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HISTORY AS RUMOR: THE POLITICAL FANTASY OF THE NEGRENSE ELITE IN VICENTE GROYON'S *THE SKY OVER DIMAS*

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Abstract
This ideological critique reads Vicente Groyon's *The Sky Over Dimas* in its appropriation of historiographic metafiction. The paper argues that its two borrowed modes, historiography and metafiction, function as a symbolic act following Fredric Jameson's Marxist interpretive ground of the political. In *The Sky Over Dimas*, historiographic metafiction is a symbolic act that articulates the political unconscious/fantasy of the landed elite while repressing their role in the perpetuation of the feudal system of sugar in Negros. This provisionalizing or bracketing of history in the novel, unlike other historiographic metafictional texts like *Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café, State of War* and *Empire of Memory*, does not foreground any "alternative histories" of the marginal or the ex-centric. Instead, the novel withholds narrative (and historical) truth, reduces most of its narrative circumstances to gossip and speculation to humanize its protagonists—the hacendero class in Negros. It is this displacement or deviation from the emergent form of historiographic metafiction, its generic series, which engenders a diachronic differential reading that allows the novel to be construed as a symbolic act—an ideological reply or imagined solution to an actual social dilemma.

Keywords
historical novel, historiographic metafiction, Negros, political unconscious, postmodernism

About the author
Mayel P. Martin teaches at the Ateneo de Manila University where she finished AB Humanities and MA in Literary/Cultural Studies. The present paper is based on her MA thesis "The Persistence of the Feudal: Generic Discontinuities in Vicente Groyon's *The Sky Over Dimas*/The Political Fantasy of the Landed Elite," which attempts to historicize the ideological functions appropriated in the narrative mode of historiographic metafiction. Aside from teaching core curricular English and literature classes, she has taught elective courses in Western Literature. Her research interest engages the intersection of Marxist critique and genre studies, focusing on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Fredric Jameson.

In Georg Lukacs's landmark analysis, the historical novel is said to have developed into its full-fledged classical form in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Deviating from the socially-realistic novels being written in England in the eighteenth century, Scott's historical novels displayed an awareness of history as a process, as emblematic of change and directionality. Lukacs attributes this shift in perspective to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, which enabled European states to perceive history as a mass experience, affecting everyone, and not just a natural or innate event. The many wars that were fought in resistance to Napoleon likewise brought about a surge of nationalist sentiment, and

along with it a longing for national independence and identity (23-24). More significantly, the defeat of Napoleon also altered how men came to view progress which, for the first time, was understood as wrought by social forces in conflict and not, as the Enlightenment put it, a result of the triumph of humanist over feudal-absolutist values. At this juncture, men also came to a realization that human nature is not permanent or essential but is shaped by man's activity and his participation in history (27-28).

This historical consciousness of mass movements finds its way into Scott's delineation of characters in his novels as "historical-social types," motivated in activity and action by their class affiliations and concerns, which situates them in a position of conflict with another class. Moreover, the heroes are not the great historical figures that dominated the socio-realist works of the Enlightenment but are average, typical, ordinary men, who in their middle-class status function as a neutral ground on which the struggles between the elite and the masses are enacted (33-36). In making the historical human, Scott confers on his middle-class heroes the "narrow-mindedness" which is emblematic of their social group. Lukacs is quick to point out, though, that such a representation of the middle class can very well be explained by Scott's ideological limitations; Scott after all is not without aristocratic and conservative biases. For Lukacs, what makes the historical novel distinct from the older social-realist form is that the hero and the other typical characters of the period are unique individuals inasmuch as their individuality is shaped by historical necessity. As a result, reality is rendered as socially discriminate, depicted according to how men relate with their social environment in a broad sweep (46-47).

Lukacs's discourse on the historical novel illumines how form or genre embodies a way of thinking, a particular consciousness about history. Fredric Jameson expands Lukacs's insight in asserting that genre is essentially a symbolic answer to a socio-historical contradiction; as such, it is not a mere category or slot that locates and identifies literary texts; form carries an ideological charge in its inception such that a new appropriation of an old form registers a change in function (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 99). Thus, history is not only an unfolding of punctual events but also, more importantly, an understanding of it is a condition of possibility which influences the emergence of certain genres at a particular moment.

HISTORY AND THE NOVELISTIC IMAGINATION

It is probably the merging of history and the novel that has produced what has become a valorized form in Philippine literature as evidenced by the number of titles

under this form that have won in awards such as the Palanca (*Bamboo in the Wind*, *The Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café*, *The Sky Over Dimas*), National Book (*Killing Time in a Warm Place, Empire of Memory*), and Centennial Book (*My Sad Republic*, *An Embarrassment of Riches*). This phenomenon can perhaps be explained by how Philippine literature, from Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, has canonized novels that deploy history in the narrative not only as setting or context but as a means of re-inscribing the narratives of the Filipino nation as well. Rizal himself stated that the *Noli* contains the last decade of the country's history (Daroy 257). Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo confirms this belief when she says that "any Filipino who wanted to write the big one turned to history for his/her material" (117). This is the sense in which the paper will use the term "historical novel." This form of the novel, in its inception, purports to be a genre in which historical time and place are evoked. Soledad Reyes in *Nobelang Tagalog* declares the subject matter of the historical novels to be an imaginative effort that extends or intensifies history (29).

