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ANG MGA PINAGDAANANG BUHAY NG IBONG ADARNA: NARRATIVITY AND IDEOLOGY IN THE ADARNA'S CORRIDO AND FILMIC VERSIONS

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Abstract
Through a consideration of narrativity, the paper explores different structures of recognition in the *corrido* and 1941 filmic versions of the *Ibong Adarna*. The paper compares the chapbook's context and narrative techniques with that of the film's capacity to address an audience and creating subject-forms. It explores the applicability of James Siegel's concept of the *lingua franca*'s communicative power to the Philippine situation, and suggests that different textual technologies contain different though overlapping grammars that affect their ideological functions.

Keywords
film adaptation, metrical romance, myth

About the Author
Francisco Benitez is Assistant Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Washington. His research interests are on the multiple and often conflicting formations of modern subjectivity and nationalism in the literature and film of insular Southeast Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is currently working on a book project on the Philippine *awit* and the Malay *syair* during the emergence of print-capitalism in insular Southeast Asia.

In his series of essays on the mythological function and structure of romances, Northrop Frye argues that contemporary mass and popular culture kidnapped the romance of earlier periods, what he calls "the absorbing of it into the ideology of an ascendant class" (54), in order to regulate a certain kind of wish-fulfillment that brings into the present something that properly belongs to the future in the guise of the past or the archaic.[1] He argues that the rise of the adventure, love story, and quest romance as a genre of the popular novel indexes the emergence of the bourgeois class, and that the mythic function of romance is given over to the creation of a class ethos. The process of creating a class ethos in turn simultaneously contains within it what Raymond Williams terms the vestigial, the dominant and the emergent structures of feeling, or the lived experience that goes beyond articulations of a rational political ideology (see especially chapters 8 and 9). In this view, romances, love stories and adventure quests not only has an ideological or mythic function

for class structures, but in this very opening to temporal transitions, also contain the contradictory possibilities implicit in modernity's potentially liberating impulse as well as its conservative or regulatory force.

The Philippine metrical romance, known as *awit* and *corrido*,[2] was perhaps the most widely read vernacular secular literature in nineteenth century Philippines. They were printed and circulated, memorized and sung in many vernaculars.[3] Considered by some as literature primarily of the peasantry, lower classes or of children, they were judged "low" literature—though they probably crossed class and racial boundaries as the first secular mass printed literature of the country. Sharing the market with religious literature like *pasyons*, novenas and lives of saints (with which they share many characteristics and which were often categorized with them), they were sold outside churches after mass or even in bookshops well into the mid-twentieth century. I would argue that the Tagalog *corrido*'s emergence in the eighteenth century, and its dominance in the nineteenth century, is symptomatic of historical conditions not in the sense of being "un-modern," but in the sense of Fredric Jameson's argument that the romance's

> ultimate condition of figuration, on which the other preconditions … are dependent—the category of worldness, the ideologeme of good and evil felt as magical forces, a salvational historicity—is to be found in a transitional moment in which two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development, coexist. Their antagonism is not yet articulated in terms of the struggle of social classes, so that its resolution can be projected in the form of a nostalgic (or less often, a Utopian) harmony. (148)

The metrical romance exists in a moment of historical transition that configure multiple temporalities and uneven developments across and within various geopolitical spaces.[4] The historical moment is not, Jameson argues, causal in a direct and instrumental manner, but constitutes a "limiting situation" or condition of possibility for production, reception and circulation for a form or genre. Jameson suggests that narratives contain sedimented traces of older narrative forms that continue to haunt newer and subsequent literary forms.

Few Philippine romance narratives are as famous and easily recognized as *Ibong Adarna*. Most Philippine *corridos* are translated or directly adapted from identifiable Spanish romances of chivalry. The *Adarna*, however, does not seem to have been translated from a European original, though its folkloric motifs (such as the magical bird whose

song cures the king or the winning the hand of bird-princesses) are common enough both in the Philippines and elsewhere. The *Adarna corrido*'s 1034 quatrains tell the tale of Principe Juan's quest for the *Adarna* bird to cure his ailing father, his resistance to the bird's seductive songs and his betrayal by his brothers that has been made into comic books, school textbooks, and has been the source and inspiration for various films and songs. Clodualdo Del Mundo's *Native Resistance* argues that by making films that had references familiar to the local population, early Philippine film "resisted" the imperial capacity of American cinema. He argues that early Philippine film indigenized filmic technologies by adapting recognizable vernacular dramatic forms to the screen. Del Mundo implies that the use Filipinos made of cinematic technology increased the number of cinematic gazes structured by filmic production beyond just the American imperial one.[5] Foremost in his analysis are the adaptations of *sarsuelas* and *komedyas* by LVN studios. One of his case studies is the early version of *Ibong Adarna* (1941) that adapted the *moro-moro* or *komedya* for film (see chapter three). The film's own opening credits claims it is an adaptation of a Philippine legend.

As opposed to Del Mundo's arguments about the links between the *komedyas* and early film, this paper attempts to explore the structures of recognition in the *Adarna corrido* and film as narrative texts. I do not mean to suggest that the film was adapted from a *corrido* rather than a *komedya*. Nor do I argue against the communal aspects of vernacular performance, nor provide a different history of filmic adaptation. This paper hopes to explore provisionally some of the structures of recognition and exchange implicit in the narrative techniques available to the chapbook and film as forms in themselves. I would like to suggest that the texts allow us to explore the ways in which subject positions are constituted in a social field through structures of recognition particular to secondary orality[6] and film. Further, my analysis is limited by looking at the textual traces of orality in the chapbook version through its style and narrative technique, rather than their *actual* performances that might elucidate non-verbal performative functions.[7] The chapbooks mimic the bard's performance and foregrounds a transactional relationship between the reader/listener and the author and authorities.

The Tagalog *corrido* contain a particular poetics of *translatio studii* that presupposes the colonial relationship to Spanish, the Church and the mediating role *ladinos* played in the production of lowland Christian culture in the Philippines. The conventional modes of configuring authorship in the romance borrow authority from colonial power. The *corrido*s are generally anonymous, with the convention of imploring the Divine, usually the Virgin, for the grace to narrate the story. The authority of the text is not based upon the author, but

on other textual sources, usually taken to be *historia*. It is also convention for the narrator to beg forgiveness of his or her inability to equal the source, and to end the *corrido* or *awit* with humility, to ask the reader to complete the story or amend it if somehow found lacking. Authority in the *corrido* derives in part on the conceit found in the openings of most romances, that the romance was adapted or translated from another source rather than the creative genius of the writer, and with the convention at the end asking the reader/listener to complete or amend the romance should it be found lacking. The *Adarna* for example, asks for the listening audience's (*auditorio*) attention at the beginning, right after invoking the help of the Divine. Authority in the *corrido* derives its legitimacy from a vacillation between an external source (either the Divine or the lettered knowledge of European texts), and the listening community constituted through the very performance of the *corrido* and that can judge the truthfulness of the narration.

The *corrido* were performed orally in social gatherings, sung or chanted by a bard, or perhaps read individually or out loud to a group in chapbook form. As chapbooks that flowered with print-capitalism in nineteenth century Philippines, the *corrido* occupy a peculiar space between mass, popular, and folk literature. The chapbooks were written in the vernacular that constituted the language of the *indios*' public sphere, derived for the most part from non-indio sources, generally printed without colophons under an atmosphere of censorship,[8] and arguably are extensions of a Spanish religious colonial ideological apparatus and took part in an emergent public sphere. The Tagalog film in turn, though clearly and unabashedly popular and mass mediated has had a history of being associated with a certain conception of the masses as the people.[9] Rafael Ma. Guerrero for example has argued that Tagalog film's social function has more to do with the unconscious desires and aspirations of the "people" than with the aesthetics of cinematic art: they "reveal deep-rooted, tacit and even covert aspirations, frustrations, and complexes of more pertinence to the national character than to the established genres of cinema" (109). Part of the way these texts ideologically function as both mass media and folklore then is the manner by which they provide a position or place in a network of exchange of recognition of common concerns, aspirations, and cultural values. Both the chapbook and the film offer textual means to performatively situate the reader or audience within larger social networks. These textual means may be discerned in the diegetic content and themes of the *corrido* and film, as well as in the narrative logic of their styles. Along these axes—thematic, stylistic and historical—I sketch and explore some of the possible ways we can understand the specific structures of recognition that they engender.

Recognition is configured by the text offering a structure or form that both provides

places for, and performatively positions, listeners and speakers, spectacle and audience in a network of exchange. The narratives give subject-forms or sets of networked positions that can be occupied, taken up, reconfigured, as well as used to weave social relations, and thereby compose subjectivity and intersubjectivity (see Vince Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism* for a discussion of networks of exchange in Tagalog lowland societies). Subject-forms are reference points that provide anchors for social interaction, and that depend upon both preexisting discursive structures and practices of exchanges of recognition.[10] Recognition is the manner in which subjectivities interact and struggle with each other, and are necessary conditions for reflexive and self-reflexive individual and communal consciousness that require narratives or stories for their formulation and dissemination. Narrative texts provide a form through which subjectivity can be modeled, performed, articulated, actualized and propagated.

My interest in the *Adarna* here is not in consciousness but in exploring the manner by which narratives reify and constitute, while at the same time proving itself—and the community it engenders—to be negotiated and potentially under erasure, open-ended and changing. I suggest that narrativity, or the *temporality* of narrative and narration, gives us a glimpse of how communal formation binds us into a social order even as our interactions with such an order are precipitates of our agency. Folklorists have argued that the performative frame, both verbal and non-verbal, is key to understanding the affective appeal and function of folk narratives and rituals, even of rituals that are against the interest of some of the participants.[11] Form in this sense gives a shape to relations. The certainty given by a set and recognizable form, even when employed towards the emergence of something new, reiterates and renews older materials and relations. In suggesting this, I hope to foreground the ideological capacity of narrative iteration paradoxically to be both inherently conservative and potentially radical.

The *corrido* romances circulated in the Philippines like distant echoes of a bygone European period, but this is also symptomatic of Philippine conditions. Though *corrido* texts circulated well into the second half of the twentieth century and were most probably composed as early as the second half of the eighteenth century, the first printed version is believed to have been around 1815 (Fansler 204). I suggest it is in the transformations in the mode of production of the long *duree* of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the context of the *corrido*'s limit situation for figuration might be found. I suggest we read the significance of the *corrido*'s sedimentation of the oral in the written as a culture's incomplete move from what Samir Amin might call a primarily tributary to a more intensely capitalist form. This residual "orality" in the text, at one time the dominant

literary mode, creates a textual tension with the written and filmic narrative's impulse to create an ending that somehow legitimizes the status quo.

The *corrido* provide a form for organizing the structure of feeling of a specific historical moment, understood through Jameson to "block off or shut down a certain number of formal possibilities available before, and to open up determinate new ones, which may or may not ever be realized in artistic practice" (148). What then does the shift from metrical romances to other forms such as the novel, short story or even film that occurs in the early twentieth century indicate about the changes in formal "possibilities"? What difference does the medium make in the ideological function of the tale and the structures of recognition deployed? What are the ways in which technology and its attendant practices might provide a grammar for subject formation specific to secondarily or semi-oral *corrido* and to industrial commercial cinema produced by a studio system? How do these shifts point towards the various means by which desires that might expose what Herbert Marcuse called the "affirmative powers of culture" get coopted and sutured into dominant social relations? Borrowing from James Siegel's discussion of the *lingua franca* in Indonesia and Eva-Lotta Hedman's speculation about the Tagalog film as a possible cinematic *lingua franca* for the Filipino *masa* (for other discussions of the *lingua franca* in the Philippine context, see also Rafael's "Talglish"), I suggest below that the technological distinctions between the printed *corrido* chapbook and the cinema suggest differing possibilities for structures of recognition. While the secondarily oral *corrido* was either read in isolation or in social occasions mediated by a singer of tales, the film's camera takes the structuring or suturing dynamic of the bardic narrator that is mimed by the chapbook reading, and evokes the desire for recognition without the capacity of a singer to frame and mediate the interaction in a social and communal event. I would like to suggest that the opaque filmic image, in contrast to the mimed bard's narration, does not fully return the spectator's desire for recognition, even as it activates and commodifies this desire. Though there is a type of ritualized sociality in the watching of a film that releases what Siegel calls its "communicative power" or perhaps the "mythic" function of the *lingua franca* to constitute a community through narration, the filmic activation of desire for recognition and subject formation in turn offers its own possibilities and foreclosures.

The Catachretic *Principalía*: "Maginoo sa DON Lamang" and the *Corrido* as *literatura callejera de corro y plebe*

Kasabihán:	**Saying:**
Máginoó man kung turan	Even if noble when named
At walang magandang ásal	But has not good manners
Kapárang tae nang bákal	Like the 'shit of steel'
Maginoó sa DON lamang	Noble in DON only.

The octosyllabic mono-rhyming quatrain above is taken from Pedro Serrano Laktaw's entry for *ginoo*.[12] *Maginoo* is a modifier as well as a noun, a title as well as a position in society. The saying plays with this distinction (note the shift in accents: *máginoó* as opposed to *maginoó* that emphasizes the *ma-* prefix). Someone called *maginoo*, if he does not act like one, then such a person is like an *escoria*—the dregs of society or the slag of metallurgy—*maginoo* or noble, only "DON." The joke is that *don* here is both the mere title as well as a place marker for "there" or *doon*, which directs us back to *turan*, name or mention. *Maginoo* is nothing than simply an indexical signifier whose relationship to a proper referent, "magandang asal" or proper behavior and manners, can be subject to a catachresis. Such a play on words also affects the other register of Don as the title of the *maginoo*. Scoria, or the waste of metallurgy, is contrasted with the true noble, or *maginoo*, but is linked to the "false" noble, the noble who does not have "magandang asal" or proper behavior or manners. The title of "don" for a *maginoo* is a signifier whose links to a proper signified needs to be proven.

As a title, "don" reflects a certain social standing in *indio* society. It is for this reason that Florentino Hornedo calls the *awit* and *corrido*, whose characters are primarily dons and doñas, "literature of legitimation."[13] For Hornedo, they attempt to legitimize the use of power rather than criticize it (a function he wishes to give to "true" carnivalesque folklore).[14] What Hornedo suggests is that the *awit* and the *corrido*, as metrical romances that portray the concerns primarily of a ruling class (displaced as it might be to Europe), do not present the "persona" of the folk but of the vestiges (under colonial conditions) of the precolonial elites, the people that became the *principalía*. Hornedo reminds us that the world of the metrical romance is not strictly speaking "folk," but rather the world of elites, of the pre-colonial and colonial ruling class, that extols and legitimizes royal power. Yet, as Hornedo himself avers, the capacity to become a "don" based on "magandang asal" does emphasize an ethical component that can be seen to keep abuse of "royal" power in check (78).

In contrast to Hornedo, Damiana Eugenio points out that at "the height of the popularity of *awits* and *corridos* in the Philippines in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there seemed to have been a free exchange of story material between the *awits* and *corridos* and folktales" ("Philippine Folktales" 167). The world of the *corrido*, of questing European knights-errant became so popular and disseminated among the *indios* such that in the 1910s, Dean Fansler called them indicative of the "mental pabulum of the ordinary native" (203). The *corrido*s portray the ways in which the *indios* conceived of the workings of power, leadership and authority. One could almost say that the Philippine metrical romance was an "Occidentalized" vision of the European world from which not only the majority of original plots were derived, but more importantly a form in which colonial or imperial power manifested, appeared or presented itself to the natives. Yet power, particularly hegemonic power is no simple coercion from above. The *awit* or *corrido* have been seen as either markers of hispanization of the Philippines or of an enduring folk tradition upon which the nationalist movement cast its shadow. They have been read as didactic stories that portray the genteel and conservative orientation of "traditional" Philippine culture and society amidst the changes caused by Americanization, as well as the source of visions of moral virtue that inspired radical movements that sought social transformation and justice (see Ileto). One of the things this juxtaposition of Eugenio and Hornedo suggests is the difficulty in assuming folkways or even populism necessarily leads to radicalism or is always progressive. The other is how the *corridos* might provide a formal resolution to real social contradictions that contain what Raymond Williams calls the vestigial and the emergent, or exhibit the utopic impulses and drives that Jameson discusses as the political unconscious of narratives as socially symbolic acts.

How do texts that translate the world of Spanish aristocracy gain such appeal and importance to the *indios* of *Las Islas Filipinas*? (see Leonard). How did they function in this milieu? In discussions of the world of the *moro-moro* or *komedya*, scholars like Doreen Fernandez, Nicanor Tiongson, and Resil Mojares argue that on the one hand they were clearly textual means for Christianization and conversion, in other words ideological technologies of colonial rule, but at the same time the staging of these dramas during fiestas constituted an almost ritualized performative text of community relations, with all the complexities such a social text implies. As such, they are simultaneously conservative in maintaining the status quo of the social structures of imperial rule, as well as proto-public spheres where intersubjective relations are negotiated and actualized.[15] The themes of morality, virtue and order within these exemplary texts provide terms to evaluate good and bad colonial governance. As exempla of propriety, these texts also provided the

indios with images that came to constitute part of their own technologies of the self (see Fernandez). I suggest that it is partly against this vision of Europe as a source of status, propriety and power that a form of colonial mimicry of hispanicity (or semi-hispanization, as Phelan has argued) came to be circulated among the *indios* and the social field was mapped among them.

Access to this power and authority required the translational skills of a literate elite or the intervention of a class of municipal elites of the resettled pueblos called the *principalía*. They derived their authority from the colonial regime and mediated between the Spanish government and clergy on the one hand, and the *indios* on the other. They aspired to the "dons' and "doñas" of the *corrido*, and whose archaic and foreign ethos was adapted to and clothed their own world. In their translational mediation between the people and the sources of colonial authority, they accessed what Vince Rafael calls the "promise of the foreign"—*translatio* Philippine style (see also Raphael's *Contracting*).[16] While the romances display the erudition of a literate bilingual class to a presumably less literate audience, they exhibit a *translatio studii* without the abrogation of authority of a *translatio imperii*. Instead, the romances generally cobble together authority that seemingly derives from "elsewhere" (either the Virgin or the audience) and attempt to proximate this power.[17] They articulate themselves then to power structures and relations of colonial society. The colonial regime's social field, its concerns and anxieties are in this manner imprinted in the romances.

These texts and their performance may be read as manifesting techniques of power and containing technologies of the self, both of the rulers and the ruled. They positioned subjects in a specific network that articulated social relations. Despite the fact that the romances' settings are invariably anachronistic visions of Europe which are disseminated as representations of the contemporary state of affairs, they gain their impact within the colony in positing the source of power and authority in the colonial period as distant (if not downright transcendent), vertically integrated and religiously motivated, and thereby requiring intermediaries. The intermediary position was occupied by bilingual *ladinos*[18] and *principalía*, at least until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Philippine metrical romance emerging out of the resettled pueblos thus has a relationship similar to what Angel Rama calls the "lettered city" of Latin America, where "all aspired to be *hidalgos*—minor nobility with the title *don* attached to their names—disdaining manual labor and lording it over their slaves and over the indigenous inhabitants who had been entrusted to them by the crown" (11). In the case of the Philippine *principalía*, they were themselves *indios* (by the late eighteenth century, increasingly Chinese mestizos) lording it over other *indios*. They were the proponents of the *maginoo* ethos. Throughout the late

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the period of the *awit* and *corrido*'s flowering, the position of this class as an administrative category was slowly being eroded as the Spanish regime had to govern the colony directly after the loss of Mexico, and began to increase the secular or civilian state's more direct and intensive regulation of the population.[19]

As late as the second half of the nineteenth century, according to the Comisión Central and Exposición General de Las Islas Filipinas, authors of the *Memoria Complementaria de la Seccion 2*, 1887, the *indios* had no access to any other representations or knowledge of Europe, except through these texts. Thus the *indios*, according to them, have no sense of the history and of the progress of modernity in Europe. The *memoria* argues that the *indios* particularly those who lived along the edges of colonial control and the forests, were unexposed to modern history, did not understand transformations in political sovereignty and maintained an anachronistic notion of kingship and politics. The memoria argues that the *indios* in general have no sense of modern politics or of political parties, of citizenship and political representation, and by implication have no concept of liberal sovereignty—it goes without saying that these authors in 1887 argue that the *indios* should not be given that which they do not understand (338). A similar deferral of recognition happens under the United States after 1898, though this time with Spain and Hispanicity itself a problematic figure from which Filipinos of the Philippines (as opposed to *Las Islas Filipinas*) were to be rescued. Once again, an imperial power argues against recognizing Filipino sovereignty and refuses to grant citizenship to the conquered while presupposing that a modern liberal subjectivity that conjoined sovereignty with citizenship was the only proper one. Once again, the cultural field is not detached from these concerns.

The opinion that the *awit* and *corrido* comprise low or bad literature generally has Western notions of high literature as their comparative criterion. As an extension of this, many critics argued that literature's capacity to mark cultural elevation and education's function to create citizen-subjects required more "realist" fare. The famous contest between the *komedyantes* and the *sarsuelistas* at the turn of the twentieth century that Del Mundo also mentions (69-72), attests to this divide even among vernacular writers. The *awit* and *corrido* do eschew versimilitude, and as Trinidad Pardo de Tavera famously notes as late as the 1920s:

> The *corrido*s are stories in verse about historic events, falsified and fanciful, and love-tragedies full of wonderful events mixed with divine prodigy and diabolical magic—all lengthy, exaggerated, puerile, and absurd in the extreme. No one of the characters is native. All are Turks, Arabs, knights-errant, ambassadors, dukes,

> warriors in armor, provided with magic arms … good Castilians, and bad strangers. (7)

Pardo de Tavera argues that the literature of the *indios*, inherited from Spanish times but still circulated in the early twentieth century under the American regime with the blessings of the Catholic Church, did not have the pedagogical function of creating a "logical mentality" among the people. Instead their pedagogical function was to teach servitude and supplication, and the need for intercessors before a higher power. Such literature, Pardo de Tavera argued, was inimical to the formation of civic virtue in a democratic society that the public education system under American colonial rule ostensibly strove to create and upon which the deferred independence was conditioned.[20] The world of *Adarna* in the LVN film though, as I argue below, skews the older modes of intersubjectivity as supplication.

There are at least two registers to the technologies of the self in the *corrido*. On the one hand, there is the technology of the self as exemplarity: the *corrido* provides commonly recognizable subject-forms of virtuous ideal characters. These virtuous ideals gain cultural and symbolic capital through specific structures of recognizing normativity that are quite conservative. The cultural capital, the power of technologies of the self, depend in part on the social field within which they are deployed and with which they have a reciprocal relationship. Thus, on the other hand, exemplarity requires a certain field and a level of recognition where its opposite can be clearly discerned. The contrasts and reversals, the *peripeteia* and *agnorisis*, in the story create a field of practice and interaction where exemplarity itself emerges. It is not simply that the characters themselves exhibit virtue, but that they do so in their actions and encounters with other characters. The narrative's arrangement, or emplotment, itself places value on these exemplary actions and characters. The dichotomy of good and evil of the melodramatic *corrido* may thus be read as registering the anxieties over threats to the colonial order. Thus a consequence of Pardo de Tavera's "good Castilians and bad strangers" may be taken to mean that the *corridos* figured exemplarity along the colonial lines, that the recognizable structures of what Ileto called the *plaza-cabecera* complex provided the world of the *corrido* an anchor point for order, civilization and salvation. Outside this colonial order lay the wilderness, the land of the tulisan, the world of the bandits and the remontados, or even the land of the Muslims: the world of the "bad strangers" or those who lived away from subjugation beneath the church bells.[21] Paradoxically, these are also the spaces where true and proper leadership is tested and forged. These sites are the location where the foreign, the magical and the supernatural

thrive, the potentially beneficial or harmful forces that need to be tamed, redirected, and used for social and sexual reproduction. One such ambivalent and ambiguous creature is the *Adarna* bird.

Perhaps first published in or around 1860, though probably composed earlier, the *corrido* was definitely published by 1887. Vicente Barrantes' list of *corrido* and *awit* exhibited in the 1887 exposition had Spanish translations of the Tagalog metrical romances, including the *Adarna*.[22] Though the *corrido* is generally known as *Ibong Adarna* or the *Adarna Bird*, it is actually not about the *Adarna* bird itself. The title of the chapbook is *Corrido ng Pinagdaanang Buhay nang Tatlong Principeng, Magcacapatid na Anac nang haring Fernando at nang Reina Valeriana sa Caharian ng Berbania* [*Corrido* of the Traveled/Travailed Life of Three Princes, Sibling Children of King Fernando and Queen Valeriana of the Kingdom of Berbania]. The Barrantes' list translates the typical *pinagdaanang buhay* of the *corrido* titles back to the Spanish as V*ida Tragica* or H*istoria y Vida Tristísima*, or S*ucesos de Pasaron* or V*ida de Llevaron*. The multiple ways in which they have been translated signals an issue of translation.

Pinagdaanan contains within it a notion of passing through, or on a road carrying a burden, to go through an experience. "*Pinagdaanan":* that which is trod upon, passed over or through, and by extension, the journey or road experienced—the way. Written in what could be considered a passive voice, it emphasizes, or foregrounds, the contextual or "situatedness," the difficult path and circumstances, of a life or life in general, *buhay*. A "life" here is seen as a series of events or experiences that are knitted together to create an emplotment. The title does not necessarily emphasize the subjectivity of the three princes as "individuals" or monads, but the string of events, choices, actions and encounters that make up their lives, as well as their relationships within a social field, a social map with a specific genealogy and a locality—as siblings and as children of royalty in Berbania (*Tatlong Principeng Magcacapatid*).

The romance is made up of events, and episodes, each event a "travail" or a task that the hero(es) must pass. It is a quest—first, for a magical bird that shall cure the sick King Fernando; and then for the perfect brides for the three princes: Pedro, Diego and the heroic Juan. The primary issue is the tension and conflicts between the three princes—how they relate to each other, whom they shall marry and who shall inherit the throne(s). Like most Philippine metrical romances then, the *Adarna* is a family drama.[23] It highlights social and sexual reproduction, and the necessary resolution of intra-generational conflicts for the orderly passage of power from one generation to the next. Its episodes, or situations, are tied together through narrative techniques that, on the one hand sutures the narrative;

and, on the other, foregrounds the performative frame of the bard's enunciation or narration. Many of these techniques and conventions are inherited from European sources, but translated into the vernacular to create a particular mode of presentation. Written in monorhyming quatrains of eight (*corrido*) or twelve (*awit*) syllabic lines, the prosody restrictions make repetitions of specific conventional phrases common and even provides a lexicon for descriptions in the romance (see Fernandez for a discussion on this lexicon in the *komedya*).

CHAPBOOK THEMES, ROMANCE CONJOINTURE, AND NARRATIVE SHIFTERS

The stories of the *corrido* often follow conventional narrative trajectories that lead to a happy resolution. They contain flat characters and scenes that are stitched together not necessarily to provide information about a logical or causally arranged plot, but to heighten emotional responses to events and confrontations in a family melodrama that lead to the moral of the story. There is little in the manner of an exploration of the inner world's landscape and experience of characters that we might find in a realist or psychological novel. Character development through exploration of an inner experience then does not seem to be the preoccupation of the *corrido* (except perhaps in a sort of allegorical mode in some *corrido*s). Neither, it seems, is plot used in the sense of the causal logic of the unfolding events. Instead, the *corrido* seems to foreground the virtue of the characters and their exemplary or un-exemplary behavior within particular circumstances and in a specific social field.

Repetitions of tropes, of themes, and of couplets, if not whole stanzas, are not only indications of the secondarily oral nature of the *corrido*, they also stitch the underlying structures of echo and the dynamics of interlacing and variation in the romance's design or *conjointure*. As Kelly explains, "for Chrétien as well as the other romancers, it was the 'right' combination and adroit 'jointing' that brought out the significance of heterogeneous *matieres*" (31). Similar to European romances, the sense of exemplarity in the Tagalog *corrido* emerges out of the arrangement or configuration of the episodes, the themes and the actions or choices of the characters. The manner in which romance stitches together diverse thematic sources and concerns, gives form to a fundamental rather than a literal truth, itself a major theme of the *corrido*. In the final closing sections of the *Adarna*, the bardic narrator seems to declare a curious pedagogical thrust of the *corrido*: humility and "laxity" (*malubay*) of vassals: see stanzas 1031 and 1033. This is, of course, a little odd given

the treatment of *negritos* and various familiars throughout the story. Yet, what is the nature of this humility and laxity, and how does it emerge from the configuration of the *corrido*'s episodes that suggests primarily the tension between truth and appearance? The scenes or episodes are sequenced to evoke emotions, referencing common tropes in social relations and structuring them in mythopoetic or else almost archetypal ways.

The *corrido* deploys folkloric themes (such as the bird maidens) and "conjoints" them to Christian imagery. The very opening of the *corrido*, following convention, supplicates the Virgin Mary. Prince Juan's journey is described as a *penitencia*[24] and he is aided at various points by Christ-like figures. The first hermit Prince Juan meets in his search for the Kingdom de los Cristales gives Juan bread (that *looks* moldy but *tastes* fresh), echoing but reversing the first encounter before Mount Tabor, as well as alluding to the Eucharist and to the sensorial theme of appearance or accidents as opposed to essence or substance. The episodes in the *corrido* are primarily stitched together sequentially,[25] but with slight or incremental variations, or else reversals. For example, the brothers must climb up Mount Tabor and are seduced by the sight of the bejeweled Piedras Platas, the tree where the *Adarna* roosts; but Juan must not be fooled by the beauty of the tree, instead he must look down to the hermit's hut for hospitality and aid. The first (and most evil) brother does not even get to see the *Adarna*. He sleeps at the foot of the magical tree because of exhaustion. The second brother is seduced by the *Adarna*'s song and gets turned to stone along with his sleeping brother. Juan famously resists the spell and succeeds in capturing the bird. As each brother takes a step closer to the bird, the *corrido* creates an effect of incremental intensification as the readers approach a goal that is not quite suspense, in the sense of a plot question's solution. Instead, these variations create a layering that distinguishes each character's position in relation to the other, and to their distance from exemplarity and sanctity.

The opposition of sleep and awareness, of appearance and truth, is perhaps the most famous of *Adarna*'s motifs. The *pharmakon* of the story, the bird, is both truth-teller and enchanted with the capacity for death, or at least petrification. The hermit, with whom he had shared his last bread, informs Don Juan that the *Adarna* can only be captured by one who stays awake. His brothers, having already succumbed to fatigue and the seduction of the *Adarna*'s voice, have been turned to stone. Juan must cut himself and squeeze lime into his wounds if he is to be sufficiently awake to avoid the bird's droppings which can turn him to stone like his brothers. This scene can be understood as containing a very Christian allegory about the mortification of the flesh, or as a certain folk asceticism that might lead to power and charisma; but it can also be interpreted as an anti-colonial allegory. In such

an anti-colonial reading, the *corrido* insists on staying true to one's objective and desires to alleviate the suffering and sickness of the bodily and earthy, of brute Calibanesque material reality, rather than the seduction of colonial or imperial glamour. It conjoins the realms of necessity and freedom beyond 'mere' appearances. Glamour in the *Adarna* divides brotherly love over objects of desire (fame, sexual love objects and the throne), and separates those who ought to have *kapatiran*, a kind of fraternity or even sodality.[26]

In this view, the beautiful bird is the illusory promise of the colonial order and an aesthetic that anaesthetizes us to structures of oppression and separation, of alienation and anomie—a brilliance that may only be mind-numbing and sleep inducing, a *Schein*. The light of freedom and truth is given then only to those who suffer pain, to those on whose bodies is cut and on whose wounds, moreover, drops of lime keeps awake the mark of awareness of the world around them. To them, the seduction of appearance, of the colors of the tree and the bird's feathers, the seduction of the bird's song, cannot lull them to sleep. Only to those who remain awake and vigilant, in other words, will the bird be given, and and can turn the bird of slumber into the bird of healing truth-song. Here the body's pain protects from the numbing illusions of the eye and the ear and keeps Juan alert and focused. only to them and in their presence will the bird be beautiful, sing and speak the *liwanag* of truth. Only those who are not distracted by appearance are not turned to stone[27] and can turn the bird of slumber into the bird of healing truth-song. Here the body's pain protects from the numbing illusions of the eye and the ear and keeps Juan alert and focused.

