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FROM BIRMINGHAM TO ANGKOR WAT: DEMARCATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

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Abstract

The radical inspiration of Cultural Studies has been betrayed, declares E. San Juan, Jr. In this timely essay, he argues that this betrayal springs from the postmodernist temperament, the "metaphysical turn," of contemporary Cultural Studies. By exaggerating "the possibility of liberation over the established fact of domination," Cultural Studies has abandoned fundamental categories such as class and nation in favor of race and gender, among others. The frivolous has overcome the political: commercial icons and rituals are now fantasized to topple the very system that makes their condition possible. "In what sense can this still inchoate and contested terrain called 'cultural studies,' distinguished for the most part by formalist analysis of texts and discourses, be an agent for emancipation, let alone revolutionary social transformation, of the plight of oppressed peoples around the world?" In this essay that politicizes as rigorously as it historicizes, San Juan critiques the critics and criticisms of contemporary Cultural Studies whose avocations swing back and forth between the ludic and the ludicrous. With this necessary polemic, San Juan strives to give back to Cultural Studies, as an heir to a radical tradition, its truly radical aspiration.

Keywords

anthropology, contemporary cultural studies, history of cultural studies, postmodernism, travel and tourism

About the Author

E. San Juan, Jr. is a fellow of the Center for Humanities, Wesleyan University, and is also visiting professor of English. His recent books are *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression: Essays in Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature, The Philippine Temptation: Dialectics of US-Philippines Literary Relations, Filipina Insurgency, Beyond Post-Colonial Theory, From Exile to Diaspora: Versions of the Filipino Experience in the United States, and After Postcolonialism.*

> Times would pass, old empires would fall and new ones take their place, the relations of countries and the relations of classes had to change, before I discovered that it is not the quality of goods and utility which matter, but movement; not where you are or what you have, but where you have come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there.
>
> –C. L. R. James

One survivor of the conflicts of the current "culture wars" in the North is the discipline or field of inquiry called Cultural Studies (hereafter CS). Since the intervention

of CS in the academy began with violating the conventional protocols, I start with a similar transgression by a preface of travel notes. Last March my wife and I attended a convention of the National Association of Ethnic Studies in Orlando, Florida, where we encountered the tourist holiday crowd in full force. Among the attractions disseminated by hundreds of publicity paraphernalia is the Salvador Dali Museum located in St. Petersburg, Florida. The Museum's brochure describes the place in six languages (German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Dutch); the English version reads thus:

> World-famous, the Salvador Dali Museum ranks as one of the top attractions in Florida receiving the highest rating by the Michelin Green Guide—the only such attraction on the west coast to be so honored. Daily tours of the museum's fascinating collection will educate, yet entertain you, about one of the 20th century's greatest artists—Salvador Dali. Bewildering double images and incredible paintings will surprise; sculptures, holograms and art glass will amaze; and early impressionist-style paintings and melting clocks will delight you. You are assured of finding something special. Be sure to include time for the Dali Museum in downtown St. Petersburg in your plans.

No doubt the Museum has been competing with such popular favorites as Epcot Disney, Universal Studios, Sea World, Wonderworks, and a thousand other diversions–from ethnic restaurants, boutiques galore, art galleries, curio shops, and diverse simulations of Disney World iconography in numerous malls. We visited the Museum for verification. The reality was not far from the media hype. Shopping at the Museum, with surrealist-art mementoes and assorted merchandise—zapping for pastiches and visual language-games—summons to mind Michel De Certeau's tactics of make-shift creativity and historiographic place-making. Welcome to Dali-land! Shift to another CS venue. Later in March, I participated in an international conference organized by the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences at Chiba University, Tokyo, Japan. The theme of the conference was "Searching for the Paradigm of Pluralism: Cultural and Social Pluralism and Coexistence in South and Southeast Asia." Scholars from Thailand, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka came; the plenary lecture was given by a leading Japanese scholar, Prof. Mitsuo Nakamura, who spoke about "Islam and Civil Society—Hope and Despair." My topic for the opening keynote address was "The Paradox of Multiculturalism: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in the Philippines." Mindful of the Japanese Empire's goal of building a "Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" during World War II and the peculiar ethnic homogeneity in Japan, I

remarked that the dialogue was a good start in exploring the transformative potential of "multiculturalism" which, initiated in the West as a theme, genre, policy, and disciplinary orientation, can be recontextualized in the Asian setting and merged with the larger research projects of intellectuals, government officials, and other protagonists in the public sphere.

There is some distance, of course, between these initiatives and CS. Disneyworld, Dali, and Japan are coeval in the frame of my diasporic experience. How do we connect both the Dali Museum and the Japanese interest in pluralism, and my position as a Filipino scholar based in the US as constituent elements in the field of CS? Given the fact that the analytic and synthesizing practice called "cultural studies" has acquired a distinct temper at every case of "situational appropriation," one can call both the placing of the Salvador Dali Museum in the tourist-shopping cosmopolis and the multiculturalist conference in Chiba, Japan, as innovative points of departure for reflection on the plight of CS. As a comparative literature scholar from the Philippines, and also a specialist in ethnic studies in the US academy, I consider myself a conjunctural site for the encounter between various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, between "third" and "first" world cultures, and between popular/plebeian layers of culture and the mainly Eurocentric discourse of the academy. Obviously I may be an exceptional case, analogous to the situation of Taipeh, Taiwan—an emergent global city—which has become one venue for the exchange between Western CS and its local practitioners.

The trajectories of traveling ideas do not, of course, immediately translate into a neat geopolitical calculus. So in what way is this encounter productive of knowledge and pedagogical practice that can be used for undoing the hegemony of "transmigrant" capital? Can the critical apparatus of concepts, idiom, rhetoric, and style be imported or transplanted from Birmingham and Chapel Hill, USA, to Asian, African, and Latin American milieus without reinforcing postcolonial hegemonies? How do we negotiate, for example, the tensions between World Bank/International Monetary Fund imperialism and the subjects of CS as stratified heterogeneous movements?

SOUVENIRS OF OVERDETERMINATION

In the postscript to the now orthodox textbook *Cultural Studies*, Angela McRobbie celebrates the demise of Marxism–the reflectionist and mechanical kind she attributes to Fredric Jameson and David Harvey–as an influence on the field and its replacement by

deconstruction. Although she notes with it the disappearance of the "organic intellectual" (in Gramsci's sense) and of any social class as the agency of emancipation, she claims nonetheless that the essays in the anthology demonstrate "a mode of study which is engaged and which seeks not the truth, but knowledge and understanding as a practical and material means of communicating with and helping to empower subordinate social groups and movements" (721). In what sense can this still inchoate and contested terrain called "cultural studies," distinguished for the most part by formalist analysis of texts and discourses, be an agent for emancipation, let alone revolutionary social transformation, of the plight of oppressed peoples around the world?

A brief background may provide an orientation to my critique of contemporary orthodox cultural studies. When the field was initially outlined in Britain by its first proponents–Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E.P. Thompson–it was originally intended to critique the elitist and anti-democratic methodologies and traditions attendant upon the study of cultural expression. The immediate post-World War II milieu was characterized by the triumph of liberal democracy over fascism, the installation of the welfare state, and the beginning of the Cold War. Cultural criticism reflected the progressive impulses of that period. Instead of replicating the class divisions that separated the canonical works from the artifacts of mass culture, CS conceived of the whole of cultural production, including texts and all signifying or discursive practices, as its open-ended domain. Thus advertising, popular genres like thrillers and romances, films, music, fashions, and so on can be read (like literary texts) as communal or social events, and no longer as aesthetic icons removed from their contexts of production, circulation, and consumption.

Culture thus signifies not just beliefs and values but patterns of behavior and symbolic action. It is a layered complex of dispositions and institutions which Bourdieu distills in the concept of habitus embracing both objective structures and mentalities. By theorizing cultures as historically shaped "designs for living," whole ways of life, the early practitioners of CS engaged themselves with the critique not only of activities and artifacts in "civil society" and private lives, but also with their ideological resonance and the political implications they have for the total social order. Put in a dialectical idiom, culture may be conceived as the mode in which the social relations of a group are structured and shaped; "but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted" (Clark 10). The pioneers of British CS crafted their practice as an intellectual-political engagement with the realities of power and inequality in late-modern capitalism.

After the founding of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in the seventies, the field underwent a tortuous growth in the ferment of the sixties youth revolt, the civil rights and anti-war struggles in the US, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the revival of "humanist Marxism." It proceeded from the empiricism of its initiators to a structuralist phase, then to an Althusserian/Lacanian one, followed by a Gramscian moment, up to its dissolution in the deconstructive post-structuralism of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Because the field was committed not only to institutional analysis but also to ideology critique, the classic problematic of the relation between subject and object, traditionally formulated as the relation between consciousness and society, reasserted itself as the opposition between culturalism and structuralism. One must recall that both Thompson and Williams reacted against a positivistic Marxism which insisted on the strict determination of thought and action by economic forces. Within a generally Marxist perspective, they shifted the emphasis to the experiences of everyday life as creative interventions of social groups in the making of history.

The first director of the Center, Stuart Hall, although inspired by his socialist mentors, laid the groundwork for the questioning of culturalism and its empiricist predisposition. The adoption of a structuralist problematic derived from Althusser enriched the analysis of ideology as the prime cultural mediation whereby individuals were interpellated as subjects (in a process of misrecognition, as though they were free agents). The subject was thus theorized as a subject-position defined by historical coordinates and, with a Lacanian inflection, biographical circumstances. Empirical truth was displaced by meanings and interpretations within determinate contexts. The Cartesian self, also called the transcendental ego of science, was displaced by the concept of a subject-position produced as an effect of textuality, more precisely, of discursive practice. Instead of experience as the key category, representation via the mass media and other technologies of disseminating information became the privileged locus of investigation.

Culture then began to be construed as the production of meanings and subjectivities within discourse and representation. Since the subject was an effect of signifying processes, it was then easy to move to conceptualizing politics as a struggle over representation. Not only is the subject an identity or position constituted by social and historical structures, it was also an actively experiencing subject, thanks to the paradigm lent by Gramsci. Although the Italian communist was construed through revisionist lenses, it was Gramsci's crucial interpretation of hegemony as the securing of consent by a historic bloc struggling for domination and moral-intellectual leadership that provided the means for re-ascribing

to the subject-position (constrained by Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses) some degree of agency. In the study of youth subcultures, for example, Dick Hebdige argued that working-class youth were not passive and unreflective consumers of American mass culture; rather, they transformed the meanings of what they consumed, rearranged images, styles and vocabularies of American popular culture as forms of resistance to middle- and upper-class cultures. What was omitted was Gramsci's belief that the class-conscious leadership of the working-class, together with its cadre of organic intellectuals, would lead the hegemonic struggle of the toiling masses against the oppression and exploitation of capital. Because of this drastic alteration of the paradigm, it might be instructive to review Raymond Williams' problematizing of culture and its interpretation to place in perspective later developments in the field.

RE-COGNITIVE MAPPING

By consensus Williams is considered the inventor of "cultural studies," at least in its British exemplification. His two books, *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*, followed by *Marxism and Literature* and *The Sociology of Culture*, may be regarded as foundational documents enunciating axioms, theorems, and hypotheses that need to be explored, qualified, and further elaborated. A fully responsible cultural studies, he suggests at the end of his 1981 summation, needs to be "analytically constructive and constructively analytic" in dealing with "altered and alterable relations" in both cultural forms and social circumstances. I take it that if there is any coordinating vision to this project, it is the principle that a historical, processual and relational view of the social totality be applied in order to achieve a democratic, socialist conception of culture. The phrase "cultural materialism" has been often used to designate Williams' theory and practice of cultural analysis, his distinctive framework for critical analysis and interpretation.

In *The Long Revolution*, Williams sums up his observations on the limits of the British culture-and-society tradition (examined earlier in *Culture and Society*). With a synoptic stance, he describes "culture" as the site where crucial questions about historical changes in industry, democracy, class, and art as response to these changes, converged. Against the traditional emphasis on ideas or ideals of perfection divorced from material social life, Williams defines culture as the pattern of society as a whole, the differentiated totality and dynamics of social practices. Culture is a constitutive social process, an expression of general human energy and praxis. This goes beyond the ethnographic, documentary

definition of culture as "whole way of life" (325). Art in this framework is no longer the privileged touchstone of the highest values of civilization; it is only one special form of a general social process in the exchange of meanings, the development of a common "ordinary" culture. So literature and art, the artifacts of high culture, are simply a "part of the general process which creates conventions and institutions, through which the meanings that are valued by the community are shared and made active" (*The Long Revolution* 55). All social relations, including the formal rules for symbolic exchange and their structural constraints, need to be investigated as actual practices and "forms of human energy" whose full range no given system of domination and subordination can totally exhaust.

In *The Sociology of Culture*, Williams rejects the idealist understanding of culture inherited from the bourgeois-artistocratic tradition and modifies the mechanical materialist version. He underscores the fact that cultural practice and production are not simply derived from a constituted social order but are themselves constitutive. His new approach envisages culture as the signifying system "through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored" (13). Cognizant of the "culturalist" deviation, Williams posits as fundamental the axiom that meaning is always produced under determinate empirical and existential conditions. Language is "a socially shared and reciprocal activity, already embedded in active relationships, within which every move is an activation of what is already shared and reciprocal or may become so" (*Marxismand Literature* 166). In a fully historical-materialist position, the use of signs–utterance or speaking as social practice–becomes "notations" for performance. Money, for example, like any sign, becomes a notation performed under certain historically limited conventions. The dichotomy between signifier and signified is thus displaced in Williams' thesis that language is not a sign system but "notations of actual productive relationships" (170). The term that covers the performance of notations in changing circumstances is "communication," a network of practices which engenders "variable societies" comprised of the acts of communal affiliation or solidarities.

For Williams, then, signification concerns language in history, the chief theorem of a dialectical-materialist semiotics. Inspired by Bakhtin/Voloshinov, Williams stresses the vocation of cultural studies as the analysis of the social and historical production of signifying systems, systems which are constituted and reconstituted modes of formation. Concretely particularized in *The Country and the City*—"the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production" (210), this approach is defined by Williams as "cultural materialism."

Williams' method of analyzing ideological/intellectual formations may be considered as his distinctive mode of tackling the classic problematic of the relation between the economic base and the superstructure. We confront once again the problem of articulating in a non-reductive way the complex articulation between consciousness and reality, the claims of immanence and signification, as registered in the social categories of thought and in the ongoing dialectic between knowledge and material power-relations. How do we grasp the connections between social existence and mentalities without the reduction of complex group/individual experiences to their spiritual essences or static social forms? Williams recommends this guiding axiom: cultural analysis begins with "the attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships" (*The Long Revolution* 63). By studying "a general organization in a particular example," the cultural critic seeks to discover "patterns of a characteristic kind." By connecting the separate activities of art, trading, production, families, and politics, cultural inquiry seeks to grasp how interactions between practices and patterns are lived and experienced as a whole.

Williams's overall research project concerns the dialectic of form and content, of intentionality and the occasions of realization—that is, "all the active processes of learning, imagination, creation, performance." In his inquiry, the object of knowledge is no longer just the individual but the communities of form, the collective subject that is realized in active processes of self-definition: "it is a way of seeing a group in and through individual differences: that specificity of individuals, and of their individual creations, which does not deny but is the necessary way of affirming their real social identities, in language, in conventions, in certain characteristic situations, experiences, interpretations, ideas" (*Problems* 28-9). Cultural criticism is concerned with grasping "the reality of the interpenetration, in a final sense the unity, of the most individual and the most social forms of actual life" (*Culture* 29). To accomplish this, we must go beyond isolated texts/products to investigate "[their] real process—[their] most active and specific formation" (*Culture* 29). We engage again the pursuit of determination in terms of the levels of institutions and formations articulated with material means of cultural production, actual cultural forms, and modes of reproduction.

How are the grammar and syntax of history woven into Williams's method? To capture the configurations of interests and activities that distinguish a historical period and at the same time register the "actual living sense" of a community that makes communication possible, Williams deploys the term "structure of feeling": "We learn each element as a precipitate, but in the living experience of the time every element was

in solution, an inseparable part of a complex whole" (*The Long Revolution* 47). In the practice of cultural historiography, Williams was engaged in tracing historical patterns, especially the actively lived and felt meanings and beliefs which of course mix with "justified experience" or systematic world-views. In analyzing formations, Williams spelled out both the fixity of "structure" and the spontaneous flow of (for want of a better word) sensibilities. Instead of describing patterned wholes, Williams sought to apprehend "forming and formative processes," "practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity," through this conceptual device of a "structure of feeling" which captures accurately the dialectic of the social and the idiosyncratically private or personal (*The Long Revolution* 47). The subtext to this interpretive strategy is easily discernible: Williams opposes the assignment of ideas, meanings, and experience to the domain of the received notion of the superstructure which, being merely reflective of and determined by the economic base, has no autonomy or social effectivity of its own. Culture cannot be simply folded into the realm of ideology in the sense of "false consciousness" or Althusser's "imaginary relations."

One way to illustrate how "structure of feeling" functions as a mode of historical accounting of signification is to focus on Williams's series of essays on modernism in *The Politics of Modernism*. In one essay, Williams begins with a juxtaposition of two strands of events in a unique historic conjuncture. In Zurich in 1916, a cabaret of Dadaism was being performed in Number One, Spiegelgasse, while in Number Six of the same street lived a certain Herr Ulianov (Lenin). One of the founders of Dadaism, Hugo Ball, reminisced how Lenin must have heard the artist's music and tirades, their quixotic and "unpurposeful" counterplay to the Bolshevik "thorough settling of accounts." Williams remarks that within five years of Dada's launching, a revolutionary avant-garde theater appeared in the newly founded Soviet Union, Europe's periphery. Williams sums up by observing that the emergence of modernism from metropolitan experience marks the peculiar confluence of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural trends, often overlapping and contrapuntal, from both the metropoles and the patrolled borderlands of the empire.

The concept of "structure of feeling" as a heuristic instrument for elucidating the social history of forms also informs Williams's extended inquiries, in particular *The Country and the City*, as well as his chapters "The Social History of Dramatic Forms" and "Realism and the Contemporary Novel" in *The Long Revolution* and *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. In this latter book, Williams stresses the desideratum that technology, its application and responses, can only be understood "within the determining limits and pressures" of particular historical periods in specific societies (21). Seen thus, television for him began to

manifest its cultural form as a response to the specific crisis of industrial capitalist society, especially the conjunction of the social complex of the privatized home and mobility. The sequence or flow in television programming embodies, for Williams, both residual, dominant, and emergent trends in the history of communication.

Meanwhile, in *The Country and the City*, Williams charts the vicissitudes of tone and feeling toward the mutable and metamorphosing spaces of city and countryside. He warns us not to reify images or memories, to be sensitive to the immense actual variation in our ideas about lived spaces, and to register the confluence of persistence and change: "For we have really to look, in country and city alike, at the real social processes of alienation, separation, externality, abstraction … experiences of directness, connection, mutuality, sharing, which alone can define, in the end, what the real deformation may be" (298). Through his notion of "knowable communities," which links epistemological realism and utopian speculation, Williams qualifies "totality" as a mode of communication and transaction among diverse practices. His accent is on relations, not autonomy of spheres of activity. According to Alan O'Connor, "knowable community" describes "a strategy in discourse rather than immediate experience or an 'organic' community" (68). In other words, there is no such thing as an organic, seamless community where experience is not discontinuous, fragmentary, in need of a connecting intelligence or sensibility. The connections are fashioned by artistic works and by critical analysis. In the course of this historicized aesthetics of place, Williams reminds us again of the dialectic between social consciousness and needs. He underscores the imperative of openness to the changing objective world in which the critic is "always already" imbricated: "For what is knowable is not only a function of objects–of what is there to be known. It is also a function of subjects, of observers–of what is desired and what needs to be known" (*The Country* 165). And so the concept of determination operates in the sense of "limits and pressures," introducing levels of effectivity into what would otherwise be a monolith of "indissoluble practice" that is identical with sensuous, socially-constituted praxis.

Williams returns to the issue of determination in a substantial essay, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," where he answers his critics' refutation of his organicist stand. Williams assents to the layered architectonics of any cultural conjuncture. He refines his notion of a manifold totality founded on social agency and the class organization of society: "the principles of this organization and structure can be seen as directly related to certain social intentions [connected to] the rule of a particular class" (156). This intentionality is given more precision by reappropriating Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Hegemony for Williams refers to our experienced or lived reality, the "whole

body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and his world," the "common sense" which legitimizes the existing social system of distribution and hierarchy of power (157). But no sociopolitical order can exhaust the full range of human practice, energy, and intention because "modes of domination select from and consequently exclude the full range of actual and possible human practice" (161). Ultimately, then, determination is uneven and can only be formulated as a sense of limit and pressure, not control or strict causality, allowing for prefigurative and utopian experiments in mapping a redeemed future—something that evokes Ernst Bloch's teleology of critical phantasy and a practice of inheritance to welcome the "Not-Yet."

We can now gauge the distance CS has travelled from Williams' "cultural materialism." Conceived as a mediation of subject and object, the concept of "structure of feeling" has been reconfigured if not discarded by the postmodernist fetishizing of representation and its articulation of the decentered neoliberal subject. Not only is the dialectic of differentiating complex formations jettisoned for a microphysics of dispersed power and its local narratives, but the polarity of subject/object is construed as merely an effect of the "conditions of operation of the enunciative function," with knowledge itself being an effect of a generalized will to power (Foucault 117). From Williams' cultural materialism, we move on to the time of "anarcho-Nietzscheanism" which denies in effect the possibility of objective knowledge and social emancipation. CS protean transmigrations and wayward metamorphosis may be tracked by the inventory of its various trends and tendencies.

CUNNING OF CONJUNCTURES

The omnibus collection *Cultural Studies* edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler has established a consensual doxa about the discipline. We can now appreciate CS as a superior form of bricolage, context dependent but both anti-/post/ multi-disciplinary, pragmatic, strategic and self-reflective, with a tradition and lexicon that defy codification, affording no guarantees of validity or authoritativeness and stimulating endless self-reflexive interrogation. It is a contentious field crisscrossed by diverse positions and trajectories, putatively open-ended. What does bricolage mean? It encompasses textual analysis, semiotics, deconstruction, ethnography, interviews, phonemic analysis, psychoanalysis, rhizomatics, content analysis, survey research, and so on—a carnivalesque bazaar for any handyman!