At present, the subgenre continues to be privileged by both novelists and literary critics alike although the cause célèbre has become another object altogether: history as a fact, as a verifiable progression of events that has institutionalized the reception of most novels has given way to an understanding of history as a system of representation, as discourse. Nothing is more indicative of this shift in knowledge than Ruth Pison's *Alternative Histories: Martial Law Novels as Counter-Memory*. In the book, Pison analyzes seven Martial Law novels from 1972 to 1992 as attempts to interrogate Philippine colonial histories while proposing ways of countering hegemonies via a way of reading which, borrowing from Foucault, she calls counter-memory (1). Martial Law refers to the nine-year period (1972-81) in Philippine history when dictator Ferdinand Marcos suspended the civil and political rights of the Filipinos in the interest of creating a "New Society," which supposedly heralded social and political reforms but in reality, neutralized Marcos's economic and political enemies and prolonged his stay in office. The Martial Law novels' re-inventing and rereading of history in order to bracket its referential quality are devices of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction." A self-conscious mode of writing, which is one of our current cultural dominants given the postcolonial agenda of recent Philippine novels in English, historiographic metafiction questions the possibility of objectively knowing the past since our access to it (its written variety) is emplotted as a narrative. This narrative mode posits that history, like literature, uses literary techniques like figurative language and these tools are not mere medium that transmit meaning. Given this corrective view, written histories can now be "closely-read" and interpreted like any fictional story and thus are subject to the same motivations and ideological closures. Such

interplay between fiction and history is the motor behind Groyon's *The Sky Over Dimas*, winner of the 2003 Palanca Award and the 2005 National Book Award.

Groyon's is similar to the novels in Pison's critique in that it celebrates the confusion between what is fictional and what is historical. That this historical novel is unabashedly metafictional in its treatment of Bacolod history is articulated by one of the main characters: "It is more difficult to fabulize what's there in front of you, as opposed to something in the past, which is so much more malleable and receptive to fabrication (Groyon 32). Such overt self-referentiality resonates in almost every other page.

The Sky Over Dimas chronicles the troubled saga of the Torrecarion family, a hacendero clan in Bacolod whose past crimes and misdemeanors, committed in a desperate bid to keep its bloodlines free of working class breed, are deforming its present. George Torrecarion and his wife Marge, if not obsessing about and denying the past, are trapped in a bubble of their own choice. George, the reluctant sugar planter, "fictionalizes the present" by dissimulating madness and entertaining present day Bacolodnons with his quixotic antics; Marge indulges in hack spirituality and the convenience of a split personality. Rafael, the second of two sons, the only survivor, sends himself to college in Manila and manages to escape "the sins of the fathers." Negros history finds its way into the genealogy of the family which is half-contained by the plot and half-revealed by George Torrecarion's journals. These sources unravel one dramatic secret after another and they involve genocide, miscegenation, murder, incest, and idiocy from the first Torrecarion settler in Spanish Bacolod to the post-EDSA descendants of the clan.

Historiographic metafiction forwards a provisional sense of history or "reality" given its insight that the past we know today is not a sequence of actual events but is mediated by representations. That Groyon chose to make Bacolod history provisional, a footnote, in the direction of *de-buena pamilya* melodrama and titillation when such a past had been witness to landed oppression and other feudal atavisms is a symptom of and an imagined solution to what has been a long-standing social contradiction. Thus, the novel, in its attempts to denaturalize the conventions of (his)tory-telling and its blurring of fact and fiction, begs to be read as a relativizing of official histories.

Metafictional narrative strategies, in theory, hold that such a corrective view likewise attempts to "redress the balance of the historical record of writing histories of the excluded, those relegated permanently to history's dark areas" (McHale 99). This is why such theories of narrative are perceived as sharing a host of strategies with feminism. Yet such a resurfacing of hidden, unofficial histories of lost or silenced groups does not seem to be the motivation of the novel when it narrates an apocryphal history of Bacolod.

As a historical novel, *The Sky Over Dimas*'s treatment of the comprehensively-documented history of Bacolod is an overdetermined and contradictory one. On one hand, the novel fictionalizes history but, on the other, insists on showing that same history as a natural cycle, not one impelled by human action. "History" in the novel is neither the recorded past of Bacolod nor an alternative one that surfaces hidden stories about possible "Others," the losing groups that might have been excluded from official documents. What interpretation of "history" can we then read from the novel given its metafictional treatment of history?

Any theory of history has at one point or another confronted the problem of how the present can represent an absent past. The past it has been held has disappeared and what we have of it are its traces. An acceptance and an addressing of this point is precisely what the Marxist insight into history is: it is an absent cause, resisting representation in its totality but almost always present as narrative. Narrative and genre assume a privileged position since they inscribe complex connections among people, places, and objects and are thus expressive of a perceived totality of real life (Roberts 81). History may be an absent cause but that does not mean that its forces have no shaping influence. In fact, history bears upon narratives in the way our stories mediate experience, drawing social and historical reality into the texture of the work. Narrative is that place where a feeling for or a suspicion about history finds articulation.

