

# UNITAS

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

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Creating Discontinuities,  
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# Rizal's *Noli* and *Fili*

## Creating Discontinuities, Imagining Nation

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### Abstract

In *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee suggests that it is from the private and spiritual cultural formations rather than the public and material ones that the imagination of the nation began for many colonized peoples. For the Philippine experience, however, the obliteration of the precolonial private and spiritual cultural formations over three hundred years of colonization and Christianization under the Spaniards did not leave such an uncolonized internal space from which the imagination of a nation could arise. Through a comparative close reading of Rizal's two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, this paper explores the discontinuities between the two texts as symptomatic of the necessary discontinuities in the consciousness of the colonial community that would eventually allow its differentiation from the colonial masters and imagine itself as a nation, separate and equal. The paper also finds that not only do the two novels exemplify these discontinuities but that there is an intentionality in the text to provoke such discontinuities towards the imagination of the nation.

### Keywords

Rizal, *Noli*, *Fili*, Philippine novel, national imaginary, post-colonial literature and criticism

## Introduction

On the hallowed walls of the United Nations Headquarters in New York are two world maps, one of 1945 and the other of the present. In these two maps, the countries are shaded in the UN's signature light blue color to indicate the independent member states of the United Nations. The rest are then shaded various colors to indicate whether they are recently independent, still dependent, or non-member territories. Except for a few tiny red spots (red signifying no independence), the present day map is almost totally shaded in blue. On a third frame are these words: "The United Nations and Decolonization: In 1945 more than 750 million people—over a third of the world's population—lived in dependent territories. Today less than two million people live in non-self-governing territories."

Drawn up as these maps are in the UN Headquarters, the boundaries defining each country's territory would seem like they were as natural and permanent as the boundaries of the continental and insular land masses. Because no differentiation is made between natural geological boundaries and humanly conceived state-territorial boundaries, the exhibit elides the fact that the very lines partitioning the world for those two-thirds formerly colonized were imagined by their colonizers and are therefore lingering reminders of the triumph of colonization despite their blue shade in the present-day map. The clean simple lines of territorial boundaries also do not reveal the fact that these boundaries either have cut through or have combined pre-colonial, i.e., indigenous, language, and other cultural groupings and that they were instead determined by the colonizers' administrative, military, and economic agenda.

Furthermore, being uniformly shaded in UN blue, the self-governing territories come across as representing nations that have one and the same ideation of nation, i.e., following the Western European notion of a territorially bounded, language-based, mono-cultural nation-state. Like the plain white empty wall on which the maps are posted, the exhibit does not give any context to the nationhood of the countries represented. The exhibit therefore fails to carry across the particularity of the history that each nation endured to obtain independence; it elides the fact of plurality in

the ways non-Western European nation-states have been established. The UN maps thus contain in it a contradiction: while they supposedly celebrate the freedom of peoples, they perpetuate their subjection by idealizing the Western European model of a nation-state aside from deceptively naturalizing the colonizer-inspired territorial boundaries.

This continuing ideational subjection, as pointed out by Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (10), would mean that the two-thirds of the world that lived in a state of “dependence” in 1945 can only desperately and hopelessly struggle to approximate their former colonizers’ imagination of the nation, but which their historical realities would simply never allow to happen. These newly independent state-nations are therefore mere consumers of the modernity ideated by the former colonizers (Chatterjee 5).

Because these mostly Asian and African nations have subjected themselves to the regime of Western nationalist discourse in which they are regarded as imitation nations, the power of self-determination supposedly achieved through political independence is rather suspect. Furthermore, any deviation from the national social structures of the metropole nations is seen as defective imitation and is interpreted to mean that the postcolonial nation’s culture is underdeveloped and needs yet to evolve to become like the metropole nation.

Chatterjee points out that in the Western nationalist discourse, the public domain must be “distinguished from the domain of the private” (10). Many if not most of postcolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa are considered inauthentic and disingenuous because their nationalisms very much integrate populist and communitarian elements in what should have been a liberal constitutional order. Chatterjee rejects this criticism and argues that far from being the result of cultural underdevelopment, the mixture of the personal with the political in the colonial state is rooted in the very struggle against colonization. Chatterjee explains that social formations in the personal or private realm were the only venues in which colonized people could at first assert their sovereignty and difference from the colonizer. The nationalist elite sought to modernize and generalize these private social formations (which Chatterjee calls the spiritual social formations) to



stand in equality to, but different from the colonizer's culture. The spiritual realm was therefore the staging platform from which the nationalist struggle to take over the public material social formations was launched, eventually climaxing in the attainment of independence. The intermingling of the personal and the political—the private and the public—social formations is therefore the consequence of the historical forces at work in the process of constructing the former colony's national imaginary; and this should be judged not as a poor approximation of western models but as the unique character of postcolonial nationalism (Chatterjee 12). It is evident in these observations by Chatterjee, that what is apparent must be placed in its context to be rightfully understood and productive.

### **The Philippine Experience**

Chatterjee's theorizations themselves have been made within a context, namely the experience of India. While well aware of the specificity of his context, he had hoped that his conclusions would resonate with the experiences of other postcolonial nations. Realizing the peculiarities of each colonial experience, however, Chatterjee himself knew that the resonance can never be complete. The case of the Philippine experience significantly deviates from the experience of India in that there was not much of an indigenous culture from which to launch the anti-colonial struggle. Except for disparate languages among which not one was nationally predominant and a few regionally distinct cuisines, there were not many social formations which could be modernized and identified as the cultural markers that would at the same time bind together the Filipinos and also differentiate them from their colonizers. Over three centuries of colonization, the Spaniards had already effectively transformed the personal and private aspects of cultural life: marriage, village structure, religion, and dress. Even the most private matter of sexual behavior had been placed under scrutiny and regulation through the sacrament of confession. Pre-Hispanic literature and other art forms had been prohibited from practice because they were considered works of the devil and had been virtually completely destroyed or lost. There

were also no great structures like temples that could recall the pre-Hispanic past as a time of cultural and scientific achievement.

In the absence of pre-colonial social formations that could mark the Philippine colonial community as both distinct from and equal to the metropole nation, the question arises: through what social formations did the Philippine peoples' consciousness begin to differentiate themselves from their colonial masters?

To begin to answer this question, a cue may be taken from the close link between the nation and the novel first noted by Anderson in *Imagined Communities* and then expounded on by Homi Bhabha in his Introduction in *Nation and Narration*. With obvious reference to Anderson, Chatterjee refers to the novel as “the celebrated artifice of the nationalist imagination” (8). The novel both recreates in its writing and requires in its reading a consciousness of simultaneity in homogeneous time. A consciousness of time as simultaneity in homogeneous time, Anderson explains, was a necessary shift in consciousness to be able to imagine a nation (24-26). Indeed, the rise of nations has often been accompanied by the rise of the novel as a genre. No less is true for the Philippine nation which dates both the emergence of the national imaginary and the rise of the Philippine novel in the late nineteenth century. In fact, among the first novels by Philippine writers are the two novels of Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* (henceforth to be called *Noli* and *Fili*, respectively); and these two books strongly figured in the rise of nationalist sentiments in the late nineteenth century leading to the armed revolution against Spain. The novel is therefore here explored as a borrowed social formation which the Philippine peoples used to re-imagine the colony as a nation.

The national imaginary and the novel are both cultural artifacts subject to the same greater social forces that sweep through human societies. They are both products of the human imagination, and therefore both reveal the consciousness of their imaginers at the moment of their production. This study explores the *Noli* and the *Fili* as depositories of the development of a nationalist consciousness at different historical moments of the colony's struggle to become a nation.

## Revisiting the *Noli* and the *Fili*

Through a comparison of the *Noli* and the *Fili*, we hope to recover the unique process by which the Filipino nation may have come to imagine itself as a nation equal and separate to its three-centuries-old colonizer, Spain. Written and published in the late nineteenth century, the period of nationalist ferment in the Philippines, Rizal's novels played a historical role in the struggle against the colonial master. Rizal started as one of the *propagandistas* fighting for parity rights which, in their imagination, ought to come through the assimilation of the Philippines as a province of Spain. His novels were among the most important literary productions of the *propagandistas*. Because of the novels' critical stance toward the friars and because they embodied liberal ideas, the *Noli* and the *Fili* were condemned by the Spanish authorities as highly subversive. The *Noli* was published in 1887 in Germany.<sup>1</sup> The *Fili* followed in 1891 and was printed in Belgium. The second novel was dedicated to the three members of the local clergy, Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora (collectively called GOMBURZA), who were falsely charged with subversion and consequently condemned to death by Spanish colonial authorities in 1872. The contents of this dedication would later be used as evidence against Rizal when he was put on trial for the same charge of subversion. The two novels coupled with Rizal's execution drew the attention and sympathy of the people, eventually further fueling the already rising nationalist sentiments to spread among the populace and helping spark a successful anti-colonial nationalist revolution.

The first part of this essay discusses the *Noli* which, by the narrative as well as the physical structural design of the text, sets the historically dominant narrative of the era of Spanish colonization which was "the friars's sermon," in contrast with narratives that highlight a rationalist episteme and ethics. The novel is here read as presenting a challenge to move away from the friar's pre-modern narrative toward a modern narrative inspired by the enlightenment and the scientific method.

The second part of the essay discusses the *Fili* in reference to the *Noli*. It is crucial here to recall that the context in which the *Fili* was written was quite different from that of the *Noli*. A four-year period separated the publi-

cation of these two novels, during which time the author made a home visit to see for himself the effects of his first novel and from which he must have drawn a very different assessment of the national situation. This difference in his appreciation of the national situation becomes evident through comparisons of various narrative and historical elements in the two novels. The narrative elements include both form (for example, the tone of urgency present in the second novel but absent in the first) and content (for example, the parallel but differently rendered scenes and characters such as school scenes, boat scenes, and peasant women in dire straits).

Part of the content is the allusion to historical events alluded to by both novels but treated rather differently. Foremost among these is the allusion to the martyrdom of Fathers Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora (GOMBURZA) which in its fictionalized form in the *Noli* refrains from exposing the injustice of the event much less putting blame on anyone for their deaths. However, in its inclusion in the dedication in the *Fili*, not only is it no longer fictionalized but it also clearly identifies the Spanish colonial authorities as having committed an act of gross injustice in the conviction of the three priests. The comparison of the two novels illustrates a change from the assimilationist stance held by the *propagandistas* to a revolutionary stance that was already in ferment in the islands at the time the second novel was written and published. In the *Fili*, the central character expresses the hope that the establishment of a Filipino nation will bring about the freedom and development that the people desire.

### **Rizal: From Assimilationist to Separatist**

The events in Rizal's life that intervened between the publication of his two novels and his own comments about his second novel provide more compelling reasons for a comparative reading. As mentioned above, the first of these transforming events was Rizal's visit to his native land. Right after the publication of the *Noli* in late 1887, even while still figuring out how to effectively distribute his first novel, Rizal started planning his return to the Philippines. He finally arrived in Manila in August 1888. In the next six months that he was home, he saw for himself the reactions to and the repercussions of his

novel. The friars were all up in arms against him; the novel's publication and distribution in the Philippines were officially banned; the Governor-General though maintaining a cordial relationship with him advised him to leave the country; and even his family and friends wanted him to go away for fear of reprisal. Through all these, Rizal gained two important insights. One insight was an understanding that the colonial civil authority, exemplified by the attitude and behavior of the Governor-General, was an ultimately unreliable ally for reform because its colonial motives overrode any liberal agenda. The constant change of hands of government in Spain between the Carlists and the liberals was only a mitigating factor that further weakened the civil government to the benefit of the friars. The other insight comes from the reaction of the friars. He saw that the pervading theme of the friars' reaction was the charge of ingratitude: the personal ingratitude of Rizal for the favors the Dominicans had granted his family and the ingratitude of the *indios* for the civilization the friars had afforded them. The desire to expose the civil authority's betrayal of liberal values and the desire to respond to the friars' charges of ingratitude by proving that the Spaniards had not improved the lot of the indigenous peoples inspired Rizal to dig up in the British Museum Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de los Filipinas*, a document that described pre-colonial Philippines. He had hoped to prove that Spanish intervention in the Philippines had resulted in neither greater freedom nor a higher civilization.

Rizal left Manila for Hong Kong in February 1889. He headed east, visiting Japan and crossing the United States, travelling from coast to coast, and finally reaching the United Kingdom in August of the same year. At the British Museum, Rizal copied the *Sucesos* by hand and annotated it. As Leon Ma. Guerrero explains in *The First Filipino*, Rizal's annotations suggest that Rizal's political position was increasingly becoming clearer to himself and that at the same time he was becoming more unwilling to accommodate the reformist (i.e., assimilationist) position of his fellow propagandists (286). The annotations therefore reflected a seemingly small but actually essential shift in Rizal's critique of the Philippine situation. While Rizal placed the blame for injustices and lack of progress heavily on the friars in writing the *Noli*, he made a wider indictment in his annotations to the *Sucesos de Filipinas*

by placing the blame on the whole process and machinery of colonization in which the friars were a significant but only a part of. The whole intervention of Spain in the Philippines through both Church and civil authorities had then become the issue and the object of blame (279).

However, Rizal's annotations to the *Sucesos* did not make the political impact he had hoped for. It was very poorly received by both foreigners and co-expatriates. His critical stance was deemed predictable and one-sided. The result was that the annotated *Sucesos* was a big failure as a political weapon. Nonetheless, the clarification of Rizal's political position as a result of the exercise was worth the trouble. This political position would become more evident in the sequel novel.

By the time Rizal wrote the *Fili*, Guerrero argues, he had come to a firm conviction that the Filipino struggle would have to become a struggle for separation from Spain rather than assimilation to it (281). To prove his point, Guerrero quotes the dialogue between Simoun and Basilio from the *Fili* (Lacson-Locsin translation). Here, Simoun heavily criticizes the young men's demands for hispanization and assimilation while advocating a separatist option himself:

Ah Youth, always inexperienced, always dreaming, running after the butterflies and flowers! You bond together so that with your efforts you can bind your country to Spain with garlands of roses, when in reality you are forging her chains harder than the diamond! You ask for parity rights, the Hispanization of your way of life and you fail to see that what you are asking for is death, the destruction of your national identity, the annihilation of your Motherland, the consecration of tyranny. (52)

And when Basilio tries to argue that the key to the progress of the Filipinos is learning the Spanish language because it will unite the people of the islands to the Spanish crown, Simoun replies:

They refuse to integrate you into the Spanish nation? Well, congratulations! Stand out then, molding your own individuality, try to lay the foundations of the Filipino nation. They give you no hopes? Well and good! Hope only in yourselves and work. They deny you representation in their parliament? All the better! Even if you were able to send representatives elected by your

own choice, what could you do there but drown among so many voices and, by your presence, sanction the abuses and wrongs which may afterwards be committed? The less rights they give you, the more rights you will have later to shake off their yoke and return evil for evil. If they refuse to teach you their language then develop your own, understand it and make it more widely known. Keep alive in the people their own way of thinking, and instead of aspiring to be a mere province, aspire to be a nation; instead of subjugated thought, think independently so that neither in rights, nor customs, nor language, the Spaniard may be considered here as being in his own home or thought of by the people as a fellow citizen, but always an invader, a foreigner, and, sooner or later, you will be free. (54)

Through the utterances of Simoun, the idea of a Philippine national independence appears in no subtle terms. However, this is not to say that Simoun is the personal mouthpiece of the author in the novel. Not any one of Rizal's characters can be said to completely or faithfully reflect the author's own political ideas but the very inclusion of this idea in such explicit terms should at the least allow a reader to surmise that the author was indeed seriously considering, perhaps struggling, with this idea. The fact that this separatist option is completely absent from the first novel further compels us to think that Rizal may have had a change of heart and may have been indeed already leaning toward the separatist option while he was writing the *Fili*. The period between the publication of the first novel and the writing of the second seem to have been a period in which Rizal further developed and more clearly defined his political position. It was at that historical moment of his life that Rizal began to imagine the Philippines not as a province of Spain but as an independent nation of its own. Guerrero believes that it was precisely because of the clarity of this position in his second novel that Rizal thought the sequel to be "more profound and perfect" (275).

While Guerrero rightly identifies and describes Rizal's nationalist position in the *Fili*, he does not find in it any indication of how Rizal might have arrived at that political disposition. If indeed Rizal left out this process of change in consciousness, the national hero would have to be held responsible for a gross oversight. Rizal was after all a propagandist; he would not have been worthy of the name if he didn't lay out a map for others to come

to the same consciousness as his own. This study will demonstrate that Rizal was in fact trying to show that way, and that this becomes more evident by a comparative examination—in both their common elements and variances—of the two novels.

Guerrero actually seems to have had an inkling of the importance of the novels' similarities. This must be the reason why he points out several of them:

The *Fili* also rounds up the lives of other characters in the *Noli*. Basilio, the surviving son of Sisa is sent through school by Capitan Tiago and becomes a physician but is unable to save his benefactor who, encouraged in opium smoking by a friar, dies leaving his wealth to the Church. Espadaña runs away from Doña Victorina, who pursues him all over the archipelago but never does catch up with him. Father Salvi becomes ecclesiastical governor of the archdiocese. Father Sibyla is glimpsed again, as elegant and sibylline as ever. Rizal tries to redress the balance which was so weighed against the friars in the *Noli*. A Dominican, Father Fernandez, earnestly tries to understand the Filipino intellectuals and defends the work of the church and the religious Orders. The noblest character in the novel is a good priest, the native secular Father Florentino. But the indictment is only softened. It is not a sinister and sanctimonious lecher like Salvi but a jolly muscular serenade, Father Camorra, who rapes Basilio's sweetheart Juli and drives her to suicide; the crime is scarcely more palatable for all that. Cablesang Tales, the farmer hounded into banditry, has more understandable motivations than Elias; the student intellectuals are more human and believable than Ibarra; but there is no character to match Doña Victorina, Tasio the scholar or the "Muse of the Constabulary." Paulita is only a more calculating Maria Clara; Isagani, a less generous Ibarra; Pelaez, as ingratiating and craven as Linares. Even Don Custodio, the "liberal" hoarder of "reforms," does not come as alive as Capitan Tiago.

One must concede that the *Fili*, as a novel, is inferior to the *Noli*—perhaps because it was so drastically shortened. (276-277)

While Guerrero could see the parallels between the novels, he unfortunately uses the comparison to do no more than judge the literary merits of the *Fili* as a novel. However, there is much more to be drawn out from these similarities as the following discussion of the texts will try to show. The



continuities and discontinuities between the two novels reveal the changes in consciousness necessary to imagine an independent Philippine nation.

### **The Necessity for Discontinuities to Imagine the Nation**

In the book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson establishes the connection between transformations in consciousness and the imagination of nation. Anderson traces the emergence of a new consciousness of time to the development of capitalism, particularly print capitalism. The increased production and consumption of newspapers and novels produced in the people's consciousness a concept of time that he calls "simultaneous, homogeneous empty time." Reading the daily newspapers allowed an individual reader to imagine others much like him or her reading the same material and participating in the same economic and social events being reported. Meanwhile, the novels placed the readers in the same such temporal horizon that imagined the occurrence of events connected not by any cause and effect or even process sequence relations but by sheer simultaneity in the same defined time and space. Anderson suggests that this new consciousness of time was a necessary shift for the notion of nation to be at all conceivable. He says it was this sense of time that allowed the people to imagine a community whose existence they could not affirm by direct sensory perception: "[t]he idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26).

An accompanying change in consciousness that Anderson identifies as a prerequisite to a national imaginary was the delineation of spatial boundaries. He traces this limning of boundaries in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century colonial Americas to the pilgrimages of creole functionaries. The colonials' pilgrimages, though possibly including a temporary sojourn to the metropolitan capital to get academic degrees, would be entirely limited within the colonial territory in their later professional practice. The spatial boundaries set by the territorial limits of their professional practice delineated the territory of the nation that would later be imagined.<sup>2</sup> Through the changes in consciousness of time and space brought on by print capi-

talism and the pilgrimages of creole functionaries, the first wave of national imaginings emerged in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Americas, culminating in the establishment of nation-states that asserted their freedom from their colonizers (64-65).

While the emergence of this first wave of national imaginaries came as the unself-conscious “distillation of a complex crossing of discrete historical forces,” the later formation of the national imaginary in Europe and even later in the Asian and African colonies of European countries was a much more self-conscious effort (4). Having once been created, the “nation” became “modular,” meaning that it could be copied, transplanted, and mobilized from various political and ideological positions. In Europe, it was the vernacular languages that provided the principle of inclusion and exclusion; and the spatial boundaries were set according to the geographical spaces occupied by the speakers of each language. In the Asian and African colonies, the spatial boundaries were set by their colonial administrators and the political, military, and economic interests of the colonizers became the principle of inclusion and exclusion. This is the paradox formerly colonized nations will never escape—that the principle of inclusion and exclusion has been imposed upon them by their colonizer. The world would indeed, up to the present, be organized based on nations as the UN maps so blissfully celebrate. The consciousness of a nation-partitioned world had thus been created.

While Anderson’s version of the nation invites legitimate criticism, for example, that the nation imagined and externalized into a state is a nation imagined by an emerging local elite that actually disenfranchises the masses (a point that we will come back to later), Anderson’s version foregrounds the fact that the consciousness is where nation is first formed and founded. The analysis of Rizal’s novels here will show that Rizal was keenly aware of this fact. Aware that the birthing ground of the nation was in the consciousness, Rizal perceived the consciousness of his readers as the first venue of the nationalist struggle.

## Discontinuities Provoked by Modernity

It was the discontinuities in consciousness that made the ideation of nation possible. While these discontinuities in consciousness may have emerged in the Americas and Europe in gradual stages of secularization, they reached Philippine shores as one distilled package within a very short period of time. Before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, *Las Islas Filipinas* was a very distant colony that had very little mercantile, cultural, and intellectual exchange with Mother Spain, much less with the rest of Europe. In addition, whatever modern idea that might have been able to creep in was aggressively rebuffed by the Church and the conservative civil authorities in the islands. When the canal was opened, a sudden rush of trade as well as ideas came to the islands. Coupled with this was the counter-traffic of Philippine natives and *mestizos* going to Europe for studies (among whom was, of course, Jose Rizal). In the book *Necessary Fictions*, Caroline Hau identifies this package of new ideas as the age of modernity. Because of both the geographical isolation of the colony and the intentional efforts of the colonial masters, the Philippine peoples did not experience the rise of modernity and its secularizing effects as a slow-going process. Rather, modernity came in the second half of the nineteenth century as a sudden onslaught of ideas that competed with the episteme and morality of a consciousness that until then had remained unchanged since perhaps the sixteenth century. For this reason, Hau correctly observes that modernity was seen as a distinguishable, external thing. Like other things unfamiliar that came to Philippine shores, modernity sometimes mesmerized, sometimes alienated, and at other times simultaneously did both. As Hau points out, modernity put into question the standards of truth and virtue (72). What is true? What is right? She describes the older, traditional episteme and morality in the following words:

Before the sixteenth century, the canonical truth of the Scriptures had been the main standard of spiritual and historical truth against which all other writings were measured and often found wanting. “Facts” were relevant, but they were subordinated to truth, and in an apparent conflict between the two, it was the Scriptural abstraction that took precedence over material and concrete issues. (73)

The older, traditional episteme therefore centered on the Church as the only fount of truth for despite the Church's deference to the authority of Divine Scripture, it effectively places itself as the supreme earthly authority by virtue of its claim to being the only rightful interpreter of Sacred Scripture. Furthermore, the claim to being the sole standard of truth came with the claim of having the sole authority to set a standard of virtue including the standard of moral political action. In *The Rizal-Pastells Correspondence*, Raul Bonoan points out that "the Christendom of the Middle Ages in which there was an alliance of throne and altar became the ideal political order" (28). Bonoan further explains that, in the nineteenth century, "theologians took an unbending, intransigent, reactionary posture against new social and political principles, such as personal freedom in place of despotism, the right of peoples to self-determination, religious freedom, freedom of the press, and the separation of Church and State" (28). In nineteenth-century Philippines, this standard of episteme and morality was constantly validated and avidly defended by colonial authorities, both church and civil. As Vicente Rafael has pointed out in *The Promise of the Foreign*, this standard was sustained through the dominant and prevalent text at the time which was "the friar's sermon," indefatigably rehashed and declaimed week after week all throughout the colony (24-25, 64).

Quite incompatible with the church-centered standards of truth and virtue were those of modernity. Modernity relied on the scientific method that required empirical—i.e., observable and measurable—evidence as the standard of truth. Human reason was therefore deemed as capable of acquiring all knowable truth through the scientific method. Furthermore, modernity placed human reason as judge of moral action. It was in fact a criticism against this reliance on human reason made by Fr. Pastells that a lengthy correspondence ensued between him and Rizal.<sup>3</sup> In Fr. Pastells' instructions to Fr. Obach (in whose parish Rizal was to be exiled), he wrote, "Tell him to stop this nonsense of wanting to look at his affairs through the prism of his own judgment" (Bonoan 37). The message which was dutifully delivered by Fr. Obach provoked Rizal to initiate what would then become a protracted philosophical-religious argument via correspondence.

Caught between the centuries-old consciousness and modernity, the people in late nineteenth century Philippines needed to navigate their way through the opposing currents. Rizal, deeply aware of this situation, tried to give answers to the question of what modernity would mean for the Philippines. “It is in the space of thinking through a Philippine modernity,” Hau writes, “that Rizal located the political possibilities of nationhood” (52). That Rizal proffered the idea of a nation within the context of thinking through a Philippine modernity finds evidence in the first scenes of his two novels.

### **The Philippine Colonial Community as Subject**

Both of Rizal’s novels begin with a representation of the colonial community in the form of a gathering: in a house in the *Noli*, and on a steamboat in the *Fili*. The representation in the *Noli* is introduced in the very first paragraph and makes an immediate reference to the perceived dangers of modernity. It reads: “Capitan Tiago was reputed to be a most generous man, and it was known that his home, like his country, never closed its door to anything, as long as it was not business, or any new or bold idea” (1). In the *Fili*, the representation is also introduced in the opening paragraph and just as instantly reflects the presence of a wary attitude toward the imminent entry of modernity:

One December morning the steamship TABO was arduously sailing upstream through the winding course of the Pasig, carrying numerous passengers to the province of Laguna. It was a ship of heavy build, almost round like the *tabu* or water-dipper from which she derives her name, rather dirty despite her pretensions to whiteness, majestic and solemn in her slow calm. For all that, the region has a certain fondness for her, perhaps for her Tagalog name, or for exuding a character peculiar to things native, something akin to a triumph over progress—a steamship that was not quite a steamship, a changeless entity, imperfect but indisputable, which when she wanted to pass herself off as progressive was proudly content with a new coat of paint. (1)

Through these opening representations, the texts introduce their central subject. It is not Ibarra in the *Noli* nor what happens to Ibarra as Simoun in the *Fili*, and not even the tragic love story between Ibarra and Maria Clara. It is the community found in that territory colonially claimed as *Las Islas Filipinas*; and the complication of the story is the inevitable entry of modernity. At the very beginning of each novel therefore, the texts put forward to the reader what they intend to investigate so that the remainder of each novel would consist of the findings of that investigation. In the language of the “Dedication” in the *Noli*, it is this colonial community that is the body which will be diagnosed.<sup>4</sup>

By being made the subject of Rizal’s novels, the Philippine colonial community becomes apprehensible as an entity in itself. That which was not directly available to the senses is made imaginably real. Furthermore, being narrated thus, what once was an amorphous appendage of Spain gains an identity of its own. The texts implicitly posit that identity over and against the prevailing colonial ideology that deprives the said community of any claim to an independent identity.<sup>5</sup> Hau therefore rightly argues that inhering in the novels’ narrative stance toward its subject is a political act in itself. Unable to gain that recognition of identity in the political realm (as the *propagandista* movement was trying to do), the author resorts to the cultural realm to make a political assertion. This must call to mind Partha Chatterjee’s thesis in *The Nation and Its Fragments* that the colonized had often turned to the *spiritual* (or cultural) realm to assert their sovereignty before finally achieving it in the *material* (which includes the political) realm (6).

Through the same scenes used to introduce the subject and complication, the texts give a textual representation of the subject colonial community. However, the *Fili* is more successful in this depiction than the *Noli* on two counts. First, the metaphor in the *Noli* actually becomes convoluted and problematic. Soon after suggesting the gathering at the house of Capitan Tiago as a microcosm of Philippine society, the house itself is presented as a metonymy of the personality of the owner: “Generally speaking, we mortals are like tortoises: we are valued and classified according to our shells; for that and for other qualities as well, the mortals of the Philippines are the

same as tortoises” (2). This statement is then followed by a detailed description of Capitan Tiago’s house that is meant to characterize the owner. The confusion regarding what or whom the house represents is perhaps one of the reasons that the author himself claims his sequel to be “more perfect” than the first. In the *Fili*, the metaphor of the TABO is sustained throughout the rest of the first chapter and in the following chapters so much so that it is even repeatedly referred to as the “Ship of State.”

However, the consistency in the use of a figure of speech is not half as important and significant as the difference in the representation and critique of the colonial community conveyed by the opening scenes. Taking the suggestion of the author to see the gatherings as microcosms of Philippine society, it is important to note the difference in *who* is represented. In the *Noli*, the gathering consists only of the upper crust of society (those whom Capitan Tiago would invite to a party). Although it can be argued that other sectors of the colony are amply represented in the remainder of the novel, the exclusion of many in the opening scene still stands as an unfortunate limitation of the first novel. It is therefore no surprise that in the “more profound and more perfect” sequel, the problem is extensively rectified.

In the *Fili*, the gathering scene takes up not one but the first two chapters each of which is devoted to one of two decks—the upper and the lower decks. The first chapter that describes the gathering on the upper deck of the TABO presents a group uncannily similar to the one found in the first chapter of the *Noli*. As in the *Noli*, Padre Salvi and Padre Sibyla are present. Padre Damaso is not present but a similar villainous priest in the person of Padre Camorra is. There is a fourth friar who has no counterpart in the *Noli*, and he is Padre Irene. As in the *Noli*, someone close to the Governor-General is also present. However, instead of a Colonel of the Civil Guard whose fealty to the Governor-General arises from sheer propriety expected of a military officer, there is a Simoun to whom the Governor-General is personally indebted and who is acknowledged by the society at large to have already had actual influence on official policies. As in the *Noli*, someone who likes to write about the Philippines is included in the group. However, instead of a young Spaniard on a sociological adventure, the *Fili* includes a

Ben Zayb, a writer, marked by pretentious scientific-mindedness. And of course, Doña Victorina, with her off-tangent and ill-informed interjections is still present. Finally, there is a second character who has no counterpart in the *Noli*, and that is Don Custodio, a Spaniard who presents himself as an originally-minded technocrat.

To this reincarnation of the *Noli* crowd, the author adds the gathering on the lower deck in the *Fili*:

Below deck, other scenes are taking place.

Seated on benches and small wooden stools, among suitcases, boxes, baskets and *tampipis*, two paces away from the machine, the heat of the boilers, amid human stench and the pestilent odor of oil are the majority of passengers.

Some silently contemplate the varied landscape on the bank; some place cards or converse in the midst of the clatter of paddle-wheels, the noise of the machine, the hissing of the escaping steam, the roar of moving waters, the hooting of the horn. In a corner piled up like corpses, sleeping or trying to sleep, are some Chinese peddlers, seasick, wan, slobbering with half-opened lips and bathed in the thick sweat oozing from all their pores. Only some young people, students for the greater part, easily recognizable by their spotless white attire and their well-groomed appearance dare to circulate from bow to stern, jumping over boxes and baskets, happy with the prospect of the coming holidays. Now they are discussing the movements of the machine trying to remember their forgotten notion of Physics, as they mill around a young *colegiala* and the crimson-lipped *buyera* with the necklaces of *sampagas*, whispering into their ears words that make them smile or cover their faces with painted fans. (11-12)

The gathering, or crowd, that the *Fili* assembles takes on a strikingly pedestrian, non-exclusive air. Although a few of them like Basilio, Isagani, Padre Florentino, and Capitan Basilio will be given voices as the second chapter progresses, there is a voiceless, anonymous “some” who remain unheard and unnamed but are made to penetrate the consciousness of the reader. Their presence in the Ship of State recognized, it is as if the text is telling the reader to be mindful of those whose voices we cannot hear. In this way the opening scene of the *Fili* as a representation of the colonial community was indeed better crafted. It should be noted though that while the *Noli* does not



register this voiceless “some” in its first scene, they are indeed present in the succeeding chapters especially in the many crowd scenes it contains.

The representation of this voiceless, anonymous “some” in the *Noli* and the *Fili* gives evidence to Caroline Hau’s argument that there is in Rizal’s novels an “excess” that the “novel can index but cannot fully contain” (92). Hau repeatedly speaks of the “insider/outsider” stance of the narrator that reveals the narrator is speaking from a particular and fixed social location from which he speaks as an insider at times but at other times as an outsider to other social locations. As such, the narrator does not claim to speak for other cognitive points of view, though he reports what he can observe about these others. Speaking from a specific location, the narrator embodies a specific cognitive position which may be described as modern in the sense of being empirical and secular. Based on this analysis, Hau argues that the narrative stance maintains a self-critical attitude in writing about this colonial community (49-50, 92). Through the insider/outsider narrative stance, there is no pretension to speak for everyone in the community. There is an acknowledgment that the narrator speaks from a specific social location and not for the “excess” whom he cannot fully represent and speak for (79-80, 92).

Hau’s interpretation of the insider/outsider stance of the narrator in Rizal’s novels (especially in the *Fili*) implies that the novels did not presume to speak for all the sectors of the would-be national community. They could not therefore be faulted for what critics of Anderson’s version of nation (as mentioned above) have argued—that the nation was the imagination of a colonial elite that imposed its imaginings on the rest of the people, thereby creating another level of subjection. Hau argues that there is, inhering in the narrative stance, a political stance which does not make an imposition: Rizal did not wish to impose his imagination of the nation on the rest of the colonial community; rather, he offered alternatives that on the one hand he may have wished the people to embrace, but which, on the other hand, he left them to embrace from their own freedom. In taking this political stance that resists the imposition of one’s own imagination of the national community, Rizal was avoiding the pitfall of sacrificing individual freedom for the

sake of national freedom—a mistake of inconsistency that many nationalist movements have committed. It should be noted, however, that Hau conscientiously warns her readers that her argument (that Rizal’s novels registered an “excess” and sustained a self-critical stance) is her interpretation of the text and not necessarily an explicitly articulated position of the author (52). Nonetheless, the consistency of her interpretation with the textual evidence gives much credence to it.

### Creating Discontinuities through the *Noli* and the *Fili*

Moreover, Hau’s interpretation may find validation in its ability to provide an answer to one of the most striking questions that Rizal’s novels provoked: Why does Rizal not offer a clear, concrete program of political action? One of Rizal’s co-expatriates in Spain—Graciano Lopez Jaena—had in fact commented that the *Fili* presents the problem but offers no solution (Guerrero 274). The non-imposing political position inherent in the self-critical narrative stance does not indeed allow for advocacy of a very specific program of political action. However, it would also not be right to surmise that the author did not intend to initiate political action altogether. The texts do point to a political act and direction but not of the kind most people expected. Instead of a specific programmatic option, the texts advocate an act of consciousness or imagination that was no less political than instigating a revolution. The novels promoted an awareness of one’s own consciousness, the objectification of which could open the possibility of reshaping that consciousness. In other words, the novels meant to create discontinuities in consciousness that would allow for the imagination of a nation. They, however, did leave the question of the specifics of establishing the nation as a state unanswered.

That the author ascribed such political potency in an art form finds evidence in Chapter 20 of the *Noli*. In the chapter titled “The Meeting in the Townhall,” one of the young men attending the town meeting describes what he and the other young council members hope to accomplish in the staging of realist drama:

What will we get from the week of *komedya* proposed by the Teniente Mayor? What can we learn from the kings of Bohemia and Granada, who order their daughters to be beheaded or lead them into a cannon which is later converted into a throne? We are neither kings nor barbarians, nor do we have cannons; and if we imitated them we would be hanged in Bagumbayan. What are those princesses doing who go into battles, exchange strokes and two-handed blows with the sword; do battles with princes and roam alone through mountains and valleys seduced by the *tikbalang*? In our customs we love sweetness and tenderness in a woman—and we would be fearful to clasp a damsel’s hands which are reeking with blood, even if this were the blood of an infidel or a giant. Among ourselves we hold in contempt as vile the hand of a man raised against a woman, whether he be a prince, an *alferez* or a rude peasant. Would it not be a thousand times better for us to depict our own customs in order to correct our vices and defects and commend the good qualities? (119)

As the young man argues, realist drama that depicts customs will have the effect of an awareness of one’s own faults which in turn should provide the impetus for change. The depiction of customs in the drama is understood then to allow for an objectification of one’s ways of thinking and doing. This objectification allows for a mental distantiation that leaves room for a self-conscious decision for change. By discussing the function of realist drama in this manner, the text of the *Noli* seems to be giving instruction on how the novel itself should be read. In fact, the description the young man gives of realist drama in the novel could very well apply to the *Noli*: “[one that depicts] our own customs in order to correct our vices and defects and commend the good qualities” (119). The statements of the young man are actually an echo of the novel’s “Dedication” in which Rizal writes, “Desiring your well-being, which is our own, and searching for the best cure, I will do with you as the ancients of old did with their afflicted: expose them on the steps of the temple so that each one who would come to invoke the Divine would propose a cure for them.” What the young men of San Diego intended for the fiesta drama to accomplish, Rizal intended his novels to do: that the fictional representation of reality will allow the viewer or reader to assume a self-critical position and initiate a process of objectification, critique, and

decision-making that will break into a new (i.e., different, discontinuous) consciousness.

### The *Noli's* Crowd Scenes as Imagination of a Community

To this end of creating a self-aware and critical consciousness, the *Noli* draws attention to the presence of disparate cognitive positions in the community through its numerous crowd scenes. The crowd scenes are a venue for bringing together various and often contradictory cognitive positions and allow them to engage one another, thereby accenting their incongruities as well as providing a venue for critiquing them. A full quarter of the *Noli's* chapters have these crowd scenes in which contrasting cognitive positions are juxtaposed with one another.<sup>6</sup> Some of such chapters dramatize how these cognitive positions of characters, like those of the older and the younger men in “The Meeting in the Townhall” (Chapter 20), are in direct collision against one another. Other chapters like “The Comment” (Chapter 36) exhibit how the same event or utterance (in the chapter mentioned, Ibarra’s attack on Padre Damaso) is interpreted in widely different ways by different cognitive positions so that they do not engage one another at all but talk past one another. And still others, like “The Eve of the Fiesta” (Chapter 27) in which the carefree stroll of Maria Clara and her friends is disrupted by the disturbing appearances of a leper and of Sisa, give a constant reminder of the presence of people from other voiceless social locations.<sup>7</sup> In addition, another quarter of the chapters provide in-depth studies of characters which, juxtaposed with one another, also reveal the great variety of social locations within the colonial community and convey the irreconcilability of their varied cognitive positions.<sup>8</sup>

The disparate cognitive positions divide the colonial community along several crisscrossing lines: age, gender, race, economic status, educational background, and religious belief among many others. Among these many lines of fragmentation however, the most pronounced in the *Noli* is the line that divides the community into the modern, scientific thinkers on one side and the traditional, religious believers on the other. This is evident in scenes like the one found in Chapter 23 of the *Noli*. This chapter brings old women

and the youth together on a fishing excursion and reveal the differences in beliefs which in this case also happens to run along the line of age differences:

“Are the waters calm? Do you think we will have fine weather?” the mothers were asking.

“Don’t be alarmed, ladies; I know how to swim well,” replied a tall thin young man.

“We ought to have heard mass first,” sighed Tia Isabel, clasping her hands.

“There is still time, Señora; Albino who was once a seminarian, can say mass in the *banca*,” replied another, pointing to the tall thin youth.

The latter, who appeared rather crafty, upon hearing himself alluded to, assumed a somber demeanor, slyly aping Padre Salvi.

Ibarra, without dropping his sober mien, shared the merriment of his companions. (136)

This bit of dialogue in the beginning of the chapter introduces the presence of different, even contrasting cognitive positions. To emphasize the point of difference, an ex-seminarian, Albino, is placed in the middle of the fray thereby acting as a foil to the old women’s unquestioning faith. His personal history of having shifted from belief to unbelief raises the truth question: Which is true? The old women’s belief or the young men’s unbelief? The potentially volatile difference is, however, constantly accompanied by humor as in this subsequent conversation:

“Nothing can compare with *salabat*, taken in the morning before hearing mass!” commented Capitana Tica, Sinang’s mother. “Have *salabat* and rice cakes, Albino, and you will have more appetite to pray.”

“It is what I do,” replied the latter. “I intend to go to confession.”

“No!” Sinang was saying, “Take coffee first—it will give you happy thoughts.”

“Yes, right now, because I am feeling somewhat depressed.”

“Don’t do that!” warned Tia Isabel. “Take tea with *galletas*, they say that tea soothes one’s thoughts.”

“I will also take tea with cookies!” answered the accommodating seminarian. “Fortunately, not one of these drinks is Catholicism.” (138)

Through such humorous exchanges, the chapter exhibits the paradox the colonial community was living out: the co-existence of harmony and differences among the peoples. While the exchanges reveal the potentially estranging gap between the traditional religious view of the old women and the liberal, irreligious (even anti-religious) view of the young men like Albino, the conflict is smoothed over by the humor, so that the exchanges also affirm a positive relationship of mutual tolerance between them. This mutual tolerance is, however, not unaccompanied by a critique as the final exchange in this chapter shows. This dialogue occurs after the encounter with the cayman in the first *baklad*<sup>9</sup> during which Elias almost loses his life:

The older women no longer wanted to visit the other *baklad*. They wanted to leave, alleging that the day had begun badly and that many misfortunes might still occur.

“All because we did not go to mass!” sighed one of them.

“But Señoras, what misfortune has befallen us?” asked Ibarra. “The crocodile was the only unfortunate one!”

“Which goes to prove,” concluded the ex-seminarian, “that in all its miserable life this accursed reptile had never heard mass. I never saw it among the numerous crocodiles which frequented the church.” (145-6)

In this last conversation, the two epistemological positions (the traditional religious view of the old women vs. the modern, empirical view of Ibarra and Albino) are contrasted along their logical terms. On the one hand, one of the señoras blame their failure to attend mass for the misfortune that had befallen the group, thereby exposing the logical fallacy of their reasoning: the simplistic attribution of cause and effect to accidentally sequential events (i.e., *post hoc ergo propter*). On the other hand, Ibarra looks at the observable data which to him shows that there has been no misfortune where one was thought to be.

### **Creating Discontinuities in the Imagination of Self and Community**

The critique of the traditional-religious position embedded in this contrast reveals that the narrator, though tolerant of other cognitive positions, is

not neutral at all. The critical attitude the narrative stance has toward the religious position has in fact been coloring the whole chapter as the religious views of the old women are constantly made the object of the young men's jesting and mocking all throughout. In this last conversation, however, the superstitious religiosity of the old women are subjected not only to an emotional humorous rebuke but to a rational analysis of its logical error from Ibarra.

Moreover, since superstitious religiosity is self-validating and by its nature resistant to rational critique, the text employs another strategy to undermine religious belief from within the dynamic of believing. The text provides another way to expose the arbitrariness of religious truths, that is, by showing that what may be morally acceptable in one religion may not be so in another. In the final comment of the chapter, we read:

Music filled the air; the smoke from the earthen stoves rose eddying into gay and tenuous whirlwinds; the water sang inside the kettles, perchance words of comfort for the poor fish, maybe with sarcasm and irony the body of the crocodile slowly revolved in the water, sometimes exposing its white shattered belly, sometimes its colored moss-covered back—and man, Nature's favorite, had no qualms about committing what the Brahmins and the vegetarians describe as so many fratricides. (146)

This seemingly matter-of-fact mention of other alien religions is actually a powerful strategy of creating a self-critical mindset.<sup>10</sup> It relocates the reader from an extremely local or parochial perspective to a much wider view of human reality in which there is a plurality of religions and belief, each claiming to hold the complete and only truth and each enjoying the fervent following of multitudes. The narrator forces the reader to see his religious beliefs as one of many. The claim to absolute truth by all the faiths renders it rather suspect. This suspicion developed in the reader creates the objectifying distance toward the reader's own religion and divests religious belief of the absoluteness of its truth claim and moral imperative. This re-contextualization of the reader's belief as one among many beliefs opens his consciousness to other possibilities. Through such operations of re-contex-

tualizing and critiquing, the text pursues its objective to transform the reader's consciousness.

The strategy of re-contextualization used in Chapter 23 is actually employed in the *Noli* on a macro scale (i.e., it structures the whole narrative). The narrative uses this strategy to critique what it singles out to be the primary obstacle to modernity: the superstitious religiosity of the people. As mentioned earlier, the stranglehold of superstitious religiosity on the people's consciousness was perpetuated by "the friar's sermon"—a text that the people heard over and over again, presented slightly differently each week but requiring one and the same response of submission and obedience. This truth was consecrated as the only and complete truth week after week. "The friar's sermon" permeated the lives of the people: it was found in the church at mass, in the confessional, in the classroom, in the laboratory, in the processions on the streets, at picnics in the middle of a forest, at gatherings in private homes, and at the bedside of the sick and dying. To loosen the grip of superstitious religiosity, the *Noli* as a counter-narrative needed to re-contextualize "the friar's sermon." It therefore may be no mere accident that almost at the very mid-point of the sixty-five chapters that comprise the *Noli* is Chapter 32 titled, "The Sermon," literally placed at the center of the text as it is at the center of the people's consciousness, but juxtaposed by stories that seriously undermine its authority and truth.

### **Creating Discontinuities: Debunking the Sermon of the Friar**

In the chapters leading up to and coming after the chapter on "The Sermon," the text exposes the pitfalls of upholding the infallible truth of the friar's exhortations. It narrates the follies of the friars—their vanities and ambitions epitomized by Padre Sibyla, their depravities and abominations exemplified by Padre Salvi and Padre Damaso. The sermon is also juxtaposed with stories of the follies of those who live by "the friar's sermon" and those who place all their hope in it: the shallow, misguided faith of Capitan Tiago and the tertiaries, the diminution of manhood like that of Capitan Tiago, the *gobernadorcillo*, and Don Filipino who are deprived of the freedom, power, and honor proper to their positions, the violence against women like Doña Pia Alba



(Tiago's wife), Sisa, and Maria Clara which result in the loss of their honor, their freedom, their sanity, and eventually their lives. Re-contextualized among stories of the friars's human weaknesses, "the friar's sermon" diminishes in the authority of its moral imperative, its divine origin subjected to doubt. Re-contextualized among stories of the degeneration of the general faithful, "the friar's sermon" loses its truth value.