The British CS expert Richard Johnson describes the three models of CS in terms of "production-based," "text-based," and "studies of lived cultures" (107). While claiming that there is no single narrative or definition of CS, Grossberg and his colleagues cite the double articulation of CS: cultural practice and production as the ground on which analysis takes place simultaneously with political critique and intervention. Investigating the historically grounded practices, representations, languages, and customs of specific formations, CS also studies the contradictory forms of "common sense" or commonplace understandings which presumably provide resources to fight the constraints of the social order. Grossberg and colleagues write: "It is nevertheless true that from the outset cultural studies' efforts to recover working-class culture and history and to synthesize progressive traditions in Western intellectual history had had both overt and implicit political aims" (5). But what are the concrete consequences and implications of terms such as "political critique," "progressive," and "intervention"?

The overt and implicit political aims turn out to coincide with language and sign systems. Post-structuralism has resurrected formalist idealism. From here on, the reduction of the ideological component of cultural production to discourse and knowledge-power (to borrow the Foucauldian term) and questions of representation has become routine. In 1992, Hall reaffirmed the primacy of discursive and textual processes over political economy: such processes are "not reflective but constitutive in the formation of the modern world: as constitutive as economic, political or social processes [which] do not operate outside of cultural and ideological conditions" ("Race, Culture" 13). It is one thing to say that economic and political processes "depend on meaning for their effects and have cultural or ideological conditions of existence"; it is another to conclude that textuality or representation, in tandem with economic and political forces and in isolation from them, construct the social and political system we inhabit. The subsumption of relations of power to relations of discourse or cultural practices returns us back to a one-sided culturalism that Hall originally wanted to move away from, even though now a theory of discursive articulation is introduced to anticipate such critical objections of reductionism and of idealist formalism to what pretends to be an improvement over vulgar Marxism.

This crux was already prefigured in the entire trajectory of Williams's wrestling with mechanical materialism and also with Lucien Goldmann's sociology of culture. His attempt to resolve the disjunction between theory and practice resulted in the highly nuanced category of "structure of feeling" enunciated in many works, in particular *Marxism and Literature and Problems in Materialism and Culture*. But here I would like to address the latest reconstruction of the problematic of cultural studies which has been quite influential,

namely, the theory and method of articulation of various levels of significations embodied in forms of cultural representation, a problematic first elaborated by Stuart Hall.

Hall tried to clarify his research orientation and agenda in a 1985 interview:

> An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? So the so-called "unity" of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary "belongingness." The "unity" which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. Thus, a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects. (Grossberg 141-2)

This approach reformulates the Althusserian idea of interpellation. It seeks to disentangle the elements of any ideological complex from their class roots or association, endowing the new ensemble with a power to "discover its subject" and enable that subject to make intelligible its historical situation without "reducing those forms of intelligibility to their socio-economic or class location or social position" (142). What this implies is that an ideology like Thatcherism, while anchored in Tory conservatism, entails a politics of positionality contrived by juxtaposing ordinary commonsense beliefs of the masses with a class-based worldview. Elucidating this hegemonic drive requires a theory of discursive articulation to reveal the principle whereby diverse elements have been organized to promote a neoliberal political platform.

TRAJECTORY OF DESIRE

How parts are assembled together rather than their substance or import commands priority. Translated into the grammar and syntax of CS, the theory of articulation becomes almost a methodological dogma. Hall states: "An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions …

The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse [composed of elements without any necessary 'belongingness'] and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected" (Grossberg 141). Hall stresses the *a priori* contingency and adhoc transitoriness subtending the practice of articulation. One suspects that whoever commands enough political clout can alter the contingent to the necessary.

Indeterminacy unfolds its seeming opposite: opportunist *Realpolitik*. Beginning as a reaction against determinism, the reduction of ideology to political economy, this theory of articulation betrays itself as a pragmatic epistemology of explaining social change as arbitrary, even gratuitous, susceptible to the dictates of who commands the most power. When Hall illustrates this CS *modus operandi* by using the Rastafarian movement as an inflection of disparate ideological elements along certain historical tendencies, he gestures to the need to take into account "the grain of historical formations." However, the move is aborted. What transpires is a return to the primary thesis that religion, like any ideological complex, operates like a language or discursive enunciation open to a wide range of experimental play. So ideology (if that is still a viable notion), which interpellates individuals into political agents, is not given necessarily in socio-economic structure or in objective reality; in short, "the popular force of an organic ideology" is "the result of *an articulation*" (Grossberg 144).

I rehearse part of the debate here in this question: Can all cultural practices then be reduced "upward" as discourse or language, and all subjectivities or subject positionalities be conceived as discursively constituted? Hall registers a limit to the theoretical reductionism of Laclau/Mouffe and its extension in psychoanalytic exercises. He instructs us to locate cultural/discursive practices "within the determining lines of force of material relations, and the expropriation of nature…. Material conditions are the necessary but not sufficient condition of all historical practice," but such condition need to be thought of "in their determinate discursive form" (Grossberg 147). This notion of practice approximates the materialist dialectic of object and subject conceived as an interactive process of being and becoming.

Hall is cognizant of the abuses of a theoretical *bricolage influence by Realpolitik* pragmatism, as found in some applications of Foucault and the deconstructionist archive. Unfortunately, such abuses are fostered by the inadequacy of articulation theory: it cannot comprehend the internal relation of parts within a dynamic whole since its level of abstraction refuses to grasp the internal impulses and potential within the elements being articulated, the unity and contradiction distinguishing them, as the force that shapes the

way in which the whole galaxy of forces is configured. What is lacking is the dialectical unity of the continuous and discontinuous which generates dynamic coherence. Further, the internal transformation of each articulated moment—the categories of mediation within the totality—remains obscure if not mystifying. While Hall acknowledges that Rastafarianism centers on the "determinations of economic life in Jamaican society," its status as a product of discursive articulation, as a unified force with a non-unitary collective subject, originates elsewhere (Grossberg 144). Rastafarianism is conceived as the unifying ideology that subsumes economic determinations and constitutes its bloc of social/political forces in a non-holistic way through negotiations, compromises, and other realignments. But exactly how that ideology materializes, remains mysterious.

Whatever our wishes may portend, the real world has proven itself more recalcitrant and intractable. CS pundits are discovering it everyday. As the sociologist Jorge Larrain has shown, the old Marxist concept of ideology would suffice to enable the critique of Thatcherism as a "return, with a vengeance, to the old and quintessential principles of bourgeois political ideology which had been progressively obscured by years of social democracy, welfare state and Keynesianism" (66), the old ideological values of a mythical "free market"—freedom and self-interest based on property. But this time, the conjuncture of the eighties does not replicate the Victorian conflation of Bentham and Mill. Hence the Thatcherite emphasis on authority, law and order, family and tradition; patriotism is invoked to hide the real origins of the capitalist crisis, a crisis whose symptoms are unemployment, poverty, racist discrimination, criminality, new forms of violence, national and regional divisions, intensified class conflicts, and so on. Such populist authoritarianism is neither arbitrary nor contingent. To counter its effects, we need the framework of the organic crisis of the capitalist system without which a method of articulation can only discover short-range opportunism and even a deceptive liberalism in Thatcher's agenda.

Viewed as a programmatic formation (in Williams's sense), Hall's theory of articulation responds to a new historical-political development which I think resists elucidation by this semiotic maneuver. What Hall is addressing is not so much the novel features of bourgeois hegemonic rule but the need to recognize the political economy of class interfaced with race, gender, nationality, and other "new social" movements. Class is, to be sure, not just another banal aspect of identity. For these movements to interact, it is necessary to understand what background totality would enable them to dialogue and form alliances, to forge the "chain of equivalence" that Laclau and Mouffe believe is the catalyzing element for radical democracy.

Poststructuralist fallacies prove damaging here. By valorizing the moment of articulation and even reifying it, Hall tends to occlude the larger epochal background which functions as the condition of possibility for making sense of conjunctural particularities. To use Williams's terminology, the moment of "lived experience" overshadows again the category of formation (residual, dominant, emergent), the structuring modality of "feeling" with which cultural analysis is preoccupied. Fredric Jameson considers articulation or mediation (to use the philosophical term) as "the central theoretical problem" of cultural studies. He views it as "a punctual and sometimes even ephemeral totalization in which the planes of race, gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality intersect to form an operative structure" ("On Cultural" 269). Although Hall states that articulation names the unity of a discourse with social forces under certain but not necessary conditions in history, he is careful to point out that the result is an "articulated combination" and not just a "random association—that there will be structured relation between its parts, i.e., relations of dominance and subordination" (qtd. in Slack 115).

What concerns me here is the way such a theory of articulation has been deployed in contemporary CS. The problem may be a replay of the anxieties over the reimposition of class reductionism or economism as a reaction to identity biopolitics and the anarchism of local narratives. Earlier I have alluded to the recurrent concern of CS practitioners that in foregrounding social history and political economy, the matter of agency is sacrificed. One scholar, for example, contends that women's consumption of Hollywood cinema, or any object of cultural exchange for that matter, does not simply illustrate "the power of hegemonic forces in the definition of women's role as consumers; rather, consumption "is a site of negotiated meanings, of resistance and of appropriation as well as of subjection and exploitation" (qtd. in Strinati 218). Taking passive consumption as an autonomous activity, populist-oriented CS ignores the aestheticization of commodity production itself, mistakenly attributing to the form of value (exchange) instead of the real value (use) the source of pleasure and agency. Meanwhile, the division of manual and mental labor born of commodity-exchange and bourgeois property relations continues to hide the historicity of images, codes, artifacts, and *habitus*—culture remains naturalized, opaque, and instrumentalized.

Can we renew the radical inspiration of CS? Stuart Hall constantly reminds us of the core problematic of CS at its foundational moment: culture (meaning, symbolic forms, signifying practices, discourses) situated in the context of mutable social relations and the organization of power. The analysis of semiotic and discursive practices—the linkages between language/literature and political economy/mode of production—includes

with it the examination of the position of collective subjects in history, generating a critique of those practices and positions. Hall comments on a later development: "A formal deconstructionism which isn't asking questions about the insertion of symbolic processes into societal contexts and their imbrication with power is not interested in the cultural studies problematic" (Osborne 390). CS then is distinguished by its disclosure of how cultural practices are enmeshed in networks of power. But is it enough to insist as a desideratum of legitimacy for this new approach the linkage of discourse, society, and power? What does "power" signify here? How is it related to political economy and the complex dynamics of social relations? Isn't this by itself a formula, a game of empty abstractions, since there is no investigation of purpose, agenda, or historical direction? Isn't this a rehashing of the rudimentary empiricist demand that ideas be framed in social and political contexts?

All commentators agree that a version of Marxist reductionism, otherwise known as economism, triggered the revolt against the left. What happened in the reaction to a caricatured "actually existing" Marxism? Despite claims that the rebels were reinstating agency and freedom to the subject, a swing to atavistic ideology and obscurantist reaction occurred. I believe the correction offered, namely, the over-emphasis on a formalist methodology conflated with organicist (Leavis) or nihilistic assumptions (post-structuralism), resulted in the unwitting cooptation of CS. It was never radical enough to destroy the logic of capital and the ideology of quantifying concrete-use values into abstract equivalents (the cash nexus), the law of *laissez-faire* exchange which governs the market. Eventually CS has become an Establishment organon, or an academic "ideological state apparatus" preventing even the old style of *Kulturkritik* to function. Terry Eagleton calls our attention to the crippling flaw in both *Kulturkritik* and modern-day culturalism in their lack of interest in "the state apparatus of violence and coercion" (43).

VULNERABILITIES

One of the most astute diagnoses of this decay is by Francis Mulhern. In utilizing Gramsci's complex notion of hegemony to ascribe more freedom to the subject, postmodernist CS exaggerated the possibility of liberation over the established fact of domination. Both subordination and resistance are found in popular culture, the impulses of resistance embedded in relations of domination and imperatives of commodification. Rejecting totality, according to Mulhern, CS has ignored elite cultural forms and elevated

popular/mass culture as intrinsically subversive of the exploitative mode of production, thus overlooking "the overwhelming historical realities of inequality and subordination" that condition both (34). In privileging commodified recreation and subsistence activity found in marketed "life-styles," Mulhern argues that the "spontaneous bent of cultural studies is actually *conformist*—at its worst, the theoretical self-consciousness of satellite television and shopping malls" (35).

Pierre Bourdieu has argued convincingly that culture legitimates social inequality, with consumption fulfilling the function of legitimating social differences. Taste itself is a profoundly ideological discourse, a marker of class. Enforced by schools and other institutions, a "cultural arbitrary" inflicts symbolic violence by inculcating a *habitus* of misrecognition: cultural hierarchies appear rational and so justify economic and political domination. No doubt we need an adequate theory of cultural politics. If the culture of everyday life is politicized and all difference regarded as immediately emancipatory, Mulhern contends, this dissolves the "possibility of culture as a field of political struggle." Why? Because politics is a deliberative and injunctive practice that seeks to determine the character of social relations while culture, whose major function is to produce meanings, does not have for its chief purpose the determination of social relations by deliberation, injunction, and coercion. The two realms should not be collapsed nor conflated. Political judgment and cultural judgment are distinct and do not coincide, as Gramsci taught us.

Mulhern concludes that orthodox CS treats all differences as absolute, whereas politics aims for united fronts and tactical alliances in pursuit of specific ends. By eliding that distinction, dissolving politics into culture, CS abandons the search for political solidarities and freezes "the particularisms of cultural difference," of varying cultural practices as political in themselves. Mulhern perceives CS as bankrupt in accepting without criticism the bondage of the masses to consumer capitalism—the ironical end-result of their will to resist all determinisms: "There is no space, and in fact no need, for struggle if all popular culture, abstracted from 'high' culture and from the historical realities of inequality and domination, is already active and critical, if television and shopping are already teachers of subversion" (40). One needs to discriminate between culture as universal value and culture as specific life-forms. This has also been sharply formulated by Neil Larsen in his critique of the populist brand of CS advocated by John Fiske. Fiske simply reads off the popular as "immediacy, as the 'everyday' while the 'aesthetic' is quarantined in idealized transcendence, the antinomial ideology of modernism itself, but here with its normative polarities reversed" (Larsen 91).

Apart from the historical misfortunes of the radical left in Britain, the post-structuralist "exorbitation" of language and semiotics contributed to what I would call a "metaphysical turn" in CS. Socioeconomic determinants shaped its immanent vicissitudes. The evolution from cultural empiricism to Althusserian structuralism ended in a neutralist if not counter-revolutionary revision of Gramsci. The concept of ideology was purged and hegemony replaced ideology-critique. Entirely overlooking the distinction between class-in-itself and class-for-itself already found in Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire and other works, Laclau interpreted the Gramscian concept of hegemony hinging on working-class moral/intellectual leadership as equivalent to the "historic bloc." This bloc constructs political subjects (working class, women, environmentalists, etc.) by the figure of equivalence—in short, politics as "articulation." A heterogeneous bloc serves as the stage for performative, disingenuous "free play."

Immanence displaces transcendence by tergiversation. While Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* grant that the collective will of such a bloc is forged by organic intellectuals, a will expressed in the politics of compromise uniting the bloc, they argue further that there is not just one hegemonic center in society but many. A field of "articulation" is posited in which society is no longer a totality sutured together, but an open field; "the openness of the social as the constitutive ground or 'negative essence' of the existing, and the diverse 'social orders' as precarious and ultimately failed attempts to domesticate the field of differences" (95-6). Rejecting the notions of "mode of production," "social formation," "overdetermination," and the like, Laclau and Mouffe claim that all social reality is constructed by articulatory practices which establish identities of elements through relation. Thus, "all identity is relational…. There is no essence, no structure, which underlies the signifier, social identity is symbolic and relational, not fixed independently of any articulation," although temporary nodal points in the symbolic field for fixing meanings are conceded (113). But what rationale or purpose lies behind articulation? Unaffected by the elements it articulates, what is the direction of articulatory practice? I submit that the motivations and ends of this research programme, however, are not obscure: they are geared to legitimizing the indeterminacies of post-Keynesian "market" fluctuations, privatization of socially produced knowledge, and the sublimation of irreconcilable contradictions in every society wracked by the profound crisis of the capitalist world-system.

CARNIVALESQUE CLOSURE

The imperative of contingency and indeterminacy becomes almost fetishized in the work of Lawrence Grossberg, a disciple of Hall and editor of the chief institutional organ of CS. In surveying current theories of identity, Grossberg refuses what he calls the logic of modernity founded on difference, individuality, and temporality. He proposes an alternative logic of otherness, production and spatiality for a theory of human agency and historical change. Agency, for Grossberg, is defined by "the articulations of subject positions and identities into specific places and spaces … on socially constructed territories" (*Questions* 102). Constructionism thickens with the entailment of conventions.

Mystifications based on nominalist relativism pile up amidst triumphalist CS rhetoric. Grossberg upholds a notion of singularity underlying a community envisioned by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. It is somewhat of a puzzle that Grossberg endorses Agamben's view that the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstration in China instances the singularity of belonging without identity; ultimately, it's the place, the exteriority of locale, that constitutes the singular community. What is egregiously tendentious is the praise of spontaneous action that supposedly characterized the urban insurrection in Beijing, a false premise based on ignorance of the facts of the case. Ignoring the actual circumstances, the tautology Grossberg indulges in to convey what he thinks is profound—"it was the fact of belonging that constituted their belonging together"—serves as proof that anomie, ephemeral accidents, an anarchistic valorization of the happenstance and contingent all acquire foundational import that becomes a warrant for novelty in CS (*Bringing It All* 372).

The cult of vernacular experience substitutes for all-rounded historical analysis. Perhaps the style of adhoc extrapolation of the significance of a major historical event may not be as trivializing as the prodigious dissertations written on pop stars, TV talk shows, public spectacles (sports, media events), and beauty pageants which argue that such commercial icons and rituals are counterhegemonic ruses to overthrow the system. Or, more soberly, what harm can a treatise on Dali among the dolphins in Disneyland do? Nothing except that they legitimize the way things are: cash registers ring merrily while service workers in hotels, restaurants, and carnival grounds sweat it out for corporate capital and its instrumentalities to reproduce themselves and, with it, the unequal division of labor and the theft of social wealth amassed on the damaged bodies of millions of workers, peasants, women and children around the world.

Now, surely, CS from the outset aspired to displace the centrality of victimization with the praxis of resistance, opposition, people's democratic initiatives. From object to

subject–this underlines the trajectory of the critique of determinism and the search for new forms of subjectivity launched by Williams, Thompson and Hall. But on the way to utopian pleasure and empowerment of the fissured subject, its own internal contradictions exploded. Relativism and nominalism undermined the goal of integrating theory and practice. The imperative of rhetorical mastery, compounded with the individualist ethos of "free-trade" theorizing for privileged academics, channelled any oppositional or critical impulses into the invention of apologias for neoliberal multiculturalism. CS becomes a scholastic game for careerists accumulating venal symbolic hoards.

At this point, we need to scrutinize the more insidious irony at work in CS when poststructuralist ideas of resistance become a framework of describing the ordinary practices of exploited people. Sheer heterogeneity reflecting the fragmentation of commodity culture infects the subject to the point where everything becomes relative. Nietzschean perspectivism prohibits the critic of Cartesian rationality from appealing to a normative framework for criticizing that rationality and its power. It is through the social conditions of fragmentation and dispersal that power, discursive and otherwise, prevail. Can a positivist description of epistemic structures be conjoined with "modalities of moral self-constitution" (Dews 234) to offset the preponderance of institutional power? Can ethnographic verisimilitude dear to the connoisseurs of the particular discover the "weak links" in the social structures that repress the human potential?

ACCIDENTS OF NECESSITY

With the deepening crisis of the global market system in the seventies and eighties marked by populist authoritarianism (Thatcher, Reagan), ludic pragmatism and poststructuralist nominalism have begun to dictate and narrow the parameters of intellectual exchange. Anti-Marxism culminates in the blanket prohibition against essentialism, teleology, meta-narratives, and all claims to find truth with historical grounding; in fact, "totalizing" comprehension is equated with totalitarianism. Since the invocation of material conditions summed up in the term "political economy" is stigmatized as terrorism of the left and branded as "political correctness," CS practitioners are often left with the choice of doing positivist ethnography intended to validate any popular activity as somehow authentic and liberating.

One illustration may be cited here. Abandoning critique and exploration of possibilities negated by the market system, John Fiske celebrates bricolage as the mark of

popular creativity. He extols the ethnography of an extra-discursive activity of producing quilts, diaries, or furniture arrangement, as well as routine practices of daily life. One example is the urban poor's employment of television to "enrich and further densify the texture" of quotidian life. Another example is the use of photographs, plastic flowers, and other commodities in which "lost kinship webs are reasserted, reformed through bricolage" (156). The logic of this pattern of accommodation is spelled out by Fiske in this way: "The construction, occupation, and ownership of one's own space/setting within their place/arena, the weaving of one's own richly textured life within the constraints of economic deprivation and oppression, are not just ways of controlling some of the conditions of social existence; they are also ways of constructing, and therefore exerting some control over, social identities and social relations" (160). Coping and other forms of daily adjustment to the dictates of the social order are taken as life-enhancing indices of agency. Everyday life thus becomes validated as affording scenarios for performing the ludic politics of cultural difference.

Clearly, this "take" on CS is both disingenuous and self-incriminating. It actually abstains from any task of "empowering" the oppressed and exploited by confining popular creativity to accommodation to the status quo by means of an "everyday tactical dissembling" now described as politically progressive. The model of peasant resistance cited by Fiske and other ethnographers of this persuasion reveals their conformist bias and defeatist inclination. This approach resembles the aleatory "matterism" of Foucault and his followers that Teresa Ebert condemns as obscuring the material relations in which discourses and practices are produced, an influential "protocol of ludic reading—this genealogy or eventalization—to mask the rigid divisions of class struggle" (228; see also Cotter).