However, having succeeded in capturing the bird, the two older brothers betray Don Juan, steal the bird and leave him for dead. Arriving at the castle, the brothers are surprised that the bird refuses to sing since the one who truly caught it is absent. Its beautiful feathers are shed, leaving a bird with warts. Juan prays to the Virgin and is rescued by an old man. He returns to the palace and is not recognized by his father until the bird finally sings. The song of the bird that cures the king is none other than a truthful narration of Don Juan's own adventures to capture it and his fraternal betrayal (sung in seven narrative units and accompanied by seven changes in feathers).

The King's sickness was caused by a dream of Don Juan, his most favored child (10-1), being betrayed by two evil men and left for dead in a well (22-3). The dream is a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, as Juan's betrayal by his brothers happened twice. First, it occurred when they set off on the quest to cure the king and the brothers stole the bird from Juan; and second, because Pedro wishes to steal the Princessa Leonora for himself (373-89). It is this second betrayal (389) that the narrator tells us was the King's dream and

that set the whole quest into motion. In the plotline of Don Juan, Doña Leonora and Doña Maria's love triangle that occupies most of the *corrido*, it is the *Adarna* bird that wakes Juan up and informs him about the princesses in Reino de los Cristales and introduces the motif of infidelity in love (422-32). The bird's song narrating Doña Maria's beauty and seducing Juan actually makes him forget his feelings for Princessa Leonora (432), who in turn is postponing her wedding to Pedro and is waiting hopefully for Juan's return to Berbania.

Comprising more than half of the *corrido*, starting from stanza 423 when the *Adarna* returns to awaken Don Juan from his rest after being cured of Mount Armenia's magical wolf and baptized by Doña Leonora, Don Juan sets out to search for Doña Maria, dove princess of the Kingdom de los Cristales. The *Adarna* bird tells him of the princess and makes him forget Doña Leonora to whom he had previously declared his love. As part of the story's complication, he also initially declared his love to Doña Juana, Doña Leonora's sister. In order to marry Doña Maria, suitors must pass King Salermo's tests. Those who have failed, echoing the earlier episode, have been turned to stone. With Doña Maria's help, Don Juan passes all of King Salermo's tests. Two of the tests involve familiars: members of the family, the household, or magical familiars. Some of the familiars in the story are animals. Others are *negritos* and even an industrious *inchic* who harvested the wheat and baked the overnight bread that was one of Salermo's tests (stanza 615). When Salermo decided to send Juan to Inglaterra bearing the letter of his own execution orders, Doña Maria decided to elope with him. Salermo cursed his daughter in the name of God (843) so that Juan would forget her and marry another.

When they returned to Berbania, Juan left Maria in order to prepare a proper welcome for her. Significantly, this is described as *sa labas nang villa* (848) or *sa villa't, labas nang bayan* (855). Juan did indeed forget Maria and decided to marry Leonora who had been waiting for him all this time. Doña Maria came to the wedding in the guise of an empress and impressed the whole court. The wedding was stopped on account of her spectacular arrival and she offered to show a *laró* for the couple (892). Using her magic ring, Maria called for a flask within which was a *negrito* and a *negrita*. They danced, then narrated the story of Juan and Maria. Each time the *negrita* asked the *negrito* if he remembered Doña Maria and the *negrito* denied it, she whipped him. It is however Juan who *feels* the whip's sting.

This displacement of the source of Juan's pain onto a *negrito*, a "familiar" (whose meaning ranges between being a family member, or a household servant to a magical familiar), provides a layering of the structures of recognition and exemplarity. There is a clear hierarchy that paradigmatically links Maria to her familiars and her familiars to Juan.

The miniature familiars within the flask narrate events that happened to the royals who watch them. It creates a hierarchical structure with royals above and with familiars below. The sphere of the familiar (and their magical productive capacities, from the industrious *inchic* to the "upland" *negritos*) then is the base level upon which the *corrido*'s return to proper sexual and social reproduction depends. Even the supernatural is made "familiar" in the senses above by figuring it as having, and leading to, a royal hierarchy with a racialized organization. In this sense, the hermits, and the animals, like the unicorn, the eagle and the *Adarna* bird itself, are "familiar" helpers of the narrative arc that culminates in heterosexual social reproduction within the colonial order of things. After Juan finally recognized Maria, the problem of Leonora needs to be resolved. The bishop and the king first decided that Doña Leonora had the prior claim on Don Juan and that he must marry her, despite Juan's recollection of Maria and his professed preference for her. Only Maria's superior magical powers and her threat to flood Berbania, made the king change his mind and made Doña Leonora amenable to marrying the redeemed Don Pedro.

Reading the incorporation of these women and their familiars as a signal of an anxiety over their domestication, I would like to suggest, is to read the *corrido* somewhat against its narrative grain for traces of its political unconscious, and to read in the contours of its form—a *conjointure* that combines Christian, colonial and indigenous material—provisions for a recognizable place in a social mapping that partly accounts for the *corrido*'s regulatory power and appeal.

On the one hand, the magical women from outside the colonial order, *sa labas ng bayan o villa*, from under the earth and from the sky, compete in the *corrido* for the love and hand in marriage of the exemplary *maginoo*. They are in this way incorporated into the colonial order. On the other hand, the injunction at the end to emulate Juan and Maria, the rulers who are "lax with their vassals" (*mag utos pa ay malubay /sa mañga vasallong tanan* stanza 1031) and who are humble (*ang loob na cababaan /capatid nang capalaran* 1033) makes sense if we consider that Doña Maria's magic is beyond the bishop and the king's decision-making powers. Her white magic is shown to be superior to her father's, the colonial state and the church. Only her love for Juan ties her, the supernatural figure prophesied by the truth-telling *Adarna* and re-enacted by truth dancing *Negritos*, to social reproduction and safe guards the continuity of royal power. Humility before power is advised. This power in turn desires proper recognition. It is her desire for Juan and his recognition that ends the *corrido*. Her gaining this recognition makes the couple an example of gentle rulers. At the same time, the desire for *kapatiran*, for fraternity, is met by Juan's forgiveness of his brothers, Leonora's agreement to marry Pedro and by the dividing of the thrones. Pedro

becomes king of Berbania and Juan king of the kingdom in the sky.

Deceptive appearances and forgetting, truth-telling, destiny and dreaming, the colonial and the supernatural, the royal and the familiar, recognition and reversals, are connected through narrative unfolding. The conjoining of the episodes and the narrative occurs in fact through a conceit that mimics the bardic performance in the chapbook texts. The *corrido* do not contain quotation marks that specify speech versus description. A reader must follow clues in the text to discover whether the stanza or line is spoken by a character, or is addressed directly to the audience by the narrator. Occasionally only contextual clues are given to designate when a speech by a character ends and when the narrator resumes in a non-mimetic manner.[28] What is clear and almost always marked are the shifts in scenes or focal point of the narrative episode. *Corrido*s stitch narrative episodes together by shifting scenes, as if evoking or invoking them to the listener/reader's mind in the present, what supposedly had happened in the past through the bardic persona. The foregrounding of the narrator's voice, of his or her position in suturing the narrative, is most evident in moments when the story shifts in location or scene. We do not have an omniscient narrator in the manner of realist fiction. Here the "ako" of the narrator is declared and the address is directed at the readers (or as the *corrido* calls them, *nalilimping auditorio* 4) that reminds us of the narrative's performative frame as miming the bard's presence. This technique sutures us to the narrative's conceit of linear temporal unfolding.[29]

The convention in shifting a reader's orientation or attention, a kind of "cut" in film, or "gutter" in comics, is the narrator's spatialization of the narrative—the conceit that it is a scene that is to be left behind as we are directed to another one. In general the mode of narration attunes us back to what the characters are doing, as if spatializing a scene is only pertinent if connected to events happening to a character or to an encounter between them. In this way, the social field of the *pinagdaanan buhay* is stylistically foregrounded. It is in these moments that the narrator/bard exposes himself to his audience and reflexively draws them into the narrative. Here are some examples from the *Adarna*:

> Marali,t, salit naman / At di co na paghabaan, / Ay naguing apat na buan / Paglacad niya sa parang. (106)
>
> Nguni aquin munang lisan / Ang pag-alis ni don Juan, / At ang aquing ipagsaysay / Ang hari niyang magulang. (272) Ito,i, aquing pabayaan / Nang paglalacád sa párang, / Ang aquing ipagsasaysay / Ang príncipeng si don Juan. (279)

Ipagparito co muna / Magcapataid na dalauá, / Ang paghanap sabhin pa / Cay don Juang bunsó nilá. (282)

Atin munang pabayaan / Ang paglalacad sa párang, / At ang aquing ipagsaysay / Ang hari nilang magulang. (388)

Ito,i, lisanin cong agad / Na sa haring napañgarap, / At ang aquing ipahayag / Ang apat na naglalacad. (390)

Aquing ipagbalic naman / Sa lobong pinacaualán, / Nang maquita si don Juan / Mañga lamóg ang catauan. (407)

Aquing lisanin na muna / Yaong paglalacád niya / At ang aquing ipagbadyá / Ang princesang si Leonora. (434)

Ito,i, itiguil co muna / Pananaghoy nang princesa, / At ang aquing ipagbadyá / Si don Juan de Berbania. (438)

The last two examples above, between stanza 434 and stanza 438, is a short episode discussing the plaints of Doña Leonora and is inserted into the story of Don Juan's search for the Reino de los Cristal of King Salermo and for his daughter Doña Maria's hand. The short episode depicting Leonora crying and calling Juan's ghost to her, intercuts Juan's narrative here to set the stage for Juan's romantic dilemma at the end. The common trope in *corrido* "editing" is leaving behind, returning or calling to mind, or to the imagination, an episode of the narrative. The rhetorical devices in such shifts as these include: claiming to no longer let the narration meander (temporal); leaving a scene of a specific act or actor to move to another actor (actal); calling to mind (evoking); or leaving behind a particular scene (spatial). The locus of the shift varies from the time of the narration, the characters, and the site of the event or experience.

Before and after such shifters, the narration takes on either the speech acts of characters or description of events. In an actual performance, the bard's *"ako"* would be quite clear, placing us in the position of narratee's, mediating our relationship to the narration through both the singer's social function in the performance event of the song itself. In each case of scene shifting, the narrator's *"ako"* emerges, drawing us along and allowing us to take on the mimetic voice of the bard's *badyá* ourselves as if we were reading

it out loud to our own "internal" listeners. I would like to suggest that in our act of reading and aided by the verse prosody's rhythm and minimal punctuation, we fluctuate between taking on the narrator's and the narratee's positions. This oscillation between being the narratee's, listening to a narrative given to us by the bard, and being the narrator ourselves provides differing subject positions in the actual unfolding of narration. But this oscillation sutures us into the narrative's unfolding and enmeshes us in the field of exemplarity of the *corrido*'s *conjointure.*

Narrative texts, according to Paul Ricoeur, allow us to organize temporal experience and create stories of seemingly coherent subjectivity in a necessarily social field. The temporality of a text's recitation or performance is a "public" time of gathering the community, where speakers and audiences interact with one another and constitute each other. Such a constitution may be seen as happening along at least two registers: the register of the narrative as a performance event, and the register of the narratives' plot themselves. The quest narrative is, for Ricouer, the pre-eminent genre of intervention and action. As Ricouer argues:

> these narratives in fact, represent a person acting, who orients him—or herself in circumstances he or she has not created, and who produces consequences he or she has not intended. This is indeed the time of the "now that…," wherein a person is both abandoned and responsible at the same time. The dialectical character of this "now that…." appears however, only as it is unfolded narratively in the interplay between being able to act and being bound to the world order. (172)

Poised at the moment of this being able to act and being bound to the world order, characters and readers of quest narratives make manifest the paradox of narrativity as temporality in the narrative's unfolding. Suturing the narratives, the shifts expose moments when we might see Paul Ricouer's point between acting and being bound to a word and world order in the act of reading.

Binding us to a world order through a grammar, similar to filmic intercutting here, sutures the narrative and situates us with regard to the ideological thematics of the *corrido*: the construction of an exemplary ethos for the *maginoo* and the taming of forces outside the colonial regime in the service of social and sexual reproduction of a Spanish colonial order that had the *principalía,* through their association with the clergy, as intermediaries of power during a period of transition in the Philippine modes of production and state-society relations. The *corrido* registers the anxiety of this class while providing the popular classes

with images of resolutions for the social contradictions of this transition. I propose that the temporal constitution of the subject through structures of recognition in narrativity is a kind of grammar to the ideological syntax and semantics of what Neferti Tadiar calls our "fantasy production" and that binds us to a specific historical world order. The oscillation between an authority that is Divine or transcendent to the networks of relations and an authority that is immanent from the performance of the *corrido*'s narration, that supposedly derives from its audience's approval, is a recognition of the limits of authorial power that literacy often attempts to mitigate and master. Semi—or secondarily oral—*corrido* chapbook that sutures the reader to the narrative through miming the bardic mediating social function, that attempts to stabilize meaning through an avowed moral, provide a slightly different grammar of recognition than film.

FILM AND THE LINGUA FRANCA

Film in the Philippines was first introduced in the last years of the Spanish regime, mostly imports from Europe (Deocampo). The new colonial masters brought with them new colonial conditions and technologies, including experiments in cinematic narrative style (Del Mundo 58-9). Americans conducted most of the early film production in the islands, including films made by the Edison Manufacturing Company and the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company. It was in the 1920s that Filipinos began making films and developed a studio system in the 1930s. Del Mundo argues that Tagalog film resisted the onslaught of American film that dominated this early film market by adapting vernacular theatrical traditions to film. The first film by Filipinos in 1919 was *Dalagang Bukid*, a silent feature that had the original *sarsuela* performers sing their parts during the show. By the time LVN studios produced *Ibong Adarna* in 1941, the Philippines was a commonwealth of the United States and looking towards independence.

Ibong Adarna, adapted and directed by Vicente Salumbides with technical supervision by Manuel Conde, was the third year anniversary offering of LVN studios in 1941. By this time, the title no longer declares the moral of *kapatiran*, humility and laxity. Instead, the focus is on the marvelous bird and the marvels of film. While the *corrido* chapbook focuses on the ethos of the *maginoo* and the problem of appearances, the film celebrates the technological magic of filmic special effects. Like other Mila Del Sol LVN films such as *Giliw Ko* (1939) with Fernando Poe Sr., or *Sarung Banggi* (1947) with Rogelio de la Rosa and Rosa Rosal, *Ibong Adarna* foregrounds the production process of the magic of film and its capacity to generate spectacle (and the studio system's stars). The first Tagalog

film with colorized sequences, it is the spectacle and the mystery of producing visual illusions—and Philippine LVN's capacity to produce them—that *Adarna* marks. As part of this spectacle, the chapbook's Occidentalism changes into a filmic Orientalism. Whereas the *corrido* was generally set in Europe and mediated an apprehension of Spanish colonial authority and power (even if the kingdom is called "Berbania"), the film is set in some vision of Arabia or an Islamic country that provides an exotic milieu much like the *Thief of Baghdad* (both the 1924 and 1940 versions) with which it has similarities. The film also has musical scenes between the primary characters and large scale dance numbers filmed in the manner of Hollywood musicals (or as del Mundo puts it, "Busby Berkeley-inspired dance"). Marking a colonial legacy, the film's protagonists are all *mestizos* stars while all those who belong to the lower classes, or are the "familiars" and ogres, are dark figures.[30]

The film contained as many different kinds of special effects that LVN could technologically master at the time: the large outdoor scenes containing vistas of kingdoms from the sky, painted landscapes on glass shots; the fight between the giant and Don Juan and the dance of the miniature *negritos* (clearly in black face and dancing to non-*Negrito* music) towards the end showing discrepancy in size within one shot and frame; the eagle's claws carrying Juan and Diego while the background moved or Doña Maria standing in the foreground while a shot of the mountain in the background moves to a close-up and gives the illusion of movement; the "time lapse" photography of Pedro and Diego turning to stone or of the mountain flattening and the wheat growing overnight; the changes in clothes of Doña Maria using a superimposition while a witness stands within the same frame in order to provide continuity; and of course the hand-colorized *Adarna* bird whose feathers change color with each song. These special effects are meant to amaze and hold the audience's attention, to play tricks on perception and compel a response from the film's viewers or addressees that marvel at film's capacity for illusion.

The film's plot generally follows the *corrido*'s, but without the careful incremental accretion, and play with destiny and temporality of the original's *conjointure*. The spoken lines in the film are in prose that aims towards everyday speech as opposed to the formal cadence of the *corrido*'s verse prosody. The many Christian allusions of the *corrido* are decreased or excised from the filmic version. Instead of invoking the Virgin at the beginning as in the *corrido*, we have as the opening credits, an image of a storybook that begins with a "Once upon a time" [Noong unang panahon]. Instead of a bishop who can judge the suit for recognition and grievance of Maria and Leonora, we have a court minister. In the *corrido*, the content of the king's self-fulfilling dream (Juan's betrayal) is divulged, while in the film it is simply mentioned as a "magical dream" that has caused

his illness. Instead of the bird informing Juan of the princess in the sky, it is a disembodied voice that speaks like the hermit. While the voice informs Juan that hardship is necessary to get to Reino de los Cristales, in fact the princes are brought to Salermo's kingdom immediately by the bird through an act of magic by the disembodied voice. The three princes set out for the bird at the same time and all of them meet the hermit in order to show the cruelty of the other princes.[31]

The film attempts to tighten the causality of emplotment and diminish the impulse to domesticate a recalcitrant feminine supernatural that Doña Maria portrayed in the *corrido* version. Instead of two princesses from beneath the earth, there is only one and instead of one princess from Cristales, now there are two. Don Diego, the second prince, played a relatively small narrative function in the *corrido* aside from a slightly less evil brother than Pedro. In the film however, Don Diego now accompanies Don Juan to the Kingdom de los Cristales and marries Doña Isabel, sister of Doña Maria, rather than Doña Juana, sister of Doña Leonora from beneath the earth as he does in the *corrido*. In the *corrido*, Doña Leonora is not possessed of magic or familiars. It is Diego who rescues Juan from the well. The fear in the film is that Don Juan's profession of love for Doña Maria is caused only by Doña Maria's magic. It is Don Diego in the film that confirms Doña Maria's claim to Don Juan's love to be true, which apparently in the world of LVN has more purchase than prior promises and contracts. It is Don Diego who suggests the tri-marriage that ends the film and who inherits the throne of Berbania, and not Don Pedro as in the *corrido*. In the film, heaven, earth and underworld are divided clearly among the princes and their wives: Juan in Cristales, Diego in Berbania and Pedro under the earth. These changes in the plot make the story more logical and by-pass the need for Doña Maria to threaten the people of Berbania, and for the king to admit defeat before her magic. Doña Maria can then be most clearly and unambiguously an example of womanly strength and virtue. In this way, the film version attempts to flatten and resolve the contradictions that the *corrido* contains. Yet the film, like the *corrido*, also contains an excess beyond this regulatory capacity of narrative structure.

The *corrido* thematizes appearances and truth, as well as obligations for and of the *principalía*, while the film version circulates these questions to an anonymous mass audience through the power of the cinematic image that constitutively plays with appearances and illusion. The film enraptures us with the magic of the camera's special effects and sutures us to the narrative through the gaze and the use of images available as common reference points in a sort of widely disseminated and studio mediated *lingua franca*. The *lingua franca* is a concept of an ideal communicative medium of exchange. James

Siegel argues that in Indonesia, the emergence of a *lingua franca* based upon low or market Malay, particularly in commercial presses and literary publications, meant there was a medium of communication that was by definition egalitarian and free.[32] It did not belong to anybody but arose out of interaction and encounters, particularly in the marketplace (rather than being associated with the Javanese courts). It allowed, and to a certain extent required, people to place themselves in the position of another regardless of nationality as they groped for understanding. The "I" of the *lingua franca* was a position available to anyone, and in fact encouraged acts of "overhearing" or listening in on communication that was not meant for "certain" people, particularly the natives. What this meant, Siegel argues, is that in the Dutch East Indies colonial context where stable identities are necessary for colonial discipline, the leveling force of the *lingua franca,* its capacity for heteroglossia, was seen as a threat by colonial authorities. In this case, the address' dissemination exceeded the capacity of the addressor to regulate recognition. Consequently, Dutch colonial authorities that used Malay as a *lingua franca* needed to police and regulate the economy of its promise and its circulatory power.

According to Siegel, the colonial language and education policies that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Dutch East Indies responded to the inherently politically dangerous potential of the *lingua franca* that could and did destabilize colonial rule. "The lingua franca cannot make anything legitimate. Rather, it forges a connection to authority and demonstrates its own force" (67). Citing incidents when laws that strove to maintain clear and transparent identities for the colonial regime's disciplinary purposes were broken in literature, photography and film, Siegel points out that

> anyone stopped for breaking the law of disguise could reflect that he did indeed have a force he never suspected himself of possessing. … after the fact he sees he has a force of communication that is outside the law and that unwittingly reaches it. (93)

The capacity to communicate, Siegel argues, is linked to a power of action, to a kind of agency that is dispersed in a communicative field. The emergence of various modern media technologies brings with it then an increased awareness of the capacity to transgress against, even as it facilitates, the more intense governmental intrusions into technologies of the self. The power of communication, believed to have belonged to the Dutch colonial powers, Siegel argues, now becomes available in a new way to the natives. However, the need to provide legitimacy and recognition still persisted. Siegel argues that the institution that finally answered this need in Indonesia was the nationalist movement and then the

nationalized state. In the end, according to Siegel, the state provided recognition and thereby ensured that the "legislating body" maintained the same structural organization and relationship with the nation even after the upheaval of the revolution.

In contrast to the chapbook, the emphasis on spectacle and special effects, the movement of camera angles and editing, suggests that the spectators in the *Adarna* potentially experience what Eva-Lotta Hedman, following James Seigel, calls a "visualized *lingua franca*" that partially explains the popular appeal of Philippine Cinema.[33] In this view, watching visual images created for mass consumption provided a new structure of communicative relation that did not exist before. For Hedman, a visualized *lingua franca* is "unburdened by tradition, hierarchy, and easily accessible to a wide spectrum of the population," and that revealed to an audience "new structural formations of the subject" (5). While the literary tale can articulate an avowed pedagogical claim, in his discussion of the film *Nyai* Dasima, Siegel argues that the film's

> claim is not the moral value of the story, but that the perfection and the clarity of the film hold attention. Thus, the identifications we have described are allowed to take place. The audiences of the movie seem to have moved behind the intentions of the story to be gripped instead by the process of production. (75)

While swept up into the process of producing these visions, the technological tricks needed to make these visions are meant to be a mystery. The audience's attention is gripped by the process of producing marvelous visions and exposed to their finitude in the shadowy images. Hiding the technological mediation that could stand as a barrier to the affective power of the images however also means that the audience perceives that there is even the possibility that, as Siegel suggests, "all characters are equitable with any member of the audience" (75). Enamored with the special effects, the audience does not necessarily ask about the meaning of the images in terms of the psychological motivations of the characters, nor in terms of the complex social map diegetically presented to them that attempts to regulate, order, and organize this chain of subject positions. Siegel argues that the cinematic function "sweeps up viewers, enabling them to think "I" in the form of another and another and another" (74) in a serialized syntagmatic chain.

In Siegel's terms, the film's actors gaze at the audience incapable of receiving a response from the audience, and the audience gaze at the actors attempting to apprehend the message behind the opaque images. The cinematic gaze of course is actually heavily structured, as I will argue below, but the images haunt because they address the viewers as

"you" and expose something of their terrible finitude. In a way, positioned and addressed as a "you," hailed and interpellated by the film, the audience as a community of viewers needs to respond. Hedman speculates that cinematic images demanded recognition and provided Tagalog audiences with the desire for recognition themselves, a recognition that they could not truly receive from the films, even as the films set this desire in motion and capitalized on it. She argues that they saw "there was a message in the first place, a message in circulation beyond the purview of tradition, hierarchy, and authority as inscribed in the dominant culture" (17). The message was not however, simply a message of content or of a moral from a dominant culture that was visibly comprehended (though that too). She suggests that the message apprehended in Tagalog film was a power of communication. The film version of the *corrido* opens up the possibility of the audience's (mis)identification, and their desire for proper and authentic recognition from ghostly images. Hedman suggests that the capacity of the visualized *lingua franca* to set loose communicative power, to displace authority through opaque images and inhabiting, possessing or haunting the audience, generates the desire for a response and recognition which is displaced upon celebrity cults. Celebrities metonymically gain the communicative power that the film engenders. Their populist aura emerges from the intimacy felt with their imagistic power.[34]

In the scene where Doña Maria has been forgotten by Don Juan, she stages a drama with the help of her *negrito* familiars. The *mise-en-scene* is quite static with the stage and the miniature *negritos* at the center and the royals arranged in decreasing rank. Only the *pusong* or Chaplinesque character (who does not exist in the *corrido* but is a common enough *komedya* character) breaks with this arrangement. In the scene when the *negrita* whips the *negrito* each time he claims that he does not recognize or remember Doña Maria and when Don Juan feels the pain of the whip in his body, we generally see the *negrita*'s arm rise and the whip descend, but we don't see it connect. When we do see the whip connect a couple of times, there is no close-up reaction shot of the *negrito* feeling the pain. Instead the camera cuts to a shot of either Doña Maria or else we see the pain on Juan's face. This is a technique that the film employed in the earlier scene where Juan wounds himself during the *Adarna*'s song: the editing cut taking the place of our watching as he cuts himself. As the camera moves from character to character gaze, the thematic content of recognition, body's pain and identification gains an additional function. However, what is important to notice is that the camera's angle is never from the position of the black-faced *negritos*. Even when Doña Maria addresses the *negritos* directly, what could have been a shot-reverse-shot is simply a direct head shot of the princess rather than from the angle of the miniature *negritos*.

This scene leads to the scene of judgment. The film, like the *corrido*, does not speak in terms of class struggle. Instead the themes of an ethos of the *maginoo* as honor and love is presented as a question of justice. The final scene of the film is a scene of judgment that, unlike the *corrido*, depends on a witness' testimony. The presence of witnesses in the film for continuity purposes (i.e., those whose reactions can signal that a marvel has occurred) and even the testimony of Diego himself, point to a shift in understanding versimilitude and virtue in the film. The necessity for verifiable fact, like the syntagmatic chain of subject positions in the camera's work, also empowers witnesses as experiential authorities rather than simply by virtue of their position. The access Diego has to the court is because he is the prince, but the King recognizes Diego's testimony because he speaks as a witness, not necessarily because he is the prince. Thus being a witness is on the one hand enough to validate testimony, on the other hand it requires access in order to be recognized: it must occur in the presence of a sovereign body.[35]

While the bardic performance might provide a loop or return gaze from the singer, or the chapbook ends with the affirmation of the reader's capacity to correct or fill the gaps of the text (*Cun sa letra ay sumala /Capupunán ay cayo na* 1034), the film releases the desire for recognition but does not provide a sufficient response to this desire. The audience can suture themselves to illusory identifications, and take on the ideological content of the camera's positioning and the narrative arc. We can occupy the positions of Maria and Juan in a way we could not in the chapbook's narration. While the scene shifts in the *corrido* discussed above foregrounded the performative frame of the bard's mediation of the story, the editing and the camera work of the film attempt to hide its mediation in the interest of the spectacle and the marvelous. In Hedman's view, the desire for recognition seeks a legitimate authority to take the place of the bardic voice.

The ideological content given by the camera and the narrative arc are insufficient to the affective capture of attention. The serialization of subjectivity in the film haunts the audience and demands a response and a politics *outside* of the film. The capacity of the camera to catalyze this desire is belied by the narrative's conventionality and the racial dynamics of the *negritos* and the primarily *mestizo* actors and actresses who become reified objects of desire to our gaze. The narrative closure, and the film's capacity to yoke affectively the structure of recognition elicited by cinema, frustrates what might be considered film's liberatory desubjectification. Suturing into the film's narrative to provide an apparently coherent subject position is an illusion, but a compelling one and is clearly part of its appeal. Similar to the *corrido*'s narrative techniques that provide spaces to constitute social fields, film also activates subject formation through a desired

identification. Thus even though film perhaps promises the recognition of a visualized *lingua franca* and releases a potentially transformative desire for recognition, the foreclosure by the narrative that reinstates conservative structures (both in the *corrido* and in the film) suggests something about what Hedman reminds us: "of the decidedly conservative limitations of populism itself as political project and vision" (23).

The capacity to imagine the "I" in a syntagmatic serialized chain rather than a paradigmatic hierarchized network of narrator and narratee mediated by the bard as in the *corrido*, functions in Philippine film, it seems, to provide on the one hand a space of entertainment and wish-fulfillment, but also on the other a desire that this kind of recognition be given in real life—that the State be responsive to the whippings of *negritos* on the screen and remember their obligations of justice to the people. What Philippine scene of sovereignty or collective body such recognition can or ought to occur remains to be explored. Here I would like to suggest the need for art to reminds us of the "sakit ng bansa" and the situations that still require bodily pain. In this sense, Haring Fernando's dream of betrayal and fratricide, and the message of the *Adarna*'s song haunt us still.

NOTES

1 Northrop Frye, in *The Secular Scripture*, suggests that aristocratic romances were kidnapped by the ascendant bourgeoisie. He sketches the relationship between a declining aristocratic, ascending bourgeois and emerging proletarian desires (see particularly pages 54, 173-80). Jameson's *Political Unconscious* supplements this argument by making Marxism the final (critical) horizon through and for which these utopic desires may be glimpsed, understood and realized. In the Philippines as I hope is clear from the discussion below, the issue of ascendancy and decline of the 'bourgeois class' and its relationship to the romance is slightly different than the one discussed by Frye.

2 Technically an *awit* is a metrical romance with twelve syllables per line while a *corrido* has only eight. Both however use quatrains with mono-rhymes in the Tagalog manner, namely the rhyme is carried by the final vowel sound, regardless of the last consonant. Scholars have tried to define the precise difference between these two terms (one deals with more religious while the other more heroic tales, one is more indigenous and the other taken from the Hispanic *rima perfecta* metrics, one is chanted and the other sung, etc…), but thus far the most convincing generic distinction lies in their prosody. The vast majority of the romances are actually *awits*. For the rest of the paper they will be used interchangeably.

3 Many romances have multiple versions in the same dialect, and cross-over into other dialect groups as well. Damiana Eugenio speculates however that most of the romances originated in the Tagalog region. See her *Awit and Corrido*.

4 For arguments about cultures of capital, modernity and simultaneous multiple temporalities, see Nestor Garcia Canclini and Harry Harootunian.

5 Nick Deocampo argues against this thesis. By foregrounding the Spanish influences in and origins of Philippine cinema rather than its contrapuntal relationship to American film production and techniques, Deocampo sees in early film's continuation of Hispanic colonial influences more adaptation than outright resistance. Deocampo reserves the term resistance to more directly nationalist and anti-colonial material and techniques.

6 The term "secondary orality" comes from Walter Ong, and here denotes oral texts that emerge out of a context of literacy, or an orality that depends upon a world of literacy, print and technology. Most *corrido*s were translations from Spanish chapbooks and themselves allude to a written Christian tradition for sources of legitimacy.

7 See Elena Rivera Mirano's *Ang Mga Tradisyonal na Musikang Pantinig sa Lumang Bauan, Batangas* (NCCA: Manila, 1997) for a discussion of the performance of *awit* and *corrido* in Batangas up to recent times.

8 More work needs to be done in the printing, authorship and circulation of chapbooks and the formation of "publics" in the nineteenth century. See Vince Rafael, *Promise of the Foreign*; see also Smita Lahiri, and Patricia May B. Jurilla.

9 Patrick Flores has gone so far as to call Tagalog films by the oxymoron "cinematic folklore" that points to its being mass mediated and industrial, as well as folkloric in significance, particularly with regard to the practice of the everyday. See Patrick Flores, "The Dissemination of Nora Aunor," in Rolando Tolentino (eds.), *Geopolitics of the Visible*.