Furthermore, apart from juxtaposing the sermon among the friars's follies and their devoted followers, the text also frames it with two death events, both taking place on the eve of a religious feast and carefully situated at the beginning and at the end of the text. The first death event is that of Don Rafael Ibarra the mysteries of which are unraveled on the eve of the Feast of All Souls. The second is that of Elias and takes place on Christmas eve. Both are carefully staged as meaningful, life-giving deaths: Don Rafael's is traceable to rescuing a defenseless child and Elias's to save the life of the falsely-accused Ibarra.

As the story of Don Rafael's death unfolds to Crisostomo and the reader, the picture of a morally upright though not religious man emerges. The text painstakingly explains his moral principles through the reports of Señor Guevarra the *Teniente*:

Besides, Don Rafael was an honorable man and more than the many who regularly took to confession. He had his own rigid code of morality, and was wont to tell me when he was speaking to me of these troubles: 'Señor Guevarra, do you believe that God forgives a crime, a murder, for example, just by telling it to a priest, who in the end is a man like us, who has the duty to keep it secret, and fears to burn in hell, which is an act of attrition? Despite being a coward, a shameless cad and assured of salvation? I have a different idea of God,' he said. 'For me an evil is not corrected by another evil, neither forgiven with empty weepings nor alms given to the church.' And he gave this example: 'If I, for instance have murdered a family man, if I have made a woman a hapless widow and turned happy children into helpless orphans, will I really satisfy God's eternal justice by being hanged, by confiding the secret to one who would keep it, by giving alms to the priest who needs them the least, or by weeping day and night? And the widow? And the orphans? My conscience tells me that I should make restitution where and if possible to the person I have murdered; consecrate all of myself

and for all my life to the good of the family to whom I caused so much harm; and even then, even then, who can replace the love of the husband and father?' Thus reasoned your father and he acted always according to this severe morality. It can be truly said of him that he never offended anyone.

Quite contrary, he endeavored to efface with good deeds certain injustices which he said had been committed by his grandparents. (23-24)

Señor Guevarra's description of Don Rafael indicts the friar's moral teaching that is centered on the sacrament of confession and in its place offers a morality based on human reason exemplified by Don Rafael. In no vague terms does Señor Guevara endorse Don Rafael's brand of morality over that propagated by the friars.

Like Don Rafael, Elias is presented as a deeply moral person; and like the story of Don Rafael, the story of Elias slowly unfolds to Crisostomo and the reader at the same time. Elias's moral strength is put to a test in Chapter 55, "The Discovery," in which he finds out that Ibarra is the descendant of the man who had caused the misfortunes of all his family:

Completely outside himself, Elias ran towards Ibarra's small collection of weapons ... but as he laid hold of two daggers, he let them drop and looked bewildered at Ibarra, who stood motionless.

"What was I going to do?" he murmured and fled from the house. (358)

In overcoming the wave of emotional rage brought on by the discovery of Crisostomo's ancestry, Elias proves himself another man of great moral strength. He and Don Rafael, coming from the two ends of the socio-economic ladder, forming a complementary pair in which one "endeavored to efface the injustices his ancestors had done" and the other finding it in his heart to pardon the injustices of the past, both of them dying so that others may live, and both of them being morally irreproachable despite their unbelief in the friars's teaching, together provide another instance of expanding the consciousness of the readers. By this display of moral strength, the figures of Don Rafael and Elias are bright lights forcing the reader to see the friars's teaching as only one among other grounds of morality, thereby striking a severe blow against the friar's claim to absolute moral authority.

Through the strategy of expanding contexts, the *Noli* labors to undermine the superstitious religiosity that stood in the way of Philippine modernity. By re-contextualizing the friar's teaching either among empirical evidence that proved the folly of the teacher and the teaching or by the exemplary lives of men whose morality is based on human reason, the text brings the reader to an awareness of the follies of her own consciousness and, having created such a distance, disposes the reader to assume another epistemological and moral stance. By endeavoring to remove the stranglehold of friar teaching over the imagination and consciousness of the colonial community, the text, given the fact that Spanish domination of the islands rested squarely on the friars's control of the people's minds (a fact admitted by the civil colonial authority), is executing a thoroughly political act.

As the foregoing discussion has tried to show, the *Noli* sought to generate a discontinuity of consciousness among the colonial community. It strove to unshackle the people's imagination from the enslaving truths of the frailocracy so as to make way for a modern consciousness that, following the ideology of the enlightenment, promised a more egalitarian and free society. It did not, however, try to create a national consciousness.<sup>11</sup> The possibility of a national consciousness emerges only in the sequel novel. In fact, the community that is the subject of the *Noli* is different from the community that is the subject of the *Fili*. The *Noli* does not draw a line between the colonial authorities and the colonial subjects whereas the *Fili* draws this line through the divide of the lower and upper decks of the TABO. The *Fili* then eventually focuses on the would-be national community on the lower deck for its proper subject. Rizal therefore seems to have tried to draw boundaries in the *Fili* that were not drawn in the *Noli*.

### **The *Fili*: Redrawing the Line of Conflict**

In an earlier discussion, the point was made that the microcosm communities in the opening scenes posits that the *Fili* suggests a more non-exclusionary notion of the colonial community. However, it would be wrong to think that it was completely so. In the same opening scene that the text avers the inclusion of the voiceless "some," it also asserts the exclusion of others.

The text performs the act of exclusion by first identifying those to be excluded. This begins in the conversation engaging the men and woman on the upper deck. As in the *Noli*, the conversation of this group eventually turns to the subject of the Governor-General. However, there is a significant difference in the way he is spoken of in the two novels. In the *Noli*, the Governor-General's authority is severely challenged by Padre Damaso who says, "I say what I want to say! I mean that when the parish priest throws out of the cemetery the corpse of a heretic, nobody, not even the King himself, has the right to interfere, much less impose punishments. That little general...a calamity of a little general..." (9). These defamatory remarks then elicit a counter-challenge from the *Teniente*, but Padre Sibyla intervenes to quell the rising emotions by confusing the issue with metaphysical differentiations that leave Padre Damaso free of any reason to apologize. In effect, the discussion about the Governor-General in the *Noli* leaves an impression that there is a serious divide between the Church and civil authorities. The rift between the two is borne out further later in the *Noli*, especially when the Governor-General is portrayed to be nothing more than a manipulated cooperator in the friars' machinations against Ibarra.

In the *Fili*, a rather different sense of the relationship between Church and civil authorities is to be found. When Don Custodio lambasts the Governor-General for being Simoun's wet puppy—because the former owes his position to the latter—Custodio fully expects the others to give their agreement. Instead, however,

No one dared make common cause with those diatribes; Don Custodio could fall out of favor with his Excellency if he wanted to, but neither Ben Zayb, nor Padre Irene, nor Padre Salvi, nor the offended Padre Sibyla, had confidence in the discretion of the others. (9)

By relocating the criticism against the Governor-General in the utterance of a non-friar, the *Fili* re-contextualizes Padre Sibyla's subsequent reticence, suggesting a different signification. Instead of underscoring a rift between Church and civil authorities, Padre Sibyla's response (or the lack

of it) conveys a more complex relationship, one that is partly conflictual but ultimately bound by mutuality.

This seemingly small detail in the rewriting of this scene actually makes an essential difference in the political stance contained in each novel. The presumed estrangement between the Church and civil authorities was the crux on which rested the difference between the assimilationist and nationalist positions, for it was this estrangement that made the assimilationist position of the *propagandistas* viable. It was in the *cortes real* that they placed their hopes of assimilation, trusting that the *cortes* will not yield to pressure from the friars. However, as earlier mentioned, by the time Rizal was writing the *Fili*, he had come to realize that despite the superficial conflicts between the colonial Church and colonial government, there was no rupture between them large enough to turn one against the other. The colonial Church and civil authorities were more like than unlike each other.

The *Fili* thus valorizes a line of conflict other than the line of conflict between the modern and medieval consciousness. It emphasizes the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized instead. The text does this by identifying who belonged to which side of the conflict. For example, it includes this rather curious paragraph in the first chapter that hardly any critique has bothered to explain:

Ben Zayb, the writer who looked like a friar, was discussing with a young religious who, in turn had the looks of a gunner. Both were shouting, gesticulating, raising their arms, throwing their hands, stamping their feet, as they discussed water levels, fishponds, the San Mateo river, ship hulls, *Indios*, and so forth to the great satisfaction of the others who were listening, and the manifest displeasure of an older Franciscan, extraordinarily thin and emaciated, and that of a handsome Dominican who bore the trace of a mocking smile on his lips. (5)

The resemblances noted here (of the pretentious intellectual to a friar, of the friar to a gunner, and their strikingly similar gestures) are curious because the likenesses do not gain greater significance in any later reference in the novel. It therefore needs to be interpreted in its plainest meaning: that there is a likeness being noted here, that there is no differentiation to be made

between the pretentious native elite, the religious authorities, or the civil authorities. By erasing the differences among them, the text establishes their common and mutual complicity in the colonial machinery. This, in turn, gives more significance to the upper and lower deck division. The group in the upper deck comprises the colonial machinery whose weight the people in the lower deck are made to carry. The *Fili* thus redraws the main line of conflict.

That the *Fili* valorizes the colonial conflict over the conflict between modern and pre-modern consciousness is further given evidence by the difference in the turn of events that lead to the failure of establishing a school to teach Castilian in each novel. In the *Noli*, the school for the children, for which the construction had already begun, is sidelined because Ibarra is implicated in a mutiny organized by his local enemy, Lucas. The failure to establish the school comes not as the result of deliberate acts of any Spanish authority but as the unexpected fallout of events quite unrelated to it. And because those events were put into motion by an *indio*, its failure is all the more not attributable to Spanish intervention. In the *Fili*, however, the disapproval of the project is squarely attributed to the opposition of Church authorities and the fearful indecisiveness of colonial civil authority. In the *Noli*, although the suspected opposition of the friars is mentioned several times, the turn of events does not give credence to the suspicions. The *Fili* leaves no doubt that the colonial administration deliberately derails the project.

The change in where the primary line of conflict is drawn is actually already reflected in the differences in the “Dedication” of the novels. The *Noli* is dedicated to the author’s native land (*a mi patria*) which he claims is suffering from a social cancer that has beset other lands before. He writes:

In the annals of human adversity, there is etched a cancer of a breed so malignant... And thus, many times amidst modern cultures I have wanted to evoke you, sometimes for memories of you to keep me company, other times, to compare you with other nations—many times your beloved image appears afflicted with a similar malignancy. [vii]

The author refers to a disease afflicting his native land, but does not name this social disease explicitly. However, his mention of the context in which he has been able to identify the disease—*amidst modern cultures*—is more than enough to cue the reader. The implied comparison between his native land and those modern cultures tells the reader that the disease is a cultural condition that modern cultures have overcome. From this context, it is the un-modern ways of the peoples in his native land that he identifies as the problem.

Toward the end of his dedication, he counts himself as complicit to this social cancer. He writes, “I will lift part of the shroud that conceals your illness, sacrificing to the truth everything, even my own self-respect, for, as your son, I also suffer in your defects and failings” (iii). That Rizal would consider himself as sharing in the affliction tells us that, for Rizal, the enemy was those cultural defects and failings that his novel would proceed to expose. As foregoing discussions have indicated, this was the medieval consciousness that had remained unchanged for over three centuries. The enemy was not any particular group of people.

In the *Fili*, Rizal takes a very different stance. The *Fili* has two dedications the first of which, though not unimportant, is not material to our present discussion. The second dedicates the *Fili* “To the Memory of the priests: Don Mariano Gomez (85 years old), Don Jose Burgos (30 years old), and Don Jacinto Zamora (35 years old). Executed on the scaffold at Bagumbayan on February 28, 1872” [ix]. The paragraphs which follow show that Rizal has identified a different enemy:

The Church, in refusing to degrade you, has placed in doubt the crime imputed to you; the Government, in shrouding your cause with mystery and obscurities, creates belief in some error committed in critical moments, and the whole Philippines, in venerating your memory and calling you martyrs, in no way acknowledges your guilt.

As long therefore as your participation in the Cavite uprising is not clearly shown, whether or not you were patriots, whether or not you nourished sentiments of justice and liberty, I have the right to dedicate my work to you, as to victims of the evil that I am trying to fight. And while we wait for Spain to reinstate you and make herself jointly culpable for your death, let

these pages serve as a belated wreath of dried leaves laid on your unknown graves; and may your blood be upon the hands of those who, without sufficient proof, assail your memory! [ix]

In this dedication of the *Fili*, the author no longer counts himself among those culpable. Instead, Rizal holds Spain, through both its church administration and civil government in the colony, particularly responsible for the evil at hand. By the very act of dismembering himself from Spain, the author establishes the other-ness of Spain. This must bring to mind the emphatic words of Simoun to Basilio:

Instead of subjugated thought, think independently so that neither in rights, nor customs, nor language, the Spaniard may be considered here as being in his own home or thought of by the people as a fellow citizen, but always an invader, a foreigner, and, sooner or later, you will be free. (54)

Furthermore, by dedicating the *Fili* to the three priests, Rizal is evoking popular political sentiments. The reference to GOMBURZA recuperates the social polarization created by the 1872 executions. In 1864, the secular priest Fr. Jose Burgos, a Spanish mestizo wrote a manifesto defending the local clergy who, because of events going back to the previous century, had been suffering from ill repute and have been getting the short end of parish assignments.<sup>12</sup> Since 1825, when there was a marked increase in the number of friars coming to the Philippines, the local clergy were losing their parishes to the friars. The escalation of these losses in the 1860s occasioned Burgos's manifesto. In the manifesto, he clearly identifies himself with all those born in the Philippines, whether of Spanish or Malay blood: "*sean estos loque son, Filipinos o indigenes*" (qtd. in Schumacher 28), asserts the equality of the locally born and trained clergy to the regular friars in their abilities to perform ecclesiastical duties and demands justice for the local clergy. Although the Burgos manifesto did not advocate separation from Spain (despite the charges that were later made against the author), the manifesto gave off a distinct "national feeling"<sup>13</sup> through its assertion of unity among



the Philippine-born (whether Spanish or native), of their equality with those from the peninsula, and of the audacious demand for justice.

Having thus caught the attention of the colonial authorities, Father Jose Burgos was marked as a threat. The authorities then used the Cavite mutiny in 1872 to take action against him. Burgos together with two other politically-vocal priests, Fathers Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora, was falsely accused of inciting the mutineers and was put to death by *garrote vil* at Bagumbayan on February 28, 1872. In addition, many other laymen who were known to hold liberal ideas were also falsely implicated, though receiving a much less harsh punishment of exile.

These actions of the colonial authorities, far from removing the threat to Spain, sowed resentment among many, thereby creating a polarity within the Philippine colonial community. On one side were the *peninsulares*, and on the other were the creoles, *mestizos*, and *indios*. Philippine historian Teodoro Agoncillo makes the observation that “The unjust execution of the three Filipino priests was a turning point in Philippine history, for it ushered in a new era—the reform movement” (129). In itself, the affair did not inspire separatist sentiments but merely the demand for parity rights. However, in Rizal’s dedication of the *Fili* to GOMBURZA, the evocation of the polarizing sentiments of 1872 are accompanied by the other-ing of Spain, thereby re-contextualizing the polarization within a separatist political stance.

From the foregoing analysis of the opening scenes and the examination of the dedications, it is rather clear that the communities Rizal was concerned with in the two novels were quite different. On one hand, the *Noli* was critiquing the Philippine colonial community as one entity that needed to overcome the slavery of pre-modern thinking; on the other hand, the *Fili*, through an act of exclusion (or other-ing), was distinguishing the would-be national community from the colonizers.

### Imagining the Nation

Through the reconfiguration of the narrative conflict and the re-definition of the subject community, the *Fili* thus induces another discontinuity of consciousness in its reader. It positions the reader to perceive a division

of the community in anti-colonial terms thereby exacerbating the political tension already spreading in the islands. The next thing the *Fili* tries to do is to bring the reader to a point of decision and action as the following analysis of other similarities and differences between the two novels shows.

The variance in the trajectories of the two novels is consistent with three of the most striking differences between the two texts. The first of these is the tone. The *Noli* maintains a highly humorous, jesting tone all throughout as the analysis of its twentieth chapter above shows. As mentioned in that discussion, humor plays a role in sustaining a harmony (or at least a situation of mutual tolerance) among the people despite differences in their convictions. This disappears in the *Fili* where the tone turns serious. Far from smoothing over differences with humor, there is instead an intentionality toward greater polarization of the community.

The serious tone is further heightened by another striking difference between the two novels: instead of crowd scenes that proliferated in the *Noli*, confrontation scenes fill the pages of the *Fili*. Although these chapters with confrontation scenes do not number as much as those containing crowd scenes in the *Noli*, they are evenly spread throughout the whole text so that there is never a long while within narrative time that a confrontation scene does not come up. The confrontations may be as indirect as the scene where Simoun uses the legend of Doña Jeronima to pique Fr. Salvi's conscience about Maria Clara in Chapter Three or as straightforward as that where Placido Penitente questions the logic and authority of Padre Millon in Chapter Thirteen. It may also be as civil as the scene where Cablesang Tales goes to court against the friars in Chapter Four and as violent as that where he decides to take matters into his own hands by killing the friar-administrator and the new tenant in Chapter Ten. Despite the great variety of modes of confrontation in these scenes however, there is one common characteristic in all of them: they all leave the issue at hand totally unresolved. No compromise or middle ground is ever found. The possibility of harmony despite differences which characterized the conflicts in the *Noli* is totally absent. Instead, the conflicts bring to the fore not only the polarization of the community but the possibility of widespread violence.

In fact the text suggests that widespread violence is not only possible but inevitable. The *Fili*—like the *Noli*—provides studies of certain characters: Cabesang Tales, Basilio, Placido Penitente, Señor Pasta, Don Custodio, and Juli. Unlike in the *Noli*, however, the juxtaposition of these character studies highlight their common predicament rather than their cognitive differences. The text thus suggests that despite the great variety of social locations within the community, there is a common predicament facing everyone. Each of these characters is confronted with a decision to make, a decision made difficult because the more just choice in each case would place them at odds with the colonial authorities. They are reduced to only two possibilities for their choice: to acquiesce to the arbitrary exercise of power by the colonial authorities or to set themselves against it. These characters are therefore portrayed agonizing over their decision. At length though, no matter which way they actually decide, violent consequences follow: Tales turns to banditry; Basilio and Placido join Simoun in sowing anarchy; and Juli jumps to her death.

The *Fili's* tone of urgency and its assertion that the colonial conflict can only be resolved by violence create an air of foreboding. The narrative seems to direct the reader to a moment of decision with a similar urgency with which Simoun tries to persuade Basilio:

“It is useless!” Simoun said dryly. “Within an hour the revolution will start at my signal and tomorrow there will be no more studying, there will be no University, there will be nothing but combat and killings. I have everything ready and my success is assured. When we win, all those who could have served us but did not will be treated as enemies. Basilio, I have come to propose your death or your future!” (197)

Through the utterances of Simoun, the text conveys the challenge of the actual historical moment in the 1890s when the Philippine colonial community found itself in a situation needing a decision to be made; there could be no fence-sitters. This demand of the text for the reader to make a decision required a commitment that was no less political than planning the revolution itself.

Simoun's confidence, however, soon reveals itself to be rather unfounded. The revolution he speaks of fizzles out and that happens mainly due to his own weakness. As if this were not enough, a second attempt to spark off the revolution fails because of the foolish romantic notions of Isagani. The failure of these revolutionary attempts is perhaps the most thought-provoking element of Rizal's second novel. If indeed the novel was meant to fan the fires of anti-colonial, revolutionary sentiments, why does the leading revolutionary figure in the novel fail so miserably?

### Creating a Revolutionary Imagination

This question, however, need not be such a mystery especially if we recall the function Rizal attributes to literary art forms. In the earlier discussion of the *Noli*, especially with reference to Chapter 20, art forms for Rizal had an instructive function. Just as the young man in Chapter 20 explains, the instructive aspect is achieved by the dramatization of what needs to be changed (119). The *Fili* also deploys this instructive function of literary art forms. In the third chapter, Simoun uses the legend of Doña Jeronima to strike at the conscience of Padre Salvi (20-21). In Chapter Eighteen, the mysterious disembodied head of Imuthis tells a legend-history that the friars could so easily identify as an analogy of Philippine colonization (148). The failure of Simoun should therefore not be summarily dismissed as an inconsistency of the novel; rather, it should be taken to invite analysis.

Indeed, to remove any doubt that the figure of Simoun was meant to teach the reader, Simoun himself points out the cause of his failure, one that must be avoided if anyone is to attempt to do what he tried to do:

“Yes,” he [Simoun] continued, “the movement failed, and many deserted me because they saw me crestfallen, vacillating at the supreme instant: I was holding something in my heart, I was not the master of my emotions and I still loved ... Now everything is dead within me and now there is no sacred corpse whose sleep I must respect. There will be no more vacillations.” (272)

Simoun thus recognizes the lesson to be learned from his mistake. Single-heartedness and the wholeness of one's will are needed to lead a revolu-

tion. Furthermore, to be single-hearted and to have a wholeness of will, one must not cherish anything else; one must master one's feelings; and one must not love anyone or anything else. To emphasize its point, the novel actually re-teaches the lesson in the story of Isagani who, because of his love for Paulita (a romantic but foolish love because it was unrequited anyway), causes the failure of Simoun's second attempt. The text thus presents Simoun as a character in whom the possibility of revolution is made real but uses his weakness to give an instruction on preparedness for political action.

Furthermore, the fact that Simoun appears in the narrative as the figure who both holds up the possibility of revolution and causes its failure means that the text has woven into Simoun's character not only a negative but also a positive example. It is through the character of Simoun that the text instructs on a necessary and concrete political strategy.

In Chapter 25, the students "celebrating" Don Custodio's decision at the Chinese *panciteria* see Simoun and call him "the black friar." To the students, calling Simoun as such refers to nothing more than the fact that Simoun, like the friars, wielded a lot of influence and power over the Governor-General and must have therefore been also part of the rejection of their proposal. He is however a "black" one because he is not actually a member of any religious company. Ironically, to the reader, the epigram could mean much more than that. Like the friars, Simoun held sway over the hopes and imaginations of many people especially those who had been disgruntled with the ways of the friars. A whole list of these people are given in Chapter 19, "The Fuse." Like the friars, he traveled far and wide throughout the archipelago to preach his anarchic gospel and to initiate men into his church of violence.<sup>14</sup> Like the friars, he presented himself as foreign enough to be commonly acceptable to the competing indigenous groups.<sup>15</sup> Like the friars, he provided a vindication not for the atonement of but for a justification of their feelings of resentment and vengeance. And like the friars, he gave hope; hope to regain what the colonial system had caused them to lose. In all these ways, Simoun emulated the workings of the friars except that he was preaching a counter-gospel of violence. In doing so, he filled a void in the lives of those who had fallen away from the friars.

The void that Simoun filled was the space of paternity. The friars had effectively usurped this space from its rightful owners literally represented in the text in the story of Capitan Tiago's paternity over Maria Clara. Furthermore, the paternity extolled and exercised by the friars was the concrete analogical manifestation of Spain's paternity over the Philippine islands.<sup>16</sup> To break the bonds of colonization, the space of paternity had to be abrogated from the friars. Simoun did just this; and this he did well.

There was therefore something to be positively learned from Simoun. The figure of Simoun contrasted with the figure of Cablesang Tales whose movement, like the many uprisings that punctuated the three hundred thirty-three years of colonization under Spain, was too parochial, without an overarching philosophy of resistance, and therefore doomed to fail and fade away in a short time. The figure of Simoun pointed to a wider and more systematic, perhaps more sophisticated organization of resistance and at the same time pointed to a very strategic point of insertion into the consciousness of the people which would legitimize the resistance.

Given the foregoing interpretation of the figure of Simoun, the question of how to interpret the figure of Padre Florentino then arises. Is he the alternative paternal figure? As many critiques have noted, Padre Florentino is given the last say and the one who figures in the very last scene of the novel. For these reasons, he has often been interpreted by many as the one who must embody the author's final political position. And for this reason, the author has been perceived as a non-revolutionary, which, unfortunately, was eventually used by the American colonial government to provide a non-violent, non-revolutionary exemplar to the Filipinos.

There are however counter-interpretations. Benedict Anderson, in *Under Three Flags*, points out that when Padre Florentino does give his last say, Simoun remains silent during and after. Simoun dies without giving his assent to Padre Florentino's *sermon* (120). It is indeed questionable that the author would have P. Florentino represent his political position. Padre Florentino must also be analyzed with the same critical mindset that the narrator has been trying to cultivate in the reader. How can someone who has degraded himself in order to avoid confrontation with the friars be a

paragon of virtue? This all too clearly contradicts the most uncontroversial interpretation of Rizal's novels. How can someone as spineless as Florentino who became a priest purely out of his parents' wishes be regarded as a man of wisdom? How can someone as treacherous as he—giving sanctuary to half a man like de Espadaña who has maliciously deceived his (Florentino's) people pretending to be a doctor and who has followed up the bravest thing he did which was to slap his incorrigible wife by going into hiding—be the voice of nationalism?

Far from being a figure to be heeded and emulated (much less interpreted as the author's textual representation), Padre Florentino is the antitype the reader is strongly urged not to emulate. He is, in fact, Capitan Tiago reincarnated. His is the only other home that is painstakingly described as much as Capitan Tiago's at the beginning of the *Noli*. The parallels are not too subtle: the religious figures, the openness of the home "to everything except new and brave ideas" (*Noli* 1). The great similarities in the characterization of P. Florentino and Capitan Tiago are also rather clear: their religiosity, their willingness to submit their paternity to the friars (one over the daughter of his wife and the other over the faithful entrusted to him by the Church), and their sole concern for self-preservation. Therefore, instead of representing the final recommendation of the author, Padre Florentino more likely signifies stagnation. His appearance at the end of the novel as reincarnation of Capitan Tiago, conveys the idea that things have not changed at all, that everything is still where they started: therefore the urgency to make a decision and to take action. Until its very last paragraph, therefore, the novel is still doing what the author had set out to do even in his first novel. He writes in his dedication, "To the Motherland," its instructive function:

Desiring your well-being, which is our own, and searching for the best cure, I will do with you as the ancients of old did with their afflicted: expose them on the steps of the temple so that each one would come to invoke the Divine, would propose a cure for them.

And to this end, I will attempt to faithfully reproduce your condition without much ado. I will lift part of the shroud that conceals your illness, sacrificing to the truth everything, even my own self-respect, for, as your son, I also suffer in your defects and failings. [vii]

By his own example, the author invites his readers to see their own follies, to be able to objectify the structure of their consciousness and having attained true interior freedom by such action, to initiate discontinuities of consciousness that demand real material changes in external social formations.

## Conclusion

The preceding analysis of Rizal's two novels have tried to show that both texts attempted to induce discontinuities in the reader's consciousness. This reading is warranted by two historical realities surrounding their production: first, the author was well-recognized as a propagandist; and second, the novels are undoubtedly political novels in a period of nationalist ferment. The analysis was performed using a simple method of comparative reading of the two texts. The impetus to using such a method comes from the texts themselves, that is, the presence of very similar or starkly different narrative elements that are too noticeable to be ignored.

In comparing the two texts, the analysis has found the frequent use of a strategy of re-contextualization. In the *Noli*, this strategy serves to bring the reader's consciousness from a pre-modern to a modern consciousness. In doing this, the *Noli* primarily attempts to undermine that which has had a stranglehold on the people's imagination and has stood in the way of more scientific thinking: the frailocracy. Through re-contextualization, the *Noli* sought to relativize the truth the friars propagated. In the *Fili*, the analysis found the continued use of the same strategy often applied to re-contextualizing elements from the first novel. It reveals a different critique of the Philippine colonial community. The problem is no longer seen merely as an issue of modernizing consciousness, but it is complicated by a problem of power relations arising from the colonial situation. It is from this critique that the anti-colonial nationalist option is proposed.

The difference in the critique (and therefore the political agendum too) of the two novels does not imply that the author abandoned the critique of the first. It implies rather that the colonial issue is deemed to have become a more urgent problem and therefore required more immediate attention in



the second novel. The following quotation from the fierce dialogue between Basilio and Simoun implies just this:

“No, Señor, no,” answered Basilio modestly. “I do not just cross my arms; I work as others work to raise from the ruins of the past a country whose citizens will be united, each one of them conscious in himself of the consciences and of the life of the totality. But no matter how enthusiastic our generation may be, we realize that in the great fabric of human society there must be a division of labor. I have chosen my task and devote myself to science.”

“Science is not the end of man,” observed Simoun.

“It is the goal of the most cultured nations.”

“Yes, but only as a means to procure their happiness.”

“Science is more eternal, more humane, more universal,” replied the young man in a burst of enthusiasm. “Within a few centuries, when humanity shall have been redeemed and enlightened, when there shall no longer be races; when all peoples shall have become free; when there are no longer tyrants nor slaves, colonies nor empires; when one justice reigns and man becomes a citizen of the world, only the cult of Science will remain; the word patriotism will sound as a fanaticism, and whosoever will take pride in patriotic virtues will surely be locked up as a dangerous maniac, as a disturber of the social harmony.”

Simoun smiled sadly.

“Yes, yes,” he said shaking his head, “but to reach that condition it is necessary that there should be neither tyrants nor enslaved people; it is necessary that man should be where he goes free; he should know how to respect in the rights of others that of his own person, and to achieve this, much blood should first be shed; it demands the struggle as necessary ... To vanquish the ancient fanaticism which oppressed consciences it is expedient that many perish on the stakes so that the conscience of society, horrified, would set free the conscience of the individual. It is also necessary that all answer the question which every day the nation asks them when she lifts up her shackled hands. Patriotism can only be a crime in the oppressor nation, because then it would be rapacity baptized with a beautiful name, but no matter how perfect people may become, patriotism will always be a virtue among the oppressed peoples, because it will signify for all time love of justice, freedom, and self-dignity. Let us not have then illusory dreams and idylls fit only for women! “The greatness of man lies not in being ahead of his times, something impossible anyway, but in divining his wants, responding to his needs and guiding himself to march forward. The geniuses who the common man thinks are ahead of their times appear only so because those

who judge them see them from afar, or take for an era the tailend in which the stragglers move.” (55-56)

This dialogue, a part of a long exchange between Basilio and Simoun and therefore easily missed for its importance, reveals the same ultimate aspirations that the two protagonists shared. For Basilio, it is “when justice reigns and man becomes a citizen of the world”; for Simoun, it is “justice, freedom, and self-dignity” for all. Both speak of a time when there shall no longer be tyrants and enslaved peoples. The ideological ground of their aspirations is little veiled by Basilio whose words set a condition: “...when humanity shall have been redeemed and enlightened...when all people shall have become free” (55).

In their aspirations, both Simoun and Basilio were creatures of their times. Both were motivated by the promises of the enlightenment: freedom, justice, and human dignity. They differ, at least at this point in the narrative, in how they think those aspirations would be attained. Basilio looks forward to the enlightenment of human consciousness through the progress of the scientific paradigm while Simoun hopes to awaken this consciousness through what he deems as necessary violence. Simoun does not disagree with Basilio’s point about the development of human consciousness (in fact, he agrees with double yeses); but he points out the need to address the real and present issue of colonial oppression. In this argument between Basilio and Simoun therefore, the author sums up the change in agenda between his first and second novels.

That Basilio would eventually come to take up Simoun’s position later in the narrative only serves to confirm the change. That Simoun proposes the nationalist option in this context of aspiring for the more universal and permanent ideals of freedom, justice, and human dignity reveals much about how the ideation of nation may have come to be in the Philippine colonial community. As an idea that comes as a self-conscious choice made to serve a greater purpose, the nation is proposed not as an end in itself. Neither is it conceived as a natural division of the world and humanity as the UN maps tend to suggest. Instead, it is a means thought to be useful and needed at that

historical juncture to fight colonial oppression. It was therefore by necessity of other human aspirations that, according to Rizal's novels, the nation began to be imagined.

## Notes

1. That Rizal wrote his novels while on studies in Europe is not an insignificant detail. It was in Europe that he assimilated a modern consciousness; and it was also there that he arrived at a social location from which he could compare nations to one another. The choice of Germany and Belgium as the venues for publishing his novels was, however, a purely pragmatic decision. Rizal was in financial dire straits most of the time he was in Europe; Germany and Belgium were the countries where he found the least expensive and willing printers.
2. The creole functionaries in the Americas were created out of the administrative needs of the colonial apparatus. They thus found themselves replacing one another in positions which, while placing them above the rest of the populace in the colony, did not promise their rise to positions reserved for metropolitan functionaries. In the experience of themselves “as traveling companions, a consciousness of connectedness (‘Why are we ... *here* ... *together?*’) emerges, above all when all share a single language-of-state” (Anderson 56). The exclusion by the metropole experienced by the creole functionaries defined their identity in opposition to the center. In fact, the “consciousness of connectedness” they experienced with one another provided them with a sense of belonging and identity, thus slowly transforming itself into a national imaginary.
3. This correspondence between Fr. Pastells and Jose Rizal has been recovered and published in its entirety by Raul J. Bonoan, SJ, in the book mentioned earlier: *The Rizal-Pastells Correspondence*. The correspondence and the commentary of Fr. Bonoan exhibit the centrality of the questions on epistemology and the ground of morality in the thinking of Rizal.
4. That Rizal likens the Philippine colonial community to a sick human body suggests that the author sustains an organismic conception of the nation. This may be found to contradict the implications of Chapter Two of Hau’s book *Necessary Fictions* which asserts that the *Noli* and the *Fili* recognize the fragmentation of the would-be-nation community. While Hau’s argument does prove that the novels do register this fragmentation, it does not prove that Rizal (or the texts) recognized the fragmentation as a given and unchangeable fact that would particularize the kind of nation to be imagined and not as just another part of the problem or disease that needs to be remedied. Other textual evidence actually suggest the latter interpretation to be more consistent.
5. As later discussions will show, the identity posited in the *Noli* is not necessarily the same as the one posited by the *Fili*.
6. These chapters containing crowd scenes include the following: 1, 2, 3, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 30, 32, 34, 35, 38, 40, 46, 56, and 58.

7. This point on how disruptions constantly plague gatherings has been made by Caroline Hau in *Necessary Fictions*.
8. These chapters include the following: 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 37, 39, 42, 45, 50, and 54.
9. A *baklad* is a fishing trap consisting of wooden poles struck unto the seabed forming an increasingly narrow passage through which fish can swim into but, being unable to turn around because of the narrowness, cannot get out of.
10. This passage also exhibits the narrator's frequent direct addresses to the reader outside the goings-on of the narrative. This textual strategy enhances the self-critical stance the narrator herself exercises and that she invites the reader to.
11. It is here that this study separates ways from Caroline Hau's arguments in *Necessary Fictions* which tends to make no significant distinction between the two novels of Rizal.
12. In the 1770's, Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Justa had hastily created a local secular clergy in his attempt to subject the friars or regulars to his own jurisdiction: "When the Archbishop's crash program produced unworthy priests, whose behavior led to the Spanish joke that there were no more oarsmen for the Pasig river boats because the archbishop had ordained them all, a permanent prejudice was created against the [local] clergy" (Schumacher, *The Making* 26-27). Despite adequate reforms in the seminaries in the early 1800s, the ill regard for the local clergy continued throughout the rest of the 19th century.
13. The phrase "national feeling" is repeatedly used by John Schumacher in his book *The Making of a Nation* to distinguish it from a more complete nationalist sentiment.
14. In *Under Three Flags*, Benedict Anderson provides extensive evidence that Rizal drew from actual events and personages associated with Anarchism in Europe and the Americas in developing the character of and sub-plots closely associated with Simoun.
15. In Chapter Two of *The Promise of the Foreign*, Vicente Rafael presents a convincing argument that Rizal himself became a unifying figure bringing together people divided by geographical, linguistic, and social boundaries precisely because he appeared foreign. He was therefore capable of *becoming common to all because native to no one* much like Simoun is in the *Fili*.
16. The issue of paternity appears in both of Rizal's novels frequently in various contexts: biological fatherhood, spiritual fatherhood, foster fatherhood, and a fatherhood used as a figure of the relationship between Spain and its colony. The texts suggest strong analogical connections between them worthy of a separate study of its own.

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# The Highs and Lows of the Reception to the Works of Lu Xun in Middle School Chinese Textbooks from the 1920s to 2017

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## Abstract

Lu Xun (1881-1936) is one of the most important Chinese twentieth century cultural figures who had addressed a number of social concerns in his works and attracted numerous readers both in China and abroad. He is such an iconic figure in China that he is easily identifiable by the following description of this Chinese saying: “His short hairs stood up like brushes. His thick moustache looked like a character “一” of the calligraphical style used in Han Dynasty..”

The paper discusses how Lu Xun was so highly regarded in China in the context of the roles and functions of intellectuals in the country. But while outside China literature scholars and students generally see Lu Xun’s reputation in the Chinese literary canon as solidly established, in China, that did not seem to not have been the case historically. This apparent instability in his status in the Chinese canon is what this paper tries to investigate as may be gleaned from the controversies surrounding the alleged “retreat of Lu Xun in China.” In particular, this paper focuses on the changes in the representation of Lu Xun’s works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks from the 1920s to 2017 owing to conflicting attitudes and ideas in Chinese history, society, and politics. Finally, it analyses the competing positions over the

“reshuffling of textbooks” in China involving the alleged exclusion of works by Lu Xun resulting from his increasingly unstable status in the Chinese literary canon, and the further reduction in the number of his works left represented in Chinese textbooks.

### **Keywords**

Lu Xun, literary canon, Mao Zedong, literature textbooks, modern Chinese fiction



## Lu Xun and his time

Lu Xun, the pen name of Zhou Shuren, was born to a scholar-official family in Shaoxing, southeastern China, in 1881. His childhood education made him well-versed in the Chinese classical tradition. When he grew older, the family's financial crisis and the abolition of the Chinese Imperial Examination in 1905 prevented him from becoming a scholar-bureaucrat, usually the path taken professionally by the literati since ancient times in China. Thus, he studied first at the newly organized schools in China which exposed him to ideas antithetical to those he had received previously from his traditional education. It was not easy for him because at that time, "anyone who studied 'foreign subjects'" was regarded as a social outcast, "someone who could find no way out and was forced to sell his soul to foreign devils" ("Call to Arms" 5).

The reason is that the traditional Chinese educational system mainly focused on memorization and mastery of the Confucian classics, as well as training on the prescribed protocols for writing in order to pass the Chinese Imperial Examination. Students' performance was evaluated according to their exact imitation of the Confucian classics rather than on their analytical merits or critical way of thinking. But by the late 19th century, with the failure of the Opium Wars, modern or Western methods of education were introduced by westerners in China. New subjects that emphasized scientific training began to be taught in some newly organized schools. Although the Emperor (GuangXu) and the officials in the Qing Dynasty had foreseen the benefits to be derived from this scientific and practical education for the Chinese public, the perception was that it was "foreign" because it was brought in by the foreign invaders. As such, negative responses were generated that looked down upon the foreign subjects and those who had been required to study them were regarded with disdain and rejection. Lu Xun himself confessed that he had hesitated to attend the new school but because it offered financial support which could reduce the burden on his family, he decided to receive foreign education eventually.

After four years of this Western-type of education learning about mining, chemistry, English, and evolution, Lu Xun won a scholarship to

study Western medicine in Japan in 1902. The sad memories of his father's illness made him imagine that someday, there would be "a glorious future... in which I would return to my homeland after graduation and set about medicating its suffering sick . . . all the while converting my fellow countrymen to the religion of political reform" (Lovell, "China's conscience"). In 1906, due to what he felt was the great indifference of his countrymen to the nation's tragedy, he decided to abandon his medical studies and began literary study in order to forge "new paths, opening himself to novel places, while searching for a new breed of people with different characteristics—a new personality" (Lu Xun 1981, 415).

His lifetime was a tumultuous time for China. He saw the fall of the Qing dynasty (1642-1911), the rise of the Republic of China (1912-1949), and the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. With important political and cultural reforms taking place in the wake of the mid-19th century Opium Wars, the Chinese literary scene became closely linked with major historical developments and political movements. The failure in the war with England in 1840 brought China a series of misfortunes that the country had never experienced in the past. Finally, "the Chinese began to doubt anything of their traditional culture." This doubt began to help shape the May Fourth Movement in 1919 that would seek to "overthrow all traditional Chinese cultures and rebuild their culture by learning everything from the West civilizations..." (Dawson 80-81). The changes that resulted from these developments would be woven tightly into Lu Xun's works.

After having studied in Japan from February 1902 to June 1909, Lu Xun returned to China in the midst of great upheavals. However, although he experienced one difficulty after another upon his return, he chose to face the country's tragedy with the spirit of self-critique and confront reality in the face through his writings. He established himself as one of the most important writers in the Chinese new vernacular literature movement with his first short story, "Diary of a Madman," published in the revolutionary periodical *New Youth* in 1918 and now considered to be one of the first and more influential modern works written in vernacular Chinese. Indeed, Lu Xun's works validate the claim that the new vernacular literature singularly

raised the critical awareness of the Chinese masses about the link between traditional Confucianism and cannibalism at that time as may be gleaned from his works. It is from this perspective that Lu Xun may be said to have laid a solid foundation for the development of modern Chinese literature.

Meanwhile, the Beijing warlord government's surrender to Japan at the Versailles peace conference after World War I occasioned the students' protest march in 1919. This is the famous May Fourth Movement in China's history. It can be traced back to the "Literary Revolution" that had originated as early as 1917 by Hu Shi (1891-1962) and Chen Duxiu (1879-1942). Hu Shi published "Initial Discussion on the Reform of Literature" in the January 1917 issue of *New Youth* and claimed that the classical style of writing had lost its vitality, unable to adapt to the modern trend; hence, he believed that people should advocate the use of the vernacular and discard classical Chinese.<sup>1</sup> Chen Duxiu echoed his call and appealed for a revolution in literature as well, calling for reforms in traditional Chinese culture and demanding the overthrow of Confucian moral principles which marked the beginning of the May Fourth Movement. The new way of regarding literature as the tool of modernization and enlightenment began.

Due to China's repeated failures and humiliations in the face of foreign invasions, the Chinese intellectuals became strongly critical of the study of Chinese tradition and classical language. Upon the urging of such intellectuals, Lu Xun decided to contribute to *New Youth* in 1918. But before doing so, Lu Xun recalled in his Preface for *Call to Arms* his initial concerns and subsequent decision to publish in *New Youth*. After his early attempts to awaken the Chinese people in his works believing that he had failed in his efforts, Lu Xun felt discouraged and decided to stay in Beijing doing nothing more than writing calligraphy and copying ancient inscriptions everyday to kill time. But one day in 1918, Lu Xun was asked by Qian Xuanton about the meaninglessness of copying inscriptions and urged him to write articles for *New Youth*. Lu Xun replied:

Suppose there was an iron house, sealed tight without a single window and virtually indestructible. Inside there are a large number of people fast asleep who within a short period of time will all die for lack of oxygen. Yet if they

pass from the stupor of sleep into the extinction of death, they will be spared the agony of knowing they are about to meet with their own demise. Now if someone starts shouting and awakens a few of the lighter of these sleepers, but in so doing subjects them to the pain and suffering of inevitable death, would you, in fact, consider this to be doing them a favor?" (qtd. in Kowallis 28).

After hesitating for a while, Qian Xuantonq replied, "since a few are aroused...you cannot insist that there remains absolutely no hope of breaking down the iron house" (qtd. in Kowallis 28). After this exchange, Lu Xun made up his mind to write articles for *New Youth* for the sake of awakening the "sound sleepers" from "the iron house," no matter how slight the chances were.

The term "intellectual" needs a closer examination because, literally, this word can be understood to mean officials (the learned ones who passed the Imperial Examination from ancient China until 1911, the fall of the Qing Dynasty), professionals, or anyone who had received a certain level of education. While it is understandable, therefore, that only those who had a certain educational background could be called intellectuals, in the historical context of China, other factors might be said to have been at play as well in such a consideration including how much freedom they had in order to publish their ideas and opinions or whether they were involved in government service or not.

There are many studies about the meaning of "intellectual" in the western academic world. Edward Shils, on the one hand, defines it as one among "a minority of persons who, more than the ordinary run of their fellow-men, are enquiring, and desirous of being in frequent communication with symbols which are more general than the immediate concrete situations of every life, and remote in their reference in both time and space" (3). On the other hand, Said has said that intellectuals are the "disturber of the status quo" (x). Thus, it may be said that intellectuals are associated with questions of power relations in society and are linked with matters of "symbolic capital and power" ("The Field" 166). This "symbolic power" ("In

Other Words” 138) enables the intellectuals to make authoritative claims because they possess knowledge in the symbolic realm, which are associative of public recognition and influence in the sense that what they do and what they say can be easily paid attention to by the common public. From this perspective, it is not surprising why the *New Youth* eagerly wanted Lu Xun to write articles for them.

Traditionally, officialdom was the natural position for good scholars in the long imperial history of China. This is why the Chinese intellectuals historically have an ambivalent relationship with the dominant class within the field of power. In fact, Bourdieu emphasizes that intellectuals are “a dominated fraction of the dominant class” (“The Field” 145).

Since the Qing Dynasty was overthrown by the revolutionaries in 1911, the Chinese intellectuals enjoyed freedom for at least two decades until the Kuomintang took control of some parts of China in the 1930s. Without the Emperor, the ruling elite, and the traditional restraints of the past, the Chinese intellectuals became tremendously productive. One of the greatest intellectuals of the period was Lu Xun whose contributions to China deserve more than a passing glance.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China and several political movements during Mao Zedong’s leadership in the 1950s and 1960s, the status of the intellectuals began to change. The intellectuals were no longer in their esteemed position as they were denigrated as the “stinking old ninth” (the Chinese saying to describe the most humble class in society) among “class enemies” (Thurston 21). Thus, most of the Chinese intellectuals were deprived of their rights to write and were forced to be silent until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976). After the open-door policy and economic reform in 1978, China began to regard the intellectuals as an integrated part of the working class. Little by little, some of them resumed what their older generations had done and participated in the party leadership of modern China. The crucial difference at this juncture was that there no longer existed the traditional close relationship of the scholar-official class and the ruling class as had been the case in Chinese history and the intellectuals were

no longer part of the dominant class but were now under the influence of the Communist Party, the Party-state, the new dominant class, so to speak.