The stress on consumption and leisure over production/work may account for the hermeneutic turn in CS. It may also explain the emphasis on random, arbitrary differences over determinate social practices with ascertainable intentionalities. Symbolic representation often becomes privileged apart from concrete structures of domination. But it is CS's shifting of the point of gravity toward gender and race, away from class and nation, that sheds light on the downgrading of the political economy of cultural practice. Ignoring the processes of commodity production and exchange, the international division of labor, unequal trade, and racialized labor market, CS rejects the problem of "false consciousness," of ideology in general. It casts all popular practice as positive resistance to domination, trivializing the possibilities of revolution and emancipation. Nicholas Garnham correctly insists that CS should focus on the core characteristics of the capitalist

mode of production—waged labor and commodity exchange as necessary conditions of existence—if it wants its liberatory stance to signify more than a gesture of sympathy for the underdogs. Garnham argues that "one cannot understand either the genesis, forms, or stakes of the struggles around gender and race without an analysis of the political economic foundations and context of the cultural practices that constitute these struggles," conditions that "shape in determinate ways the terrain upon which cultural practices take place—the physical environment, the available material and symbolic resources, the time rhythms and spatial relations" (502). Political economy, needless to say, is a point of departure, not the dogmatic center or end-point of any CS inquiry.

Nor is this a matter of substituting an abstract schema of political economy for an exorbitant culturalism. When the sphere of culture becomes inflated and universalized to function also as politics—call it "cultural politics" or subaltern resistance—then cultural studies becomes nothing else but an apology for commodity fetishism. This also applies to the aestheticization of all practices in ethnographic cultural studies like those of Fiske, Clifford, Grossberg, and other scholars, in which culture immediately becomes oppositional so that ideological struggle within it is elided. Actuality and possibility are conflated, resulting in a conservative standpoint (for a philosophical framework, see Jameson; Hebdige). Francis Mulhern warns us against this trend: "There is no space, and in fact no need, for struggle if all popular culture, abstracted from 'high' culture and from the historical realities of inequality and domination, is already active and critical, if television and shopping are already theaters of subversion" (40). Celebrating the market in "life-styles," commodified recreation, and subsistence activity, CS abandons critique and submits to the dictates of what W. F. Haug calls "commodity aesthetics."

Deployed in cultural inquiry, the concept of everyday life can be articulated in a pragmatic and reformist direction, as Fiske does, or in a historical-materialist one, as exemplified by Henri Lefebvre and Agnes Heller. In her book *Everyday Life*, Heller points out that "the use of means of consumption is determined by custom and tradition.… I construe 'consumption' as the appropriation of any meaningful object in which the key role is played by the relay of social meaning (or social import)…. In the mere use of things, man (as person) can only realize himself via moral mediation" (149-50). Precisely here lies the problem of ethnographic cultural studies that evacuates any reference to historical "organic" structures in favor of the "slice of life" empiricism: the "moral mediation" of the Western commentator insinuates itself to endow recorded performances and scenes with meaning and import, a significance larger than the semantic horizon of particular routine details of lived experience. We are back to the problem of authority and explanatory

validity that has afflicted cultural studies when it rejected a dialectical mediation of structure and experience.

VOYEURISTIC RUPTURES

Let us now consider anthropology's refraction of CS. In our postcolonial millennium, one would have expected that a new sensorium of spatiality would compensate for the damage wrought by temporal distancing on colonized indigenous peoples. Johannes Fabian has demonstrated how the denial of coevalness and the scientistic cartography of progress legitimized Europe's "civilizing mission" over the barbaric natives. The ideal of progress served to apologize for the genocide of "peoples without history," justifying by extension the white supremacist evangelism of CS itself and its postcolonial hubris. But now, if the metropole is becoming a wasteland, why not travel to the periphery?

One example of this is James Clifford's intriguing essay "Traveling Cultures." Clifford is engaged in exploring and purportedly displacing "exoticist anthropological forms" inhabiting the domain of comparative cultural studies: the diverse, interconnected histories of travel and displacement, exile, diaspora, tourism, and immigration. While preoccupied with the theme of intercultural hermeneutics, "how cultural analysis constitutes its objects—societies, traditions, communities, identities—in spatial terms and through specific spatial practices of research" (97), Clifford is arguably intent on rehabilitating neocolonial anthropology.

The technique of salvaging what is useful can be an astute exercise in self-reflexivity. One strategy for retooling anthropology pivots around the effort to redefine "fieldwork" as less a concrete place of research than a methodological ideal, a communicative competence. The issue of representation is, for Clifford, concerned with "the portrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, [consequently] one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted native ones." Clifford expands on this topic:

> In tipping the balance toward traveling as I am doing here, the "chronotope" of culture (a setting or scene organizing time and space in representable whole form) comes to resemble as much a site of travel encounters as of residence, less a tent in a village or a controlled laboratory or a site of initiation and inhabitation, and more like a hotel lobby, ship, or bus. If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology,

> in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term culture—seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, etc.—is questioned. Constructed and disputed *historicities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view (101).

Not a believer in nomadology or nominalism, Clifford seems earnest in proving that he can discriminate between the privileged and the disadvantaged, between the missionary West and subjugated natives, between oppressor and oppressed. He disavows linear history and its telos of progress. But he is passionately driven to do comparisons and analogies. He states that while there is no ground of equivalence between Alexander von Humboldt travelling through South America as a scientist and the Asian indentured laborer in California, "there is at least a basis for comparison and (problematic) translation" (107). He believes that a comparative cultural studies would be interested in knowledge of the Asian laborer's view of "The New World" as a potential complement or critique of Von Humboldt's. But what is the basis for such comparisons?

Clifford favors itineraries, returns, and detours, "a history of locations and a location of histories." He is obsessed with migration, exile, transitions, diasporas, movements here and there. Borderlands fascinate him, cities where artists sojourn and pass through. But what is peculiar is that the cities he concentrates on are European ones, Paris in particular, "a site of cultural creation," where Alejo Carpentier, Aime Cesaire, and a host of African and Latin American intellectuals learned a "post-colonial habitus," a "discrepant cosmopolitanism." Symptomatic of an aesthetic-driven agenda, Clifford does not mention Ho Chi Minh, Chou En-lai, or Frantz Fanon who also travelled through Paris, literally and metaphorically: Ho and Chou witnessed and rejected the Eurocentric chauvinism of the French communists while Fanon experienced the gamut of racism in his encounter with psychoanalysis and existentialism. Unbeknownst to Clifford, the problematic of travel thus contains the positive in the negative, opposites uniting and separating in diremptive motion. Contrast Clifford's exhibitionist travelogue with a historical-materialist delineation of places by David Harvey. Adopting the framework of "militant particularism," Harvey points out that the "dialectics of space and place" implies a process of remembering activities of "place creation and dissolution" (29) rooted in class consciousness and political action– "structures of feeling" (Raymond Williams' term) without which encyclopedic travel, albeit sophisticated and anti-ethnocentric, is nothing but blind and empty motion of atoms in space.

Clifford's broad agenda is "to rethink cultures as sites of dwelling *and* travel" (105). In a time when transnational capital, with its new modalities of "flexible accumulation" and niche marketing, is uprooting millions of "third world" peoples and converting them into "transnational" workers, Clifford has the leisure to craft a strategy of aestheticizing this planned mobility for a refurbished ethnography of cultural mapping. An obvious symptom of this aestheticizing of migration is his agreement with CS practitioners who believe in the extinction of the nation-state. For example, he agrees with the sociologist Orlando Patterson's idea of a postnational environment in the United States, a country now possessing "borderland culture areas, populated by strong, diasporic ethnicities unevenly assimilated" into the dominant culture. No mention here of the role of "buffer races," labor-market segmentation, pauperization of gendered labor, and so on (see Martin and Schumann; Hoogvelt). Instead, Clifford emphasizes that "travel," encompassing the historical resonance of other terms like migration, pilgrimage, safari, and so on, is a translation term to be used "for comparison in a strategic and contingent way" (110). Dense with connotations of gender, class, and race, "travel" harbors a "certain literariness" which allows semiotic free-play. But of course, the play of representations, images, and texts inventoried by the ethnographer is always contrived and classified by the power of authorities who also command material, political, and economic resources/properties.

Postmodernist CS scholars make the familiar idealist move of projecting into the object of inquiry a particular "way of understanding" (Eagleton 219) which, contrary to their original motivation, becomes spontaneous dogma. While Clifford urges self-critical awareness that we are using "compromised, historically encumbered tools," he himself (like his fellow anthropologist Constable) does not reflect deeply enough on his own spatial politics. As a result, his survey flattens contradictions of class, nationality, race, and gender into a homogeneous cluster whose utility as ethnographic source material for knowledge is its most indispensable virtue. Significantly he treats tourism as something marginal, when in fact tourism, a form of commodified travel, reveals the function of travel as an allegory of bourgeois modernity, not a form of raw experience or unmediated consciousness but a virtual translation of socioeconomic institutions.

It is relevant to remark that Clifford's "travel" as a pedagogical technique requires the acquisition and deployment of substantial cultural capital. Travel becomes a means of exchanging knowledge, ostensibly for enriching knowledge of one's self, but ultimately for reaffirming mastery of the few privileged Westerners able to engage in leisurely self-reflection. Travel seeks to domesticate Otherness (personified here by migrants, exotic cultures, diasporic artists and intellectuals). In this connection, John Frow points out the

dangers entailed by the ideology of travel when he comments on the touristic role of the Other:

> The commodification of reciprocal bonds, of the environment, and of culture are moments of that logic of contemporary capital which extends private appropriation and ownership from material to immaterial resources, and whose paradigm case is the commodification of information….The logic of tourism [as of travel considered as a form of aestheticized knowledge] is that of a relentless extension of commodity relations and the consequent inequalities of power between centre and periphery, First and Third Worlds, developed and underdeveloped regions, metropolis and countryside. Promising an explosion of modernity, it brings about structural underdevelopment (100-1).

The seeming equalization of societies imposed by Clifford's spatial politics of translation may impress those who are already die-hard crusaders of business pluralism. But I think it is one-sided and misleading in trying to remedy the chaotic fragmentation of life in late capitalism by detaching culture from its contradiction-filled matrix. Its project of breaking down national boundaries, like the aim of technocratic modernization theory still sponsored by the World Bank/International Monetary Fund, is premised on that same reality of unequal development that reproduces center and periphery under the aegis of universalized capital accumulation. As Doris Sommer remarks, "Time-lag decries inequalities, against the drone of pluralism and multiculturalism" (78). Postmodernist travel underwrites such inequality and reinforces the asymmetry of the globalized status quo.

SCHIZOID MOBILITY

Postmodernist anthropology has made a crucial intervention in CS by proposing a free-wheeling ethnography in opposition to bureaucratized, cybercultural development discourse. One of the most militant proponents is Arturo Escobar who rejects World Bank/ International Monetary Fund modernizing formulas. He argues for "a new reading of popular practices and of the reappropriation by popular actors of the space of hegemonic sociocultural production" (223), in short, for ethnographies of cultural difference and local alternatives that would serve as a transformative force for re-figuring the Third World. But

such countermodernist alternatives suffer from the very same neoliberal assumptions that vitiate Clifford's project. Vernacular experience by itself cannot offset the inroads of the coercive "free market."

With the abandonment of metanarratives, teleology and any provisional working conception of social totality, ludic CS practitioners have succumbed to relativist and nominalist paralysis. Their pretense to radicalism has been compromised by an indiscriminate, self-serving, sometimes cynical, stance. In order to salvage some claim to intelligibility if not "truthfulness," they resort to "thick description" (according to Clifford Geertz), ethnographic notations of exotic cultural performances (with emphasis on bodily pleasure, performative desire, subjectivity), and playful speculations on surrealist contingencies that produce "truth-effects." In his engaging survey of the field, Fred Inglis jettisons "analysis of institutional power" for what he considers the more suitable terrain for CS: the study of language games. While upholding Wittgenstein's stress on "how we mean anything" (87), Inglis fetishizes methodology, even though he still clings to a residual "reference" (in Frege's construal) underlying the polysemy of "sense." Consequently he endorses Geertz's essay on the Balinese cockfight as "our model" for CS.

Aesthetics trumps epistemology in the process of hierarchical discrimination. Geertz's fieldwork artifice/artifact, however, is seriously flawed by the problems of translation when it claims to register "the social history of the moral imagination." The confinement to narrow empirical environments and uncriticized common sense—the postmodernist dilation on surface, spatial intensity, and the eternal present—returns us back to the limits of functionalist empiricism that deconstruction vowed to transcend in its initial appearance. Vincent Crapanzano's comment on Geertz is scrupulously on target: Geertz "offers no understanding of the native from the native's point of view,… no specifiable evidence for his attributions of intention, his assertions of subjectivity, his declarations of experience" (67). Erasing completely any historical perspective–e.g., Indonesia as a necolonial formation subject to US imperial diktat, Geertz's ethnography (according to Crapanzano) presents "little more than projections or blurrings" of the American anthropologist's constructions of constructions.

Interpretation needs to be grounded in social reality. CS as an emancipatory discipline producing testable knowledge cannot go beyond textualism without rejecting methodological individualism and its framework of idealist metaphysics. Linguistic analysis needs to be supplemented with a critique of ideological structures. Instead of hypostatizing the arbitrary character of the sign, Anthony Giddens reminds us, we should develop instead "a theory of codes, and of code production, grounded in a broader theory

of social practice, and reconnected to hermeneutics" (48). This has been cogently argued by previous materialist critiques of poststructuralist deconstruction (see Wolin; Hodge; McNally).

On balance, CS has accomplished its initial aims. One can say that there already exists a consensual appreciation of CS' call to valorize the texts and practices of everyday life—the populist agenda of mainstream academic CS—as an antidote to bourgeois elitism and the commodification of high art. But the substitution of a populist program to validate routine behavior as in itself a form of resistance or transgression trivializes the call to pay attention to the intentionalities of subaltern actors and local knowledges. Despite its virtues of empathy and sensitivity to nuanced textures, ethnographies of quotidian life are plagued with errors: they confuse social structure with visible social relations. The ethnographic cult of intertextuality mistakes interdependence for causality, focusing on the specific gravity and efficacity of fragments. Further, postmodernist ethonographers unwittingly focus on a normative equilibrium of details, thus occluding contradictions that defy closure. They substitute a mere succession of events and density of circumstances for historical change; in fact, history is converted into Heideggerian temporality, flux and process of "worlding," substituting itself for a historically-informed critique (Bloch). Ethnography of this kind that mirrors its condition of possibility cannot resolve the problems brought about by new forms of reification and inequality of power/resources that the protracted historical crisis of globalized capital makes possible.

The difficulties of salvaging the old humanistic disciplines like anthropology have been acknowledged by mainstream CS scholars. The problem is associated with the postmodernist dogma on the "celebration of a radically relativized Difference," the "effectivity of surfaces" predicated on "unity in difference." Such formalist concepts replicate the anarchy of the market, anomie, and alienation (Jameson, *The Cultural*). To remedy this predicament, Slack and Whitt have proposed an "ecocultural alternative" that tries to mediate between a holistic ecosystem and the integrity of constituent individuals that are supposed to overdetermine the whole. But this alternative still clings to a dualistic metaphysics, assuming that "life is conducted in discursive conditions not of our own making" (585). The CS program centering on biotic interdependence, with an eclectic bricolage of various pragmatic strategies for survival, is charged with abundant moral messages. But unfortunately it lacks a history in which subject and object dialectically interact. Silent on the contradictions destabilizing the welfare-state consensus in advanced capitalist societies, ecoculturalism colludes in reproducing social inequality. Echoing Frankfurt Critical Theory's attack on instrumentalism, it dismisses the complicity of

the systemic accumulation of capital using a moralistic attack on fascism. Its communal utopianism renders the whole program a panacea for the neoliberal's guilt-stricken conscience.

I am only rehearsing here a judgment already elaborated by others (see Katz; O'Connor). Implemented in a dispersed, eclectic manner, CS works to help capitalism manage the ongoing crisis of the old humanist subject by what Samir Amin calls "culturalist strategies" (66) impotent to challenge the havoc wrought by the universalizing effects of finance capital in its new forms. Because cultural practice is conceived as inherently indeterminate, contingent, infinitely plural, and shifting, CS cannot theorize how new identities or subject positions can really transform social institutions. These identities begin and end with the testimony of everyday experience taken as irreducible and meaningful in itself, unmediated by any normative critical framework. Defined as one-dimensional and atomized aspects of identity, the categories of race, class, and gender are mechanically repeated without any determinate content. Instead of being viewed as new forms of collective labor power that intensify the contradictions in racialized bourgeois polities, CS regards class, race, and gender as abstract counters–so many incommensurable language games, articulations of the flux of some ubiquitous power which remains enigmatic, eventually assuming the guise of the incomprehensible postmodern "sublime."

It is not just a matter of shifting the focus from the now disreputable metanarratives of modernity to the quotidian *habitus* of postmodern consumers. The collapse of CS's radical challenge to the reign of capital stems chiefly from the nominalist subjectivism and discursivism adopted from poststructuralist doctrines. Critique is abandoned for a rhetorical assertion that certain practices, which turn out to be simply survival techniques, are inherently emancipatory or liberating. The reduction of history to a series of conjunctural moments, of identity to temporary positionalities, and positionalities to symbolic chains of equivalence, has eliminated not just lived experience but also the determinants of location and the geopolitics of place. More starkly, it has expunged class struggle. While postmodernist simulacra, pastiche, and extra-territoriality have compelled us to pay more attention to surfaces and spatial dispositions, this has not translated into a serious engagement with the geopolitics of the "global assembly line," NAFTA and MASSTRICHT, the internationalization of migrant labor comprised primarily of women of color, and other mutations of the global markeplace.

COUNTERINTUITIVE INSCRIPTIONS

An alternative can be sketched here as a heuristic provocation. Of various possible routes, I can point to one rather obscure counter-example to Clifford's style of doing CS that is fully conscious of the internal contradictions that define any historical moment. This example takes into account the political economy of cultural practice and production, apprehending culture as an ensemble of agencies that produce and reproduce the totality of social relations with its specific hegemonic articulation. What Jameson suggested as a cognitive mapping based on the imperative "simultaneously to grasp culture in and for itself, but also in relationship to its outside, its content, its context, and its space of intervention and of effectivity" ("On Cultural" 47), has been pursued with lucid and impassioned eloquence by Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle in their now classic ethico-political intervention, *Angkor: An Essay on Art and Imperialism*.

Myrdal and Kessle, committed Swedish intellectuals, travelled through Vietnam and Cambodia in the days of heavy U.S. bombing of the region in the late sixties. They preface their historical and topographical survey of the architectural ruins at Angkor, Cambodia, by transvaluing their experience into social awareness and transformative critique:

> You stand face to face with the stone faces of Angkor. Beyond a border there is a war. But when you yourself face this stone then the "beauty" becomes a concrete reality. These faces of stone were hewn by sweating men in a bloody time of repression and revolt.
>
> To write about Jayavarman VII and get beaten up by the cops; to stand in the midst of the dirt and violence writing fiction; to collect money for the striking mine-workers and lecture on Strindberg; to publish the secret Swedish army regulations on the use of gas against "rioting" strikers and to demand back all of history and all the millennia–that is to take part in the razing of the load-bearing walls of imperialism. To write on Angkor is a necessary part of the struggle for liberation (4-5).

For Myrdal and Kessle, culture as a mode of production is articulated in the way that Japan during the conference I mentioned at the outset articulated itself for me as a place of collision and confrontation, not a place one simply travels through. Unlike Clifford, our joint authors do comparative cultural studies by juxtaposing testimonies and ethnographic accounts of Western travellers and the sites surrounding Angkor. They discuss not only

climate, local history, topography, tribal customs and rituals, but also carry out a subtle analogizing of distant events: twelfth-century Angkor Wat interfaced with the Italian Renaissance, Hellenism, Count Gobineau, Livingstone, and of course French colonialism. Andre Malraux (famous author of *Les Conquerants* and *La Voie Royale* set in IndoChina) is inserted here as someone who plundered the temple of Banteay Srei in December, 1923, but was later acquitted because the monuments were not considered "protected" by the colonial government. This militant ethnography is guided by a consistent historicizing of social forms and cultural practices, thus materializing the nuanced coevalness of cultures, times, and places for judgment. Alterity is not fetishized but rendered concrete and practical within a project of building solidarity with anti-imperialist forces.

What distinguishes Myrdal and Kessle's travel through history and concrete geopolitical space is not its erudition nor its meticulous scrutiny of how culture and power are imbricated. Rather, it lies in the dialectical intelligibility of its discourse. This depends on its inquiry into both "the causally generated presentation of social objects and their explanatory critique–in terms of their conditions of being, both those which are historically specific and praxis-dependent and those which genuinely are not" (Bhaskar 128). While respecting the relative autonomy of art, Myrdal and Kessle situate Angkor in a constellation of political, economic, and ideological forces that determine its history. It is a mode of CS that proceeds from the materiality of signification to the political constitution of subjectivities, sublating rhetoric and textuality into a field of conflicting forces where control/access to knowledge and resources are at stake both for past and present protagonists. Mindful of the people's war of national liberation against the West often inspired by Marxism-Leninism, these European observers implicate themselves in what they are studying: they question the ideal of detachment and neutrality. They are partisans of the popular forces that built Angkor in the past and those fighting imperialist bombs at the time of their writing.

Partisanship demands sensitivity to relations, processes, movements. Employing a dialectical method of analyzing the unity of opposites, Myrdal and Kessle are grappling with symptoms of reification in the discourse of bourgeois aesthetics and history. They succeed in penetrating the surface of empirical data, of personal experience, to register the movement of conflicting tendencies. Surfaces reveal fissures, underneath the joints are rhizomatic cracks. What caused Angkor's decline? Not wars or shifts in religion, as the official textbooks say, but the internal contradictions immanent in society:

Angkor perished. But Cambodia survived. The rulers vanished. But not the people.

> The whole history of Angkor was a history of incessant revolts, of unending social struggle…. Angkor grew up as a centralized state, in which, by exploiting new techniques, oligarchy has been able, at the people's expense, to create for itself immeasurable wealth. This state existed in a chronic state of war. Just as the temples were not just religion or mere ostentatious waste, but the very mechanism by which the oligarchy could absorb the people's labor, so these wars were an inevitable form in which the state's organization could exist.
>
> The most comprehensive building period in Angkor's history coincided with–and was an expression of–the inner crisis which shook the state…. With Angkor as with the Roman Empire, the internal contradictions tore the state asunder…. This social collapse [of the nobles and wealthy merchants]–the collapse of intensive irrigational agriculture (thus of the centralized state)–was a liberation (Myrdal, and Kessle 158, 164).

