran sa naunang indihenong konsepto ng pilosopiya sa kanilang kultura: "Japan already had in place a solid philosophical tradition rooted in an intellectual history that provided it with resources comparable

to but very different from those that have sustained western philosophy” (Heisig, *Japanese Philosophy* 17). Sa India naman, may konsepto ng *darsana*:

The Sanskrit term *darsana* is the rubric under which classical India engaged in and understood its philosophical practice. It does not connote a ‘love of wisdom’ for its own sake, but a vision—an insight into the nature of reality—indispensable for overcoming various forms of suffering. Suffering, it is argued, is a product of a distorted picture of reality and a misunderstanding of its basic principles. Our defective grasp of reality ensnares us in a cycle of birth and death, which is referred to in classical philosophy through the trope of ‘bondage.’ The task of philosophy, on some interpretations, is to provide a corrective to our distorted picture of reality and free us from this ‘bondage’ (Dalvi qtd. in *Boundas* 645-646).

Sa pagdidiyalogo na isinagawa ng mga poskolonyal na pilosopo sa pag-itan ng kanilang tradisyunal na mga teksto at ng Europeong Modernong pilosopiya, mulat nilang muling sinimulan ang kasaysayan ng pilosopiya. Upang maganap ito, kinailangan ng abot-tanaw ng pagkamarami at pagkakaiba (*pluralism at diversity*). Lumagpas sila sa reduksyon o pag-uuwi sa pilosopiya sa iisang anyo lamang (i.e. Europeyong Modernismo). Kinailangan din nilang isa-alang-alang ang konsepto ng kultura sa pagsasagawa ng pilosopiya. Ang pilosopiya ay hindi na lamang kilos ng unibersal na isip ng inbidwal na mang-iisip kungdi ang pagtahak sa isang paglalakbay kasabay ng indibidwal ang buong kultura. Ang proseso ng pag-iisip ay hindi lamang pagbigkas ng isang katangi-tanging posisyong personal, kungdi diskurso rin na kasabay ang isang buong komunidad at/o iba’t ibang komunidad.

Sa ganitong paraan, ang proseso ng inklusyon ay kilos ng *hybridization*, *fusion*, at *creative appropriation* (o ang tinatawag ng pag-aaral na ito bilang *remix*) ng iba’t ibang hibla ng kultura: “On the contrary, a critical awareness of the historical, cultural, and linguistic conditions that shape its thinking are a necessary condition for identifying original or creative contributions to philosophical thinking” (Heisig, *Japanese Philosophy* 21). Ang pagpasok ng usapin ng kultura sa pilosopiya, at ang pagsusuri dito ayon sa alituntunin ng kasaysayan at lingwistika ay kinailangan upang ang pagtanggap sa kanluraning kaisipan ay hindi pasibo bagkos ay aktibong lumilikha. “In this

literature, methods, vocabularies, and reference points from outside of India are creatively appropriated by philosophers in the service of anchoring, articulating, and rendering accessible to a global audience Indian philosophical issues in a modern context” (Bhushan and Garfield xxii). Sa India, ang malay na pagharap sa pandaigdigang mambabasa ang nagbunsod na gamitin ang kaisipang Europeo nang malikhain.

Ngunit para saan ang lahat ng pagsusulat ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya? Kungdi bigyang tinig at espasyo ang tinatawag na subalternong identidad (Boundas 22ff). Tinanong nila kung ano ang kinalaman ng pamilosopiya sa nakararami sa lipunan. Ito ba ay sinasagawa ng mga malalakas sa lipunan upang panatilihin ang sarili nila sa kapangyarihan, upang lalong lupigin ang mga nasa ilalim? Kapag ganito nga, kulang pa ang paglampas sa kolonyal na abot-tanaw. Ang poskolonyal na pilosopiya ay ebolusyunaryong pilosopiya na kailangang humantong sa pag-unlad ng buong komunidad, at hindi lamang ng nasa taas na. Hindi lang niyong sinasangkot ang usapin ng lahi kungdi ng ekonomikong kalagayan ng mga tao.

Sa prosesong ito, may malaking kinalaman ang usapin ng wika. Sa Hapon at Tsina, pinili nilang mamilosopiya sa sarili nilang wika. Ngunit hindi nito ibig sabihin na walang naging kaakibat na mga suliranin sa mga iba’t ibang indihenong wika. Samantala sa India:

Anybody who is writing in English is not an Indian philosopher. . . . What the British produced was a strange species—a stranger in his own country. The Indian mind and sensibility and thinking [during the colonial period] was shaped by an alien civilization. [The British] created a new kind of Indian who was not merely cut off from his civilization, but was educated in a different way. The strangeness of the species is that their terms of reference are the West. . . . They put [philosophical problems] in a Western way (Bhushan xiii).

Sa kabila nito, pinili ng mga pilosopo sa India na mamilosopiya sa Ingles dahil ninais nilang maging bahagi ng global na tanghalan:

They strove to usher Indian philosophy onto a global stage; they used the English language in order to call attention to Indian philosophy and in an effort to bring India into dialogue with Europe (Bhushan xxvi).

Sa puntong ito pumapasok ang tanong ng pag-aaral natin. Nararapat bang isagawa ang pilosopiya sa wikang Filipino? Paano ito nagiging posible? Sa katunayan, ang pagsagot sa mga tanong na ito ay humihingi ng pagtingin sa depinisyon sa pilosopiya na isinasali ang mga di-tradisyunal na tekstong gaya nang nangyari sa ibang dating nasakop na mga kultura.

Sa maiksing paglalahad na ito ipinapakita natin na ang poskolonyal o di-tradisyunal na pamimilosopiya na may higit na isang daang taong kasaysayan ay salaysay ng inklusyon na humihingi ng pakikipag-diyalogo sa Modernismo at ninais iyong lalong maging higit na inklusibo at plural. Kasama ito ng isang buong ebolusyon sa pilosopiya na nilayong gawing kilos ng pilosopiya sa pagpapaunlad sa kalagayan ng mga nagigipit ng mga strukturang ekonomiko at politikal.

Pilosopikala Pagbasa sa *Ibong Adarna*

Pinapanukala ng papel na ito na ang pagsusulat ng mga awit at korido, mga popular na teksto, ay impormado ng pilosopikal na hinagap. Naglalarawan ito ng limang hakbang tungo sa pakay na ipaliwanag ang kamalayang iyon. Sa unang hakbang, ipapakitang posibleng unawain ang *Ibong Adarna* nang pilosopikal at nakikipag-diyalogo sa Europeong Modernismo gaya ng ginawa sa Aprika at India. Makikita ito sa katauhan ni Don Pedro bilang pigura ng konsepto ng *der Wille zur Macht* ni Nietzsche. Sa ikalawang hakbang, tatanungin kung may konsepto ng pilosopiya sa Pilipinas na iba sa konstruksyon niyon sa kanluran. Tatalakayin kung gayon ang konsepto ng karunungan sa pigura ni Dona Maria. Sa ikatlong hakbang, tatanungin kung ano ang lugar ng ala-ala, pagbalik, at katutubo sa pilosopiya ng *Ibong Adarna*. Ipapakita sa paliwanag sa teksto na ang pag-alala sa katutubo ay maaaring maunawaan bilang pulkrum ng pamimilosopiya sa Filipino. Ngunit, hindi natin nauunawaan ang katutubo bilang pagbalik sa sinauna, ni Griyego ni ng kulturang Filipino, bagaman kasama ang mga ito, kungdi sinauna bilang kritikal na pag-tingin sa mga 'tumutubo.' Ibig nitong sabihin, na ang tunay na inuusisa ng katutubong pag-iisip ay ang kalikasan. Ang ekolohikal at ebolusyonyong pagharap sa realidad ang ibig sabihin ng katutubo. Sa ika-apat, ipapaliwanag na ang katutubo sa abot tanaw din ng

mga awit at korido ay ang boses ng *subalterno* o nasa-isang-tabi (peripero). Ang Filipino bilang wika ng pilosopiya ay kilos at pagbibigay boses sa walang boses. Sa wakas, ang subersibo at naka-gagambalang kilos ng pagbubuo ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya ay nauunawaan ito bilang Inobasyon hindi lamang paglikha kungdi bilang remix.

Ang Filipino bilang wika ng pilosopiya ay pag-aalog at paghahalo. Hindi lamang ito ang ideya ng pilosopiya bilang alyenasyon (o paglisan na mababanaagan sa katauhan ng mga anak ng hari) ni ang pagbalik lamang sa katutubo (sa katauhan ni Dona Maria na bumalik sa Reino de los Crystal), kungdi ito rin ang remix ng lahat-lahat. Ang inobatibong hinagap ang daigdig nga ng mga awit. Kung gayon, ang Filipino bilang wika ng pilosopiya ay kontemporaryo sa kahulugang nagbibigay lakas itong yakapin ang di-katiyakan ng hinaharap, sapagkat duon, ang bawat hibla ng ating kasaysayan, at kasaysayan ng daigdig, at planeta, ay maaaring iremix. Sa ganitong paraan tunay na intelektwal na wika ang Filipino mula't sapol.

Don Pedro at der Wille zur Macht

Nagbendicion nga muna
Atsaca sila, I, nalis na,
Si don Pedro ay nagbadia
Cay don Diegong bunso niya.

Si Don Juan ay magaling pa
Hindi mahihiya siya,
At siya ang nacacuha
Nito nangang ibong Adarna.

Ang mabuti ngayon naman
Ang gauin natin paraan,
Patayin ta na si don Juan
Sa guitna nang cabunducan (189).¹

Kung magsisimula ang repleksyon sa katauhan ni Don Pedro, maaaring maunawaan siya gamit ang lente ng Europeong Modernismo. Para sa awtor ng papel, si Don Pedro ay malalim na pigura (*figura*), ibig sabihin, pagsasatao ng isang sinaunang konsepto. Maaari ngang basahin ang mga awit sa etikal

na paraan, ngunit, maaari rin basahin sila, ika nga, “lagpas sa mabuti at masama.” Talos na marahil ng naka-aalam, na tinutukoy ang isang akda ni Friedrich Nietzsche, ang isa sa mga pilosopo ng paghihinala. Pinag-uusapan ni Nietzsche ang pagnanasa ng tao sa kapangyarihan, ang der *Wille zur Macht*. Itong pagnanasang ito ang nagbubunsod sa ating gawin ang anumang ginagawa natin, lalo na ang magtalaga ng mabuti at masama. Ang pagnanasang ito ay kitang-kita sa pagkakaroon ng paniniwala sa isang absolutong Diyos na nagtatakda ng malinaw na mga moral na alituntunin. Ayon sa pananaw ng ating pag-aaral, ito ang nakikita kay Don Pedro. Binugbog nga nila ni Don Diego si Don Juan, na sumagip sa kanila, pawang naging bato, at pina-akala ang hari na sila ang nakahuli sa Ibon:

Quinuha na capagdaca
Ang dala nga niyang jaula
Nang dalau, t, umui na
Doon sa reining Berbania.

Ito ang isang pilosopikal na bahagi ng awit—ang Prometeong kilos ng pag-aagaw ni Don Pedro sa kabayanihan ni Don Juan. Itong-ito rin ang dahilan kung bakit nagkasakit ang hari, ang tanyag na kaliluhan ni Don Pedro. Paano natin masasabi na kalililuhan nga ito? Paano kung ito nga ang kasaysayan ng buhay ng tao, ng ating lahi? Ang pagkuha sa bunga ng tunay na katapangan ang nagbubunsod sa kasaysayan ng mga lipunan. Hindi nga *martyr complex* ang nagbubunsod sa buhay, kungdi pagnanakaw sa kabayanihan ng iba. Maaaring isipin na may dahilan ang kaliluhan ni Don Pedro, ang nararapat na inggit niya sa bunsong kapatid na pinapaboran ng Ama. Tinatawag ni Nietzsche ang inggit na ito bilang *ressentiment*—ang pagkahumaling sa sariling kaapihan na lalabanan sa pamamagitan ng pag-ako sa sariling pagnanasa sa kapangyarihan. Wala namang buhay politika kung lahat tayo ay tatanghod na lamang sa kalooban ng hari. Umuusad lamang ang buhay kung sasalingin ang kalooban ng haring-ama, sa subersyon ng batas, upang makamit ang lakas, ang tunay na birtud ng buhay. Sa awit, si Don Pedro lamang ang tunay na nag-iisip, samantalang si Don Juan ay walang ginawa kungdi magdasal. Malinaw na nang nakita ng tatlong magkakapatid

ang balon, naglaro na kaagad sa isip ni Don Pedro ang kanyang pakana upang maagaw ang kapangyarihan: “Panguingan ninyong dalaua ang aquing ipagbabadya...” “Nang mayruong sampon dipa Ang lubid na naugos na, Ay pinatid capagdaca ni don Pedrong palamara” (213). Sa puntong ito, mas may kumpyansa na si Don Pedro na makukuha na niya ang ninanais, sapagkat tanging ang parehong paghahangad sa kapangyarihan ang nagbunsod kay Don Juan na bumalik upang kunin ang singsing ni Leonora. Sa ganitong paraan, ang moral na pagbasa sa Ibong Adarna ay hindi lamang kung paano tumutugma ang awit sa moral na uniberso, na pilosopikal nga, ngunit kung paano ito tugma sa pagtutol at pagsira sa moral na uniberso na iyon ng mga Modernong mang-iisip. Sa katunayan ang daigdig kung saan malinaw ang mabuti at masama ay mas halata sa pigura ni Dona Maria. Tiyak na hindi lamang dahil moral siya kaya niya pinahiram ang kanyang karunungan kay Don Juan, kungdi dahil sa kanyang pagnanais na salingin ang imperyosong ama. Sa susunod na bahagi, pag-uusapan natin ang konsepto ng karunungan sa awit.

Karunungan ni Dona Maria

Sa kabila ng bakas ni Prometheo sa teksto, masasabi bang tumuturo ang teksto sa konsepto ng karunungan na iba sa konstraksyon ng mananakop? Talos na maraming beses na ginagamit sa (mga) awit ang salitang karunungan. Katambal nga ito ng pagiging matanda: “Ang matandang ito naman, Segurong may carunungan” (222). Ulit sa 235: “Sila ay naging talunan, Narilag sa carunungan, Nang haring aquin magulang, Naging bato ang catauan.” Dito malinaw na ang pag-unawa ng awit sa karunungan ay may kinalaman sa kapangyarihan. Malinaw na malinaw sa: “Saan patutungo naman Ang sa haring carunungan, Na majica negra lamang Ang canyang tinatangnan.” Kung gayon, ang karunungan ay kapangyarihan, ngunit kapangyarihang o majica negra o majica blanca” (240). Sa wakas: “Sapagca, t’, uala cang daan Cay don Juan ay macasal, Matigas ang carunungan, Dona Mariang timtiman” (286).

Para sa isang pilosopo, ang salitang karunungan ang tiyak isa sa mga salitang nakakabighani. Tanungin kaagad: anong karunungan ito na

binabanggit ng awit? Paano ito nauugnay sa “karunungan” ng kasaysayan ng pilosopiya na laganap sa panahong sinulat ang mga awit? Paano ito nauugnay na karunungan sa [kanlurang] kasaysayan ng pilosopiya? Ito na marahil ang tiyak at walang-kaduda-dudang patunay na may pilosopiya sa mga awit at na maaari silang basahin sa pilosopikal na paraan. Isa pa lamang ito sa pagkaraming ideyang pilosopikal na nakabaon sa mga awit (ang iba pa ay ang ‘awa,’ ‘pag-ibig,’ at ‘sarili’). Ngunit nagiging sadyang kumplikado na ang usapan kapag titignan naman ang pagsasalin sa salita sa Ingles. Tiyak na hindi nga “*wisdom*” ang ibig sabihin ng karunungan sa mga siping nabanggit. Mas malapit sa “*power*”; gayonpaman, bakit nga ba “*power*” ang pagsasalin sa Ingles? O kung “*power*” man, malinaw na nga ba sa isip natin ang ibig sabihin ng “*power*” sa kontekstong ito?

Bagaman karunungan nga ang tinutukoy na salita sa teksto, at binabasa ito sa pilosopikal na paraan, hindi nito ibig sabihin, na may malinaw nang pag-unawa sa salitang iyon sa akda. Gayonpaman, ilang dekada na rin akong nagturo ng pilosopiya sa Filipino sa Kagawaran ng Pilosopiya sa Ateneo, na may kahiligang magsalin ng mga kaisipan mula sa Ingles sa Filipino: halimbawa na nga ay ang salitang *philosophia*. Tinuturo sa mag-aaral na galing ito sa salitang Griyego na *philein*, na ang ibig sabihin ay ‘umibig,’ at salitang *sophia*, na ang ibig sabihin ay: ‘Karunungan.’ Ang ibig sabihin ng *philosophia* ay “maging kaibigan o umibig sa karunungan.” Gayonpaman, maaari pa ring tanungin kung sino ang unang nagsalin ng *philosophia* nang ganiyon, at kung bakit ay kailangang tuklasin ng historyador ng pilosopiya sa Pilipinas? Bakit hindi ito sinalin bilang “pakikipagkaibigan sa pag-unawa” o “paghahanap sa katotohanan?”

Dalawa ang dapat tanungin: una, ano nga ang ibig sabihin ng karunungan sa awit; at ikalawa, sa anong dahilan at ang salitang ito ang ginamit sa pagsasalin ng *sophia* sa salitang *philosophia*. Nais linawin, na hindi natin ibig sabihin na may pilosopiya sa awit dahil ginagamit nito ang salitang karunungan. Kungdi, may pilosopiya dito sapagkat nakikipaglaro ang awit sa iba’t ibang bukal ng “karunungan” na naririnig o binabasa, ang Banal na Kasulatan, ang Koran, ang mga *manual* ng scholastikong pilosopiya ng mga panahong iyon, at tiyak ang mga bukal na hindi tinuturing na piloso-

pikal sa tradisyunal na kahulugan. Samaktuwid, hindi tayo namamangha sa paggamit ng salitang karunungan sa teksto, kungdi na mayruon itong malinaw na *ibang* kahulugan sa sinasabi sa mga silid-aralan ng pilosopiya na bumabatay sa nakagisnang kasaysayan ng pilosopiya.

Hinihingi ng pagbubuo ng pilosopiya sa Filipino ang pag-depina ng metodo ng pagbabasa upang mataluntong ang ibig sabihin ng mga salita sa Ibong Adarna at upang maipakita ang proseso ng pagtuklas sa kahulugan ng mga salitang ginagamit dito, tulad ng karunungan, *magica negra*, pagligtas. Kailangan din sabihin na ang matayog na paggamit sa wika na naririnig sa mga awit, ito rin ang buong metodo ng pilosopiya.

Ala-ala at Katutubo

Yayamang ang pagbuo ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya ay humihingi ng pagbalik sa mga teksto na tradisyunal sa natatanging kultura, nararapat na talakayin ang konsepto ng “ala-ala” sa awit. Alam ang kilalang bahagi: “Umupo na capagcuan Doon sa sinapupunan, Nauala sa gunam-gunam Princesa niyang iniuan” (269). Dito ang salitang ginamit para sa memorya ay: gunam-gunam. Itabi natin sa isa pang sipi: “Sagot ni dona Maria, Cun yaon ang utos niya, Huwag cang mag-ala-ala Aco, I, siyang bahala na” (246). Sa huling bahagi ng awit ay ang panghuling hamon sa mga nagbabasa: ang pagkalimot ni Don Juan sa mga naganap sa Reino del los Crystal. Sa isang paningin, maaaring sabihin na inuulit ng kwento ng awit ang maka-kanlurang mito ni Odysseo yayamang nasasaad duon ang paglisan at pagbalik. Ang mitong ito ay natatagpuan na puso ng iba’t ibang pilosopiya, halimbawa nuong panahon ng Edad Media. Kahit sa kontemporaryong pilosopiya ni Emmanuel Levinas, sentral din ang kwento ni Odysseo. Ngunit mapapansin, na *ibang-iba* ang paglalahad ng mitong ito sa awit: sapagkat naging problematiko ang pagbabalik ni Don Juan sa buong nais sabihin ng kwento. Sa kanyang pagbalik sa sariling tahanan may nagawa siyang pagkalaking kamalian: ang kalimutan ang mga ginawa sa kanya pagtulong ni Dona Maria. Sa isa pang mas nakahihilong pagbabaligtad ng anonimong akda, alam ni Dona Maria na ito nga ang mangyayari, kaya pagkabilin-bilin niyang huwag lilingon sa ibang babae (Cung icao ay dumating na sa real palacio бага, ay huwag palalapit ca Ni sa

iyong reinang ina. 268) Dito nga rin maaaring unawain ang lahat ng “ginawa” ni Dona Maria upang masagip si Don Juan sa malulupit na hamon ng kanyang Amang, si Haring Salermo. Sa ganito ring abot tanaw maaaring unawain na ang mga Hari at Reynang Magulang ay *hindi* lumilisan ng kanilang “tahanan,” manapa’y mga anak lamang nila ang naghahanap ng pakikipagsapalaran.

Isa lamang ang bantog na manunulat na si Tony Perez² na nag-bigay ng pagbabasa sa *Ibong Adarna*. Inilahad niya ang malalim na kahulugang *personal* ng awit, na nilalarawan ng kwento ang paglalakbay ng sarili tungo sa kanyang pagtubo bilang indibidwal. Kailangan nating sabihin na mulat din si Tony Perez na mula kay Freud at psiko-analisis ang kanyang pagbasa. Sa ganitong paraan, ang pilosopikal na papawirin ng awit ay kitang-kita sa pagsisid nito sa konsepto ng paglimot, pag-ala-ala, at pag-aalala, na malinaw sa sipi, na may kinalaman sa tunay na karunungan ni Dona Maria: na siya ang bahala. Ito ang *aporia* ng awit: alin nga ba ang dapat matandaan, ang “real palacio” o “ang Reino de los Crystal?” Ngunit sa wakas, mas nakagigimbal ang paraan ni Dona Maria ng pagpapa-ala-ala na hindi dapat magdulot ng pag-aalala: walang iba kungdi ang dalawang negrito sa banga: “Siya nang pag-uuiuca na Ang musico, I, tugtugin na, At nagsayao an dalaua, Ang negrito at negrita.” (274).

Sa puntong ito nakarating na tayo sa buod ng nais nating sabihin—na ang pilosopiya sa awit ay ang pag-uusisa nito sa mga tema ng pagkakasakit at pagkahilom, paglisan at pagbabalik, ang pagkalimot at pag-ala-ala. Hindi nga ba’ ito ang kwento ng buhay ng tao, ng ating lahi: na nakalilimot sa nagligtas sa ating buhay, na, gayang isiniwalat ni Perez sa kanyang mga akda, ay walang iba kungdi ang ating mga sarili? Tiyak na may magsasabi na ang huling bahagi ng awit ay mahabang aral tungkol sa kahalagahan ng Santa Misa, sapagkat duon, ang *anamnesis* sa buhay ni JesuKristo ang panuntunan ng banal. Gayonpaman, gaya ng lahat ng kilos ng may akda ng awit, binabaligtad ng teksto ang proseso. Sa wakas, ang katutubo ang nagpapa-ala-ala sa nakalimutan. Para bang sinasabi ng may-akda, ang nakalimutan ang siyang magpapawaglit din sa nakaligtaan.

Sa awit, ang kaalaman ay nasa balanghay ng pagkalimot at pag-alala. Ang malalim nitong inuusisa ay: sa buong prosesong ito ng paghahanap sa ating ala-ala, nasaan ang lugar ng katutubo?

Ito ang talagang tinatanong kapag tinatanong natin ang bakit at paano ng pagsasagawa ng pilosopiya, ng siyensa, atbp., sa Filipino. Ngunit isang tanong na tinanong na ng mga may akda ng awit. Kaya, kung ninanais nating patunayan kung nararapat isagawa ang intelektwal sa Filipino, mula't sapol nangyari na iyon, nakalimutan lamang natin.

Katutubo bilang Pagharap sa mga Tumutubo

Kung paano mag-usisa hinggil sa katutubo ay masalimuot at marubdob na usapin, lalo na sa panahon ng neo-kolonialismo. Sa pag-aaral na ito, babanggitin ang pagharap ng Heswitang mang-iisip na si Roque Ferriols, yayamang, siya ang isa sa mga nagsagawa (muli) ng pamimilosopiya sa Filipino.

Halos ganito ang sinasabi ni Ferriols hinggil sa usapin ng katutubo. May dalawang kilos ang pagbaling sa katutubo kung pilosopiya ang tatanungin. Una ay makasanayang na pagbalik sa tinatawag na Klasikal na kaisipan. Isinalin ni Ferriols ang *Ancient Greek Philosophy* bilang *Mga Sinaunag Griyego*.³ Ang akda niyang ito marahil ang isa sa mga seminal na akda ng kaisipang Filipino sapagkat taglay ng aklat ang buong kasaysayan ng pag-alam na humanistiko ng panahon ng Kastila, Amerika, at sa Nueva York, Cebu, Loyola Heights, Sampaloc, Zambales, atbp. Si Ferriols ay Katutubong Pantas, sapagkat hindi lang siya kumuha ng mga klase ng Griyego at Latin, kungdi siya ay nagpamalas na kakaibang galing sa klasikal na mga wika. Bakit binabanggit ito? Sapagkat itong-itong tradisyon din ang konteksto ng mga may akda ng awit. Sa kabila ng kanyang kolonyal at klerikal na edukasyon, hindi pinili ni R. Ferriols ang magsulat sa Ingles o ano pang trandisyunal na wika ng pilosopiya, kungdi buong tapang niyang isinagawa ang pamimilosopiya sa wikang Filipino. Ganito rin ang ginawa nila Huseng Sisiw at Balagtas, na siya namang hindi ginawa ni Jose Rizal: ang magsulat sa [sariling] wikang katutubo.

Parang sinasabi ni Ferriols sa kanyang akda hinggil sa Sinaunang kaisipang Griyego na ang pagbalik na ito sa katutubo ay hindi lamang

pagbalik sa *sophia* ng mga Griyego kungdi sa tunay na *sinauna*—ang matanda pa sa matanda. Makikita sa aklat na ito ang pagmumuni tungkol sa konsepto ng katutubo, bagaman (at marahil dahil hindi sa sistematikong paglalahad).

Sa pahina 20, ang seksyon ay pinamagatang *Salita*:

Sa pakikipagkatoto sa sansinukob, sa paglalabas sa kinakakublihan sa mga landas ng sangtumulubog, katutubo sa taong pag-usapan ang kanyang ginagawa.

Narito ang parehong proseso na nakikita sa laro na itinanghal ni Dona Maria upang tunay na makabalik si Don Juan sa Reino de los Crystal—na kanyang pakay. Kung mamarapatin ninyo, magsasagawa ako ng isang masusing pagbasa nito. Una, nakikita ang pinag-usapan ni Ferriols sa pahina 12, ang paglalabas sa kinakakublihan, ang konsepto ng *aletheia*. Ngayon, ang katagang pinag-uusapan ay *Lethe*, na tumutukoy sa ilog sa Hades na nagdudulot ng pagkalimot sa nakaraan. Sa salitang *lethe* nga nagtatagpo ang mitong Griyego at ang pilosopiyang Griyego. Kaya ang salitang Griyego sa katotohanan ay *aletheia*, o paglabas sa kinakublihan o pag-alala. Ngunit sa isang kilos ng subersyon, binabanggit ni Ferriols ang salitang Filipino para sa katotohanan: pakikipagkatoto sa pamamagitan ng pagsasagawa sa katutubo. Ibig sabihin, sinasabi ni Ferriols na ang Klasikal na kaisipan ay talinghaga lamang a) ng katutubong kilos ng tao, at b) ng katutubo sa atin.

Isa itong halimbawa ng sinasabi niyang, pamimilosopiya, ngunit na hindi magagawa nang hiwalay sa wika. Bilang isang magaling sa mga wika, tunay na nagawa ni Ferriols ang sumabay sa mga akdang Griyego; ngunit bilang tunay na namimilosopiya, batid niyang, kailangang bumalik siya sa tunay na katutubo—at hindi iyon ang Klasikal na Griyego, kungdi ang tinatawag niyang Sansinukob (o Kinapal), ang mga tumutubo.

Linawin natin ang mga puntos hanggang dito: a) una, na ang pag-usisa sa katutubo ang ginagawa ng awit, hindi lamang dahil nasa katutubong wika ito, kungdi dahil duon ang kwentong isinalaysay ay ang kwento ng pagbalik; ikalawa, na ang pagbalik na ito sa katutubo ay para sa sinauna, at ano ang sinauna, ang mismong mga tumutubo o ang kalikasan—ang mas matanda pa sa matanda. Kapag sinasabi nilang pagsasalin ang meron ng *Being* o ng *Es*

gibt, hindi ko maiwasang tumutol dahil, hindi ito sinasaad ng mga akda ni Ferriols. Ang pilosopiya ay ang mismong pagharap sa mga *tumutubo*. Tiyak na upang maunawaan ang ibig niyang sabihin, kailangang suriin ang lagapan na kaisipan nang panahong binubuo niya ang mga ideyang ito, hindi lamang sa Pamantasan ng Ateneo de Manila kungdi sa Kapisanan ni Hesus, kung kailan ang buong usaping ng radikal (e.g. sa Theolohiya ng Liberasyon) ay matunog-na-matunog. Tama man siya o mali, kay Ferriols ang tunay na radikal ay iyong konsepto ng katutubo. Sapagkat ibig nitong sabihin na bumabalik ang tao [at ang buong usapin ng pagpapakatao] sa mas nauna sa Sinaunang Griyego, ang kalikasan at ang *lupang* pinag-uugatan ng lahat ng Salita. Kung hindi tayo kumbinsido, magpatuloy tayo sa parehong talata:

“May bukod tanging landas ang bawat kalinangan.”

Hindi ba ito ang landas na tinahak ng mga poskolonyal na pilosopiya sa Aprika at India—ang makita ang kanilang sariling kultura bilang daan ng pamimilosopiya? Tulad ng mga awit, ang radikalismo ni Ferriols ay naka-ugat sa katutubo. Kung iisipin mong pagsasalin ng mga akdang banyaga ang sinabi niya, *hindi* iyon ang sinabi niya. Upang maunawaan ang sinabi ni Ferriols, kailangang *bumalik* tayo sa “ugat ng kalinangan.” Wala itong iba kungdi ang buong konsepto/usapin ng katutubo. Sa madaling sabi, ang katutubo ay hindi lamang iyong *indigeno* o *indio* o *nativo*, kungdi ang natatanging kalinangan, iyong sinauna sa anomang pananakop, ni ng isang imperyo o ng isang relihiyon. Ibig sabihin, bumabalik si Ferriols hindi lamang sa nakaraan kungdi sa kailaliman ng bawat paglilintang (kultura). Tulad ni Don Juan sumisid siya sa balon at duong nakipagbuno sa higante at serpiente upang maiahon mula sa dusa ang kanyang Leonora.

Katutubo bilang Ekolohiya at Tinig ng Subalterno

Bagaman nagsisimula ang ating pag-uusisa kay Ferriols, hindi naman ito nagtatapos duon. Sapagkat hindi lamang ang indihenong kultura ang katutubo. Ito ay mas natibo sa natibo, ang mga tumutubo, ang kalikasan. Sa puntong ito nais kong sabihin na bagaman may kahiligan talagang maging gubat na mapanglaw ang pilosopiya ay hindi ko nais gawin iyon.

Nais kong maging malinaw. Kaya maging malinaw at distinkto tayo: una, ang katutubo ay walang iba kungdi ang kalikasan na tunay na pinag-uugatan ng pag-unawa. Kaya nga, ang pamimilosopiya sa katutubong wika ay walang ibang ibig sabihin kungdi ang bumalik sa kalikasan, sa ekolohiya, at sa organiko at ebolusyunaryong buhay nito.

Sa puntong ito nililisan natin ang papawirin ni Ferriols. At dumadako tayo higit na malapit sa depinisyon ng kalikasang tinutukoy sa kontemporaryong panahon. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit isinagawa ang lingwistikong metodo sa itaas; ito ay upang linawin na *hindi* pa iyon ang pilosopiya. Kapag nagsusuri tayo ng mga salita, hindi *pa* tayo namimilosopiya, kungdi gumagawa tayo ng kinakailangang kilos ng hermenyutika upang tunay tayong makarating sa PAKSA ng pilosopiya, na walang iba kungdi ang TALAGANG NANGYAYARI. Ito ang ibig sabihin na ang pilosopiya ay nagsisimula sa ating karanasan at na empirikal ito. Ang tanging paksa ng pilosopiya ay kontemporaryong (sa literal na kahulugan bilang kasabay sa panahon) pangyayari, ang tinatawag ni Ferriols na “talagang nangyayari.” Ito ang ibig sabihin ng katutubo. Kaya nga, malinaw na ang pagbalik sa katutubo ay walang iba kungdi ang unawain ang kasalukuyan natin. Isang kilos na malinaw sa kwento ng awit. Sa wakas, ang pagsasalita ng magkatambal na negrito at negrito ay paalala sa ating konteksto. Ang pagbalik na ito ay kilos na kritikal sa kahulugang ang pamimilosopiya ay hinggil sa pagtatanong tungkol sa ibig sabihin ng mga palatandaan o hudyat ng ating panahon. Kaya sa ganitong paraan, yayamang ang kalikasan ang pinakamahina, marapat na bumalik sa mga awit sapagkat ang mga awit ay “boses ng subalterno.” Kapansin-pansin na sa mga pagsusuri sa mga awit, hindi malinaw na ito ay koneksyon natin sa Amerika Latina. *Corrido* din ang tawag sa mga metrikong romansa ng mga Latino. Sa mga nag-aaral ng mga *corrido* sa Latin Amerika, malinaw na kritikal na pag-iisip ang ibig sabihin ng pagiging katutubo (Villalobos and Reyes-Pimienta 129-149).

Linawin pa ang pagpapakahulugan natin sa katutubo: a) hindi ito pagbalik sa nakaraan; b) hindi pangunguna sa isang bukod tanging kalinangan na walang kahit anong bahid ng banyagang impluwensiya; k) bagkos, ang katutubo ay pagbalik sa kritikal na pag-tingin sa kontemporaryong panahon,

lalo't higit sa kalikasan sa empirikal na metodo ng agham; d) kaya, ibig din sabihin ng katutubo ay ang boses ng mga naaapi, na siyang kalikasan at mga hindi marunong sa wika ng mananakop. Samaktuwid, ang katutubo ay ang kritikal na pag-iisip, na huwag basta tanggapin ang nakikita. Ito ang pangin-gilatis ni Dona Maria, na batid na nag-babalat-kayo ang lahat ng nadarama.

Unang-una, alam natin na ang buong suliraning ng kalikasan ay ebolusyon bilang pag-unlad. Kaya sa buong proseso ng pag-unlad mahalaga ang malinaw na pagtingin sa kalikasan. Kung babalikan ang ekolohiya, wala naman duon ang proseso ng paggapi sa mahina upang manatiling buhay. Ang ebolusyon ay hindi proseso ng pagdaig sa mahina, kungdi proseso ng pakiki-pagtulungan ng mga organismo sa pamamagitan ng adaptasyon, na ang ibig sabihin, ay nararapat na pagtugon sa kapaligiran. Adaptasyon ay hindi ang pagkain ng malaki sa maliit, kungdi ang pagbubuo ng kakayahan ng isang organismong maging bahagi ng isang ekolohiya. Ito ang katutubo. Ngunit sa ganitong proseso, paano nga ba tunay na makalilikha ng isang ekolohiya, kung walang boses ang mga naaapi? Kung ang tingin natin ay dapat ngang kainin ng mga Don Pedro nang buhay ang mga Don Juan, hindi na kailangan ng awit ng *Ibong Adarna*. Ang pagbalik sa mga awit at pananatiling umaawit ay pagigiit sa katarungang panlipunan. Ang katutubo ay kalikasan, ang kalikasan ay kinikilala ang lahat ng tumutubo o ang lahat ng buhay.

Ngunit iyon na nga, paano makikita ang ibang umiiral kung iisa lamang ang wika ng pag-iisip? Ang katutubo ang nananatiling garantiya ng marininig ang boses ng subalterno, ang hindi makasali sa global na talakayan.

Katutubo at Inobasyon

Sa huling bahagi ay makita na ang pagbubuo ng poskolonyal na pilosopiya sa Filipino ay sinasangkot ang depinisyon ng katutubo bilang inobasyon. Nakikita rin ito sa awit. Wala sigurong linya ng awit na hindi pina-uusad ang panahon dahil sa paghahalo dito ng mga tanda. Ang tawag dito ng mga teorista ng pagkamalikhain ay *Remix* [o gaya ng nabanggit na, *hybridization* at *fusion*]. Binanggit natin na ang suliranin ng tumutubo ay ang ebolusyon. Sa paghahangad ng tao sa ebolusyon, inisip niyang ipanguna ang progreso. Isa itong sinulid ng pagbasa sa mga awit, ang paghahanap ng kalayaan sa

panahon ng pananakop—isang progresibong at liberal na pagbabasa. Ngunit, nakabatay din iyon sa progresibismo na may mga tao at lipunan na nakahihigit o nakaka-aangat, isang pag-aangat na nakabatay sa pagiging hari ng malakas, ng *der Wille zur macht*. Itong kaisipang Nietzscheano hinggil sa katutubo ay ang orihinal na nagsasanhi ng kaapihan ng mahihina ng mga maharlika; ng isang maling pag-unawa sa ebolusyon bilang pagkain ng malakas sa mahina.

Ang progresibo at liberal na pag-unawa sa awit ay balido, ngunit kailangan ng kritikal na pagtingin, sapagkat ang liberalismo ay nagdudulot din ng eksklusyon. Kung gayon, ang simplistikong ekonomikong pag-unlad na sinusulong ng liberalismo mismo ang ugat ng kwento ng kaapihan na inaawit ng mga korido. Ngunit ang awit din ang malinaw na pagtutol sa kaapihan. **Dahil hindi naman nagagapi ang kaapihan nang walang paglikha.** Ang buong kilos ng katarungan ay hinihingi ang pamimilosopiya bilang katutubo, bilang paglikha. Itong katutubong paglikha ay ebolusyonaryo sa kahulugang ginagalugad ang konsepto ng ekolohiya, o ang pagiging naka-depende ang lahat sa isa't isa.

Naunawaan ng mga akda ng awit na ang katarungan ay sa mismong pagbalik sa katutubo. Ang katutubo ang lumilikha, ang inobasyon. Ibig natin sabihin na wika ng pilosopiya ang Filipino sapagkat mula't sapol ang hangarin ng awit at korido ay ang lumikha, o sa wika nating ngayon, ang mag-inobeyt. Ang inobasyon ay humihingi ng remix. Isang kilos ng subersyon, sapagkat may hinahalo ba na hindi naaalog? Ngunit napakapayak ng naunawaan ng mga ninuno, na kung may magdadala man ng katarungan sa ating lipunan ay tayo din iyon, sa pamamagitan ng disrupsyon na gagawin natin sa mapang-aping struktura ng lipunan. Ang tunay na aral ng awit ay na hindi mararating ang katarungang panlipunan kung hindi isinasama sa mix ang katutubo. Ang pagsasamang iyon ang laging nagbubunsod ng inobasyon. Kung wala nitong inobasyon na iyon ang tanging tanggulan ay karahasan.

Ang Filipino bilang wika ng pilosopiya ay paghahangad na makatuklas ng paraan ng katarungan na nagmumula sa paglikha. Pinag-iisipan ngayon kapwa ng mga relihiyoso at siyentipiko ang siyentipikong paraan ng pagiging maawain—ito ang susunod na hakbang ng ebolusyon. Kaya, hindi lamang kalayaan ang tanong ng awit kungdi ang *awa* at *habag* din: “Nang cay don

Juang matatap Ang hatol na iguinuad, Siya ay nagdalang habag, Sa capatid niyang liyag” (198); “Nang maguing tatlong oras na ang canilang pagbabaca, Cay D. Juan ay nagbadya, Ang taksil at palamara. Quita ay magpahingalay itong ating paglalaban. Napaayon si D. Juan sa serpienteng tampalasan” (210); “Doon ay caguinsa-guinsa Doon sa pagtulog niya, Siya nangang pagdating na Mahal na ibong Adarna” (218). *At marami pa.*

Sa madaling sabi, ang tanong ng agham ngayon ay hindi lamang kung ano ang Sistema ng pag-unlad, kungdi ano ang Eko-sistema ng pagiging makatarungan. Ang sinaunang suliranin ng relihiyon, kung paano magagawad habag ay nagiging suliranin ng inobasyon. Lalo itong lilinaw sa pagsasagawa ng pilosopiya sa katutubong wika bilang boses ng subalterno. Sa kilos na ito, ang intelektwal na hangarin ay nagiging posible sa pamamagitan ng pag-iisip sa katutubong wika. Sa madaling sabi, ang inobasyon ang hangarin ng agham, at ang inobasyon ay hindi lamang daan tungo sa pagkikipagkompetensya (pakikibaka sa serpyente) kungdi paanong natututo rin sa serpyente. Iyon ang katutubo. Ngayon ang hangarin ng inobasyon ay katarungan—o awa.

Inobasyon rin ibig sabihin, pagsisimulang muli. Nasa buong kilos ng katutubo ang konsepto ng pagsisimulang-muli, ang pagbangon sa libingan. Ang awit ay simulang muli. Ito nga ay pagbati ng Anghel sa Birhen Maria sa Salubong, isang pagbubunyang na nabuhay na muli ang anak niyang ipinako sa krus. Ibang-iba ito sa konsepto ng progreso o promosyon; kungdi, naroon ang buong kilos ng pagkamatay upang mabuhay na mag-uli. Sa wakas, ang *Ibong Adarna* mismo ang nabuhay na muli: “Namayapac at naghusay Naglinis na nang catauan, Balahibo, I, pinalitao Anaquin ay quintong tunay” (194).

At lagi, ang awit ang tanda ng pagkabuhay na muling ito. Ibig sabihin, pinatatanong ng buong konsepto ng pagkabuhay na muli kung layunin nga ba ay umangat lamang nang umangat o ang maging panibagong spesiye—ang maging inobasyon? Kung wala nitong resureksyon, hindi naman nag-ebolusyon ang mga organismo. Sa isip ng may akda ng awit, ang tunay na ebolusyon ay sa awit—sa remix ng inobasyon (sinauna at moderno; organiko at teknolohikal; totoo at birtwal). Bahagi ng pamimilosopiya sa Filipino ang isagawa ang inobasyon sa katutubong wika. Lalo’t higit, ang katutubo ang

nananatiling kontemporanyo, ibig sabihin, may kabuluhan sa hinaharap. Kung gayon ang wikang katutubo ay sabay na pulkrum ng pagtutol at ng pagsilang ng panibago.

Konklusyon

Salita nga ba ang daan ng kaligtasan? May halaga ang mga wika. Ngunit sa wakas higit na may dunong ang awit. Bagaman nagsisimula ang mga awit sa pamimintuho sa pintakasi, ang tunay na simula ng awit ay ang umaawit. Sinabi ni Karl Marx na ang relihiyon ay opyo ng mga masa, marahil iyon din ang tingin natin sa mga awit, na isa itong pagtakas sa mga kaapihan ng kolonyalismo; ngunit sinabi din ni Marx na ang relihiyon ay panaghoy ng mga naaapi (Rehmann 144-153). Bilang panaghoy, ang pag-awit ay pagkilos. Sa pilosopo, ang tunay na pagkilos na ginagawa ng tao ay ang pagsasalita. Kung ang pagsasalita natin ay hindi nagtatayo ng mga tulay, bakit nga ba hindi pa tayo humawak ng mga armas, tulad ng Supremo? Sapagkat alam natin ang nagsasalita ay higit na matapang sa may hawak ng armas, sapagkat hindi nakamamatay ang sandata bagkos lumilikha. Kung haharap tayo sa may sandata na taglay lamang ang ating mga gitara, tunay tayong matapang.

Buksan natin ang bawat pahina ng mga awit, naruon ang buong tapang ng ating kalinangan, hindi sa paniniwala lamang sa karununganang blanca at negra, kungdi sa pag-awit na nakapagtutulala sa mga naghahari-harian. Gayonpaman, ang mang-iisip, hindi tulad ng makata, ay hindi nais magparilisa. Bagkos nais niyang ang tao’y mag-usisa tungkol sa sarili nating karunungan nang sa gayo’y mabago ang lipunan.

Sa pagsasagawa natin sa Siyensa sa katutubong wika sinusundan lamang natin ang halimbawa ng mga may akda ng mga awit na ipinakita ang tunay na inobatibong agimat ng katutubo. Nagsisimula pa lamang ang buhay ng ating mga awit at korido, yayamang nasa karununganang katutubo na maging laging bago. Tinatawag tayong ng mga ninunong mang-aawit na sa palikha ng bayan tayo’y kailangang magsimulang muli at muli.

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Performativity and the Coming Out Discourse in PETA Gay Plays from 1967 to 1998

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Abstract

This paper examines the gay plays staged by the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) from 1967 to 1998 through the postmodern lens of gender performativity of Judith Butler. The paper argues that the instability of gender complicates the ongoing discourse of subject formation which could open up spaces for the possibility of alternative identity and community formations for queer subjects which in this paper is provisionally labeled as “transempire.” In these selected plays, including the iconic “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat” by Orlando Nades, the coming out narratives demonstrate that transempire consciousness does not only serve to complicate perception of sexual difference and subvert assumptions about gender identity which is similar to what Butler calls “indeterminacy of gender” or even Beauvoir’s notion of the “unknowability of womanhood,” but in significant ways, enacts the transempire experience in all its ceaseless contradictions.

Keywords

transempire, performativity, performance, gender, drama, Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA)

Introduction

One might as well begin with an imagined gallery of genders and stream of sexualities: Masculine. Feminine. Cisgender. Cissexual. Gay. Lesbian. Bisexual. Bigender. Transgender. Transsexual. Transman. Transwoman. Heterosexual. Homosexual. Queer. Demigirl. Girlfag, Guydyke. Non-binary. Genderless. All Genders. Genderqueer. Gender Variant. Gender Fluid. Gender Nonconforming. Gender Questioning. Agender. Aromantic. Asexual. Pansexual. Two-Spirit. Polygender. Intersex. Androgyne. Womyn. Neutrois. Other.

The twin notion of gender and sexuality has always been fraught with problems for a number of reasons. On the one hand, it is problematic because there is an almost natural tendency to confuse one with the other as a fundamental index of identity. It is not uncommon today to single out one's gender when one is referring to a person's sexuality or gender orientation. For example, if this or that popular actor is rumored to be gay, his sexuality or sexual orientation (meaning the sex of people he is attracted to) is typically questioned. Conversely, when his role as a devoted father and a great family provider is at issue, his masculinity is taken for granted.

But aside from this, confusion also arises when one locates the concept of sex and how it is situated in the above discussion. Is sex subsumed under the idea of gender or is it incorporated into the idea of sexuality? The answer is definitely no. Sex as referring to the anatomic biological trait (being male or female) and reproductive capacity (as having a male or female genitals) is neither a function of gender nor is it inherent in expressing one's sexuality. In short, sex, gender, and sexuality are three distinct but nonetheless closely interconnected categories.

Conceptually, there are two major strands that govern the basic understanding of these categories: Classical Essentialism and Social Constructivism. According to the former, the self is characterized by an unchanging, timeless, and universal inner core or foundation that governs one's biological body (sex), one's social identity (gender) and one's sexual object choice and desire (sexuality). The Social Constructivists reject this universalist notion. They believe that reality, including one's perception or experience of sexu-

ality and gender, are discursively produced, while emphasizing the importance of language as a tool for interpreting one's lived realities. As socially constructed categories, gender and sexuality (along with other related categories such as race and class) are also viewed as social systems and systems of oppression. As such, both are presumed to determine patterns of social relationships among people. These relationships are further characterized as complex (intricate and interconnected), pervasive (covers all social domains such as families, communities, religion, education, and media, among others), variable (historically contingent and always changing across time periods), and ultimately hierarchical and oppositional (privileging males over females and normalizing heterosexuality over homosexuality) (Beasley, *Gender & Sexuality*; Weber, *Understanding*).

In more ways than one, people who fall outside the heterosexual paradigm and who are forced by circumstance to identify as sexual minorities—lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, and queers—must constantly deal with society and its range of negative attitudes and feelings (owing to strong and deep-seated social, cultural, and religious bias) toward them. Thousands of young people who identify as part of the sexual minorities become targets of bullying, discriminations or even violent criminal behavior not only by homophobic individuals or groups but also even by misguided state agents. When members of the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn gay club in Greenwich Village in June 1969, it immediately became a flashpoint and inaugurated a radical form of activism that came to be known as the gay rights movement. Remembered and memorialized today by 'gender warriors' as the Stonewall Uprising, that watershed moment which began in a spirit of both rage and parody charged the gay struggle for equality and visibility with the ultimate force of a revolution.

This paper imagines the notion of the transempire as evoked and manifested in the gay plays of PETA from 1967 to 1998. These plays are "Hanggang Dito na Lamang at Maraming Salamat" by Orlando Nadres, "Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross" by Rody Vera, and "Human Voice" by Jean Cocteau as adapted for the PETA stage by Jorge Ledesma. The paper argues that the PETA gay plays serve to demonstrate the notion of transempire both as an



Fig. 1. Multi-awarded film director Lino Brocka plays Fidel with Manny Castañeda as Julie in PETA's original production of "Hanggang Dito Na Lamang at Maraming Salamat" at the Rajah Sulayman Theater in Intramuros in 1975. The play is considered by many as a watershed moment in Philippine theater history. PETA Library & Archives.

instance of performance and performativity. Transempire,¹ as it was originally deployed by noted Filipino anthropologist Michael Tan in his regular newspaper column, *Pinoy Kasi* dated October 22, 2014 at the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PDI), refers to the Philippines as a sovereign country which

remains dependent on the US, its former colonial master, for its security and other geopolitical concerns. This was in the context of the tragic murder of Filipino transgender, Jennifer Laude, by US Serviceman Joseph Scott Pemberton in Olongapo City. Thus, transempire is originally understood as Filipino nationhood struggling to break free from its colonial past.

However, this paper opts to abandon the postcolonial antecedent of transempire and instead aligns its new deployment to the postmodern notion of gender as a performative effect of reiterative acts that constitutes the subject as a subject (Butler, *Bodies That Matter*). This theoretical grounding is based on the revolutionary ideas of philosopher Judith Butler who powerfully challenges essentialist assumptions made about sex and gender (where both is understood to consist of identifiable, inherent, and trans-historical qualities). She contends that gender, like sexuality, is not an essential truth derived from the body's materiality but rather a regulatory fiction. Through the principle of reiteration which takes place within a highly rigid regulatory frame, gendered bodies are produced, not only as representations but as materialized and sensuously experienced entities. Repetition generates habitual forms that are recognized within the social world; and they subject persons to ideals but in a manner that leaves them relentlessly deficient in both mind and body. Compulsively enacting the forms that would demonstrate conformity to gender ideals, most train their bodies to become sexually legible. For some, however, a consciousness of the gap between ideal gender and materially actual difference can become the basis for resistance to the sex/gender system (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 19).

With this Butlerian theoretical concept, this paper hopes to highlight certain "moments" in the PETA gay plays where transgender identity can become a signifier of individual choice, social determination, and the transempire consciousness.

The Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) is regarded by many as one of the country's foremost theater organizations. Founded on April 7, 1967 by Cecille Guidote-Alvarez, PETA is driven by its vision to be an active agent of social change and cultural transformation. Using its own singular brand of dramaturgy, it sets out to develop what it calls a people's

theater for empowerment that will contribute toward building a free and sovereign society as well as a genuine people's culture (Samson, et al., *A Continuing Narrative*; Fernandez, *Palabas*). Because of its strong engagement with the masses and their narratives of oppression, PETA has developed a formidable reputation as a left-wing performing group totally committed to the task of conceptualizing, producing, and staging original protest and political drama written in Filipino during the tumultuous Martial Law period.

Some of the most notable and critically-acclaimed productions in this genre and period are *Halimaw* by Isagani Cruz (1971), *Ai'dao* by Malou Jacob (1972), *Nukleyar I* and *II* by Al Santos (1982 and 1985, respectively), *Oratoryo ng Bayan (Makabayang Deklarasyon ng Makataong Karapatan)* by Alan Glinoga and Rody Vera (1983), *Buwan at Baril* by Chris Millado (1985), *Panata sa Kalayaan* by Alan Glinoga, Al Santos, Rody Vera, Chris Millado and Cast (1986), *Macli-ing Dulag* by Malou Jacob (1988), and *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamu* by Rody Vera based on a filmscript by Marina Feleo-Gonzales (1991) where Nora Aunor, in her first theater role, was made to deliver the play's most explosive closing lines: "Lansagin ang Base Militar!" (Pambid, "Paano Nga Ba" 255).²

Aside from political and protest theater, PETA has also produced a varied repertoire of plays dealing with and inspired by history, literature, indigenous culture, folklore and ritual as well as translations and adaptations of classical dramatic texts such as *Macbeth* translated by Rody Vera (1984), *Antigone* adapted by Al Santos, Alan Glinoga, and Nick Cleto Jr. (1975), as well as local productions of Brechtian theater: *Ang Butihing Tao ng Setzuan* (1971) translated by Paul Dumol and Marcelino Cavestany Jr. from *The Good Woman of Setzuan*; *Ang Hatol ng Guhit na Bilog* (1977) translated by Franklin Osorio and Lito Tiongson from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; *Ang Buhay ni Galileo* (1981) translated by Alan Glinoga; *Ang Operang Tatlong Pera* (1998) translated by Rody Vera from *The Three Penny Opera*; *1896: The Musical* (1996) by Charley Dela Paz (libretto) and Lucien Letaba (music); and *Radiya Mangandiri: Isang Pilipinong Ramayana* (1993) by Rody Vera based on the classic Indian epic of *Ramayana* by Valmiki. Also, through PETA's partnership with various international theater companies, it has also collaborated on a number of

highly successful co-productions such as *Romeo at Julieta: Isang Komedi* (2008) by Rody Vera and Yamamoto Kiyokazu with the Black Tent Theater of Japan, and *Ang Mahiwagang Kampanya ni Sebieng Engkanto* (1992) with the San Francisco Mime Troupe (Pambid, “Paano Nga Ba” 195-255).

In between these notable productions are the moneymaking ventures of PETA (so-called because they never fail to bring in the audience and, as a consequence, generate revenue for the company) that tackle equally relevant social issues such as gender and gay-oriented plays. This particular project is interested in three gay productions staged by PETA from 1967 to 1998, the period that covers the latter’s early beginnings, the Martial Law period, and the post-EDSA years. Orlando Nadres’ “Hanggang Dito na Lamang At Maraming Salamat” (1974) occupies a privileged position in Philippine theater history as the first ever play produced and staged in the country that tackles the issue of homosexuality (Fernandez, *Palabas* 237). Since its initial run in December 1974 at the Rajah Sulayman Theater in Intramuros with the late National Artist for Film Lino Brocka as Fidel, Manny Castaneda as Julie, and Bembol Roco as Efren, the play has been performed countless times by both amateur and professional as well as university-based theater groups. And it is precisely because of its numerous incarnations and stagings—not to mention, the highly collaborative nature of theatrical performance—that the play has undergone so many emendations not necessarily by its original playwright but by subsequent directors who have taken the liberty to update not only the text and its language for a modern audience, but also some key aspects of Fidel’s characterization.

For example, in his book, *Philippine Gay Culture: Binabae to Bakla, Silahis to MSM*, J. Neil Garcia analyzed a version of the play that was intended for a commercial run by the Integrated Performing Arts Guild (IPAG), a local theater group based in Iligan City. In that particular version of the play, as discussed by Garcia himself in the book, lines and passages that purportedly show Fidel and Julie, at some point in the narrative, as having solicited the sexual services of young boys including this particular dialogue apparently delivered by Julie: “Sixteen years old lang ‘yon. At huwag mong tawaran, ga laki. Eh di kinabukasan ay namulaklak kang parang isang gumamela dahil

nadiligan ka,” represent radical revisions to the text that may or may not be considered as authorized (Nadres qtd. in Garcia, *Philippine Gay Culture* 280).

However, this paper has used a copy of the original manuscript of its playwright, Orlando Nadres, which he completed on November 27, 1974. The said copy was obtained with permission from the archives of the PETA library specifically for purposes of this academic endeavor.

“Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat”

When PETA successfully restaged Orlando Nadres’s phenomenal 1974 play, “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat,” in May 1997 at the Rajah Sulayman Theater in Intramuros, the late award-winning playwright and PETA artist, Rene Villanueva, wryly remarked, “What else is there to say about coming out?” The context of the question at that time was that the current Nadres play was already the third production of PETA after “Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross” in 1992 and “Ralph at Claudia” in 1996 which dealt with issues of coming out and gay sexuality. It appears then that PETA, despite its well-known propensity for polemical and politicized positions on a wide-range of issues, remained belatedly bogged down and overly concerned with “coming out” as a dramatic motif while the rest of the world was already wrestling with more pressing issues like HIV/AIDS, gay rights activism, gender equality, and other LGBT concerns.

Arguably, the proliferation and rise in popularity of gay-themed productions at around this time not only in PETA but also in other theater groups can be characterized as part and parcel of the so-called post-EDSA phenomenon. That is, with the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos—along with his family and cronies—effectively driven out of the country, artists and activists alike have been left with a little less reason to rage, rave, and rant against the erstwhile dictator. In PETA, for example, the usual angry rhetoric against the Marcos regime was tempered as the company redirected its singular aesthetics and creative energy to the politics of an entirely different demographic.

This demographic includes the likes of Fidel Palma, the dignified and discreet middle-aged male homosexual, and Julie, the stereotype manicurista



Fig. 2. Noted filmmaker Joel Lamangan reprises the role of Fidel with Kryss Adalia as Julie in the post-EDSA restaging of Orlando Nadres' iconic gay play in 1995. After two decades since its first production, the play still resonates strongly with Filipino audiences. PETA Library & Archives.

in drag. Both inhabit a world as depicted in “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat”; it is a world awash in patriarchal values and norms of what it means to be a real man as idealized by the character of Efren Reynoso, Fidel’s beloved, whom the play describes as “devastatingly handsome, sexy, very virile looking,” and *prone to homophobia* (emphasis added). As the play opens, spectators are immediately inducted into the seemingly happy lives and sometimes not-so-happy loves of both Fidel and Julie. Fidel is a closet gay who owns and manages a small pawnshop in his unspecified hometown outside of Manila. For the past several years, he has been supporting the college education and other needs of the handsome teenager, Efren Reynoso, as though the latter is his own flesh and blood. Although not related to him in any way, Fidel is nonetheless only too willing to squander his own money on Efren simply because he is secretly in love with the young man. No one

knows about this except his friend, Julie, the flamboyant beautician who regularly goes to Fidel's house to give him a manicure and pedicure. In one such instance, Julie, out of genuine concern, tries to convince Fidel to reveal his true feelings for Efren because as the former puts it, "...Sa buhay ng mga katulad natin, wala nang pinakamasaklap kundi ang tumanda nang hindi man lang nagkakaroon ng kahit isang lalaking mamahalin" (7). Julie also tries to divert Fidel's attention by inviting him to an event where they would dress up and party and playfully compete for the Miss Sward Philippines 1974 title. But Fidel would hear none of it. That is, until Efren's homecoming where he announces that he is about to marry his college classmate and sweetheart. As expected, Fidel is devastated by the sudden news and the ensuing events inevitably lead to his reluctant coming out to a bewildered Efren who cannot seem to reconcile the fact that his Tiyo Fidel and Julie are the same. In the final scene where Efren returns for the last time to bid farewell, Fidel blurts out his feelings and desire for the first time. In the end, when everything has been said and done, Efren is only able to muster a detached and emotionless goodbye: "Aalis na ho ako. Maraming salamat po" (35). Clearly, among the three characters, it is Fidel who struggles with an identity crisis as he oscillates problematically from being a closeted gay ["...Siyanga pala, Julie... huwag mo akong tatawaging Ate (3) to trying or appearing to be manly:

Julie: Eto naman si Maria Clara!

Fidel: (Seriously a bit offended, very manly.) Please...

Julie: Naku, Mr. Palma, mahirap maglalaki-lalakihan!

Fidel: Talagang ganito ako! (17)

The first staging of this classic Nadres play in 1974 is usually invoked as having inaugurated a tradition of gay writing in Philippine theater (Garcia, *Philippine Gay Culture* 277). Literary critics like Fernandez and Garcia have long acknowledged the valuable contributions of Nadres as a trailblazing champion of Filipino gay writing; however, when it comes to his classic play, "Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat," critics and playgoers

alike have traditionally watched and subsequently understood it as a typical 'coming out' narrative that ends with Fidel letting out a primal scream, "BAKLAAA!"

While this kind of interpretation is thoroughly valid and compelling, this particular project attempts to offer an alternative reading of the play. Butler once pointed out that coming out of the closet may mean stepping into another closet: "before, you did not know whether I 'am,' but now you do not know what that means" ("Imitation and Gender" 307). When considered in relation to the character of Efren with whom Fidel is in love and to whom his coming out is reluctantly addressed by force of circumstance, breaking into Efren's consciousness as "bakla" is not the same as finding out how Efren shall perceive him (his "Tiyo Fidel") from hereon.

Therefore, this project takes another view of analyzing and understanding not only this Nadres text but the other plays under discussion by employing the critical lens of gender performativity as a point of reference: first in exposing the performative aspect of identity and demonstrating the impossibility of any subject ever fully inhabiting hegemonic gender ideals, and second, tracing the emergence of agency as it originates from a subject's ability not only to negotiate between and among divergent, incompatible, and contestatory norms, but more importantly, to twist norms and identify in subversive and unpredictable ways, and finally in imagining the transempire as a transgressive postmodern form of gendered self-representation of queer subjects.

As mentioned earlier, the world as inhabited by Fidel, Julie, and Efren in "Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat" is defined by a matrix of intelligibility characterized by the heteronormative regulatory ideal as the dominant category of identification. Linked to this regulatory category are specific sets of practices, attributes, rules, traits, and qualities comprising the masculinist norms. In the context of this play, these norms constitute its dominant social order. As subjects, Fidel, Julie and Efren are interpellated into the dominant social order as gendered subjects meaning as either a man or a woman and thus initially would feel compelled to identify as either one or the other. In the case of Fidel and Julie, the former has identified

himself as a man while Julie, the flamboyant gay beautician, has recognized two idealized genders under the hierarchical regimes of the heterosexual or heterosexist matrix, but Julie has chosen to be interpellated as “different” rather than as man or woman: “...ang kanyang kaisa-isang anak na...hindi lalaki, e, hindi rin babae” (41). Although this interpellation of “otherness” has deep ideological implications, it is something that Julie has already accepted and made peace with: “Ang alam ko, ipinanganak ako ng nanay ko na ganito ako, pwes...ganito ako” (24). In yet another encounter with Fidel, Julie comes forth more forcefully: “Look, darling...hindi na tayo mababago! Pabilisin mo man ang ikot ng mundo, wis na tayo hope na maging tunay na lalaki...Nang patayin ni Kain si Abel, ganito na tayo. Nakarating na sa buwan ang tao, ganito pa rin tayo...matagal nang binuro sa asin ng Diyos ang Sodom at Gomora, Fidel...ipinanganak kang ganito, mabubuhay kang ganito—at made-dedbol kang...alanganin, s’yoke, M.S., sward, sister, nene, binabae...Binabae! BINABAE!!!!!!” (42).

However, it is a completely different story with the play’s protagonist, Fidel. When he enacts his own mode of coming out, he does so by savagely sounding out his self-judgement. Such utter display of self-loathing is, according to David Van Leer, a cliché of homosexuals as divided selves. It represents accurately the psychological distress of some gay people for whom, coming out is a way to escape the anger (and often homophobia) that would otherwise result from repression (*The Queening of America* 124). Toward the climax of the play, the moment of recognition and disbelief on the part of Efren has become a double negation for Fidel as he finally invokes and reiterates sexual norms that connect homosexuality with dehumanization, immorality, and disgusting animal behavior:

Efren: (Meaning “you’re a queer?”) Kayo?

Fidel: Ako. At si Julie. Oo, Efren! Oo! Kami nga...Mga nakakahiyang animal...Mga lintek at putang-inang baboy...kami ni Julie ay mga nakakapandiring hayup... lintang buwisit...walanghiyang s’yokeng... binabae...Kami’y mga...nakakasuka! Nakakasuka... (28)

It is a double negation for Fidel because finally he breaks the dual misidentification and “gender passing”³ that he has always subscribed to in the beginning. That is, with Julie “...ako ay hindi ikaw, at ikaw ay hindi ako; (7) “Sinabi nang...magkaiba tayo, Julie!” (29) But when the latter calls him out and warns him on the perils of his pretensions: “Naku, Mr. Palma, mahirap maglalaki-lalahikan!” (17), he justifies his choice of gender passing: “Hindi ko naman itinatangi kung ano ako, a! Itinatago ko lang dahil...kailangan itago” (18). So in the presence of Efren (which in this instance could also stand in for the outside world), Fidel enacts the ideals of heteronormativity and reiterates a certain masculinist discourse as the respectable Tiyo Fidel, the small-town businessman who is kind enough to underwrite the college education of an impoverished but physically attractive young man.

When the rupture in Fidel’s masculinist discourse occurs, his shallow gender differentiation dissolves into a traumatic objectification with deep ideological implications that can be compared to the famous, “*Look, a Negro!*” by Frantz Fanon in his postcolonial treatise and retelling of personal traumatic objectification in *Black Skin, White Masks*. It is deeply ideological because both instances of interpellation into the dominant social order: Efren’s *Kayo?* (as in *You’re queer?*) and Fanon’s, “*Look, a Negro!*” are made from positions of privilege which is that of the heteronormative ideal in the case of the former, and the White Colonial Master in the latter.

According to Fanon, “*Look, a Negro!*” is akin to saying, “*Look, a monster!*” In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in the development and display of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. The external stimulus of a child who says, “*Look a Negro!*” has compelled a physical reaction for the objectified person. One becomes disoriented, and one has to evaluate one’s own bodily schema within social spaces. Most importantly, one sees his or her own body as an object, free-floating in space, a separation between self and world. This hyper-awareness of one’s body produces traumatic effects even as it reiterates the norm by which one’s bodily schema is reckoned by the other.

Fanon’s “*Negro equals monster*” finds its own metonymic equivalent in Fidel’s “*bakla equals mga lintek at putang-inang baboy.*” The fact that Efren

cannot even bring himself to say the word, “bakla,” as in “Bakla kayo, Tiyo Fidel?” results in the former’s own hyper-awareness of his own sexuality which Fidel initially tries so hard to deny: “Wala yon sa...sa relasyon namin. Wala akong hinihintay na ganon kay Efren! Ang turing niya sa akin ay isang magulang, at siya naman ay para ko nang anak” (20). But in his last encounter with Efren before the young man leaves to marry his college sweetheart in Manila, Fidel finally finds himself professing his love and acknowledging his own sexuality: “Mahal kita...At kaiba ang pagmamahal na yon. At ako lamang ang nakakaalam kung ano ang tawag sa pagmamahal na ‘yon” (34). These lines are among the most heartfelt in the play and represent a key moment in Fidel’s coming out as they also heavily convey his long-repressed sexual desire. Additionally and in some interesting way, they also sound like the Filipino equivalent of the poetic line, “I am the love that dare not speak its name,” by Lord Alfred Douglas from his poem, “Two Loves,” which was also immortalized in Oscar Wilde’s “De Profundis” (Miller, *Out of the Past* 44-45). Traditionally invoked to denote homosexual self-identification, Douglas’s “I am the love that dare not speak its name,” and by extension, Fidel’s “Ako lamang ang nakakaalam kung ano ang tawag sa pagmamahal na ‘yon,” aptly illuminate how Fidel is led to his own self-knowledge and desire. Eventually this self-knowledge and awareness of his own sexual desire drives him initially to moments of despair and later on to violent behavior, first toward Julie, and later on, against the world as he finally enacts his own mode of performativity and shouts into the night, “BAKLAAAAA!” (35)

But aside from demonstrating how gender norms operate as a regulatory category of identity through which a subject is constituted and initiated into the dominant social order, on another level, the play also exposes conflictual gender ideals. The ambitiousness and homophobia of macho masculinity, and to a lesser degree, the maternity and self-sacrificing aspect of femininity circulate simultaneously alongside non-normative gender identities such as bakla as feminine/vulgar/loud versus bakla as masculine/modest/respectable. For Garcia who also analyzed the same Nadres’s play for his pioneering work on local gay culture, such distinct identity bifurcation conforms to what he calls the overt/covert dichotomy of homosex-

uality which is quite common in the Philippine context. Before the term LGBTQ became popular and politically-correct, Filipino gays have always been divided into two general types: the overt gay (like Julie) and the covert type (like Fidel).

However, the difference between overt and covert gays goes beyond mere physical appearance and gestural manifestation as it also underscores serious sociological implications or questions of class (another regulatory category of identity), privilege, and even power relations. It has always been a familiar and common misconception to characterize overt gays as belonging to the lower class owing to their occupational choices as beauticians and *manicurista* (like Julie) or what is derogatively referred to as *parloristas* in the vernacular. On the other hand, covert gays are viewed as having assumed a certain degree of class privilege because most of them are college graduates, and therefore, work as professionals and entrepreneurs (like Fidel). Thankfully, in “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat,” Nadres renders his two main characters as essentially on equal footing in this regard as both Julie [“...Mukha nga akong hindi kagalang-galang, pero tapos ito ng AB”] (23); [“Pagkatapos kong mag-college...walk away ang beauty ko”] (30); and Fidel [“Sa high school, hindi na nila ako tinutukso, kahit puro babae ang barkada ko, dahil matalino daw ako...lagi akong honor student...kahit na sa college”] (33) are college educated who manage to earn enough for them to live comfortable lives. Thus, between class and gender as regulatory categories of identity and where the former is viewed as a site of privilege, it is the latter that is brought into focus in this analysis because both Julie and Fidel have failed to assume privilege in relation to gender because of their prior interpellation as neither man nor woman, particularly in the case of Julie. As far as Fidel is concerned, his coming out brings to the fore two crucial aspects of his gender identification. On the one hand, his coming out ultimately highlights his inability to conform with the regulatory injunctions linked to masculinity with which he was initially compelled to identify, at least on the surface, while reluctantly invoking the non-hegemonic norms that he has always refused to recognize as represented by the character of Julie. But on the other hand, it also conforms to what Manalansan calls as

the “defining characteristic of gay identity: the focus on sexual object choice as the primary and singular defining factor” which for Fidel has always been his beloved Efren (*Global Divas* 23).

But even those subjects who can assume privilege due to their position within the power hierarchy are not exempt from the rigors of performative reiteration. In the character of Efren, for instance, Nadres tries to represent the lone male persona in the play as the embodiment of a true and ideal male: young, devastatingly handsome, sexy, very virile looking, but also severely homophobic. If this is the hegemonic masculinity circulating in the Nadres universe, this particular ideal norm of masculinity is also an ideal impossible to embody for those subject to it. To remain viable and non-marginal within this universe, Efren must also constantly cite and mime the very norms making his masculinity intelligible in the first place. But sadly, it is an ideal that he cannot completely inhabit:

Fidel: May...may karanasan ka na ba sa...sa mga tulad ni Julie?

Efren: Natatandaan n'yo ba 'yong nabanggit ko noon sa inyo sa isang sulat ko?

Fidel: Alin?

Efren: 'Yong sinabi ko sa inyong anak ng kasera ko sa Maynila?

Fidel: A, oo...

Efren: Minsan ho, nakainom ako...ang animal...at ginapang ako!

Fidel: Anong ginawa mo?

Efren: Ano pa hong magagawa ko? Lasing na lasing ako! Ayokong magkaroon ng eskandalo sa boarding house. Ang walanghiyang binabae! Nagmakaawa...may paiyak-iyak pa.

Fidel: (Saying a plain statement) Pinagbigyan mo siya.

Efren: Ganoon pala ang ginagawa nila sa mga lalaki! Pwe! Kapag naalaala ko 'yon, lumuluwa ang aking bituka sa kasusuka! (26)

Here, it must be said that masculinity's dependency on reiteration clearly disputes and undermines its claim to naturalness and validates the notion that a coherent, stable inner identity is, at best, largely illusory. Efren's failure to live up to attributes associated with the dominant norms of masculinity in this instance and the pronounced 'discontinuities' in his gender performance somehow demonstrates the impossibility of any subject ever fully inhabiting hegemonic gender ideals because the possibility of a slip-up, inappropriate gesture, or worse, an unconscious queer impulse within a space of sexual instability is always present. Despite his strong dislike for and even stronger disavowal of Julie and his kind, Efren (whether sober or otherwise) arguably has become an easy masculine prey to a homosexual predator. In this queer moment, Efren has reluctantly played into the space of sexual instability and erotic marginality that is already made queer by the presence of his landlady's gay son. This clearly demonstrates the unstable nature of gender norms and its troubled relations to hegemonic notions of masculinity.