On the one hand, the Party-state China needed the knowledge possessed by the intellectuals; on the other hand, the government was wary about the political threat (actual or potential) which the intellectuals might pose upon the country, specifically due to their possible influence on the masses. After China's serial policies to emphasize China's economic development in order to compete with other countries at the end of the 20th century and move towards a technocracy, some conflicts emerged between the government and the intellectuals. The intellectuals worried about the sustainability of China's economic growth as social and environmental problems gradually became serious and alerted the nation about the possible harm from utilitarianism. In the midst of this development, the intellectuals advocated for people to learn from the great Chinese figures and form the habit of critical thinking in order to understand the social reality. In this regard, a case in point is the status of Lu Xun in relation to the controversies about his changing representation in the Middle and High School Chinese textbooks in 2010. In his case, one sees a diverse range of positions defining the relationship between the intellectuals and the state that bears upon the changing reception to Lu Xun's works.

The following section discusses the so-called “retreat of Lu Xun” in China in relation to the formation of intellectuals and the reception to his works by Chinese critics in so far as the representation of his works in the textbooks is concerned.

### **The “Retreat of Lu Xun in China”**

The discussion began on September 6, 2010, when Liu Yi, a Chinese intellectual, stated in his Twitter blog that there were over twenty Chinese classic literary works—such as “Thunderstorm” (by Cao Yu 1910-1996), “The Peacock Flies to the Southeast” (written in the Han Dynasty [202 B.C–220], author unknown), “Medicine” (Lu Xun [1881–1936]), “The True Story of Ah Q” (Lu Xun [1881–1936]), and “Miss Liu Hezhen” (Lu Xun [1881–1936]) which had been taken out of the High School Chinese textbooks and warned

the Chinese public to be alert. His statement aroused heated discussions among the Chinese public especially among netizens. Liu described the “renewal of textbooks” in Chinese lessons for High Schools as the “exchange transfusion,” alluding to the process of blood transfusion, which led to a kind of renewal or rejuvenation. Since several of Lu Xun’s representative works which had been previously included were now excluded from High School Chinese textbooks, the whole case was dubbed by some commentators as the “Great Retreat of Lu Xun” (Lu Xun da chetui).<sup>2</sup>

From then on, Lu Xun’s name understandably kept appearing in the media. It was nothing about his works or his ideas in general. What was being discussed heatedly was the alleged “expulsion” of Lu Xun’s selected works from the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks where he had been placed in a comfortable position since the mid-1920s. The discussion soon started getting out of control because the Internet allowed broad access to numerous readers. Netizens and online communities with opposite opinions quarreled with and criticized each other furiously and asked the government and authorities to give an explanation about the issue. In the discussions, various interpretations of Lu Xun’s works appeared. Some of them obviously did not have an understanding of the case of Lu Xun nor did they seem to have first-hand knowledge of Lu Xun’s works, yet, their participation in the discussions was also welcome. As a result, the literary community began to appeal for a critical reading of Lu Xun and classical Chinese literature.

However, judging from the Ministry of Education’s subsequent clarification, People’s Education Publisher’s reports, newspaper accounts, discussions, and commentaries on the Internet and Chinese blogosphere, the “Great Retreat of Lu Xun” might have been, in a sense, a misperception or an exaggeration.

Firstly, Liu Yi’s assertion that Lu Xun had been removed from the High School Chinese textbooks was due to his misunderstanding of the Chinese textbook reform under the state’s new curriculum standard. The whole curriculum and textbook reform had been a long-standing process, happening not overnight, and beginning not recently, but at the beginning

of the 21st century and extended to different provinces gradually. Provinces such as Guangdong and Hainan were the first participants at the start of the textbook reform. China consists of 23 provinces: 4 municipalities<sup>3</sup> are directly under the central government, five autonomous regions<sup>4</sup>, and two special administrative regions. The changes that transpired had accumulated into a big snowball over the years of the reform process which led to the debate on the Internet in 2010.

Secondly, apart from the leading textbook publisher—People’s Education Press (PEP)—there are now several publishers qualified to be textbook providers for the textbook reform. This means different regions can use different versions of the textbooks according to their different demands. Since different versions of the textbooks offered different selections of Lu Xun’s works by the different publishers, the changes might have made the readers and the public feel that there had been really huge changes about Lu Xun’s works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks. For example, some netizens mentioned that “Miss Liu Hezhen” was axed from the new textbook in 2010; actually, this article had never appeared in the Guangdong province’s textbook in the first place. But it was still kept in the version of PEP, the leading textbook publisher in China even today. Moreover, some provinces divided the teaching sections into compulsory and optional parts; because of this, Lu Xun’s works appeared in different parts of the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks, making the public feel that some of the works had been altogether removed from the textbook.

Still, some of the articles were transferred from the compulsory parts into optional ones, which, in itself, is arguably an important enough change. Worse, it is also true that “Medicine” and “The True Story of Ah Q” are two of Lu Xun’s most famous short stories worldwide have been completely withdrawn from all six versions of the Chinese textbooks. But worst of all, the total number of Lu Xun’s works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks had been gradually reduced.

Apart from the discussions on the diminishing number of Lu Xun’s works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbook reform, there



were a lot of disagreements on the underlying implications of the removal of Lu Xun's works. The spokeswoman of the Ministry of Education, Xu Mei, answered the questions about the "retreat of Lu Xun" on May 12, 2011, stating that "it is very tiny, fine-tuning; actually there was no such big adjustment at all" (Guo). According to her, there are six versions of the High School Chinese textbooks in China; they are published by Beijing Normal University Publishing House, Shandong People's Publishing House, Guangdong Education Press, Language Publishing House, and PEP. Among them, only the Guangdong Education Press version changed Lu Xun's "Medicine" to "The New-Year Sacrifice." Thus, what Liu Yi says is not entirely correct.

Although "the official line claimed that different generations require different textbooks to reflect different demands" (Sascha), the chief editor of Jiangsu Education Publishing Company stated that the removal of some of Lu Xun's works was due to their length and complexity which teenagers have difficulty in understanding and appreciating. Nevertheless, some Chinese commentators in the blogosphere held totally contradictory positions. They pointed to the political factors related to the government's ideology and appealed for Lu Xun's re-inclusion into the Chinese textbooks for the continuing relevance of the spirit of his works in today's materialistic world. Some western scholars such as Julia Lovell connected this issue with the Chinese government's alleged intention and said that "the beginnings of a Lu Xun's withdrawal from Chinese school textbooks began, partly to make way for escapist kung fu texts. Perhaps the intention was to vary the literary diet of the young. . . . Perhaps also it was an attempt to discourage the youth of today from Lu Xun's hanging inconveniently faultfinding habits" (Lovell).

### **The Changes of Lu Xun's Works in Middle and High School Chinese Textbooks from the 1920s to 2017**

In the midst of all these current debates and discussions, one wonders what standard might have been used that allowed so many of Lu Xun's works to be included in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks since the 1920s. In relation to the matter of inclusion, questions deserve an explanation: whether or not those selected works can be considered representa-

tive of Lu Xun, and whether or not they play a positive role in promoting Chinese students' language performance, thought development, and reading comprehension ability. By tracing the historical changes of Lu Xun's works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks from the 1920s to 2017, the above-mentioned observations might be validated. To be discovered as well are the factors that might have contributed to the selection of his works for Chinese textbooks and the relationships between them. However, due to the constraints of the availability of data before the founding of the People's Republic of China, only the general distribution of Lu Xun's works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks was listed, although the total number of Lu Xun's works in certain periods were collected and presented. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the data are mainly from the leading textbook publisher's version—PEP.

Since the life cycle of each version of the Chinese textbooks can last around 5 to 10 years, comparing the lists of Lu Xun's works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks in different periods may help. This study classifies them in accordance with significant historical movements in China on the basis of the standard periodization of important episodes in modern Chinese history. They are from the 1920s (the period shortly after Lu Xun published his first vernacular story in 1918 and his works were included in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks) to 1949 (the founding of the People's Republic of China); from 1949 to 1966 (the steady development period to the start of the Cultural Revolution); from 1966 to 1976 (the Cultural Revolution); from 1977 (the period when China started to follow the Open Door policy and focused on the country's economic development) to 1999 (China's rapid development period after the Open Door policy); and from 2000 (the period of rapid economic growth) to 2017 (the period when China was moving toward globalization).

The reason for choosing these events as the basis of categorization is due to their serving as landmarks, after having had a strong influence on society, in many ways shaping the compilation of the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks.

Compared with the works of other contemporary writers, Lu Xun's works were included in the Chinese textbooks of Middle Schools and High Schools the most, with consistency and continuity during the past century. This fact has enabled the successful build-up of Lu Xun's canonical status and, ironically, has also attracted a great deal of perhaps overstated comments and criticism. As Chen Duxiu notes:

Before getting close to the political party, about 16 or 17 years after the establishment of the Republic of China, he was cursed worthless by the members of this party; as he got close to it, he continued to be highly regarded by them. It seems that Lu Xun used to be a dog that transformed into a god. Although Lu Xun is neither a dog nor a god. He is actually a man who has talents in literature. (24)

Generally speaking, "Textbooks best embody the political cultures of an era especially the content about the humanities. They serve as windows through which we can view how the political cultures change public's behaviors and customs" (Xie 365). Thus, to a certain extent, textbooks generally reflect the political cultures of a country and are important embodiments of the literary creations of a period. When the political, economic, and cultural systems are relatively stable, the adjustments are minor; in contrast, changes, even marked deletions and revisions, will be apparent when there are great social or economic transformations. Therefore, Lu Xun's works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks became a barometer of the times. In this sense, the canon and the value assigned to the canon in association with the privilege accorded the author as author-function combine render it "useful" as cultural capital.

### *1. The 1920s-1949*

In the early 1920s, Lu Xun's works already appeared in Chinese textbooks which were compiled by various domestic publishing companies and some famous universities, in spite of the fact that Lu Xun had just started writing his new-vernacular literature two or three years earlier. Based on the classification of Lu Xun's works for the Middle School and High School

Chinese textbooks in the Republic of China (1922-1949), most compilations of Lu Xun's works for Middle School and High School concentrated on his stories and prose. The chosen principles upon which the selections were made were "either subjective prejudice or preference" (R. Wen et al 40). It may be said, therefore, that the construction of the canon in this period owed to preferences of compilers and the growing popularity of Lu Xun.

The earliest known Middle School Chinese textbook which contained the works of Lu Xun appeared in the early 1920s in Beijing KongDe school's *Junior Middle School Chinese Selected Readings* (《初中国文选读》) which included "Storm in a Teacup," "Hometown," "The Comedy of the Ducks," "Village Opera," "The Rabbits and the Cat," and "On the Fall of the Leifeng Pagoda" (Chen 123). Afterwards, readers began to frequently see Lu Xun's works in all kinds of textbooks such as in August 1923, Shanghai Commercial Press published *New Education System Chinese Textbook* (Xinxuezhì yuwen jiaokeshu), compiled by Fan Xiangsan, edited by Hu Shi et al., which contained "Hometown" and "The Comedy of the Ducks" (Wang and Deng 54). Also, the *Curriculum Standards for New School System: Middle School Chinese Course Outline* (《新学制课程标准:初级中学国语课程纲要》) by Ye Shaojun and Hu Shi in May 1923 stated clearly that Lu Xun's *Story Collection* (not yet published at that time) had been included in the minimum reading requirements for graduates (Curriculum Research Institute 276). Moreover, the following books contained Lu Xun's works: *Mandarin* (《国语》) which was edited by Ye Shaojun for the new educational system in 1924; *Revival Junior Middle School Chinese Textbook* (《复兴初级中学国文教科书》) edited by Fu Donghua in 1934; and *Intensive Reading Guidance and Brief Reading Guidance* (《精读指导举隅》和《略读指导举隅》) co-edited by Ye Shaojun and Zhu Ziqing in the 1940s (Wang and Deng 55). Apparently, Lu Xun's works initially did not appear in the official Middle School Chinese textbook but in some famous private schools' Chinese textbooks indicating clearly the historical origin of Lu Xun's important role in the Middle School Chinese textbooks and popularity among the public.

In consideration of the numerous Chinese textbooks during the period of the Republic of China (1912-1949), this study has focused on three major publishers— Shanghai Commercial Press, Zhonghua Book Company, and Shanghai World Publishing House—covering the period from the 1920s to 1949 to analyze the changes in the representation of Lu Xun’s works in Chinese Textbooks (Zhou Haiying).

Based on Lu Xun’s works which were included in the textbooks by the three major publishers during the time of the Republic of China, the main works, classified into genres, including the translation by Lu Xun, are as follows:

Prose:

“Autumn Night” 《秋夜》

“Snow” 《雪》

“The Kite” 《风筝》

“The Good Story” 《好的故事》

“The Wise, the Fool and the Flunkey” 《聪明人和傻子和奴才》

“Mr. Fujino” 《藤野先生》

“Father’s Illness” 《父亲的病》

“From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study” 《从百草园到三味书屋》

“Winter Leaves” 《腊叶》

Story: “Kong Yiji” 《孔乙己》

“An Incident” 《一件小事》

“Storm in a Teacup” 《风波》

“Hometown” 《故乡》

“The Rabbits and the Cat” 《兔和猫》

“The Comedy of the Ducks” 《鸭的喜剧》

“Village Opera” 《社戏》

“Medicine” 《药》

Critical essay:

“What is Required to be a Father Today” 《我们现在怎样做父亲》

“Preface to *Call to Arms*” 《〈呐喊〉自序》

“On the Fall of The Leifeng Pagoda” 《论雷峰塔的倒掉》

“The First and the Last” 《最先和最后》

Translation:

“Unfruitful Studios (by Tourumi Yusuke)”

“Father in America (by Arkio Alexander Filander)”

“Father Time (by Eroshenko)”

“The Tragedy of Chicken”

“The Journey in Summer”

“Debate on Law”

“The Method of Reading”

“With Young People”

“My School Life—Fragment (by Eroshenko)”

Academic article: “The Rebuking the Novel in the Late Qing Dynasty”

Among them, the works which most frequently appeared in textbooks were: “The Comedy of the Ducks” (eight times, see fig. 1), “Hometown” (eight times), “The Kite” (seven times), “Autumn Night” (seven times), “The Wise, the Fool and the Flunkey” (five times), “Snow” (four times), and “Medicine” (four times). The rest appeared in different Chinese textbooks at least once or twice.

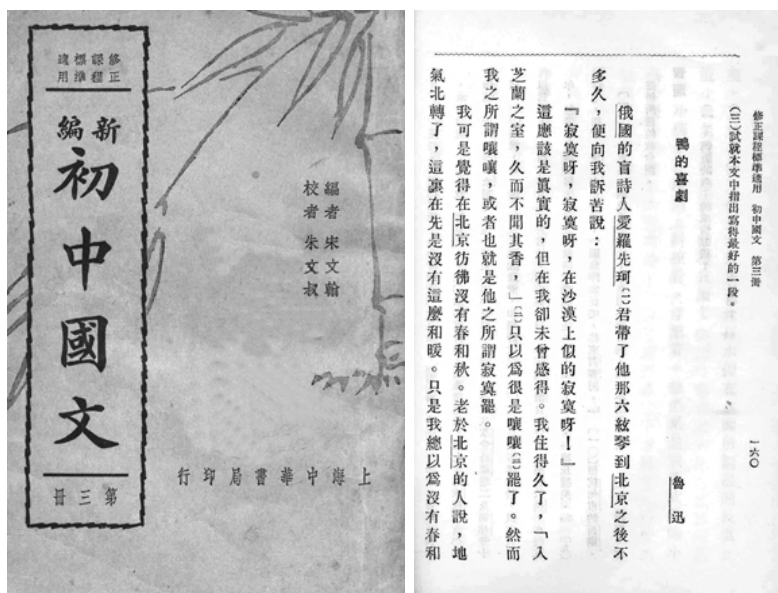


Fig. 1. The page is taken from *New Middle School Chinese Textbook* in 1938. “The Comedy of the Ducks” is the most popular one.

#### THE 1920s -1949

##### (THE LIBERATED AREAS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY)

Meanwhile, in other areas of China, namely the Central Soviet area, the anti-Japanese base and the liberated areas under the leadership of the Communist Party, the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks began to be compiled in the mid-1940s. The guidelines for textbook compilation included sections on the training of their own cultural cadres and the need to inspire cooperation with the Agrarian Revolution and Anti-Japanese War.

The Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region (revolutionary base area) formulated the Middle School Chinese Curriculum Standards (trial) (《初中國文課程標準草案》) to design *Intermediate Chinese Textbook* (《中等國文》) in 1946. The general objective for the textbook stipulated that “all teaching activities of this subject must implement new-democratic revo-

lution's standpoint and method" (L. Zhang 109). *Intermediate Chinese* (《中等国文》) which was edited by Hu Qiaomu is the example of this kind of textbook. Mainly, there were textbooks in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region: *Chinese Selected Works* (《国语文选》) by Li Guangjia in 1948, *Middle School Chinese* (《初中国文》) by Wang Shisan in 1949 and *High School Chinese* (《高中国文》) by WanMan et al. in 1949.

Twenty-two of Lu Xun's works were included in the above mentioned textbooks (Li Bin 61), namely:

Story:

- "Kong Yiji" 《孔乙己》
- "An Incident" 《一件小事》
- "The True Story of Ah Q" 《阿Q正传》 (selected parts)
- "Hometown" 《故乡》
- "The Comedy of the Ducks" 《鸭的喜剧》
- "A Madman's Diary" 《狂人日记》
- "Village Opera" 《社戏》

Critical essay:

- "Preface to Linkeduo's Knowledge recorded in the Soviet Union" 《林克多〈苏联见闻录〉序》
- "We Will Not be Deceived Any More" 《我们不再受骗了》
- "Preface of *Essays from a Semi-concession*" 《〈且介亭杂文〉序言》
- "On the Postponement of Fair Play" 《论“费厄泼赖”应该缓行》
- "Astonishment on the Allied Countries' Behavior" 《“友邦惊诧”论》
- "Answers for BeiDou Magazine" 《答北斗杂志社问》
- "The Rebirth of Chinese" 《中国语文的新生》
- "The Opinions on Left-wing Writer Federation" 《对于左翼作家联盟的意见》
- "The Abuse and Threat is not Fighting" 《辱骂与恐吓决不是战斗》
- "An Illiterate Writer" 《不识字的作家》
- "The Public are not as Stupid as the Literate Thinks" 《大众并不如读书人所想象的愚蠢》



“The First and the Last” 《最先与最后》

“Epilogue of Liberated Don Quixote” 《<解放了的唐吉可德>后传》

“How do I Start to Write Novel” 《我怎么做起小说来》

“Rush” 《冲》

It is worth noting that it was the first time that “The True Story of Ah Q” was included in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbook.

## 2. 1949-1966

There were several textbook revisions undertaken in accordance with the central government’s educational reforms during these 17 years; generally, they can be categorized according to periods.

### 1949-1955

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the whole nation was in an enthusiastic mood to create its own national Chinese textbook so as to educate the new citizens under the new era. Thus, the State Administration of the Press nominated the PEP to edit and publish the first set of national Chinese teaching materials which included the *Middle School Chinese Textbook (6 volumes)* and *High School Chinese Textbook (6 volumes)* in November 1950. At first, they contained all together 18 of Lu Xun’s works.

Later, “The First and the Last,” “The Comedy of the Ducks,” “The Kite,” and “Against Assault” were to be deleted when the State Administration of the Press required the PEP to revise the textbook in 1952. This 1952 version of the textbooks was designed to adapt to the changing demand from the new democratic revolution to the transitional periods of socialist revolution which China had to address at that time. Thus, it focused its attention on the ideological and political aspects of the content but not on Chinese literature and language training. For example, the PEP stated clearly in its *Junior Middle School Chinese Textbook (《初级中学语文课本》)* that “[e]very subject has the obligation to complete the task of political and ideological education, especially for Chinese subject” (X. Zhang 201). This version of Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks was used until 1955.

1956-1957

Since Hu Qiaomu, the general secretary of Government Administration Council (the former State Council in China), questioned the problems in Chinese teaching which did not clarify the differences between Chinese language education and literary education. On March 23 1951, several meetings and discussions were conducted by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China (CPC) from 1952 to 1954 to study the possibilities of separating Chinese language education and literature education for Middle School and High School. Finally, the decision was made by the Political Bureau of Central Committee of CPC on February 1, 1954 and the People's Education Press was requested to compile a new Chinese textbook and teaching syllabus. This new version of the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks consisted of two parts: the Chinese language textbook and the Literature textbook. They were launched in the autumn of 1956 on a nationwide scale.

Fourteen of Lu Xun's works were included, namely:

Prose:

"The Wise, the Fool and the Flunkey" 《聪明人和傻子和奴才》

"From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study" 《从百草园到三味书屋》

"Mr. Fujino" 《藤野先生》

Story: "Kong Yiji" 《孔乙己》

"An Incident" 《一件小事》

"Hometown" 《故乡》

"Village Opera" 《社戏》

"The New-Year Sacrifice" 《祝福》

"Medicine" 《药》

"Storm in a Teacup" 《风波》

Critical Essay:

"For the Oblivious Remembrance" 《为了忘却的纪念》

"We Will Not be Deceived Any More" 《我们不再受骗了》

“The Opinions on Left-wing Writer Federation” 《对于左翼作家联盟的意见》

“On the Fall of the Leifeng Pagoda” 《论雷峰塔的倒掉》

It may be observed that from the list above, there were more literary works by Lu Xun included in the 1954 version than in the 1952 version. The launch of the separate teaching of Chinese Language and Literature in Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks aroused heated discussions. PEP devoted a special column to discuss and present all the opinions about it from 1956-1957. Famous scholars like Lu Dingyi and Zou Yang criticized some aspects of the content of the literature part and the difficult materials of the language teaching part. So a conference was held in December 1956, following Chairman Mao's instruction, in view of producing a simplified Chinese textbook. In March 1958, the decision was made to reconsolidate Chinese language and literature for purposes of unification under the banner of the “Great Leap Forward.” So the 1956-1957's version of the Middle School and High School Literature textbooks separating language from literary education was the first and the last version of its kind that ever existed in China.

#### 1958-1966

On September 19, 1958, the “Instructions on Educational Work” was promulgated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council. It stated that “the party's educational policy is to serve the proletarian's political demands, thus necessitating the combination of education and productive labor. In order to implement this policy, educational work must be led by the Party” (“Instructions on Educational Work”). So the PEP rushed to have another version of Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks. There were 10 articles in each book, mainly the works by Mao Zedong and articles about the “Great Leap Forward,” “People's Communes,” and “China's General Line.” Less literary works were selected, including those by Lu Xun. The details are found below (see table 1):

**Table 1. Lu Xun's works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks from 1958 to 1966**

Year	Title	Works
1958	<i>Middle School Chinese Textbook</i>	“Kong Yiji” 《孔乙己》 “From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study” 《从百草园到三味书屋》 “The Opinions on Left-wing Writer Federation” 《对于左翼作家联盟的意见》 “Mr. Fujino” 《藤野先生》
1958	<i>High School Chinese Textbook</i>	“The Good Story” 《好的故事》 “On the Postponement of Fair Play” 《论“费厄泼赖”应该缓行》 “Answers for BeiDou Magazine” 《答北斗杂志社问》 “Village Opera” 《社戏》 “Miss Liu Hezhen” 《纪念刘和珍君》 “The New-Year Sacrifice” 《祝福》 “Medicine” 《药》 “Forging the Swords” 《铸剑》 “Hometown” 《故乡》
1960	<i>Middle School Chinese Textbook</i>	“Self- portrait” 《自题小像》 “Self-mockery” 《自嘲》 “For the Oblivious Remembrance” 《为了忘却的纪念（诗）》 “Heaven and Underground” 《天上地下》 “Curbing the Flood” 《理水》 “Homeless Capitalist’s Jackal” 《“丧家的”资本家的乏走狗》 “Some Thoughts under the Lamp” 《灯下漫笔》 “The True Story of Ah Q” 《阿Q正传》 “A Madman’s Diary” 《狂人日记》
1960	<i>High School Chinese Textbook</i>	“The Wise, the Fool and the Flunkey” 《聪明人和傻子和奴才》 “We Will Not Be Deceived Any More” 《我们不再受骗了》 “Astonishment on the Allied Countries’ Behavior” 《“友邦惊诧”论》 “On the Fall of the Leifeng Pagoda” 《论雷峰塔的倒掉》 “Chinese Proletariat Revolutionary Literature and the Forefather’s Blood” 《中国无产阶级革命文学和前驱的血》 “Confusion Starts from the Day of Becoming Literate” 《人生识字胡涂始》 “Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?” 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》 “Literature and Sweat” 《文学和出汗》 “Preface to <i>Call to Arms</i> ” 《〈呐喊〉自序》 On “Completely Crush a Defeated Enemy” 《论“打落水狗”》 On “The Third Kind of People” 《论“第三种人”》

From the list of works in this period as cited above, it may be observed that there was an increase in Lu Xun's critical essays in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks during this period.

### *3. 1966-1976 (Cultural Revolution)*

To a certain extent, the 33 works listed above prove that Lu Xun was well received by the country, indicating that none of the other literary figures could compete with his status at that time. Later, however, Lu Xun would experience ups and downs during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

On June 13, 1966, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council endorsed a report by the Ministry of Education, "Request for Instructions in the Middle School and High School Politics, Chinese and History Textbook in the 1966-1967 Academic Year." The new instruction ran contrary to existing ones, as it stated that:

Any textbook that does not assume the leadership of Chairman Mao, does not highlight the proletariat's political characteristics, violates Chairman Mao's theory of class and class struggle, and against the Communist Party's education policy, should henceforth be forbidden. Now the Ministry of Education should organize all the possible forces to reedit the Middle School and High School teaching materials in all the subjects according to the instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. (Bo 64)

Thus for the first two or three years of the Cultural Revolution, there were no nationwide Chinese textbooks and even after each province followed the government's proposal to compile their own Chinese textbooks, almost every version of the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks merely consisted of the works by Mao Zedong, articles praising the contributions of Mao Zedong, and the Cultural Revolution (see the Appendix). It was not until 1968 that the first set of the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks during the Cultural Revolution was published in Beijing in which Lu Xun's works appeared again. Later, the publication of his works (limited to the essays with strong political relevance) resumed slowly in 1969. Little by little, more and more of his literary works were exempted

from the prohibition and since 1972, none of Lu Xun’s works were banned (L. Wen 5).

According to Gu Zhenbiao (the chief editor of the PEP who has worked there since 1965), during the period of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese subject was so intertwined with political doctrines and interpretations that it became a kind of “political education” (qtd. in Chang). Furthermore, the efforts in compiling textbooks were all in a mess because almost all the staff members of the PEP were forced to work in the rural areas (due to the Party’s intention to transform the intellectuals to become members of the working class). Thus, there were no state-compiled Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks during those ten chaotic years. The textbooks for the Chinese subject were designed according to each province’s local demands in line with the central government’s policy. Without exception, the “class struggle” and the “two routes struggle” were the main themes of the Chinese textbooks and the main contents were drawn from Chairman Mao’s works. Ironically, Lu Xun’s works became the only literary materials in Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks because the other writers and their works were banned in the middle and later periods of the Cultural Revolution. Apparently, in this period, at least, the dominant contributor to Lu Xun’s canonicity was political rather than “literary” or any other considerations.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), certain works of Lu Xun were included in the Middle School and High School Chinese Textbooks (see table 2):

**Table 2. Lu Xun’s works in the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks from 1966 to 1976**

Year	Title	Works
1969	<i>The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Nine-year System School Chinese Textbook (On Trial)</i> 《内蒙古自治区九年一贯制学校试用课本语文》	“Chinese Proletariat Revolutionary Literature and the Forefather’s Blood (included in the 11 <sup>th</sup> volume)” 《中国无产阶级革命文学和前驱的血》 “On the Postponement of Fair Play” 《论“费厄泼赖”应该缓行》 (Selected parts in 13 <sup>th</sup> volume)

1969	<p><i>Beijing Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《北京市中学试用课本语文》</p>	<p>“Answers for Bei Dou Magazine” 《答北斗杂志社问》 (included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume)  “ Astonishment on the Allied Countries’ Behavior”  《“友邦惊诧”论》 (included in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Literature and Sweat” (included in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume)  《文学和出汗》  “A Reply to the Trotskyists” 《答托洛斯基派的信》 (included in the 5<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Untitled” 《无题》 (included in the 5<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Self-mockery” 《自嘲》 (included in the 5<sup>th</sup> volume)</p>
1972-1975	<p><i>Beijing Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook</i> 《北京市中学课本语文》</p>	<p>“From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study” 《从百草园到三味书屋》 (included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume)  “An Incident” 《一件小事》 (included in the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume)  “The Methods on Training Beast”  (included in the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume)  “Kong Yiji” 《孔乙己》 (included in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume)  “The Similarities and Differences between China and Germany’s Book Burning”  《华德焚书异同论》 (included in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Revolutionary Literature” 《革命文学》 (included in the 6<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Mr. Fujino” 《藤野先生》 (included in the 6<sup>th</sup> volume)  “On Etiquette” 《礼》 (included in the 6<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Miss Liu Hezhen” 《纪念刘和珍君》 (included in the 7<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Storm in a Teacup” 《风波》 (included in the 7<sup>th</sup> volume)  “For the Oblivious Remembrance”  《为了忘却的纪念》 (included in the 8<sup>th</sup> volume)  “Medicine” 《药》 (included in the 8<sup>th</sup> volume)  “The New-Year Sacrifice” 《祝福》 (included in the 9<sup>th</sup> volume)  “On the Postponement of Fair Play”  《论“费厄泼赖”应该缓行》 (included in the 10<sup>th</sup> volume)  “The Opinions on Left-wing Writer Federation”  《对于左翼作家联盟的意见》 (included in the 10<sup>th</sup> volume)  “On Ambiguity” 《捣鬼心传》 (included in the 10<sup>th</sup> volume)</p>
1973	<p><i>Gangsu Middle School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《甘肃省初中试用语文课本》</p>	<p>“A Real Letter” 《一封真实的信》  “The Preface for Bai Mang’s <i>Haier Ta</i>”  《白莽作〈孩儿塔〉序》</p>
1973	<p><i>Gangsu High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《甘肃省高中试用语文课本》</p>	<p>“Confucius in Modern China”  《在现代中国的孔夫子》</p>

1973 -1976	<i>Jilin Middle School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《吉林省初中试用语文课本》	“Reply Xu Maoyong and on Question about Anti-Japanese United Front” 《答徐懋庸并关于抗日统一战线问题》 “Kong Yiji”《孔乙己》 “Custom and Reform”《习惯与改革》 “Abortion and Sterilization”《流产与断种》
1973 -1976	<i>Tianjin Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《天津市中学试用语文课本》	“Hometown”《故乡》 “Some Metaphors”《一点比喻》 “March Time’s the Leased Territory”《三月的租界》
1973	<i>Tianjin Middle School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《天津市初中试用课本语文》	“Village Opera”《社戏》 (volume one for Grade Two)
1972 -1973	<i>The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《内蒙古自治区中学试用课本语文》	“Preface of My Collection”《(自选集)自序》(the 6 <sup>th</sup> volume) “An Impromptu Composition”《偶成》(the 6 <sup>th</sup> volume) “Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?” 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》(the 6 <sup>th</sup> volume) “The Abuse and Threaten is not Fighting” 《辱骂与恐吓决不是战斗》(the 8 <sup>th</sup> volume) “Preface of the Miscellany in Qiejieting” 《(且介亭杂文)序言》(the 9 <sup>th</sup> volume)
1974 -1975	<i>The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《内蒙古自治区中学试用课本语文》	“Small Talks in Late Spring”《春末闲谈》 (volume two for Middle School Grade Two) “Celebrate Shanghai-Nanjing Retake the Other Side” 《庆祝沪宁克复的那一边》 (volume two for High School) “Revenge”《算账》(volume two for High School)



1972	<i>Shanghai Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook</i> 《上海市中学课本语文》	“Some Trivial Thoughts on Reading (the second parts)” 一年级第二学期用：《看书琐记(二)》 (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester of Grade One) “On the Benevolent Thinking in China” 《关于中国的王道》(the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester of Grade Three) “Some Stories of Zhang Taiyang” 《关于太炎先生二三事》 (the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester of Grade Four)
1972	<i>Hubei High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《湖北省高中试用课本语文》	“Ode to the Goddess of the Xiang River” 《湘灵歌》(included in 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)
1975	<i>Hubei Middle School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《湖北省初中试用课本语文》	“Do not Know the Taste of Meat and Water (On Concentration)” 《不知肉味和不知水味》(included in 3 <sup>rd</sup> volume)
1974	<i>Fujian Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook</i> 《福建省中学课本语文》	“Fourteen-year’s “Classical Works Reading” ” 《十四年的“读经”》(the 1 <sup>st</sup> volume of High School Grade One)
1975	<i>Fujian Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《福建省中学试用课本语文》	“Death (selected parts)” 《死》(节选)(the 1 <sup>st</sup> volume of Grade Two)
1972	<i>Jiangsu Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《江苏省中学试用课本语文》	“Difficult Questions” 《难答的问题》(选自《且介亭杂文末编》) (the 1 <sup>st</sup> volume of Middle School Grade One)
1974	<i>Jiangsu Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook</i> 《江苏省中学课本语文》	“The Old Tune has Already Finished—The Speech at Hong Kong Youth Men’s Christian Association on February 29, 1927” 《老调子已经唱完--一九二七年二月二十九日在香港青年会上讲》(the 9 <sup>th</sup> volume)

1972	<i>Hebei High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《河北省高中试用课本语文》	“Confusion Starts from the Day of Becoming Literate” 《人生识字胡涂始》 (the 3 <sup>rd</sup> volume)
1976	<i>Hebei Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《河北省中学试用课本语文》	“Illiterate Writer” 《不识字的作家》 (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)
1975	<i>Liaoning Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《辽宁省中学试用课本语文》	“The Changes of Hooligan” 《流氓的变迁》 (included in the 6 <sup>th</sup> volume)
1970	<i>Liaoning Middle School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《辽宁省初中语文实验教材》	“Self- Portrait” 《自题小像》 (included in the 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)
1971-1977	<i>Qinghai Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《青海省中学试用课本语文》	“Kite” 《风筝》 (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume for Grade Two) “Warrior and Fly” 《战士和苍蝇》 (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume for Grade Four)
1975	<i>Guangdong Middle School and High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《广东省中学试用课本语文》	“To Tai Jingnong” 《致台静农》 (the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester of Middle School Grade Two)
1974	<i>Yunnan High School Chinese Textbook (Trial Version)</i> 《云南省高中试用课本语文》	“Before the Birth of the Talent” 《未有天才之前》 (included in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> volume)

Source: Zhou Haiying and Zhou Lingfei. “What are Lu Xun’s works in Primary, Middle and High School Chinese Textbooks?” Digest of Chinese and Foreign Books, vol. 1, 2012.

It is interesting to note that certain works by Lu Xun which were included in the textbooks during this period did not appear again in subsequent periods, suggesting that the inclusion of the works was mainly meant to serve political and ideological purposes. Examples are: “Revolutionary Literature,” “Reply Xu Maoyong and on Question about Anti-Japanese United Front,” “The Abuse and Threaten is not Fighting,” and “The Changes of Hooligan.”

#### *4. 1977–1999*

After the dark ten years for ordinary intellectuals which were a bright time for Lu Xun, China finally struggled to be free from “class struggle” and began to focus on the country and its citizens’ real development. The Ministry of Education organized the educational experts and scholars to edit the primary and secondary school teaching materials in September 1977 and issued one set of a trial version in the autumn of 1978. This trial version was revised in 1980 and finally launched nationally in 1982. From then on, the process of establishing the Chinese teaching material system was gradually completed.

According to Gu Zhenbiao who attended to the editing and revision of all the Chinese textbooks after the Cultural Revolution, “although the Cultural Revolution was over, there were many historical problems which had not yet been clarified, such as the issue of the ‘rehabilitation’ of many intellectuals and writers, who were still waiting for their reputation to be rehabilitated; so Lu Xun became the first choice to be included into the Chinese textbooks” (Chang Lei).

Thus, Lu Xun’s works were included in the unified national Chinese Middle School and High School textbooks again to meet a different time’s demands. From then on, Lu Xun, the writer, would find himself constructed somewhere in the intersection between state intervention and modern literary and cultural criticism, constituting “Lu Xun,” the cultural and political figure in China. On the one hand, the country needed the “spirit” to encourage the Chinese to face the future courageously; on the other hand,

the experience of relative freedom in the academic world enabled the scholars to closely study Lu Xun and interpret his works more freely.

Since the central government appointed the PEP as the main textbook publisher again, almost the whole country's Middle Schools and High Schools used their version from 1977 to 1999. The changes in the representation of Lu Xun's works during this period are notable.

Altogether, 25 articles in these three versions of the Chinese Middle School and High School textbooks by the PEP appeared from 1977 to 1999. These included the following works by Lu Xun:

Prose:

"Miss Liu Hezhen" 《纪念刘和珍君》

"From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study" 《从百草园到三味书屋》

"Fan Ainong" 《范爱农》

"Snow" 《雪》

"The Kite" 《风筝》

"Mr. Fujino" 《藤野先生》

"For the Oblivious Remembrance" 《为了忘却的纪念》

Story:

"A Madman's Diary" 《狂人日记》

"Kong Yiji" 《孔乙己》

"Medicine" 《药》

"An Incident" 《一件小事》

"Hometown" 《故乡》

"The True Story of Ah Q" 《阿Q正传》

"Village Opera" 《社戏》

"The New-Year Sacrifice" 《祝福》

Critical Essay:

"Preface to *Call to Arms*" 《〈呐喊〉自序》

"On the Fall of The Leifeng Pagoda" 《论雷峰塔的倒掉》

"Literature and Sweat" 《文学和出汗》

“On the Postponement of Fair Play” 《论“费厄泼赖”应该缓行》  
“Astonishment on the Allied Countries’ Behavior” 《“友邦惊诧”论》  
“Grabbism” 《拿来主义》  
“Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?” 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》  
“Answers for Bei Dou Magazine” 《答北斗杂志社问》  
“Confusion Starts from the Day of Becoming Literate” 《人生识字胡涂始》

Biography:

“Autobiography of Lu Xun” 《鲁迅自传》

To be noted in the list are some slight changes, such as the removal of “The Kite” and “Snow” after the 1981 Middle School Chinese version; but apart from these, Lu Xun’s works that were included in the three versions of the Middle School Chinese textbooks (1978, 1987, and 1992) were almost the same. However, in the High School Chinese textbooks (1980, 1987, and 1992), there were comparatively big changes. “A Madman’s Diary,” for example, was not included in any version of the High School Chinese textbooks after 1982. Also, worth noting is the addition of “Fan Ainong,” “Grabbism,” and “Autobiography of Lu Xun” which were included in the PEP’s Chinese Middle School and High School textbooks during this period. “On the Postponement of Fair Play” first appeared in the 1987 *High School Chinese* version.

### 5. 2000-2017

In the 1980s and the 1990s, with the opening up and deepening of reforms, the Chinese government rapidly developed the country’s economic productivity and efficiency. In response to the rapid social and economic development, a drastic reform of the educational system was announced in 1985 (Lewin et al. 3). Firstly, the nine-year compulsory education law was promulgated in 1986; then followed the decentralization of educational administration which allowed regional agencies to compete with the PEP in the publication of textbooks and references in accordance with different

regional needs. Furthermore, the Chinese education ministry issued “The Fundamental Education Curriculum Reform Outline” in 2001 in order to cultivate well-rounded citizens in the new millennium.

In the midst of all these reforms, the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks in the 1990s could not meet the needs of the time. Increasingly, negative comments were expressed about the outdated contents of the Chinese teaching materials. The feedback from the students and the educational world urged the PEP to develop the new Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks in 1996. After several years of trial, because of the positive responses from the provinces like Jiangxi, Shanxi, and Tianjin, the Ministry of Education decided to recommend at the end of 1999 the new set of Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks to the schools throughout the country. So officially, the whole of China began to use the new version of the Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks in the fall of 2000.

There were mainly three versions of the Middle School Chinese textbooks during this period, which were issued in 2001, 2007, and 2011. The details are found in the lists below (see tables 3 and 4):

**Table 3. Lu Xun’s works in the 2001 version of the Middle School Chinese textbooks**

Year	Name	Works
2001	<i>Middle School Chinese</i> (the 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	“From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study” 《从百草园到三味书屋》
2001	<i>Middle School Chinese</i> (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	“Village Opera” 《社戏》
2001	<i>Middle School Chinese</i> (the 3 <sup>rd</sup> volume)	“A Chang and Chinese Bestiary” 《阿长与〈山海经〉》
2001	<i>Middle School Chinese</i> (the 4 <sup>th</sup> volume)	“Autobiography of Lu Xun” 《鲁迅自传》
2001	<i>Middle School Chinese</i> (the 5 <sup>th</sup> volume)	“Hometown” 《故乡》 “Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?” 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》

2001	<i>Middle School Chinese</i> (the 6 <sup>th</sup> volume)	“Mr. Fujino” 《藤野先生》 “Kong Yiji” 《孔乙己》
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**Table 4. Lu Xun’s works in the 2007 version of the Middle School Chinese textbooks**

Year	Name	Works
2007	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Seven 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	“The Kite” 《风筝》
2007	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Seven 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	“From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study” 《从百草园到三味书屋》 “Village Opera” 《社戏》
2008	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Eight 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	“A Chang and <i>Chinese Bestiary</i> ” 《阿长与〈山海经〉》
2008	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Eight 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	“Mr. Fujino” 《藤野先生》 “Snow” 《雪》
2009	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Nine 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	“Hometown” 《故乡》 “Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?” 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》
2009	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Nine 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	“Kong Yiji” 《孔乙己》

There were two versions of the High School Chinese textbooks during this period, issued in 2003 and 2007. The details are found in the lists below (see tables 5 and 6):

**Table 5. Lu Xun’s works in the 2003 version of the High School Chinese textbooks**

Year	Name	Works
June 2003	<i>Full-time High School Chinese</i> (the 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	“Preface to <i>Call to Arms</i> ” 《〈呐喊〉自序
	<i>Full-time High School Chinese</i> (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	“The New-Year Sacrifice” 《祝福》 “Grabbism” 《拿来主义》

<i>Full-time High School Chinese</i> (the 3 <sup>rd</sup> volume)	“Miss Liu Hezhen” 《纪念刘和珍君》 “Some Thoughts under the Lamp” 《灯下漫笔》
<i>Full-time High School Chinese</i> (the 4 <sup>th</sup> volume)	“Medicine” 《药》
<i>Full-time High School Chinese</i> (the 5 <sup>th</sup> volume)	“The True Story of Ah Q” 《阿Q正传》

**Table 6. Lu Xun’s works in the 2007 version of the High School Chinese textbooks in accordance with the New Curriculum Standard**

Year	Name	Works
2007	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (One)	“Miss Liu Hezhen” 《纪念刘和珍君》
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (Two)	
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (Three)	“The New-Year Sacrifice” 《祝福》
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (Four)	“Grabbism” 《拿来主义》
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (Five)	

From 2000 to 2008, there were 17 works by Lu Xun in the above-mentioned Middle School and High School Chinese textbooks, namely:



Prose:

“Snow” 《雪》

“The Kite” 《风筝》

“A Chang and ‘Chinese Bestiary’” 《阿长与〈山海经〉》

“From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study” 《从百草园到三味书屋》

“Miss Liu Hezhen” 《纪念刘和珍君》

“Autobiography of Lu Xun” 《鲁迅自传》

“Mr. Fujino” 《藤野先生》

Story:

“Kong Yiji” 《孔乙己》

“Medicine” 《药》

“Hometown” 《故乡》

“The True Story of Ah Q” 《阿Q正传》

“Village Opera” 《社戏》

“The New-Year Sacrifice” 《祝福》

Critical essay:

“Some Thoughts under the Lamp” 《灯下漫笔》

“Grabbism” 《拿来主义》

“Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?” 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》

“Preface to Call to Arms” 《〈呐喊〉自序》

The PEP version of compulsory education textbooks (hereafter referred to as the new textbooks) were revised and improved based on the new curriculum standards for compulsory education subjects (2011 edition). It was promulgated by the Ministry of Education, based on more than ten years of textbook experiments and follow-up researches. It is the eleventh set of primary and secondary school textbooks compiled and published by the PEP. The new textbooks implement the spirit of the “National Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020),” uphold the concept of quality education, follow the fundamental principles

of moral education first and aim to educate people next, and fully absorb the experience of the new curriculum reform.

**Table 7. Lu Xun's works in the 2011 version of the Middle School Chinese textbooks in accordance with the New Curriculum Standard**

Year	Name	Works
2011	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Seven 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	
2011	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Seven 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	"From Baicao Garden to Three Flavor Study" 《从百草园到三味书屋》 "Village Opera" 《社戏》
2011	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Eight 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	"A Chang and <i>Chinese Bestiary</i> " 《阿长与〈山海经〉》
2011	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Eight 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	"Mr. Fujino" 《藤野先生》 "Snow" 《雪》
2011	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Nine 1 <sup>st</sup> volume)	"Hometown" 《故乡》 "Did Chinese Lose Their Self-confidence?" 《中国人失掉自信力了吗》
2011	<i>Chinese</i> (Grade Nine 2 <sup>nd</sup> volume)	"Kong Yiji" 《孔乙己》

**Table 8. Lu Xun's works in the 2011 version of the High School Chinese textbooks in accordance with the New Curriculum Standard**

Year	Name	Works
2011	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (One)	"Miss Liu Hezhen" 《纪念刘和珍君》
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (Two)	
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese</i> (Three)	"The New-Year Sacrifice" 《祝福》

	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese (Four)</i>	“Grabbism” 《拿来主义》
	<i>New Curriculum Standard High School Chinese (Five)</i>	

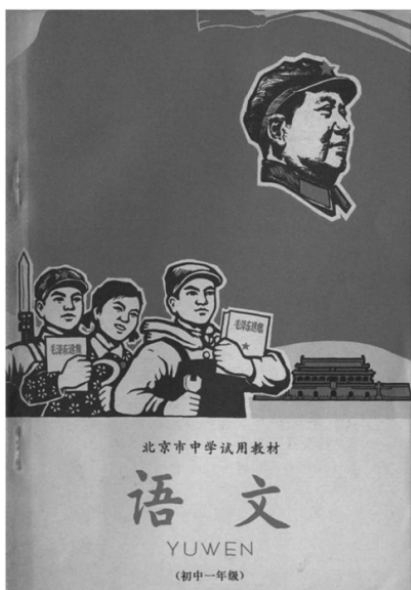
Notable in the above lists is the apparent reduction in the number of Lu Xun’s works represented in the Chinese textbooks from 2000 to 2011.