In bold strokes, Myrdal and Kessle delineate the pattern of dialectical exchange between milieu and art, between objective constraints and subjective capacities, ideas and material culture, in order to mobilize an audience for anti-imperialist intervention.

What Myrdal and Kessle exemplify is not wholly alien to CS's original project, as I have reviewed earlier. Orthodox CS experts have repeatedly stressed the uniqueness of CS in bridging theory and material culture, contextualizing intellectual work with real social and political problems, with cultural and political power and struggle. At present, the question of AIDS, for example, is an urgent testing ground for ideological contestation: "What cultural studies must do, and has the capacity to do, is to articulate insights about the constitutive and political nature of representation itself, about its complexities, about the effects of language, about textuality as a site of life and death" (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 7). This certainly responds to local academic needs. But is that all the strategic intervention CS can do?

The limits of CS stem, I suggest, from the lack of an alternative, counter-hegemonic view of capitalist society. Conjunctural analysis and the theory of articulation are privileged because they are "embedded, descriptive, and historically and contextually specific" (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 8). Myrdal and Kessle go beyond the conjunctural by transposing the lessons of Angkor's past into the war-torn landscape of Vietnam in the sixties. They emphasize the need to grasp the historical relations of political forces in order to act intelligently and effectively. They understand Lenin's insight that

national liberation struggles (such as those of the Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples) are forms of revolutionary subjectivity generated by capital's uneven and combined development (Lowy; Anderson). From this perspective, the stone temples of Angkor should not be read simply as symbols of gods or abstract ideas; rather they embodied power. Myrdal and Kessle assert these challenging propositions:

> All aesthetic problems connected with Angkor are wrongly put…unless connected with the hierarchy of social classes…. Prayers and ceremonies. Sacred texts and learned men. All were merely the form in which the rice crop was collected from the peasants and distributed among the rulers…. The construction of these immense temples was conditional upon the majority of the people being called brute beasts. In the night, when Gun slept and the fan squealed, I thought of Manhattan. Of Paris. And London. Walk down these streets a thousand years from now. How much will remain? (167)

Myrdal and Kessle's writing, to my mind, exemplifies a form of CS that intervenes across the boundaries of popular and elite cultures. While dealing with the fabled ruins of an Asian kingdom studied by art historians and anthropologists, Myrdal and Kessle succeed in making its history intelligible for lay persons without any prerequisite of technical knowledge. What is required is a knowledge of how culture is tied with human labor and the organization of social energies, the entire "field of cultural production" (Bourdieu). Canonical CS today avoids talk of exploitation of labor, property relations, and the whole field of political economy that embraces the conditions of possibility for both elite and popular culture; for overlapping residual, dominant, and emergent tendencies in the realm of ideological class-struggle.

INVESTMENTS AND DISAVOWALS

What needs more critical engagement is the task of how this mediation of history and textuality as shown in Angkor can be accomplished in cultural studies. Antony Easthope's guidebook *Literary Into Cultural Studies* is one such illustration. In the process of formulating his approach, Easthope demonstrates that the discipline of literary studies no longer exists as such; it has evolved into cultural studies as soon as it attends to "the materiality of its own construction as a discourse of knowledge" (174). This has been foreseen by literary scholars like Jeffrey Peck, for example, who envisaged the

reconstruction of literary scholarship as a "critique of institutions and disciplines" (52), a view inspired by the work of Edward Said. Said's redefinition of culture refines those of Williams and Hoggart by accentuating the problem of power, ethnicity, and identity: "culture" signifies "an environment, process, and hegemony in which individuals (in their private circumstances) and their works are embedded, as well as overseen at the top by a whole series of methodological attitudes," including "the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases belonging to or in a place, being, at home in a place" (8). This is a considerable amplification of experience compared to which the revitalization of aesthetics or the endorsement of rarefied biography (by Fred Inglis, for example) is a return to the iniquitous realm of a feudal division of labor.

I venture a provisional conclusion here. The crisis of contemporary cultural studies inheres in its historical origin from contradictions in social relations tied to changing modes of production. Disjunctures between social actors/agents and the material circumstances pervaded by class, gender, race, nationality, and other categorizing frames of experience have reproduced the classic problem of subject/object dualism in epistemology and ethics. Consequently, the politics of culture tends to be viewed from either an idealist and subjectivist optic, or from a deterministic prism. What results in intellectual practice is either the voluntarist ideal of the "civilizing mission" or the bureaucratic-technocratic resignation of the modernizing expert whose patron-saint is Max Weber (Wood). Having forsworn historical materialism and dialectics, CS succumbs to the miasmic polarities of metaphysical idealism.

We confront a familiar dilemma. How do we mediate the antinomies of thought that reflect in oblique ways the real-life historical contradictions in which the thinkers are embedded? Do we suspend our inquiry until we resolve first those contradictions, or do we need to register impulses of change in paradigm-shifts that catalyze problem-solving strategies? Indeed, the educator needs to be educated; theory and practice needs to be synthesized.

Unless we wrestle with both horns (philosophical realism or idealism) of the dilemma anchored in the historical process, we will end up in the "vertiginous abyss" of textual and discursive speculation. Not a salutary prospect, by any means. For praxis-oriented practitioners in CS, I would recommend as a way out of this impasse the practice of David Harvey in his recent work, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference.* In chapter 12 of his book, Harvey uses a historical event–the fire that gutted the Imperial Foods plant in Hamlet, North Carolina, on Sepember 3, 1991, and killed 25 and seriously injured 56 of two hundred workers—as a point of departure for his research program. In his account,

Harvey not only presents a "thick description" of the political and economic circumstances surrounding the tragic event, but he also explores the question of social justice and "the political geography of difference"—notably, issues of race/ethnicity and gender—in its embeddedness in place and modalities of cultural discourse and expression. Harvey modifies the genre of traditional ethnography by interrogating its hidden assumptions, articulating the organic "permanences" of U.S. social history with the conjunctural differences of racism, sexism, and national oppression specific to North Carolina and to U.S. capitalism within the global parameters of systemic crisis. I believe that Harvey's methodology of dialectical linkages of several levels of analysis conforms to the spirit of Gramsci's magisterial vision of "critical understanding of oneself" (*The Modern* 69) founded on the moment of "catharsis" as the passage from the base to the superstructures (Gramsci *Selections* 181), the union of theory and practice, attained through stages of mediating elements of social life and directed to fashioning a coherent and critical comprehension of history and one's place in it. Without this informing vision, CS cannot claim to be emancipatory or liberating—except in a gestural self-serving sense.

Problematizing CS, I submit, entails a reinscription of such dichotomies as elite/popular in the dialectical coupling of mode of production/social formation. Notwithstanding all the talk about intervention, CS reveals its own compromised situation when Grossberg and colleagues pontificate: "Cultural studies does not require us to repudiate elite cultural forms—or simply to acknowledge, with Bourdieu, that distinctions between elite and popular cultural forms are themselves the products of relations of power. Rather, cultural studies requires us to identify the operation of specific practices, of how they continuously reinscribe the line between legitimate and popular culture, and of what they accomplish in specific contexts" (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 13). Apropos of this formalism, Easthope remarks that "it would be a form of logocentrism, the old vision of speculative rationalism, to believe that an intellectual procedure necessarily leads to a particular politics" (178). Evidently CS cannot operate as an autonomous institutional force separate from the demands of the ideological-political field. Just as "reason develops and transforms itself in the practical field" (Godelier), CS acquires value-filled import in engagement with crucial public issues affecting entire peoples and societies, as Patrick Brantlinger ably demonstrated in his synoptic survey of CS, *Crusoe's Footprints*. The contexts are decisive, as Ioan Davies has shown in the case of Canada and in the person of Kenyan novelist Ngugi W'a Thiongo; and Jon Stratton, Ien Ang, and Kuan-Hsing Chen for the rest of the world (for the Australian scene, see Turner; for Taiwan, see Liao 2000).

Proposals for renewing CS usually invoke a pastiche of topics such as sameness-

in-difference, multidimensionality, return to the "cultural-in-the-economic" (Morley 49), syncretizing racialized ethnicities, "deracinated subaltern subjects, heterodox traditions" (Leitch 182), postnationalist ethics of hybridity, transcultural cosmopolitanism, and the like. For a start, I would like to endorse Barbara Epstein's always timely advice: "In the United States it is impossible to take our understanding of race, gender, or questions of social division and disintegration further without acknowledging the fact of class polarization" (136). Space constraints prevent me from being able to elaborate further my view that a historicist "cultural materialism" first outlined by Williams can be renewed by recovering and adapting to new contexts the principles of "national liberation struggles" espoused by Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James, Lu Hsun, Amilcar Cabral, Che Guevarra, Aime Cesaire, and others. CS practiced by those committed intellectuals can be a revolutionary way out of the current impasse.

Besides denaturalizing CS, we need therefore to historicize its thematics, methods, and objectives. Mindful of Williams' advice to think through the history of conflicted ideological formations, Hall recently urged the concentration of CS on problems of "racism today in its complex structures and dynamics" arising from "the terrifying, internal fear of living with *difference*" ("Race, Culture" 17). Obviously the resurgence of racism in the UK and elsewhere in the last two decades precipitated this call to arms. There is no cause for premature alarm–unless apocalyptic investments persist in attributing a messianic mission to CS in the hope of revitalizing a civic but still patriotic humanism beloved by Rorty and fellow neopragmatists. Jameson in fact celebrates the utopianism of CS as a "project to constitute a historic bloc" ("On Cultural" 251) of progressive academics. However, because of its current fixation on articulation, contingency, indeterminacy, and local power resistance, CS will continue to perform at best a polite and loyal-opposition role, reinforcing that affirmative culture which Herbert Marcuse once described as the realm of freedom and happiness–"universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realisable by every individual for himself 'from within,' without any transformation of the state of fact" (95). Unwittingly, mainstream CS promotes this affirmative culture offering temporary anodyne to the inhabitants of an administered racial polity. Far from the cacophonous din of Disneyland surrounding Dali's enigmatic masterpieces in St. Petersburg, Florida, this veritable utopia is the not so clandestine object of desire for the contemporary high priests of Cultural Studies whose complicity with predatory capital, no doubt unpremeditated and even resisted, will surely be the object of "enormous condescension by posterity."

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FRAGILE ARENA:
THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN PROTEST AND CONFINEMENT IN THREE *SUGILANON*

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Abstract
Though the Hiligaynon prose narrative form called the *sugilanon* appears innocuous enough, it can also be—and has been—used as a channel of social protest. As a protest text, the sugilanon can expose, criticize, and propose alternatives to perceived social wrongs such as the oppression of one individual by another or of one social class by another. This paper seeks to explore the protest aspect of the *sugilanon* through three examples of the form. The three texts are analyzed and evaluated in terms of the extent to which they manifest recognition of and engagement with, the oppression in the world that they create and/or in the world that surrounds them. At the same time, since these texts exist within contexts where the power relations tend to confine protest, this paper also analyzes how each text manifests such confinement, or conversely, how it manages to "escape" confinement.

Keywords
confinement, counter-consciousness, Hiligaynon, Philippine literature, protest text, regional writing

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My paper's framework begins with Michel Foucault's concept of confinement. "Confinement" as Foucault conceives it may be defined as a condition of "permanent visibility" created by subjecting all individuals, through various social institutions, to examination, investigation, evaluation, and judgment, and to penalties if judged unfit or aberrant. This condition exerts on individuals an internal pressure that circumscribes all their thoughts and actions, turning them into unwitting transmitters of the very power system that controls them, and making confinement, in effect, utterly inescapable (Foucault 464-5, 470-86).

This will not, however, be applying Foucault's concept of confinement in its entirety, particularly in the matter of confinement's inescapability. I believe that confinement is made inescapable only by two factors: ignorance and inaction. If, through some mechanism a counter-consciousness develops and is acted upon, escape from confinement becomes possible. This paper's main objective is to demonstrate the tension between these principles of confinement and escape–and the role of counter-consciousness in three examples of the Hiligaynon fiction form called the *sugilanon.* The discussion here is derived from a somewhat longer study I made on the same theme, using the thirteen stories in the anthology *Sugilanon: Mga Piling Maikling Kuwentong Hiligaynon,* edited by Rosario Cruz-Lucero.

The three stories discussed in this paper are among the thirteen. What follows now are sections abstracted from the longer paper, with some modifications for cohesion and/or compression.

The texts to be analyzed are the following: "Si Pingkaw" by Isabelo S. Sobrevega, first published on August 14, 1968, in *Hiligaynon* magazine; "Panaghoy sang Ginahandos nga Palpal"
("The Sound of a Stake's Lament") by Juanito Marcella, first published on September 7, 1966, also in *Hiligaynon* magazine; and "Diin ang Hustisya?" ("Where is Justice?") by Nilo Par. Pamonag, originally published in *Hiyas '75* by the Yuhum Press.[1]

"Si Pingkaw" is about a woman who scavenges for her and her children's survival, and who goes insane when the children, poisoned from eating scavenged food, fail to get medical treatment in time and, one by one, die. "Panaghoy sang Ginahandos nga Palpal" is about a farmer, Tyo Danoy, who has tilled the same piece of land for almost two decades on the strength of a pledge made by the late Don Lucas, his landlord, out of gratitude for all that Tyo Danoy had done for him and his children during the Japanese Occupation. But now Don Lucas's son Emilio (whom Tyo Danoy calls "Toto Meling"[2]) is taking back the land and evicting Tyo Danoy, only because the latter, totally ignorant of Emilio's political involvements, had supported his own son against Emilio's candidate in the last elections. "Diin ang Hustisya?" is about two friends who choose separate paths to achieve similar goals. Both are concerned about the poverty, oppression, and injustice prevalent in their society, but the wealthy Manny believes that change can best come about through elections, while the sugar worker Nanding—himself a victim of injustice—believes that revolution is the only effective recourse. Because these three stories deal with social problems, they are read here as texts of social protest, that is, as texts which seek to expose, criticize, or propose an alternative to, a perceived social wrong.

As texts of protest the three stories are further classified according to the level of their comprehension of the oppression that exists in the worlds that they create and/or in the world that surrounds them. These levels may be articulated as follows:

> Level 1: The oppressive situation is recognized and therefore presented or used as the text's background or context, but the text makes no judgments about it. The reader is left to make those judgments.
>
> Level 2: The oppressive situation is not only used as background material. The text raises questions about it and/or depicts the power relations that produce it thereby implying that it is an undesirable situation which should be rejected.
>
> Level 3: The oppressive situation is rejected outright in the text, which now seeks or presents ways to correct it or replace it with a more desirable situation.

PROTEST AND CONFINEMENT IN THE THREE *SUGILANON*

"Si Pingkaw" exemplifies a "Level 1" protest text. Poverty is the central issue in this story, evident in Pingkaw and her children's surroundings and way of life. While her children are alive, Pingkaw seems oblivious to the oppressive conditions under which they all live, content to push her cart and scavenge for things that she and her children can use, wear, or even eat. Her poverty and the indifference of other people only strike at her consciousness when her children fall ill and she can get no help for them until it is too late. Yet she never questions her situation. Neither, for that matter, does the story's narrator, who contents himself with merely reporting the incidents in Pingkaw's life.

Because both its narrator and its main character avoid confrontation with the socio-political realities around them, this story's capacity for expressing protest is greatly limited. In presenting the issue of oppression as mainly a question of survival, with oppression itself as an unquestioned and thus inescapable fact of life, "Si Pingkaw" fails to promote a higher level of understanding of the causes of oppression and the forces that create or perpetuate it.

Somewhat more "advanced" as a protest text is "Panaghoy sang Ginahandos nga Palpal."[3] In the relations between Tyo Danoy and Don Lucas, and later Emilio, the story depicts the *amo-suluguon* (master-servant) dichotomy in the characters' world, a dichotomy that remains unbroken through all the surface changes in their relationships and

circumstances. Tyo Danoy's life is so enmeshed with those of his masters' that he considers their welfare as his personal responsibility, supporting them in wartime and later caring for Emilio after his father's death.[4] And yet he never forgets that he is their servant. For their part, the family repays their servant's loyalty with kindness and generosity, as Don Lucas does through his pledge of land, but they also never forget that they are the masters. This is what makes it possible for Emilio to reverse his father's pledge when later developments, in his view, justify it.

The *suluguon*'s absolute subservience to the *amo*, his dependence on the latter's good will and on the reciprocity in their relationship, is evident in Tyo Danoy's repetition of the words *Pamangkota lang bala si Toto Meling* (Just ask Toto Meling) when he recounts to Mr. Tante, the lawyer sent to evict him, the many proofs of his devotion to Emilio and his family:

> Kon nahibaloan ko lang, bisan nga magpadayon man sa pagkandidato ang anak ko, sa kandidato ni Toto Meling ako mabulig. Man agalon ko si Toto. Lima ka tuig kapin ang pag-uporay namon diri sa Tapaslong kag sunado ko gid ang pamatasan niya. Pamangkota lang bala si Toto Meling. Sang panahon sang okupasyon, nakaabot gani ako sa Talangban sa pagpangita sing idalawat ko sing bugas agod itil-og sa ila. Nahibaloan ini ni Toto Meling. Pamangkota lang si Toto Meling. Ang pag-unong ko sa ila panimalay sadtong buhi pa si 'To Lucas nga iya amay wala sing kapin kag kulang. Nahibaloan ini ni Toto Meling. Pamangkota lang bala si Toto Meling.
>
> [If I had known, even if my son had gone on with his candidacy, I would have supported Toto Meling's candidate. You see, Toto is my master. We were together here in Tapaslong for over five years and I know his nature well. Just ask Toto Meling. During the occupation, I even went as far as Talangban to earn enough to buy rice so I could offer it to them. Toto Meling knows this. Just ask Toto Meling. I gave nothing more and nothing less than devotion to their family when 'To Lucas his father was still alive. Toto Meling knows this. Just ask Toto Meling.]

Unfortunately, there is reciprocity in the *amo-suluguon* relationship only when the *amo* recognizes it. Emilio does not, so Tyo Danoy loses his land.

This story exemplifies the Level 2 protest text because by revealing Emilio's political involvements, the story depicts the connections between economic and political power, demonstrating how these powers create conditions of dependency and oppression by the

way they are exercised. The exposure and exploration of some of the roots of oppression enable the reader to understand such situations better. However, by making the main character resign himself to an unjust situation, the text blocks out the possibility of correcting or eradicating oppression itself.

The third-level protest text is exemplified by "Diin ang Hustisya?" where the sugar worker, Nanding, is falsely accused and convicted of killing a soldier who was among the goons and military men sent to break up a strike organized by Nanding's union. He escapes from prison and eventually joins the Communist Underground. Visiting his friend Manny at the latter's vacation-house late one night, Nanding ends up arguing with his friend as Manny attempts to convince him to go back to the fold of the law. Their exchange of views echoes bits and pieces of the long-running debate between "radicals" and "moderates" in this country's political life. The following are segments from their argument:

> "Nanding, indi pa ulihi ang tanan agod magbalik ikaw sa latid sang kasugoan."
> "Ano nga kasugoan?"
> "Ang buot mo silingon, Manny, ang kasugoan diri sa aton? Ang kasugoan nga duha sing nawong: isa para sa mga manggaranon kag mga gamhanan kag isa naman para sa mga imol kag mga wala sing hikap?"
> "Isa lamang ang kasugoan, Nanding. Ina ang kasugoan nga wala sing pinilian. Sa diin sa iya tiilan ang tanan alalangay. Nakita mo ang simbolo sang hustisya? Nahibal-an mo ina, indi bala, Nanding?"
> "Nagsayop ikaw. Ang babae nga simbolo sang hustisya madugay na nga ginbuslan sang hurong. Ang iya timbangan nagahuyog lamang kon tampukan sang pilak kag tungtongan sang pusil!"
>
> ["Nanding, it isn't too late yet for you to go back to the fold of the law."
> "What law?"
> "Do you mean the law in this country, Manny? The law with two faces: one for the rich and the powerful and another for the poor and those without connections?"
> "There's only one law, Nanding. That's the law which does not discriminate, and before which all are equal. Have you seen the symbol of the law? You know it, don't you, Nanding?"
> "You're mistaken. The woman who used to symbolize justice has long been replaced

by a goon. His scales only move when money is piled into them and a gun laid on top!]

In the course of their argument covering the issues of social justice and elections vs. revolution, the two friends force each other to articulate clearly their commitment to their choices and their motives for making those choices. In this Level 3 story, the power relations involved in oppression are exposed, mainly through the two main characters' discussion. The story escapes confinement to a large extent because it freely explores options for change, accommodating even views from the political left, and it also blocks power from controlling the turn of events by allowing its main characters their choices. In the end, Manny decides to run for congressman against the corrupt incumbent, while Nanding goes back to his life underground.

To better understand the dynamics of protest and confinement in the three stories, it would be useful to look into the various contexts that operate in and around these texts. One of the contexts is the *hacienda* system, the root of the power relations that has circumscribed much of Negros life in the twentieth century. The system that turned Negros Occidental in the mid- to late nineteenth century from a wilderness to the country's "sugar capital" also bred what social historian Violeta Lopez-Gonzaga calls the "*amo-suluguon* complex," the "face-to-face relationship" that bonded the landlord-master to his sugar workers "with the fixity, and the fragility, of an umbilical cord" (49). The relationship often redounded to the benefit of the master, for in the vast, essentially capitalistic Negros plantation system, labor was simply an instrument of production—necessary, but renewable and expendable,[5] making the sugar workers almost entirely dependent for their survival on their landlords.

If one subscribes to Althusser's concept of ideology as being present in and around us at all times, informing all our thoughts and actions without our being aware of it,[6] one can see how the *amo-suluguon* type of power relations becomes "natural" to both sides, and conversely, how protest against such a relationship becomes "unnatural." This type of consciousness can easily operate as a source of confinement in any aspect of culture that evolves within an *hacienda*-based, economic and political system. It was beyond the research scope of this paper to determine the *sugilanon* authors' birthplace, hometown, or class origins, but one may infer from the authors' use of Hiligaynon that they must have had some contact or association with the culture of Negros Occidental or the Hiligaynon-speaking parts of Panay. Applying Althusser's concept of ideology to these writers, one could say that they probably absorbed—in different degrees, certainly, depending on the

extent of contact—the consciousness prevalent in these regions, and thus became limited (or confined) in their perceptions by that consciousness. This could help explain the varying degrees of limitation in the expression of protest in the texts discussed here.