10 For a fuller discussion of subject-forms and its relationship to emergent bourgeois public spheres and ideological critique, see Tom Lewis, "Religious Subject-Forms: Nationalism, Literature, and the Consolidation of *Moderantismo* in Spain During the 1840's."

11 Corrine Kratz hypothesizes, for example, that the persistence and persuasive power of female circumcision with active female participation, derives partly in the manner in which the ritual performatively constitutes community and subjectivity through dialogic singing. Here the emergence of a poetic form through performance provides the girl a kind of Heideggerian existential structure to apprehend experience, and consequently a connection to community. Cited and discussed in Berger and Del Negro.

12 The entry also contains representación as a meaning for maginoo, as the maginoo, a title for the *principalía* class, was also an elected official in the Spanish bureaucracy starting from the late eighteenth century. The play on the title and the gap between the true and false representative/acts of representation gains extra figural value, particularly given *Adarna*'s thematic focus on truth and appearance.

13 "An *awit* like *Florante at Laura* … takes the princely, kingly personages seriously. It admits, of course, that there are criminal princes. But their royalty has nothing to do with their crimes, except to magnify their ambit of possible harm. The theme is not the wickedness of power. On the contrary, it extols royal power. It tries to show what marks legitimate power—the power before which people must submit" (75). I disagree with so quick an evaluation of the *awit,* most especially of *Florante at Laura.* Nonetheless, Hornedo seems onto something when he claims that "In their social degradation, *datus* and other members of the ancient ruling classes brought with them the stories of their past … This means that what we call "folk literature" today encompasses the literature of the precolonial ruling classes" (78).

14 See for example how he contrasts the lampooning and carnivalesque power of the *pilandok* or *kancila* folk tales (which he says have the persona of the *taumbayan*) and the somber humorless stories or legends of royalty (78).

15 See Vince Rafael's *The Promise of the Foreign* for a discussion of this tension and dichotomy in the *komedya's* act of translation, its incorporation of foreign words within itself, and its potentially radical trajectories in its communal performance as proto-public spheres.

16 See his *Contracting Colonialism* and his more recent *The Promise of the Foreign*.

17 Some of this power, as I shall discuss below, could very well be the spirit world or the supernatural. See for example Fenella Cannell's *Power and Intimacy in Lowland Christian Philippines* for a discussion of proximity and power.

18 This term denotes translators and helpers of the priests in the Philippine context, in contrast to its usage in Latin America or Spain. Some these Filipinos were probably tri-lingual with Spanish, Latin and an indigenous vernacular as well.

19 For a description of the bureaucratic changes in the late Spanish regime, see Eliodoro Robles, *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*. The significance of the Claveria decree that provided *indios* with surnames, (a privilege previously granted to *principalía* only), in order to improve labor migration and registering taxes and tribute is an index of these changes.

20 See Trinidad Pardo de Tavera's *The Legacy of Ignorantism*. Also found excerpted in a book published by The Bureau of Printing: Eliseo Quirino and Vicente Hilario eds. *Thinking for Ourselves*. (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1924). That The Bureau of Printing published this speech and circulated it in both English and Spanish is significant. Pardo de Tavera's speech, republished in the newspapers, caused a public debate about religion, morality and public education for almost an entire year. See the Pardo de Tavera Collection at the Ateneo University Library.

21 In the *Adarna corrido*, it is interesting to note that the hermits call their animal familiars by ringing the *campana*.

22 From *Colección de Corridos Presentada por El Excmo. Sr. D. V. Barrantes*, *Apéndice* of the *Catalogo de la exposicion general de las islas filipinas celebra en Madrid, 1887*; from the Carlos Ronquillo Collection of the Philippine National Library. The Barrantes collection is now at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

23 With its thematic content based on song and dance, one might even call it a "melodrama." For discussions of the importance of family as a network for community relations in the Philippines, see for example Clemen Aquino and Prospero Covar.

24 For discussions of possible folk resonances and further significance of this trope, see Katrin de Guia.

25 In this regard, the canonical *Florante at Laura* is an exception among Philippine metrical romances.

26 See Aquino's discussion of *kapatiran* in the works of Prospero Covar and the various fellowships on Mount Banahaw.

27 In the narrative, like the incremental motif technique, this is a preparation for the tests Haring Salermo extracts from Doña Maria's suitors and mirrors his punishment for them, i.e., he also turns them to stone.

28 Here I use "mimesis" very narrowly to mean the moments when a singer takes on the speech acts that supposedly belong to a character in the text. It is interesting to note at this point that according to Vicassan's Tagalog Dictionary, a term commonly used in the *corrido ipagbadyá*, as in stanza 438 below, has the sense of assertion, statement and declaration, but also secondary meaning of mimicry, imitation and parody.

29 I say "conceit," because as a chapbook one can read by skipping or going back to other parts of the narrative and the sequence is on the level of the sentence. In actual performance, one assumes the bard is free to extemporize, elaborate, ad-lib or mix sequences.

30 Del Mundo argues: "*Ibong Adarna* is a colonial movie and it has not escaped the influence of Hollywood. The casting of the mestizo stars … unwittingly [*sic*] creates the barrier of class distinctions and dictates the colonizer's norms of beauty… [it] manifests the colonizer's way of looking at the natives, the "niggers" as the lowly characters in society, that undermines the parodistic and transgressive possibilities of the original source of this moro-moro movie" (87).

31 The introduction of a Chaplinesque character as the *pusong* is another major difference. The list could go on.

32 In practice of course, such discourse would have been situated within specific social encounters and maps. The point though is that the *lingua franca* could bleed beyond these situated usages, and was thus difficult to control.

33 See also Vicente Rafael, "Taglish, or the Phantom Power of the Lingua Franca" for other discussions of the *lingua franca* in the Philippines.

34 This is partly her explanation for Eraption, and in many ways is precisely the plaint and vain refrain of Nora Aunor in *Himala* that Neferti Tadiar discusses: *"Walang himala. Tayo ang gumagawa ng himala!"* See Neferti Tadiar's *Fantasy Production*.

35 The distinctions then between Diego's testimony at the end, the *Adarna*'s narration of Juan's adventures and the *negrita*'s punishment of the *negrito* for non-recognition of her testimony articulate a different mode of truth-telling from that in the *corrido*.

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INTELLECTUAL PORTRAIT GALLERY: AUGUSTO FAUNI ESPIRITU'S *FIVE FACES OF EXILE*

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Abstract
Espiritu writes a book which may be described as a "collective intellectual biography" of five figures in Philippine letters whose lives and texts were influenced by their expatriation in America: Carlos P. Romulo, Carlos Bulosan, Jose Garcia Villa, N.V.M. Gonzalez, and Bienvenido Santos. With a biographer's touch, Espiritu identifies the themes that are more or less common and played out differently among them: performativity, ambivalence, nationalism in their self-representation, cultural hybridity, and patronage relations—leading to what may be called a genuine "transnational" perspective for Asian American intellectual history. However, his use of other big terms such as "exile," "nation," "Filipino" and "Filipino-American," and "intellectual" raises questions and provokes discussions that may yet inform our reading of these critical biographies.

Keywords
exile, expatriation, Filipino American, intellectual biography, intellectual history

About the Author
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Back in 1990 I had occasion to hear Filipino novelist Bienvenido Santos speak at a conference in Hong Kong on Asian writing in English. I'd been in the Philippines for the better part of a year then, had begun to read some of the country's writers, Santos included, and I was interested not only in hearing what he'd have to say but in seeing how he would stack up against the other conference headliners, some of whom were impressively big names. He stacked up pretty well: head and shoulders above the others, in fact. He gave a mesmerizing talk, by turns challenging, charming, laugh-out-loud funny, and deeply insightful, all delivered without a note in sight. I remember one moment in particular very well. It came not during the talk but in the question-and-answer following. Someone from one of the other countries represented at the conference asked: "Mr. Santos, what has been the reception of you and other Filipino writers outside the Philippines?" The reply was as blunt as it was immediate: "We haven't made a dent." To illustrate, the speaker went on to cite, unflinchingly, his own inability to find a publisher for his work in the United States,

where he had resided for many years.

Of course, during the intervening time I've become aware of developments that have at least qualified the substance of Santos' answer. As he was speaking, Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* must have been just coming off the press at Pantheon. A number of Frankie Jose's novels were republished in the States over the course of the 1990s. And Ben Santos' own fiction, along with that of other Filipino and Filipino American writers, began to appear with increasing regularity in anthologies of Asian American or multicultural literature. But the spirit and tone of his reply stayed with me, helping to define the writer in my mind. What I took to be its refreshing candor stood out in sharp contrast to the prevailing sentiment of self-congratulation at the conference. And it seemed to bespeak a security in the man's sense of his own talent and achievement that was of a piece with the bravura lectern performance.

Now, though, having recently read Augusto F. Espiritu's *Five Faces of Exile: The Nation and Filipino American Intellectuals*, I'm prepared to understand that moment a little differently. What the author shows in his chapter on Santos, one of the five "faces" whose portraits he offers in this book, is first of all that the writer's skill in oratory—which Espiritu characterizes by the term "performativity"—was the product of both native traditions of eloquence and American tutelage in his early school days; as such, it represented a deeply ambivalent heritage. Secondly, he shows that Santos' writing career was haunted by fears of being a "loser," and an "excluded outsider" (149-50), fears Espiritu links to the larger feelings of "shame" which are said to have constituted one principal driving force in the writer's literary productivity and his life. By that account, the seemingly straightforward reply, "We haven't made a dent … I haven't been able to get published in the US…," must have come only after a hard swallow of personal pain and a quick summoning of intellectual courage. On the other hand, Espiritu also notes in Santos a lifelong "penchant for self-deprecation" (147), so perhaps the admission needs to be chalked up as much to the speaker's desire to be charming as to face squarely his private demons.

This is the kind of intriguing complexity that greets the reader of all five of Espiritu's portraits of venerable figures in Philippine letters: Carlos P. Romulo, Carlos Bulosan, Jose Garcia Villa, N.V.M. Gonzalez, and Santos. Or, as the saying goes, "Is it just me?" Will people whose familiarity with these figures significantly pre-dates 1990, and/or significantly extends beyond my still outsider's acquaintance with them and their works, find this new account half so enriching and provocative as I have? More specifically, how will these portraits appear to readers of this publication? In attempt to vet these questions in a preliminary way, and ultimately to stimulate readership of a book that has just recently

been published in the States, I submit the following review essay of *Five Faces of Exile*. In it, I will offer summaries of Espiritu's accounts of all five personages, as well as of his overall argument, and I will set forth critique and evaluation where they seem appropriate.

Before beginning, just to up the ante on possible reactions by readers here to the book under review, it might be pointed out that Espiritu is among a group of young Filipino American academics who, in the words of one of them, Vicente Rafael, have become "significant interlocutors in the political debates and formation of knowledge about Filipinos in the Philippines and elsewhere" (Rafael 2). Now of course Rafael is not imputing any monopoly over that role to these commentators, who include, in addition to himself and Espiritu, Sharon Delmendo, author of another recent contribution to Philippine Studies. Certainly "Filipinos in the Philippines" have themselves been busy in the "formation of knowledge" to which Rafael refers, witness for example Isagani Cruz's experimental biodrama, *The Lovely Bienvenido N. Santos*, published like Espiritu's book just this past year. Nevertheless, the contributions of the American-based scholars probably deserve to be reckoned with: first because they usually come armed with the latest conceptual and methodological apparatus of the discipline in which they are framed; second because they occupy a political, intellectual, and cultural position potentially mid-way between that of the traditional "Philippine hands" in the American academic establishment and that of the local producers of local knowledge. Like any other, this position is not a privileged one; it comes with limitations, liabilities, and outright blindnesses built in. At the same time, it may afford perspectives and illuminations on Philippine experience not available from anywhere else. In fact, it is a position not unlike that achieved by the five figures whom Espiritu studies, and whom he calls "Filipino Americans." Furthermore, in his reading, their achievement helped to create the ground from which the new generation of scholars now operates. Let us turn then to *Five Faces of Exile*.

First, a few words by way of general characterization of the book. It may be described as a collective intellectual biography of the five figures mentioned. Espiritu focuses on the experience of expatriation and its impacts on their writings, careers, and lives. He identifies five themes relating to this experience and more or less common to all his subjects, although playing out differently in individual cases. Two have already been mentioned in connection with Santos: one is "performativity," a complex concept denoting one type or another of conspicuous oral discourse, inscribed within a system (such as the colonial) of unequal power relations; the other is a deeply felt "ambivalence" with respect to the competing pulls of metropole and homeland. The further three are the "persistence

of nationalism and other discourses of the nation" in these writers' self-representation; serving as a "bridge of understanding" between East and West, later generalized to mean qualities of "cultural hybridity" in their expressive work; and the demands of patronage relations in shaping their career and political choices (xiii, 179). Espiritu succeeds in demonstrating the relevance of these themes. He also manages to advance an additional thesis, seeing in the experience of these five Filipino expatriates grounds for establishing a genuinely "transnational" perspective for Asian American intellectual history.

As icing on the cake of these solid disciplinary contributions—and *Five Faces* is an impressive piece of scholarship, thoroughly researched and documented, methodologically self-aware, conceptually *au courant*—Espiritu writes with a biographer's touch. He brings his subjects to life with telling details from their professional lives and personal relations. We learn, for example, that during his years at Cal State Hayward, N.V.M. Gonzalez struggled with the public transportation system, never having learned to drive, and that Villa, while living the rarefied lifestyle of the international artist in New York City, would slip over to New Jersey frequently to feast on Filipino food in the homes of newly arrived immigrant families. What's more, like any good biographer, Espiritu is unsparing of conflicts, evasions, and awkward moments. We hear of Romulo's falling out with his first patron, Manuel Quezon, Bulosan's quailing before the plagiarism charge brought before him, the rationalizations Santos offered for taking American citizenship. Through it all, we get biography's greatest gift: clear-eyed but compassionate understanding of individual lives situated in their social, cultural, and historical contexts.

All that said, the book does have its weaknesses. One of the most general of these is the absence of a comparative perspective. Espiritu does not stack his group of expatriate writers up against similar figures from another transnational setting, or against non-intellectual migrants (he wants to claim his five as precursors of today's Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), nurses, and mail-order brides, but his bibliography contains no references to such works as Catherine Choy's *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*). He also offers little with respect to non-expatriate Filipino writers. On this point, Sharon Delmendo's recent analysis of the work of F. Sionil Jose, a novelist who has remained in Manila but who stands in other respects the peer of the writers under study here, reveals a degree of "cultural hybridity" and "ambivalence" not easily reconcilable with the thesis of *Five Faces of Exile*. Finally, there is no comparison on basis of gender. One longs for some relief from the unremitting maleness of the subjects here (although some variation may be found in a perhaps too-fleeting exploration of Villa's apparent homosexuality). It is even possible to wonder how the book would have read

had Espiritu been able to persuade Jessica Hagedorn, say, to sit for one of his intellectual portraits. In fairness, though, this would have jimmied his existing chronological frame, defined by writers whose careers spanned the colonial and post-independence periods.

In addition to this general shortcoming, specific issues arise in connection with the book's treatment of individual figures, and will be addressed as they appear. I also plan to offer some concluding reservations and assessment. But for now let's proceed to the portrait gallery.

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Carlos P. Romulo is, after Rizal and along perhaps with Nick Joaquin, one of the Philippines' most celebrated "public intellectuals," in Russell Jacoby's term. Anyone familiar with the outlines of his career, the long periods spent in the United States, the books addressed as much or more to American than Filipino audiences, the late defense of what he took to be the joint interests of the US and the Marcos Administration, will not be surprised to learn that Romulo coined the term "expatriate affirmation" and that he saw himself as a "bridge" to transpacific understanding. What may be less expected, however, is the knowledge that, first of all, the "coinage" occurred in context of an attempt to define nationalism. "Nationalism in the Philippines," Romulo wrote, citing the example of the ilustrados, is "for better or worse, an expatriate affirmation" (Espiritu 37). Reflecting on his own experience, he went on to say, it was only in a state of expatriation, "as a member of the exile government in Washington during the war years … that I began to be more analytical about our situation … with a culture and government somehow not our own … and to have the psychological experience of longing for identity even though I knew that I manifested it everywhere." Secondly, Espiritu points out that the author of *Mother America* was often pointedly critical of US foreign policy and American society. Even in that book Romulo regretted the "interruption" of Filipinos' fight for freedom in 1898 and lectured colonial administrators on their attitudes of racial condescension. In subsequent writings he went on to deplore race relations in America itself, to protest eloquently (if privately) the US intervention in Vietnam, and to issue warnings against imperial hubris and ignorance and the "illusion" of an Americanizing world mission (21-34).

In the main, Romulo appears to have offered these criticisms in a positive spirit, as a true believer in the principles of the liberal democracy he had absorbed through expatriation, and in exhortation of America and Americans to live up to these ideals (a position not unlike the one seemingly taken by Bulosan at the end of *America Is in the Heart*

and more recently by F. Sionil Jose in his novel *Viajero*). However, Espiritu depicts him as having shifted toward a significantly new intellectual and political direction during the 1960s, corresponding to his presidency of the University of the Philippines (UP). Within the University itself Romulo determined to set a distinctive nationalist tone, lining hallways with portraits of Philippine heroes and martyrs, costuming the ROTC brigade in native garb, and renaming the administration building Quezon Hall. He also sought links with other Asian universities and strove to open minds and curricula to traditions of Asian thought, for example Gandhi's. In his broader writings and addresses during this time he appears to have been dropping the role of friendly adviser to Americans and instead "charting a path for the emerging Asian nations," steering clear of the interests of both Western and Communist blocs (36).

Nevertheless, Espiritu points out, the path charted for Asian nations was marked by the signposts of liberal democracy; Romulo would or could not surrender that aspect of his expatriate heritage. And despite the changes in tone ushered in at UP, his administration foundered on substantive charges of favoritism paid to American professors on the faculty and to US aid projects in the release of research funds. This sets the stage, in the book, for the treatment of the most infamous stage of Romulo's career, his lengthy service to the Marcos regime. Even here, *Five Faces* is able to show a complexity behind, and to cultivate an understanding of, what is in the minds of many a reprehensible record. For one thing, the stated ideals of the New Society were not so different from the nationalism Romulo had begun to nurture in exile and to promote actively while at the helm of the university. For another, his loyalty to Marcos appears to be of a piece with his earlier attraction to powerful, charismatic men—Quezon, MacArthur—who served as his patrons and enabled him to exercise the mix of intellectual expression and political power-brokering that answered the deepest needs of his genius. Still, Espiritu concedes that loyalty to this last patron led Romulo to abandon liberal principles and a good many other convictions of his earlier career, and he concludes by characterizing him in more structural than substantive terms as a classic man in the middle, a "true 'Filipino-American' … his national identity shift[ing] between the two poles of the hyphen" (45).

By following the chapter on Carlos Romulo with one on Carlos Bulosan, the creator of this portrait gallery sets into relief the sharpest contrast among these five figures. From following the career of the scion of an elite family whose first stop in the United States was Columbia University, and who rose to the corridors of highest power in Washington, New York, and Manila, we contemplate the struggles of the son of impoverished Ilokano peasants, who came to an America of hard jobs and miserable treatment, and

who remained, as an activist, in the fields and factories of laboring people. Indeed, as Secretary of Information for the exiled Philippine government during the war, Romulo was positioned to act as a patron for the writing talent that distinguished Bulosan from his "Pinoy" compatriots, but he somehow overlooked or snubbed him. Bulosan, for his part, applied directly to the sources Romulo himself cultivated: Manuel Quezon, whose request for a report on conditions of Filipinos on the West Coast became the germ of *America Is in the Heart*, and American publishers and reading audiences. Espiritu's treatment focuses on an episode that severely strained the second relationship, a charge of plagiarism leveled at the popular Filipino author for a story published in the *New Yorker* in 1944.

The charge, which hung like a weight around Bulosan's neck (he never attempted to defend himself against it, and the magazine settled the matter out of court), apparently precipitating what he himself described as a "decade of silence and heartbreak" (54), provides the key to Espiritu's interpretation of this expatriate's literary output and life. Investigating the charge, he finds evidence not only of plagiarism in the technical sense, but of an "underside" of Filipino folk culture and spirituality beneath Bulosan's more well known commitments to the values of socialism, democracy, and modernity. Espiritu distinguishes three aspects of this folk connection. One is orality, in the fashioning and transmission of stories. Bulosan's immersion in this tradition effectively exculpates him, in this reading, from the plagiarism charge. The second is animism, belief in ghosts, supernatural beings, charms, faith healing, and other legacies of pre-Hispanic spirituality. The final is commitment to the ideals of *pasyon*, the complex folk myth first analyzed by Reynaldo Ileto. Espiritu discerns motifs of martyrdom, of suffering and death with the implicit promise of resurrection or redemption, in *America Is in the Heart* and especially in the late novel *Power of the People*, as well as in Bulosan's characteristic self-presentation. In short, while other commentators have "constructed a Bulosan consonant with the project of modernity, whether defined in terms of progress, ilustrado nationalism, socialism, exile, or mobility" (Espiritu 72), *Five Faces* gives us a Bulosan "pre-modern," and indelibly Filipino, at the core.

I myself find the Bulosan chapter the least satisfactory in the book. This is not to gainsay the merit and even the need of such a revisionist reading of this important figure. Still less is it to deny that a writer like Bulosan could have rooted himself, imaginatively, even more deeply in his native soil from a situation of expatriation. Romulo's reflections on the emergence of nationalism and identity in his thinking while in wartime Washington suggest a similar dynamic at work. But the nearly exclusive emphasis placed on this reading undermines Espiritu's own thesis, which holds out precisely for "exile" (note the

appearance of this term, found in his own title, on the list of "other" readings of Bulosan) as the seminal experience in the lives and expression of these Filipino writers.

Moreover, Bulosan's experience of America was particularly intense and sustained. Unlike his more well-heeled counterparts, he could not bounce back to the Philippines, even after an interval of years; indeed, he never returned home. Also unlike them, his nose was in it—American reality—on a daily basis, as opposed to being in the books, or in the classroom, or on the lecture or cocktail circuit, as theirs often were. Surely this experience affected him in some deeply inward ways, touching on his world- and self-concepts, the springs of his creativity. At the conference I mentioned at the outset, the Korean writer Richard Kim, who migrated to the US as a young man, reported that his first novel germinated from his contemplation of the possibilities of the English pronoun "I," counterposed against the collectively oriented Korean concept of *Han*. Yet we get no inkling here of anything like that having happened with Bulosan, even though *America Is in the Heart* is rife with evidence of a highly creative and forward-looking engagement not just with "democracy" (as Espiritu acknowledges), but with the possibilities of what would become known as multiculturalism, incipient in the intellectual and political landscape to which he had transported himself in the 1930s.

In fact, this flaw in the Bulosan chapter reflects something of a general weakness of the book. While Espiritu is subtle and often profound in his reading of the Philippine cultural sources for his writers' creative performances, his construction of the other side of the "hybridity" tends to be less rich, focusing on abstractions like "liberal democracy" and "modernity," general social and literary movements like Civil Rights or the New Criticism, or on experiences of racial discrimination. But exceptions to this judgment, deft demonstrations of the role of particular American or Western influences on individual intellectual and creative growth occur often enough—I shall be taking note of certain of them presently—to make it cause for wonder why this dimension of Bulosan's expatriate achievement was not more systematically explored.

If the portrait presented in the first chapter of Carlos P. Romulo resembles one of high society painter John Singer Sargent's canvases, and if Espiritu's Bulosan is a figure from a proletarian mural by Diego Rivera, the book's next subject, Jose Garcia Villa, exhibits touches of Salvador Dali. For most of the educated public (and most educated visitors) in the Philippines, Villa's claim to fame rests with his experimental poetry. Who has not read and puzzled over at least one "comma poem"? Espiritu looks at this poetry but keeps an arm's distance from it. "Some of the poems perhaps give evidence of Villa's 'genius,'" he writes, but his significance "probably rests on something other than his

original work" (76). That something else turns out to be a special kind of performativity, involving narcissistic display (he was a man "overtaken by awe of himself" [88]), relentless theatricality ("I'm always acting," he confided to Franz Arcellana [78]), and "outrageous speech acts" (75). The chapter follows the evolution of this public persona from his student days as an *enfant terrible* at UP, defending himself, imperiously, against a charge of writing obscene literature; to New York, where to his native ilustrado style of combative hauteur were added the shock tactics of certain schools of modern artists (this is one of the points on which Espiritu's construction of the expatriate environment offers genuine illumination); and back to Manila, for extended visits later in his career, where his performances increasingly took on the homoerotic tones of the male diva, and where, according to sympathetic observer Nick Joaquin, he was "a Happening all by himself" (91).

At the same time, another, less flamboyant story of Villa's engagement with literature and life unfolds, and in it other expatriate themes emerge. One of these is patronage relations, especially complex in his case because Villa at once sought the support of powerful figures in the Anglo-American literary world in order to advance his career, and sought to preside, from a distance, over Philippine letters, running and judging contests and generally hectoring new talents coming on to the local scene. It appears that he could be as sycophantic in the one context as he was dictatorial in the other, a classic "subaltern" type of personality. In addition, Villa showed himself seriously dedicated to literary art, to the exclusion of almost every other value. He refused to accept any work unless it was directly connected to his poetic vocation, consigning himself to decades of poverty and dependency. In a 1953 poem, he scrambled information about his homeland to make it seem an imaginary place, and then went on to declare exclusive allegiance to the mythical country of "Art" (99). He also consistently refused the call of any kind of activism, save for his cause of art for art's sake.

Yet for all that splendidly declared aesthetic isolation, Espiritu finds in Villa indications of a persistent cultural and to some extent even political nationalism. His continued involvement in the Philippine literary scene was one such indication. Another was the bitter flowering in his personal manner of the seigneurial style he had rejected in his father. Then, too, the ascetic artist possessed a life-long relish for Filipino cuisine, which he indulged as often as possible. Finally, Villa never renounced his Philippine citizenship, despite nearly a lifetime (and a long lifetime, at that) living abroad. While some read cynical motives into that determination, such as his need to avail of sinecures at the Philippine Mission in New York, Villa persisted and eventually his loyalty paid off, with the receipt of National Artist Award in 1973. The citation for the award mentioned only the

artist's international reputation and poetic innovations; but it could, in light of Espiritu's findings, have touched on his supreme creation, his public persona, and on the ties of service and style that bound him to his homeland.

"There is nothing simple about Gonzalez" (102). This statement, which appears a short way into *Five Faces*' next chapter, will surely prove jarring to a number of readers. The use of the last name alone sounds a discordant note: this was a man known to nearly everyone as "N.V.M." And that cheery, avuncular, sandal-shod fellow with an encouraging word for everyone, from the aspiring undergraduate writer to the nervous new exchange professor: not "simple"? That he was complex, perhaps even disingenuous, will likely strike many who knew him as a debatable proposition. It will surely strike that way to those who know him only through the feature article written by an American journalist, in which a playful N.V.M. is quoted to have said, in reply to the question of a *kababayan* from Romblon as to when he had last been back to the province: "I never left home" (102). Yet in the case of this charming denial of the significance of his expatriate experience, as well as in other matters pertaining to his life and work, Espiritu is able to show that there was, indeed, nothing simple about Gonzalez.

That he did make a determined effort, in imagination, to stay rooted in Romblon, in Mindoro, in the Philippines, cannot be doubted. Like other writers who began their careers in the Commonwealth period, Gonzalez did not initially question the use of English as a literary medium or the relevance of Anglo-American forms and models. However, developments relating to the Second World War (which, unlike the other four figures under study, he experienced in the Philippines), including the initial American military defeats, Japanese encouragement of Tagalog, and the rise of a nationalist school of thought stressing the importance of a pre-Hispanic Philippine culture, turned Gonzalez toward a decidedly nativist bent.

This predilection was only deepened—seemingly paradoxically, but by a process Espiritu shows in other cases, as we have seen—during the period of his first expatriation, beginning in 1949. Doing literary studies in the US, Gonzalez fell under the influence of a number of the "Southern Agrarians," academic New Critics who happened also to espouse a brand of militant, anti-modern regionalism that he found well matched to his provincial background. At the same time, he became exposed to the Myth Criticism of Northrop Frye and others, which, however well or poorly, ultimately squared with the text-focused New Criticism, alerted Gonzalez to the wealth of imaginative materials lying in the oral traditions and folk culture of the *kaingin* about whom he had already begun to write. The fruit of this intellectual development appears in the 1957 novel, *The Bamboo Dancers*.

The novel first of all presents the America of protagonist Ernie Rama's expatriation in far more negative terms than found in works by Romulo, Bulosan, and Villa, as a place of "alienation, ghostliness, and disembodied existence" (116). It suggests that "return to one's native land," and reintegration with its rituals and myths, "is crucial to moral and cultural regeneration" (118).

But while he was staking down this commitment to native ground in his fiction, in his life a different—and not so simple—story was taking shape. For unlike Ernie Rama, Gonzalez did not come home to stay. Moved by the "urgings of literary ambition" (104), and also by a desire for wages that could support his son's education (in this regard the California State University system proved a more generous patron than the UP salary scale), and then by the Marcos Administration's declaration of Martial Law, he embarked on an extended period of period of expatriation. True enough, all during this time he retained his citizenship, focused his writing on the Philippines, and refused identification as a "Fil-American" much less as "Asian American" writer (134). Yet when at last the Marcos era ended, Gonzalez did not abandon his expatriate ways, but rather became what Espiritu terms a "transpacific commuter" (135), even extending his residence and travel well beyond the United States. In the last decade of his life he showed some inclination to align his writing interests more closely with this aspect of his experience, exploring in new fiction such subjects as intercultural encounters in Europe.

From this account of Gonzalez's career, Espiritu extrapolates the following conclusion: "Ironically, it may be the complexity of [his] transpacific life and his wide-ranging intellectual curiosity and commitment … that prove to have a more lasting impact than Gonzalez the master artist and proponent of a nativist poetics" (138). Whether readers in the Philippines will accept that pronouncement is an open question. Perhaps this is one point on which a "Fil-Am" perspective will differ from one of "Filipinos in the Philippines." But even those who basked directly in the glow of his sunny presence will need to acknowledge, in the wake of this new book, that little was simple about their beloved N.V.M.

Unlike Gonzalez, Bienvenido Santos did not attempt to deny the reality or the impact of his expatriate experience. He "came to recognize how important his American life was to him" (178) and allowed it to inform his fiction. What's more, he accepted the designations "Filipino American" and even "Asian American," and, alone among the five "faces," he became an American citizen. But if he did not negate it, as Gonzalez tried to do, neither did expatriation for Santos constitute a source of "affirmation," as it had for Romulo. Instead it provoked the feeling (whose name forms one half of the chapter title)

of "shame," because it resulted from a series of decisions to go to or stay in (or become a citizen of) the United States—decisions not too differently motivated than his friend N.V.M.'s—that repeatedly left him feeling he had betrayed his primary loyalty to the Philippine homeland.

That loyalty ("fidelity," the other half of the chapter title) Santos felt keenly, and his organic ties to the culture of origin manifested themselves in a number of specific ways. One of these, already touched on at the outset, was the traditional orality that formed one base for his performativity. Another consisted in his animistic beliefs. Indeed, Santos's devotion to the Virgin of Antipolo, complete with apparently miraculous physical conditions and cures, gives Espiritu a chance to show how he will navigate a potential cultural chasm in his own subject matter, and he handles the entire matter straightforwardly, taking Santos's accounts of this part of his life at face value. Third, this product of the barrio and Tondo, Manila, held throughout his life and carried into much of his fiction decidedly patriarchal views on gender and family, although his own selection of a life partner contradicted that ideology. Finally, Santos nourished visceral feelings of love for his country, which he tended to express most eloquently in moments when he was experiencing the conflict of having chosen to be away from it.