Except for “The Kite” which was altogether taken out of the Chinese textbook in 2011, there has not been so much adjustment in Lu Xun’s works which have been included in the Middle School Chinese textbooks since 2010. However, Lu Xun’s works in the High School Chinese textbooks were sharply reduced.

Since the 2011 version of the Middle School Chinese textbooks was launched in accordance with the requirements of the new curriculum standard, combined with feedback on the problems found in the experiments, and based on reasonable suggestions, the 2017 PEP version of the compulsory education textbooks (hereafter referred to as the new textbook) has been revised again. The revised principle requires that “the selection of essays should be classics, and meet the age needs of students, suitable for teaching.” Although the PEP has revised the Middle School Chinese textbooks, Lu Xun’s works have not changed compared with the 2011 version in the 2017 Middle School Chinese textbooks.

Currently, there are only 8 works by Lu Xun that are still in the Middle School Chinese textbooks and 3 left in the High School Chinese textbooks. Thus, canonicity in the case of Lu Xun, can be said to have been caught by the whirlwinds of Chinese history, his status in the literary canon of China being rather unstable. Such is all that is left of Lu Xun in the Chinese textbooks, a far cry from the Lu Xun of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the heady days of the Chinese Revolution.

## Appendix



The cover page

我们的教育方针，应该使受教育者在德育、智育、体育几方面都得到发展，成为有社会主义觉悟的有文化的劳动者。

学生也是这样，以学为主，兼学别样，即不但学文，也要学工、学农、学军，也要批判资产阶级。学制要缩短，教育要革命，资产阶级知识分子统治我们学校的现象，再也不能继续下去了。

进行无产阶级教育革命，要靠学校中广大革命的学生，革命的教员，革命的工人，要靠他们中间的积极分子，即决心把无产阶级文化大革命进行到底的无产阶级革命派。

毛泽东

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### The First Set of Middle School and High School Chinese Textbooks during the Cultural Revolution in April 1968

Source: Extracts from the first set of middle school and high school textbooks. Chinese Posters, [chinese posters.net/themes/luxun](https://chinese posters.net/themes/luxun), [https://epaper.gmw.cn/zhdbs/html/2015-05/27/nw.D110000zhdbsb\\_20150527\\_1-05.htm?div=-1](https://epaper.gmw.cn/zhdbs/html/2015-05/27/nw.D110000zhdbsb_20150527_1-05.htm?div=-1). JPEG file. Accessed on 27 July 2020.

## Notes

1. Classical Chinese (文言文) is a written form of Old Chinese modeled on the classical language which is different from any modern spoken form of Chinese. It was used in almost all formal writing in China until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was replaced by vernacular written Chinese. Conciseness and compactness are the general features of Classical Chinese. Vernacular Chinese (白话) was developed on the basis of the varieties of Chinese spoken language and the written form of Vernacular Chinese based on Mandarin Chinese, so that the ordinary Chinese could become literate.
2. In Chinese, “chetui” means a condition of having to move backward to find the shelter; here I use the word “retreat” to describe the situation of Lu Xun’s works in Chinese textbooks in the 21st century. Since the number of his works keeps decreasing, it looks like Lu Xun’s retreat (not voluntarily) was mainly due to the central government’s different needs for him.
3. A municipality directly under the Central Government is a city directly under the jurisdiction of the central government. It is not part of any province. In other words, these municipalities can also be called a city, but they are super cities, which are comparable to other provinces that include many cities in terms of population and economic contribution.
4. Autonomous region is a name of administrative division. In the early days of China, ethnic autonomous areas were collectively referred to as autonomous regions.

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# International Organization and Community

## Interrogating ASEAN's Fictions of Community

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### Abstract

Constituent instruments of international organizations constitute fictions of personality and community. With the ratification of the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN as an international organization now acts as an international person and presents itself as a community. This article examines these tropes of international organizations and critiques ASEAN's fictions of community through a reading of the language of community of its three organs—the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Political-Security Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The article argues that ASEAN's notions of community reify objects in the economic realm, turn people into *homo sacer* in the political sphere, and marginalize the cultural in what is supposed to be the domains of the socio-cultural. In conclusion, the article proposes a new way of seeing ASEAN and the region. By connecting the trope of “work” to the concept of the “right to the region”, the article offers a trope that allows a wider and permanent participation of Southeast Asian peoples in building their regional community.



## **Keywords**

International Organization; Community; ASEAN; ASEAN Political-Security Community; ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community; ASEAN Economic Community; Fictions of Community; Language of Community; Southeast Asia; Regionalization.

## Introduction

“True Love,” the Duc de la Rochefoucauld bitterly wrote, “is like the apparition of a ghost; the whole world speaks about it, but few have seen it” (25). The same thing can be said about “community” in Association of Southeast East Asian Nations (ASEAN) discourses and scholarship. Everyone seems to speak the language of community without necessarily seeing its real existence. Regional officials, state functionaries, their conduits in the academe, and even left-wing oppositionists utter the word.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, its usage in official documents such as the 2007 ASEAN Charter and organ blueprints has been taken seriously as an expression of sincere intent and vision and thus considered as a “significant” utterance (Caballero-Anthony 123).

This paper attempts to break the spell. I aim here to interrogate ASEAN’s fictions of community by problematizing the concept of community itself. I therefore bring into ASEAN discourse critical views from without the traditional fields of political science and international relations. I also aim to clarify the relationship between community and international organizations by reconnecting this concept to the constitutive power of treaties that forms international institutions. Hence, “community” shall be formulated as a trope or representation as much as “the person” is in the law of international organizations.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, I aim to provide an exegesis and critique of ASEAN’s fictions of community from the viewpoint of critical theory and the law of international organizations through an analysis of the ASEAN Charter, the three community organs of ASEAN, and their blueprints. Finally, I offer a new (re)presentation of ASEAN through which more people, hopefully, can participate in regional construction.

In this paper, I argue that a treaty that creates an international organization constitutes not only a fiction of a legal personality, but also a fiction of community. This person is conferred with a will distinct from the Member States, while the community is not just a community of states, but a community of the peoples of the Member States. ASEAN, I contend, has adopted both fictions. It has been conferred with a separate international legal personality and speaks the language of community. However, based on an examination of ASEAN’s three organs—the Political-Security Community, the Economic

Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community—and their visions, I argue that ASEAN’s notions of community reify objects in the economic realm, turn people into *homo sacer* in the political sphere, and marginalize the cultural in what is supposed to be the domains of the socio-cultural. In conclusion, I propose the trope of “work” as a new way of seeing ASEAN and the region. By connecting “work” to the concept of the “right to the region,” the paper offers a trope that allows a wider and permanent participation of Southeast Asian peoples in building their regional community.

In proving this thesis, I shall use mainly textual and analytical methods. This is only appropriate since “community” is a word embedded in texts. In fact, it has been characterized as a “language” used by scholars, activists, and bureaucrats.<sup>3</sup> It is specifically a trope, a metaphor, a representation. It forms part of the fundamental structure of language that allows us to “know something by seeing it as something” (Culler 71). All these characterizations of the object of study justify the use of a textual or, what one may even call, a literary method. Nonetheless, the basic framework of the paper is institutional law combined with critical theory. ASEAN shall be analyzed as a legal creation, a subject of international law. As Schermers and Blokker pointed out, it shall be viewed as an international person conferred with organs and independent will from its Member States (37). This person is a mask for a group of states that is practicing politics in a stylized manner.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the person trope may not be a fitting metaphor for the interests of the group. Thus, international organizations law has also created the metaphor of community. Due to its functionalist limitations, however, this international legal view shall be supplemented by critical theory that is sensitive to all forms of exclusionary strategies and searches for alternative world orders.<sup>5</sup> This interpretive strategy of utilizing perspectives in addition to the technical-legal has been described as a useful by-product of the recent wave of legal thought on international organizations (Klabbers 316). Thus, this paper adopts a critical view of international organizations as part of a hegemonic world order.<sup>6</sup> Based on this critical stance, an international organization’s fictions of community must go through a hermeneutic of suspicion and an “unveiling” of “illusions” (Harcourt 225, 229). Community, thus, will

be viewed as “divided” and exclusionary of those who have “no qualifications to part-take in arche” [governing] (Rancière 560). In this case, critique must reveal the nexus, the supplementarity, between capital and community.<sup>7</sup> It must show how the trope of community has become part of the language of the state to legitimize itself and transform it into a mode of governing.<sup>8</sup> In sum, this paper uses an interdisciplinary framework, consisting of institutional theory and critical theory, to interrogate ASEAN’s fictions of community and propose an emancipatory and egalitarian understanding of regional construction.

The present work is divided into five sections. After this introduction, the second section discusses the legal nature of an international organization and how it is related to the concept of community. The third section offers a review of the pervasiveness of community in international law, international relations, and ASEAN discourses and provides a critique of community from the viewpoint of critical theory. The fourth section focuses on the analysis of community in the ASEAN Charter and the community organs namely the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Political-Security Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The last section summarizes the analyses and offers a trope that would invite more people to participate in regional construction.

### **Fictions of a Constituent Treaty: The Tropes of Personality and Community in International Organizations Law**

The field of international relations has recently been defined as an inquiry into the “global organization of political authority” (*International Relations* 119). This definition highlights the idea of international authority which, since the establishment of the United Nations, has been anchored on international organizations (Hooghe et al. 133). Through international organizations, conquest, hierarchy, and exploitation have been delegitimized by the new norms of contractual agreement, equality, and bargaining.

An international organization, for the constructivist John Ruggie, is a bureaucratic entity with “a headquarters and letterhead” that is based on an institution. According to Reus-Smit, an institution in turn is a set of norms

and rules that shapes identity and regulates behaviors of actors (*International Relations* 13). The norms and rules can be formal or informal depending on whether these are codified in legal documents such as treaties and international agreements. Institutions may be in the form of regimes, institutional practices, or a constitution (14-16). Thus, from this viewpoint, ASEAN is a bureaucratic entity with a headquarters in Indonesia shaped and regulated by a formal institution called the ASEAN Charter (a treaty), which may be considered its constitution. Of course, this does not mean that the ASEAN organization necessarily views itself as a cold bureaucracy. On the contrary, as it will be shown below, the organization views itself as a warm community.

Be that as it may, this distinction between organization and institution is not always observed by international lawyers. The word “institution” has been used to describe international organizations as, when one textbook calls the latter, an “international institution.”<sup>9</sup> Jan Klabbbers’ popular work *An Introduction to International Organizations Law* used to be titled *An Introduction to International Institutional Law*.<sup>10</sup> Early writers on the subject also used “international institutional law” to refer to the rules governing international organizations.<sup>11</sup>

For institutional lawyers, what is crucial is the distinction between international organizations and other forms of international cooperation (Schermers and Blokker 30). They try, for instance, to underscore the difference between the informal G20 and the European Union or between the informal BRICS and the post-2007 ASEAN. Legally, no treaty confers personality on the G20 and the BRICS. Hence, unlike international organizations, they do not have separate legal personality and cannot act independently of their Member States.

From this discussion, one may note that what is critical in the formation of an international organization—which has become the ultimate vehicle for region building—is a treaty. Legal definitions of an international organization include the element of a treaty. Thus, Klabbbers defines it as an entity created by states on the basis of a treaty, endowed with an organ, and a distinct will [*volonté distincte*] (9). It is a form of cooperation founded on the

basis of an international agreement and provided with at least one organ with a “will of its own” (Schermers and Blokker 37).

This constituent treaty is not an ordinary instrument. Treaties constituting international organizations are of a particular type for they create subjects of international law who are conferred with autonomy (“Nuclear Weapons” 75). By saying this, the International Court of Justice did not mean that these subjects have the same powers, rights, and obligations possessed by states. Rather, it was saying that states are not alone in the international community. International organizations are also subjects with international rights and duties and capacity to pursue certain claims. In short, an international organization is an international person (“Repatriation for Injuries” 9).

Here one confronts the most powerful trope in the field of international organizations—the person. The international institution is a person who exercises its “*volonté distincte*” in the realm of international law (Alvarez i). This means the person has the power to act, that is, enter into contracts and sue, and so forth, independently of its creators. This trope is then extended to the parts of the organization which are now called “organs” (sometimes even including a plenary body). And though organs are subordinate to the person, they may now legitimately give birth to a new judicial body.<sup>12</sup>

The institution as person is undoubtedly a traditional metaphor. But recent scholarly reflections have complicated this trope. Personality, it may be noted, is rooted in the Latin “*persona*,” which literally means “mask.” When a group of states form an international organization, they create a fictional *persona* akin to wearing a mask. In this way, “hiding behind the mask of personality” helps create a theatrical world, where the states “turn public life into a spectacle where raw emotions and primal interests can be channeled and sublimated through the institution of a legal person” (Klabbers 65). In other words, the metaphor of a person protects them as a group from outside interference, allowing them to “conduct politics in a stylized form” (Klabbers 66). It means that the audience can see through this some sort of dragon dance where they can get a glimpse of several men leaping in coordination and in a theatrical manner. The states as actors therefore do not disappear

from sight. They are merely behind a transparent and layered entity that is the international organization (Brölmann 32).

While “person” was the traditional trope in international organizations law, “community” is the new trope that has recently become ubiquitous to the extent of losing its novelty. Writing in the mid-90s in the last century, one legal scholar states the following words in an article lyrically titled “The Souls of International Organizations”:

While international lawyers continue to describe international institutions with the tired, traditional metaphor of “personality,” the states that are members of those institutions, the people who staff and serve them, and the empirical and theoretical scholars who study them have come to see them in terms of “communities”.... (Bederman 371)

While Bederman admits that the “fictive person” is still around, he recognizes that:

... organizations see themselves as the legal embodiment of communities, with complex interplays of equal and subordinate relations with states, with other organizations ... the image of legal personality has not been the only metaphor used to describe international institutions and the regimes they make. Writers have increasingly embraced the idea of community (371).

What is immediately apparent in the excerpts from Bederman is the source of the new concept: it is the states and those who work for the international organizations who describe the entity as a community. They see the organizations as the “legal embodiment” of communities. Scholars and writers have joined this group by embracing and disseminating the new metaphor.

In the late twentieth century, it seems that “community” was still outside the mainstream. To prove that international organizations do form “communities” and work for “community interests,” Bederman returns to the archives of the International Commission for the Cape Spartel Lighthouse that maintained the upkeep of a lighthouse on the coast of Morocco to prevent maritime accidents. Despite Spain’s and France’s imperial desires to

occupy Morocco, a constituent instrument in 1865 was successfully signed and ratified by ten powers that cooperated to maintain the lighthouse and guarantee its neutrality. The Commission successfully navigated several stormy questions regarding its membership, the management of the lighthouse, and violations of its neutrality by some members, thereby journeying for several decades until the lighthouse was turned over to Morocco in 1958. For Bederman, the characterizations of the institution as servitude, internationalized territory, and as a juridical person are not enough. What was rather at stake in the history of the Commission and missed by the above-mentioned characterizations were the interests of the community that it served. Bederman stated that through the formation of an international institution and providing answers to some difficult questions regarding its existence, “international law made possible a lighthouse on a lonely shore, shining its beacon into a needful night” (377).

Bederman’s article is undoubtedly a lyrical celebration of international organizations and communities. He searches for a new way of seeing international organizations. And he finds it through the lens of the metaphor of community. For Bederman, the trope of community best describes states when they come together to construct regimes that may constrain their acts and other international actors’ behavior (372). These “treaty-regimes” create norms and do have a “powerful law-creating effect” (Crawford 29). When an international organization facilitates the creation and ratification of treaties such as the UN Human Rights Conventions, the Geneva Conventions, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea—the international legal regimes governing human rights, war, and the sea—it acts less as a person, but more as a community (Bederman 372). In these cases, the international legal regimes could be seen as, to borrow the words of McNair, “the nearest approach to legislation by the whole community of States” (cited in Crawford 29).

Thus, the constituent treaty of an international organization creates fictions of a person and a community. Most recently, the trope of a community has been so normalized that there is an urgent need to question and interrogate it.



## **Seduced by Community: Toward a Critique of the Language of Community in International Law, International Relations, and ASEAN Discourses**

Literary critic and cultural scholar Raymond Williams once wrote that the word “community” seems “never to be used unfavorably.” Unlike the words “state,” “nation,” “society,” it has not acquired any “positive opposing or distinguishing term” (*Keywords* 76). While recent critical accounts of community are now available, Williams has no doubt underscored the seductive appeal of community. Critical theorists have pointed out the ubiquity of the term in state, popular, and academic discourses. Politicians, scholars, activists, and ordinary people harp on the same word in their aim to make use of its emotive appeal (Creed 1). They seem to have been seduced by the word and in turn are using its wiles to seduce us.

Practitioners and scholars of international law have not been able to resist this seduction. Bederman’s article discussed above is without doubt its most lyrical celebration. Nonetheless, even the first and most important judicial decision in international organizations law already premised its determination of the existence of the United Nation’s legal personality, which the treaty failed to expressly grant, on the idea that the nature and rights of legal subjects depend upon “the needs of the community” (“Repatriation for Injuries” 8). The concept of community interests, which “encompass fundamental values shared by a group of states or the international community as a whole,” now stands as an important pillar of the international order (Tanaka 10). International law, which governs this international order, has incorporated the “common interests of the international community as a whole, including not only states but all human beings” (Simm 268).

International lawyers, of course, have been vulnerable to this kind of temptation. They have often pushed for normative projects to establish the existence of law in the hard texts of international agreements and in the more elusive customary practices of states. In contrast, international relations scholars would be more immune to the seductions of community. Their traditional skepticism about the idea that there exists at the international level anything that resembles a community has partly obscured the

concept of a “security community” for a long time (Adler and Barnett 31). For Adler and Barnett, the scholars who popularized the idea of “security community,” a community has three important characteristics:

1. Members share the same values and meanings;
2. They have direct and many-sided relationships; and
3. [These] “communities exhibit a reciprocity that expresses some degree of self-interest...and...altruism.” (31)

They in turn argue that such an entity can exist at the local, the domestic, and the international level (Adler and Barnett 32). At the international level, this may take the form of a security community which is tied to a transnational community.<sup>13</sup>

This recent revival of the idea of community in “security communities” has spawned numerous works, including a full-length book on the construction of an ASEAN security community.<sup>14</sup> Scholars have, in fact, noted a shift from a discourse of “region building” to “community building” in official ASEAN discourses (“Lessons from Asia” 284). This is a discursive shift that certainly utilizes the positive and emotive connotations of “community” which are lacking in the word “region.” Unsurprisingly, Southeast Asia’s international institution would adopt the language of community by speaking of an “ASEAN Community,” an “ASEAN Political-Security Community,” an “ASEAN Economic Community,” and an “ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.” Following this trend, more scholars have in turn embraced the rhetoric of “community building” or “regional community.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, international relations discourse has been ultimately ensnared.

At this moment, I shall not yet delve deeper into ASEAN’s notions of community. It should be enough to recognize the irresistible use of the word “community” in the discourses of international law, international relations, ASEAN scholarship, and most importantly, in the constituent treaty of the ASEAN international organization itself. I therefore note an evident sort of enchantment by community in the discourses examined, and that there is an urgent need to break the spell. While this paper does not totally reject the whole discourse of community, it submits that a certain self-reflexivity is

needed to maintain a critical perspective required in scholarship. This may be done through an introduction to the critical literature on community.

The term “community” is said to have become part of our way of understanding the world. This ordinariness, which makes it disarmingly acceptable to the ear, is further complicated by its meaning that may refer either to a *group of people*, a *quality of relationship*, or a *location* (Creed 2). Moreover, the term, in its modern usage, embodies a “difficult interaction” between the sense of “direct common concern” and “the materialization of common organization” which may more often than not fail to “adequately express” the former (*Keywords* 76). This slippery character of the term allows people to evoke the more positive connotations of community such as “harmony, homogeneity, autonomy, immediacy, morality, locality, solidarity, and identity” (Creed 2). But what is even more critical is its being “a warmly persuasive word” to “describe an existing set of relationships or an alternative set of relationships” (*Keywords* 76). In short, the word can either be realistic or utopian.

It is not surprising therefore that the word would see a surge in usage in the aftermath of 1989 or 1991. Just as community’s immediacy became an alternative to the 19<sup>th</sup> century urbanization of industrial societies, it offered something of a collective utopia upon the breakdown of actually-existing socialist or communist societies. It may be noted that for a long time, communism stood as “an emblem of the desire to discover or rediscover a place of community at once beyond social divisions and beyond subordination to technopolitical dominion” (Nancy 1). The breakdown of societies claiming to be communist left a vacuum to which a variety of notions of community came to fill. Community was therefore connected to the triumph of capitalism in the late twentieth century and became the new mode of governance (Creed 3).

These two aspects of community—its connections to late capitalism and governance—would be critical to the critique of ASEAN’s fictions of community. First, Gerald Creed writes that “the success of modern rule owes much to its articulation of an expansive authority...in a language of community.” Modern states “traffic in the emotional elements of community to establish

consent” (Creed 6). Thus, we do not resist “community policing” since we are disarmed by the first word in a way that makes the second word more acceptable. Second, Miranda Joseph offers a sobering view of community that uncovers not only its inclusions and exclusions, but also its connections to capital. She argues that community “supplements capital” and “shores it up, and facilitates the flow of capital” (Joseph xxxii). This is quite clear in the relationship between consumption and community. Capital nowadays is producing for targeted communities of race, gender, nationality, and so forth. Thus, the “degree to which consumption practices correlates to the boundaries of communities” is not coincidental (Creed 7).

How did community end up in the hands, if not in the arms, of the state and capital? It may be recalled that community, as early sociologists such as Tönnies, Weber, and Durkheim argued, was displaced by the bureaucratization of societies. Why then would the proximate cause of the displacement—the state—begin to speak the language of community? For Creed, the answer lies in the fact that community becomes more useful to the state as the former’s power declines and is displaced. Communities in the hands of the state become “units of consumption and representation”; thus, a community that is promoted by the state may be, in all probability, a problematic idea since the latter subjects community to facilitate the circulation and transformation of capital (Creed 7).

This critical view of community cannot be limited to the confines of a single state. The proliferation of communities in the form of international organizations—the former European Community (now EU), the Andean Community, and now the ASEAN Community—demands a critical examination of this co-optation at the international level. The critique then must be taken to the regional level, where states are involved in a so-called “community building.” Thus, one might also pause, step back, and try to analyze how “community” has been used to conjure unity and solidarity in Southeast Asia and how it is actually materialized within an international organization.

## A Reading of ASEAN'S Fictions of Community

In the previous section, I have presented a critical view of community as it has been coopted by states as a legitimating discourse even as they transform communities into units of consumption and representation. I have also discussed how international organizations' legal nature creates tropes that include the fiction of being an embodiment of a community. In this section, I bring these institutional and critical perspectives to bear on the task of examining ASEAN's fictions of community.

The ASEAN Charter constituted an international organization that uses both the tropes of person and community. In fact, Article 3, Chapter II states that "ASEAN, as an intergovernmental organization, is hereby conferred legal personality."<sup>16</sup> Article 3 constituted ASEAN as a subject of international law with a distinct will of its own. No wonder this development conjured fantasies of an ASEAN exercising its *volonté distincte* [distinct will] to the extent of entering into treaties on behalf of its Members States, thereby creating obligations to be fulfilled by the latter.<sup>17</sup> Years after 2007, it became clear that ASEAN would not be the Frankenstein's monster who could order its creators to obey. Even more problematic is the finding that in the organization's treaty practice the Member States still remain the parties to the critical agreements and ASEAN is relegated to sign rather minor treaties.<sup>18</sup> The person's *volonté* is not, after all, *distincte* from the Member States. ASEAN is run more by national governments rather than by a regional body (Tay 59). Hence, ASEAN appears to be a *wayang kulit* [the performance of a shadow play in Indonesia] of its Member States.<sup>19</sup>

Although I focus here on the trope of community, it is important not to ignore the fiction of a person in ASEAN. The metaphor of a person is constitutionalized by the Charter and the ideas of a community, as I will later argue, are all materialized in "organs" and given flesh by "bodies." Both organs and bodies are, without doubt, extensions of the person metaphor. That is why one needs to keep this metaphor in mind.

ASEAN first used the language of community in the 1976 Declaration of the ASEAN Concord: "Member states shall vigorously develop an awareness of regional identity and exert all efforts to create a strong ASEAN

Community.” (2) But, as one scholar rightly points out, this was “little more than a political slogan.” The scholar argues that it was only after the 2003 Declaration of the ASEAN Concord (Bali Concord II) that the creation of an ASEAN community became a concrete plan (Oba 63).

Nonetheless, if seen from the viewpoint of institutional law, the turning point would not be 2003. It would be the ratification of the ASEAN Charter. As already mentioned in the previous section, the constituent treaty creates not only a fiction of personality, but also a fiction of community. The Charter indeed speaks the language of community. The word permeates the Charter from its preamble and purposes to the chapter enumerating its organs. Thus, the preamble, using the fiction of the peoples of Southeast Asia as authors, states that the creators are convinced to “realise an ASEAN Community.” One of the purposes of the organization is “to develop human resources ... for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for the strengthening of the ASEAN Community.”<sup>20</sup> The organization further intends to “promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building.”<sup>21</sup> This language of community moves from the vision of the preamble to the act of building. One may note in these excerpts the conspicuous usage of the peoples in relation to the community. In the preamble, there is the “We, the peoples of Southeast Asia.” In Art. 1 (10), the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN is related to the strengthening of the ASEAN Community. Lastly, in Art. 1 (13), there is the promotion of a people-oriented ASEAN in which all would participate in community building. All these suggest that community is not only a trope to describe the international organization but also its actual object of construction—the region.<sup>22</sup>

The references to the people and to community seem like a kind of music that sounds so dream-like that one might think that the ASEAN Community is indeed “aimed in the direction not of mere attainment of the common interests of the elite” but toward the creation of a region where the common people can participate and have the “sense-of we-feeling” (Oba 76). Before one falls for this rhetoric of community, however, one must ask how the Charter itself materializes this community. By “materialize,” what

is meant is how the idea is transformed into an organizational structure. Thus, I turn to Chapter IV of the Charter which creates the “organs” of the person. Article 9 creates the ASEAN Community Councils which include the three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community Council (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community Council (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council (ASCC).

It is notable how these organizational structures use both the tropes of person and community in which each council is both “an organ” and “a community.” This is only fittingly appropriate since a community is more of an idea. One does not really see a community. One simply sees people together. In the context of ASEAN, one can say that the idea of community is materialized into an organ, which is, in turn, provided some sort of flesh through the ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial “Bodies” as seen in Art. 9 (2).

Legally, an organ is subordinate to the person of the organization. Often, it does not have a personality of its own. The organs of an international organization, however, are important in the same way that an organ is critical to a person. It is through the organs that an international organization performs functions and achieves its objectives.<sup>23</sup> Organs are also given the power to interpret the rules of an organization. Most importantly, through the analysis of its organs, one may understand the organization since the former forms part of the latter’s “interior design” (Klabbers 207). Thus, the materialization of an idea of a community into an organ, and how the same organ in turn expresses a vision of community, are worth examining.

#### *A. Reification, Fetishism, and the Supplementary Relations between Capital and Communities in the ASEAN Economic Community*

In order to understand a society, one may look into the exchange of commodities within it. It is also in the realm of the economy that one may find a clearer answer to the question of how much integration the countries of Southeast Asia have achieved. Thus, I begin the analysis with the ASEAN Economic Community.

The nomenclature of “economic community” reminds one of the European Economic Community of the ‘50s and many terms such as “single

market” and “free flow” seem to suggest a repeat of the European model (Pelkmans 18; Inama and Sim 37). But it is common knowledge among scholars that ASEAN is not an imitation of the EU. Although both EU and ASEAN are international organizations, the Member States of the latter institution have not given up certain competencies and thus a treaty signed by ASEAN alone cannot have a direct effect on the domestic law of the Member States. Exclusive competence, limitations of sovereignty of Member States, and direct effects are strictly principles of European law (Schütze 78-79; Weatherill 29-33). Hence, the reader must be very careful since the AEC does not use the terms with the same referents.

The idea of the AEC was first popularized in the Bali Declaration of 2003 which expressed the “end-goal of economic integration.” The data now shows that from 2004-2011 intra-trade of goods has risen from 260 billion USD to 598 billion USD, and from 2000-2011 intra-ASEAN foreign direct investment total share from 0.85 billion USD to 26.27 billion USD. Some have considered this the “greatest sign of integration” (Chang 349-350). It is not surprising that another ASEAN scholar has proposed to make the AEC the leading force in community building since it has the “clearest timeline” and “measurable achievements.” He believes that such integration may spill over to the other realms, making regional interest become a more predominant force (Tay 57).

The idea of the AEC is now partly materialized in an organ whose function is to facilitate the work of economic integration in the real world. The materialization of the idea therefore goes through the organ of the organization which in turn works on the construction of the economic community. The AEC organ is, for obvious reasons, peopled by the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting (Woon 98). This latter ministerial body earlier took a “life of its own” from the Foreign Ministers Meeting which for many years was the leading force in the region (Woon 104). This departure was a sign that the economic may become the central and determining factor in regional integration in the last instance.

But what kind of economic community does this organ construct? The vision is constitutionalized in the ASEAN Charter, Art. 1 (5), Chapter 1:



...To create a *single market* and *production base* which is stable, prosperous, highly competitive and economically integrated *with* effective facilitation for trade and investment in which there is a *free* flow of *goods*, services and investment; *facilitated* movement of business persons, professionals, talents and *labour*; *freer* flow of *capital* (emphasies added) (4).

This vision of a community is conceptually rich if the glittering generalities of “stable,” “prosperous,” and “highly competitive” are dropped. It is, however, a vision torn between aspiration and conservatism, between free market imaginaries and statist control, between the future and the present. In the final analysis, it is a vision of a community where things are more powerful than people and freedom belongs to things.

Jacques Pelkmans has written a full-length book on economic concepts in the ASEAN Charter and has evaluated ASEAN’s idea of integration from the viewpoint of a “modern stages approach” to economic integration (Pelkmans 20-25). I adopt here his conceptualizations and add the critical lenses of reification and fetishism. He notes that a “single market” is more of an aspiration than a regulatory concept. Not even the European Union has achieved a single market (Pelkmans 36). Moreover, the concept of a single market could not accommodate a distinction between a “free flow of goods” and a “freer” flow of capital. Freer flow of capital, in fact, contradicts a single market (Pelkmans 92). More importantly, for the people of the region, the vision is “selective” for focusing on “skilled labour,” which was changed to “professionals” in the Charter (Woon 43; Pelkmans 92). Unlike the flow of “goods” (which has now a treaty to govern it), unskilled laborers have been left out in the cold as there is no treaty covering them (Inama and Sim 36, 62). But whether skilled or not, there are no rights for people to access labor markets in the ASEAN Community. Only the states retain the right to facilitate the movement of business persons (who, as the human embodiment of capital, seem to always come first) followed by professionals, talents, and (last and perhaps, the least) labor. The words “free” and “freer” are conferred not on human beings but on things such as goods and capital. In the final analysis, the freest of them all are only the creations of human beings—the reified “goods.”

Thus, the picture of the ASEAN Economic Community becomes clear. It is a community supplemented by the freer flow of capital and whose human embodiment, the business person, always comes first (“ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint” 5). It is a community where ordinary workers, abstractly called “labor,” do not have the freedom and right to work in other parts of the region. It is a community where states have the power over the movement of people, and yet would allow the free flow of goods by eliminating tariffs and other barriers.<sup>24</sup> In other words, this is a community dominated by reification where objects have more rights of movement than their creators.

Additionally, things shall be free and pervasive in this community envisioned as a single “production base” and as such it would appear as one with “immense collections of commodities” (Marx 125). This may not necessarily be a bad development. To become a single production base and thus increase the production of goods requires the free movement of goods needed for production within the region. This is the only way the region could possibly compete with India and China as a production hub. And in the Post-Covid era and intense US-China competition, this ASEAN production base may be a logical economic alternative. Nonetheless, in a regional community where things have more freedom of movement than men, relations between people would be mediated by things and the social relations between men in one national community that produce the goods would assume the “fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx 165). The national producers would be embodied by the things they produce and would be known not as men but as things. In other words, there would be a fetishized form of community relations.

Moreover, the lack of rights of movement for people in this transnational community would maintain the archipelagic divisions of the smaller communities within Southeast Asia. In this context, the freer flow of capital and free flow of goods would be the only predominant link connecting the communities rather than a strong bond between and among peoples. In the absence of social relations between the peoples of Southeast Asia, capital and goods would supplement the void just as the communities—whose people

are without rights—would supplement and enable capital’s transformation from labor value into commodities, from commodities into money, and finally, from money into capital.

The reproduction of this supplementary relation between capital and communities would continue at the cost of peoples’ rights (Joseph 13-21). Capital would be able to harness communities’ supplements of labor without the producers gaining the same rights of movement of their own creations. Capital would be able to reproduce itself through community consumption and exchange. Indeed, capital would be able to assume several fantastic transformations in the single market while producers and consumers of value would have limited people-to-people exchanges.

Thus, reification of goods, the fetishism of community relations, the predominance of the human embodiment of capital, the affirmation of state rights to control peoples’ movements, the supplementarity of community and capital—all these characterize the vision of the ASEAN Economic Community as constitutionalized in the Charter and the plans of the ASEAN’s community organ. And after everything is summed up, the people are left only with the freedoms to produce and to consume.

### *B. Homo Sacer and the ASEAN Political-Security Community*

The nomenclature of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSA) is obviously taken from the concept of security community coined by Deutsch and popularized by Adler and Barnett. Adler and Barnett state that the original sense of this concept refers to a group of states that have become integrated so that they expect to settle their differences by peaceful means (3). Scholars have tried to answer the question whether ASEAN can be considered a security community. Acharya two decades ago described it as a nascent security community. More recently, Chang argues that it is neither a security community in the Deutschian sense nor in the “critical security community” sense (356).

In this section, I shall analyze the organ and its vision of community from the same critical viewpoint already used in the previous section. I shall also use the critical security community defined by Chang as a group of people

that has a sense of community and has built institutions and practices strong enough to “ensure common, comprehensive, and dependable expectations of peaceful change among its population.” It is comprehensive enough in the sense that it does not only include other sectors of security such as the economic, but also focuses on the individual’s emancipation as the ultimate aim of security (Chang 356). As Ken Booth writes:

Security means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as *individuals* and *groups*) from physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression, and so on. Security and Emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security (qtd. in Chang 355).

Here, freedom of individuals and groups become the telos of security rather than the security of the state and its political and military elite. War, poverty, poor education, and political oppression are the demons. This expanded notion of security not only includes education and the economy, but also political oppression which, without doubt, refers to both state and non-state violence. This notion of security is distinguishable from other concepts of security that continue to be state-centric. Critical security is centered on the individual and the “overlapping emancipatory communities” (Chang 355).

Against this concept, I shall turn to examine ASEAN’s political-security organ. Several bodies come under the APSC such as the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, Defense Ministers Meeting, Law Ministers Meeting, the ASEAN Regional Forum, Commission on the Southeast-Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone, Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (Woon 242).<sup>25</sup> Of the three organs, the APSC is the most homogenous. Woon, for instance, describes the membership of the AEC as a “mixed bag” and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community as the most “miscellaneous” (98). This membership already tells us something about the limits of the concept of secu-

rity in the Charter which is legal-military centric. Hence, ministers of law, defense, police (transnational crimes), and foreign relations predominate.

Writing ten years after the signing of the Charter, a scholar pointed out that the major shortcomings of the organ were in “the promotion of human rights and cooperation for good governance” (Baviera 17). This is already expected from the state-centric concept of security in ASEAN as materialized in the APSC organ and the ministerial bodies under it. The organ’s composition may be considered the materialization of the ideas of security in ASEAN. It may be noted that the predominant formulations of security in ASEAN have been the concepts of “comprehensive security” and “regional resilience.” “Comprehensive security” refers to a formulation of security that goes beyond military threats and covers political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. “Regional resilience” underscores economic development and neutrality in great power competitions. Both of them have already been criticized as state-centric and rather limited (“From Comprehensive Security” 125-26). This state-centricity in *ideas* and in their *materialization* in the APSC may be the reason why multilateral cooperation in this area has been reduced to an exclusive soiree of regional officials and bureaucrats (“From Comprehensive Security” 125). Non-state actors and other representatives of peoples and communities threatened by climate change, forced migration, and state violence are not invited to and do not partake in the usual regional banquets organized by ASEAN. In fact, even the APSC Blueprint 2025, which includes “non-traditional security issues,” remains police-centric. Under “non-traditional security,” the Blueprint lists transnational crimes, terrorism, drugs, human trafficking, arms smuggling, cyber-crime, border management, disaster management (“ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint” 15-22). All these issues are certainly important. But they remain police-related work, except perhaps, disaster management. Under this arrangement, the legal becomes the tool of the state to support its heavily militarized conception of security and operations. Measured against the concept of critical security formulated above, the non-traditional security issues almost look old hat.<sup>26</sup>

Published in 2016, the APSC Blueprint 2025 proclaimed “a rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered community,” where peoples enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms as its vision (“ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint” 2). To implement this vision, the Philippine state marched ahead and launched its drug-war titled *Operation Tokhang* (meaning “to knock” [toktok] and “to plead” [hangyo]) that victimized thousands of so-called “drug pushers” and addicts. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte cussed his way through and unleashed the police like furies, leaving the dead literally in the streets like garbage. Some scholars aptly called it “governing through killing” (Johnson and Fernquest 370). Not to be outdone, the Myanmar military also continued its genocidal war against the Rohingya people, pushing the latter to neighboring Bangladesh or to the sea, and, if they are lucky enough, to the shores of other ASEAN countries. In response, the International Court of Justice issued provisional measures in the case of *Gambia v. Myanmar*, ordering The Republic of the Union of Myanmar to take all measures to prevent the commission of acts enumerated in Article II of the Genocide Convention (“Gambia v. Myanmar” 25). It took a non-ASEAN state to plead before the international courts to stop Myanmar from faithfully executing its version of a “rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered” community. And while the Blueprint 2025 was being enthusiastically implemented by the Member States, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, whose membership is also composed of government representatives, was working hard in a workshop on Transition between AICHR Representatives 2016-2018 to AICHR Representatives 2019-2021 in March 2019. A few months later, the AICHR would hold the most urgent interregional dialogue on the sharing of good practices on *business* and human rights (“ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, Report 2018-2019” 12). Nero might finally have met his match.

If in the economic sphere people have less power than the reified objects, in the realm of ASEAN’s political-security community they become *homo sacer*, bodies without rights and whose elimination does not even amount to a crime.<sup>27</sup> In the cases cited above, particularly in the Philippines and Myanmar

(of course, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam have been on the honor roll in the past), it is as if the Member States have declared their acts as exceptions to international legal obligations, thereby creating what amounts to a state of exception from international law. In the ASEAN community, people find themselves rightless when Member States deem them to be outside the national law. Member States cannot guarantee the human rights of peoples living within the region. Thus, the moment a people of a Southeast Asian state lose the protection of their government, “no authority,” to borrow Hannah Arendt’s words, “(is) left to protect them and no institution (is) willing to guarantee them” within the region (Arendt 381).

The vision of a “rules-based, people-oriented, people-centered” community therefore flies in the face of massive and systematic violations of international human rights. This problem is not only limited to Member States skewing rules to settle intra-organizational conflict such as border disputes (Tan 67). The problem is not simply that they were willing to shoot it out in Preah Vihear before the ink on the ASEAN Charter had dried up. The main problem is that these states are willing to shoot their own people and sacrifice them on the altar of national security just as the Romans did with their *homo sacer*.

### *C. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: The Spectral Presence of Capital and the Marginalization of Culture in the ASEAN Community*

The ASCC appears to the imagination as a crowded house. The bodies under this organ are both numerous and miscellaneous. They include ministers and officials of education, culture, information, environment, health, labor, rural development, social welfare, youth, civil service, disaster, meteorology, and the university network (Woon 244-45). The ASCC carves a domain that includes human development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, environmental sustainability, ASEAN identity, the narrowing of the development gap (“ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2015” 1).

One ASEAN consultant describes the ideas behind it:

[The ASCC is]. . . the soft side of development or sectoral cooperation, conflated with technical cooperation among developing countries . . . socio-cultural cooperation grew out of ideas of functionalism, neo-functionalism . . . This dimension of regionalism was given the official name “functional cooperation” in 1987. On the wave of the sustainable development movement, its scope of work was expanded and then labeled ‘socio-cultural cooperation’ in 2004. (Maramis 179)

This characterization of the organ as a “soft side” of development cooperation reveals the present nature of the ASCC. It attempts to cover what was sidelined by the elitist and exclusionary APSC and AEC. Moreover, as shown above, the AEC privileges the “business persons” and the APSC, the governing class, the lawyers, and the generals. As such, both leave out the people—that is, in its Rancierian sense or “those who do not count, those who have no qualifications to part-take in *arche*” (the power to begin anew, to govern) (Rancière 558). This is the reason why the ASCC has practically gathered those ministers concerned with the laborers and their education, the doctors, and the social welfare workers into one big organ. Arguably, the idea behind the organ is remedial in nature. To remedy was its *function*.

This function is still very much clear in its objective of providing livelihood to people, though this is now couched in the language of human development which combines the insights of the basic needs approach and Sen’s concept of capability building (“ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2015” 2). Nonetheless, by adopting the language of development studies, the organ also assumes the function of capital’s social worker, that is, tending the beggars produced by the international economic system without questioning the whole logic and infrastructure of such system. This is the logic of the division between the economic community and the socio-cultural community: the former establishes an unquestionable economic arrangement; the latter serves as its social welfare subordinate, if not its utility man. Otherwise, why would the livelihood of the people be a problem if economic development is inclusive? The ASCC arguably aims to take care of those who were (or will be) left behind by the market economy even as it retains an instrumentalist view of education as an extension and conduit



of the labor market (“ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2015” 3). While it tries to move beyond the economic growth-centered notion of development, its main problem remains the economic welfare of the losers within the system. However, through a new “socio-cultural” nomenclature, the economic—the proximate cause of the problem—disappears and becomes an absent cause as it assumes a spectral presence in the concerns of the organ. In this way, the mode of production that produces unemployment, underemployment, illiteracy, high mortality, inequality, and environmental damage is nowhere to be seen and yet very much remains a palpable presence within the “socio-cultural” sphere. Capital, it seems, has wrapped itself with a veil, haunting the “socio-cultural” community.

If the economic is absent with a spectral presence, the cultural is marginally present with a spectral absence. This is ASCC’s style of exclusion by inclusion. When ASEAN started wearing the cloth of “socio-cultural” cooperation, one may think that the “cultural” would become predominant. This new attire certainly has attracted some confused stares from bystanders. One of the sources of the confusion is the prominence of “culture” in its attire. Of course, the word “culture” is one of the most complex words in the English language.<sup>28</sup> But one of its more common associations is to literature, art, and other civilizational artifacts. International relations theorists who accommodate the concept define it as “values, customs, beliefs and symbolic practices by which men and women live” (*International Relations* 104). It refers to a people’s way of life that includes poetry, music, and dance, including the kind of transport network they have built.

To reiterate, the confusion lies in thinking that the “cultural” would be prominent in the programs of the organ. One study, for example, finds that young people in ASEAN think of integration in terms of “networking” and “culture.” The study’s authors therefore recommend that the ASCC focus on networking and culture (Leopairote 194). The first ASCC Blueprint, however, relegated “culture,” which includes the preservation of cultural heritage and creative production, to letter “E” of the plan (“ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint” 21). It was preceded by numerous development goals and then followed by projects resolving the development gap in

ASEAN. This poor and marginal positioning is matched by its substantive insignificance. Woon rightly comments that the ASCC Blueprint lists some measures to build an ASEAN identity but “none of really great potential impact” (55).

This official marginalization spills over into semi-official works. Symptomatic of this marginalization of “culture” in the ASCC is the representativeness of the book on the ASCC that included the study of Leopairote and his colleagues. Volume 4 of *ASEAN at 50* (i.e., *Building the ASEAN Community*) which was published by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, compiled articles on the ASCC. The contributors included 3 economists, 3 think-tank associates, 1 social scientist from a university, 1 ambassador, 1 law professor, 2 natural scientists, and 3 social entrepreneurs from C ASEAN<sup>29</sup> (Baviera 47 and Maramis 43). One gets the impression from reading the book that the “socio-cultural” really meant socio-economic which fits the domains of livelihood, social welfare, and development gaps in the ASCC Blueprint. While admittedly “culture” has wide meanings, the absence of cultural producers (artists, writers, literary and cultural theorists) in this book is symptomatic of the malaise. One may think that this is merely a scholarly aberration in ASEAN studies. But the same exclusion of the cultural can be seen on the pages of the anthology, *The 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Reader*. This reader which includes a wide range of topics and authors also failed to give ASEAN arts and literature even a token presence. Even articles focused on the ASCC tend to talk more on areas such as environment, migration, and disaster management.<sup>30</sup> While these instances may be interpreted as editorial and authorial prerogatives and idiosyncrasies, they altogether create a discursive formation that excludes the cultural. Indeed, one could argue at this point that those who speak for ASEAN continue to talk about the “cultural” without seriously including voices from the field of cultural production itself. It must be noted that the “cultural” is a “home turf” of cultural theorists, literary theorists, anthropologists, and art theorists. Excluding these voices would surely be a loss to the cause of a deeper understanding of diversity in Southeast Asia.

Thus, marginalization in the ASCC comes in two ways. One is conceptual; the other is representational. The organ calls itself “socio-cultural” when most of its domains actually focus on the socio-economic such as livelihood, development gaps, social welfare, and environment. Moreover, the discourse of the socio-cultural is predominantly economic, if not social scientific; in this sense, the economic returns like a specter. This conceptualization of socio-cultural, which marginalizes culture, is also somewhat dated. It reflects the marginal position of the cultural in the *UN Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (1976). However, with the coming of the *UN Declarations on the Rights of Persons belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious, or Linguistic Minorities* (1992) and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), the trajectory of international politics is clearly a movement towards greater sensitivity to cultural rights and greater appreciation of cultures. The second mode, which is representational marginalization, logically follows from the above-mentioned discursive narrowness. Because of the discursive limitation of the “socio-cultural,” people from the cultural field are logically not included and their views are thus excluded as a matter of course.