At the same time, taking Macherey's view that literature can reveal the contradictions in ideology by "fictionalizing" (or reconstructing) it (Macherey 465), one can also see how a counter-consciousness can develop even in the presence of a dominant ideology. The sociopolitical developments in Panay and Negros, and the rest of the country for that matter, would not have escaped reportage (and therefore reconstruction) in print and broadcast media, and even in ordinary people's conversations. If one allows the term "literature" to include these other texts, one may find in them a source of counter-consciousness for any *sugilanon* writer they might have reached, such as, for instance, the author of "Diin ang Hustisya?"

The confinement of protest in a literary text may also be accomplished through the text's form, which thus becomes the site of the interaction between its author's consciousness and the tradition to which the text belongs.

In her book *Translating the Sugilanon: Re-framing the Sign*, Corazon D. Villareal traces the roots of the Hiligaynon narrative tradition to pre-Spanish oral literature as well as to the 19th century narrative poems called the *composo* and *corrido*, the *pananglet* or exemplum, and a publication called the *Almanake* in which songs derived from Spanish Christmas carols, like the *Daigon*[7] *sa Noche Buena*, would appear (13-5).[8] These literary forms were characterized by didacticism, conventionalization of characters, and romanticism in the sense of being both idealistic in their intentions and melodramatic in their effects. These characteristics of the earlier narrative forms are found also in the *sugilanon*,[9] "packaged" in a leisurely, gentle style of storytelling that, Villareal notes, reflects the Ilonggos' manner (13). But such characteristics may also further explain how the *sugilanon* can be confined as protest text, especially when one considers these characteristics as working in tandem with ideology. Though didacticism and conventionalism in themselves have no politics, the culture in which they exist does, and it is the dominant ideology in that culture which dictates what "morals" a text may teach, what "conventions" or norms it must follow and help to perpetuate. Having evolved within a cultural system that discourages protest, it is not surprising to find *sugilanon* like "Si Pingkaw" and "Panaghoy sang Ginahandos nga Palpal" carrying the same subliminal message: "If you are born poor, accept your lot, cheerfully suffer it in silence." Facilitating the transmission of this message are the stories' gentle narrative style and the melodrama that evokes more pity than protest.

It is "Diin ang Hustisya?" that manages to send a less subservient message, still

"packaged" in the standard *sugilanon* narrative style. The message is: "Leave the system, reform it, or change it—just don't let it go unquestioned." As a Level 3 protest text, this story clearly demonstrates the dynamics of consciousness and counter-consciousness, of confinement and escape, as they interact with tradition.

The site of this interaction is the third context of the *sugilanon*—popular culture.[10] The *sugilanon* may be considered part of Hiligaynon popular culture because (1) it uses the vernacular; (2) it is essentially a "home-grown" form, its ancestry being literary forms that were also, in their time, "mass-oriented";[11] and (3) it has been disseminated mainly through mass media.[12] The third factor is particularly relevant to this discussion because of the way commercial, artistic, and political considerations usually have to be juggled in publications intended for mass consumption.

Commercial considerations contribute to the confinement of protest in publications in two ways: (1) by making it "practical" or "necessary" to use material that is not likely to offend those who can determine a publication's existence; and (2) by automatically attributing value to material deemed "appealing" to the target market—no matter what qualities that appeal may be based on. In an environment characterized by domination and dependence (like the Negros *hacienda* system) or by a political dictatorship (like Marcos's martial law government), publications have to be careful not to displease the dominant forces because the ideology that has evolved in these environments has given these forces considerable power of confinement. If a popular magazine were therefore to feature a protest text at all, the protest would have to be as subtle as possible, a quality that, unfortunately, could render it vulnerable to co-optation or "neutralization" as in the case of "Si Pingkaw" and "Panaghoy sang Ginahandos nga Palpal." Even "Diin ang Hustisya?" published while the country was under martial law, tempers its daring by not committing itself to a wholly revolutionary perspective.

The second commercial consideration has to do with pleasing the market. As Cruz-Lucero notes, when the *Hiligaynon* writers shifted towards the end of the 1930s from translating and adapting English and Tagalog fiction to writing their own stories, they had to maintain the already-established conventions of didacticism, sentimentalism, and melodrama (xiii-xiv), which as has been seen, lend themselves well to the exercise of confinement. If one further considers that norms, conventions and the tastes of the mass market may also be defined not by the masses themselves but by a dominant ideology or dominant class—the very power that can determine the life or death of a publication—one can imagine to what levels of confinement the accommodation of political interests can lead.[13] This is how popular culture becomes a site for the interplay of form and ideology in

the confinement of protest.

Yet again, the protest-confinement dynamics does not stop there, for popular culture may also be used, deliberately or accidentally, to counter confinement. For example, it is a wonder that there are any *sugilanon* at all which deal with poverty and oppression, given the culture or ideology within which the form evolved. The very existence of these themes in such stories may be read as a form of protest because as Cruz-Lucero notes in her introduction to the *sugilanon* anthology, the stories, when taken as a body, mirror a society mired in poverty, oppression, and injustice, and thus render dubious the assumption that social equality is inherent in a democratic society (xv).

It appears, moreover, that the *Hiligaynon* magazine itself operated with a certain amount of counter-consciousness, for at various times in its history it had sponsored story-writing contests that either specified "social justice" as the theme, or resulted in the writing and publication of texts with that theme.[14] These developments in the *Hiligaynon* may of course be seen as simply more attempts by the dominant ideology to control the growth and direction of social consciousness in the *sugilanon* by limiting the expression of such consciousness through contest rules, editorial policies, and other means. What can change the equation, however, is the reader, for if a reader has already developed (or is developing) some kind of counter-consciousness, he/she will recognize the most subtly hidden or still incipient protest within a story, and in this way enable the text to escape even a self-imposed confinement. In the contest between protest and confinement in the *sugilanon*, therefore, the reader is an important factor, for if a *sugilanon* writer can write differently and produce "Diin ang Hustisya?" why should a *sugilanon* reader not read differently and re-produce "Si Pingkaw"? Protest is not necessarily only in the text a writer writes; it can also be in the meanings a reader reads.

NOTES

1 Cruz-Lucero, editor of the anthology *Sugilanon,* acquired the copy of this story from "A Historico-Critical Anthology of Hiligaynon Literature" (typescript; 1979), edited by Lucila Hosillos. It was Hosillos who found the story in *Hiyas '75* (Cruz-Lucero viii).

2 "Toto" is the Hiligaynon equivalent of "señorito" and is usually used by servants to address the master's son. The master himself would commonly be addressed as "Nonoy," which would be equivalent to "señor." "Toto" may also be used as a term of endearment or a nickname for a boy. When used as a nickname, it usually remains so up to adulthood.

3 Literally, the title translates into "The Lament of a Stake That is Being Pounded," but this sounds awkward. What was done instead was to locate within the text the image presented by the title. That image, which appears at the end of the story, was used as a guide in formulating the title's English version.

4 This kind of loyalty may seem unusual, but it is not uncommon in landlord-tenant relationships such as those in Negros. The discussion on the *sugilanon*'s socio-political context will show how such relationships develop.

5 Those *hacenderos* who could afford it kept all their workers on the plantation year-round on a tenancy basis, but others had to take in extra labor (the *sacadas*—literally, the "recruited" [Regalado and Franco 29]) on contractual basis at milling season to beef up their regular workforce. The arrangement was not without its problems for these *hacenderos* (breaches of contract by labor recruiters sometimes occurred) (Lopez-Gonzaga 45-47), but on the whole the system thus begun must have worked favorably for the landowner because by the late 1880s, some *hacenderos* had begun to see the advantages of hiring day laborers seasonally rather than maintaining tenants. An important consideration for them was the "high labor cost" that went with the tenancy system which required them to support their workers year round, even when there was little work to do on the plantations. (In reality, the wages offered, when compared to the workers' cost of living, were barely enough for their subsistence [97, 99]).

6 French philosopher Louis Althusser discusses this "embedding" of ideology in his essays, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" and "A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre."

7 Villareal says that the word *daigon* comes from *daig*, which means "to light," and that it refers to the custom then of "lighting fires along the road for the carolers." An earlier version of the *Daigon* was found

by Villareal, published separately in a pamphlet, which she says indicates that "narratives compiled in the *Almanake* had already floated in small, individual pamphlets" (15).

8 Villareal cites as her source for this information Sr. Evangelista Ma. Socorro Nite, S.Sp.S., "Magdalena Jalandoni, Hiligaynon Novelist," diss., Ateneo de Manila U, 1977 (23).

9 The conventionalization of characters is seen, for example, in the lack of ambiguity in the likes of Pingkaw, Tyo Danoy, Manny, and Nanding. In fact, they are not so much characters as representations of particular social groups, e.g., the scavengers ignored by society, the peasants oppressed by their landlords, the liberal middle class and the militant working class. The three stories discussed in this paper also irnpart "lessons" or "messages" aimed at social or individual enlightenment or improvement (as perceived by the writer, that is), and this is achieved through closing words that sum up the point to which plot development and characterization have been leading all along. The stories' idealism also reveals itself in the salutary endings which suggest a belief that society can (and should) be improved by imparting to it the right "message." Their melodrama may be revealed in the storyline (e.g., "Si Pingkaw"), in a specific scene (e.g., the argument between Manny and Nanding in "Diin ang Hustisya?"), and/or in the way language is manipulated (e.g., Tyo Danoy's heartrending repetition of "Pamangkota lang bala si Toto Meling" in "Panaghoy sang Ginahandos nga Palpal").

10 Ricardo Abad, drawing from *The Journal of Popular Culture* (1981), gives a very broad definition of the term: "popular culture are products designed for mass consumption" (Abad 12). Abdul Majid bin Nabi Baksh says popular culture "generally signifies the great variety of broadly intellectual-aesthetic products which, in the twentieth century, are mostly disseminated by the mass media of communication and are used by the 'uncultured' populace" (Baksh viii). Within and around these definitions are other concepts and interpretations of concepts that attest to the very fluidity of popular culture as a term and as a site for the creation, or conveyance, or countering of consciousness. Illustrative of this fluidity of popular culture is the *sugilanon*, which may or may not be subversive of ideology, or may be both subversive and not, depending on how it is read.

11 The *composo* and *corrido* were circulated mainly through oral tradition; the *pananglet* and *daigon* saw print in popular publications like the *Almanake*, the books of conduct, and various religious books and pamphlets (Villareal 13-6).

12 The *sugilanon* appeared in the Manila-based weekly, *Hiligaynon*, from the 1930s to the early 1970s, and with the demise of that publication in 1974, in the Iloilo-based magazine, *Yuhum*. The *Hiligaynon*, in fact,

contributed greatly to the advancement of the *sugilanon* as a literary form (see Cruz-Lucero xiii; Regalado and Franco 291, 379; Villareal 13).

13 A significant point to keep in mind here is Bienvenido Lumbera's concept of popular culture as a set of "cultural norms and their respective content, which had been introduced from without, before these had been assimilated into the sensibility and value-system of the people" (Lumbera 182).

14 In 1938, the magazine launched a story-writing contest with "social justice" as the required theme for the entries, resulting in the publication of one or two "social justice stories" in each issue for that year. Then in 1969, another short-story writing contest was held by the magazine, which awarded the first prize to Lucila Hosillos for "Bunyag-Takas" (one of the stories in Cruz-Lucero's *sugilanon* anthology and classifiable as a second-level protest text). And in 1970, the magazine awarded the first prize to "Ang Taytay" by Isabelo Sobrevega, who himself said that he was known for his stories about "outcasts and victims of injustice" (Cruz-Lucero xiv-xv).

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SONG AND SUBSTANCE: WOMEN WRITING POETRY IN CEBUANO

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Abstract

Among the emergent voices in Philippine Literature in the past decade up to the present, the most exciting to read and listen to are those of the women in the Visayas and Mindanao who are writing poetry and fiction in Cebuano. Never before since the "golden age of Cebuano literature" from 1900-1940 have the creative work of women seen such burgeoning. And this growth is substantiated by the creative work published in three literary anthologies by women, namely *Centering Voices* (1995), *Fern Garden: Anthology of Women Writing in the South* (1998), and *Sinug-ang: A Cebuano Trio* (1999). This paper focuses on the poetry written in Cebuano by women who are breaking new ground in the tradition of the *balak*, and who are bringing this tradition farther in imaginative power and reach. In particular, it will present the literary themes and issues these women are writing on, and also show how these issues are tackled by the language of poetry.

Keywords

Cebuano poetry, Philippine literature, regional writing, women poets

About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

My paper on "Women Writing Poetry in Cebuano" in the last half of the 1990s is part of the book project I have been working on and will continue working on in the next two or three years, on the development of the Cebuano *balak* in the twentieth century. The book's working title is *Awit Ug Unid* or "Song and Substance." This paper I am presenting to you is a longer chapter, the last in the book, since it is my contention that the growth of

the *balak* tradition in the twenty-first century may very well be led by women—a complete turnaround from the way it was in the 1900s up to the 1940s which had been called the "golden age" of Cebuano writing.

In 1990, Cebuano Studies scholar and literary critic Resil Mojares problematized the notions of *region* and *regional writing* in his essay called "Imagining Regions" (2-6), which introduced *Handurawan*, an occasional anthology of prizewinning works by so called "regional" writers published by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Mojares then proposed a postmodern critique of the connotations and implications of the terms *region* and *regional writing*:

> outlying, peripheral, folkloric, parochial, subordinate. The regional also evokes the notion of survivals, of something residual. This is so in a situation where the nation-state is assumed to be an achieved reality, where localities have been (or are imagined to be) effectively incorporated into a larger, supra-regional community. What harkens to the regional is then perceived to be nativistic, nostalgic, even (for believers in 'official' nationalism, whose failing is to let idea outstrip reality) divisive and subversive. (2)

Arguing for a constantly "interacting mutually-constitutive" realities of *region* and *nation* in relation to the process of nation formation, Mojares advocated the idea that there is a need to challenge "our pallid constructs of the nation-state" and begin to open our eyes to what had been for so long marginalized: the richness and variety of living cultures and lifeways, memories and artifacts of the islands outlaying Manila and the National Capital Region (NCR). Mojares concludes:

> Indeed, to return to the regions today is not to dismember but to remember, in its essential sense of retracing and rejoining together, into one vital, pulsing body, members dormant and disaffected. It is so to sound and deepen that well of common being out of which a 'national literature' is given breath and shape. (4)

The study of the literatures of the Philippines in our time cannot afford to disregard the dynamic forces that continue to shape and reshape, define and redefine the nation and the region. Since the nation itself is still caught up in the process of formation, then its literatures are part of these processes. What should matter then is that the regional members of the nation-state assert the place of imaginative writing from the regions,

instead of submitting to a kind of "nationalism [which] requires… that we set aside, forget, our identities as a clan, tribe, or ethnic group in order to forge the consciousness of being a nation" (Mojares 4).

This paper will be discussing the literature written by women in Cebuano in the 1990s as a continuation of this argument for other voices, especially those long marginalized, to be heard.

Among the emergent voices in Philippine Literature in the past decade up to the present, the most exciting to read and listen to are those of the women in the Visayas and Mindanao who are writing poetry and fiction in Cebuano. Never before since the "golden age of Cebuano literature" from 1900-1940 has the creative work of women seen such burgeoning. And this growth is substantiated by the creative work published in three literary anthologies by women, namely *Centering Voices* (1995), *Fern Garden: Anthology Women Writing in the South* (1998), and *Sinug-ang: A Cebuano Trio* (1999). This paper focuses on the poetry written in Cebuano by women who are breaking new ground in the tradition of the *balak,* and who are bringing this tradition farther in imaginative power and reach. In particular, it will present the literary themes and issues these women are writing on and also show how these issues are tackled by the language of poetry.

CENTERING VOICES

The first of the anthologies to emerge from the Visayas was published in Cebu City in 1995 by the Women in Literary Arts, Inc. (WILA), with a funding grant from the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA). WILA was established in September 1991, and in four years it had grown from a handful of writers to more than twenty practitioners of the craft. Edited by Erlinda K. Alburo, Erma M. Cuizon and Ma. Paloma Sandiego, *Centering Voices* is composed of 21 contributors writing fiction and poetry in English and Cebuano. All the stories and poems in Cebuano are provided with English translations.

Only seven of the 21 writers wrote in Cebuano. And of these, Ruby T. Enario (now Carlino), Jocelyn C. Pinzon, Catherine G. Viado, and Marvie Gil wrote in both English and Cebuano; while Erlinda Alburo, Leticia U. Suarez and Ester Tapia wrote only in Cebuano. What is important to note is that the latter three women otherwise write in English in work-related writing in the academe, in media, and in the NGO sector. Therefore, it can be said that for Alburo, Suarez, and Tapia, Cebuano is the language of choice for their poetry. We will thus focus on the poetry by these three women in this anthology.

Erlinda Alburo

Erlinda Alburo's three poems in Cebuano are characterized by their strong narrative strategy, which hews close to the tradition of the Cebuano *balak.* The first poem, which is also the first poem in the anthology, takes to task the so-called "ideal" of Filipino womanhood—Maria Clara. The poem "Patay na Tuod si Maria Clara" ["Maria Clara is indeed, dead"] deconstructs the traditional notion of the *sulondon* [obedient], *manggiulawon* [shy], *hinayon,* [soft and serene] Filipino woman, and concludes with a dare operating on reverse psychology: "Si kinsa lay gustong santoson kay atong paantuson [Whoever still wants to be a saint, we will let her suffer.]" The poem's conclusion is a manifesto for liberation: "Ang kinahanglan sa babaye karon / maalam molalik sa awit nga iyang tukaron, / maabtik mangitag idalit nga sud-anon, / molihok bisag wala pay bendisyon [What a woman needs now / is to know how to compose the song she will play, / be quick in finding the food she'll give, / move even without blessing]." Alburo's poem ends with the speaker asking: "Kon naa pa ron si Mama unsa kahay iyang ikasulti? [If Mother were still around, what would she have said?]" The discourse concludes with an ambiguous idiomatic expression *mirisi,* which can mean both "what a pity" and "good for her." The line goes, "Nga labaw pang na-anhing kaniya si Maria Clara, mirisi. [That Maria Clara is deader than her, good for her.]" The operation of the ambiguity heightens the double entendre in the tone of the poem which declares Maria Clara and the mother of the persona irrelevant to the project of female empowerment. The term also points to the double meaning of *tuod* which can function both as a noun, meaning "deadwood," and as an adverb meaning "indeed."

Leticia U. Suarez

Leticia U. Suarez's poems are neo-romantic lyrics informed by the politics of ecological consciousness. The one entitled "Tibalas," for example, is an elegy to a dead *tibalas,* a small brown-feathered bird. The bird is killed by a nameless unemployed college graduate. In one fell swoop, Suarez' poem mourns the death and vulnerability of nature and brings to the fore of consciousnes the evil effects of idleness*:* "Ninglubog na ang mga mata sa tibalas / Nga giluthang sa gradwadong walay lingaw [The light in the eyes of the *tibalas* has set/ Shot down by the idle college graduate]." While the description of the graduate does not specify the villain as male, the evocation of *walay lingaw* or idleness as well as the pastime of shooting birds point to a male culprit.

Suarez's voice of female protest packs power in the poem "Tambag Kang Beriang

Pakyas sa Gugma ug Uban Pa" ["Advice to Berta, Unfortunate in Love, Etc."]. The persona addresses Berta and proceeds to deconstruct the dominant male narrative of love, using the traditional feminine language of cooking as the language of anger and rebellion. The focus of the poem's argument for Berta's liberation from punitive male language—"Ang maidlot niyang mga pulong" [His sharp words]—is the act of transformation through fire: "Dayong ihapnig sa kolon ni Lola / Timplahi, ayuha / Pabukali, hulata / Pabugnawa, salaa / ang unod lubka [Then arrange them in grandmother's earthen pot / Mix in the condiments for taste, Boil / Well, wait for it / To cool, then strain / Pound the meat]." Like the poem on the *tibalas,* Suarez's persona brings the transformative act out of the personal and domestic sphere into the larger world where the ultimate transformation can take place.

The most scathing criticism of human carelessness in relation to nature is "Camia," a poem which addresses the fragrant white flower that grows in marshes and swamps. The voice laments the fact that the marshes and swamps are dead and in their stead are garbage dumps. The last stanza of the poem dramatizes the ironic efforts of art to preserve beauty: "Ug ikaw nga dili orkidya, dili luy-a / Karon dili na bulak apan / Hulagway na lamang nga idayandayan / Sa landong nga bungbong ning pinuy-anan / O kaha amag na lamang ning nagkalayang panumduman. [And you who are not orchid, nor ginger / You are no more than / A picture to decorate / The dark wall of this dwelling place / Perhaps you are merely an ember of wilting memory]."

Ester Tapia Boemer

Ester Tapia's highly imagistic poems are delivered in perfect pitch. "Ang Banga" ["The Water Jar"] evokes the age-old task of women to fetch water early every morning in their earthen pots for the use of the entire family. And yet while this task is part of the female burden, the female persona focuses on the poetry of the task: "gisapwang ko sa akong duha ka palad / ang hagawhaw / sa napukawang tubig / ang hinaganas sa ilang kahimungawong [I carry with my two hands / the murmur / of the roused water / the rustle of its awakening]." With this tone and eye, the persona comes to a lyric conclusion: "Pagkabug-at sa banga / subay sa ngilit sa pangpang / ang katam-is [How heavy the jar is / as I walk the cliff-edge/ of sweetness]."

It is Tapia's narrative poem "Ang Asawa sa Mangingisda" ["The Fisherman's Wife"] which exposes the suffering of women caught in the traditional gender roles: "ang asawa sa mangingisda / nagtindog sa baybayon / mga tikod mikutkot sa balas / ang pagtuya sa balod / mao ang tanan alang kaniya / nga ganay sa kinabuhi / ug kamatayon [the wife of the fisherman / stands on the beach / her heels dig into the sand / the rising and falling of

the wave / the rhythm of all her life / and death]." Caught in this world, the wife-persona weeps, and the metaphors of kitchen work are aptly chosen from the domestic space assigned to her: "gipunit niya ang baskit / sa asin ug bugas / ug unya / mga luha nga lunlon ahos / ug sibuyas nangatagak [she picks up the basket/ of salt and rice/ and tears of pure garlic/ and onions fall]."