At the same time, he did not allow this regret to engulf his experience of America. Whether with his family or alone, Santos bounced around considerably in the States and kept his eyes and ears open. He learned enough about his adopted country to create credible American characters in his novels. In one of these, the World War II drama *The Volcano*, both his knowledge of Americans and his "fidelity" to the Philippines come into play. He captures the liberal idealism of the missionary family, the Hunters, and the process of their literal and figurative "browning," as they flee with the residents of a Bicolano village from Japanese invaders. But he also captures the limit of their idealism and of their integration into Filipino society, when the Hunters subvert on racial grounds the promised marriage of their daughter to Badong, a loyal helper who has acted heroically to save their lives during the crisis. In addition, Santos pays full attention to the very different cultural expectations and economic and political interests of the Filipino villagers, who eventually drive the American family out from among them, in a rising tide of postwar nationalist feeling.

The novel, thus analyzed, constitutes Espiritu's paramount example of the power of the expatriate perspective: a "cultural hybridity" capable of discerning both national realities, and the relationship between them, with fresh vision. At the same time, his larger analysis of Bienvenido Santos shows at what cost such insight can come: the struggle and

pathos, and "shame," of creating a position at once of intellectual freedom and emotional strain, of occupying the strategically central but doubly marginalized territory of the expatriate.

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In closing, let me offer, first of all, some brief further reservations about the book's overall treatment, and then a final word of assessment. The reservations, curiously, are all keyed to the title, *Five Faces of Exile: The Nation and Filipino American Intellectuals*. Nearly every substantive term in this formulation, with the exception of "faces"—a good indication of the portrait-like quality of the individual studies—raises questions.

Take "intellectuals," for example. With the exception of Romulo, who clearly fits one common definition of an intellectual as a thinker whose concerns range over a variety of fields and issues, and who operates to some extent in a public and even political sphere, are not the figures under scrutiny here, better thought of as *writers* first and foremost, practitioners of one or another genre of literary craft (or at most, in the case of Villa and Gonzalez, literary theory)? But perhaps Espiritu owed this headlining of the i-word to his discipline, which is unmistakably intellectual history.

Another difficulty crops up with "Filipino American," when only one of the book's subjects took on US citizenship and consciously accepted that identity, and at least two of them pointedly insisted on being known as "Filipino" writers. Espiritu himself undercuts the applicability of the designation at times, referring for example to "Filipino expatriate intellectuals" as important presences in "Filipino American communities in various parts of the United States" (191). However, bigger fish are frying here. In a lengthy footnote, Espiritu acknowledges this difficulty and makes it clear that he means to appropriate the term to the service of his thesis. He proposes using it in an expansive sense, to indicate experience acquired and perspective developed by Filipinos as a result of their time, short or long, intermittent or permanent, in America. Moreover, as we shall see in a moment, he goes on to question the meaning and efficacy of the term in any sense.

Two other words from the title I want to dwell on more carefully, because I believe they signal unresolved issues of audience and of intellectual and political intent in the book. The first of these is "exile." Espiritu reports at one point a complaint by N.V.M. Gonzalez to the effect that his friend Ben Santos "made too much of the word 'exile,' which did not apply to life of Filipino intellectuals like him" (136). I think the same complaint can be brought against Espiritu himself, for showcasing in his title a term that connotes, if

it does not denote, a condition of *forced* absence from one's homeland. His subjects were technically exiles only during the Second World War and, in the case of Santos (and at a stretch Gonzalez, who did in another context actually apply the term to himself) during the Martial Law period. Indeed, for the most part in the book, "expatriation" and sometimes "intellectual travel and expatriation" (143) are the operative terms. When looking up "exile" in the index, one finds only the note, "*see* expatriation."

Why then does the shorter term get the place of honor? Could it have been the publisher's call? After all, "exile" is shorter, punchier, politically sexier—in other words, better suited to sell books, at least in Stanford University Press' area of distribution—than the more cumbersome and affectively neutral "expatriation." However, unless I miss my bet, this marketing strategy would be a less effective one here in the Philippines—where in any case Stanford does not have an outlet or, so far as I am aware, a co-publishing agreement. Preliminary conversations around this topic with local interlocutors have flared into not a little of Gonzalez's impatience with the abrogation of the exile label by writers and others who have the resources or reputations to avail themselves of lengthy sojourns abroad. This suggests that, of the logically probable audiences for *Five Faces*, American academics, Filipino Americans, and Filipinos, the term exile is targeted, whether by publisher or author, at the first two rather than the third.

This calculus is reversed, or at any rate shifted, in the case of the final element of the title I want to discuss. "The Nation" might seem a puzzling choice in a sequence of terms that includes "Filipino American." I could assume here the naivety of an American reader and ask "Which nation?" But that would be disingenuous. For I know full well that "the nation"—the Philippine nation—is the bass note in the discourse of a good many Filipino Americans and a great many Filipinos. The use of this resonant term in the title constitutes the surest sign that the author of this book, if not the publisher, intends to reach a homeland audience.

And yet the use of the term is also deeply problematic, in view of Espiritu's findings and the conceptual framework he wants to establish. For recall that he claims to have created through his analysis of the experience of these five Filipino expatriates grounds for a "new discursive space … [for] *trans*national Asian American intellectual studies" (188 emphasis added). Indeed, at another point in his concluding chapter Espiritu makes mention of comprehending not only "transnational" but "subnational" processes that would seem to "defy" a nation-centered approach (188). And in an earlier note he seems to go further than that, challenging the understanding of either "the Philippines," "Filipino America," or "America" as "monolithic, undifferentiated, and unchanging" entities (182-

83). He stresses the importance instead of appreciating the reality of "regional, class, ethnic, linguistic … religious," and historical dimensions of culture and identity (182). In other words, Espiritu appears to arrive at a point of deconstructing "the nation" as an analytical concept, that in another context Vicente Rafael approaches, on grounds of political suspicion (xiv, 2, 9-13).

Now it is also true that both writers stop short of this end, Espiritu writing, "the nation need not be eradicated" (192), and pointing out that the Philippine nation constituted a critical reference point in the lives and writings of all his expatriates. No doubt this is so. Yet it does not seem right to privilege this reference point to the exclusion of the other "themes" in the experience of these figures. And it is especially wrong to refuse a place in the title, at least alongside "the nation" or "national," to the transnational perspective the book works so hard and succeeds so well in establishing, except in the case of Bulosan, for its individual subjects and its subject as a whole.

This is a strict accounting of the problematics involved in Espiritu's choice of "the nation" for his title, or subtitle, more strictly speaking. A more appreciative understanding is also possible, and I will conclude with it. For the troubles with the term stem in part from the lengths to which the book extends its analysis, to the transnational, first of all, and then to the destabilizing particulars of the "subnational" (which as it happens are not much dealt with in the biographical chapters, but are mentioned in the conclusion). In fact, Espiritu anticipates this outcome, stating in his introduction, "Filipino American intellectual experiences involve complex negotiations of identity, politics, and culture that subvert the very categories that have been hitherto used to study them" (7). This happens with "the nation," and it happens with "Filipino American." The book's discussion of the latter term concludes with a resolve pretty much to jettison it: "the dynamism of Philippine and Filipino American life in the United States makes the attempt to limit Filipino self-naming an impossible task, if not something undesirable" (183). Yet when every intellectual construct has been analytically sliced thin, and then run through the grinder of dense human lives and history, an author still needs a few categories to serve for a title. Perhaps the final compliment to pay Augusto Espiritu's *Five Faces of Exile* is to acknowledge that the complexity which is its outstanding virtue appears too great to be adequately comprehended in its title.

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KILLING TIME:
THE CONDITION OF EXILE IN THE FICTION OF JOSE Y. DALISAY, JR.

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Abstract
The exilic condition extends not only to the Filipino who has chosen to study or live abroad, or is forced to leave the Philippines, but also the Filipino who, though he resides and works in his own country, feels himself in a state of rootless suspension brought about by the circumstances of history and colonization. In this light, all Filipinos—belonging to one or the other geographic, economic, tribal or social group—could be considered exiles, and this could be reflected in our literature. Dolores Feria states: "our literature has always been a consequence of exile." A Filipino writer's works could be expressions, possibly even extensions, of his own condition of exile, such that his characters portray, enact, and/or embody it. In specific stories by Jose Y. Dalisay, Jr., his intellectual, educated, middle class characters experience a particular kind of exile brought about by several factors from schooling and upbringing to culture, lifestyle, and choice of language. In his first novel, *Killing Time in a Warm Place*, and in his short stories "The First of Our Dead," "Amnesty," "Storyline," and "We Global Men," one could read distinct manifestations of exile and exertions to cope and to come to terms with this uneasy, irresolvable condition.

Keywords
deterritorialization, home, intellectual exile, postcolonial

About the Author
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"Home with all its disquiets was wherever I was writing." - Dalisay

Jose Y. Dalisay, Jr. writes in the preface of his book *Sarcophagus and Other Stories* that "it isn't so much 'style' one chases after [in one's stories], but a sense of place, or, more acutely, a sense of home: that point in the story where author and sympathetic reader recognize, with astonishment and pain, a sudden familiarity" (xi). This sense of place, this appreciation for home, this sudden pang of both familiarity and pain, may be most felt and acknowledged when one is in exile—a condition which may afflict writer, reader, and no doubt many of the characters that a writer in exile portrays. Yet what precisely is this

condition of exile? Who, particularly, suffers from such a condition?

Dolores Stephens Feria believes that the expatriate way is only one form that exile takes,[1] and that exile may also mean "escape to the more seminal intellectual centers of Madrid, Paris, Hong Kong or New York"; imprisonment (implying Dapitan or Muntinlupa); or exile into the past. One need not even leave the Philippines to experience exile. As a result of one or other of these forms of exile, a person "finds [himself or herself] suspended between two orders—natural and historic. That [he or she] can neither accept the one nor generate the other imposes a chronic state of psychic exile" (409). Psychic exile must therefore involve exile *from* one's own (historical) past, which is distinct from feelings of nostalgia and an escape or withdrawal *into* the past.

Though Feria studies the condition of exile in the Filipino writer, most specifically in Carlos Bulosan and Nick Joaquin—all the while she mentions other writers and includes all—she also suggests that Filipino writers' works are expressions, possibly even extensions, of their condition of exile, such that their characters portray, enact, and/or embody the writers' particular exilic condition. Works by writers in exile are, of course, not to be confused with their theme, but may be seen as reflections of their state of mind specifically produced by colonization. Feria claims that "our literature has always been a consequence of exile." She distinguishes between the Western, philosophic, "universal" condition of alienation, and the Filipinos' condition of exile that "implies a historic superstructure that is uniquely Philippine, an impetus for flight and revolt which can only occur in a society in which the basic cultural components have been periodically altered by brute force" (409).

Most—if not all—Filipinos share at least the same history under colonial rule, and feel the same postcolonial confusion over a "national identity." As Luis H. Francia states, "the question of cultural identity is a crucial one, particularly since our sense of a collective self tends to be fragmented" (xiv). He defines the modern Filipino to be "Malayan, Chinese, Indian, Hispanic, and American—somewhat like a Cubist painting with blurry lines," so that there is a hodgepodge quality to Philippine society. To some extent, one might say that all Filipinos are in exile even in their own country: to determine what is foreign and what is indigenous in the Philippines is tricky and ultimately impossible (xiii). But to leave it at that would be to rely on an overgeneralization. Francia writes that "the most enduring legacy of the Spaniard was his religion, that of the Yankee was his language" (xi); in more colorful terms, "four hundred years in a convent and fifty in Hollywood" (xiv). This legacy, particularly that of language, concerns only a percentage of the population, those who have had the privilege of schooling.

In *Kalutang: A Filipino in the World*, NVM Gonzalez says that schooling allows for some kind of economic and social mobility, though as both he and Francia argue, this ultimately proves impossible for most because of Philippine feudal traditions, the Filipinos' dependence on clan and blood ties (Gonzalez 28, Francia x-xi). Gonzalez further divides the Philippines into at least three countries, implying that the possibility of economic and social mobility also has something to do with geographical location—whether one comes from the City (Manila), the Barrio, or the Mountain (29). If one went by province, dialect, or tribe, one would have to add a hundred and more divisions. This clearly illustrates the hodgepodge quality of Philippine society.

To limit my reading of the exilic condition in Jose Y. Dalisay's fiction, I have chosen stories that feature protagonists from a particular class. Though not all of them are writers, most, if not all, could be considered intellectuals, educated, and part of the middle class. This is not to suggest that those who are uneducated and come from the lower class do not themselves experience a sense of exile, but that intellectuals, as both Feria and Francia imply, experience a particular kind of exile brought about by several factors from schooling and upbringing to culture, lifestyle, and choice of language. On the one hand, as Edward Said says, intellectual exiles are bound to their place of birth and origin, their nationality, their profession; but on the other, they find themselves acquiring new allegiances "by social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort, and willed deliberation" (*The World* 24-5).

I would like to begin my analysis with what I like to call the "Noel Stories," starting with Dalisay's novel *Killing Time in a Warm Place* (1992) which contains Noel Bulaong's memories from age ten to his present age of thirty-five. At different times, he is a Mass Communications major, a propagandist, a revolutionary, a prison inmate, a journalist, a special assistant to a Deputy Minister of government, a graduate from a business college, a Master of Arts in film, and a movie critic. Then I continue with "The First of Our Dead" in Dalisay's first collection of short fiction, *Oldtimer and Other Stories* (1984), which could very well be a conscious or unconscious precursor of the novel because it features a young revolutionary student named Noel. The protagonist in "Amnesty" from his second collection of short fiction, *Sarcophagus and Other Stories* (1992), could also count as a parallel—if older—Noel, what with the guilt he feels when he bumps into an old comrade from his university and revolutionary past. Other than the Noel Stories, there is "Storyline" from the same collection where Dalisay portrays a jaded Filipino screenwriter in the US arguing about a particular issue—the American presence and the US military bases—with a sympathetic American producer of documentaries who may never totally understand him.

Finally, I will end with "We Global Men" from *Penmanship and Other Stories* (1995), which is about a "Filipino in Scotland—neither waiter nor menial hand—[who] smugly reflects on the comforts of his upper-middle-class existence" (Remoto 556), and who prides himself on his well-received speeches in English.

Though Oscar Campomanes argues for a separate "literature of exile and emergence" for the expatriate Filipino writers in English, he agrees with Sam Solberg's observation that "Filipino-American writing nurtured on American shores … is inextricably mixed with indigenous writing in English" (170). Indeed, the "motifs of departure, nostalgia, incompletion, rootlessness, leave-taking, and dispossession" can also be found in Philippine Literature in English (161). Feria joins fictionists and poets, both expatriate and Philippines-based, in one list: Nick Joaquin, Manuel Arguilla, Amado Hernandez, Ester Vallado Daroy, Ricaredo Demetillo, Bienvenido Santos, Alejandro Hufana, Jose Lansang, Jr., Virginia Moreno, and NVM Gonzalez (416). Dalisay could very well fit into this list, therefore I will look for "expressions of exile" and "gestures of return" in his work. How is the exilic condition manifested in Dalisay's fiction? How do his characters cope with such a condition? In Campomanes's terms, "How do they characteristically respond to, or even embody, the experience of exile and indeterminacy and the question of redemptive return?" (165).

It seems that Noel Bulaong in *Killing Time in a Warm Place* could be said to represent all forms of the condition of exile as defined by Dolores Feria. At the beginning of the novel, we know that he has gone the expatriate way, having lived and worked in the US through four years, five winters. We later find out that this is because he has escaped to an intellectual center, an American school in Elmyra, which has "an English Department with a soft spot for exotic writers in need of graduate assistantships" (*Killing Time* 120). He has been imprisoned in Camp Sunflower for at least seven months. He remembers himself in the past as a boy of ten, a good and obedient son to, and hero-worshipper of, at least two fathers (his Tatay and Marcos). The boy is completely different from the man he has turned out to be; that part of him, the obedient son, is an exile in the past. And finally, in the novel's present time, he is in a state of suspension—in a physical sense because he is mid-air, on a plane above the Pacific, and in a psychological sense because he is on his way back to the Philippines, not knowing if it is for good or not, not really knowing which country to call home (clearly a case of psychic exile). This state of suspension, or of being nowhere, echoes many instances in his life:

(1) As a young boy, Noel witnesses his father—a well-respected, venerable figure

in their hometown of Kangleong—taking part in Ferdinand Marcos's victory campaign. The boy's mother puffs up with importance: "Without [your father] Marcos wouldn't be here" (21). But the part Noel's father plays is a completely trivial one; he stands at the corner of the stage, and when the sound system fails, he sees to it as an errand boy ushering in the technician. Noel shows little pride in his father here; when he loses track of his father, he easily shifts attention and loyalty to the bigger father, Marcos, "father to all of us" (24). Noel witnesses the same disparity when they move to the city: the townsfolk seek his father out for guidance and favors, but in truth he is simply a clerk, an aide, a logistics man. As a result, Noel and his family are in a neither-here-nor-there situation: his father is a big fish in a small pond, or small fry in a big sea. Either way, this isolates them from people.

(2) As a student, Noel breaks away from family and lives in the HQ, an hour away from home. He works for "the Struggle," for a particular group in the Struggle called "the Vanguards." Noel, speaking for the group, claims that in doing their civic duties they "saw the future and could locate [themselves] in it" (31), yet his position in this group is secondary. While Estoy, Benny, and Laurie work in the core missions of their revolutionary life—education, organization, finance—Noel claims to perform "auxiliary services at Propaganda" (29). This is the same position that Noel, the protagonist in the short story "The First of Our Dead," occupies. Soon, Noel Bulaong also drops out of the university.

(3) At the Tambakan, where he hides out with Jong for a spell because the HQ is no longer safe, he is quite unwelcome, an outsider, unless he brings food. It is a nowhere town, "a village [that] survived on the periphery, itself peopled by refuse: ex-farmers, ex-convicts, retirees, refugees, six-fingered orphans, junkies" (61).

(4) At Camp Sunflower, he becomes quite faceless and positionless, living in a prison camp that is almost a mirror image of the barracks where the quite faceless soldiers dwell. Here he prays for a miracle in the morning, when his name might be singled out from the roster as in a lottery, and he is set free. As Campomanes suggests, waiting for a miracle is one way an exile copes (185-6).

(5) After seven months, Noel is indeed released and rehabilitated in the DM's staff. But his work as Special Assistant to the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Public

Welfare is, one could say, in that state of indeterminacy which Campomanes, when he speaks of exile, defines as a "suspension in eternal time and alien place" (172). Noel lives alone, somewhat estranged from his father, whom he holds at a polite distance. As assistant, however, he comes closest to being like his father, a government clerk. He finds that he could sell his word, "my words," he says, "cheap as they were but many, exhausted only by my need of sleep" (*Killing Time* 114). He writes up a five-page masterpiece, a fabricated biography of the Governor Segismundo Fortuno, who doesn't deserve a Public Service Award at all. It does not make any difference in the end, as the Governor is murdered within the week.

(6) Noel leaves for graduate school and exiles himself in America. He likes it there, he says, but he has to "trod carefully on the layered ground [in autumn], as though disturbing it would hurtle [him] back in a swirl of pretty leaves to prison camp" (38). Again he finds himself in an indeterminate time and place, a tenuous one at that, which constantly keeps him unsure of his footing.

In the scheme of the novel, we could say that Marcos' reign , specifically his declaration of Martial Law, is yet another "brute force" that has altered the Filipino's already-altered cultural composition, and that has sent Noel and many other Filipinos into a condition of exile. Families are broken up, sons are isolated from their fathers (Estoy from his colonel father in the Constabulary, Noel from his clerk father in the Highways Ministry); students are cut off from their universities (Nina, Noel as the university later on becomes an "alien zone" to him while he works for the DM); and trusts are broken (an NPA husband has to execute his own wife, Benny is released from prison camp only to be murdered by his own comrades). Noel copes by continually changing professions, loyalties, identities. He perhaps represents the many choices people took during Martial Law: some became revolutionaries, others government workers, and yet others went abroad. These choices could be seen as the many ways in which people have tried to come to terms with their exilic condition. In Noel, we see all choices covered, all routes tried and given up.

Gerald Burns points out that as a hired pen in a pro-Marcos or pro-regime office, Noel may very well be called a collaborator, but he may not be called a stooge. In the second phase of Martial Law Fiction, the "ironic" or "retrospective" phase (as Burns calls it), all have a choice, and all "elect to collaborate with the regime" (201). This does not mean that they are brainwashed, only that "there seems rather little left about which to have illusions" (Irving Howe qtd. in Burns 201). In prison, Noel has lost a sense of purpose.

He says, "Prison was frightening, but freedom even more so. Prison could be a warm and restful place, and all you had to do in it was to kill some time" (*Killing Time* 104). When one says he is "killing time," one is just wasting it with any kind of activity, it does not matter what. All the routes Noel tries, and the choices of those around him, eventually lead to disillusionment and to "killing time."

As a prisoner, Noel also observes that the soldier, private Diego Soria, is killing time in his own way, being lucky at camp to be away from jungle, malaria, and bloodshed. But Soria also suffers from his own condition of exile. A conscript from a town far up north, he finds "soldiering … better than husking coconuts" (100). In the jeep, he sits isolated even if Noel is beside him: he keeps his eyes on the floor and people look at him curiously; when he looks up, they look away as if they don't see him. When Noel is released, Noel makes a choice of exile—from the Struggle and from his past and old self. Being a special assistant to the DM has made him a turncoat as much as a survivor, and Laurie says he doesn't count as one of the comrades anymore. The university too has become an alien zone which he cannot stand because it reminds him of a past he has betrayed. His owning a right-hand drive Corolla becomes symbolic, as he is "sitting on the wrong side of everything" (109), the very posture of "sitting" implying a kind of passivity. Both he and Laurie feel dislocated, they both "kill time" in Noel's apartment as "there [is] nowhere else to go, nothing else to do in that void of a dry and numbing afternoon" (116). His exilic condition is further emphasized by his choice of English; Jong, on his midnight visit, urges him to go back to his old friends, his comrades, telling him that "all the words in the English language won't save you where you are" (121).

His meetings with Laurie, Benny's re-appearance and death, and Jong's midnight visit, spur him ever deeper into the condition of exile. He becomes an expatriate where he finds his "red" not the same "red" that Jenny, his American girlfriend, means. He is separated even from his own name which is mispronounced, misread, misheard, and misspoken, by the Americans around him; but as outsider he is able to look back in as he attempts to find meaning and absolution. Perhaps, he says, it is in the telling where he will find it, in "the telling of the sin" (128). As Campomanes explains, there are really only two choices for the Filipino in exile: "Either one is disabled and 'waits for miracles to happen' … or one is enabled, moving on … to tell the story (history) … through the language and experience of one's subjection" (185-6).

To whom does Noel Bulaong tell the story, to whom does he confess? Which father does he address in the last line of the novel, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned" (*Killing Time* 128)? Neferti Tadiar enumerates at least three fathers whom Noel has loved and

betrayed: his biological father, Marcos, and Marx, "the father of his defiant generation." She suggests that God might be a fourth (468). Also, it cannot be ignored that on board the plane, in the novel's present time, Noel speaks to an American, one who might represent a fifth, though Noel has not (yet?) betrayed America. He seems to anticipate something of the sort, however, when he questions himself, "What next would I betray?" (*Killing Time* 126). On board the plane, he thinks about how he must "gather up [his] own story, recover [his] name, deny autumns and winters, take snapshots of apples and goldenrods and print them on wet paper into mangoes and *talahib* grass" (119).

To me this shows the extremity of Noel's exile: he presents a picture of himself as a completely prodigal son. It might be true that "Noel goes from working for the national bourgeoisie to working for an international bourgeoisie" (Tadiar 471), but this does not mean he is bourgeois himself. One could just as much say that he has fled the Dictator only to find himself in the clutches of an Imperial Master. Tadiar reads his graduate schooling in America to mean "the completion of his assimilation into power, the fulfillment of his desire for full assimilation into the privileged global classes" (471), but I can argue that this is hardly the case. Elmyra is a little town in the Mid-west, perhaps the First World counterpart of the nowhere town that is Kangleong; it certainly is not San Francisco, Chicago, or New York. He writes for an insignificant paper called the *Elmyra Cine Guide*, not *The New Yorker*. And though he likes it in Elmyra, he is not completely welcome or at home there; the possibility of racial slurs abound, and "after all this time I still cringe in the face of accusations, however clumsily delivered, and I've learned to walk fast" (120).

Caren Kaplan's approach to the "Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse" might be more helpful here. She writes that "men and women who move between the cultures, languages, and the various configurations of power and meaning in complex colonial situations possess what Chela Sandoval calls 'oppositional consciousness,' the ability to read and write culture on multiple levels" (187). In other words, and in Bell Hooks' terms, Noel is able to see from the outside in as well as from the inside out; he can focus on and understand both the center and the margin (187). This all has to do with "positionality" (189). Noel has moved from the Barrio to the City, from the City to the World, and he has moved up the ranks from a Bachelor of Arts to a Master of Arts. He is highly educated, and can be considered middle class, which makes him privileged from the point of view of his countrymen, but which doesn't remove him from his second- or third-class citizenship in America, or absolve him of his past betrayals and sins.

Finally, the fact that Noel speaks to an American rather than to a fellow Filipino emphasizes his isolation. True, as Tadiar points out, he has to make substitutions in the

language to make himself understood—rain for snow, coconuts for raspberries, humidity for temperate climes—but this does not necessarily involve the act of privileging one over the other "in the completion of one's identification with the Other [the American] to whom one's labor and self belong" (Tadiar 471). As Kaplan says, dualities and dialectical oppositions—for or against America; subservient to or subversive against America—may no longer prove adequate in "explaining … differences and … respective positions in full complexity" (189). It is also quite possible that as a "deterritorialized" nowhere man, Noel gains from speaking to an American rather than to a Filipino. As he is forced to choose his words carefully so as to be understood by the outsider, as he is forced to take another look from the outside in, he clarifies his culture, his country, his own self, not only to the listener, but to himself.

In the end, at any rate, Noel may have forgotten whom he is speaking to, as he wonders whether he will ever go back to America and see snowfall again. Why else would he describe snow in such great detail ("pretty, flat and crisp with creamy edges" [*Killing Time* 127]) to a person who has lived with it in his country all his life? He forgets the present as he looks forward to going home to Kangleong to bury his own flesh, his father. There are things that he would like to bury, perhaps, with his father, for he has neither found himself—nor religion—but he considers quoting from a psalm: "Let my tongue be silenced, if ever I forget" (128). Why cannot it then be his father—his own flesh and blood—whom he ends up addressing, first and foremost? He may not have come full circle, he may yet do another metaphorical orbit around the globe in search of an identity as much as to "do penance and gain virtue in due time" (126), but why should we expect otherwise? The exilic condition continues, the motifs of departure, rootlessness, and incompletion remain. To Noel, at least, "historic amnesia"—which in Campomanes means the absence of the Philippines in American history, or the Filipino's forgetfulness of his own history (163-4)—is not an option, and he urges himself "to wake up before [he loses] everything to this silly romance with temperate hazes" (*Killing Time* 119), and guards himself against forgetting in the telling of the sin. If anything else, the guilt will remind him:

> When they let me out of prison, I knew I didn't want to die. It was easier to believe that I had been wrong, been forgivably juvenile, than that I had been right and so would have to persist, be a hero beyond my years, my class, my feeble wish for a feeble old age, weeping in front of a VCR over a period film of the seventies. *If not now, when?* Some other time. *If we do not act, who will?* Some others will. Others knew more, others were stronger, others had firm, blood-hallowed reasons to stalk

> the enemy. So let them. This was my excuse: I was nobody. I was no body; I would not join the glorious carnage, the honored train of coffins that lit up chapels and engaged pallbearers everywhere, from Belfast to Beirut to Soweto to Buenos Aires to Diliman, trailing flowers, mothers, fiancees, diplomas, unfinished novels, garlic sizzling in the pan, hairbrushes, pinpricks, the plangent rains of August. If others fought, it was because they, too, refused to die, or at least live in ways that forced them not to be themselves; but I had no such qualms; I could be, would be, someone else, but live; I could live with my guilt, that I could, and leave goodness and its pains to others. Not that I wished to add myself to the causes of their suffering—I knew I would—but I could not relieve them, and so I chose the safe, well-trodden path of forgetfulness and minor griefs (to be spat upon, to be oneself, forgotten; no matter). (114)

Noel expresses in this passage not only his own exilic condition, but a majority's that fought no cause during that era and who continue to do nothing in the present time, out of a sense of hopelessness. Everyone is forced to be someone else in the postcolonial/neocolonial situation: forced to accept, compromise, speak another language, and forge an identity that can survive, and even enjoy, countless paradoxes and discrepancies. Noel finds no remedy for the situation, except perhaps to struggle against forgetfulness in the end, albeit he has chosen the safe path. Perhaps writing/speaking, for him, becomes his way of going home.

This passage reflects, too, the theme or motif of guilt that runs through the two other Noel stories. In "The First of Our Dead," Noel (Noel Bulaong's namesake who is an AB English major rather than a Mass Commnications major) defends himself before an imaginary tribunal for not feeling anything for a dead boy in their camp: "I didn't know Delfin, and … millions of Chinese and Biafrans and Indians had died and continued to die wretched deaths everyday without my being morally bound to feel anything for each of them" (56). Like Noel Bulaong after prison, he refuses to join in the "glorious carnage, the honored train of coffins." Noel admits himself to be a shallow, selfish comrade to Delfin, but he finds security and justification in the fact that he has never yet known death, grief, and loss. While Noel Bulaong's excuse is his being a nobody, Noel's is his innocence and happiness. Both admit to a fear and horror of death, and both react to this fear by playing safe. Noel's position in HQ reveals how he distances himself from danger even as he does revolutionary work. Like Noel Bulaong, he does "auxiliary services" at propaganda and lives in HQ. Delfin's political officer, Noel's friend and comrade, Horace, considers Noel

an "HQ domestic, a chairbound softy" rather than a man of action (52). Even the way Noel sees his role as "jester in a court of compulsively severe Arthurian knights and ladies" (61) keeps him distant, distinct, different, and safe.

The oppositions in "The First of Our Dead" are clearly defined. Though the group in HQ decide they have to work with the police to find Delfin's murderer, they do not trust the police, knowing that the police would rather see them all dead. Even as the group plans to join Delfin's parents, to stage a protest rally at the boy's funeral, they are aware of how they might be unwelcome and perceived as a threat to the "normalcy" of Delfin's family. Finally, even as the group temporarily relieves Horace of his organizational duties as political officer in a particularly elitist high school, Noel foresees that this school will not understand Horace's behavior, will interpret his, Delfin's, and other students' "deviance" as a sign of imperfection in their regulations and curriculum rather than as a symptom of a rotten government. The institutions of police, school, and family are the enemy, or at least are no help to their group's many causes.

Taking our cue from Kaplan's view on positionality, we find the story even more complex. At the beginning of the story, Noel's place in the HQ's scheme of things is clear. He stays home to write the propaganda. When he goes to join Horace and his group of protesters, it is clear that Noel is the outsider. Even Itas whose duty is also propaganda seems more a part of Horace's group, thus isolating Noel further with her blank look or her frown of disapproval. Noel's view of his own group as consisting of three boys and two girls, rather than "men" and "women," reveals his ambivalent attitude towards their politics. It is as if he considers them, himself included, to be "playing" rather than "fighting" for true causes in the real world. Perhaps Delfin's death by the blast of a homemade bomb rather than a real, military-issued one, doesn't help any. Noel claims he is happy in HQ, he wakes up happy, until he is "reminded of [their] revolutionary mission in the unhappy world" (62). This reminder makes him uncertain. Noel could be "killing time" until he is able to make a real commitment to something.

Horace, in spite of their friendship, serves as Noel's foil. Noel relates: "There were a dozen things we disagreed violently on, despite our common belief that society was sick and had to be shook up. The existence of God, the nature of our 'cultural revolution,' the role of the intellectual, my course (AB English), the role of women, marriage, the afterlife" (52). In the end, however, Horace's dedication and fervor do not save him from the same isolation that Noel, with his lack of dedication, feels. When Horace is relieved from his organizational responsibilities, he gets "off his high horse and [walks] by his lonesome" (59). When Noel attempts to comfort him, Noel perceives his own words as "platitudes

… rocks to the pebbles of Demosthenes" (61). The words feel thick in his mouth, but he continues to speak of the afterlife, of heaven and hell, of dying in a state of grace. He finds later on that Horace has fallen asleep before the end of his speech, but Noel pinpoints what is important in everything he has said: "the option to believe" (62).