When history is textualized, and here the historical novel is exemplary, the ground or subtext such stories embody is not a passive social reality but the more dynamic horizon of social relations, the ebb and flow of which is class conflict. The specificity and the events of the past are different from the present although the former continues to engage the latter in their shared concerns, desires, and struggles (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 18). History, Jameson holds, is the collective story of open and hidden class struggles in order to "wrest a realm of Freedom, from a realm of Necessity" (*The Political Unconscious* 19).

This paper argues that *The Sky Over Dimas*'s appropriation and displacement of narrative practices are symptomatic of an elitist political fantasy which naturalizes the dominant position of the hacenderos in Bacolod. It is indeed impossible to represent History but any collective understanding of it necessarily finds expression in a political unconscious, which embodies the social and economic realities that shape the novel's form.

HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

Currently, the historical novels that have been in the critical spotlight for a decade or so now are historiographic metafictions. Unlike conventional historical novels, this

narrative form seeks to undermine the hegemonic impulses that have directed the writing of our history. It detects in the linear and teleological representations of history a privileging of the colonizer's and the elite's discourses, oftentimes working in tandem. Historiographic metafiction is a postmodernist narrative strategy that manifests the skepticism of constructivist theorists of history regarding the capacity of history to be objective or empirical. Critics like Hayden White have argued that history is not different from fiction since both utilize the same narrative conventions like figurative language and the inscription of subjectivities in a thoroughgoing ideology. Moreover, like history, fiction can "silence, exclude, and absent certain past events—and people" (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 830). Historiographic metafiction rectifies the imbalance wrought by this conclusive and totalizing stance by dislodging history from its status as objective and disinterested, which authenticates a re-writing or re-presenting of the past that opens up to the multiple views of the present (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 834).

Umberto Eco identifies three genres that narrate the past: the romance, the swashbuckling tale, and the historical novel (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 830-32). Hutcheon sees historiographic metafiction as making up the fourth category in this list and as such can be defined in contrast to its predecessor, the historical novel as defined by Lukacs. Unlike historical novels, which enact the historical process by a presentation of character types of "all the humanly and socially essential determinants," historiographic metafiction casts the protagonist as "the ex-centric, the marginalized, the peripheral figure of fictional history" as a means of undermining the cultural universality inscribed in the personalities of the older form. Secondly, historiographic metafiction makes a ploy out of the "truth" and "lies" found in the historical record in order to foreground the constructedness of and potential lapses in recorded or mainstream history. In contrast to the historical's novel collection and assimilation of details as a means of rendering historical accuracy, historiographic metafiction includes such details but refuses to organize them into a cohesive narrative order. Lastly, in contrast to the historical novel's attempts at a seamless joint between history and fiction, which usually trots out historical personalities in order to validate the fictional set-up, historiographic metafiction compels readers to question familiar versions of history (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 838-39).

Although this postmodern genre has been charged with such excesses as narcissistic fictionalizing and/or trivializing history, its proponents have been quick to defend its agency. Linda Hutcheon, its foremost advocate, points to its denaturalizing, "de-doxifying" critique of cultural representations (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 3). She admits that this postmodern form is characterized by a "complicitous critique" in that as it problematizes

issues of representation, it also finds itself paradoxically relying on the same devices (language, representation) that it aims to challenge. This paradox, she claims, is typical of discourses that wish to interrogate codes using the articulations found within those codes as their instruments (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 13). Feminism, for instance, challenges patriarchal systems, of which language is one, although it can only do so by appropriating language.

Postmodernist politics considers the issues of representation such as subjectivity, reference, the intertextual nature of the past, and the ideological implications of historiography in the interplay between historiography and fiction which is strategic in articulating the relationship between the two practices. In its privileging of multiple points of view and an overtly controlling but unreliable narrator, historiographic metafiction addresses the notion of subjectivity, which is held by realist and historical fictions to be stable and coherent. Unlike the characters in realist fiction, the postmodern subjects is poised to deflect the possibility of ever knowing the past with certainty and point to the unreliability of memory, which most recorded histories call upon to guarantee the authenticity of the narrated events. This depiction of the subject likewise dispels the notion of man as a stable fixed point on which he could master the past and thus account for its content and trajectory (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 841-42).

In its confronting the past of both literature and historiography, historiographic metafiction insists that this past is derived from texts and documents that refer to other texts. As such the past is not an essence, handed down and preserved from some wellspring of truth. Metafictional strategies emphasize this point by its playing with the intertextual bases of history in order to allow the present to re-inscribe the past in new contexts (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 842).

This mode of historical writing also addresses the issue of reference in its assertion that our knowledge of the past's reality is problematic, since we have access only to its textual traces/remains which are represented in language, a reliance shared by both fiction and historiography. It is not external reality, that something did happen, which is questioned here as much as our ability to know it "objectively." This inadequacy of knowledge about the past immediately situates the status of written histories as provisional. Since historiography resorts to language, a non-porous semiotic system, historiographic metafiction suggests this reflexively in its demonstration that the referent is not a given, not "natural" but is always a product of discourse, inscribed in culture (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 843).