The throng of incompatible and divergent norms that simultaneously clash and circulate in society opens up potential spaces for subjects to 'perform differently.' The play thus points to the way that agency ironically materializes in the interstices of competing and clashing norms—some dominant, others not—where the conflictual nature of norms opens up spaces of negotiation. It is in the interstitial, one might say, where a character like Julie is able to conjure up transempire engenderings through his disidentification with regulatory ideals in the Butlerian sense. Although regulatory ideals like heteronormativity wield the power to form and regulate the subject, they are not fully internalized because there is always the possibility that the subject will 'twist' norms and identify itself in potentially subversive ways. Between Fidel and Julie, it is the latter who chooses to disidentify with regulatory gender ideals and to give up privilege by disrupting the gender hierarchy as a form of resistance while proceeding to enact his mode of performativity in ways that ultimately subvert gender norms. After his violent encounter with Fidel and finding himself at the receiving end of Fidel's homicidal rage, Julie manages to regain his composure while holding on to his sash. Still panting and trembling, he stands and staggers toward the door, Julie is undeniably

still a horrible sight, but he emerges with his hard-won dignity intact. In other words, confrontations or interactions between subjects who identify with different gender ideals can potentially lay bare the disjunctions and contradictions within social fields of force and their nexus of power relations. Fidel's conception of the ideal male, for instance, is not equivalent or reducible to Julie's; the former seems to prefer the quintessential masculine: young, virile, innocent, devastatingly handsome, and ambitious as epitomized by Efren, while the latter with her disenchanting experiences with men would prefer someone who is more worldly and willing to accept money in exchange for sexual favors. Plus, both Julie and Fidel are also haunted by the images of their fathers who are unfaithful, emotionally absent, and prone to violence. Thus, the matrix of intelligibility is not a "realm of uniform normativity," but rather is traversed by a "multiplicity of heterogeneous power relations" and competing normative injunctions (McNay, *Gender and Agency* 45). A masculinity comprised of attributes such as youth, virility, good looks, and ambition therefore competes with its other forms as described by Julie: "...Maniwala ka sa akin, Ate! Makakatagpo ka rin! Maraming naghilata riyan na...Malaki na ang pang-unawa, Malaki pa rin ang kanilang...armas!" (32). This is, in effect, a clash of ideals, a confrontation that undermines the dominant norm's claim to uniformity, and therefore, naturalness.

Another very significant way in which Julie can be said to disidentify with regulatory norms and strongly inflect her own mode of non-normative gender performativity is her use of *swardspeak* which adds an interesting 'local color' element to the depiction of the non-Western gay individuals like her compared to a typical homosexual from the West whose spoken language is fundamentally indistinguishable from his heterosexual counterpart. Also known as gay lingo, *swardspeak* is a neologism that first appeared in the 1970s. According to the article, "In Focus: The Filipino Gayspeak (Filipino Gay Lingo)" which was published on the website of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the term *swardspeak* is attributed by acclaimed film director Jose Javier Reyes to newspaper columnist and movie critic Nestor Torre. Reyes wrote a book on the subject titled, *Swardspeak: A Preliminary Study* (Alba, "In Focus"). While some scholars like Ronald Baytan

have already mistakenly pronounced it as “dead” and have reckoned that the term is anachronistic because of its non-usage among Filipino gays today (Alba, “In Focus”), still others like Manalansan continue to find academic value in its deployment not as a linguistic relic but as an enduring symbol of and vehicle for Filipino gay identity.

In fact, in *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*, Manalansan devotes an entire chapter to *swardspeak* and queer discourse. Etymologically, the word *swardspeak* comes from the nominal term *sward* which is the local Cebuano expression for homosexuals (46). He explains that “*swardspeak* is not a mere bundle of words but actually...appropriates elements from dominant Filipino, American, and Spanish codes, and rearticulates their symbolic meanings” (46). He further argues that in the context of Filipino gay men in the US who embody the Filipino diasporic struggle, *swardspeak* allows them “to enact ideas, transact experiences, and perform identities that showcase their abject relationship to the nation” (46). The last phrase “abject relationship to the nation” is very telling and significant when viewed in the context of this paper because it can very well be applied to the character of Julie. As far as Julie is concerned, her use of *swardspeak* is part of her recognizable discourse in disrupting the heteronormative ideal and subverting the dominant hegemonic norms of society. It is not enough that Julie enacts her disidentification from the Butlerian matrix of intelligibility by invoking and reiterating non-normative and contestatory norms through her outward appearance: wild hairdo in red, grotesque make-up, and out-of-this-world attire, but she also does so through her choice of language: “Sige ka, pag na-invierna ako rito, walkout bigla ang beauty ko!” (Nadres, *Hanggang Dito Na Lamang* 3). “Hindi ka na nasanay sa akin...para namang di mo alam na para sa akin...ma-lalaki, ma-babae, whether young and aging, marikit man o okay-okray ang beauty...” (4); “...Ni minsan ay hindi ko sila minolest’ya kahit isang sentimo sa idinadatong ko sa aking mga nahahalang lalaki sa buhay! Nunca!” (5); and “Hindi ka ba nalulungkot sa buhay mo? Ulila ka, wis na parents, wis ka pa rin min?” (6).

More than the humor as brought about by her colorful and comic manipulation of language through invention, inversion, and appropriation,

it is Julie's 'abject relationship' not to the nation but to the heteronormative ideal that empowers her to circumscribe her own modality of gender performance. Her complete disidentification not only with masculinity by the heteronormative ideal as a whole, constitutes her mode of resistance to the hegemonic injunction to identify either as male or female. By doing so, and by choosing to give up privilege, Julie (and perhaps, even Fidel) may eventually triumph as they finally conceive themselves as autonomous self-determining agents who subscribe to the moral imperative of embracing their own transempire consciousness.

"Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross"

The second play to be discussed is titled "Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross" by Rody Vera. Andy Valero, the main protagonist of Vera's celebrated 1991 play, could very well claim "gender passin" as his middle name. The play depicts Andy as a fractal character, a persona with a bifurcated consciousness. The dramatic action takes the audience to a 30-year trajectory in his life: from an eight-year-old boy who could not seem to decide whether to wield a toy gun or play with a doll, to a teenaged seminarian confronting the homosexual encounters of his friends and fellow seminarians, and from his encounter with a prostitute during his stag party to his early years as a young professional trying to survive the corporate rat race, or as a conflicted gay man with serious marital issues after a heteronormalizing marriage to a woman. Along the way, he struggles to deny his homosexuality by heeding the dictates of society.

From his youth up to his marriage to Susan, Andy has allowed himself to be interpellated into the hegemonic social order as a masculine and middle-class subject, recognizable as such to the existing matrix of intelligibility (the Butlerian field of practices constituted by norms). But this matrix of intelligibility as conceived by Butler is not a realm of uniform normativity as already demonstrated earlier, but rather is traversed by a "multiplicity of heterogeneous power relations" and competing normative injunctions (McNay, *Gender and Agency* 45). As shown in the previous discussion, within any given hegemonic order, more than one set of gender norms circulate alongside

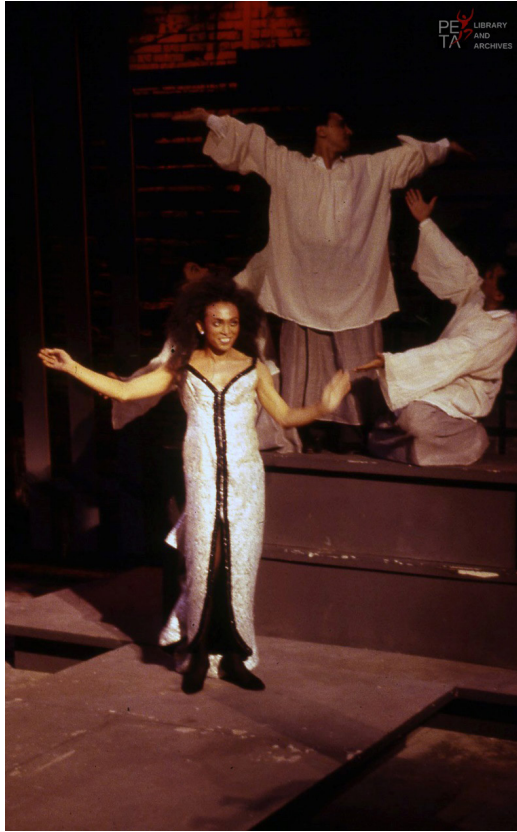


Fig. 3. Rody Vera's Palanca-award-winning play, "Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross," sizzles on stage with Linus Sto. Tomas as Andy, Melvin Lee as Diana Ross, and the PETA Kalinangan Ensemble. PETA Library & Archives.

different, competing, and even contestatory categories of identification that complicate these sets of norms (Rottenberg, *Performing Americanness* 15).

The other aspect in Andy's dual consciousness—his masculine side which is also the object and the material effect of his gender passing and his homosexual side—is represented by the character of Diana Ross, the externalization of Andy's so-called gender core, who weaves in and out of the narrative initially as a playmate and later on as an embodied conscience.

Diana is particularly ubiquitous during crucial moments when Andy's problematic claim to masculinity is exposed or threatened. Compared to Fidel and Efren, it is Andy who brings to the fore and, at the same time, exposes how the social practice of attempting to embody gender norms operates by repetitive citation, and the ineluctable gap that emerges as subjects try to approximate these ideals. For instance, when he was an eight-year-old boy:

Diana: Ako si Diana.

Andy: Ako naman si Andy. Niloko mo'ng kalaro ko. Ang akala niya totoong napatay ka. (Pasigaw sa KALARO sa labas ng tanghalan). Natakot ka ano? Belaat! (Mapapalingon kay DIANA.) Laro tayó. (Pagbabaril-barilin si DIANA habang tumatawa.)

Diana: Sandali, sandali. Hindi kasi ako violent person, e.

Andy: E, anong lalaruin natin? (Makakaisip.) Alam ko na. (Huhugutin ang isang manyika sa likod ng telebisyon.) (Vera, *Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross* 13).

Also in the seminary when his classmate and co-seminarian, Leo, is expelled after being caught kissing an older seminarian:

Andy: Masaya dito.

Diana: Masaya? Ayaw kang papanoorin ng sine kapag hindi Walt Disney o Ten Commandments. Bawal kayong magkasama ni Leo dahil kung anu-ano raw temptation ang dumarating sa inyo kapag nagsasama kayo. Dinidiscourage ka sa pagsali sa annual play dahil walang ibang makukuhang aarte bilang Our Lady of Manaoag kundi ikaw. Bawal magbahay-bahayan, bawal magpatintero. Soccer ang kailangan, football, e, alam naman nilang takot ka sa anumang lumilipad na bola. At ngayon...eto si Kuya Pascal mo, si Leo.

Andy: Tama na. Tumahimik ka na.

Diana: E, hanggang kailan ba tayó dito?

Andy: Hanggang gusto ko.

Diana: Pero ayaw mo nga rito.

Andy: (Magagalit kay DIANA, sisigaw.) *Gusto ko rito! Gusto ko rito!* (26-27)

And in his encounter with a prostitute during his stag party just a week before his scheduled wedding to Susan:

Diana: (Tutulungan si ANDY na hubarin ang kanyang t-shirt.) *Talaga ba'ng gusto mong gawin ito?*

Andy: (Mapapatigil) *Bakit naman hindi? Maganda siya!*

Diana: *Talaga? Nagagandahan ka?*

Andy: *Bakit mo ba pinahihirapan ang buhay ko?*

Diana: *Ano?*

Andy: *Tuwing may pagkakataong tulad nito na darating sa buhay ko saka ka naman sumisipot. Naalala mo noong kaming dalawa lang ni Susan sa bahay noon?*

Diana: *Dinig na dinig ko'ng tawag mo. Hinihingi mo'ng tulong ko. Hindi ka mapakali sa nerbyos. Ngayong eto ako...* (44-45).

In *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, Ginsberg contends that “passing is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established between identity categories and about the individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing” (75). Through the characterization and depiction of Andy Valero, the play shows that the notion of an essential self is again largely problematic, if not totally illusory. Andy builds his identity not on some sense of an essential self but rather on a self that is composed of and created by a series of guises and masks, performances and roles. Progressively, Andy enacts his masculinist discourse through compelled association with objects (a toy gun) and actions (pretending to enjoy the seminary in his youth, the company of a prostitute, and even the sacrament of marriage) that are traditionally part of the heteronormative injunctions. For Andy, it is not enough that he looks or “passes” for a masculine-gendered subject. For the performance of masculinity to be complete,



Fig. 4. Closeted gay man Andy (played by Linus Sto. Tomas) confronts his alter ego, Diana Ross (played by Melvin Lee) in this play that powerfully explores notions of gender and identity. PETA Library & Archives.

he must also embrace its gestures, aspirations, tastes, and its overall recognizable discourse. In the process, Andy situates his own homosexuality (and to some extent, his own internalized homophobia) within a wider dynamic of social relationships.

Unfortunately for Andy, his specific modality of gender performativity is bound to run into disjunctions and discontinuities. As already shown in the earlier analysis of the Nadres' text, even subjects already considered "normal-

ized and norm-identified” like Efren are predisposed to fall into gender disruptive behavior; how much more for subjects who are merely gender passing like Andy who feels compelled to embrace it as a viable survival strategy? How long can he remain within the heterosexual matrix? When his wife, Susan, finally learns about the “special bond” between her husband and Mike, Andy, like Fidel, is forced to enact his own mode of coming out. But unlike Fidel’s, Andy’s road to coming out almost exacts a painful price: his life. At the hospital after Andy’s failed suicide, the anxious ex-wife leaves to begin her own healing as Mike begins to take his place as Andy’s lover who will help him embrace the marginal and non-normative attributes and norms associated with homosexuality as a different configuration of gender identity.

Mike: Umalis na si Susan. (Iaabot ang susing ibinigay ni SUSAN)...Huwag kang masyadong magalaw. May sugat pa ang ulo mo.

Andy: Si Chuckie bakla.

Mike: Masakit bang tanggapin iyon?

Andy: Walang bakla dapat sa Ayala. Walang baklang dapat mabuhay sa Ayala.

Mike: Si Butch bakla din. At saka si Ronald. Bakla rin sila...At saka si Ariel, si Raul, si Lito sa first floor. Lahat sila, bakla rin. Sa fifth floor sinu-sino ba’ng bakla? A, yung dalawang matandang clerk sa Investigation Unit...Sa tenth floor? Sino ang mga bakla sa tenth floor? Si Ed, si Gino, si Manny Ornero, si Manny Tenco, si Manny Golez, at si Manny Tan. Lahat na yata ng pumasok na Manny sa EDP, bakla.

Andy: Stop

Mike: Sa 14th floor...Sinu-sinong bakla sa 14th floor?

Andy: Stop

Mike: Walang katapusan ang listahan, Andy. Kahit ang mga hindi mo gaanong kilala, kahit ang mga akala mo’y kilalang-kilalang mo na, lahat sila, nagtatago. Dahil sa Ayala, kung bakla ka, may hangganan ka! Kahit hindi sa Ayala. Kahit saan ka magpunta! Kung nasa kalsada ka

naman, di ka nalalayo sa panunukso o pambubugbog. Kahit hindi sa Ayala. Kahit saan ka magpunta. Bumili ka ng hotdog sa Jollibee. O magbayad ka ng pamasaha sa jeep. O kahit mag-isa kang nagdadasal sa loob ng simbahan ng Quiapo. Kahit pulubi kang walang kinabukasan. Basta bakla ka, may hangganan ka. (Pipikit si ANDY.)

Mike: At anong gagawin mo, kung gayon? Habambuhay kang tutulay sa makikitid nilang utak? Bababaan mo'ng boses mo? Ititikom ang palad mo? Titigasan ang tindig mo? Yuyuko, iiwas, tatahimik, iiyak? At pag natabi ka sa isa pa, pagtatawanan mo siya para siya ang mapansin at hindi ikaw? Ano'ng kabuluhan noon? Andy, para kang pusang tumatakbo habang kagat-kagat ang sariling buntot... (88-90).

Andy's gender passing, his subsequent coming out, and the basic duality of his consciousness reveal a dynamic tension between presence and absence as well as visibility and invisibility. For instance, the recurring presence of Diana Ross in the narrative is actually a manifestation of the inherent absence of Andy and his denial of his true self. And the longer he remains absent, the deeper Andy sinks into invisibility. Thus, the play conceptualizes homosexual invisibility as a "closet" and "sexuality" as something that must be revealed. What makes it worse in this particular depiction is that the hapless wife Susan's own ignorance of her husband's homosexuality, in effect, has also become her own "closet." Thus, when Andy finally decides to enact his mode of coming out with a gun to his head, unfortunately, it is intended not as a way of stepping out of the closet and into the light, but out of the closet and into oblivion. Susan, Andy's wife, also enacts her own coming out from her "closet" of ignorance to that of misery.

Also, coming out for Andy entails not just accepting his true gender core and living out in the open his sexual identity, but also learning how to occupy traditional heterosexual spaces like Ayala Avenue and the ruthless masculinist corporate world that it represents as potential erotic space where non-normative desires can thrive and prosper: "Si Chuckie, bakla... kaya hindi siya ma-promote-promote. Kasi si Chuckie bakla. Sa Ayala, kapag bakla ka, may hangganan, Mike (89). As a concrete terrain powerfully inscribed with patriarchal symbols of socio-economic and political power,

prestige, and success, Ayala Avenue is here represented as part of the masculinist discourse of ambition and competitiveness.

What is significant to emphasize at this point is that the two plays: “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat” and “Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross” highlight dramatic themes that portray the notion of coming out also as a performative effect of power (that is, the Foucauldian conception of power that works to reinforce hegemonic order and uphold existing hierarchical power relations like heteronormativity). Reiteration produces the illusion of an identifiable and stable referent for regulatory ideals, making norms seem natural and normal. But as Butler points out, if the dominant social order is dependent on reiteration for its very existence, it is also open to varying degrees of processual modifications. The irreconcilable space between normative roles and actual social practices creates a continuous dissonance, disjuncture, and discontinuities within any hegemonic order (*Gender Trouble* 145). Thus, when characters like Fidel and Andy, or even Julie fall through the cracks of the heterosexual matrix, an entire paroxysm of emotions ensues that can either be transformative or destructive.

“Human Voice”

“Human Voice” (“La Voix Humaine”) is a monologue written by French dramatist Jean Cocteau in 1928. It was first staged in Paris two years later. Its lone character is a middle-aged woman who speaks on the phone with her former lover of the last five years, apparently for the last time as he is about to get married the next day to another woman. As she tries to reach out to him through his voice, the woman struggles not only against the frequent breaks and cut-offs in their telephone conversation, but she also struggles to control her mounting desperation. The slow realization of a love affair that can no longer be finally drives the woman to her mental breakdown. In this 1997 PETA adaptation⁴ which was translated, directed, and acted in by Jorge V. Ledesma, the unnamed woman character in the text was replaced by a transgender persona who takes the dramatic action one step further. That is, toward the end of the play she appears to commit suicide by looping the

telephone cord around her neck as if to wrap herself with the fading sound of her soon-to-be-married ex-lover's voice. Then, she enacts her final moment with the words: I Love You, after which the receiver falls to the ground.

Unlike the first two coming out plays, this dramatic text features an unnamed character with a liminal identity who happens to be radically different from the two protagonists of "Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat" and "Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross," respectively. For one, she is no longer hopelessly conflicted about her sexuality and gender identity like Fidel. Nor is she engaged in gender passing as a survival strategy much like Andy. Instead, she "passes over" into the feminine side of the heteronormative ideal as a cross-dressing and gender-bending persona who openly challenges the stability of gender identities while demonstrating how it is a constantly evolving construct. As the audience listens to the one-sided and unreliable part of the spoken conversation which is mostly in English but with snippets of dialogue in French and Filipino, the audience also tries to imagine the unvoiced and unseen male lover on the other end of the phone line. It is easy to conclude that the character onstage is a woman with no hint of self-consciousness as to her true gender and sexuality: "I lied in describing the dress that I was wearing, also when I said I had dined at Martha's...I've had no dinner, I'm not wearing my red dress. I have my coat over my chemise, because as I was waiting for you to call, staring at the phone, sitting down, jumping up, pacing up and down, I was going mad!" (Cocteau, "Human Voice" 4).

But sound and visual do not actually match in this instance as visually, one realizes that the character's liminal identity and legibility onstage is actually a hyperbolic inversion of the principles of gender normativity as reproduced through irony, mimicry, and parody. In short, this particular adaptation of Jean Cocteau's text is stepping into the realm of camp as it reimagines the character as queer without having to localize the setting and its culturally specific references: "Well then, you should knock on the wall and stop your neighbors from playing their gramophone at this hour..." (Ledesma, "Human Voice" 5); Listen, darling, since you will be in Marseilles day after tomorrow, may I ask...or I would really like...I would like it if you didn't stay in the hotel

where we always stayed together” (7). All these French allusions and references only tend to highlight its element of camp especially from the perspective of a Filipino gay audience. After all, camp is always understood in the context of appropriating the hyperbole of musicals and popular movies as well as other visual extravagances like overstated décor and fashion, and especially cross-dressing (Sontag, “Notes on Camp” 278). It is this last characteristic that renders this queer adaptation of “Human Voice” as useful to this “transempire” project. Taken together, the three plays: “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat,” “Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross,” and “Human Voice” demonstrate a nuanced progression of consciousness, that is, from coming out to cross-dressing.

True to the Butlerian postmodern impulse, cross-dressing in this adaptation conforms to the notion of gender as “a corporeal style, an act, as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning...gender performance always and precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief” (*Performative Acts* 519-531). In the true spirit of camp involving the appropriation of popular culture, the original woman character in the play is transformed as an overdramatic drag queen who calls attention to the role playing associated with the female gender by overemphasizing it to a degree that it becomes sublimely ridiculous. All in all, the disruption of the semiotics of dress, gender, and identity in drama can somehow lead to a provisional understanding of the transempire consciousness.

Coming Out, Same-Sex Desire, and Performativity

PETA’s substantial experience, not to mention its institutional expertise, in the actual practice of an agitational aesthetics and rhetorics clearly informs the notions of coming out and same-sex erotic desire depicted in the plays of Orlando Nadres’ “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat” and Rody Vera’s “Kung Paano Ko Pinatay Si Diana Ross” as culturally specific and historically situated ways of performing the personal as political. This

is very important to emphasize at the very outset as the notion of ‘coming out’ itself is regarded by many—both Filipino homosexuals and heterosexuals alike—as something that is tangential to the Filipino gay experience. Or to be more straight-forward about it, “the practice of ‘coming out’ is a particularly American idea and behavior where it operates as a kind of discursive norm” (Manalansan, *Global Divas* 27).

Here in the Philippines, it can be argued that more than half of those who identify as gays or bakla have already exhibited effeminate behavior even at a very young age which makes “coming out” completely unnecessary. Of course, many of them like the character of Julie in “Hanggang Dito na Lamang At Maraming Salamat” go through very traumatic experiences as they grow up and suffer at the hands of parents (mostly their violent-prone fathers) and even some close male relatives who think that gay behavior can be “shaken out” of the person’s body through physical and psychological violence (Manalansan, *Global Divas* 58). But as Cannell rightly observes, Filipino gays (not only in Bicol) are quite adept at self-transformation. They can easily turn their sad stories into funny but insightful tales. One only needs to recall the funny story of a teenaged gay whose face was repeatedly dunked in cold water by his father as he demanded to know if he were gay, and each time the teenaged gay would say yes. But after a terribly long time holding his breath under water, when the father demanded for the last time if he were gay, the hapless teenager frantically gasped for air and grunted instead, “sirena po.” This, in a sense, constitutes the typical norm of coming out for most effeminate Filipino gays: painful but never agonizing.

Unlike other gays like Fidel and Andy who have previously been interpellated and initiated into the dominant social order and have subsequently identified as masculine, invoking non-normative gender and sexual norms as adults can be truly traumatic. And it is this kind of “heteronarratives” that PETA finds compelling. After all, as an established institutional apparatus, theater in general, and PETA in particular, has always been a critical voice and presence in society. Its engagement with major socio-political issues since the Martial law period has provided the company with a distinct perspective in exploring issues that affect the lives of specific sectors and demographic

constituencies. Through its unique mode of theatrical presentation, PETA has somehow facilitated in meaningful and memorable ways the exploration of gay motifs and the crossing of queer discourses into the popular imagination as well as constituted an expanding space and an ongoing practice where the intersectionality of coming out, same-sex desire, and performativity can be part of an ongoing discourse. According to Manalansan, coming out is translated in *swardspeak* as “pagladlad ng kapa” and the translation in itself reveals the performative element of the bakla (Manalansan, *Global Divas* 28). Performativity, it is important to underscore, is not conceived here as the subject’s freedom to choose or “play at” a variety of identities, but rather as both constitutive of identity and a constraining manifestation of dominant norms.

According to the Butlerian model, gender performativity is constituted by two kinds of performatives that are inextricably connected and interdependent. On the one hand, the iteration of gender norms operates like a performative speech-act where the discursive repetition of norms serves to constitute or produce that which it enunciates. The repetition of gender norms necessarily precedes the emergence of the subject and initiates the subject into the dominant social order. That is, in any given society, a subject’s gender identity only becomes recognizable and coherent to her/himself and to other members of society through specific gender norms. On the other hand, gender performativity refers to social comportment. The iteration of norms actually compels bodies to act, gesture, and behave in certain ways that constantly attempt to embody the fantasy of a coherent and natural gender core. To remain viable within a given society, the subject must cite and mime the very norms that created his/her sociocultural intelligibility in the first place (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 3).

As depicted in the plays under discussion, coming out and same-sex desire are best understood as specific modes of gender performativity. For instance, in “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang At Maraming Salamat,” Fidel’s coming out to Efren is concatenated with his admission of his queer desire: “Mahal kita...At ako lamang ang nakaalam kung ano ang tawag sa pagmamahal na ’yon.” For Fidel who reluctantly comes out to a long-cher-

ished but unsuspecting beloved, coming out is a necessary evil that must be endured if he is to reclaim his true identity and give voice to his inner feelings and queer desire. Whether it means “coming out” to one’s family, friends, or to that person who holds the key to one’s happiness, “coming out” almost always involves the rending of the self that could potentially leave a deep psychological wound. But if one does survive his “coming out, it also becomes the *sine qua non* of self-respect. To come out and say, “I am gay” represents a formidable kind of empowerment. And even if Butler contends that ‘coming out’ of the closet also entails stepping into another closet, this other closet is also where one acknowledges one’s non-normative desire. In a sense, “coming out” involves not just the intelligibility of one’s identity but also the visibility of one’s desire. For Andy, rendering his queer desire visible in the public spheres of Ayala Avenue which in the popular imagination conforms to the traditionally male-dominated, and therefore, heterosexually-defined spaces of the corporate world may be deemed as a strategic move in creating the space for discourses of desire. To bring desires out in the open is to force heterosexuals to perceive that there are elements of heterosexuality in the construction of homosexuality and that homosexuality also plays a significant part in the construction of heterosexuality. In another sense, this is also similar to what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls as homosocial or the potential for eroticism in male-male bonds, a potential that includes not only homosexual desire, but also feelings of fraternity, male bonding, and yes, even homophobia (Van Leer, *The Queening of America* 99).

Despite the potential conflicts that are bound to emerge when unveiling and linking the intelligibility of one’s identity to the visibility of one’s desire—that is, who we are is defined by whom we love—the three plays under consideration somehow foreground the element of gender crossing in the flow of non-normative desire. The three plays somehow demonstrate the exclusive/inclusive tension in the cultural dynamics. That is, in traditional heteronormative society, persons who are labeled as homosexuals or suspected as such are excluded and marginalized. Moreover, due to a homophobic imagination, people are eager to purify and regulate any ambiguity in erotic desires. Thus it is possible to hear assertions like “Jose

Rizal could never have been homosexual.” On the other hand, because of the efflorescence of the queer movement and queer studies, there emerges a counter-discursive impetus to queer every desirable figure. The wish to expand queer territory leads to grapevine information such as “This or that actor is a closet gay.” So, judging from this, it is easy to see a transition from the exclusion and phobia of “nobody is” to the inclusion and celebration of “everybody is” (Chang, “Taiwan Queer” 292).

Whether or not the Efrems in our midst are queer-identified or not is, of course, not the deciding point in the tug of war between exclusiveness and inclusiveness. In the first place, it is hard to guess at a certain person’s real sexuality: by necessity we now know from psychoanalytical wisdom, sexual behaviors, desires, and identities do and may not always cohere, despite the compulsions and power of socio-sexual regulations. Furthermore, there are no rules in the flow of desires. But the queering of straight individuals takes place in the process of desire projection. It also demonstrates the inherent instability of the Oedepalized heterosexual structure. According to the tradition of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the transition from the pre-Oedipal stage to the Oedipal stage is accomplished through the split of identification and desire, with the child identifying with the parent of the same sex and desiring the parent of the opposite sex. Through identifying with the same sex and desiring the different sex, one enters into the Oedipalized heterosexual matrix. However, the polarity of being and having tends to be obscured in the process of queering and desire projection (Chang, “Taiwan Queer” 292).

Or put another way, homosexual attraction can be further explicated through the elaboration on the model of “vampiric identification.” Vampirism is “identification pulled inside out—where the subject, in the act of interiorizing the other, simultaneously reproduces itself externally to the other.” In the confluence of blood, desire and identification become indistinguishable. Indeed, the uncanny twilight zone of life/death, male/female, consciousness/unconscious in the legend of the vampire leads to the verging terrain of identification/desire and subjectivity/objectivity. The eroticism of vampirism is drawn upon to represent the vertigo of identification/desire in

idol worship; to be consumed by one's idol/lover is to consume/consummate the desire for the idol/lover. In vampiric identification, identification and desire need not go in counterdirectional trajectories. The best way to love a vampire is to become a vampire (Chang, "Taiwan Queer" 293).⁵

Vampiric or not, sexual attraction in general can be typically illustrated in several ways. First is sexual attraction according to sex: heterosexuality (attraction between two different sexes) and homosexuality (attraction between the same sex). The second is attraction according to cross-gender identities. This can be further classified according to the following combinations and based on the earlier primary pairings: 1) different-gender heterosexuality; 2) same-gender heterosexuality; 3) same-gender homosexuality; and 4) different-gender homosexuality. The first adheres to the heteronormative ideal of a normal and natural sexuality involving a man and a woman. The second still conforms to the heteronormative model, for instance, a lesbian butch and a straight guy. The third involves either two gay men or two bisexuals. And the last constitutes the only possible form of homosexuality in the dominant heterosexist imagination because it seems to preserve, on the surface, a heterosexual structure in same-sex desire; for example, between butch and femme or an effeminate man with a masculine gay (Chang, "Taiwan Queer" 293).

In the context of the three plays under discussion, Fidel and Efren as well as Andy and Mike would fall under same-gender homosexuality. On the other hand, Julie and his male partner as well as the transgender character and her male lover in "Human Voice" would be considered under different-gender homosexuality. In a Third-World realm, the likes of Fidel and Andy seem to embody the vagueness of a phantasm when considered against the stark facticity of 'coming out' as something essentially alien or relatively absent from the local practices. But they continue to resonate among Filipino gays because around here, the real spectacle in "coming out" is not the cataclysmic reversals of Andys nor the primal screams of Fidels but in witnessing the Efrens and how they enact the inherent ruptures and instabilities in their performative reiteration of hegemonic masculinity. It is through these inherent ruptures and instabilities that are presented as indicative of disrup-

tive behavior that same-sex desire can be said to pass through and establish a fugitive site for an erotic interplay.

Among Filipino gays, whether one is a Fidel (covert) or Julie (overt), the primary rhetoric of “coming out” is not the Western idea of gay self-affirmation but the self-articulation of same-sex desire where the very act of speaking already constitutes its meaning. In this manner, articulating one’s same sex desire works like a performative—a statement that does not merely convey desire but, in more ways than one, enacts it.

Notes

1. Michael Tan's deployment of "transempire" is predated by the publication in 1979 of *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* by feminist ethicist Janice Raymond who attacks the practice of transsexuality and considers it as a "form of false consciousness." She argues that transsexuals failed to properly analyze the social sources of gender oppression and instead succumbed to outmoded masculine or feminine stereotypes. Her usage of the term "empire" refers to the institutional nature of the entire medical practice in the US of male-to-female surgery and the professional complexes and coalitions that create it in the name of therapy for persons diagnosed with Gender Identity Dysphoria. In response to Raymond, Sandy Stone comes out with "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" in 1991 which is largely credited today for laying the groundwork of transgender studies. As a male-to-female transsexual herself, Stone urged other transsexuals to critically refigure their received notions of an authentic self by abandoning the practice of passing as nontranssexual or as real men or women. In the face of Raymond's anti-transsexual moralism, she suggested the "foregrounding of the practices of inscription and reading which are part of this deliberate invocation of dissonance" by constituting transsexuality as a genre or a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored. She ends her "posttranssexual manifesto" by calling on her "brothers and sisters" to begin laying the groundwork for the next transformation. With regard to this paper, it aligns itself with the polemics of Stone as it resonates with the notion of the "transempire."
2. Textual sources in this paper shall be supplemented by the researcher's own recollection of his experience as an active PETA member from 1991 to 2008.
3. Gender Passing is the concealment or misrepresentation of one's gender. Passing refers to a process whereby a person of one race, gender, sexuality, or sexual orientation adopts the guise of another. For example, transsexual woman who pretends to be a biological woman is said to be gender passing. A closet homosexual who claims to be straight is also said to be gender passing. Passing was originally applied to instances of class passing which is common in the United States and is linked to the notion of upward mobility and the American Dream.
4. This particular production was a special project in partnership with Alliance Francaise de Manille which provided writer, actor, director, and producer Jorge Ledesma with a production grant.

5. Also, sometime in 1994, PETA mounted a staged reading of new plays by young playwrights. One of the plays included was titled, *Last Full Show* by Chris Martinez. The play explores the seedy world of Filipino gays who look for casual sex inside movie houses. The two characters in the play were depicted as “vampiric” in their projection of queer desire as they huddle in the dark.

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Tracing the Social Construction of the Law on the Separation of Church and State from Western History to Philippine History

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Abstract

Historical-legal studies have been conducted to find the formal legal true meaning (Coquia 17; Pangalangan 1; Jimenez 786; Candelaria et al. 842; Bagares 1; Hilbay 24; Festin and Villasis 77) of the law on the separation of Church and State. This paper looks beyond these formalist and idealist interpretations of the law, and views the law as a social-political reality that is historically constructed by social actors, like Church ministers, Heads of States and academics. Thus, this paper traces the social construction of the law on the separation of Church and State from Western history to Philippine history.

Keywords

law on the separation of church and state, social construction, western history, Philippine history

Social Constructions of Church and State Relations in Western History

Ancient History

In Western ancient history, the social construction of the relation of Church and State has been divided into those who advocated *Caesaropapism* or those who held the primacy of the emperor over the Pope and *Papocaesarism* or those who held the primacy of the Pope over the emperor. Those who advocated *Papocaesarism* believed that the power of the two keys was given to Peter by Jesus to bind and loose heaven and earth (Coronel 23). This idea was reinforced by St. Ambrose of Milan who was known to have said that, “the emperor is within the Church and not over the Church” (23). But the conceptual elaboration of the Church and State relation was started by St. Augustine of Hippo.

In the *City of God*, St. Augustine talked about two cities or two societies:

What we see, then, is that two societies have issued from two kinds of love. Worldly society has flowered from a selfish love which dared to despise even God, whereas the communion of saints is rooted in the love of God that is ready to trample on self. In a word, this latter relies in the Lord, whereas the former boasts that it can get along by itself. The city of man seeks the praise of men, whereas the height of glory for the other is to hear God in the witness of conscience (ch. 14: 410).

If we consider Plotinus’ influence on St. Augustine’s philosophical-theological thinking, St. Augustine’s stature as a Father and bishop of the Catholic Church whose concern was the formulation of a framework for the building of the Catholic Church, and the historical conditions in which he wrote his text, we can arrive at an understanding of what the two cities concretely embodied.

St. Augustine was not a Platonist but a Neo-Platonist who subscribed to the dialectical logic of Plotinus (Plotinus 36) and to the dialectical conception of the relation of the “One, to the Mind, and to the Soul” (369). Through this dialectical thinking, St. Augustine was able to explain the “Doctrine of the Trinity” where there was first the Father, then the Son proceeded from

the Father, and finally, the synthesis or love between the Father and the Son led to the birth of the Holy Spirit. If we further apply St. Augustine's dialectical thinking on the Trinity to the historical conditions of his time, we can say that the first historical moment was the existence of the pagan Roman Empire, the second historical moment with the arrival of the Christian cult as a new religious movement, and finally the third historical moment was the synthesis of the pagan Roman Empire and Christianity as a new religious movement that led to the formation of Christendom, a Holy Roman Empire, informed by the love of God.

Medieval History

What St. Augustine provided was a theoretical framework that conditioned the possibility of conceiving the Church and State union, the concrete construction of the explicit union of the Church and the State as two societies comprising Christendom, however, was done by "Pope Gelasius I, who was an African, like St. Augustine, that ruled as a Pope of the Catholic Church, from March 1, 492 to November 21, 496" (Korn 272). Karaan narrates the context upon which Pope Gelasius I constructed the union of Church and State:

During his reign, the Church in the East enjoyed the official protection of the Byzantine Empire. There was direct control of the Imperial power over the affairs of the Church. This phenomenon is denominated as Caesaropapism. However, in the West, this was not the case. The Western Roman Empire fell into the hands of the invading Barbarians. As a consequence, the Roman Pontiff was freed from the influence of the Roman Emperor. The Papal authority started to reassert itself over civil powers (86).

From the given context, Pope Gelasius I delineated the thesis on the *Two Powers*. The construction occurred when he wrote to Byzantine Emperor Flavius Anastasius I in 494 A.D. the following:

There are indeed, most august emperor, two powers by which this world is chiefly ruled: the sacred authority of the Popes and the royal power. Of this the priestly power is much more important, because it has to render account for the kings of men themselves [at the Last Judgment]. For you

know, our very clement son, that although you have the chief dignity over the human race, yet you must submit yourself faithfully to those who have charge of Divine things, and look to them for the means of your salvation (Ehler and Morral 10-11).

Unlike St. Augustine who used the concept of love to conceptually describe the union of the *Two Cities* of Church and State, Pope Gelasius I used the idea of *Two Powers* to identify the concrete distinction of powers between the Church and State. The first power was the spiritual power which the Catholic Church wielded; the other power was the temporal power which the State exercised. The temporal power took care of the bodily needs of man, while the spiritual power provided for the spiritual requirements of man. Since the Church took care of the spiritual needs of man, which was the basis of his salvation, the Pope surmised that the Church had primacy over the State, but also added that though the *Two Powers* were distinct from each other, they were not separate from each other, because they served the same man (Bloom et al. 65; Clark 11-12; Menache 57).

If Pope Gelasius I was a bishop of the Catholic Church who constructed the idea of *Two Powers* to show the union of Church and State relation to pastor or govern the members of Christendom, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, an abbot of the Benedictine Religious Order, which was a 'sect-like' organization within the Catholic Church (Finke and Wittberg 154), founded for the purpose of revitalizing the Church by way of their special apostolate or charism, also provided a new expression to the Gelasian Two Powers doctrine (Coronel 23). From his perspective as a 'religious,' "he compared the temporal power and spiritual power to the two swords which the apostles offered to Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and declared that the Church possessed both swords but exercised temporal power only indirectly through the agency of the emperor and king" (Coronel 23).

St. Bernard's concept of the *Two Swords* that qualified Pope Gelasius I concept of the *Two Powers* was modified and made academic or universally rationalized by St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Thomas Aquinas used Aristotle's conception of politics as starting point in constructing the relation of Church and State. Aristotle defined politics as follows:

Observation shows us, first that any polis (or state) is a specific form of association, and, secondly that all associations are instituted for the purpose of attaining some good—for all men do all their acts with a view of achieving something which is, in their view, a good. We may therefore hold [on the basis of what we actually observe] that all associations aim at some good and we may also hold that the particular association which is the most sovereign of all, and includes all the rest, will pursue this aim most, and will thus be directed to the most sovereign of all goods. This most sovereign and inclusive association is the polis, as is called, or the political association (1).

As Aristotle did, Aquinas believed that the establishment of a State was part of the nature of man, for man to be directed to his natural end. In Aquinas' work, *On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*, he said:

. . . it is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal, to live in a group. . . . If, then, it is natural for man to live in the society of many, it is necessary that there exist among men some means by which the group may be governed (4-5).

St. Thomas consequently identified how a group of men ought to be governed:

...since the beatitude of heaven is the end of that virtuous life which we live at present, it pertains to the king's office to promote the good life of the multitude in such a way as to make it suitable for the attainment of heavenly happiness, that is to say, he should command those things which lead to the happiness of Heaven and, as far as possible, forbid the contrary (64).

Fr. Frederick Copleston interpreted Aquinas' concept of the end of the State as follows:

If the State grows out of the nature of man, then it must bear a supernatural element as the source of human nature is God. Hence, the State's pursuit of man's natural end, which is virtuous life, must advance and not hinder man's pursuit of his supernatural end, which is the enjoyment of God.

Man's attainment of his supernatural end, in turn, it is the Church's role, because the enjoyment of God exceeds the power of human nature. Thus, the Church is higher than that of the State in "matters bearing upon the supernatural life, but that does not alter the fact that the State is a 'perfect society,' autonomous within its own sphere. . . . then St. Thomas must be reckoned as an upholder of the indirect power of the Church over the State (416).

Jacques Maritain, one of the prominent Thomists of the twentieth century, had the same interpretation of Aquinas' concept of the relation of Church and State as that of Fr. Copleston. Maritain explained:

The consequence is that the spiritual power by its very nature has authority over the temporal power in view of the spiritual end; such are the things in which the temporal power is subject to the spiritual, and this is what St. Thomas means when he writes 'with respect to things in which the secular power is subject to the spiritual power. That means that the secular power is not subject absolutely in every respect to the spiritual power: for instance, in the civil order the Governor of the State must be obeyed, in the military order the Commander of the army, rather than the Bishop, who has no business to meddle in such matters unless in relation to the spiritual thing (*nisi in ordine ad spiritualia*). But should anything whatsoever in temporal things in any way jeopardize eternal salvation, the prelate then intervening in that domain by a command or a prohibition is not thrusting his scythe into another man's harvest but legitimately exercising his authority: because all secular powers are subject on that score to the spiritual power (129-130).

Thus, with Aquinas' academic construction, Christendom gained a universal theoretical backing by conceiving the Church and the State as two perfect societies and by reconstructing Church and State relation from a 'direct' to an 'indirect' power of the Church over the State. This appeared to be a more reasonable and fair understanding of the function of the State rather than Pope Gelasius I's construction of the Church's 'direct power' over the State, until Pope Boniface VIII, in his bull, *Unam Sanctam* of 1302 declared:

. . . in this Church and in its power are two swords; namely, the spiritual and the temporal.... Both, therefore, are in the power of the Church, that is

to say, the spiritual and the material sword, but the former is to be administered *for* the Church but the latter *by* the Church; the former in the hands of the priest; the latter by the hands of kings and soldiers, but at the will and sufferance of the priest. However, one sword ought to be subordinated to the other and temporal authority, subjected to spiritual power. For since the Apostle said: '*There is no power except from God and the things that are, are ordained of God*' [Rom 13:1-2], but they would not be ordained if one sword were not subordinated to the other and if the inferior one, as it were, were not led upwards by the other.... Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff (qtd. in Schoenfeld 664).

Thus, in Pope Gelasius I's construction, the *Two Powers* independently pursued their own ends leading to the salvation of man. The State had to take care of the needs of man's body, while the Church had to take care of man's spiritual needs. This made the Church exercise 'direct' power over the State. But Pope Boniface VIII, enlarged the power of the Church from 'direct' power over the State, to the 'fullness' of power of the Church over the State (VanDrunem 37). This meant that the Church's jurisdiction extended beyond spiritual matters and included temporal matters. This construction, however, did not sit well with William of Ockham.

William of Ockham belonged to the Religious Order of Franciscan Minors whose charism was poverty. St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Order, took poverty as the charism of the Order to counter the economic abuses of the Diocesan clergy and the Benedictine monks in early medieval period. Like St. Thomas, William of Ockham was a scholastic who was tasked to universally rationalize the Catholic faith. Given these premises, William of Ockham would have a hard time accepting that the Church will again exercise temporal powers, because this might lead to the same abuses committed by ecclesiastics and the monastics in the past. Thus as a reaction to Pope Boniface's teaching, William of Ockham wrote in his work, *A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government*:

In my opinion that assertion is not only false, and dangerous to the whole community of the faithful, but even heretical. It is heretical because it is against Scriptures...The Pope could therefore by right deprive the king of

France and every other king of his kingdom without fault or reason, just as without fault or reason a lord can take from his slave a thing he has let him have. This is absurd. Also, if he had such fullness of power in matters both temporal and spiritual, the pope could impose on Christians many more and heavier external ceremonies than those of the Old law, and the gospel law would be in no way a law of freedom, but a law of unbelievable servitude. . . . And it is also dangerous to all Christendom. For if the pope had such fullness of power in temporal matters he could by right despoil all kings and rulers of their kingdoms and lordships and confer them on his relatives or any other low persons he pleased, or keep them for himself; this could easily give rise to schisms, dissensions, and wars dangerous to all Christendom (21-24).

Ockham's reaction to Pope Boniface VIII's enlargement the power of the Church over the State, however, was ignored and the Pope's position prevailed; but Ockham's reaction did not remain unnoticed by the Protestants.

Protestant Construction of the Church and State Relation

Martin Luther, a former Augustinian friar, wanted to safeguard the State from the Church, to stand against the corruption of the Church, which had become a temporal and political power.

From St. Augustine's idea of *Two Cities* to Pope Gelasius I's concept of *Two Powers* to St. Bernard's *Two Swords*, Luther formulated the theology of the *Two Kingdoms* (Steinmetz 113). In his work entitled, *To the Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (Porter 37-50), Luther talked about the State as the first kingdom, charged with taking care of the public work-life of an individual; and the second kingdom was the Protestant Church whose function was to take care of the private faith-life of an individual. The two kingdoms were united, but it was no longer a relation of love, power, or perfection. Rather, it was now a relation of social spheres—public work-life and private faith-life. Public work-life referred to what all men need to do to survive in social life, but the private faith-life denoted what an individual needs to possess by grace, to gain salvation. In this arrangement, the State dominated the Church because it controlled the

“public” work-life of an individual, but it did not necessarily mean that the Church was already subservient to the State. Luther, in his work entitled *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (Lull 429-459), asserted that an individual can refuse to follow the political obligation required by the State if it impairs the individual’s conscience.

The Anabaptists, through the writings of Michael Shattler, radicalized Luther’s idea of the *Two Kingdoms* by admonishing their members not to have anything to do with the State at all. This admonition was expressed in the 4th Article of the *Schleitheim Confession of Faith*:

A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world; in this manner, simply that we shall not have fellowship with them [the wicked] and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations To us then the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use [either] for friends or against one’s enemies I would like the records—by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not [him that is] evil (Menger 209).

The admonition meant that everything belonging to the political sphere was fundamentally and existentially characteristic of the fallen world, an expression of human sin, or even the work of the devil (Altman 72). Politics was something dirty, and renewed Christians should not take any part in it. They already lived in a regenerated world in the midst of the old and fallen one and consequently have “new life,” which they might endanger by taking part in politics (Altman 72). Thus, began the belief that the Church should not get involved in political life.

Meanwhile, King Henry VIII (Garner 3), a staunch defender of the Catholic Church against Protestantism, was interested in divorcing his wife Catherine of Aragon in favor of his concubine Anne Boleyn because Catherine could not bear him an heir. The king requested for a divorce, but Rome refused. Because of this, he separated from Rome, led then by Pope Clement VII. Henry VIII invoked his Divine Right and declared himself the

new Supreme Head of the Church of England. Thus, the king both served as the Head of the State and of the Church, where the Church became a simple department of the State. With this arrangement, every citizen had to follow the State religion (Garner 3).

The Protestants' theological constructions and Henry VIII's monarchial construction of the Church and State relation was eventually modified upon the formation of the modern democratic Nation-States.

Modern History

The formation of the modern democratic Nation-States in the western world was established through the treaty of Westphalia. This was an arrangement which deposed monarchies who used the divine right theory to legitimize their authority and, in turn, uphold the rights and sovereignty of individuals.

John Locke helped in the rationalization of the modern democratic nation-state by explaining to people, the origin of the formation of civil society. In Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, he hypothesized a state-of-nature where he conjectured that in this state, individuals had inalienable rights, guaranteed by God who is the author of nature. For a more efficient way of life, however, these individuals contracted civil society. Efficiency meant that, instead of an individual doing all things needed for him/her to survive, he/she will now have others help me survive. The only way for this to happen was for him/her to contract civil society with other individuals. Thus, through a contract civil society was born. Civil society as a contract implied that society was not a natural phenomenon, more so, not a supernatural phenomenon, but an "artefactual" or man-made phenomenon. But for society as a man-made reality to survive, the individuals will have to create institutions. The individuals will have to elect representatives to whom they will delegate the exercise of their bodily rights like life, freedom, health, wealth. This led to the formation of State as a political institution. But Locke thought that individuals continued to possess religious freedom which should be free from State interference. Thus, Locke came up with the idea of the separation of Church and State, which was similar to Martin

Luther's idea. The difference between the two, however, was that Luther placed the State in the public sphere and religion in the private sphere because he wanted to safeguard the State from the interference of religion, while Locke placed religion in the private sphere and the State in the public sphere, to keep religion from the interference of the State. By consequence, Locke distinguished civil authority and religious authority in the following way:

To settle the peace of places where there are different opinions in religion, two things are to be perfectly distinguished: religion and government, and their two sorts of officers, magistrates and ministers, and their provinces, to be kept well distinct (the not doing whereof was perhaps a great cause of distraction); a magistrate only to look at the peace and security of a city, ministers only concerned with the saving of the soul, and if they were forbidden meddling with making or executing laws in their preaching, we should be perhaps more quiet (Goldie 248).

Finally, Locke's idea regarding the meaningfulness of the life of an 'individual,' by himself or herself in the private sphere, beyond the control of the State in the public sphere, became the distinctive mark of the essence of modernity as opposed to the medieval thinking that an individual's life will only be meaningful by being a part of a group that performs a role in the State's organizational structure.

The Puritans, who believed that the Church of England was not protestant enough because they have not purified their religious beliefs and practices from Roman Catholicism, could not follow the king's order for them to embrace their State religion. They took Locke's theory as their ideology and rebelled against George III of England, fled England, and came to America to exercise their religious freedom. In America, Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, influenced by John Locke, used the phrase, "wall of separation of Church and State" in his missive to the Danbury Baptists in Virginia. Virginia, then a colony substantially patterned after the civil and religious principle that the Church of England was the established Church of the colony. This was Jefferson's way of assuring the Baptists to

not to be scared of the US government's interference in expressing their religious conscience. The missive stated:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declare that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation of Church and State (Jefferson 397).

The Act of Establishing Religious Freedom, first submitted to the legislature of Virginia in 1779 and passed in 1786, is one of the significant milestones in the history of religious freedom and is now regarded as one of Jefferson's best contributions to the development of American constitutional principles (Coquia 15-16). The act stated:

Almighty God hath created the mind free. . . . All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments . . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His Almighty power to do. . . . Be it enacted . . . that no man shall . . . suffer on account of his religious opinions (Jefferson 390).

According to Goodman, "Jefferson's bill ran along deist lines and because of this, no specific religion was mentioned unlike Locke who specified the moral teaching of Jesus" (116). This made Locke favor the Christian religion over other religions. Goodman added that, "Locke had denied protection to atheists because without belief in God they could not be trusted and to Roman Catholics because faith was not to be kept with heretics" (117). This showed the extent of Locke's religious tolerance and endorsement of the Protestant denomination among the denominations of the Christian religion, compared to that of Jefferson.

Thus, the distinctions showed that Locke followed a functional philosophy in formulating the separation between the State and the Church, while

Jefferson observed a pragmatic or “workable” philosophy in defining the separation.

Adding to Jefferson’s expression of “wall of separation,” James Madison, the Father of the United States of America’s Constitution, and later on became the fourth President of the United States of America, popularized the expression, “religious freedom” and incorporated it in the writing of the first amendment of the United States’ Constitution. Brant said this about Madison:

To Madison, freedom of religion was the fundamental item from which all forms of civil liberty depended. Its maintenance would not automatically preserve the entire civil liberty of the citizen. But without it the other rights were sure to be destroyed. In the area of religion, as Madison saw it, the basic element was freedom of conscience. But in the protection of that freedom, the fundamental requirement was a total separation between government and religion (3).

What is important to notice, though, is that, the phrase “separation of Church and State” does not appear in the United States of America’s Constitution. This makes the Constitutional provisions on the relation of Church and State ambiguous and vague leading to competing constructions of the separation of Church and State. Garry even went as far as claiming that the idea of the separation of Church and State was altogether a myth (475). On the contrary, Demereth III asserted that one just needs to clarify the context where the expression is used in order to decipher its meaning (21), because there are some cross-cultural and non-legal factors that need to be considered in the understanding of the separation of Church and State. Greenhouse lames that all these confusions would have been avoided, had the United States had a translation of the French word *laicite* (493).

The French concept of *laicite* was a result of the French revolution, The French wanted to create a common culture, shared by all and permeating daily life, that would lead to the production of their homogenous cultural identity (Whitman 93). This further led to the promulgation of the Act of December 9, 1905 on the separation of Church and State. The Act was framed from the concept of *laicite*, translated as ‘secularism,’ and understood

as a *complete separation* of Church and State where religion was relegated to the metaphysical-moral-noumenal world, which only the individual man and his/her God inhabit, separate from and having nothing to do with the physical-amoral-phenomenal social world that the State occupied.

Given the account regarding the role of the Catholic Church in the social construction of the law on the separation of Church and State in the Western world, we now turn to the examination of the role of the Catholic Church in the social construction of the law in the Philippines.

Social Construction of the Separation of Church and State in Philippine History

Spanish Period

During the Spanish colonial period in Philippine history, the Spaniards constructed a union of Church and State. Fr. Horacio De la Costa, SJ clarified the nature of such union:

. . . the union was based on the Spanish regime of the *Patronato Real de las Indias*. The *patronato real* was the result of a series of agreements entered into by the Holy See and the Spanish monarchy, starting from the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. It was developed by Spanish jurists and theologians into a body of law and of standard practices and procedures which remained in force until the dissolution of the Spanish empire in the late 17th and 18th centuries. The Spanish monarchy accepted from the Holy See the responsibility of promoting, maintaining, and defending the Roman Catholic religion in the Indies, that is, in all the Spanish dominions overseas. Accompanying acceptance of this responsibility was an engagement on the part of the Spanish monarchy that the leaders of the Church in the colonies, bishops and major superiors, were to be considered official advisers of the colonial government, and consulted on all matters. In exchange for this service rendered to the world of evangelization, the Holy See recognized that the Spanish monarchy possessed just title to the colonies it had conquered in Spanish America and the Philippines (1).

While the account on the union between the Church and State during the Spanish period in Philippine history was true, the belief in the supremacy of the Church over the State was denied by Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P. He

said, “it was the Spanish State that had primacy over the Church because it was “the State who decided who to bring to the colonies, among the so many religious orders and among the so many members of the religious orders, and who decided if a friar had to be replaced or exiled, like the case of Archbishop Guerrero in 1636 (126-128). Arguably, though such was the case, it did not mean that the Church did not do anything at all to defend the *Indios* from the cruelty of the Spanish colonial government. De la Costa narrated, “. . . whenever the Spanish citizens of Manila felt that they were being unjustly treated by the colonial government, it was the ecclesiastical authorities that they turned to” (11). Thus, the historic role assigned to the colonial episcopate both by the Spanish policy and the pressure of local conditions led the bishops to take action independently of, and sometimes in opposition to, the civil authorities in matters which these authorities believed to be the sole, or at least the primary concern of the state.

Revolutionary Period

Justice Jorge Coquia, the pioneer legal scholar on Church and State relations in the Philippines, narrated the introduction of the concept of religious freedom in the Philippines during the revolutionary period:

The contemporary concept of the freedom of religion and worship was introduced officially into the Philippines almost simultaneously by two historic documents. The Treaty of Paris, concluded on December 10, 1898, between Spain and the United States, provided among other things that, “the inhabitants of the territories over which Spain relinquishes or cedes her sovereignty shall be secured in the free exercise of religion.” Two months later, that is, on January 2, 1899, the Malolos Constitution, the organic act promulgated during the short-lived Philippine Republic under General Emilio Aguinaldo provided that, “[t]he State recognizes the liberty and equality of all religions (*de todos los cultos*) in the same manner as the separation of Church and State (15).

We also learned from Aguilar that, “in the Revolutionary Congress that crafted the 1899 Malolos Constitution, the separation of church and state was the most contentious issue, which won by a mere one vote” (279). Aguilar pointed out that, “the proponents of church-state unity championed

the Filipinization of the Catholic Church, while their opponents avoided it” (279). In the end, the issue was resolved when “US colonialism imposed the separation of Church and State without Filipinization” (279).

American Period

When the Americans occupied the Philippines, President McKinley in his *Instructions to the Philippine Commission* imposed on every branch of the government of the Philippine Islands the inviolable rule that:

No law shall be made respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof and that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever be allowed . . . that no form of religion and no minister of religion shall be forced upon any community upon any citizen of the Islands; that, upon the other hand, no minister of religion shall be interfered with or molested in following his calling (Coquia 15).

The clause which said, “No law respecting an establishment of religion” was called the “establishment clause,” which expressed the structural or institutional dimension of the law on the separation of Church and State and the clause which went, “prohibiting the free exercise thereof” was known as the “free exercise clause,” which highlighted the agential or individual dimension of the law. Thus, the two clauses expressed the integrated structure-agency dimensions of the law on the separation of Church and State.

Knowing the strong influence of the Catholic Church in the Philippine islands, President McKinley went further in constructing the separation of Church and State by emphasizing that, “the separation between State and Church shall be real, entire and absolute” (Coquia 16). Thus, “secularism” was imposed in the Philippines.

But while Pres. McKinley imposed a strict observance of the separation of Church and State, the American colonial government adopted a more pragmatic construction of the separation of Church and State, to settle issues with the Spanish friars and achieve their colonial goals. Shirley gave detailed account about how the American colonial government accommodated the

Catholic Church requests because of the vast and strong influence of the Catholic Church over the population (38).

Pres. Manuel L. Quezon also used the American colonial government's pragmatic approach in constructing the law on the separation of Church and State for political expediency. At one point he appeared to adopt Pres. McKinley's policy of complete separation of Church and State. Quezon said:

As an individual, I worship God in accordance with my own religious belief But as head of the State I can have no more to do with the Catholic Church than I can with the Protestant denominations, the Aglipayans, the Mohammedans, or any other religious organizations or sects in the Philippines (qtd. in Coquia 25).

In this expression, Pres. Quezon clearly followed a secularist construction of the separation of Church and State when he relegated his Catholicism in the private sphere and placed his being a head of State in the public sphere. Thus, his individual belief had to give way to his role as head of State.

At other instances, he adopted a social-functional construction of the law, placing the Church and the State on equal footing in the public sphere. He said:

It is of utmost importance to the Church itself, and no less the State, that the separation of their powers, as well as the independence of one from the other within their respective sphere of action be held inviolate. I should want it known that the policy of this Government is to follow strictly the letter and the spirit of those precepts of the Constitution which prohibit the interference by the State in ecclesiastical matters, and which likewise imply the firm stand of the State in not allowing ecclesiastical authorities in meddling with purely state matters (qtd. in Coquia 25).

If Pres. Quezon oscillated from a pragmatic to a social-functional construction of the law, the Catholic Church in the Philippines never gave up its position regarding the union of Church and State. The Philippine Catholic Church's construction of the law was further reinforced by Pope Pius IX syllabus of 1864 which declared as an error, the proposition that 'the Church must be separated from the State and the State from the Church.

Added to this, Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical, *Immortale Dei* (On the Christian Constitution of States) published in November 1, 1885, endorsed the distinction between Church and State, but not their separation:

But it would be most repugnant to them to think thus of the wisdom and goodness of God. Even in physical things, albeit of a lower order, the Almighty has so combined the forces and springs of nature with tempered action and wondrous harmony that no one of them clashes with any other, and all of them most fitly and aptly work together for the great purpose of the universe. There must, accordingly, exist between these two powers a certain orderly connection, which may be compared to the union of the soul and body in man. The nature and scope of that connection can be determined only, as We⁹ have laid down, by having regard to the nature of each power, and by taking account of the relative excellence and nobleness of their purpose. One of the two has for its proximate and chief object the well-being of this mortal life; the other, the everlasting joys of heaven. Whatever, therefore in things human is of a sacred character, whatever belongs either of its own nature or by reason of the end to which it is referred, to the salvation of souls, or to the worship of God, is subject to the power and judgment of the Church. Whatever is to be ranged under the civil and political order is rightly subject to the civil authority. Jesus Christ has Himself given command that what is Caesar's is to be rendered to Caesar, and that what belongs to God is to be rendered to God (par. 14).

And, Pope Leo XIII encyclical, *Libertas Praesantissimum* [On Human Liberty] in June 20, 1888 repeated the distinction between Church and State and pronounced the theory of separation of Church and State as fatal:

... what we have more than once pointed out, although the civil authority has not the same proximate end as the spiritual, nor proceeds on the same lines, nevertheless in the exercise of their separate powers they must occasionally meet. For their subjects are the same, and not infrequently they deal with the same objects, though in different ways. Whenever this occurs, since a state of conflict is absurd and manifestly repugnant to the most wise ordinance of God, there must necessarily exist some order or mode of procedure to remove the occasions of difference and contention, and to secure harmony in all things. This harmony has been not inaptly compared to that which exists between the body and the soul for the well-being of both one and the other, the separation of which brings irremediable harm to the body, since it extinguishes its very life (par. 18).

Vatican II

Until Vatican II, the prevailing Catholic doctrine about Church-State relations was known as “thesis-hypothesis.” The “thesis” was that the ideal State would recognize the Catholic Church as the supreme religious authority and therefore support efforts to repress heresy, enforce religious education, be deferred to on moral issues, and so forth. The “hypothesis” was that, the Church realized that the “thesis” could not always be reached, such as when the Church did not function in a Catholic State, the Church would accept a government policy of religious toleration.

But with the writing of The Vatican II Document, *Gaudium et Spes* [*Joy and Hope*] or the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World which was written “not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity,” signified the Vatican’s move away from the thesis-hypothesis theory (Crosby 11). Without using the language of “liberal democracy,” the Church advocated for such an ordering of political life:

From a keener awareness of human dignity there arises in many parts of the world a desire to establish a political-juridical order in which personal rights can gain better protection. These include rights of free assembly, of common action, of expressing personal opinions, and of professing a religion both privately and publicly. For the protection of personal rights is a necessary condition for the active participation of citizens, whether as individuals or collectively, in the life and government of the state (Crosby 12).

Because of Fr. John Courtney, SJ, the Vatican II Document, *Dignitatis Humanae* [Dignity of the Human Person], a document on religious freedom, rejected the automatic primacy of the Church over the State. The document said:

The right to religious freedom is exercised in human society: hence its exercise is subject to certain regulatory norms. In the use of all freedoms the moral principle of personal and social responsibility is to be observed. In the exercise of their rights, individual men and social groups are bound by the moral law to have respect both for the rights of others and for their own

duties toward others and for the common welfare of all. Men are to deal with their fellows in justice and civility.

The document, however, warned against abuses committed in the name of religious freedom and designated government to guard against these abuses:

Furthermore, society has the right to defend itself against possible abuses committed on the pretext of freedom of religion. It is the special duty of government to provide this protection. However, government is not to act in an arbitrary fashion or in an unfair spirit of partisanship. Its action is to be controlled by juridical norms which are in conformity with the objective moral order. These norms arise out of the need for the effective safeguard of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights, also out of the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice, and finally out of the need for a proper guardianship of public morality (Crosby 12).

The document also endorsed the democratic constitutional State as the best model for preserving justice and religious freedom for all people in a given society. The document said:

Indeed, religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents. The further fact is that forms of government still exist under which, even though freedom of religious worship receives constitutional recognition, the powers of government are engaged in the effort to deter citizens from the profession of religion and to make life very difficult and dangerous for religious communities. This council greets with joy the first of these two facts as among the signs of the times. With sorrow, however, it denounces the other fact, as only to be deplored (Crosby 12).

Burns, however, qualified the Church's endorsement of liberalism:

The Church essentially endorsed liberal democracy as the preferable form of government. Nevertheless, it was not the case that the Church accepted liberalism wholesale: it continued to oppose economic liberalism and a liberal view of morality. As always, the ideological change accepting polit-

ical liberalism was a result of the Church's own institutional experience: its position internationally had come more and more to resemble that of the U.S. Church. In a world in which the Church could not depend on church-state alliance (as was clear from Pius XI's disastrous flirtation with fascism), liberal politics was the best guarantee of the Church's institutional integrity. At least liberalism allowed the Church certain autonomy on religious matters, even if it required that the Church accept certain degree of church-state separation (49).

This led to a tolerated social-functional construction of Church and State separation, where the two institutions were thought to perform distinct functions in the same public sphere, where no one had pre-eminence over the other. The State took care of the material needs of the people; while the Church took care of their spiritual needs. The State did not trespass the Church's function nor did the Church trespass the State's function. But the moment the State invaded the territory of the Church, such as when the State made policies against faith and morals, then the Church had to contest the State.

Thus, this has been the unwavering stance of the Philippine Catholic Church toward Pres. Marcos' government down to Pres. Duterte's administration.

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From *Makiling* to *Rosales*

Philippine Literary Studies in Russia

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Abstract

Systematic Philippine philological studies in then Soviet Russia started in the mid-twentieth century, almost two decades before the establishment of the Philippines-USSR diplomatic relations. Attempts have been recently made to overview the impact of the Russian scholars in the Philippine historical and linguistic studies (see Makarenko 2002, Zabolotnaya 2006, Stanyukovich 2011). However, the scope of the Philippine literary studies undertaken by the pioneering Russian Philippinists and their alumni have not yet received enough attention. The present paper aims to provide an overview of Philippine literary studies in Russia during the last fifty years, studies that are concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Keywords

Philippine studies in Russia, Philippine literary studies, Russian oriental studies, translation of Philippine literature

First Steps to Philippine Literary Studies in Russia

The first data on the Philippines found in Russian sources trace back to the seventeenth century (Braginsky and Diakonova 74). Later on, in 1787, wordlists from several regional Philippine languages were included in the “comparative dictionaries of all the languages and dialects” (Pallas, *Linguarum totius*), compiled by a world-famous Prussian natural scientist, academician Peter Simon Pallas who served Empress of Russia Catherine the Great (Makarenko, “Filippinskaya Literatura” 74). However, until the middle of the twentieth century, Philippine philological studies in then Soviet Russia were yet to be undertaken fully. Since then the two centers for Philippine studies in Russia have been Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Dr. Ludmila Mervart (1888–1965), a leading orientalist from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in 1924 became the Head of the Indonesian Sector in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) of the Academy of Sciences. She is considered the first scholar in the USSR to study professionally Austronesian linguistics including the Tagalog language. Due to political repression in Leningrad she moved to Moscow, where she organized a circle of Tagalog linguistic scholars at her home (Stanyukovich, “Philippine Studies in Russia...” 45-46). Later, Philippine linguistics would become the major focus of study by one of the pioneering Moscow Philippinists, **Dr. Lina Shkarban** (1937-2018), a future Principal Research Associate at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Science.

In Moscow in 1937 the would-be Soviet academician and the “founding father” of Philippine History studies in Russia **Dr. Alexander Guber** (1902–1971) published a biography of the Philippine National hero Dr. Jose Rizal (Guber and Rykovskaya 1937). In 1961, another Soviet historian, Georgy Levinson, edited a collection of Rizal’s articles translated into Russian, and in 1963 Guber wrote an article on Jose Rizal’s creative writing as an introduction to the Russian translation of his masterpiece novel *Noli Me Tangere*. But even such highly enlightened pioneers as Guber or Levinson could not do much within the conditions of the Iron Curtain: they could not visit the Philippines, study Philippine languages in person, nor grasp the knowledge of Philippine literature and culture from the country itself. Those books in

Spanish or English accessible to them were not a big help either in understanding Filipino life or profound studies of Philippine literature.

Two pillars of evolving Philippine literary studies in Russia—Dr. Vladimir Makarenko and DSc Igor Podberezsky—entered the world of Philology later, in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. However, they also had to start studying the Philippines through books. Though “granted” independence from the USA in 1946, the Philippines still stayed in the wake of American politics and did not enter diplomatic relations with the USSR for another thirty years (Sumsky 140). So it was good luck when in 1956 a Philippine political emigrant Teodoro Lansang (under the name of Manuel Cruz) arrived in Moscow and became the teacher for the first ever group of Russian students learning Tagalog at the Moscow Institute of International Relations, or MGIMO (Zabolotnaya 3). Among his students were the pioneering Russian Philippinist Igor Podberezsky as well as his future co-author of the first Tagalog-Russian (1959) and Russian-Tagalog (1965) dictionaries and a talented translator of Philippine literature, Sergey P. Ignashev. The editor of those first dictionaries was Dr. Vladimir Makarenko.

Russian Pioneers of Philippine Philology

Dr. Vladimir A. Makarenko (1933–2008) is considered one of the founding fathers of Philippine Philology studies in Russia, and a leading specialist in Tagalog linguistics and Philippine literature. A graduate from the Economy Department of Lomonosov Moscow State University, from 1957 until 1964, he had been working as an editor of the State Publishing of Foreign and National Dictionaries where he had taken interest in Oriental studies. Makarenko taught himself Tamil and then Tagalog and defended his thesis on Tagalog Morphology in 1965 at the Institute of Oriental Languages (now the Institute of Asian and African Studies, or IAAS), Lomonosov Moscow State University (Pogadaev 84-85). Makarenko started to teach Tagalog and Philippine linguistics at the Institute of Oriental Languages in 1959. He had also prepared and taught a course on the History of Philippine Literature as an integral part of the Philippine studies curriculum at the MSU. Sadly, Philippine studies were discontinued at the MSU for more than a decade

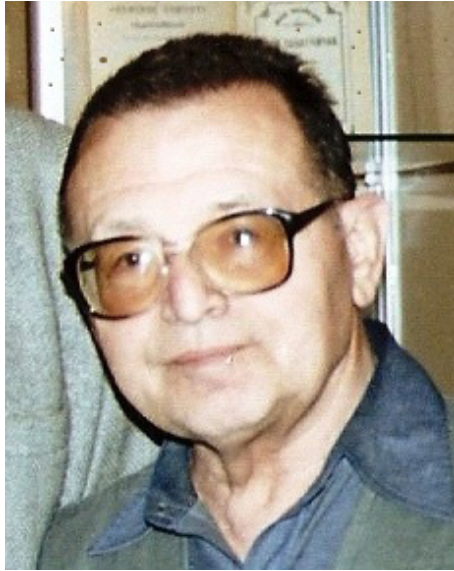


Fig. 1. Dr. Vladimir Makarenko, a pioneer of the Philippine Linguistics and Literary Studies in Moscow (MSU). en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Makarenko.

(1985-1997), during which period Makarenko had to shift to the Institute of Scientific Information in Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences. He resumed teaching Tagalog, Philippine Literature and Linguistics at the IAAS of MSU in 1997 (until his untimely death in 2008), in cooperation with his former graduate Elena Frolova and later with their alumna Ekaterina Baklanova. Makarenko is the author of more than sixty works in linguistics (in Russian, English, and Tagalog), more than 100 scientific reviews, research and popular science articles, including those for different encyclopedias. He enjoyed a friendship with the renowned Philippine linguist Bro. Andrew Gonzalez and with the writer and literary critic E. San Juan, Jr., among others, and had been a life member of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines.

A pioneering Russian researcher on Philippine literature as well, Makarenko became an editor and translator of twelve collections of

Philippine prose and poetry in Russian (see below a list of the Philippine writers included in the Russian collections). In 1971, in cooperation with Manuel Cruz's alumnus Sergey Ignashev and a talented Russian poet Alexander Revich, he published in Russian a collection (*Rice Grains*) of translated poems by National Artist in Literature Amado V. Hernandez, dubbed as one of the biggest figures in Philippine literature of the American colonial period (Lumbera and Lumbera 183). In 1976 with his co-author Ignashev, he translated for Soviet readers Amado Hernandez's novel *Mga Ibong Mandaragit* (*Birds of Prey*). Dr. Makarenko's series of articles on Philippine Literature of different periods in the eight-volume Russian edition, *The History of World Literature* (Makarenko 1983–1994), has provided the groundwork for the following Philippine researches in Russia. His papers and lectures are based on the profound works by such Philippine experts in literature as C. Panganiban, L. Casper, T. Castillo y Tuazon, V. Almario, B. Lumbera, E. San Juan Jr., F. Sionil Jose, among others. As the author of academic courses and various articles on Philippine literature, along with the translations of Philippine poetry and fiction, Dr. Vladimir Makarenko has laid the foundation for Philippine literary studies in Russia.

Another pillar of the pioneering Philippine studies was **Igor V. Podberezsky** (1937-2014), a famous scholar and translator, who became the pioneer in the field of Philippine literature and culture studies in Russia. A talented MGIMO student of Tagalog in the aforementioned Manuel Cruz group in the 1950s, Podberezsky, while still an undergraduate, succeeded M. Cruz as a teacher of Tagalog at MGIMO as early as the 1960s. He defended his PhD thesis on Philippine Linguistics in 1967, and in 1976 published the first comprehensive textbook of Tagalog in Russian for Soviet universities.