FERN GARDEN: ANTHOLOGY OF WOMEN WRITING IN THE SOUTH

Three years after *Centering Voices,* a second anthology was published, again funded by the Committee on Literature of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts. Edited by poet Merlie Alunan, the anthology had a wider coverage, this time including writers from all the islands of the Visayas and Mindanao. The anthology has works written in any of five languages: English, Cebuano, Waray, Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a. In her critical introduction, Alunan says:

> We intended a representation of the variety and diversity of women writers in the south. It includes such established writers as Edith L. Tiempo herself, Aida Rivera Ford…Elsa Victoria Coscolluela, and Erma Cuizon. Majority [*sic*] are writers still struggling to find their voices.… None of them are full-time writers. (*Fern Garden* 2)

The poetry and fiction in the anthology are mostly culled from periodicals like *Bisaya, Hiligaynon, Yuhom,* and from the earlier anthology, *Centering Voices.* In the poetry section, there are 44 writers and of these, Erlinda Alburo, Merlie Alunan, Pafuncia Borja, Ruby Enario, Marvi Gil, Ester M. Jundis, Marianita Mangubat, Luz de Mañana, Jocelyn Pinzon, Fe Echavia Remotigue, Lucia Segaffa, Leticia U. Suarez, Ester Tapia, and Catherine Viado write only in Cebuano.

Of four poems in the anthology, Alunan's three poems in Cebuano speak of her very recent movement away from English—a strategic move which seems to be the way of the writers who first wrote in English and then wrote bi-lingually, either writing directly in Cebuano and English, or translating works in English into Cebuano. Alunan's introduction clarifies this movement within the context of the problematic notions of "nation" and region":

> The south is a sociopolitical idea. It implies a dominant north where resources, talent, expertise are concentrated, where power and authority emanate, where quality of performance is assessed and affirmed. For the southern writer, the concept of the north includes a colonizing national language which reduces the regional languages to secondary status. Away from the center, southern lifeways thrive on their own. These lifeways yield their own stories, and breed their own unique modes of thinking and seeing. Crude though this may seem, the north-south configuration nevertheless forms a dimension of the composite national reality. The rhythms of southern speech are as diverse as the languages spoken in the major Visayan islands and among the many tribes of Mindanao. The diversity of language also implies a diversity of attitudes and habits of thinking. Most, if not all the women represented in this volume write in English. *Those who write in their native tongue are aware of the politics of their choice, realizing it as an effort to restore or regain lost ground and to reassert them as medium for the works of the imagination.* (*Fern Garden* 3, emphasis mine)

Ruby Enario Carlino

Ruby Enario-Carlino of Cebu City is one of the younger writers writing in English and Cebuano. Her one poem in Cebuano in this anthology tackles the story of Nana Salvacion, one of the "comfort women" during the war. The persona dedicates the poem to Nana Salvacion, aged 69. And it is a compassionate female voice that confronts with Nana Salvacion the trauma of the past and refuses to grant forgiveness to the ones who committed these war crimes against women:

> Kinsa may gustong mangutingkay sa nangagi?
> Aduna nay daghang apo sa tuhod ug sungkod,
> Bisan pa ug ilubong ug bulawan ug sapi
> Din na mapapas ang labod sa dughan ug likod,
> Ang hulagway sa mga dilang naglataylatay
> Sa alimpatakan, may daa pang talidhay ug laway.
>
> [Who wants to unearth the past?
> Many are the grandchildren and great grandchildren,
> And even if I would be buried in gold and money
> The living scars on my breasts and back cannot be erased,

The image of their tongues crawling all over
In my brain, their mocking laughter, their spit.]

Fe Echavia Remotigue

While Ruby Enario-Carlino's poem speaks of the female's heroic gesture of remembering and refusing forgiveness, Fe Echavia Remotigue of Davao City shows women the way to transform oppression into liberation in her poem "Madyik" ["Magic"]. The strategy starts with liberation in language: "Gikandaduhan niya / ang baba ko / Pwerte nakong / katawa / kay ang yabe / ania sa akong kamot [He locked / my mouth / Loud / I laughed / for the key / is here in my hand]." The image of the key in the woman's hand is the central metaphoric device which the persona uses to assert the transformation of key to pen to rifle. And its conclusion is a revolutionary one: "Pagkadaghan sa hitsura / sa nag-isa'g kamot / aron ipatumba / ang monumento sa hari [The shapes of images are many, / as many as those whose hands are raised / to bring down / the monument of the king]."

SINUG-ANG: A CEBUANA TRIO

On their eighth anniversary in September 1999, WILA once again marked another year of spunk and gumption in the field of creative writing with a second anthology of poetry by three of its members: Erlinda Alburo, Ester Tapia, and Corazon Almerino. Printed in feminist lavender, the cover designed by Ma. Jessamyn K. Alburo, uses the motif of the triangle with three female figures doing the feminine tasks of fetching water in the earthen *banga,* rocking a baby to sleep, and playing the flute. And on the copyright page is a linguistic explanation of the title and cover: "*Sinug-ang* [fr. *sug-ang,* n. a triangularly placed stove tripod stand for cooking, wood burner composed of three stones triangularly arranged; also *sug-angan, Dictionary of Cebuano Visayan* by John Wolff, 1971]."

The motif of the *Sinug-ang* becomes the central analogue of the book's introduction, written in Cebuano by poet Merlie Alunan. This introduction is a welcome and refreshing gesture in itself because Alunan used to write poetry and critical essays only in English. She starts her critical introduction entitled "Paghimo og kalan nga sinug-ang ug uban pang panghunahuna bahin sa balak ug sa pagkababaye" ["How to build a three-sided stove and other thoughts on poetry and womanhood"] with sections on "Paghimo og kalan" ["How to build the stove"] and "Ang Pagpanimpla" ["Taste"]. Between these two concepts of food preparation, she re-creates the locus of the female and poetry, "Si Inday ug ang balak"

["Inday and poetry"]. The critical project does not deconstruct the notion of the kitchen as a "woman's place" and cooking as a "woman's task." Rather, it reclaims the territory with the assertion of practical and artistic wisdom, passed on from one generation of women to another:

> Timan-i nga bisan kalan lang, dunay gabayan sa husto nga pamarog. Ang mubong kalan angay ra kung magdangdang kag binuwad nukos o magsugbag isda. Mao nay gitudlo nako ni Nay Aming, ang akong inahan. Dunay eksaktong timplada para sa bisag unsang buhaton sa kinabuhi. (Alunan, *Sinug-ang* 1)
> [Remember that even if you are using only this earthen hearth, there are guides for its use in right relation to its height. The low stove is only good for grilling dried squid or broiling fish. This is what Mama Aming, my mother, taught me. There is a precise measure and flavor for everything one does in life.]

It is in the discussion of the art of getting the right taste where the introduction articulates from a new ironic viewpoint the old bias against women who enter and inhabit the world of writing:

> Anad na ang atong dalunggan sa gahob sa inga sa mga Ondo inig-uli nila makaadlawon nga hubog og pakyas sa gugma. Kasagaran ra ni kaayo. Apan ang mga Inday nga mag-apil—apil sad og inga ug pamudyong, murag mabag-ohan gyud tang maminaw. Di ba na hilas? (3)
>
> [Our ears are so used to the groans of the male poets when they return at dawn drunk and failed in love. This is much too common. But of the women who join in the groaning of poetry, we are shocked to listen to them. Isn't their audacity embarrassing?]

Having posed the question, Alunan sets the ground for her critical position regarding female writing and the tradition of Cebuano poetry. She calls the anthology a rare event, *talagsaon ang maong hitabo.* Like a host in a fiesta, she invites us to savor the fare prepared for us by poet-chefs Alburo, Tapia and Almerino.

The anthology is conceptually divided into themes, with each poet contributing a poem or two to shed light on the poetic problem. It starts with the concept of Self-Identity, *Pag-ila sa kaugalingon,* and ends with the experience of having a holiday, *Bakasyon.*

But between these two markers, the three poets wrestle with the weight of traditional notions, now problematized and seen with new eyes: the relationship among women, the relationship with men, youth, marriage, motherhood, parting, the darkness of the soul, awakening, friendship, nature, language, etc. The most successful among the poems are those which yoke substance and form into an awakened sense of language and its power.

Erlinda Alburo

Linda Alburo's "Babayeng Nag-atubang sa Salamin" ["Woman facing the mirror"] is a powerful concrete poem whose visual form is an analogue for the female body's shape, but whose mature and wise articulation departs from the usual narcissistic projection into a new awareness of the slippery nature of words and meanings themselves: "nag-atubang ko karon / sa usa sab ka salamin / kahibalo na ko / nganong nabali / ang tanan / nganong dili / matusok / ang naglawig /nga kahulogan [I now face / another mirror / I now know / why everything / turns inside out / why I cannot / pierce through / meanings / which are at sea]."

Cora Almerino

The playful and young imagination of Cora Almerino offers us the humor and pathos of female desire. While the focus of attention is still the ubiquitous male, the ironic attitude of the poems opens up spaces of delightful laughter, which is always self-reflexive, and thus potentially liberating. In the section "lbid-ibid" ["Flirtation"], the poem "Tubig-tubig" ["Game of water tag"] dramatizes the play of desire: the female speaker is out to catch the beloved in a child's game whose boundaries are marked with water. She is skilled at the game but her aims are thwarted by the beloved's counter-strategies:

> Ang nakaapan lang, hanas kaayo
> kang molipat-lipat. Sutoy kang modagan
> mao nga gahangos ko. Nahumod sa singot.
> Namuypoy na ang akong mga bukton.
> Ang akong baba kalit ningtak-om.
>
> Daw mahugno ang akong pagsagang
> Onianang imong paghata-hata
> padulong ning dughan.

[Trouble is, you are skilled
in deception. Fleetfooted you run
and I pant. I am soaked with sweat.
My arms are weary. My mouth
is suddenly clamped shut.

It is as if my defenses are defeated
by your false attempts to cross the line
into my heart.]

Ester Tapia

Ester Tapia's poetry, on the other hand, delivers their power through its tone and perfect pitch. In poem after liquid poem of surreal beauty, poetic realization breaks through with the wedge of language into a new space where the imagination asserts its freedom and affirms its capacity to shape new meanings. In the poem "Mason" ["Stonebuilder"], Tapia's speaker recognizes the intent of male desire and refuses complicity:

Mason
nga mitutok kanako gikan sa pikas
nga daplin niining lawa
diin akong gituslob ang akong tiil
sa tubig
dili ko maghumod
dili ko maligo niining tubig
nga puno sa panghupaw

sa iyang mga abaga mitihol ang mga abog
ang iyang maong gision sa tuhod

ang hugong sa umaabot nga mga palasyo
misaka gikan sa kakahoyan
ang mga bato mipundok sa ilang kaugalingon
misakmit sa tinagoan sa kadahonan

ug dili ko manginlabot niya

mason sa lahing kahusay
bisan kon ang samin niining malumo nga lawa
naukay sa iyang mga mata

[Stonebuilder
staring at me from the other
shore of this lake
where I dip my feet
in the water
I will not get wet
nor bathe in this water
filled with sighs

from his shoulders the dust whistles
and from his jeans torn at the knees

the roar of future palaces
rises from the trees
the stones gather unto themselves
snatching the secret of the leaves

and I shall have none of him
stonebuilder of a different order
even though the mirror of this languid lake
has been stirred by his eyes]

What is perhaps most telling of the theme of freedom in the anthology are the poems on taking a holiday. Ester Tapia's poem re-enters the mangrove at a river's mouth where the speaker remembers having picked up with Ranie: "tiyan sa kaha, / ug mga kinhason nga gihulmahan / ug sa dahon nga pikas/ nga pako sa usa ka anghel // ato kini silang gibakwi / balik ngadto sa lilo / sa katahom ug kasakit / kining mga biniyaang bukog / arong atong kaawitan [belly of the frying pan, and the seashells used as moulds / and the unpaired leaves / the wings of an angel // we will reclaim them / back into the whirlpool / of beauty and sorrow / these abandoned bones / for which we sing]."

In the final analysis, the mind and heart's tongue that savors the lifelong feast offered by *Sinug-ang* is inevitably changed and revivified by the new flavors of things that truly nourish the imagination. And life is never the same again because one has been taught how to sing even to the abandoned bones of daily living.

CONCLUSION

At the threshold of the 21st century, female writers from the Visayas and Mindanao are actively claiming language to assert the power of their new ways of seeing and saying things. These three anthologies show us what they can do and where they can go. It will not be farfetched to predict that in the next century many of them will be publishing their individual collections of poetry in Cebuano, the dominant language of the southern part of the Philippines. And never again will they be silenced by any of the groups who arrogate unto themselves the power of literature.

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LITERATURE ENGINEERING IN WEST VISAYAS

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Abstract

Language engineering involves the willful, studied—or even legislated—empowering of language to hasten its development. Literature, whose medium is language, can likewise be engineered. Certainly, an indicator of tremendous talent in the creation of contemporary literature and in nation building, the emergent writers of the region have sharpened their sense of locus just as they have succeeded in asserting their place in the nationhood of Philippine literature. Through generous funding and support, new writers have been developed and older writers invigorated. Thus, new writings have manifested themselves.

For years, West Visayan writing had been only in Hiligaynon, the lingua franca, and in Spanish and English. The last decade has seen the emergence of writing in Kinaray-a (centered in Antique), Aklanon (in Aklan), and in Visayan-based Filipino. This paper will deal only with poetry in these three languages. Writing in Visayan-laced (rather than Visayan-based) Filipino is probably the ultimate attempt of a West Visayan to make his work truly national. Visayan-laced Filipino is basically Tagalog in structure but incorporated in the text are Visayan words. This type of writing has been well published in national magazines and anthologies and has even won national awards. This paper concludes with readings of representative poems in Kinaray-a, Aklanon, and Filipino.

Keywords

language engineering, Philippine literature, regional writing, West Visayan poetry

About the Author

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OVERVIEW

A recent phenomenon in the development of Philippine literature is the emergence of new writing in West Visayas. This is threefold: written literature in Kinaray-a, Aklanon, and a brand of Filipino laced with Visayan words.

The Locus

West Visayas is politically labeled as Region 6. It is composed of the provinces of Iloilo, Antique, Capiz, and Aklan—all on the island of Panay; the new island province of Guimaras which used to be a sub-province of Iloilo; and Negros Occidental, the bigger western half of the island of Negros.

The lingua franca of the region is Hiligaynon which is spoken in Iloilo City, in the coastal towns from Iloilo City to the northeast, in all of Guimaras, in Bacolod City, and most of the towns and other cities of Negros Occidental. A variant of Hiligaynon is spoken in most of Roxas City in Capiz while the northern part of Negros Occidental speaks mostly in Cebuano. Hiligaynon is also spoken in most of South Cotabato where the majority of settlers come from West Visayas.

Unknown to many, there are more speakers of Kinaray-a than of Hiligaynon. Kinaray-a—in its many variants—is spoken in all of Antique, all the southern coastal towns of Iloilo from Oton to San Joaquin bordering Antique, all of Iloilo's central towns, and all the towns and hinterlands of Capiz. A good number of people in Romblon, Cuyo Islands, and Palawan speak variants of Kinaray-a.

Aklanon–likewise in its various versions–is spoken in all the province of Aklan. Sadly, people in linguistics lump all these languages together as Hiligaynon. Worse, Kinaray-a and Aklanon are labeled as dialects as if they were not capable of expressing the best in the minds and hearts of their users.

The Mother Language

The mother language of West Visayas is Kinaray-a, also called Karay-a, Kaday-a, Hiraya, or Hiniraya. It must have been the language of the ten Bornean datus believed to be the ancestors of the West Visayans as recorded in the Maragtas and the Panay epics. These ten noblemen allegedly got the island of Aninipay (the ancient name of Panay) from the Ati chief Marikudo in exchange for a headgear of gold and a necklace that touched the ground.

Hiligaynon developed through the Chinese of Molo, lloilo's Chinatown. The development of this child language is an early example of how colonial mentality works and how economic and cultural power can shape the language of power. The natives spoke Kinaray-a but instead of forcing the Chinese who controlled business and commerce to master the language of the place, it was the natives who accommodated to the linguistic deficiencies of the foreigners. Thus the *r* in *wara* (none or zero), *daraga* (young woman), *harigi* (post), *uring* (charcoal), *parigos* (to take a bath), etc. became *wala, dalaga, haligi, uling,*

paligos, etc. *Tubig* (water) became *tubi*, which is really baby talk. The origin of Molo, the home of the famous pancit Molo, always makes the hearer smile when retold. When the Muslims from the Sulu Sea sailed upriver, the Chinese of old Parian shouted "*Molo! Molo!*" The name stuck the way Ilong-Ilong evolved from Irong-Irong. In time, the Spaniard's own linguistic deficiency came up with Iloilo and the town of Ogtong became Oton, the way the big island up north became Luzon from the ethnic Lusong.

As Hiligaynon developed to be the language of the elite lorded over by the Chinese and Spanish mestizos, Kinaray-a lost fast its position and dignity as the mother language. It became associated with the soiled workingman of the farms and the highlands, of the vulgar and the uneducated, of the *muchacha* and the *sakada.* Instead, the corrupted child language became the correct, respectable lingua franca in Molo, Jaro, Mandurriao, La Paz and Villa Arevalo in Iloilo City and in Bacolod, Silay, Bago, La Carlotta, La Castellana, and most of Negros Occidental.

The Other Child Language

Meanwhile, in the northeastern corner of the Panay triangle, Aklanon also developed from Kinaray-a without the Chinese acculturation. The most peculiar aspect of the language of Boracay and the Ati-Atihan is its exotic *l* sound. The so-called normal *l* in *Aklan, ulo* (head), *balay* (house), *dalaga* (young woman), etc. is sounded with the tip of the tongue touching the upper teeth. The Aklanon *l*, however, is sounded with the tip of the tongue touching the lower teeth. Somewhat inadequately represented in its orthography, the Aklanon version is *Akean, ueo, baeay, daeaga,* etc. On the other hand, there are words that have the normal *l*. The problem is only Aklanons know them. The Hiligaynon *bala* (the Tagalog and Cebuano *ba*) is *baea,* but *bullet* is *bala,* not *baea.* The province is Akean all right, but the provincial capital is Kalibo, not Kaeibo. There are towns like Balete, not Baeete, Malay not Maeay, and Malinao, not Maeinao.

The folk explanation for this peculiarity is that Datu Bangkaya, the Bornean who appropriated for his territory the present province of Aklan, had a speech defect. He had a short tongue and he lisped. So that their chief would not feel abnormal in his speech, the followers of Datu Bangkaya imitated his mangling of the *l* sound.

The Hiligaynon Hegemony

Pre-Spanish West Visayan literature was in Kinaray-a, but when written literature was brought by the Spaniards, only Hiligaynon texts got to be printed. When at the close

of the 19th century Bicolano Mariano Perfecto established Imprenta La Panayana, the first printing press in the region, Hiligaynon hegemony was likewise established. Only works in Hiligaynon and in Spanish–and later in English–were considered worthy of publication. Another printing press, Rosendo Mejica's Makinaugalingon, likewise championed Hiligaynon journalism and literature. *Hiligaynon* magazine of the Manila-based Liwayway Publishing became the canon of writers even if, after the Pacific War, Iloilo-based *Yuhum* and *Kasanag* enjoyed great popularity. Literary competitions, both written and oral, were in Hiligaynon. The *pagdayaw* (the speech or poem praising the fiesta queen) was in Hiligaynon even in Kinaray-a areas. The language of the Mass and other Church ceremonies, after Latin had been abandoned, was Hiligaynon all over the region.

It is ironic that the biggest names in Hiligaynon literature come from Kinaray-a areas: Delfin Gumban (Pavia), Flavio Zaragoza Cano (Cabatuan), Ramon L. Muzones (Calinog), Conrado J. Norada (Miag-ao), Augurio Paguntalan (Antique), Jose E. Yap (Dao, Capiz) and Santiago Alv. Mulato (Maasin). Among the writers of the first magnitude, only the following are native Hiligaynon speakers: Angel Magahum (Molo), Serapion Torre (Mandurriao), Magdalena Jalandoni (Jaro), and Miguela Montelibano (Negros Occidental).

THE ENGINEERING

The Cory Revolution of 1986 is a milestone in the literary history of West Visayas and the country. Three new writings have emerged in the region and pleasantly surprised literary and academic circles and especially the writers themselves. 'I'hese are writings in Kinaray-a, Aklanon, and Visayan-influenced Filipino.

At this point, it is pertinent to shift the point of view of this paper. For this reader, as a cultural worker, has been there since the first day of the three-fold birth of the region's new literature. He is, in fact, the engineer.

It all started with the new management of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and the establishment of the Presidential Commission for Culture and the Arts (PCCA) which later gave way to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

After ten years at Silliman University where I finished my doctoral studies in English and Literature with specialization in creative writing, I transferred to the University of the Philippines (UP) in the Visayas in Iloilo in 1985. In 1986, the Marcos dictatorship was toppled and the country saw the dawn of many changes.

I was named by the Cultural Center of the Philippines as literature coordinator for

West Visayas. The new management encouraged the establishment of local art councils, subsidized conferences, workshops, and publication and awarded writing grants and venue grants at the National Arts Center in Mt. Makiling.

The Resurrection of Kinaray-a

The first writing workshop I directed was at UP in the Visayas in 1987. It was subsidized by the CCP. Manuscripts in English and Hiligaynon were submitted. The following year, the Sumakwelan, the association of Hiligaynon writers, won a venue grant at the National Arts Center in Mt. Makiling with me as the director of the writing workshop there. It was in that workshop that Alicia Tan Gonzales, from Bacolod and a teacher at UP in the Visayas and now a major fictionist-poet-playwright in Hiligaynon, was discovered. Also with the group were two writers from Antique, Ma. Milagros C. Geremia and Alex C. de los Santos. Like any other Kinaray-a-speaking writer before them, the two never thought of writing in their home language. They both submitted mediocre English and Hiligaynon materials. Then during one of the discussions, I blurted out to the two: Why don't you write in Kinaray-a?