This marginalization of culture is shortsighted at the very least. It runs counter to the emphasis on identity construction in the Charter. The preamble, Article 1 (14) of Chapter 1, and a Chapter titled “Identity and Symbols” devote space to identity construction. The development of a consciousness of belonging to a single region (or identity) could ultimately be achieved by the circulation of shared cultural forms and artifacts. If one is seriously looking for the “soft” side of integration, it exists in the cultural products that can be shared with one another. This was already persuasively argued by Anderson in his study of Southeast Asia’s novels. The world of fiction allows people living in various parts of a territory to recognize and imagine a community even without meeting each other (Anderson, 1991). Arguably, narratives are stronger bonds among human beings. Thus, ASEAN must recognize not only the right to life, but also the right to narrate and represent.

Even from the viewpoint of governance, the importance of this complex word “culture” cannot be ignored in ASEAN. The international organization is constructing a region out of a vast and diverse cultural wilderness. To construct also means to organize. Regional governance must therefore deal with this complexity. It cannot simply hide in slogans like “unity in diversity” then relegate to the nation-state the problem arising from ethnic differences. Historically, ASEAN countries have troubled relations with their ethnic minorities (such as the Moro in the Philippines, the Chinese in Malaysia, the Rohingyas in Myanmar, Aceh and the Chinese in Indonesia among others) due to conflicts rooted in culture and history. One may recall the Tausug attack on Sabah or the Rohingyas’ arrival on the shores of other ASEAN countries. To understand the importance of culture in international relations, scholars have recently dealt with the problem of organizing diversity. They argue that builders of an international order often construct a “diversity regime” —“system-wide norms that configure authority and organize diversity” (Reus-Smit 189).

This paper does not propose anything like a diversity regime. The intention is simply to reveal how the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community has veiled the economic only to be haunted by it, including the cultural only to marginalize it. A development model that aims to uplift peoples’ lives cannot simply accept an economic order without questioning its very logic. Culture cannot be and should not be marginalized in regional construction. The cultural is integral to the organization of an international order. Thus, a serious consideration and study of the region’s cultural diversity is needed. If ASEAN really intends to construct a unified region, it must draw lessons from scholars of culture who have shown that the nation-state became legible in the world of the novel. Indeed, communities are unified by their Homer and Shakespeare. The peoples of Southeast Asia will not gather and listen to the songs of the think tanks. My bet is that they will ultimately prefer the *wayang kulit*. This shared taste might, in the long run, unite them.

## Conclusion: Community as “Work” and the Right to the Region

In this paper, I have related how international organizations use the trope of community to solve the limitations of the trope of personality. I have also shown how the trope of community pervades scholarly discourses of international law, international relations, and ASEAN. I have provided a critique of the trope as advanced by critical theorists. I have examined how ASEAN—the international organization—describes itself and the region that it is building as a community. And I have found that this is a community that reifies objects, devalues people by limiting their rights in both the economic and the political realms, and marginalizes culture in the visions of its organs. Given these observations, one may understand why ASEAN has been described as a “distant and aloof entity” (Woon 55). The fictions of community that I have examined could not radically change this characterization. Thus, it is, perhaps, about time that new ways of seeing the international organization and the region are explored.

ASEAN was recently described as a work in progress (Wang 23). This description appears to the reader merely as an ordinary and factual statement. Behind its apparent ordinariness and facticity, however, is a literary figuration that has become familiar—the unfinished work. The metaphor used here is “work,” an object or artifact which is shaped and transformed by human labor. This is one of those instances where the figurative has become part of ordinary language and thus no longer appears metaphorical. Here, I shall try to recover *work’s* earlier figurative sense of being an object of our creative powers and use it as a new description for the international organization and the region it is trying to construct.

If ASEAN’s fiction of community is inadequate, then maybe, as a community, we could find other metaphors for it to widen our visions. I shall not suggest that we drop the community trope. What we might do is to add another metaphorical dimension. Thus, we could re-imagine community-building also as a “work” unto which we could lay our rough working hands. Perhaps, it may help if we imagine this community as a *collective work* of peoples living in a particular space.

Critical to this conceptual strategy is Henri Lefebvre's idea of the "right to the city" in which he envisioned the city as a *collective work* (oeuvre) of its inhabitants (Lefebvre 100). There are two critical concepts here: Right and City. Right, for Lefebvre, is not a juridical right that is enumerated in constitutions and treaties; rather, it is one that is rooted in the constituent power of the people who built the city. In this sense, right is prefigurative of future juridical rights (Purcell 141). City, for Lefebvre, is conceptualized as a space. It is both inhabited and constructed. Thus, the right to the city means that "interested persons" (i.e., the inhabitants of the city or the peoples as constituted by the ASEAN Charter's preamble), have a "permanent participation" in the collective ownership and management of the space they inhabit (Lefebvre qtd. in Purcell 148). This participation is operationalized in the appropriation of space in the city by its inhabitants.

Thus, applying Lefebvre's concept to regional construction, the inhabitants of the regional space must reclaim a radical *right to the region*. They cannot stand as a passive object of construction by state functionaries and their think tanks. In claiming a right to the region, the inhabitants or the peoples—those who are uninvited to govern—acquire a permanent participation in shaping this work that is the community or region. They therefore appropriate the project as their own, wresting it from the elite, becoming active subjects in the production, appropriation, and management of the region. Through this permanent participation of the interested parties, the regional community, including the international organization, is transformed into a "collective work."

Thus, the re-conceptualization of community as a work entails a conceptualization of the right to the region to be exercised by the inhabitants. Rights thus play a critical role in the formation of both the subjects and the object. This interplay between subject, right, and object is constitutive of a more democratic community—the real community. As Raymond Williams once argued, "Community only became a reality when economic and political rights were fought for and partially gained . . . there is more community in the modern village, as a result of this process of new legal and democratic rights" (*The Country and the City* 131). In other words, we make

communities in the process of claiming the right to permanently participate in the construction of a space that we inhabit. Perhaps, it would not look too ambitious and presumptuous to begin the exercise of this right by interrogating ASEAN's fictions of community.

## Notes

1. See critique of ASEAN and academic think tanks in ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN's People's Forum, "2019 Resolution on Alternative Regional Integration for Southeast Asian Peoples" in *Workshop Proceedings: Alternative Practices of Peoples in Southeast Asia Towards Alternative Regionalism*, The University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (2020). ASEAN was first established in 1967 by Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore. In 2008, the ASEAN Charter transformed the group into a regional international organization. ASEAN member states now include, together with the five founding countries, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, and Brunei. It aims to build a Southeast Asian Region with a single market.
2. For a detailed discussion, see Bederman's "The Souls of International Organizations: Legal Personality and the Lighthouse at Cape Spartel" 1995-1996.
3. Please refer to Acharya's "Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order."
4. See Klabbers' "The Concept of Legal Personality," which was published in 2005.
5. See Linklater's *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty, and Humanity* published in 2007.
6. For a detailed discussion, kindly see Cox's "Gramsci, Hegemony, and International Relations: An Essay in Method."
7. For more information, see Joseph's *Against the Romance of Community*, published in 2002.
8. More information is provided in Creed's "The Seductions of Community: Reconsidering Community" published in 2006.
9. For more information, see Sands and Klein, 2001.
10. For further information, see Klabbers, 2015.
11. For a detailed discussion, see Schermers and Blokker, 2011.
12. In the *Tadic case*, the defense raised the issue of the legality of the Security Council's creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Appellate Chamber affirmed the legality of its own creation. For further information, see Dekker and Wessel's "Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic, Decision on the defense motion for interlocutory appeal on jurisdiction, Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, October 2, 1995."
13. See also the concept of "epistemic communities." "Interpretive communities," which group readers together, have been used in the humanities and law. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination"



- (1992) 46 *International Organization* 1; S. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1982).
14. For more information, see Acharya's *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* published in 2001.
  15. For instance, Morada, 2008; Amador, 2013; Oba, 2014. The use of the word "community" in these articles certainly goes beyond mimicking official labels. There is at the very least an unconscious appeal to the emotive connotations of the word.
  16. More details are found in ASEAN Charter, 2007.
  17. More information is found in Chen's "ASEAN and its Problematic Treaty-Making Practice: Can International Organizations Conclude Treaties 'on behalf of their Member States'" which was published in 2014.
  18. For more information, see Venzke and Thio, 2016.
  19. Wayang kulit is an Indonesian puppet theatre.
  20. Art. 1 (10), Chapter 1, ASEAN Charter.
  21. Art. 1 (13) Chapter 1, ASEAN Charter.
  22. For more information, see Kühnhardt, 2010.
  23. For more information, see Amerasinghe, 2005.
  24. This is stipulated in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement which has taken into effect since 2010.
  25. For more information, see Annex 1 of the ASEAN Charter.
  26. For a detailed survey of the "broadening" of the concept of security, see Krause and Williams, 2018. A recent survey of critical security studies is Hendershot and Mutimer, 2018.
  27. Agamben, 1995. The application of *homo sacer* has ranged from terrorists to drug addicts. See Gulli, 2017; Centerlaw's "Writ Contra Homo Sacer" as cited in Buan.
  28. For a discussion on this topic, see Williams, 1983.
  29. C ASEAN is an ASEAN organization that aims to reinforce connections within ASEAN, which aims to reinforce connections within the region in areas such as business, sustainability, art, and culture. For more about C ASEAN, see [www.c-asean.org/?op=home-aboutus](http://www.c-asean.org/?op=home-aboutus).
  30. See, for instance, Quayle 2013.

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# Dictatorship's Temporal Edifice

Ang Bagong Lipunan's  
Manila International Airport

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## Abstract

Gerard Lico's book *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture* (2003) explores historical narratives via criticism of architectural structures built within the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Complex—the prime location where Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos's shared edifice complex was structurally manifested. Lico situates his architectural criticism in the context of Marcosian dictatorship that redirected foreign aid funding while appropriating the architectural works of Leandro Locsin, Francisco Mañosa, and Froilan Hong. These edifices, most of which are still functional until today, are residues of the Conjugal Dictatorship's vision of a new world order—*Ang Bagong Lipunan* [The New Society].

In this paper, I analyze the Manila International Airport (MIA), currently known as the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), and how the Marcos Regime utilized the airport to propel *Ang Bagong Lipunan's* directives and how it affected the families of the biggest users of the airport—the Filipino overseas contract workers (OCWs). I argue that the MIA produces a space that both consistent and inconsistent with the salient features of the *bahay kubo* [nipa hut]. This connects the family rhetoric of the Marcoses's *Ang Bagong Lipunan* and the experiences of the OCWs inside the airport through an architectonics of contradiction and excess. By extending Preziosi's concept of

“houseness” and how it relates to the simplicity and complexity of the hut and by supplementing the concept with Lefebvre’s spatial triad, I posit that this (re) production of airport space augments a nationalism that *Ang Bagong Lipunan* purports: associating self-sacrifice for the common good of the nation and the state that, ultimately, legitimizes a national narrative and cultural memory, both fantasized and constructed.

### **Keywords**

airport studies, architectonics, Conjugal Dictatorship, Ferdinand Marcos, Manila International Airport, martial law



And yet, for all the absences that mark NAIA, it is an airport equally defined by excess. In place of the gaps and lacks so visible in NAIA, there are the lines that stretch endlessly, the “balikbayan” boxes piled on top of one another on cumbrous trolleys, the din of too much chatter, the poor families waiting by the fences, the excess delays, the filth of the toilets, the smell of dust accumulated over decades.

—Bobby Benedicto, Filipino scholar and academic

The value of an airport in relation to a country’s economic and financial status cannot be stressed enough. Despite this, governments “routinely misjudge environmental impacts, overstate economic benefits, and generally underestimate project financial costs in order to get them built” (Salter 96). These colossal projects also mirror the nation’s international relations not just within its immediate region, but throughout global aviation conglomerates and alliances. For many decades, airports, including national flag carriers, have “operated as instruments of nation-building, becoming symbolic projectors of both nationalistic propaganda and, on occasion, imperial power” (Raguraman 241). Such colossal projects mirror the nation’s international relations not just within its immediate region, but throughout global aviation conglomerates and alliances. Since the 1930s, airports functioned as “flagships of capital cities” and became “linchpins of modernization strategies” for these metropolitan hubs for air travel (Roseau 41).

The First Couple, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos,<sup>1</sup> were well aware of these economic, political, and cultural realities. The establishment of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*<sup>2</sup> articulated these visions of the Marcoses. With the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, Marcos unpacked various machineries for authoritarian control, including the exploitation of the family rhetoric “in an attempt to remake the Philippines into his image of a New Society” (McCoy 16). In a book published by the Philippine Army’s Office for Civil Relations titled *Towards the Restructuring of Filipino Values*, it stated that “[a] society is composed of people. New structures, new systems, new laws are necessary to build a new society. But these are not enough. To build a new society we have to build a new people. It is not the environment that must change. The people themselves must change” (i). In a sense, the Marcoses were aware of

how the air transport and aviation industry “provide one of the most highly visible articulations of power” (Adey et al. 780).

Ferdinand Marcos’s regime consolidated both legislative and executive powers in the president: “Marcos baptized the Conjugal Dictatorship as the ‘New Society,’ and alternately, as a regime of constitutional authoritarianism operating under the aegis of Martial Law” (Mijares 83-84). He wanted a peaceful and silent revolution that emphasized how the state has the real power to enact change and be effective in the efforts to transform society for the better. But within this spectacle, the privileged and chosen few families (including the First Family) benefited more than the others. At the height of the Marcoses’s forceful inculcation of their ideologies, they created cultural institutions, organizations, and programs in order to lay down the solid foundations of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*. But their imbalanced perspective and narrative by way of their *Ang Bagong Lipunan* has led to several flaws in the design narratives of the regime’s edifices, including the Manila International Airport (MIA).

In this paper, I analyze the MIA, currently known as the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), and how the Marcos Regime utilized the airport to propel *Ang Bagong Lipunan*’s directives and how it affected the families of the biggest users of the airport—the Filipino overseas contract workers (OCWs). I argue that the MIA produces a space that is both consistent and inconsistent with the salient features and other cognates of the *bahay kubo*<sup>3</sup> [nipa hut]. This connects the family rhetoric of the Marcoses’s *Ang Bagong Lipunan* and the experiences of the OCWs inside the airport through an architectonics of contradiction and excess.<sup>4</sup> This paper attempts to expand Preziosi’s concept in terms of applying the simplistic and complex design of the *bahay kubo* for the airport: “communication—both linguistic and architectonic—incorporates an emotive function as a particular kind of modificational orientation on one of the component parts of transmission” (*Architecture* 94). I posit that this (re)production of airport space augments a nationalism that *Ang Bagong Lipunan* purports: associating self-sacrifice for the common good of the nation and the state that, ultimately, legitimizes a national narrative and cultural memory, both fantasized and constructed.

The paper is divided into five main parts. The first part of the paper tackles a quick history of the Manila International Airport. The airport was commissioned through the auspices of the Marcoses and was designed by one of the favored architects of the regime, Leandro Locsin.<sup>5</sup> After the historical tracing of the airport's construction, some theoretical frameworks on spatial and architectural discourses are unpacked in order to situate the underpinnings of the study. The second part of the paper focuses on the external features of the MIA and how its aesthetic design propels the cultural politics of the regime. The third part of the paper highlights the interior intricacies of the airport complex. Both the second and third sections of the paper are anchored on the discussion of how the MIA was inspired and designed from the traditional Filipino dwelling place, the *bahay kubo*. It is important to note that Imelda Marcos was the one to give such specific directives to Locsin. The fourth part of the paper emphasizes how the airport space of the MIA can be read as an extension of the cognates of the *bahay kubo*. The fifth part of the paper looks into how the Marcoses deprecated the various narratives of family rhetoric from political systems, architecture, and culture. Throughout the essay, I intend to include the lived experiences and cultural discourse of Filipino OCWs. In the end, the paper attempts to trace how this temporal (and temporary) edifice of the regime contributed to the establishment and institutionalization of the Marcosian ideology of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*.

### **Historicizing Locsin's Manila International Airport**

First, a backgrounder. The MIA, presently called the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), is right in the middle of the cities of Pasay and Parañaque, both of which lie in the southern end of Metro Manila. The location of airports is almost always at the urban periphery. Roseau posits that this idealization of airport placements “prefigures the city's extension and marks it out both as part of the city and its outer frontier” (41). The MIA shares a history of air travel and service to the central urban region and its neighboring provinces, and has serviced countless connecting flights to numerous island destinations within the archipelago.

In 1935, Grace Park Airfield<sup>6</sup> began its operation in Caloocan. More popularly known as Manila North Airfield, this was the original airport that serviced Manila and was considered the foremost commercial airport that operated within the city and later utilized by the Philippine Aerial Taxi Company (Philippine Air Lines) for its early domestic routes.



Fig. 1. Aerial view of Grace Park Airfield in Caloocan (northern Manila), bordering Manila Bay. (From Allied Geographical Section, credits to Pacific Wrecks, Inc.)

Two years after, in July 1937, the Manila International Air Terminal, situated inside the vast 42-hectare property of Nielson Airfield<sup>7</sup> was inaugurated, serving as “the gateway to Manila” (Maurer 36). Currently, these runways form what we now know as Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas, two of the main arteries that connect Makati’s fast-paced business district. In 1948, the airport was transferred to its current location adjacent to the

Villamor Airbase in Pasay City. In September 1961, the modern terminal of the new Manila International Airport began its operation in Pasay City and opened its halls to the public.



Fig. 2. Aerial view of the Nielson Airfield, with its two intersecting runways: the main runway NW/SE and a smaller runway running NE to SW. US National Archives.

Architect Federico Ilustre’s design for the new terminal was considered trendy during the 1960s, fashionable even by global standards. In Alcazaren’s (2001) account of the terminal’s architectural illustriousness, the airport’s canopies located at its entrance “were expressive statements in cantilevered concrete [and] the façade was a composition of sunshade screens, [while] the parking lot in front had a grand pool, space-age flagpole and neat Luneta-type landscaping” (PhilStar.com). Ilustre’s design of the MIA proved to be relatively more extensive and spacious as compared to its congested and narrow predecessor. Alcazaren provides the specific details of Ilustre’s design that made the new terminal an iconic structure during



Fig. 3. The Manila International Air Terminal, located at Nielson Airfield in Makati. NASM Archives.

those years: “Ilustre provided a double-height lobby, decorated with a large mural depicting Filipino life, while a large globe of blown steel housing an electronic clock that gave the time in various capitals of the world became a popular attraction as was the Hall of Flags, one for each of the countries that flew to Manila.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Alcazaren, the halls of the main terminal building also housed the country’s first escalator that led passengers to the facilities, offices, and other establishments located on the second floor (The Philippine Star). Friends and family of passengers had the option to proceed to an open outdoor deck, much like a veranda, to wave and gesture at passengers while watching jetliners depart and arrive along the wide runways.<sup>9</sup> In a sense,

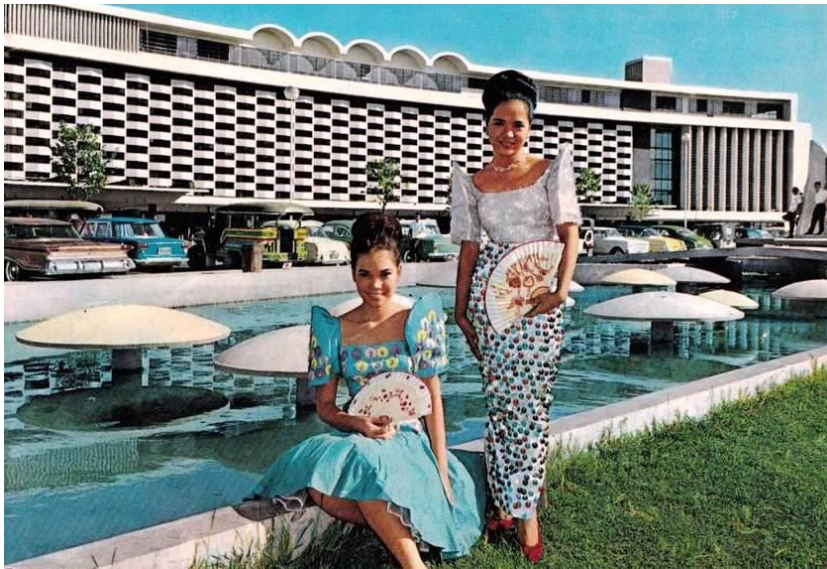


Fig. 4. Vintage postcard of young Filipina ladies posing with the Manila International Airport (1960s) designed by Federico Ilustre. *Esquire Magazine Philippines*.

the design of the airport terminal that preceded Leandro Locsin's MIA concentrated and focused on how citizens can utilize the public structure in terms of the Filipino native traditions of *pagsalubong* and *paghatid*.<sup>10</sup> In the departures hall, numbers of well-wishers bid their final or temporary farewells as friends, relatives, and family members depart from the country. The arrivals hall is also occupied by people ready to give their warm and festive homecoming for those who are coming back. These are some of the specific Filipino cultures that were embedded in the design of Ilustre's MIA.

During its heyday, the MIA was reported to be the most profitable and the most modern architectural structure in Southeast Asia, at least until the mid-1960s. As an overall structure, the MIA is described by Alcazaren as a "proud product of Filipino architecture and engineering, as well as a showcase of Filipino craftsmanship and public art" (PhilStar.com). Filipinos would congregate and assemble in multitudes at the airport in the first few years

of the newly constructed terminal. Its structure represented and mirrored a country supposedly on the brink of modern innovation and self-sufficiency.

However, due to an unfortunate event, this illusion created by the new terminal lasted for only a few years. In 1972, a great fire ravaged and destroyed a huge portion of the Ilustre-designed MIA. According to The New York Times, “a fire of undetermined origin destroyed the four-story Manila International Airport building” (NYTimes.com). The news further elaborates that the whole building, from ground floor to fourth, including the control tower, was destroyed (NYTimes.com).



Fig. 5. Terminal of the Manila International Airport was heavily damaged because of a fire from an undetermined origin (1972). The New York Times Archives.



A new one would be built under the auspices of the states, which designated Locsin as designer. As an architect, Locsin demonstrated a specific “awareness on forms and spaces of Filipino architecture” (Polites 12). Since 1966, Imelda Marcos favored Locsin as one of her top architects of choice. Eventually, the Marcoses turned to him and asked him to design many of the regime’s architectural projects such as the infrastructures inside the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex, most notably the Theater of the Performing Arts, the Folk Arts Theater, the Manila Film Center, and the Philippine International Convention Center (Polites 13).

Eventually, Ferdinand Marcos ordered the development and improvement of the MIA to cater to the aviation needs of the next generation. Locsin used his original concept of a modernized *bahay kubo* or nipa hut for the new airport terminal. The structure followed consistently in the vein of the edifices of *Ang Bagong Lipunan* (New Society) under the aegis and direction of the First Lady Imelda Marcos to modernize the Filipino architectural vernacular. Locsin, much like the other favored architects of the regime, followed this cultural protocol of the First Lady.

For a developing country, building an international airport is a blank canvass for national governments, architectural and urban planning firms, and other vital stakeholders to express current design sensibilities and cultural tastes through a highly-functional structure (Cosgrove 223). International airports also become a palette by which political grandeur is exhibited, all in the name of the state. In a way, these construction projects of airports “engender considerable civic pride and are hence objects of municipal and regional prestige” (Adey et al. 778). The MIA, much like other international airports and gateways around the world, aimed to portray the best that any nation can offer. An international airport functions as the first visual and experiential imprint of the nation. Hence, given these considerations, airport projects eventually become “some of the most celebrated civil works projects of all time” (Maguigad 5). Locsin, however, rendered a brutalist interpretation of the *bahay kubo* that made it unwelcomingly cold, which is quite the opposite of our warm and convivial culture.

Donald Preziosi highlights the significance of historical purpose and usage-context in his architectonic signification of buildings. Spaces and spatialities from the perspective of the familiar and the mundane are seldom evaluated for their independent characteristics and values. However, spatial discourses are more commonly perceived as a specific classification of concepts and ideas that operate as mere backgrounds or as contexts for meaning-construction of other tangential or intersectional objects of inquiry. Elliot Gaines argues that the semiotics of space is a “descriptive process enquiring into the relevant significance of the relationships between objects and their spatial contexts” (174). These facets of spatial discourse deploy “dimensional aspects existing between other, significant phenomena” (Gaines 173). Therefore, whenever spaces are perceived as semiotic phenomena, it can be deduced that the symbolic meaning and function of space, as a sign, becomes “understood in relation to other concerns” (Gaines 175). The fundamental frameworks of such categorical thinking have been established by a number of systematic thinkers that include Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, C.S. Peirce, and Henri Lefebvre.

Lefebvre posits that a spatial code “is not simply a means of reading or interpreting space: rather it is a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it” (48). Three things make Lefebvre’s spatial semiotics distinct: representations of space, representational spaces, and spatial practice. Representations of space form a “conceptualized space that identifies what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (38). To significantly connect these concepts, it is vital to unpack and operationalize the notion of representational spaces. He posits that representational spaces are those that are “directly lived through its associated images and symbols” (39). Moreover, this method of experiencing spaces will only be possible through spatial practice where “people produce, reproduce and change social reality, social space” (40).

In the Lefebvrian sense, the MIA idealized the excesses of the authoritarian regime of Marcos. In terms of purpose and context, the excesses came indirectly by way of imagining and reimagining the public structure as a gateway to the City of Man,<sup>11</sup> and its representation. The City of

Man, a project launched by Imelda Marcos as the first governor of Metro Manila, was a rebranding campaign that aimed to reshape the capital of the Philippines. This name was in reference to the cultural operation of reshaping the [capital region] city that “prioritized global tourism, international commerce, economic development, and political power” (Litonjua 370). This chosen nomenclature reinforced the larger movement towards the Marcoses’s idea of a new society. Under this campaign, several urban beautification and development projects were undertaken “to make Manila the world’s center of international tourism and finance” (Lico 34). According to a report from the Asian Development Bank, the project commenced through the approval of a loan amounting to US\$29.6 million in December 1973 (ADB.org). Contradictory to how it was idealized, the MIA discloses (or hides) snippets and elements of the country knowingly or instinctively to passengers traversing its halls.

An airport becomes a cultural showcase for passengers given the privilege to navigate and traverse the halls, gates, and lounges inside the structure. Imelda Marcos wanted to invest and take advantage of this project because, in a sense, this new airport became a “city” inside an architectural structure, even a representation of the “country” (Roseau 38). It revealed the architectonics of excess in that the First Lady wanted the MIA to hold a certain microcosm of the city inside it; a lavish city that she envisioned through extravagant and excessive beautification projects. Much media and press coverage was granted to the First Lady’s disproportionate means of embellishing the city. Considerable amount of publicity was arranged to advertise the accomplishments of government projects by “ascribing it to the President, and the activities of the First Lady, Mrs. Marcos, who is variously describes as *the* patroness of art and culture, *the* foremost social worker, and *the* first in the forefront of the battle against air and water pollution” (Lin 117).

This specific kind of recalibration draws the MIA as *representational space*, or the space of inhabitants and users. It becomes the “passively experienced space, which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 135). These spatial aspects “overlay physical space, making symbolic use of

its objects” (Lefebvre 39). In a sense, the way the MIA was designed, its materials, including the process of how passengers traverse the building were symbolic manifestations of this space. Generally, representational spaces are rooted in history: “the study of the history of thought is crucial to understanding the formation of a representational space in a particular context” (Lefebvre 41).

Meanings are created, produced, and deployed depending on contextual histories. Furthermore, these contexts act and function as various, differentiating, and often conflicting cultures and subcultures within a given society: “both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, over-inscribed: everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-contradictory” (Lefebvre 142). In the case of the MIA, the grand vision of the Marcoses establishes the context of this specific built space. However, its architectonics of contradiction and excess reflect how particular features of the MIA both reproduce and counter its original template—the *bahay kubo*. Leandro Locsin’s modernized *bahay kubo* design as applied to the airport’s construction boasted of a level of grandeur and elegance supposedly befitting the regime’s vision for the nation: an economic and political power that will eventually be noticeable in the global stage for architectural feats.

### **Politics of Exteriority: An Aesthetics of Dictatorship**

From an aerial perspective, the terminal looks like a funnel. Locsin’s design of the MIA terminal adheres to the classical architectural pronouncement, “function follows form.” This becomes an important characteristic of the design because it ultimately functions like a funnel that leads passengers from the main departures and arrivals halls onto the respective departures and arrivals gates. Moreover, from the airside, the terminal looks like it is “collecting” aircraft arriving along the tarmac.

One vital function of an airport is to welcome visitors. Its wide, conical mouth from both sides depicts openness—a specific feature that is consistent with the *bahay kubo*. The *bahay kubo* reflects this in two ways: its structural design and the way it echoes the Filipino culture and tradition of openness to other people. However, this funnel design presents a drawback in terms



Fig. 6. An illustration of the native Filipino dwelling, the *bahay kubo* (nipa hut). Photo from John Ryan Recabar.

of constricting flows, or the bottleneck. At the MIA, this piped, narrow stem leading to both mouths functions as controlled areas for channeling and filtering. Such reticence departs from the *bahay kubo* feature of the airport. From the outside, the design reflects openness and spaciousness but once departing passengers clear their check-in formalities, they are channeled through immigration and security checks where such control bottlenecks happen. Moreover, a labyrinth-like interior follows security check.

As if traversing through a maze of novelty and gift shops, tributaries then lead to different gates for boarding. It is also true upon arrival. Upon disembarkation, passengers go through tight, directed halls for immigration, baggage collection, and customs. These processes follow the functionality of the funnel. But, again, it deviates from the *bahay kubo* concept. The constricted hallways and low elevation in areas in between the departures hall and boarding gates make the interior of the airport disorienting and

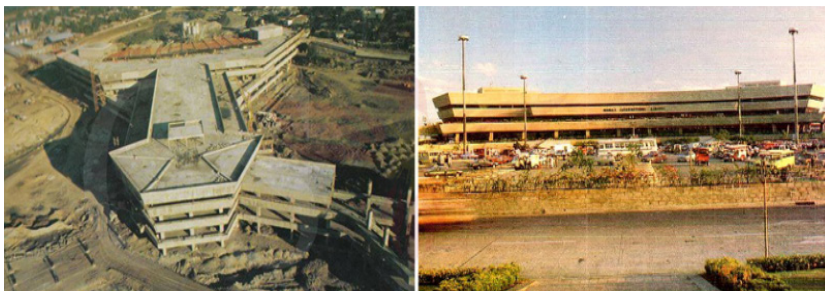


Fig. 7. Locsin's *bahay kubo* design as applied in the new terminal construction of the Manila International Airport. Left: Construction of the new Manila International Airport terminal that started in 1978. Right: Completed structure of the Manila International Airport.

almost harrowing for passengers. This feeling of constriction or compression departs from the *bahay kubo*'s promise of openness.

The *bahay kubo*'s important feature includes the complementary relationship of "spaciousness and openness" (Perez et al. 11). Such concepts may be further discussed in terms of the Filipino notion of *aliwalas*. It is used to describe a space that is clean, open, and pleasant. But the idea of spaciousness that Locsin wanted was that of awe and magnificence, and yet discounting the previous conventions. In a way, this could also augment its excessiveness: dysfunctional spaciousness. At the outset, the MIA promises both features but its interior space speaks differently.

Architecturally, the MIA has been described "as an extension of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Complex" because of its design concept (Maguigad 19). Before reaching the airport terminal, the elevated approach from the Airport Road to the departures hall gives the similar sense of approach to the Main Theater of Performing Arts inside the CCP Complex from Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City. People are brought up to the departures hall of the terminal by a curving ramp that follows the perimeter of the elliptical shape of the parking area. On one hand, this can reflect elitism, or may give off a feeling that travel during that time was only for the privileged.

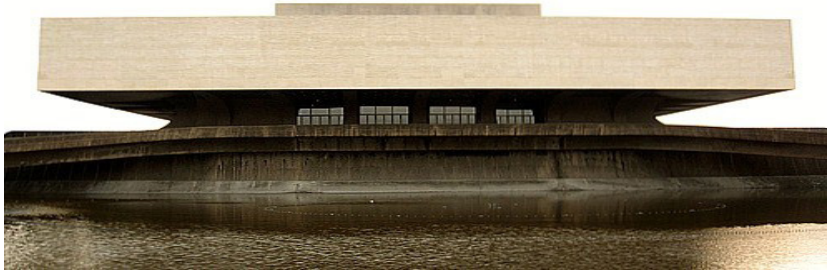


Fig. 8. Front view of the Theater of the Performing Arts inside the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex, designed by National Artist for Architecture, Leandro Locsin. Photo by Paul Blasco.

From the outside, the terminal is perceived as a tri-level, inverted isosceles trapezoid elongated to the whole length of the structure that curves slightly to make a concave-shaped façade. The arrivals hall at the base of the terminal grows out from the ground to support the entire monumental structure. The travertine blocks, materials used for the exterior of the structure, are suspended and elevated into the air by strongly arched beams that support it, so that it appears to “float in suspension above the base podium” (Polites 25). This design gives the visitor (or passenger) the feeling of astonishment and admiration upon realizing that such a small elevation from the floor to the ceiling of the opening is very tight, and yet once you enter, massive space welcomes the visitor.

Looking at the external design of the MIA, the ramp that leads to the departures area is reminiscent of the entrance to the *bahay kubo*—both are elevated from the ground and the only means to go inside both structures is through the stairs, or in the airport’s case, the elevated approach. The cantilever block that overhangs at the entrance of the departures hall exudes the balcony and balcony roofing of the traditional *bahay kubo*. The balcony of the *bahay kubo* is located on a lower plane than the living room (Alarcon 42). In

a way, the entrance of the airport becomes its balcony that leads to the main departures hall. It is interesting to note that in cases where the *bahay kubo* is located by a riverbank or any body of water, an important part is the *daungan* [harbor] (Dacanay 24).

One reaches the *bahay kubo* coming from the harbor where the house owner docks and anchors their boat. The owner then passes through the front yard and walks into the entrance door leading to the kitchen and the dining room. There is an entry door to the house proper as the elevated living area is already “enclosed” by the roofed *silong* [basement] (Hila et al. 201). In a way, the harbor functions as the most important exterior space as it “heralds the arrival and departure of guests and neighbors as well as the husband going and coming from the day’s fishing work” (Hila et al. 202). Looking at the exterior spaces of the airport, the side of the terminal for both the departures and arrivals displays this ‘harbor’ concept. The balcony, reached through the elevated ramp, both welcomes and bids farewell to those who are embarking on their journey, regardless of the purpose. The air-bridges that connect the aircraft to the arrival hall become spaces for welcoming visitors and *balikbayans* [Filipinos visiting or returning to the Philippines] back.

The fragment of the airport that partitions the outside and inside—the windows—also reflect certain features of the *bahay kubo*. Generally, the design of the *bahay kubo* limits the use of windows because “the space between the walls and the eaves already constitute one continuous window” (Hila et al. 194). This functional design is utilized “to provide a vantage point of perspective coming from the front yard” (Alarcon 16). This flowing nature of visual continuity, together with openness and spaciousness (as discussed in the earlier parts of this section) are vital features of the *bahay kubo*. The windows inside the terminal emanate the *pasamano* [windowsills] of the *bahay kubo*. However, the departures hall has no windows, giving it a constricted feeling of inescapability and confinement. It is ironic how the airport, the initial gateway of an ‘escape’ for Filipino OCWs toward a better life, renders a feeling of inescapability.



After clearing immigration and security check, the hallways that lead to the boarding gates are lined-up with windows. The tilted and slanted design of the windows contributes to the inverted isosceles trapezoid shape of the structure. The windows from the halls leading to the boarding gates are wide-set, following the whole length of the hallways, thus exuding the outside environment as extensions of the structure. The windows surrounding the boarding gates follow the same design of that in the hallways. This continuity contributes to the overall consistency of the structure in terms of design.

### **Architectonics of Interiority: Designing the Interiors of a Nation**

In his book titled *The Semiotics of the Built Environment*, Preziosi posits that “architectonic objects function territorially by staging behavioral routines or episodes, framing interpersonal interactions, and dividing, structuring, delimiting, or zoning an environment” (65). This means that spaces are divided into territories depending on the main function or purpose of the building.

In the case of airports, this zoning is critical because of issues on security, efficiency, and governmentality. This is also one of the reasons why Augé deems the airport a non-place as the systems and organization inside them are virtually the same (63). The airport, as Augé argues, is a distinctive non-place of travel. It is “just a provisional space on the worldwide network of air travel” (101). However, the MIA departs from how airports are conceived by Augé as its zoning is made unique because of the politics of passenger presence. For instance, in the case of the MIA, a huge percentage of passengers are the Filipino overseas workers. I have chosen to refer to them as OCWs because it was a category which Marcos crafted himself.

The paper expands the arguments by showing how special lanes and zones for OCWs function as spaces of abuse. Preziosi mentions how “social, ethnic, economic, or religious ties” affect the movement inside airports (*Semiotics* 65). For passengers who are not OCWs, the airport space is merely a transition from one place to another, from one border to the next.

However, based on the experiences of OCWs, it becomes a jump-off point to a better life given the social and economic status of most of these workers. Filipino OCWs remain to be the category who is most victimized inside airport spaces. Their narratives contribute to the contemporary discussions and issue of uneven mobilities. According to Sparke, contemporary mobilities exhibit the stark “contrast between frequent flyers [for business and leisure purposes] and the underprivileged ‘kinetic underclass’ [who are] subject to intensive forms of security control” (169). These formations articulate social topology that is produced and reproduced inside the MIA.

Locsin, one of the favored architects of the regime, designed the entrance lobby going to the departures hall as a “hollowed-out interior sculpture of continuous flowing lines” (Polites 17). In the original design, he decided to encase the panels, walls, and pillars of the terminal in molded concrete for better aesthetic projection. The polished marble floors complement and play against the chiseled, soft-textured concrete of the walls and pillars. Exuding the upper level of a *bahay kubo*, the mezzanine floor hangs over the balcony on both sides of the departures hall with windows opening up the view of the ground floor where passengers queue for check-in.

While Locsin extended the concept of the *bahay kubo* in terms of its functionalism, such heavy materials used evoke bulkiness and coldness. One of the monumental works of Locsin made use of a material he championed: the concrete. However, the use of concrete as its main material contradicts the main features of the humble, native structure it is supposedly modeled after.

The *bahay kubo*, a symbol that welcomes and champions the vernacular culture of the country, monumentalized the modernistic inflection and cultural showcase of the regime. However, it only does so to an extent that benefits the elite. The airport reflects an openness that is constricting. The openness, established by the funnel-shaped structure of the terminal, achieves its promise only until the departures hall. Anywhere else inside the terminal, the elevation becomes lower. Moreover, the number of passengers passing through immigration, security check, baggage claim, customs, and the arrivals hall causes a sense of compression and tightening.

Today, the decision of assigning special lanes for OCWs added to this unnecessary “compression.” The number of leaving and arriving OCWs takes up significant space because their concentration in just one or two lanes proves to be insufficient. These special lanes, seemingly established to give importance to the modern-day heroes, act as funnels to focus on OCWs who are leaving and returning to the country. Various reasons come to mind as to the creation of these special lanes. For one, their check-in process differs from ordinary passengers because of the quantity of luggage and baggage carried.

In terms of immigration, OCWs are required specific documents before passing through immigration. The stricter review of documents and policies regarding foreign workers causes bottlenecks on the part of the terminal. This kind of compression and tightening of spaces also happen inside the boarding area where the limited seats force passengers to squat on floors while waiting to embark. Upon arrival, luggage and baggage expected by passengers are by bulk and huge boxes. The narrow allowance from one baggage carousel to another contributes to this feeling of constraint. While passengers weave through trolleys, luggage, boxes, the number of people overflows to customs where officers become more particular with the baggage carried by the passengers. As passengers exit from the terminal, the low elevation and limited space offered by the arrival lobby intensify as lined-up vehicles greet them. Across the parked vehicles, people wait for the arriving party, cramped inside a small space where railings enclose the section.

The interior configuration of the MIA, then, can be described in terms of seemingly contradictory concepts of openness and constriction. From the outside, with its panoramic, single-span façade, the structure reveals a huge, geometric building that has three solid blocks on top of each other. These “floating blocks” that are characteristic of Locsin’s design concept, give a sense of tight elevations inside the terminal (Polites 20). In a way, this illusion of tight openings renders vital in surprising passengers once they enter through the low-elevated cantilever entrance.

The amazement and awe-inspiring openness of the departure lobby promises the same, consistent design throughout the terminal. However, passengers find themselves amidst labyrinths and maze-like spaces filled with walls, establishments, and people. Such illusion and promise reflect the Marcosian rhetoric in terms of empty, hollow promises propelled by their propaganda, i.e., *Ang Bagong Lipunan* promising a better society for the citizenry. The Marcoses promoted grand narratives of the family and dwelling places that form part of the promise but ended up disappointing the greater majority. In a sense, the feeling of astonishment upon entering the terminal quickly disappears as the feeling of constriction overtakes the initial sense of awe and wonder.

This proves how the aesthetic drama and narrative of both the MIA and the Marcoses's *Ang Bagong Lipunan* are, in the end, empty and hollow. Even the modernized transformation of the humble *bahay kubo* did not live up to its functionality. The vernacular dwelling of the ordinary folk changed excessively through opulence and lavishness during the MIA's conceptualization and its main features of spaciousness and functionality were not delivered.

In his other book titled *Architecture, Language, and Meaning*, Preziosi argues "[the] house is not a 'machine for living' but a system for the production of meaning by its user(s)" (75). In terms of discussing the house, Preziosi does not only consider its purpose as a mere shelter where it mechanically functions for the borders. He critically points out how the signification of the house and other architectural structures "goes beyond formal configuration and structure and the physical or material variations" (*Architecture* 75). This significantly links the concept of simplicity and complexity of the *bahay kubo* mentioned in the previous section of the paper. However, his argument does not explain how this production of meaning is achieved when designs are used as templates for the purpose of another structure.

When mentioning the OCW experiences inside the airport, it is important to understand how the airport has become charged with emotions based on how passengers acquaint themselves inside the building. Majority of passengers inside the MIA are OCWs and they are able to modify their

perspective of the space based on their experiences from the departures hall, security check, immigration, customs, until the arrivals hall. Preziosi argues that an “architectonic system is a system of relationships, not of forms or materials” (*Architecture* 113). Hence, this vision and version of the airport, inspired by the functionality of the indigenous *bahay kubo*, ultimately fail amidst the ostentatious design.

### Reading the Cognates of the *Bahay-Kubo*

More than the aesthetics and spatial function of the *bahay kubo*, it can be argued that other cognates of the *bahay kubo* can also be applied in analyzing the MIA. One of the factors that affect the construction of the *bahay kubo* is the “body of beliefs pertaining to the chosen site and rituals observed” before, during, and after the construction (Dacanay 18). These traditional folk rituals and beliefs guarantee not only good and prosperous health for those who are residing within the household and a wealthy, joyful family life but also fortification and assurance of safety from evil spirits and bad omens for both the occupants and the people engaged in the house-building effort. Hence, Dacanay argues that the *bahay kubo* of the ethnic architect becomes “an embodiment of the culture and unique behavioral patterns of a people within a particular social organization and worldview” (19).

It also functions as an expression both of the individual needs of the people in response to the environment and of the bigger narrative of communities respectively. The *bahay kubo* relates these different social dimensions and is a part of a bigger community setting. As mentioned earlier, two traditional, almost ritualistic acts that happen inside the MIA are the *hatid* (well-wishing) and the *salubong* (welcoming back home).

*Salubong* stems from familial tradition. A *pagsalubong* in the airport varies from time to time and among social classes. The practice of welcoming *balikbayans* back home differs particularly from the West. The concept of the *balikbayan* is rooted in the idea that a country’s borders do not confine identity, belonging, and culture. The term *balikbayan* is actually three words in one – *balik* is “to return,” *bayan* is “nation” (or home), and, when these two words are combined, the third term is born—*balikbayan*.

The word also has two meanings. As a noun, it means someone who returns home, and as a verb, it is the act of returning home. In food, language, tradition, and stories, Filipinos continue to strive to preserve the identity and culture of their mother country but have also adapted to changes that come from new places they call home. Specific traits and acts done by *balik-bayans* have become repetitive; hence, these practices have become rituals and practices that function as mirrors or antecedents of Filipino culture and identity.

In the Philippine context and tradition, Filipino returnees and foreign visitors have been welcomed through a barrage of cultural spectacles. Throughout the airport terminal, musicians and dancers are designated to perform the *rondalla* and *kumparsa*.<sup>12</sup> These are two of the most famous forms of traditional Filipino music. Nowadays, these types of music are typically performed during special occasions such as shows and festivals. These jovial routines, accompanied by the sight of employees from Duty Free Shops donning their full Filipiniana dresses, become a cultural performance and act for arriving and departing passengers in the airports.

The now-defunct *Nayong Pilipino*<sup>13</sup> or the Philippine Village, originally built near the MIA in order to entertain passengers while waiting for their flights or transfers, wanted to showcase the different cultures of the country. Contemporary airports are envisioned as a prefiguration of the city where they are located. As such, airports were often “linked by rail or metro, and was surrounded by parks and urban amenities such as trade fairs, hotels, shops, aviation schools, and so on” (Adey et al. 41). According to Cabalfin, the identity politics articulated by such architectural structures “distills the essence of the country into its irreducible elements [and] can produce ideas of how the nation is articulated through theme parks” (27). However, the problem in this process is the politics of representation. As in the case of the *Nayong Pilipino*, the creation of the master plans and exhibits was given to a select and elite group of people, often hired or commissioned by the government. The narratives depicted were based on official directives from Imelda Marcos herself.

These spectacles and edifices are performative and built articulations of how the regime wanted to articulate Philippine culture not only to foreigners but to locals as well. However, these manufactured efforts masked the real situation of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*. Just like the concrete fences that were built in order to conceal the slum areas surrounding the airport area, blinders that will make it seem that the country was a progressive nation were ratified by the Marcoses.

Almost a year after the opening of the MIA's terminal in 1982, its tarmac or runway became a witness to the climactic moment that eventually led to the fall of the Marcos regime—the assassination in 1983 of Senator Benigno Aquino, the face of the opposition, who had just returned on board a China Airlines flight from exile. It is primarily for this reason that, by virtue of Republic Act 6639, the MIA has been renamed Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in order to give due reverence for the late senator's patriotism and martyrdom for democracy. The MIA remains a stark reminder of how the tragedy in the tarmac began the fate of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*'s terminal. Aquino's homecoming, no matter how tragically it ended, sparked the People Power Revolution against *Ang Bagong Lipunan*, thus restoring democracy. Aquino's arrival toppled the old regime and created a new democratic space.