This option calls to mind what Burns calls "choice" in the "introspective" phase of Martial Law Fiction, but also a distrust/disillusionment/disbelief/dissatisfaction in the choice one makes (Burns 201). There is not necessarily a "better" choice or a real one, in which case any choice amounts to the same undecided exilic condition and there is no choice after all. In Noel's case, he even runs out of things to believe in. In his Christian beliefs and his disagreements with Horace, Noel proves himself not a real revolutionary with a corresponding or contradictory set of beliefs; and after his little speech on faith, which seems to him "transparently anchorless and sophomoric" (62), he is not quite sure if he believes in the afterlife either. Noel is changed—whether he likes it or not, whether he is ready or not—by Delfin's death. At the end of the story, he finds himself on the threshold of Horace's worse-than-hellish void. Noel moves from certainty to uncertainty, from innocence to guilt, from faith to emptiness. Delfin's death has ushered him into the exilic condition, and as a coping mechanism, religion proves to be as ineffectual as the other institutions of security, learning, and family.

In "Amnesty," the nameless counterpart of Noel Bulaong is older, married, expecting a second child. In some ways he is further along the safe path that Noel Bulaong has taken, for at the historical time of this story, right after People Power, Noel Bulaong is still in Elmyra USA, not yet having found a wife with whom to "play son, brother, and father" (*Killing Time* 126). Again, the word "play" calls to mind the idea of a role put on, a role that is not accompanied by a deep-felt belief, not unlike the role of propagandist and jester that Noel "plays" in his group of boys and girls. Like Noel Bulaong, this nameless person whom we could call N has found a new life outside the revolution, has "retrieved … a future from the chaos" as an MBA graduate and aide to a minister ("Amnesty" 49). This life, however, proves just as tenuous, for the minister has fled to Hawaii with the dictator, and N finds himself practically jobless. As a husband and father, N enumerates his many worries: "of the knife slipping in my wife's hand and nicking her; of falling helplessly behind in my payments on the house and car; of getting caught jaywalking, and having the old subversion charges dredged up by some efficient prosecutor; of choking on my food; of meeting former comrades and hearing the same harrowing news, now and then relieved by perplexing accounts of courage in the face of certain death; of my own death, for nothing" (52). Like Noel Bulaong and Noel, he admits to fearing death, but he elaborates: a senseless

death. N's fears seem strange, however, at the time of the story, for a new government has replaced the old one, and declared an amnesty for all political prisoners. Why then should N be afraid of efficiency in a prosecutor, or even think about subversion charges; why expect the same news of violence spawned by an already defunct government? N seems to show little faith in the new era; he has lived too long with the small choices of "juice or tea or coffee in the morning" (52). In this new era, N is on a bus, late for a job that is no longer there.

When he takes the bus, he bumps into an old comrade who has been woman, muse, and rebel in the old cause and has paid the price of losing her husband and being incarcerated. N then reenacts the guilt that Noel Bulaong feels when he meets with Laurie, after he has chosen to work for the government. On the bus is one whom N has let suffer and left the goodness and pain to, one who has joined the glorious carnage, fought, and survived. More than Noel Bulaong, N has gone further down the road of forgetfulness, drinking and toasting old comrades with ex-comrades, promising to visit this Laurie #2 "with gifts of such cakes and flowers as prison has never seen, but in the morning traffic we all forgot" (51); yet in their younger days they had "secretly pledged … to her service and to her defense, in barricade and picket line" (49).

The encounter between N and Laurie #2 uncovers a wealth of irony. Laurie #2, newly released from prison and attempting to connect with lost relations, appears to be the outsider. Her man's shirt, rubber sandals, plastic bag, sampaguita necklace, and her one-night sleepover in Luneta all seem outside the normal or fashionable scheme of things. But her enjoyment of sampaguita and Luneta, of the novelty of roads and shopping centers, of the dream-like quality of the prison gates opening and people clapping so that she thought she had died and gone to heaven, makes her feel more welcome to the new regime than N does. For N, the new regime, the amnesty, the encounter with Laurie #2, bring to mind things from a past that he has tried to escape; he can only feel offended by the perfume of sampaguita and frightened by the thought of sleeping in Luneta. It is she who tries to assure him that he is a good man, that he will find another job, and to root him in the present: "The future. The past. I convinced myself that someday it would all come together, that we would all meet again, and start afresh, and here we are" (52). She gives him hope and lights up corners—just corners—in N's soul. But though the story ends with hope, hope itself hangs by a thread.

"Amnesty" is filled with descriptions of the devastation and brutality that the nightmare of Martial Law wrought in the lives of countless Filipinos. Laurie #2 has lost her husband Tino (just as Laurie lost her true love Benny in *Killing Time*); yet even more than

losing others, Martial Law has also made people lose selves. A day's amnesty, a change in government, is not enough to undo this—not enough for things to come together and for people to begin afresh. N seems to echo Noel Bulaong's compromise "to be someone else, but live," when he tries to defend his choice to Laurie #2: "I got a job … I got married. I thought I'd give it a try" (51). There is no deep commitment here, and anyway, he has lost his job and found one part of his choice ended. Laurie #2, on the other hand, despite trying to keep true to her beliefs, has lost a part of herself too, the part of her womanhood that is able to wear a dress and paint her nails. She fears that her experiences in the mountains and in prison have effaced this feminine side of her, and she fears that N might not understand.

Martial Law has been construed "as an extreme manifestation of a longstanding distortion of Philippine life" (Burns 200). Indeed, Martial Law has only added to a spectrum of brutal alterations ranging from the nation's colonial past and stretching into its neocolonial future (Gonzalez 33). Martial Law may have altered Philippine life, but so has the restoration of (an American-type) democracy. The exilic condition persists because there are larger brute forces beyond either a collaborator or rebel's control. More than N not being able to appreciate the scent of sampaguitas anymore, there is the quite disturbing image of him on a plane from Singapore, sucking on a salad cherry with Vivaldi humming between his ears. He thinks of "the howling murder that infested the islands below [and wishes their] flight to vanish into a cloudbank, into the forgiving arms of angels" ("Amnesty" 51-52). There is a wish for effacement here, by cherry, by Vivaldi, by Spanish-Catholic-inspired angels, but there is also a dream of forgiveness not unlike Noel Bulaong's as he flies "thirty-six thousand feet above the black Pacific" (*Killing Time* 3). In the end, both return to the islands, both are unable to forget.

Furthermore, the altitude of thirty-six thousand feet represents for N, as it has for Noel Bulaong, a psychic distance between N and the islands infested with howling murder. The Philippines has turned savage, unfamiliar, and unrecognizable as one's home so that he would rather disappear. Minnie Bruce Pratt's idea "sensation of being homesick while at home" (qtd. in Kaplan 193), or in this case while flying home, takes on a whole new meaning. N has become homesick. In "Storyline," something similar has happened to Jack Del Mundo, a professional screenwriter who has declared a vacation from "work, country, [and] God if that's possible" (80). For him, the Philippines has been reduced to an experience of meanness and misery, from which, in fact, he has made his living.

Joaquin "Jack" Del Mundo—a clever name that could read "Jack-of-the-world" or "Global Jack"[2]—might strike one as a representation, or at least a caricature, of the native who has a severe case of colonial mentality and historic amnesia. His access to America is

not through any reading of the Philippine colonial past, but through a series of textbooks in grade school called *Faith and Freedom*, which shows a very idyllic "Littletown" America, as well as through *The Guinness Book of World Records*, *Ripley's Believe-it-or-not*, *Reader's Digest*, and of course, TV and the movies. His intention while in the US is "to genuflect at the gates of Universal Studios" (72) and "to see tall buildings, fast cars, and busty women" (80). He carries in his heart the dream of Hollywood and the Oscars. Yet, at the same time, he is a much more complicated man than this, able to see the humor and irony in the fact that work, country, and God, have followed him anyway.

Howard Creedy, a film producer based in Swansdale, Philadelphia, has enlisted Jack to come up with a storyline concerning the US Naval Base in the Philippines "using the relationship between Bob, an American sailor, and Mylene, a Filipino prostitute, as a geopolitical metaphor" though Jack simplifies and translates this into "a love story with a tearful ending" (74). Howard is not the George Lucas-type that Jack expects. Instead, he turns out to be more like Jesus, the non-fashion plate, in his well-meaning desire to make a timely documentary aimed at making the American people "care." Yet Jack too turns out very different from the patriotic and accommodating Filipino that Howard expects. Jack admits that he "couldn't care less if that navy base stays or goes" (78) because caring one way or another wouldn't make any difference, and at any rate he has already given up. He beats all—beats Noel Bulaong, Noel, and N—on the road to forgetfulness, and has chosen not only safety but apathy. He brims with even more citified cynicism than poor Apple Pie Howard does.

"Storyline" becomes a series of misreading, miscommunicating, and misunderstanding that goes beyond the simple mispronunciation of the Spanish appellation "Joaquin" (as the Americans do with "Noel Bulaong") and the surprise that Jack speaks good English, into deeper and deeper levels of double, triple-edged arguments and inscrutability. For example, each one points out that the other has an "image" problem. Howard looks too little like the sleek Hollywood producer, and Jack seems unconvincing as a Third World Writer in his Marshall's sportcoat. Howard further suggests to him to use his more exotic-sounding name "Joaquin" rather than "Jack." Both are guilty of stereotyping the other/Other. Jack expects Howard to have a car, to be married to a Caucasian rather than a Vietnamese, and proclaims that all Americans stereotype Asians, even as he generalizes them all to be "kind, warm, and friendly" (79). Their stereotyping goes deeper into the level of images. Howard presents to a potential fundraising group a slideshow of the Philippines which is a succession of "beaches, coconuts, bathers, and battleships in the horizon" (74). Jack, on the other hand, sees America as Hollywood, as Laundromat

and self-service instead of washerwomen, as shopping mall with its discounted mugs, and as a big Ripley's museum showcasing a two-headed calf and a man who strings a ton of iron coils around his body "just because." America becomes senseless expanse and freedom, delightful diversion, a juxtaposition of New England steeples and Golden Arches/ McDonald's.

Yet Jack goes even further and reduces his own country to images of "an awful lot of Mylenes, Monas, Susans, Josephs, stock characters all with stock histories and monologues" in places like "bars, massage parlors, jails, charity wards, and fractious dinners, any place that looked like all it needed was an Arriflex grinding away in a corner, any place like Manila" (79-80). Jack himself is that Arriflex camera, and looks with a colonial master's eyes to see what could be filmed, exploited. He prizes his provincial sentiments, for all his citified airs, because they are "good for the movies, they never fail" (79). Francia writes, "If the idea of the Other appears as an exoticized objectification of the alien in contemporary Western society, in the Philippines what has been exoticized and commodified has been the deepest part of ourselves" (xiv). Before Jack has even set foot in America to define it, he has already been defined by it, so that "Littletown, USA" becomes more familiar and welcome to Jack than himself or his countrymen as Filipino. Indeed, it becomes impossible for Jack to satisfy Howard's demand for a "genuine Filipino sensibility" ("Storyline" 75). His attitude towards his work, towards the "material" for his work, echoes not only Howard's detachment (Howard who does not even leave Philadelphia to put together documentaries of Somalia, Kampuchea, and Nicaragua because in the final analysis, it is only a job and he would rather stay home) but also reflects Noel Bulaong and N's psychic disconnectedness with their work for government. He calls his fifteen scripts "potboilers mostly" (72) and couldn't care less if his storyline pleases Howard.

As Howard and Jack exchange witty, as well as barbed, banter, they also become more and more exasperated with each other because they cannot agree on a storyline. Whereas before, Howard compliments Jack on his English and sighs with relief that they are talking the same language (76), by the end of the story they realize that they aren't. When Jack does not give way to the happy ending Howard wants, the American criticizes him on the funny-smug way he talks, and Jack responds defensively by saying, "I wouldn't be here in the USA if I weren't able to speak this way!" (86). Underlying this outburst is a belief that the English language is his ticket to America (to make it big in America, what with his half-professed dreams of Hollywood), and all the while he is aware that some Filipinos spend their lives preparing to be complimented on their good English (grammar and pronunciation). He is proud of his language skills, and he feels a right to be able to use

it any way he wants, just like any American.

Jack here can be considered, in Campomanes's terms, a bilingual or trilingual "neocolonial native" immersed in "'two psychical and cultural realms' which [generate] an irremediably conflicted and complicated condition" (Memmi qtd. in Campomanes 178). Even as Jack expresses himself in English, he runs the risk of losing himself in the translation. The assumption here is that he is translating his (native's) experience using the colonizer's tongue. The use of English, according to Campomanes, "is a material and symbolic mode of alienation and transformation." As a mode of alienation, the choice of English as a language no doubt gathers a group of people/class together while leaving out or isolating another so that it becomes "a mechanism of social hierarchy" (178). It becomes more complicated as a mode of transformation because it offers a wide range of possibilities ranging from (1) being absorbed into, and losing the self entirely to, a culture that is not one's own; to (2) finding the self fragmented, or one's life presented as non-actual; to (3) carving out a "native clearing" to express native longings and the "sense of dislocation and ambivalence, the crisis of self-image and identity" (Strobel 64-5).[3] In the long run, the opportunity and possibility of expressing one's true self and situation in any language is the best one can hope for, for the national reality "is never in any language, let alone a borrowed one" (Gonzalez 36). Jong warns Noel Bulaong that all the words in the English language won't save him, but qualifies his own statement by adding: not where he is, not at the moment when he isn't being his true self, working for, instead of against, government. Similarly, like the empty speeches of Noel Bulaong, Jack's potboilers and quips, his appreciation of America, and his disparagement of all things Filipino, hide a self Jack might not even be aware of, a self so good at hiding that it is in danger of being lost altogether (Francia xiv).

This self has ironically and unwittingly—even if only partially—revealed itself through Howard and Jack's disagreements on the issue of storyline and on what Bob the Sailor and Mylene the Prostitute might represent. On one level, we see the Benevolent American argue for "some residual nobility" in everyone, just enough "to make personal relationships work" so that love and understanding can triumph. In answer, the cynical Filipino asserts the one and only possibility of tragedy and cataclysm, because in the Philippines "politics will always defeat love" ("Storyline" 85). His justification for saying this lies in his articulated thesis earlier that "America had to be better beside everything else" (80). However, the America in his thesis, the America he visits, is different from the America he perceives in his storyline, the America that is present in the Philippines. While Howard would like to emphasize mutual understanding and universal human sameness

in the language of love, Jack insists on miscommunication, on cultural barriers and misunderstanding. In Jack's storyline, Bob the Sailor ends up murdering Mylene because he has misread her actions for love, never mind that he has paid for her time. He thinks he can buy her love, and when he can't he murders her. America is the murderer when it isn't loved back.

Though Jack is ready to sell his soul to Hollywood, there is a part of him that senses what America—its politics and democracy—has killed in his country. All his life the image of America, through textbooks in school and through TV and the movies, has made his own reality pale in comparison. While Tom and Ann took him by the metaphorical hand "to the drugstore and the carousel, to the hills to hunt for arrowheads, to school for an education," he sat in a school with "a knotty mud floor and a roof of thatched straw" (81). "Storyline" may be about Jack's whole lifetime of coping by means of his imagination and humor, as well as a resigned cynicism regarding his country and a detachment from work, and an occasional vacation from both, if not from God. He may not be as insightful or guilt-ridden as Noel Bulaong or N, may not be totally aware of his "image" problem, but by the end of the story he is "bothered no end by the dramatic necessity of murder" (87).

It is just as much possible that Howard Creedy may not have come out unscathed from this encounter with an unyielding, unapologetic, apathetic Filipino. Robbins writes:

> [T]ransfers from the periphery to the center do not leave the center as it was. The transnational story of upward mobility is not just a claiming of authority but a redefinition of authority, and a redefinition that can have many beneficiaries, for it means a recomposition as well as a redistribution of cultural capital. In short, progress is possible. (32)

Jack has moved from the Barrio with his provincial sentiments and develops citified airs in the City, then takes a vacation in the United States where he gets an American to concede to the ending of their hypothetical storyline, although as a compromise Mylene is granted a speech on truth and justice before Bob murders her. It's interesting to note that it is Mylene who gets to say the speech, not Bob, and more importantly, it is Howard who has chosen Mylene to speak his sentiments rather than his compatriot Bob. Noel Bulaong too has moved from the periphery of Kangleong nearer the center in Elmyra USA; who's to gainsay the American sitting beside him has not listened the whole novel's while? This becomes possible too in "We Global Men" where a Filipino—another nameless protagonist whom we could call J—who is even more global than global Jack, as well as better-educated

and better-traveled, makes two Scottish businessmen uncomfortable, however briefly, in their complacent First World seats.

J is an engineer in Edinburgh for a week's training visit, care of a Canlubang-based manufacturing firm with ties to the central headquarters in the UK. J has moved up in the world, from being a graduate scholar to Germany, where he might have been taken "for a foreigner who would impose himself and his needs on the social security system of another country" (54), to being a world traveler who has seen China, India, and the US. At present, J has become a part "of the dizzying flow of global commerce in the late 20th century" (49). In his mid-thirties, J feels proud of his advancements and accomplishments, looking forward to a life of promotions, more children, travel, and retirement among his ornaments and curios, collected as souvenirs from places around the world "not so much to show off as to reassure himself that anything and everything was, almost literally, within reach" (50). In Scotland, his middle-class achievements and his American-accented English serves to set him apart or distinguish him from a certain class of Filipinos the Scots are used to: maids or nurse's helpers. "He imagined that they expected him to speak in some kind of Japanese or Swahili, and he was glad and proud to disappoint them; if they knew German, well, he could speak some of that, too. He felt like an ambassador at large, from 'The Orient, Etc.'" (53).

His idea of being an ambassador or representative of whatever he means by "The Orient" has ironic underpinnings. He certainly doesn't epitomize the majority of his country, the populous masses, which to some extent an ambassador really does not represent; but he isn't one of the elite or ruling class either. Secondly, he isn't at all what the Scots expect, and he is proud to surprise them with his linguistic prowess and impress them with his cultivated smartness, with the ultimate agenda of being acknowledged as one of them, as one of the global men, rather than as exemplary Filipino. Decidedly the best demonstration of this is the postcard of three young Filipino girls in native or traditional attire that J chances upon in an antique show, among others in a box marked "The Orient, Etc." Its "oddly cool monochrome" sets it apart from "the more common sepias and hand-tinted photographs" (47) so that even among the "orientalia," it is an isolated curio. To J, it is a reminder of a distant past from which he is already cut off, or he has already cut himself off. He buys it not for any sentimental or deep-felt connection but as a potential conversation piece or joke on his return to the Philippines. Yet he inadvertently brings it with him to a business meeting, pocketed with business cards that he no doubt believes will identify him as one of them, their equal, a global man. The postcard could very well symbolize his disconnected past and dislocated identity, and the business cards his

articulated or conscious and present but incomplete self.

Here we see what Francia refers to as "the cruel legacy of colonialism: the Other refers to what was once our familiar but now has become foreign; and what was once foreign has now become our familiar" (xiv). J does not even get to appreciate the difference Scotland offers from all the other countries he has been to. If anything, he prefers "the impersonal efficiency of American hotels" and admits that he "could forgo the bagpipes, even, as far as entertainment [is] concerned. Culture, to him, mean[s] a gift shop in the lobby and a ceremonial glass of the local brew" (51). He reveals himself just as adept as his Scottish hosts later on in reducing the other culture to internationally standard images: Scotland = bagpipes and kilts; Philippines = dancing girls in Japan. J feels insulted and shamed by McTaggart's reference to Filipino girls in the bars of Osaka, but he recalls having taken his clients out to local bars back home and finding nothing wrong with it because he could afford it. His middle-class comforts, his impeccable English, his little speech on international economic cooperation may draw toasts and applause from McTaggart and Forsyth, but in the end he feels reduced to a performing curiosity like the dancing girls, or the postcard of Filipino children almost a century before. As Danton Remoto says, even with his double-breasted suit, his liquid accents, his plastic cards, he is still a second- or even third-class citizen (556). When he feels for the business cards later on, to hand over to his hosts, it is the postcard he touches.

Forsyth misconstrues J's hand on his breast pocket as an indication of a heart ailment, and asks J if he is okay. But what ails J is deeper than any medical problem, the disturbance hard to reach and articulate, like Jack Del Mundo's uneasiness over "the dramatic necessity of murder." He may have imagined showing the postcard to his hosts as a way of distinguishing himself from the Philippine past, its backwardness and failures, its "quaint barefoot girls in their native costume," but instead experiences himself in a "median state," pulled by two forces or selves:

> And look at me, I'm here, a man, a businessman who wears good shoes and speaks the languages of the world. Don't you see?—I 'm one of you now, we're all in this together, we global men. But the postcard seemed to burn in his chest, to weight down his whole body, to draw him back to something he had struggled long and hard to leave. (58)

His thoughts, not enclosed in quotations, of wanting to be a global man are in the first person; his separated self is referred to in the third. Said describes the intellectual

exile as suffering from this "median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or secret outcast on another" ("Intellectual Exile" 49).

Shaken, J's impulse is to call his wife, to retreat into family, the solace (or the dream of solace) as it seems, of many of our previous exilic protagonists. Noel Bulaong equates penance and working towards the forgiveness of his sins with buying a house beside his parents in Marikina and finding someone to marry. Here, he says, he would learn to "reattach [himself] to a new kind of responsibility" (*Killing Time* 126). N has already found this responsibility, expecting a second child and having "paid down payments on a subdivision house and a two-liter car" ("Amnesty" 49). J speaks of the same things in even greater detail, describing with pride his middle-class life with a wife and two kids, and enumerating his belongings: from the trinkets he brings home from all parts of the globe, to his four-bedroom bungalow and a year-old Nissan Sentra, to the stocks that give him hope of a future that, barring changes in government or business policy, is completely and financially secure ("We Global Men" 50). Should he die suddenly, he finds comfort in the fact that his family can collect from an insurance policy totaling three million pesos.

The family is where they find the consolation and the reassurance to continue despite the exile's "global predicament of continual transition and an ongoing negotiation of competing allegiances" (Graves). On the voyage from the margins of society towards the center (as the Filipino moves from Mountain to Barrio, from Barrio to City, from City to World), instances and expressions of the exilic condition abound. The Filipino intellectual—whether Noel Bulaong or N, Jack Del Mundo or J—has to negotiate the median state, "a liminal space between the prerogatives of national interest, academic specialization, and filial piety" (Graves). Once he realizes or perceives his position to be just as shaky or tenuous in the global world, he begins to long for the voyage home. The gestures of return to at least an idea of home, comprised of a family that brings comfort or forgiveness or fulfillment, is the closest a Filipino might get to a stability in the exilic condition; for a sense of meaning and purpose, a direction, might never be fully realized in the public, political sphere continually shaken by colonial and neocolonial brute forces. As Dalisay writes in the preface of *Sarcophagus and Other Stories*, a sense of place in his stories, a sense of home, may finally be "the only thing to say, the only thing to go for" (xi).

NOTES

1 Caren Kaplan, in her essay "Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse," suggests that the expatriate way or form of exile may be further divided into either a personal choice or a forced circumstance (191).

2 He could also be a parallel play on the name Nick Joaquin/Quijano de Manila ("Jack of Manila").

3 The question of language in the exilic, postcolonial condition is another paper unto itself. Already, there are varying opinions on the subject of the transformative power of a borrowed tongue, from the most negative views and reactions as described or espoused by Campomanes and Gonzalez to the more hopeful let's-make-the-most-of-it views of Francia, Abad (as quoted in Strobel), and Kaplan.

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NEW SCHOLARS FORUM

ILOCANO IMMIGRANTS' RENEGOTIATION OF SPACE IN GUMIL HAWAII FICTION (CIRCA 80s)

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Abstract
Migration, transportation, overseas labor, globalization, etc., have spawned complex and overdetermined consequences—among them the unprecedented migration of Filipinos, particularly Ilocanos, to Hawaii. The Philippines' colonial history and neo-colonial realities often figure in the Filipinos' construction of their identity in Hawaii, resulting in their essentialization as unskilled, uneducated, and unassimilable plantation laborers. The decline of the plantation era, however, led to the reconstitution of the Ilocano labor force into the "new plantations" of the tourism industry's hotel and restaurant sectors. The new set-up is nonetheless rooted in what E. San Juan calls the "integration of Filipinos into US society on the basis of inequality and subject[ion] to discrimination due both to their race and nationality." This study looks at Ilocano immigrant writers' prize-winning short fiction (circa 80s) anthologized in GUMIL Hawaii; how Ilocano immigrant personas negotiate experiences of diaspora, dislocation, marginality, and disempoweredness; and how they create and recuperate a new hybridized space, even as they struggle with exilic life and its neo-colonial realities.

Keywords:
Ilocano-Hawaiian fiction, Filipino diaspora, migrant literature, plantation workers

About the Author
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Migration, transportation, overseas labor, and globalization have spawned complex and overdetermined consequences, among them the dispersal and the dissipation of identity for hundreds of thousands of Filipinos. How do Filipinos negotiate this anxiety of separation from their roots, compounded even more by their relegation to the periphery? Whatever field of endeavor they embark in – whether as plantation laborers of the first to the fourth wave movement, to the professional fields such as teaching, writing, and publishing—Filipinos continue to experience marginalization. They are often essentialized

as unskilled, hot-tempered, untrustworthy immigrants, and often relegated to the lowest positions, a case in point being the experience of Filipino plantation laborers during Hawaii's plantation era. More recently, teaching posts, for example, would be reserved instead for the Japanese even if Filipino teacher applicants are more equipped for the job or speak better English. Such is symptomatic of the essentialization of Filipinos as unskilled, unassimilable laborers; this explains their "subordinate social status" (Agbayani VIII). And in this great migration to Hawaii, the Ilocanos take up a huge number of immigrants more than other ethnic groups in the Philippines. It was the Ilocano group that constituted the majority of Hawaiian plantation laborers that was initially recruited by Hawaii Sugar Plantation Laborers (HSPA) during the plantation era. According to Dean Saranillo, to this date, Filipinos "comprise 23.4% of the settler community and an estimated four thousand settle in Hawaii every year, making Filipinos the fastest growing ethnic group in the island" (134). And out of the total Filipino population in Hawaii, 80% comprise the Ilocano community.

Research yields that in earlier anthologies of Asian-American writing, Ilocano literature in Hawaii had been excluded, nor was there even any mention that such activity of Ilocano writing exists. In the Introduction of the anthology *Charlie Chan is Dead* (1993) edited by Jessica Hagedorn, she speaks of the belated representation of Asian-American writing, particularly of Filipino-American writing. But as one peruses over the titles, one notes the absence of Ilocano-Hawaiian writing. Where does the kind of writing Ilocano writers based in Hawaii fall then if even mere tokenism of their existence is absent? Fact is, Ilocano-Hawaiian writers have been producing in all genres since the early seventies. In 1997, however, the tandem of Oscar Campomanes and N.V.M. Gonzales published an essay titled "Filipino American Literature" (62-102), which is included in the book *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* edited by King-Kok Cheung. The essay includes a substantial discussion of Ilocano-Hawaiian short fiction. Other than this essay, Ilocano writing in Hawaii has been consigned to invisibility.

What underpins the absence of Ilocano-Hawaiian writing in Asian American anthologies? Tony Schirato posits that "Western culture's explanation of the Orient remains predicated on the discursive reproduction—in novels, travel writing, tourist guides, as well as more overtly political documents—of certain naturalized and racially based hierarchies of power" (44-5). Based on this formulation, one notes a US-centric discourse, an ever present and pervasive discourse that informs other cultural practices. Could this dominant discourse be responsible then for the positioning of Ilocano-Hawaiian writing as outside what is deemed Asian-American writing?

This paper will therefore focus on the experience of Ilocano immigrants in Hawaii, their social formation, and the kind of writing they produce. In order to interrogate the project of the Ilocano negotiation of their experience of immigration and diaspora, the study will focus on one aspect of Ilocano signification—the short fiction (circa early 80s) anthologized in *Dawa* and *Bin-I*. Focusing on ten award-winning short fiction by five Ilocano writers, this paper will problematize how this dynamic and ever changing geopolitical context, and the Ilocano immigrant personae's experience of dispersal, dislocation, and disempoweredness in the short fiction of GUMIL Hawaii writers, are negotiated to create an "imaginary coherence" that resonates of originary Ilokandia home but in the process rewrites a new, hybridized space. The study uses largely the framework of Stuart Hall on cultural identity and diaspora to construct a reading of the social formation of the Ilocano immigrants and how the personae in the stories attempt to negotiate the experience of diaspora. (Please see the section "Laying down the framework.")

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Fired by the promise of a much better life, a group of young and audacious Filipino men, majority of which were Ilocanos, packed their bags, sailed off for Hawaii, and braved the unknown. They became the first overseas contract workers in a predominantly sugar and pineapple plantation. This first venture to Hawaii in 1906 paved the way for Filipino migration to Hawaii. The movement fell into four waves of recruitment:

> The First Wave, 1906 to1919, drew more than 29,800, including 24,406 men, 3,056 women and 2,338 children. The Second wave, 1920 to 1929, drew the most with 73,996, including 65,619 men, 5,286 women and 3,091 children. The Third Wave, 1930 to 1934, limited then by the Tidings-Mcduffie (Philippine Independence) Act with a stringent US entry quota against Filipinos, drew 14,760, including 13,488 men, 610 women and 662 children. The Fourth Wave, 1946, coming immediately after World War II, drew 7,361, including 6,000 men, 446 women and 915 children. (Cordova 29)

Despite the harsh and unmitigating condition of plantation life in a foreign land where, according to Cordova, they were literally treated as "indentured first generation Filipino-American workers" (26), the movement to Hawaii was unrelenting. By 1946, in a span of 37 years, a "total of 125, 917 Filipinos were lured to Hawaii under the recruitment

program" (Cordova 29).

The decision to work in the newly-acquired American territory was primarily driven by economic motives, which was of course made imperative by an aggressive and systematic recruitment program that fired the imagination of the Filipinos.

> In addition … to the man in charge of general recruiting, there is one who goes from town to town, showing a movie of life in Hawaii. One scene shows the handing out of checks…, several reels were recently taken on one of the plantations of an annual Harvest Home festival in such a way as to show a maximum number of Filipinos, both in the parade and among the spectators [up close] to make recognition possible—and at a moment of natural exhilaration and pleasure over the spectacle. (Lasker qtd. in *Filipinos in Hawaii* 11)

Hawaii Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) was unrelenting in its recruitment. Filipinos signed up under voluntary arrangement, despite the long stretch of leave from their country and their families. As mentioned earlier, majority of the workers came from four Ilocano provinces—Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Abra, and La Union.

> At first, it was the five-year contract; later, it was the standard three-year contract. Passage to Hawaii was prepaid and a promise of free travel for those who wished to return after contract was fulfilled was also made to Filipinos after 1915. Depending on the immigrant group, a small amount of travel money was sometime also included. In every case, the promise of paid work and new opportunities in a new land was widely advertised, often with excellent results. (*Filipinos in Hawaii* 9)

While the Filipinos were enticed by the promise of an edenic life in Hawaii, the movement to this American territory was equally spurred on by the increasing difficulty of life in their own towns.