Dr. Podberezsky held leading positions at the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In the early 1960s, official Manila-Moscow ties began to develop (resulting in the establishment of Philippines-USSR diplomatic relations in 1976), and the countries exchanged several cultural delegations. Thus in 1967 Philippine National Artist in Literature



Fig. 2. Dr. Igor Podberezsky (center), a pioneer of the Philippine Literary Studies in Moscow (MGIMO), awarded the Presidential Medal by former Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. interaffairs.ru/i/pdf_asean/16.pdf.

Francisco Sionil Jose visited Moscow and, as Victor Sumsky writes, their first meeting there with Podberezsky was “the start of half a lifetime of friendship” (Sumsky 141). It turned out to be very fruitful for Philippine literary studies in the USSR: many short stories by Sionil Jose, along with three of his five novels from the so-called “Rosales saga” were published in Russia in Podberezsky’s translation (*Pretenders* in 1971, *Tree* and *My Brother, My Executioner* in 1983), followed by their publication in Latvian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian. In 1974, Podberezsky was also a co-translator of the novel *A Season of Grace* by another National Artist, N.V.M. Gonzales. The famous novels by another master of Philippine English fiction, Nick Joaquin, whom Podberezsky rated as a “Nobel-caliber writer” (Sumsky 144), were translated by the Russian scholar in 1988. Podberezsky’s postdoctoral research has been dedicated to the literature of the Philippines, with his postdoc thesis on the

evolution of the creative writing by the Philippine National Hero, Dr. Jose Rizal (Podberezsky 1982, in Russian), defended in 1982. In his comprehensive monograph, Podberezsky presents his survey on the factors and various directions of Jose Rizal's evolution as an outstanding Philippine writer who has paved the way for realism in Philippine literature. As Podberezsky stresses, Rizal is the first cultural figure to articulate the incompatibility of the historical destinies of Spain and the Philippines. Chapter 1 of the monograph, "The Pre-Rizal Philippines and Philippine Literature," is also the first ever Russian scientific review of Philippine literature since pre-Hispanic times until the mid-19th century. The author shows that by the 16th century, Philippine folklore had developed forms of labor and ritual songs, folktales, riddles, proverbs, as well as epic and lyrical epic; the demythologization process and social motives began to evolve. Analyzing the strong influence of the Spanish folk epic on Philippine epic and lore, Podberezsky points out that those subjects and motives which contradicted Philippine ethical views were restricted from being borrowed (e.g. the motive of killing a relative). Philippine literature in the early 19th century, though much influenced by Spanish and Catholic literature, featured "the Philippine essence" in its characters and plot ornamentation. As Podberezsky stresses, Jose Rizal was first to introduce the true Philippine reality as a literary object into Philippine literature. In the second chapter of the monograph, the formation of Rizal's poetry is analyzed. The author points out that though Hispanized, Rizal's aesthetics also reflect the influence of the Philippine folktales. Podberezsky describes Rizal's poetic style as "baroque," flamboyant, which he attributes to one of the principles of Philippine aesthetics. The third chapter of Podberezsky's monograph is dedicated to Jose Rizal's becoming a European scale scientist as well as the best Philippine poet, a leading public and Propaganda Movement figure. Analyzing Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tangere*, Podberezsky notices Voltaire's influence on the novel in terms of its satire and sarcasm towards Catholic orders and their local henchmen as an obstacle to the development of the Philippines, as well as Rizal's idea of the invincibility of the progress. The researcher also points out to another Philippine aesthetic principle in Rizal's creative writing—"the fullness of literary space"

where an art pause or a lack of action is regarded as a flaw and emptiness. In spite of the traditional didacticism of the novel and uniformity of its characters, Podberezsky attributes the *Noli* to critical realism. Indeed, Rizal is the first to introduce *real* contemporary Philippine space and time in the native literature; he showed social evil, as well as the evolving national consciousness of the Filipinos. In the last two chapters of the monograph, Podberezsky analyzes the evolution of Rizal's creative writing since the late 1880s due to his disillusionment in Spanish colonial rule and possibility of the reforms. He describes J. Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* as a truly realistic novel which, regardless of some flaws in the plot, boasts of more multifaceted characters, psychologism and realistic details. Podberezsky calls the *Noli* "a diagnosis novel" and the *Fili* "a prognosis novel" in terms of Philippine social history. Podberezsky's postdoc monograph (1982) presents an in-depth analysis of the evolution of Jose Rizal's creative writing in the context of his biography and socio-political activity.

As the author of more than a hundred papers on Philippine culture and literature and as the editor or translator of eleven books of Philippine fiction, Podberezsky has laid a solid foundation for Philippine studies in Russia. In June 2009, during the former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's visit to Moscow, this author and others were invited to the ceremony of awarding Igor Podberezsky with the Presidential Medal of Merit for his pioneering studies of Philippine culture.

The other center of Philippine studies in Russia is the Oriental Faculty of the St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) State University (SPbU) and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of the Academy of Science (MAE RAS). The founding father of Philippine studies in SPbU was **Gennadiy Ye. Rachkov** (1929–2016)—a prominent scholar in Korean and Philippine philology and linguistics. In 1967 he became the founder and the Head of the Tagalog Department of Philology at the Oriental Faculty of then Leningrad State University. An outstanding specialist in Tagalog linguistics, he has published numerous papers, and a fundamental PhD monograph on the morphology of contemporary Tagalog in 1981, as well as the first and only



Fig. 3. Dr. Gennadiy Rachkov, the pioneer of the Philippine Linguistics in Saint Petersburg (SPbGU). www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/index.php?option=com_personalities&Itemid=74&person=183

Big Russian-Tagalog and Tagalog-Russian Dictionaries (Rachkov 2012). He has also contributed to the translation of some Philippine short stories. According to one of the first of Dr. Rachkov's alumnus, the leading Russian specialist in Philippine ethnography and folklore Dr. Maria V. Stanyukovich, G. Rachkov is "the teacher of all the present-day specialists on the Philippines in St. Petersburg." (Stanyukovich, "Pilipinas Muna!" 48). From 1967 to 2011, Dr. Rachkov was the only staff teacher of the Tagalog Department and was in charge of lectures both on Philippine linguistics and on the folklore, literature, and history of the Archipelago. One of the first graduates of the then Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, **Rostislav L. Rybkin** (1934–2010) was a famous Russian translator and literary editor. He has translated folklore and fiction from more than fifteen languages including Tagalog and Indonesian. Among his publications on Philippine literature are collections of Philippine short stories (e.g. Rybkin 1970) and folktales. Thus,

Rybkin's first comprehensive Russian anthology *Folktales and Myths of the Peoples of the Philippines* (1975) is a collection of the narrative folklore pieces of nineteen Philippine peoples in the three main parts of the archipelago. The anthology has become a significant contribution in Russian folklore studies. The introduction to Rybkin's anthology, as well as to other translations of Philippine literature, is written by DSc **Boris B. Parnickel** (1934-2004), a MGIMO University graduate and one of the pioneering Russian specialists in Malay literature and the history of the Nusantara literatures (Ogloblin 5). One of his fundamental works is *The Introduction to the Literary History of Nusantara, IX-XIX cent.*, in Russian (Parnickel 1980). B. Parnickel is the founder of the Russian scientific society "Nusantara" in 1990, which since then, has been uniting the Russian scholars studying the vast region populated by Austronesians (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Timor Leste, Madagascar, Oceania), including countries with some Austronesian minorities such as Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan.¹

One of the current leading Russian specialists on Philippine modern history, Director of the ASEAN Center of MGIMO University DSc Victor V. Sumsky called the period between the early 1970s and the late 1980s "a true Golden Age for Philippines studies in Soviet Russia" (Sumsky 145). Indeed, while the country was commonly believed to be plunged in "stagnation," Soviet research works on the Philippines—various books by pioneering Philippinists—came out in quick succession. The majority of the Philippine literature translations by different Russian philologists was published during that period. According to P. Kisseleva's comprehensive Russian-English bibliography of the Philippine literary translations into Russian (Kisseleva 110-119), in the years 1974-1996 Soviet and Russian readers were presented with 6 books of Philippine poems by more than 100 poets (translations from Tagalog, Spanish, and English); eleven collections of Philippine short stories by almost fifty fictionists, three books of folktales and myths, and fifteen novels by various Philippine writers—from B. Appel, C. Carunungan, C. Poncela, and W. Pomeroy to such masters of Philippine prose as Jose Rizal, Amado Hernandez, N.V.M. Gonzales, F. Sionil Jose, and Nick Joaquin,

whose large literary heritage including poetry, short stories, and essays have also been translated into Russian.

It was in the 1990s that a stagnation in the Russian humanities science came, with lack of funds assigned for researches and publications. The new edition in 2001 of Igor Podberezsky's translation of *Cave and Shadows* by Nick Joaquin was among the last Philippine literary works published in Russian so far. Unfortunately, his brilliant translations of two more of the five novels that make up Sionil Jose's "Rosales Saga" are still awaiting a publication sponsorship. However, the Moscow and St. Petersburg academic schools keep the Philippine studies going and strive to raise a new generation of Philippinists in Russia.

The Present State of Philippine Literary Studies in Russia

Dr. V. Makarenko's alumni Dr. Elena Frolova and Dr. Ekaterina Baklanova now continue to teach and conduct research studies on Tagalog (Filipino), Philippine literature, and linguistics at the IAAS of Moscow State University. An IAAS graduate Nikolay V. Sadokov has defended a PhD Thesis in Russian on "The Main Stages of Formation and Development of the Philippine Literature" in 2005. The work presents a general overview of Philippine literature from Pre-Hispanic times until the late 1980s, and appears to be largely compilative as it uses extensively the papers and unpublished lectures by V. Makarenko, I. Podberezsky, B. Parnickel, M. Stanyukovich and other Russian scholars, as well as Philippine literary researches by L. Casper, T. Castillo y Tuazon, B. Lumbera, and L. Santos, among others. During the last decade, two more graduates of the Philippine Department of IAAS MSU have defended their MA thesis (in Russian) on Philippine literature in English, covering the creative writing by two National Artists of the Philippines: Alyona Greshnova studied the novels of Francisco Sionil Jose while the above mentioned Polina Kisseleva did her research on the fiction of Nicomedes Joaquin (the novels of both Philippine masters were translated into Russian by Podberezsky). Their MA research studies had been supervised by another pioneering Philippinist, the leading specialist in Philippine history and Director of the ASEAN Center of MGIMO, DSc



Fig. 4. Russian translations of the novels by F. Sionil Jose, N. Joaquin, N.V.M. Gonzalez, and B. Appel. From the author's personal collection.

Victor V. Sumsky. Some attempts have been made to fill the gap in the Russian studies of contemporary Philippine literature of the 1980s-2010s (e.g. Baklanova 2015). Two BA Theses in Philippine Literature have been done on the evolution of the Tagalog short story in the twentieth century and on the creative writing of Genoveva Edroza Matute, accompanied by full Russian translations of several Tagalog short stories. Presently, the Philippine Literature course at the IAAS of MSU includes both lectures and reading assignments, and also literary translation of Filipino fiction. Thus, a number of short stories by such prominent Filipino writers as G. Edroza Matute, S. Guinigundo, M. Pineda, E. Abueg, Ed. Reyes, R. Sicat, and J. Cruz Reyes have been translated into Russian; these pieces still wait in the wings to find a publisher. An attempt to make subtitles for a Philippine play has also been made (*Ang Paglilitis* 2019). Various Filipino movies based on the

fiction by Luwalhati Bautista, Edgardo Reyes, Ricardo Lee, as well as films by Lino Brocka, Mario O'Hara, Lav Diaz are demonstrated to the students of IAAS MSU within the frames of the Philippine Literature course.²

In St. Petersburg, Dr. Maria V. Stanyukovich holds high the banner of Russian Philippine studies. She has been teaching in the Department of Tagalog Philology of St. Petersburg University for more than thirty years. She is also the Chair of the Department of Australia, Oceania and Indonesia at Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Science. Dr. Stanyukovich specializes in the Philippine epic and ritual, particularly of the Ifugao people, as well as Philippine oral literature, anthropology, ethnolinguistics, and ethnobotany. She is the only Russian expert on the Ifugao hudhud epics; she also leads the work on the electronic corpus of Philippine folklore ritual texts (see Stanyukovich 2000; 2013). Among Stanyukovich's graduates are Olga Koltyga, who worked as a Professor of Philippine Literature and is presently doing her PhD research on Francisco Balagtas' creative writing, as well as other Philippine poetry of the Spanish colonial period (e.g. Koltyga 2017), and Sergey Yatsenko who has made his MA Thesis on the Ilocano epic *Biag Ni Lam-Ang* (*Life of Lam-Ang*). Dr. Stanyukovich has compiled and edited the first-ever multifaceted representation of Philippine studies in Russia, "Pilipinas Muna! The Philippines is a Priority!" as proceedings to the International Philippine Studies Conference of the same title held on September 14-15, 2009 in St. Petersburg. The collection consists of articles by Russian, Philippine, and Western scholars in such areas of Philippine studies as the history of the Russia-Philippines contacts, folklore and literature, linguistics, anthropology and ethnology, as well as the representation of the Philippines in the Russian art and museums. The Philippine Folklore and Literature section includes articles (in Russian) by the following scholars: Yuri E. Berezkin's "Four Folklore Motifs Related to Three Epochs in History of the Philippines and Indonesia" (136-172), Sergey I. Yatsenko's "Ilocano Epic *The Life of Lam-ang*: History of Studies and Analysis of Contents" (173-195) and "Verse Organization in the Ilocano Epic *The Life of Lam-ang*" (203-232), Artyom V. Kozmin's "Metrics of the Iloko and Mongolian Epic Verse: a Comparison"



Fig. 5. The Russian edition of Francisco Balagtas' *Florante at Laura*, translated from Tagalog by H.E. Valery Sorokin. From the author's personal collection.

(196-202), and Olga V. Koltyga's "History and Evolution of Francisco Balagtas Studies in the Philippines and in Russia" (233-247). Full texts of the articles (in Russian) and abstracts and biodata of the authors (in English) are available online (Stanyukovich, "Pilipinas Muna!").

Philippine literature finds a lively response in Russian hearts and minds. To illustrate the assumption, here is an extract of the review by a random Russian reader on Nick Joaquin's two novels masterly translated into Russian by Podberezsky. The full review in Russian is easily accessible (*translation mine*):

Frankly, my acquaintance with this author [Nick Joaquin] is really inspiring while also disappointing because [besides these novels and a few short

stories] there is only one more long piece translated [into Russian]—*The Portrait of an Artist as Filipino* <...> Joaquin’s prose is unique. He masterfully merges original scenes, fresh images, colorful descriptions and lively dialogues. His characters are real, his plots are smooth, and his finals are mostly ideal” (*Russian Reader’s Review*).

An invaluable gift for any Russian interested in the Philippines has been the recent publication of a talented translation of the classical Tagalog poem by Francisco Balagtas “Florante and Laura.” The author is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia Mr. Valery Sorokin.³ The book was published in 2017 by the ASEAN Center of MGIMO University with a comprehensive introduction by Dr. Elena Frolova (Balagtas 2017).

Conclusion

The Russian studies of Philippine literature started by the pioneers (Makarenko, Podberezhsky, Rachkov) in the 1960s have resulted in various lectures and publications on the history of Philippine literature, as well as on its prominent figures from Francisco Balagtas to the most contemporary writers. The works by Jose Rizal have been studied extensively; translations of poetry by more than 100 Philippine authors (in Tagalog, Spanish, and English), and of fiction (Tagalog, English) by almost fifty writers of the 1900s-1970s have been published in the second half of the twentieth century.

At present, Philippine literary studies in Russia are being developed by the pioneers’ alumni in Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities. Researches are done on Philippine folklore (Stanyukovich, Yatsenko), classical literature of the Spanish period (Koltyga), and contemporary Philippine fiction and poetry (Baklanova with IAAS graduates). There is still much to be done for the study of Philippine creative writing and the description of Philippine literature at its different historic milestones, particularly in the fields of poetry and Philippine regional literatures. A cooperation with Philippine and other foreign specialists on Philippine literature could be very fruitful. There is also quite a number of brilliant contemporary Philippine writers totally unknown to Russian readers. Thus, another challenge is to find the means to fill this gap, too.

Notes

1. Some trivia on the Nusantara Society available at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nusantara_Society.
2. E. Baklanova as the professor of the Philippine Literature course would like to thank the Ambassador of the Philippine Embassy in Moscow H.E. Carlos Sorreta and Third Secretary and Vice Consul Ms. Catherine Alpay for their kind support in organizing the Filipino film screenings.
3. Translation of PHL Literary Classic Published in Russia available at www.dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/news-from-our-foreign-service-postsupdate/13833-translation-of-phl-literary-classic-published-in-russia.

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Of Alternative Histories

The Hierarchy of Memories in
Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado*

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Abstract

In this paper, I contend how the naming of alternative histories as “counter-memories” may only lead to the creation of a dichotomy between what have been presented as the “central,” “primary,” and “dominant” memories of the nation against what is suggested as the “peripheral,” derivative,” and “other.” Even though the “multiplicity of voices” is acknowledged in alternative histories, there remains the question of whose voices dominate in this particular discursive practice. Thus, instead of a counter-memory, I propose in this study that even though some works can be considered as alternative narratives of history, these works can still contribute to the hegemonic narratives of institutionalized histories thus forming a hierarchy of memories. Alternative narratives of history can thus still be appropriated to serve hegemonic ends. Using Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado*, a novel that can be considered to present an alternative narrative of history as it is able to recognize, both by *form* and *content*, the varying postcolonial fissures left unacknowledged by nationalist discourses in Philippine historiography, I present in this paper how it remains complicit in

the hegemonic discourses of institutionalized histories by privileging certain voices and memories over others in presenting an alternative narrative of history.

Keywords

alternative histories, counter-memory, historiographic metafiction, *Ilustrado*, hierarchy of memories

Introduction

The construction of official histories of the nation has always been subjected to what national identities are to be considered as “acceptable” and “positive” representations of the people. In terms of how these identities have been constituted over the years is usually based on historical events and memories that are institutionalized to be collectively remembered. Dominant memory, however, is “produced in the course of struggles” (Olick and Robbins 2), and is always open to contestation. Larger social processes continually rework the past that shapes a society, and thus history has to present itself as an “enlightened, corrected memory” (Nora 7). In every society, social memories that are considered to uphold order are preserved leading to their institutionalization as official histories, while those that threaten the “balance” of the community are excluded leading to the marginalization of certain groups in the society. In this sense, social memories play a very “important factor in struggle, for if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism and [...] their experience and knowledge of the previous struggles” (Foucault 252).

In literature, alternative narratives of history have been produced with the aim of countering hegemonic practices and discourses constructed by official or institutionalized histories. These alternative narratives of history in literature which literary theorist Linda Hutcheon refers to as “historiographic metafiction” are novels that present historical events but at the same time are critiquing the idea of doing just that. They are “self-reflexive” (Hutcheon 106) as they present both literature and historiography as matters of discourse where relations of power are actualized by ignoring certain fissures in the society in order to present a monolithic national history. This notion of history writing is in line with what Hayden White contends about historiography as mainly a matter of “emplotment” (23) because in order to present history as a linear progression of events, historical writings tend to make use of certain literary tropes in writing an account of history, especially if the historical account is used to serve nationalist ends.

In postcolonial countries like the Philippines, repressive and hegemonic state nationalisms are often embraced after nominal independence has been

achieved in order to promote national unity and development among the nation's people. In a study on Ilustrado nationalism by Filomeno Aguilar, the "Filipino nation" for the members of the Ilustrado, or the elite and educated class during the 19th century, is conceived with the notion of the superiority of the Malay race that consists of the third wave of migrants in precolonial Philippines. Aguilar contends that those who do not belong to this category of the "civilized" and Christianized people in the lowlands such as the indigenous peoples in the highlands and Moro Muslims in Mindanao are thereby relegated to "savage" or "primitive races." Having the most social and cultural capital during their time, the ilustrados' idea of the nation led to the construction of a monolithic nationalist historiography that marginalizes the experiences of other social groups that they consider to be below them in a Westernized concept of racial and civilizational hierarchy.

Even though the Philippines may have gone beyond this Ilustrado concept of nationalism with the growing number of studies on history writing from below and local histories since the 1970s,¹ Resil Mojares points out that there is "still little direct, critical engagement with established conceptions of the nation or its constituent units such that much work on the study of local histories does not significantly reconfigure the familiar, dominant national narratives" (150).

Caroline Hau in her book, *On the Subject of the Nation: Filipino Writings from the Margins, 1981-2004* argues how certain memories are privileged over others in nationalist discourses and contends that there is a need to pay more attention to the individual and collective experiences of those in the margins, such as the Filipino-Chinese communities and Filipino revolutionaries, to help redefine notions of belonging against the hegemonic discourses of Philippine historiography.

As pointed out by Lily Rose Tope in her study of nationalism and postcolonial literature in three Southeast Asian countries,² contestatory discourses to hegemonic narratives of nationalism from those who belong to the peripheries are often silenced in order to promote the needs and interests of dominant groups. This takes place when the project of nationalism is transferred from the hands of the colonizer to the colonized as

newly appointed or elected national leaders are forced by circumstance to transplant a Western or European concept of nationalism amidst having a diverse and multicultural population. In order for these minority voices and discourses to be recuperated, literature and postcolonial writers, according to Tope, should be involved in “the ideological project of providing spaces for dialogue between the dominant and marginalized discourses of the nation” (243) through writing alternative narratives of history that present reimaginings or alternative perspectives of nationhood and cultural identities.

Alternative narratives of history in literature have thus been produced and they are commonly associated with the movement of postmodernism. Postmodernism, although challenging to precisely pin down, can be considered as a response to the modernist movement by attempting to do away with grand theories and narratives brought about by the (Western) Enlightenment. Postmodernist literature is characterized by a narrative that acknowledges and celebrates the fragmentation, multiplicity of voices or “heteroglossia,” and often combines previous art forms and styles in order to distinctly establish the intertextuality of texts where the myth of originality is questioned and everything becomes “traces of the past (writings)” (Hutcheon 3).

In the Philippines, a study by Ruth Jordana-Pison about Martial Law novels³ functioning as “counter-memory”—a term she adopted from French philosopher Michel Foucault—shows how seven novels about Martial Law in 1970s Philippines “deconstruct the concept of truth and its role in history [by transgressing] disciplinary boundaries” (151). These novels, according to Pison, are examples of historiographic metafiction that “celebrate the multiplicity of voices” (153). Instead of presenting another *logos* or center, these novels give an avenue for the representation of the diverse alternative readings of history. Putting these novels in Philippine historical perspective, these novels examined by Pison can be considered as a response to institutionalized Philippine histories such as *Tadhana: The History of the Filipino Nation* authored by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. *Tadhana* presents the history of the Filipino nation as a linear progression of events towards

“development” in order to forward the late dictator’s agenda of extending his presidency during the period of the 1970s-1980s.

The naming of alternative histories as counter-memories, however, only leads to the creation of a dichotomy between what have been presented as the “central,” “primary,” and the “dominant” memories of the nation against what the study suggests to be “peripheral,” derivative,” and “other.” Even though the “multiplicity of voices” is acknowledged, there remains the question of whose voices dominate in this particular discursive practice. Thus, instead of a counter-memory, I contend that even though some works can be considered as alternative narratives to what can be considered as dominant or official history, they can still contribute to the hegemonic narratives of histories that aim to serve dominant class’ interests and thereby form a hierarchy of memories. Alternative narratives of history can still be appropriated to serve hegemonic ends. By looking at how these narratives construct alternative versions of history through the recuperation of peripheralized histories and memories, one may still see that a hierarchy is created where certain voices, and thus memories, are given more privilege over others. Using Miguel Syjuco’s *Ilustrado*, a novel that can be considered to present an alternative history as it is able to recognize, both by *form* and *content*, certain fissures left unacknowledged in nationalist discourses of Philippine historiography, I attempt to show how the novel remains complicit in the hegemonic discourses of nationalist historiography as it privileges certain voices over others in presenting an alternative narrative of history. Before that, I will discuss first the importance of recognizing the subjectivity of both history and fiction as discourses in representing the past.

History as Fiction, Fiction as History

According to philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault, history is a discourse and is related to power relations. He posits that those who possess greater power over others in framing one’s and other’s subjectivities are the ones who determine how others are positioned by and positioned within discourses. He contends how history should not be seen as merely an objective account of the past, but rather, as a discourse that “involves both the

potential for manipulation and also the possibility of evasion of responsibility through silence” (Marshall 153). The nature of history must be re-read to discover how it operates in constructing notions of a nation’s identity and its past (156).

Apart from history, fiction, according to Hayden White, also has a “referential function to represent the past” (25). Historical and literary discourses both use language as their medium of representation and both create realities and re-create already constructed knowledge. Both also refer to realities but in different ways with history presenting the past as an “objective reality” while historical fiction, in particular, presents the past by focusing on certain particularities of individual and group experiences in relation to “historical events.”

Michel de Certeau, on the other hand, claims that both history and realist fiction are similar because “(1) of the conditions of their production, i.e. the use of language and rhetoric, (2) as discourse, they survive because they often displace and silence other discourses considered to be their rivals; and (3) as the historian writes, he is placed at the center of the nation which implicitly has resulted in the elimination of other nations” (Ungar 65). This similarity in the use of narrative structure in history and realist fictions, according to de Certeau, produces the notion of history as similar with realist fiction.

Thus, in trying to access remnants of the past, one can turn not only to historical writing, but also to literature. In societies like the Philippines where nationalist discourses dominate the writing of history, one can turn to literature to create and read counter-narratives and discourses. According to Ruth Pison in her study of Martial Law novels in the Philippines, writers of this literature celebrate the “multiplicity of voices” instead of creating or adhering to another “center.” Their novels can be considered to form a “counter memory” as they present a reading of history that is “against the grain” (18). However, whose voices and memories dominate in certain types of this counter-discourse remains a question to be answered.

Given this theoretical perspective, I will look into Miguel Syjuco’s *Ilustrado*, a historical novel written in the 21st century, to examine whether

it is able to recognize the fissures in nationalist discourses of history and whether it is able to account for the multiplicity of voices in giving its own account of the past. If it is able to account for the multiplicity of voices, a further question will be asked regarding whose voices dominate in its recognition of this multiplicity.

Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado* as an Alternative Narrative of History

Ilustrado by Miguel Syjuco received the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for the Best Novel in English as well as the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2008. It throws light on issues of Filipino identity, history, and politics, covering a century and a half of Philippine history. It presents the story of a young protagonist, Miguel, in search of what he believes to be the *magnum opus* of his mentor, the infamous Filipino author Crispin Salvador. This is the overarching narrative in the novel, which is told in the form of fragments together with clippings of Crispin Salvador's stories, memoirs, and interviews, as well as blog entries from Crispin Salvador's critic, Marcel Avellaneda.

This narrative style characterizes a pastiche where different narrative forms and styles are evoked in order to present a non-linear narrative of Philippine history. Apart from the use of pastiche, *Ilustrado* also throws light into issues of Filipino identity, history, and politics by making use of different points of view in constructing the cultural identity/ies of the Filipino. From a diasporic Filipino writer wanting to write The (Next) Great Filipino Novel (whose first name Crispin is an allusion to one of the characters in what is still deemed as The Great Filipino Novel(s), Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, and his last name Salvador which implies his desire to bring salvation to his country through his writing) to the family of an overseas Filipino worker in the USA whose first paternal figure worked different jobs in order to attain a comfortable life when he and his family return to the Philippines, and to the generalized "masses" or more particularly, the urban poor communities who are all waiting to be redeemed from their sordid conditions by a "messianic figure," different perspectives are used in presenting the current conditions of the Philippines and its people in the era of transnational capitalism. This use of pastiche and a multiplicity of voices

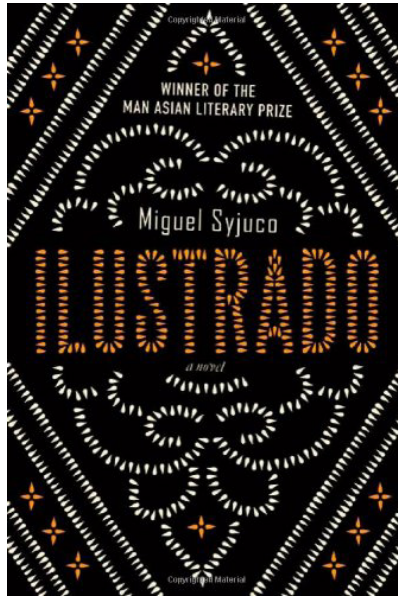


Fig. 1. Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado*, published in 2010. <https://www.amazon.com/Ilustrado-Novel-Miguel-Syjuco/dp/0374174784>.

in the narrative thus makes the novel an example of postmodernist literature. Its self-reflexive discussion of Philippine history, especially of US-Philippine relations, with the narrative problematizing Crispin Salvador's "rewriting" of Philippine history by exposing the abominable secrets of Filipino political families of which he and the narrator are portrayed to be a part of, also makes the novel fall under the category of historiographic metafiction.

As historiographic metafiction, the novel presents an alternative narrative of history by showing that no matter what revolutions the nation will go through, it will continue to search for an identity/ies that will account for its past and present subjectivities. In contrast to nationalist Philippine historiographies that generally present teleological and hegemonic versions of history, the novel focuses on the fragmentation and heterogeneity of Philippine history and society. This can be observed in the stories and biography of Crispin Salvador as well as the journey of the protagonist Miguel in

search for his mentor's greatest work, *The Bridges Ablaze*. As the novel shifts to different points of view by presenting clippings from Crispin Salvador's works, interviews, and biography, the setting of the story also changes from the present time of the narrative in the year 2002 to the time of the revolutions against Spanish and American invaders in the late 19th and early 20th century respectively, the Japanese occupation in the 1940s, and the Martial Law era in the 1970s.

The images used in portraying these scenarios show how the Filipinos in the novel, whatever class they may be, continue to struggle against their social and colonial entrapments. Even though they are regarded as having attained liberation from the subjugation of their colonizers, imperialist invaders, and by their own neocolonial government, they are still struggling for their right to assert their own sovereignty as a nation and as a people. As is shown in the novel, after the revolution against Spain, Filipinos continue to become beings-for-others whose cheap labor is taken advantage of in order to satisfy the incessant demand for capital in the neoliberal economy (Diaz 65). Cristo in Crispin's novel *The Enlightened*, already lives a comfortable life, but after witnessing the revolution against Spain that he wanted to involve himself in had already "succeeded," he agonizes on how he was not able to take part in this revolution even though he himself is one of the first *Ilustrados* or "the enlightened ones" who were able to leave their country to study in Europe. He eventually considers having his children educated in the United States to know the ways of the new colonizers, the Americans, who have only replaced Spain in subduing his people:

"We will become American," Cristo says. "Our children will learn to speak American. When they are ready, we will send them to America to be educated. Just as I was in Europe. All this land will be theirs when they return. They'll return to make a difference" (180).

However, as soon as Cristo engages himself in the war with the American military, he and the people in his command eventually find themselves unable to do anything to suppress and defeat the American troops. They eventually conceded thinking that no matter what they do and how

many lives they sacrifice, the new invaders will still continue to send more military troops to subjugate them. Instead of subverting them, Cristo, as a Western-educated Filipino during the American colonial period, resorted to appropriating the ideologies of the colonizers and started gathering *indios* from neighboring islands to work in his *azucareras* that cater mainly to the demands of American corporations. This shows how only those like Cristo, the landed and educated elite during their time in history, have benefited from the subsequent colonization of the nation. Inequalities have only exacerbated as the privileged minority are able to have real properties and hire workers in exchange for the assertion of the rights of the native peoples in their own lands. During the Japanese occupation, Crispin and his family, specifically his uncle, resorted to siding with the Japanese for they knew that it would be the only way for them to secure their ownership of their lands. Those who do not have the same power as Cristo's and Crispin's families, however, are the ones left with no other option but to resist and struggle or to concede their fates and thus were the ones who suffered the viciousness of the Japanese military. After the Philippines was "saved" by the Americans from the hands of the Japanese and started constituting its own government and economy thought to be independent from any foreign control, the previous colonial entrapments still remain as the "benevolent assimilation" of the Americans continue to ascribe to the Filipinos the identity of "little brown brothers" (Rafael 32) who need support in tending their wounds from the previous revolutions.

Continued association with the United States has been considered in the novel as necessary in the building of the nation. Those who are able to receive education abroad like Crispin Salvador and Miguel, the narrator, are the ones who are lauded by the Filipinos who have remained in their country. They are the ones who seem to have the capacity to determine the discourses of Filipino identity that is necessary for nation building. The Filipino writers Rita Rajah and Furio Almondo in the poetry-reading event that Miguel attended appear to abhor Crispin Salvador for it is his works that determine the representation of the Filipinos in the international community and in the country itself. Not them who write for the Filipinos and the "essence of

being a Filipino” (180). Also, according to these writers, the reasons for the revolution against the administration of Ferdinand Marcos have been easily forgotten by the Filipinos, as what the country has reaped during the time of Marcos’ neocolonial rule is thought to be beneficial in the “fattening of [the country as] a third world pig” from all the “first world dollars” (166). Those who benefitted, however, are the same people from the first and the succeeding generations of *Ilustrados*. The rest of the people would have to live up to a little changing and still the same frame of subjectivities that continue to haunt the Filipino as always in the process of becoming, but never really attaining an identity that will account for “a true Filipino-ness” independent of any colonial significations. In these Filipino revolutions discussed in the novel, the struggles are portrayed not as collectively experienced, but rather, there is a recognition of the postcolonial fissures or fragmentations where only those who have the economic and social means have the power to get themselves involved or absolved in the struggle for Philippine independence from colonial and despotic regimes. The search for a collective identity continues to haunt the succeeding generations of Filipinos in the novel as they continue to struggle with a fragmented history and racialized subjectivities that create further divisions in terms of race and social classes.

These political and social conditions that Filipinos find themselves in affirm new forms of racialized subjectivities that the novel *Ilustrado* is able to bring into light. Apart from the recognition of this fragmentation in terms of content, the novel also emphasizes fragmentation in terms of form by presenting different perspectives or points of view in unveiling the narrative. The novel is told in a form of a frame narrative where there are clippings of Crispin Salvador’s stories, biographies, and interviews embedded in the narrative of Miguel as the narrator of the novel to another omniscient narrator who considers Miguel as the young protagonist of the story.

However, even though the novel makes use of different perspectives or points of view to present a fragmentation or a “multiplicity of voices” in constructing an alternative narrative of Philippine history, the metaphors used in its description of the characters and the revolutions that the country has gone through still remain complicit in asserting the centrality of the

present dominant or “the modern ilustrados” in its representation of the Filipino political and social landscape.

There are many points of view that are used in the novel, giving the impression of a “heteroglossia” or a “multiplicity of voices,” but one can readily perceive how most of the voices that dominate are coming only from one social class or the modern *Ilustrados* of Philippine society. In the novel, the characters that are given the voice to give their own accounts of history are Crispin Salvador, Marcel Avellaneda, and the narrator named Miguel. They all come from relatively the same social background and are all engaged in presenting their own narrative significations of the Philippine society. However, those who do not belong to the same social class as them are alienated from participating in the discourses of history and are ascribed with identities that portray them to be uncritical individuals who cannot participate in nation-building.

Examples of these are Erning Isip, the people who comment on Marcel Avellaneda’s blog entries, and Wigberto Lakandula. Erning Isip is one of the characters in the Filipino jokes translated by Crispin Salvador into English. Jokes, according to Crispin, are the Filipinos’ “true shared history” as they give a “sweetly bitter commentary” to the society (35). Erning Isip, a student from AMA Computer College, is portrayed as a self-effacing young man in Crispin’s jokes in contrast to two other college students from Ateneo and La Salle. One of these “jokes” is about Erning asking for an autograph from a fair-complexioned woman while the other two, one coming from Ateneo and the other one from La Salle, invite her to Polo Club and Dencio’s Bar and Grill respectively (36). Another condescending portrayal of Erning Isip is when he refers to what the novel describes “a skanky girl” in public as his “classmate” while the other two refer to her as “a veritable whore of Babylon” and “a puta” (50). Another joke, meanwhile, is about Erning, working in the United States, painting a Ferrari instead of the porch of a house for he thought the word “porch” can only refer to an automobile brand (88). Examined closely, one may wonder whether the jokes, as Crispin says, are really “a way for us to understand ourselves as Filipinos” (36) or whether they are mainly invectives to those who do not come from the dominant

social class in the society. Erning Isip represents those who are not educated in the ivory towers of the academia, which is, apparently, the majority of the population in the Philippines. Thus, this ascription of an identity for Erning as a laughing stock only because he is not educated in the same way as the two other characters in Crispin's jokes, shows how feelings of social and intellectual superiority by the elite may only lead to the further disenfranchisement of those who belong to the fringes of the society. As people from the lower social classes like Erning are portrayed in the novel as individuals who can be easily taken for imbeciles and are unable to think on their own and for their community, they are thus further alienated from participating in the more relevant discourses in the society and from knowing their real social conditions.

A similar bias can be observed with the people commenting on the blog entries of Crispin Salvador's nemesis, Marcel Avellaneda. The novel attempts to show how only those coming from expensive and exclusivist academic institutions in the Philippines (as indicated by the domains of their e-mail addresses) are able to come up with sensible comments while the rest are portrayed to be frivolous internet users that their comments are not by any means, relevant with the matter discussed in the blog. This portrayal indicates how even though there is already an increased accessibility of meanings and avenues for representation in the 21st century, not coming from and not being educated in the same way as those who belong to the upper social classes of the society, can mean being easily dismissed as a "troll" who cannot contribute anything to "intellectual" discourses.

A third example of this generalizing representation of people from the lower social class is Wigberto Lakandula who is dubbed in the novel as the "hero of the masses." Even though he holds a whole family hostage for killing his lover, he is portrayed in the novel as someone revered by the masses, especially by women, mainly because of his physical stature and of doing whatever means necessary to exact vengeance on the people who killed his paramour. He is sensationalized as a hero in the tabloid articles and by the end of the novel, even though he escaped as a criminal for killing his hostages, people continue to talk about him and report sightings of him

hoping that one day he will show up and run for government office. They believe that he can save the country from the control of those who continue to exploit people similar to him who belong to the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. He does not speak at all throughout the novel but the way he is used to divert people's attention from their real social conditions shows how this identity ascribed to him as a messianic figure is nothing but an assertion that people coming from the same or lower social class as him only concern themselves with matters of triviality. Their credulousness, as portrayed in the novel, attempts to show that because they belong to the lower rungs of the social hierarchy, they cannot contribute to the advancement of the society unlike those who belong to the group of modern *Ilustrados*, or the educated elite in the 21st century Philippines.

Both the media and some government officials in the novel further perpetuate this credulity of the masses who are generally portrayed throughout the narrative as passive consumers of information, with no one questioning why a man who committed crimes against humanity is popular. The veneration of Wigberto Lakandula by the masses only because of his physical appearance attempts to show that since the masses are unable to assess what is right from what is wrong, there is a need for the modern *Ilustrados* to intervene and assert their socio-political dominance over the people. As one looks closely, this can be seen as a way for the dominant class to legitimize their power over the masses by justifying their privileges (i.e. their intellect and wealth) while at the same time denying them to the dominated members of society.

Even though there are also some characters from the upper social class—the students from La Salle, the college friends of Miguel, and Sadie's family—who are condescendingly portrayed in the novel, they are at least given a “voice” to show how their upbringing negates the idea that they can be as injudicious as the masses who they all see as “lesser” than them. They are able to voice out their opinions and share their perspectives about the present Philippine scenario. The chances to speak and be heard then seem to remain exclusive to the members of the ruling class. Even though the novel may appear to recognize the fragmentation and the multiplicity of voices in

the society, only voices coming from the same social class, particularly that of the affluent and educated elites, are given the chance to eventually speak and be heard.

Thus, the notion of a multiplicity of voices is a mere appropriation of the ideology that the dominated class has been fighting for which is to be able to be heard and substantially take part in the transformation of society. As exemplified in the novel, it has always been the moneyed and educated classes whose voices are heard for they are always perceived as the ones who know “better” even though a good number of them have already long excluded themselves from the reality lived by those who belong to the fringes of society.

These biases toward the ruling classes, however, can only be attributed to the ideological limitations that dominant discourses in society have constantly been perpetuating. Even though the narrative form of the novel symbolically presents an alternative account of history that can be considered as something that recognizes fragmentation, as something that undermines linear representations of history and social reality thereby producing a counter or alternative narrative, still it has remained complicit to the hegemonic discourses of institutionalized nationalist histories as it is all about asserting the ideological rhetoric of the center/periphery relationship between the dominant and dominated classes in society.

Even though the novel *Ilustrado* may be considered as a counter-memory by giving an alternative narrative to official and institutionalized histories, able to recognize the fragmentations and fissures in nationalist historiography through its narrative content and technique, the way it privileges certain voices and social memories over others shows how a hierarchy is still being adhered to, a hierarchy where only those at the upper echelons are given the chance to speak and be heard while the rest are reduced to generalized representations that further alienate them from participating in the social and historical discourses in their society.

Notes

1. Studies on local histories have already been done prior to the 1970s such as Isabelo de los Reyes' study on the culture and history in Northern Luzon and in the Visayas and with the Department of Education's initiative in the 1950s to collect local folklore and traditions. However, as pointed out by Resil Mojares in his study on local histories, university-based research on the topic have only peaked in the 1970s as part of the growing interest in intraregional studies in Southeast Asia that looked into Philippine historiography's relation with the rest of the region.
2. The three Southeast Asian countries studied by Lily Rose Tope are Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore.
3. The novels studied by Pison are the *State of War* and *Twice Blessed* by Ninotchka Rosca, *Empire of Memory* by Eric Gamalinda, *The Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café* by Alfred Yuson, *Dogeaters* by Jessica Hagedorn, *Cave and Shadows* by Nick Joaquin, and *Awaiting Trespass* by Linda Ty-Casper.

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Helen Yap

Translation and Self-Exploration in Travel Writing

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Abstract

All travel writing is, in a sense translation. Travelers come to an unknown place and try to “translate” it, i.e. to make it comprehensible, for themselves first, and then for their readers. In this essay, I wish to examine a travel book by one Filipina, Helen T. Yap, where this translation is both literal and metaphorical. In the process, I hope to demonstrate the rich potential of the genre of travel writing as a literary form for Filipino women writers of creative nonfiction.

From Inside the Berlin Wall (2004) chronicles the sojourn of Helen T. Yap, a Filipina marine biologist and professor of the University of the Philippines, to East Germany, at a time when that country was barely known in the Philippines. She has, first, to learn the language so she can work in it as she does her research and studies for her PhD degree. She then uses this foreign language to penetrate the culture, to understand it, and come to terms with it. And then—even as she is completing her research and writing her dissertation in German—she is translating her observations, impressions, and perceptions for her family, who are the first readers of her book. The resulting narrative is both a kind of social history, as well as an exploration of the author and narrator’s own state of mind: what drove her to leave her country, what she needs to

understand about herself—her family, her values, her ideals, her beliefs—so she can take the first steps into her own future.

My interest in the travel narrative by women stems from two sources. First, most of my research has been in the field of literature by Filipino women, in particular, their autobiographical writing. And, second, I have myself produced several volumes of travel literature, and therefore, am very invested in the genre. I am hoping, through this essay, which is the first of what I hope will be a series, to encourage more critics to pay attention to the genre.

Keywords

Helen Yap, *From Inside the Berlin Wall*, travel writing, travel narrative by women, Filipina travel writer

Travel Literature by Women in the Philippines: An Overview

Travel writing has only recently been recognized as a literary genre in the Philippines, although the first travel book by a Filipina was published in 1930—Maria Paz Mendoza’s *Notas de Viaje*. Mendoza was traveling on an educational mission to the US and she regarded her book as a “report to my colleagues and to my country,” an obligation to be fulfilled.¹ This she did with dispatch.

It was not until 1968 that another Filipina published a travel book, *Hanoi Diary*, a little known book by Gemma Cruz-Araneta. This is a pity because, if only for its being the only literary record of a visit by a Filipina writer to Hanoi during the Vietnam War, the work is historically important. Cruz-Araneta and her husband, Tony, were traveling as journalists and as guests of the Hanoi government.² Cruz Publishing issued a new edition in 2012 but it did not set off any ripples either. And, again, I feel that this is cause for regret. Because it is a well-written narrative—not just recording meetings with important government officials and visits to places significant for having been the sites of battles and such—but also offering observations of the daily life and attitudes of ordinary people during what was perhaps the longest war in modern Asian history.

These two books obviously do not belong to the tradition of travel writing by women in the West. Critics of travel writing by European and American women used to focus on the subversive nature of—not just travel writing—but traveling itself by women. Both travel and travel writing were considered masculine activities, and discussions of the travel literature produced by women often focused on the courage and intrepidity that it took to undertake their projects, and whether or not the works in question were complicit with the discourse of colonialism, of “othering” and “exoticizing.”³

Mendoza-Guazon and Cruz-Araneta travelled as professionals, on official business; and their writings, while not devoid of personal impressions, seem more akin to the tradition of male travel writing in the West, as described by Carl Thompson: “In most of its forms, travel writing’s prin-

cial business has been to bring news of the wider world, and to disseminate information about unfamiliar peoples and places . . . ” (62).

Kerima Polotan belongs to the generation between Mendoza-Guazon’s and Cruz-Araneta’s. She, too, was a practicing journalist, though she is now better remembered as a writer of fiction. Her travel writings are included in two collections of magazine articles produced during a long writing career: *Author’s Choice* (1971 and 1998), and *Adventures in a Forgotten Country* (1977 and 1999).⁴

The travel writing of Sylvia Mayuga, who belongs to Cruz-Araneta’s generation of writers (and, incidentally, my own) are included in three books—*Spy in My Own Country* (1981), *Earth, Fire, Air* (1992), and *Between the Centuries* (2004)—which, however, also include other nonfiction pieces which are not travel writing. The essays in the first book are undated, but a note at the beginning of the book says that they had been published “over the past 12 years in several national magazines.”⁵

The first of my own travel books, *Sojourns*, published in 1984, was a collection of essays on countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East where my husband was posted by UNICEF. The rest were published from 1991-2009.⁶ I decided to call my *Looking for the Philippines* (2009) and *Travels with Tania* (2009), “travel memoirs” (a term I initially thought I was coining, until I realized it was already in use) to describe what I had earlier referred to as a “mongrel form.” The narratives in both books were not so much about discovery as about recovery—most were about places I had visited and revisited many times. I continue to do travel writing today. And recently, I’ve gotten into the habit of publishing them first as Facebook Notes, and then compiling them into books, along with other essays and personal narratives—*Stella and Other Friendly Ghosts* (UST, 2012) and *The Thing with Feathers: My Book of Memories* (UST 2017). I mention these works here in the context of the development of the genre of traveling as it is practiced by Filipina writers.

The term “travel memoir” seems to fit both *A Journey of Scars* by Criselda Yabes (UP, 1994) and *From Inside the Berlin Wall* by Helen T. Yap (UP 2004).

Yabes' book is really a memoir, but structured like a travel notebook or travel journal, consisting of a series of short entries which chronicle a brief period spent in Europe. The official reasons for her trips have to do with graduate courses and her work as a foreign war correspondent. The real reason is the need to get away from a bad relationship. Both the trip, and the writing about the trip, seem prompted by this need to "get over" something. So the book is not so much an account of places visited by the author as it is a chronicle of her own journey back "home," i.e. to both her homeland and to herself.

Helen Yap's book, like Yabes', records a trip that has both an official reason and a personal reason. I shall not go into details here since the principal concern of this essay will be her book.

Finally, there is *Twisted Travels* by Jessica Zafra (Anvil, 2007). This is a collection of essays about trips undertaken by the author primarily as part of her job(s) as a media person. Its most distinctive quality is the author's voice, her persona—the sharp, sophisticated, witty, irreverent, in-your-face stance which made Zafra not just a columnist but a TV personality, a celebrity.⁷

These authors are not the only Filipino women writers doing travel writing. There are others whose essays and narratives have been published in newspapers and magazines. Time constraints have dictated that I focus only on those who have either published travel books or collected a good number of their travel writing into their personal nonfiction books.

It seems to me that the "tradition" of travel writing by women in this country is being created by professional writers, mainly journalists and academics, who travel not on leisurely tours or in search of adventure but as part of their work. This accounts for many of the characteristics of their texts. Though the authors might sometimes travel as tourists, alone or in the company of husband or friends, they see with the eyes of a reporter and critic, relying on facts as well as impressions, producing analysis and reflection as much as reverie.⁸

Regrettably, travel literature in general has received very little critical attention in this country.

I selected this book from among the other travel books written by Filipinas, which I mentioned above, for three reasons. First, its subject is an unusual experience. To a generation born after “perestroika” and “glasnost” and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Helen Yap’s experience may not seem particularly extraordinary. But her sojourn took place in 1984-1987, a couple of years before the Berlin Wall came down. It was actually a groundbreaking book.

Second, I find the narrator to be a fascinating person, a distinguished scientist whose concerns go beyond science, to cover philosophy, history, literature. Hers is an interesting mind grappling honestly and fearlessly with the Large Questions. And, third, the book is a remarkably engaging work, a fine example of the genre now referred to as “creative nonfiction,” of which travel writing is a sub-genre.

A Backward Glance: Criticism of Travel Writing by Women Writers in the West

Carl Thompson tells us that “[f]or much of the twentieth century . . . the genre (of travel literature) was usually dismissed by literary critics and cultural commentators as a minor, somewhat middle-brow form” (3). And this, despite the fact that many distinguished writers of fiction had produced excellent travel books. A few examples will suffice: Aldous Huxley, Somerset Maugham, Edith Wharton, Mary McCarthy, D.H. Lawrence, Lawrence Durrell, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Graham Greene, and M.F.K. Fisher.

With the appearance of a new generation of travel writers—like Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin, Peter Matthiessen, Ian Frazier, Bill Bryson, John McPhee, Edward Hoagland, Annie Dillard, and so forth—who not only made the best seller lists but received favorable reviews from such prestigious publications as *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, and the *London Review of Books*, this has changed. Critics now regard travel writing as a genre “especially reflective of and responsive to the modern condition” (Thompson 2). Even academe now considers it relevant to several disci-

plines like anthropology, sociology, gender studies, postcolonial studies, and of course, literature.

The question that interests me, as a travel writer myself and a teacher of travel writing is an obvious one: has travel literature by women aroused the same critical attention?

It is now an accepted fact that European women began traveling pretty much at the same time that European men did. They ventured forth beside their fathers, husbands, brothers (who were traveling as diplomats, officers in the armed forces, traders, missionaries, and so forth), and even by themselves, as nurses, for instance, and on religious pilgrimages. That they did not record these sojourns is due perhaps to the lower levels of literacy among women. Only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did women travelers become *women travel writers*; and even then, their writings were generally only circulated among family, as was deemed appropriate.

But by the mid-nineteenth century, more women were traveling either because they had the leisure and the means to do so or because they had decided to allow an adventurous nature its due. And their accounts of their travels were finally being printed (Thompson 171).

Criticism of this writing came much later. And when it did, it was, naturally, women—feminist critics—who first began to pay attention to it and to embark on the task of recovering and re-evaluating these books. To us modern readers, it now seems so odd that, for a long time, it was taken for granted that travel writing was masculine turf when, as Thompson observed, “women have, in fact, been prolific producers of travelogues, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (3).⁹

First wave feminists were inclined to read women travel writers as proto-feminists, and to regard their project as defiance of the patriarchy. More recent scholarship has suggested, however, that this might be too simplistic a view. Not all women travel writers were feminists, to begin with. And most of those who were, seemed not to have wished to rock the boat, that is, more than it had already been rocked by the very acts of traveling and writing about it. They sought, rather, to negotiate the gender norms, rather than confront them openly (Thompson 181).

In the aftermath of “second-wave” feminism of the 1970s, more critics have investigated other contributions to the genre by women.¹⁰

In her review of the book *Gender, Genre and Identity in Women’s Travel Writing* edited by Kristi Siegel, Helen M. Buss praises Sukanya Banerjee for her “excellent close reading by which relevant theory is allowed to rise out of the careful examination of the primary texts (she analyzed the letters of Lady Mary Montagu), rather than by using previously set theories which seem to impose themselves from our own position of post-colonial hindsight.” She also urges critics to pay “more attention to *the art of the travel writer*, to read travel writing by women as works of art, like novels, poems and plays, crafted by more or less sophisticated hands as much as they are considered mere tableaux of gendered subjectivity” (445-447).

Earlier than this, Clare Brant, in her introduction to the Everyman’s Library edition to the Montagu letters, wrote: “Our indifference to the literariness of letters has been reinforced by twentieth-century tendencies to take them either as useful sources of social history or as transparent biographical records.” She does not deny that letters do project something of their writers’ personalities as well as of their times. But she reminds readers that “writing a letter is less a matter of copying reality than of constructing it.” Finally, she points out that “by ignoring the literary form in which Lady Mary wrote, we may still discover her views but we cut ourselves off from understanding her better as a writer” (x).

Traveling with Helen Yap inside the Berlin Wall

For me, the position taken by Clare Brant and Helen Buss represent a significant development. And, taking up my cue from them, I hope in this essay to offer a possible framework for the literary analysis of travel literature, in particular travel literature by women.

To my knowledge, there are no books which articulate the poetics of travel literature in the Philippines. In formulating my framework—and in the absence of related literature by Filipinos—I have done extensive reading of both the travel literature and the criticism of travel literature in the West. I quote from some of my sources in this essay by way of illustrating what

they consider to be “good” travel writing. It is not my intention to prescribe their theories to Filipina travel writers. What I propose to do is to describe Helen Yap’s practices in her book and determine how effective they have been in allowing her to achieve the goals she has set for herself. And, were I to find that they have, indeed, been effective, to suggest hers as one possible direction that travel writing by Filipino women writers of travel literature might wish to explore. In short, I hope this essay will be taken as a tentative step in the direction of formulating a poetics for travel writing by Filipino.

I plan to utilize my suggested framework in the analysis of Helen Yap’s *Inside the Berlin Wall*. Further, I propose that—while it is true that the use of literary strategies leads to travel writing which contains more than useful information and amusing anecdotes, leads, indeed, to narratives as compelling as the best fiction—it can, and sometimes it does, do even more. I have mentioned that some critics have already accepted travel writing as a form of social history. I think that—since it is a type of memoir—it might also serve as a way of exploring social, political, philosophical, or moral issues which are of interest to the traveling writer. It might also be used for self-exploration, and, again like other types of memoir, for self-healing.

A good point with which to start is the question: what, precisely, does “the art of the travel writer” consist of? The answer I propose takes the form of a series of questions:

1. Who is the writer and why is she travelling?
2. Why did she decide to write about her travels?
3. Is there an awareness on her part of a tradition of travel writing that she might belong to? Does she appear to be writing in accordance with that tradition or writing against it?
4. What choices has she made—in regard to narrative strategies—and have these worked effectively toward what seem to be her goals/objectives, or have those strategies somehow impeded or compromised those goals?
5. Even as she narrates her experience as a foreigner (in short, the stranger-in-a-strange-land theme), is she embarked on another journey, an inner journey other than the ostensible physical move-

ment in space, i.e. from one place to another. Is there an inner purpose, a question that she might be grappling with? How has she used the genre of travel writing to fulfill this quest?

6. Does the account of her travels offer any insights or discoveries that might be of consequence or significance to others besides herself?

The first three questions are fairly simple and will be discussed only briefly. The fourth is more complex, and will require a longer discussion. This question will only be partially answered at this point. Question numbers 4-6 will be answered in the course of my discussion of what I believe are the book's five narrative strands.

First, who is the author and why is she traveling?

Yap answers both these questions in her Preface. She is an academic, teaching in what was the Marine Sciences Center of the University of the Philippines Diliman, traveling to the German Democratic Republic to do her doctorate studies there. Her scholarship had been arranged by her father, through his connections with the family of Jesus Lava, a leader of the old Communist Party of the Philippines, and Lava's connections with the GDR government.¹¹ Yap was 27 years old when she left Manila, and 30 when she returned.

Second, why did she decide to write about her travels?

Her motive for writing about her experience, she claims, was the thought that some Filipinos might take an interest in what it is like to live and pursue higher studies in a country extremely different from the ones Filipinos usually went to. She also wished to see for herself what life was like in a Socialist country, and to write about it in her country, which was still in the grip of Cold War propaganda: "Global tensions continue to exist, despite the so-called collapse of the Berlin Wall and the 'demise of communism . . . These tensions are merely played out on a different plane. I continue to believe in socialism, and that socialism lives: the kind that Albert Einstein believed in" (viii).

Her interest in the subject, as the book makes abundantly clear, is the result of her background: her family, her father in particular, considered

themselves socialists. However, Yap makes it a point to remind the reader of her age when the book was written, suggesting that her views may have altered somewhat by the time of her book's publication.

Third, does there seem to be an awareness on her part of a tradition of travel writing that she might belong to? Does she appear to be writing in keeping with that tradition or writing against it?

There is no existing "tradition of travel writing" in the Philippines, either by men or by women. The works mentioned in the previous section of this paper are little known even to Filipino writers; they are not part of the standard academic syllabi. I am not aware that they were even reviewed in the cultural pages of newspapers or magazines. So it is not likely that Helen Yap saw herself as writing either for or against a tradition.

What one learns from her letters themselves is that Yap seems to have had plans, from the start, to write about her sojourn to the GDR:

It's a good idea after all when a member of the family is away—the everyday life on both sides gets to be documented. Then later we could go back to all this correspondence and see how things were. And our insights as well, and how things evolved. When we try to write something about contemporary Philippine history (and perhaps relations with the GDR), we could use this material too! (47)

She does not make clear whether she intended her future book to take this form, i.e. letters to her family and diary entries; or whether these were written as "" from which she would then shape the book. But from the above passage, it would seem that the original plan was simply to correspond with her family. Later, "we" could return to it, and out of the "insights" produced, perhaps write that future book.

Fourth, what choices has the author made—in regard to narrative strategies—and have these worked effectively toward what seemed to be her goals, or have they somehow impeded or compromised those goals?

This question is concerned with the writer's literary style, i.e. the technical narrative strategies employed in her narrative. The first strategy that will strike the reader is, of course, its structure. The novel is epistolary in structure, i.e. the narrative unfolds through a series of letters addressed

by the author to her parents and siblings (mostly as a group, sometimes individually).

There is a long tradition of epistolary novels by women in the West, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1918) to Bel Kaufman's *Up the Down Staircase* (1965), Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1981) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986). In Philippine literature, the book that comes immediately to mind is the nineteenth century *Urbana at Feliza*, a Tagalog novel by the secular priest, Modesto de Castro.¹²

Where writing in English is concerned, I can think of two novels which are written in either the epistolary or diary modes. My novel *Recuerdo* (1996) is epistolary but using the e-mail format and Cyan Abad-Jugo's *Salingkit: A 1986 Diary* (2012) which consists of diary entries.

Is there a similar tradition where nonfiction prose—specifically, travel writing—is concerned? Carl Thompson has observed that in the West, women's travel books often “took the form of writing intended for private rather than public consumption, such as letters and diaries.” These, he adds, were circulated only among family and friends, and printed only in the nineteenth century (170-171). Perhaps the most famous of these early women travel writers is the Lady Mary Montagu whose letters, written after her return from Turkey where her husband had served as the British Ambassador, published privately in 1763.¹³

Brant has described the “distinct literary advantages” for the choice of the epistolary form for her travel writing by Lady Mary Montagu:

Its sequential nature provides a rhythm of anticipation and immediacy; its personalized address creates an illusion of privileged access for readers other than the addressee; its flexibility allows the episodic nature of travelling to be matched to an appropriately punctuated form... (and) Negotiations of otherness inherent in correspondence are readily converted to explorations of alien cultures (xvii).

An even older tradition of autobiographical narratives which includes travel writing is a body of work which, for lack of a more suitable label, literary historians and critics named “diaries” produced by the court ladies of the 10th and 11th centuries in Japan. The best known are: *The Gossamer Years*:

The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian Japan by a woman known only as “the mother of Michitsuna,” *Murasaki Shikibu: her Diary and Poetic Memoirs*, *As I Crossed the Bridge of Dreams: Reflections of a Woman in 11th Century Japan* by the Lady Sarashina, and *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shonagon.

Helen Yap’s book consists mainly of letters. But inserted among the letters are short diary entries. These are in italics. That she intended these to be part of a diary is clear in one of her letters where she writes that she had resumed the “bad habit of keeping a diary. Not so much recording daily events, since my letters sort of detail these already, as writing down thoughts, impressions and other ideas that might come to me.” She adds, with her tongue in her cheek that this is “just to refresh my English,” since already she is sometimes dreaming in German, trying “to reconstruct grammatically correct sentences in my sleep” (47).

In trying to describe the kind of narrative that emerges from this collection of letters and diary entries, the term that springs to my mind when is the “braided essay.” The term was coined by Brenda Miller (2001, 14-24). As the term suggests, the author of such a text takes several strands—which represent several narrative lines or issues, or themes—which intersect at various points throughout the book. She is, actually, “braiding” them together. The result is an essay consisting of intertwined strands. I would call Yap’s book a “braided narrative.”

I am certain there is no lack of books by women in the West that combine letters and diaries. One such title that comes to my mind is *A Very Private Eye: an Autobiography in Diaries and Letters* by the English novelist Barbara Pym published in 1985.

But, in the Philippines, Yap’s book seems to be the only example of travel writing consisting entirely of either letters or diary entries or a combination of both.¹⁴

I have identified five major strands seamlessly interwoven into the “braided narrative” by Yap. First, there is the effort to adjust to a new place, and to know and understand its people and their culture. Second, there is her abiding love for her family, in particular, for her father. Third, there is the pursuit of her degree and the determination to be accepted as an equal by

international scientists. Fourth, there are the author/narrator's philosophical and political reflections. And, fifth, there is the need to heal or recover from something that has gone wrong in her life, and find a new purpose or meaning.

Fifth, even as she narrates her experience as a foreigner, is she embarked on another journey, an inner journey other than the ostensible physical movement in space, i.e. from one place to another.

Aside from structure, I think that narrative voice is another striking strategy. Perhaps the single most important quality of travel literature—and other autobiographical forms like the memoir and the journal or diary—is narrative voice. One expects the narrator's voice to be clear and strong, and his/her personality to be not merely interesting but engaging. This is because what actually happens in this kind of writing is that the reader is invited to join the narrator in a journey, an adventure, a quest. No one is likely to willingly come along unless the guide or host is at least pleasant, if not downright charming. Related to voice, is of course the tone or tones adopted by the narrator. The modern essay, as invented by Michel de Montaigne (and travel writing is as much in the essay mode as in the narrative mode—in fact, the distinction may be meaningless), has mostly been biased toward the humorous, the ironic, the self-deprecating. Of course there are many other tones that will work as well. We have ample proof of this in numerous essay collections and anthologies.

The voice of Yap's letter writer/diarist is strong and clear from the very beginning. She comes across as, not just intelligent, but interesting, initially a bit lost, lonely, and helpless, but as soon as she gets her bearings, a different sort of person emerges, as I hope to show. Her tone varies depending on who she is writing to, on her moods, on the season. And she uses an altogether different tone for the diary entries. And, most important of all, she is always self-aware, always self-reflexive.

Another imperative, arising from the nature of the genre of travel literature is the faithful and evocative rendering of place. This is done in any number of ways: through straight description, through captured conversation, through anecdotes, through embedded press clippings, and so forth.

Behind all these techniques one finds a sharp eye and ear for nuances of sight and sound, a feel for atmosphere or ambiance, a keen observation of people's habits and mores, and a sensitivity to what the great travel writer Lawrence Durrell referred to as "the spirit of place" (162). Yap's narrator brings time and place to life, not in lumps of clunky descriptive passages, but as a seamless part of her narrative. The natural curiosity that brought her to this unlikely place stands her in good stead as she attempts to recreate the different places where she lives and works for her family.

The reader—not just of travel writing, but of all types of narrative, both nonfiction, and fiction—looks forward to events or episodes presented in a manner which will involve, and even absorb, him/her. If action is dull, or banal or stereotypical, it will fall flat on its face. Taken together, Yap's letters and diary entries are arranged chronologically. This is effective, because taken together, they form a natural narrative arc, from arrival to departure. This natural arc is sustained by the earning of a PhD theme, and the inner journey theme. The narrative is enlivened by numerous little anecdotes; the narrator's large variety of interests (not just in new people and unfamiliar places, but in newspaper stories, radio broadcasts, political discussions, food, fashions, concerts, opera; and her sense of humor.

And then, there is, of course the matter of language, by which is meant, not simply the selection and arrangement of words, the use of straightforward speech or the reliance on metaphors; but other things as well. I am referring to, for instance, the choice of the concrete over the abstract; of clarity over ambiguity; attention to rhythm or cadence, timing, pace; a preference for subtlety over melodrama, or vice versa; for simplicity over complexity, or vice versa; the juxtaposition of scene and summary, of the comic with the tragic; of the routine with the melodramatic. One could go on and on, for style grows out of many elements, and all the others I have been discussing here—the creation of a persona with a distinct voice, tone, evocation of time and place, dialogue and action—are all part of it.

Yap's manner is mainly direct and straightforward. She is a scientist, interested in facts, in data, in getting things right. But, confronted with a people who are even more like *that* than she is, she begins to realize that

she begins to surprise herself. She is Asian, not European—she stresses this several times. Beyond the material is something else: there is spirit. And, she is not only a scientist. She is a poet and a philosopher. Her language mirrors this, in its inflections, its rhythms, its lucidity. Discoveries are followed by reflections.

At this point, I must add that technique is not all. A travel narrative is more than just technique. I believe that, even more important than technique is attitude, a particular frame of mind.

And sixth, does the account of her travels offer any insights or discoveries that might be of consequence or significance to others besides herself?

“The great thing is to try and travel with the eyes of the spirit wide open, and not too much factual information,” wrote Lawrence Durrell. He continues, “to tune in, without reverence, idly—but with real inward attention” (162). This is achievable, not by breezing through a place (i.e. traveling on the run), but by spending some time in it, ideally living in it for a while, as Durrell did in all the places about which he wrote in his famous travel books.

He is referring to what all good literature is about: insight. What is most important about what an author shares, is, finally, not just the experience, but his/her insight into that experience. I hope that, in the analysis that follows, I will be able to show, that this is precisely what the author has been doing: come a bit closer to understanding the place has been her home for almost three years, and to understanding herself, what brought her to this country so far away from her own home, and how she can use what she has learned to help others when she returns home.

Narrative Strands

First Strand: Adjusting to the New Environment and Finding Her Place in It

The short “en route” chapter with which the book opens, covers a stop-over in Singapore, and reveals a bit of Yap’s background. She is traveling with another young Filipina, Mahal Magallona, and neither of them had packed their own suitcases. (Mahal’s was packed by her mother and sister;

and Helen Yap's, by her Tita Let!) This dependence on adult relatives by many single Filipino women of a certain class, even after they have left school and are living professional lives, is something many Filipina readers will recognize, though we may be reluctant to admit it. It may explain why Yap alludes several times in her letters to her "crying," even as she disclaims its being caused by homesickness. I would suspect that the author decided to open the tale of her adventures with this little detail because it would strike the right humorous tone.

From the very beginning the letters also reveal the warm, frank, affectionate relationship which exists among the members of the Yap family. For instance, the narrator seems eager to assure them that she is well and there is no reason for anxiety. Even as she writes of her discomfort and loneliness, it is with a light touch. Never does she wallow in self-pity. Her narrative is disarmingly candid, consistently humorous, and livened by a quick curiosity about everything she encounters. In spite of the discovery that she has arrived a full six months too early, and has to be enrolled initially in an intensive language course in Karl-Mar Stadt, 220 kilometers south of Berlin, she is determinedly cheerful and optimistic.

Her first living quarters are in a students' dorm, which has common bathrooms, with no doors on the shower rooms, no hot water in the pipes, and "toilet paper that is not like ours," and what she describes as "king-sized" sanitary napkins. Yap reports this to her family, without sounding like she's carping. She explains to her family that there was no way the GDR in Manila could have known of these arrangements for the language course, since they were finalized only recently. And she chooses to focus on the kindness and helpfulness of the officers of the Students' League, who have been put in charge of her, on the shops which are "no different from department stores anywhere I've visited, like Australia and Singapore," on the clean and orderly streets, and on her own pride and excitement at being able to wash her own clothes. It does not seem to bother her that no one in the place seems to have any idea where she is, and who made the decision to send her there. "It seems they are still in the dark about me, aside from the explicit instructions from

Berlin.” Someone actually asked her, “if the Party has anything to do with my being here” (15).

To keep homesickness at bay (homesickness which is so bad it gives her an upset stomach) and preventing herself from using her return ticket immediately, she tells her family about the small circle of interesting people whom she has met. Her account of her encounter with a Syrian student is particularly amusing. She meets him while she is washing her clothes in the kitchen, and he invites her to dinner with friends—all also PhD students—in the apartment they share. The next day, he asks her “very carefully and matter-of-factly if we could live together” (18). But quickly, Yap adds that they (her family) are not to worry about her, since he is “otherwise very civilized;” and she dismisses it as something which “a girl traveling alone is likely to encounter now and again” (19).

I am reminded here of Mary Morris’ assertion that the early women travelers from the West “move[d] through the world differently than men. The constraints and perils, the perceptions and complex emotions women journey with are different from those of men. The fear of rape, for example, whether crossing the Sahara or . . . crossing the street at night, most dramatically affects the ways women move throughout the world” (viii).

M.F.K. Fisher, in her autobiographical *The Gastronomical Me*, has written about what it was like for a woman traveling alone in Western Europe even in the late 1930s:

I saw clearly for the first time that a woman traveling alone and behaving herself on a ship is an object of curiosity, among the passengers and even more so among the cynical and weary officers. I developed a pattern of behavior which I still follow, on ships and trains and in hotel everywhere, and which impresses and undoubtedly irritates some people who see me, but always succeeds in keeping me aloof from skullduggery.

Yap does not seem to take the little episode with the Syrian graduate student all that seriously, though. She simply recognizes that there are things women who are traveling alone need to be prepared for—passes, propositions—from both graduate school colleagues and near-strangers. And a bit later, she is proven correct. The invitation to visit their room “when she is

lonely” seems like a *modus operandi*, with Indian graduate students as well as Syrian graduate students. However, I note that she does not experience the same harassment from European men.

Fortunately, she also gets to know a different type of graduate student. Soon enough, Yap becomes part of a “small circle” which includes two German girls, one an 18-year-old teacher of math and physics who is quite “stern” and outspoken with other boarders but treats Helen as if the latter were her age, or younger, invites her to tea with her friends, tries to “look after me” One might speculate that this happens because of Helen’s being so slim and slight, and therefore, by comparison, so youthful in appearance.

Both the German girls are single mothers and have their babies with them. Yap describes them as “incredible—they cook, clean, wash, look after babies, and go to school, all by themselves.” One assumes she means—with no help from nannies, yet more proof about the narrator’s social or economic? class. On the other hand, she notes, there is “the crèche, and absolutely free medical services” (20). Then there is Yap’s roommate, a plumber’s daughter, also 18 years old, “a very nice girl” who offers her food, kisses her good night, and immediately invites her to visit her family’s home and go traveling with her.

A bit later, she becomes friends with some Vietnamese, more advanced students, with whom she finds she has greater rapport. They are curious about her, and she, for her part, asks them about the Vietnam War. She is a little surprised at their readiness to admit that they received help “even from the capitalist countries; and marvels at their resilience, at how “now they laugh and talk like little children” (38). This encounter is one of those touching moments in Yap’s narrative, her discovery that she enjoys a greater “rapport” with fellow Asians.

Yap is informed that there are also Syrian and Mongolian students in the GDR, at the expense of their own government, while the Vietnamese are funded by the GDR. And she learns, further, that there is a huge workforce of 40,000 Vietnamese in the country, manpower required for the country’s industrial development. Might this indicate an appreciation for a people as

disciplined as the Germans? Or perhaps a desire to help a political ally? It is details like this that function to make her narrative partly social history.

As she becomes more integrated into this small community, Yap is aware that they see her as a kind of curiosity. But she senses no condescension or rudeness in it. Not once does she mention being treated patronizingly or with prejudice, and through her friendship with them, she is able to observe the life of ordinary Germans more closely. Through them, she also gets exposed to Germany's rich cultural life, from opera to students' jazz clubs.

Second Strand: Her abiding love for her family, in particular, for her father

This strand in Helen Yap's letters is very closely interwoven with the first strand, the adjustment to her new environment. In fact, it underlies all of the narrative strands. Her letters are addressed sometimes to the entire family, and sometimes to particular members. Her tone changes depending on the letter's recipient. These documents provide a vivid picture of differences in character of the persons addressed as well as Yap's ability to nuance each message.

In her letters addressed to both her parents, she frequently reports on her health, e.g. how many pounds she has gained since arriving in Germany, week by week, to bring her weight up to 104 pounds, which gives one an accurate idea of how little she weighed when she embarked on her journey, and why there was the need to keep constantly reassuring her parents on her health.

She also informs them about the distances she walks to get to places, how she cleans her own room regularly and actually enjoys it. Nor is she daunted, despite her class background, about taking her turn with the other boarders in cleaning the toilet and other common facilities. She admonishes her family "not to get horrified: since the toilets are "so clean already, all they need is a token cleaning."

In reply to their questions about her delayed flight out of Manila, Yap reveals—and again, this strikes me as a curious reaction in a professional woman of her age—that she actually panicked (my word, not hers) and tried to find a phone, or to even get out of the building and ask her father to take

her home. This was also the way she felt when her flight out of Singapore was delayed. But “after talking with Apa, I felt much better and told myself to stop being irrational” (24). This, and many other passages in the letters reveal more about her father’s pre-eminent role in her life.