### **The Marcosian Inflection: Deprecating the Family Rhetoric**

Banking on pure spectacle, the romantic and dramatic narrative of the Marcoses continued as they mythologized their parental and messianic image through cultural endeavors. The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos established not only the image of power and elegance, but strived to propel the rhetoric of the nation as a family under the banner of mythologized parents.

The Marcoses shared a communal vision about themselves. Their sense of destiny was so pronounced that they compared themselves to *Malakas* (strong) and *Maganda* (beautiful), the first Filipino man and woman who as legend has it, emerged from a single bamboo stalk. The logic behind this narcissistic desire was to satisfy their supposed destiny: promoting a kind

of renewal of national identity and such visual works make obvious their ambition to be part of the national mythology (Rafael 595). Following this analogy, they believed that they were at the “origin of all that was new in the Philippines” (Ellison 79). They regarded their privileged positions as an allowance for them to cross and recalibrate all boundaries that included the social, political, and cultural. The use of the *Malakas* and *Maganda* myth permitted the Marcoses to reconstruct themselves as “ideal helpmates governing the nation as though it were a mythical household” (Ellison 82). With the creation of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*, the Marcosian wish to be the parents to the Filipino people was given a stronger institutional basis.

However, the darker, more sinister side of this narrative came in the form of oligarchy and crony capitalism. Marcos’ authoritarian rule “was built around extensive state patronage networks and the creation of a class of rent-seeking capitalist” (Hawes 51). As crony capitalism progressed, the economy suffered and brought about economic and financial crisis from 1981 to 1985. The former President removed the old oligarchs but installed new oligarchs, and the promise of greatness offered by *Ang Bagong Lipunan* was reserved only for the elite and the powerful—the cronies of the Conjugal Dictatorship.

The financial contribution of OCWs, through their remittances, proved vital for the salvaging of the weakening economy of the country. OCWs were tagged *bagong bayani* or modern-day heroes because of the sacrifices they make for the family, and eventually, the country. For instance, in the introduction essay of Odine De Guzman’s collection of OCW poems entitled *From Saudi with Love: 100 Poems by OFWs*, she maintains that working in other countries seems to have become “the only option left” for Filipino families to experience a good life back home (1). She purports that “while many OFWs who come home are nostalgic of past economic comforts afforded by working abroad, some were without fond memories, others yet have no memories at all” (De Guzman 3).

According to De Guzman, most of the poems were submitted in literary contests sponsored by Overseas Filipino Press Club where it gave an opportunity for OCW writers “to examine their relationships with their family and the nation-state and to make these usually private musings public” (14).



She initiated this study of poems produced by overseas Filipino workers who as a class or sector would not have thought of writing at all. The concept of literature and social change encouraged OCWs to express their experiences through poetry. Her efforts were “directed at retrieving the literature (both written and oral) of the dispossessed and the marginalized” (De Guzman 16).

In a sense, OCWs participate in the nation-state differently. During the time of Ferdinand Marcos, the OCWs became tools to curb the unemployment rate and to improve economic stagnation through their remittances. Now, through their literary works, they also produce writings about their concerns regarding the country and their families as they explore their selfhood as it relates to citizenship.

Airports are always packed during the holidays because it is a time dedicated for the family. For the MIA, now officially called NAIA, its arrivals hall becomes a witness to a multitude of homecomings. Even commercials, product promotions, and advertisements focus on the plurality of homecomings via the airport such as those of Max’s Fried Chicken and Globe Communication. Still grounded on the narrative of the family, these commercials depict the arrivals hall as the immediate nexus of home, both in its national and familial sense. It becomes the first interface with the motherland and it is where families wait for the one returning. More often than not, these commercials depict OCWs, returning home to spend Christmas with the family.

But what is not highlighted in these commercials is the fact that even before OCWs get to finally exit the terminal and experience their full return, the country already has a different kind of welcoming prepared for them—confusion inside a constricted building, possible corruption from immigration and customs officers, mismanagement of archaic machines, and the outdated terminal complex itself. One of the most recent controversies included the *laglag-bala* [drop bullet] or *tanim-bala* [plant bullet] scandals. According to a news article written by Constante, airport security personnel were alleged “to have planted bullets inside the luggage of passengers in order to extort money from them” (AsianJournal.com). According to Carvajal, most of the victims were profiled as overseas Filipino workers and the elderly because

“OFWs are easily duped and the elderly easily get nervous” (PressReader.com). Specified lanes are now installed for the special treatment of OCWs (because they are modern-day heroes). But in reality, these lanes are installed to make it easier for officers to harass and take advantage of OCWs. These are all symptoms of a larger narrative of corruption and manipulation that disillusioned the nation.

The return of these workers to their places of work abroad reflects how this cycle of departure and arrival becomes a perpetual means for supporting a government that heavily relies on OCW remittances but neglects to prioritize their welfare. Moreover, the abuses directed toward the so-called modern-day heroes inside the airport continue to haunt the OCWs both upon departure and upon arrival. The airport functions as an enabler of a particular kind of spatial interrogation inside a space that was supposedly built as a homage to the Filipino home.

## Conclusion

The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos extended their vision of *Ang Bagong Lipunan* to monumental edifices such as the architectural buildings within the CCP Complex, medical and health infrastructure, and structural facilities for transportation and mobility. Part of these edifices included the MIA. These grand structures, commissioned by the state through her patronage “were indicative of a modern, uncluttered, monumental architecture associated with prestige state construction in the industrial West” to “encapsulate, dignify, and display a cultural heritage that was uniquely Filipino” (Lico 14). Hence, the modernistic rendering of the native dwelling, the *bahay kubo* or the nipa hut, became the design concept for one of the regime’s preferred architects, Leandro Locsin.

Locsin applied the modern *bahay kubo* concept for the terminal design for functionality and aesthetics. However, the humble dwelling place of vernacular Philippines became extravagant and ostentatious for the sake of monumentalizing the regime. The promise of functionality and warmth that the vernacular *bahay kubo* possesses became secondary. In a way, even if the design basis of the MIA that was grounded on the concepts of modernizing

the vernacular Filipino dwelling was achieved, the lived experiences and spatial culture of the airport prove that it failed to reflect the true essence of where the structure was originally based—the *bahay kubo*.

During the time of the Marcoses, the MIA functioned as a gateway for international leaders and foreign dignitaries. The opulent design of the airport wanted to show these visitors how progressive the country was under the regime. But the experiences of OCWs offered a distinct interrogation not only of the spatial function of the airport, but ultimately, of the larger narrative of *Ang Bagong Lipunan*.

MIA functioned not just as a gateway for foreign and international visitors and dignitaries to get a taste of the City of Man, but also solidified the edifice complex of the regime. It became a getaway for Filipinos to render service elsewhere. It became a tool for sending out Filipino citizens to other countries, which bolstered the OCW wave. In the Lefebvrian sense, the Marcosian architectonic represents *spatial practice*—the perceived notions that bring about patterns inside the respective physical space (38).

The airport, particularly its interior calibration of space, embraces the production and reproduction of what was conceived. The airport ensured continuity of ideals propelled by the Marcoses. The narrative of these architectural edifices of the regime, specifically MIA, is meant to instigate a kind of nationalism that *Ang Bagong Lipunan* purports: associating self-sacrifice of the common folks for the good of the nation and the state.

This myth creates a “unified image that gives tangibility to the promise of a national architecture and imagination of a nation” (Lico 161). Through public, state-initiated architectural structures of *Ang Bagong Lipunan* such as the MIA (and the produced spaces thereafter), the regime continually played out a national narrative and cultural memory, that was both fantasized and constructed.

## Notes

1. Primitivo Mijares coined the phrase “conjugal dictatorship” to denote the regime of former Philippine president and dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his First Lady, Imelda Marcos. In his book entitled *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and Imelda Marcos* (1976), Mijares unpacks how the phrase described the kind of power and influence held by the First Couple. A huge portion of the book discusses how Imelda Marcos wielded and maintained a more powerful influence than that of a quintessential First Lady. She held many government positions and these appointments permitted her to commission several architectural structures and buildings within Metro Manila, including the Manila International Airport. The phrase also highlights how the excessive means of the regime, through plunder and corruption, was made possible by this kind of family dictatorship, cronyism, and oligarchy.
2. *Ang Bagong Lipunan* or the New Society was established by Ferdinand Marcos. He discussed in his book *An Ideology for Filipinos* (1983) the meanings of the social theories based on Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism that eventually led him to form this New Society (Marcos 13-36). Ferdinand Marcos endorsed these social theories which have been appropriated in the Philippines, and, for him, shall have the potency to bring about social change for future generations. According to Litonjua, this ‘new society’ presumes a nation wherein “all Filipinos would equitably share in the benefits of economic development and progress” (368).
3. The *bahay kubo* or the native nipa hut is a traditional stilt house indigenous to the Philippines. Its design and architectural principles paved the way to various iterations of Philippine traditional houses and structures beyond the precolonial period. Even before the colonial era, the *bahay kubo* has been utilized as the native house of indigenous people living in the Philippines. These houses were designed to functionally accommodate the tropical and humid climate of the islands while enduring the country’s equally harsh environment. However, these structures were temporary, as they were usually made from plant materials such as bamboo and various parts of the coconut plant (Kim 135).
4. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the term “excess” is defined as “an amount of something that is more than necessary, permitted, or desirable; lack of moderation in an activity; exceeding desirable amount.” In this paper, the term is operationalized to reflect an aesthetics of excess articulated by the Marcosian regime: unnecessarily extravagant edifices, opulent designs, lavish loans, unrestricted power and influence, and unrestrained spectacles for cultural performativities. While architecture aims for both function and communica-

- tion, the immoderate amounts spent on Marcosian edifices raise the question— is it necessary?
5. During Locsin's time, most architects trusted the architectural education and theories that lean more towards Western designs. Such cognizance was attributed to Locsin's "growing up in a culturally-rich environment such as Silay [in Negros Occidental]" (Paredes-Santillan 3). His usage of concrete produced feats of daring and ingenious designs. From that moment on, Locsin felt that concrete as a material became the best option for any architecture that arose as a response to Philippine conditions. Locsin's projects displayed certain similar characteristics: "a lightness of form, an airiness and grace lent by the slender, tapering columns, the thin sunscreens, and the almost weightless balconies and overhangs" (Polites 11).
  6. Built before World War II, it was considered to be the first commercial airfield in Manila. It was first used locally by Philippine Aerial Taxi Company to service light aircrafts to Loakan Airfield in Baguio. In September 1944, American aircraft carriers and bombers attacked Grace Park Airfield, much like other airfields and shipping installations in Manila (Allied Geographical Section 39). Eventually, it was disused and developed into an industrial area. It remained to function as an airfield until at least 1946 (Allied Geographical Section 40). It is now the Grace Park Subdivision, located in the middle of an urbanized area, where there are no longer traces of the air strip.
  7. Built as an airfield by the Americans during the prewar years, Nielson Airfield was named after a New Zealander businessman and aviation enthusiast, Laurie Reuben Nielson. It was initially used as a civilian airport by the American Far Eastern Aviation and Philippine Airlines (Allied Geographical Section 38-39). In 1947, Nielson Airfield was eventually closed and was later used for commercial development (Maurer 21). Today, the original tower and the air terminal building are operated by the Ayala Museum.
  8. Paulo Alcazaren, "Manila's International Airport: Gateway to the World." *The Philippine Star*. 10 Nov. 2001. [www.philstar.com/modern-living/139620/manila%C2%92s-international-airport-gateway-world](http://www.philstar.com/modern-living/139620/manila%C2%92s-international-airport-gateway-world). Accessed 28 July 2021.
  9. Paulo Alcazaren, "Portal of the Jet Age." *The Philippine Star*. 8 Jan. 2016. [www.philstar.com/lifestyle/modern-living/2016/01/08/1540557/portal-jet-age](http://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/modern-living/2016/01/08/1540557/portal-jet-age). Accessed 28 July 2021.
  10. The terms *pagsundo* and *paghatid* are cultural traditions of Filipinos when accompanying family members, relatives, or friends to the airport either to see them off or welcome them home. *Sundo* means to pick-up the arriving passenger from the airport's arrivals halls. *Hatid* means to see them off to their respective flights. Just like many airport terminals, there are designated spaces and areas for well-wishers.

11. Under Imelda Marcos' vision, the elements of the City of Man included the architectural structures inside the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex and the medical and health infrastructures such as the Lung Center of the Philippines, the Kidney Center of the Philippines, and the Philippine Heart Center. These Imeldific edifices were commissioned, designed, and constructed in order to solidify and concretize the Marcosian City of Man (Lico 12).
12. The *rondalla* is a famous form of traditional Filipino music. The *rondalla* is a type of traditional ensemble made up of several types of string instruments of various sizes. *Rondalla* is more formal and dramatic. The Filipino *rondalla* has a wide repertoire ranging from the simple folk songs to the modern and contemporary tunes as well as Filipino and foreign classics (Roces, 34). The *rondalla* as a Filipino musical form has become an "institution" and has made its "distinct contribution to the musical culture of the nation" (Roces 40).
13. The *Nayong Pilipino*, also known as the Philippine Village, was originally conceptualized by Former First Lady Imelda Marcos to showcase various Filipino cultures and traditions. Opened in 1970, it was a cultural theme park located beside the Manila International Airport. It was popularly advertised as the first of its kind in the Southeast Asian region.

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# The Ruse of Reading

## The Postcolonial Literary Marketplace and the Novels of Gina Apostol

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### Abstract

This paper explores the politics of reading in the novelistic production of Gina Apostol in relation to Sarah Brouillette's analysis of the postcolonial literary marketplace, Timothy Brennan's critique of cosmopolitanism, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's tracking of the native informant in postcolonial discourse. In Brouillette's work, postcolonial writers, unlike the Romantic author who disavows commercial popularity, are aware of the commodification of their work and interact with it, either through resistance or complicity. Cosmopolitanism for Brennan denotes an unequal flow of intellectual commodities between center and periphery instantiated in the consciousness of the migrant writer valorized in "international book markets because of their authentic native attachment to a specific Third World locale" ("Cosmopolitans and Celebrities" 3). Lastly, the native informant, in Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, is a postcolonial subject whose self-representation projects the ascendancy of liberal Western discourse while authenticating a homogenized identity for the 'Other'.

### Keywords

postcolonial, literary marketplace, authorial strategy, cosmopolitanism, native informant

To say that reading occupies pride of place in Gina Apostol's literary production would be an understatement. Not only are the protagonists in her four novels readers: Primi Peregrino in *Bibliolepsy* (1997), the titular character in *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata* (2009, 2021), Soledad Soliman in *Gun Dealer's Daughter: A Novel* (2012), and Chiara Brasi/Mimi Magsalin in *Insurrecto: A Novel* (2018) but the stories themselves are metafictionalizations that capitalize on reading as a practice and its theoretical contexts. In "Reading and Writing: Some Notes on the Author's Patrimony by Estrella Espejo," a fictional paratext in *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata*, for instance, Apostol reworks Benedict Anderson's key observation that Rizal's realist perspective in *Noli Me Tangere* summons an 'imagined community' in the minds of its readers (27): "The Philippines may be the only country whose war of independence begins with a novel (and a first novel at that)—Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* ('Touch-Me-Not'). Our notion of freedom began with fiction, which may explain why it remains an illusion" ("The Revolution" 25). In the same section, Apostol doubling as Espejo, the fictional editor of Mata's book/journal, explains the exigency of the word in understanding the 1898 Philippine Revolution:

By 1896 readers were risking their lives all over the place to smuggle pamphlets and decode anagrams of heroic names. Membership to the Katipunan rose dramatically with the publication of the first (and last) distributed issue of a newsletter, *Kalayaan*. Histories of the war refer constantly to memos to the warfront, distributed decalogues, intercepted letters, confiscated libraries. It is said that unread peasants gained revolutionary passion via *pasyon*, a narration (25).

Textuality is also a central conceit in *Gun Dealer's Daughter: A Novel*. In the story, Soledad, the main character, is suffering from amnesia and words, according to her doctor, are crucial to her recovery: "Language plays its part, the doctors say: above all, words are symptoms. I must be alert. Even one's vocabulary could be a crime" (*Gun Dealer's Daughter* 18).

In the first section of this essay, I examine Apostol's preoccupation with reading as an extension of what Sarah Brouillete, in *Postcolonial Writers in*

*the Global Literary Marketplace*, points out as the strategic self-consciousness of the postcolonial author who is actively involved in the reception of his/her works by metropolitan First World audiences. Reading in this context is a vehicle for cosmopolitan and intercultural values whose cultural capital is consecrated by an international reading public. In the second section, I compare scenes of reading in the postcolonial analyses of Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* and Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions* with Apostol's novels. Lastly, I argue that Apostol's fictocritical strategy offers reading as an elaborate ruse for foreclosing the text from its social and political logic, which allows the text to do the work of "self-writing."

### Reading Publics

In her book, Brouillette claims that postcolonial field had become an industry, echoing and expanding on Graham Huggan's seminal insights on postcolonialism's similarity with tourism in his book *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001). For both scholars, postcolonial literature had undergone "industrial commodification that serves the interests of certain privileged audiences; the 'postcolonial field of production' turns out translated products for metropolitan consumers in places like London and New York" (Brouillette 15). Huggan claims that postcolonial literature written for a metropolitan audience tends to privilege certain representations and strategies where "difference is appreciated, but only in the terms of the beholder [while] diversity is translated and given a reassuringly familiar aesthetic cast" (qtd. in Brouillette 16). This tendency, for Huggan, is the fate of the postcolonial in the globalization of commodity culture that aestheticizes cultural difference and makes it available for mass consumption; the code for such aestheticized difference is the exotic, an "aesthetic perception... which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery" (13). Although Brouillette agrees with Huggan's description of postcolonialism as a touristic industry, her view grants more autonomy to the author who employs "otherness" strategically and is willing to market "authorial self-consciousness" through several literary strategies which he/

she negotiates with the reader (7). Unlike Huggan, Brouillette is more interested in examining how postcolonial authors manifest a self-awareness of the potential reception of their work by anticipating and responding to it in their writing. In the chapter on Derek Walcott, for example, Brouillette identifies the persona in his poem collection *The Fortunate Traveller* as the poet himself, a “bureaucrat, a functionary of the neocolonial world.. an intermediary between the Third World’s citizens and Northern institutions of geopolitical power” (34), underscoring an inclination of migrant postcolonial authors published by Anglo-American publishers to write themselves in their novels as a means of exercising the author function.

From the outset, Apostol’s postmodern novels confirm Brouillette’s observations about highly-marketable postcolonial literature in the First World metropolis: “it is English-language fiction; it is relatively ‘sophisticated’ or ‘complex’ and often anti-realist... it uses a language of exile, hybridity, and ‘mongrel’ subjectivity” (61). Brouillette’s claim that postcolonial writers employ self-conscious strategies in their works is evident in the novelistic world of *Raymundo Mata* and *Gun Dealer’s Daughter*. A cursory reading of Apostol’s interviews and blog essays is enough to establish a correspondence between main characters in both novels and the author herself. Moreover, Apostol has written copiously about her obsession with books and how her writing pays homage to her favorite authors, among them, Flaubert, Borges, Nabokov, and Barth. Note, for instance, the parallels between author and characters: Apostol’s frequent visits to the British Council in Manila which she mentioned in her blogs (“On Finishing a Novel: Thoughts on Writing About Philippine History”), is a hobby of Fernando, a character in *Bibliolepsy*, her first novel, and Sol in *Gun Dealer’s*. There are references to libraries in *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata* [e.g., “Andres Bonifacio’s library” (47), “Rizal’s library” (97), “Crisostomo Ibarra’s library” (182)], which suggests that the Philippine Revolution was an effect of reading, a claim that Apostol reiterated on several blogs and interviews. In “Reading and Writing: Some Notes on the Author’s Patrimony,” for instance, Espejo states that “[a] distinctive quality of this war was its reliance on reading—literacy was the charming obsession of many a revolutionary” (24). Espejo narrates, in the

same section: “By 1896 readers were risking their lives all over the place to smuggle pamphlets and decode anagrams of heroic names.... It is a truism that our revolution existed—and lives on—as a text” (25).

Moreover, Apostol is known to provide readings or interpretations of her novels which reference a number of literary theories. This strategy, which is consistent with Apostol’s self-authorization and self-reflexivity, allows her to manage and police the reception of her works. Postcolonial theory, for example, from which Apostol launches her notions of doubleness, multiplicity, hybridity, functions as both paratext and master trope in Apostol’s novels, essays, and interviews. She chides Mark O’Connell, who wrote a review of two new books on Borges in *The New Yorker*, for taking Borges’ statement that he is “not politically minded” at face value: “[a]nd like a gullible reader of Pierre Menard’s *Don Quixote*, O’Connell falls for Borges’s wit, his “double act.” Taking offense at O’Connell’s statement and casting her lot with Borges, while labelling O’Connell a First World writer, she refutes his point by recounting a personal history:

Having grown up under a dictatorship, beset by the local scars of the history of colonization, I know my debt to Borges. I learn from him as an artist but I also read him as a luminous thinker about the politics and problems of the so-called Third World.... writers in *The New Yorker*... might not have the experience that Borges and I have—the postcolonial experience of that ‘divided self’, that ‘ontological double act’ (“Borges, Politics, and the Postcolonial”).

Elsewhere in the article, she calls Borges’s essay “The Argentine Writer and Tradition” ... “a classic in deconstructive political thought” while calling Menard, the author-double of Cervantes in Borges’s story, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*,” a “commentary on the postcolonial condition.” Apostol defines “postcolonial” as mode of deconstruction: “More practically, I read Jorge Luis Borges in this postcolonial, deconstructive way... I read Poe and detective stories and Nabokov in this way too—in a postcolonial, deconstructive way” (“Advice to Writers”).

Another authorial apparatus that Apostol deploys in her novels is the paratext, defined by Gerard Genette as a device which “enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers, and more generally to the public” (1). It mediates “between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned towards the world’s discourse about the text)” (2). Paratextual elements can be divided into peritexts, those that appear within the book itself (e.g., title, preface, dedication, notes, epilogue), and epitexts, which refers to information about the book gleaned from author interviews, recommendations, publisher’s statements, author’s blog, and other promotional strategies. The fictional peritexts in *The Revolution*—an editor’s preface, a translator’s note, an abecedary, an afterword, an epitaph, a translator’s postcard and references—reinforce Apostol’s control over the story while limiting its interpretation. As Genette notes the paratext is “an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies)” (1). That peritexts represent the interests of the author is evident, for example, in Apostol’s approval of a researcher/blogger from Filipiniana.net for engaging the aforementioned peritexts in *The Revolution* in the correct way: “This article researches facts in history related to details in the novel... While not ingenious, it is earnest, and I enjoyed looking at how the researcher figured out some of the novel’s puzzle out. There are so many pieces of the jigsaw puzzle in this layered novel that it is satisfying when a person at least figures out even one corner of the complex piece... the novel, *if figured out completely* (my emphasis), is meant to shed light on multiple resonances among and between history, reading, language and art with the revolutionary period of the Philippines” (“Nice Job of Research”). Apostol, as the rest of this essay will demonstrate, equally relies on epitexts to promote the ‘correct reading’ of her novels. In this sense, paratexts are tools of marketing literature and circumscribing its literary value.

It is important to note that Apostol tends to reference “postcolonial” in a manner that preempts a candid reading of her novels and, more curi-

ously, as a catch-all phrase to describe her experience that confers a ready-made significance and authenticity in her writing. In this context, Apostol's novels are fictocritical: they merge self-writing, fiction, and criticism (Robb 5-7). The individualized/experiential meanings and frequent incantation of "postcolonial" indicate an authorial self-consciousness that caters to the reading competence of metropolitan audiences in the global North. In "The Novel and Technologies of Empire: A Conversation with Gina Apostol," an interview conducted by Paul Nadal, Apostol admits that *Insurrecto*, her fourth novel and the second one published in the U.S., was based on a draft for *The Unintended*. She explains: "I think Duterte made the novel urgent in some way. Duterte in power created a demand to figure out how to include the current political situation in a novel. I wasn't going to include it in *Insurrecto*, because I already had a draft. But my first readers, including editors, were curious about Duterte's possible place in the story I had written" (Nadal, *The Margins*). As this suggests, Anglo-American publishing industries exercise a significant influence in determining the content, which validates Brouillette's observation that postcolonial authors published in the U.S. are more receptive to metropolitan tastes, and following Bourdieu, that authorship in the "social production of literature often translates into literature itself (2).

In a response to an article on *Gun Dealer's Daughter* in *Manila Review*, she denounces the shortsightedness of the review which she claims was oblivious to the artistic status of her novel and instead reduced it to "a social studies thesis"; she writes: "I did not recognize my novel at all—didn't hear language, tropes, ironies, complexities—a non-reading of art" ("Reading Novels: A Novelist's View"). Although she issues a disclaimer at the beginning that her ideas are only those of a provisional reader, she calls the *Manila Review* article a "misreading" since it was silent about the intended connection between character (Sol) and reader. She ends the essay by emphasizing her intention:

When you do not examine the crucial ways the reader is implicated in a self-referential text (and most texts, once you read them closely, are self-referential), which involves the tropes of reading and writing, in which the crisis of self-discovery lies in the ruses of language, and in this case, in partic-



ular the rapacious English language, the reader might be led to a meager, shallow reading.... In this novel, and in other self-referential novels that deliberately involve the reader in language games, these novels that involve acts of reading and writing in its tropes are also directly addressing community—the imagined community of novel reader, novel, and protagonist, that needs to be imagined by the essayist (“Reading Novels: A Novelist’s View”).

In contrast, there are reviews of *Gun Dealer’s* that are more reflective of metropolitan tastes and preferences which Apostol approves of and has cited on her blog. These reviews consider Apostol’s use of style commendable for the pleasures it affords the reader. One is by Merry Gangemi, host of *Woman-Stirred*, a radio program in Plainfield, Vermont, whom Apostol considers to be “an intelligent reader” for having noticed “the incidence of insects, repetition of heat and decay, and the book’s language games” and their priority in *Gun Dealer’s* (“Listen to Woman-Stirred Radio”). Brian Collins in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* comments on a vivid passage in the book:

as deft a sketch as something from Fitzgerald and the happy accident of the able storyteller is contrived with so much grace than in too many new books, where narrators sound like writers no matter what their fictive place in life; Soledad’s verbal intensity we grasp as that of a bookish only child with a cosmopolitan upbringing. Apostol even allows her to *overwrite* here and there, to slip into a precious or self-indulgent style, sharpening our image of Soledad as a stunted character. (For a sense of Apostol’s own impressive style range see also her first novel *Bibliolepsy*, already a kind of contemporary classic back home in the Philippines, though now out of print. Soon, I would think, some alert publisher will bring this book out in the US).

Apostol included Collins’s review in her blog and captioned it: “a stunningly smart review” (“‘Empire at the End of Time’: a Stunningly Smart Review”). In the same blog, Apostol mentions a “lovely review” of the novel by Kerry McHugh at *Entomology of a Bookworm*: Sol’s “telling and retelling and editing and tweaking of her own history feels disjointed in the opening chapters, but ultimately proves to be one of the most successful aspects of Apostol’s creations; the technique invites readers into the very core of

Sol's experiences, accompanying her on her journey of self-understanding... self-acceptance" ("Lovely Review").

Apostol's U.S. publishers are similarly invested. Denise Scarfi, Apostol's editor at W.W. Norton, the US publisher of *Gun-Dealer's Daughter* recalls dropping everything to read a draft of the novel after a literary agent's prodding, who called it an "obdurately literate tale of rebellion and romance, adolescence and assassins." In Scarfi's interview with Apostol for *Bookslut*, the first part of which is published in Apostol's blog, the former lauds the latter for prioritizing her craft, calling Apostol a writer "who thinks so deeply and intelligently about her craft, and who writes out of pure enjoyment. It is a testament to her skill and sense of humor that she'd managed to have fun (and to create a fun reading experience) writing about Sol, a daughter of arms dealers..." The novel, Scarfi claims, is one of "infinite satisfactions—a coming of age tale, a love story, an amnesiac thriller, a revolutionary potboiler." ("Bookslut Interview"). Interestingly, Scarfi would also drop a comment in a blog by Brian L. Belen (*Brain Drain* comments section) that reviewed the same novel before Norton published it. Refuting Belen's remark that it may "not be accessible to those that don't know much about the Philippines" since "[i]t's a book about the Philippines written with a Filipino audience in mind," Scarfi replied: "As Gina's Irish-Italian editor, I will argue that this book absolutely can be understood and enjoyed by non-Filipinos! Her ability to allude to Filipino history and politics *with subtlety* (my emphasis) is what makes this such a compelling read, and smart readers will be able to put the pieces" (Belen). The fact that this brief exchange about Apostol's novel revolves around the novel's ideal reader—Filipinos or non-Filipinos—is instructive of how the "imagined readership," which the author anticipates and influences as part of his/her self-conscious strategies (Brouillette 6), indexes the value of the work. Scarfi's comment, tellingly, attributes the readability of *Gun Dealer's* to its muted references to actual, concrete situations and moments that motivated Philippine history. Belen's and Scarfi's comments imply a distinction between the local and international reception of the novel. It is unsurprising thus that this valorization of narrative style and construction

is the central idea in Apostol's introduction in the US edition of *Raymundo Mata*.

The review of Christian Benitez, a Filipino critic, of *Insurrecto* is one of the few that considers it from the perspective of a Filipino audience. Overall, Benitez finds the novel's "metaphoric strategy" inadequate:

As a novel that attempts to "show us the dark heart of a forgotten war that would shape the next century of Philippine and American history," what *Insurrecto* ultimately offers is a performance: the aforementioned war critically takes place less within the competing narratives of the novel, than in *the struggle of reading the text itself* (my emphasis), given its temporal and metaphoric strategies that disrupts the form, especially in its speciation in the Philippine imagination. And that such disruptions come from Apostol, a writer currently based in the United States, only doubles the violence of the Philippine disappearance to a Filipino reader: despite the desire to foreground an often neglected moment in Philippine history, the novel induces the same neglect through its impressionistic metaphorizations and aphasiac techniques, dangerously repeating to the reader the phenomenon of forgetting (112-113).

Benitez's review is informed by the material specificities of a Filipino reader, one whose interests are not limited to academic tastes, while negating the idea that mere complex telling, which involve disruptions of the form, can offset official narratives which erased or othered the Filipino in Philippine history. The idea that "in multiplicity is truth," the title of Laurel Fantauzzo's interview of Apostol which also forms the logic of Apostol's statements about *The Revolution* and *Insurrecto* in other epitexts, begs the question of which historical process or whose experience is represented in the range of perspectives that "multiplicity" implies. E. San Juan has analyzed this condition in *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* and deplores that postcoloniality has become inseparable from postmodernism: "[b]ecause postcolonial critics are heavily invested in the complicitous critique offered by postmodernism via irony, allegory, and self-reflexive tropes of doubleness, they reduce everything to metanarratives of contingency and indeterminacy" and this view, he asserts, is shortsighted for it "confuses self-misrecognizing mastery of difference with empowerment of citizens" (24). Apostol's defense of postmodern

tropes tends to make a cult out of difference while eliding a central consideration of postcolonial theory which is “who speaks and for whom?” and this is, in a sense, the same problematic that Brouillette’s addresses in her study of the postcolonial literary marketplace.

The relevance of textual prolixity is also called into question in Myra Garcés-Bascal’s review of *Insurrecto* in *Gathering Books*. Bascal finds the complexity of the novel off-putting, particularly the ordering of the chapters and her sentiments coincide with Benitez’s and San Juan’s:

I do wonder at the target audience of the novel, or even if there is one, or if the question is moot and academic. The reason I even thought of it is my inner wondering as to whether the story is reaching its intended audience in a way that will move them, or at least make them think deeply about who they are and what it means at a time when the islands of the country are disappearing and bargained off to the highest bidder, where silence and difference are conjoined twins allowing evil to proliferate with immunity (Garcés-Bascal).

The reviews in the preceding discussions indicate a tension between national and metropolitan reception that Brouillette considers exemplary of the role of First World literary markets in promoting the postcolonial novel. For Brouillette, whose view of the literary field reworks Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of the term as a site of conflict between forces of autonomy and heteronomy, “[a]ttending to the changing nature of current publishing, and to the position of postcolonial authors within literary markets, thus assumes a compelling relevance for meaningful interpretative practice” (1). This suggests that the commodification of the literary, in the postcolonial marketplace, has allowed the author to exercise some power in responding to the expectations of her audience while finding a niche in the book market. And this process, as demonstrated, is one that Apostol fully participates in. Brouillette points out that writers are complicit in this process: “authors then act as consumers of their own images as they react to their own personae in their literary works, often through attempts at theorizing the process itself, whether thought of as the communication circuit, the field of cultural production, or... the field of postcolonial production” (3).

## Postcolonial scenes of reading

The connection between reading and postcoloniality has been explored in other novels and critical work on them although with aims that are political, resistant, and subversive. In “The Formalist Genesis of ‘Postcolonial’ Reading: Brathwaite, Bhabha, and *A House for Mr. Biswas*,” William Ghosh traces the import of reading in postcolonial studies by attending to the novel’s own emphasis on form and relating it to two different receptions of Naipaul’s novel in a meaningful genealogy. Ghosh analyzes the scene of reading in the novel where Mr. Biswas, a Hindu-Indian in Trinidad and Tobago, is moved by the “wish-fulfillment” novels of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli only to realize that the “intoxicating world” and the “[d]escriptions of weather and landscape,” which caught his fancy, are discontinuous with his own social reality. The moment is narrated by Naipaul:

[h]e stayed in the back trace and read Samuel Smiles. He had bought one of his books in the belief that it was a novel and had become an addict. Samuel Smile was as romantic and satisfying as any novelist, and Mr Biswas saw himself in many Samuel Smiles heroes: he was young, he was poor, and he fancied he was struggling. But there always a came a point when resemblance ceased (Naipaul, qtd. in Ghosh 769).

Similar to Apostol’s recruiting of literary authors and works in her novels, Naipaul references other writers in his novels (Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Guy de Maupassant, Walter Scott, and Nikolai Gogol) but as Ghosh points out, Naipaul brings up these authors in *A House for Mr Biswas* to draw attention to the “historicity of the novel form,” its European provenance, and “how it had functioned for colonial Caribbean readers” (769). Moreover, Naipaul’s curiosity about the novel form allows him to address its “disciplinary social functions” (772). Ghosh proceeds to another scene of reading, this time demonstrated by a young Homi Bhabha. In two early essays (“Representation and the Colonial Text” and “The World and the Home”) Bhabha offers a reading of Naipaul’s novel, which Ghosh notes, would form the core of Bhabha’s more widely-read *Location of Culture*:

[w]orking on *A House for Mr Biswas* I found that I couldn't fit the political, chronological, or cultural experiences of that text into the traditions of Anglo-American liberal novel criticism. The sovereignty of the concept of character... and the practical ethics of individual freedom bore little resemblance to the overdetermined, unaccustomed postcolonial figure of Mr Biswas ("The World and the Home," qtd. in Ghosh 776).

Naipaul and Bhabha, Ghosh argues, are postcolonial readers in that their awareness of the novel as a European form has "forced [them] into a dialogue with a literary tradition that is neither wholly native to them nor wholly alien" (776). In contrast, the comparisons in Apostol's novels, whether explicit or implicit, defines postcolonial agency as a demonstration of postmodern readings (e.g., doubleness, multiplicity).

In "Differential Publics—Reading (in) the Postcolonial Novel," Elleke Boehmer analyzes the role of reading in Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Boehmer claims that the three novels stage scenes of postcolonial reading which speaks to and renews "transnational and cosmopolitan values" (1). Scenes of reading in these novels problematize the relationship between the telling and the told: the told are the texts sampled by the main character ("what a text has read"), a reader, while telling denotes the narrational mode that constructs the relationship between the author/narrator, characters, and reader (12-13). Here Boehmer borrows Althusser's concept of interpellation as a process that allows texts to "hail" and address readers. Interpellation explains "how the postcolonial reader is invited by or invoked within the text, either as a character, or through the text, as its reader" (13). Boehmer's study is relevant primarily for its identification of significant dialogic relationships that accrue when the text that is read is situated differently from its reader and serves as a useful counterpoint to Apostol's novelistic deployment of reading as aesthetic structure even as Boehmer refracts the text through a cosmopolitan lens. Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*, which takes place in Southern Rhodesia in the 1970s calls attention to the conflict between the experience of English-educated Nyasha and Tambu and the books that they're required to read in mission school.

Boehmer refers to a paradigmatic moment of reading in the novel when the adolescent Nyasha reads D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which "calls up both her rebelliousness and her privilege as a character, a child of the colonial middle class in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia)" (13). The mode of the telling positions Lawrence's novel athwart and alongside Dangaremba's novel. Reading in the three novels, Boehmer claims, is integral to the characters' coming to consciousness and, as such, they problematize reading's inextricability with colonial experience and its potential in fostering cosmopolitan belonging. Boehmer elaborates:

[r]eading understood in this way, as involving translocal, transnational, and other cross-border modes of identification, including other publics different from one's own, can also be seen to activate cosmopolitan sympathies (14).

She expounds: "[r]eading does not involve merely the application or imposition of a meaning or framework upon a piece of writing. Rather, reading is taken to involve imaginative and cognitive interaction with that writing, or the repeated application of inferential procedures to it" (17).

The focus of both essays on reading and its concrete historical situations gesture toward a relevant postcolonial problematic, one that enacts a "contrapuntal" reading of texts, which Said describes as "a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (51). Naipaul's and Dangaremba's novels are inquiries on the role of literature in furthering an awareness of difference produced by the disjunction between the colonized's socio-historical reality as it shapes cultural knowledge and practice and literary forms and their interpretations, which are part and parcel of colonial legacies (e.g., education). In contrast, reading in Apostol's novels conscripts and elevates an aesthetic lineage, a universal literature dislocated from the historical exigencies of colonial experience. As Benitez points out in his review of *Insurrecto*, Apostol's reliance on metaphor conflates the act of reading with the act of addressing gaps in Philippine-American history as if the struggle to read a postmodern text

like *Insurrecto* or *The Revolution* is a representation of the Filipinos' untold experience in the Philippine-American war or the Revolution of 1898.

If, for Boehmer, cosmopolitanism underpins the potential of reading in its capacity to imagine alternative solidarities, *Apostol*, represents its nominal value. This nominal sense of cosmopolitanism inheres in a dynamic between center and periphery where the latter functions as a relay for the former's values which is often masked as hybridity while "sublimating differences on grounds of understanding by way of a motive to export ideological products made to the measure of the world of saleable things" ("Cosmo-Theory" 660). Brennan argues further that the cosmopolitan figure that emerges from this context "expands his or her sensitivities toward the world while exporting a self-confident locality for consumption as the world" (660). Thus, despite *Apostol's* valiant statements about Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, and the Philippine Revolution; these references and allusions, which she dryly calls "facts," are merely pressed into the service of the writer's mastery of Borgesian doubleness ("My Borgesian Rizal") and the aesthetic "involution" that characterizes Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (Appel qtd. in McGurl 9) among others. These comparisons only signpost a series of narrative *mise-en-abymes* which seem to be the more important consideration in *Apostol's* novels. A number of comparisons in *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata*, for instance, posit a genealogy or an encounter between the local and international. In footnote 84, Diwata Drake, a caricature of a Lacanian critic, seizes on the likelihood that Raymundo had read Voltaire's *Candide*:

I note the translator's disclaimer above... Inexplicably, the manuscript [Raymundo's journal entry no. 5] inserts Voltaire's *Candide* word for word, except for substitutions of random names later in the manuscript... It would have been impossible for Raymundo, a sensitive boy in late nineteenth-century Philippines, not to see the parallels to his country's condition in the anticlerical satire he's writing down word for word; just as it is impossible for Estrella not to read Raymundo in the paragraphs from Voltaire... Thus, despite herself, Estrella's 'misreadings,' her anachronisms, are perhaps accurate (*The Revolution* 81-82).



Apart from Voltaire, Apostol enlists Cervantes, Dumas, Baudelaire, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Dante's Hell, Eugene Sue's *Mysteries of Paris*, Tolstoy, Charon, Prometheus, Homer, the Cyclops, and Oedipus to frame other characters and moments in the novel. These references to foreign authors and literary works enact a comparativism or revaluation not dissimilar from the consecration of national authors to what Pascale Casanova describes as "world literary space" (87, 109). This strategy, which instrumentalizes a literary cosmopolitanism, is also responsible for the global reach of the novel. Apostol compares Raymundo Mata's blindness, for instance, to two literary characters': "I edged beyond the calesa paths, across palay harvests, sapa and streams. I ranged like the Cyclops and roved more or less like three-legged Oedipus; I did not sing like Homer" (238). The comparisons, whose logic is unmotivated by the narrative—it is not established, for instance, how Mata's character overlaps with Oedipus or the Cyclops apart from their visual impairment—effects a universalization of a figure whose perspective allegedly offers a focalization of the Philippine revolution.

Brouillette considers Casanova's work to be a timely modification of Bourdieu's analysis of cultural capital and how it emerges from autonomous social space, which is brought about by the broad commercialization of the literary field, especially postcolonial literature: "the local writer enters the global field not to access the more legitimate cultural capital attached to modernist aesthetics, but out of a desire to achieve global celebrity" (80). Here local writers are consecrated in the world republic of letters, which operates on "the opposition between a capital, on the one hand, and peripheral dependencies whose relationship to this center is defined by their aesthetic distance from it," thereby assuming recognition, a kind of world-readability by ignoring national concerns while supporting the notion that literature is "pure, free, and universal" as opposed to its emerging from "political fiat, interest, or prejudice" (Casanova 12). This tendency accounts for the cosmopolitan undergirding of Apostol's novels, which translates the national to a global literary paradigm, to speak to an international audience. Moreover, the structure of the narrative itself, appropriated from Borges' and Nabokov's

postmodernist aesthetic, allows Apostol to address metropolitan audiences in the global North. As Casanova claims:

the writers who seek greater freedom for their work are those who know the laws of literary space and who make use of them in trying to subvert the dominant norms of their respective national fields. The autonomous pole of the world space is therefore essential to its very constitution, which is to say to its *littérisation* and its gradual denationalization: not only does the center supply theoretical and aesthetic models to writers on the periphery; its publishing networks and critical functions jointly strengthen the fabric of universal literature (109).

Apostol's novels are thus intelligible to US publishers because of how they are written, more than the story that they tell. Sabina Murray's description of *Raymundo Mata* in her interview with Apostol in *LitHub*, for instance, re-packages the novel's relevance by capitalizing on its lessons for the Trump era:

*The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata...* is a marvel of structure, history, voice, and humor... This rich comedy grows out of a tradition launched by Borges, an influence readily acknowledged (a Pedro Ménéardsz pops up in the footnotes), but also calls to mind the rollicking humor of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* in its textual meddling, using the disruption of order as an organizing principle. In fact, the book can be seen as an exploration of the comic: the compulsive punning of the Filipino, the wry conceits of the critic, Apostol's joyful wit in the deployment of a stunning array of figures of speech. At its core, the book examines the revolution that wrenched the Philippines from the stranglehold of Spain, only to thrust the nation into the rapacious embrace of the United States. First published in 2009, Apostol took advantage of this new American edition to further explore its themes of insurrection, media falsehood, and the splintering of reality under the force of differing opinion as she lived in Trump's America. *Raymundo Mata*, despite its focus on an invented Filipino hero, should be required reading as we navigate these times (Murray).

Of the two levels of reading specified in Boehmer's essay, Apostol is clearly more interested in the telling not in the potential dialogue between the two, which Boehmer considers as a relevant postcolonial problematic. In

their book *Reading Across Worlds: Transnational Book Groups and the Reception of Difference*, Bethan Benwell and James Procter, citing John Guillory's study "The Ethical Practice of Modernity: The Example of Reading," outlines the distinctions between lay and professional reading, a problematic related to the role of reading in literary studies, especially postcolonial critique (see Lazarus' "The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism"). Guillory defines professional reading as "a kind of work... a disciplinary activity, that is governed by conventions or interpretations... is vigilant, and stands back from the experience of pleasure, not in order to cancel out this pleasure, but in order necessarily to be wary of it" (qtd. in Benwell and Procter 21). Lay reading, in contrast, is pleasurable and solitary, which encourages "self-absorption over critical consciousness" (21). Professional reading is an attention to the text that subscribes to the "trope of complexity," which recalls Timothy Brennan's and Sarah Brouillette's discussions of the concept in *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* and *Postcolonial Writers in the Literary Marketplace*, respectively. Benwell and Procter also reference Tony Bennett's observations about professional reading which brings to mind Apostol's prerogative: a "reading [that] seeks to clear a space for itself and to displace the cultural power of prevailing readings by producing, in its construction of the text itself, the criteria of validity in relation to which other readings can be found wanting" (qtd. in Benwell and Procter 21). Bennett's point lays bare the logic of Apostol's prescriptions about reading and their indispensability for postcolonial work. This imperative is often articulated as a call for smarter readers which is made explicit in her interview in *Fiction Advocate*, for instance. The question as to whether the postmodern structure of her novel might convince readers that *Insurrecto* is only fiction, Apostol's replies with "No—those readers need to get smarter" (Stack) and proceeds to a reiteration of her oft-quoted observations about the constructed nature of history and reality. Another instance is her justification for her writing in the *Author's Note* on the US edition of *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata*: "For me, a powerful reason to write novels like these is that their construction matches *my sense of reality* [my emphasis]. A colonized country is the overt result of various others shaping its sense of self. The novel's

multiple voice, which refracts, realigns, repositions texts and viewpoints from awry angles, ruptured plots, confused tongues, and an almost heedless anachronistic sense of the past, is for me a potent way to fathom and portray the unfinished ‘reality’ of such a nation.” Recurring in this piece and her other essays and interviews is the idea of the author’s pleasure projected onto the reader. In her riposte to *Manila Review’s* reading of *Gun Dealer’s Daughter*, Apostol writes: “My editor says that the reason she picked up this novel and fought for it at Norton was because of its language. The wordplay was funny she said. The pleasure of the text. For me, the work of language is where a novel’s eroticism, pleasure, lies” (“Reading Novels”). Pleasure, elsewhere in the same essay, is mentioned when she explains the connection that binds reader and narrator:

[p]art of the problem of writing in English in the Philippines is that one might say that English is a sign of trauma: it inscribes our colonized self in our everyday lives, just as Rizal noted the same for Spanish in his time. English, just as Simoun noted about Spanish, touches on a divide. Right now, you can succeed without English, like Erap (or at least the myth of Erap), but our system makes it difficult. In the early American period, English was both the rape and redemption of the middle classes. Knowledge of it allowed the middle classes to expand, so it democratized even as it drove a wedge: it created marked division. So it’s useful to note that this partnership between the reader and the narrator in this novel is pleasure, or at least, proficiency in English. Language is the erotic tie between narrator and reader (“Reading Novels”).