> The frustration of the Revolution of 1896, and the American conquest at the turn of the century, had asserted the movement for agrarian revolution in the Philippines. It is no accident that, as peasant exploitation intensified with the tying of the Philippine agricultural system to the world capitalist system, the lure of Hawaii became more and more irresistible to those Filipinos who had only a bleak future to look forward to in the Philippines. (*Filipinos in Hawaii* 12-3)

One, therefore, can see that the first wave of workers to Hawaii was among the least educated members of the working class. Since there were no unions then in the earlier recruitment years that would help them with labor issues and concerns, the contract between the elite planters and the Filipino sakadas was practically one-sided—a negotiation or arrangement that was solely drafted by the planter-employers. Thus, the plantation was practically run like a fiefdom:

> The Haoles [whites] were in management positions regardless of education and experience, the Spanish and Portuguese were the lunas or work supervisors, the Japanese were employed in shop and technical jobs. Invariably, the Filipinos were in the lowest positions and were kept as unskilled laborers for most of their lives. They performed the hardest task of planting, weeding, cultivating, cutting, hauling, loading, and fluming for very low pay. (Cordova 31; *Filipinos in Hawaii* 13)

The Filipinos lived and worked under stark conditions. They had to deal with prejudicial attitudes from their white employers who viewed them as no more than mere economic commodities. "Although they were spared flagrant beatings and physical abuse, their suffering, nevertheless, had perpetuated psychological damages, at least within two generations of Filipino-Americans, thus intensifying their sense of inferiority and self-esteem" (Cordova 30). The odds have always been stacked against them. This is what the Filipino laborers have struggled to change and overcome. In the 1920s, even if the Hawaii Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) was no longer aggressively recruiting Filipino plantation laborers, a huge number of Filipinos, majority of which were Ilocanos, continued to arrive in Hawaii even if this meant mortgaging the little properties and lands they had to cover airfare which costed seventy dollars in the 1920s.

THE FOUNDING OF GUMIL-HAWAII: WRITING IN DIASPORA

On January 16, 1971, an association of Ilocano writers called Gunglo Dagiti Mannurat nga Ilocano iti Hawaii was founded by Pacita Salude, an Ilocana originally hailing from Ilocos Norte. GUMIL Hawaii is a "recognized branch of GUMIL-Filipinas, the nationwide association of Ilocano writers in the Philippines" (Lorente 1). The Preamble of GUMIL-Hawaii which contains its vision and objectives asserts the "burning desire to form a writers' association in order to study and learn the most effective ways and means of perpetuating and communicating the Ilocano dialect, to develop and sharpen those with

writing talent so that their works might be recognized, printed, published and preserved for posterity" (Saludes 134). Since its founding, the association has regularly produced anthologies of prize-winning entries of different genres.

While GUMIL-Hawaii is driven by a vision to preserve the Ilocano language and culture through Ilocano literature (Saludes XIII; Albalos 119), I would say that it is through this venue that the Ilocanos could be afforded yet the opportunity to disabuse prejudices and demeaning stereotypes leveled at them. Filipinos, particularly the Ilocanos (since they comprised a huge number of plantation laborers) were referred to as uneducated plantation laborers.

Roman Cariaga's master's thesis *The Filipinos in Hawaii* published in 1937 profiles some of the great achievements of Filipinos in Hawaii. Jonathan Okamura posits that the "biographical sketches and accompanying photographs contradict the predominant stereotype of the uneducated, unskilled, unmarried, and unpredictable Filipino plantation field laborer widely prevalent in Hawaii throughout the pre-World War II period" (42). He asserts further that this "intractable ignorance" and the racism and discrimination which the Ilocano laborers endured was what Cariaga, in his thesis, and the Filipino community were resisting and contesting through the production of the book *The Filipinos in Hawaii* (Okamura 53), an anthology of biographical sketches of successful Ilocanos who had made it in Hawaii.

Several decades after Cariaga had published *The Filipinos in Hawaii*, GUMIL Hawaii replicated this project by coming up with a similar one, a biographical anthology of Ilocano achievers in Hawaii. This compilation of biographical sketches of successful Ilocanos in Hawaii is the first anthology published by GUMIL Hawaii two years after its inception. In the Foreword of the anthology entitled *Dagiti Pagawadan a Filipino iti Hawaii,* Reverend Juan Dahilig remarks that the anthology is taking the first "bold step to demonstrate the rightful place of the Ilocano dialect in the United States of America in particular" (VII). George Ariyoshi, Acting Governor of Hawaii, sharply reads this undertaking as a declaration to the world of the "unique gifts and cultural richness of the Filipino people … to acquaint many of our citizens with the positive contribution of Filipino Americans here, and … contribute to a sense of identity and serve as an inspiration to members of our Filipino community" (Ariyoshi III).

The founding of GUMIL-Hawaii as an association of Ilocano writers, and their project of putting together for its seminal publication profiles of selected Ilocano personalities who had made it big in Hawaii, was not just a venue to preserve the Ilocano language and culture, but a deliberate effort at constructing an Ilocano representation

that attempts to overturn Ilocano stereotypes that have stigmatized them and rendered them invisible. The "institutional invisibility" which Filipinos, particularly Ilocanos, have been experiencing had pushed them to form an enclave that would attempt to reverse racist attitudes and work towards their erasure. Still, while there were achievements by Filipinos they were regarded as marginal, placements of responsibilities were mere tokens, and avenues of equal opportunities were "stubbornly heavy [with] layers of encrusted institutional racism" (Umali 24).

Another instance of Filipino and Ilocano victimization is their erasure in the history of the United States. Through almost peonage-like labor, Filipinos who were part of the Asian population have largely contributed to the building and shaping of the economy of Hawaii and the US Mainland. It is through their backbreaking labor that Hawaii, a US territory, has become during the plantation era a multinational state. Little is known, however, of the Asians in the building of America: "many existing history books give Asian-Americans only passing notice—or overlook them entirely" (Takaki 9). According to Takaki, the epical proportions of *The Uprooted,* an American history book, had "completely left out the 'uprooted' from lands across the Pacific Ocean and the great migrations from Asia that also helped to make the American people" (10).

Moreover, when Jessica Hagedorn, a third generation Filipino-American immigrant, put together an anthology of Asian-American literature which came out in 1993, Ilocano literature was excluded from what is defined as Asian-American literature or writing. In Hagedorn's Introduction, there was even no mention that such writing exists, considering that GUMIL Hawaii has been publishing and in existence since the early seventies. In her Introduction to the Asian-American anthology Hagedorn writes: "In the 30 years I have lived in America, I never really thought I would see the literary landscape change, splitting off into so many challenging and liberating directions. As the first anthology of Asian American fiction by a commercial publisher in this country, *Charlie Chan is Dead* proudly presents 48 writers" (XXVIII). The literary landscape changed, all right, but where is Ilocano literature classified? The question one asks is, why Ilocano writings are excluded from the Asian-American anthology? Where does Hagedorn base her set of definitions of Asian-American literature? What is representative of Asian-American writing?

While the Asians have been essentialized as the Other of the West, the effort by some Filipino-American intellectuals, among them Jessica Hagedorn, to put together an anthology of Asian-American writing is a political move. And although Hagedorn explains that the process of putting together an Asian-American anthology would inevitably lead to the exclusion of other writings, such inclusionary measures or yardstick is still

implicitly informed by the dichotomy between the West and the East. The process of canon construction of Asian-American literature "demonstrates the very active processes of inclusion and exclusion associated with the maintenance of hegemonic" (Patajo-Legasto 39) Western literary practices. The implicit paradigm that is operational here is one that is

> responsible in the reproduction of the Orient, a reproduction based on an initial distinction (West/Orient) and the value (positive/negative) associated with it. The Orient becomes accessible to the West precisely because the West invests resources in acquiring knowledge (details about institutions, languages, religions, history, customs) and telling stories (novels, dramas, scientific treatises, anthropological works, business and brochures) about the Oriental object. (Schirato 46).

Hagedorn and other Filipino-American writers are coming from a system of knowledge about the Orient, and what is supposedly "an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness" (Said qtd. in Schirato 46).

Therefore, consigned to institutional invisibility, GUMIL Hawaii constructs a venue in the effort of self-representation. Using the Ilocano language, Ilocanos tell of their narratives, songs, and histories. The assertion of an identity, but which is always under erasure by American hegemony, has led them to found GUMIL Hawaii, an enclave that attempts to dispel the legacy of the "spectre of institutional invisibility" (Tiongson 1-14).

The great migration of Filipinos to Hawaii (where a large majority is comprised of Ilocanos) as indentured laborers has essentialized them as servile, unintelligent, exploitable, and unskilled domestic helpers. But the fact is, HSPA which supervised the recruitment of Filipino workers to Hawaii, stipulated of the need for workers who are used to manual labor and not too citified: "We want unskilled laborers for the plantations. They wouldn't be too unhappy to do manual work in the plantation, ten hours a day. So, give us rural people to work on the plantation" (Alcantara 28).

Such HSPA specifications had bred prejudicial images of Filipinos, particularly of Ilocanos. They have persisted, progressing into something very unflattering, hounding to this day third and fourth generation Ilocano immigrants. This construction of Ilocanos has marginalized and consigned them to the periphery. How then can this marginalization and essentialism of the Ilocanos be repositioned and reversed? How can this marginality be recuperated to achieve an Ilocano sense of agency? This project of recuperation will be made possible through the use of the Stuart Hall's framework. Stuart Hall talks about this notion of "cultural identity and diaspora" in connection to Jamaican experience, but this

paper appropriates his framework to theorize an understanding of the social formation of Ilocanos in Hawaii. Stuart Hall's theory then is deployed to the short fiction anthologized in *Bin-I* and *Dawa*, circa early eighties, by Ilocano writers belonging to GUMIL Hawaii.

LAYING DOWN THE FRAMEWORK

Stuart Hall defines cultural identity in two ways. The first definition is grounded on a shared culture. After colonized countries have attained their independence, one phenomenon that came out as a result of postcolonialism was a huge wave of migration. People from colonized countries started to migrate to imperial heartlands, ultimately to find better job opportunities. In turn, the experience of enforced diaspora or separation from the mother country has yielded fragmentation and dislocation.

Diasporic peoples experience nostalgia for the originary Motherland. The image of the Motherland, therefore, serves to anchor diverse experiences. It is positioned at the center of diverse cultural identities. This common culture and common past which the dispersed people dream of provides a single point of reference. As Hall points out: the Motherland is a signifier of "common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us as 'one people' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath shifting divisions and vicissitudes of an actual history" (Hall 393).

Therefore, the image of the Motherland, which is associated with a common past, provides an "imaginary coherence" amidst the experience of dispersal and fragmentation. The act of linking the present diasporic condition of the immigrant with the originary allows for coherence and integration. Situating the Motherland as the center amidst diverse experiences, values, and relationships serves as a panacea, a salve for brokenness that heals severed and forgotten connections. It enables the reconstruction of a fragmented identity into a one, stable cultural identity. Hall posits that the Motherland enshrined at the center "restores an imaginary fullness and plenitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past. They are resources of resistance and identity with which to confront the fragmented and pathological ways in which that experience has been reconstructed within the dominant regimes … of the West" (394).

The first sense definition of cultural identity, however, essentializes identity. It assumes that the past is recoverable, something that can be retrieved in its pure pristine state—that once the past is recovered, one can in turn "find a sense of ourselves into eternity" (Hall 394). This definition assumes that identity is unproblematic, fixed, and

stable, portraying the individual as a rational, conscious actor who could understand the basis for his or her action. The subject is assumed to be constituted by overdetermined signifying practices which are culturally specific.

The second sense definition of "cultural identity" posits a different view at looking at the term. While it recognizes points of similarity in the experience of the dispersed subjects, there are deep and significant differences that constitute the person or subject. This is so because history intervenes in the constitution of a subject. Contrary to the common notion, history is not linear, stable, coherent, fixed, and unproblematic. Instead, according to Hall, histories have "real material and symbolic effects" (395). In talking about the Jamaican experience, Hall opines that "we cannot speak for very long with any exactness about one's experience, one's identity, without acknowledging its other side—the rupture and discontinuities which constitute precisely the Caribbean's uniqueness" (395). In other words, while some Third world countries have a common history of colonization, the process of negotiating their colonial experience differs from each other, notwithstanding the overdetermined factors that come in, in the constitution of a subject, of a nation. The constitution of a subject, race, or nation is characterized by a constant but disjunctive, discontinuous, and fractal flow. The past continues to have its mark, but it is not the fixed, factual past that will be discovered or retrieved, as subscribed by traditional historians. Instead, the dispersed subject's relationship to the past, to his Motherland, is a relationship that is likened to that of a "Mother and a child after the break" (Hall 395) when the child through speech begins to be socialized into his or her role in society.

In order to understand what Hall posits as the dispersed subject's relationship with his past and with his Motherland, a brief explanation of Lacan is necessary. According to Jacques Lacan, who reworks the theory of Freud, a child gets the notion of the "I" from six months to eighteen months in three consecutive stages. This is called the mirror stage (Sarup 8). Lacan contends that initially, the "child does not merely desire contact with the mother and her care; it wishes, perhaps unconsciously, to be the complement of what is lacking in her, the phallus" (Sarup 8). The father, who symbolizes the Law, intervenes in the child's unconscious desire to be one with the mother. The father's intervention "deprives the child of the object of its desire [the mother]" (Sarup 9). In the process of intervention, the father symbolically castrates the child by separating him or her from the mother. It is also at this point of repression of the child's real desire that he or she gets socialized into the world and learns the language. On separation, the child's real desire, the mother, is replaced by the child's appropriation of the language; as the child learns the language, socialization begins—he or she gets initiated into different, sometimes conflicting

roles or subject positions awaiting him or her in the society. This oneness with the mother which the child experienced before the entrance of the father is severed forever. The subject can only go back to this originary relationship in a form of "memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth."

Hall, on the other hand, appropriates Lacan's theory of self and identity by positing that this originary past can only be visited and constructed through "memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth" (395), and not in the recovery of it in its pure, factual, unadulterated form. This connection with the past happens only within the realm of the imaginary. This satisfaction, and therefore ensuing coherence that one achieves through an evocation of the past, is imaginary. Hall argues that cultural identity is "not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us in which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not a once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return" (395). Moreover, cultural identity is not an "essence but a positioning that is reconstructed by some point of suture or rupture within the discourses of history and culture" (395).

What is strategic about this dual definition of cultural identity is its capability of simultaneous operation. The first definition functions to ground a continuity with the past—a utopian past which renders an imaginary coherence, integration, and stability to ruptured identities as a result of enforced dispersal, where subjects, race, and nations are directly "cut off from direct access to their past" (Hall 397). The second definition of cultural identity foregrounds the category of "difference," precisely the element inscribed in the cultural identity of fragmented subjects, rendering them unique. Ironically, it is this element which makes subjects unique that affords them agency.

Now, how does this play of difference functions in the foregrounding of Hall's definition of identity? Jacques Derrida, a French poststructuralist critic, spells the concept "difference" with an "a" so that it is spelled "differance." Such spelling gives the concept a defamiliarization effect which calls attention to its foregrounded meaning. Hall quotes Christopher Norris in explaining "differance":

> [Difference] remains suspended between the two French verbs "to differ" and "to defer" (postpone), both of which contribute to its textual force but neither of which can fully capture its meaning. Language depends on difference, as Saussure showed … the structure of distinctive prepositions which make up its basic economy. Where Derrida breaks new ground … is in the extent to which "differ" shades into "defer" … the idea that meaning is always deferred, perhaps to this point of an endless supplementarity, by the play of signification. (397)

If meaning is always deferred, always giving us the slip, then this dismantles the essentialist notion of identity which assumes it is fixed, coherent, consistent, stable, and unproblematic. Moreover, this binary scheme of constructing meaning is destabilized once and for all.

Toril Moi asserts that our culture is heavily imbricated in binary oppositions. Dichotomies like man vis a vis woman, original vis a vis translation, white vis a vis black or non-white, etc., are caught in a hierarchical play of meanings (125). She argues that in the struggle for hierarchy, an inevitable silencing or death happens where the weak are silenced, or worse, experience metaphorical death. Further, in this binary scheme, the underlying paradigm is male/female, positive/negative, white/black—where valuation is given to the first side of the tandem. The second categories in the binary oppositions (women, blacks, colonized, minority culture, etc.) are relegated to the powerless instance or position and deemed negative, inferior, other (Moi 125). If fixed binaries that stabilize meaning and representation are subverted by the poststructuralist definition of difference, then meaning becomes provisional. "Without relations of difference, no representation could occur. What is constituted within representation is always open to being deferred, staggered, serialized" (Hall 397). If production of meaning depends on the endless deferment of meaning, then these "traces" of signification happen in the juncture of difference. Meaning, therefore, is always repositioned, contingent, and arbitrary.

Now, the study brings in Edward Said's *Orientalism* to give a clearer picture and understanding of Stuart Hall's framework on cultural identity and diaspora. According to Said, the colonized were "constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West…. [As a result the West] had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as Other" (Said 235, Schirato 46). This discourse, according to Schirato, who quotes Said, is a way through which "violence is perpetuated against various groups, both in terms of its authorization/legitimization of overt political practices … and in terms of perpetuating Orientalist attitudes" (46).

The second sense definition of cultural identity can give us a frame and methodology by which Orientalist attitudes, which have inured to become common sense, can be dismantled after all. As Hall points out, such framework can be deployed in the project of reversing and recuperating the "ways in which Black people experience, positioned and subjected to the dominant regimes" (Hall 395).

Finally, substantiating Hall's theory of cultural identity and diaspora is Trinh Minh-Ha's theory of "Inappriopriate Other." Third World peoples, the non-White, or the colonized have been relegated to the margins for they are viewed as Other. Like Hall,

Minh-Ha posits marginality as a "sliding" positionality, therefore recuperable. It is not a fixed essence. Given this definition, Minh-Ha puts into question the binary schemes center/margin, outside/inside. She questions the measure or the scale that defines the perimeter that divides center and margin, inside and outside. She problematizes the questionable character of the scale that valorizes boundaries by pointing out its arbitrariness:

> [T]he moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to non-explicative, nontotalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure. (217-8)

The subject is therefore invested with an irreducible aspect "not quite the Same, not quite the Other. She stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider" (Minh-Ha 218). Such fluidity, positing an image of an indeterminable frontier, deconstructs fixed notions that have been responsible for the oppression of the Other and the continued domination by the West. Thus, the Other becomes the "Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about with always two/four gestures: that of affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference; and that of reminding 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness" (Minh-Ha 218). The category of indeterminacy can be used to substantiate Hall's and Derrida's frameworks for the project of theorizing the social formation of the Ilocano immigrant personae in the short stories under study. The seemingly commonsensical notions, assumptions, schema, and paradigms from which meanings are drawn are demolished: "there no longer is a position of authority from which one can definitely judge the verisimilitude value of the representation" (Minh-Ha 216).

ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT FICTION

The First Moment of Reading

My analysis takes a two-moment reading. First, it will look into how Ilocano writers based in Hawaii, through the characters or personae in their short fiction,

construct or recreate an "imaginary coherence" in their experience of dispersal and the ensuing dislocation and displacement**.** To do this I will employ in my analysis Hall's first sense definition of cultural identity. Although there are advantages of using the first sense definition of cultural identity, as discussed in the framework section of this paper, the poststructuralist critique of the assumptions of identity and other categories such as history, past, representation, etc., also expose their limitations and narrowness. In this regard, the second moment of reading which employs Hall's second sense definition of cultural identity is meant to recuperate what could be the unique (in the category of difference) identity of Ilocanos; substantiating Hall's framework is Minh-Ha's Inappropriate Other/Same (in the category of indeterminacy).

The first set of award-winning short fiction from *Bin-I* and *Dawa* ("The Heaven of Nana Sela," "Uncle Angelo's Return to Hawaii," "The Story of the Patani Plant, Water, and a Gentle Wind," and "Lakay Saulo, His Hut and the Rain") looks into the lives of oldtimers. The term "old timers" refers to men who started working in Hawaii as young, single plantation laborers and have now retired. Tata Joaquin, Uncle Angelo, and Lakay Saulo are old timers for they had left for Hawaii as young, single men, continuing to work at the plantations until their retirement. On the other hand, Nana Sela, another character in "The Heaven of Nana Sela," in is an old woman, a grandmother who migrates to Hawaii to join her son. These stories problematize their crisis and how they try to negotiate this exilic experience.

"The Heaven of Nana Sela" ("*Ti Langit ni Nana Sela"*) is about a grandmother who has been in Hawaii for three years. She lives with her son, daughter- in law, and two grandchildren whom she babysits. Throughout the story she is gripped with an unmitigating nostalgia (*iliw*) and a yearning to return home to her hometown (*purok*) in the Philippines. She asks her son Manuel a couple of times to allow her to go home, but each time she is rebuffed. Manuel has reasons for not allowing her to go home just yet.

This displacement that Nana Sela feels is intensified by her inarticulateness. Her inability to speak and understand English cuts her from belonging to the place. It intensifies her isolation, incarcerating her all the more in this paradise-like Hawaii. It is her inability to speak and understand English that Manuel uses to explain why he cannot allow her to go home alone, without his and his wife accompanying her.

Nana Sela, however, attempts to dispel this dislocation by prefiguring in her mind, in her imagination, a homeland which she revisits each time she is in the middle of housework, in the privacy of her room, or when she is alone. When her son's adamance finally sinks in, she tries to negotiate this yearning for home by constructing a fictive home.

Thus in an interior monologue she rationalizes that Hawaii and the Philippines have much in common anyway, recognizing the presence of many fellow Ilocanos. She observes that vegetable products found in Hawaii are also raised and produced in the Philippines, so she resolves to make Hawaii a more habitable place by constructing a vegetable garden, planting vegetables (eggplant, camote tops, etc.) that are also found in the Philippines. The vegetable garden approximates her Ilokandia shrang-ila. The act of reconstructing a vegetable garden is a creative expression that attempts to sublimate the literal and figural paralysis that Nana Sela feels.

Finally, Nana Sela's friendship with Nana Clara is valuable because like her, she is also an Ilocana. Nana Clara is a signifier of an Ilokandia past. Nana Sela looks forward to Sunday masses because she could meet up with her townsmate friend, Nana Clara. Their friendship grounded on their hometown ties (*kailyan* or *kababayan*) renders an imaginary coherence to the figural and literal inarticulateness, isolation, and alienation that Nana Sela is experiencing in edenic Hawaii.

The central character in the story "Uncle Angel's Return to Hawaii" (*"Idi Nagbalik Hawaii ni Uncle Angelo"*) is an old man who also experiences nostalgia.

Uncle Angelo had worked in Hawaii for a long time. After retirement, he returns to the Philippines to marry. Auntie Lorenda, the girl he marries is not a young bride. She is able to bear a child though, but she does not make it at childbirth and dies. The baby survives, but when the baby was a year old he gets sick and eventually dies. Uncle Angelo almost goes crazy with grief. Recovery is slow, so Uncle Angelo decides to visit Hawaii in order to forget his pains. He stays in Hawaii for several months but is possessed by nostalgia, so he eventually decides to go home to the Philippines.

After almost a lifetime of working in Hawaii as plantation laborers, a dominant thought occupying the minds of laborers is going home to the Philippines to marry and forge a family. Uncle Angelo fulfills this dream of putting up a family, except that it ends up short-lived for his wife dies in childbirth, and his child who initially survives dies shortly after. Angelo's grief is intense. Staying in the Philippines becomes too painful for it reminds him of his loss. He decides to visit Hawaii to forget, but the heart does not forget. Instead of finding temporary reprieve in paradise-like Hawaii, the tenuous equilibrium is unsettled more by the fast-paced bustling metropolis that initially greets him from the airport. He is not prepared for this.

Thus, even at the onset, a rift sets in and begins to wear down Uncle Angelo's already fragile sensibilities. But as he stays longer in Hawaii, the sense of equanimity he tries hard to negotiate gets badly eroded. Despite being with relatives of his own flesh

and blood, despite their frequent appeals to think of settling permanently with them in Hawaii, as he has no immediate family to return to anyway, Angelo would not hear of it. Even at the onset of his visit, he makes it clear to his relatives that his sojourn in Hawaii is temporary (*diak nga rangta ti agnaed ditoy*). He tells them that his dire wish is to equitably divide his property among the relatives of his wife in the Philippines, and spend the rest of his life and die there. "I don't want to die here" is Angelo's pronouncement ("*Diak kayat a ditoy ti pakatayak*").

Ten years pass since Angelo's leaving Hawaii, and he flies again to Hawaii to get temporary reprieve from sorrow and the wrangling relatives who never seem to be happy with the amount he allots for them from his retirement pay as a plantation laborer. But though he is in Hawaii and practically tension-free, he could not snugly settle in. His thoughts are constantly with the people he has left behind. His thoughts are single-mindedly directed towards home. Nostalgia grips him, throwing Angelo's nephew in panic. By way of easing this sadness, Angelo's nephew brings him to Aala Park, a haven of old Filipino men and women. In Aala Park he meets with other oldies and bonds with them, recreating with them a semblance of home. But this frequent trip to the park is short lived. He explains to his nephew that constant exposure to the oldies depresses him as he is reminded mercilessly of his near death. Ensconced once again in the four walls of the house, Angelo tries to distract his homesickness by puttering around the house. He takes on tasks that he had been doing back home in his farm—cutting firewood and tending a vegetable garden.

But Hawaii, as other cities, is not a place for the old. The modern, urban kind of lifestyle is the ingredients that advances isolation and loneliness. It is unfriendly, hostile, and petrifying—it could freeze the soul. Despite attempts on the part of Angelo and his relatives to make his stay as comfortable as can be, the body and the soul cannot take the bashings of city life. After some time the isolation takes a toll on him and he falls ill. This fragility is compounded by his present state of mind: he has returned to Hawaii as a broken old man with defenses that have been too frayed by an earlier crisis.

Angelo is torn between loyalty to his relatives in Hawaii and loyalty to the relatives of his wife in the Philippines. He soon realizes the hunger for warmth, for the comfortable routine that the body would eventually settle in—the simple but sluggish kind of existence that is found back home. It is what feeds the soul. Angelo decides to take the next flight back to the Philippines.

"The Story of the Patani Plant, Water, and the Gentle Wind" (*"Ti Mula, Ti Danum Ken ti Angin"*) again unfolds from the eyes of an old man who used to work in a sugarcane

plantation until his retirement a few years before. Tata Joaquin has been a widower for so many years. His wife passed away when their only child, Perla, was only six years old. Since then he has singlehandedly raised his daughter and taken care of their needs. But for some time after his retirement, with much free time, loneliness begins to creep in. His daughter is a now working. While she is out working, he is on his own for most part of the day. Nursing back pains and the fear of getting old slap him cold. The need for a wife intensifies. Some three months ago he had returned to the Philippines for a visit and had met Mercedes. He proposed marriage and she accepted. But he had to first inform his daughter about his plan. Marooned by cowardice and the fear of an untoward reaction from Perla, he delays his plan of marriage. When he finally musters the courage to raise the subject, Perla outrightly disapproves of it and threatens to leave if her father insists. Despite his daughter's stout objection, Tata Joaquin pushes through with the marriage. He flies home to the Philippines and marries Mercedes, then flies back to Hawaii with his wife. Perla, who is willful like her father, leaves home but after several months comes back upon realizing the folly of her ways.

Going back to that part of the story when after Tata Joaquin's retirement, he finds himself suddenly feeling old and idle yet with so much free time in his hands, pining for home and a wife he approximates the image of Ilokandia by tending a vegetable garden. He particularly tends with care and patience a *patani* plant—a marker of his Ilokandia home. The patani bean signifies fertility, lushness, and reproductive capacity. Ironically, though, it mercilessly reminds him of his current state as old, inactive, and unproductive—the opposite of the patani beans. In meticulously caring for his vegetable garden, particularly his patani plant, Tata Joaquin notes of the plants' needs: the life-giving heat of the sun, the whiff of a gentle breeze, and more importantly, the right amount of water to fight parchness (*"nabun-ag danto, nakunnana ti nakem na, ta saan laeng ti darang ti init ken lailo ti angina ti kasapulan ti mula no di pay met kangrunaan ti danum"*). The patani plant is not only a signifier of his Ilokandia home, but he is the patani plant who needs the sun's heat, and water—the sap of life. As the sun, breeze, and water are the basic needs of a plant, are not the life-producing warmth of a woman and her loving care the basic needs of a man?

While working on his vegetable patch that renders an imaginary order, meaning, and coherence to his metaphorical impotence, he attempts to crush this impotence by introducing the presence of a woman in his life. The adamant refusal of his daughter for him to get a wife does not deter him from this desire to complete a family. He goes home to the Philippines to marry Mercedes. The presence of Mercedes in his home in Hawaii will complete this aspiration. After some time, the daughter returns home to ask for forgiveness.

Tata Joaquin is successful in putting together a family. At long last, the Philippines is transplanted to Hawaii; his Ilokandia home is relocated to Hawaii.

The last story of this first set is entitled "Old Man Saulo, His Hut and the Rain" (*"Lakay Saulo, Ti Abong Abong, Ken ti Sangasudo nga Arbis"*). Very disillusioned and bitter, Lakay Saulo runs away from Dan-aw Asin, the community he has lived in for the longest time, and begins to settle in an uninhabited land called Red Cliff (*Nalabaga a Turod*). Lakay Saulo is an unfortunate man who has only known sadness and misery in his life. First, his young wife runs off with another man. Later, he is asked to leave the plantation housing because the laborers' barracks will be razed down to give way to development and progress. This tears his heart for he has lived there since he was a young plantation laborer in 1915. After being coerced to leave the plantation quarters, he does not find a home. He then decides to leave Danaw-Asin, which for him is a signifier of sin.

Despite the unfortunate trend of events, the old man does not go home to the Philippines. It has been a long time. He has left the Philippines as a young man and has been in Hawaii for most of his life. Ironically, he is now a stranger to both his Motherland and Hawaii. He likens himself to a leaf. Subject to the whims of nature, the leaf is plucked out from its branch. Rootless, it is then blown off to nowhere. It dries up, withers, and soon dies. Like a plucked out leaf, the old man is neither here nor there, for he never feels belonged to the community at Danaw-Asin. He is a fugitive running away from his past. Moreover, he is neither from Hawaii nor the Philippines. He is without roots. At eighty-five—enfeebled and infirm, and more importantly, houseless—a sense of weariness and helplessness engulf him. This sense of isolation and alienation are rendered physical when he stumbles onto Red Cliff, an uninhabited land which he later on decides to finally settle in.

As Lakay Saulo begins to construct a sense of home in this unexplored, unpeopled territory, he senses a new life for him. He shapes the frontier and wields it to his liking. He reconstructs a parcel of Red Cliff based on his imaginary of Hawaii in the earlier years of the plantation era—virgin, uncharted, unspoiled by the intrusive hands of modernization. On the other, in this boundless frontier, he fashions it to also look like the Ilokandia of his memory. He begins to grow vegetables of all kinds: camote, squash, string beans, etc. Soon he gets back his usual vigor. Red Cliff is transformed into a citadel, a stronghold against the depraved kind of life in Dan-aw Asin. His present habitation not only becomes his defense against the onslaughts of modernization, which had uprooted him from his plantation house, but also a possible link with his past. Here he is reconnected to the originary Motherland, and his ruptured sense of identity (illustrated in his earlier fugitive condition) begins to heal.

The next three stories ("Karma," "Adrift in the Night," "The Tang of Yesterday's Rain") look outwards. They problematize immigrants' dealings and relationships with society, entailing their work, their relationship with employers (implied or explicit) and neighbors, and finally, how they negotiate with diaspora, dislocation, and disempoweredness.

"Karma" (*"Adda Supapak ti Tunggal Biddut"*) revolves around the working conditions of Filipinos in a construction site. It speaks of the differences and divisiveness among ethnic groups, like Filipinos vis a vis Koreans. The Korean architect of the ongoing construction fabricates stories and lies to put the Filipinos in bad light. The sad thing is that the owner of the construction services, Mr. Gaston, though a Filipino is predisposed to listen to the stories of the Korean. Mang Rogel, the foreman-supervisor of the construction project, keeps his cool. In the end, he vindicates the Ilocano group of workers when Mr. Gaston realizes his mistake. He realizes his error and asks for forgiveness, but Mang Rogel tenders his resignation and surrenders the key of the pick-up truck he drives for his service. Mr Gaston loses a good, dependable man.