A later diary passage recounts the hurried farewells with her family in the chaos of the Manila airport, which includes this telling detail: “The parting with Apa was hard, but necessary. I think it was the first time I gave Ama a good hug” (44), a signal about the marked difference between her relationship with her father and the one with her mother.

To her father, Emmanuel Quiason Yap, she addresses a short note in which she refers to the matter of mail being opened in the GDR, and suggests that he not use envelopes marked “official mail” because they take longer to get to her, suggesting that they are intercepted.

And she announces the speed with which she has picked up German (already she is reading literature on marine science in the GDR in books obtained from the library), and that this has so impressed her teachers that they have decided that she need not take the 5-week language course, and can just do self-study and take a test afterward. So, she is to be sent, not to Greifswald but to the William-Peck University at Rostock, “the leader in the field,” and the place where the Institute of Marine Science of the GDR Academy is located. She is now anticipating living in the provincial capital city, which will make her life much more satisfactory in many ways (25). This is the first instance that one glimpses the third narrative strand: her professional progress.

Other letters to her father are more personal. Some speak of her admiration for him, a feeling she seems to have no trouble articulating. It is an emotion bordering on hero-worship, and it is a recurring motif in the book. She writes to him that she cannot be just a scientist or a poet: “Through you and your experiences I have derived an understanding of what is evil in the world, and what one really has to live his life for” (134). In one of her later letters, she reveals to him her ambitious dream for herself. She plans to “venture more and more into philosophy, with science as a tool, and poetry as a language” (134).

Another time she writes that many times she wishes she could sit down with him and ask him the answers to many of her questions, “[s]uch as when a matter of a political nature comes up, or those concerning human relationships. When a particularly tricky situation comes up, I think hard: ‘What would Apa do and say in this situation?’” (85)

Perhaps in response to some comment or question of his, she writes: “As to the opposite sex here, as far as I’m concerned, I am first and foremost a scientist. Then a writer, artist, historian . . . *and* then a woman. But of course I don’t plan to become an old maid!” This letter was written on January 10, 1985, the eve of her 27th birthday.

“Because of what you’ve stood and continue to stand for, our family had to develop precariously close to the workings of evil in this world. The systematic brutalization of the human spirit, greed, selfishness, cruelty. And you, my wonderful father, have shielded us from all of that. And we have prevailed” (134).

This is a rare tribute for a daughter to pay her father. Yap does not elaborate about “the workings of evil in the world,” nor does she go into the specifics about “brutalization,” “greed,” and so forth.¹⁵

With her mother, Erlinda Timbol-Yap, she is more reticent. In fact, there are just two letters in the book addressed only to her. One is dated March 17, 1985. It is mostly “a bit of girl talk”—about Ljubka’s admiration for her (Erlinda’s) good looks, about her fashion sense, her mania for cleanliness, the home she shares with her own widowed mother, her brother and her grandmother, as well as about her other new friends in Rostock.

Letters addressed individually to her siblings reveal a little of the character of each one, and the nature of her relationship with them. With Jop, the oldest of her brothers, she shares the political commentary she has obtained from the newspapers and the radio; she informs him of the lectures she has attended, relying on the German she has already picked up while just having barely started language training; she provides information about the exchange rate, the prices of cars, calculators, the existence of a doctorate in Computer Science for which a demand increased with the local manu-

facturing of component parts. Then she teases him with, “Surprisingly, mein Bruder, German girls here are slender and pretty. I think they have finer features than Americans (except that they don’t shave you-know-where. They also wear perfume and jewelry” (21). The comment suggests that her brother had a different idea of German girls. On her roommate’s abundant cosmetics, Yap says, “Compared to her, *I’m* the Spartan revolutionary.” Commenting on the girls she sees walking down the streets, she says, “Compared to them, I look like a tramp” (21).

She also discusses philosophy and politics with him, Ayn Rand and capitalism, the great religions. She owns up to not having read Hegel yet, and not enough of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, but feels that it “just may be that socialism is the best way, at least with the particular psychological stage of development the human race is presently in” (64). But there is no lack of caveats.

To her other brother Dave, she writes about the changing of the seasons, about birds and bird-watching, about news broadcasts over different radio stations. She asks after his caterpillars and his moths, and his lessons in the Japanese language (114).

Her letters to her younger sister Leah are full of gossip and chatter about places she saw during her trip to Berlin; her plans for her trip to Czechoslovakia; household chores she now knows how to do; and advise for Leah to learn them now. She passes on more gossip about her experiences with male students—at once amusing and annoying—an Egyptian and a Jordanian. After one such episode, the Jordanian asked her if they could still be friends. Helen says drily, “I agreed, but I think I lost my appetite for Arab food” (66). And there is one letter, which is of particular interest because it reveals another picture of the GDR—what it is like for older people. An old lady had asked her help with her grocery bag and complained to her about how frightful most people were. Yap assumed she meant they were rude and inconsiderate to her. Taking the grocery bag into the lady’s “drab, lonely apartment” showed her how old people lived (140).

With her youngest sister, April or Pili, Helen’s voice as “*Ate*” comes to the fore. It is April’s letter that makes her laugh the most, she tells the

family *bunso*. She recounts what she has learned about the life of the “young people” in the country—the discos, the obsession with being thin, the ease with which they are able to travel (in the Socialist countries at any rate), their amazement that in the Philippines people have to pay for everything, including vacations and dental treatments. She urges her sister to try and do well in her studies (“When one knows and understands as many things as he can, one can appreciate and enjoy the WORLD better. Which I am finding out now!”) She tells April that she is glad to learn of her interest in biology: “As a biologist one gets a deeper understanding of the laws that govern all life. And with this, an understanding of how the whole universe functions and develops. Then one can venture into the questions of human consciousness or of how societies evolve and make history” (133). In another letter she tells April that if the latter ever asks her parents questions to which they answer “stork” or “cabbage,” she is to come to her (Helen) and *she* will supply the right answer.

And then there is this passage in which she describes herself, perhaps more clearly than any other passage in the book that she was “greedy for knowledge and understanding” and that she was “trying to read as much as I can” (127). Finally, she reassures Pili solemnly, but probably with a smile, that “yes, I do believe we’ll be sisters for as long as we live.”

One of her letters addressed to the whole family is about how one time when her class is asked by the teacher what they expect out of life. Her classmates replied with jokes—one says “all material wealth”; another says, “a good wife”; Yap, however, answers seriously, “the capacity to help my fellowmen” (52). One of her Vietnamese friends tells her that this “is a very good thought.” Yap replies that she and her siblings were always told by their father that “your life is for your people,” and the Vietnamese says that this was also what they were reminded about in Vietnam” (52). This was another reason for the narrator to feel sympathy with her fellow-Asians.

First Strand (cont): Adjusting to Her New Environment

By mid-November 1984, Yap is settled in another hostel with a much nicer room to herself and her own mailbox and, one assumes, better bath-

room facilities since she mentions being back taking to daily showers. However, there are still common showers with men and women supposed to take turns at different hours of the day (with some perhaps deliberate overlaps). Nor is she expected to take part in cleaning the facilities since her new rooms are not part of a regular students' dorm.

Another interesting bit of social history is the arrival of a batch of Libyan students who get a whole hotel just for themselves thus “causing a lot of consternation.” The rumor that reaches Yap is that the Libyan government is paying the GDR US\$2000 a month for each student for housing and education, and an additional \$250 monthly stipend. In addition, they are receiving an additional 300 marks from GDR. So “they go all over painting the town red.” One German student remarked to her that a Libyan has only to yawn “and everyone is at his beck and call.” A teacher who had been assigned to supervise Yap’s language instruction personally was instead assigned to them, which is why she is still part of a class, despite her being far advanced in her German language skills (56). From this one gathers—as the narrator intends one should—that the GDR is not entirely immune from being impressed and bending its own policies to benefit the wealthier students. But she lets this pass without comment, and turns to the advantage of having classmates from those parts of the world which do not receive fair coverage from American media. Her scholarship, she feels, has enabled her to gain access to what is really going on in the Middle East, Africa, and so forth.

By the end of January 1985, Yap is settled in Ronstock, “the oldest university in Northern Europe. It is a university town, the university buildings scattered all over town, so that Ronstock is in effect like one big campus” (107). She has met her adviser, Doz. Dr.sc.nat. Jörg-Andreas Oertzen. Her dissertation is to be on the energy dynamics of benthic community systems. Her studies will include more German and Marxism-Leninism (“routine for everybody”). A minimum of two years’ experimental and field work will be required. Her adviser informs her that “German Ph.D. standards are very high. But he also tells her that, because of her publications, she is considered fully integrated into the scientific community, which is not true of many other Ph.D. candidates (90). Yap is obviously delighted by this compliment.

Then her adviser and his wife present her with an anorak. They tell her kindly that there was no need for her “to have only one coat” (99?) One notes that Yap does not take offense. She is only perhaps a little amused. As she makes clear in several of her letters, she is determined to live frugally so she can save up for a washing machine, since her new residence, Betenhaus, is not a student hostel and tenants are expected “to look after their own needs” (99). Indeed, she does acquire the required appliance, with money to spare. In a later letter, she refers to having received an additional 7 Marks a day while she is doing her research work in Zingst. Her comment to this is that, since she is provided with bedding soap and washing powder, she doesn’t really need the extra money (125-126).

Even more important, perhaps, to her becoming fully settled in, is the way she relates to the people she encounters, how she eventually becomes part of a little community.

In her Preface to the anthology *Traveler’s Tales: A Woman’s World*,³ Marybeth Bond writes: “When we travel, we pause more to listen, to assimilate, to move in and out of the lives of those we meet on the way. Where women go, relationships follow” (Bond xv). She might have been describing Yap, even when she was a recent arrival, a fish out of water in an undergraduate dorm. None of her new acquaintances was Filipino, and, like Yap herself, they were students, therefore transients, and so much younger than she was. But the measure of how she succeeded in forming strong bonds with them is that when the time came for her to leave K-M-St, there was sadness. She was given two farewell parties, with dishes her friends had cooked themselves, and wine; and someone carried her luggage to the train station: “The one who took me to the station lingered more than an hour until the train left, even if it was quite cold,” Yap writes (98).

In Ronstock, she again quickly makes friends among her fellow graduate students. Her roommate Ljubka, a Bulgarian shipbuilding engineer, and this woman’s friend, Monika, who is doing a doctorate in communism, are both a bit older than Helen. They, too, treat her as “some kind of kid sister.” Yap’s term for it is “almost doting.” While watching TV, they offer her wine, munchies, pretzels, chocolates

Sharp little sketches of the members of the bright, enthusiastic young people who form her circle are scattered throughout this lively narrative. There are a German professor of English; a Cuban called Roberto who shares the washing machine in exchange for doing “house repairs” for Yap and Ljubka; a handsome surgeon specializing in neurosurgery who speaks English with a Cambridge accent, and “visits often to make us laugh” (109). Her partner for her first year of field work in an isolated spot called Zingst is 24-year old Michael Scheffler who is working on the equivalent of the Philippine MS.

Despite this, though, the narrator never quite loses the sense of being the “other,” of being “some kind of curiosity” to her new friends. She observes that “sometimes with the questions they ask, it would seem I came from some primitive tribe in the remote, barely discovered regions of the world,” and adds that they are surprised that she knows Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, and has been to New Zealand and Australia (104). However, since Yap seems to take no offense, one assumes that she does not detect in their questions an implied racism. In fact, racism does not figure in her narrative at all.

Eventually her friendship with Monika becomes so close that the latter invites Yap to her family’s home in Zingst and gives her the opportunity to get “a more intimate glimpse of German family life” (136). She also speaks of basking in the warmth of German hospitality and family life, when the Merckels (wife and daughter of the then GDR ambassador) go out of their way to cook interesting dishes for her such as goose and wild pig with rice; take her to the opera; introduce her to “jazzed up German gypsy music in the cellar of an old, dignified building made cozy by rugs, pictures on the wall, wooden tables, where students gather to drink wine, beer or whatever, and chat and listen to new trends in music” (154).

By August 1985, Yap reports having achieved “a pleasant balance” between her time in Ronstock and her time in Zingst, which reflects what seems to be a new-found emotional and mental stability and harmony. She provides a picture of herself. In Ronstock, she is a “city girl, dressed in slacks and pumps, “jumping on streetcars, hurrying from one University

building to the other, or to the post office, or to the various shops department stores. And having long chats with my new friends. In contrast, there is the “country girl” in Zingst, who’s always in jeans and rubber shoes, who gets up when she feels like it, and “spends hours tinkering in the laboratory, or going through my pile of data and scientific literature.” She takes walks in the woods, spots two small deer, gathers mushrooms for lunch the next day, cooks new dishes, takes bus rides with Michael, her assistant, to look at oak trees and beech trees, and taste her first blueberries, see her first squirrel. . .” (146-147).

A month later, Yap writes to her family that, of all the roommates she has had so far, she likes a 32-year old Cuban girl, Aida, who “feels the need to feed her when she cooks only eggs for herself” (149). One might speculate that the relationship works better because Aida is closer in age to Helen than her other friends are. And also because Aida is a person of color too. But I am personally bemused by this constant preoccupation on the part of her friends with Helen Yap’s eating habits.

Third Strand: Professional Progress

One thing Yap does not bother to disguise is her satisfaction at her remarkable progress where her studies are concerned.

Before leaving K-M-Stadt, she has to sit for an oral exam during which she is expected to discuss such topics as the causes of World War II, the oil crisis, world hunger, and so forth from the Party’s point of view. After this, she announces to her family that she passed with a grade (“AUSZEICHNUNG”) higher than a “1,” which is the highest recommendation the Herder-Institute can give. She is told that she is considered one of the best doctoral candidates ever to study there (91).

But when she begins her actual PhD work, the going is not easy. “The scientific work can be very hard, what with the new techniques I need to learn, and the weather constraints. But on the other hand, many things and facts of life are beginning to seem so simple—distilled to their essentials” (110). She describes the difficulty of taking temperature and light measurements, and collecting samplings of sediment, while standing in water that

is 5 degrees centigrade, with a strong wind blowing so hard that it nearly knocks her off balance, followed by snow.

To me, the amazing thing, aside from her determination and meticulousness as a scholar, is Yap's high tolerance for loneliness. This is unusual in itself, but even more so, because she is a Filipina. Philippine culture practically makes solitude impossible. Our extended family system, while it guarantees a solid support group, also imposes countless claims on one's time and resources. In addition, there is the culture of the "barkada," the gang, the *posé*. We tend to move in packs of at least three. When a person is espied by his friends or acquaintances, in a mall or restaurant, in lieu of a greeting, he is likely to hear the query, "Sino ang kasama mo?"

Yap, on the other hand, seems to thrive in her solitude, or at least not to be bothered by it. In Zingst she is mostly by herself. In the evenings and on weekends, her main company consists of a pony, ducks, geese, chickens, and fat cats. Nowhere in her letters to her family does she indicate discontentment. She takes walks in the woods and acquires a tan, learns to drive a motorcycle so she can take herself to her work sites. She expands her cooking repertoire. She writes, "[i]t is almost like my dream of living in a Walden Pond like Thoreau, where my only resources are what I can create with my own mind and hands." And she gloats that the laboratory—and all its "sophisticated gadgets" are practically hers alone (120).

Yap takes justifiable pride in her professional success: "I know now that I can be not only a scientist, but also a good one. I read scientific papers now with a more critical eye, and can more or less detect the flows in the currents of thought of the writers, their weaknesses, even idiosyncrasies. I have a better grasp of the standards that science strives to set" (120).

Both the station director and her adviser are impressed with Yap's work. One sign of the esteem in which her adviser holds her is his recommendation that she replace him in an important experiment on "shallow water compartments" (called FLAK), involving scientists with different specializations. She is also accepted into a workshop in Hungary sponsored by UNESCO, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the International Union of Biological Sciences in which Dr. Ed Gomez (her mentor in the Institute of

Marine Sciences at UP) is a member who she suspects, has recommended her acceptance to the workshop (127). Ulrike Schiewer, the program leader, she informs her family, is “world-famous, has written books, and is practically in? his field. But like many others, he is a very kind and unassuming man, and handsome, he-he . . .” (131).

Writing to her father on 1 July 1986, she says: “I think it is time to come home. After a few more months of doing concentrated work here, I feel more confident now about my whole research, and I think it is realistic to plan on finishing up this year” (180).

She adds that she knows it will not be easy for her to leave the GDR. She will miss her friends and the pleasant, convenient life she now enjoys: “But I know where I belong. I cannot remain in Europe for lengthy periods. The Europeans think in such a fixed linearity. They are also very materialistic, even in a society that strives towards utopia” (180).

In September 1986, she presents a paper at the 21st European Marine Biology Symposium in Poland (“the best conference I’ve ever attended”), and it is a great success. It earns her an invitation to read a paper at another big conference in Kiel, West Germany.

This is the international validation she has obviously been seeking. She writes: “So, with this I feel I was finally able to prove myself to the international scientific community, and, more importantly, to my hosts, the GDR scientists, who were present and who were my real judges” (192).

She attends a few more meetings, gives a few more talks, finishes her thesis draft. Her adviser tells her that she has broken all records.

After her dissertation oral defense before a panel consisting of her adviser and heads of departments of other universities, her dissertation is circulated within a committee of 10 professors and associate professors for their comments. The defense goes very well. She receives another “Auszelchnung” which means all ten members of her examination committee gave her a “1” (her adviser tells her he does not recall this having happened before). And she receives her degree, *magna cum laude*.

Looking back on what she has accomplished, toward the end of her book, Yap writes: “So I am here. Still coping with vast events. At the start,

greatly handicapped because of a crippled core. I think that for this reason, compared to my peers here, my achievements are tremendous” (171).

As she puts the finishing touches on her dissertation, she writes: “I’m in good shape, too. As a matter of fact, in terms of my work, I think I am reaching my peak . . . I’m enjoying my work with the FLAK crew, and feel like I belong in their company, even if the demands, as always, are pretty high” (178).

Fourth Strand: Philosophical and Political Reflections

Most of Yap’s reflections on politics and philosophy are to be found in the italicized diary entries. It is here that Helen is at her most transgressive: initially, in her candid admiration of socialism and how it actually works in the GDR, something that most Filipinos at the time would not have shared; later, in her equally candid assessment of its contradictions, which would certainly not have endeared her to her hosts; and, finally in her unorthodox view of religion, which is quite out of synch with Filipino Catholics who are a clear majority in the country.

She never actually refers to institutional religion, to the Catholic Church or to any other church. She does, however, articulate her belief regarding the existence of a God. She claims she has been developing her ideas regarding her concept of God since she was 15. And what she has distilled from her searching seems to be a kind of mysticism, which, paradoxically, she seems to have arrived at through her study of nature as a scientist.

Among the big questions she grapples with is the question of the spirit—its existence, its origins: “As a natural scientist, I have little doubt that it is very probably a product of nature, possibly a form of deathless energy But what is energy? What is nature? What are its origins, its limits, all its forms?” She notes Ouspensky’s concept of the several dimensions, of levels of consciousness, of cosmic consciousness; modern-day attempts to reconcile physics with mysticism (118).

“That the paradox exists—of Him being in each one of us, and at the same time only a part of Him being in each one of us, so that we need each other to achieve our spiritual wholeness. God is not external. He is the

'force' energy' we feel inside us, the sublime feeling. It is not externalized, but reverberates from inside of us to the world around us" (152). Hence, she feels that the whole point of existence is to pursue ever higher levels of spirituality. She returns to this theme several times, and elaborates more deeply on it, including its implications for human attitudes and behavior: "Pride and arrogance are only barriers to growth, a hindrance to the willingness to continually change and learn" (176).

She states unequivocally that she is not an atheist: "I do not believe that we come to an end with death. We undoubtedly possess a life energy that, according to simple physical laws, is indestructible What is this energy? To understand this is perhaps one of the most important tasks of science, as well as of this great diversity of philosophical and religious movements. There definitely is something greater than us. What is it? (177).

Her political reflections mainly have to do with her efforts to understand socialism better, and how it is actually working in the GDR. But they also have to do with her own country and her countrymen, and her efforts to understand and accept them.

The first of these entries is only half a page long. "Socialism demands an extremely high level of maturity," she writes. "One must be at peace with one's self; one must be able to gaze up at the stars, and sit back and say calmly to herself: 'I can reach them.'" She speaks about how Germans seem to lack a sense of humor, to be so intent (or did she mean "intense"?). Then she wonders, in parentheses, whether the thing wrong with the Filipino is that "he is all sense of humor." In this, too, Yap would be out of synch with her fellow-Filipinos who trot out this much-vaunted sense of humor anytime to counter any criticism about the national character (32).

This passage ends on a poignant note: "The Revolution is many decades and many worlds past. For us Filipinos, we have to dream it. From here, far away, I can see that my homeland is very beautiful. And that there is so much to do, and there is so much hope, and it is so difficult" (32).

She returns often to the theme of this difference between the Germans and her *kababayan*. And when she does, her tone is often frustrated, even despairing: "I see that it is huge and incredibly beautiful and I do not under-

stand why it is in such a mess.” She compares it with the GDR, tiny, with scarce natural resources (“the mountains and the sea are a poor excuse for mountains and sea”). Yet they have worked so that now they are at “the forefront of the world scene, and are capable of leading it.” She feels that it’s a combination of the devotion to hard work, and the striving for excellence, which “are already second nature to them. It is in their blood, and the air they breathe.” She demands: “Where did this incredible talent come from” (59)?

And then she turns to her own countrymen: “The Filipino simply cannot hold things together. Does his mind lack the ability to grasp the relations of things? . . . Is it entirely the fault of the colonial master, who, through hundreds of years systematically brutalized the spirit” (59)?

Yap is not blind to the flaws in the German character. The humorlessness, for example, which strikes her as most pronounced whenever she receives letters from her family who ~~which~~ are apparently consistently funny. This leads her to speculate that the humor of the Filipino is distinct, “penetrating and encompassing,” containing “a certain wisdom” drawn from a distillation of Malay, Chinese, Spanish, American and Japanese cultures.” She refers to it as “a great gift, almost a talent. The Filipino laughs because he sees something deeper . . .” (49).

In another diary entry, Yap comments on how remarkable it is that the Germans have “rebuilt from the death and ashes of the World War, with a conscious advocacy of selflessness, despite the poverty and desperation.” She remarks on the “kind of childlike innocence” of the Germans. This, I found difficult to quite accept, given that World War II was also a low point in German history because of the horrible Nazi atrocities. I would have expected that mixed in with the “poverty and desperation” would have been at least traces of guilt. But Yap makes no mention of it.

Regarding what she has called their “innocence,” she explains: “They have no pretension, no haughtiness, no vulgarity. They appear simply not to have learned them. Could it be a function, too, of this particular socio-dynamic system: that a real gentleness and unselfishness are deeply inculcated into the character of the people?”

And, again, I would protest: but are these not the same people who condoned the extermination of a race who were their fellow-citizens (43)?

When she does refer to World War II, it is not the Holocaust that she mentions but the bombing of Dresden by the Americans and the British: “. . . And for their vendetta they chose Dresden, with the intention of wiping it out” (74).

Initially, it seemed to me that the succeeding passage hinted at that contradiction. She notes that the people are somehow “subdued,” that a kind of sobriety pervades the atmosphere. But the next passage reveals her to be on a different page. She is referring to how curious they are about “the other side of the fence” and how “agog about imported goods such as coffee and chocolates, which is frankly a pathetic sight,” the “swarms of locals” in a shop that sells jeans at US\$50 a pair, and speculates that they must be regarded as “some kind of status symbol.” Yap notes, further, that movie theaters showing Russian or GDR films are hardly patronized, even if they can be quite good. But tickets for American films are sold out immediately. And her Vietnamese classmates boast to her of importing US cigarettes. (“What the rest of the world has, Vietnam also has!” they tell her with satisfaction.) Yap interprets this as “a curious balance between these people’s condemnation of the bad aspects of ‘capitalist’ society, and their candid appreciation of the good” (74). Which, of course, may be a valid observation.

There is an interesting letter dated December 2, 1984, which appears to be in response to one from her family—perhaps her father—suggesting the publication of her letters by the “Friends of GDR” (in the Philippines?) in their newsletter. It is not clear how they got copies of her letters. My guess is it was Helen’s father who showed them the letters. Helen says she is, of course flattered, but she is candid enough to admit her reservations about publishing so early, emphasizing that the letters contain her *initial* impressions. And she admits to having “very honest thoughts that maybe should not be published.”

Yap takes pride in her steadfast efforts to maintain “a sober frame of mind” where she is. So, while sometimes tempted to give in to “an all-out enthusiastic praise for socialism,” she sees the other side. Why would the

average American rather die than become a communist? And why should people from socialist countries think that America should turn socialist? Shouldn't what's best for America be left from? for? Americans to decide? She also voices her suspicion that some of the Germans who hold that opinion are just "envious" of what they perceive as "the American way of life" like the average Filipino. "And if they are unable to live like that, why should the Americans or anyone else for that matter?" From talking to different people, she adds, she sometimes thinks that "if all border restrictions were suddenly lifted, this country would be deserted in three days." She qualifies this by adding that this is the effect of the West's effective propaganda, and not because they are "unhappy with the system here."

However, she also recounts a conversation she had with a Mexican and a Peruvian about ideology during which she got piqued by what she perceived to be narrow-mindedness, and told him in no uncertain terms that "stupid socialists also exist and they are as dangerous as stupid capitalists," (68) which quite bewilders them.

Yap feels fortunate in having grown up in a family which gave her a better understanding of capitalism, of "both its dazzling and its sinister sides, hence of the true nature that we confront." The basic attitude of the developed nations is arrogance, and that of the socialist countries is wariness and defensiveness. But this, she thinks, may be true only of immature individuals on both sides. She sympathizes with the socialists because "the odds against them are still very great"—such as the relentless propaganda and the acts of sabotage—political, economic military . . ." (61).

By January 1985, she feels that day-to-day life in Europe has actually fed her fascination for Asia, for her origins: "I'm beginning to realize that Europeans, compared to Asians, are just impertinent little children. And it is their arrogance that has made them grow big in the eyes of the world.

She identifies what she believes to be one crucial difference in character: "The Asian is unselfish. And the European . . . is selfish. In the home, in culture, in national life." Whereas the Asian is open, the European is cautious, calculating. And yet, "despite his spiritual superiority, the Asian has become the servant of the white man in the latter's harsh material world . . ." (87).

She expands on this idea in a later diary entry. "I will always be Asian in my heart and spirit. Even if, in the eyes of Europeans and even of my own people, I am 'Europeanized.'" She speculates that "in the development of the European spirit something has clamped somewhere. Is it the narrowness of the logical (Aristotelian) method, or in the phenomenon of the 'Ego' which has attained its high point in Western culture" (142)?

An interesting sidelight: Yap writes that her Brazilian friends showed her a paper from their country dated November 1984, a supposedly right-wing paper, "as are all of Brazil's." It contained a long commentary on Marcos. After reporting on his illness and the absence of a strong-enough successor, it predicts that "after Marcos the country would plunge into chaos." Comparisons were made between the Philippines, Nicaragua, and Chile. And it predicts the likelihood "that the communists would take over, since they are very strong."

"Anyway," says the narrator laconically, "this is how it was related to me, as I couldn't read Portuguese" (72).

She writes to her family that people she knows listen a lot to West German radio, GDR media being rather limited: "Hardly a squeak now and then about home, for instance." Whereas the western media "appears to take more interest in the Philippines." The assassination of Aquino, however, was "played up very prominently," and included a hint that President Marcos may have been behind it (105).

To her brother Jop she confides some of her realizations as she reads more Marx, Engels, Hegel, Feuerbach, as part of her studies. Regarding the "muddled philosophical bickering that took place after Hegel, "whether the spirit, i.e. consciousness or nature really determined historical events." They eventually decided it was "nature that was the primary force" (Feuerbach, with Engels' agreement) "because everything including men and their minds, stemmed from? it." This makes Yap happy,

because frankly, many times, especially when I was shivering underwater, I'd wonder why on earth I was doing that, and whatever made me choose this field, when I was more comfortable with history and philosophy. **I suppose I'm beginning to find the answer.** "I'm here to learn as much as

much as I can from nature. There exists a link between nature and philosophy. A vital link. I suppose that all along I've unconsciously set to find it... (113; emphasis added).

Whatever philosophical label, the ultimate purpose of all the heartache and brain-twisting is most probably the development of a truly wise and noble human being capable of relating to society and the cosmos in an organic, creative and dynamic way, ultimately for the optimal development of human civilization" (117).

In May 1985, she feels that her "entire sphere of interest is shifting to Philosophy. I won't give up science because it's a vital foundation and powerful tool. But I feel there's a higher dimension on which I must focus" (129).

Aside from the diary entries, the philosophizing is generally to be found in Helen's letters to older brother Jop. The letter dated July 14, 1985, for instance, contains her observation that "when Marx and Engels declared that God does not exist, they did not work hard enough at formulating an adequate alternative."

She confesses that she is "starting to sense that a real difference (exists) between herself and "the people I now associate with"; she hazards a guess that is a difference that might possibly be a general one between the Asian and the European, which "lies in a certain level of spirituality."

She is astonished at the great value that Germans place on personal comfort, for example—"leisure, health, good eating." What is already uncomfortable for them is still "O.K. lang" to the Filipino! What is uncomfortable for us is already catastrophic for them! I do the Asian has a higher margin for suffering and hardship" (115).

Elsewhere, she writes, "[m]any people here work hard and well for personal enhancement—to secure a good position in society. I strive for excellence not to earn the esteem of others, but because I feel that the 'human condition' can be transcended and transcended even further, as one develops towards higher spheres of existence" (137).

If this sounds rather like hubris, I would accept it? as pardonable in a person as young as Helen Yap was when she wrote these letters and diary entries.

She tells Jop that her adviser, who is extremely logical and precise, once told her that her answers to his questions were “diffuse,” which made the man impatient. “He wants to see, and sees only, black-white 0/1? (as in computer language), $1+1=2$. What he doesn’t realize is that I deliberately make room in my thinking for spirals, multiple dimensions and probabilities. Without losing sight of logic (I hope!) as the Europeans so treasure it” (138).

And here one gets a clear statement of what the other quest has been: “I came to this far away part of the world in search of a perspective for myself. Now after almost a year away from home, in this quiet around me, things are beginning to fall into place in my mind. I’m slowly gaining my perspective. I have worked so hard . . . Leah, I have earned my ‘corner of the sky.’ It is back home, with my family and people. And there are so many things to do—science, literature, history, philosophy” (142). This strand in Yap’s narrative closely overlaps with the fifth strand, the strand I’ve labelled “the other journey.”

Toward the latter part of her book, Yap has reached a clearer understanding of her own intellectual background and its limitations. She describes this background as “strongly immersed in philosophy, and speculative philosophy at that.” This she attributes to her father’s Jesuit education.

She now considers this as possibly “very damaging” because “it alienates the cognitive processes of humans from the actual processes in nature and the actual physical laws.” Paradoxically, she also credits her father with consciously trying “to destroy those barriers of perception and understanding and evolve a progressiveness of thought to be imparted to and continually developed by his children—strongly marked by his personality, independent of but incorporating the best elements of philosophical movements, including that of Marx and Engels” (171).

I am not sure if Yap is aware of the paradox in this conclusion. It would make her father both the cause of the problem and its solution. Yap says that she has arrived at this point “after witnessing and experiencing what is

probably the best of present-day European civilization—German tradition and culture maturing in the socialist mold” (171).

In her brothers and sisters, Yap says, she still sees “vestiges of this handicap . . . a kind of idealism—the difficulty being that it masters them, instead of the other way around,” so that “life will always continue to baffle them somewhat, even if they fight bravely” (171).

For her part, she feels that her time in the GDR has cured her of “my shortsightedness.” Being assigned to complete a task in a very short period, “under harsh living and working conditions, within circumstances completely unknown to me at the start.” She was thus forced to learn “to master the resources around me, as well as myself” (171).

Fifth Strand: The Other Journey

This strand—which, as mentioned earlier—is closely interwoven with the fourth strand (“Political and Philosophical Views”)—first emerges in a letter dated November 11, 1984: “As I go from day to day here, I learn a lot about myself, too. I think I’m beginning to understand that my biggest fault is that I’m too much of a perfectionist, and that I get nervous and impatient most of the time” (48). That word “impatience” is to recur throughout the book.

A little later, she writes: “I need this peace, far away from my homeland, to be able to understand it. The sad inanity had taken its toll on me too though I am only twenty-six. In this quiet existence here I am trying to exorcise the anger. And the impatience with my people . . .” (59).

While on holiday in Berlin in the company of “kababayan,” Yap paints some scenes which echo other narratives by Pinoys sojourning in the West—the thrill of the first snowfall, the fun of hurling snowballs at each other. This holiday is courtesy of the only Filipina who appears in her narrative: Linda Abad, who teaches Pilipino in Humboldt. It is this lady who met Helen Yap and Majal Magallona when they first arrived in Germany, and stayed even after the Germans assigned to meet them had gone home due to the lateness of the flight. It is she who invites Helen and Majal and two Filipino students to spend the holidays in Berlin with her (74-75).

This leads to a little essay on the Filipino in one of the diary entries: “[a]fter my time in Berlin, I see a new side to my countrymen.” She speaks of their holding their own, of their dignity, of “a pride that radiates through the utmost gentleness and humility, even naiveté? And a keen intelligence and a quiet hunger for knowledge.” And then, she wonders,

[h]ave I found one of the answers to one of my questions? In these quiet, struggling Filipino youngsters that I’ve met? Has it all been staring me in the face all along, even back home? Except that I was so preoccupied with my own rebelliousness? Because these Filipinos studying in the German Democratic Republic are not unusual or atypical. They are everywhere—wandering far from home, swallowed up in the madness of the ‘university belt’ (81-82).

She wonders how she could have missed them all this time, and adds a phrase that makes one pause: “and failed to take care of them” (81-82).

It is not clear in what sense Yap means that she should have “taken care of these nameless Filipinos.” She doesn’t quite patronize them, no. But this strikes me as one of the very few times when she indulges in a bit of sentimentality, even of melodrama: “[t]hese boys are like little children, laughing over simple things. Awed, wide-eyed before the world of learning. But they have nerves of steel. And the blood of men who died for their fatherland” (82).

In another letter, she returns to the theme of impatience, the recognition that part of the problem back home was in herself: “I’ve been gone almost eight months. And in this whole time, I haven’t gotten angry even once” (115)! From which one might gather that she used to get angry often when she was back in Manila.

In the Diary entry dated 11 August 1985, she writes that one night, after a long day in the field and in the laboratory which ended at 1:00 a.m., she dreamt of her parents and cried in her sleep:

Now I understand why I felt so battered and broken when I left home for socialist Germany. Since my early childhood I had imbibed, unconsciously, the understanding that whatever one created in one’s lifetime would be

destroyed by others, that whatever one built up would eventually be taken away. I could not dare cherish the beauty that I saw and felt around me, the treasures I had. So is the brutal heritage of growing up in an oppressed country” (144).

She speaks of how her father had once complained that of all his children, she “looked the saddest.” She recognizes now that “the way I’ve led my life till now was merely a reflection of my father’s experience and struggles. But now, I realize he may have been too? impetuous. As I work out my own life in a foreign country, I feel that I am almost an exact replica of my father, except that I am more tempered. Maybe this way I could carry his battle a little further.”

What is this battle she refers to which apparently lies at the bottom of all this—what made her the kind of person she is, what drove her away from her country?

The answer lies—not in Helen Yap’s book—but in a little-known volume published in 2016, ten years after Helen Yap’s own book had been published: *Lessons from Nationalist Struggle: The Life of Emmanuel Quiason Yap* by Jose Dalisay and Josef T. Yap (EQY’s oldest son, Helen’s brother Jop).

The elder Yap was born in 1913 and passed away in 2011. Recognized for his brilliance since he was a schoolboy, he had a remarkable career in both Holy Angel Academy in Pampanga (where he did his high school) and at the Ateneo de Manila (where a Litt.B. in 1953?). Then he took his MA in Economics at Georgetown University. But while working on his PhD he decided to quit and come home. He is quoted in the biography as saying of his graduate education: “I learned nothing good . . . I had already learned most of what I needed to know from Laurel (Pres. Jose P. Laurel) and Lansang (Jose A. Lansang).” He was a nationalist, a socialist, a reformer; though he was not affiliated with any political party and did not hold public office, he nonetheless exerted a strong influence on Philippine politics. His biographers sum up his legacy thus:

His peers and colleagues would recognize and refer to him, even within his lifetime, as a visionary, an astute student and critics of his nation’s political and economic fortunes, a shaper of minds whose firm nationalist beliefs

might have led the Philippines on to another track of growth and progress. He was an adviser to presidents, senators and congressmen (3).

Former UP President Dodong Nemenzo describes him as

... [a] very strong nationalist intellectual who saw an American conspiracy to dominate the world. He was too individualistic to become a Party member, but he was very close to the Party. There were many people like Manoling who were close enough to the leadership of both the Party and the nation to exert some influence on their thinking—Renato Constantino, Justice Barrera, JBL Reyes, and so on. They identified themselves as nationalists but resisted Party discipline. I don't know whether he was the original author of the idea, but the push for industrialization, which Manoling championed, practically became dogma within the Left.

When EQY passed away, Helen Yap recalls that she ran into President Nemenzo at the Chocolate Kiss in the UP campus, and he consoled with her reminisced? briefly about Manoling. “Yes he is much older than I am,” she quotes Dodong as saying. “When I returned to the Philippines from my studies, he was already a demi-god” (145).

Elsewhere in the biography, Helen Yap is quoted as describing her father's political and moral influence:

He was very frustrated about the way things worked out. He was an idealist who believed he could bring all of these people together and make things work. You won't believe who came to our house in Teachers Village. They included Susan Roces, Mike Defensor, Apeng Yap, the Lavas, the Tarucs, Norberto Gonzales, Ramon Mitra. My father also met with businessmen like Danding Cojuangco, Peping Cojuangco, and Enrique Zobel. He sat down with military people like Gringo Honasan and Danny Lim. With all these people, he tried to draw on their love of country and to find that common denominator that could get them working in one direction (81).

He was, his biographers say, a true reformer: “But as many, if not most, reformers soon discover, Manoling Yap would often find his idealism opposed, rejected, or even taken advantage of by others resigned to a more cynical view of things” (4).

Details of his tireless attempts to steer the country's leaders in what he felt was the better course, of his important contributions, and of the vicissitudes he and his family had to undergo are to be found in this biography.

The effect of all the latter on his children is clear in a letter from Manoling Yap to Letty Ramos-Shahani, sister to then Constabulary Chief and future President Fidel V. Ramos (Manoling Yap worked with Ramos-Shahani later when she became a senator), dated October 10, 1979(?). He writes: "I have suffered a great lot in my commitment to the cause of true and enlightened nationalism. My family has suffered with me, uncomplainingly" (159).

In another letter, addressed to Speaker of the House Jose B. Laurel, dated August 28, 1979, he requests the Speaker's assistance in regard to the "covert persecution" that he is being subjected to: "I am very sorry that I must explain this way now, but I feel so disheartened, and my family is suffering with me as a result of this persecution" (163).

This persecution led to Manoling's frequently losing his position, and constantly having to transfer the family's place of residence and other forms of harassment which, of course, took a toll on his wife and children. The information that I found in EQY's biography has thus shed light on why his oldest daughter, who loved and admired him fiercely, was almost broken, and had to practically flee the country.

In her diary, Helen Yap writes about her father in a way that reveals the depth of her admiration for him, what I referred to earlier in this essay as a form of hero-worship: "My father now is fully, inexorably encompassed in a struggle bigger than him, than his own life. It started from the horrors of the Japanese war, the lessons from the peasant struggle, and now the continuation of the quest for independence and identity for his nation. As a result his personality is growing in explosive bounds, **into a kind of transcendental supra-humanness**" (172; emphasis added).

Toward the end of her own book, Yap moves toward a recognition of what she came away for, even more than the need to refine her skills as a scientist:

In this country, far away from the struggles of home, I'm beginning to be able to put myself together again. In my extreme sensitivity, I've been finding even the socialist Germans too selfish and too aggressive—always looking for weaknesses in the other's personality and working on them . . . **Now, after almost a year, I'm becoming whole again. I can follow my own rhythm again** (144; emphasis added).

She cannot help but compare her situation with that of her close friend Monika Wallis—“a simple girl from the humble town of Zingst,” the daughter of a carpenter and a shop assistant, and herself, having spent most of her life in the capital city of her country, educated in the best Philippine schools, the daughter of a man “who had his time in the limelight of the country's political and economic life.” Discussions over supper in Monika's home “center around the everyday, the trivial” while discussions in her own (Helen's) home “were always highly intellectual,” and deliberately so.”

And then the reader catches, again, the note of despair: “[a]nd my growing up was always a struggle. Monika, though also shy and reserved, did not need to fight to be what she is. She ripened . . . peacefully” (145).

But in the end, Yap feels, both she and her friend have survived, and prevailed in their different ways. Their ideas are their own (144-145).

While Helen Yap is on a short visit to Manila, the People Power Movement and EDSA happen. It is worth noting that she says nothing about it, in either her letters or her diary entries. The reason for this might be gleaned from this passage in the “Prologue” to her EQY's biography:

. . . History has a way of revealing the truth. Take for example the conventional wisdom that the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution heralded a new era for Philippine society. Yet no fundamental change took place. Thirty years after this historical event—by now it is clear it wasn't a revolution—the Philippines has fallen farther behind . . . (ix-x).

What she does write of in her diary is her strong desire to be back home for good. In a diary entry dated May 25, 1986 written when she is back in Ronstock, she says:

I came here and got cured. It is almost as if I started to really live only from 1 September 1984 onward. I came loaded with psychological burdens, because the basis of daily living in my country was so tenuous. And I had to deal and work with the unstable characters of the people around me. Growing up was a painful fight where, on balance, I lost This whole process of upheaval was too great for me as a child. To contribute to it, I had to find my own freedom first. Else I would be destroyed (171).

Having found it, she is now ready to go home and “help the little I can in the rebuilding” (171).

Conclusion

Helen Yap’s book ends in Quezon City, with a few entries dated October 1987 and May 1988.

Seven and a half months after her return from the GDR, she feels that she is not really a different person from who she was when she left home, “perhaps I just have a slightly better command of my emotions.” But she remembers how sapped she felt then, remembers her “desperate tiredness.”

Now that she is back, she sees the advances in the Marine Science Institute, and finds herself surrounded by younger people who now look up to her “as a model, a guide, teacher, source of support.” This convinces her that she has a duty to fulfill.

I had set out, in this essay, to do two things. First, I wanted to offer a possible framework for the literary analysis of travel literature, in particular travel literature by women, and to utilize it for the literary analysis of Helen Yap’s book, *From Inside the Berlin Wall*. Second, I hoped that my analysis of Yap’s book would show that literary travel writing by Filipinas does more than provide useful and entertaining information and serve as a form of social history. It can create narratives as compelling as one might find in fiction, analyze political and philosophical issues, and serve as self-exploration and self-healing.

To achieve my objectives, I asked the first three questions that formed part of my framework: (1) who is the writer and why is she travelling; (2) why did she decide to write about her travels; (3) was she writing with an

awareness of a tradition she might belong to or of deliberately going against that tradition; (4) what choices has she made—in regard to narrative strategies—and have those worked effectively toward her achieving what seem to be her goals or objectives, or have those strategies somehow impeded or compromised those goals; (5) even as she narrates her experience as a foreigner encountering a new place, is she embarked on another journey, an inner journey other than the ostensible one? Is there an inner purpose, a question she might be grappling with? How has the genre of travel writing enabled her to fulfill her quest; (6) does the account of her travels offer any insights or discoveries that might be of consequence or significance to others besides herself?

The answers to the first two questions were answered by the narrator herself in her Preface: she was travelling as a student to obtain her PhD from a university in Germany; she had decided to write about it, because she thought that her observations and reflections might be useful to other Filipinos, and because she wanted to witness with her own eyes what life was like in a Socialist country and share it with her *kababayan* who were still in the grip of Cold War propaganda. Her plan seems to have been to return to these letters and these notes later, and from them, perhaps construct a book, perhaps with some members of her family.

The fourth question has to do with style.

First, the choice of the epistolary style, which provided the Lady Mary Montagu with “distinct literary advantages” (as Clare Brant observed), have uncannily provided Helen Yap with similar advantages, even if her book was written three centuries later. The sequential nature of letters and diary entries, which provides a rhythm of anticipation and immediacy are at work in Yap’s book. The author cleverly builds suspense as she takes readers through the steps of, initially, Yap’s adjustment to her new environment; then, of her efforts to prove herself equal to the highest academic standards; and, finally, of her search for answers to her political, philosophical, and personal problems. The letters, addressed both to her family as a group and individually to its different members, create in readers the impression that they are eavesdropping, so to speak, on private conversations, and have

become, in effect, intimates of the narrator, what Brant described as “the illusion of privileged access.” The flexibility of structure allowed for the development of what I have named a “braided narrative,” referencing Brenda Miller’s “braided essay,” where fragments do not appear truncated or incomplete, but are woven together to form a unified, organic whole. And, finally, even as she experiences her “otherness” among her university colleagues and professors, the narrator is exploring their cultures (particularly German culture), and comparing them with her own.

Second, the author-narrator’s voice is clear and strong, and she comes across in her book as sincere, honest, open, and self-aware. One of her most striking qualities, in my view, is her attitude toward the new and the strange, which is open, curious, tolerant. In a letter dated October 27, 1985, she mentions what someone observed about her a kind of “defenselessness.” She attributes this to her training as a scientist: “I approach a new experiment or system or process with no preconceived notions or judgments. My mind is like a blank pool of water which absorbs and evaluates things as they happen.” Apparently, there is a German phrase for it which translates into “I allow for surprises.” The mind behind this book is wide open: “I came to this country without feeling the need to *defend* myself, conceptually, spiritually, or physically” (150).

Yap’s response to initial difficulties and deprivations, is simply to adjust, to accommodate herself to what she found. And confronted with the unknown, her response is to welcome it.

Pico Iyer has written:

On the road we often live more simply . . . with no more possessions than we can carry, and surrendering ourselves to chance. This is what Camus meant when he said that ‘what gives value to travel is fear.’ Disruption, in other words (or emancipation) from circumstances, and all the habits behind which we hide. And that is why many of us travel, not in search of answers but of better questions.

Yap’s book chronicles precisely this: her having to live more simply than she ever has, and surrendering to whatever awaits her. She is prepared to discard much of what she is used to and to do challenging work under extremely

difficult circumstances, so difficult that she falls sick several times. And toward the end of her narrative, she is still asking questions.

Moreover her letters and diary entries are replete with passages which record her feeling that much of what we Filipinos think we know about foreign countries—particularly the countries from which come many of the people whom she gets to know in the GDR—are unfair, being the result of political propaganda. She wants to go beyond that, and understand both why the Germans she comes to know have made the political choices that they have made, and what they are like, apart from those political choices.

It is a kind of sensitivity... ewor? perhaps the more appropriate word is depth. She is not content with recording her impressions. She needs to dig deeper, to understand motives, values, patterns of thought. And, always, she compares what she finds with what she left behind, wanting also to understand what she had rejected, what she needed to distance herself from.

To cite Iyer again:

For me the great joy of travelling is simply the joy of leaving all my beliefs and certainties at home, and seeing everything I thought I knew in a different light, and from a crooked angle We travel to fill in the gaps left by tomorrow's headlines Travel is the best way we have of rescuing the humanity of places, and saving them from abstraction and ideology.

I might add that, all this being said, Yap also has a kind of tough-mindedness that's as important as tolerance and sensitivity. She's no pushover. She will give everyone and everything all the reasonable chances that fairness demands. And then she'll call it as she sees it. Hence, after living in the GDR for two years, she begins to see the place a little more clearly, and she does not hesitate to say so in her letters and her diary.

Rolf Potts was referring to that, I think, in this passage:

I think the core task of travel writing—going slow, experiencing, listening, seeking nuance, reflecting—hasn't changed much, and won't change all that much in the future. Often travel writing is a matter of getting past your preconceptions and being thoughtful and honest about what you experience. This naturally applies to getting past crude cultural stereotypes, but

it also means avoiding performative sensitivity and the over-idealization of other cultures.

Third, in the matter of language, William Zinnser, writer, critic, and teacher of writers has emphasized that travel writers need to be “intensively selective” with words as well as details. After warning against anything that sounds remotely like a cliché, he says:

Also resist straining for the luminous lyrical phrase to describe the wondrous waterfall. At best it will make you sound artificial—unlike yourself—and at worst, pompous. Strive for fresh words and images. Leave “myriad” and their ilk to the poets. Leave ‘ilk’ to anyone who will take it away (118-119).

I hope that the quotations from Yap’s letters and diaries have shown that she is in no danger of using language that is either artificial or pompous. Her prose is simple and straightforward, but it is also lively and vibrant, which is as much the result of an observant eye as of an instinct for the precise words that will capture her impressions on the page. For instance, in this passage she describes having to take samples for her research on a terribly cold day:

I waded into the water and spent about two hours taking temperature corers, and had to be very careful so that the original sediment structure was not disturbed. The water was +5° C! A strong wind was blowing and nearly knocked me off balance a couple of times. And I had to *face* it so that the stirred up sediment would flow away from and not towards where I was sampling. Then I noticed my field jacket was white . . . with SNOW! By the time I had finished, I was so chilled to the core that my hands had no more strength to screw the sample container shut. My companion, who had been waiting in his car the whole time, had to do it for me (119).

And, even when having to put up with inconveniences and difficulties, her humor comes to the rescue. Describing the sudden invasion of her work station in Zingst by a high-powered research team, she says, “Now the place is swarming with intense, nervous German scientists” (129).

That humor is only very rarely turned against others though (as when telling her sisters about the importunate male graduate students who were basically harassing her); most often it is directed at herself. For instance, after

having invited her friends to have a chicken adobo dinner in her apartment, she has to confess that she “had never cut up a chicken in my whole life, and that I didn’t know how to cook rice.” Her surgeon friend ends up cutting the chicken, and everyone else does the cooking, sets the table, brings the wine and opens the bottle. “All I ended up doing,” Yap says ruefully, “in addition to looking over each one’s shoulder was cutting up a cucumber” (131).

Another time, she describes going to a fair:

I was at a fair in town today, alone. A Christmas fair. A large pine towered against the cold evening sky, adorned with lights. Under it, I ate hot, crisp potato puffs coated with sugar. (I had poured on too much sugar, and later on my hands were so greasy that I couldn’t put my gloves back on.)” She ends ruefully with, “I felt at home because American rock music bounced merrily in the air and kept me company” (63).

And, fourth, I believe, that what makes this narrative of one woman’s journey, to the GDR and back, most unusual, is the story of the parallel journey, “matching the physical steps of a pilgrimage with the metaphysical steps of a questioning . . .”

From the very beginning of her sojourn to the GDR, the reader senses that something has gone wrong in the traveler’s. There are hints scattered here and there: the constant assurances to her parents that her health is fine, the references to her thinness, her anxiety. Is there something she needs to escape from? something she needs to recover from? something she needs to find? Little by little, the letters and diary entries, reveal what the trouble is. Perhaps she sometimes exaggerates the situation, but, given her age, this is forgivable.

What is important is that she has confronted her demons, and, having named them, she is now trying to overcome them, and to heal herself. The reader accompanies her on this quest. So, when she attains her goals—when she finds what may be the answers to the questions that have been troubling her—the reader feels her triumph, and shares in her sense of fulfillment. That her discovery also means a return to her homeland adds a touching poignancy to the journey. She will take up her work again. She will contribute

what she can. And now, she will do it with peace of mind, and with a more quiet, more patient courage.

“Perhaps what I would most like to do is contribute by asking the right questions, treading the essential paths. Life is formed by many stormy seasons. What is most beautiful is the tranquility that comes afterward” (218).

However, it cannot be said of this book that it has a conventional happy ending. The author is aware that the life she has committed herself to, for many reasons, will still be a lonely one. And Helen Yap has accepted this.

One significant indicator that a story is well told—is that the ending leaves the reader wishing that it hadn’t ended quite so quickly, that it were possible to find out what lay in the future for the story’s characters. Helen Yap’s *Inside the Berlin Wall* is one such book. And even more so, perhaps, because one knows it to be a true story, not an imagined one. Its hero goes on living, is alive today. One wants to know if she continues to chase the dream, or if it has become a reality.

However, the book has done its job. And if my essay has done what it set out to do, the book will now be taken as proof of the possibilities of travel writing as a genre: possibilities for the creation of character, the evocation of place, the chronicling of social history as it is lived; a reflective meditation on political and philosophical ideas considered important by the author and narrator; and the exploration of one person’s deepest conflicts and tallest dreams.

Notes

1. There is no translation of this book into English or Filipino. But I translated one chapter from it: "A Newspaperman and a Bolshevik," in the anthology *Pinay: Autobiographical Narratives by Women Writers, 1926-1998*, which is mentioned above.
2. Tony Araneta was the son of Don Antonio Araneta, publisher of the *Graphic* magazine, and Gemma Cruz, writer and daughter of the distinguished essayist and journalist Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil. The *Graphic* was among the publications closed down when President Marcos declared martial law on September 21, 1972.
3. In her study of nineteenth-century women's travel narratives, *Solitary Travelers: Nineteenth-Century Women's Travel Narratives and the Scientific Vocation*, Lilia Marz Harper examines the lives and works of four such traveling women, who, being widows or spinsters, were "freed from conventional expectations" and chose to travel alone, a decision which "seems to have stemmed in part from a resistance to male influence and competition" (Sabiston 512). Even Sidonie Smith's *Moving Lives: 20th Century Women's Travel Writing* harks back to the "ideologies of 'manifest domesticity' and treats of the travel of white Anglo-American women as a means of "negotiating cultural displacement through unbecoming subject positions" (Fish 672).
4. The earliest essays in the first of these books were initially published in the now-defunct *Philippines Free Press* between 1964 and 1970. The first of these seems to be "Remembering Saigon" which is about a visit to that city, as part of the Motion Picture Production unit of USIS Manila, just before and during the TET offensive of the summer of 1956 (but published in the PFP in November 14, 1964). Then there is "Letter from Bacolod," about sex and politics in another city in the Visayas a few months after the election of Ferdinand Marcos as the country's president in 1965 (and published in June 25, 1966).
5. These magazines are the *Philippines Free Press*, *Asia-Philippines Leader*, *Focus Magazine*, *Ermita*, *Sunburst*, and *Who*. Some essays are devoted to trips taken to different places in the Philippines, and one (titled "Just Passing Through") records a trip to several cities in the US in the late 70s.
6. This is a list of my own travel books: *Sojourns* (1984); *Five Years in a Forgotten Land: Five Years in a Forgotten Land: A Burmese Notebook* (1991); *I Remember... Travel Essays* (1993); *Skyscrapers, Celadon and Kimchi: a Korean Notebook* (1993), first published as *A Korean Sketchbook* (1987)); *Coming Home* (1994); *Passages* (2007). Many of these narratives were published in Philippine magazines during the 14 years that my husband was posted in different countries as a UNICEF officer and I worked at different jobs, mostly as a teacher and writer. More

- recently, I returned to travel writing with two books which I call travel-memoirs: *Looking for the Philippines* (2009) and *Travels with Tania* (2009).
7. In October 2018, as I was completing the final edits of this paper, I read an announcement on the publication of Jessica Zafra's new book, *Twisted Travels: Rambles in Central Europe*, published by Visprint.
 8. The exception is a book co-edited by myself and Erlinda Panlilio, *Why I Travel and Other Essays* (2000), an anthology of travel essays by women, most of whom are not professional writers and who do travel for leisure.
 9. Harper, as cited by Elizabeth Sabiston, stresses that solitude conferred authority on these early women travel writers, hitherto a male prerogative. On the other hand, it seems to have precluded any collective action, or female solidarity. In other words, they lived a contradiction (511). Leading courageous lives, they nonetheless refused to deviate from Victorian respectability. For example Mary Kingsley and Gertrude Bell seem to "have tried to balance the implicit transgressiveness of their remarkable travel achievement with an ostentatious display of conventionally 'feminine' attitudes" (Thompson 181).
 10. In the social sciences such as Geography, Anthropology, and Sociology . . . recent interest in travel writing is partly a consequence of theoretical and methodological debates as to the forms of knowledge and enquiry most appropriate to each discipline. All these disciplines to some extent evolved out of travel writing, engaging in enquiries that once were principally associated with, and articulated in, the genre known in English as 'voyages and travels'" (Thompson 4).
 11. Jesus Lava, a medical doctor turned revolutionary, was the Secretary General of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas also referred to as "the old Communist party."
 12. I am unable to add other titles to de Castro's because not much has been written about the early novels by women Tagalog writers. Soledad Reyes has noted in at least two essays—"The Romance Mode in Philippine Popular Literature" and "Lost in History: Women's Text in Filipino and Canon Formation" (2012)—that Filipina novelists are hardly visible in the literary history and criticism of literature in Filipino. This is not because they did not exist but because they were not considered important enough to be taken seriously, having been mainly serialized in magazines or written about? in *komiks* form. She names numerous such writers but does not anywhere indicate if any of their works was written in epistolary mode. Patricia May B. Jurilla, in *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century: a History of the Book in the Philippines* (2008), makes similar observations about twentieth-century romance novels but does not discuss literary techniques, like structure.
 13. In her Introduction to the Everyman's Library edition of the Lady Mary Montagu Letters, Clare Brant writes: "Letters were peculiarly open to women because they require no classical education, literary training or uninterrupted

time. They could if desired, uphold class distinctions through the etiquette of address and the designations of certain idioms as refined. Letters also manifest class by the ways they create impressions of leisure, and through the cost of correspondence, which could be expensive and in this period was paid by the recipient. For women, letters were also a neat solution to unwelcome publicity. Enough correspondence was published in the eighteenth century for publication—whether illicit or posthumous—to be a distinct possibility; simultaneously, the domestic or familial nature of ‘familiar letters’ allowed women do disavow plans to publish” (xi).

14. I am not aware of any published diaries, letters, or travel narratives written either in Filipino or Tagalog by Filipino women. But this may simply be due to my lack of expertise in the area. Where Philippine literature in English is concerned, one chapter, “Letters to Rita,” in my book *Sojourns* (1984), is epistolary in form; and one chapter, “An English Major in Oxbridge” in *Coming Home* (1997) and another, “Peacocks and Roses in Perth,” in *The Thing with Feathers: My Book of Memories* (2017) are in diary form. But I have never combined the two forms in one book.
15. To answer the question of what Helen Yap was referring to here, I have consulted his biography, written by Jose Dalisay Jr. and Josef T. Yap, *Lessons from Nationalist Struggle: The Life of Emmanuel Quiason Yap*, which was published long after Helen Yap’s book was published. I shall return to this volume later in this essay.

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Text and/as Travel

The Self-Translations of Merlie M. Alunan

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Abstract

Routes and roots form the dominant themes of the poetry of Merlie M. Alunan. Her translation practice exhibits these same tendencies as well in that her mobility across the islands of the Philippine South has allowed her to learn the Visayan languages from West to East: Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a in Western Visayas, Cebuano in Central Visayas, and Iligan City in Mindanao, and Waray in Eastern Visayas. It is not surprising that she would describe her writing in both Cebuano and English as a kind of “crossing borders” and “coming home” (“Crossing Borders, Coming Home” 138-145). This paper engages with Alunan’s self-translations from Cebuano, also called Sebwano or Sugbuanong Binisaya, to English or, as current Southeast Asian linguists and literary scholars put it, english. Selections are taken from her first poetry collection in Cebuano, *Pagdakop sa Bulalakaw ug uban pang mga balak* (To Catch A Firebird and Other Poems, Ateneo de Manila University Press 2012), which contain her translations of her poems. This paper argues how hetrolingualism or multilingualism brings a repertoire of strategies, though not mutually exclusive, in addressing a particular intertext, enabling the poet to navigate between signs. Alunan’s self-translations, for one, can be identified with the broader literary tradition of Philippine postcolonial Anglophone writing. In the same way, her self-translations amplified what was suggested in the Cebuano poems,

thus, adding more texture and intricacy to the self-translations. In a way, her back and forth, to and fro movements between languages, cultures, and traditions produced her self-translated texts. Alunan’s Cebuano balak may have “migrated” into her translations in English. However, it may also be said that her self-translations, informed by the poetics of her writing in English, also traveled back to her Cebuano balak.

Keywords

self-translation, travel, Philippine Anglophone poetry, balak, double poetics, Merlie Alunan

Introduction

Routes and roots form the dominant themes of the poetry of Merlie M. Alunan. Her translation practice exhibits these same tendencies as well in that her mobility across the islands of the Philippine South has allowed her to learn the Visayan languages from West to East: Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a in Western Visayas, Cebuano in Central Visayas, and Iligan City in Mindanao, and Waray in Eastern Visayas. It is not surprising that she would describe her writing in both Cebuano and English as a kind of “crossing borders” and “coming home” (Alunan, “Crossing Borders, Coming Home” 138-145). Her three recently edited anthologies of Philippine literature, which carry some of her translations, attest to this linguistic mastery: *Sa Atong Dila: Introduction to Visayan Literature* (University of the Philippines Press 2015), *Susumaton: Oral Narratives of Leyte* (Ateneo de Manila University Press 2016), and *Tinalunay: Hinugpong nga Panurat ha Winaray* (University of the Philippines Press 2017). All books won the National Book Award from the Manila Critics Circle in 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively: *Sa Atong Dila* for translation, *Susumaton* for anthology in a Philippine language, and *Tinalunay* for anthology in English (English translation, I presume, because the book is in Waray with English translations, but the Manila Critics Circle chose to award the book in the category mentioned).

This paper engages with Alunan’s self-translations from Cebuano, also called Sebwano or Sugbuanong Binisaya, to English or, as current Southeast Asian linguists and literary scholars put it, English. Selections are taken from her first poetry collection in Cebuano, *Pagdakop sa Bulalakaw ug uban pang mga balak* (To Catch A Firebird and Other Poems, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2012), which contain her translations of her poems. Indeed, “[translation] allows writers to cross boundaries of language and culture and enjoy readerships larger and vastly different than texts in the original would have assumed, and thus assures the survival and dissemination of the text across time and space” (Asaduddin 235). Asaduddin may have been referring to Urdu writer and self-translator, Qurratulain Hyder, when she wrote that, but the same could be said of the self-translating practice of Merlie M. Alunan. With multilingualism as cultural capital, Alunan accessed and



Fig. 1. Merlie Alunan's *Pagdakop sa Bulalakaw ug uban pang mga balak*, published in 2012 by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17927984-pagdakop-sa-bulalakaw-ug-uban-pang-mga-balak>.

appropriated literary traditions outside of her academic writing training in English. Her work, then, could be read as an ongoing conversation with these traditions rather than a monolithic, unitary system.

This study was guided by the following general questions: What happens in the translation process when the translator translates her own poems? What happens when bilingual and multilingual authors from post-colonial settings adept at two or more languages and literary traditions perform self-translations? The postcolonial context complexifies matters here because it requires not so much a movement between languages as from a Self to an Other within the same subject. What, then, do plurality and heterolingualism bring in the process of translation? Specifically, what strategies did Merlie Alunan deploy in her self-translations that enabled the “stripping” of her Cebuano Visayan text to take place? What significations

were reconstituted or dislodged in the traffic between Cebuano linguistic and cultural elements in her *balak* and her self-translations in English? How were elements like folksy personae, humor, and verbal folklore negotiated in the self-translations? Moreover, how does Alunan's "double poetics" intervene in her self-translations? How is interrogation between the foreign text and the translation achieved in her self-translations?

After a brief synthesis of tropologies of travel in self-translation theory, the paper proceeds with a discussion of Philippine Poetry in English and Filipino translation theory to situate Alunan's translation practice. Alunan's self-translations will be analyzed using Lawrence Venuti's schema of the threefold intertextuality of translation namely "(1) those between the foreign text and other texts, whether written in the foreign language or a different one; (2) those between the foreign text and the translation, which have traditionally been treated according to concepts of equivalence; and (3) those between the translation and other texts, whether written in the translating language or a different one" (158). In this paper, I modify these categories into the following: 1) the intertext between Cebuano linguistic and cultural elements in Alunan's *balak* and her self-translations in English; 2) Alunan's *balak* and the poetics of her writing in English; 3) Alunan's self-translations in English and Philippine postcolonial Anglophone writing.

This modification has to be qualified. Venuti's definitions of "foreign" and "translation" do not entirely apply to Alunan's self-translations because of Alunan's relationship with these two languages: Cebuano is the Visayan language she is most familiar with, albeit adoptive; English is the language where she first found expression for her poetry (Alunan, "Crossing Borders, Coming Home" 138-143). Both languages are "foreign" to her in the strictest sense of the word, but not alien to her, as Cebuano, she claims, is her way of "coming home to a language of one's own" and English, though awkward for her at times, is still a language in which she would write creatively. Alunan is at home with Cebuano as she is with English but in an indeterminate way. As a writer in both English and Cebuano, she occupies a "Third Space," "the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space" where identities, histories, and languages clash and coalesce (Bhabha

38, italics in original). By self-translating, Alunan enacts what is already inscribed in the postcolonial condition: always in a state of translation—transported, transient, transitive, in transit.

Travel in Self-Translation, or a “Translational Poetics”

Consequently, the taut and tenuous connections between travel and translation, a tropology of travel, runs through the warp and woof of self-translation theory. In their pioneering work, *The Bilingual Text: History and Theory of Self-Translation*, Hokenson and Munson highlight self-translation’s “dual perspective... [in which]... liminality becomes the prime space of reading... [where]... sounds and concepts, punned signs and signifieds collide.” Through what they call “colingual wordplay,” that is, the co-presence of two languages in a bilingual text, readers are “propelled into that space” between languages that are “not just traverse[d] but... inhabit[ed] and animate[d]” (8). Intertextuality is thus implicated “as the interliminal space of reading,” where the “tacit relations of the two texts as intercultural representations within a translanguing zone of commonality” are deeply entrenched (12).

Multilingualism adds complexity to this situation. What Falceri, Gentes, and Manterola observe about the multilingual self-translator may be said of self-translating Filipino poets: “The multilingual thinks, speaks, and writes in at least two languages, inhabits and is shaped by different cultures and sometimes travels among distinct geographic areas” (ix). One thinks of Marjorie Evasco whose way back to her Bol-anon Cebuano, the Cebuano variant spoken in Bohol, commenced with the publication of her bilingual poetry collection, *Ochre Tones/ Tando-Huni* (Salimbayan Books 1999), which contains her own Cebuano transcreations; Jerry Gracio, poet and screenwriter in Filipino, who recently came out with *Waray Hiunong sa Gugma/ Walang Tungkol sa Pag-ibig* (Ateneo de Naga University Press 2017), a poetry collection in both Northern and Western varieties of Waray, the lingua franca of Samar and eastern Leyte, and his Filipino translations; Nicolas Pichay, whose self-translations in *Ang Lunes na Mahirap Bunuin/The Intransigence of Mondays* are creative rewritings of his poems in Filipino that defy principles of correspondence and commensurability (Chaves 113). To name only a few,

these Filipino writers speak and write in two or more languages and show a propensity for moving from one place to another.

Mobility and nomadism are traits as much as necessities in multilingual societies. Diana Cullell describes the bilingual texts of Joan Margarit, Catalan and Castilian poet, as “literature at the crossroads: he seems to place himself and his work at a border between two cultures, a pivoting element that allows him to link separate literary spaces as well as present a culture in translation” (103). Margarit used his bilingualism as cultural capital by banking on the literary traditions, instead of the linguistic and political differences, of Castilian and Catalan. As a result, his entry into either side of the Spanish border, which meant publishing in the most prestigious presses and winning the most important literary prizes in both languages, was easier and more fluid. Self-translation was his strategy for accessing what lay beyond the margins of two languages and cultures.

In an interview with Maria Recuenco Peñalver, Afrikaans writer, André Brink, speaks of self-translation as “crossing frontiers,” where both Afrikaans and English stand on equal footing. “Every single book I write,” he said, “is written in Afrikaans and English. That has become part of the way in which I think and the way in which I write.” He then relates his creative process as a repetitive “to and fro” movement between these two languages. This way, what might have been missed in a work in either language usually surfaces. It is interesting to note that he calls this in-between state of being “stuck with” two languages a “translation” (Peñalver 149-151).

Paul Venzo draws from a similar vocabulary when describing self-translation as “the possibility that two texts-in-translation are equal rather than equivalent,” he stresses the self-translator’s proficiency to “move back and forth between languages and between cultural identities.” He even went as far as claiming that “the bilingual writer-translator produces two different but interrelated texts-in-translation, rather than separate source and target texts,” thus unsettling the logics at work in binaries such as “source text” and “target text,” “author” and “translator,” and “original” and “translation” (Venzo, “(Self-)Translation and the Poetry of the ‘In-Between’”). Located in the interstice of multiple speech communities, the self-translating poet

mediates between cultures (Răbacov 67), links literary histories and cultural spheres (Grönstrand 134), and produces what Paolo Valesio calls a “trans-poetry,” where the writing of poetry is simultaneous with the translation process (qtd. in Gjurčinova 7).

Literary critics have long viewed Philippine poetry in English as “translational.” Gemino Abad deserves the first attribution to this reading of Philippine poetry in English: that it is, among other things, already translated. In his introduction to *Man of Earth*, the first volume to what is the most definitive three-part compendium of Philippine Anglophone poetry, he writes:

Yet, only with a re-created fine-tuned language does the poet recapture or revoke our deepest ways of feeling and habits of perception. For poetry is essentially *trans-lation* into new discourse; that is, the poet ferries across the essential void of words (since their meanings rest only on *internal* difference) thoughts and feelings for which the language of the poem is the poem itself (11; italics in original).

Of course, this is in light of his now well-known argument that “English in Filipino hands, under the pressure of his own circumstances and choices, becomes not English but Filipino” (Abad 9). “Becoming” suggests a kind of translation that took place between languages and texts and literature in a constant flux of translating and translatedness.

J. Neil Garcia argues that Philippine writing in English operates from what he calls a “translational poetics,” which stems from “the increasingly hybrid and multilingual conditions” Philippine writers in English work in (219). He argues that “realism,” Philippine-style, is not at all “realistic,” as “realism is a signifying practice that presupposes a monocultural ground, upon which the ‘consensus’ of representational fidelity can happen—between authors and readers, both” (68). He classifies Philippine poets in English as “representational” and “postrepresentational,” the former being poets who “write verbal ‘imitations’ of life and usually work within the register of the didactic or the confessional” and the latter being those who “churn out structurally complex and ‘procedural’ performances that critique this mimetic function and seek instead to foreground the materiality of the verbal medium”

(219). Garcia avers that “representational” poets are as creative and innovative as “postrepresentational” poets in that the former writes in both modes of mimesis and poesis, that is, imitation and invention. The Philippine poet in English, after all, performs a “double translation”: a translation from the specificity of his/her own culture to the specificity of a foreign one and a translation from his/her own particularity to a larger, more universal reality (66). In a move reminiscent of Gemino Abad, Garcia affirms: “... the universal in the hands of the postcolonial subject, is nothing if not a translated or *translational* universal, and for this reason it cannot be remotely coincident—or even performatively comparable—with the universal of the colonizers” (70, italics in original). Translation, in other words, facilitates travel between, across, and beyond one’s familiar borders in the same way that travel clears space for the possibility of translation.

As a poet in English, Merlie M. Alunan already performs a translational act. In a recent interview, she spoke of how she would attempt to transform local material into her poetry in English only to deal with the latter’s inadequacy to grant a habitation and a name, so to speak, to experiences closer to hearth and home (Likhaan: Institute of Creative Writing, UP Diliman, *Akdang-Buhay—Merlie M. Alunan*). This feeling of uneasiness, which she calls a “dis-ease,” with English led her to write poetry in Cebuano. Ironically, her language of self-translation is English. How then does she deal with the local specificities of her *balak* in her English self-translations?

The Cebuano Intertext

Travel is subtly metaphorized in Filipino translation theory. In Tagalog, the word for “translate” is “hulog” (drop) and “salin” (transfer). “Hulog” refers to the fulfillment of the process of transfer, and “salin” is the act of transferring itself (Lumbera 59). “Kahulogan” (meaning), a word derived from “hulog,” could be said to be the fulfillment of signification in the translation process. Hiligaynon uses the words, “luad” (copy or imitate), “ginbiao” (“biao” means spring or pool), “ginpahamtang” (stabilize), “hubad” (to open, solve, untie, or bind), and “lubad” (to untie, to open, to disentangle) to describe translation (Villareal 32). The Cebuano language has three terms for translation: “hulad”

(to copy, reproduce, to pattern after, model on), “hubad” (to solve, unravel, as riddle; translate, interpret, construct, be translated; untie, as knot, to unfasten, undo, to take off garment, disrobe), and “huwad” (to pour out, transfer to another container) (Albuero 146; Mojares 70-71). All these terms suggest a movement from one state to another so that translocation and transformation become inexorable. Running through all these significations, “hubad” is the common thread: it means “naked, strip, untie, unravel, undo.” To translate, then, is to lay bare the text. It follows that to self-translate is to undress the self, or to force the metaphor, to peel one article of clothing (that is, meaning) after another, and from there, move from one degree of nakedness to another.