In its emphasis on the discursive nature of the referent, historiographic metafiction strategies foreground the ideology behind versions of history that are validated and made operative. Given its insight that fiction is historically-conditioned and history is discursively structured, the issue of whose history is read is of utmost urgency to the mode inasmuch as historians impose a process of selection in retaining certain textual details and discarding the rest which do not fit their intention. Postmodern theory holds that history-writing has been known to privilege certain discourses and subjectivities while marginalizing or silencing alternative identities as a result of cultural biases and hegemonic ideologies. The narrative strategies of historiographic metafiction thus liberate both history and fiction from their former actantial status as "truth" or "fact" and "invention" or "imagined," respectively, unto an understanding of both as *narratives*. As their shared structure, it is narrative and not the quibble between which is historical and which is fictional that should become the proper focus of critical inquiry in that narratives are conditions of possibility, embodying a mode of coherence and sense-making which renders the knowing into the telling (Hutcheon, "Historiographic" 843).

Most historiographic metafictions produced by Filipino novelists and short-story writers have been lauded for taking up the postcolonial or Marxist task of demystifying and countering hegemonic discourses in their re-imagining of Philippine history and reconstitution of Filipino subjectivities. Such postmodern narrative strategies recognize the fact that our history has been written for us by those whose politics have been complicit in Othering marginal or subaltern identities. This narrative practice, it seems, guarantees "alternative" versions of the past that acknowledge the plurality of discourses given the constructedness of history.

Yet, the creative practice of historiographic metafiction can fall off from its theoretical high-horse. Hutcheon asserts that such a mode of writing is not narcissistic or apolitical. It is not, though not in any a priori or automatic manner. This paper contends that such a mode of re-writing of history can be appropriated to defend and further dominant class ends. Since history is "just another story," open to a multitude of discourses, then the power to "re-represent" becomes open to abuse as well. Our access to reality is indeed mediated by representations; such a realization, though, is necessary but not sufficient in proposing a means by which excluded groups can assume agency and be allowed to articulate their own discourses. It is impossible to know the past but this should not imply that "history" is to fall casualty to indulgent fictionalizing. The rationalizing histories of the ruling class, the victors can return with a vengeance despite the form.

PHILIPPINE HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTIONS

This mode of postmodern writing has certainly found fertile ground in the Philippine setting, and has become an embattled but resilient cultural dominant. Since the eighties up to the present, a slew of novels written in the mode have been published to popular and critical acclaim. In chronological order they are *Cave and Shadows* (1983) by Nick Joaquin, *State of War* (1988) by Ninotchka Rosca, *Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café* (1988) by Alfred Yuson, *Dogeaters* (1990) by Jessica Hagedorn, *Twice Blessed* (1992) by Rosca, *Empire of Memory* (1992) by Eric Gamalinda, *My Sad Republic* (1998) by Gamalinda, *An Embarrassment of Riches* (1998) by Charlson Ong, *Voyeurs and Savages* (1998) by Yuson, and *The Sky Over Dimas* (2002) by Vicente Groyon.

These novels, with the exception of the last one, have been valorized in that they are read as postcolonial interrogations of canonical/colonialist historiography and other narratives, which open up spaces for inscribing alternative stories of the colonial experience, martial law, and other aspects of Philippine history. In Pison's study of these novels, she locates in each of the seven the discourse of "counter-memory," which is the Foucauldian "process of reading particular events against the grain of hegemonic histories" that articulates the silences in authorized versions of history (Pison 1). Foucault's counter-memory echoes the critical assumptions of Hayden White and the politics of postmodernism discussed by Linda Hutcheon. All three theories converge on the idea that history is non-referential but discursive, already an interpretation in its narrativization of events, and therefore, ideological. Aside from this stance, counter-memory also projects critical uses of history as the parodic or farcical, the dissociative, and the sacrificial, all three being strategies that subvert official and authoritative history. The first dislodges history from its status as authorized reminiscence or recognition, and enables a focus on forms that signal a departure from reality such as the carnival; the second undermines the accepted notion of history as the homogeneous continuity of a tradition or empire by a demonstration of plural discourses that constitute a nation's past and its people's identities; the last refers to the sacrificial use of knowledge, which debunks the notion of history as knowledge and truth and reveals how knowledge-formation is predicated on violence and injustices (Pison 1-19). Lily-Rose Tope recognizes the same postcolonial recuperation in her critique of *Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café*, one of the seven novels in Pison's analysis. Tope sees in Yuson's novel a similar narrative re-inscription which surfaces the subjugated discourse of the millenarian in the history of the Philippine nation.