The Ilocanos, representing the Filipinos, have always been an embattled ethnic group. In the work area they are relegated to the lowest positions and essentialized as unskilled, untrustworthy, and volatile laborers. These stereotypes have caused their marginalization, and the Ilocano immigrants have worked hard at negating these homogenizing labels. In the story, the Ilocano construction workers negotiate this disempoweredness by forming groups on the basis of hometown ties (*kailyan* or *kababayan*). This system of grouping establishes two things: strength that comes from the support each member lends to the other, and the establishment of a bond or cohesiveness that Ilocanos employ to survive in Hawaii.

The Ilocano community that is established from this kind of group formation is reminiscent of the Philippine concept of *bayanihan* or cooperation. This affords a powerful panacea from a sense of emasculation that happens in the workplace. Forming a community characterized by *kapatiran* approximates ties of brotherhood. "It is reminiscent of barrio support control system that extends family and kinship alliances" (Teodoro 49). In this case, the *kapatiran* grouping enables not only a kind of bonding among the Ilocano construction workers, so that they can draw strength from the presence of each other, but a connection with their Motherland, so that they can gain strength and inspiration to fight racism and American hegemony. They emerge solid, unified, and one.

In "Adrift in the Night" (*"Ti Nalnawan a Biahe"*), Isagani and his wife Rozinni are evicted from their housing by the company Isagani works for. The plantation housing

has to go to give way to a better business venture. The couple are left helpless for they are not given ample time to look for temporary lodgings. Adrift in the night, their situation worsened by the breaking down of their car, Rozinni gives birth in a barn.

The situation of Isagani and Rozinni, adrift in the night and with nowhere else to go, illustrates displacement and dislocation to the extreme. Driven out of the housing without prior notice, and taken by surprise, they are powerless to counter the directive. Isagani appeals to the humane side of the president of the company, explaining that his wife could give birth any time. His appeal falls on deaf ears. The president, a native Hawaiian, explains instead the project's great potential and that nothing can be done about their plight.

The couple is thrown into a dilemma. They are alienated by modernization, development, and progress. Moreover, Isagani is threatened of losing his job if he does not vacate the housing immediately. He is not given any option. Since work is hard to come by as he is just a carpenter, he is forced to abide by the rules of a faceless and heartless dominant order.

Isagani and Rozinni experience literal dislocation caused by the inhuman hand of civilization. Their literal dislocation is deepened by psychological dislocation—the metaphorical exposure and helplessness caused by being thrown outdoors, the anguish of not being able to find lodgings in the dead of night, and the fear and trauma for both wife and baby.

Stranded and terrified and Rozinni breaking into labor, man and wife find reprieve in God. Praying to a more powerful, transcendent being for help in crisis is juxtaposed with the facelessness and dehumanized character of modernization. In the rushed, fast-paced, impersonal face of city life, the act of praying and believing in a higher, transcendent being is no longer part of the people's lifestyle. The bustle of life in the US negates the act of praying, reflection, and slowing down. Praying has been replaced by the concerns of earning money. Praying and the belief in the transcendental are practices associated with more conservative, traditional societies like the Philippines. Filipinos have not lost their belief in the power of prayer. Pushed to extreme, Isagani and his wife call on to their God. Call it religion or superstition, invoking the power of prayer, as Isagani does, produces a magical effect. The dislocation is given temporary reprieve. A calming is felt and Rozinni gives birth. A measure of peace is felt by the couple by their invoking a practice, a rubric, of the past.

In "The Tang of Yesterday's Rain" (*"Naapgad ti Arbis di Kalman"*), Manuel, who has been in Hawaii for two years, finalizes plans to go to the Philippines for a visit. He will fly

in three days time. However, as of late, he has been getting brusque treatment from Lucy, his older sister. Manuel is clueless as to why his sister is giving him the cold shoulder treatment. As the story progresses he learns after an ugly confrontation with Lucy that he has to pay his sister back for his studies and trip to Hawaii, which she had sponsored. He cancels his trip to the Philippines and gives the little savings he has reserved for the trip home to his sister as initial payment for his debt.

Manuel's two year sojourn in Hawaii is made bearable by the hope that he is going to return home for a vacation someday. There is always a looking back to his hometown ("Do fishes in Pandan River still abound? What could my friends be doing now? Has my girlfriend changed, is she more beautiful?") These thoughts and images of home are often revisited. His desire to go home remains strong and unflagging.

His memories of home excite him and give him a sense of moorings in his literal displacement. This dislocation, however, is transformed into symbolic homelessness with the severance of brother-sister ties over money matters. Manuel is asked by his sister to find another place to stay after his return from the Philippines. Manuel is stunned by what he hears. He tries to make his sister see reason: "'I thought you were helping me because I am your brother, and that we are family?' His sister, in turn, responds: 'There are no blood ties here. This is Hawaii.'" (*"Awan kinabsattan ditoy. Hawaii detoy."*) This ugly exchange severs completely the bond between brother and sister.

After the violent confrontation when Lucy reveals to Manuel her true intentions and motivations, he flounces off to his room. Sapped by the violence of the exchange, he lies on his bed and wonders where he can take temporary lodgings. This marks the beginning of his literal homelessness and isolation. This literal dislocation is deepened and brought to a different level by the severance of ties between siblings. While his first sense of displacement (away from the Philippines) is mitigated by the presence of a family in Hawaii (he lives with his sister and her family), Lucy's coming out into the open and bluntly confessing her purpose for helping out Manuel completely ruptures the bonds of the family. Thus, family ties broken, Manuel experiences both literal and symbolic homelessness and dislocation.

Another level of dislocation is experienced by Lucy. Her denigration of the importance of family bonds, an important Filipino value, is supplanted by so-called modern, Western values such as individuality, practicality, efficiency, functionalism, etc.—perceived as mercenary alongside the Filipino values that Manuel espouses. Lucy reasons that in Hawaii, there is no place for sentimentality, brotherhood, kinship, and hometown ties – values that Manuel keeps.

Lucy serves as a foil to Manuel. Lucy, who has been in Hawaii far longer than Manuel, has been corrupted by modern, Western ideologies. Manuel, on the other hand, who is severed from his sister because of differences in ideology is initiated into the corrupting influence of modernization and civilization. Although the story ends with a scene where Manuel is left wondering where he could find temporary lodgings, we see that he is going to clutch on to his Filipino values, much more so this time that he is plunged into crisis. It is precisely their differences that cut family ties, and it will be these traditional values that he learned from home which he will need to fiercely hold on to as he negotiates his literal and symbolic dislocation and isolation. He will continue to construct in his imaginary pictures of his Motherland. The devotion and care that he offers to his girlfriend back home is the same devotion that he accords to his Motherland through his keeping intact the traditional Filipino family values. He is going to sail through this crisis.

The next two stories "The Shell Pickers" and "Love is Sweeter the Second Time" focus on marital, filial, and neighborly relationships. Such relationships, like in the earlier stories discussed, are contingent with temporal space and time.

In the story "Love is Sweeter the Second Time" (*"Lumangto Met ti Nalanglay nga Ayat"*), Lorelie's miscarriage paralyzes her. The doctors pronounce, though, that she could walk again given there's therapy, exercise, and support from the family. But it seems that being up on her feet again is far from happening because since her miscarriage, she has been confined and strapped to her chair. Each day she watches the transformation of her husband, Leo, who grows colder and distant by the day. He is not only distant towards her but treats her brusquely. His ministrations on her are carried out grudgingly. Lorelie suspects that he is seeing someone for he is practically out nights and weekends where he is expected to be with her, given her condition. Lorelie quietly nurses the pain.

Lorelie's pain is deep. She is in a double bind—she experiences miscarriage, loses her child, becomes incapacitated as a result, and is unable to fulfill her wifely obligations. Because of these unfortunate events, her husband's eyes stray. Any self-respecting woman would go crazy with this situation, but Lorelie is made of a tougher kind. She tries to negotiate this literal and metaphorical paralysis by constructing pictures and images of home, drawing strength from her memories of family and home.

Somehow, despite her brokenness, this imaginary of family and the Ilokandia home gives her an easing sense of wholeness. After some time when she realizes that the moral and physical support she needs (patience, therapy, etc.) will not come from her husband, she announces to him her plan to visit home where she can recuperate properly. She loathes to leave her husband, as she loves him so much, but her resolve to go home to the

Philippines, she realizes, might bring her healing. In the Philippines she will not only be able to walk again (a literal healing), but her homecoming could recharge her completely too—an emotional and psychic healing. This reconnection with home speaks of the possibility of wholeness, a panacea to the brokenness she is strapped to.

In Lorelie's mind, in her imaginary, the visit would also reconnect her to her family, townsmates, friends, memories, and practices of home; it would refuel her being, give her a sense of wholeness once again. She would then be ready to take up the fight of winning back a philandering husband. These thoughts alone give her strength and resolve to get well. In the meantime, Leo witnesses an incident in the park as he awaits his lover. He realizes the grave injustice and pain he has caused his wife. He goes home hurriedly and cries for forgiveness.

In "The Seaweed Pickers" (*"Dagiti Agpipidut ti Limo"*), Manang Consuelo, a widow, tries to fend for the needs of a family of four by gathering seaweeds and selling them off to Filipino buyers and a few Japanese and Chinese stores. This challenge of picking seaweeds as a source of income is compounded by her problem with her two teenage children. They have given her only headache and unnecessary worry.

Another widower, Ka Conrado, comes into her life and confesses his love for her. He offers her marriage. She could have easily accepted Ka Conrado's suit, except that facts of her family's situation complicate things. Marrying a non-employee of the coconut plantation where her husband used to work before his death would mean the eviction of her family from the housing and termination of their housing benefit. What makes the situation worse is that Ka Conrado, a seaweed picker like her, is just renting an apartment outside the plantation. Accepting Conrado's proposal would make life more difficult for her and her family. The story leaves the readers with an ambivalent ending. The exilic sensibility that grips Manang Consuelo is caused by her struggle in Hawaii—the death of her husband seven years ago that has left her with three small children to singlehandedly care for.

The sea, as a source of income, breeds competition among the shell pickers. Once, she figures in a fight because she is accused of trespassing boundaries. A group of shell pickers constantly harasses her. She feels a sense of unbelonging and her source of livelihood is also constantly threatened.

Another disjuncture that Consuelo battles with concerns her two teenage children. She laments over the Americanized ways of Darius and Chona and the disintegration of Filipino family values. They have become wayward kids. Manang Consuelo tries to negotiate the sources of her dislocation by harking back to organic Filipino values

associated with Maria Clara. She tries to make up for this loss among the youth and her teenage children by constructing a fictive, organic past when Maria Clara values were still enshrined in a Filipino family.

Consuelo, bogged down and pressed on all sides by this sense of dislocation, may be in the midst of fellow Filipinos but does not feel a sense of community with them. In her multiple dislocation, her consolation is looking back to a fictive homeland that temporarily gives her a sense of moorings. On the other hand Ka Conrado, an Ilocano like her, who has kept intact his Filipino values can help Consuelo negotiate this exilic sensibility and displacement.

The last two stories share a similar setting and theme. Both deal with the remote world of the lepers—remote because they are thrown and tucked away from the society, from the daily grind of living, where they are soon forgotten by their family and the rest of the world. Ironically, though, the problem of the afflicted is very real and needs perennial attention of the government.

The dominant mood of the stories "The World of Salome Alegre" (*"Ti Nagkaysa a Lubong ni Salome Alegre"*) and "Father Vidal Ciriaco and the World of the Leper Colony" (*"Ni Padre Vidal Ciriaco Iti Lubong ti Agkukutel"*) is unrelenting despair. The residents of Kawalao Colony and Marakeke Colony are in deep bitterness over their fate. All sort of ethnic groups are here—Ilocano, Filipino, Samoan, Portuguese, Japanese, etc. They are all leveled by their incurable sickness, awaiting the erosion of the parts of their body and their eventual death. The government has forgotten them for they too fear this ailment. In both of these stories, hope and life come back slowly to the victims by the presence of priests who, despite the bad treatment they get from the lepers, do not relent from drawing them out of disbelief and despair.

In "The World of Salve Alegre," the figure of stronghold that slowly leads the main character, Salve Alegre, out of wretchedness is Father Ziechzen, a German missionary. Their long and frequent conversations finally enlighten her, nourishing her soul. Substantiating these spiritual encounters with the priest is Salve's frequent recollection of her past. She talks to the priest about her happy past when she was a dancer back home. As a dancer, she was young, supple, healthy, and had a lithe and beautiful body. Her beauty shone through. Remembering these thoughts sustained her.

In "Father Vidal Ciriaco and the World of the Leper Colony," it is an Ilocano priest, Father Vidal, who serves as the fortress of the residents of Makarere Colony. The diverse ethnic groups are at first hostile towards Father Vidal. They have no interest in the salvation of their souls, much more the upkeep of their bodies—they believe that their fate

anyway is eventual death. The colony is a depraved, dysfunctional hell hole.

At first the victims resent the presence of Father Vidal. He is spat at, ignored, physically and verbally attacked. But he does not give up on them, and eventually he is able to penetrate their hard defenses. Soon he is teaching them songs and ways to be productive like handicraft, needlework, and gardening. More importantly, they learn to pray again.

Father Vidal believes the importance of the environment in the upkeep of a person's being. So he starts supervising the construction of a well, then progresses to the construction of a chapel where the residents can go to for meditation and solace. He spearheads the plotting of a vegetable garden where they plant vegetables of all kinds: pechay, tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, etc. He introduces the value of *bayanihan.* Soon the terrain is transformed from a brown, lifeless expanse, into a greenery of trees, plants, and vegetables.

The sense of alienation, brokenness, and darkness that the lepers are deep into is slowly healed as their lives begin to take meaning again, and it is through the leadership and charisma of the Ilocano priest. In transforming the people and the place, Father Vidal invokes his training as a priest—as a spiritual master with deeply ingrained Filipino values, and a deep love and belief in the goodness of humanity.

The Second Moment of Reading

The first moment of reading functions to ground a continuity with the past. It valorizes invoking a fictive originary Motherland and signifiers associated with it in order to attain a sense of coherence in the immigrants' experience of diaspora. This notion, however, has its limitations. The claims of the first moment of reading assume that the past can be recovered in its original, pristine state, and that once the past and originary Motherland are invoked, the subject begins to achieve an imaginary coherence and wholeness.

The second moment of reading illustrates how the notion of identity is, in fact, contingent on conflicting and overdetermined factors that undercut the claims of Liberal Humanism that identity is fixed, coherent, and unified. The second moment of reading foregrounds the category "difference" as the very element that renders the subject unique, as the latter is caught in the endless play of signification. Meaning, therefore, is deferred.

Since no literary text, or any text for that matter, is autonomous, the analysis of the second moment of reading will be contextualized and drawn from the material facts from which the texts were written.

The central characters in the stories "Uncle Angelo's Return to Hawaii," "Lakay Saulo, His Hut, and the Rain," and "The Story of the Patani Plant, Water and the Gentle Wind" are portrayed as sugarcane and plantation laborers for most part of their lives. They have come to their present state through the rigor, severity, and harshness of plantation existence as they attempt to recuperate the cultural elements of their hometown. The appropriation of these cultural practices to negotiate the environment and life they are in takes on a slightly different form, as their appropriation is contingent and predicated on the times.

During the plantation era in Hawaii, a large majority of young, single, robust men were employed in the vast fields of Hawaii, since those were the specifications set by the plantation owners. Thus the workers that signed up were men that answered to those specifications. Yet even if they had practically grown, matured, and retired in Hawaii, they have not been fully co-opted by the dominant order. In the first place, their objective for leaving the comfort and familiarity of their hometown in order to work in a strange land was goaded by economic motives. Their motives were primarily driven by the desire to earn, save, and return quickly to the Philippines. Assimilation with America was least in their minds.

Their positioning as unskilled laborers with very little education, which predisposed them to unfair labor practices, was repudiated by the existence of labor unions. Even at the onset they were able to establish a union, which had crude beginnings but was institutionalized later on. In fact, workers' strikes started as early as 1909. There was one also in 1920 which lasted for two months (Kerkvilet 6). Then four years later in 1924, another strike was waged: this big strike by Filipino plantation workers "lasted for five to six months with more than 2,000 plantation workers in 4 islands going on strike "(Kerkvilet 6). It was often noted that the labor union was characterized as militant, astute, and known to make a hard bargain.

The exodus of Filipinos to Hawaii was driven by "self-serving" motives—they did not leave their hometown to help in the expansion of the US economy, but to capitalize on their skills and services in return for pay. They profited too from this business arrangement with the plantation owners. They were completely aware of the power of waging strikes and its consequences—paralyzing plantation operation and causing market crash. Strikes were often employed to prove their point and get their demands.

As mentioned earlier, assimilation was not the objective of the Filipino laborers. In fact, the laborers and their families who came afterwards worked at reconstructing a Filipino community in Hawaii, forming their own social enclaves (Cordova 55). Such

community ties were tightened by frequent organizations of *fiestas* and other celebrations:

> Fiestas and national holidays were observed although in Hawaii, these events were celebrated mainly for their social value of bringing Filipinos together. A far greater community-wide emphasis … was placed on the celebrations of national holidays. They were seen as the most important expression of collective Filipino identity, vis a vis other ethnic groups. (Teodoro 52)

Thus, the workers were autonomous unto themselves, as they got the much-needed support from each other. They approximated the *barrio*-support of the Philippines. When the workers were able to bring their families with them to Hawaii, they maintained clan networks throughout the island where the responsibility of maintaining the networks rests on the mother. The Ilocano community spirit was strengthened by their retention of the native language; for example, the Ilocano language was used in the barracks and plantation houses. The pidgin English they learned was enough to get them by in their work. They have always believed that the "straightest road to assimilation into American society is through the abandonment—or at least, the non encouragement of the immigrants' native tongue" (Teodoro 56).

The oldtimers Uncle Angelo, Lakay Saulo, and Tata Joaquin in the stories are retired plantation laborers. They are testimonies of a plantation era. They are shown to have survived the rigor, harshness, and exacting life in the plantations despite their little education and knowledge of English. Now, focusing on the individual lives of these characters as discussed in the earlier section of the paper, the problems they confront with are eventually resolved when they use the same survival strategies that made them survivors of the plantation era.

For instance, when Tata Joaquin believes that nothing would make him happier in his retirement years than getting married to a Filipina. Since he has opted to settle permanently in Hawaii with his daughter, an element that would complete the picture of contentment (that is, if he could not go home) is at least to marry preferably an Ilocano like himself. This assumption reiterates the insular characteristic of the Ilocanos. Recall that it was the hometown ties that helped them through their sojourn in Hawaii. This *kailyan* or *kababayan* ties, expanding to kinship ties, saw them through.

The importance of *kailyan* ties is also illustrated in "The Heaven of Nana Sela." Here, Nana Sela is able to last in Hawaii despite fierce nostalgia for home through her friendship with a *kailyan*. She happens to sit near an old lady during one Sunday mass and thinks

she is a *kailyan*. After mass, Nana Sela asks the old lady if she is from the Philippines, and when the latter answers yes Nana Sela is filled with happiness. After the initial question of where in the Philippines one comes from, other questions follow, "questions delicately seeking out common acquaintances, should it turn out that the other came from the same hometown" (Teodoro 51). In a strange place such as Hawaii, one's hometown ties are important. "[O]ne's townmates formed a significant other one could trust, depend on or in whom one could find the links of kinship that bond people in the Philippines to each other" (Teodoro 51).

The importance of expanded kinship is also illustrated in "Karma." This time, the story is set in Hawaii of more recent times. In construction work, one observes competition and rivalry between and among ethnic groups or countries. In the story the Korean architect, for example, would fabricate stories against Filipinos to smear their names and block future jobs. Despite their being embattled in the work site, the Filipino workers under the leadership of Rogel hold on to each other for support, loyalty, and alliance. Stories go around that Mang Rogel, the Ilocano foreman of the construction project, does not know how to read construction maps and that he is slackening in his job. However, the workers under him—Ilocanos like him—stand by his side. Their support and loyalty extend to a group strike or a group resignation if Rogel is unfairly terminated from the project.

This *kababayan* alliance is illustrated in "Karma" when Mang Rogel forms an alliance of construction workers on the basis of *kailyan* or *kababayan*. Since construction projects are often negotiated with a foreman, he brings in his own set of construction workers formed through hometown alliance. The alliance is also invested with a bargaining power. It was this kind of alliance that laborers often invoked in their negotiations with plantation life in Hawaii.

What this analysis wishes to foreground is that while Ilocanos are marginalized by essentializing constructs, their very condition and position is precisely what they recuperate to negotiate their marginalization. Thus, the alliances which they formed work towards their favor in two ways: first, it affords the laborers the kind of support they need in a strange circumstance marked by unfamiliar working policies and conditions. Second, the alliances serve as a mode of resistance against total domination and cooptation as they enable a modicum of autonomy on the part of the Filipino laborers. For example, this insularity—interpreted by the other ethnic groups and the US as bigotry, narrowness, and parochialism—is recuperated as a Filipino survival strategy.

Since the aim of the US during the plantation era is to achieve highly efficient production, the Filipino workers were educated to a new work condition and a new way

of life which was alien to what they were used to in their *barrios*. *Barrio* life then was slow and characterized by self-regulated pace of farm life. But their transplantation to Hawaii threw them into a different working condition. They were programmed to work under a regulated schedule, to learn the use of industrial machinery, and to abide by plantation policies. They endured backbreaking labor demanded by a plantation field.

The exacting life of a plantation system is negotiated by the strength of their culture. The institutionalized labor unions, the kinship networks, and the *kababayan* or *kailyan* are some cultural elements of back home that are appropriated by the laborers as tactical and survival strategies. The excuses made to throw get-togethers among themselves strengthened alliances. These are the kinds of support systems that are recuperated by the Filipinos to become the source of their strength and creative resistance against extinction and cooptation.

As repeatedly discussed in the paper, Filipinos (in this case, Ilocanos) are often essentialized as docile, subservient, and often in deference to the white hegemony. However, in the stories "Karma," "Adrift in the Night," and "Lakay Saulo, His Hut and the Rain," the main characters show the opposite of these labels. They are shown experiencing tension and conflict not only with themselves but with the dominant order: Mang Rogel, Isagani, and Lakay Saulo are forced to emerge from their relatively peaceful existence, but not necessarily contented, when their source of living, sense of equilibrium, and their families' sense of security are threatened by the imposition of unfair, hegemonic white practices.

The characters have different ways of showing their defiance against the dominant order: Isagani confronts the president of the company and tells him to his face that what he is doing is an infraction of the workers' rights; Mang Rogel shows a more subtle defiance by tendering his resignation to prove a point; and Lakay Saulo, a first generation immigrant, shows a quiet kind of subversion by snubbing the invitation of the Commission for the 75th anniversary of Filipino Immigration to Hawaii.

One glimpses the edgy character of the central figures in these stories, and this can be disquieting, at least to the dominant order, because one can read something lurking in their placid, seemingly passive exterior. Yet, in as much as the characters are still constituted by the dominant paradigm, this fact alongside their position at the border has to be considered. The specificities by which they negotiate their environment, marginalization, and the ever-noisy, ever-authoritative American hegemony, vis a vis the peripheral position of Filipinos, is the juncture in which the dialogue takes place. This is where the immigrant is not quite there or here. Thus the idea of a unitary identity is exploded.

Father Vidal in "Father Vidal Ciriaco and the World of the Lepers" can be read as a quintessential image of the subversion of Filipino representation by the dominant US paradigm. Even at the onset, the character of Father Vidal upsets the usual stereotypes of Filipinos as compliant, docile, submissive, unintelligent, etc. Here is one character who is intelligent, critical, bold, and subversive.

Father Vidal, who is seen dealing with and talking to the youth, is accused of fomenting insurrection against the government. He is picked and thrown into prison for a year. After his release, he asks to be assigned at Makarere Colony where he can do missionary work. In this multicultural colony, Father Vidal's presence is seen by the lepers as unnecessary and even absurd. They reject him, but Father Vidal does not give up until he is able to penetrate their hardened exterior. He does not work singlehandedly, though; he seeks the help of the government. Coming from a marginal condition as an Ilocano, and coming from an "unplace" like Makarere Colony, he drafts a letter to the government outlining the condition of the residents and demanding for provisions. The government's non-acknowledgement of his letter does not stop him. He continues to bug them until he gets the government's attention. Father Vidal takes up the cudgel for the victims, and even faces the government to give voice to the voiceless.

Eventually, the bold and charismatic leadership of this man transforms the hellhole into a habitable place, an act that required navigating diverse nationalities and ethnic cultures. In transforming the bedlamite, he invokes *bayanihan* or the Filipino way of showing cooperation. In recreating the place, he acknowledges the importance of other cultures. He understands that exclusivity has no room in that place and puts together the energy and resources of the ethnicities and nationalities in the improvement of Makarere. In the synergy of these different cultures, Father Vidal recreates not only the place but recreates himself as well. He belongs nowhere and everywhere.

The character of Father Ciriaco shatters the unflattering essentialist stereotypes of Filipinos. His creative transformation of the place and his self-transformation illustrate two things: that identity is fluid and contingent on the specificities of the environment, the dynamics of the moment, and the survival strategies to be employed. Thus, identity is a contingency, ambivalent, provisional, and eternally repositioned.

CONCLUSION

Ilocano-Hawaiian writing leaves us with the impression that somehow a large part of their life has been left behind. The writings are gripped with nostalgia, for something

that used to be and what can no longer be recovered, perhaps except in memory. There is always a going back, a returning. It is clear that the sensibility of Ilocano-Hawaiian remains smelling of home, even if they are all elsewhere in Hawaii.

The writings take on a tone of fierceness, a veiled rage, for they are underwritten by our history, a history that continues in Hawaii. The diasporic writing is an attempt at negotiating their historical specificity, their individual and collective conditions as a consequence of living under the shadows of US neocolonial structures and hegemony.

Ilocano-Hawaiian writing can be a venue yet for crafting a space for Ilocano immigrants, a survival strategy that can be employed to recuperate this dislocation, displacement, and disempoweredness—a condition which will continue to haunt them as they have decided to cross the borders between Ilokandia home and Hawaii.

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LITERARY SECTION

POEMS

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Allan Popa obtained his BA in Creative Writing in Filipino at the University of the Philippines-Diliman and MFA in Creative Writing at De La Salle University-Manila. He is the author of six books of poetry, two of which won the Manila Critics Circle National Book Award for Poetry (*Morpo* in 2001 and *Samsara* in 2002). He received the Philippines Free Press Literary Award for Poetry in 1998-1999. He teaches at the Ateneo de Manila University.

THE KNOT

There was no sure way to know which kind
would not cut too deep so he wound each one
around his wrist as tight as he could and read
the marks they left on his skin like Braille.

He was careful to select which one would
not give from his weight, which one would hold
his breath long enough and never let go again.
He took time acquainting himself with knots.

Finally a connoisseur of ropes he chose well:
how satisfied he must have felt as he mounted
a stool to tie one end of the rope to the house
he was leaving, the fine blue noose around his neck.

How does one talk now about his protruding
tongue, how close his feet were to the ground
when he was found, the air that hissed from his body
as the rope was cut, the knot we could not untie.

THE OTHER END

I pity that your imagination too could reach
only as far as the noose at the end of my rope,

a rope you see me groping for in the dark
endlessly as it frays without end—as if I would

still cling to some promise of passage after
I had let go: a punishment that, to your mind

I now inhabit; but really it is you who are tethered
to a hope of seeing beyond, a rope hanging

from nothing but your urge to climb out.

KOLUM KRITIKA

ANG ATENEO SA KASAYSAYAN KO BILANG GURO NG PANITIKAN

Tugon sa Parangal, Setyembre 22, 2006
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Bienvenido Lumbera, one of the most multi-awarded Filipinos today, was named National Artist for Literature in 2006 for outstanding contributions to the development of Philippine arts and culture. He was Ateneo's Tanglaw ng Lahi Awardee in 2000, recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1993, and winner of many literary awards like the Centennial Literary Awards in Playwriting in 1998. He is one of the Philippines's most respected literary and cultural critics who has published books of poems, plays, librettos, essays, translations, criticisms, and who still mentors today's better writers, teachers, and scholars. Detained during the Marcos dictatorship, he continues to be active in movements for nationalism, freedom, and democracy; he is national council member of the multi-sectoral Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and chair of Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP). He was Irwin Chair Professor of Literature in the English Department of the Ateneo de Manila University, and now Professor Emeritus of the University of the Philippines.

About the Translator

Charlie Samuya Veric is a PhD student in American Studies and member of the Working Group on Globalization and Culture at Yale University. He is the editor of *Anticipating Filipinas: Reading Bienvenido Lumbera as Critic* (2006) and co-editor with Alice Guillermo of *Suri at Sipat: Araling Ka Amado* (2004). His recent publications have appeared in the journals *American Quarterly, Common Knowledge,* and *Rethinking History.*

Nang hingan ako ng talaan ng mga taong gusto kong maging panauhin sa okasyong ito, napukaw ang mga alaala ng sampung taong inilagi ko sa unibersidad na ito. Unang nagbangon sa gunita ang mga mukha ng mga estudyante at kapwa guro. Mga lugar sa kampus at mga pangyayari. At mga damdamin at diwang dinanas ko sa pakikipagkapwa sa mga gurong kapanahon ko, at sa pag-ugnay sa mga estudyante at sa mga tradisyon ng unibersidad. Kasabay ng mga alaala dumagsa ang mga yugto sa buhay ko nang

ako'y nagsisimula pa lamang magturo at magpakilala bilang propesyonal sa labas ng unibersidad.

Apat na mukha ng estudyante ang bibigyan ko ng pangalan. Una, si Ferdinand Arceo na, sa pananalita ng mga aktibista, siyang "dumikit" sa akin upang maipaloob ako sa kilusang makabayan nang nagsisimula pa lamang pasukin ng mga radikal ang unibersidad. Dito ay katuwang niya si Perfecto "Boy" Martin, isa kong estudyanteng aktibista rin, na hanggang sa kasalukuyan ay kasama pa rin at kaibigan. Pagkaraan ng Martial Law, nagpamilya si Boy at napunta sa desktop publishing. Si Ferdie ay umanib sa NPA at nang kabababa pa lamang ng Martial Law ay nasawi sa isang engkwentro. Ang laki ng panghihinayang ko sa naputol na ugnay niya sa aking buhay ay hindi na mabubura ng mga taon.

Sa pagsubaybay ko sa naging kapalaran ng mga estudyanteng nakilala ko sa Ateneo, malaki ang natutuhan ko sa naging pagbabago sa politika ni Edgar Jopson. Dahil iba ang kanyang pananaw pampolitika sa aking natutuhan sa kilusang pambansa demokrasya, hindi ko siya gaanong kinilala sa panahong kapwa kami nasa kampus. Nang muli kami magtagpo sa panahon ng Martial Law, malinaw ang leksiyong itinuro ng buhay niya sa akin bilang guro—humanga ako sa kanyang integridad at masugid na paglilingkod sa sambayanan. Tinanggap ni Edjop ang radikal na tugon sa diktadura at nagbuwis siya ng buhay sa pakikibakang andergrawn.

Ang ikapat na estudyanteng ang pangalan ay humihinging alalahanin ay si Emmanuel Lacaba. Naging research assistant ko siya sa isang proyekto sa panitikan, pero halos hindi kami nagkikita dahil madalas ay nasa bundok siya noon ng Banahaw. Dumating siya sa Ateneo mula sa pagiging American Field Scholar na tila Amerikanisadong teenager na tumutula ng mga akdang Ingles na mahirap unawain. Ipinagpalagay ko na ang panahong inilagi niya sa Amerika ay nakapag-iwan sa kanyang kamalayan ng permanenteng tatak ng hippie culture. Subalit nagpamalas siya ng pambihirang kakayahang tuklasin ang kanyang pagka-Filipino. Sumangkot siya sa pakikibaka ng mga manggagawa hanggang umakyat siya sa mga kabundukang ng Davao bilang isang Pulang Mandirigma. Doon sa wikang Ingles pa rin tumutula subalit karanasan na ng makabayang gerilya ang pinapaksa.