The first intertext I would like to examine is between Cebuano linguistic and cultural elements in Alunan’s *balak* and her self-translations in English. Let us take a look at Alunan’s “Ang Misay Kun Mangagalon.”

Translated as “Cat Looks for a Master,” the English translation title presents an explication of the poetic theme: the mastery of the tamed over the tamer. However, a shift in object needs to be noted: whereas in the Cebuano, the cat masters his owner, in the English translation, the cat seeks for a master. This shift is important to note because it sets the whole tone of the poem. A humorous, playful *balak* in Cebuano becomes an ironic, subdued poem in English. The second stanza reads:

Ikaw nga way gusto sa iring, o bisa’g
unsa pa dihang hinoptan, bisan pa
sa bakiking hiniktan ni Tingting Kimpang
gibantog tsampyon sa siyam nga tigbakay
sa Libungao, bisa’g sigbin pa gani hisgotan,
nga matod pa sa mga karaan, masugo
pagkawat sa bahanding naa sa kinauyokan
sa kinabuhi, tingali’g sa kadugayan,
maaghat pagduol, unya sa kahimuot,
mosangpit sa iring, “Ming, Ming, ngari Ming...” (18)

Well, say, you don’t care for cats,
or any pet for that matter—

not even for the grey cock
 that One-Leg Tingting keeps,
 famed veteran, nine-time champion,
 they say, of the cockpits of Libungao,
 not even for, say, the horrible *sigbin*,
 which, old folks say, could be sent
 to steal the most precious treasure
 in the very heart of life—
 one day, you might find yourself
 calling the cat, “*Ming, ming, here, ming..*” (20)

The English translation is two lines longer than the Cebuano not because of any lengthy explication but because the line-cutting observes economy and precise diction. The use of monosyllables and a conversational register lighten the translation’s tone, approximating Cebuano. “Approximating” aptly describes the whole performance because literal translation and borrowing are the strategies used to handle the Cebuano material. The retention of *sigbin*, a creature of the dark in Philippine folklore, and the literal translation of *Tingting Kimpang* to One-Legged Tingting are such instances. On the latter, one can immediately observe that the Cebuano focuses on the character’s uneven gait (*kimpang*, meaning to walk with a limp) and the English, on the character’s disability (one-legged). Alunan uses the same strategies in translating some Cebuano phrases scattered throughout the poem. *Banbanong daku*, literally, large tomcat, becomes rogue, an explication; the expression, *dakong disgrasya*, literally, big trouble, becomes big mistake, a literal translation; the lines, *Labot pa, usa ra gyuy imong kinabuhi./ Unsay alamag nimo sa mga lutsanan/ o sa mga palusot nga iring raw nahibawo?* (Alunan 18) (Gloss: What’s more, you only have one life./ What do you know about the caves/ or tunnels that only the cat knows?) become more direct: “One life,/ that’s all you have against nine” (Alunan 20). The effort to find an idiomatic equivalent in English is easily observed. Also, as one reads along, the stanzas get shorter and shorter. For example, the third stanza, is a line shorter, and the sixth stanza is omitted altogether.

Alunan's inclination for economy, precision, and logical arrangement of details are even more pronounced in the fourth to fifth stanzas. Compare the following:

Wa kay kalibotan, nahubad na
sa misay ang tigmo sa pangagonal.
Nasukod na sa iyang bungot ang imong
katakos pag-alagad sa iyang panginahanglanon—
pananglit, ang gutom, kalaay, kamingaw,
kahidlaw sa pag-amoma'g pagtagad—
unya, nasuta na niya nga ang kapintas
sa iyang tinagoang kuko imong maantos.

Adlaw-adlaw imo siyang lawga'g buko'g
ug salin-salin sa imong pinggan.
Makaingon kang imo na siyang napaanad,
kay makaila na man siya s' imong tingog,
moduol kun imong tawgon, mobaid-id pa gani
sa imong bitiis. Unya di pa gyud mosibog
sa imong baho, moyukbo, nagpasabot
nga gamhanan ka s' iyang kinabuhi. (19)

Everyday you feed him scraps
from your plate and by this means,
you'd think you got him tamed—
he answers to your voice now,
doesn't flinch at your smell,
even comes near when you call
to rub his fur against your shins,
scrapes and bows to show
you're the big one in his life.

Well now, he's got you trained.
He's sniffed out your fitness
to provide him affection and care,
all that he needs to spare him
from hunger, boredom, loneliness.
He's made sure the sting
of his hidden claws you can endure. (21)

Like a mirror image in reverse, both stanzas are placed inversely in the English translation, suggesting that the latter may be following a logic different from the Cebuano. The lines, *Nasukod na sa iyang bungot ang imong/ katakos pag-alagad sa iyang panginahanglanon* (Gloss: He has measured by his whiskers/ your worthiness to care for his needs), is transposed into “He’s sniffed out your fitness/ to provide him affection and care,” where “measured by his whiskers” in the Cebuano conflates in the two-syllable idiom, “sniffed out.” *Panginahanglanon*, needs, is amplified into “affection and care,” for emphasis, perhaps, but most importantly, to make up for the specifically Cebuano elements excluded in the English translation because of the preference for brevity. Another example of Alunan’s economical style is gleaned in the translation of the first two lines. *Wa kay kalibotan, nahubad na/ sa misay ang tigmo sa pangagalon* (Gloss: Don’t you know, the cat has solved/ the riddle of being a master) is simplified into “Well, now, he’s got you trained.”

Something remains to be said about the arrangement of details in the English translation, particularly in that crucial stanza that shows how a cat is tamed. The lines, *Unya di pa gyud mosibog/ sa imong baho* (doesn’t flinch at your smell, in Alunan’s translation) exchanges places with *mobaid-id pa gani/ sa imong bitiis* (to rub his fingers against your shin). In Cebuano, the lines move from auditory (*kay makaila na man siya s’ imong tingog*) to auditory-psychomotor (*moduol kung imong tawagon*) to tactile (*mobaid-id sa imong bitiis*) to olfactory (*Unya di pa gyud mosibog/ sa imong baho*) to kinesthetic (*moyukbo, nagpasabot/ nga gamhanan ka s’ iyang kinabuhi*). In English, the process of taming begins with the auditory (he answers to your voice now), then proceeds to the olfactory (doesn’t flinch at your smell), then to the auditory-psychomotor (even comes near when you call) to tactile (to rub his fur against your shins) to kinesthetic (scrapes and bows to show/ you’re the big one in his life). Maybe a slight difference, but this reveals how Alunan follows a particular logical arrangement in her English self-translations dissimilar to that of her Cebuano *balak*. Furthermore, the habit of simplifying concepts in the Cebuano understates the humor of the *balak* in the English translation.

Explication and literal translation are the same strategies Alunan deploys in *Kun Unsaon Pagdakop sa Bulalakaw* (To Catch a Firebird). This

time, the poem has a serious tone, being instructions a sage gives to a younger person. These are directions for a quest, the ultimate goal of which is to catch the *bulalakaw*, the mythical bird of fire. Unlike the previous poem, the directions are arranged as they appear in the Cebuano text. The number of lines in the English translation runs almost parallel to the Cebuano *balak*. The tendency to simplify and be economical is again revealed in the translation of the following stanzas:

Apan kun mohunong ka dinhi di nimo maabot
ang balay s' mga kuwaknit nga buta.
Mao sila ang nagkapot sa gahom nga motugkad
sa lalom sa mga ginaray sa kangitngit ug katugnaw—
hangyoa sila, bisa'g tipik lang sa ilang kaalam—
kini sa imong larang gikinahanglan gyud.

Tingali'g maamang ka, ug ako sab mabungol—
kay usahay ang pulong bisan man sa tidlom
nga kahilom, ayaw tawon ko'g basola
kun wa natoy makaalinggat,
bisa'g siyam pa ka dila ang magyamyam,
sa tanang matang sa kahinam
o molitok ba hinuon sa ngalang bathala (132-133).

But if you don't move on,
you won't reach the house of the blind bats.
They are the keepers of magic to plumb
the abysses of darkness and cold.
Beg them for a chip of their ancient wisdom—
you'll need it to obtain your resolve.

You could turn mute, and I could be deaf—
as often words are banished
by sternest silence. No blame then
if neither of us hears,
though nine tongues cry them out
all the names of desire,
or pronounce the words to call God (134-135).

“Abysses” abridges the line, *Lalom sa mga ginaray* (Gloss: In the depths of verses). A transposition, likewise, takes place in the lines, *kay usahay ang pulong bisan man sa tidlom/ nga kahilom* (Gloss: because sometimes words even in the harshest/ of silences), when it is rendered in English as “as often words are banished/ by sternest silence.” These techniques quicken the rhythmic pace of the English translation. It even turns up the sage-persona’s urgent tone because of the use of mono- or disyllabic words and curt phrases. The preference for short words and phrases must have also factored in adapting “God” for “bathala,” even if the latter could have been retained to keep the pagan resonances of the Cebuano. Of course, the familiarity of the reader in English with “God” than with the archaic “bathala” must have been one of the translator’s important considerations. The search for the right idiomatic equivalent and logical progression of details in English could have also prompted the translation of the last stanza as:

Pilay palad, sa imong pag-atang,
takulahaw sa imong atubangan
ang karnerong pula motungha, ug unya,
hinayhinay, sa imong kiliran motugdon
ug magpahikap sa iyang balahibo
ang nagdilaab ug idlas nga bulalakaw (133).

With luck, as you sit there waiting,
before you the red sheep
may suddenly appear, and then,
softly softly by your side will light
and allow you to touch its feathers
the bright and untamed bird of fire (135).

The rendering of *Pilay palad* as “With luck” demonstrates, as with the rest of her self-translations, Alunan’s ability to shift from Cebuano to English without straying too far from the intents of her Cebuano balak. She can make her translations, for example, sound more natural and communicative by deliberately inverting some lines: *takulahaw sa imong atubangan/ ang karnerong pula motungha* becomes “before you the red sheep/ may suddenly appear.” Even the calque, “softly softly,” which is a literal translation of

hinayhinay (Gloss: slowly), does not interfere with the lineation. A marker of foreignness, “softly, softly” grounds the self-translation in time and space that is not English in its moorings, challenging the limits of English as a language of translation for poems in the Philippine languages.

The Philippine Poetry in English Intertext

According to Venuti, translation is both a decontextualizing and a recontextualizing process. By decontextualization, he means how translation displaces and transforms a text in a different way from its “original” context. By recontextualization, he refers to how the translated text locates itself in a milieu, not its own but has created a space within it (Venuti 158, 165). In other words, travel complicates translation; translation is only thinkable in conditions set by travel; texts are already translations in themselves. Intertextuality is, therefore, deeply interwoven in the translation process. Another intertext to be problematized concerning Merlie Alunan’s self-translations is the intertext wrought by her own poetics of her writing in English.

Let us examine a lyric sequence entitled “Tulay sa Dausi” (Dausi Bridge), one of the most charming poems in the collection because it deals with Alunan’s most frequent themes: travel across seas. This will also be a good way to look into her poetics of self-translation, specifically how she deals with translating her Cebuano *balak* into English while wading in the twin seas of her English and Cebuano poetics. This shows what has been referred to as “two texts-in-translation” (Venzo), “transpoetry” (Valesio), and “double translation” (Garcia). This section addresses the question: How does Alunan’s double poetics intervene in her self-translations?

The sequence consists of three poems: *Viajedor* (Traveler), *Hangin* (Wind), and *Estranjero* (Stranger). Already, we witnessed how Alunan prefers economy, simplification, and explicitation among her translation strategies. She also observes equivalence in her self-translations to a certain degree through literal translations and *calque*. “Tulay sa Dausi” shows the same repertoire of techniques except for one thing: Alunan takes her self-translations a step further by rewriting her Cebuano *balak* in her English translations. In the second stanza, a significant difference is immediately apparent:

Nan kung tawo ka lang, way hingbis ug palikpik,
hubo sa balhibo, way pakong masaligan,
igo na lang ka sa pagtimpasaw sa lapyahan,
mangalihid uban sa mga sagbot nga dinagsa
sa hunasan piliw sa isla sa Panglao.

Kay unsaon man nimo paglabang sa pikas pangpang
kun wa kay himbis ikasukol sa kusog sa lilo ug sulog,
o di ba hinuon, wa kay pakong ikatangkod
sa nagbantog nga wanang sa kalangitan?

Kinsa kadtong *viajedor* nga nangandoy makatilaw
sa mga lampirong ug tuway nga nanagpahipi
sa lapok sa pikas katunggan, labing siguro,
dinhi sa Daus tulay, nga way dalanong gisumpay,
ang imong tinguha walay katumanan (94).

Merely human, without scales nor fins,
or naked and featherless, no wings to count on,
you could only wade among the seaweeds
dumped by the ocean on the shore
in the beaches of Panglao Island.

How to cross to the other shore without the means
to brave the stream, or wings to span the rifts of sky?
Those who dream of tasting the scallops and clams
buried in the mud on the other side, to be sure,
here at Daus Bridge which no roads link,
no good end will come of this intent (97).

As in the self-translations discussed above, Alunan follows the principle of economy. The polysyllabic, reduplicative phrasings of the Cebuano balak conform to the monosyllabic requirements of the English translation. The lines, *Kay unsaon man nimo paglabang sa pikas pangpang/ kun wa kay himbis ikasukol sa kusog sa lilo ug sulog/ o di ba hinuon, wa kay pakong ikatangkod/ sa nagbantog nga wanang sa kalangitan?* (Gloss: How would you cross the other shore/ if you have no scales to swim through waterspouts or sea currents/ or maybe, you are wingless/ and so cannot fly the great expanse of sky?), undergo massive rewriting. These four lines are reduced to two in the English translation: “How to cross the other shore without the means/ to brave the

stream, or wings to span the rifts of sky?” Lines were shortened through generalization: “means” for *kun wa kay himbis* (if you have no scales) and “stream” for *lilo ug sulog* (waterspouts or sea currents). Economy is also again carefully worked out, as in the lines, *o di ba hinuon, wa kay pakong ikatangkod/ sa nagbantog nga wanang sa kalangitan?* (or maybe, you are wingless/ and so cannot fly the great expanse of sky?). Alunan trims down what might have been verbose in the English text had a literal translation been followed. In monosyllables, the lines now read in English as “or wings to span the rifts of sky?” “Wanang,” a generic word for space in Cebuano, is concretized as “rifts,” hinting on the persona’s internal conflict and the violence of separation from the island of one’s affections. Moreover, *Kun kinsa kadtong viajedor* (Who is the traveler) is transposed into the pronoun “those.” What emerges in the English translation is, therefore, a rewritten version of the Cebuano balak.

The economy that Alunan’s English poetics demands can be further observed in her translation of the next poem in the sequence, *Hangin* (Wind). The sixteen lines of the second stanza in the Cebuano balak is condensed and tightened into eleven lines in the English self-translation.

Unya dili tuyoon, iyang bation ang hingalayo
 sa adlaw, katugnaw sa dag-om nga kanunay
 nagaungaw sa bagtik ug nangliki nga darohan.
 Ug unya sa kalit man o sa hinay-hinay,
 ang kaamang o kabungol sa pagbati manglimbuwag,
 ang tinumpi nga kahilom mangabungkag,
 mga linaming aligutgot mangabuklat, mapalid,
 mangapyot sa balod, mangabay sa nanglutaw
 ug way gamut nga mga lusay, mahitipon
 sa mga dinagsa sa kabatoan, malusaw sa parat,
 mangalubong sa balas ug lapok sa katunggan.
 Ug kining mga nagkatimbulaag dili na gyud
 matigom pa sa usa ka yano nga pagsaysay,
 may purohang makalimtan. O mausab
 sa makadaghan ang mga pamaagi sa paglitok
 tungod ning hangin nga way kutas ang paghuyop (95).

slowly, slowly—or quick—the senses
dumb and deaf will shatter, silence melt,
anger unbound and flung to the waves,
there to drift among the rootless seaweeds,
driven to the rocks to merge with the salt,
finding its grave in the sand and mire
as the ebbtide sweeps in swamp,
and thus crumbled, no shape ever find again,
a story lost and forgotten, or told over and over
changing a hundred ways with every telling
by this endless wind that never stops blowing (98).

In the translation, the first line continues where the previous stanza leaves off because Alunan made the first three lines of the second stanza the last three lines of the first stanza. Like in her other self-translations, Alunan follows a different logic whenever she shifts from Cebuano to English. Although this may be the case, the self-translation still takes a semblance of equivalence, as the phrase, “slowly, slowly” hints on the Cebuano *kanunay* even as it also points to the word, *hinay-hinay*, a few lines later. *Kanunay* may mean eternity or a little later, suggesting a slow pace; *hinay* means slow, but it also means to take care or to handle something or someone with great care. *Hinay-hinay* is emphatic: it is to be slower than usual; by a single word, the whole stanza in English translation sounds almost like the Cebuano *balak*.

A shift in language brings a change in poetic sensibility because every language has peculiarities of worldview and expression. The terse phrase, “Silence melt,” is made to stand for *ang tinumpi nga kahilom mangabungkag* (the well-kept silence breaks). “Melt,” instead of the more proximate word, “break,” is used so that the line logically coheres with the metaphor of “waves” in the preceding lines. The rest of the stanzas are shorter versions of the lines in the Cebuano *balak*. One last remark about the translation: when *mangalubong* is rendered as “finding its grave,” the subject in the English translation is granted an agency absent in the Cebuano *balak*. In the Cebuano, the poem’s addressee is buried force majeure. In the English translation, she seeks a grave on purpose.

Estranjero (Stranger), the last poem in the lyric sequence, employs the same strategies of explicitation and economy as in the other poems, but with an additional touch: the literal translation is made to resonate the Cebuano while, at the same time, it keeps intact all that the English signify. A closer examination of its second stanza will make this apparent:

Balbal ka man o mirko, puga gikan sa Sugbo,
Batangueñong *viajedor* og habol ug kaldero,
o magbabalak nga naalaot, namad-an sa pulong
ug sa damgo gilayasan, maglalawig ka man
nga magadali o magalangan-langan,
masangko ka gyud dinhi, mauntol ang mga tikang,
di makapadayon kay wan-ay pasingadtoan.
Paghidunggo ning tulay nga way dalang gisumpay,
ang maglalawig, unsa pa may dudilaing katuyoan,
di angay isalikway unsay iyang maabtan (96).

Witch, magus, or jailbird from Cebu,
or a Batangueño hawker of blankets and pots,
or a poor poet deserted by words
and whose dreams have fled, or traveler
hurrying past or going slow, here you stop,
your steps halted, nowhere else to go,
you can't continue. At this bridge
which links no shores, one seeking to go
places, must honor the land that welcomes him
no questions asked (99).

The line, *o magbabalak nga naalaot, namad-an sa pulong* (Gloss: or a poet that's adrift, whose words have dried up), is amplified in the phrase, "deserted by words." *Naalaot* means adrift, as the root, *laot*, refers to the high seas. When the focus on the utterance turns on the one left on the *baybayon*, the shore, the word could also denote abandonment. As a verb, "desert" means forsaken, abandoned, or left behind. However, the word is a homonym of "desert," a dry, dead, sandy place. Thus, when the line becomes "deserted by words" in the English translation, it takes as its signification both "desert," as forsake, and "desert," as dry place. Only a reader knowledgeable in both

Cebuano and English can detect these delightful turns in Alunan's self-translations. The self-translations in English may reach an English-speaking audience, but it is also addressed to readers who know and read Cebuano. To paraphrase Abad, English in Alunan's hands is no longer English but Cebuano.

The Foreign Text and Translation Intertext

Translators work on intertexts simultaneously. The *inter* in intertext assures that the work of translation will always be a simultaneous operation between, within, and around languages. Another intertext that translators confront is that the distinction between the foreign text and the translation is often blurred in self-translation. The blurring arises from how texts interrogate each other in the translation process, most significantly, with the self-translator's familiarity with her own poetics in both languages. Such a self-translator can easily travel between languages and cultures, bringing her double poetics' strengths together in fresher and surprising combinations.

Alunan experiments with technique in her self-translations of two notable poems in the collection, *Pagdakop sa Bulalakaw: Si Barbie'g Tarzan* (Barbie En' Tarzan) and *Istorya ni Carmelintang Kutoon* (Carmelita the Cootie Girl). The two poems are notable because they attack colonial ideology in its vicious forms, particularly American colonial historiography and American capitalism. More interestingly, the poem does not merely abrogate—"deny the privilege of"—the English but appropriates it—"put under the influence of a vernacular tongue"—as the language of translation (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 38-39). When placed alongside the Cebuano *balak*, the self-translations appear to question the episteme on which the colonizer-colonized binarism is founded: authentic and copy, foreign and native, original and translation. Viewed this way, the *balak* and self-translations present a case of what Hokenson and Munson calls "colingual wordplay." How is this interrogation achieved in the self-translations?

At the phonological level, the self-translation disfigures the English spoken by the personae, departing from the merely mimetic to the subversive mimicry of the colonizer's tongue in the mouth of the colonized. Both

Barbie En' Tarzan and *Istorya ni Carmelitung Kutoon* are uttered in a sort of creole by grown women recalling childhood memories of destitution and war. While the tone may be humorous, the narratives are serious, making the performance a double entendre. Thus, even as lines in *Barbie En' Tarzan* read like:

Merkano si Barbie, 'sa no? Tan-awa, way makatupong
sa iyang kagwapa (hila-osi una). Buraw'g buhok,
bawod ug pilok, silhag ug kalimutaw, mora'g diwata.
Iyang hawakan baling gagmitoya. *Wow legs*, kandilaon ang porma.
Wa koy Barbie sa gamay pa ko, akong monyika arang bug-ata,
manghihi, malibang, motiyabaw kong akong ibutang—
mao na si inyong Iyo Ponso, manghod nako—kay si Nanay
kanunay sa darohan, o nanginghas para itindahay sa taboan.
Aadtong panahona akong Tatay, kun di mangisda,
tua sa iyang bwanting hiniktan, maghapyod-hapyod,
magtugpo-tugpo, magpabuga'g aso. Maayo pa mo,
may Barbing tinuod, gasa ni Tita Penny nga tua s'Canada.
Tan-awa o, kadaghan niya'g ilisan, may pangkatulog,
pangsimba, pang-*ballroom dancing* pa.
Dagha'g sapatos, ariyos, kwintas, may kotse pa gyud (22).

She's *Amirkano*, no? Jus' look at dat face
(but wipe it up a bit first). See dat yello' hair,
curly lashes, eyes like glass, like a fairy she is.
Her waist, ay, so tiny. *Wow legs*, too, smoot' as candle.
No Barbie for me when I was young, my doll, too heavy,
pee an' crap for real, an' yell w'en I put him down—
dat's your Tatay Ponso, my younger broder—because
Nanay, always in the fields dat time, or looking for clams
to sell in the *taboan*. In dos days, my father always fishing,
or playing wit' his gray cock, the *bulanting*, always
massage, exercise, blowing tobacco smoke on its face.
You lucky to have a real Barbie, a gift from Tita Penny
from Canada. See dis Barbie? She got plenty of clothes—
for sleeping, for going to de church, for ballroom dancing.
Ay, also lots of shoes, earrings, necklace, and a car, too! (25)

One finds the ensuing laughter alienating, as one realizes that Barbie is an imposition of American capitalist ideology on the woman-persona who lives in an impoverished, remote corner of the Global South. Through what seems to be a harmless toy, the colonizer's ideas of beauty, body, and class are enforced in the everyday life of the colonized. However, the whole discourse that Barbie brings becomes the source of the material from which the woman-persona talks back to the colonial master. She speaks eloquently in a language recognizable to be understood but different to resist hegemonic colonial standards of linguistic propriety.

For example, one quickly notices that the self-translation is interspersed and accentuated with borrowings such as *taboan*, *bulanting*, *pandak*, and Cebuano expressions like *pastilan intawon*, *bitaw*, and *lagi*, all untranslated. All throughout, one also encounters calque such as “Curse de evil luck” for *Pinisting dako* and literal translations carried to the extreme such as “Please fan me, so hot” for *Paypayi ko bi, init kaayo*. The smattering of interjections and particles such as *ay*, *tara*, *ba*, and *na* makes the poem's tone more conversational and, even, gossipy. Initially, one might comment that all this is for humorous effect. However, the decision to mess around with English could also be read as deliberate defiance of convention and correctness compelled by *Merkano/Amirkano* colonial institutions. Deliberate because the self-translations are not in a bizarre kind of English, suggesting that the communicative purpose is still essential in the translation process. However, the self-translations ensure the reader is placed in the presence of an Otherness, understood somehow but always with the risk of error and misinterpretation. Alunan's self-translations of these two *balak* are, therefore, not echoes of a Cebuano “original,” but are poems in themselves, counterpointing and amplifying what is unsaid in the Cebuano *balak*.

Let us look into another aspect of self-translation in *Istorya ni Carmelitung Kutoon* (Carmelita the Cootie Girl), amplification, and how this is used as a strategy to interrogate not just the Cebuano text, but also American colonial historiography on an episode of the Philippine-American War known as the “Balangiga Massacre.” The event is told from the perspective of an old woman recalling her girlhood in the besieged town of Balangiga,

Eastern Samar, whose men took arms against the American colonial military. Because the *balak* assumes a young girl's voice, the narrative is structured along with a mundane activity of rural folk: *panghinguto* (killing lice in the head of another using one's thumbs' fingernails), playfully rendered as "louse-hunting." Carmelita, the young girl-persona, makes an ingenious connection between her mother's "louse-hunting" where not a single louse on her head is spared and the victory won by Balangiga townsfolk against the American colonizers where not a single American escaped.

Nahauli ra man hinuon si Itay, pila 'to ka semana.
Pagbalik niya, among kamaisan nahimo nang kasagbotan
lay wa masurko. Daghang giabot ug gutom adtong panahona.
Apan wa magdugay, nakabalos sad mo, no?
Amo silang gipamatay, mora sad sila'g mga kutong
way dag-anan dihang amo silang nasakpan.
Gipanadtad, gipangluba sa among mga kalalakin-an,
gipang-irok bisa'g kinsay hing-agian sa kadalanan.
Mga banyagang puti, ambot asa to sila gikan!
Unsay ilang katuyoan, wa gyud mi atoy kabangkaagan,
labi na ang Balangiga hilit man lagi sa nga tanan (58).

Tatay come home after few weeks.
By den, weeds are plenty in the cornfield.
Hunger that season in Balangiga.
But soon we make de revenge.
One day we kill dem, one morning
we had de chance, we cut dem down
our men crush dem like de cooties.
Dos white men not-like-us,
where dey come from, who know?
Why dey come here, who could say?
Balangiga so small, so far away" (65).

The line, *mga banyagang puti*, is amplified as "Dos men not-like-us" in two ways: it interrogates the *puti* or "whiteness" in the Cebuano text by an underhanded way of saying that the military atrocity committed in Balangiga, as part of the US imperialist project, is a racist formation, and it critiques American colonial historiography by emphatically calling the *banyaga*, the

Merkano/*Amirkano*, “dos men not-like-us.” This remark is a critical turn in the self-translation because *banyaga* could have simply been translated as “foreigner.” Why opt, then, for the gauche “dos men not-like-us”? The answer is in the intertext Alunan draws between the concept of the white American foreigner and local folklore, particularly Waray verbal lore circulating in places like Balangiga, where otherworldly beings are usually called *diri sugad ha aton* (Gloss: not like us). According to folklore, these beings live in technologically advanced cities, are of fair skin, and harm human beings (see Alunan, *Susumaton: Oral Narratives of Leyte* 2-24). The reference to the American colonizers as “dos men not-like-us” in the self-translation amplifies this foreignness based on why precisely the American military personnel who invaded Balangiga are intruders. This reference, in turn, justifies their “massacre,” as shown by the vengeance exacted by Carmelita’s father and all of Balangiga’s menfolk. Like the other poems, *Istorya ni Carmelintang Kutoon* / “Carmelita the Cootie Girl” proves the intertextual, interrogative stance of self-translation, involving a back and forth movement between languages and cultures, that is, a double poetics in that interliminal zone of encounter with radical alterity.

“It was difficult to migrate this poem from Cebuano to English,” Alunan writes about *Istorya ni Carmelintang Kutoon*, “because the persona is deeply rooted in the culture of its linguistic community. There is a way of dealing with the translation that would be close to this community and visually intelligible to a reader. Filipinos are familiar enough with the phonology although there are many who make fun of it. Who are the imagined audience of this story? Who are the tautological audience of the poem? This is beyond any writer’s prediction. It is a risky undertaking.” She further reflects: “Is there a future for this kind of translation in my country? One does not have to live in the Philippine outback to hear this kind of English. This too, is how we are, no apologies” (Alunan, “Notes on the Bilingual Writer”).

Conclusion

An affinity between translation and travel is evident in the theoretical fabric of translation studies. The act of translation entails an initial position,

bordering between languages, followed by a movement from that space to another, where one encounters the Other, and back. The keyword is movement (Spivak 398; Benjamin 760; Dingwaney 8; Tymoczko 19). Jacques Derrida in “What is a Relevant Translation?” unwound the fibers that bind translation and travel together when he elaborated on the significations that pressure and produce a term such as “translation”: “...the *travail* of childbirth, but also the *transferential* and *transformational travail*, in all possible codes and not only that of psychoanalysis, will enter into competition with the more neutral motif of translation, as *transaction* and as *transfer*... [Relevant] is not only *in* translation, as one would say in the works or in transit, *travelling*, *travailing*, in *labor*” (353, italics in original).

By breaking “translation” into its smallest etymons, Derrida stretches the term semantically to its utter limits and forces it to disseminate, “... interrupts the circulation that transforms into an origin what is actually an after-effect of meaning” (21). Therefore, translation and travel belong to the same signifying chain, knit into a web of intertextual relations. But what of “text”? What does it have to do with “travel” and “translation”?

As textile and woven cloth, the “text,” according to Barthes, “*is experienced only in an activity, a production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop, at the end of a library shelf, for example; the constitutive movement of the Text is a *traversal* [*traversée*]: it can cut across a work, several works” (75, italics in original). Akin to Derrida’s *dissémination*, Barthes’s “Text” “achieves a plurality of meaning, an *irreducible* plurality... not a coexistence of meanings but passage, traversal; thus, it answers not to an interpretation, liberal though it may be, but to an explosion, a dissemination” (77).

As conjunctive with “travel,” the text travels across periods and locations, across media and modalities, across cultures and languages. It challenges reading and writing parameters, upsets singularities and unities, and maps out terrains of discourse and subjectivity. As identified with “travel,” the text “cuts across” and makes incisions in wherever it finds itself at the moment, be it history or geography. These relations are, by necessity, provisional and un-hierarchical, that is, one term simultaneously permeates the other: text *and* travel, text *as* travel. Nothing remains the same in these traversals,

where given contexts break and new contexts are engendered (Derrida 123). In the words of Edward Said, "... movement into a new environment is never unimpeded... This complicates any account of transplantation, transference, circulation, and commerce..." (115).

Said was, of course, speaking here of "theories and ideas," but he might have as well added "translation." Travel complicates texts, and texts are already translations in themselves because they track the paths of language. Such movement between points or nodes is what Deleuze and Guattari proposed when they pushed for a "nomadology, the opposite of a history," which "is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus" (23). Mobility across "lines of segmentarity and stratification" and "lines of flight or deterritorialization" enables a cartographic understanding of rhizomatic networks within which language moves (Deleuze and Guattari 21). The freedom of movement that translation affords opens up multiple entryways into language in nonlinear, nonhierarchical habits of mind that challenge static centers, singularities, and binaries such as author/translator, source text/target text, and original/translation. The translator as nomadic subject maps these movements thereby presenting a broader view of the workings of language and its multitude of relations be it culture, philosophy, micropolitics, and economics. Travel is therefore the necessary condition for translation to be even possible, for the text to be text, or for poetry to be poetry.

In the act of self-translation, one language inevitably touches the other such that distinctions between source and target texts, original and translation, author and translator, obscure and dim. As seen in the reading of Alunan's self-translations, the demands of one literary tradition impinge upon another in the translation process. Hetrolingualism or multilingualism brings a repertoire of strategies, though not mutually exclusive, in addressing a particular intertext, enabling the poet to navigate between signs. Through simplification, literal translation, explication, and explicitation, Alunan observed economy and precision, principles she also follows in her poetry in English, in her self-translations. However, the self-translations were restrained in contrast with the Cebuano poems that were rife with humor

and playfulness. Cebuano linguistic and cultural elements in her *balak* had to be understated in her self-translations. In fact, she needed to rewrite some of her Cebuano poems in her English self-translations to accommodate her poetics, which gave premium on brevity, precision, and the logical arrangement of details. For her self-translations to stand as poems in themselves, calque and borrowings came in handy. The self-translations can be identified with the broader literary tradition of Philippine postcolonial Anglophone writing. As such, her self-translations amplified what was suggested in the Cebuano poems, thus, adding more texture and intricacy to the self-translations. In a way, her back and forth, to and fro movements between languages, cultures, and traditions produced her self-translated texts.

Alunan's Cebuano *balak* may have "migrated" into her translations in English. However, it may also be said that her self-translations, informed by the poetics of her writing in English, also traveled back to her Cebuano *balak*.

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Pag-Balik

The Dynamics of Repetition in Virginia Moreno's *The Onyx Wolf*

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Abstract

Philippine serial colonialism left indelible marks in the consciousness of the Filipino nation and thus may be considered as cultural trauma. The large volume of literary works focusing on the issue of colonialism demonstrates the impact of this trauma and exhibits what in trauma studies is called repetition. This study distinguishes the repetition presented in Virginia Moreno's *The Onyx Wolf* because it indicates working-through and appropriates the concept to the Filipino context. The Filipino word *balik* embodies this unique form of repetition. Specifically, the Philippine experience of repetition as displayed in *The Onyx Wolf* involves *pagpapabalik-balik* (going back and forth), *pagbalik* (striking back and giving back), and finally *pagbabalik* (coming home).

Keywords

cultural trauma, Philippine colonialism, repetition, *The Onyx Wolf*, working-through

In the article “Toward a Cultural Theory of Trauma,” Jeffrey Alexander posits that cultural trauma “occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (307). Along the same lines, renowned Filipino critic Resil Mojares, in his essay “Haunting of the Filipino Writer,” claims that “[c]olonialism is the trauma of Philippine literature” (300). Mojares explains that this traumatic historical event so greatly disturbed the community that it caused the dislocation of the soul and the disorientation of the body of the Filipino people (300). He continues that “[c]olonialism created such a divide in our collective consciousness that [Jose] Rizal and the nineteenth-century nationalists lamented the loss of memory of our ‘ancient nationality,’ dreamed of lost archives, and imagined the long colonial period as a ‘dark age’ that separated a people from their roots in the past” (301).

Rizal, the Philippine national hero, exposed in his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* the grim social situation of the country under Spanish colonial rule. Later generations, however, would confront the consequences of the American colonization and the Japanese occupation during the Second World War.

Due to the impact of serial colonization, modern Filipino writers continued to produce literary works which attempt to retrieve the past, reinterpret history, or relocate the nation’s soul. In fact, even without counting Rizal’s *Noli* and *Fili*, Philippine literature—from fiction to poetry to drama—is composed of many works dealing with the colonial experience and its effects on the country: *The Woman Who Had Two Navels, Cave and Shadows, Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, and “Summer Solstice” by Nick Joaquin; *Viajero* by F. Sionil Jose; *Dream Eden, The Peninsulars, and Three Cornered-Sun* by Linda Ty-Casper; “A Wilderness of Sweets” by Gilda Cordero-Fernando; *The Trilogy of St. Lazarus* by Cirilo F. Bautista; *Walang Sugat* by Severino Reyes; *Kalantiaw* by Rene O. Villanueva, *In My Father’s House* by Elsa Coscolluela; *When the Rainbow Goddess Wept* by Cecilia Manguerra Brainard.

The list could go on and on, attesting to the seeming fixation of Filipino writers on the country's serial colonial experience. Indeed, Mojares was right to describe the Philippine experience of serial colonization as trauma for, given such a large corpus of works on the matter, it certainly left indelible marks on the Filipino identity. Having identified our colonial experience as traumatic, the more important question is identifying whether our case is leaning toward the aporetic direction, which sees trauma as endless repetition, or the therapeutic, which shows the possibility of healing.

In trying to answer this question, this paper counts among the attempts to combine postcolonial studies and trauma studies. Undeniably, many post/colonial experiences—racial discrimination, slavery, genocide, forced migration, imposed erasure of native culture—cause repression and trauma on both the individual and the cultural level. Adding a psychoanalytic perspective may expand our understanding of how far-reaching the effects of colonial atrocities could be. Abigail Ward also points to this potential when she wrote that “the application of psychology to the study of post-colonialism offers a deeper understanding of the effects [of post/colonial traumatic experiences] on the psyche” (171). Furthermore, psychoanalytic theories may provide ideas on how to handle these issues not just on a socio-political level but also on a psycho-cultural, or even personal, level.

Yet, as post-colonial critic Irene Visser states, there still seems to be “no consensus about the question whether trauma theory can be effectively ‘postcolonialized’ in the sense of being usefully conjoined with or integrated to postcolonial studies” (270). There are several reasons why it seems hard to incorporate the two.

First, many important names and paradigms in trauma studies originate from the West. Sigmund Freud, whose works form the basis of many fundamental concepts in trauma theory, is European while Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra are American. Many of the seminal texts in the field are about the Holocaust, an event that occurred to Jews in Europe. Also, the paradigm for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is based on the diagnostic manual of the American Psychological Association.

Second, understanding history is important in postcolonial studies while, in trauma studies, the accessibility and reliability of history are usually put into question. Victims of trauma may experience failure to recall certain incidents or difficulty to construct a coherent understanding of circumstances related to the traumatic event. This reason leads to the third point of contention between postcolonial studies and trauma studies: the strong influence of the aporetic stance which highlights trauma's unspeakability and implies that healing is impossible.

Since postcolonialism emphasizes the importance of resistance and agency, its critics will understandably have reservations about incorporating trauma theory. However, I believe that the reasons for contention can be overcome.

In this paper, I aim to appropriate trauma theory to the Philippine experience of trauma. I will explain how certain theories from the West, specifically Freud's "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through," can be applicable to the Philippine experience, making the foreign surprisingly familiar. For the issue of lack of historical referentiality and aporia, I will show how tapping alternative sources and using other modes of articulation can supplement facts and reconstitute history, thus facilitating healing. Using this methodology, I will demonstrate that the Philippine literary output, in general, and Virginia Moreno's *The Onyx Wolf*, in particular, may be leading toward the therapeutic, not the aporetic, direction.

Moreno's *The Onyx Wolf* won third prize in the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Literary Contest for Drama for the year 1969 to 1970 and was staged under the direction of Rolando Tinio on August 27, 1971, during the inauguration of CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino (Tiongson 7: 219-220).

Moreno's piece is a play-within-a-play which presents how the theater company of the Director Huseng Batute prepares for their next production: a historical drama also entitled *The Onyx Wolf*. Because of its metatheatrical structure, the play follows two story arcs: the theater company preparing for their production and the narrative of Philippine history pieced together by Huseng Batute, the Director of the play-within-Moreno's-play. Accordingly,

the actors and actresses of Huseng Batute's group take on roles of famous characters or personages derived from Philippine history and literature, making such sources intertexts of Moreno's work. Likewise, the play has two dramatic spaces: onstage for the enactment of the Spanish colonial period and offstage for backstage preparations set during the American colonial period. Throughout the drama, the onstage and the offstage scenes are interspersed, making the exposition of the Philippine colonial experience non-linear.

These non-linear, intertextual, and metatheatrical qualities allow Moreno's dramatic text to exhibit a form of repetition that is not only therapeutic but also appropriate to the Filipino context. To demonstrate how repetition works in *The Onyx Wolf*, I would like to re-evaluate the definition of belated repetition and investigate how such formulations could be compatible with the Filipino experience of repetition as displayed in *The Onyx Wolf*.

The concept of belated repetition, which captures the haunting quality of trauma and the time gap between the event and the recurrence of the trauma, comes from Sigmund Freud. In "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through," Freud formulates the concept by distinguishing it from acting-out; he explains that the traumatized person or entity "reproduces [the forgotten] not as memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (150). Understandably, because of the time gap, it becomes a struggle to remember a significant portion of the traumatic event, making the memory questionable, if not unavailable or incomprehensible; hence, the lack of awareness of the repetition on the part of the traumatized.

In a way, the Philippines suffers from this unavailability of the past. Quoting writer-critic Danilo Francisco M. Reyes' introduction for the Tagalog region section for an anthology of Philippine literature:

The most glaring consequence of this encounter [colonization] is the loss of Tagalog epic literature. Clearly, the experience does violence to the Tagalog's understanding of his life, natural world, and folk experiences as it deprives him of a mythic hero. The Tagalog are eluded by this primordial figure after whom they could pattern their values and visions and from

whom they could draw a clear code of being. Haunted by this tragic loss of their foundational text, Tagalog writers have created a literature always aspiring to reconcile art with the desire to repossess their ethnicity (a lost sense of the nation) and, in practical terms, to dream up versions and visions of their subdued society (181).

One can deduce from Reyes' explanation that part of the reason for the proliferation of literary works addressing the nation's history may be the loss of critical archival data. This loss may be the explanation why, until now, the writers continue to reinterpret and to fill in the gaps of Philippine history. So, like the traumatized in Freud's formulation of belated repetition, the Filipinos persistently repeat in writing their colonial experience and attempt to make sense of it.

On the other hand, unlike the traumatized in Freud's concept, our writers do know what they are repeating through their writing. The choice of a topic is a commitment that a writer makes. Their literary outputs could even be considered as testimony and processing combined because literature can supplement gaps in history as well as facilitate understanding of cultural issues among many other concerns. As follows, I believe that a more suitable way of viewing repetition, at least in the Philippine literary context, is Freud's definition of the concept in "Repression." Here, he explains that symptoms of trauma "constitute indications of a *return of the repressed*" (4:93; emphasis added).

Repetition, formulated as a return, seems more appropriate to the Philippine context, for it captures the diverse connotations of the Filipino verb *pag-balik*, which plainly means repetition in its base form (*balik*), but could actually capture the implications of the word return when combined with affixes. Consequently, this Filipino word also reflects better the dynamics of repetition in *The Onyx Wolf*. This appropriation finds further validity when one looks up the meaning of the original term used by Freud who coined this concept: *Wiederholen*. This term is made up of two words, *wieder* and *holen*, which, according to the *Langenscheidt's Dictionary*, mean "again" and "to fetch," respectively (Springer 510; 28). Thus, *Wiederholen* means to get hold of something again. Understood this way, Freud's orig-

inal formulation of the concept of repetition becomes more meaningful. The memory that one repeats is something that one is trying to reclaim or to get hold of again. *Balik* turns out to be closer to the original than initially perceived.

In this paper, I will argue that repetition in Virginia Moreno's *The Onyx Wolf* undergoes three stages, all revolving around the concept of *balik*: a sense of recurrence by way of going back and forth (*pabalik-balik* or in its progressive form: *pagpapabalik-balik*), a sense of response or reciprocation (*pagbalik* which is synonymous to the Filipino word *pagganti*, although the latter has stronger connotations of vengeance), and, finally, a sense of coming home (*pagbabalik* as in *pag-uwi* in Filipino).

Pagpapabalik-balik: Repeatedly Going Back and Forth

In many ways, repetition abounds in *The Onyx Wolf*, most of which relate to or revolve around the character Itim Asu or The Onyx Wolf, a guerilla-like figure whose presence—literally and figuratively—haunts the play. Besides having the text named after her, she appears avenging the brutal assassination of her husband Governor General Bustamante in the 3 middle scenes of this 8-scene play. Even though she dies at the hands of her enemies shortly after killing a priest and leaving his body inside the confessional box, her cause and her anguish live on through other characters which could be considered echoes or mirrors of her.

Primarily, she is Doña Luisa, wife of Governor General Bustamante. Yet, in her daughter's husband, she finds an avenger: Angelito de los Santos y Soliman, heir of pre-colonial Tondo's Rajah Sulaiman. Angelito, because of his cause, becomes a mirror of Itim Asu. By extension, the young actor playing Angelito, for being a real-life guerilla on-the-run, embodies the resistance against the Spanish colonial rulers started by Itim Asu. Accordingly, he creates a link between Itim Asu and the other characters he portrays onstage, all of which subvert colonial rule: Simoun from Rizal's *Fili* and Elias from Rizal's *Noli*.

Another important mirror image of Doña Luisa is the actress who portrays her in Huseng Batute's drama. Literally, she brings Itim Asu to

life onstage. Furthermore, because of her, Itim Asu finds a connection to Angelito's native priestess mother who, all of a sudden, channels the spirit of her ancestor Rajah Sulaiman when the young Angelito's lineage was questioned by the Spanish officials.

Those examples of mirroring may be considered instances of repetition in the sense of *pagpapabalik-balik*. One may ask why I used *pagpapabalik-balik* instead of the Filipino word *pag-uulit*. While *pag-uulit* also means repetition, its connotation is a recurrence in a progression which, when not stopped, may continue until infinity. I, however, do not see the echoes of Itim Asu as recurrences in a timeline leading to infinity. They are recurrences, but their appearance at certain points in time exhibits the dynamic of going back and forth. Moreover, the text is metatheatrical and therefore self-aware. The repetitions are part of the design; they are critical in the text's meaning-making.

One significant example of repetition is the death of Itim Asu and all her mirror images, except the Old Actress, in the story. That each of these images champion resistance as a lone quixotic figure without so much of a sidekick or an army means that, whenever the champion dies, the resistance, in need of a leader, takes a step backward. It only moves forward anew once another champion emerges. Hence, it is more appropriate to describe this kind of repetition as *pagpapabalik-balik* than mere *pag-uulit*.

Moreover, *pagpapabalik-balik* is present in the production team's investigation of history. Drawing from Dominic LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, acting-out and working-through are "intimately related" because they are "parts of a process" (143). LaCapra realizes that a traumatized person will, at some point, need to face and grapple with repetition, but he clarifies that not all repetition is compulsive. Even when working-through, repetition may occur in that the process "requires going back to problems" with the hope of "transforming the understanding of them" (148). He also explains that, in this process, the patient must labor to "gain critical distance" from the traumatic situation and learn to "distinguish between past, present, and future" (143). The research that Huseng Batute's production team does can be interpreted as a process of going back and forth. They dig the archives in

order to create a coherent story out of the fragments of history. Through this process, they can reorganize the sequence of past and present. The result of this process of revisiting and reorganizing history is the play *The Onyx Wolf* which features the repeated appearance of figures of resistance.

Notably, even the order chosen by Moreno displays a going back and forth. It starts with a Spanish event which is revealed to be a rehearsal in the next scene. Then it goes back to the Spanish period of the play-within-a-play then to the American period of the theater company. Finally, it ends with the theater company inviting their audience, the people of Manila, to “come onstage and play a part” (26). Here, Mang Norio—the theater company’s spokesperson— extends the duty of understanding and reconstructing history to the people of Manila. This ending is the culmination of Moreno’s and Batute’s going back and forth in history. Through all of those examples, *pagpapabalik-balik* is exhibited in the play.

Pagbalik: Repetition for Striking Back, Repetition for Giving Back

Looking at the examples of mirrors and repetitions in *The Onyx Wolf*—and even other characters for that matter, one may observe a certain trend. They all manifest the following characteristics either singly or in combination: an experience of oppression or silencing, an affiliation with revolutionary movements against the country’s oppressors, and a dual identity which, in one way or another, serves the purpose of the resistance. When seen in the light of the context of these figures in the original text from which they were drawn, these common characteristics become even more evident.

Governor General Bustamante and his wife Doña Luisa fulfill the criterion of silencing because husband and wife have been silenced in real life. Bustamante’s character is based on Fernando Manuel Bustamante y Bustillo, Mayor of Txacala in Mexico and later on appointed Governor General of the Philippines on the 9th of August 1717 (Rosca: 5:1241). Owing to his good record, he was given the said position and “was charged with the specific task of putting to order the Public Treasury” (5: 1241). That the Public Treasury



Fig. 1. A faithful photographic reproduction of Félix Resurrección Hidalgo's *The Assassination of Governor General Bustamante*, an oil on canvas painting circa 1904. Public domain. From Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7a/Hidalgo%27s_The_Assassination_of_Governor_General_Bustamante.jpg.

“was in a sorry state” implies that officials could have been pocketing some of the money (5:1241).

Like a quixotic figure, Bustamante fought the whole corrupt system (and that included government officials, merchants, and friars). Once in office, he “seized the goods and properties of rich merchants and others who owed the Public Treasury money” and even “pursued an investigation of the activities of persons who held royal offices in trust before his arrival” (5: 1241). These actions establish Bustamante as an upright official who would not tolerate the shameful customs of leadership practiced by fellow Spaniards.

On the other hand, Bustamante’s wife, who later becomes known as The Onyx Wolf or Itim Asu, finds herself homeless after her husband’s death. This explains her need to take refuge in the home of Juan de los Santos, Angelito’s father. At some point after this, she assumes a dual identity by being a vengeful guerilla known as Itim Asu, concealing her real self as the wife of Bustamante.

The lady’s choice of alias is likewise interesting: that of a wolf—“sharp of eye” and “swift of foot” or even “beastly” as the text reveals (Moreno 17). By taking on an alias that connotes a beastly image, she displays how oftentimes the colonized is described as a beast or an animal deprived of human faculties and considered a lesser being (Mbembé 1). This image evokes the primal human desires that are relegated into the unconscious realm which when allowed release may be difficult to control. With all the beastly strength she could muster, she strikes back at her enemies and threatens their position of power. Indeed, Itim Asu encapsulates the vengeful aspect of the return of the repressed.

Then again, the figure of the wolf is not only wild and powerful; it can be nurturing. One of the more evident sources about the wolf’s nurturing character is the story of Romulus and Remus, the twins suckled and brought up by a wolf. That myth, however, may be too remote a source for Itim Asu’s character. A source closer to the context of Bustamante’s wife is the Mexican myth of La Loba. That one of the basis texts of Moreno’s drama is the novel *La Loba Negra* only strengthens the need to look at this Mexican source. La Loba is an outlander who reassembles and resurrects dead animals, especially

wolves (Estes 29-30). As Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes describes, La Loba takes it upon herself “to collect and preserve especially that which is in danger of being lost to the world” (29). And she does this by singing: “La Loba sings some more, and more of the creature comes into being; its tail curls upward, shaggy and strong... And still La Loba sings so deeply that the floor and the desert shakes, and as she sings, the wolf opens its eyes, leaps up, and runs away down the canyon” (30). Given her ability to revive dead wolves and animals, La Loba lends a nurturing quality to Itim Asu’s wolf-like image.

This nurturing quality grants the figure of *La Loba* an alternative kind of power, one that is drawn from magic and the control of life force, making her a character who can transcend death and material limitations. In a way, this is applicable to Moreno’s Itim Asu as well. As explained under the heading of *pagpapabalik-balik*, the play-within-a-play is an attempt to supplement the Philippines’ gap-filled archives. Itim Asu, being the central figure of the play, alludes to almost all revolutionary characters in the drama, and so exhibits a power to figuratively transcend death and material limits. Likewise, the project of supplementing or reviving history also rests on her centrality in the text because the drama has been named after her.

Picking up from the centrality of Itim Asu, I will now shift my focus on the other characters that mirror her. As explained earlier, Itim Asu is related to the Older Actress who portrays her and to Angelito’s mother who channels Rajah Sulaiman. Furthermore, Itim Asu’s battle is continued by Angelito who marries her daughter and right after avenges her death. Angelito then connects to the Young Actor who portrays him onstage and who in turn connects Itim Asu to the other roles he plays onstage, Simoun and Elias, and to Sakay whose life is very much similar to that of the Young Actor who idolizes him.

These afore-mentioned characters (the Young Actor, Simoun, Elias, Sakay, Angelito, Rajah Sulaiman, Angelito’s mother, and the Older Actress) are all victims of some form of oppression or discrimination and are also revolutionaries living double lives. The Young Actor is secretly part of Sakay’s guerilla group. Sakay, on the other hand, manages to evade author-

ities by using his roles as cover and by moving from one theater to another. Elias dies acting as a double for Ibarra while Simoun is Ibarra in disguise. Angelito is also a revolutionary drawn from the character of Emilio Melgar, a wealthy merchant by day and a guerilla leader by night in the novel *La Loba Negra*. Angelito's mother and Rajah Sulaiman are related to each other; the latter's spirit even possessed the former's body. Finally, the Older Actress, like her son, is secretly a revolutionary as hinted by her slip-of-the tongue wherein she accidentally reveals that she knows how to use a real gun.

The reason for these characters' involvement in the revolution is a prior experience of oppression or discrimination. Angelito's lineage has been doubted by authorities. In *Noli*, Elias is depicted as a wealthy man who lost everything once the identity of his real father is revealed. Ibarra suffers a similar fate and so hides only to return as Simoun. Rajah Sulaiman's kingship and the pre-colonial culture preserved by the native priestess ancestors of Angelito's mother have been undermined by colonizers. The Older Actress and the Young Actor are the drama's representatives for the real-life Filipinos who suffered under colonial rule. And, finally, Sakay has been oppressed even as a guerilla leader for he has been labeled as a bandit despite fighting for his country's freedom.

The other characters' and Itim Asu's attempt to strike back at their oppressors are ways of reciprocating the oppression they experienced. In other words, their involvement in guerilla movements and the revolution is their return to the colonizers, their *balik* or *ganti* to them. However, striking back at the oppressors, while empowering and, in some ways, may even be considered a necessary part of the process of working-through, is not supposed to be the end itself. Relating this to trauma theory, the moment of revenge and revolution may be interpreted as a release of the repressed which is understandably angry and uncontrollable for it has been concealed or buried for a very long time. But, returning to the colonial context, the reason for the upheaval is to return a sense of fairness and to reclaim one's rights. The *Ilustrados* wanted to be treated equally and the *Katipuneros* wanted freedom from oppressive rule. Simply put, there is a goal other than fighting, that is, to put things to right.

Similarly, the return of the repressed in the form of several characters in *The Onyx Wolf* can be assumed as attempts to put things to right. The repressed is making itself felt in order to finally rest knowing that freedom and equality have been won and, most of all, identity has been reclaimed. This, I believe, is the reason why the play does not end with a revolutionary actively firing shots at enemies and this time winning the battle.

As emphasized earlier, most characters carry on the battle mostly alone. When they die, the revolution takes a step backward before it moves forward again. In order for this not to happen again, the fight needs to reach everyone, thus, the need to perform the drama in front of the people of Manila. Notably, this drama begins with an invitation to “later on come onstage and play a part” (Moreno 26). The embodiment of the dead heroes are onstage and it is clear that they have passed away, but the battle to reclaim one’s identity is now being passed on to the people of Manila. This may be the figurative meaning of Mang Norio’s line saying that “the heroes now live on you, and you in them” (26).

Nevertheless, there is still a problem. How can identity be reclaimed if there are gaps in history? How will the story be ours if we do not even know the whole narrative? The drama provides a solution to this issue. It may not be the ideal solution, but it’s a solution nonetheless: to use artistic imagination and recreate something out of the fragments that we still have. In the play, it is through Huseng Batute’s stitching of various historical and fictional events that some sense of coherence is achieved. By putting the fictional alongside the historical, the Director Huseng Batute offers an interpretation of Philippine history and identity. This act relates to the goal of LaCapra’s understanding of working-through—one wherein a sense of temporal sequence is regained, one wherein a clearer sense of past, present and future is achieved.

This emphasis on the power of the imagination intersects with the post-colonial project of re-working history which Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins argue in their book about post-colonial drama. They say that “post-colonial reworkings of the European master historical narrative are not always concerned with constructions of history *per se* but with constructing

the self in history” (108). This type of reworking of history is what Moreno accomplishes through the character of Huseng Batute, the director who constructs the repressed into his version of the Philippine narrative.

That said, the play not only reconstructs history based on the fragments but also incorporates the embodiment/s of the repressed in the reworked narrative of the nation. Because of this reworking, Moreno through Huseng Batute owns the fragments of history and in doing so returns not just vengeance but a new imagination of the nation. The narrative ceases to be just an anger-laden *pagbalik*, which in that case is only *pagganti*, but a positive response to an otherwise not-so-ideal situation. This idea leads us to the final appropriation of the concept of repetition, *pagbabalik* or coming home.

Pagbabalik: Repetition as a Way Home

It is important to take note of the event that enables the performance of Huseng Batute’s play: the celebration of the naming of the streets of Manila after local heroes. The act of naming is very meaningful for naming is an exercise of power. That the streets of the Manilenyo’s home will once again be named after local heroes is very symbolic. It may mean that the people of Manila are now reclaiming and re-familiarizing themselves with their home whose administration had once been taken away from them, making it truly an act of *pagbabalik* or coming home. This idea is reinforced by the theater company’s spokesperson Mang Norio who says:

We have come to celebrate the naming of your streets after the old heroes because they are dead and you now live in them..Since we cannot afford an elaborate stage or rich costumes or pay the real actors—you will recognize them as they face you as your neighbor, your son or your husband, your enemy or your friend but in this zarzuela, all are one....Afterwards, you might want to come onstage and play a part—to relive those playing tonight. (26)

Clearly, that passage hints that the heroes, while already dead, still remain through the people of Manila who are still living. In the same way, the people of Manila are living on them both literally and figuratively because their homes are now standing on the streets named after the heroes and the

identity the people of Manila have now in a way depends on the beginnings set by the heroes. In more sense than one, the heroes now live in them and they live on their heroes.

I want to highlight the importance of the communal activity presented in the eighth and final scene of *The Onyx Wolf*, a scene so different from all the other ones that came before it. No longer is there a lone quixotic figure singlehandedly fighting the oppressor. Mang Norio, by emphasizing the role of the audience in the play, has broken the fourth wall and extended the battle to the people of Manila. Furthermore, that everyone seems to have a role to play underscores how acting-out can be utilized by drama to lead to working-through. It is not enough for Huseng Batute to just weave a narrative, the theater company needs to act it out onstage to literally and figuratively include the people of Manila.

Although a play is only an act, performing the repetitions in the narrative woven by Huseng Batute becomes a means for the actors to practice until they already understand what is happening. That the play is mostly comprised of rehearsals proves this point. As Ric Knowles, another critic writing about drama and memory, says: “All cultural memory is performative. It involves the transmission of culture through bodily practices such as ritual, repetitions, and habit” (49). The same goes for the people of Manila. They do not have to completely understand initially. It begins with the theater company transmitting their reimagination of the people’s identity. The play is the means to transmit it whereas the people’s taking part in the performance is the method to inscribe it in their memory. Simply put, the rehearsal becomes the tool to make sense of the narrative and acting-out eventually leads to working-through.

From Mourning to Morning

At this point, only one question remains: what is the purpose of enacting a funeral to begin the performance of the play-within-the-play in the final scene? In fact, all one gets to see or read is the funeral. One does not even get as far as the parts rehearsed in earlier scenes. What could be the meaning of this?

One needs to recall that part of the process of working-through the Philippine cultural trauma is to reclaim one's identity. Simply put, working-through, in this case, is also about remembering. According to critic Jocelyn Martin, "[b]oth remembering and mourning require from the person a two-fold process: firstly, one needs to allow for time to pass in order for remembering or mourning to be fully worked-out; secondly, these two experiences tend to move toward ideal results, namely recognition of reality (for remembering) and acceptance of reality (for mourning)" (105). This statement by Martin draws attention to the connection between remembering and mourning. Remarkably, Philippine cultural trauma, having resulted in a loss of memory, exhibits that connection. The range of the events included in the drama attest to the time that has elapsed. Now, to recognize who we are as a people entails a proper mourning of what has been lost and coming to terms with it.

Applying these ideas to *The Onyx Wolf*, one can assume that the performance of a ritual of burial follows what Michel de Certeau's insight about the interment of the past. In *Writing of History*, de Certeau argues that "[w]riting is a tomb in the double sense of the word in that, in the very same text, it both honors and eliminates [the dead]" (101). In the play, performing the burial honors the dead heroes because the purpose of the play is to celebrate the naming of the streets of Manila after them. Also, the performance eliminates the dead because a burial is an honorable way of putting the dead in their proper place, somewhere different from the space for the living.

In this case, the interment of the dead through the performance of Batute's play-within-a-play organizes the living and the dead. Going back to the idea that the revolutionaries in *The Onyx Wolf* represent the repressed returning, one can perceive the dead revolutionaries as related to the unconscious aspect of the mind. Consequently, the living is related to the conscious aspect. The delineation of the conscious and the unconscious, the living and the dead can, therefore, be considered as a way of acceptance and recognition of the way things should be. The repressed, now recognized and appeased, can be laid to rest. Not to be forgotten again, but to be put in its designated place and properly commemorated, so that the living can continue their lives.



Fig. 2. The Manunggul Jar, a neolithic burial jar from Palawan. No rights reserved. From *Wikimedia Commons*, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/Neolithic_Pottery_Burial_Jar%2C_Palawan%2C_890-710_BC_%2825144673285%29.jpg.

The understanding of the trauma having been transformed and the memory having been put in its rightful place allow the living to revisit it, but this time with a critical distance. This space to revisit the memory underscores that working-through is by no means linear and absolute. Going back to this memory at times and even acknowledging its impact are in fact part of working-through. What sets working-through apart from compulsive repetition is not letting the future be controlled by the trauma, the struggle to live a meaningful tomorrow despite the trauma.

At the end of the day, history is created through people's lived experience. While the burial in scene eight may refer to a pre-colonial ritual

of interment such as the one depicted in the Manunggul Jar, the scene as a whole may also remind us of the river chase towards the end of *Noli Me Tangere*. Here, Elias tries to boat Ibarra to safety, but realizing that they are being followed, conceals Ibarra and jumps into the river to mislead the constabularies. But before succumbing to death, he says: “I die without seeing dawn’s light shining on my country... You, who will see it, welcome it for me... don’t forget those who fell during the nighttime.” (Rizal 416). That plea, I believe, is akin to the purpose of the final scene. And while Moreno’s play ends with the people in awe, still not understanding what is unfolding before them (26), the people’s reaction does not leave us with a negative ending. The theater company’s performance is not yet finished. It is up to the audience, which in this case includes us, to grant Mang Norio’s request that they, or rather we, come onstage and play a part.

The Philippine literary circle has accepted Mang Norio’s challenge as evidenced by the number of works discoursing about our colonial history. They prove that colonization did leave indelible marks, both negative and positive, on the Filipino identity, but they also demonstrate the struggle to work-through and make sense of this trauma. Moreno’s *The Onyx Wolf* sheds light on this matter. Because of its self-reflexive characteristic, it becomes a reflection of how the Philippine creative arts, specifically the literature, respond to the issue of colonization. Faced with a fragmented past, our writers and artists use creative means to assemble the remaining pieces, even looking at obscure, unorthodox sources. In this case, one can compare our writers to Itim Asu who embodies the return of the repressed. Consequently, they also go through the three-fold process of repetition: *pagpapabalik-balik*, *pagbalik*, and *pagbabalik*. Their constant revisiting of the colonial past, perhaps even doing research on it the way Huseng Batute does in the play, can be considered a process of going back and forth, whereas the texts themselves become their response to the oppressors as well as their gift to the people. Finally, the act of writing, being simultaneously a means to eliminate the dead and honor them, is their attempt to put the repressed to its designated place and allow the living to go on with their lives. In other

words, it is what LaCapra calls an attempt to understand the past and gain critical distance from it.

I use the word ‘attempt’ because the impact and success of each and every work is another matter which requires a more detailed examination. Furthermore, the process of working-through continues. Since cultural trauma involves a community—in this case, a nation—the process is even more complex and multi-faceted. We can only hope that these attempts may eventually encourage more and more people to respond to Mang Norio’s call and play their respective parts.

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Book Recommendation

Mia Alvar's *In the Country* for Filipino Readers
(and Philippine Short Stories for Americans)

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In the Country, a debut volume of stories by Manila-born, New York-based author Mia Alvar, made quite a splash when it came out in the US in 2015. Reviewers gave the collection, dealing with aspects of Philippine life both in diaspora and at home, glowing endorsement. In some cases the tribute went beyond the accents of praise commonly accorded new entries in the book trade. Maureen Corrigan reported to National Public Radio listeners on a “gorgeous writing style...an imagination [that] seems inexhaustible,” declaring, “as a reader and a new fan, I want more and more and more” (par. 2, 8). Jessica Woodbury wrote simply, “*In the Country* is like no book of stories I’ve ever read and I loved it deeply” (Damien par. 25). Prize committees found merit, too, with PEN, the *New York Times*, Amazon, and numerous other organizations and publications awarding special recognition (“Mia Alvar”). Ordinary readers joined the bandwagon, especially as publisher Penguin Random House brought out a paperback edition in 2015, followed by e- and audiobooks, and arranged for a steady stream of author interviews. On the website *Goodreads* Rachel L. remarked on first not having heard about the collection, then finding it “suddenly everywhere I turned” (“*In the Country*” par. 4). Other subscribers to the site showered down four- and five-star ratings, and adjectives on the order of “stunning”; one suggested Mia Alvar

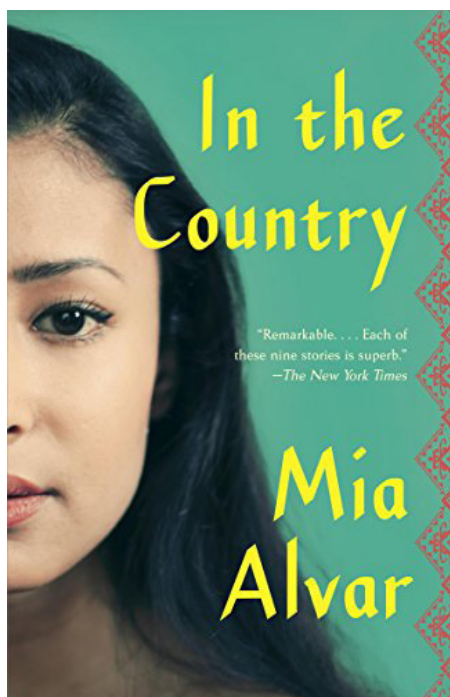


Fig. 1. Mia Alvar's *In the Country*, published in 2016 by Vintage Books. Penguin Random House, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/237106/in-the-country-by-mia-alvar/>.

might be the “new Alice Munro,” referring to Canada’s Nobel Prize-winning short fictionist (par. 15).

The excitement generated in the US literary world raised expectations of a similar reception in the author’s native land. “Surely,” predicted *BuzzFeed* interviewer Matt Ortile, “many Filipinos will...be proud to be represented in [your] book, particularly because it’s a work of literary merit in the United States” (par. 29). However, cheering crowds did not arise to greet the arrival of the book in the Philippines. Instead of creating a splash, it has sunk pretty much without a trace. Although National Bookstore picked up distribution rights and sponsored a promotional tour, including a featured appearance for Alvar at a literary festival in Davao, sales have been modest at best.¹ *In the*

Country has not generated the buzz here that it has across the Pacific. When I mentioned to a number of Filipino colleagues in the literary field that I was considering a review of the book, it turned out that none of them had read it and fewer than half had even heard of it. One volunteered that no one she knew was working on Alvar—which, she added, in a reaction to which interviewer Ortile could have related, “is odd.” Another advanced an explanation for the seeming incongruity: upon learning the venue of publication, she nodded in understanding and offered that Alvar would “not be perceived as a Philippine author.”

Looking to drill down further into this decidedly indifferent welcome, I arranged (or had arranged for me, by a generous colleague) a meeting with several creative writers who had read *In the Country* and knew of its author. It was a rainy afternoon, good time for a literary conversation, and the exchange was a lively one. My interlocutors shared eye-opening insights on the stories, provided background on the book’s—and Alvar’s—arrival in the Philippines, and pointed me toward sources of information and intertextual influences I had not been aware of. But there was no mystery about the reception, in their minds, and little in the work in which to take national pride. Never mind perception: Mia Alvar “is not a Filipino writer,” one participant stoutly maintained, however much she may have identified herself that way in promotional appearances. Another found the stories’ fictional settings “inauthentic.” The term “cultural appropriation” floated into the air. The gut verdict couldn’t have been clearer. *In the Country* does not get it, does not capture Philippine reality as we experience it. The author is taking what is not hers, at worst, or at best violating the tried-and-true M.F.A. maxim to “write what you know.”

Now, this is not the first time a disconnect has opened up between the reception of a book in the United States and in the Philippines. In 1990, Manila-born and New York-based Jessica Hagedorn published *Dogeaters*, to loud acclaim in the US. The topsy-turvy novel of the Marcos years wowed critics and was nominated for one of the very top American literary honors, the National Book Award. But reaction in the Philippines proved decidedly more mixed. This resulted in part from the choice of the title, which offended

far more people than ever considered reading the book (but at least gained it wider recognition than *in the Country* has known). The “thoroughly post-modern” narrative technique (Zamora 89) and a frank handling of various sexual practices also produced their share of consternation. But critics of widely differing political persuasions united to pronounce Hagedorn’s portrayal of then-recent national history lacking in “realism” (Zamora 89). A writer and personal acquaintance from that time thundered a rejection louder than any heard recently from the afternoon group, charging that *Dogeaters* had nothing whatever to say about the actual Philippines. The students in one of the first classes I taught here, to whom I enthusiastically presented a single photocopied (also pirated) copy as a special addition to the syllabus, responded to the novel with what in retrospect seems to have been a mix of perplexed interest and polite resistance.

If this type of disconnect is not new,² and if the reasons for it are not hard to understand (as we shall see, similar instances crop up in other “post-colonial” or analogous situations, and even when the differences between the communities of reader and author are less charged), that does not mean that it is unfailingly a good thing. Important values, literary, cultural, and human, can slip through such a gap as this. That is why the main, or at any rate the first thesis of this essay consists of a recommendation to Filipino readers to give Alvar’s book another chance. The recommendation comes with two rationales. First, *In the Country* has compelling “literary merit,” as that interviewer has said. The stories in this collection are rich in beauty, insight, and interest, to please and to move most any reader. Second, with due respect to my rainy afternoon consultants, and bolstered by the example of Maria Zamora, who has subsequently made a case such as this with respect to *Dogeaters*, I believe it may have something to offer to Filipinos in particular: these same literary qualities honed in on aspects of their distinctive experience.

The word “may” in the preceding sentence needs to be underscored. I am aware that my background as an American professor who has enjoyed a couple of stints teaching and living in the Philippines, and who has written occasionally on Philippine literary topics, by no means qualifies me to

pronounce on what is or is not relevant, useful, or enlightening to Filipino audiences. As Gemino Abad rightly insists, in the introduction to his magisterial anthology of Philippine short stories in English, “we [Filipinos] are our own best critics and interpreters: [of] the way we live, the way we think and feel, how we see what we call ‘our world’” (*Hoard of Thunder*, vol. 1 xiv). My appeal here is only for a reconsideration, or a belated first consideration, on the part of those critics, interpreters, and readers, to see for themselves whether Alvar has produced a work, to use another phrase from interviewer Matt Ortile, of “cultural portraiture” (par. 24), in which they can see true reflections of themselves and their “world.” What’s more, the appeal itself is a tentative one: empirical and analytical rather than argumentative in nature, a laying out of evidence for the judgment of those best situated to judge.

This second provision of the basic recommendation, which attempts to move beyond general literary to specific cultural value, occupies by far the largest portion of the essay. This section begins with a two-part discussion, keyed to issues that came up in the conversation with the writers, first of the concept of “cultural appropriation,” and then of what Jose Y. Dalisay has memorably called “Filipino-ness in fiction,” together with a neutral evaluation of Mia Alvar’s case on both these scores. This evaluation will be based on what may be regarded as external factors, inputs to her fiction: life experience, sense of identity, sense of audience, writing process. Following that, with the same broad question in mind, i.e. of Alvar’s relevance or not to a Philippine audience, I will look to the output, the intrinsic features of the work itself: specifically setting, language, and theme, with the most extensive treatment—really the heart of the essay—going to the last of these. Again, the method here will not be to make judgments from my own limited knowledge, but simply to compare and contrast Alvar’s stories with recent fiction of seemingly unimpeachable “Filipino-ness,” i.e. the texts collected in Abad’s multivolume anthology.³ Holding these two up against one another, taking careful note of convergences and divergences, I hope to allow the reader of this essay to reach some determinations: about the fit or not of Alvar’s work with the canon of Philippine literature; about whether or not

her fiction has something to say about the way Filipinos “live...think and feel...and see [their] world”; and about whether the stories in the collection deserve a place in any future anthologies of Philippine short stories, or only their current place, gathering dust on National Bookstore’s shelves.

Should that reader wish to check the accuracy or adequacy of this comparative analysis by reading Alvar’s stories, be my guest. Irrespective of the findings of the fact check, that perusal will go toward fulfilling the principal recommendation here. For that matter, reading or rereading the pieces in *Hoard of Thunder*, for a similar purpose, will likely also produce an incidental gain. I have discovered this for myself from exploring this body of work, which I set out to review only as a benchmark in relation to Alvar, but which I’ve come to believe has strong “literary merit” of its own. Indeed, the quality of many of these Philippine short stories inspires me to advance, at the close of the essay, something on the order of a second thesis. This also takes the form of a recommendation: one addressing a further disconnect, on the other side of the bilateral literary relationship; urging a reciprocal reading assignment, of Philippine stories, on American readers; and rolling out, as a means of making that assignment doable, a still further recommendation, this one a more markedly practical proposition. But before steering into these choppy cultural waters, let’s first take stock of *In the Country* more or less on its own terms.