HISTORICIZING GENRES

Fredric Jameson, in *The Political Unconscious*, posits that cultural forms perform a social function, owing to their emergence and evolution in specific historical moments. This is apparent when one considers the social needs addressed by rituals and other collective practices in agricultural or tribal society. The same social needs persist, although in an entirely different degree, when one advances to the era of capitalism. Such a relationship presupposes that from the very start, cultural forms and their social milieu contribute to a total process, an interrelatedness of experience, the activity of one sharing in the impulse of the other; and this context, where art coincides with the movements of society, grants such forms immediate meaning (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 165). At this historical moment when a connection was felt among the different spheres of human existence, between private and public domains, now compartmentalized, there was yet no need to symbolize and thus to "interpret." With the loss of such concerted quality between art and its social ground in the capitalist age and its later developments, when artistic works are reified while the social ground descends to the level of base, art has come to develop or "behave" in a way that captures this vanished completeness. That art stood in an organic relationship with society—its emergent historical situation—is then the starting point for the interpretation of cultural forms. Thus the history of a thing, whether it is sexuality, a literary work, or a musical composition, conditions the way it is interpreted (Roberts 112). Such is the process in which the past engages the present.

Such an intuiting of the historicity of forms is especially useful in the study of narratives and, in particular, the novel. Genres establish and sustain a necessary relationship between an aesthetic or author and its public or audience (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 106). Not a neutral category, genre is receptive to changes or movements that occur in the larger contexts of the social and the economic. The novel, for instance, which is "an attempt to give meaning to the outside world and to human experience (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 173) in its full-fledged form is attributed to the rise of the middle class as a social group distinct from the nobility and the proletariat. In this manner literary texts, despite their detached or "experimental" quality, come into being as a response to certain dilemmas or situations. Such an argument finds its theoretical basis in the Marxist work of Jameson, who sees narrative as the "central function or instance of the human mind" (*The Political Unconscious* 13) and defines it as a *symbolic act* (*The Political Unconscious* 20). For Jameson, "the will to read literary or cultural texts as symbolic acts must necessarily grasp them as resolutions of determinate contradictions" (*The Political*

Unconscious 80). Not a simplistic model of reflection between base and superstructure, the understanding of a text as a balance of tensions between the conjured and the real finds further basis in Kenneth Burke's notion that it is a "play of emphases, in which a symbolic act is on the one hand affirmed as a genuine act, albeit on the symbolic level, while on the other it is registered as an act which is merely symbolic, its resolutions imaginary ones that leave the real untouched, suitably dramatizes the ambiguous status of art and culture" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 81). In effect, literature is imaginary but it possesses a kind of potency as well: it does something to the world by its very representation of society, in its host of characters, places, conflicts, as a total scheme of things.

The definition of genres and narratives as social contracts and symbolic acts qualify them as forms of mediation by their very ambiguity in structure and function, and thus enable a dialectical reading between the literary text and its social ground. Hence, narratives are mediating structures that surface, as if against themselves, the unseen correspondence between two levels in the overall structure of society. Mediation, in Jameson's terms, is "the classical dialectical term for the establishment of relationships between, say, the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base" (*The Political Unconscious* 39). As a method, mediations demonstrate the working of a subtext, a deeper reality, which is not apparent on the surface of the work but influences it in a way similar to how the unconscious, in its slips, projections, and displacements, breaks into conscious thought. In this process, the fragmented and autonomous qualities of phenomena in human existence such as work, the academe, the household, the legal system, and cultural practices are unmasked as illusions issuing from the rationalization and reification of daily life in the capitalist age (*The Political Unconscious* 40), where such phenomena are apprehended as things-in-themselves, oblivious to their actual status as produced, as moments in a total process. This is not to repeat the commonplace that the essence of the base is simply reproduced in the superstructure but that the literary work, in its status as a symbolic act, exercises a degree of freedom as it compensates for, resolves, or revolts against the situation, contradiction, or dilemma found in the historical moment of the text's production (*The Political Unconscious* 42).

Aside from fostering a momentary unification between literary forms and their historical contexts, mediation is crucial in tracing the text's historical conditions of possibility—those available concrete objects and developments in the structures of the economic, the political, and the social—which constitute its subtext. Jameson views the subtext not merely as a passive ground which the text reflects or as a series of determinate

contradictions but as a "political unconscious." Such a claim finds its wider relevance in Jameson's assertion that "everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (*The Political Unconscious* 20). Both statements about the political initialize the point by which Jameson proposes that History is "a horizon encompassing all interpretation" (qtd. in Roberts 50). "History," in Jameson's scheme, is similar to Jacques Lacan's "Real," which is the reality lying beyond the reach of consciousness. Both are absent causes, apprehended only through their *manifestations*, resisting the confines of the imagined and the symbolic (Roberts 77). Such an idea is at work, for instance, when postmodern narrative theories refer to the cultural and not "natural" status of historical documents, imputing that the latter are not real or actual but privilege certain groups or subjectivities and are therefore mere effects or versions of History. Thus when we "think of" or "write" "history," our doing so can only be but an oblique estimation, an effect of an absent cause.