Hindi ko bibigyan ng pangalan ang ikalimang estudyante. Siya ang aktibistang Atenista na sumalo sa akin nang mapasok ako sa Youth Rehabilitation Center (YRC) bilang bilanggong pulitikal noong 1974. Nauna na siyang naging bilanggong politikal kaya't sanay na siya sa kultura ng bilangguan, at siya ang kumupkop sa akin sa mga unang araw ng aking pagkakulong. Kinilala ko ang kanyang talino at tapang kaya't nang

siya ay pumailalim sa anino ni Presidente Macapagal-Arroyo ay nakaramdam ako ng magkahalong pagkabigo, pagkamuhi at panghihinayang.

Sa naging pag-unlad ng aking diwa sa panahong nagturo ako sa Ateneo ay kailangan kong isangkot ang bisa ng pakikipagpalitan ng mga kuro-kuro sa mga kapwa propesor na naging katrabaho ko sa mga komiteng kinabilangan ko. Si Doreen Fernandez ang unang-una sa mga dapat kong gunitain at pasalamatan. Estudyante ko siya sa Graduate School ng Ateneo, isang iskolar na masikap sa pananaliksik at kritikong mapagkumbaba subalit matalisik humango ng kabatiran. Alam kong kanya ang naging pananalita ng mga citation na nagtampok sa mga kapurihan ng dating guro niya nang ang inyong lingkod ay parangalan ng Ramon Magsaysay Foundation at nang ako ay gawaran ng Ateneo ng parangal Tanglaw ng Lahi.

Nang hindi ako makabalik sa Ateneo bilang Full Professor matapos ang aking pagkakulong, dalawang propesor ang nanguna sa nabigong pagkilos upang mabago ang desisyon ng administrasyon ni President Jose Cruz, S.J. Sila sina Dr. Vicente Valdepenas Jr. at Dr. Mary Racelis, na pinasasasalamatan ko ngayon at hinahangaan sa matapat nilang paninindigan para sa academic freedom.

Dalawang administrador na Heswita naman ang nasasa aking gunita bilang mga pinunong akademiko na nakapag-iwan ng tatak sa aking propesyon. Si Fr. Nicholas Kunkel, S.J., ang dekanong tumanggap sa akin bilang instruktor noong 1960. Isa siyang dayuhan na may tapat na paggalang sa talino ng Filipino at pagkilala sa mga adhikaing makabayan ng mga gurong nasa ilalim ng kanyang administrasyon. Siya, sa palagay ko, ang taghasik ng mga unang progresibong binhi na nagbukas sa Ateneo sa mga pagbabagong dala ng Dekada 60. Hindi masalitang tao si Fr. John F. Doherty, S.J. subalit kanyang gabay ang nagturo sa akin ng interdisiplinaryong lapit sa pagbasa sa panitikang Filipino, na pagkalabas ko sa Ateneo ay siyang landas na tutuntunin ko bilang kritiko at iskolar. Una muna, inimbitahan niya akong magsuri sa mga akdang Filipino para magteorya tungkol sa pagkataong Filipino para sa isang komperensya ng mga social science professors. At noong 1970, bilang Academic Vice President, siya ang nagpanukala ng isang Department of Philippine Studies, na siyang tugon ng Ateneo sa kahingian ng mga estudyante para sa Filipinisasyon. Ako ang kanyang pinaglatag ng bisyon at ginawang tagapangulo ng bagong sangay ng akademikong istruktura ng unibersidad. Hindi nagtagal ang buhay ng departamento dahil binuwag ito sa mga unang taon ng Martial Law nang ako ay nasa andergrawn. Kung lingunin ko ngayon ang departamentong pinahawakan sa akin ni Fr. Doherty, iginuhit nito ang tatakbuhin ng aking karera bilang propesor ng Philippine Studies.

Sa mga personaheng nagkaroon ng permanenteng luklukan sa aking gunita at kalooban, si Rolando S. Tinio ang pangunahin. Siya ang nagdala sa akin kay Fr. Kunkel at kanya ang rekomendasyong nagpasok sa akin sa kaguruan ng unibersidad. Kanya ang talim ng isipan na humawan ng landas para sa patutunguhan ng aking pagiging guro ng panitikan. Kanya rin ang ningning ng imahinasyon na umakit sa aking pasukin ang daigdig ng teatro. At kanya rin ang lalim ng hilig sa musika na gumabay sa akin upang malulong at lubos-lubusang magmahal sa opera at teatrong musikal. At di kasi, kanya rin ang galing sa paghawak ng Ingles at Tagalog bilang makata na nagtayo ng pamantayan para sa aking sariling paglikha. Habang siya ay nakaburol, inihalintulad ko si Rolando sa kaningningang kinailangan kong takasan upang mahanap ko ang sarili kong liwanag.

Tunay na mapalad ako na sa Ateneo nagsimula ang aking kasaysayan bilang guro ng panitikan. Ang mga itinuro kong batayang kurso sa tula, kwento, dula, sanaysay at retorika ay matibay na pundasyon na nagbigay sa akin ng tiwala sa sarili upang magpakadalubhasa sa panitikan at magsalita nang walang pagkasilong bilang manunulat at propesor. Ang Summer Institute of Philippine Literature noong 1965 ay okasyon na nagbigay sa akin ng pagkakataong magsaliksik at maglatag ng mga panimulang kuro-kuro tungkol sa panitikan ng Filipinas.

Limang panayam na binigkas ko sa nasabing summer institute ang nalathala sa librong *Brown Heritage, Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1966), at ang mga iyon ang naging susi sa pagpasok ko sa scholarly publishing. Taong 1967 nang tanggapin ng Indiana University ang aking disertasyong doktoral tungkol sa kasaysayan ng panulaang Tagalog, at noon ding taong iyon inilathala ng *Philippine Studies* ng Ateneo de Manila ang sentral na kabanata ng disertasyon na lumabas sa ilalim ng pamagat na "Florante at Laura and the Formalization of Tradition in Tagalog Poetry." Nalathala bilang aklat ang buong disertasyon noong 1986 bilang *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898, Tradition and Influences in Its Development,* na inilimbag ng Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Naging mabunga ang panahong inilagi ko sa Ateneo de Manila, at iyan ay dahilan kung bakit nagtumibay ang buhol ng ugnay ko sa unibersidad na ito. Bilang pagsasara sa yugto ng aking pagkatiwalag sa Ateneo noong 1975, mahalagang banggitin na isang institusyon mismo ng tradisyong relihiyoso ng mga Heswita ang pinag-ugatan ng aktibismong nagbunsod sa akin na maging "suwail."

Panahon ng malaganap na popularidad ng "cursillo" nang ako'y mapasok sa "Days with the Lord." Sa mga okasyon na sumali ako sa mga sesyon ng DWL, naging malapit ako sa mga estudyanteng naglilingkod bilang staff at sa mga partisipante sa mga aktibidad

ng retreat. Bilang isang gurong nasa staff, tumiim sa kalooban ko ang bisa ng pakikiisa sa mga kabataang naghahanap ng kahulugan sa kanilang pakikipagkapwa. Subalit sumapit ang aking pagsangkot sa DWL sa yugto na namalayan ko na ang pinaglilingkuran namin bilang staff ay mga kabataang ang problema kadalasan ay lantay na personal, gayong ang nakararami sa lipunan ay mga Filipino na ang pinuproblema ay ang kabuhayan at ang pagkakait ng uring naghahari sa lipunan ng paglingap sa mga dukha at pingsasamantalahan. Noon ako nagsimulang dumako sa panig ng nakararaming Filipino at makibahagi sa kanilang pagpupunyaging mabago ang kanilang panlipunang kalagayan. Sa madaling sabi, bisa pa rin ng pagiging Atenista ang naghatid sa akin sa kilusang pambansa demokrasya.

Kaya, paano ko kaya mapasasalamatan ang dakilang institusyong ito na tumanglaw sa aking kasaysayan hindi lamang bilang guro kundi bilang mamamayang Filipino na rin? Salamat, Ateneo de Manila, maraming salamat!

THE ATENEO IN MY HISTORY AS A TEACHER OF LITERATURE

Response to the Awarding Ceremony, 22 September 2006
Ateneo de Manila University

Bienvenido Lumbera

Translated from Filipino by Charlie Samuya Veric

When I was asked for a list of people that I would like to be my guests for this occasion, the memories of my ten-year stay at this university were awakened. The first to come to mind were the faces of students and fellow teachers. The places on campus and events. And the feelings and ideas that I had experienced being with colleagues that were my age, getting to know the students and the traditions of the university. With these memories came rushing that time in my life when I was still starting to teach and introduce myself as a professional outside the university.

I will name four of the student faces. First, there is Ferdinand Arceo who, in the language of activists, stuck it out with me to take me into the nationalist movement just when student radicals were beginning to enter the university. Perfecto "Boy" Martin was his companion, one of my activist students that, to this day, remains my comrade and friend. When the Martial Law had passed, Boy started a family and went to desktop publishing. Ferdie joined the NPA and, just when the Martial Law was suspended, was killed in an encounter. The great regret that I have for his aborted connection to my life will not be eased by the years.

Following the fates of the students that I had known at the Ateneo, I learned so much from the changes in the politics of Edgar Jopson. Because his political views differed from what I learned from the national democratic movement, I did not try to know him better when we were both on campus. When we met again during the Martial Law, the lesson that his life had taught me as a teacher was clear. I admired his integrity and devoted service to the nation. Edjop embraced the radical response to the dictatorship and sacrificed his life in the underground struggle.

The fourth student whose name begs to be remembered is Emmanuel Lacaba. He was my research assistant for a literature project, but we almost did not see each other because he was often in Banahaw. He arrived in the Ateneo after serving as an American Field Scholar, an Americanized teenager who wrote arcane poems in English. I thought to

myself that the time he had spent in America had left a permanent mark of hippie culture on his consciousness. But he had shown an incredible skill in discovering his Filipinoness. He joined the labor struggle and then went to the mountains of Davao as a Red Fighter. There, he continued to write poems in English, but its subject had become the experience of the nationalist guerilla.

I will not name the fifth student. He was an activist Atenean that rescued me when I entered the Youth Rehabilitation Center (YRC) as a political detainee in 1974. He had been a political detainee accustomed to the prison culture, and he protected me during the first days of my captivity. I had known his intelligence and courage so that when he decided to be in the shadow of President Macapagal-Arroyo I felt a mix of defeat, disgust, and regret.

On the development of my mind while I taught at the Ateneo I must mention the effect of conversations with colleagues serving on the committees of which I was a member. Doreen Fernandez is the first among those that I should remember and thank. She was my student at the Ateneo Graduate School, a conscientious scholar and unassuming critic, yet fierce in distilling knowledge. I knew that hers were the words in the citation that heaped praise on her former teacher when yours truly was honored by the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation and when the Ateneo awarded me the Tanglaw ng Lahi.

When I could not return to the Ateneo as a Full Professor after my detention, two colleagues led the failed effort to change the decision of the administration of President Jose Cruz, S.J. They were Dr. Vicente Valdepenas, Jr. and Dr. Mary Racelis, whom I thank and admire for their steadfast position on academic freedom.

Two Jesuit administrators are on my mind as academic leaders that had left a mark on my profession. Fr. Nicholas Kunkel, S.J., the dean who admitted me as instructor in 1960. He was a foreigner with a true respect for the Filipino mind and understanding for the nationalist ideals of the teachers under his administration. He, I believe, had sown the first progressive seeds that had helped the Ateneo to embrace the changes brought by the 60s. Fr. John F. Doherty, S.J. was a man of few words, but his wisdom had taught me to read Filipino literature using an interdisciplinary lens, a perspective that I would pursue as a critic and scholar after leaving the Ateneo. First, he encouraged me to examine Filipino works and theorize Filipino personality for a conference of social scientists. And in 1970, as an Academic Vice President, he established the Department of Philippine Studies, the Ateneo?s response to student demands for Filipinization. He chose me to express its vision and made me chair of the new division of the academic structure of the university. The department did not last long because it was disbanded during the first years of the Martial Law when I was underground. If I looked back at the department that Fr. Doherty

had made me lead, it would illustrate the paths of my career as a professor of Philippine Studies.

Of all the people who have carved out a permanent place in my memory and heart, Rolando Tinio stands foremost. He brought me to Fr. Kunkel and his recommendation secured my passage into the academic workforce of the university. His was the sharpness of mind that cleared the destinies that I would follow as a teacher of literature. His as well was the imaginative brilliance that attracted me to enter the theatrical world. And his also was the deep love of music that led me to want and completely love opera and musical theater. And indeed, his too was the mastery of using English and Tagalog as a poet that set the standard for my own work. When he was lying in repose, I likened Rolando to a brightness from which I needed to be escape in order to find my own light.

I am truly fortunate that my history as a teacher of literature began at the Ateneo. The basic courses in poetry, fiction, theater, essay, and rhetoric were the solid foundations that gave me the confidence to specialize in literature and speak bravely as a writer and professor. The Summer Institute of Philippine Literature in 1965 was an occasion that gave me the chance to investigate and formulate initial ideas about Philippine literature.

The five lectures that I had given at the summer institute were published in Brown Heritage, Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1966), and they were the key to my entry into scholarly publishing. It was in 1967 when Indiana University accepted my doctoral dissertation on the history of Tagalog literature, and it was in that year that Philippine Studies had published the central chapter of my dissertation under the title of "Florante and Laura and the Formalization of Tradition in Tagalog Poetry." Ateneo de Manila University Press printed the whole dissertation as a book titled *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898, Tradition and Influences in its Development.*

The time that I had spent at the Ateneo de Manila was productive, and that was the reason why my ties to this university had been strengthened. To give closure to my separation from the Ateneo in 1975, it is important to say that that the roots of the activism that drove me to become "rebellious" run deep in the Jesuit religious tradition itself.

It was the heyday of "cursillo" when I entered the "Days with the Lord." During the times that I joined the DWL sessions, I became closer to the students serving as staff and retreat participants. As a teacher who was also a staff member, I came to understand the power of being with the young who had sought the truth by feeling for others. But it struck me that the problems of the students that we were serving in DWL were purely personal, while the majority of Filipinos tried to confront their lives and the ruling classes that stood

in the way of caring for the poor and weak. That was when I took the side of the majority and shared their aspiration to change their social condition. In short, it was ultimately the Atenean vision that led me to the national democratic struggle.

So, how can I possibly thank this great institution that enlightened my history not only as a teacher but also as a Filipino citizen? Thank you, Ateneo de Manila, thank you very much!

KOLUM KRITIKA

RESISTING BOUNDARIES: AN INTERVIEW WITH SUCHEN CHRISTINE LIM

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About the Interviewer

Lawrence L. Ypil teaches literature and writing at the Ateneo de Manila University. He has published poems and essays in local and international journals and magazines, and has won first prize in the Carlos Palanca Awards 2006 for his poetry collection *The Highest Hiding-Place*.

About the Interviewee

Suchen Christine Lim is the prize-winning author of *Fistful of Colours,* which was awarded the inaugural Singapore Literature Prize in 1992. Her fourth novel, *A Bit of Earth,* was shortlisted for the same prize in 2004. *The Amah: A Portrait in Black and White,* a co-authored play, was awarded the Short Play Merit Prize in 1989. Her other novels are *Ricebowl* and *Gift from the Gods*. In 1997 she was awarded a Fulbright fellowship to attend the International Writers' Program at the University of Iowa. She is the first Singaporean writer honored as the University of Iowa's International Writer-in-Residence in 2000.

Lawrence L. Ypil (Larry): In your talk for the Ateneo de Manila University Literature Conference, "Reading Asia: Forging Identities in Literature," you mentioned how the novel, *A Bit of Earth* (2000) began. You said it began with the character Wong Tuck Heng.

Suchen Christine Lim (Suchen): Yes. The image of a boy Wong Tuck Heng appeared in my mind from nowhere one day when I was working on my curriculum activities for the Singapore Ministry of Education. I lived with that boy in my head for about a year before I finally clarified who he was. And when I gave him a name Wong and I positioned him as a Cantonese boy and as someone from southern China because I saw him with a *que* (ponytail). And that told me that he was probably from the late nineteenth century when the Chinese started coming to Malaya.

Larry: Is that way you usually start a novel? Almost like a vision?

Suchen: Well the last two books where certainly like that. *Fistful of Colours* (1993) started with the image of a woman, a young woman, painting furiously on a canvas with her bare hands. I have no idea how that came about. That afternoon I was minding my son who was three years old playing at my feet and I was just being what I thought was a housewife and a mother when suddenly this woman came into my head and I had to write down what I saw. And that became part of the first chapter of *Fistful of Colours*. If you have read *Fistful of Colours* you will see that it starts there.

Larry: How do you decide when a character in your mind will become a character in a novel? Or, how do you decide when an image will be useful?

Suchen: I think it's the colour and the intensity of that image. I mean, all of us get images, you know, especially those of us who have acquired the art of meditation. When you close your eyes you see a lot of images – the past, the recent past, and things like that. But the two images that became part of my last two novels were certainly very intense experiences of scene and had no connection with whatever I was doing then. I thought I was writing syllabus material for the Singapore English curriculum, but this boy Wong came into my head, and luckily he was a boy, not a man! That might have been distracting!

Larry: That would have been a different matter! Do you find it easy to write? These characters have such a different life from yours. They have different nationalities, different histories, different social classes.

Suchen: No, they are not me at all. Because I saw myself then, and I still do, as young writer. Not in terms of chronological age, because I'm past that, but young in terms of the craft of writing. So I didn't know what to do with these images. I didn't understand the process. The process of the imagination and the process of writing (very different processes) are extraordinarily mysterious. Perhaps we'll never fully understand them. All I did then was to write down what I saw and eventually what I heard. Sometimes I hear also.

Larry: You hear what your characters say in your imagination?

Suchen: Yes. And it went on from there, sometimes I imagine. But when it comes to me the first time it is always vivid. Sometimes things come when I am doing something else. And that to me is the beauty and the mystery of writing. Of art, in fact. The creative imagination

is unfathomable.

Larry: In your novels, there is a very strong sense of history. *A Bit of Earth* especially is an historical novel.

Suchen: It was launched by an historian, Professor Wang Gung Wu, (Director of the East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore) who is one of the respected historians of Southeast Asian history of Malaysia and of China.

Larry: Have you always been interested in history?

Suchen: Well, I am a history buff of sort. I am a magpie. I collect all sorts of history trivia. You never know when it might be useful in the writing process. Of course, the best histories—the most interesting, that is—is not always found in the official histories. You have to search to find the interesting pieces of history, like adultery. You have to search the footnotes.

Larry: You search the marginalia, for whatever escapes the headings.

Suchen: Yes. I look for the kind of history that mainstream historians would ignore because most historians write about people in power, people who have attained wealth, or have great knowledge and expertise. But they don't tend to write about the rickshaw-pullers, the coolies, the miners, the tin miners. These are the histories I am interested in for my books.

Larry: Why do you think it is important to talk about these seemingly unimportant minor characters?

Suchen: I didn't have a plan to write about them, to say they were important. It just came about because when I look around they exist. It's not my fault if mainstream historians don't write about them. They only write about politicians and not coolies, they only honor the millionaire, the landowner and not the landless. So maybe I do like to look at the things that other people don't like to look at. For example, I like to look at earthware, and brass, and coppers, not so much the butterflies that people collect. So somebody has to look! That is the job of a writer–perhaps it should also be the job of the historian, but the world isn't like that–yet.

Larry: In your latest novel, *A Bit of Earth*, most of your characters are male.

Suchen: I have a good explanation.

Larry: And yet I feel it is a novel about women. There are men in the novel, the major characters are men, but I get the sense that it is a novel about women really.

Suchen: Well, you are sitting in front of me. I see you. You are a male. You are a man. But behind you, I see your mother, your sister, your auntie. I can't help it! And that's a fact of life. I don't believe in writing a book and saying this is a feminist book. The reason why I write is much more complex than that. It's back to the mysterious processes of writing: some character comes jumping into my head and sometimes they're male. That I don't fully understand, and I don't think we ever will fully understand. But the conscious reason I had for writing more about male characters was because for the previous three books the critics said, "Oh, Suchen, you're a feminist writer! Because you talk about women and their troubles, and what have you." And I got quite upset because if *you* wrote about men no one would come up to you and say you are a "masculinist" writer. But they do that to women. Why? I am a writer like everybody else. I want to resist being labeled, and so I choose to write about both women and men.

Larry: So you feel the labels aren't important, at least for you as a writer?

Suchen: I want to be beyond labels. I come from a country, an island, full of boundaries and borders that we are not supposed to cross. I want to be free from all that. I would like to be a half blind person, or at least like someone wearing glasses, who can't see boundaries very clearly. So, away with labels that bind people and set borders around writers. I choose to write about the people I see and the people who come to me.

Larry: The other thing that I love about your novels is their settings. Your descriptions of setting and the detail you give seem like a character in itself. The land—explain to me the importance of land in your novels.

Suchen: I think, for me as a person and a writer, land is important. I tend to believe that the land, the geography, shapes the people. Perhaps the mountains bring about a certain generosity of spirit that people living on a tiny island with no hills cannot experience. I

grew up in Malaysia with the view of the Penang Hills and the Nakawan Range. I had a grandfather who took me out to sit on a rock and to look at the hills. I think that the daily gazing at trees and mountains does something to one's soul that you can't quite explain or control. My soul has been marked deeply by the land and that comes across in my writing.

Larry: There are many occasions in your novels where a character makes an offering to nature. The miners before they cut down the trees at one point. There's a relationship not only between the Malay and the Chinese and Indian, but also between these men and the landscape. There's a relationship between the people and the land.

Suchen: Hmm, well historically that kind of a relationship between the land and the people is an historical fact. Traditional cultures had a spiritual relationship with the land and with nature. That has not yet been fully lost to many of our Asian cultures. It's still rooted within us, even if we are losing it.
As for me, I do think that there is some value in the reverence of land as a gift. The land has a life of its own, that we the users of that land should honor and appreciate. It is a very old traditional value in Asia that we should honor. I hope we will not lose it, but with urbanization, large sections of the population have lost the feel of the soil beneath our feet, because we no longer walk on it. We no longer walk on earth, we walk on concrete. So maybe it's something I don't share with my fellow Singaporeans, because they're city dwellers, and I was born in the country and I grew up with ricefields.

Larry: So you would say your imagination was shaped more by Malaysia than by Singapore?

Suchen: No, I wouldn't say that. They both influence me greatly, though in very different ways. Certainly, I cannot say I am a Malaysian writer.

Larry: You stayed in Malaysia for how long?

Suchen: I was there for fifteen years. I grew up in Malaysia. So I think I have that relationship of sensibility to the earth that the traditional people had—those that worked the land. In *Fistful* and in *Rice Bowl* (1984) my first novel, there is a sensibility in terms of the relationship between the characters and the earth. So I think I am a dweller in both. In both the city and the land. In both Singapore and Malaysia. That's why I don't want to see too many

boundaries. Nor can you simply say that there is no appreciation for the land in Singapore—it is there, but it may be different. Nor can you say there is always an appreciation for the land in Malaysia—that's not true either. The world is too complex. Boundaries make simple divisions.

Larry: Did you go back to Malaysia often?

Suchen: Yes! Yes!

Larry: But you live in Singapore.

Suchen: Yes. You see, it is a complex relationship. Boundaries can make false divisions, where no division exists. Between the land and the human soul there was once no division, or at least, the boundary was thinner than it is today.

Larry: Was it you who migrated to Singapore?

Suchen: No, my family. My grandfather was from China. He migrated to Malaysia. Back in those days, the boundaries were a lot more fluid. You know, in that generation I suspect many were illegal immigrants. They crossed the borders much more freely than we do today. And the border between their daily life and their spiritual sensibilities was a lot thinner too.

Larry: You mentioned that your grandfather worked as a coolie on the land. Has that influenced your writing?

Suchen: I honor his spirit and the spirits of those like him who worked the land in *A Bit of Earth*. In a sense, it was a new land that he discovered. As a young man, he was from a rice-growing village in China. He and the people like him were very close to the land. And in the new land, they maintained their close relationship and respected the land that fed them and their families.

Larry: You mentioned once that you were never confident in your understanding of the Malay language. Yet the issue of language is very important in your work.

Suchen: Since I live in a multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious society, I think that the

variety of languages, customs, and religions are part and parcel of my inner landscape. I think that I celebrate that variety of languages and the variety of people in my work. It is not an easy task to maintain a truth to your roots and your heritage, and yet remain open to the Other. Language offers us a way to negotiate our loyalties and our openness. Language certainly reflects where we are from, but it also reflects how far we are willing to go into the culture and traditions, into the identity, of the Other. Despite needing to remain open, we do need a connection to our own self, to our own roots.

Larry: Here in the Philippines, when we learn to speak English the task is to make sure that your Filipino accent is erased.

Suchen: So how are you supposed to speak? Like the Americans?

Larry: On the one hand, there is the rise of the call centers that demand a certain accent. They're forcing people to have an American accent as part of their job. So it is very interesting for me to read your works. You write your characters' language as it is spoken. I can hear their accents. You write in their language instead of transcribing your characters' language into standard English. You seem to be saying that it is possible to speak in English and yet maintain…

Suchen: Your Asian sensibility?

Larry: Your "Asian sensibility" and the more local sensibility, not only of the province but also of the village.

Suchen: Yes it's possible. I think accent is an acquired thing. Like an acquired taste for durian, or cheese. But if you really get down to it, so long as the English is comprehensible internationally and grammatically understood by everyone else, then whether you speak in this accent or that accent is just dressing up. The main thing is, are you understood? Are you speaking English in a grammar that is common to all? At least comprehensible to all?

Right now we're talking about a kind of international English. Now that would be something we could use for call centers, for example, or the opening of a seminar. It would require that all the various English speakers be open to the varieties. Everyone would have to learn to adjust to the varieties of accents and grammars and lexical variations. At the moment, many

are not willing to be so open. Some want to continue to impose their variety. That won't work any more in an international setting. Our world is too small. We need this international English in today's world.

But when I am with you, I can speak in another register. I know your Asian ear can understand me. So I am freer with you to speak my own more local English. This is what I used once in the seminar and my characters use it in my books. We understand one another and our local English allows us to express our identities and culture.

A student once asked me if it's alright to use Singlish, which is the Singapore street language. A lot of people, especially politicians and administrators, tend to say don't do that, it's ungrammatical. But if you look at it, I think you should be flexible. We have a variety of table manners. When you're invited to dine at the Marine Hotel, an expensive French restaurant, you will learn to use a fork and knife and spoon, a champagne glass, and so on. But if you dine at the hawker center you won't be doing that. You'll be using your hands and chopsticks, wearing shorts and loafers and slippers. And the whole wonderful thing about education is that we learn to be flexible, and when to be flexible. When to be formal and when to be informal, and to be able to make that switch. The whole idea of school and education is that we teach students, who have their own local English, to be able also to use that more international register of language of English so that they can move up and down the social scale. To be just as comfortable in Malacanang Palace as in the…

Larry: …in the shanty right beside it! Yes, in the barrio, and why not? So the person who is fixed on a single "correct" register of language, now that is a sad thing whether he is a King or Prime Minister. You cannot just go up the scale. You have to be able to go down too—to communicate in the various local Englishes.

Suchen: That's it exactly. And that's why I think it is so important to have books written and published that contain local varieties of English. We need the experience, the exposure, of reading other varieties. And we need to be able to see them in novels so that it is a way of saying, these too have a right to their own use of English. It gives dignity.

Larry: Finally, in relation to the whole conference—the construction of Asian identity. It's a volatile topic. For example, there are people, on the one hand, trying to set boundaries, trying to define what makes them "them." It's necessary for people to define themselves

and to assert their own culture. Yet, on the other hand, there's the need to put on that open, international identity. You realize that the moment you get in touch with other people, you have to let your own boundaries go. There's a kind of flexibility necessary also in intercultural dialogue.

Suchen: Yes. You get nearer to the Americans and the West. You wear certain branded boots like Nike, right? But, you go somewhere else and you might want to wear a sarong. On certain occasions, you might want to wear a barong shirt. Other times, you can wear no shirt at all. And language, once you are confident about yourself and your identity, you can use language like a "clothes change" and we can all be multi-language communicators.

Larry: Does this give you ideas for new work?

Suchen: I was just thinking, maybe that's what literature does. Literature celebrates not just the grand themes, but also the little lives, in the village, in the barrio. No history book, no sociology book, no business book will celebrate that. That makes literature superior. May I use the word "superior"? At least, it makes literature more interesting to read!

Larry: The way it can explore the languages of these various peoples?

Suchen: Yes. And then we use language to indicate all these things, you know, and that is the clay. The potter uses the clay to make his pot; the writer uses the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet to do that.

Larry: When did you decide to write in English, or was it a conscious choice?

Suchen: I really hadn't much choice! I failed Malay in school. My Chinese is not very good, you know. I was sent to learn Cantonese, you know, but Cantonese was banned in Singapore. I had to be good at something—in those days, a woman had to have some little learning. My mother had great hopes that I would learn how to sew and embroider, since I was no good at languages. She sent me to the Irish nuns but I didn't learn to sew, I picked up English and literature.

Larry: Do you see a point when you will be writing in another language, like Chinese?

Suchen: I don't think so. I think that there is still a lot to explore using English as a medium for international communications. I think our future will be to deepen and to widen that particular audience. And I don't know if my other languages will ever be good enough!

Larry: Do you have a particular reader in mind when you write your novel?

Suchen: When I first started, no. I was just so happy that I was able to write. So it was just an incredible gift. It took me all of ten years to accept it. Now when I think about it, if you ask me about an audience, I hope it will be a Southeast Asian audience and then the rest of the world. I write in Singapore and you in Manila read it. I'm so happy you understand it, which means that there's a connection. Yes, we can tango.

Larry: Perhaps writers here in Asia, for example, the ones writing in English, almost always seem to be writing for the West. There's an almost inherent understanding that the ultimate market is the Western market—the American or the UK market. It almost seems that all the writers are writing for the people outside Asia and not for each other. Is it surprising for you that a Southeast Asian, like a Filipino, will respond to your writing?

Suchen: Yes and no. In the sense that we share the same colonial history, it's not surprising that you can easily understand my writing. But if I think about colonizers, I think strictly of British, not Spanish. So, it is surprising that you can understand. And then I think of Malaysia because we in Singapore have a shared history. I think of Indonesia because it's so close to us in Singapore. And the Philippines is further north. So in that sense I am surprised again. But again, I am not surprised because we have a shared linguistic heritage in terms of English, the common language, despite our various colonizers. Ultimately, I see us all as part of Southeast Asia. I always maintain that I am a writer of Southeast Asia. I am Chinese, but I am Southeast Asian; not Chinese Chinese but a Southeast Asian Chinese. That's the flexibility of my boundaries. A strong local sense, but open to flexibility.

Larry: Is the novel an important formulation for you?

Suchen: Ah, yes!

Larry: Are you confident that it will be an important part of this new Asia?

Suchen: Yes. And I think it will live. Novel writing might take other forms, but it has a kind of narrative strength that will help it to survive. It is eternal, whatever.

Larry: Do you think Southeast Asia needs the novel?

Suchen: Yes. The novel because of its capacity for breath and for depth in terms of time gives you, the writer, a way of staying and sharing something in a written breath or depth that you can't find, let's say, in a poem or in short story. You don't have to know me in order to be able to understand *A Bit of Earth* or *Fistful of Colours*. Whereas, I think for poetry, you have to know the poet a little bit and his context and so on, his philosophy, to get the full flavor of poetry, right? So in that sense for me, writing the novel is where I am most satisfied. Or maybe I've lived a long time with it, I don't know. We're like an old married couple.

Larry: Suchen, we've talked a lot! We've wondered about the mystery of the creative process, where your characters come from. We've noticed your interest in history, especially the marginal characters who don't get written about in official histories. You've said you resist being labeled a feminist, but you do see the importance of women in life. You resist, in fact, all boundaries and borders that limit people. And so you maintain a spiritual connection with the land, minimizing the boundaries that separate, and instead focusing on the deeper union between the human spirits and nature. We explored a little your origins as an Asian writer, but again you defy the borders that would categorize you. And, we had a good discussion on the varieties of English: the need for an international English and also the need to appreciate local Englishes.

It's been an interesting discussion, Suchen. Thank you very much!