And they did. After the Mt. Makiling workshops, the two swamped me with poems which were all written in Antique Kinaray-a. I found them very good, some in fact extremely good, making their efforts in English and Hiligaynon insignificant.

Geremia, from Sibalom, Antique, was a research assistant at UP Visayas' Center for West Visayan Studies. De los Santos, a former fisheries student of UP Visayas, was a senior major in English at Saint Anthony's College in San Jose, Antique. Soon the two formed Antique's first ever writers' group which they called Tabig.

De los Santos, who was editor of his college paper, asked me to hold Antique's first creative writing workshop at Saint Anthony's College. The participants, until that time, had never thought that their language could be used in a literary manner. In short, the tyranny of English and Hiligaynon—and Tagalog-based Filipino—was total in their conscious . I gave them a brief linguistic history of West Visayas, emphasizing the fact that Kinaray-a, their language, was the mother language and that Hiligaynon, was only the corrupted, bastard child. My politicizing would begin by my saying: "There is no such thing as a superior language. No one can give power and dignity to your language except you. Your language has dignity and power if you can do three things with it: sing your songs in it, compose your poems in it, pray in it. If you can do these in Kinaray-a, then your language is [at] the level of any language in the world."

It worked. When the CCP published a special *Ani* issue for West Visayas which I

edited, a section was allotted to Kinaray-a poetry. Finally, in 1990, a Kinaray-a issue of *Ani*, which I edited again, was published by the CCP. Meanwhile, with more workshops both in Antique and Iloilo, the body of Kinaray-a writers became sizable. Aside from Geremia and De los Santos, other very competent ones came to the fore: John Iremil E. Teodoro, Jose Edison C. Tondares, Ma. Felicia Flores, Gerardo Antoy, Ma. Aurora Salvacion J. Autajay and Genevieve L. Asenjo. Geremia and De Los Santos even went on to win writing grants in Kinaray-a from the CCP. A few Hiligaynon writers also shifted to Kinaray-a like Raymundo Aujero Italia and Remegio B. Montaño.

Aklanon Liberation

Liberating itself likewise from literary oblivion was Aklanon. Just as the Antiquenos were forming Tabig, emerging Aklanon writers also formed the Aklanon Literary Circle in Kalibo. Spearheading this was Melchor F. Cichon, a librarian at UP Visayas. Ably assisting him was UP Visayas student John E. Barrios.

In my various workshops in Iloilo, Cichon had been there listening to the things I was telling Kinaray-a writers to challenge them. Cichon—and Barrios—took the challenge and soon the Aklan issue of *Ani,* which I edited with Cichon, et al., was published by the CCP and launched in Kalibo in early 1993. Cichon, who was by then writing in English and Tagalog-based Filipino, has turned out to be the leading poet in his language and has the distinction of being the first Aklanon ever to publish a book of poems in his own language. Eventually, Cichon and Barrios won writing grants in Aklanon from the CCP.

In fact, the writing workshops I had had in Kalibo were more thorough as high school writers were involved. Two poetry prodigies came from the Science Developmental High School of Aklan. They were Alexander C. de Juan and Am I. Roselo. Roselo went to UP Diliman for college and has since disappeared from the literary scene. De Juan who, as a high school student, was published by *Philippine Graphic* (two poems in Filipino), is now a senior literature major at UP Visayas. He has just attended the National Literature Conference for Young Writers II in Tagbilaran City where he and Antique's Genevieve L. Asenjo, who is also a literature senior at UP Visayas, were two of the better paper and poetry (their own) readers.

Right now, the more prominent Aklanon writers aside from Cichon, Barrios and De Juan, are Monalisa T. Tabernilla, Joeffrey L. Ricafuente, Topsie Ruanni F. Tupas, Arwena Tanlayo and Pett Candido. Veteran Akianon writers in English Roman A. de la Cruz and Dominador I. Ilio, curiously, have branched out and written a few poems in Aklanon.

Visayan-Laced Filipino

More deliberate is my involvement in this radical, more calculated engineering of a brand of Filipino which I believe is the intention of the Philippine Constitution. The Constitutional mandate is clear. The national language is not Tagalog but the natural fusion of words and concepts from the different languages of the country as well as loan words from Spanish, English, Chinese, Arabic and other foreign languages. Let alone, this fusion will take centuries. The development of language can be hastened if there is planning and judicious implementation.

I have always been a nationalist. I believe that the country needs a national language and the sooner we junk English as the language of instruction in our school system, the better it is for our people. I resent, however, the manner Tagalog is being forced on us as the national language contrary to the Constitutional provision. I have always believed that the national language will be something like the lingua franca of Davao City where I grew up. It is a natural combination of words from different languages, mostly Tagalog and Visayan and a sprinkling of Iluko and other northern languages, Chabacano, and the ethnic languages of Mindanao.

At this point, I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not anti-Tagalog. What I oppose is its being made the national language at the expense of the other no less important Philippine languages. I respect Tagalog very much. I speak it and write in it professionally, even winning three CCP and two Palanca awards and in the process defeating many Manilans in their own game.

It was I who proposed to the Cultural Center of the Philippines to create a category for Tagalog in the writing grants. I found it extremely anomalous and high-handed for the CCP to have a grant in lluko, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, English and Filipino but none in Tagalog. That meant Tagalog was Filipino—which was not true and in fact fraudulent. Some months later, the artistic director of the CCP convened a meeting of prominent writers, critics, scholars, linguists, and academicians. I was tasked to defend my proposal in a somewhat high-strung discussion. I was grateful I got support from Dr. Isagani R. Cruz of De la Salle University (who was not there) and Dr. Florentino Hornedo of the Ateneo de Manila University. The rest were loudly antagonistic or simply indifferent. Nevertheless, I got what I wanted.

And so, the CCP separated the Tagalog grant from the Filipino grant. The first winner of the writing grant in Filipino poetry, in Filipino that was not pure Tagalog, was John lremil E. Teodoro of San Jose, Antique and a product of my workshops. Teodoro followed this with the first prize in the Gawad Amado Hernandez the very next year.

It was also I who proposed to kill off the CCP writing grant in English and who angered a good number of writers in English. My argument was: why spend people's money, little as it was, to support writing in a foreign language? English had support from the universities and patrons like the Palancas and magazines like the *Free Press* and *Graphic.* Instead of helping writers in English, the CCP should support writing in the marginalized Philippine languages. I was ecstatic when the CCP opened the competition for the writing grant in Aklanon.

In 1990, I was named the coordinator of UP Visayas' Sentro ng Wikang Flipino just as the university was preparing the transition period of its eventual shift to Filipino as its language of instruction. As UP Visayas includes UP Iloilo, UP Cebu and UP Tacloban, I found my new assignment perfect for making my idea of Filipino noticed further and farther than the Ilonggo belt.

I also happened to be the poetry editor of *Home Life,* a family magazine published by the Society of St. Paul and based in Makati. My experiment had been given more room.

In a few years, a group of writers has come up with a type of writing in Filipino that may look and sound *chabacano* but to me is the true national language of the future. And I am serious in making it more popular and acceptable because in itself it is respectable and can express the best in us.

Practitioners of my idea of Filipino aside from John Iremil E. Teodoro are his fellow Antiqueños Alex C. de los Santos, Ma. Milagros C. Geremia, Jose Edison C. Tondares and Genevieve L. Asenjo. From Aklan are Melchor F. Cichon, John E. Barrios and Alexander C. de Juan. From Iloilo, notable ones are Peter Solis Nery, Joenar D. Pueblo, John Carlo H. Tiampong, John Hingco, Joseph D. Espino, Vicente Handa and Mark Anthony Grejaldo.

Home Life poets outside West Visayas have taken the cue and the result is indeed interesting. Prize-winner and Baguio-based Jimmy M. Agpalo, Jr. incorporates lluko and Cordillera words into his text. Two-time prizewinner Noel P. Tuazon of Bohol incorporates Cebuano words. *Home Life* and Palanca winner German V. Gervacio, who is from Pasig but is now based in Iligan, does the same.

THE LITERARY WORKS

Let us now come to the documents to show the product of this literary engineering. This paper, however, limits itself to poetry.

Kinaray-a

Ang Baboy
Ni John Iremil E. Teodoro

Sugot takun nga mangin baboy
Kon ang tangkal ko mga butkun mo.
Basta damogan mo lang ako
Kang imo nga yuhum gak haruk
Aga, hapon.
Dali man lang ako patambukon.
Ang pangako mo man lang
Nga indi ako pagpabay-an
Amo ang bitamina nga akun
Ginatomar.
Kag kon gabii
Ang mga hapuhap mo man lang
Sa akun likod kag dughan
Ang makapahuraguk kanakun.

The Pig
Translation by Leoncio P. Deriada

I am willing to be a pig
Provided my pen is your arms.
As long as you feed me
With your smile and kiss
Morning, afternoon.
It is easy to make me fat.
Your promise
Not to abandon me
Is the vitamins
I take.
And during nighttime
It's your touch
On my back and breast
That can make me snore.

Sulat
Ni Alex C. de los Santos

Nay,
Nabuy-an ko ang imo sulat pagdawu
kang kartero
tuman gali ka bug-at bisan sampanid lamang
ang malauring nga tinta tama ka siri
seguro nagtagos sa papel
kag naghigku sa lamesa mo sa kusina
pero sa ubus kang papel
naglubad ang iban nga mga tinaga
daw mga isla kon turukon
ginpangita ko kon diin ang Antique
Nay, indi ko run mabasa ang sulat mo
raku pa nga mga isla ang nagturuhaw
napunu run ang pahina
kon ano man ang sugid mo parte kay Tatay
kag akun mga libayun
kaluy-an sanda kang Dios
Nay, indi run ako pagsulati
Indi rin natun pagpaayawan ang kartero
Kinii ang paggamit kang tinta
Agud indi mamantsahan ang lamesa
mo sa kusina
Kag ang mga isla
indi ko gusto nga makita ruman

nagapalangga,
ang imo anak.

Letter
Translation by Leoncio P. Deriada

Mother,
I dropped your letter when the postman
handed it
it was very heavy even if it was only a
page
the charcoal-black ink was too
concentrated
maybe it seeped through the paper
and stained your kitchen table
but at the bottom of the paper
the other words changed color
like islands when beheld
I looked which part was Antique
Mother, I could not read your letter
anymore
many more islands appeared
the page was filled
whatever you said about Father
and my younger brothers and sisters
may God have pity on them
Mother, don't write to me anymore
let us not overwork the postman
some more
save on ink
so that your kitchen table will not stain
and the islands
I don't want to see them again.

lovingly,
your child.

Lupa Kag Baybay sa Pinggan
Ni Ma. Milagros C. Geremia

Maarado
mamanggas
mang-abono
manghilamon
mangani
malinas
mapahangin
manglay-ang
mapagaling
manahup
matig-ang
para gid lang
pinggan ni Nonoy
masudlan

piro kan-on pa lang d'ya
wara pa maabay gani
kon paano ang pagsaruk
kang baybay agud mahimu
ang asin nga darapli
kag sa pinggan ni Nonoy
liwan magkitaay
ang lupa kag baybay.

Earth and Sea in a Plate
Translation by the author

To plow
sow the seeds
fertilize
weed
harvest
thresh
winnow
spread dry
mill
remove the chaff
cook the rice
all these
just to fill
Nonoy's plate

But this is only rice
yet unmentioned
is how to scoop
the sea
to make
salt to go with the rice
and in Nonoy's plate
again will meet
the earth and sea.

Kay Esmeralda,
Anak Kang Akun Mga Damgo
Ni Jose Edison C. Tondares

Kadyang adlaw ang aktin niga tinaga
Bukad kang karabasa nga nagabuskag
Nga may kalinung sa dughan
Kang pagpamanagbanag kang kaagahun
Kag sa dyang panahon kon san-o
Ang mga damgo nagabarikutot pa
Sa kabud kang kasanagun
Una ko ikaw nakit-an.
Amo gali dya ang wara't katapusan
Ang iduyan ikaw sa akun mga butkon
Kag bantayan ang imong pagturog.
Pamatii, anak, ang mga yabag
Kang karbaw sa akun dughan
Agudto sa imong paghamtung
Imo malubad ang gahum
Kang ginakaisahan ta sa lupa.
Ria lang ang mapaambit ko kanimo.
Ria kag ang maruyog nga liso
Kang kasanag sa imong mga mata–
Idlak kang akun mga luha nga ginhuput
Kag padayon nga ihuptan.
Sa akun pagmal-am, pahanumdumun mo ako
Kang mga aga kon san-o ang mga hilamon
Nagahilay sa pagpas-an kang inggat
Kang mga engkatado nga gabii.
Karon, sa ingod kang imong nanay
Damguhon ko liwan ang pagturo
Kang uran sa ginbungkag nga lupa.

To Esmeralda,
Child of My Dreams
Translation by the author

Today my words
Are flowers of squash opening
Silently to the breast
Of the morning light
And in this moment when
Dreams still curl
In the tendrils of dawn
I first saw you.
So this is eternity
To cradle you in my arms
And watch you while you sleep.
Listen, child, to the footsteps
Of the carabao in my chest
So when you grow up
You may unravel the power
Of our oneness with the earth.
I give you only that.
That and those lovely seeds
Of light in your eyes–
Sparkles of tears I hid
And will keep on hiding.
When I am old, you will remind me
Of mornings when the grassblades
Bend with shimmers carried
From enchanted nights.
Tonight, by your mother's side
I will dream again of the falling
Of rain upon the earth broken.

Aklanon

Ham-At Madueom Ro Gabii, Inay
Ni Melchor F. Cichon

Inay, ham-at madueomn ro gabii?
May buean, Toto, ugaling may galipud
nga gae-um.
Inay, ham-at madueom ro gabii?
May bombilya ro mga poste
Ugaling may brown-out.
Inay, ham-at madueom ro gabii?
Ginsindihan ko ro atong kingke
Ugaling ginapinaeong it hangin.
lnay, ham-at madueom ro gabii?
Toto, matueog ka eon lang
Ag basi hin-aga temprano pa
Magsilak ro adlaw.
lndi, 'Nay, a!
Sindihan ko't oman ro atong kingke.

Why is the Night Dark, Mother?
Translation by the author

Mother, why is the night dark?
There's a moon, Toto, but the Cloud
is covering it.
Mother, why is the night dark?
The electric posts have electric bulbs,
But there's a brown-out.
Mother, why is the night dark?
I keep on lighting our kerosene lamp,
But the wind keeps on blowing it out.
Mother, why is the nigh dark?
Toto, it's better that you sleep.
The sun might rise
Early tomorrow.
No, Mother!
I will light again the kerosene lamp.

Haead Kay Arsenia
Ni Arwena Tamayo

Gindaehan ta ikaw it mga bueak
Nga may kasiga ku adlaw
Ag kainit ku mga hiyom-hiyom
Agud taw-an it kasadya
Ro imong mga mata
Nga nagakasubo.
Mga violeta nga nagakiay-kiay
Sa huyop ku hangin–
Pageaum ku mga daeanon
Nga owa maagyi...
Ag mga rosas–singpuea ku dugo
Pero madali maeaay.
A, sayud ko kon paalin
Do mapisang it sanglibong parte
Ag do magbatyag ku hapdi
Ku mga napirdi

An Offering to Arsenia
Translation by Joeffrey L. Ricafuenta

I bring you flowers
With the brilliance of the sun
And the heat of a smile
To give happiness
To your eyes that grieve.
Violets that bend
At the blow of the wind—
The hope of the paths
That have never been trodden...
And the roses–as red as blood
But easily dying.
Ah, I know how it is
To be broken into a thousand pieces
And to feel the pain
Of the defeated...

Kon do Pasahero hay Natag-Ihi nga Indi Eon Mapunggan
Ni Alexander C. de Juan

Kon do pasahero hay natag-ihi nga indi eon
    mapunggan
nga nagasakay sa pangmaeayo ang biyahe
    nga dyip
hueaton nana nga may magpanaog ag mangutana
sa drayber kon puydi imaw kaihi.
Kon do pasahero hay eaki,
ginapasugtan imaw it drayber
bangud sayod nana
nga ro eaki hay maihi eang say kariton
    it dyip.

Kon do pasahero hay bayi,
ginapabungoe-bungoean eang imaw it
    drayber
bangud sayod nana
nga ro bayi hay indi makaihi sa kariton
    it dyip.

When the Passenger Would Like to Pee and Cannot Hold It Anymore
Translation by the author

If the passenger going on a long trip
feels like urinating and he cannot hold
    it anymore
he has to wait until somebody gets off
and asks the driver if he can pee.
If the passenger is a male
the driver allows it
because the driver knows
that he'll pee on the wheel.

If the passenger is a female
the driver just ignores her
because he knows
that she cannot pee on the wheel.

Filipino

Hihintayin Ko si Santa Claus
Ni Joenar D. Pueblo

Nakabugtaw ako noon
na may regalo mula sa iyo,
pero nagbagting na ang ala-una'y
wala pa ring laman ang medyas
na pinakabit ko sa bintana.

Kanina pa ako nagbabantay
sa pintuan ng aming kusina
(sa dapog ka raw nagdadaan sabi nila);
kanina ko pa rin tinutulok si Nanay
na nakahiga sa mesa,
nakatulog na sa sobrang inom ng hinebra,
pero nakikita ko ang nagmamalang
luha sa kanyang mga mata.

Kung hindi lang sana naipit si.Tatay
ng makina ng kanilang paktorya
sana tatlo kami ngayon
ang naghuhulat sa iyong pagdating.
Pero bakit kaya kadugay sa iyo
magdating, Santa Klaus?

Oyayi sa Tag-Ulan
Ni Genevieve L. Asenio

Kapag ganitong umuulan
bumubuhos ang kahidlaw
sa aking dughan.
Tag-ulan kasi nang umalis ka.
Ngayon, kahit nag-iisa na lang ako
patuloy ko pa ring inaararo
ang taramnanan ng pagsulat.
Kaniakailan nga lang naisab-og ko na
ang binhi kong kataga.
Aabunuhan ko ito ng pagsanay,
payayabungin sa tension
ng mga unos at salot,
Bubunutan ng mga ligaw
na metapora at aanihan
ang lamigas ng kalipay.
Hindi ko ito iiwanan
ulit-ulitin man nilang sasabihin
na wala ang karangyaan
sa pagsaka, sa pagsulat.
Nasisiguro kong hangga't buhay
at totoo ang mga binalaybay
sa ating kaluluwa, habang may
tagtaranom sa bawat tag-ulan
uuwi ka pa rin.

Gayuma ng Dinagyang
Ni John Carlo H. Tiampong

Baywang ko'y umiindayog
Ulo'y kumakaway, sumasabay
Sa agos ng mga taong pintado.

Hiiidi ko mapigilan
Ang kumawala sa dalan
Ang lumundag-lundag, ang lumangoy
Sa alon ng mahiwagang tingog
Ng mga dram.

Habang napupuno ang hangin
Ng dumadaguob na tugtog
Umiitim ang aking balat
Buhok ko'y kumukulot
Nag-aanyong gubat ang palibot.

Sa aking paningin, ako'y sumasayaw
Sumasabay sa anaw
Ng mga taong nakabangkaw
Sa aking paningin, ako'y nagwawala,
Umiindayog sa harap
Ng isang dambuhalang apoy
At nakagapos na usa.

Protesta
Ni John lremil E. Teodoro

Ay abaw, palangga,
Ang sinapupunan ko
Ay hindi isang CR
Na kung sumasakit
Ang tiyan mo't puson
Ay tatae at iihi
Ka na lamang.

Ay abaw, palangga,
Ang mga palad ko
Ay hindi isang bangko
Na dinideposituhan mo
Ng iyong suweldo

At pagkatapos ay wiwidrohan
Ng sobra-sobra
Na para kang naglo-loan
Sa IMF at World Bank.

Ay abaw, palangga,
Ako'y hindi isang DH
Na ililibing mo
Sa isang trak na labahan
At ginagawang governess
Ng overpopulated na lababo.

Ay abaw, palangga,
Ay abaw!

Sa Iyong Kaarawan
Ni Mark Anthony A. Grejaldo

Hangin akong dumapya
Sa pagbati sa iyo.

Pero hindi mo man lang
Binatyag ang mahinay kong
Pagdupoypoy.

Kaya ngayon, hindi mo
Mabasol kung ako ay isa nang
Bagyo.

NEW LOCALITIES, RICHER NATIONHOOD

The emergence of new writing in West Visayas—writing in Kinaray-a, writing in Aklanon and writing in a Visayan-influenced Filipino—has produced three new literary localities in the region. These three, combined with the more established writing in Hiligaynon and writing in English, make the literary geography of West Visayas an extremely visible landmark in the country's mapping out of a richer, more diverse yet more defined nationhood.

As I have said in the Introduction of *Patubas*, an anthology of West Visayan poetry (1986-1994) which I edited and was published by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (1995), "At the end, the language becomes irrelevant: the craft has transcended mere locality to render universal what is human and worthy in the poets and their milieu" (xxi).

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PEDAGOGY: TEACHING PRACTICES OF AMERICAN COLONIAL EDUCATORS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract
Filipino historian and essayist Renato Constantino wrote: "With American education, the Filipinos were not only learning a new language; they were not only forgetting their own language; they were starting to become a new type of American." What specific strategies did the American colonizers use to create this new type of American? How did they use the public schools to produce their cultural clones? The answer may be found in the language and literature teaching practices of American colonial educators in the Philippines. This paper argues that the Anglo-American canon of literature imposed on the Filipinos would not have been as potent without its powerful partner: colonial pedagogy.

Keywords
American colonialism, Anglo-American literature, colonial education and pedagogy, English language

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When the Americans arrived in the Philippines, the Filipinos already had a flourishing literature. In the first decade of American colonialism, with memories of the revolution against Spain still fresh, secular values spread rapidly as a rejection of 300 years of religious domination. Spanish declined but English had not yet gained a foothold. Thus, the floodgates of literature in the native languages were flung wide open. With a newfound

freedom of expression under the American colonizers, Philippine poetry, fiction, and journalism flourished.

However, in spite of the existence of a wealth of writing by Filipinos, Philippine literature was never recognized inside the colonial classroom. It was only during the latter half of American colonialism, perhaps with the introduction of the readers of Camilo Osias and the textbook of Francisco Benitez and Paz Marquez Benitez, that the canon in the classroom opened up to Filipino writers.[1]

It is easy to understand why Philippine literature was not recognized in the colonial classroom.