Moreover, for Jameson, the unconscious can aptly be metaphorized as ideological, the vantage point from which a version of History is constructed, since History is "the unity of a single great collective story … sharing a single fundamental theme—for Marxism, the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity" (*The Political Unconscious* 19). Such a definition of History strongly entertains a class composition or character and anticipates the three concentric frameworks of the political, the social, and the historical by which Jameson interprets literary texts as ideological constructions. History might be unrepresentable but our collective understanding of it as necessity (the sentiment that what happened had to happen) seeks expression in the political unconscious—a vision of history which is nevertheless a desiring, alternative, and a utopian one.

It is from this understanding of history and other narratives as ideological that a text assumes different levels of intelligibility in the gradual expansion of its social ground. Such a process may likewise be seen as the strong rewriting of the literary text that deepens its semantic and ideological registers following the widening of its subtext. Jameson identifies the first of these grounds as the political (*The Political Unconscious* 75), the interpretive horizon on which this paper reads Groyon's novel.

NEGATIVE INTERTEXTUALITY

On this level of interpretation, the text is construed as a symbolic act and its immediate period in political history, marked by historical figures and political regimes, as

its horizon. At this point, the narrative is an imagined or formal solution to a determinate contradiction and is outright ideological (*The Political Unconscious* 77-79).

As with any Marxist analysis of cultural texts, the concept of contradiction and its articulation is vital to concluding both the first and second interpretive analyses and clarifies what Jameson actually means by "subtext." In contrast to the sociological reading of literature, which grasps mediation as mere reflection of base on superstructures, the Marxist subtext is nowhere announced in the text "but rather must itself always be (re) constructed after the fact" (*The Political Unconscious* 81). This is the sense in which the construction of the text as symbolic act gains critical import: the text reconfigures an earlier historical or ideological system of relations, thus the text engages the Real by "draw[ing] [it] into its own texture" (*The Political Unconscious* 81). In effect, the subtext is that which the literary work "brings into being … to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction" (*The Political Unconscious* 82).

This recognition of the workings of the text as primarily a symbolic act informs the paper's analysis of genres and their displacements in a formal mapping of ideology. Symbolic acts are generic forms implicated in literary evolution and the processes of social life. More importantly, they undergo an ongoing strategy of replacement and variation (*The Political Unconscious* 131) in order to address changing historical situations and assume cultural validity. Jameson proposes this understanding of the genesis of genres:

> in its emergent, strong form a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other terms, that *form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right*. When such forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite different social and cultural contexts, this message persists and must be functionally reckoned into the new form. (*The Political Unconscious* 141)

This model of causality between the variable form of genres, their inherent ideologies and the historical context entertains a process of imbrication where the passage from one historical period to the next inscribes a new function in the text. As it transforms and displaces older social messages, the text finds its current ideological charges contending with the former, such that the new generic mode either clashes with or subsumes prior sedimented ideological messages (*The Political Unconscious* 141). This is how genres, in neutralizing the contradiction/s in the subtextual and formal layers, regulate such diverse signals issuing from different historical moments in order to simulate a uniform, coherent appearance.

The resulting substitutions or displacements that accrue in the development of a genre by its constant reappropriation by discontinuous historical situations have typically been ordered as a confirmation of identities between an original form and its later morphing. Jameson describes the evolution of romance, as mapped out by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* to demonstrate a specific instance of this type of generic ideological construct. The frequent re-modeling of romance as a genre adapts itself to different contexts by replacing the original substance of magic with other contents such as religion and the psyche among others as the form approaches the arrival of secular society (*The Political Unconscious* 134). This idealist mode of Frye's, though, elides the differences that mark the jump from one historical situation to the next as it insists on seeing a smooth continuity from the romances of Chretien de Troyes to the fantastic literature of the modern (*The Political Unconscious* 136).

In contrast, a Marxist account of the same generic series considers the construction as taking the more properly restorative form of a *negative intertextuality* where a differential account is enlisted to register a significant absence in the newer text once it is introduced into its primary generic series (*The Political Unconscious* 137-38). This type of diachronic construct is articulated through the text's deviation in its formal features or content from its background of generic affinities (*The Political Unconscious* 137). The departure from its formal templates, by way of modifications in the plot structure, the functioning of certain characters, or the shifting of the conflict, signals an important absence and displacement where an element in the incipient form, for some reason, is banished or muted in the text and the text itself transfers its urgencies elsewhere. Jameson considers such a maneuver as performing a necessary operation where the text senses a kind of present societal anxiety in its current generic registers and consequently, does its best to exploit another feature in order to distract the reader from and neutralize such apprehensions (*The Political Unconscious* 138).

The displaced/subdued moment or feature and the diversionary one are the intertextual constructs that engender a reading of the text as the "coexistence, contradiction, structural hierarchy, or uneven development of a number of distinct narrative systems" (*The Political Unconscious* 138), owing to the changes in the socio-historical situation. This diachronic differential reading permits the text to be construed as a symbolic act, an ideological reply or resolution to an actual dilemma. This is the process by which the text can be made to surface, after repressing the appearance of it, its political unconscious—an imagined and desired "solution" given the determinate contradictions in a historical moment. More importantly, such a plotting of narrative registers or traces

"restore[s] our sense of the concrete situation in which such forms can be seized as original and meaningful protopolitical acts" (*The Political Unconscious* 148).