To be sure, what Apostol refers to as “proficiency in English” is not commensurate to the pleasure of the reader, as Guillory refers to it in his essay. In his review of *The Revolution*, Guzman observes the same impasse. He notes that while the novel’s “tireless pastiching” is “exhilarating,” he admits that it “is easier to admire than to enjoy” (281). Its humor, he adds, dependent on slips of the tongue and satire, can be contrived: “[u]nfortunately, satire is not the most comedic form, given that it is more interested in teaching the reader a lesson than in making him or her laugh; in effect, a succession of satires

packaged in zingy one-liners often sounds less like humor than items in a syllabus” (281).

That Apostol privileges the telling and regards it as a tool of postcolonial critique is suggested in a number of her essays, but it is most evident in her recent interview published in *Fiction Advocate*. Here she claims that Borgesian and Nabokovian narrative structures, which produce “the destabilizing of reality through mediated stories—are very rich for postcolonial work” (Stack). These two, narration and postcolonial writing, she elaborates, produce something both “politically coherent—and fun.” Her advantage, she continues, is having grown up in “the hyper-hybrid, mixed-world of the Filipino... I hold the advantage of multiple-world—the Western art-worlds of Nabokov, the unbearably multiple-worlds of the Warays... I make that multiplicity central in Mata and *Insurrecto*: so that the novel’s form is in itself also political and historical commentary” (Stack).

### **Cultural Capital and Self-Writing**

Certainly, postcolonial studies had professionalized a kind of reading, perhaps more than any other critical theory, and this is understandable given literature’s role in colonialism. In fact, the complicity between the two has been the subject of studies done by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. A kind of reading was ordained by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in their book *Post-Colonial Studies: Key Concepts* as postcolonial:

A way of reading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable efforts of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records; administrative and scientific writing. It is a form of deconstruction most usually applied to works emanating from the colonizers (but may be applied to the works of the colonized) which demonstrates the extent to which the text contradicts its own assumptions (civilization, justice, aesthetics, sensibility, race) and reveals its (often unwitting) colonialist ideologies and processes (192).

Apart from postcolonial studies, reading has gained currency in other fields in literary and cultural studies. Another work that signals an increase

in reading's cultural capital is Martin Joseph Ponce's book *Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading*. Ponce considers *Raymundo Mata* exemplary of a "diasporic" and "queer" reading which, he claims, accurately describes Filipino literature in the United States in its status as a "dispersed, coreless tradition whose relation to conventional political and social histories has invariably been oblique and ex-centric to the latter's normalizing dictates" (2). This interrogation of that particular literary history, Ponce explains, does not flatten difference but "[pursues] instead interpretations that underscore rather than underplay the literatures peculiarities in ways that render inadequate cultural nationalist models of reading and that respect the "wild heterogeneity" of this literary archive" (3). This ex-centricity, he notes, is what Raymundo Mata exhibits. Its metafictional reconstruction of the 1898 Philippine Revolution reflects the central themes of his study, namely "the politics of linguistic multiplicity, address, and audience; the critique of U.S. imperialism; the relation between sexuality/desire and nationalist affect; and the need to cast an "awry lens" at the pieties of the past" (224).

Ponce concludes his analysis of the novel by pointing to its "un-ONEing" of the ideas of "reading, revolution, and resurrection," a "universalist gesture" which Apostol closes the novel with. He writes:

...[t]his novel in many ways is about recovery. The recovery of a text, a body; the recovery of a hero, a history; the recovery of a country, a past... The power of Rizal, and the power of our history, is that these geni are inexhaustible: we must be glad for the patently 'unfinished' and infuriating history that we have—in this way, it seems, Filipinos must represent the complexity of everyone's incomplete and indeterminate selves, and our endless, surprising resurrections (293).

Despite the different discourse (the queering of reading), that Ponce tackles in his book, his interpretation of Apostol's novel resonates with its transnational reception. Both regard her use of narrative constructionism as productive of contestatory readings; thus the "awry lens" is enough and is a sign of the political. Ponce closes his commentary by drawing our attention

to the metaphor of Raymundo Mata's blindness and how it signals a shift in the terrain of "knowledge production" to unknown territory. Brennan's explanation rings true at this point: this unhomeliness for Ponce that allows for the invention of "unfixed [and] permeable" identities (232) is ironically an aesthetic exercise in perspective which, as suggested by the foregoing discussion, makes Apostol's fiction intelligible to metropolitan audiences in the global North. Ponce's view that *The Revolution* addresses Resil Mojares' call, in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History*, for a more representative national history that remains open to "the reality of many unaggregated, dispersed, and competing versions of community," which makes visible what "is rendered peripheral, subordinate, or invisible in the formation of the nation" (223), is unpersuasive. The peripheral in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling* pertains to "the local structures of belief and knowledge" (7), which are relegated to local, regional or provincial status in contradistinction to the national (308). As such, which narratives of belonging does *The Revolution* bring to fore against the hegemony of national discourse? It is unfortunate that Mojares' points are taken out of context. This (Apostol's) estranging perspective conceives of reading as in itself a political act but does so in a way that dismisses the relevance of content or, more problematically, any grounding on the social as if the reader is, in a misreading of Barthes, "without history, biography, psychology" (*Image-Music-Text* 148). The dissociation from the social world is effected by Apostol's insistence on reading as a blank concept without recourse to its historical and material particularity. As San Juan points out, postcolonial criticism (i.e., Bhabha's) views its enunciation as "an uninterrupted process of performance... that elevates the 'language' metaphor to transcendental aprioristic status" (26). By not configuring the reader as a historical subject, Apostol's reader becomes an instrument in the author's self-writing often referred to as fictocriticism.

Brennan has critiqued this kind of writing that claims exemption from the political and the economic in disavowing mediation as a critical method in the analysis of texts since the text, as its proponents claim, is already the performance of the political. In line with his argument that a

sociology of literature remains relevant in the study of form, Brennan notes that “this new textualism has, in one variant, found a voice also in ‘fictocriticism’, where creative writing is seen as itself a theory, and where theory, in order to perform its political task fulfills itself in literature” (“Running and Dodging” 279). He explains that this discourse pronounces itself, echoing Benitez’s criticism, “as immediately political—whose theory is a politics performed” which entails “the deliberate rejection of all correspondence to experience, evidence or proof” since it generates “new modalities of perception” (“Running and Dodging” 280). These maneuvers are evident in Apostol’s self-conscious techniques, which, as mentioned, forestall any other interpretation apart from a formal analysis that gives way to pleasure. This formalism which neatly delivers a postcolonial reading of Philippine history accounts for Apostol’s appeal for international readers, a relationship that bears traces of the manner in which literary critics assumed the role of native informant in authorizing knowledge production about the Third World in the First World in the 80s, which marked the transformation of the postcolonial into a purely textual category. Underscoring the significance of this moment, Simon Gikandi writes:

[o]nce the ‘Third World’ speech communities had changed, once the primary audience for cultural discourse was based outside the national state...the global had to be reinvented as a substitute for nationalism. It was during the same period that minority communities in the metropolitan centres were adopted as supplements, or even field sites, for the vanishing ‘Third World’ (646).

An appropriation from ethnography, the native informant represents the non-West in a language authorized by the metropolitan First World. This role is more recently carried out by the “self-marginalizing or self-consolidating” postcolonial in Anglophone countries whose representation of his or her country is “needed and foreclosed” (Spivak 6). As explained by Spivak,

[t]he postcolonial informant has little to say about the oppressed minorities in the decolonized nation as such... Yet the aura of identification with those distant objects of oppression clings to these informants as, again at best,



they identify with the other racial and ethnic minorities in metropolitan space. At worst, they take advantage of the aura and play the native informant uncontaminated by disavowed involvement with the machinery of the production of knowledge... The continuous and varied product of this dissimulation is an 'other' or 'ground level activity', 'emergent discourses' for postmodernity, a kind of built-in critical moment (360-361).

As a migrant writer in the U.S. and trained in one of its foremost creative writing programs, Apostol thus speaks on behalf of Filipinos and their history. As a cultural broker, she posits that the narrative design in *Insurrecto* is in itself indicative of the Philippine postcolonial condition: "the structure of the book mirrors how I figured out the war, which is layers and layers of other voices and the Filipinos barely heard. In my view, that structure—the absence or layers of other voices, tells us something about the Filipino" (Soliman). The imperative on reading (recall Apostol's requirement for "smarter readers"), reduces the Filipino into a reader like herself, a cosmopolitan whose perspective is that of the "triumphalist self-declared hybrid" (Spivak 361). Thus, she can only address the Filipino as a foreclosure on reading. Consequently in *Insurrecto*, Magsalin's perturbations about reading and the author's intentions are emblematic of the Filipino's quandary:

[h]ow many times has she waded into someone else's history, say the mysteries of lemon soaps and Irish pubs in Daedalus's Dublin, or the Decembrists' plot in Dostoevsky's *The Devils*, or Gustave Flaubert's Revolution of 1848 in what turns out to be one of her favorite books, *Sentimental Education*, and she would know absolutely nothing about the scenes, the historical background that drives them, the confusing cultural details...and yet she dives in, to try and figure what it is the writer wishes to tell (103).

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# Introduction to the Special Section on Culture and the Environment

While for sure culture and environment in the Philippines, taken separately and as a relation, have been the subject of countless studies, a huge area still lies open for inquiries based on perspectives from within, that is to say, from the experience of culture and environment of those who concretely live out the various cultures within the archipelago. These cultures in themselves involve an understanding of the environment and the way indigenous peoples, for example, stand in relation to it.

The fact alone that the Philippines has at least 170 different languages and that each language contains a culture with its own uniqueness, will give us an idea of how much remains untapped in this area of research. For the Tagakolu or Tagakaulo of Eastern Mindanao, for instance, God bears the name of *Tyumanem* which literally means “the one who planted.” One could surmise how such an understanding of the divine that is intimately related to their experience of their natural environment gives rise to, or flows from, a culture whose wealth and uniqueness have much to offer the world at large in terms of understanding our shared cultures and environment.

In this special section on culture and the environment in the Philippines, Dr. Benjamin M. Vallejo, Jr., in his thought-provoking essay, “Pandemic, Anthropause, and Healing the Planet,” reflects on the meaning of the disruption caused by the pandemic (called “anthropause”) and how it

presents itself as a possibility to reassess our human existence in relation to nature, and to determine how we are to correct the mistakes of the past and move toward a future that is not just sustainable but is also able to bring about the full flourishing of both the human community and the natural world.

In “The Sustainable Development Goals and the Importance of Cultural Change,” Dr. David O’Connor shows us how the Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved by way of global solidarity, which in turn can only be forged by a cultural shift. It is not without reason that such a shift is being heralded by the youth, as exemplified by the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who managed to both disturb and inspire us at the same time.

For his part, the anthropologist and theologian Br. Karl Gaspar, CSsR’s piece, “Resistance to Coal Industry’s Impact on Mindanao’s Ecology,” examines the basis of the growing resistance to coal-fired power plants (CFPPs) in Mindanao, citing not just reports by experts but also the reaction of local communities that bear the brunt of the effects of that technology in their lives. Br. Gaspar’s analysis is informed not only by the official teachings of the Catholic Church (notably the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*) but, even more significantly, by his long years of personal interaction with lumad communities in the region.

Unfortunately, the dominance of science and technology has brought people to view the environment in a materialistic way. Science, on the one hand, is built on observation and measurement and it has become the principal tool to describe the environment. Technology, on the other hand, has separated humans from the environment. Science and technology have reduced the environment to its material dimensions which can be quantified, and therefore be priced. We now routinely calculate the monetary value of the environment. If the predominant view of the environment is materialistic, then culture which is rooted in the environment becomes tainted with this materialism.

The decade of the 2020s may change things. The COVID-19 pandemic is devastating the global economy, and simultaneously, climate change is accelerating in bringing calamities of great magnitude such as forest fires and

devastating mudslides. Biodiversity continues to decline even as we realize how bad ocean plastic pollution has become. These environmental losses are beyond calculation. Perhaps this is finally the time when we will realize their value.

These essays indeed invite us to take a pause but only so as to guide our actions in the future. As we say, when we take a pause, we take stock of things, step back, regroup, and try to regain our bearings. In this way, the disruption that the pandemic has brought about becomes a necessary one. To the extent that it is necessary and on a deeper level, it is not really a disruption in the negative sense. It is precisely the opportunity to redeem ourselves by recovering the delicate balance that we have lost through the excesses of the modern technological and calculative age. When we get sick, our bodies force us to take a pause by getting weak, by making us stay in bed for us to heal and recover. Our hope is that we make full use of this enforced disruption that is the anthropause in order for our planet to heal.

Remmon E. Barbaza and Fabian M. Dayrit  
19 July 2021

# The Sustainable Development Goals and the Importance of Cultural Change

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**David O' Connor**

Formerly United Nations Division  
for Sustainable Development

## **Abstract**

Sustainable development is an ambition rather than a reality. Profound changes will be needed to achieve it in ways of producing and consuming. These will only happen at scale if societies undergo major cultural changes, including placing greater value on undervalued natural assets and internalizing in individual decisions the costs they impose on the environment, including the climate system. For these changes to occur, societies need to become more equitable, ensuring that all members enjoy decent living standards and are thus willing and able to attach greater weight to the well-being of future generations.

## **Keywords**

sustainable development, natural assets, biodiversity loss, climate change, intra- and intergenerational equity



## **Introduction: From incremental to transformative change**

Just over five years ago, the nations of the world together with various civil society representatives began the journey toward the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at a United Nations (UN) Summit in September 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (“Transforming our World”). The Summit—and the intergovernmental negotiations which led up to it—was a high point in multilateral cooperation. The international community adopted a hugely ambitious agenda<sup>1</sup> aimed not at completing the unfinished work of poverty eradication targeted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but going beyond the MDGs in addressing global environmental challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and degradation of land and of waters, including the world’s oceans.

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda recognize the interdependencies among the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. Freshwater, for example, while understood to be essential to human life and health, is also a renewable environmental resource whose continued availability depends in large part on the conservation in a healthy state of watersheds, rivers, aquifers, groundwater, and other sources which provide that resource. Productive agriculture is essential to feeding the world’s population but how we produce food impacts not just the health of soils but human health and the health of the planet, as agriculture and land use change are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions globally.

## **The urgency of a course correction**

The 2030 Agenda aims to rectify the historical imbalance in development models which have given overriding importance to material progress as measured by growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with only secondary consideration to social progress (e.g., addressing structural causes of inequality, including gender inequality) and little consideration to the environmental consequences of a growth fixation. China’s long and polluting economic boom represents a recent example of the large environmental costs of a “growth first” model; most industrialized and emerging economies followed similar paths in earlier days. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, economic

growth has been powered in most countries by fossil-fuel-based energy.<sup>2</sup> Thus, with growth has come an inexorable rise in greenhouse gas emissions. Looking ahead at the next half century, this model is unsustainable if humanity is to avert runaway climate change.

The SDGs and 2030 Agenda were negotiated in parallel with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and tackling climate change is at number 13 of the SDGs.<sup>3</sup> Implementation of these two agreements must proceed in parallel as well since the 2020s are both the Decade of Action and Delivery of the SDGs and the make-or-break decade for reversing the upward trend in greenhouse gas emissions. If global greenhouse gas emissions are not substantially reduced by 2030, it will be impossible to stay within the mean global temperature rise of 1.5°C., which is stated in the Paris Agreement. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documents in some detail the implications for the planet and for various ecosystems of exceeding that threshold.<sup>4</sup>

The post-World War II international economic institutions and rules have strongly supported this “growth first” model. So, for instance, trade rules as enshrined in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have erected high hurdles for countries wishing to restrict imports based on the production methods used to produce the exports—though exceptions are permissible where trade restrictions or other policies are deemed necessary to protect human, animal, or plant life, or health, or to conserve exhaustible natural resources (“WTO rules and environmental policies”). The WTO has yet to be stress tested by having to adjudicate cases involving measures (e.g., the carbon border adjustment mechanism proposed in the European Union’s Green Deal designed to deter “carbon leakage” from European countries governed by strict carbon reduction measures to other countries with more lax carbon emission controls. The concern is that, as capital is mobile, if climate policy in one country or region significantly raises the costs of production, (e.g. in energy-intensive industries), those industries may shrink there with expansion occurring in other countries with more lax policies—and with global emissions staying the same or even rising.

Given the world trade rules and the challenges these pose for governments' intent on introducing stronger domestic or regional (in the case of the EU) climate policy measures unilaterally, consumer preferences and choices assume outsized importance in influencing global greenhouse gas emissions. That is because, if enough consumers demand, for example, that the products they consume be produced demonstrably with "zero deforestation" or "zero net emissions," those hoping to sell to them have little choice but to meet those demands. The present problem is that not nearly enough consumers demand such products to be able to make a major difference on global greenhouse gas emissions. Confronted with the choice between green products and cheap products, the choice for most will be cheap. This is a rational choice considering the stark inequalities in income within and between countries and the tight budget constraints of low-income consumers everywhere.

Thus, the likelihood of cultural change such that the majority, even the vast majority, of consumers prefer the "green" alternative is closely linked to the diminution of the stark inequalities characterizing many countries.

The SDGs are a uniquely well-suited framework to address the climate change challenge and other environmental challenges because they are a holistic set of goals which also aim to reduce inequalities within and between countries and to address the basic problems of inadequate access to food, health care, education, energy, and economic opportunity of the world's poor (Kamau, Chasek, O'Connor 23). They were not naively conceived without acknowledging possible trade-offs between different goals and targets. Rather, they are presented as a challenge to governments and others not to hide behind trade-offs to explain why we cannot feed the hungry and protect the planet at the same time. They say: maybe not now, given our broken economic model and perverse incentives, but we have to find a new model, change the incentives and behaviors, and develop the technologies and production methods which will permit us, for example, to produce adequate nutritious food for everyone sustainably. This will also involve changing consumers' food preferences, given the sharply different effects of

different foodstuffs on greenhouse gas emissions, with red meat particularly high in emissions.

The global food system is an excellent example of a system and set of technologies which have the capacity to produce enough food to feed over seven billion people—although hundreds of millions still go hungry—but which has in the process contributed significantly to both health and environmental problems from obesity to eutrophication from nutrient runoff from fields to greenhouse gas emissions. Given the importance of farming and food security politically, governments around the world have heavily subsidized farmers, encouraging them to convert biodiverse ecosystems to monocrop fields, and to overapply water, fertilizer, and chemicals. Thus, incentives have perversely encouraged environmental degradation.

The food system extends to the plate and people's food preferences, and here, too, the system has been environmentally devastating as animal protein consumption rises rapidly with incomes. Such protein consumption requires much larger quantities of land, water, and other inputs than vegetable protein, thus contributing to large-scale land conversion to grow feed grains for livestock. The Food and Agriculture Organization in 2012 estimates that 26% of the Planet's ice-free land is used for livestock grazing and 33 % of croplands are used for livestock feed production. Thus, an important part of the challenge of transforming food systems is a large-scale change in food consumers' preferences toward less meat-rich diets, a significant cultural change especially in wealthier countries and among wealthier people generally. While various expressions of vegetarianism are becoming more common in developed countries, they represent a small share of total food demand there. Meanwhile, emerging economies are experiencing growing meat demand with rising household incomes.<sup>5</sup>

### **Sustainable economics**

Renewable energy is one example of a green product which, originally much more expensive than fossil fuels per unit of energy supplied, has dramatically fallen in price to the point where electricity from onshore wind and solar power is cheaper than that from a new combined-cycle gas

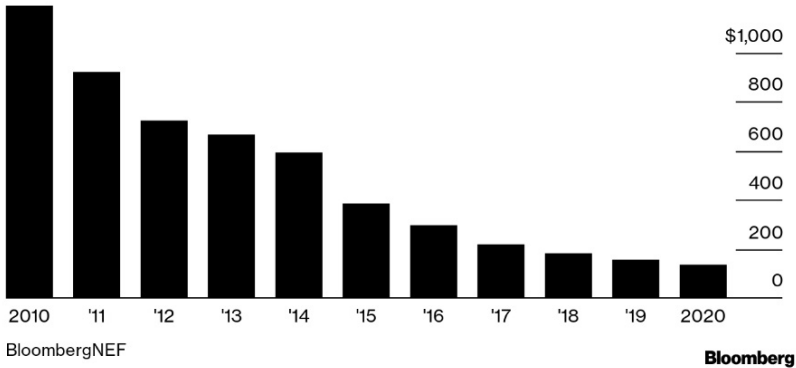
plant—\$40-41 versus \$56 per megawatt hours (MWh) (Roser). This makes renewable-generated electricity ever more affordable even to lower-income households—many of which still lack access to any electricity, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The economics of wind and solar power have been driven by economies of scale and learning, accelerated by “market-making” measures like ambitious renewable energy targets and feed-in tariffs such as those introduced in countries like Germany, Denmark, and Spain. Germany’s renewable electricity production, in the most recent legislation, is targeted to rise by 55% in 2030, with the bulk of the increase coming from solar photovoltaics (PV) and offshore wind (Appun).

It remains to be seen how many other “green” products enjoy comparable scale and learning economies and thus can, with a large enough market, become price-competitive with their traditional competitors. There is certainly a reason to believe that, over time, prices of many such products will fall. For now, and for most low-income consumers, they remain unaffordable (or unattractive, given tight budget constraints) (Chouinard, Ellison, Ridgeway). Electric vehicles (EVs) are a case in point, where their current cost limits their market but the cost of EV batteries is expected to continue to fall, making such cars ever more affordable even without government subsidies (Boudway).

Table 1. Electric vehicle Battery Prices from 2010-2020

### Electric Vehicle Battery Prices Near \$100/kWh Watershed

A BloombergNEF survey shows the average price of lithium-ion battery packs at \$137 per kilowatt-hour. At \$100/kWh, EVs are as cheap to make as gas cars.



Source: [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-16/electric-cars-are-about-to-be-as-cheap-as-gas-powered-models](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-16/electric-cars-are-about-to-be-as-cheap-as-gas-powered-models).

As sustainable development and tackling climate change in a timely manner will require a wholesale and rapid shift toward low-emissions, less environmentally damaging products and production methods, it will not suffice to wait for markets alone to lower the costs of such products and to make them competitive with traditional products. Policy inducements will be needed to accelerate the pace. For example, where economies of scale are operative and where government is a large consumer—e.g., with buses and other vehicles, office equipment and supplies, health-care products in many countries, and certain other products—government procurement policy can help to create viable markets for green products like electric buses. Still, procurement policy can only reach so far. The government can also impose tax to polluting products in order for these to be less cost competitive by internalizing the costs of pollution in the price. Such policies work, however, not by lowering the costs of green products, but by raising the

costs of “brown” ones. In the near term, then, it fails to address the problem of unaffordability of green products.

Far more efficacious to effect the large-scale changes needed in consumption and production patterns would be to introduce redistributive fiscal policy measures aimed at raising the real post-tax incomes of low-income consumers while limiting the same for high-income earners. Cross-country data on energy footprints of households across the income distribution show that high-income households have much larger footprints than low-income ones. Globally, the consumption share of the bottom half of the population is less than 20% of final energy footprints, which in turn is less than what the top 5% of the population consumes (Oswald, et al. 231).

Such redistribution would not, on its own, ensure that with rising incomes ordinary households would choose “green” products over traditional ones. Policy-induced relative price changes must also be part of the equation. Moreover, education and awareness-raising will be important complements, to instill in the population an appreciation of the importance of their consumption choices to tackling environmental challenges—and the importance of the latter to their own well-being and that of their children and grandchildren. Also, as there tends to be a strong copycat tendency in areas such as fashion, convincing trendsetters to choose sustainable products can have a demonstration effect on other consumers’ preferences.

Given the urgency of tackling a challenge like climate change—in short, the need to overhaul whole sectors of the economy in a short time frame—waiting for consumers to change their preferences without any steering or nudging may simply not result in the required pace of change. Governments have a variety of policy instruments at their disposal to complement efforts at shaping consumer values and preferences. Taxes on polluting products are one; limitations or even prohibitions on certain activities and technologies are another; education of people about the personal financial benefits over a product’s lifetime of purchasing energy-saving lighting, appliances, or vehicles is a third. Very often, governments will want or need to combine all these instruments to achieve the desired effect at scale and in time.

One of the biggest challenges in addressing a challenge like biodiversity loss is the failure of markets to reflect accurately the value of nature—e.g., the economic costs of destroying a natural watershed and having to substitute it with investment in a drinking water treatment plant. Those costs may only become evident once the damage has been done, even if it would have been much less costly to protect the watershed and its ecosystem services in the first place. Dasgupta observes that, in addition to nature’s mobility (e.g., migrations of many different species):

Many of the processes that shape our natural world are silent and invisible. The soils are a seat of a bewildering number of processes with all three attributes. Taken together the attributes are the reason it is not possible to trace very many of the harms inflicted on Nature (and by extension, on humanity too) to those who are responsible. Just who is responsible for a particular harm is often neither observable nor verifiable. No social mechanism can meet this problem in its entirety, meaning that no institution can be devised to enforce socially responsible conduct. (5)

The absence or imperfect functioning of markets for ecosystem services means private individuals and corporations have little or no incentive to conserve the natural assets which support those services.<sup>6</sup> The risk of degradation or collapse can exist even for products which are traded in markets, like fish, but which depend on the health of an open access natural resource (like coastal or offshore waters and ecosystems like coral reefs). Various fish species’ reproduction rates risk being exceeded by their extraction rates from overfishing. Governments and fisher communities have developed ways to manage fisheries to ensure timely replenishment of fish stocks (Asche, et al. 11221) but these practices remain underutilized. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains a serious global problem,<sup>7</sup> as countries with large marine territories often lack the capacity to police them effectively and as monitoring and reporting of high seas fishing are inadequate.

### **International equity in pursuing sustainable development**

Environmental challenges today transcend national borders yet, national sovereignty remains very much the bedrock of international law enshrined



in the United Nations Charter. This requires international cooperation among sovereign states to tackle challenges like climate change, governance of the high seas, and conservation of biodiversity. All three problems are thus the subject of international treaties, or conventions, negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations. Of course, most biodiversity resides within national borders, but the benefits of a biodiverse planet and of a stable climate system accrue to all of humanity. Thus, all nations have an interest to ensure adequate conservation of biodiversity and stabilization of the climate system, which will depend not only on their own actions but on those of other State, private and civil society actors.

Two problems plague efforts to forge stronger international cooperation: the costs and benefits of action are not equally shared across countries; and countries differ markedly in their financial and other means to take action.

First is the problem in the distribution of costs and benefits. In the case of climate change, 20 countries account for almost 80% of global emissions today.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the benefits of action to slow and then halt climate change accrue to many countries, in the first instance to small-island developing States (SIDS), low-lying countries and other countries particularly exposed to extreme weather events. Of the 30 countries ranked most vulnerable<sup>9</sup> to climate change, 23 are low-income countries. Yet, whatever these countries might do to lower their own emissions, it will have a negligible impact on the problem. Thus, the big 20 emitters must be convinced to take bold action. Some of those are lower-middle income countries—notably India—which still have major development challenges to address, not least ending extreme poverty, and therefore only reluctantly would forego use of cheap coal reserves for electricity generation. Global transfers can help address these concerns, though mobilizing international climate finance on a sufficient scale remains problematic. Developed country delivery of multi-lateral commitments on climate finance will be a high priority at the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, taking place in Glasgow in November of 2021.

In relation to biodiversity, countries rich in biodiversity are relatively few, with 17 countries accounting for roughly 70% of the Earth's biodiversity<sup>10</sup> and only eight of these are the same as those accounting for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions. Some of these countries are low-income; others are lower-middle-income. If they are to be expected to conserve the biodiversity within their borders for the benefit of humanity, they can reasonably expect adequate remuneration for conserving these valuable natural assets. Yet, until now, the resource flows for this purpose have generally not been equal to the opportunity costs of conservation, namely, foregoing the conversion of lands to other uses—harvesting timber, planting palm oil or soybean, or raising cattle. The negotiations currently underway under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework include the matter of global financing for biodiversity conservation; the financing gap has recently been estimated at \$711 billion per year (“Financing Nature”).<sup>11</sup> There is little prospect for this gap to be closed by public funds alone which suggests that ways must be found to tap into the huge pools of financial capital controlled by private investors, notably institutional investors like pension funds and sovereign wealth funds. Climate finance has a greater prospect of attracting significant private money insofar as it goes to commercially viable renewable energy or electric rail or other projects, but so far multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank have had limited success in tapping institutional investor capital.<sup>12</sup> Biodiversity finance has had even less success tapping into private finance on a significant scale beyond philanthropies, though the Global Environment Facility does mobilize biodiversity finance largely from governments. Ironically, tackling climate change may be the best hope for increasing biodiversity-relevant finance, as so-called “nature-based solutions” (NBS) like forest restoration, avoided deforestation, mangrove replanting, and restoration of degraded lands, enjoy wider adoption as part of the greenhouse gas mitigation arsenal. These investments have along the added benefit of often being beneficial for climate change adaptation—e.g., with mangroves as buffers against storm surges and coastal erosion, forest

cover mitigating erosion on sloping lands—and conservation of vital ecosystem services like water flow regulation and purification.

Second, countries differ greatly in their financial and technical capacities to address global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss. Separate from the question of an equitable or fair sharing of the costs of action—e.g., measures taken by a mega-diverse country to conserve its biodiversity or greenhouse gas mitigation measures taken by a low-income country—is the question of ability to pay. Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, are both biodiversity-rich countries, yet, based on World Bank data, Indonesia’s per capita income is around \$4,000 and DRC’s is around \$500. Meanwhile, per capita income in the United States, another mega-diverse country (according to the World Conservation Monitoring Centre) is roughly \$66,000. So, clearly the capacity to finance biodiversity-related investments from domestic resources differs markedly across countries rich in biodiversity. International development finance is meant to be one means of addressing inequities in ability to pay but aid budgets are constrained by the extent of domestic political support and are therefore not scaled to match recipient country needs whether for biodiversity conservation or for other purposes.

### **Conclusion: A way forward toward greater global solidarity**

International financial flows to developing countries which contribute to providing international public goods like climate stabilization and biodiversity conservation remain below what is needed, though estimates of the funding gap vary.<sup>13</sup> For instance, climate change mitigation investment needs in developing countries from various sources (the International Energy Agency, McKinsey, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis) range between \$180-540 billion per year between 2010 and 2030 (Fankhauser, et al. 203). The scale of international financial flows to developing countries from multiple sources will need to increase significantly if we are to come to grips with these challenges. For low-income countries,

concessional development finance will have to constitute the largest share, at least initially.

If at present domestic political constituencies in major donor countries do not render likely a sizeable increase in development assistance to financial global public goods like climate stabilization and biodiversity conservation, then the best hope is that future generations—beginning with the current generation of young people—will become a powerful political constituency in the coming years, supporting stronger domestic action and global solidarity to tackle these global challenges. This can happen and may even be likely to happen as young people are not only acutely aware of climate change (if not to the same extent biodiversity loss) but many are also active in pressuring their governments for more ambition to address it. The Swedish teenage climate activist, Greta Thunberg, has inspired and led the emergence of a global youth movement for stronger climate action. Another factor, based on the above discussion, may be what happens to domestic inequalities in some of the large donor countries. Admittedly, there is not a close inverse relationship between the degree of income inequality in a country and the share of its gross national income (GNI) which it devotes to development assistance. For instance, the USA and the United Kingdom are two of the most unequal high-income OECD countries (as measured by their Gini coefficients), yet the UK devotes a sizeable share of its GNI to development assistance (0.70%) while the United States devotes 0.18% (though in absolute dollar amount it is the largest single donor because of the size of its GNI).<sup>14</sup>

It is at least plausible that, within a given country's domestic cultural milieu, reducing the degree of domestic income inequality—and the poverty rate—would make the political case for increasing international development assistance more palatable. If so, then redressing domestic inequalities should provide favorable conditions for a country's taking action to increased official development finance, including to support low-income and lower-middle-income countries' climate and biodiversity finance needs.

Beyond financing, global solidarity can and does take other forms. International scientific and technological cooperation is crucial for tackling climate change, conserving biodiversity, and early detecting and responding

to pandemic outbreaks such as COVID-19. Such collaboration is facilitated by international education, student, and faculty exchange. While scientific research increasingly requires international collaboration, collaboration faces several barriers which need to be addressed.<sup>15</sup>

Ultimately, such global solidarity can be greatly facilitated by a cultural shift, one which seems possible if not already materializing in the younger generation. The shift, which has been enabled by the internet and information technologies, involves self-identification not only as a citizen of a particular country but as a global citizen. This implies assuming the responsibilities of global citizenship—not only respect for human rights irrespective of country but also recognition of the need for all people everywhere to bear their fair share of the burden of action to solve global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss while also addressing persistent problems of poverty and hunger, as called for in the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals are embedded in a unified, integrated agenda, one for the cooperative attainment and the shared well-being of all humankind.

## Notes

1. Unlike the first 6 MDGs, MDG 7 is couched in very broad terms: “Ensure environmental sustainability” and the targets lack coherence. Climate change figures only in an indicator under target 7.A. The links between environmental health and human well-being are not explicitly reflected in the set of goals and targets.
2. For more information, you may access this chart at [ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels](http://ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels).
3. Details of the Paris Agreement may be accessed on this site: [unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement](http://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement).
4. Details of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming may be accessed on this site: [www.ipcc.ch/sr15/](http://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/).
5. For an animation showing the strong correlation between per capita income and per capita meat consumption, visit: [ourworldindata.org/meat-production#meat-consumption-tends-to-rise-as-we-get-richer](http://ourworldindata.org/meat-production#meat-consumption-tends-to-rise-as-we-get-richer).
6. For more information, kindly visit this site: [www.paulsoninstitute.org/key-initiatives/financing-nature-report/](http://www.paulsoninstitute.org/key-initiatives/financing-nature-report/).
7. In 2016, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported that 15-30% of global annual catches account for IUU fishing.
8. The 20 by emissions share are China, USA, India, Russian Federation, Japan, Germany, Islamic Republic of Iran, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Turkey, Australia, France, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom; see [www.ucsusa.org/resources/each-countrys-share-co2-emissions](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/each-countrys-share-co2-emissions).
9. See this Notre Dame University ranking: [gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/](http://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/).
10. The 17 megadiverse countries, as identified by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of UNEP are: Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Ecuador, United States, Philippines, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa and Venezuela.
11. That report puts estimated financial flows into global biodiversity conservation in 2019 between US\$124 billion and US\$143 billion, which is a near-tripling since 2012. Nevertheless, this amount pales in comparison with spending on agricultural, forestry, and fisheries subsidies that degrade nature and are estimated to be at least two to four times greater. The gap estimate includes the additional investments in cropland and rangeland around the world to make their management supportive of biodiversity conservation.
12. For a discussion of why multilateral financial institutions have not succeeded in tapping institutional investment to support climate-aligned investment and how to change that, see OECD (2021).

13. For the biodiversity financing gap, see Financing Nature, [www.paulsoninstitute.org/key-initiatives/financing-nature-report/](http://www.paulsoninstitute.org/key-initiatives/financing-nature-report/).
14. See the OECD DAC data: [www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/](http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/).
15. K.R.W. Matthews et al. (2020), International scientific collaborative activities and barriers to them in eight societies, *Accountability in Research: Policies and Quality Assurance*, Volume 27, 2020, Issue 8. Among the barriers are lack of funding for international work, restrictions on material and data sharing, and differences in academic standards. Respondents also complained about bias against scholars from emerging or developing countries; [tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08989621.2020.1774373](https://tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08989621.2020.1774373).

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# Pandemic, Anthropause, and Healing the Planet

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## **Abstract**

This paper reflects on the environmental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the environmentalist view of the planetary system's holism, and the anthropause. Referenced are religious traditions and the philosophies of three early mid-20<sup>th</sup> century marine biologists who are considered founders of the modern environmentalist movement—Edward F. Ricketts, John Steinbeck, and Rachel Carson. Their philosophies on the interconnectedness of the environment provide the inspiration for the Gaia hypothesis which provides the framework for understanding the anthropause, or the hiatus of human domination of the planetary environment resulting from COVID-19 economic lockdowns. Indeed, there might have been a “reset” of the planet's biosphere which is referred to as a “healing of the earth.” However, the apparent improvement of the quality of the global environment which validates the predictions of the Gaia hypothesis masks the other unexpected phenomenon of the anthropause such as more economic dislocation resulting in inequality, poverty, and more extractive use of the Earth's resources. From this perspective, the anthropause

provides human society a pause for reflection. A new global consensus on the nature of human and economic development is needed. This will have to draw from science, the humanities, philosophy, and theological traditions.

**Keywords**

sustainable development, natural assets, biodiversity loss, climate change, intra- and intergenerational equity

## Introduction

No doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has environmental causes. In the face of an existential crisis, it has shed light on the ambiguous relationship between humans and their environment. It is likely, for example, that the zoonosis happened when the ancestral SARS-CoV-2 virus, the pathogen that causes COVID-19, jumped from a bat animal reservoir in central China to an intermediate host, possibly a pangolin, and then to humans (Shereen et al. 92). A large body of evidence suggests that the Sarbecovirus subgroup of coronaviruses evolved from viruses that naturally infect bats, pangolins, and small carnivores in Asia (Morens et al. 556). In 2002, the first documented SARS-CoV-2 emerged in Guangdong Province, China, which killed 889 people and infected 8000. It was suppressed because it was not very infectious. The intermediate reservoir were civet cats (Wenzel 375). In 2012, the virus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) was isolated in Saudi Arabia. The intermediate hosts are dromedary camels, and the primary host remains unknown but is hypothesized to be bats. Like SARS-CoV-2, it is not easily transmitted between humans. Most cases have been in a health care setting where estimated fatality rate is 35%.

Environmental scientists and virologists have been warning of the consequences of habitat destruction in the emergence of new diseases. One of the most documented cases is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, where zoonosis from apes occurred in the 1920s, at least on three occasions, because of increasing clearing of the African rainforests which expanded the bushmeat trade. HIV spread beyond Africa with the continent's subsequent decolonization (Hillis 1757; Goudsmit 63). For the Sarbecoviruses, the cause is the intensification of agriculture in countries where the forests have been largely cleared but where there is an increased demand for bushmeat (Jones et al. 8400).

With the examples of recent diseases mentioned above, the emergence of infectious diseases is a result of human choices, more specifically economic, and as such can be investigated within an ethical framework as it involves human-nature interaction. This interaction is culturally constructed, and, in some cases, the nature of this interaction is somewhat ambiguous. This

ambiguity plays a role in our understanding of concepts as important as “healing the earth” and the planetary system’s wholeness which is central to current constructions of environmentalism for which we must ask questions on how such ideas came to be.

### **Constructing the Environment and Human Relations from Philosophical and Religious Ethical Traditions**

First, we must reflect on the ambiguity of the concept of “environment” by asking, “What is the environment?” Environment and nature are part of the observable natural world. Humans exist within that natural world. Greek rationality considered the structures of nature reducible from its inherent complexity, a paradigm of the sciences to the present. The stoic Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, however, considered nature as a single entity whose purpose is harmony (Bourdeau 10). The Judaeo-Christian in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis separated man from nature: all nature shall serve man, while man shall serve God, and man was commanded by God to dominate the earth. Thus, Christianity as the offshoot of Judaism is considered as the most anthropocentric of religious traditions (White 1205) even if it had demythologized nature and so became an object of rational understanding (“Laudato Si” 57). However, since the emergence of the ecumenical movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church, the nuance of domination has changed to a meaning of stewardship in the Christian churches. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, shares with Pope Francis a theology of integral ecology which recognizes the Earth as a “common home.” (“Laudato Si” 5). This “integral ecology” has been a consensus of the ecumenical movement of the Catholic, Orthodox, Oriental, Anglican, and the Evangelical churches as well as inter-religious dialogue since the Second Vatican Council (Sereti 621). This lack of stewardship is, for the church, an environmental crisis that is a moral problem (John Paul II 2), structural in cause, and rooted in consumption (Benedict XVI 33; Sereti 622).

The Asian philosophical and religious tradition that chimes in with 21<sup>st</sup> century notions of ecological and environmental holism is Buddhism.

Buddhist philosophy on the environment is holistic and Buddhist environmental thought is naturalistic as modern ecological science is. However, it does not put a special place for man in nature but is dynamic and cyclical. Unlike philosophies of environmentalism which draws on the natural sciences, it is not materialistic (James 603). Buddhist thinkers maintain that any being, such as a human or a helmeted hornbill is “empty,” devoid of value but is emergent from nature (James 606). John J. Holder, a scholar of early Buddhism from St. Norbert College in Wisconsin, USA, and visiting professor of Science, Technology and Society at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, challenges this idea of “devoid of value.” Buddhism’s idea of value in beings in nature is, according to Holder, with early Buddhist ideas of human continuity with nature, a recognition of “*dukkha*” or a concern for all beings in the natural world (Holder 116). These emergent properties from nature as observed in detail is central to the “breaking through” and “non-teleological” philosophies of early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century environmentalists such as the American marine biologist, Edward F Ricketts and his friend, the Nobel prizewinning-writer John Steinbeck (Ricketts 103).

Islamic ethical views on the environment are premised on “*tawhid*” or the majesty, mercy, and all compassion of Allah as the creator of the cosmos and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, which is to do what is right, forbid what is wrong, and act with moderation at all times (Dien 49; Khalid 709). Muslims do not have the same meaning for nature as the Christians have. The closest Muslim meaning for the Christian idea of nature is the modern Arabic word “*bi’a*” whose meaning is habitat. As Pope Francis writes in “*Laudato Si*,” nature in Christianity has been demythologized and so is an object for study by science (57). Creation, according to Pope Francis, has a broader meaning than nature and incorporates God’s purpose and value of each and every being he created. In this sense, the Muslim idea of creation is that it is a “sign” of Allah’s goodness. Muslim environmental ethics is rooted in the Sharia and its application to human needs and the common good.

This concept of interconnections in and wholeness of the planetary environment became the inspiration for philosophical reflection by naturalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and marine biologists of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century which eventually

led to various formulations of interpreting holistic hypotheses in perceiving the planet.

### **Reflections on the Environment by Naturalists and Marine Biologists**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century American transcendentalist philosopher and poet Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) writing in “Walden” (Furtak 3; Thoreau 12) viewed nature as a symbol of spiritual truths in harmony. Thoreau went to the woods deliberately in solitude and in “Walden” challenges his readers to demand more from life, to complete it and flourish in freedom. For Thoreau, freedom is not just liberty from coercion but the freedom to explore and find meaning in nature with the purpose of “living simply.” This theme was further developed by Aldo Leopold whose classic essay “The Land Ethic” (1949) makes a moving plea for human restraint in the use of resources and for a greater self-development and worth in deeper reflection of nature (Leopold 5). The marine biologists—Edward F Ricketts (Ricketts 5) and Rachel Carson (Carson, *Silent Spring* 9; Carson, *The Sea around Us* 146; Carson and Hubbell 7; Lear 15)—bridge these concepts and philosophical reflections for the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when environmental problems and the Cold War arms race were clearly becoming existential crises for human society. Carson’s environmental ethics was clearly supported by scientific data in “Silent Spring” (Carson, *Silent Spring* 17). She criticized an overt anthropocentrism which was ascendant after the Second World War. The evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley in his preface to Carson’s book states that the excessive “technological and quantitative” basis of human society is anti-ethical to “ecology in service to man” and that ecology must also ensure the quality of human life for it to flourish. Ecology and human progress must respect human dignity. These are themes reiterated by Pope Francis in “Laudato Si” 54 years later. (5) Since “Silent Spring” was about the environmental hazard of pesticides, it intersects with human health and that a holistic environmental ethic based on the interconnectedness of human society and nature is important in human flourishing.

Ricketts' philosophy of the environment is based on detailed natural observations of species and communities in nature and their interrelationships at each level of biological organization (Sagarin and Crowder 26). These observations were his units for understanding a holistic concept of nature which was possible only with a "non-teleological thinking" philosophy which is the subject of the celebrated Easter Sunday chapter in "The Log from the Sea of Cortez" (Steinbeck and Ricketts 155). In non-teleological thinking, the units for observing nature were essential in building a holistic worldview. In non-teleological thinking, Ricketts wanted to define a concept of nature without preconceived notions or a priori assumptions, an asking of "what" questions rather than of "why," a process that avoids jumping into unwarranted conclusions. In furthering this line of thinking on the road to a holistic understanding, Ricketts called this as "breaking through" (Ricketts 89). "Breaking through" was much influenced by Buddhist philosophy and the idea of compassion for all living things. In turn, his philosophy greatly influenced his friend John Steinbeck who, like Ricketts, studied marine zoology and accompanied him in field expeditions in the Sea of Cortez also known as the Gulf of California.

### **The Holism of the Gaia Hypothesis**

The philosophical and theological traditions mentioned above form part of the inspiration for and understanding of James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis. Gaia, the Greek term for Earth goddess, is now a household word worldwide and many people accept the idea that the Earth is a self-regulating entity, similar to that of a living organism. Gaia holism proposes that the Earth is a giant organism where all living and non-living components interact and co-evolve in order to maintain a state of environmental homeostasis ("The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth" 18; Lovelock and Margulis 8). The concept of an internal environmental condition or homeostasis is taken from medical physiology where WB Cannon first coined the term (Cannon 400). Since the time Lovelock proposed his hypothesis in 1968, Gaia has been the subject of debate and discussion, especially on the teleology and testability of the hypothesis. But can Gaia be seen in Ricketts'

holistic non-teleological thinking worldview? We must look at the formulations of Lovelock's and Margulis' hypotheses to have an insight on the holistic concept and whether these are testable and can serve as a framework for understanding the environmental effects of COVID-19.