For Readers: Good Stories

The first grounds for recommending attention to this book in the Philippines is one that would hold for readers most anywhere: Alvar writes a good story. Testimony to the quality of her work has of course been offered by its critical and public reception. An indirect measure may be found in the circumstances of its publication. As leading authority on the short fiction genre Paul March-Russell has noted, it has become increasingly unlikely for mainstream commercial houses (like Alvar’s publisher, Penguin Random House’s Vintage Books) to publish story collections by a single author, especially a newcomer without a name already made as a novelist (49). Perhaps the only validation lacking has been the choice of one of her pieces for the presti-

gious annual series, *Best American Short Stories*. One wonders if perhaps the reverse of the judgment that has apparently impeded Alvar's acceptance in the Philippines, i.e. that her work comes across as insufficiently "American," may have played in here—although the only stated qualification for selection is publication in a US or Canadian magazine (gay title page).

But external evaluations aside, what makes these stories good? Let us begin with some time-tested and basic criteria, the ones set forth by the judges for the O. Henry Prize, established in 1919: "originality, excellence in organization of plot incidents, skill in characterization, and power in moving emotions" (qtd. in March-Russell 81). Take first the two arguably more objective matters in the list, plot and characterization. Unlike too many contemporary short story writers, content to wind up a situation and let it play out more or less on its own momentum, or worse ready to bail out of artistic responsibility behind a deliberately ambiguous or artificially truncated ending, Alvar works hard on her plots. They tend to be, as one reader has observed, "multi-layered" (*Good Reads* "Jo"), and they move toward aesthetically satisfying and intellectually provocative ending-points. What's more, there's plenty of fictional maneuvering along the way. "Twists abound" in this collection, wrote *The New York Times* reviewer, "as in a good Tagalog movie" (Ramakrishnan par. 2). Many of these turnarounds bring to the surface dark secrets and unexpected cross-purposes, and some are genuinely "gut-punching" (Damien): none more so than climax of the first story in the collection, "The Kontrabida," upending assumptions about who is the hero and who the villain in a family drama. Yet there is seldom any trace of gimmickry in these effects. Indeed, as the *Times* reviewer went on to note, "Alvar's finely wrought shocks...reverberate without easy resolution."

It has become a commonplace of early commentary on the book to say that its stories are "character-driven" ("*In the Country*" par. 4), and in fact Alvar creates rounded, believable fictional personages who live up to Henry James' standard of co-equal weight with "incident," or plot (qtd. in March-Russell 120). But the strength that has been singled out for special note is her way with "morally gray" (Ortile par. 27), flawed characters. Devout Esmeralda of the tale that bears her name, for example, pillar of rectitude in her family,

enters into an unexpected affair and discovers inside herself a craving for sex that reduces distance she has always felt from her drug-addicted brother. In another story, "A Contract Overseas," brother Andoy is the *mensch*, light-hearted, generous, caring. Yet a mysterious hole that appears behind his teeth when he opens his mouth to laugh signals a dangerous weakness in his makeup, a man who truly loves "not wisely but too well." In fact, Alvar shows something of a magical touch with secondary characters like Andoy, snapping them in an instant into unexpectedly full life.

Originality, the first of the O. Henry Prize committee's criteria, is admittedly tough to judge. You no sooner declare a tale to be the wildest, most unlikely thing you've ever heard, and you discover it to be a type found in the folklore of half the world. Certainly, though, it's not every story that contains a character like Baby, the rogue *katulong* of "Shadow Families." When she comes into the lives of the titular middle-class families, she is expected to be much like the other young women in their service: "another sweet, humble church mouse, who'd somehow strike us as a child and a granny all at once" (95). But not so. A tall mestiza, clacking along on heels that make her even taller, trailing clouds of cinnamon-and-roses perfume, Baby insists on speaking only a rough-edged English, refuses nearly every offer of food or routine assistance with her trademark phrase, "Thanks-no," and when accepting a favor returns no gratitude whatever. Her individualism is as unbreakable as it is inexplicable, and it is strategically counterpointed by a collective narrator, a voice speaking as "we" for the families and never identifiable with any one person. "No one could get anywhere" with Baby (98), the voice says, and likewise for the reader. She is a triumph of opacity, a cipher character worthy of comparison with Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener* (if that doesn't diminish the originality of Alvar's conception).

Of the O. Henry criteria, the fourth, "power in moving emotions," is undoubtedly the most subjective. Ample testimony does exist to the emotional power of *In the Country's* stories, but the reactions vary widely from reader to reader, by the nature of the emotion and the story that provokes it.

For example, in *Goodreads* John H. reports being “hit...like a truck” (par. 25) by the title story in the collection, while for another contributor it was “Esmeralda” that “took [her] breath away” (par. 20).

My own taste in these matters, admittedly conditioned more by a lifetime of sappy movies than a career of teaching literature, runs to happy-sad outcomes, moments when things work out or people come together, against all odds but rightly. One such outcome occurs near the end of “The Virgin of Monte Ramon.” Young Danny and his partner Annelise are prevented from dancing the *kuratsa* at the town fiesta, because he is horribly crippled and confined to a wheelchair, and then prevented even from playing their assigned auxiliary role because she becomes crippled by menstrual pains on the day of the fiesta. Yet some time after the event they meet, in a pouring monsoon rain. Annelise curtsies, Danny bows, she promenades around him and he shifts his wheels in the mud to turn with her: the opening movements of the *kuratsa*. Another, less climactic happy-sad triumph (involving one of those deftly drawn secondary characters) occurs in “A Contract Overseas.” Ligaya, the girl from a well-off family whom Andoy has made pregnant and left with his hard-pressed mother and sister while he goes off to work in Saudi, proves herself a massive drag on the household: she is spoiled, peevish, and the inveterate antagonist of the mother. But when Andoy and his income are lost to the family, Ligaya surprises everyone by rejecting her estranged family’s offer to take her in, strapping her newest baby to her back, and plying her mother-in-law’s accustomed odd-jobs route from house to house in the neighborhood.

Of course, the O. Henry committee did not capture everything of value when they laid out their contest rules a hundred years ago. *In the Country’s* stories exhibit a number of additional features that distinguish them as short fiction and as literature. One is descriptive language. A reviewer praised Alvar’s “gift for grounded, human-scale metaphors” (Gentry par. 8), and the figuration in “Esmeralda” of the 9/11 attacks—“When smoke, the second night in one bright hour, again snuffs out the morning” (188)—appears to fit the bill. But she is equally skilled in the creation of concrete, literal images and on occasion in suffusing these with hints of larger meaning, as in this

rendering of a plaster replica of a 400-year-old statue: “The Virgin’s nose was fine and strong, her mouth tiny, her eyes bold” (143). Another merit may be found in depth and complexity. Numerous testimonies may be found to the effect that “each story...feels like it has the weight of a whole novel behind it” (*Goodreads* par. 25). Lastly, there is “human understanding,” without which fiction amounts to, as Eudora Welty put it, “the worst kind of emptiness” (qtd. in *Charters* 2). This quality is prominent here. In a follow-on to the *kuratsa* scene referred to earlier, Danny comes to an epiphany:

It wasn’t easy. But for one brief moment, in the rain and the mud, I saw a world where everyone was struggling in the body he or she had been given. That world and struggle seemed bearable to me, and even beautiful (153-54).

And genial Andoy delivers an actionable nugget of wisdom, when he advises his sister that love takes both time “And money—yes, love does...You’ll learn *that quick*” (252).

All this said, the collection is not perfect. While its evocation of that September 11 morning does indeed “take [the] breath away,” I find “Esmeralda” the only one of the stories that feels in any way contrived. The weaving of the historic event into the plot imposes a more apocalyptic significance than is needed on the tender, conflicted relationship between “Es” and her lover. Too, in some instances there can be a bit too much complexity, novelistic “weight.” And while I experienced some sharp local effects from “In the Country,” in general I agree less with the reader whom it hit like a truck and more with those who found the novella-length narrative moves at the lumbering pace of a truck (*Goodreads* par. 15). This is the piece, coming last in the order, that I lost steam on, causing the book to languish on my bedside table for a year and more. But then, perfection can be something of a brittle virtue. *In the Country*, the collection, has more than enough in it, of both literary excellence and life, if not to inspire all to “love it deeply,” then to repay the attention of serious readers in any country and any culture.

For Filipino Readers: “Portrait” or Caricature?

Time to move to the second provision of the recommendation tendered by this essay as a thesis, i.e. the proposition that this collection may have something in it for Filipino readers specifically: reflections of their distinctive experience that they might recognize and even find illuminating. This is the proposition I offer most diffidently, looking to evaluate rather than advocate for the claim Alvar places on the attention of this particular audience.

Make no mistake, though, there is nothing tentative about the book’s making this claim, first of all through its title: only one “country” is consistently in focus here. Curiously, in view of the preposition that leads off the title phrase, initial American takes on the collection, which seem to have cued a good deal of subsequent commentary, presumed the stories to be set anywhere but in the Philippines: “nine globe-trotting tales” (*Goodreads* par. 1); “Mia Alvar explores Filipino diaspora” (Ayala title); “nine different lives, connected through memories of their home country” (Donoghue par. 1). Yet while immigrants, expats, and OFWs figure prominently, they are by no means the whole of the stories here. Five of the nine take place entirely on native soil (granted, one of these features the sole American protagonist); another depicts a family who can only be the Aquinos, hardly typical “globe-trotters,” and on the cusp of their return from Boston to Manila. One interviewer more accurately captures the overall intention in asking Alvar what she hopes to accomplish by “writing about Filipino experience”—a question the author answers without skipping a beat (Kaplon par. 19). Matt Ortile perhaps best characterizes this aim as “cultural portraiture...through these stories run threads of a distinct cultural fabric that is shared amongst a nation, a diaspora, a proud people” (pars. 24, 36). Yet it is also the case that the portrait painted by *In the Country* has gone largely unnoticed by the great majority of Filipino readers, and been roundly rejected by a select few who have carefully scrutinized it as an inauthentic, if unintended, caricature. So the question of the book’s claim to national cultural space is very much an open one.

I. Externalities

Let us begin an evaluation of this claim with two distinct but related objections raised against it by that small group of writers. Both may be regarded as “externalities,” inputs into the production of literature—matters of the author’s background, identity, craft, intention in several senses—rather than qualities of the produced work, which will be the focus of the second phase of the treatment in this main body of the essay. Before setting out, a caveat: my evidence for these external factors is scattershot, gleanings from interviews and profiles published on the internet. A personal conversation might reveal a fuller, even a different picture. But I have judged that scholarly neutrality is better served by the public record. I do look forward to the possibility of such a conversation someday, perhaps in connection with the project to be proposed at the end of the piece.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

One of these objections, the more charged of the two although it came up slightly later in the conversation and arguably constituted the less fundamental sticking point, is contained in the term “cultural appropriation.” This usage, in the public lexicon since at least the early 1990s, is defined in the Cambridge English Dictionary as “the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing you understand or respect this culture.” Other, less official definitions follow the “especially” with different intensifiers, e.g. the culture of a minority or nondominant group, or with the intent to demean or make fun of the other culture, parade its stereotypes, etc. It seems clear that cultural appropriation understood in this way is tantamount to cultural misappropriation.

The issue of (mis)appropriation has marked one of the many battlegrounds of the culture wars worldwide. In the realm of popular culture, broadsides have been fired at British filmmaker Danny Boyle, whose Academy Award-winning *Slumdog Millionaire* has been accused of exploiting Bollywood styles and Mumbai slum conditions in order to pander to Western expectations of India (Singh), and recently at the half-Filipino hit songster Bruno Mars, charged with trading on African-American styles without

having been “born into the legacy of the culture” (Harriott, “Bruno Mars Controversy”). The matter is typically taken with deepest seriousness in the case of postcolonial and “first nation” cultures, which have been (and continue in some respects still to be) subjected to tremendous pressures not only of appropriation but of de-legitimation and even extirpation emanating from centers of power. A signal episode in the field of literature has brought out the big guns of protest. In 2016 *Harry Potter* author J.K. Rowling published a fictional “History of Magic in North America,” one portion of which was devoted to magic in Native America and featured the Navajo tradition of skinwalkers. The story drew criticism for ignoring tribal distinctions and for being “shallow and poorly researched.” Other Native authors and critics went further, Aaron Paquette declaring, “This is colonialism. Simply put, it’s cultural theft, and these are not her stories to tell” (Fallon par. 6).

Nor have the guns been silent on the other side. In the same year as the Rowling controversy, the American novelist Lionel Shriver delivered a blistering attack on what she took to be the premise of cultural appropriation, decrying the notion that white writers can or should not write about members of other races as an abridgement of artistic freedom, a kind of censorship (Tolentino, “Lionel Shriver”). Other writers have expressed themselves more temperately but would draw a distinction between appropriation and misappropriation, holding out the possibility of a respectful and illuminating artistic venture into unfamiliar cultural territory. They also appear generally inclined to defend the claims of empathy and imagination—without which “stories would be populated by clones of the author”—and to regard the “ventriloquism” reviled by critics of mainstream authors presuming to speak for marginalized subjects as a staple of the art of fiction (Kunzru, et al. par. 7, 18-19).

In fact, cultural appropriation is a difficult if not a wholly intractable issue, complicated by a number of additional factors, including unequal access to publishing opportunities for minority writers and the simultaneous desire on the part of modern audiences for both the representation of diversity and the feel of authenticity in their fiction (Fallon pars. 21-23 ; Kunzru, et al. par. 26). It seems virtually impossible either to resolve or to take firm

sides in the conflict. Still, some parties to it, including the author who so categorically denounced Rowling's playing fast and loose with the Navajo skinwalker tradition, have suggested practical means by which appropriating materials from and telling stories of a culture not one's own can be done genuinely. One of these is research, widely commended as indispensable not only to sensitive intercultural work but to good fiction (Fallon par. 20; Kunzru, et al. pars. 13, 43; Wong par. 6). Another, related to the research orientation, would be an attitude of humility toward the enterprise, a desire to inquire into and examine the less familiar human reality, rather than using it for purposes of drawing audiences or showing off artistic virtuosity (Galchen and Holmes par. 9). A third involves consultation with knowledgeable insiders to the other culture, consultation extending (this according to Aaron Paquette) to "form[ing] relationships and get[ting] permission" from those key informants and leaders (Fallon par. 20). Finally, giving back, to the culture from which one has taken or borrowed, the artistic fruits of the appropriation, can be an indicator of a healthy reciprocity (Galchen and Holmes par. 2). This, in fact, is what defenders of Bruno Mars credit him for, notwithstanding the circumstances of his birth (Pasquini, "Bruno Mars Fans"), and what Maggie Gee, an Englishwoman who in the course of writing a novel featuring an Ugandan narrator checked in with two writers from the country for feedback, and now is a member of an Ugandan women writers' association, has accomplished in her realm (Kunzru, et al. par. 41).

How does Mia Alvar's case stack up, in light of these ad hoc criteria for crossing cultural lines without exploiting a heritage and a lived experience distinct from one's own? On the score of research, there can be little to question. This writer has done her homework. Alvar reportedly makes research a fundamental part of her writing process (Lee par. 4), and the results are everywhere evident in *In the Country*. Whether it is the big pages of national history, like the day-by-day progression of the People Power revolution; footnotes like the Rosy Lacaba tragedy; folk traditions like the *kuratsa* or urban legends like the White Lady of Balete Drive; scholarly finds like Ninoy Aquino's early affinity for political strongmen; or empirical knowledge of the way a house deteriorates under the twin pressures of poverty and a tropical

climate: Alvar places her fiction on a solid-seeming footing of fact. Likewise with the related matter of attitude, or purpose. Although there is more room for argument on this point, it would be difficult to deny that the different stories here at least attempt to examine aspects of Philippine culture and experience, rather than simply slipping these on to parade in them, as if they were the literary equivalent an exotic dance costume. Surely there is no hint in this work of an intent to carry misappropriation to its ugly extreme, of mockery or trading in stereotypes.

Measured against the remaining two criteria, consultation and “giving back,” Alvar’s case appears to be less strong. If she did check in with “insiders,” none of the leading figures in Philippine letters with whom I spoke on my recent visit—who might be considered likely candidates for giving this kind of counsel—had heard tell of it. Nor does anything the author has said publicly indicate she sought out such assistance. Alvar appears to have pursued her research, and her fictional examinations of Philippine characters, settings, and themes, primarily under her own lights. As to making return, there is the marketing of *In the Country* by National Bookstore, and the associated book tour in 2015, no small gestures for an author published by a top-of-the-line American house. Yet I do not find mention of any more recent visit to the Philippines and, while she does lament the “lack of visibility and access” for Filipino authors in the US book scene, and does at one point speak of we “Pinoy” (Filipino-American) writers, Alvar seems not to have practically joined hands with peers based in the Philippines, as Maggie Gee has with her Ugandan colleagues.

“FILIPINO-NESS [NATIONALITY/CULTURE] IN FICTION”

Regarding the charge of cultural (mis)appropriation, the picture appears to be somewhat mixed. Let us turn then to the second and probably more strongly felt objection, among that small circle of writers, to Alvar and her book: that she is “not a Filipino writer.” This is a line of resistance hardly unique to the Philippines or other postcolonial situations. A friend tells me of the case of Annie Proulx, a writer who lived the first half of her life in New England and wrote prize-winning fiction set there and in the Canadian

Maritime Provinces. When she moved west and came out with three volumes of “Wyoming Stories,” critics and the general public responded enthusiastically: one tale was selected by John Updike for inclusion in the anthology *Best American Short Stories of the [Twentieth] Century*, and another became the basis for the highly regarded film, *Brokeback Mountain* (“Annie Proulx”). But, according to the friend, many long-time residents of the state remained unimpressed, deriding her fictional representations as not the “real Wyoming.”⁴ There can be no doubt, though, that matters of identity and authenticity are especially delicate subjects in the realm of Philippine literature. Anxieties along these lines among a group of the country’s young writers prompted one of the deans this literature, Jose Y. “Butch” Dalisay, to turn the matter over in one of his newspaper columns, headed “Filipino-ness in fiction.”

In this piece, Dalisay adopts a generally tolerant and inclusive attitude to national literary credentialing. “It doesn’t matter to me where it’s published, what it contains, what language it’s written in...[or] even what passport the writer carries,” he writes, before settling on some very basic commonalities: “What connects us as Filipinos is the land we came from and some experiences we’ve shared.” By these minimal criteria (not the only ones Dalisay lays down, as will be shown), it would seem Alvar has a chance to stack up. Certainly she is no interloper the likes of J.K. Rowling, entirely without organic ties to the culture whose magical practices she outed in her recent North America book. Alvar was, after all, born and lived until age six in Manila, although she says her memories of that time are largely “impressionistic.” Then came four years in the Filipino OFW community in Bahrain. After that, the family was mainly based in New York but had the resources for relatively frequent visits to relatives in the Philippines (Ortile pars. 13-15). Her husband, too, has similar family connections, in Pangasinan (Visaya par. 22). Not surprisingly, given this background, Alvar has maintained what are often regarded as primary cultural links, to food (with the exception, in her case, of *dinuguan* [Ortile pars. 3, 10]) and language : She has told an interviewer that if a sentence in her writing does not seem to be “landing right,” she will ask herself how it would be said in Tagalog and then

translate it literally back to English (Lee par.7). She has also said, apropos of this background, that a good deal of the material for the stories in the collection “came out of family anecdotes and childhood memories” (Piters par. 5).

So if an argument can be made for this writer’s connections to the homeland, what of the “experiences” that Dalisay also makes part of his minimal criteria? On this point the case is more problematic. The experience that apparently set in motion the creative process leading to *In the Country* came in 1999, when as a senior in college, and after an absence of some ten years, Alvar returned to Manila to attend to the death of a family member. “After being away so long,” she found the environment “completely new and alien” (Lee par. 5) but also “completely fascinating” (Ayala par. 7). She immediately started to explore, making observations and taking notes, for example on the Araneta Avenue “death district” (Lee par. 9). The opening story of the eventual collection, “The Kontrabida,” had its genesis in the thoughts and feelings of that time (Piters par. 4). This would seem to count for experience or at least for “being there,” as Rowling notably was not in the North American tribal areas, and Alvar followed it up with certifiably diligent research in working out the stories that fill out the book. However, during the more than ten-year period of composition she did not so much as revisit the scene that so fascinated her, still less take up residency there (Ardenia). It is hard to see this experiential basis for the fiction, even if we add to it the earlier times in Manila and the Middle East, the family’s continued touch with the land and culture left behind, and the “anecdotes” and “memories” present to Alvar’s hand, as being of any great depth.

Now there are any number of other factors, not touched upon by Dalisay in his brief columnist’s riff on the subject, that can enter into the judgment of whether a writer should, as he puts it, address themselves to “carabaos and coconuts,” or stick to “subways and mackinaws” (par. 9). Among them are authorial self-identification, intended audience, and acquaintance with the literature of, in this case, “carabaos and coconuts.” On the score of all three of these further extrinsic considerations, inputs to the creative process rather than fruits of it, the picture for Alvar is mixed.

According to Kathryn Shanley, addressing the issue in a Native American context, the “cultural identity of a writer claiming to be an Indian” depends on a number of factors including community recognition and “self-declaration” (par. 67). As noted, a claim of the latter sort on Alvar’s part, made to audiences on her Philippine book tour, served only to steel her creative counterparts here against any extension of the former, i.e. community recognition. In fact, though, her self-declarations have been varied. An early *Wikipedia* entry characterized her, presumably with the consent of its subject, as a “Filipino writer” while a more recent one uses the term “Filipino-American” (par. 1). The Ortile profile opens with a confession to being a “fraudulent Filipina” (although this is in reference to *dinuguan* and certain other dishes too strong for her palate) but closes with the declaration, “I’m pretty Filipino” (pars. 1, 40). She told an Oberlin College student journalist that she feels herself “American in many ways”—but that the feeling can vanish in a moment when something happens or is said to make her “non-Americanness” apparent. In short, as she also confided to that student reporter, identity is “fragile and fluid” for Alvar (Harris par. 12), as it is for many whose circumstances have been significantly transnational or transcultural—including her predecessor Jessica Hagedorn, who writes movingly at the close of *Dogeaters* of the displaced Rio Gonzaga as “at home only in airports” (247). Again, Alvar is no outsider on the order of J.K. Rowling to the people she writes about. But neither would it seem that she could state with a conviction to equal that of poet Mary Tall Mountain, adopted as a girl away from her Alaskan tribe but returned in adulthood and quoted by Shanley to have said, “But I know who I am. Marginal person, misfit, mutant; nevertheless I am of this country, these people” (par. 75).

The case is likewise with audience. While there are points in the Ortile interview where she appears almost talked into the proposition that she is writing to and for Filipinos, and while National’s distribution and the accompanying tour might seem to have put that proposition into practice, in other connections Alvar professes a kind of writerly agnosticism, claiming not to have an audience in mind as she “just tries to get the story to work” (Harris par. 4). And she can let escape signals of a quite differently oriented

intention. For example, while maintaining that she did not want to “dumb down” her work by providing translations of Tagalog words and phrases (presumably for the convenience of non-native readers (Ortile par. 35), she most commonly does offer these or at least sufficient clues from the context to make understanding readily possible. In a larger sense, when asked what she hopes to accomplish by writing of the “Filipino experience,” she replies: “to inspire curiosity and then maybe as a result of that empathy or a connection” (Kaplon par. 19)—aims unnecessary for an audience of those who live this experience. The same premise becomes evident in the list cited often, and with no apparent objection from Alvar, of her primary influences: Junot Diaz, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Amy Tan (Ayala par. 3; Kaplon par. 1; Harris, par. 7). These are all writers who have made their names interpreting the experience of exotic cultural others to American readers.

The list would seem also to rule out the last of the three further extrinsic claims to affiliation: being steeped in the traditions of Philippine literature. Such a grounding could presumably go some way toward making up for a deficit in Philippine experience. As it happens, Alvar has tried to see herself in a Philippine context, occupying a position “midstream in a healthy and vibrant stream of Filipino writers” (Ayala par. 3), and expressing admiration for Paz Marquez-Benitez and Carlos Bulosan (Visaya par. 15). Yet Marquez and Bulosan (the latter of whose “Filipino-ness” has been questioned), lie quite far back in that stream. Nor is there any indication so far in the journalistic record that the author of *In the Country* has drawn inspiration from more modern practitioners, including the successors of Marquez who have contributed their short stories to the Abad anthologies.

On the basis of these externalities, then—geographic and cultural connections, experience, “self-declaration,” intended audience, relation to the literary tradition—Alvar’s case proves difficult to pin down. She appears to be neither fully native nor a complete stranger. But there are internalities to be considered, as well: qualities of the work as opposed to the writer. While a full exploration of these qualities is the business of the second part of the essay, a specific consideration—of the factor of imagination—is rele-

vant to this phase of the discussion of literary nationality. In fact, Dalisay himself does eventually come to this point.

I suppose what I'm saying is, the 'Filipino' in what we write is...hardwired into our imaginations, and it'll almost surely come out in what we put on paper....In music or in art, you might be able to play like Rachmaninoff or paint like Pollock, and get away with it without anyone being the wiser. In writing, you can't—your language will give you away, and locate you as surely as a GPS tracker.

So in the end, to apply a different analogy than Dalisay's, the proof of a work's provenance lies in the pudding, and the pudding consists of imagination and language—the two basic ingredients, according to Gemino Abad, of fiction and of all verbal art (*Hoard* xiii).

Leaving aside language for the moment—there will be opportunities to apply this kind of taste test to *In the Country's* diction and syntax, style and tone, in what is to follow—let's pause for a moment over the idea of imagination. For, understood aright, imagination poses a subversive challenge to the notion that any artistic sensibility can tightly bound to a specific identity, national, cultural, perhaps even personal. This is the gist of the argument made by those writers who push back against the charge of cultural appropriation. "Fiction doesn't appropriate, it creates," insists A. L. Kennedy. To think otherwise is to fall into the error of presuming that "all writing [is] autobiographical, journalistic"—which, Kennedy maintains, fiction emphatically is not (Kunzra, et. al. par. 18-19). Imagination figures in this point of view as a power untethered from, or at the very least lightly tethered to fact. "Write what you know' is a tired maxim," maintains Stella Duffy, and "write who you are' is even more restrictive. We can write who we are not and do it well, if we write with passion, strength—and care" (Kunzra par. 24-25). And that care can be very substantially an internal matter: "One writes," according to Linda Grant, "out of a deep knowledge of one's interior world..." (Kunzra, et al. par. 26).

It turns out that Mia Alvar is of this mind, although not with any discernible intent to take a side in the controversy. Explaining her writing process

to Matt Ortile, she relates that memory and research help in getting going on a story, but then imagination, “this other thing,” kicks in and assumes control (par. 21). To another interviewer she confides that as soon as she finds herself obsessing over details like exact driving times between two points, she knows she’s strayed off the track, is “not writing fiction anymore” (Kaplun par. 17; Sipin pars. 20-21). And with yet another she pulls out all the stops, declares that she is “not that interested in factual or geographical accuracy at all, to be honest. The Manila and New York and Bahrain in my book are imaginary” (Lee par. 10). Here is potential subversion, indeed—even, seemingly, of her own project, writing of the “Filipino experience.” If these seemingly vivid specific places in the book are imaginary, “in” what “country,” exactly, is *In the Country* situated?

Yet fiction, Alvar’s and others’, is not entirely the solipsistic enterprise that these comments may seem to imply. If the tie to the real is light and flexible, it is nevertheless vital. “Married to that” deep interior knowledge which Linda Grant celebrates, “is an intense curiosity about the lives of others” (Kunzra, et al. par. 27). What’s more, imagination can be a means to gratifying that curiosity. It is not only a power of invention but a tool for discovery, a privileged avenue to the truth of human life and the world in which it is lived. That is the premise, and the promise, that has established fiction as the preeminent literary genre over the last two centuries. It is the premise behind Philip Hensher’s claim that “A really good writer can throw themselves into worlds they may only have glimpsed, and light them up” (Kunzra, et al. par. 33). And it is the premise behind the remark with which Dalisay closes his column, by an artist whom few would accuse of a lack of “Filipino-ness,” and whose fiction is solidly set in the land of carabaos and coconuts: N. V. M. Gonzalez, who is reported to have said, “Writers create their own nation, even if they have never set foot in it.” By these measures, Alvar’s time after her “glimpse” of the Philippine scene in 1999, if spent in imaginatively lighting that world up, creating her “own” Manila, New York, and Bahrain—fictionalized theatres of Filipino experience—may have placed her stories more fully “in the country” than any amount of further setting foot in it could have.

But this is a theoretical, and indeed a hypothetical proposition. The way I propose to test it, again, is to turn from the inputs to the fictional process that have been under consideration—imagination, experience, research, cultural heritage and literary influences, conceptions of self and audience, and whatever else may be found relevant—to the output, qualities internal to *In the Country's* stories themselves, and to measure them against a comparatively empirical standard of “Filipino-ness,” the stories collected in the two most recent volumes of Gemino Abad’s anthology of Philippine short fiction in English. Let’s proceed to this, the second task of this main portion of the essay, now.

II. Internalities: In the Country vs. Philippine Short Stories

The method employed in this section will be familiar to anyone who has written a comparison/contrast paper. Having read Alvar’s book and then short stories which Prof. Abad has considered part of Philippine literature, and having made the determination that contributors to the most recent two volumes in the anthology, entitled *Hoard of Thunder* and covering the period 1990-2008, represent her closest counterparts in time, I seek to identify points of congruence and divergence between the two bodies of work. The main difference between what follows and a conventional comparative study, as indicated at the outset, is that I do not intend to provide a definitive weighing of the findings, an answer to the question whether a story or two from Alvar deserves a place in the next volume of Abad’s anthology, or the more fundamental question of whether her collection offers an authentic “cultural portrait” versus an ungrounded “caricature.” My expectation is that readers of this essay will make those for themselves, on as empirical a basis as seems possible to put in place in a matter of literary judgment such as this.

Now, while its attempted empiricism may give it an advantage over the usual subjective manner proceeding in these matters—“I know it when I see (or don’t see) it”—the method in use here is by no means above challenge. For one thing, the stories collected in Abad’s anthology are all written in English, an attribute which has led their “Filipino-ness,” or at least their representativeness of Philippine literature, to be challenged in some quarters. For this

limitation there is presently no remedy. My Tagalog, not to mention my Hiligaynon, does not permit a broader survey. Second, asymmetries mark what social scientists would call the two “samples” being compared. Alvar’s collection contains only nine stories; the two volumes of the anthology hold a total of 92, written by somewhere near as many authors. The smaller number cannot hope to match the range and diversity of the larger (a range and diversity which do at least attest that Philippine short fiction in English is no unitary thing); therefore, comparisons made will necessarily be selective. What’s more, in gathering the more extensive sample, I opted to be guided by the literary whim of “reading around” rather than the scientific procedure of marching straight through the volumes from end to end, checking off titles along the way. In consequence, I logged in only 74 stories altogether, and it can’t be ruled out that personal preference, perhaps influenced by my previous acquaintance with *In the Country*, played a role in the types of stories admitted into consideration and those left out. Further subjective factors must surely enter, as well, into matters more sensitive than the count, for me and for any readers who care to join in the exercise. Comparison entails interpretation, one of the least scientific (if most meaningful) of intellectual operations. Also to be taken into account is the almost entirely non-intellectual “will to believe.” In my case this was conditioned by the presumption, when initially reading Alvar, that I was reading Philippine literature. In the case of the writers I spoke with, the initial bent of belief appears to have been precisely the opposite. I cannot guarantee that I have eliminated all traces of this bias. I can only say that I have done my level best to try, and invite those on the other side of the page to do likewise.

Finally, less a qualification of the method than of the larger enterprise being undertaken here: Literature is not so much national as it is human. Among the great equalizing discoveries of recent times has been the finding that human beings share 98.8% of our DNA with chimpanzees, 90% with cats, 80% with cattle, and so on (Ramsey and Lee par. 6, 7, 9; “What does it mean to be human?” par. 3). I submit that something like those proportions apply to the shared essence—both in terms of craft and in terms of the lived experience represented—of different national literatures. This is the rationale

behind Wai-chee Dimock's call, in her 2001 manifesto "Literature for the Planet," to de-emphasize the place in critical studies of political, geographical, and even cultural boundaries. So it will be well to keep in mind some of the observations made in the relatively brief first section of the essay, while engaging in the intensive investigation of the factor of nationality that occupies this portion

Of course boundaries that recognize a shared identity do remain important to readers, whether they are found in Wyoming, Native America, or the Philippines. Accordingly, I have identified a number of "outputs," features of the finished literary work (fiction in particular) that seem the most promising sites for identifying national differences and commonalities. These include several subsets of setting, certain factors of language, and a short list of themes, which will anchor the comparative analysis. That analysis, again respecting the asymmetry between the two collections of stories, will be in some part quantitative, involving a rough determination of the proportion of *In the Country* and *Abad* anthology pieces either manifesting or not manifesting the qualities under consideration. (In other words, reader, brace yourself for a few tables.) In larger part, though, it is qualitative, looking to discover more subtle evidence of congruence and/or divergence in the interpretation of individual works drawn from the two sources. Transparency regarding the task established as best as can be, let's get to it.

Setting

One obvious place to look for the national provenance of a work of fiction is its setting. As a literary concept, setting comprises more than location per se. It is typically subdivided into any number of distinct dimensions. For purposes of the comparison between Alvar and her Philippine-based counterparts, the most immediately relevant of these are likely to be the following: geographic (focused here on national domains), demographic, historical, social, and physical (referring to the immediate material surroundings in which the action/s of a story take place).

With regard to national geography, it has already been mentioned that five of the nine stories making up *In the Country* take place on Philippine soil.

Of the remainder, two are set in the Middle East, one definitely in Bahrain, and two in the United States. How does this breakdown compare to the pieces collected in the two volumes of *Hoard of Thunder*? Here the first of the threatened tables appears. (Brief instructions for interpreting it and subsequent numerical displays appear in the endnotes.)⁵

Ninety percent of stories written by writers presumed to be Philippine-based, unfold on home ground, while close to half of Alvar’s, forty-four percent, take place elsewhere.

National Setting	Philippines	United States	Other
Philippine Stories (n = 74)	(66.5) 90%	(5) 7%	(2.5) 3%
In the Country (n = 9)	56% (5)	22% (2)	22% (2)

This table reveals that an overwhelming proportion, 90%, of stories written by writers presumed to be Philippine-based, unfold on home ground, while close to half of Alvar’s, 44%, take place elsewhere. This constitutes a material difference, and not a surprising one, given the circumstances of her family’s migrations. At the same time, a number of *Hoard’s* stories, 5 or 7%, are sited in the US. Moreover, if we take into account that Alvar’s Other offerings are solidly situated in the Filipino OFW community (while that of *Philippine Stories* consists of the partial exception of China and futuristic other worlds) then the gap between national and foreign settings looms less large.

Once inside a given set of national boundaries, demographic as well as geographic distinctions become relevant. In the case of the Philippines, we have N.V.M. Gonzalez’ still useful delineation of three internal “countries”: City, Barrio, and Mountain (qtd. in Abad, *Hoard*, vol. 1 xxviii). Comparisons by these categories, with certain further specifications, are displayed in the following table.

Demo-graphic Settings	City (Manila)	City (Provincial)	Barrio (Village)	Barrio (Field)	Mountain	Other
<i>In the Country</i> (n = 5)	(4) 80%	(0) 0%	(1) 20%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
<i>Philippine Stories</i> (n=66.5)*	67% (44.5)	17% (11)	9% (6)	0% (0)	2% (1)	6% (4)

*Lower total reflects exclusion of sci-fi or fantasy settings.

First apparent here is the decided urban bent of both samples. The overall percentages match nearly exactly, and, although the absence of provincial cities from *In the Country* marks a notable difference, Manila functions effectively as a default setting for Philippine-based writers, as well. The Barrio plays a clear second fiddle in the demographic dimension but has a definite role in each collection. An additional sub-category here, of the barrio as a scene for actual agricultural activity (as opposed, say, to scenes of cockfighting or of the capture of a rebel leader), reveals an even closer correspondence and a surprising finding, that not only Alvar but contemporary in-country authors have set none of their stories in this way. Apparently few if any contemporary short fictionists with their eye on the Philippines have entered the world of the *kaingero* which was the staple of Gonzalez' own storytelling or decided to treat the "carabaos and coconuts" that Dalisay takes as the proverbial marker of "Filipino-ness in fiction." The same holds true for the mountains and their tribal peoples: outside of Alvar's ken and present in only one narrative (Krip Yuson's "The Music Child") from the anthology volumes. In sum, then, the match between the two sets of stories seems somewhat closer by these internal geographical and demographic measures of setting than it is by overall national location.

Some potentially significant daylight opens between Alvar and her counterparts in two additional aspects of setting. One of these is temporal, or more precisely historical: the periods or events within which in which fictional scenarios take place. The contexts referred to in the table below are primarily derived from the stories collected in the anthology. They include

the technically unhistorical “contemporary” period (contemporary that is to the time of writing), and feature a designation, “past,” that may appear a tautology but will be explained in the discussion of findings.

Historical Setting	Contemp	M.Law	WWII	Spanish	Other	Future	“Past”
<i>Philippine Stories</i> n=74	(48) 65%	(7.5) 10%	(2.5) 3%	(3) 4%	(4) 5%	(4.5) 6%	(5.5) 7%
<i>In the Country</i> n=9	22% (2)	25% (2.25)	3% (.25)	0% (0)	44% (4)	0% (0)	6% .25

The first discrepancy evident here, in concentrations of stories with contemporary settings, is partly accounted for by the circumstance of Alvar’s Bahrain pieces both taking place in the 1980s, roughly during the time of her family’s sojourn there, placing them into the “Other” category of historical settings apparently of little interest to Philippine-based authors. But another addition to *In the Country*’s Other choices, the 9/11 attacks on New York forming the primary context for “Esmeralda,” does constitute a notable divergence. No story in the *Abad* volumes takes note of this event, which, while arguably international in scope, loomed larger in the US than anywhere else. The setting surely bespeaks Alvar’s American ties; indeed, she has described the story as among other things, a “love song to New York” (Lee par. 15). At the same time, if she found herself resonating to this distinctive American cataclysm, Alvar is also drawn, by a markedly stronger percentage measure than her in-country counterparts, to what is arguably the great crisis of recent Philippine history: Marcos-declared Martial Law and the challenges raised to it from various sectors of political society. The same holds roughly true for another national crisis of the 20th century, World War II, although the focus on that event has measurably declined with passing generations, and Alvar’s only reckoning with it occurs by way of backstory in “The Virgin of Monte Ramon.”

Two other categories filled by the anthology stories are blank for *In the Country*: the future and the Spanish colonial period. Alvar's imagination appears not to have been drawn to science or "speculative" fiction, nor beckoned by far earlier times. Another signal difference occurs with the category I am labeling "Past," a kind of indistinct but emotion-laden temporal setting, as much mythic as historical, roughly equivalent to the American vernacular notion of "back in the day." This "Past," when it not frequently but quite recognizably appears in recent Philippine fiction, seems to refer to a transitional moment in the country's colonial history, marked by a fusion of fading Spanish and advancing American styles. Butch Dalisay's own well known story "Penmanship" captures this vanished era poignantly and even pinpoints it, after a fashion, in the date the protagonist's prized instrument of Stateside technology, a Parker Vacumatic, was manufactured: "1934, a few years before he was born, when the large and airy house on Donato Street must have been spanking white, and his mother would have been swishing about in a *terno*, minding the lilies in the vases" (Abad, vol. 1 194). No precise equivalent to this setting can be found in Alvar's collection, although she does evoke it in "Monte Ramon," which, while taking place in the 1970s, spins the ghosts of Catholic saints and American GI's into a kind of *kuratsa* with one another, in the background of the story.

Differences, along with similarities, are also worth noting in the social dimension of setting. The social milieu constitutes a subtle and variegated element of any story, but for purposes of this comparison it can be boiled down to the class background of the principal characters: upper, upper-middle, middle, lower-middle, and lower, distinguished as best as my American-acclimated eye for status details permits.

Social Setting	Upper Class	Upper Middle	Middle	Lower Middle	Lower Class
<i>In the Country</i> (n = 9)	(1) 11%	(3.5) 39%	(1.5) 17%	2.5 28%	(.5) 5%
<i>Philippine Stories</i> (n = 74)	23% (17)	39% (29)	20% (15)	7% (5)	11% (8)

Both Alvar and her counterparts write across the range of the Philippine class spectrum, with solid commonalities in the upper-middle and middle-class categories. Notable differences occur at both extremes of the spectrum. Seventeen of the *Hoard* stories profile upper-class individuals, their families, friends, cronies. *In the Country* features just one set of upper-class characters, although the aim here is high: “Old Girl” presents a fictional representation of what can only be taken to be the Aquino family, on the eve of Ninoy’s return from Boston to the Philippines. Writers doing their work in the Philippines also show greater frequency of interest in the lives of the poorest of their countrymen and women; and they arguably exhibit a more intimate knowledge, or a more imaginative feel, for the texture of those lives. Maria L. M. Fres-Felix demonstrates this capacity in “Mayday” through vivid details, such as protagonist Nena’s knowing observation that the scars on the backs of some demonstrators in a People-Power protest mark them as subjects of kidney harvesting. Even more telling is the understanding that Nena is at least as strongly motivated to join the action at EDSA by the prospect of a free meal as by any outrage at Joseph Estrada’s performance as President. Alvar displays nowhere near this depth of focus on lower-class characters, but she does draw one memorable figure of the type: Annelise, Danny’s love interest in “The Virgin of Monte Ramon,” the daughter of his mother’s laundry woman, a resident of the squatter area in town. She also introduces some compelling details of her own, including the observation that Annelise’s *labendera* mother “walked with a haste that suggested there were too few hours in the day to earn a living” (122), while Danny’s would-be upper-class mom favors reclining to walking. So perhaps

the New York-based writer is not without some grasp, whether acquired through experience, research, or imagination, of the reality of class in the Philippine situation.

Last to be considered in this review is perhaps the most fundamental aspect of setting, the immediate physical surroundings in which the action of a story takes place—the equivalent of a stage set for a play. No need for a table here. Given the concentration on the urban demographic in both *Philippine Short Stories* and *In the Country*, it will come as no surprise that the primary physical setting in both samples is some facet of what is known as the “built environment”: streets, trains, cars, stores, offices, schools, and especially houses. We find dwelling places of every shape, size, and condition in the two bodies of fiction. Let’s allow the comparison in this instance to take the form of two passages, one from each side, descriptive of a specific living space. The task, which is left to the reader, will be to determine which passage comes from Alvar’s and which from a Philippine-based writer’s hand. No judgment is intended, by the way, in both descriptions’ turning on a narrative of deterioration. I was simply looking for comparable levels of physical detail.

Passage 1:

It was in this flat, with its sagging ceiling-boards and cracked tiles and rust-encrusted plumbing, that Julie had grown up. As a child she had been in love with the place, with its mystery and darkness, with the hundred secret nooks where she and her friends could play hide-and-seek....As she grew up, though, the romance of the place had begun to fade, replaced with a growing hatred of the squalor of the building and of the area: she envied her classmates, their houses in the subdivision villages, with a garden and a garage and a drainage system in which the water only went one way.⁶

Passage 2:

Nine years before, a “slum upgrade” had turned the scrap shacks of our barangay into two-story homes, one room below and one above. We had electricity and plumbing now, concrete blocks instead of tin-and-plywood walls, furniture and some appliances, a bathroom with a faucet and a flush toilet at the foot of the stairs....[But] like all the neighbors’ houses, ours deteriorated faster than it had improved. Rust had spread its scabs over the

bathroom floor and walls. The vent built into the wall above the kitchenette to air out cooking smells became a nest for rats, who chewed through the wire mesh and made a racket with their shrieking every night.⁷

I am curious to know how readers do with this identification challenge. And, as a means of transitioning away from the discussion of setting to the next section of the comparative analysis, a follow-up question: In trying to determine whether a given passage came from the American- or a Philippine-based author, what did you focus on? Was it more the authenticity of the detail, or more the language in which the descriptions are conveyed?

Language

Of course, any skilled reader will simultaneously process both sets of cues. But clearly language is one of the intrinsic qualities of a literary work that matter to its cultural and national provenance. Recall Dalisay's admonition to those who would falsely parade their "Filipino-ness" in fiction: "your language will give you away" (par. 10). Bear in mind, too, Chinua Achebe's famous question, posed for those who would write in a tongue that came as a heritage of colonialism, "Can [an African writer] ever learn to use [English] like a native speaker?" and his equally famous reply, "I hope not." That writer's medium, according to Achebe, would need to be a "new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (82, 84). This is apparently the gist of Gemino Abad's oft-stated maxim holding Filipinos to be writing not simply in English but "from" it: "forg[ing], enrich[ing], and reinvent[ing] this medium to our will and purposes, in both discursive form and semantic content..." (*Hoard*, vol. 1 xiii-xiv).

Let's hold the two short story samples to some further scrutiny on this score. The following is a collection of short passages taken from Alvar and *Hoard of Thunder*, beginning with a pairing based on roughly parallel subject matter (as with the two dwelling places above), and then presenting six further selections ranged in no particular order. The passages may not be of sufficient length to allow for a determination of what Abad terms "discursive form and semantic content," but more garden-variety linguistic features—

diction, syntax, idiom and slang, figures of speech, style—should be more or less in evidence. One aspect of language not to be taken account of here is the use of Filipino words and phrases.⁸ Of course, in these examples, authenticity of detail remains in play, as well; in some cases, indeed, this factor might prove determinative. But the challenge here, once again for the reader to take up, is to judge to what extent it is possible to identify, primarily on the basis of language, the nationality of these bits of prose fiction in or “from” English. As before, the source of each quotation can be found in the endnotes (but in order to ensure the integrity of the exercise, I recommend making selections first, peeking after).

Pairing (strong rain)

The downpour drummed on the roof. About the street lamps fine spray and mist formed iridescent globes....The rain struck him like pellets of glass that broke on his skin and tore at his pajamas. He was drenched before he got to the gate. The asphalt was a simmering obsidian river. He waded across.⁹

Along the ravine, children were laughing in the storm, shirtless or bare-legged or naked altogether. Their rubber tsinelas clapped along the mud. Below them, the creek collected raindrops with a sound like frying oil.¹⁰

Individual passages, no order [equal number of passages from Alvar and *Philippine Stories*]

You sit Manila jeepney-style, six knees in a row—as if you’re riding home from Nepa-Q Mart, once again, your cousins’ children on your lap, the week’s meat thawing at your feet, while strangers pass their fare through you up to the driver.¹¹

Don’t you believe me? I tell this tale in a marketplace that stinks of dried fish, dried squid, dried dreams. For these islands have stories as colorful as dreams woven on cloth, as mysterious as the sea churning in the wake of a boat bound for Borneo.¹²

Positive, she said cheerily, as if I shouldn’t go out and hang myself this instant. I was sure that if I let go I would fall down. The coffee turned to

mud in my mouth—I ran to the sink and heaved. Congratulations, it’s a fetus. You frigging idiot.¹³

Smoking and drinking struck you as a man’s vices, and a waste of money besides. Gambling, too. But nights with [name]—the stars in your brain, the beggar that sex made of your body—gave you a taste of it, that life, those forces that held [name] at their mercy.¹⁴

“Goodbye, goodbye,” he whispered, as his heart finally broke into a thousand mismatched pieces, each one small, hard, and sharp. The tears of the butcher’s boy (who had long since ceased to be a boy) flowed freely down his face as he watched her rise....¹⁵

When she had finished, she went underground and fed the stencils to the mimeo....To replace the ink, she slid a barrel, heavier than her brother’s guitar, across the grooved belly of the machine until it clicked with satisfying decision into place. She shivered in the basement, cold and gray as a stone church...¹⁶

Time to consider your findings. Without resorting to the kind of arbitrary scale that sometimes accompanies a task like this it should be possible to offer a rough guide to interpreting these admittedly subjective responses. If you were reliably able to distinguish the passages written by Alvar from those found in *Philippine Stories*—say in substantially more than half of the eight possible choices—then Alvar’s “language gave [her] away,” and the case against the “Filipino-ness” of this writer will likely have been strengthened in your mind. If on the other hand you found yourself more often wrong than right, then perhaps the room for her, within the fold of Philippine literary expression, expands. Either that or your confidence in the distinction between metropolitan and indigenized Englishes, championed by the three writer-critics referred to above, may have been undermined. (But in the absence of a “control” sample of passages by writers fully non-native in their background and linguistic range, no judgments can be made on this score.) It is also conceivable that your identifications were made primarily on the basis of the representational details—for example, that meat at Nepa Q-Mart in an earlier day would not have been sold frozen—or on the basis of

other non-linguistic considerations. In any case, let us leave the reckoning with language at this and push on into themes, where perhaps interpretation, as opposed to gut-feel guesswork—or statistical breakdowns, as with the factor of setting—can play a role in adjudicating the overall question.

Themes

So, to the heart of the matter, and the opportunity dive into the literature, at last. While there has been some rumbling of late around the traditional notion of theme,¹⁷ the term here will refer simply to an area or issue of sustained fictional exploration. Five such appear relevant to the comparative task at hand: the supernatural; family, with special attention to gender relations; class relations; Fil-Am relations; and struggle.

The Supernatural

The representation of supernatural beings, states, events, and forces would seem a likely dividing line between an American- and home-based writers addressing Filipino experience, and in some respects it proves to be. Take two common conduits into fiction of the unseen and the extraordinary: folk beliefs and the conventions of what is typically called in the US “magical realism” and in the Philippines more often “marvelous realism,” or sometimes, following Dean Francis Alfar, “spec(ulative) fiction.” (Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo has analyzed the distinctions between these terms, and additionally made the case that these highly literary modes of representation draw directly from the folk base. [109, 129]) Examples of both are reasonably plentiful in the anthology volumes. A total of eight stories feature *bangungot*, *engkantos*, astronomical signs, a Lady of the River (who is never actually seen), walking skulls (which are), fortune-telling, and faith-healing rituals that succeed in curing ills. A similar number of tales are typified (and distinguished) by an offering from Dean Alfar himself: “L’Aquilone Du Estrellas,” a fable of a “marvelous” kite that takes a lifetime to make and carries its rider to a height that is the “beginning of forever” (vol. 2 126-28). By contrast, Mia Alvar makes only one reference to a folk creature, and this *manananggal* flies high above the school-yard only in “Monte Ramon” Danny’s imagined escape

from classmates who mock his physical deformities for the resemblance they give him to this mythical monster (126-27). Moreover, while the magical/marvelous genre is well established in the States, *In the Country* never so much as dabbles in it.

If there is a genre in which Alvar appears to relinquish her grip on realism, it is the ghost story. Long a part of both traditional folklore and fantasy literature, this to some extent distinct narrative type has a surprisingly strong foothold in short fiction in particular, and it finds a conspicuous—and honored—place in the *Philippine Stories* anthology. Seven separate stories in the two volumes feature beings existing somewhere between life and death. What's more, two of the selections are among the strongest entries in the entire collection. In "The Haunting of Martina Luzuriaga," a meticulously realized, state-of-the-art ghost, whose image appears, when the viewer has stared long enough, "as though everything around him had gone flat and he was the only three-dimensional thing...standing before a painted backdrop" (vol. 2 329), displays a stubbornly independent existence and ultimately leads the protagonist to a remarkable transformation in character. In Francezca Kwe's "A Ghost Story," the spectre makes its entry at the end of the tale, in the form of a howling indoor wind, whose cessation leaves the "clearest silence, unlike anything I have ever heard again" (vol. 2 504.) The terrifying apparition brings to a close a short story epic in its ambitions, linking the historical settings of the Past, the War, and the Martial Law period. Validating the realist, as well as the marvelous intentions of "A Ghost Story," Pantoja Hidalgo observes that even though the narrator "is unsure of what exactly happened in the old mansion, she does not doubt that it happened" (128). And Hidalgo goes on to provide a cultural anchor for these types of narratives, noting that in them "most Filipino readers will recognize echoes of stories they may have heard or perhaps even lived through themselves" (131). And author Kwe attests to the same culturally grounded fictional intention, writing "I want to keep alive in my stories the myths of my country: the half-human being *tayho*...the *mantayo* peering down from the crowns of the *kapok* trees..." (qtd. in Hidalgo 135).

Alvar seems to share her counterparts' enthusiasm for the ghost story, and even to enter into its spirit. *In the Country* includes two candidates for the genre, a proportionally greater representation than found in the anthology volumes. Both feature apparitional figures important to the main character and the narrative's meaning. "Legends of the White Lady" takes up the well known Philippine urban legend of a lady tragically killed, haunting the New Manila district's Balete Drive, in her white dress. Alice Anders, the American fashion model who tells the story, describes several encounters with a lady in white, one second-hand from a taxi driver, another with a tallish female who sweeps by the window of a restaurant where she is eating (among other things, *dinuguan*, a personal calling card tucked into the story by the author), and finally an old woman dressed in a nightgown, inside a house on Balete Drive. As it happens, this third figure proves thoroughly substantial. She attacks Alice physically, punching her in the face and bringing to an end her Philippine modeling gig—and not coincidentally bringing to an end the story's supernatural mystique. By the end it becomes clear that the "legend" is just that, and the actual "white lady" is the protagonist herself, who, in fright and shock at the sudden death of her half-Filipina roommate back in New York, had "wanted, even tried, to forget I had a body altogether" (85), and who, for her final photo in the country, poses in a way that will make it seem that she had "receded to a bright puddle and dissolved" (90). In short, ghostliness has served as a metaphor for the character's troubled identity.

A similar pattern unfolds in the story *In the Country*. Here the ghost is Billy Batanglobo, former owner of the house where main character Milagros now lives with her family. Billy is a victim of drowning, either by his own volition or by order of the Marcos regime—the facts are not clear, and he isn't telling. As happens with Martina Luzuriaga, the manner of apprehending the haunting presence is handled in chillingly credible physiological detail, and the description of his appearance appeals to multiple senses, creating an evocation tangible in effect:

The first time Billy Batanglobo...appears to her, she senses him in her skin, the spread of cold pinpricks along her back. From her bed, facing the wall, she hears a dripping sound, smells fetid Pasig River water. And when she

turns he's standing in her doorway: the bloated, waterlogged version of the man she's seen in Ateneo yearbooks....in soaked Levi's, his muddy Adidas leaving pools of water on the floor as he approaches, his polo shirt clinging to his swollen gut (305).

No less than Martina's visitor, too, Billy is an interlocutor with an agenda, a kind of moral lawyer arguing first principles with Milagros as she considers her life choices. In contrast to the Philippine story, though, and more in keeping with "Legends of the White Lady," this ghost is not real. Shortly after the initial appearance, the ostensible object of the haunting "wakes alone. The sheets are dry....She walks the corridor, expecting a puddle any second. But the floor is dry too. She knows then that Billy Batanglobo is hers alone; no one else is invited to his world" (306). In other words, this is a case of a projection, a hallucination, the personification of an inner voice, not a case of an independently if inexplicably existing being. So even in this genre for which Alvar shares affinity with her Philippine counterparts, and seems about to follow them across the threshold into marvelous representation of literally existing entities, she holds to a more conventionally realistic line. And that line might likely marks a divide between two sets of nationally inflected cultural sensibilities.

On another aspect of the supernatural the line may not be so clear. Religion has great prominence in Philippine life: a hundreds-year-old tradition of Catholicism; vigorous Protestant sects, some imported, some home-grown; not to mention Islam in the South and a history of indigenous beliefs, a number still practiced in certain regions. Some 23 of 74 anthology stories, nearly a third of total, address religion in one way or another; 10 of those take it on directly, as a theme. How does the fiction in Alvar's collection compare to the home-based literary representation of this feature of national life?

Quantitatively, again allowing for the disparity in sample sizes, the match is quite close. Two of *In the Country's* nine entries pursue religion, both of them in a manner that suggests genuine exploration, so the proportion is either slightly less or slightly more than that found in *Philippine Stories*.

There are differences to be noted in the treatment, though. Take for example Alvar's one sustained portrait of a conventional religious believer, "Esmeralda." The title character has been raised a devout Catholic, in a rural area of the provinces. In the room she occupies many years later in New York City, where she works cleaning downtown offices, a "wooden Christ Child and Virgin Mary live inside [her] nightstand drawer" (155). On what may be the last day of her life, September 11, 2001, she takes them out and prays as usual, recites the rosary in an emergency vehicle headed to the disaster at the World Trade Center, and in asking God to take her life so another's may be spared, assures herself: "Faith is a wealth, and you, Esmeralda, are rich with it" (187). Yet great changes have taken place in her life and her understanding of life. The other she seeks to spare is a married American businessman, who works in one of the towers, and with whom she has been having an affair. The intensity of the emotions involved is conveyed in the sample passage from the story offered earlier: "the beggar that sex made of your body." Not surprisingly, the situation creates a crisis of conscience for Esmeralda (and for the man, as well, whose wife is lost to him through a total deprivation of cognitive function). Yet in spite of a stern call from a brother still in the Philippines for a return to religious duty, and in spite of actually breaking it off for a period of several weeks, "Es" (as he calls her) resumes her relationship with John. In the passage following the one in which she bargains with God for the sacrifice, after having first asked whether the unfolding catastrophe might constitute a judgment on their infidelity, we get a flashback to the couple, their love matured: at peace, playful, fully committed to one another. The tender scene serves to undercut the question about 9/11 as a judgment, and to underscore the implications of the reply: "God doesn't answer" (187). Notwithstanding the wooden Jesus and the rosary, and the thoughts swinging from guilt to spiritual abundance, Esmeralda is no longer the person she was. While she retains the faith of her childhood in all of its external forms, it appears that her internal character has evolved: not exactly to an "American" identity (174), as she at one point suspects, but to a frame of meaning that is sometimes labeled secular humanism, the idea that,

among other things, the most profound transformations and even redemptions are ones that human beings achieve for themselves and for each other.

If this seems a large claim to be making, it can at least be said that the treatment of conventional religious belief in this story stands far apart from the one offered in Gregorio Brillantes' "On a Clear Day in November." In this charmingly straightforward narrative, the eternal verities of Christianity are unambiguously affirmed. On the All Saints' Day in question, the residents of a provincial town gather in an expectant, festive mood, which changes to something more serious: "...the bantering and laughing ceased, and Rene listened to them speaking of faith, hope, and love, what it meant to die and enter into eternal life, which is the life of God" (vol. 1 107). And the affirmation is then confirmed by the appearance of the Saints, near and more distant ancestors of the assembled multitude—ghosts, of a sort, but communicative and comfortable ones.

Alvar's other religiously oriented story lies not in the direction of Brillantes' "Clear Day," but rather along a vector in which spiritual meanings are if anything still more occluded—but for that not without relevance. This is a fictional strategy, common in recent American literature and perhaps best exemplified in Raymond Carver's classic "A Small, Good Thing," that starts from a humanist perspective in which religious belief figures as illusory, irrelevant, or inaccessible to modern individuals, but then allows for a symbolic level at which traditional teachings, and beings, may retain their power. In "The Virgin of Monte Ramon," young Danny is held back not only by his physical disabilities, but also by a web of deceitful fantasies that his mother has woven around their cause. The son has his doubts about his mother's words, but accepts them as part of a continuum that extends directly from the most proximate to the highest authority. "But what were reasons in face of faith? I believed her—honoring, as the commandment taught me, both my mother and that greater, universal parent himself" (125). When he learns the truth, however (to be discussed under a different heading, below), Danny—after first trying to respond to the shattering news with prayer—makes a break with his childhood piety and deference: "But I didn't feel like praying. My palms simply refused to meet. They went to the wheels of my

chair and pulled, retreating from my mother. I turned my back to her—a first” (152). Having completed his rebellion by desecrating his mother’s bedroom, he strikes out on a new course in life, one free of hierarchical control: “I did not wish to look at another adult now, let alone console my mother. I wanted consolation for myself, and knew only one source for it” (153).

The “source” of consolation Danny seeks is no more theological than it is parental; it is the *labandera’s* daughter Annelise, with whom he has been forming something between a friendship and a relationship throughout the story. So at this point he seems to have shaken off completely a religious for a secular and human point of view, one in which he and Annelise enact redemption for one another. But this is where the symbolic level needs to be considered. The title has a dual signification. On the one hand, it refers to the statue of Our Lady, carved for the church in the distant Spanish past, carried to safety during World War II, and paraded in the annual town fiesta. At the same time, the title phrase fits Annelise, a linkage confirmed when the girl, prostrated by her menstrual pains, is carried to the hospital in the wooden boat used to parade the Virgin. What’s more, descriptions of the statue, which itself exists in dual forms, a plaster replica as well as the original, convey a mysterious power. This quality has already been noted in the imagery of the replica, quoted earlier in the essay, and it is subtly amplified in the unveiling of the 400-year old original. The “real Virgin” is “both darker and brighter than the plastic decoy to whom Annelise and I had prayed...the jewels in her robe were real...her crown trapped and seemed to magnify the sunlight” (144). In reaching out to Annelise, then, Danny is also reaching out to an icon of the deep faith tradition of the place and culture, and a potential conduit, judging by the aura emanating from it, to a source of “consolation” beyond human offering.

Turning back to *Philippine Stories*, it seems that not only the numbers but the patterns evident there do not differ markedly from what has been discerned in Alvar’s work. The quantitative record in fact gives a qualitative indication of this. Even tallying stories that only touch on religion in passing, rather than exploring it as a theme, does not add up to a large number, given the ostensible importance of the phenomenon in Filipino life, and leaves

over two-thirds of the total without any reference whatever: secular in point of view, whether by default or design. What's more, among those that do address religion in some way or another, the uncomplicated affirmation presented in "A Clear Day in November" is by no means the rule. Fully six of these stories adopt a critical take, presenting belief, doctrine, official teachings, pronouncements by ecclesiastical leaders, and the like, as in one way or another self-serving, pernicious, or at best benighted, belonging to the past rather than the present, an impediment to human progress. One, Kwe's ghost story "The Haunting of Martina Luzuriaga," provides a surprisingly close analogue to Alvar's "Esmeralda." When the ghost first appears, the title character goes through a series of surmises about the purpose of his visitation, before settling on the explanation that he has been sent by God to tell her to be prepared for an imminent death. This she takes to mean having her spiritual affairs, and especially her burial plans (a new mausoleum, on the family property), in order. But the ghost, who himself has no clear idea why he has come to take up residence in this lady's house, objects: "That doesn't seem right" (vol. 2 339). And sure enough, as the story develops it becomes increasingly clear that he has appeared not to prepare her for death but to invite her to a life she has never lived fully enough. As his influence becomes more direct, and as the ties that linked the two individuals together become more apparent (the deceased was a member of a squatter community living on the fringes of the spinster Luzuriaga's property), Martina begins to swing into action, take risks, and transform things—beginning with the mausoleum project and continuing with the house, the grounds, her relationship with her family, and ultimately herself. Here, in spite of its frankly supernatural elements, is a humanist parable if ever there were one, with the dictates of conventional religion left far more decisively behind than Esmeralda is able to manage.

Analogues also exist in *Philippine Stories* to "The Virgin of Monte Ramon," that is, to the type of narrative in which religious meanings, seemingly routed by a secular perspective, make their way back into currency by symbolic or other indirect textual cues. I count six of these, including Andrea Pasion-Flores' "For Love and Kisses" and Rhea B. Politada's "The Epic Life."

The clearest example is “Things You Don’t Know,” by Ian Rosales Casocot. The story portrays a modern family in distress. The husband has been fired from his job for watching pornography on his work computer but pretends he is still going to office every day, while he actually searches, unsuccessfully, for a new position. The wife (the main character, Doris), operates somewhere between stress and rage as she pretends a) she doesn’t know about her husband’s doings and b) that they still have enough money to keep up their accustomed lifestyle. The six-year old daughter reacts in complicated fashion to what she can intuit of the situation, including pretending to be alternately a Spanish *senorita* or Princess Di. For Doris, religious belief plays a role in the general web of mutual and self-deception: “Sometimes I pray, the way I used to when I was still a kid and my mother was about being a good Born Again Christian—but nothing comes out of my most desperate Amen. I pretend God listens” (557).

The mother, or grandmother, is another important character in the story, even though she doesn’t live with the family. She embodies unvarnished religious belief, of the Protestant persuasion, emphasizing the word of the Bible rather than the iconographic and sacramental textures of Catholicism (although the elements of her belief prove rather eclectic, including “superstitions” [560]). It is clear Doris regards her mother’s faith as anachronistic or at any rate not relevant to the family’s current crisis. However, the older woman has an ally in her granddaughter. Margot, having shifted her fantasy persona to that of an angel, apparently inspired by a book given to her earlier by the grandmother, asks her mother point blank if she believes in God—adding that *Lola* says one must, or else go to hell. The query exasperates Doris, drawing from her the retort, “Well, your *lola* is always full of bullshit,” which in turn provokes Margot to a mild reproof for using “bad words” (560). Later, when the suddenly hospitalized grandmother attempts to offer some advice concerning the situation directly to her daughter, Doris is equally quick to dismiss it: “Is that from the Book of Matthew or Mark?” she scoffs, leaving the other to a conventionally scandalized comeback similar to Margot’s (567).

In the end, wife and husband come back together, seemingly around a peril that arises to their daughter (who runs away from the house and cannot be found), and also perhaps out of sheer exhaustion from all the pretense. Doris, the narrator, draws this lesson about “all I need to know now in this world. Love, forgiveness, understanding—all the bright little things easily lost in the rush to live” (570). To all outward appearances at this juncture, it would seem that “this world” is not only the operative context but the source of this wisdom, the “things” (as the title phrase puts it) that “you don’t know.” Secular humanism has firm control of the reins of this story, at the literal level. But, as in “The Virgin of Monte Ramon,” there is present here another, subtler level, on which a differing interpretation is possible. Of the three virtues Doris ticks off, two, “love” and “forgiveness,” come directly out of the teachings of the New Testament gospels that she mocks. And the third, “understanding,” the key to the reconciliation she and her husband achieve, her mother has explicitly articulated in that hospital room exchange: “We have our little secrets...our little sins—our endless *transgressions* [emphasis in original]....In the end, it’s enough that we understand how human each of us truly is in our imperfections” (567). In addition, it’s hard to read Doris’ reference to the “bright little things easily lost” without thinking of Margot’s turn as an angel, gone missing. And this bit of symbolism clicks into place with the earlier, wisdom-transmitting conversation, when, pirouetting in her “crisp, white hospital gown,” Lola has made her parting words, “Hey, look, I look like an angel, too” (567). So perhaps after all in Casocot’s story the things we human beings “don’t know” are things we can only know with assistance from beyond “this world.”

Summing up, in the exploration of supernatural themes the comparison between *In the Country* and *Philippine Stories* yields mixed results. Alvar shows little interest in reifying folk beliefs or in creating marvelous fictional effects, two modes of supernaturalism that have had appeal for a number of home-grounded writers. In a related, similarly popular genre, the ghost story, she draws a firm line of realism beyond which her apparitions do not stray, while in the anthology narratives—those that are not frankly marvelous in their representation—the haunters share in the realism of the characters

they haunt. And it seems reasonable to speculate that this contrast owes to a difference in the cultural sensibilities from which the American-based writer and her Philippine counterparts draw. At the same time, though, it is surely noteworthy that Alvar creates a place for a ghost-like figure in two of her nine stories, a higher rate than occurs in the anthologies and a penchant altogether unlikely to see in an American fictionist otherwise committed to realism. This very possibly suggests the pull of a cultural sensibility in the opposite direction, from the other side of the Pacific through whatever of a national and family legacy remained to this writer in her upbringing in the US. When it comes to the supernaturalism of religion, perhaps surprisingly, parallelism is stronger than incongruity in the comparison. Not everything is alike, Brillantes' tale of literal Christian faith confirmed by a mass return from beyond the grave finding no exact counterpart in *In the Country*. But both in the overall pattern of attention to the theme and in the two types of stories in which the theme is explored—one which favors a secular humanist perspective and the other in which that perspective is significantly hedged by a set of symbolic cues pointing back to traditional religious beliefs—Alvar and her counterparts appear, perhaps surprisingly, to be writing effectively on the same page.

Family and Gender Relations

If religion is known to be prominent feature of national life and consciousness, so too does another Filipino preoccupation recommend itself for thematic comparison: the family, and within its relations between men and women, husbands and wives. Of course, family is a universal context for human experience and a universal theme of literature, but in the Philippines, as in other emergent traditional societies, it is a subject of intense concern. 58 of 74 anthology stories make reference to family life and/or family relations in some fashion, and of the first number 62% focus on these matters directly enough to constitute them as a theme or sub-theme. In an additional, still more subjective classification, roughly half of the directly focused narratives take what can be considered an affirmative and half a negative or critical perspective on the aspects of family under their purview.

Alvar is right up to speed with her counterparts in this concern. All nine of her stories at least instance family matters, and seven address them in a thematic manner. Attesting to the sincerity of her interests in this regard, she has spoken to an interviewer of the tension felt, when writing her title story “In the Country,” of needing to work through the history of Martial Law and the People Power Revolution, “while really wanting to write the story of a family” (Kaplon par. 13). The departure comes in the attitude taken toward the subject. Five of the seven focused stories portray their fictional family or families in a critical light, only one in a hopeful or favorable way, while one more or less halves the difference. Matt Ortile notes this orientation when he issues readers of his generally laudatory profile the warning that Alvar challenges “the authenticity of the happy Filipino family...saintly children, diligent father, and his selfless pious wife” (par. 22). Certainly she does that. To take one example, in the collection’s first story, “The Kontrabida,” the father is no model of diligence: he has lost job after job, the latest for stealing from the employer, and his declining fortunes have not deterred him from demanding and physically abusive behavior toward his spouse. The son, for his part, has inherited or internalized some of the old man’s worst impulses, and has strayed so far from saintliness as to have arrived home in the Philippines carrying deadly contraband from the US, also misappropriated from his employer. The wife certainly appears selfless and pious—she even overdoes the role, not only maintaining a posture of servitude toward her now helplessly ill husband, but seeming to wait even on laundresses, gardeners, and the like, paid to wait on her—before eventually revealing the dramatic opposite of those virtues. This variance from *Philippine Stories* is statistically and literarily significant. What’s more, it seems reasonable to suspect a factor of national culture coming into play here, the US being notoriously the land where a fragile family came undone before the eyes of millions of viewers on public television (Ruoff).

On the other hand, a 50/50 split between affirmation and exposure, which is what we find among the anthology stories, does not exactly constitute a ringing endorsement of said Filipino family. True, the affirmations are often genuine. They can be unconflicted, as in Yvette Tan’s “Daddy,” in

which a beloved parent who “loved us so much, it killed him” (vol. 2 526) gets in touch after death with an ambiguous yet encouraging message from which the entire family takes heart. They can also be hard-won. The Casocot text profiled above begins with every member of the family pretty much at odds with every other (and the father paralleling the one in “The Kontrabida,” in having been fired from his job for malfeasance in it). But by the end, differences have been painfully worked through, including symbolically with Lola back in the hospital, and the characters have come together in “love, forgiveness, and understanding.” The reader has every assurance that the restored family bonds will prove durable into the future.

Yet the negative treatments are equally compelling. The best example may be Socorro Villaneuva’s “Foggy Makes Me Sad.” The story actually begins on the upbeat, and with a jaunty tone that reflects its narrator-protagonist’s “sense of humor—*joie de vivre*” (vol. 2 540), inherited from her father. Now it happens that a couple of discordant notes are struck early. Some type of sibling rivalry simmers between main character Tini and her adult sister Coylee, and their mother, a recent stroke victim, is given to making incongruous remarks—including, on the eve of a visit to Baguio where the family had lived for some time, and in reference to the city’s frequent fogs, the title statement, uttered to “nobody in particular” (541). But the narrator quickly interprets, for her own daughter, the comment to have referred to “melancholy...a sweet kind of sad” (541). Indeed, Tini’s memories of Baguio, anchored in the “tender, poignant love” (552) she felt from her father, which she believes she has found in the constancy and faithfulness of her own husband, and which she hopes will be the source for her daughter of the same “solid sense of self” that she has taken pride in, prohibit any harsher view of that time in the family’s life. Still, as the mother rears up in refusal to return to Baguio, the older sister points out that the younger may have been looking through rose-colored glasses, failing to see “That we were unhappy. Misery” (547). Eventually, Coylee discloses the specific cause of that unhappiness: the father, whom Tini revered “like God” (551), was unfaithful to their mother just as he was most “tender” and protective of his younger daughter. It turns out that this infidelity was not an isolated instance in the

mountain city of that day, which as Villanueva tells it would seem to have been something of a Filipino Peyton Place. But it is the revelation of her father's betrayal that rocks Tini's world, much like the great Baguio earthquake alluded to in the story. The shock wave buries the ready wit and *joie de vivre* (in the final moments she can't even speak). It shakes the presumed solid sense of self to its foundations. And it creates grave uncertainties, as her husband appears on the scene only to meld into the image of her father on an outing to Burnham Park, about the stability of any and all of her family's bonds going forward.

Sister Coylee's revelation proves to be no isolated instance in *Philippine Stories*. At least a half dozen entries in the anthology identify male infidelity as the prime cause of familial "misery," the breakdown of relations among members. This signals another contrast with Alvar, one perhaps more telling of national differences than the simple proportion of critical to affirmative treatments of the overall theme. For the stories of *In the Country*, the leading threat to family unity is female rebellion—granted, rebellion often provoked by male behavior (although as it happens never by actual extramarital liaisons).