The materialist basis of Jameson's Marxism constitutes the ultimate conditions of possibility of any genre and this is especially true of the novel whose constant metamorphosis makes it exemplary a form for revealing such a symbolic act at play, muting, subsuming, unifying, and displacing narrative paradigms which are all ideologically-charged in contradictory ways, themselves originally symbolic acts. In this manner is how Bakhtin considers all utterances to be *only* "relatively stable" speech genres of which the novel or any literary work is one. As speech, literary works do not really "create" original expressions or messages but instead exhibit a process of assimilation where the text is charged with "others' words" in varying degrees. These words, which the speaker or author attempts to own or shepherd into his/her work, are derived from different epochs, social circles, or family and intersected by the various fields of human activity like law, journalism, and the sciences. In its embodiment of a world and an evaluation of it, these words which the author assimilates is re-worked and re-accentuated in the literary work (Bakhtin 89).

HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION AS A SOCIALLY SYMBOLIC ACT

It is to this generic sequence or diachronic construct of historiographic metafiction that *The Sky Over Dimas* finds itself positioned as its most recent addition. As demonstrated in the critical reading of a number of historiographic metafictions above, the form has always been read as relevant and corrective, although not uncontested, given its postmodernist and postcolonial denaturalizing critique that provisionalizes and pluralizes history, and resurrects subjugated knowledges and stories that may have been casualties of written historical records.

Despite the textual-political hermeneutic that a synthesis of postmodern and postcolonial strategies projects in order to locate the agencies of individual works of the form, it glosses over the fact that the genre itself, historiographic metafiction, is a socially symbolic act, marked by its emergence in a particular period of history (it replaces the dominant form of the historical novel in the late-capitalist era) and situated in a co-existence of mode of productions (feudal capitalism-late capitalist). In Jameson's critical insight, the history of any genre—its semantic conditions of possibility and its emergent social function—should be a necessary ground for its interpretation, not as a replacement of other reading strategies but as a vital precondition for adequate literary

comprehension (*The Political Unconscious* 17). Amidst the dilemma about the status of historiography and other texts that deal with history in one way or another, which the above set of readings and counter-readings of historical fiction evokes, it is Jameson's Marxist hermeneutic, in itself a "genuine philosophy of history," that settles the issue. This understanding of history, Jameson claims, is "capable of respecting the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles, with those of the present day" (*The Political Unconscious* 19). History, as invoked in this definition, is neither a referent nor a mere construction but an absent cause, invisible because it is the ever-continuing narrative of class struggles that have marked a range of historical periods from the prehistoric to late capitalist (and thus cannot be directly accessed), which has nevertheless the capacity to make itself manifest in its effects. History is also, in Jameson's critical scheme, simultaneously the mode of production, not to be reduced to the economic base but understood as a structure that synchronizes the system of social relations between and among different levels as a whole. Monopoly and/or late capitalism, for instance, are modes of production that regulate the functional synchronicity of culture, the political, and the economic. This is the sense in which the mode of production is an absent cause, since it is nowhere visible and discrete as an element; it is not one of the levels in the mode of production, but rather "the entire system of relationship among those levels" (*The Political Unconscious* 36). This is not to fall back on the vulgar base-superstructure model that plagued other sociological criticisms since, as Jameson demonstrates in his hermeneutic apparatus, each level in the structure does exercise a relative autonomy. The present writing of literature, for instance, is determined by a capitalist mode of production and yet it is also a reaction or a revolt against the social system.

Modes of production have usually been understood as stages of human society: tribal society, hierarchical kinship society, Oriental despotism, an oligarchical slaveholding society, feudalism, capitalism, and communism (*The Political Unconscious* 89). Although this progressive series seems to imply that the movement from one stage to the next signifies a clean break or transition, Jameson claims that realistically, there has yet to be a historical society that typifies a mode of production in its pure state. What Jameson observes, instead, is that social formations or societies have consisted in the synchronicity of several modes of production at any given historical moment, structured according to the order that reinforces the rule of the dominant (*The Political Unconscious* 95). Thus, it is possible to survey any point in a society's existence and discover that residual traces of older modes like feudalism co-existing, albeit marginally, with the new dominant, capitalism, both

anticipating the emergence of a mode which has yet to articulate its difference or autonomy from the current dominant.