First of all, the Philippine literature that flourished at the beginning of the American colonial period was not in English. As it had been the policy from the start that native languages were not to be used in schools,[2] Philippine literature certainly had no place in the colonial classroom.

In 1925, a comprehensive study of the educational system of the Philippines (also known as the 1925 Monroe Report) reported that Filipino students had no opportunity to study in their native language. The report recommended that the native language be used as an auxiliary medium of instruction in courses such as character education, and good manners and right conduct (Board of Educational Survey 40). In spite of this, American education officials insisted on the exclusive use of English in the public schools until 1940. Such policy propelled the English language towards becoming, in the words of Renato Constantino, a "wedge that separated the Filipinos from their past" (6).

COLONIAL CANON

Other than language, a more compelling reason for barring Philippine literature from inclusion in the canon of the classroom was that Anglo-American literature best served the interests of the colonizers. In this canon, the following titles were included:

Titles	**Authors**
The Song of Hiawatha, *Evangeline*, and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
The Alhambra	Washington Irving
"Gettysburg Address"	Abraham Lincoln
"Self-Reliance"	Ralph Waldo Emerson
Robinson Crusoe	Daniel Defoe

The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Macbeth, and *Julius Caesar*	William Shakespeare
Lady of the Lake	Walter Scott
Sohrab and Rustum	Matthew Arnold
The Life of Samuel Johnson	Thomas Babington Macaulay
Silas Marner	George Eliot

A detailed analysis of these texts, as well as the way they were taught to Filipino children, reveals the combined power of curriculum, canon, and pedagogy in promoting myths about colonial realities. These texts made natural and legitimate the illusion that colonialism existed for the sake of the colonials and not the colonizers. One would wonder, for example, why the works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow were included in this canon when in the United States during the early part Longfellow was regarded by critics as one whose poetry was shallow and too didactic (Snyder 583-4). But beginning 1904, *Evangeline* was read by all Filipino high school students. In 1911, *The Song of Hiawatha* was read by all Filipinos in all public elementary schools in the country.

Also in 1904, Filipino elementary school students began to read Washington Irving's *The Alhambra*, a collection of stories set in a historical palace in Spain. The Alhambra was built and inhabited by Moslem kings during the 13th century. One would wonder why, among all the works of Irving, this particular one was included in the colonial canon.

A closer inspection of *Evangeline, The Song of Hiawatha*, and *The Alhambra*, reveals themes that directly promote American colonialism. In these texts one can almost find prescriptions for good behavior in a colonized society. *Evangeline*, for example, is the story of how the lovers Evangeline and Gabriel were separated during the time when the Acadians were ejected from their home by the English colonizers. However, the story tends to attract more attention to the romantic and sentimental portrayal of Evangeline's ill-fated love, rather than to the anger of the Acadians at the English. In *The Song of Hiawatha,* the protagonist Hiawatha regards the English colonizers as messengers of God. In the end, Hiawatha accepts his fate, leaves his home, and entrusts to the English his fellow native Americans. Irving's *The Alhambra* depicts colonizers as savages who destroy lives and cultures. It is interesting to note, however, that these colonizers are the very same Spanish colonizers who subjected the Filipinos to 300 years of suffering. It is thus easy to see why the text is an invaluable tool of American colonialism in the Philippines.

THE HUMAN AGENT

This Anglo-American literary canon, powerful as it might be, would not have been as potent on its own. Direct exposure to such a canon did not automatically ensure the creation of the so-called "brown Americans." Such view presupposes that literature has a direct effect on readers, that the language of literature is transparent, thus making its meaning immediately accessible to the reader.

However, the act of reading cannot be reduced to the simple act of recovering meaning from a text. The act of reading is not the simple process of decoding some embedded message from a text. Rather, it involves what Paulo Freire describes as "reading the word-*world*," where text and reader converge to produce meaning (32). Such view of reading shatters the notion of the literary text as the sole source of meaning. The reader is thus empowered; she is made co-creator.

However, as the act of reading liberates, so too does it subjugate. In the context of the colonial classroom, there is another force that intervenes in the production of meaning—the human agent, the teacher.

In 1904, Washington Irving's *The Alhambra* and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline* were first taught to 1st year high school Filipino students. *The Merchant of Venice* and other plays by Shakespeare were introduced to 3rd year high school Filipino students. One wonders how, after only a few years of exposure to the alien English language, these students could access literary texts of such a complex language and a strange culture. The key, of course, is the teacher.

COLONIAL PEDAGOGY

During the early years of public education in the Philippines, memory work became a popular method of teaching. This was described by one school principal as the only way by which Filipino students could learn English. In 1911, she wrote the following:

> We must insist that every day in his first three years of school life, the Filipino child has a dialogue lesson, and we must make him commit that lesson absolutely to memory. For instance suppose his first lesson is as brief as this:
> Good morning, Pedro.
> Good morning, Jose.
> How are you this morning, Pedro?
> Thank you, I am very well.

> It would not be cruelty to animals to insist on any second grade pupil's committing that lesson to memory. (Fee 113)

This school principal believed that, like American students, Filipinos would best learn the language, not by reading, but by memorizing dialogues, the same dialogues American children memorized in American schools. This, of course, was symptomatic of the practice by American teachers in the Philippines of importing teaching methods from the US. And why not? After all, the Philippines was a colony of the United States.

This and other mechanical methods of teaching the English language manifested itself in different pedagogical practices in the public schools: stressing eye movements in reading, asking students to read aloud, making them perform grammar drills, and expecting them to recite memorized passages. The practice became so widespread that in 1913, Dr. Paul Monroe, later appointed head of the Board of Educational Survey, wrote the following about language education in the Philippines:

> Grammar seems to be too much separated from language work.… The method employed seems to be largely a question and answer method—often combined with mere memorized work. (150)

In 1925, the Board of Educational Survey, which conducted a comprehensive study of the Philippine public school system, reported similar findings:

> Children in upper grades seem to have a "reciting" knowledge of more technical English grammar than most children in corresponding grades in the American schools. To what degree this helps them in speaking and writing English no one really knows. (Board of Educational Survey 239)

This mechanical method of teaching English also found its way to the teaching of literature. The 1925 Board of Educational Survey noted the following observation about a typical language-oriented literature class:

> Practically an entire semester of the freshman year is given to an intensive study of "Evangeline," a selection that can be read by an ordinary reader in two or three hours. Obviously this poem is read intensively. It is analyzed, taken to pieces, put back together, looked at from every angle, and considered in all of its relations.

> Such a course in literature is really a course in intellectual analysis of the most unprofitable kind. This analytic method of teaching literature is sanctified by a long academic tradition and should provide a splendid training for the literary critic, but, as a means for developing taste for literature and an interest in reading, little can be said in its defense. (378)

In 1929, one American school teacher reported the following practice in literature classes in the Philippines:

> The course in literature was a misnomer. It should have been called "The Comparative Anatomy of our Best Works." We skinned participles and hung the pelts on the blackboard to dry. We split infinitives, in much the same manner as a husky midwestern youth splits a stick of wood. We hammered the stuffing out of the compound and complex sentences, leaving the mere shells of their selves. We took our probes and dug into the vitals of literary masterpieces, bringing their very souls to the light of day…. We analyzed sentences and defined word—in short, we completed the course, as outlined, including the most important thing: the correct manner of passing the final examinations. ("Experiences" 7)

Such teaching practice—the mechanical, language-oriented approach to analyzing literary texts—presupposes that these texts are models of good English and therefore worthy of detailed study. These practices, of course, resonate with linguistics which is perceived to be a more objective and rigorous study of language. Thus, with the authority of science, the teachers presented the Anglo-American canon, not just as examples of good English, but also of great literature.

Exposure to such a canon and pedagogy would certainly exact a toll on Philippine writing, as well on standards for Philippine literature. From the compositions of Filipino students alone, one can already see the effects of American colonial education on writing. In 1928, one English teacher observed that in writing compositions, students tended to mimic the Anglo-American writers they read in class. An example of such follows:

> Amongst my female sectionmates there is one who will make my heart stop throbbing whenever I will gaze upon her. She is not pure Filipina but are what we call in the Philippines Mestiza. She have a golden kinky hair and a oblong face on which was a rare and sporadic pimples. She is not so white as plate nor so black

> as Negro, but between the two, so that when the sun will shine on her face a blood running thru the arteries can be plainly seen. (Annex Teacher 17)

According to the student-writer's English teacher, the student (who graduated valedictorian of the class) directly lifted the words "throbbing" and "oblong" from Edgar Allan Poe, although Poe did not use the term "oblong" to refer to the face of a person, but to a box. The term "sporadic," which the student used to describe pimples, might have been taken from a biology text, or could have been a confusion with the word "dangling." If it was an error, then the source of the word was most likely Washington Irving. The lofty tone of the paragraph, furthermore, might be traced to Matthew Arnold. The teacher added:

> A vast army of literary knights—Chaucer, Poe, Irving, Kipling, Arnold, Stevenson, Tennyson, Longfellow, Johnson, Noah Webster, Shakespeare and countless others crop up continually in the written work, perhaps somewhat mangled, but recognizable nevertheless. (Annex Teacher 17)

This observation was confirmed by the General Office Supervisors of the Bureau of Education. In March 1928, they published the following statement:

> The topics chosen for composition should encourage originality in thought and expression rather than reproduction of literary works. There should, of course, be nice correlations of work in literature and composition. But such a large majority of the composition topics should not be drawn from the course on literature and when the composition topic is correlated with literature, it should be so worded as to call for original thought rather than reproduction. ("Observations" 124)

Because the Anglo-American canon was presented to Filipino students as examples of great literature, writing in Philippine schools tended to imitate the language of these texts. Such an observation is not very different from those made about Philippine literature in English by such influential personalities as Dr. George Pope Shannon, who in 1928, declared that Filipino writers had a tendency for the "slavish imitation" of Anglo-American texts (6). (At that time, Dr. Shannon was the head of the English Department of the University of the Philippines and adviser of the UP Writer's Club.)

During the latter part of American colonialism, the mechanical, language-oriented

approach to studying literature was not anymore popular. The *1933 Course of Study in Literature,* which was distributed to all teachers of English in the public school system, promoted a more "literary" way of reading the texts. In this document, the objective of teaching literature was described as follows:

> … *to give our students a literary experience* (emphasis added)—enable them most vividly to realize some part of the literary materials read. Success in teaching any bit of literature is to be measured by the keenness with which the experience there set forth is realized by the pupils. (Bureau of Secondary Education 5)

In stressing the literary experience, the teacher was now less concerned about the linguistic features of a text and more focused on the almost "natural" effect great literature had on the reader. Students were taught to appreciate literature by studying the extrinsic and intrinsic elements of a literary text. The *1933 Course of Study* makes the following prescription about teaching literature:

> the student should have a knowledge of a brief history of English and American literature touching only on the outstanding figures and the salient political, social, and literary characteristics of the more important periods. (56)

In a literature class, studying these "important periods" presupposes that writing is determined by "race, milieu, and moment[3]." Thus, it is necessary to look into history, biography, or anything external to a literary text that is believed to have influenced its creation. It may be argued that this approach to studying literary texts, by focusing on elements extrinsic to literature, was a logical extension of the mechanical, language-oriented pedagogical practices which were presented as more rigorous, objective, and therefore, scientific. The effect, of course, is the transporting of Filipino students to a time and place unfamiliar to them. In this world, the language is foreign, the experience strange, the images mysterious. It is a world that is totally alien. However, it is also a world that represents greatness. In such a setting of high culture and civilization, would there be room for the more familiar fables, folktales, and epics? Certainly not.

But it was not just the study of context that drove a wedge between Filipino students and their own culture. An analysis of the intrinsic features of literary texts in the Anglo-American canon, in other words, the study of text as text, also propagated the myth of greatness. The view that literature is an elevated art form with the ability to naturally

express itself is apparent in the following recommendation of the *1933 Course of Study in Literature*:

> Lyric poetry should not be studied analytically. Do not try to make the class "thrill" over it. Instead, read the selection or have it read as rhythmically as possible, and trust the students to catch *the spirit of it* (emphasis added). In the advanced classes some analysis may be attempted of the more difficult types of poetry, some attention should be paid to imagery and to metrical forms, but neither should be permitted to becloud the spirit and sensuous appeal of the poem. Seldom should the reading of a beautiful passage be interrupted to explain an unknown expression. Explain or have explained the dialect and allusions before-hand. (Bureau of Secondary Education 97)

Literature, in this case, lyric poetry, is believed to possess a spirit, an essence that can be recovered by the reader. Thus, the teacher is cautioned against interrupting this "natural" process of capturing the spirit. The power, of course, to create meaning lies in the literary text and not in the reader. In a colonial setting, such approach to studying literature is potentially damaging as it reduces the student to a passive receiver, a receptacle or repository, of meaning.

CONCLUSION

As material manifestation and ideological apparatus, public education in the Philippines perpetuated the interests of American colonialism. At the same time that American colonialism promoted the Anglo-American literary canon, it also propagated approaches to teaching that would have direct benefits on the existing order. The partnership of canon and pedagogy sealed the fate of Filipino readers and writers.

Thus, the belief that public education was introduced in the Philippines for the Filipinos is in fact false. The reality is that public education, specifically language and literature education during the American colonial period, was designed to directly support American colonialism. The combined power of the canon, curriculum, and pedagogy constituted the ideological strategies resulting in rationalizing, naturalizing, and legitimizing myths about colonial relationships and realities. The Filipino experience of American colonial education must constantly remind us that language and literature education is never neutral. Education is power—the power to forge realities, the power to propel cultures, the power to interrupt life.

NOTES

1 It should be noted that these textbooks were written in English.

2 The native language (Pilipino) was not allowed to be taught in the public schools until 1940.

3 The phrase is associated with Hippolyte Taine (1828-93) which was described in Raman Selden, *Theory of Criticism: From Plato to the Present* (London: Longman, 1988) as "the first to elaborate a strictly deterministic history of literature. His first assumption is that national histories can be explained by "some very general disposition of mind and soul." This elementary "moral state" is conditioned by environmental factors—"the race, the surroundings, and the epoch." From the resulting disposition arises a certain "ideal model of man" which is expressed pre-eminently in literature" (419).

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KRITIKA
KULTURA

THE FICTIONS OF NECESSITY

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Abstract

Nationalism's great success as well as its great failure comes from the fact that it is an artefact of the mind that strives to imagine a closed society. In Charlie Samuya Veric's review of *Necessary Fictions*, he lays bare the implications of Caroline S. Hau's uncovering of the narratives of exclusion in the ways the nation is conceived in key Filipino literary texts. As Hau inquires into the problematic authorships of the fictions of nation, Veric, meanwhile, returns the problem of Hau's criticism of the idea of nationalism as a necessary fiction. Necessary, Veric asks, for whom? For what purpose?

Keywords

Caroline Hau, literature and nationalism, Necessary Fictions, Philippine literary criticism

About the Author

Charlie Samuya Veric completed his undergraduate degree in Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines. With the help of a few good friends, he masterminds the critical directions of "sub/berso"—an interdisciplinary circle of students based locally and abroad. He has written for the *Philippine Collegian* and has contributed articles to *The Observer* and to the journal of the UP Center for Women's Studies. He is currently teaching with the Department of English, Ateneo de Manila University.

No other book of Philippine criticism fills one with so much sense of arrival than Caroline S. Hau's (2000) *Necessary Fictions*. Unimpeachably a book about literature and nationalism, *Necessary Fictions* grapples with difficult, and often unbidden, questions regarding how we imagine the living fictions of our nation. But alas—in fiction, as in life—one fiction told leaves out other fictions waiting to take form, waiting for forms with which to tell other silent, because silenced, fictions of nation.

The coming of Hau's book augurs the arrival of overdue questions that shake the foundations of our nation as embodied in the canon of Philippine literature. Whose invisible hand writes, Hau asks, the fictions of our visible nation? Hau looks for answers in the ways the nation is produced and consumed by social and cultural institutions that forge historical subjects willing to fulfill monumental sacrifices in the nation's name. More specifically, Hau takes pains to reexamine the foundational fictions of Jose Rizal, Amado V.

Hernandez, Kerima Polotan, Nick Joaquin and Mano de Verdades Posadas, among others, to find the spectral light of her question's resolution.

Certainly the nation's power to exact extreme benefaction from its people makes such imagination potentially violent. Violent because a community of people wanting to count in its members will necessarily count out other peoples and communities perceived to be potentially unruly. An understanding of this phenomenon necessitates the remembrance of the place of the Chinese, or lack of it, in the constitution of the Philippine nation. According to Hau, the Chinese serve not only as bogeys of Philippine nationalism but also as principal objects of vicious economic and political legislation (Hau 133-4). Moreover, Hau argues that the Chinese are historically and systematically made to embody the "foreign" and the "external" against which notions of the ethnic and the local in Philippine nationalism are defined in severe contradistinction (134).

What is ironic about such an embodiment, I must say, is the fact that the symbolically embodied Chinese so central to Philippine nationalism's formation are banished from the body of Philippine nationalism itself—their blighted bodies exiled from the very history of Philippine nationalism itself. Here, Hau's discussion of the tribulations of the Chinese is anguished, as it is equally urgent. Reading her chapter on nationalism and what she lovingly calls the "Chinese Question," one feels the wounded shadow of the author lingering among her own visionary words.

But, as Hau herself declares, this "is not mere quibbling over what ought to be included in history textbooks" (135). More fundamentally, Hau argues that "anti-Chinese racialist discourse is in part shaped by the nationalist attempt to imagine 'the people' as a unity that takes precedence over social differences, when the very reality of the history of the nationstate serves to highlight these social differences" (137). Hau adds that "the selective inclusion and exclusion of the Chinese helped enable precisely a political community to be imagined as Filipino" (139). Philippine nationalism, in other words, betrays the Chinese as well as history by using history against itself.

Hau also sees traces of the same ambivalence toward the Chinese in Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*. In fact, Hau considers Rizal as "the best guide to the issue of the Philippine Chinese" (140). What is interesting about such a statement is the fact that, for Hau, Rizal and his works are magisterial when it comes to imagining not only the interior of Philippine nationalism but also its imagined and much maligned exterior. Intriguingly, Rizal's centrality haunts the other literary texts that Hau discusses in her book. Say the scene in Hernandez's *Mga Ibong Mandaragit* where the protagonist, Mando Plaridel, is being tested by an old revolutionary, Tata Matyas, on his knowledge of Rizal. Or, Posadas's

Hulagpos whose first circulation was titled *Huwag Akong Ipiit*, the Tagalog translation of *Noli me incarcerare* and an intertextual allusion to Rizal's *Noli me tangere*. In almost all of the chapters, Hau frequently returns to Rizal's works and ideas, like a tide torn between the moon and the earth.

Indeed, for Hau, Rizal is the founding figure of Philippine nationalism, and his *Noli me tangere* its founding text. Hau goes as far as suggesting that Rizal signifies the Modern whose modernity coincided with the modernity of the novel and nation as cultural artifacts (52). It is known, for example, that Rizal had a profound intellectual affinity with Europe. To illustrate, Germany was of particular importance for Rizal who called it his scientific homeland. In Rizal's analysis of Philippine conditions, according to Hau, "the 'modern' is primarily seen as external … something that comes to the Philippines from the outside" (78). Hau contends that Rizal highlights the connection of the "modern" to the "outside" and that Rizal "looks to other countries, specifically to modern Europe, for the concrete embodiment of [his] ideals" (78). Disturbingly, the same motif is suggested in *Hulagpos* and *Mga Ibong Mandaragit*. By rehearsing the *Ilustrado* origins of nation and linking them with alternative and underground literatures like *Hulagpos*, one risks the error of perpetuating the dominance of *Ilustrado* narratives of nationalism. Thus, leaving out the real subjects and makers of history: the masses themselves. It seems to me that such an erasure is a trace of a symptom that inheres in Rizal's own failure to signify the "people." As Hau herself observes, "[s]ome readers may notice the relative paucity of attention Rizal devotes to elaborating the day-to-day life of so-called ordinary people (with the possible exception of Sisa), contenting himself with eavesdropping on their conversations" (90). It is richly ironic, therefore, that the multitudes that constitute Rizal's imagination of the Filipino nation are grasped solely by way of secret listening. And the single possible exception that is given space, Sisa, is doomed to suffer the speciousness of insanity. The "people" who embody the community end up being represented by the *Ilustrado* like Rizal as beings of a community who are not allowed to produce their beings for themselves. If Rizal's "literary feat of imagining a Filipino community is itself considered a characteristically *modern* gesture" (Hau 53), the same act, one may add, is at once Modernity's gesture of silencing the "people."

At this juncture, let me bring in the politics of knowledge production. It seems that for Rizal, the source of modernity—therefore that also of knowledge and power—is external, something that comes to the Philippines from outside. If it takes us *Necessary Fictions* in order to cement Rizal's reputation as the embodiment of modernity, as the creator of Philippine nationalism's master-text, does this mean that Hau's book is the

master-criticism of Philippine nationalism? To recall, Hau originally wrote the book at Cornell University as a dissertation. As Hau herself acknowledges, *Necessary Fictions* bears the ghostly imprint and imprimatur of Benedict Anderson—nationalism's gorgeous theorist—who, in a correspondence with this author, described Hau as his most favorite student (Anderson).

In a 1998 review published in *Public Policy*, Hau coined the term "Cornell" school to refer to Filipino scholars educated at Cornell whose dissertations were all published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press (a friend, however, describes the coterie as the Cornell Mafia). Reynaldo C. Ileto, Vicente L. Rafael, Filomeno V. Aguilar, and most recently Hau, are all theoreticians of nationalism who benefited in one way or the other from the generosity of the Fulbright grants and Anderson himself. All these scholars of Philippine nationalism are now based in foreign universities.

Where, then, in the minds of American-educated scholars whose bodies grow ashen in the climate of distant shores do we locate Philippine nationalism and the Filipino people and the unfinished revolution? Without a doubt, the question of nationalism is ultimately a national one. Recognition of such is a comprehension of the ineluctable primacy of the nameless multitudes that move History. The project of the coming times, then, is to examine the fictions that self-exiled scholars of nationalism have imagined, for themselves, as the necessity of our people and community.

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