One significant case of female rebellion, already hinted at, takes place in the lead story of the collection, "The Kontrabida." The selfless and pious wife eventually proves that her character is not to be contained by these attributes; in fact she inverts them. She does drop hints of her true nature to her unsuspecting son, visiting from the States: "Oh, Steve, you don't know my strength" (3) and "You underestimate me" (21). And she proves awesomely competent in running the family's *sari-sari* store, which seems a humble enough occupation yet serves not only as a fallback against the loss of the last of the husband's jobs but also as a way around his prohibition on her working outside the home. But when Steve, in partial recognition of the mismatch between her talents and the caregiving her ill spouse expects and demands from her—"You're a CEO, not a slave" (16)—gifts her with a supply of powerful painkillers he has appropriated from his hospital pharmacy, the woman whose habitual gesture is wiping her hands on a non-existent apron sees her path to a complete breakout. What she does with this unique *pasalu-*

bong makes for one of the “gut-punching” twists reviewers have commented on in Alvar’s collection. Without wishing to spoil what I am recommending here to be read, suffice it to say that the opiates go to redress a lifetime of ill treatment at the hands of her husband and to give a nice boost to sales at the *sari-sari* store. The actions also lead Steve to wonder for the first time about the mother whose character he has always taken for granted. Who after all, he asks himself, is this woman? Is she the *bida* or the *kontrabida*, in the terms of traditional Philippine melodrama? Or, as he eventually comes to understand the hold these dramatic stereotypes have had on his moral sense, and to see that he has placed himself in the role of the family hero contesting his father’s villainy, is the lesson rather that, when the “*bida* and the *kontrabida* crossed swords...the woman...might be the one to watch” (27)?

Two other stories in which the narrative of female rebellion plays out less directly may be briefly noted. In “Shadow Families,” the ungovernable individuality of *katulong* Baby sets at naught all the rules of the collective family unit formed by Filipinos of all backgrounds.¹⁸ In the end, her independence (coupled with the accusation that one of the husbands in the group has impregnated her) undermines trust and at least presages the eventual “toppl[ing of] our pillars of domestic and family life” (118). In another story, the part of the beset woman is played by a fictional version of the first female president of the Philippines, here known not by her name but by the title phrase, “The Old Girl.” The phrase refers to the system in place in the 1940s and 50s for grooming girls of the wealthy classes as “future wives and mothers” (193), supporters in all things of their likewise well heeled, ambitious male partners. This role the Old Girl, having forfeited a promising career in law, plays in relation to an also unnamed but unmistakable former Senator and political prisoner, exiled for reason of major heart surgery to the US, and hatcher of such wildly impractical schemes as running the Boston Marathon and returning to the Philippines to confront the power of the sitting regime (the story draws an equivalency between the two plans, in its highly iconoclastic portrayal of this revered national figure). In the end she does not actually rebel, revving up the Old Girl instincts one more time to rally the family and follow the “hero, in his myths about himself” (192) home

to his destiny. But the reader is certainly allowed, and encouraged by the story to imagine such a rebellion for her.

Perhaps the most complex but ultimately decisive instance of female rebellion occupies the center of “In the Country,” the story Alvar mentioned in connection with her desire to write about the family. Main character Milagros Reyes’ husband would seem to present a smaller target for disaffection than the surly beast of “The Kontrabida” or “The Old Girl’s” self-absorbed Senator. Jim Reyes is a skilled and dedicated journalist with a political conscience; he and Milagros meet at a nurse’s strike she is leading and he is covering. He proves his mettle when being arrested under Martial Law.

Milagros had grown up thinking strong, decisive men were a myth....But in this moment, with Jim, she felt strong and safe....As the typhoon of history made landfall on their doorstep, she could train her eyes on this man, and follow him (285).

Follow him she does, becoming effectively his secretary for regime-critical writing from prison, not giving up her nursing career but letting it be eclipsed by the new commitment.

But cracks begin to appear in the armor of this shining knight. For one thing, work and politics come first for him, family a distant second. Rather than issue a correction to the piece that led to his arrest, he accepts six more years of confinement, leaving Milagros to wonder, “But they had a son now, didn’t they? They’d lived apart longer than they’d lived together” (286). For another, it develops that Jim’s opposition to the Martial Law regime consists in part of a *mano a mano* game with its President, a game in which he naively presumes to know all the rules. But when their son becomes a stake in the game,¹⁹ Milagros reaches a point of alienation from male leadership.

They’re all the same to her now, this fraternity of men, who televise their hunger strikes, print articles after they’re told to stop. They prize their causes and their names, their principles and legacies, above all. They eat the rice without wondering how it got cooked....They name sons after themselves and never once worry about those sons’ [everyday care] (316-17).

On the momentum of this recoil, she makes plans to leave the family, including a younger daughter—a move the internal “ghost” of Billy Batanglobo questions sharply.

At the last moment Jim asks for a reconciliation, offering as an earnest of his reformation to resign from his job and foreswear journalism altogether. Milagros is almost persuaded. “But no” (346), she says to herself, in an echo of classic rejectionist Baby’s signature expression. Thinking back to her mistake of taking it as “her life’s mission, to tend the flame of [her husband’s] work like a priestess at some temple” (347), and to other considerations, she moves off, on her own, to the new life that Alvar is apparently making the subject of a forthcoming novel.

Before entering into any analysis of this gender divergence, it needs to be acknowledged that, while male infidelity represents the most frequent cause of family breakup in *Philippine Stories*, there are instances in which the pattern of female rebellion appears, potentially or actually. How do these compare with the plots just reviewed? If ever a wife had reason to break off on an independent course, it would seem to be “Things We Don’t Know’s” Doris, whose husband has been fired from his job for watching porn and then goes through an elaborate charade to conceal the fact from her. But although she is furious with him, as their resources dwindle and other family relations come under strain, at no point does the thought of leaving come into her mind. The two just finally come to accept each other, and with renewed hope go on, as Milagros and Jim do not. In another story, Rhea B. Politado’s “The Epic Life,” the wife, Sarah, very definitely has thoughts of leaving. Indeed, she entertains an elaborate fantasy that includes an exotic lover and seems to touch down on the real as she contemplates her baby daughter, Lily, going through life without her. (“Maybe the [girl’s] dimples will help” [vol. 2 613], she rationalizes.) But a chance memory of a past night of affection and promise—the very night, Sarah believes, that Lily was conceived—brings her back, imperfectly but realistically, to her husband and family: “a truce if not love” (616).

Rina of Linda Ty-Casper’s “Time and Wandering Markers,” does actually rebel. Her Lilo is cut from the same mold, just of a higher class, as the

anonymous husband in “The Kontrabida.” He is a bully—Rina reports at the outset of the story being “afraid of his anger” (vol. 2 1)—a controller, and a failure. In addition, he has been unfaithful on numerous occasions and possesses an inveterate habit of confusing mine and thine. This last trait sets the plot in motion, as Lilo has brought Rina (driving her car, because his is low on gas) to the home in which she grew up, with the objective of persuading her to move from her Metro Manila condominium into the large but run-down house, and to pay rent for it to him, out of income anticipated from the rental of the vacated condo. The scheme arises because he has previously mismanaged his wife’s family home, creating a cash shortfall. But as Nina tours the house, the exhortations Lilo is urging upon her are progressively drowned out by a flood of memories of the place and of her parents, especially her father, who had cared for it meticulously. Fortified by the recollections, “no longer someone who has forgotten how to speak or to breathe” (8), she nullifies his plan by quietly declaring that she’s taking the house for her own. Further, now fully confident to face his anger, she resolves to let him know, perhaps after she drives him back to the city, that there will be no need for him to visit her in her old/new abode.

While the fact of Rina’s rebellion differentiates it from the two other cases in *Philippine Stories*, certain details mark it off from those portrayed in Alvar’s stories. First, there is no revenge in play, and no profit motive. Ty-Casper’s character remains unambiguously within the *bida* category throughout. Second, there is no blanket denunciation of men, such as we get from Milagros. In fact, Rina is led to her turnaround in part through the rediscovery of feelings of affection and admiration for another male, her father. Finally, in standing up for herself she does not turn her back on the next generation. In fact, her adult children—from whom her husband had succeeded in distancing her, to some extent—stand to gain from her decision, for they will immediately inherit the Manila condo she is leaving, allowing them to buy houses of their own for the first time. Her rebellion is intended to strengthen those family relations which deserve strengthening.

With regard to the gender relations aspect of the family theme, then, *In the Country* appears quite sharply divergent from the collected work of

writers based literally in the country: more divergent, certainly, than in the area of religion or even that of family more generally, holding strong or falling apart. The reasons for the gap are not far to seek, and they do suggest the operation of broad cultural influences. The outlines of modern feminist thinking, as it has emerged in the West and the US, are readily evident in Alvar's rebellion stories: grievances over thwarted career aspirations and the inequality of responsibilities within the home and family, and a staunch critique of male power and privilege. Not even a figure as hagiographic as Ninoy Aquino escapes this treatment. His character in "The Old Girl" could have been lifted from one of Alice Munro's many portrayals of self-absorbed, humanly incompetent middle-class husbands. Even a character fictionally endowed with more gravitas, like Jim Reyes, turns out to have feet of clay—or rather a heart of steel. Rebellion against such figures is understandable, and also understandable, without necessarily warranting approval, is that rebellion sometimes eventuates in transgression. Angela Carter, the British fictionist and editor of the short story collection *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*, says that the characters captured in the title, in order to avoid being trapped in a victim's role, "are prepared to plot and scheme; to snatch; to battle; to burrow away from within" (qtd. in March-Russell 57). Mia Alvar is among the feminist writers who are willing to follow their female characters across lines of law and perhaps even more binding lines of customary duty, such as to childrearing, as they struggle to escape victimhood.

This separates her from the authors represented in *Philippine Stories*. This is not to say that such an inclination does not exist in Philippine life or Philippine literature (or even in the stories from this collection that I did not review). But in the 74 or so pieces that make up this sample, none approaches Alvar's boldness in treating gender revolt; and the one that does portray such an event, staying within bounds of legality and civility, happens to have been written by an author long resident in the United States. This divergence needs to be acknowledged and if possible accounted for in any reckoning with the national literary provenance of the two samples of work.

Class Relation(ships)

If Alvar takes a harder-edged view of gender relations than do her Philippine counterparts, she appears to offer a more sanguine view of class relations. This is especially true of interclass relationships, or at any rate the possibility of love across socioeconomic lines, a theme visited with a fair degree of frequency in both collections.

Examples from *In the Country* of this kind of romantic connection being made include, of course, Danny and Annelise of “The Virgin of Monte Ramon”: he the son of a want-to-be upper-crust mother, she the daughter of that mother’s *labandera*. They also include Esmeralda the cleaning woman and her well educated and well-to-do paramour, John—although this story’s being set in the US (where democratic matches are commonplace, at least in the movies) perhaps lessens the strength of its example. But the most exuberant case of love triumphing over class distinctions is that of driver Andoy, brother of the narrator-protagonist of “A Contract Overseas.” Andoy wins the love of two different women above his station: one the daughter, the other the wife of his employer at the time. In fact, the social distance to be crossed in such situations serves as an aphrodisiac for him: “...what really made my brother weak was danger, obstacles—the chance to break a rule or cross a line or overcome some hideous odds for love...’I can’t have her and I *have* (emphasis in original) to have her...” (234). As it happens, in the second of his two transgressions, with the wife of a wealthy Saudi connected to the royal family, the “danger” is palpable: the prospect of apprehension by the religious police, endless lashings in prison, public execution. But nothing stays Andoy, who continues to act on his belief that “love’s miracle” is worth any cost.

What to Alvar’s irrepressible character beckons as a line to be crossed, a hurdle to be cleared, in *Philippine Stories* looms as an apparently insuperable obstacle. With the caveat, again, that even a sample of 74 is a limited one, none of this number features a successful or even a promising interclass relationship.

That a class barrier proves inflexible is of course understandable in Dean Alfar’s “L’Aquilone Du Estrellas (The Kite of Stars),” which is not only a bril-

liantly stylized piece of speculative fiction but a Spanish period piece, what must be the earliest setting of all the stories in the collection (although no date is actually specified). A fourteen-year-old “butcher’s boy” finds himself dazzled by the beauty and intrepidity of the wealthy Maria Isabella du’l Cielo, two years his senior, and herself enamored of the dashing Lorenzo du Vicenzio. Informed that Lorenzo, an aspiring astronomer, “only has eyes for the stars” and therefore will not pay attention to her, the young lady conceives of a plan to make him see her and commands the butcher’s boy to take her to the best kitemaker in the land. He complies and thus begins a career of service that lasts nearly the rest of both of their lives. At the end of the story, as Maria Isabella rises on the “kite of stars” that the two have painstakingly put together from sundry parts gathered from all over the Spanish Philippines, she calls out a goodbye to the butcher’s boy. He, overcome, replies (in a passage quoted without source earlier):

“Goodbye, goodbye,” he whispered, as his heart finally broke into a thousand mismatched pieces, each one small, hard, and sharp. The tears of the butcher’s boy (who had long since ceased to be a boy) flowed freely down his face as he watched her rise—the extraordinary old woman he had always loved..(127).

But the love goes unrequited. The butcher’s boy realizes that in all their time together, “she had never known his name” (127). For her part, Maria Isabella does not come to this realization, and makes no further recognition of her faithful helper as she shouts out the name, Lorenzo, “that had been forever etched into her heart” (128)—drawing a muffled acknowledgement in the old man’s dreams—and ascends, strapped to her stellar kite and secure in the social elevation of her love, to an apotheosis.

But the barrier remains intact in stories with contemporary settings, as well. Brief illustration is offered by two tales taking their point of departure in the world of musical entertainment. In Arterio E. N. Gutierrez’ “Blind,” Ramon is a former concert pianist, reduced by an accident affecting his eyes to a part-time gig playing popular tunes in a chic restaurant. He is drawn to Fe, a waitress at the establishment, whose voice he initially mistakes for

that of Angela, his lover from conservatory, and sighted days. A friendship slowly develops between the two from very different backgrounds, but an attempt to take things to the next level ends abruptly when Ramon's touch discovers Fe's deformed body and ravaged skin, the opposite of the physical perfection he had found in Angela. While played out in terms of literal beauty and the want of it, the unsettling end of the story might possibly be read as a metaphorical warning of the unpleasant discoveries awaiting one who would look for love below their station.

In "Karaoke Strip," by Caroline J. Howard, the performer is the character from the lower class: Emmarose, who has come to Manila to earn money for her struggling family in storm-tossed, poverty-stricken Sorsogon. The unnamed man she joins at his table after her stint at the mike is a burned-out journalist with a rebel past, carrying a torch for a woman still in the movement somewhere. Their conversation clicks. While she holds back details of her family's need, and of her own impending eviction from her rented room, he, with his "funny-sweet tongue" (457) does draw from her the admission that she wants some day to be a teacher rather than a singer. This prompts him, already seeing in her the image of the lover lost to the past, to volunteer a contact in the Department of Education, and to back up the offer by handing over his card. But when she looks at the name on the card, it "glare[s] like something on credit" (459), and she stifles a desire to follow the man outside the club. So in this case the rejection comes from the less advantaged party, and class pride may mix with female pride—and a fear of strings attached—in the motivation for it. But for whatever reason, a gulf once again opens between potential romantic partners, unequally situated.

The most extensive treatment of the interclass relationship theme, at once a foil to Alvar's "A Contract Overseas" and a bookend within *Philippine Stories* for "L'Aquilone du Estrellas," is to be found in Dennis A. S. Aguinaldo's "Burgundy." Narrator-protagonist Lino Sierra is, like "Contract's" Andoy, a driver by trade. Unlike Andoy, his hopes of seeking his fortune in Saudi have been crushed, and as a fallback he finds employment with the Uytiepos, a mother-daughter household his mother had done laundry for until her death. In time, he develops feelings for the unmarried daughter, eleven

years his senior, whom he professes to find younger-looking than himself. In turn, the daughter –Ma’am Seling to Lino—calls him “Kuya,” adopts an easy, bantering manner in their interactions, and comes to rely on him for a range of family-related services beyond simply driving. Why Seling is single is a mystery, certainly to her mother, Aling Naty, who pushes her toward matches that might lead to marriage—receiving a series of Baby-ish “thanks-no’s” in return. Eventually, though, one gentleman appears to pass muster, and a wedding date is set. However, Seling secretly changes her mind and hits upon a drastic plan for extricating herself from the commitment. In this plan she enlists the unwitting help of Kuya, who parlays the task into an opportunity to shop for and present a gift “of worth” to the woman he admires and wishes above all to please (vol. 2 598). But when his gift turns out to play a conspicuous role in her final solution, Lino is crushed beyond anything the disappointment of his Saudi hopes had done to him; indeed, it seems that any hopes for his life have been extinguished by the event.

In the end, then, this driver’s essential fictional kinship lies not with Alvar’s Andoy but Alfar’s butcher’s boy. He tenders faithful service, never achieves intimacy, never even progresses to familiarity with his superior (as Andoy does in Saudi, shifting references in his correspondence from “Al-Thunayan’s wife” to “Madame” to “Alia” [254]). Ma’am Seling, for her part, fills the role of Maria Isabella. True, she does know her assistant’s name, although preferring Kuya to the “Lyn” that her mother uses. And she does not sustain attachment to her class peer, as Ma. Isabella does with Lorenzo. Now, some mystery does hover about Seling’s feelings toward Lino, as about her aversions to marriage. It is she who has made the suggestion that the down-on-his-luck young man be taken on as the family driver. Later, when he ignores her advice to quit smoking, she flies into an uncharacteristic fit of temper, nearly causing an accident. But it seems unlikely that her pulling out of the marriage commitment owes to an unspoken love for Lino. In a notebook left behind, Seling offers both money and best wishes for a “bright future,” and thanks him for his “gifts” and those of his mother (vol. 2 402). The expression of gratitude contains potential ironies, of more than one kind, but it also underscores his origins, as the son of the laundry woman. A

fair conclusion would seem to be that in this story, and in *Philippine Stories* generally, class lines are not as easily crossed by love as in Alvar's fictional universe; the romantic mobility of a driver Andoy or a *labandera*-born Annelise appears harder to imagine. For even if, say, Seling's valedictory meant to thank his mother for the gift of Lino, even if she secretly harbored feelings for him, as he for her, the socio-romantic distance evoked in Alfar's period piece remains still too great to be transgressed.

Fil-Am Matters

From inter-class we move to international relations, or, practically speaking, Philippine-American relations. Exploration of the connections and disconnections between lives and cultures in the two countries constitutes a notable theme in both samples of short fiction. Ten *Philippine Stories* feature this theme; less than a handful, and no more than one each, deal with other countries, e.g. China, Austria, Saudi (although one can imagine these proportions changing in a selection made now or in the future). Seven pieces offer significant treatment of Filipinos residing in the States, one of an American in the Philippines, and one of a repatriate, returning from an extended sojourn in the US to his native land. Of course these numbers are roughly matched, and the percentages of the total greatly exceeded, by the coverage of *In the Country*. Six of nine of these stories (so 66 compared to 14%) delve into the theme. Two follow Filipinos in America, and one imagines an American in Manila. As to repatriate protagonists, whose recurrence in earlier Philippine fiction once prompted a younger critic than I to argue the case for them as defining a distinctive genre (Burns), the disparity is still more marked. Two classic cases (and one partial, making a representation of 28%) turn up in Alvar's collection, bearing solutions patented in the neo-imperial metropole to problems not necessarily perceived as such by the Filipinos who have stayed put. By contrast, the single (1%) *Philippine Stories* repatriate, comics-stall entrepreneur Billy of Carljoe Javier's "Everybody Gets Off at Cubao," is not so much intent on administering any kind of makeover as on coping with the challenges of life as he finds it in the homeland metropolis.

The disparity in attention to the Fil-Am theme is paralleled, to some extent, by disparities in the treatment of it. Philippine-based writers, at least those represented in the recent volumes of this anthology, tend to be almost uniformly skeptical of American ways and values, and, when they are placed together in the balance, stoutly appreciative of the Filipino alternatives. In Marianne Villanueva's "The Hand," a Filipina, Teresa, has been living for eighteen years in the US, married to a man whose name and nationality go unspecified, but whose traits coincide with some of the most widely reputed emotional deficits of American masculinity. He spends most of his spare time watching football on TV, coldly refuses to help out a son whose car has been totaled in an accident, blames and belittles his wife following her much more serious accident, and when she returns home from the hospital, still hurting, all he has to say is "I have to go to work" (vol. 2 532). The only refuge Teresa has from this callous treatment is the happiness brought by her memories of childhood in the Philippines. There she had inhabited a "magical realm" filled with "sunlight...and *talagib*," where her *yaya* had treated her kindly and neighborhood boys brought her gifts of animals, living and dead (533). In fact, it is to that place, which now exists "only in herself" (532), or to death (which may be one and the same) toward which Teresa appears headed when, in the aftermath of a difficult follow-up surgery, she heeds the beckoning of a mysterious, disembodied hand that has been her only ally in exchanges with the inaccessible American husband.

For a spunkier postcolonial sensibility than Teresa's long-suffering temperament can muster, we turn to Jessica Zafra's "Portents." The story begins with single-lady Miggy receiving the news that she is pregnant, which presents her with difficult choices: between boyfriends, either of whom could be the father; over what to do about the pregnancy; and about the kind of person she wants to be. All three involve cultural values that can be mapped on a Filipino-American axis. For boyfriends there are Lawrence and Ramon, whose names tell much of their stories. Lawrence is a well heeled young executive working for a US firm, a buttoned-down type on the outside who is not above groping his date under the table during lunch. It is not this, however, but his bad-mouthing a boss in from the home office,

then, when the man happens by their table, kowtowing to him, that drives Miggy to stand up and leave the restaurant, trailing behind a taunt about a “your sahib” (vol. 1 54). Ramon on the other hand, occupation unspecified, is low-key and not very attentive to details like days of the week, but he claims to be able to read his friend’s thoughts from her face, touches her gently, and is with her at the end as she contemplates her other choices. The pregnancy weighs heavily on Miggy: “Congratulations, it’s a fetus. You frigging idiot,” is how she processes the news from the clinic. What’s more, the various “portents” of the title appear to point toward some apocalyptic disaster which compound with the young woman’s doubts about her mothering skills to make a potent case against bringing another child into the world, and lead her to seek the advice of a co-worker who is the veteran of multiple abortions. Miggy rolls this choice into the larger one concerning her moral character.

Here the options seem likewise to be binary. One is the jaunty, hip-talking, designer-dressing career girl, independent, in full charge of her sexuality—a kind of younger Murphy Brown, the American television icon of the period around which the story was written (and who faced a situation much like Miggy’s during a certain well known sequence of shows). The other is the girl raised in the “traditional Filipino values” (55) whose decline her mother is perpetually lamenting (albeit from American TV territory, L.A.) and trained by the nuns at the Academy of Our Lady’s Seven Sorrows to wear skirts that safely cover the knees (unlike the outfit she is eyeing as the memory of her schooling comes back to her). Expanding on the recollection, Miggy muses that these nuns, “an enlightened bunch,” would have treated a breach of modesty as occasion for a guilt trip rather than a spanking. But in her present case,

Corporal punishment would simplify everything. For sleeping with a guy you weren’t married to, you’d get, say, five hundred lashes. For sleeping with two guys, neither of whom you were married to, one thousand lashes. For even thinking about an abortion, ten thousand lashes. And I’d been such a good girl, too, until recently, anyway, so I’d probably get five hundred extra lashes for being such a disappointment (55).

Although the story does not lay all its cards on the table, it seems fair to project, from the vividness of the punishment fantasy, from the break-up with Lawrence and the closing snuggle with Ramon, and the late reflection that with everything in the world threatening a newcomer's arrival "you didn't need your own mother plotting to get rid of you" (58), an outcome: the "good girl" will win out over Murphy Brown. As punctuation to the triumph of "traditional Filipino values," and counterpoint to the latest portent spread across the sky, in the pit of her stomach Miggy feels a "little kick" (59).

In Alvar's stories we sometimes find these cultural polarities reversed. John, the American significant other Esmeralda commits to is every bit the mensch that Teresa's husband is the cold-hearted monster. He even cleans her offices for her when she is hobbled by ailing feet. And his maturely liberated sexuality stands in sharp contrast to the views of her drug-addicted but still traditionally minded brother, who hectors her about "fornication" and "adultery" (179) from rehab back in the Philippines. In "Old Girl" it is the Filipino husband who makes for the problematic character. What's more, the protagonist clearly loves living in America, whisking the children on train rides down the Northeast Corridor, appreciating not only New England's fall foliage but its winters, too. Earlier in her married life she had fulfilled the repatriate's role indifferently, feeling cooped up, "half-drugged and half-asleep" (198) in a dusty provincial town, prevented from making improvements to their house by the husband's fear of appearing too good for the life of the people, his constituents. She would happily have stayed in Manhattan where she'd taken a job, enrolled in law school, and rented an Upper West Side studio, before a certain letter arrived beckoning her back to Manila and a different destiny.

In other of *In the Country's* stories, however, the preference for American ways is more apparent than real. "The Virgin of Monte Ramon's" Danny and his mother live in a bubble defined by the legacy of a World War II G.I. martyr: light skin, and tastes ostensibly too refined for *dinuguan* or *radionovelas*. But the American story behind Danny's deformed legs turns out to be more sinister than the mother's fairy tale of inheritance from his land-mine injured grandfather. That tale is cover for the decision she made,

early in a difficult pregnancy with Danny, to seek out a miracle pill, taken by women in “both Europe and America” (150), large quantities of which had been arriving in Manila, after “Westerners lost interest” in the remedy. The clear allusion here is to the German-manufactured drug Thalidomide, which caused large numbers of hideous birth deformities in the late 1950s (Michiyato), and the clear implication is that, once its effects became known, the substance was dumped on the market in the developing world. In fact, this is one instance in which Alvar’s usually impeccable research would seem to have failed her: Philippine governmental restrictions on imported pharmaceuticals were stringent at the time, and little if any Thalidomide made it into the country (Michiyato). But this slip in execution does not negate the stand-up postcolonial intent of the plot feature. What’s more, Danny’s ultimate rejection of his mother’s influence, in favor of dancing the *kuratsa* and following *radionovelas* with Annelise, signals a clear preference on the part of this protagonist for authentic Filipino over contrived American ways.

Another story in the collection repeats the trope of Thalidomide dumping, in the form of American model Alice Anders’ attempt to prolong her career in the Philippines, after fashion consumers in the States have “lost interest” in her blonde bombshell look. According to Alvar, “Legends of the White Lady” was inspired by comments from the actress Clare Danes who, shooting a film on location in Manila, reported herself appalled by what she saw of life there: the traffic, the trash, and in particular the numbers of people with physical deformities (which we now know not to be the result of Thalidomide prescriptions). Alvar does concede she could relate Danes’ feeling of alienation to her own on her pivotal return visit to the Philippines (Kaplon, pars. 16-17). But the story itself does not countenance, for long, the presumption of white privilege shared by the actress and her fictional avatar, Alice. Instead, it highlights the resistance, missing in the erroneous account of the “miracle pill’s” introduction, that can be offered on the Philippine side to reputedly superior standards, whether of pharmaceuticals or beauty.

The chief source of this resistance in “Legends” is Jorge Delgado, the Filipino model and “real star” (70) of the gig which Alice has, as expected, easily landed over her Filipina competitors. The most obvious sign of the

resistance is physical: although Jorge is slightly shorter than she, his “taut muscles” and the “hard denim” he wears for the shoot pose a barrier against the effect she is accustomed to having on men. A subtler sign pertains to the camera-ready appearance that is any model’s stock-in-trade, and it offers a tacit rebuttal to Clare Danes’ chief complaint, as well. Jorge bears a white scar across his upper lip, the aftermath, Alice later learns, of a birth defect. But while this could have defaced him, she finds herself acknowledging that this particular deformity is “beautiful in a devastating sort of way” (71). One further instance of Jorge’s holding up against the American’s expectations, comes in the matter of names, always significant in these sorts of cultural interactions. When Alice asks if she can anglicize his name to George, easier for her to say and without untoward associations with a certain English word, Jorge demurs, quietly “shushing” her (83).

In fact, a melting of other forms of resistance has occurred by this time of this conversation, apparently precipitated by Alice’s demonstrating a degree of local knowledge, specifically of the white lady legend. The two agree to go out and, in the moments following this exchange, come together. Things take yet another turn, though, when shortly after their coupling one of the candidates for ghostly status delivers a flesh-and-blood blow to Alice’s face. At first solicitous of his date’s condition and likely jeopardy with the modeling agency, Jorge turns cold the following morning, calling her “kind of an idiot’...without laughter or forgiveness” (87). After having been duly sent packing by the agency, Alice tries to salvage the situation and keep future options open by suggesting to her lover from the night before that his look might be in demand in New York just now. The first time she’d dropped this hint he’d replied familiarly, “Why should I [i.e. go to the States]? All the hot American girls come here” (78). But this time, having been interrupted in a “rapid-fire Tagalog” consultation with a crew member, he throws up a wall with national feeling emblazoned on it: “I’ve never had to leave my country to find work...but thanks” (88). The rejection leaves Alice—and perhaps in fiction if not in fact the real-life figure who inspired her creation (and who has been punningly mocked earlier when Jorge opines that the “Danes” who are all the rage on the female side of international modeling “look like

aliens to me” [72])—to retreat from the Philippines bluntly instructed on the wherewithal, and pride, of its people.

This brings us to Alvar’s novella-length title story, the only one alluding to nationality in its title, and a complex, twisting exploration of the Fil-Am theme. “In the Country’s” protagonist Milagros Sandoval comes to the reader’s attention as an activist on behalf of Filipino rights, devoted to her homeland. In the early 70s she leads a successful strike by local nurses for pay equal to that of American expatriates doing the same job. “REWARD EXPERTS, NOT EXPAT\$” (265) read the picket signs. The action draws the interest of journalist Jim Reyes, who in the course of an interview queries Milagros on the “greener pastures” option open to nurses, i.e. working in Saudi or the States. “Migration’s not for me,” she shoots back. “Your mother gets sick,” she says (accessing a trope for a troubled nation that extends back in Philippine literature to Rizal [Burns 175]), “you don’t leave her for a healthier mother. She’s your mother” (267). In fact, Jim serves as something of a foil to Milagros’ nationalist attitudes in the early stages of what will become the couple’s life together. Although he does not appear intent on greener pastures, either, he does engage in culturally symbolic transactions around names. His own is Jaime but he pointedly instructs Milagros to “call me Jim” (265). And he takes, without explanation, to calling her “Jo,” a cognomen she thinks might have come down from Rizal’s Josephine Braken or (with far higher probability) Louisa May Alcott’s icon of spunky young American womanhood, Jo March. In addition, Jim exhibits the kind of undeviating rationalism that has been associated with representative American male characters, for example Jim Cross of Moshin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007).

But Jim Reyes cannot hold a candle to the adopted Americanism of his friend Billy Batanglobo, who has died before the story opens. Jim called him “Joe Kano,” and upon his return from college in the US he cut the most gung-ho repatriate figure to be found in the collection. Billy acknowledges in his ghostly colloquy with Milagros that he liked America so much he only left “so I could re-create it here” (305). One of his intended re-creations was suburban living, which Billy tried to approximate in a housing division of his design. A grimmer innovation was the Cold-War style fallout or bomb

shelter, two of which he installed on his own property, to play a role in the plot later. However, Billy's infatuation with America hit an abrupt end with the Vietnam War. As a volunteer with a Filipino civic action group, he came to witness firsthand civilian deaths, crop destruction, and prisoner torture. He went AWOL from his organization and came to regard his housing development and "everything [he'd] believed...a complete lie" (279). Eventually he either killed himself (the claim of the Marcos regime) or fell victim to government reprisal (Jim's suspicion).

Curiously, Billy Batanglobo's pivot reflects the one that Milagros undergoes, more gradually, in the opposite direction. Reacting to the kidnapping and eventual killing of her first-born child, Jaime, in an effort by the regime to silence Jim's critical reporting, she begins to entertain the possibility of leaving for greener pastures, after all. "YOUR CAP IS A PASSPORT" (293) proclaims a brochure handed her by a fellow nurse from the strike days. Billy, or the projection of him that speaks for part of Milagros' mind, now remonstrates with her. At first, the push back is gentle: "You can leave a place, but places have a way of not leaving you" (305). But then, as if drawing on his eventual alienation from the American alternative, he becomes more insistent, calling her a "defector," comparing her with the regime generals who will go into exile "without a scratch" (329), and most pointedly reminding her of the daughter she will leave behind. While she protests that he has read her wrong, in the end Milagros cuts her ties and plans to depart for what she had once half-mockingly described as "that shiny, organized place where the buses run on schedule and the bosses pay you well" (293).

Why the turnaround? It does seem possible to see this as less a cultural and political than a personal decision, a rejection of Jim as a husband and a human being. But Milagros herself says that "Jim is not the one—at least not primarily the one" she blames for her son's fate (347). Exactly where that blame lies is not explicitly stated. But in her silent consideration of Jim's appeal for a reconciliation, she trains her gaze precisely toward the level of culture and politics, that is, nationality. Even if things could be better between them, "this country [would] still [be] the country that took everything away." And she repeats that emphasis in her stated reply: "Jim...I

am leaving the country” (346). So it appears that at length she has come to conclude that her metaphorical parent’s condition is a hopeless one, and that migration is for her.

Now, to determine whether this course should be understood as a selfish and cowardly or a liberating and hopeful one, we will probably need to await Alvar’s projected novel following Milagros’ life in the States. But it seems clear, to trade on the assessment the character makes of the reply she gives to her husband’ promise of a reformed marriage—“a serious answer to a serious offer” (346)—that this and other stories in the current collection present a serious exploration of serious theme: Philippine-American relations extending from the political and cultural to the personal level, and back again. It is also apparent that the exploration yields markedly different outcomes, suggesting that it is driven more by imaginative than ideological imperatives, reflecting a working out of possibilities inherent in fully realized fictional characters and their situations.

Struggle

A Filipino artist of the short story in an earlier period, Amador T. Daguió, recollected of his starting out in the 1920s:

I began to see possibilities in the suffering and miseries of my lonely and repressed boyhood...and the struggles of the poor around people around me. I wish[ed] to write about the poor and the ambitious, therefore of the majesty of life, the search for man’s meaning in this world” (qtd. in Abad, vol. 1 xxiii).

In this reflection Daguió articulated not only his own aims as writer but an enduring theme in Philippine literature, and the last to be considered in this discussion: struggle. As with the other themes that have previously been taken up (with the exception of the most recent, the Fil-Am), struggle is a universal, of experience and expression. Nevertheless, in a country in which, even today the human subjects a fiction writer like Butch Dalisay feels most closely around him are those “for whom a gas-stove explosion or a case of diabetes could set a whole family back by one generation of social

mobility” (par. 7), it is an indispensable focus. Arguably no assessment of *In the Country*’s claim to the attention of Filipino readers is complete without a comparison by this measuring rod.

Before proceeding to the comparison, two additional points need to be made regarding the theme. First of all, a given instance of struggle need not be exclusively directed toward an economic end. As Daguió’s reference to his “lonely and depressed” personal existence implies, the striver might just as well be poor in love or poor in spirit, or in some other of life’s needs, and the gap between the depth of the deprivation and the strength of the “ambition” equally capable of energizing the current of human “majesty.” Second, especially in Philippine context, the struggle does not always, or even usually, succeed. This was borne in on me personally first when teaching an American story whose unhappy outcome typically shocked American students but which a class of Filipinos anticipated as a matter of course, and then in my study of “repatriate” protagonists, who uniformly fell short of realizing the projects that animated their return to the homeland. It has seemed to me that Philippine fiction is often written in what Northrop Frye has called the “ironic mode,” where the hero is “inferior in power” to what the reader presumes as their own, and “we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity” (33)—without, it should be added, any necessary diminution of the dignity or even the majesty of the hero’s character.

This being said, some sixteen of *Philippine Stories*, or slightly less than a quarter of the total, explore the theme of struggle, of varying kinds, and of them over half end in the failure, frustration, or even death of the striver. Some of these are tales of downward socioeconomic mobility. For example, the narrator-protagonist of “Burgundy” sets out to escape the poverty into which he was born by going off to Saudi, then by following a three-year plan drawn up by his next employers, only to fall by the end of the story into a dead-end job, as a night watchman. B.S. Agbayani Pastor’s “An Act of Kindness” tells of a young girl selling cigarettes on the streets, whose situation is so unremittingly grim that an older man’s decision not to intervene in her suicide warrants the characterization conferred upon it in the story’s title (Abad, vol. 1 18-28). But perhaps the best worked-out examples in these

volumes of the struggle theme involve love. (For that matter, Lino's descent in "Burgundy" is triggered by unrequited love and the death of its object, Ma'am Seling; and the young girl of "Kindness" seems to have been pushed over the edge by the return to the provinces of a boy her age whose company had been her only comfort.) So in the interests of time (if it is not already too late to serve them) let us take up only two of those examples, stories not otherwise discussed in this section, and then proceed to the comparative analysis of Alvar's work.

A classic story of failed struggle is told in Aurelio Pena's "The Apartment." Isidro Bato has been doing quite well for himself financially since leaving the provincial town of Mati, running a small business in Davao City. But his departure from Mati was occasioned by a hurt in love, when his wife proved unfaithful with a visiting ship captain. Isidro left quietly but can't free his mind from the children, wife—and ship captain—left behind. He finds himself tormented by "fits of depression" (181) and dreams or fantasies of death. In an especially telling one of the latter, he imagines his tomb, surrounded by *ipil-ipil* trees, which the wife, Carmela, had for some reason hated.

The character's solitary life takes a turn when he meets three young women, one of them a niece. These girls are struggling economically, working in a Chinese department store (from which one is about to be fired) and sharing a dingy room in a squatter area. To give them some hope, Isidro tells them he's thinking of looking for an apartment. As they jump at this possibility of an upgrade, he suddenly feels like a father again, concerned for the younger folks' safety and health.

However, it is his identity as a husband that gets rekindled when he begins to be sexually attracted to one of the girls: Edna, like Carmela, a tall *morena*. After a sleepy, half-accidental coupling at a beach resort to which he has brought the three friends, Isidro's feelings escalate. Getting the apartment, for which he has to this point been looking for only half-heartedly, takes on a sudden urgency, "because of her" (187). But this renewal of amorous interest—unabated by any further contact between the two—receives an abrupt check when Edna invites to the apartment a young male friend, an engineer, who it turns out is financing her move to Cebu after her

firing from the department store has become official. Isidro doesn't show any reaction to what he feels as a reprise of his wife's betrayal, but he is clearly crushed. Leaving the apartment after turning it over to the remaining two tenants, he turns back to see over the roof of the building a symbol of his defeat: a "crescent moon...struggling against a slow dark cloud which had begun to swallow it" (190). He also notices for the first time that the trees around the apartment are all *ipil-ipils*, an allusion to the earlier tomb fantasy which suggests that in some sense life is now over for him.

Evidence that in *Philippine Stories* struggle does not always end in defeat comes from Carljoe Javier's "Everybody Gets Off at Cubao." Main character Billy does not appear to have any romantic failures equivalent to Isidro's behind him. On the other hand, past successes do not seem likely, either, for this severely bespectacled young man with his head full of the heroes who inhabit the comics he sells. But Billy is realist enough to know that "these [aren't] days for heroes" gifted with the magical powers to save young ladies in distress and the "cool...to say the right things" to them afterward (Abad, vol. 2 474). And he is realist enough to know that he is struggling in his life. His comic book business (which is also his repatriate "adventure" [476] to the Philippines) is barely breaking even, he has been unable to connect with friends from childhood, and he feels himself a superhero in free fall without a cape, "alone, plummeting now and flailing his arms, grasping for something or someone to hold on to" (477).

In fact, Billy has already identified a potentially saving "someone": a young woman with shoulder-length straight hair highlighted at the tips, with whom he has been sharing the MRT ride home for six months. During that time, while he's fantasized coming heroically to her rescue, the closest to a cool, right thing he has come up with to say to this damsel is the story's title phrase, drawing a one-word reply: "Yep" (474). So disgruntled is he with the lameness of that line that while mutteringly repeating it he slaps himself, hard enough to send his glasses flying. In addition to the dissatisfaction with his timidity in this matter, Billy is down on himself for the way he lets the other passengers bump and push him out the way in the rush to board the train. This leads him to wonder, in shades of Isidro, what it would be like to

jump down on the tracks with the train coming or, alternatively, to launch a supervillain-style rampage against these aggressive fellow commuters (Isidro had also had thoughts about killing his wife and the sea captain).

Shortly after these musings, Billy experiences his real-life low point. Totally stampeded by the unruly crowd, he loses his glasses once again, then his footing, and finds himself crawling, “blind and helpless” (481), on the platform. Tears spring to his eyes, “as if he had been unmasked,” and snot from his nose mingles with the tears as he continues a futile search for his glasses. Much of “Everyone Gets Off at Cubao” is comic in tone, but this moment registers a full measure of Frye’s ironic mode: the hero powerless, the reader looking down on a spectacle of “bondage, frustration, and absurdity.” Yet it is also the moment when the hero himself is rescued: by the damsel, she of the highlighted hair and the crisp “Yep,” who touches his shoulder and hands him his glasses. Still, his vision restored and the rescuer recognized, eloquence once again fails Billy. He can only stammer and offer a feeble smile, before rushing off to clean himself up. All that sleepless night he weighs his mortification against the hope engendered by the possibility of her having been intentionally looking out for him.

The following day, determined at least to convey a proper thank you, he waves aside a potentially action-defeating hero fantasy and bulls his way through carloads of other passengers to where she is standing. A conversation ensues, in which Billy says nothing super-cool but shows his interest and draws from the young lady her name (Janice), the tacit admission that she has been noticing him for as long as he her, and even a repeat-back of what he had taken to be his utterly unmemorable line. This last is offered to signal her own unaccustomed getting off the train at Cubao. But the early departure is accompanied by a promise which, delivered with her characteristic matter-of-factness, allows Billy, with his characteristically active imagination, to start filling in an empty comics page in his head with thoughts of “Tomorrow” (485).

And how does *In the Country* bear in comparison with *Philippine Stories* on the score of this venerable literary theme? Six of the entries in Alvar’s collection treat instances of struggle, with varying degrees of directness and to different outcomes. The closest counterpart to Javier’s “Everybody Gets Off

at Cubao” is likely “The Virgin of Monte Ramon,” which has been discussed in several contexts already. Certainly Danny’s situation lies more consistently and more viscerally in the ironic mode than does Billy’s. But other details are quite similar: fantasied magical powers (attributed to a mythical beast, in the one case, to caped superheroes, in the other), and a love connection with an unconventional female willing to do her share of rescuing. And the endings are very much the same, in triumph or at least in hope, rather than defeat and despair. Danny’s is accompanied by an epiphany, a passage quoted earlier, which names and universalizes the theme. It “wasn’t easy,” he concedes, to dance the *kuratsa* with Annelise in the quagmire produced by the pouring rain. “But for one brief moment, I saw a world where everyone was struggling in the body he or she had been given. That world and that struggle seemed bearable to me, and even beautiful” (153-54).

Alvar also enters stories of struggle on the other side of the ledger. The most abject defeat actually befalls her only American protagonist. “The Legend of the White Lady’s” Alice Anders comes to Manila hoping to revive her modeling career, only to be sent packing by the agency, given the cold shoulder by her romantic interest, and reduced to spending her final moment in the country contriving how to make her image disappear. But leaving aside the question whether an American character’s enacting it cancels out any Philippine quality to the theme, a more nuanced and, to Filipino readers, potentially more relevant fictionalization of struggle may be found in “The Miracle Worker.”

This story is an unusually complicated one, containing a sizable number of moving parts even by Alvar’s standards. But by focusing on the main plot line, in which aspirations play out along an axis of servant vs. professional occupational status, a compelling tale of “bondage, frustration, and absurdity” can be made out. Protagonist Sally Riva grew up “poor and Catholic” (29), her mother either a servant or of some comparably menial occupation. But that mother had a plan for a “better life” (59) for her daughter, which Sally has attempted to fulfill by entering a professional career in the field of special education. At the time the story opens, though, she has seemingly left

behind her teaching days in Philippines to accompany her engineer husband, Ed, to an opportunity in the oil fields of Bahrain.

Yet while Sally seems to have made it, become a woman of leisure in a comfortable home provided by the Arab petroleum company, ambiguities concerning her status persist. A Filipina maid, whose posture and manner of “servitude” (34) Sally takes to resemble her own mother’s, asks her in a public market, “Who is your *amo*” (33), meaning, master or employer? In larger perspective, a former boyfriend had criticized the government’s rush to export contract workers abroad, arguing that a “peasant [is] a peasant [is] a peasant, whether on the rice fields or the oil fields” (29). And in another case of mistaken personal identity, yet with national implications, the story circulates among the OFW’s of the wife of the Philippine ambassador having been ordered out of the Dubai country club swimming pool, on grounds that “no domestic helpers [are] allowed” (34).

As it happens, it is the mistaken maid who makes the connection with her *amo* that puts Sally back to work and sets off a complex reckoning with her economic and social place in the world. Mrs. Mansour is the mother of a severely handicapped child, whom she brings to Sally in hopes that “Teacher,” as she always refers to her, can play the role of Annie Sullivan to Helen Keller alluded to in the story’s title, “The Miracle Worker.” Sally accepts the challenge, partly to feel “useful” (47) again and partly because the money (to which Mrs. Mansour adds extravagant gifts from her weekend shopping trips to European cities) is lucrative. But she omits the customary special education teacher’s protocol of setting of “realistic expectations” for the parent(s), and Mrs. M., who literally does believe in miracles where her daughter is concerned, is left to entertain visions of bilingual competence and symphonic conducting in the future of a child who cannot communicate and shows little responsiveness of any kind.

The work with Aroush, as the girl is named, yields limited but real gains, and an unexpected result: a growing affection on the part of the teacher for her pupil. This feeling leads Sally to realize that she would like to have a child of her own, which drives a wedge between her and Ed, who is perfectly satisfied with their childless marriage (and who for this and other reasons joins the

rolls of feckless middle-class husbands in Alvar's collection). It also leads her to question the charade she is maintaining with Mrs. Mansour. "Com[ing] clean" (56) however, proves difficult to do, in part owing to the power she believes her professional expertise gives her in this situation, with a parent who punctiliously recognizes that expertise, at one point drawing a line between Sally's services and that of a mere "baby nurse" (55). "Mrs. Mansour was the first mother I had known to put herself at my mercy. I saw more clearly...the damage I could do, her dependence on what I chose to say" (56).

In the end, though, our protagonist determines to carry out what both professional duty and personal ethics urge upon her—only to discover that the relationship between her and Mrs. Mansour does not answer to the preconception she has formed of it. The scene is the compound swimming pool, where "Teacher" has declared a "Parents' Day" (59) of one, to demonstrate some of Aroush's distinctly modest accomplishments and to use these as a basis for speaking frankly to the mother. In a brilliant image, the "sun wink[s] in a million facets off the water," hurting Sally's eyes "as if they'd been blinded and gained total clarity all at once" (60). Thus equivocally illuminated, she pushes forward with the truth:

Please listen, Mrs. Mansour. Aroush is not Helen Keller, and I'm no Annie Sullivan. She won't write books or cure cancer. But I can teach her to hold objects, to communicate without words, to recognize sounds, even shapes... (61).

But her listener does not appear "damaged," or even budged, by this straight talk. "Cut[ting] a terribly elegant figure" beside the pool in which Sally is immersed, like the Philippine ambassador's wife before her, Mrs. Mansour draws the line of expertise above rather than below her employee's occupation: "Now you are doctor, as well as Teacher" (61)? And she simply chooses not to believe what the teacher has told her. With a "cheery finality" she lowers her sunglasses, previously raised to take in the day, back over her eyes. Thereby she issues "a warning I understood: that whatever I wished to illuminate, she was happy in the dark" (62). Sally simultaneously understands her own position. If she wants to keep Aroush in her life, she will

have to continue providing services on false pretenses. “What I had thought was deception was my duty” (62). With darkness now covering not only Mrs. Mansour’s eyes, but her own earlier, blinding revelation, much like the clouds “swallow” the moon over Isidro Bato’s head, Sally comes to realize that her struggle for a fundamentally different place in the world than her mother or her maid friend occupied, has come to an ironic end. The illusion of a professionalism transcending wealth and class extinguished, the teacher adopts her equivalents of the posture and manner of subservience: “I held my tongue and treaded water, looking up at where Mrs. Mansour’s eyes were hidden from me. From a distance perfect strangers could assume that Mrs. Mansour was my *amo*, and I was the servant at her feet” (62).

Now, more could probably be said on this matter of servitude and the responses to it in Alvar’s stories. Not all those responses align with Sally Riva’s. Think, for example, of the mother in “The Kontrabida,” who breaks free of a lifetime of subservience with a dramatic and coldly calculating act of vengeance; or of “Shadow Families” Baby, who does not so much rebel against as refuse to be defined by her station, maintaining the sovereignty of her island-like self. Indeed, it would seem to constitute a distinct theme of *In the Country*, albeit related to others that have been discussed, e.g., gender, class, struggle, and even Fil-Am relations (consider the different stances adopted toward their American love interests by Esmeralda and “White Lady’s” Jorge Delgado). What’s more, the perceptual link established in “The Miracle Worker” between servitude and nationhood suggests the relevance the theme may carry for whatever larger “portraiture” is being drawn within the collection. But as this interest does not appear to find an exact match among *Philippine Stories*, and as this section of the essay has already extended well beyond its planned boundaries, it will be best to offer here a brief summary of the themes that have lent themselves to comparison.

As in the areas that have been investigated previously, findings from the thematic comparisons are subject to interpretation. Clearly, differences are manifest in the treatment of specific themes, and a number of them appear to correlate with generally acknowledged differences in the two national cultures. A good many Philippine stories embrace of folk and spectral

expressions of supernaturalism, while Alvar holds to a scientifically tethered literal realism, even in her “ghost” tales. *In the Country* features numerous female characters, imbued with the spirit of Western-style feminism, rebelling against their husbands and the family responsibilities thrust upon them. Filipino short fictionists tend to take a less conflictual view of gender relations but see more of a battle line running through class distinctions, possibly owing—if Alfar’s “Aquilone du Estrellas” may be taken as a vector—to the legacy of a hierarchical Spanish social structure. Alvar’s stories are more apt to find something to admire in American characters and values, whereas Philippine narrative, perhaps reacting to a more proximate legacy of colonial and neocolonial hegemony, is inclined to look askance at anything tinted red, white, and blue.

In other respects, though, the two collections of work seem to be effectively in synch: in the treatment of religion, for example, or of unhappy family situations; in Alvar’s willingness to let her stories take a postcolonial turn, presenting presumed American superiorities as superficialities or worse, and validating sturdy, sensible Filipino resistance to them; and in the more or less even-handed representation of struggle’s outcomes, frustrated or triumphant. Equally noteworthy, perhaps, as these specific divergences and convergences, is the concordance evident around the larger set of themes. Granted, spiritual matters, family and gender, class, and struggle—all but Fil-Am matters, really—are to some extent universal concerns of literature. But this particular combination, which stands out quite clearly in the anthologized Philippine stories, may be a distinctive one. And, to extend what was said about Alvar’s penchant for the ghost story vis-à-vis other practitioners of realistic fiction, it would be at the very least unusual to find other American-based writers focused as intently as she appears to be on exploring these particular themes.

At the same time, of course, it has just been suggested that one theme repeatedly explored in *In the Country*, servitude and the responses to it, does not appear to be precisely matched in Philippine stories. This raises the possibility that the interest is something that Alvar brings to her material for idiosyncratic reasons, or out of her American background. Indeed, as I recall

it now, attentiveness to the situation of servants in Philippine social life is one of the few aspects of Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* that drew a reaction from my students in that long ago class: a reaction either of incredulity that the matter would be seen as important enough for fictional comment, or unwillingness to credit that the comment had actually been made. So it may be that, while the concordance of themes is striking, a cultural disjunction manifests itself at this level, as well.

Conclusion and Further Recommendations

If the findings under all headings of this inquiry—cultural appropriation, authorial identity, setting, language, and thematic comparison—are open to interpretation, the task of interpretation falls to the “best interpreters,” as Abad puts it: Filipino readers. This was the assurance offered at the outset of the essay. These readers are to be both judge and jury over the evidence set forth here. It is theirs to determine whether the pattern of convergence or divergence is stronger in the thematic explorations of *In the Country* and Philippine stories; whether the English in which the former is written can reliably be distinguished from the language of the latter; whether Alvar's knowledge of Tagalog is canceled out by her distaste for *dinuguan*; whether the labor of research and feats of imagination that turned a “glimpse” of Manila in 1999, pearl-like, into an elaborately realized fictional world, outweigh the dearth of lived experience in the actual world represented by the fiction. It is also theirs to make determinations on the larger questions. Do these American-published stories deserve a place in any future anthologies of Philippine short fiction? Do they paint a “cultural portrait” in which a “nation, a diaspora, a...people” can see themselves, authentically and honestly? Do they have things to say that Filipinos can take to heart?

This may be the point to issue the reminder that the purpose of all this evidence gathering has been to support a recommendation for Filipino readers simply to read Mia Alvar's book. Doing so will allow them to add to their roles of judge and jury that of eyewitness, and will be the best assurance of a fully considered and balanced verdict. It will also allow for the “disconnect,” between the book's reception in the US and in the Philippines, to be

eased. And, of most immediate benefit, it will put those readers in the way of some fine stories, to be enjoyed for their own sake.

This is also the point to recall that a further recommendation was promised at the start of things. This one, too, is aimed at healing a disconnect, and bringing good stories within range of a readers who have not had the benefit of them. Had this proposition not already been indicated in the title and the introductory section, the just completed discussion of themes would have tipped off what is coming. For although Alvar's work is the ostensible focus of the comparison, Philippine stories receive here very nearly the same amount of detailed critical attention as those in her collection. This was far from the original intention. In fact, I first planned to write a review essay of *In the Country*, urging its claims on Filipino readers and even as Philippine literature, with no more instructed sense of that body of writing than the blurred and partial idea gained from occasional past forays into it. Even after discovering Abad's anthology and with it the error of my presumption, I only imagined using the entries in those volumes as more or less collective and anonymous markers of "Filipino-ness in fiction"—having something of the function, in the comparison, of the unidentified voice in Alvar's "Shadow Families," blandly expressing the conventional standards of that community.

But as I became more deeply involved in the analysis, individual stories from the anthology began to take on something like the sharp edges of Baby's personality, demanding to be taken seriously on their own terms. Numbers of them sprung into vivid life before my eyes. Not a few of them lifted me up and away, like Ma. Isabella's marvelous kite. I discovered myself shedding tears, laughing out loud, and testing the patience of family and friends with detailed plot summaries. In terms of the evolving study, I found it no longer enough to be extracting generalized qualities from these works; it became necessary to move inside them, to engage with the particularities of their designs, language, meanings. This has led, I hope, not only to a more specific but a deeper and more authentic comparative understanding, than would have been possible from a more schematic view. It has also led to a personal recognition that the "literary merit" Matt Ortile felt would commend *In the Country* to Filipino readers belongs also to home-grown stories. And it leads

to this essay's second recommendation, that American readers open themselves to short fiction by Filipino authors.

Nor is this endorsement, any more than the one in Alvar's favor, made solely on literary grounds. The Philippine stories offer cultural payoffs, as well, to an American audience, although the "portraiture" in this case would not hold up a reflection of their own reality but rather that of another people and culture. That said, Filipinos are not the Other, not exactly strangers in this case. In doing this reading Americans would be learning about the life of a nation whose history is deeply entangled with their own. They will see everywhere the influence of their own ways. They should be able to feel a palpable bond with writers who struggle to express their meanings in a shared tongue. At the same time, of course, they will sense the rooted presence of mores and traditions very much "other" from what they know. And they will detect subtle but inexorable movement away from old colonial and neo-colonial ties toward genuine literary and cultural independence—one hallmark of which may surely be found in the quality of this body of stories. Beyond such markers of larger significance, though, and more than anything else in these stories they will find fictional representation of people living their lives, struggling, failing, and triumphing in ways which, whether they be culturally similar or different are humanly akin to their own. Such an encounter may allow those readers, to reverse the phrasing of a defender of fiction quoted earlier, to "marry... an intense curiosity about others" to a "deep interior knowledge."

But if there is this parallel, there is also a decided asymmetry between the two recommendations. If I were to ask random colleagues in the US the same questions about Philippine short fiction that I posed to Filipino colleagues regarding *In the Country*, i.e. "Have you read..Have you heard of..?" the result would be a far higher percentage head shakes and blank looks. That's because the disconnect between potential reader and work is more pronounced in this case. While Alvar's book was promoted and at least remains available in the Philippines, courtesy of whatever cooperative arrangement was struck between NBS and her publisher, short stories by Filipino authors (with the exception of a couple that have appeared over the

years in the *Atlantic*) enjoy no such profile in the United States. A number of novels and a few volumes of poetry have debuted, but no anthology of short fiction from the archipelago has been published in the US since Leonard Casper's *Modern Philippine Short Stories*, in 1962—a book long since out of print. True, there is Amazon (and other clearinghouses on the internet), but without the marketing muscle of a domestic publisher, a book listing might as well not exist for American literary consumers. As long as this state of affairs continues, any appeal to such consumers to make room in their reading for this unfamiliar genre must ring hollow.

While this circumstance might seem an argument for retracting the appeal, in fact it prompts a still further recommendation, one hinted rather than placed directly on the table at the outset: bring out a book of Philippine stories in the United States. That will eliminate any (valid) excuses on the part of American readers. But is this call, which would need to be answered by the publishing industry, any more realistic, less hollow, than the one that preceded it? Here are a few points to consider. On the face of it, the disconnect in question appears a vacuum waiting to be filled. The market for short stories, which are regarded as something of an American specialty (March-Russell 56, 83), is generally strong in the US. What's more, by testimony of practitioners from past to present, the short story is a preferred genre among Filipino fictionists, as well (Hidalgo 13, 59; Dalisay conversation)—a marker, perhaps, of a significant parallel between the two literary cultures. What has prevented this natural complementarity from being recognized as a business opportunity? Actually, a larger factor has entered in here and would need to be taken into account in any approach to a prospective publisher. Not only Philippine, but “postcolonial” short fiction in general has been given relatively little notice in the US, perhaps in part due to the strong push to recognize the work of domestic minorities (March-Russell 86). But one can imagine turning this deficit to account, by arguing that an anthology of stories from one postcolonial setting could open the way into this largely uncharted but potentially expansive new marketing territory. What's more, since it is the major trade presses that stand the best chance of exploiting such a market,

it might make sense to propose the idea first to a major player, on the order of Alvar's Penguin Random House. For that matter, perhaps right of first refusal should be offered to that very publisher, to allow them to capitalize on the success of *In the Country* (and, more distantly, *Dogeaters*, which the same root company brought out twenty-five years before). Suggesting publication in calendar year 2022, the fiftieth anniversary of Casper's volume, just might put the icing on the cake.

Yes, but what of likely audience interest in such an anthology? Selling is the main selling point to make to commercial publishers, and readers who buy are not necessarily interested in closing gaps and redressing imbalances. They need to be drawn to a particular book or type of literature, and then to like it enough to influence others to give it a try. On this score, no doubt some serious market testing would be in order. But here, too, Alvar's example can prove instructive. Among those posting their reactions to her collection on the *Goodreads* site, a good many sincerely believed themselves to be reading a work of Philippine literature. And they waxed enthusiastic about it, in some cases wildly so; a few commented how little they had previously known of this other culture and how grateful they were to these stories for so vividly informing them about it. Needless to say, the aficionados of *Goodreads* constitute a small and perhaps atypical sample. Certainly it might prove difficult, even with a more extensive data set and the other savvy pitches that have been trotted out, to persuade a major commercial house to take a risk on this venture.

Not the end of the world. If a Big Five publisher doesn't bite, we simply fall back and approach an independent or academic press, enterprises less focused on the bottom line, which publish the majority of short fiction anthologies in the US (March-Russell 49). The first run may be smaller, and the volume less likely to attract reviews from *The New York Times* and National Public Radio. But who knows? With a push from the *Goodreads* crowd that gave *In the Country* a bump, and maybe word of an over-the-top response to a cooperative release in the Philippines (something stronger, anyway, than Alvar and National Bookstore received), a buzz starts up, a second printing rolls out, an

audiobook goes in the works, Netflix shows interest in adapting select pieces for a series on their streaming service and...recommendation 2 gets fulfilled: Americans get to know Philippine short stories.

Of course, recommendation 3, the precondition for 2, has not yet landed on a publisher's desk, and so for the time being this recommendation lies in the hands of the recommender. But I welcome help in preparing a package of materials for submission; the hope of having more hands involved is what emboldened me to slip into the pronoun "we" in the preceding paragraph. In fact, I have offers of assistance on the task from some of the notables in Philippine letters who have been referenced here, and I am grateful to them. Yet others can give input, too. Among the questions to be resolved is the scope of the anthology. Should it include stories from all periods of Philippine literature in English, going back to Marquez-Benitez, Arguilla, Daguió, Joaquin, Gonzalez, Jose, Rosca...or focus on the more recent decades covered in the *Hoard of Thunder* volumes drawn from for this essay? Are there still more recent works that might deserve inclusion? And, not to aggravate a sore subject, what about Alvar? Does the question of her status, as a Filipino, American, or Filipino-American writer fall under a different light, or not, when a book like this, rather than a follow-on anthology to be published in the Philippines, is in consideration? As for getting suggestions to me, let us make it simple. Here is my email address: burnsgt@franklin-pierce.edu. I look forward to hearing from any who still have the energy, having sat this far through the discussion of it, to step up and take a practical turn with the matter at hand.

For no number of recommendations will heal the disconnects that have been identified here. Only acting on the recommendations will. So Filipino readers, give Mia Alvar another chance, and see what you think. American readers, if there be any, your time to read Philippine stories may come. Meanwhile, bear in mind that a number of your countrymen who, rightly or wrongly, took Alvar to be Filipino writer, loved her. And those who wish to help get the proposed new volume to press, so that it can come into the hands of the Americans, hit that email link, roll up your sleeves, and let's set to work.

Notes

1. In spite of repeated requests to representatives of National Bookstore and Vintage Random House (Asia), I was unable to acquire definitive information on Philippine sales of *In the Country*. In consequence, I am left to rely on the anecdotal evidence that appears below in the text for judging that the reception of the book in the Philippines has been less than rousing.
2. Closer in time to *In the Country* than *Dogeaters* came Fil-Am author Lysley Tenorio's short story collection *Monstress* (2012), another work which received praise in the US but does not appear to have made an appreciable impact in the Philippines (at least, it was not mentioned in any PH interviews with Alvar, or by the literati whom I consulted, as a precedent to her efforts). Although the fictional worlds Tenorio creates are more Filipino-American than Alvar's in their centers of gravity, they do feature Philippine settings and Filipino characters. Perhaps because the publisher in this case (HarperCollins' Ecco imprint) did not actively promote the book in the Philippines, *Monstress* seems not even to have entered the field of controversy over what qualifies as national literature. However, a more recent entry may be enjoying a somewhat different fate. US-based Randy Ribay's young adult novel, *Patron Saints of Nothing* (2019), has found an audience in the country to which its Filipino-American protagonist travels on a mission. One reviewer on YouTube gushed, in very much the terms Matt Ortile had expected Alvar's work to be received, that the publication of *Patron Saints* by a Big Five US house "means our story, our people, our country will be given an international spotlight. My country is being represented" ("Patron Saints..."). In the testimony of this admittedly unsophisticated commentator, at least, no barriers are being raised against the relevance of an American-raised and American-published author's perspective on the Philippines. A more savvy set of comments to a Facebook posting do suggest that Ribay's book, while supported by a comparatively modest marketing campaign (but addressing a topical concern, the Duterte drug war), has succeeded in creating the buzz among Filipino readers that Alvar's stories did not achieve. Still, one of the comments on this thread strikes a familiar chord: "I wanted to like it, but it seems to be written more for Western audiences" (Pantoja Hidalgo, Randy Ribay). No doubt few things change fundamentally overnight. Still, a recent communication from a Manila colleague suggests that judgments of what does or does not constitute Filipino writing may be more complex and evolving than my brief survey of attitudes led me to presume. If so, then the underlying aims of this essay may already be in process of realization.
3. It turns out that this "unimpeachable" standing is not universally acknowledged. Concerns have been raised regarding the determination of what is and

is not Philippine literature from the other side, as it were, with Abad's selection coming under question for being Manila-centric, insufficiently attentive to the work of fictionists from the provincial areas of the country. See Monica Macansantos, "Becoming a Writer: The Silence We Write Against."

4. As this essay was headed to press, another literary controversy, bridging issues of cultural appropriation and those of identity/authenticity currently under discussion in the text, broke out in the United States. A novel titled *American Dirt*, the story of a tumultuous flight to refuge in the US by a Mexican woman and her daughter "seemed poised," according to the *New York Times*, "to become one of this year's biggest, buzziest books" Oprah Winfrey selected the novel for her prestigious book club and made plans to interview the author on the border between the two countries (Schuessler and Alter par. 1-2, 5). But reviewers and other advance readers began to voice resistance to the work, by a writer distant from the experience depicted: Jeanine Cummins, "Latino" only by virtue of a Puerto Rican grandmother, whose understanding of Mexico and the migrant experience appears to have come from "five years of research" and whatever imaginative investment she was able to make in the material. One such reader, with direct family ties to Mexico and a journalistic record of interviewing refugees from there, reports having wanted "to see myself in this book," but finding in it "all these things that constantly make us feel small" and coming away from it with the sensation of her "skin...crawling" (Martin par. 1-2, 4, 6-8) At the same time, a bookseller in the border city of San Diego maintains there has been no pushback from customers and that the most disturbing reaction has been the "vitriol...in some critiques" (Schuessler and Alter par. 25). So the beat goes on, and the issues raised by the Filipino writers remain relevant.
5. The basic criterion for comparison appears in the top row left, followed to the right by specific categories. The left-hand column holds the two "samples," i.e. the stories in Abad's anthology and Alvar's collection. The data displayed in the interior cells consists of both a percentage (in **bold**), allowing for the most direct comparison between the very differently sized samples, and an absolute number (in plain type and parentheses), offering a check on the weight to be placed on the percentage values—the "statistics of small numbers" being not the most reliable of mathematical indicators. One seeming oddity might be the presence of decimal values. These reflect ambiguous cases, when the setting, in this case, is not clearly identified or unitary. Here, for example, a story whose individual and company names sound American but whose geographic setting is otherwise not specified figured as a .5 for the US category and .5 for Other, while another whose backstory is set largely in China split a point between Other and Philippines.
6. Clifford Palanca, "The Apartment." Abad, ed. *Hoard of Thunder* vol. 1: 224-225.
7. Alvar, "A Contract Overseas." *In the Country* 235.

8. The use of Filipino words and phrases I take to be primarily a matter of intended audience, previously addressed. For the record, Alvar introduces quite a number of Filipino terms but commonly—not always—provides a translation or explanatory clues within the context. *Philippine Stories* writers use such terms more regularly, once in a great while breaking out into something approaching the code-shifting that marks a good deal of everyday speech among educated urban-dwellers in the Philippines (*Hoard* vol. 1 273). These writers tend also not to offer any assistance to understanding—although an exception is made by none other than NVM Gonzalez (*Hoard* vol. 1 121).
9. Bobby Flores-Villasis, “Menandro’s Boulevard.” Abad, ed. *Hoard of Thunder* vol. 1: 168.
10. Alvar, “The Virgin of Monte Ramon.” *In the Country* 153.
11. Alvar, “Esmeralda.” *In the Country* 171.
12. Timothy R. Montes, “Under the Wave.” Abad, ed. *Hoard of Thunder* vol. 2: 585.
13. Jessica Zafra, “Portents.” Abad, ed. *Hoard of Thunder* vol. 1: 50.
14. Alvar, “Esmeralda.” *In the Country* 178.
15. Dean Francis Alfar, “L’Aquilone du Estrellas.” Abad, ed. *Hoard of Thunder* vol. 2: 127.
16. Alvar, “In the Country.” *In the Country* 291.
17. Among other developments, there has been a push on the one hand to construe theme as an abstract proposition, analogous to a thesis in argumentative writing (Griffith 40-41), and on the other to understand it as a more diffuse feature, manifesting itself not only in relation to the subject but the form of a work (Childs and Fowler 239).
18. The super-unit of families in this story constitutes an example of a “chosen” family, in which “nonbiological kinship bonds” unite people for purposes of “mutual support and love” [Gates par. 1]. Familiar in American pop culture and fiction, the chosen family also makes appearances in the Philippine anthology, notably Eric Gamalinda’s “Fear of Heights” and Butch Dalisay’s “Some Families, Very Large.”
19. Here is another plot point apparently supported by Alvar’s research, in this instance into the case of Primitivo Mijares and his son “Boyet,” abducted, tortured, and killed by the regime in retaliation for the father’s critical journalistic writings. I am indebted to my former UP student, Monica Macansantos, and to her mother Priscilla S. Macansantos, for recognition of this probable source (which is in fact more complicated than this brief summary can convey [“Conjugal Dictatorship”]).

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SPECIAL SECTION

Eco-Social Surveying

Mapping Social Assets, Urban Greenery, and the Connections Between Them in Rapidly Changing Cities

The Missing Map: Eco-Social Asset Mapping

An Introduction

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The focus of this special section of UNITAS is on the recording and preservation of freely available social assets like meeting places, market places, community halls, playgrounds, public open spaces, and green infrastructure, including urban greenery, both planned and unplanned. As evidenced by the experience of countries worldwide, these spaces in general have a particularly strong impact on the wellbeing of marginalized groups because in situations of rapid urbanization and change, they can quickly be overrun.

Background

The Newton-CHED Institutional Links research grant to the University of Santo Tomas, entitled “Eco-Social Surveying: Mapping Social Assets, Urban Greenery, and the Connections Between Them in Rapidly Changing Cities” together with its collaborative partner University of Reading (UoR) of United Kingdom is funded by the British Council through the Commission for Higher Education (CHED) and was approved in December 2017. As may be gleaned from the papers included in this special section, this project has used participatory design techniques to map out social assets and green infrastructure eco-social assets in two small cities, exploring the connections between them towards meaningful place-making.

The Missing Map

These papers, written by the University of Santo Tomas Newton Research Team headed by Leah Dela Rosa, were presented during the Missing Map Research Symposium, organized by the Urban Living Research Group, held on June 25-26, 2019 at the School of Architecture, University of Reading, UK. In the effort to explore eco-sociocultural concerns in context, the symposium looked into how mapping may provide visual and/or participatory ways of exploring alternate perspectives in addressing such concerns. Specifically, by taking into consideration the stories behind these maps, it was hoped that previously unrecorded narratives might richly complement our understanding of where and how we live (Samuel 2018).

“Manila’s Binondo District: Beyond Restaurants and Tourist Trails Mapping Social Assets of Binondo Within the Social Construct of Chinatown” by Simoun Ong looks into the political district of Binondo, Manila in the Philippines, which is known to be the oldest Chinatown district in the world, dating back to the Spanish colonial period. Based on his own experience and through the mapping of social assets, identified through surveys and interviews in and around the district of Binondo, the author takes note of how the Chinatown has expanded into the nearby districts of Tondo, Santa Cruz and San Nicolas through time. The paper also compares and contrasts how insiders and outsiders look at these assets as identifiers of Chinatown.

“Redefining Street Life: The Intertwine of Public and Private Spaces in the Streets of Santa Rosa, Laguna, Philippines” by Noel Cruz, John Clemence Pinlac, and Vinson Serrano focuses on the three main streets in three barangays of Santa Rosa, Laguna with different socio-economic profiles. The paper describes how the streets have been redefined as seen in the overlapping use of the public realm such as streets and adjacent private spaces which is a common occurrence in most Asian cities. The street profile documentations were analyzed through the interrelation two qualitative frameworks, namely, (1) socio-cultural contexts and (2) physical attributes.

“Mapping Urban Ethnography Through Streetscape Analysis: A Case Study of Barangay Kanluran, Santa Rosa City, Laguna, Philippines” by Noel Cruz and Kimberly Ronquillo, examines are the streets of Barangay Kanluran

in Santa Rosa through the use of the ethnographic research methods such as streetscape characterization, transect walk and key informants interview, identifying material and non-material cultures. It highlights how material cultures greatly affect and sustain non-material cultures such as religions, organizations and customs and traditions. Notwithstanding regulation issues, the combination of socio-economic structures in the barangay, as shown in the output map and streetscapes, reflect some positive aspects of the Filipino culture such as mutual trust and “bayanihan.”

“Mapping the Eco-Social Construct of Santa Rosa: An Emerging City in a Watershed of Opportunities for Development” by Nathaniel C. Bantayan, Leah Dela Rosa, Sylvia D. Clemente, Magdalene P. Guevarra, and Kyle Pierre Israel studies the possibility of involving communities in the process of academic research and innovation by analyzing the selection of projects such as in the promotion of the concept of the Local Advisory Council (LAC) while identifying localized community assets. It focuses primarily on geographically-defined communities of each of the participating barangays of Santa Rosa based on the ecological perspective of the city’s watershed. Moreover, while taking on a historical perspective and studying the current state of land use, the paper employs methods in remote sensing and Geographic Information System also known as GIS.

Participatory approaches currently occupy a prominent position in community development practice. From the results of the participatory mapping with local communities indigenous expert knowledge is shown to be the source of the social and cultural representations of the local landscape. Out of the eighteen (18) barangays of Santa Rosa, five (5) barangays have been identified to have an in-depth identification of their eco-social assets.