The Gaia hypothesis has five formulations in the order of the "weak and less complex" to the "hard and complex" (Kirchner 224). These formulations are: 1) the Influential, 2) the Co-evolutionary, 3) the Homeostatic, 4) the Teleological, and 5) the Optimizing (Boston 502). The first four formulations are testable, with the first formulation supported by much scientific evidence since it is the simplest of the Gaia hypothesis formulations. This formulation states that at all spatial scales, the biosphere affects the geophysiological environment of the planet (Selley 432). The Co-evolutionary formulation in Darwinian natural selection provides a feedback process in the geophysiological environment. The Teleological formulation is both confirmed and refuted by the Daisyworld computer simulation where, in a hypothetical planet, the populations of black and white flowers result in an equilibrium of constant conditions suitable for life (Lenton and Lovelock 292; Watson and Lovelock 286). Finally, the Optimizing formulation is for a complex system in which the biosphere can regulate itself, resulting in emergent phenomena which may not be predictable. This formulation might not be testable under Karl Popper's falsification criteria (Popper 34).

Since 1974 when the hypothesis was first presented, it has been the subject of debate on whether it was testable and was truly a scientific hypothesis. Computer simulations like Daisyworld have been used to test the hypothesis and its predictions (Watson and Lovelock 294). Extrapolation of predictions to the real earth was at best tenuous as Watson and Lovelock warned in 1983 and advised readers to consider it as a parable. A 2003 reexamination of the model by quantification of ecological, planetary, and evolutionary factors led Lenton and Lovelock to conclude that the model is robust but still must be considered a parable (Lenton and Lovelock 303). The feedback mechanism can only be tested with a stoppage of any of the biological and planetary processes which is unlikely in nature or by the stoppage of the economic



processes of the human component of the Earth environment. In 2020, an economically disarming virus essentially did that to the anthroposphere.

### **The Anthropause, Covid-19, and the Healing of the Earth**

SARS-CoV-2 is a remarkable virus. It is the first virus to have resulted in an existential threat to the anthroposphere. In recent history, perhaps it is only HIV that may have been close to being an existential threat to certain sectors of global human society. HIV is called the “most disarming virus” (Goudsmit 1) not only as it attacks the human immune system and disarms it giving rise to AIDS, but it also threatens the economic viability of many countries. To this day, there is no vaccine for HIV although anti-retroviral treatments may guarantee a near normal lifespan for infected people. SARS-CoV-2 and the disease it causes, COVID-19, may be considered as similar. It threatens the economy of the anthroposphere by stalling economic activity in quarantine lockdowns in what is now called as the “anthropause” (Rutz et al. 1156). The anthropause has resulted in changes in human economic and social behavior with shifts in consumption, logistics of supply, food procurement, mobility, education, and knowledge generation. These shifts were a direct result of COVID-19 avoidance behaviors (Buck and Weinstein 2) which were unexpected and emergent.

The first noticeable effect of the anthropause which was observable within a month of the declaration of the global health emergency, was an improvement in air quality with drastic reductions in particulates and nitrogenous emissions worldwide (Kerimray et al.3 ; Li et al.4 ; Rodríguez-Urrego and Rodríguez-Urrego 4; Wang and Su 6). It is estimated that in 2020, 6.4% of greenhouse gas emissions were cut from predicted rates because of the shutdown of the global economy (Tollefson 158). These improvement effects were throughout the anthroposphere, from reduction of environmental noise, less solid waste deposition on shorelines, less solid waste generation, restoration of beach environments (Soto et al. 8) and even the return of biodiversity to periurban areas such as fish, seaweeds, and seabirds returning to Venice’s canals (Rutz et al 1156; “Nature Is Taking Back Venice”) and mammalian carnivores returning to the urban parks of Tel Aviv (Stokstad

893). These massive improvements in environment are at the cost of human social and economic development such as fishery stocks increasing with the economic lockdown of fishing fleets (Stokes et al. 893). Recent contextual assessment of the human and environment nexus suggests that the perceived and measurable improvements in the environment have positive, negative, and neutral effects on human society and the environment. An example is the dramatic increase in medical solid waste because of the pandemic (Sarkar et al. 3) and larger opportunities for biological invasion and killing of predators considered harmful by human communities (Manenti et al. 7). The effects are only now being identified and the interconnections of these effects will be a subject for future research in Earth systems science also known as Gaian sciences. These sciences will try to answer Julian Huxley's question in 1961: "How then can the balance be achieved?"

The Gaian sciences will have to provide insight and understanding of the various nexuses of the human and environment relationships. COVID-19 will have its worse environment and human society nexus outcomes in underdeveloped countries with the global economy expected to contract by 5.2% in 2020 ("The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic"). Underdeveloped countries also have less investment in health care and public health systems (Singh and Misra 1625). With economic dislocation, biodiversity, and ecological economists predict even more unregulated extractive resource use (Forti et al. 3492) which is an emergent consequence of the anthropause.

The anthropause now describes the global hiatus of human domination of the planet (Lawton 21). Before January 1, 2020, the anthropause was an abstraction and a thought experiment of radical environmentalists who did not just theorize a reduction in consumption while ensuring human development goals beyond the classical economic metric of GDP. For them, the anthropause was a new social and environmental order (Jasanoff 341). The anthropause happened not by a social or revolutionary movement, but by a chance event within the parameters of Darwinian evolutionary ecology with the natural release of a coronavirus. The anthropause provides a unique opportunity for scientific research on the "reset" of the global environment

but this comes with much human suffering and economic dislocation which is expected to continue in the post-COVID-19 era. The consensus is that the anthropause will be temporary and the 6.7% cut in greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 is still less than the 7.6% per year estimated to cap global temperature increase within 1.5° C.

### **Making Sense of the Anthropause or Anthropauses**

What does it mean to pause? The experience of most of us is like pausing a YouTube video or film at mid-track. Pausing will include reassessment and the time at which it is done involves uncertainty. Pauses also are opportunities to consider before and after scenarios. A pause is disruptive by its very nature (Searle et al. 70) and destabilizing. The 2020 anthropause resulted in perceivable and measurable improvements in environmental quality which led many people in social media to believe that the Earth healed and is consistent with at least the first formulation of the Gaia hypothesis. But if we look at the anthropause with a holistic view in the philosophies of the marine biologists Ricketts, Steinbeck, and Carson, the anthropause with its “what” questions gives rise to emergent phenomenon—unexpected and complex—that we need to understand. Carson’s environmental philosophy, which inspired the modern environmental movement, allows us to reflect on the limits of anthropocentrism for the common good which is much echoed by Pope Francis in “Laudato Si,” the encyclical letters of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, on integral ecology, the Dalai Lama’s universal concern for the environment (Dalai Lama 79), and the Islamic environmental ethics. Pope Francis cautions on idolizing the technical in modern anthropocentrism over human relationships (Deane-Drummond 398), a point argued by Julian Huxley in his preface to “Silent Spring.” This implies that environmental decisions must be a global social consensus for the common good (“Fratelli Tutti” 66).

It can be argued that the 2020 anthropause was not the first one. It could be the first one at a global scale but other anthropauses have happened and they were all the result of human choices. Some were caused by disasters such as the Chernobyl and the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns. Some were

political disasters such as the Korean Demilitarized Zone or World War II. The 1929 global Great Depression is an anthropause which resulted in a -0.4 GT decrease in GHG emissions. Others were due to a pandemic disease such as the medieval Black Death, Smallpox because of the European colonization of the Americas, the 1918 Spanish Flu, and the current COVID-19 pandemic; and among all these, it is the COVID-19 pandemic which is of the greatest scale.

Our understanding of the current anthropause is framed in the hyperconnectivity and hypermobility of global society and economies. This is where human society has been most disrupted; this is where the Gaia theory becomes relevant as it is framed as connections in a single planetary environment. In a Gaian framework, hyperconnectivity and hypermobility can be reduced to a single environmental economic metric—the global measure of Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The current pandemic has resulted in a -9.8 GT decrease in GHG emissions twice than the -0.8 GT decrease estimated because of World War II and four times the decrease caused by the 1929 Great Depression (Liu et al. 2). The consequences of the past disruptions were not imagined then as societies coming out from the war and economic depression were able to recover with economic assistance from the international community. The 2020 anthropause, however, places more uncertainty in predicting the socio-economic outcomes than in similar crises in the past. Whether economic assistance can still be provided by the global North to the global South to ensure an equitable socio-economic regime is placed into question.

Ricketts' non-teleological thinking philosophy was framed in natural history and in the context of World War II. Can this be a way to reflect on the pandemic anthropause? Will it allow us to understand the uncertainty associated with it? Non-teleological thinking is further elaborated by Ricketts' friend John Steinbeck as "is" thinking (Rumsby). While teleology will allow us to consider cause and effects, Ricketts and Steinbeck's philosophy recognizes the methodological limitations of finding causes and effects, especially in situations of uncertainty. Non-teleological thinking allows for a wider world of evidence to inform our perception of a phenomenon, such

as the planetary healing. It anticipates the postnormal science paradigm of Funtowicz and Ravetz by 60 years (Funtowicz and Ravetz 750).

In an age of anthropauses, will this allow us to make sense of what kind of healing the planet requires? Nobel laureate John Steinbeck's social realist novels were much marine ecological in ethos may provide an avenue for exploring this question of healing through interconnections and emergences of phenomena. Steinbeck's novels were framed in what he called as the Argument of Phalanx (1933). In this argument, Steinbeck characterizes humans as part of a group much like what a cell is to the whole organism, or what a single starfish is to the whole marine ecosystem. A single unit in this system may have a teleology but the whole group of which the unit is a member will have an emergent purpose which the unit never expected. This theory permeates Steinbeck's fiction of the 1930s and his earlier stories in the collection entitled "*Long Valley*." An example is the story "The Vigilante" (1936) which is about a lynching, takes the "pause" of a witness in which he notes that the lynched was dead, and asks what the purpose of the lynching was and its consequent yet emergent feeling of desolation. The Argument of Phalanx is sociobiological in Steinbeck's framing as reflected in the *Log from the Sea of Cortez* where he likens the behavior of a school of fish to human society whose only emergent purpose is the Darwinian diktat of survival. But even if it is sociobiological, his later novels such as *In Dubious Battle*, *Tortilla Flat*, and *Cannery Row*, uses a phalanx framework which is tempered with the role of key actors who reflect on their moral judgment premised on freedom of choice and self-determination in a non-teleological sense. And that moral judgement of a human society will exist in human community and solidarity. The healing of the planet will happen through human solidarity. This is Steinbeck's faith in humanity so much trivialized by his literary critics.

Thus, in his 1962 Nobel Prize banquet speech, Steinbeck hoped for the perfectibility of man even with his Godlike power to destroy the world and all living things. Providing redemption and hope for this despite human failings is the vocation of the writer. Perhaps this redemption is in literature with Steinbeck's "Word is Man and with Man" an allusion to the opening verses

of the Gospel of Saint John. This “Word” is the consensus of where human society is headed. Will this consensus require a redefinition of economic and human development which places a limit on GDP growth and which could be due to an anthropause or repeated anthropauses (Daly 82). Whatever the consensus about what the global human community will be, this has to be inclusive, encompassing the setting of priorities that guarantee long term economic and environmental sustainability (Gibbs 92). Global society will require new economic incentives based on a complex system understanding of the planet with the urgency of pressing global environmental and humanitarian problems expected in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The COVID-19 pandemic is the first global environmental and health nexus crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the anthropause provides a benchmark for reflection of a global sustainable future or a future of collapse (Musser 46). In 2005, when *Scientific American* published a collection of essays titled *Crossroads for Planet Earth*, the anthropause was never foreseen by environment and society scholars. It was possible in theory with SARS-CoV-2 in 2002, but with science and technology, we were confident in preventing a global pandemic. The global economy did not shut down in 2002. But in a very related but even more economically disarming virus called SARS CoV-2, the global economy went into a hiatus.

Now, we may need the “breaking through” of the marine scientist-philosophers like Ricketts, Steinbeck, and Carson. Redemption is in the mystical and transcendent realization that man is related to the whole thing, to all of reality, as the plankton is to the universe or the tidepool to the stars. This is nothing new—the idea of human community and communion. Such has been known throughout human history by the scientists, holy people, prophets, and saints alike (Steinbeck and Ricketts 257).

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# Resistance to the Coal Industry's Impact on Mindanao's Ecology

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on how the coal industry has expanded in various parts of Mindanao especially in the provinces of Misamis Oriental, South Cotabato, and Surigao del Sur. However, it first provides a historical account of how coal began to be a source of energy generation in the Philippines and how the coal industry has expanded through the past decades. A section of the paper also presents the reasons behind the resistance of international, national, and local groups to the use of coal for fuel. The paper's last section provides the Mindanao case studies of the CFPPs already operating as well as the proposed coal explorations.

## **Keywords**

coal industry, South Cotabato, DENR, Mindanao, RA 7942

## Introduction

There is no question that mining remains to be one of the major ecological issues confronting Mindanao. Ever since the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 (Republic Act 7942) was passed into law, two opposing sides have passionately defended their respective positions. On the one hand, big business engaged in mining supported by State agencies and local government units who believe that mining is necessary for the country to increase its Gross National Product (GNP) were pleased with the passage of RA 7942 and hoped that no restrictions would limit both their explorations and operations.

On the other hand, civil society organizations have militantly opposed the law, with various groups staging a series of protest marches, conducting fora, and lobbying before government agencies, some of them even filing a restraining order before the Supreme Court in a desperate attempt to stop the implementation of the law. The most vocal among these groups have been the militant civil society organizations (CSOs) that have mobilized indigenous peoples to join the public demonstrations.

The controversy came to a head when the first newly-appointed Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) under the Duterte administration—the late Ms. Regina “Gina” Paz Lopez who, for many years, had taken a strong stance on anti-mining advocacy—issued the DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2017-10 that imposed a ban on the open-pit mining practice of extracting mining resources, e.g., gold, copper, silver, as well as complex ores. A report indicated that:

...the ban on open-pit mining put in place by rejected former environment secretary Regina Paz Lopez will be lifted before year-end after the inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC)... voted to reverse the order. A majority of the MICC members voted to recommend a change in the policy of the DENR with regard to DAO (DENR Administrative Order) 2017-10, particularly, that the DENR lift the ban on open pit mining provided that mining laws, rules and regulations are strictly enforced (De Vera).

The incumbent DENR Secretary, Roy Cimatu, announced this to a group of reporters. Cimatu co-chairs the Cabinet-level, inter-agency MICC with Finance Secretary Carlos “Sonny” Dominguez III. Cimatu said the MICC resolution will be presented in the November 6, 2019 Cabinet meeting, and he expressed optimism that the ban will be removed before the year’s end. He further stated that the DENR will issue an Administrative Order restoring open-pit mining operations.

This new development is bound to see public clashes between militant groups and the police even as more indigenous communities are expected to be in the frontlines opposing this shift in DENR policy. While it is understandable that it is the big mining enterprises engaged in extracting the more high-profile natural resources that have attracted public attention the most, there is also need to look into the expansion of mining of resources such as coal. Naturally, those engaged in extracting gold, silver, copper, iron, and similar resources are the ones being resisted by most environmental organizations as these involve massive investments that consequently bring about serious impact on the environment.

What has brought about the importance of coal in the Philippines today? Data from various sources show that the government’s Energy Plan has recognized the need to diversify the energy sector and to become more energy-independent. While there is interest in expanding renewable energy, fossil fuels are still the main energy resources and dominate primary energy demand with an approximately 86% share of the energy mix. With a population of more than 100 million—increasing yearly at 2.3%—spread across 7,100 islands, providing electricity to all Filipino citizens is obviously a difficult challenge.

For all its reliance on oil imports, the Philippines often still has to contend with electricity shortage as one of its major problems. The government hopes to develop more renewable sources of energy, but whether this will satisfy the growing demand for reliable electricity is questionable. The power outages taking place in most parts of the country at the time of this writing will continue unless the supply side will generate adequate energy. The national government thus was led to the conclusion that to increase

electricity supply, the utilization of coal-fired power plants (CFPPs) must be increased from the current 50% to 75%, thereby generating an additional 25% power supply.

This paper argues that we should also look into how coal is being extracted in the country today, leading to both the exploration of areas where coal can be extracted, as well as the fast expansion of constructing CFPPs. While this has become a major problem in the country, this paper focuses on Mindanao, with case studies involving the provinces of Misamis Oriental, South Cotabato, and Surigao del Sur. However, it first provides a historical account of how coal began to be a source of energy generation in the Philippines and how the coal industry has expanded through the past decades. A section of the paper also presents the reasons behind the resistance of international, national, and local groups to the use of coal for fuel. The paper's last section provides the Mindanao case studies of the CFPPs already operating in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, the proposed coal exploration in Barangay Ned in the town of Lake Sebu in South Cotabato, and the present coal extraction in Bislig, Surigao Sur.

### **History of the Coal Industry in the Philippines**

Voncken defines coal as a biogenic sedimentary rock formed from remains of plants through a process called coalification (25). It is a combustible rock which is mainly composed of carbon. Various types of coal include peat, lignite, subbituminous, bituminous, and anthracite.

As far back as the 1800s during the Spanish colonial regime, coal was already being tapped for various purposes. This was consolidated during the US colonial period when in 1917, the Philippine Legislature enacted Act No. 2719 titled "An Act to Provide for the Leasing and Development of Coal Lands in the Philippine Islands." It then became known as the Coal Land Act which indicated that "coal-bearing lands may only be leased in blocks or tracts of 400 to 1,2000 hectares each" with the lease "good for periods of not more than 50 years." (Yu 20). The law's concern was to ensure that "coal extraction activities be efficient so as to better ensure a steady supply of coal

rather than with protecting the environment or the rights of the indigenous community over these coal lands” (Yu 20).

A major shift in the State’s policy vis-a-vis coal took place in 1976 when then President Marcos issued Presidential Decree no. 972 (PD 972) also known as the Coal Development Act, which aimed at a major paradigm shift, where energy sourcing will be depending from oil to coal. This legislation further stressed that it was the State’s policy to maximize the utilization of the country’s coal resources, and tasked to pursue this policy was the Coal Development Program. The rapid increase of CFPP facilities in the Philippine energy sourcing mix can most probably be traced to the incentives of PD 972 for the conversion of power plants from oil to coal.

More PDs were issued to consolidate the importance of coal: PD 1174 which granted additional incentives to coal operators and increased the operating expenses reimbursement to be paid by government to the coal operators, followed by PD 1722 which created the National Coal Authority, aimed to create an integrated system of coal’s utilization as a source of energy. Marcos also issued Letters of Instruction (LOI) 1159, 718, 752, and 1084 which were all geared toward consolidating the country’s coal industry.

The latest information provided online by DOE in 2019 indicated that coal production totaled to 15,273,525.21 tonnes. Of these, the biggest percentage (99.45%) was produced by the Semirara firm (“2019 Coal Production”). However, the quality of the local coal does not respond to the level required by some users, so the Philippines imported from various countries a total of 27,692,284.65 tonnes including from Indonesia (constituting 90.20% of imports), South Africa (4.79%), Australia (2.57%), Russia (0.58%), and others (1.86%). Nonetheless, the Philippines still exported its coal totaling 10,242,706.69 tonnes to China (which made up 96.56% of exports), Thailand (2.23%), Taiwan (0.68%), and India (0.53%) (“2019 Coal Production”).

The usage of coal as a main source of energy in the Philippines has increased throughout the years. From almost 1.4 million tonnes in 2000, it has increased up to 15.3 million tonnes in 2017. The main bulk of this extraction has been driven mainly by the Semirara Mining and Power



Corporation, which was granted its Coal Operating Contract (COC) in 1977. It has supplied an average of 94.5 percent of the annual production from 2000 to 2017. Data from 2017 shows that Semirara contains the largest reserves in a region, which transpired following a surge of discoveries in the previous year, when almost 215 million tonnes out of around 221 million tonnes of new deposits were found in the region (“Technical Report” iv).

Since it was first discovered almost two centuries ago, coal has become one of the countries biggest and most utilized source of energy. In 2016, gross generation from coal power plants totaled to 46.7%. The cement industry accounted for 6%, while other industries, such as the metal mining and processing, and food and beverage industries accounted for 7%. The Philippines, however, has to import coal from countries such as Indonesia, Australia, and Russia as the coal sourced in the country is of sub-bituminous type, which is classified as a lower-grade type of coal. In order to be cost-efficient but not sacrificing the energy requirements needed, imported coal is mixed with locally-produced coal (“Technical Report” 1). In a recent data, it shows that the Philippine coal mining industry has produced more than 100.3 million tonnes of coal over the seventeen-year period from 2000-2017, in which the coal level extraction from 2000 is estimated to about 1.4 million metric tonnes and almost increased more than ten times (16.0 million tonnes) in 2017 (“Technical Report” 12).

Insofar as coal resources are concerned, the Philippines is blessed with numerous resources, which only requires exploration and development so that the country can be energy self-sufficient. The DOE’s studies to determine the country’s coal reserves made them claim that there are 2.53 billion tonnes of potential reserves in Quezon, Negros Oriental and Occidental, as well as in the Daguma Mountain range of South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat, and in other provinces.<sup>1</sup>

It is believed that coal will remain a dominant force in terms of energy generation (Domingo). CFPPs are projected to be depended on as a significant source in the Philippines’ energy mix until 2020, despite the environmentalists’ pleas and protests in conserving the environment.

In 2014, the fifth Philippine Energy Contracting Round (PECR-5) proposed fifteen prospective coal areas across Mindanao ("DOE to launch"). Consequently, five firms submitted nine applications to explore seven coal areas in Agusan del Norte and Sur, Surigao Sur, and Zamboanga Norte and Sibugay ("DOE opens Bids"). Following the alternative and more environment-friendly model of maximizing the use of natural gas and geothermal sources of energy, private institutions and corporations are allowed to put up their own plants at the mine site, in order to secure a market for the coal by selling electricity to the grid. Various incentives are also being offered in the form of tax exemptions, payment of tariff duties, and other forms of operating expenses. (Kessels).

### **Critique and Resistance to Coal's Operations**

Coal has been a significant factor that led the planet to the brink of catastrophic climate change (Sangupta). As indicated in the UN's scientific panel on global warming in 2018, the report states that as radical transformation in most of the world's economy transpires, radical measures must be implemented, and one of which is to minimize the utilization of coal as energy source (Tanaka). However, despite such warnings, the dependence and utilization of coal has not been minimized especially in Asian countries. In the past year, reports indicated that "global production and consumption increased after two years of decline" (Tanaka).

Because coal is a powerful incumbent. It's there by the millions of tons under the ground. Powerful companies, backed by powerful governments, often in the form of subsidies, are in a rush to grow their markets before it is too late. Banks still profit from it. Big national electricity grids were designed for it. Coal plants can be a surefire way for politicians to deliver cheap electricity—and retain their own power. In some countries, it has been a glistening source of graft (Tanaka).

If one looks at progressive and rich countries such as Japan, it continues to rely on CFPPs despite global criticism (Sangupta), despite a series of

disasters that have hit this country, thus indicating that the effects of global warning can no longer be denied,

This resource-poor country is sticking with coal-fired energy production that emits more than double the carbon dioxide generated by liquid natural gas-fueled plants. To meet its pledge to the world in the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord, Japan aims to achieve a 26 % cut in greenhouse gas emissions by fiscal 2030 from the fiscal 2013 level. But the government has drawn a lot of criticism from both in and outside the country for going against the international trend to move away from coal (Tanaka).

How harmful have CFPPs been in Japan? Allegations include the following:

Burning coal produces gases that contain pollutants, mainly sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. They are the major sources of PM2.5 airborne toxic particles and ozone pollution that can cause health and environmental problems. The government has ordered all coal plant operators to install filters to eliminate emissions of the harmful substance. But Kiko Network has pointed out that even though operators claim the latest filters can remove over 95 percent of pollutants, it is impossible to stop them all from escaping into the air. According to an estimate based on a 2017 study by Daniel Jacob, an atmospheric chemistry professor at Harvard University, pollutants emitted from coal-fired power plants currently operating in Japan lead to the premature death of 1,117 people every year (Tanaka).

However, there have been some attempts in Japan to cut down on their coal dependence. Recently J-Power scaled down a project to build a CFPP in Yamaguchi Prefecture with two partners owing to international criticism of coal-fired power generation. A plan to construct and operate a power plant which has the capacity of 1.2 million kilowatts in the city of Ube was initiated. It is expected to be fully operational in 2026. At present, Kyushu Electric Power Co., Tokyo Gas Co., and Idemitsu Kosan Co. said they had scrapped plans to build a CFPP in Chiba Prefecture (“J-Power and other firms”).

There has also been resistance from ordinary people “[who] call for the abolition of coal-fired thermal power and an end to construction of new coal

plants in Japan at the COP24 U.N. climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018” (“Japan to rule out”). The Environment Ministry said that in principle it would not sanction construction and operation of new CFPPs that will add to existing facilities, in line with Japan’s international pledge to help alleviate issues on climate change and global warming.

Constructing CFPPs have increasingly been criticized as it counters the measures on a global shift to cleaner energy, as stipulated in the Paris Agreement which took effect last year. A worldwide movement, “Divestment,” is geared to end investments and loans to fund CFPP constructions and operations. Two of the powerful countries in the world, Britain and Canada, have spearheaded the scrapping of all their coal plants (Mathiesen).

Then US Federal Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg stated that plans regarding the Carmichael coal mining project, pursued the moral high ground against the government’s critics, who claim that there is “a strong moral case” for mining and coal exportation to underdeveloped and developing countries (Thompson). To understand what is behind this statement, we need to take into consideration the benefits and harms brought about by too much dependence, mining, and usage of coal. There are those who claim that coal mining alleviates poverty by supplying people with cost-efficient and reliable energy but there are also those opposing this view, as coal is the largest triggering factor to increase in global temperatures resulting to global warming, which in turn would place the poor in a disadvantaged position.

In a statement by the Union of Concerned Scientists, it indicated that “the transition away from coal is essential for avoiding some of coal’s worst impacts” (1). Among the ills indicated by this group are the following:

1. **AIR POLLUTION:** This occurs when toxins and pollutants such as mercury, lead, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulates, and various other heavy metals are released into the air due to coal burning. If not immediately addressed, this may lead to cardiovascular, neurological, and respiratory diseases, cancer, and even premature death.

2. **WATER POLLUTION:** When charcoal is used for activities such as home cooking (i.e. grilling), ash is left over. The same is true CFPPs, which account for more than 100 million tons of coal ash annually. More than half

of that waste end up in primary sources of water such as ponds, lakes, landfills, which may lead to contamination.

3. IMPACT ON GLOBAL WARMING: Climate change is coal's most serious, long-term, global impact. Chemically, coal is *mostly* composed of carbon which, when burned, reacts with oxygen, leading to produce more amounts of carbon dioxide, a heat-trapping gas. If carbon dioxide is released in the atmosphere in uncontrollable levels, it works like a blanket, contributing to the earth's rising temperature. If not addressed and prevented at the soonest possible time, some areas in the globe may experience episodes of drought, rise of sea levels, floods, extreme weather conditions, and species loss.

In Bengkulu, Indonesia, the minister demanded a review of a proposed CFPP. A report indicated that "Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Ignasius Jonan confirmed PT Tenaga Listrik Bengkulu's 2x100-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Sepang Bay, Bengkulu City, Bengkulu, Indonesia will be evaluated if a mismatch is found in the Environmental Impact Analysis" (Marini). What brought this about was Bengkulu residents' filing of a lawsuit in the Bengkulu State Administrative Court against the environmental permit of PT Tenaga Listrik Bengkulu, who claimed that the establishment of the CFPP was above the red zone, which is susceptible to earthquakes and tsunamis.

It is clear in this section of the paper that opposition to coal industry's inroads have faced questions in various parts of the world, either in developed countries (Japan, USA, and Canada) and in Third World countries (e.g. Indonesia) owing to its impact on the environment and the people's health and well-being. We now look into what has taken place in the Philippines vis-a-vis the incursions of the coal industry in various provinces.

Through the past decades, as coal extraction expanded and more CFPPs were constructed, there has been resistance from various communities and groups fearful of coal's impact on their lives and well-being. Some of these included the following:

In April 2010, the townspeople of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, led by Mayor Tomasa Guardo, held remonstrations against the continuation of mining activities in the area conducted by Marcventures Mining and Development Corporation (MMDC). This protest is just one of the many that was held in recent years that call for the cessation of mining activities especially in conserved and protected areas in the country. Environmentalists and other organizations devoted to put a stop on mining activities strongly believed that such activities in protected and conserved areas—or known as Important Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)—is detrimental to the diminishing wildlife in rural areas such as Surigao del Sur.

On the celebration of Earth Day more than a decade ago, another rally was staged and was spearheaded by thousands of environmentalists in Tampakan, South Cotabato and Maasim, Sarangani, to halt the construction of the proposed Kamanga power station to be operated and managed CONAL Holdings. Protesters in Sarangani included leaders of several religious groups and other sectors of the society such as the fisherfolk. Moreover, MSU students and some members of indigenous tribes posited that this project would destroy the waters of Maasim, thus drastically affecting the area's ecologically important zone of coral reefs. The protesters and media were not allowed in the premises of CONAL Community Development Office. Elson Helsa of Maasim Peoples Coalition on Climate Change (MP3C) expressed fears CONAL might finance local candidates who supported the setting up of the plant. Sarangani Governor Miguel Dominguez, Maasim Mayor Aniceto Lopez Jr., and Kiamba Mayor Rommel Falgui announced their support for the project in a community consultation held in 2009. In November 2010, a 75-boat flotilla and a human banner with an estimated 800 participants were formed in the town of Maasim, Sarangani.

In March 2011, residents of Binugao village in Toril, Davao City asked the city government to reject the proposal of Aboitiz Corp. to put up a CFPP. Earlier, the city council approved on first reading the proposed project and forwarded it to the committee on energy, the committee on environment, the committee on health, and the committee on trade and commerce. The four committees were tasked to conduct public consultations on the

proposal. Then Vice Mayor—now Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte was very vocal about his endorsement of the proposed 300-megawatt CFPP, even before the conduct of any study. Eventually, the CFPP was constructed.

## **Mindanao Case Studies**

Three case studies are presented in this paper to show how the process of coal extraction and the construction of CFPPs were aggressively pursued by corporate firms which are fully backed by local government units and state agencies which then resulted in people's resistance.

### *Case Study 1: Villanueva, Misamis Oriental*

In September 2016, just a few months into his presidency, incumbent president Rodrigo Duterte inaugurated the 405-megawatt CFPP in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental. Filinvest Development Corporation (FDC), one of the country's leading conglomerates involved in various business ventures and investments such as property development, banking, hotels and resorts, sugar, and energy, manages this multi-billion infrastructure (Gallardo).

This CFPP is the biggest of its kind in Mindanao and utilizes circulating fluidized bed boiler technology which they claim is "one of the cleanest in the industry" (Gallardo). Local officials welcomed the FDC's plant as it was expected to be a solution to the perennial power shortage experienced in Mindanao, considering that it only has an energy reserve of 131 MW which almost ten times lower than the peak demand of 1,574 MW" (Gallardo).

The choice of Villanueva as a site for the CFPP has its precedence in terms of how this relatively young municipality had entered the global economy. In January 2, 1975, the Philippine Sinter Corporation (PSC) was established at a 155-hectare area within the Phividec Industrial Estate-Misamis Oriental (PIE-MO), located between the towns of Villanueva and Tagoloan. Kawasaki Heavy Industries (KHI) of Japan manages the said company and has become the single biggest Japanese investment in Mindanao.

PIE-MO was the small town's gateway to the world, sending many of the products produced here and in adjacent provinces to other countries'

markets such as Australia, United States, Europe, Africa, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. This global exposure of PIE-MO resident firms is perhaps best exemplified by the construction of a multi-million dollar CFPP now nearing located in Barangay Balacanas (Baños).

Despite the CFPP's contribution in opening this humble town to the global market, some residents have voiced out their concerns as some have referred to CFPPs as dirty, aged, and disastrous, thus the resistance of some town residents (Ocio). He posits that:

[T]he entire provincial government of Misamis Oriental and its provincial board ... had opposed the plan by FDC Utilities Inc. to put up a CFPP in the province... [w]ith a Department of Environment that does not even know how to regulate, monitor, and implement environmental laws on logging and mining, how can we ever expect strict compliance of regulations concerning carbon emissions of aging coal plants dumped and already rejected from other countries (Ocio).

Nixon A. Baban, then chairman of Bangon Kagay-an stated that, “[c]oal is a fossil fuel that is burned during power generation, it unavoidably emits CO<sub>2</sub>, one of the major causes of global warming” (qtd. in Ocio). Summarizing the negative impact of CFPP, he gave the following reasons:

1. It is non-renewable and it is causing global warming.
2. Although it is now cheap, if the coal continues to be used in such a way, it will soon be very expensive.
3. Burning a fossil fuel produces carbon dioxide, which contributes to the greenhouse effect, warming the Earth.
4. Coal extraction is dangerous and mining for coal destroys the environment.

Bangon Kagay-an—the group who led the filing of the granted petitions for the Writs of Kalikasan and Mandamus and the pending case for the Temporary Environmental Protection Order against Mining in Cagayan de Oro—persuaded the people, including the youth and other members of the community, through this statement to go against this multi-billion project:

We urge every concerned citizen of Cagayan de Oro and Northern Mindanao to immediately study this matter (Google it, the subject is all over the net.).



Then, let us convene soon and perhaps if the circumstance warrants, bring this matter to the court (Ocio).

Despite the strong opposition from the ground, the CFPP was eventually constructed and is presently operating.

### *Case Study 2: Barangay Ned, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato*

In April 2011, South Cotabato provincial government officials passed an ordinance halting open pit mining activities in the area, which coincided when one of the biggest conglomerates in the country, San Miguel Corporation (SMC), proposed the construction of a 750 MW CFPP. With this announcement, SMC officials indicated that their plan would be affected if coal for the plant is extracted using the strip method, which is considered open-pit mining. In the previous year, San Miguel planned to bring in three coal miners operating in Mindanao to supply the plant: Bonanza Energy Resources, Inc., Sultan Mining and Energy Development Corp., and Daguma Coal and Agro Industrial, Inc. Daguma has reserves that stretch from Sultan Kudarat to South Cotabato (Doguiles).

The coal field is within Kabulnan River Watershed Forest Reserve, which is considered a protected area. President Joseph Estrada signed Proclamation No. 241 signed in 2000 which covers this reserve. The forest reserve is situated above Allah Valley Protected Landscape within the ancestral domain of the T'boli-Manobo S'daf Claimants Organization (TAMASCO). The coal field in Daguma mountain range, which straddles South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat provinces, contains an indicated resource of 150 million tonnes. The provincial board rejected Daguma Agro Mineral, Inc.'s (DAMI) bid to excavate 126 hectares of the 2,000 hectare Daguma coal field.

The T'boli-Manobo Sdaf Claimants Organization (TAMASCO), a group comprising of several indigenous tribes strongly opposed for this project to continue as they will suffer the severe brunt should this project continue. This indigenous people's organization exerted efforts to mount various activities that call for the cessation of coal mining and the expansion of coffee plantations in this area, which resulted to the demise of eight

tribal members in a military operation at Barangay Ned. Casualties included Datu Victor Danyan, TAMASCO chair, and three of his family members. Civil society organizations called this tragic incident a massacre, which was ensued by protests demanding justice for those killed.

Both the Lumad and the CSOs have claimed that corporate greed and the attempt to grab Lumad ancestral domain were behind the occurrence of this tragedy. Located in fertile rolling hills, Barangay Ned has long held value to various logging, coal mining, and coffee companies. After the incident, this village that was once teeming with life became a ghost town as the residents evacuated to safer grounds. What followed were protest rallies demanding justice for the massacre (Espina-Varona).

San Miguel Corporation or SMC—owned then by Mr. Danding Cojuangco—had acquired three coal mining projects with a total land area of close to 20,000 hectares that would greatly affect the ancestral domains of the T’bolis and the Ned Agrarian Reform Community (ARC). It acquired DAMI and its sister company, Bonanza Energy Resources Inc. (BERI), and Sultan Mining and Energy Development Corporation (SMEDC) coal operating contracts for production and development. SMC was to partner with DMC Construction Equipment Resources Incorporated owned by the Consunjis for this coal project in Barangay Ned. Aside from DAMI, BERI, and SMEDC, another coal operating contract was awarded to Dell Equipment and Construction Corporation which covers 10,000 hectares of land also within the ARC of Ned, thus making this zone the severely burdened by these impacted various coal contracts.

The massacre attracted the attention of General Delfin Lorenzana (Jubelag); he ordered probing on these reported human rights violation allegedly committed by the military. However, Lorenzana also pointed the notorious communist rebel group New People’s Army (NPA) who manipulated members of the indigenous tribes who are strongly resistant into the encroachment of these conglomerates as these will spoil their ancestral domain. He mandated that soldiers who belong to IP groups should spearhead in conducting peace and security tasks in the hinterland villages of

T'boli and Lake Sebu towns which are predominantly inhabited by Blaan and T'boli tribe folk.

Providing a tribute to the Lumads in Barangay Ned, multimedia journalist Keith Bacongco said:

Deep behind the rugged terrains of Daguma Mountain Range, voices of the struggling Lumads remained unheard even after the death of Datu Victor Danyan, his sons and other Lumads on December 3, 2017. The T'boli-Manubo Sdaf Claimants Organization (TAMASCO) endured the agony of being pushed to the fringes due to the encroachment of the coffee plantation in their ancestral domain. Since the entry of the coffee plantation in the area, Datu Victor and the Lumads in the area have been opposing its expansion. Harassment and intimidation have been a part of their daily life. But Datu Victor and his people never backed down. Instead, Datu Victor rallied his people to remain firm in their stand. (Bacongco)

### *Case Study 3: Bislig, Surigao del Sur*

Destruction of 110,000 hectares of land for coal mining is currently the target for the largest coal mining land in Mindanao, which could further the destruction of forests and mountains to give way for mining activities, which will in turn displace people, and may even destroy the livelihood the people's sources of livelihood, as this has been the claim of a militant group in Surigao del Sur (Malaya). Several mining companies such as the Abacus Coal Exploration, Great Wall Mining, Benguet Corporation, and Bislig Ventures, were awarded 20,000 hectares of land to be used for mining activities. In addition, another seven large companies have been allowed to appropriate more than 30,000 hectares for exploration, while another 62,000 hectares are offered to other possible investors.

The Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines is one of the known mining companies that have exploited the place. Through the years, various companies came and went. First was the Philippine National Oil Company Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) operations followed by Sultan Mining—the coal affiliate of MG Mining and Energy Corporation—which assumed the coal drilling and extraction rights in the area covering a total of 10,000 linear miles (LM) vertical non-core and core drilling works.

Later, MG Mining also operated here followed by D.M. Consunji, Inc. The last company that penetrated this area was the Bislig Ventures Construction and Development Inc.-Coal Operation (BVCDI-Coal). More recently, PNOC-EC has recalculated the in-situ reserves in Bislig which it estimates to be between 53.83 to 54.29 million tonnes.

Eventually, the Department of Energy decided that it would no longer give permits to corporations seeking to do large-scale coal mining in Bislig. Instead, they would only allow small-scale mining. However, it has not been easy for the Lumad residents to secure permits. First, there is the need to secure an Area Clearance from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as well as a Free and Prior Inform Consent (FPIC) from the National Commission for Indigenous People (NCIP) since most of the coal areas lie within the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT)-approved area. A Lumad also needs to spend money to secure the DOE permit which can only be processed in Manila making this procedure quite expensive. Even when a Lumad household already has a permit, one needs further capitalization to sustain the operations as well as pay for all kinds of charges with various government agencies.

Mining across Surigao del Sur—including areas adjacent to Bislig like Lingig, San Agustin, and Diatagon—have brought about the area’s militarization as government troops have been assigned to this province to protect corporate interests but also as part of the State’s counter-insurgency campaign: “Military presence in Lumad or indigenous communities in Surigao del Sur is meant to stifle local opposition to the entry of mining firms according to leaders of a Lumad organization” (Mordeno).

A series of incidents took were documented between 2005-2007. These transpired in the town of San Miguel particularly in the areas that are part of the Andap Valley Complex, where logging and mining operations are quite rampant. The *Kahugpong sa mga Mag-uuma sa Surigao del Sur-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KAMASS – KMP) which was red tagged as members of the NPA because of their strong resistance to these mining activities. On June 28, 2005, Jerry Barrios was a victim of illegal detention as he was accused of being a staunch supporter of the NPA. He was illegally

detained by the 58<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army (IB PA) in their headquarters. On August 20, 2005, Hermelino Marqueza, an active member of KAMASS, was one of the casualties of summary executions in Maitum, Tandag, Surigao del Sur. On April 2, 2007, Dandan Quillano, 12 years old, and his mother were killed after members of the 58th IB PA strafed at them along with 9 others in Carromata, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur as they were rad tagged as members of communist groups, according to Col. Jose Vizcarra, Commanding Officer of the 401st IB PA (Caraga).

The anti-mining group Caraga Watch issued a statement on July 21, 2018 pointing five companies that have been gearing up for coal-mining operations in Surigao del Sur. Their target locations are those in the Andap Valley Complex that are constituted by several towns located in Surigao del Sur (Cantilan, Madrid, Carmen, and Lanuza and Tandag City) and Agusan del Sur (including Sibagat and Bunawan). So far, mining operations have not operated only because of the refusal of the Lumads to grant sign the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) agreement.

The Lumads in this territory were made aware of the State's insistence on providing the corporations an entry into their territory:

During the Indigenous Peoples Leaders' Summit in Davao City on 1 February 2018, President Rodrigo Duterte declared he will choose the investors in Andap Valley Complex... [and told them to prepare for relocation], insinuating the dislocation of the Lumad from their ancestral homes amidst combat operations of the AFP to ease the entry of plantations and mining projects (Mordeno).

Earlier in June 2017, through Executive Order No. 30, the President established the Energy Investment Coordinating Council to facilitate the processing of energy projects and investments with national significance. This could only mean that these areas will experience more militarization leading to evacuations—now a common occurrence in some towns of Surigao del Sur.

President Duterte's statement is clearly "indicative of the neo-liberal mindset of the government as it routinely abdicates its responsibility to

indigenous peoples by falsely pinning its hopes on the private sector” [as] “large-scale development projects harm instead of nourish the way of life of the IPs,” according to Norly Mercado, executive director of Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC) on the occasion of the international day of indigenous peoples on August 9, 2018.

Ironically, the NPA’s presence in Bislig is negligible. There are no reports of an actual guerilla base operating within the city although NPA troops do crisscross its areas now and then. On June 13, 2018, most of the residents of Pamaypayan evacuated to safer grounds when they thought they heard shooting resulting from an encounter of NPAs and the AFP soldiers, although this was not confirmed. But considering that it is located in the more volatile areas of the province, Bislig could easily be drawn into this cycle of violence and could easily also serve as an evacuation destination in case violence erupts on a massive scale.

From these three case studies we can see the same patterns: coal has substantial reserves in various regions which usually are the homeland of the Lumad communities. Coal attracts the attention of corporate mining firms. As the State’s energy policy has sustained the importance of coal, government agencies—and the military—are supportive of these corporate incursions into the uplands. Given the NPA’s presence in the upland guerrilla zones and the eventual opposition of grassroots communities to coal extraction and CFPP construction, militarization ensues. Despite the people’s resistance in collaboration with the support of CSOs, we can expect that the coal industry will continue to expand. Consequently, the environment and people’s lives will continue to be drastically affected.

## **Conclusion**

As can be deduced from the available information and analysis presented earlier in this paper and coming mainly from reports on the ground, we are witnessing at the grassroots level a growing and consistent resistance against the expansion of coal mining and incursion of more CFPPs. Faced however with the material wealth and power of corporate firms and the political might of government agencies, and aided by the military, these sources of

resistance have barely made a dent except for a few successful attempts to block more CFPP construction. There seems to be no dampening of the coal industry's optimism based on what it perceives to be a future that is bright—but bright only in terms of its profitability for business, resulting in a gung-ho attitude unmindful of the industry's ecological impact.

Despite their limited success in resisting the coal industry's push towards expansion, one can expect that grassroots communities, especially the indigenous peoples—fearful as they are of the ensuing ecological devastations—as well as CSOs, will not cease their mass actions or abandon their advocacies. They believe there is so much at stake especially in terms of the long-term effects that they will continue to take to the streets demanding the end to the country's dependence on coal. With what has happened in Misamis Oriental, South Cotabato, and Surigao del Sur, the Church took a strong position to support acts of resistance initiated by grassroot communities and CSOs alike.

Bishop Gerado Alminaza of San Carlos Diocese in Negros, one of the Philippine bishops who has come out publicly with his call to reject coal, was quoted as giving a warning “against the apparent bias for coal on the part of the DOE, which downplayed the contribution of renewable energy to growth in the Visayas, and the impact of these projects on public health and the environment in the region” (Gomez). He expressed his disappointment with the Governor's move “to revoke an executive order declaring Negros Occidental a coal-free province” and the news that “a power firm is planning to build a 3-megawatt CFB (circulating fluidized bed) coal-fired plant in San Carlos in Negros” (LRC).

Why have bishops, priests, pastors, religious, lay leaders, and ordinary churchgoers manifested such resistance? One reason can be traced to the inspiration from no less than the Holy Father, Pope Francis, whose encyclical letter *Laudato Si* has exhorted the world to be concerned about the planet and to help protect the integrity of creation. After *Laudato Si*, the Church is not only concerned on the plight of human beings in the totality of their realities and needs but also on the plight of humanity's common home—the planet that today is facing ecological crises with far-reaching consequences. Pope Francis' encyclical states clearly that “the urgent challenge to protect

our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change” (No. 13). The following passages from the encyclical are worth citing here *in extenso*:

Many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms, simply making efforts to reduce some of the negative impacts of climate change. However, many of these symptoms indicate that such effects will continue to worsen if we continue with current models of production and consumption. There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. (26)

Economic growth, for its part, tends to produce predictable reactions and a certain standardization with the aim of simplifying procedures and reducing costs. This suggests the need for an “economic ecology” capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality. The protection of the environment is in fact “an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.” (No. 141)

Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor. (190)

The Pope’s message has reverberated across the world and is sustained by the voices of a growing number of people all over the world as they demand less dependence on fossil fuels and a shift to renewable sources of energy. Officials of the United Nations, Green parties in various nation-states, scientists, theologians, artists, and ordinary folks across divides—class, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and faith tradition—have converged to



call for an end to the use of coal and other non-renewable energy sources. Only time will tell if their efforts will help save our planet from an ecological catastrophe whose likelihood cannot easily be downplayed in the face of the reality of climate change manifested by, among others, global warming, the melting of polar ice caps, and the concomitant rise of sea level.

## Note

1. Readers may want to look at relevant information in the following source: Greenpeace. *True Cost of Coal in the Philippines*. Volume 1. Greenpeace Southeast Asia, n.d.

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