Collectively these papers have amplified the eco-social values of the communities identified through participatory approaches resulting in the drawing not just of cartographic maps but the formulation of social maps—“missing maps”—generated from the shared unique stories and narratives of the community members as they navigate their valuable public places.

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Mapping the Eco-Social Construct of Santa Rosa

An Emerging City in a Watershed of Opportunities for Development

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Abstract

The years 1946 to 2020 saw the gradual dwindling of Santa Rosa City, Laguna's agricultural land, from 96% to 15.4%. Meanwhile, the city's urbanization catapulted to 84.5% by 2013 from just below 4% in 1946. Under the regional development plan of the Aquino Administration designating Region IV-A, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon (CALABARZON) as the industrial hub of the country, and driven by the increased access with the construction of the expressway in the 1980s, Santa Rosa City's manufacturing industry rose from 746 in 1980 to 5,201 in 2013, a near 700% increase. Today, Santa Rosa City is at the heart of

the urbanization and industrialization, topping Metro Manila's economic growth. The highest population density is concentrated at the shore areas of Laguna Lake, the largest freshwater lake in the Philippines. From an environmental perspective, this is an economic bubble waiting to burst, but the effect to the city's environmental sustainability is dire: water abstraction at its highest may lead to land subsidence, not to mention water scarcity, which the environmental effects lead to the increased pollution of its catchments, waterways, and the shoreline, and continuous land conversion particularly for housing are imperiling its array of ecosystem services.

This paper will give a historical perspective and present the current state of the Santa Rosa City land use by employing remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS). Map overlays of natural boundaries of catchments and waterways will be analyzed in terms of barangay's governance boundaries to show its effect on the populace's in health, and physical, material, economic, social well-being, and the quality of life in general. Results of participatory mapping with local communities that capture indigenous expert knowledge will be shown as social and cultural representations of the local landscape.

Keywords

watershed; land use/land cover change; remote sensing, Geographic Information System (GIS), participatory mapping

Introduction

This study tracks the urbanization sprawl southward of Mega Manila along a major spine of South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) towards the City of Santa Rosa and extending to the City of Calamba. Population growth and land-use change between the years 2000 to 2015 are analyzed. Historically, this spine that extended the Osmeña Highway into the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) was constructed in the late 1970s. At the southern edge of Mega Manila, where Muntinlupa City meets Laguna province, one starts to see and feel the difference. Cool air meets the motorist and the view is filled with vast expanses of rice fields that extend to at least 20 kilometers until one reaches the foot of the majestic Mount Makiling in the City of Calamba. Famous for its rich water reserves, Santa Rosa is home to two big companies of soda and beer. The vital ecosystem services of fresh air and abundant water are rapidly disappearing with the massive replacement of agriculture with housing and industry.

This study aims to produce a governance proposal that follows the natural boundaries of a watershed ecosystem. Further, a watershed vulnerability index is presented that allows a governance manager, i.e. Mayor of a City or Municipality, to be guided on the mix of land uses in his/her area of jurisdiction that ensures a sustainable flow of benefits without sacrificing the provision of watershed ecosystem services.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study area is focused on the significant spine of Mega Manila that extends to the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) traversing the area of interest, i.e. City of Santa Rosa. Figure 1 shows the cities and municipalities (black) and the watersheds (pink) along the spine with the City of Sta Rosa (highlighted).

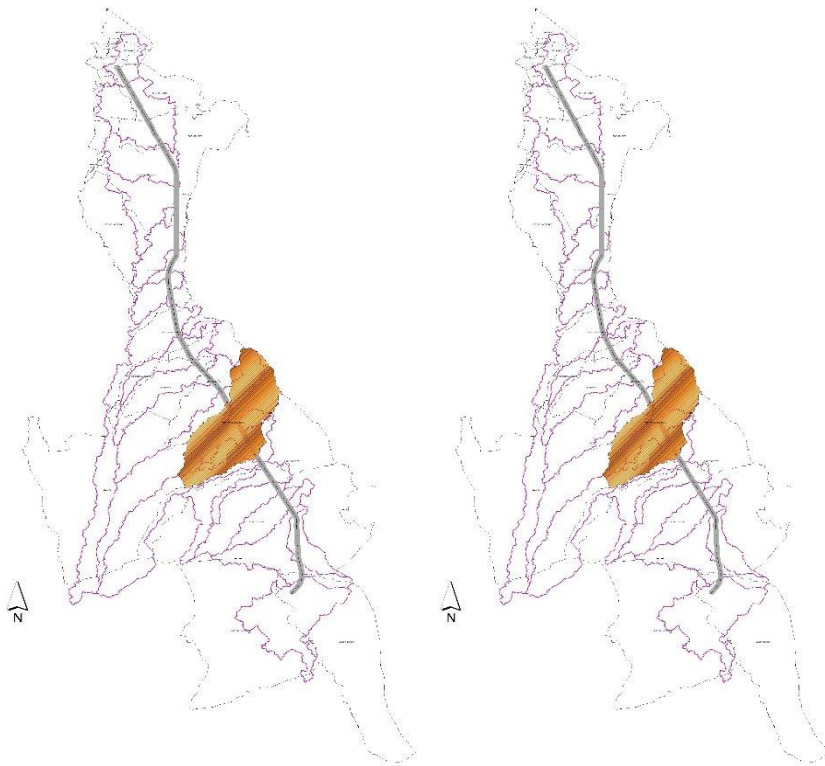


Fig. 1. Cities and municipalities and the watersheds along the spine. Nathaniel Bantayan.

Mapping Process

The mapping process follows the phases of GIS implementation as described in Bantayan, et al., namely: Geographic Information System (GIS), Geographic Encoding and Processing (GEP), GIS Analysis and Modelling (GAM), and GIS Geographic Output and Display (GOD) (*GIS in the Philippines* 44). The first phase involves the transformation of the gathered data and information into one uniform framework. As in the case of the city of Santa Rosa, the inputs include various sources: maps, reports, satellite images, GPS notes, tables, databases, and others. As noted by Bantayan et al., “the input sources derive from remote sensing (i.e. aerial photography

and satellite images) and global navigation systems (e.g. GPS)” (*GIS in the Philippines*, 44). More recently, the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) is becoming prevalent.

GIS Analysis and Modelling (GAM) is considered the real power behind GIS because it is where GIS analytical operations are performed, resulting in several scenarios and new insights and information. The third and final phase is putting the output into a format that will reach the greatest number of users and in the most understandable, i.e. readable way. In GIS output and display (GOD), the common results of GIS analysis are maps and statistical reports. These can be printed on paper or sent to other users (i.e. as digital files) for further analysis.

Ridge-to-Reef (R2R) Model of Sustainability

The R2R model raises the success potential of a poverty alleviation project as communities may be easily asked to participate in development activities. The activities may be a community organization, nursery establishment, fishpond development, tree planting, or farming.

Under the R2R concept, local government unit-partners are tapped when these are around a “watershed or micro-watershed, lake ecosystem, including its tributaries.” The model also defines the choices of recipients grounded on land ecologies of highland, low-lying areas, coastal and marine ecosystems, including ecotones (*Business Mirror*, “Leyte town adopts”). The concept also promotes the following: (1) zoning enhancement to avoid and alleviate climate impact and to sequester carbon dioxide; (2) mandatory development controls for high risk flood-prone areas; (3) stricter building code standards implement a relocation plan for informal settlers residing in “no build zones”; (4) mitigation measures such as use of permeable surfaces, reforestation, etc.; and (5) coordinated land-use planning among local governments in managing the watershed eco-system.

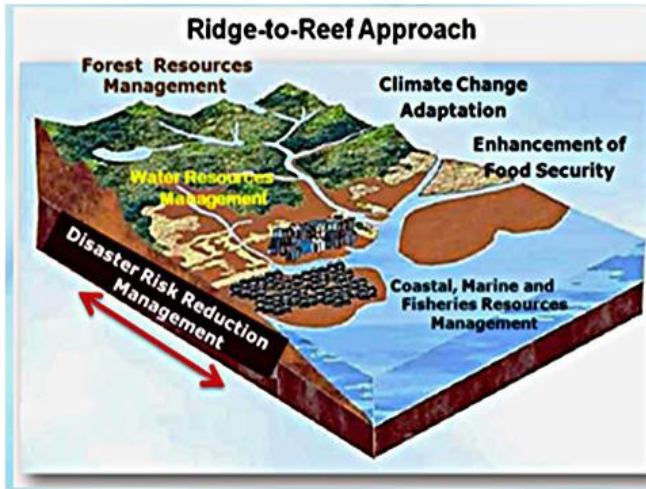


Fig. 2. Ridge-to-Reef Approach. From Housing and Land Regulatory Board (HLURB), 2014.

The Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) is parallel to the ideologies of the ridge to reef or R2R approach. It can mostly be appreciated as a strategy that fares the ecosystems, but relatively due to the organizational undertaking of anthropological activities, environmental and ecological effects have been detrimental to the ecosystems from ridge to reef. These effects can be taken into account while creating organizational and management decisions (Gavaris 6-14).

EBM will likewise hasten the understanding of material transfers from watersheds and reducing “downstream” agriculture and forestry effects on coastal aquatic ecosystems. Preservation of existing vegetation and development with runoff mitigation measures reduce rainfall-runoff, leading to less intense and frequent flooding. Exposure of people to floodwater could be further reduced by strict action and through reinforcement of building standards in flooded areas.

The most important degradation process in the upland areas is deforestation, which leads to increased erosion, soil depletion, and, eventually, water pollution, and irregular streamflow.

Typical causes of deforestation include shifting farmlands to building industrial parks, commercial areas, and residential areas. It can be observed that most of these hazards are experienced at the 3rd level of hazard exposure to which there are four barangays are vulnerable, these barangays are Don Jose, Malitlit, Pulong Santa Cruz and Santo Domingo.

The most prominent degradation processes in the lowland areas are derived from agricultural activities resulting in soil and water pollution with fertilizers and pesticides, and depletion of fresh water used for irrigation. Additionally, settlements and the related release of solid and liquid wastes and loss of vegetative cover from infrastructure development contribute to these processes. These barangay settlements lead to a degradation of water quality in the surface, ground, and coastal waters and air and soil pollution.

The matrix on Table 1 shows the exposure and vulnerability of Santa Rosa City to four types of environmental hazards: flood, liquefaction, landslide, and erosion. Flood, landslide, and erosion are natural phenomena influenced by the climatic element of rainfall, resulting from typhoons, extended rain, strong thunderstorms, and La Niña episodes. These could be aggravated by climate change. These hazards induced by rainfall are experienced yearly by the city. The most vulnerable barangays are considered to be at the 1st level hazard exposure.

Table 1. Disaster/Hazard Inventory Matrix Based on the Possible Levels of Hazard Exposure for Project Research Implementation

Barangay	Flood	Liquefaction	Landslide	Erosion
1st Level				
Aplaya	/	/		
Caingin	/	/		
Sinalhan	/	/		
2nd Level				
Market Area	/	/		
Ibaba	/	/		
Kaunlaran	/	/		

Malusak	/	/		
Labas	/	/		
Tagapo		/		
Pooc	/	/		
Dila		/		
3rd Level				
Balibago		/		
Dita		/		
Don Jose			/	/
Macabling		/		
Malitlit				/
Pulong Santa Cruz				/
Santo Domingo			/	/

Of the three hazards of flooding, landslide, and erosion, it is flooding that presents a high risk to the population, urban use areas, natural resource-based production areas, critical point facilities, and lifeline utilities—especially those located in the northern flat areas with low slopes and elevation (Santa Rosa City Comprehensive Land Use Plan).

Soil erosion is an imperceptible and slow process, but it accumulates over the years. It is the cause of the siltation of rivers, consequently exacerbating flooding in the northern lowland section of the city. Additionally, the three hazards mentioned above are exacerbated by anthropogenic activities in the uplands of Silang within the Silang-Santa Rosa sub-watershed. It can be observed that most of these hazards are experienced at the 3rd level of hazard exposure to which there four barangays are vulnerable, these barangays are Don Jose, Malitlit, Pulong Santa Cruz, and Santo Domingo.

These activities pertain to the denudation of secondary forest, commercial tree plantations, and grasslands in Silang brought about by urban development that allows rainwater to flow quickly to the lowlands of Santa Rosa City and Cabuyao City without being caught by vegetation or absorbed by

the soil. The watershed must be managed well, especially in terms of maintaining the ground cover in the higher elevations and steeper slopes of Silang to minimize the occurrence of the three hazards in the cities of Santa Rosa and Cabuyao.

The identification of levels through city's hazards is important because these levels would help the impact areas based on multi-sectoral approaches operating at a multiple geographical scale. It would integrate flexible management structures of the city and barangays that will allow adaptive management.

The use of R2R management allows the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services from each sub-watershed to help people adapt to the hazards the city experiences. Each ecosystem layer has specific methods and environmental impact assessment that has positive and negative effects in the environment. The public depends on healthy ecosystems, such as purifying the atmosphere for clean air, sequester carbon for climate regulation, proper nutrient cycling for to clean drinking water without costly infrastructure, and pollinating crops so that there would be no food scarcity. As the world's population continues to grow, so too does our dependence on healthy ecosystems to provide the necessities essential to our survival. Valuing nature and the ecosystem in a way may help promote conservation efforts in the future. It brings nature back into the cost-benefit discussion in a way that can be easily understood through ecosystem service mapping.

Another important information transformed usable forms such as two-dimensional maps for the upland, midland, and lowland/coastal portions of the watershed, three-dimensional maps for the upland and midland barangays, as well as decision-maps using a GIS program. These forms can be used for planning purposes by the community, environmental planners, local government, decision-makers, and other stakeholders.

In summary, the key aspects of most R2R approach include: (a) inter-connectivity of ecosystems; (b) protection and restoration of ecosystem functions; (c) integration of socio-economic and institutional aspects; and (d) harmonized management of human and natural resources (Andrade et al., "Principles and Guidelines").

The basis for sustainable natural resource management is a harmonized and systematic land use and development planning. This means that R2R looks at the physical interconnectedness and at the institutional and sectoral synergies as well as overlapping of mandates and tenurial instruments.

Sustainability Analysis: Watershed Perspective

The sustainability of the provisioning and regulating services depend on the maintenance of the health of these watersheds. A healthy watershed can provide sufficient water and productive soils which are essential to the populace and agriculture and fisheries. As watersheds reflect the intricate connections among land, water, and other resources, an integrated assessment of the watershed's health should include, at least, the following: water quality, hydrology, geomorphology, connectivity, and biological condition. Our study assessed these factors using Geographic Information System (GIS) and remote sensing. Research results reveal that portions of the study watersheds are prone to drought between January to July. The drought covers an area of up to 950 ha. in thirteen (13) and six (6) barangays in Los Baños and Laguna de Bay, respectively (Bantayan 12).

Results and Discussion

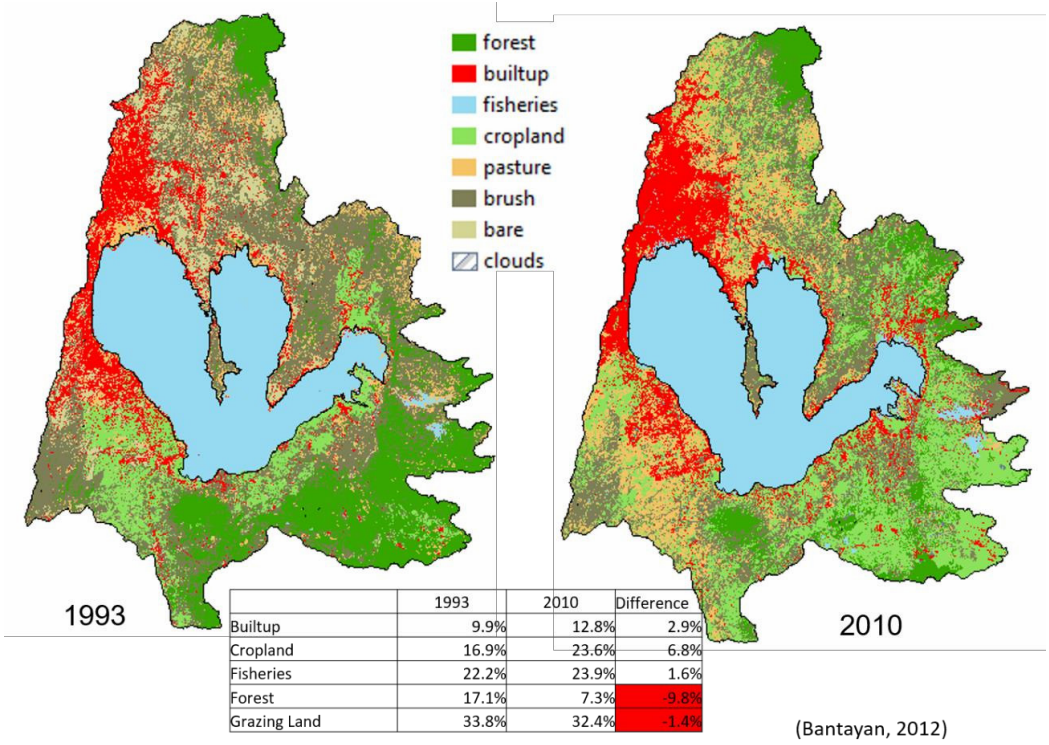


Fig. 2. Ecological footprint of Laguna Lake Basin. From Bantayan, "Estimating the Impact of Natural Disasters on the Laguna Lake Basin Using Ecological Footprinting Analysis."

Table 2. Ecological footprint of Laguna Lake Basin

	Biocapacity		Ecological Footprint		Surplus (Deficit)	
	Total No. of Species	Per Capita	Total Earth Area per Person	Per Capita	Total	Per Capita
1993	561,130	0.0326	362,449	0.0155	198,680	(0.0155)
2010	512,560	0.0220	479,678	0.0206	32,883	(0.0206)
Surplus (Deficit)	(48,569)	(0.0106)	117,228	0.0050		

Ecological footprinting is a mature and robust way of capturing human demand on nature. The global footprint network has catalogued humanity's ecological footprint and biocapacity from 1961 to the present and shows that there is a deficit of more than one earth due to human activities. While ecological footprint appraises the biologically productive land and sea or bodies of water that is needed to provide the renewable resources that a population consumes and to absorb the wastes it generates. The use of prevailing technology and resource-management practices is to determine how many people a given land area or the entire planet can support. It measures the requirements for productive areas (croplands, grazing lands for animal products, forested areas to produce wood products, marine areas for fisheries, built-up land for housing and infrastructure, and forested land needed to absorb carbon dioxide emissions from energy consumption) This scaling makes it possible to compare ecosystems with differing bioproductivity and in different areas of the world in the same unit, a global hectare. A global hectare represents a hectare with average world productivity.

In Bantayan's paper titled "Estimating the Impact of Natural Disasters on the Laguna Lake Basin Using Ecological Footprinting Analysis," five categories of biologically productive (bioproductive) area were similarly examined in this present paper. These categories are cropland, grazing land, forest, built-up areas, and fisheries. The ability of these areas to supply ecological goods and services depends on a host of environmental and socio-economic factors, such as soil, climate, management practices, and technological inputs (Fischer et al., 1999). These characteristics collectively determine a given area's productivity. Conventional Ecological Footprint accounts for weight productivity through equivalence and yield factors. Figure 2 and Table 1 both show that the Laguna Lake Basin is in deficit.

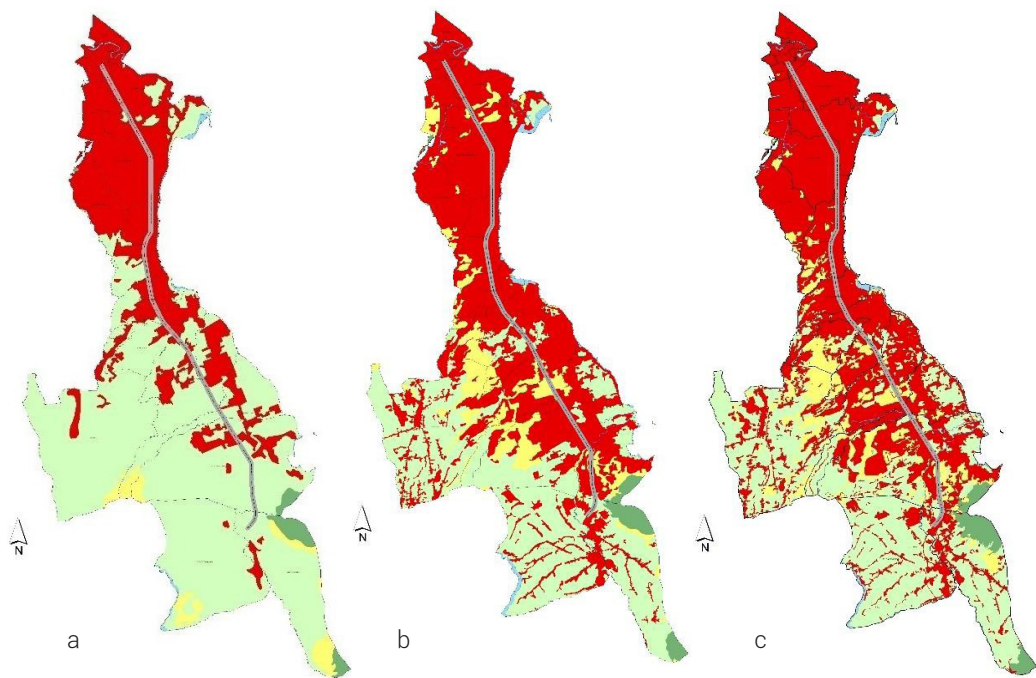


Fig. 3. Population and Land Use Dynamics in the Santa Rosa City. Land-use change in the study area (a. 2003; b. 2010; c. 2015). Nathaniel Bantayan.

During the study period, built-up areas increased by 31% while agriculture decreased by 46% (Figures 3 and 4). This transformation is most apparent between 2003 and 2010 where most of the changes occur. In the City of Santa Rosa, agriculture decreased by about 79% while built-up areas increased by more than 104%.

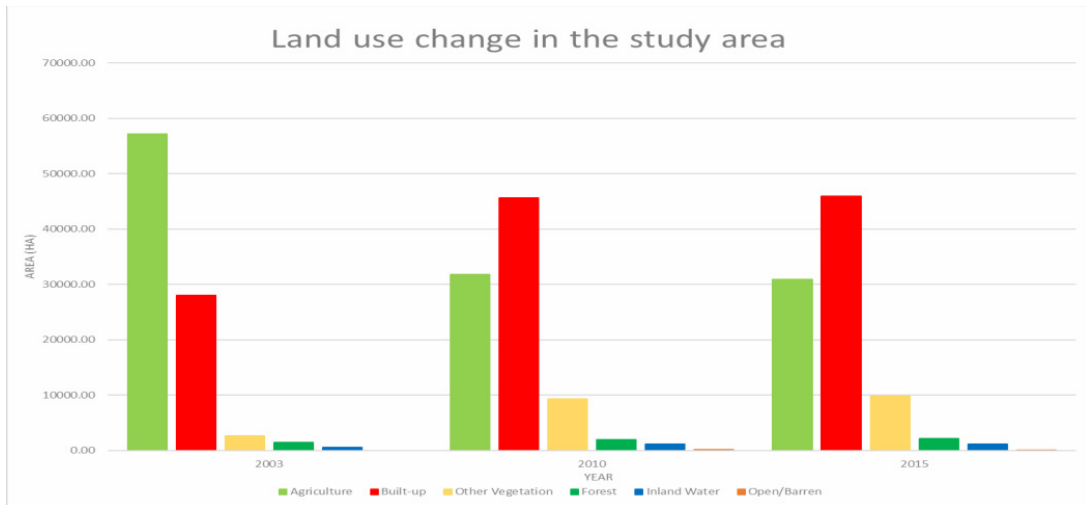


Fig. 4. Land cover change along the spine.

In terms of population growth, the City of Santa Rosa ranked 11th, 10th, and 9th among the 23 cities and municipalities along the spine, for 2000, 2010, and 2015, respectively. In terms of population density, it ranked 16th, 17th, and 18th (table 2) on 2000, 2010, and 2015 respectively.

Table 3. Population Growth and Density (2000-2015)

City/Municipality	Population along the spine (HouseHold)						Population density along the spine (HH)					
	2000		2010		2015		2000		2010		2015	
Cabuyao City	106630	16	248436	12	308745	12	22.5	18	52.4	16	65.2	16
Carmona	47706	21	74986	19	97557	18	19.8	20	31.1	18	40.4	19
City Of Biñan	201186	10	283396	11	333028	10	53.5	15	75.4	15	88.6	15
City Of Calamba	281146	8	389377	7	454486	6	20.2	19	27.9	20	32.6	20
City Of Las Piñas	472780	1	552573	3	588894	3	144.3	9	168.7	10	179.8	10
City Of Makati	471379	2	529039	4	582602	4	188.8	7	211.9	7	233.3	6
City Of Muntinlupa	379310	5	459941	5	504509	5	96.8	13	117.4	14	128.8	14
City Of Parañaque	449811	4	588126	2	665822	2	100.3	12	131.2	12	148.5	12
City Of San Pedro	231403	9	294310	9	325809	11	96.2	14	122.3	13	135.4	13
City Of Santa Rosa	185633	11	284670	10	353767	9	33.0	16	50.7	17	63.0	17
City Of Tanauan	117539	14	152393	15	173366	16	10.5	22	13.6	23	15.5	23
Ermita	5969	23	7143	23	10523	23	23.9	17	28.6	19	42.2	18
Gen. Mariano Alvarez	112446	15	138540	16	155143	17	128.9	11	158.8	11	177.8	11
Malate	77398	19	77513	18	86196	20	279.0	4	279.4	4	310.7	4
Paco	64184	20	70978	21	82466	21	226.6	5	250.6	5	291.2	5
Pandacan	79003	18	73895	20	87405	19	480.9	2	449.8	2	532.1	2
Pasay City	354908	6	392869	6	416522	7	198.4	6	219.6	6	232.8	7
Sampaloc	352329	7	341461	8	375119	8	454.3	3	440.3	3	483.7	3
San Miguel	16798	22	15992	22	17464	22	185.6	8	176.7	9	192.9	9
Santa Ana	177480	12	176894	14	195155	14	524.5	1	522.8	1	576.8	1
Santo Tomas	80393	17	124740	17	179844	15	9.0	23	14.0	22	20.2	21
Silang	156137	13	213490	13	248085	13	10.9	21	14.9	21	17.3	22
Taguig City	467375	3	644473	1	804915	1	131.1	10	180.8	8	225.8	8

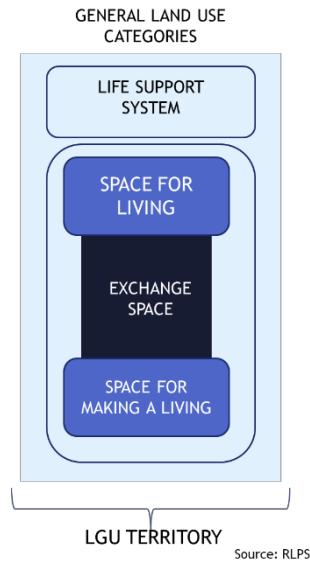


Fig. 5. General Land Use Categories. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), 2007.

Conclusion

The ability of the City of Santa Rosa to provide a quality way of life for its citizens will continue to be diminished unless it slows down, expanding the built-up areas at the expense of its natural environment. As shown in the previous section, built-up areas increased by an estimated 31% at the expense mostly of its agriculture and other open areas. Correspondingly, population growth continues to rise among its neighbors. While there is still some space for expansion given that it currently ranks 5th in population density with about 63 persons per hectare, the City should consider embracing the watershed approach, which is provided for in the first place by the Department of Interior and Local Government (Figure 5). The premise of the rationalized local planning system (RLPS) is that every square meter of the territorial jurisdiction of the local government should be placed under a policy. The four policy areas correspond to the four generalized land use

areas within any given political/administrative unit or territory, i.e. areas for living (SETTLEMENTS), areas for making a living (PRODUCTION), the areas taken up by infrastructures to connect and support the two areas (INFRASTRUCTURE), and the life support systems (PROTECTED AREAS). The life support system ensures the provision of ecosystem services like water and air. These areas are usually located at the upstream of the watershed. Ultimately, as shown in Figure 1, Santa Rosa City should collaborate with local governments that share boundaries of the watersheds encompassing it, particularly Silang, Biñan, and Cabuyao.

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Redefining Street Life

The Intertwine of Public and Private Space in the Streets of Santa Rosa, Laguna, Philippines

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Abstract

Streets are communal spaces that serve a variety of functions. Not only do they act as arteries of the communities by connecting spaces, but they also offer an avenue for public and private community life. The diversity of activities that can happen on streets provide an identifying quality for symbolic cities all around the world. Due to the changing urban fabric and urban economies in various scales, how do we delineate the boundaries between public and private spaces? What are the parameters that make a space public or private? It is important for active and vibrant cities to identify active streets that act as venue of urban prosperity. Active streets give life to every city. Santa Rosa, Laguna, an urbanized city in the Philippines has a variety of street culture that contributes to the vibrancy of its culture. The findings of this study can help provide a community-based and culturally-aligned framework on how streets can improve the quality of urban life, productivity, social inclusion and equity.

Keywords

public and private space, streetscape, sustainable and resilient streets

Introduction, Research Objectives, and Methodology

The public and private spaces of a locality have been thoroughly examined in various literatures to define them and to distinguish one from the other. Most commonly known definitions are from Western academic concepts whose division according to McDowell is “socially constructed and gendered” (qtd. in Drummond 2377). Public spaces pertaining to gender would categorize productive spaces as masculine, while the private spaces defined as reproductive spaces would pertain to being feminine.

Public spaces, in the sense of being “public,” are those that (1) admit and are mutually beneficial for the society (Madanipour 191; Madden, “Revisiting the End”); and (2) whose ownership belongs to the whole community (Drummond, “Street scenes”). The political nature of space in terms of land formality and tenure suggests that spaces that are public are not exclusive. These are managed by the state (Madanipour 117), therefore regulated by prevailing social and legal norms, and are meant to be seen and used by the members of the society.

On the other hand, private spaces are those that “belong to, or is controlled by, an individual, for his/her exclusive use, keeping the others out” (Madanipour 202). Looking at the political context in terms of ownership, this is established through legal means. Cities, however, have characterized spaces based on social patterns and territorial behaviors even without the legal framework to support it. Occurring activities in spaces that are within the “private” and “public” spaces seem to be overlapping which causes blurring of its space distinction (Gehl 59). Furthermore, state intervention or government’s jurisdiction to spaces that are identified as private is one among many overlaps. Some argue though that the concept of public space does not necessarily correspond to the public realm.

With the intent of identifying what makes a space public, Karaçor lays out four (4) elements that show publicness of spaces as synonymous to the Place-making Diagram of the *Project for Public Spaces* (2007). These are: (1) sociability (2) uses and activities, (3) access and linkages, and (4) comfort and image (“Public vs. Private” 53). Many Asian public spaces, such as streets in Vietnam (Drummond, “Street scenes”), and parks in Malaysia (Sakip,

Akhir and Omar, “Determinant Factors”; Latip, “Place Making Concept”) were observed to share similarities based on these characterizations and methodology.

Spatial network systems such as streets are the “physical embodiment of the social custom and functional need expressed in spatial term” (Thomas, *Placemaking* 20). They function as significant parts of the circulatory system of the community thus contributing to the economic, cultural and social intercourse of the people. Studying the streets and how people use them translates to the people’s innate needs and behavioral manifestations (Mateo-Babiano and Ieda, 1918). Furthermore, studying the streets can help on the provision of community-based and culturally-aligned framework on how these network systems can improve the quality of urban life, productivity, social inclusion and equity. As streets serve as communal spaces providing a wide array of functions, observation of streets through their characteristics and distinctions is a great opportunity to examine the “public” and “private” realm of spaces and define the blurs and overlaps between the two.

In exploring the public and private distinctions of spaces, this study primarily aims to further understand the characterization of public and private spaces through an observation of streets in Santa Rosa, Laguna, Philippines. Having similarities in most Asian cities, this study aims to redefine the intertwine of public and private concepts of streets in an Asian context, and to find similarities, differences, overlapping points and blurs. Three barangays—the smallest unit of administrative boundary in the Philippines—with distinct street characterizations are used as case study areas.

A qualitative study of physical characteristics of streets through direct observation and documentation (Gehl and Svarre, *How to study public life*) of street profile considering two categories, namely, the (1) socio-cultural contexts and its (2) physical attributes, shall be used. The (1) socio-cultural contexts will be documented through street profile documentation, to capture their spatial characterization (Thomas, *Placemaking*). This shall be based on the four elements of publicness and placemaking (*Project for Public Spaces*, 2007; Karaçor, “Public vs. Private”) namely: (1) sociability, (2) uses

and activities, (3) access and linkages, and (4) comfort and image. On the other hand, the documentation of (2) physical attributes using the physical urban framework, focusing on meso- and micro-scale components of urban form shall be used (Sharifi and Yamagata, “Resilient urban form”). Such analysis is supported by Bain, Gray and Rodgers (*Living Streets*), wherein a holistic approach to the analysis of streets is its consideration, not just as a flat plane on which to navigate, but a volume of space, a “large outdoor room” with “floor” surface and “walls” represented by the structures on its edges. Through these two categories, a comprehensive understanding of streets will be analyzed and will become the basis for recommendations.

With the view to incorporate sustainability and resilience concepts on street life, grounded theory will be applied in the streetscape analysis. This study aims to promote active urban public spaces in communities in revitalizing culture and tradition to improve community identity, especially in the context of Asian cities, if not worldwide.

The Case Study Areas

Santa Rosa is a component city located along the south corridor of Luzon or about forty kilometers south of Manila in the first district of the land-locked province of Laguna in the Philippines. The city has a total land area of 5,543 hectares. Based on the 2015 Census data, the population density is computed at 6,451 inhabitants per square kilometer and characterized as highly urbanized city. In addition, according to the city’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) 2018-2026 (2018), almost one fifth of its land is classified as industrial, while three fifths is classified as residential. Numerous industrial, commercial, and residential developments have occurred and have been observed within the last decade.

Santa Rosa became an important industrial center of Luzon, from being mostly agricultural land of historical significance to a highly urbanized model city in the Philippines. It offers a distinct character of economic growth, cultural significance through some of its heritage sites, and ecological value. The diversity in terms of character of the city is also defined through the various barangays, located in the upstream, middle stream, and low stream

of the watershed system where the city is located. To capture this character diversity, three main spines of three barangays with a length of one kilometer were selected, namely: (1) Gomez Street in Barangay Kanluran, the (2) Old National Highway in Dila, and the (3) Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Road in Barangay Santo Domingo. These key barangays were considered for their diverse ecosystems and strategic locations in the city, their population densities, their current state of development, and their innate historical significance.

Gomez Street, Barangay Kanluran

Barangay Kanluran is among the smallest barangays in Santa Rosa in terms of population and land area. Despite its size, it is considered as one of the most historical barangays in the city, being part of the old *población* or the administrative and socio-cultural center of the city since its foundation. It has 4,785 residents within its 22 hectares territory. According to the city's CLUP (2018), it has a concentration of old ancestral houses and its rich history made it part of the Heritage-Institutional Redevelopment Area. Gomez Street is one if not the busiest and most prominent streets in Barangay Kanluran. It is connected to the *población* on one end and to the road that leads to one of the main commercial centers of Santa Rosa and to a State-university Annex campus.

Old National Highway, Barangay Dila

Barangay Dila is approximately 179 hectares, and about 65 percent of it is now residential, mostly subdivisions, according to its barangay profile. According to the local CLUP (2018), it used to be mostly agricultural, with the land use allotment for agricultural use dropped to around 5%. Barangay Dila also classified to be Heavy Commercial based on Land Classification, is home to almost nine percent of the total population of Santa Rosa, the second most populated barangay of the City. The barangay is situated between two major cities, Biñan and Cabuyao, thus making it a significant thoroughfare for people crossing cities. The Old National Highway that runs across the

barangay is an important public transportation route for jeepneys and buses, utility vehicles, delivery trucks, and private vehicles.

Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Road, Barangay Santo Domingo

Barangay Santo Domingo, although has a small population is one of the largest barangays in terms of land area that covers approximately 873 hectares. Predominantly identified as one of the heavy industrial mixed-use areas of Santa Rosa based on land classification, it is considered as Tourism and Low Density Residential Mixed-Use area based on the CLUP (2018). About 55% of the barangay is allocated for commercial use while 30% is for residential use. Based on the barangay profile, Barangay Santo Domingo lies in the western fringe of the city with new residential developments. Recently, the historical Spanish Cuartel de Santo Domingo was declared as an Important Cultural Property (ICP) of the National Museum of the Philippines. Its main thoroughfare, the Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Road connects the northern cities with Tagaytay City, Cavite, a popular weekend destination. Prominent commercial establishments and malls such as the Robinson's, Ayala Nuvali, and Vista Mall, along with gated private residential subdivisions are located along this street.

Street Life Assessment of Case Study Area

As mentioned above, there are two frameworks used for the assessment of the selected streets for this study. The first one is composed of physical attributes adapted from the micro-scale and meso-scale components of urban form by Sharifi and Yamagata (2018). The second is composed of socio-cultural attributes adapting the four elements of publicness and placemaking, namely: (1) sociability (2) uses and activities (3) access and linkages, and (4) comfort and image (*Project for Public Spaces, 2007*; Karaçor, "Public vs. Private"). These elements have been considered by Carmona, et al. when they developed the twenty urban space types which included streets and roads.

Table 1. Physical Urban Framework Meso- and Micro Scale Components of Resilient Urban Form

Physical Urban Framework Meso- And Micro-Scale Components Of Resilient Urban Form (Sharifi and Yamagata, 2018)				
Attributes		Summary of Observations		
		Kanluran (Gomez Street)	Dila (Old National Highway)	Santo Domingo (Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Road)
Meso-scale level	Diversity/heterogeneity	Land use is predominantly residential but front yards are used for commercial purposes.	Mixed-use residential/commercial/institutional spaces	Mix of commercial and institutional spaces.
	Typology of transportation network (both active and non-active transportation)	With diverse transportation, like tricycles and private vehicles, and bicycle.	Delivery trucks, buses, jeepneys, and motor-bikes. Tricycles are not allowed.	Delivery trucks, private vehicles, and tricycles
	Street width	Approximately eight meters	Approximately fourteen meters	Approximately fourteen meters
	Street orientation	East-West	Northwest-Southeast	Northeast-Southwest
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks	One-way double loaded, with segmented sidewalks on either side and highly utilized by pedestrians, residents usually walk	Two-way double loaded with sidewalks on both sides and highly utilized by pedestrians, residents prefer taking public transportation	Two-way double loaded with sidewalks on both sides and least utilized by pedestrians, residents prefer taking public transportation
	Centrality and spinality of street network segments	Of medium centrality value, considered as arterial road that connects barangays, and towns	Of high centrality value, considered as main road that connects residential subdivisions, barangays, and towns	Of high centrality value, considered as main road that connects barangays, neighbor cities, and towns
	Permeability/ connectivity	Of low traffic volume, limited circulation and access only from one point to other, and considered as an arterial road	Of medium traffic volume, easily passable from point-to-point, and considered as an avenue	Of high traffic volume, easily passable from point-to-point, and considered as highway
	Open and green space	Directly adjacent to a plaza, gated houses with front yard	Directly adjacent to cemeteries, and an enclosed parking lot	Directly adjacent to industrial park, Police training grounds (enclosed), covered basketball court, and commercial spaces
	Size, shape (design), and distribution pattern of green space	Approximately 5,220 square meters, polygonal in shape, cultural function of ecosystem services	Approximately 48,766 square meters, polygonal in shape, cultural function of ecosystem services	Approximately ++82,338 square meters, irregular in shape open space, provisioning, cultural and supporting ecosystem services

Table 1, continued.

Micro-scale level	Building configuration / layout	Predominantly rectangular in shape, approximately (50-150) square meters, heavily dense layout	Predominantly rectangular in shape, approximately (250-520) square meters, relatively dense layout	Square to rectangular in shape, approximately (44) square meters, very sparse layout
	Street canyon geometry	Symmetric canyon: 1 (3) meters and 2 stories (6) meters height, approximately eight (8) meters street width; $9:8 = 1.125$	Asymmetric canyon: 2-3 stories (9) meters height, approximately fourteen (14) meters street width; $9:14 = 0.64$	Asymmetric canyon: one-storey (3) meters height, approximately fourteen (14) meters street width; $3:14 = 0.21$;
	Design (street front/street edge)	"Sari-sari"/Variety store front, parking, residential fence; street edge reflects Spanish architectural influence	"Sari-sari"/Variety store front, parking, residential fence; street edge is predominantly contemporary	"Sari-sari"/Variety store front, facility fence; street edge is predominantly organic

Table 2. Four Elements that Show Publicness of Streets

Four Elements that Show Publicness and Placemaking of Streets (Project for Public Spaces, 2007; Karaçor, 2016)			
Attributes	Summary of Observations		
	Kanluran (F. Gomez Street)	Dila (Old National Highway)	Santo Domingo (Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Road)
Sociability	<p>Bazaar activities, fiestas or festivals both religious and cultural, are happening in the plaza annually. Students hang-out to rehearse, prepare for school or cultural activities, or spend time with peers.</p>	<p>Big communal celebrations such as 'fiestas' or festivals both religious and cultural, fun run, and alike are happening annually. However, during regular days, social interaction happens between shopfront owners and buyers living in the community.</p>	<p>Social interaction related to commercial activities such as selling grilled corn along the streets, pineapple, and other fruits from ambulatory vendors are happening due to high traffic passersby. No communal social interaction during regular days. Limited interaction is present, apart from minimal commercial business transactions.</p>
Uses & Activities	<p>Presence of small sari-sari/variety stores where social interactions are happening are prevalent to the site. Pedestrians can be seen walking, talking, buying from sari-sari/variety stores daily.</p> <p>Religious activities happen weekly, such as Lolo Uweng devotion every Friday, and Iglesia ni Cristo during Tuesdays and Saturdays, apart from Sunday mass of the Catholic church.</p>	<p>Presence of services offered by facilities such as the barangay hall, commercial spaces, and transportation/jeepney stations attract people to come to the street. There is an influx of students going to the school, making the space vibrant. Diverse groups of people of varying social groups and ages come to the streets to interact.</p>	<p>Presence of services offered by facilities such as the barangay hall, commercial spaces, and transportation/jeepney stations attract people to come to the street. There is an influx of students going to the school, making the space vibrant. However, these are limited due to high speed vehicles and heavy traffic passing through. Students, fruit and corn buyers are the most people that can be seen interacting in limited engagement. The street is busiest during weekends.</p>
Access & Linkages	<p>Storefronts are the access point of people when interacting. Sidewalks are used as extension of residential property and most often used as parking space and drying area for laundry.</p>	<p>Sidewalks are mainly used for foot traffic, and as off-street parking space in some occasions. It serves as connection between commercial spaces and passersby.</p>	<p>Commercial spaces are the access point for people to interact, via ambulatory fruit and corn vendors.</p>
Comfort & Image	<p>The street is known to be a major route for religious processions. Prominent structures such as heritages houses, houses of public officials, old municipal hall, the city museum, the city plaza, and the Santa Rosa de Lima church from which the name of the city originated.</p>	<p>The street connects barangays and access points for residential subdivisions and other prominent facilities such as the barangay hall, cemeteries, schools, and other commercial establishments.</p>	<p>The street is known as a major access route passing through prominent gated subdivisions, shopping malls, police training grounds, and connecting Santa Rosa to nearby towns such as Silang, Cavite and Tagaytay City.</p>

Discussion

Table 3. Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix. Interrelation of the two frameworks based on Sharifi and Yamagata (2018), Karaçor (2016), and *Project for Public Spaces* (2007).

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Sociability	Uses & Activities	Access & linkages	Comfort & Image
Meso-scale level	Diversity/heterogeneity	■	■	■	■
	Typology of transportation network (both active and non-active transportation)	■	■	■	■
	Street width	■	■	■	■
	Street orientation	■	■	■	■
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks	■	■	■	■
	Centrality and spinality of street network segments	■	■	■	■
	Permeability/connectivity	■	■	■	■
	Open and green space	■	■	■	■
Micro-scale level	Size, shape (design) and distribution of pattern of green space	■	■	■	■
	Building configuration/layout	■	■	■	■
	Street canyon geometry	■	■	■	■
	Design (street front/street edge)	■	■	■	■

Table 4. Physical Components Related to Identity and Image

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Comfort & Image
Meso-scale level	Typology of transportation network (both active and non-active transportation)	■
	Street width	■
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks	■
	Centrality and spinality of street network segments	■
	Permeability/connectivity	■
	Design (street front/street edge)	■

On the comprehensive table, the Access and Linkage element is the most interrelated element on both frameworks, whereas the meso-scale level is strongly related to the four elements. When expounded in detail, it is noted that the physical components directly related to physical design, such as typology of transportation network, street width, and design and layout of streets, cycling and pedestrian networks of street help create identity and

image. Evidence found on the analysis matrix, such as the Spanish colonial architectural style is recognized by locals in Gomez Street.

Streets are also strongly identified according to the type of transportation present on the road. For example, Santo Domingo is a known major thoroughfare connecting towns and cities. The centrality and spinally of street network segments, as well as their permeability and connectivity bring a convergence of people which serves as an identifying element of the street, and thus increases the opportunity to be identified by locals.

Table 5. Physical Components Related to Social Life and Socialization











Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Sociability
Meso-scale level	Diversity/heterogeneity	
	Street width	
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks	
	Size, shape (design) and distribution of pattern of green space	
Micro level	Design (street front/street edge)	

Table 6. Physical Components Related to Activities

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Uses & Activities
Meso-scale level	Diversity/heterogeneity	
	Street width	
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks	
	Size, shape (design) and distribution of pattern of green space	
Micro level	Design (street front/street edge)	

Similar physical components are found to be related to elements of social life and socialization and activities. Diversity and heterogeneity offer a variety of activities that make the street flexible in terms of function. Spaces that are of mixed land use serve as a venue of the multitude of functions and activities. For example, houses with sari-sari/variety storefronts engage locals to interact with community members while serving as a source of

livelihood. Street width through the sidewalks serve as a venue for social interaction, while the design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks also increase the level of diversity and heterogeneity of activities happening on the street. Streets with active pedestrian traffic are observed to have more social interaction due to street width, design and layout, and design of street front and street edge. Kanluran is more vibrant in terms of pedestrian traffic compared to Dila, while Santo Domingo has a limited social interaction as the street is primarily designed for heavy vehicular traffic and not for pedestrians. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic indeed affect the street life pattern of the community (Gehl 35).

Table 7. Physical Components Related to Social life and Socialization and Activities

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Sociability	Uses & Activities
Micro-Meso-scale level	Diversity/heterogeneity		
	Street width		
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks		
	Design (street front/street edge)		

Physical components directly related to physical design are found to be related to the socio-cultural elements of publicness of space. Diversity/heterogeneity of spaces attracts socialization and activities, as observed in spaces such as plazas, sidewalks, sari-sari/variety storefronts, and transportation stations. It is considered active spaces due to heavy convergence of people, the presence of various types of social interaction, based on observation. Common socio-cultural activities such as religious festivals and communal celebrations, as encouraged by the physical design components, also contribute to the increased socialization and vibrancy of social life.

Table 8. Physical Components Related to the Four Elements that Show Publicness of Streets

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Sociability	Uses & Activities	Access & linkages	Comfort & Image
Meso- cr o-	Street orientation				
	Open and green space				
	Street canyon geometry				

It is notable that some physical aspects of the streets used as case studies do not relate to their publicness. The street orientation, open and green spaces, and street canyon geometry do not relate to the emphasis on the publicness of the streets. Street orientation is important in solar exposure and its capacity to harness solar energy for sustainability. Open and green space in the absence of socio-cultural activities do not necessarily attract “publicness” despite its supporting, functioning, regulating, and provisioning ecological systems. For example, industrial parks with vast open and green space in Santo Domingo are not necessarily attracting social interactions due to its land use classification and restricted public access. A similar case is observed in the Police Training grounds (SAF) primarily due to its legal ownership.

Table 9. Physical Components Related to the Four Elements that Show Publicness of Streets

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Sociability	Uses & Activities	Access & linkages	Comfort & Image
Meso- cr o-	Street width				
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks				
	Design (street front/street edge)				

Physical urban characteristics, namely, the street width, street design and layout, and street front/street edge design are directly relevant on the activation of street life and socialization, activities, access and linkages, and

identity and image. The narrow width of Gomez makes it a good venue for religious and cultural festivities, and other vibrant activities and social gatherings. The width, together with it being highly accessible, reinforce the identity of the street on the community. Active pedestrian and slow traffic are observed, which make these streets good places for commercial establishments and sari-sari/variety stores that are useful for nearby residences.

Table 10. Physical Components Related to Access and Linkages and Identity and Image

Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix		Access & linkages	Comfort & Image
Micro	Meso-scale level		
	Typology of transportation network (both active and non-active transportation)		
	Street width		
	Design and layout of streets, cycling, and pedestrian networks		
	Centrality and spinality of street network segments		
Macro	Permeability/connectivity		
	Design (street front/street edge)		

The physical characteristics and design of the streets contribute on the elements Access and Linkages and Identity and Image. The type and diversity of vehicles passing along the streets make nearby cities, barangay, and structures accessible, thus reinforcing their strong image on the city. The width and design layout of the streets are significant in supporting the kind of vehicles needed to use the roads and the influence of walkability of the streets. These solidify the identity of the streets as low-, medium- or high-traffic roads. Lastly, the physical design of the façades of structures and their direct connectivity to the streets make them commercially viable and identifiable to the streets and the whole community.

Findings and Recommendations

The political nature of space in terms of land formality and tenure suggests that spaces that are public are not exclusive. However, in the context of case study areas, some sidewalks and streets are used as private spaces, as parking lots and drying area, and the concept of front yard being an exten-

sion of private properties reflects an opposing argument to this definition. In countries with weak legal implementation, such as of physical and urban design policies, compliance on street easements may not be strictly enforced. In some cases, streets that are considered public, depending on the level of traffic, may become extensions of private spaces. These may be observed through some sense of personalization of streets, such as the existence of gates as barriers for security and exclusivity, among others. The regulation of streets in the case of Santa Rosa is highly dependent on the regulation of prevailing communal norms than prevailing legal restrictions. The three barangays have characterized streets based on established social patterns and heavily influenced by the physical design and elements that affect the level of publicness of these spaces.

Overlapping elements, predominantly the mix of private and public activities on streets, make public spaces private, such as front yards, that are legally public but are used as extensions of private spaces. On the other hand, private spaces, such as prominent heritage houses and houses of political leaders were identified to be of significant public buildings based on their socio-cultural value. Furthermore, three common elements were characterized to describe public-private spaces, namely: (1) spaces that are of high social interaction; (2) spaces that are designed with proper sidewalks and street with front yards that allow access; and (3) the social and communal perception that such space may be used as public-private spaces. The presence of a sidewalk encourages a smooth transition of private residential spaces to be integrated to public spaces, such as the street. Looking at the three barangays, the physical presence and design of sidewalks highly relate to sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, and comfort and image of the space, thereby making them public. It is evident in the three barangays that public space is conceptual and may be considered as a social construct and are not resolutely defined by the legal context in terms of ownership and use.

The physical elements that are interrelated to the “publicness” elements were found to be present on the interrelation analysis matrix that was presented. This study further suggests an exploration to expound the

physical elements list, and its descriptive analysis, to retrofit a framework locally suitable in the Asian context. After performing the Public-Private Interrelationship Analysis Matrix, it is good to note that there two categories that constitute the four elements namely: (1) socio-cultural activities, having sociability and uses and activities in one group, and (2) the physical design, having access and linkages and comfort and image as its elements.

Conclusions

Streets are more than spaces for network; they represent the social, cultural and economic characteristics of the city. As the city grows, the streets grow and evolve with it. Indeed, it is true that it would be beneficial for people to delineate public from private spaces by virtue of legibility and law enforcement and regulation. However, there are reasons why some streets have intertwined public and private spaces on changing cities: chiefly because this is what the community needs to make their communal spaces desirable and alive. A strict demarcation between public and private spaces could limit the contacts of people with one another and the outside world. For some, having the public and private spaces intertwine makes community interaction much easier, thus encouraging social, cultural and economic exchange among people. In a way, this is the people's response to the urban changes to make them more meaningful and attractive. For the planners, architects and other designers of the public realm, it is important to study the community on the grassroots level, and even invite them to design their own common spaces (*Project for Public Spaces*, 2007). With this community-driven approach and the technical knowledge of the planners and architects, streets and other public spaces could be (re)developed in a manner that is unique and distinct for the target society.

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Mapping Urban Ethnography Through Streetscape Analysis

A Case Study of Barangay Kanluran,
Santa Rosa City, Laguna, Philippines

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Abstract

Although map representation correlates with the understanding of relationships that exist among the built environment, the space between them, and the life in place, it does not always capture the cultural realities of a society and the character of a place. Urban ethnography offers an answer to this issue, as it focuses on the ethnographic interpretation of urban life and culture of a place. One method to capture urban ethnography is through streetscape characterization using observational analysis and photo documentation. This paper aims to map the cultural patterns of a barangay—the smallest unit of administrative boundary in the Philippines—in Santa Rosa, Laguna, a city with historical significance undergoing rapid urban change, and to analyze how different aspects of the local culture are developed. This city that started with a majority of rural land use has evolved into a highly industrial and commercial city in the south of Luzon, earning it the label “Investment Capital of Southern

Luzon.” The findings of this study can help trace the positive cultures which can become basis for the preservation of the local identity of a place like Santa Rosa, a city currently undergoing urbanization.

Keywords

urban ethnography, culture, streetscape, mapping

Introduction

It is a common knowledge that urban space is a social, cultural and physical space in a city setting. As compared to rural spaces, an urban space can be considered more sophisticated due to the diverse cultures present and the fast-paced development. Its residents are usually diverse in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic status. It is therefore important that studies of urban spaces be done in a more nuanced approach (Venegas and Huerta 2).

This paper is focused on streets as a major urban space and the main artery of circulation that connects people with the built environment. Unlike other urban spaces, streets are considered necessary (Gehl qtd. in Hartanti and Martokusumo 5) and unavoidable. It is where residents and visitors alike experience and get an “impression of the city” (Hartanti and Martokusumo 5). The idea of experience gives an impression of three-dimensionality to the street as an urban space which Bain, Gray and Rodgers coin as a kind of large “outdoor room” (5) or simply a streetscape. It captures the overall character or the urban identity of a city.

However, urban identity in recent years has evolved into having varied definitions and a much broader context. One of its many definitions is “the expression of distinguishing features of a being which are unique to it” which implies “interaction” or the necessity of “being in relation” (Ocakçi and Turk qtd. in Kaymaz 28). This perceived identity of a city may be considered as bases for improvement measures of desired image and quality (Hartanti and Martokusumo 5).

There are several ways of doing urban space studies, and one of the most known research approaches is ethnography. According to Atkinson, urban ethnography, unlike other methods, is not a singular method (qtd. in Portus 102). It is a holistic research approach in documenting the culture of a group of individuals (Portus 102).

Ethnography, although it is already used in urban planning, has been viewed as a subfield of sociology. Portus' *Doing Social Science Research* explains how ethnography enriches the research process and outcomes in a number of ways, including the following:

- It documents the existence of alternative realities and describes and appreciates these realities in their own terms;
- It introduces ethnocentrism which is the tendency to regard one's culture as intrinsically superior to others;
- It discovers grounded theories or alternative theories based on actual data or information from the field;
- It shows the range of cultural differences as well as the dynamic interaction of people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives;
- It facilitates the understanding of complex societies (102).

An ethnographer's role is to gather data either by participating in or observing community activities, examining documents and materials, interviewing stakeholders, and gathering field notes (Creswell qtd. in Venegas and Huerta 5). According to Hobbs, surveys, life histories, films, and photographs have already gained popularity as part of the ethnographic approach nowadays (qtd. in Portus 102). Since these modern methods are primarily driven by technology, documentations such as these enable the ethnographer to pause time to more carefully observe details that may not have been visible in real time.

Research Goals and Methodologies

The aim of this research is to discover how streetscape documentation can be used as a tool not just for archival purposes but more importantly to aid in urban ethnography. It aims to achieve the same goals of ethnography that are mentioned above, particularly the discovery of grounded theories based on actual data and the deeper understanding of complex modern societies.

As aforementioned, urban ethnography is the holistic research approach in documenting the culture of a group of individuals. Although Culture may have a variety of valid definitions and interpretations in the past centuries, one of the commonly used academic definition is by Edward Tylor which states that culture is "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired... as member of society" (qtd. in Johnson 2). Although this definition provides

a good initial idea, its totalitarian nature poses certain problems such as in providing a clear distinction between material and non-material processes. According to modern authors such as Griffiths et al., in their book *Introduction to Sociology*, “culture consists of thoughts and tangible things” (53) which they later identified as material and non-material cultures. While material cultures are physical objects and possessions of a group of people, non-material culture in contrary, consists of “ideas, attitudes and beliefs of a society” (Griffiths 53). For the purpose of this paper, particular material and non-material cultures were identified and analysed. These are (a) building types; (b) open spaces and greeneries, which are material cultures, and; (d) religion; (e) organizations; and (f) traditions/customs, non-material cultures.

These cultural aspects were identified and analysed through a triangulation using streetscape characterization, transect walk and key informants’ interview (KII). Mapping of the abovementioned aspects of culture shall be done to assist the analysis of streetscapes.

Streetscape is defined as “spatial arrangement and visual appearances of built and landscape features when viewed from the street” (Australian Environmental Planning Act 1979 qtd. in Tucker, et al. 519). One way of presenting it is through architectural photography. Architectural photography may be presented in various ways, such as spot photography or panoramic photography. According to *Panorama Streetline*, there are two ways to present a panoramic view of a street depending on the viewpoint. The first is the classic panorama which is taken from one viewpoint, and the second one is the linear streetline panorama which is a multi-viewpoint panorama (see figures 1 and 2).



Fig. 1. Partially stitched Arambulo St., Barangay Kanluran. Noel Cruz and Kimberly Ronquillo.

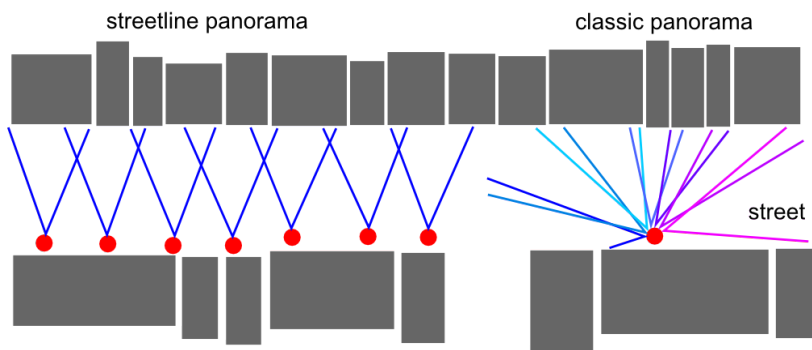


Fig. 2. Viewpoint difference between linear streetline and classic panorama. *Panorama Streetline*, <https://panoramastreetline.com/>.

For this project, the researchers chose the production of linear streetline panoramas as they present more of the complete street front with less distortion and present the building elevations at a similar scale. These streetscapes will be supported by field notes and random informal interviews with local residents during the photo documentation.

The transect walk is the observation, documentation, and mapping of the selected streets by the researchers with some selected local experts. The key informants interview (KII) on the other hand is the one-on-one interview with five key informants from Barangay Kanluran.

Following the prescribed ethnographic method by Walcott (1994) found in Portus' *Doing Social Science Research* guidebook, the researchers processed the data through (a) description; (b) analysis; and (c) interpretation.

Case Study Area

The selected area is Barangay Kanluran in the City of Santa Rosa, Laguna, Philippines. Although it is one of the smallest barangays in terms of population density and land area, it is part of the Heritage-Institutional Redevelopment Area of the city.

Santa Rosa City, one of the fastest developing cities of the Philippines and currently known as the "Investment Capital of Southern Luzon," is

undergoing a rapid and drastic change in its urban fabric. In general, there has been a drastic increase in the urban land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and infrastructural) with a corresponding decrease in the rural land uses (agricultural and idle). Due to the rapid urban development, it is not just the urban fabric of the city which has changed significantly, but also its the population profile. Barangay Kanluran, being the bearer of Santa Rosa's historical identity, is no exception to this.

The selected study areas are three streets in Barangay Kanluran, namely, Gomez, Zavalla, and Arambulo. Gomez Street can be considered as the main avenue in the barangay, being connected to the poblacion (old city center where the plaza, the old municipal hall, and the old church are located) and to other barangays. Zavalla Street is another important street connecting the ancestral houses of the Zavalla, Tiongco, and Perlas families. Arambulo Street has been considered for this study, for its unique street profile and because it connects Gomez and Zavalla streets.

Description

Table 1. Descriptions and Data Gathered During the Streetscape Characterization, Transect Walk, and Key Informants Interview (KII)

	Aspects of Culture	Streetscape Characterization	Transect Walk	Key Informants Interview
Material Culture	<p>Building (Building typology, building materials, street profile)</p>	<p>Building typology is mostly residential, fenced and unfenced; they are all attached directly to the street. Those unfenced usually have small store fronts called sari-sari store in the Philippine context and some small food stalls called carinderia. There are also some institutional, commercial, and religious establishments which noticeably follow the front setback requirements by the local code.</p> <p>Old houses follow the bahay na bato design where the lower ground floor has concrete walls and the upper floor walls are made of wood with capiz sliding windows. Interesting as well is the use of brise soleil made of wood fronting some of the windows.</p> <p>There are provisions for electrical lamp posts and sidewalks which, however, are not well organized.</p>	<p>Streets are commonly lined with residential structures, most of which have store fronts attached to the sidewalk. There are some parts of the street where sari-sari stores are too close to each other. It is noticeable that in Gomez and Arambulo Streets, residential buildings have small frontages unlike in Zavalla Street where properties are bigger, justified by the presence of big important ancestral houses.</p> <p>A particular brise soleil design common in Santa Rosa can be seen in some of the houses.</p> <p>It can be observed that commercial buildings followed the setback requirements.</p> <p>There are some parts of the streets where private vehicles and tricycles are parked outside houses. Sidewalks are not consistently placed. There are also some open canals.</p>	<p>Based on the economic interviews, it was acknowledged the presence of a number of sari-sari stores and small food stalls attached to the front of the houses which according to them are regulated.</p> <p>Most streets in Kanluran are lined with residential buildings. Street widths according to some informants are not consistent if you compare them.</p> <p>Some parts of the street do not have sidewalk even though walking is very common among residents.</p>
	<p>Open spaces and greeneries</p>	<p>Open spaces are not common in the observed streets except for the Plaza in front of the Santa Rosa Church in Gomez Street. Some residential properties have front and side setbacks although they are fenced. There are still some vacant lots. Trees are present in some private lots and on some parts of the sidewalks.</p>	<p>Noticeable are the trees not just inside private lots but also along the sidewalks. Greeneries are abundant in some residential structures as well.</p> <p>Open space is quite scarce in the barangay except for the Plaza in the old <i>poblacion</i> and inside some private residential properties.</p>	<p>Greeneries and trees are still present in some residential properties. The plaza being an asset to the community also has economic value especially during city festivities.</p>

Table 1, continued.

Non-Material Culture	Religion	The religions famous in the locals can be identified with the presence of churches—Santa Rosa de Lima (Catholic), Iglesia ni Cristo and a catholic chapel called “Lolo Uweng.”	Based on interviews and site observation, present religions in Kanluran are: Catholic, Iglesia ni Cristo, Aglipay, Born Again and Jehovah’s Witness.	Churches are a popular place for worship and socialization among residents.
	Organizations	Tricycle terminals are present in some parts, regulated by the Tricycle Operators and Drivers’ Association (TODA). A senior citizen group is also active in the barangay.	Tricycle terminals are regulated by the Tricycle Operators and Drivers’ Association although locations are quite organic and not included in the city plan.	A senior citizen organization is very active in the barangay.
	Traditions/ Customs	The “tingi” (retail) system represented by the presence of sari-sari or variety stores.	The “tingi” (retail) and lending systems are famous in the barangay with the presence of stores in front/attached to some houses. Concentration of their present is noticeable in some streets especially those of Arambulo and Gomez. Religious traditions include processions, Friday and Sunday devotions and mass services respectively.	Traditions and festivities are linked with the plaza and the churches. As well as in front of stores.



LEGEND:

- RESIDENTIAL
- FOOD RETAIL (CARINDERIA)
- SCHOOL
- SARI-SARI STORE
- WATER REFILLING STATIC
- CHURCH
- SHOPS
- SPACES BETWEEN

Fig. 3. Sample streetscape showing the building classifications based on use and typology. Noel Cruz and Kimberly Ronquillo. (Detail on later page)

KANLURAN SPINE (WHOLE)

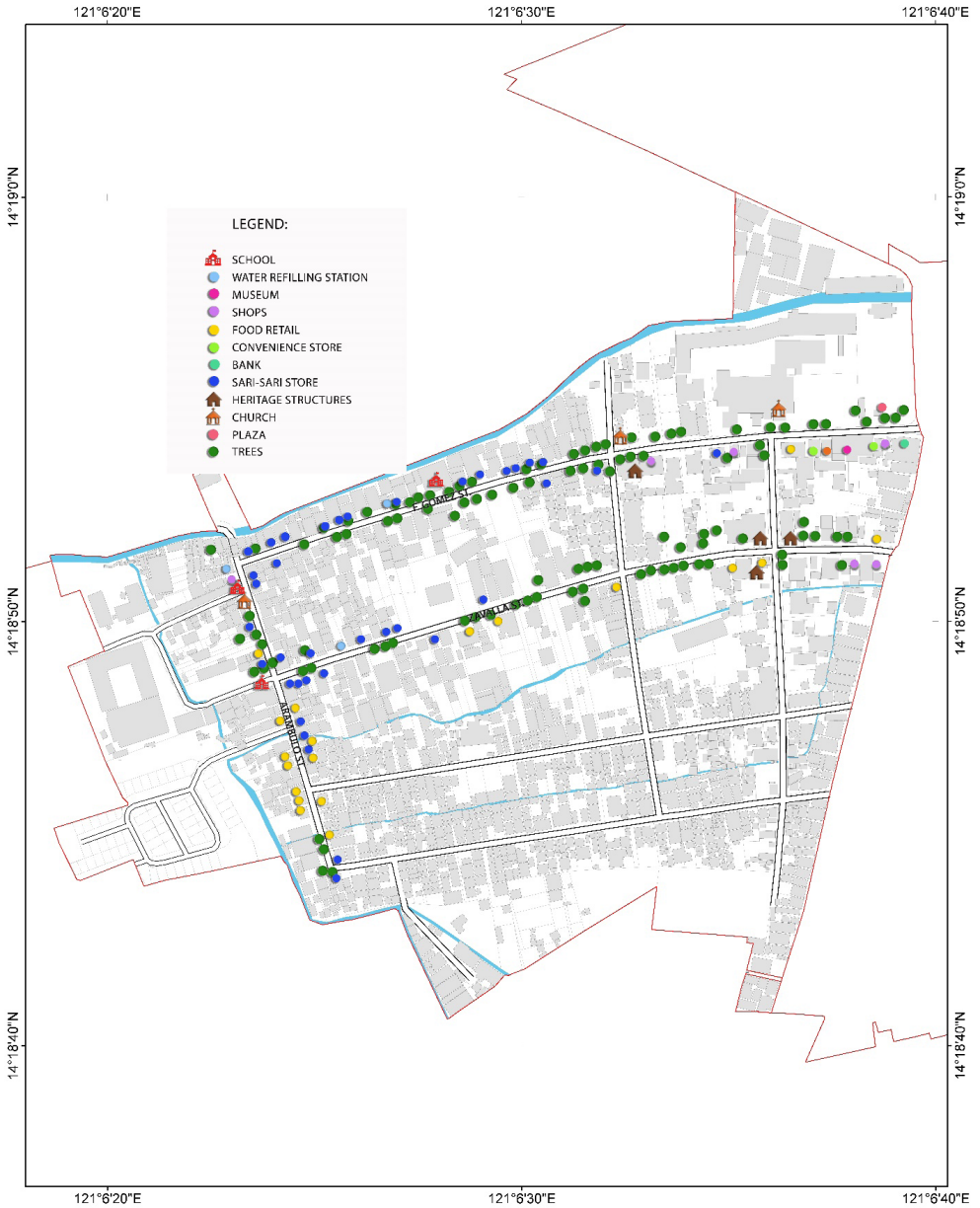
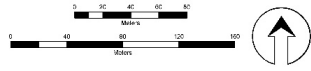


Fig. 4. Map showing the composition of the selected streets based on the building types and use. GIS base map provided by the Tax Assessor's Office of the City of Santa Rosa.

Analysis

Below is a summary of all the results from the data gather and the map produced based on the streetscape documentation group according to the established aspects of culture. In general, it can be said that material cultures, especially buildings, play an important role in the development and persistence of non-material cultures.

Material Culture

1. *Building.* The most common building type in Barangay Kanluran is the residential structure. Clusters of residences have store fronts for sari-sari store or *carinderia* which most of the time are very close to each other. Houses are either of Spanish colonial period *bahay-na-bato* (made of stone) style or modern, which varies from one- to two-storeys, old and new. Building materials used are not so diverse, but the use of *brise soleil* is quite noticeable as this building feature is present in other parts of Santa Rosa. Other building types present are religious, institutional, and commercial. It can be noticed that these bigger structures follow the easement requirements by the local codes as most residential units are directly attached to the sidewalk. Street profiles are quite diverse in some parts—sidewalk provision is not consistent, residential building fronts are used as parking space for tricycles and private vehicles.
2. *Open spaces and greeneries.* Open space is scarce in Kanluran and the only prominent open public space is the plaza in front of the Santa Rosa de Lima Church. Greeneries are still abundant although most can be found inside private residential properties.

Fig. 3. Sample streetscape, detail.



Non-material Culture

1. *Organizations.* Organizations that are common in Kanluran are the Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association and the Senior Citizens Organization.
2. *Religion.* Religions that are present in Kanluran are Catholic, Aglipay, Iglesia ni Kristo and Jehovah's Witness.
3. *Traditions/Customs.* Most famous religious traditions that are the annual Holy Week processions of the Catholics and Aglipays, feast day procession of St. Rose, the Friday devotion in Lolo Uweng Chapel, and the Mass Services of the different churches. Another common tradition connected to commerce is the "*tingi*" (retail) and the lending systems.

Interpretation and Conclusion

Non-material cultures developed in the community are very much connected and are highly influenced by the material cultures especially the building types. The historic establishment of the Church of Santa Rosa de Lima, after which the City was named, has kept its influence through the established traditions such as processions during feast days and holy week, and the religious devotions such as those in the Chapel of *Lolo Uweng*. Filipino religiosity is also evident not only in the established religious traditions of the Catholic Church but also in the presence of churches of other local religious sects.

It is also interesting how the residential buildings have evolved into having commercial store fronts such as sari-sari (variety) stores and *carinderia* (eatery). A sari-sari store is a store where residents can buy products in retail and small portions, although collectively they would cost a bit higher. It can be said to be a "win-win" situation where low income store owners get their source of income free of tax, while customers are satisfied with being able to get their daily needs in close proximity to their houses in small portion that is just enough for their daily budget. In the vernacular, this is called the "*tingi*" (retail) system, It is interesting to find that their locations are clustered (see fig. 4, *carinderia* in yellow and fig. 3, sari-sari stores in blue dots) which will provide more diverse product options for buyers. These

small-scale enterprises provide the venue and promote the culture of human connections. It is common that since neighbors know each other, customers and store owners create small talks even on a daily basis. According to Ba, sari-sari stores allow credit for frequent buyers that is based on trust and familiarity (“The Role of Home-based”). Another interesting result of the establishment of sari-sari stores is that they act as an “eye for the street,” as store owners are usually stationed near their store counters.

It is common among Filipino communities in general to use street fronts connected to residential properties as an extension of their private activities, such as drying of clothes and parking of private vehicles. This is interpreted by Stone as the concept of “transitory possession or use of public spaces” wherein public property, rather than being owned by all, belongs to no one or to those who will use the public space “first” (qtd. in Drummond 2384). This concept is quite similar to the trend of squatting private properties. This seems to be a generally accepted notion, and results to several problems related to traffic and the public use of spaces.

Based on interviews, it is not a common notion among residents that ancestral houses present in the barangay are a source of pride for the community, except for those families owning the houses even though the city government has already recognized the barangay’s historical importance. Heritage for most residents is only connected to the old poblacion, the church, and the plaza.

Based on these findings, it can be said that while communities thrive and develop, regulation on the use of public spaces is an important mover of a society that must be looked into at the governance level. Another important thing is the enforcement of local codes and ordinances such as those related to easement requirements. Narrowing of streets due to the private use of street edges may have been avoided if easement codes have been strictly enforced.

Lastly, resiliency that has already become a trademark of Filipinos as an individual and as a community is something that is generally kept in almost all societies. It is important to note that even though the community is continuously evolving, it is still evident through the establishment

of sari-sari stores in Barangay Kanluran that the community has developed small cultures of mutual trust and bayanihan, which refers to the spirit of communal unity and cooperation towards common good.

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