Resil Mojares's "The History in the Text" articulates this thinking about history. Mojares summarily states the essay's point at the very beginning: "Any literary text is a point of entry into the historical world" (Mojares 1). Rejecting the category of historical literature, Mojares counters that all texts are historical since they are inevitably "permeated, determined, or compromised by history" and qualifies what this means in four statements, which echo Jameson's notions of History. First, literary texts are told or narrated within a certain historical consciousness, an awareness of the manner in which experience is shaped by ideological forces. Second, history is produced or enacted in the totality of the text, when events are bound to a specific time and place. Mojares sees this demonstrated in Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* that draws attention to Capitan Tiago's dinner gathering as an instance of Rizal's modern consciousness that informs the construction of the collective life in that historical moment in the novel. Third, it is likely that history is what the text represses. A novel may not deal with a punctual historical event but its writing unconsciously finds itself drawing historically-specific notions of time, space, subjectivity, for instance, which is nowhere explicit in its content. Mojares illustrates this point by a simultaneous reading of F. Sionil Jose's *The Pretenders* and Kerima Polotan's *The Hand of the Enemy*, both written in 1962, which points to the novels' being circumscribed by a common sense of cynicism that is grounded on the ideological climate of the 60s. Lastly, Mojares cautions that the concept of history should not be reduced to that of empirical or objective events like wars, revolutions, and the like. Instead, history is that which happens in common, everyday life, which nevertheless is marked by hidden transformations of "ideas, emotions, consciousness."

As Jameson's formulations and Mojares's statements reveal, texts are negotiations of history in their being written in a specific ideological environment or social milieu of the time. Cultural and literary works are always historical, regardless of their declared content, in that they draw history into their textual fabric. This understanding of a literary form's imbrication in history is a vital pre-condition in the interpretation of any genre. Historiographic metafiction in this historical grounding can be made to yield an account of its narrativizing impulses and motivations by situating it against the period of postmodernism.

POSTMODERNIST HISTORY

Postmodernism, whose narrative strategies inform historiographic metafiction, first and foremost is not merely a description of an aesthetic but is more significantly, a periodizing concept. For Jameson, postmodernism is the "cultural logic of late capitalism," replicating, reinforcing, and intensifying the "deplorable and reprehensible" socio-economic effects of postmodernity (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 85). Postmodernism expresses the "inner truth" of late capitalism's emergent social order and is marked by pastiche or the transformation of reality into images, schizophrenia or the death of the individual subject, increasing commodification, borderless socio-economic systems or multinational capital and a nostalgia that colonizes the present in its blurring of immediate contemporary references (Jameson, *The Cultural Turn* 1-20).

Evocative of the logic of late consumer capitalism, postmodernism marks the "disappearance of a sense of history" that is illustrated in the manner in which we have lost our capacity to retain our past and exist in an eternal present. Jameson sees this phenomenon as buttressed by the informational activity of the media whose exhaustive delivery of news encourages a quick consignment of recent historical experiences to the past, thus facilitating some kind of amnesia (*The Cultural Turn* 1-20).

It is to this ideological climate of late capitalism and its cultural expression, postmodernism, and its conditions of possibility that this paper now locates Groyon's novel as a symbolic act. That historiographic metafiction emerged from this distinct historical period is a significant precondition of its interpretation whereby the function of this genre construes it to be a symbolic act carrying two pronounced ideological charges: it projects the postmodern condition and articulates the postcolonial discourse of recuperation.

THE TELLING AND THE TOLD IN THE SKY OVER DIMAS

The Sky Over Dimas makes it a point to trouble its narrating of the Torrecarion family saga to the extent that its plot, which resembles the twists and delays of detective fiction, its shifting points of view, setting, images and symbols are structured to dramatize the distance between (historical) truth and its telling. Of these formal devices, it is the symbols of "ground" and "sky" which dominate the story, shaping and prodding the other elements in their marked opposition.

In the novel, the ground, which is one term in the binary opposition, is associated with derogatory qualities. To it are conjoined notions of "truth"/"essence," "the past,"

"family secrets," "filth," and "corruption." These meanings overlap in several instances in the novel.

In the beginning of the novel, George withdraws from the peering eyes and voluble tongues of Bacolod and holes himself up in Hacienda Dimas, which is by itself a symbolic gesture. George writes in his journal that he will unbury the past by telling "all of the things … driven out of sight into the dark until everything grew over it and hid the signs that anything have ever been buried there to begin with" (12).

Such a figuring of truth, and the past as hidden and buried likewise appears in George's journal as a comment on the Negrosanon's penchant for digging and burying things. In disclosing such a habit, George then proceeds to exonerate himself from guilt by announcing that he will tear down the lies surrounding his family.

These three references to "hiding" confirm a meaning of "ground" as a mass or receptacle of unearthed truth and skeletons in the closet that have yet to be disclosed. The ending of the story, of course, makes the skeleton a literal one. The trope of hiding is likewise used to refer to Faustino's journal, which George describes as "emerge[ing]" from hiding."

Another connotation of ground generated by the story comes from its affinity with land. Land and its attendant connotations in Negros are deplored by the characters in the novel, but most especially so by Rafael who scorned the trappings of hacienda life and relates anything close to the ground with working class life, primitiveness, and vulgarity. In explaining why he prefers Manila, Rafael reveals his dislike for physical labor and its connections with land and dirt. It is this aversion, he professes, which fuels his choice to live in high-rise condos, "as far away from the smog and filth of the earth as possible."

A similar use of the idiom of distantiation, which straddles the symbolic registers of sky, appears in Rafael's description of the plaza in Bacolod. In observing how the underbelly of Bacolod society has taken refuge on the stone benches, Rafael notes that even prostitutes, the jobless, and the homeless desire to be "lifted" away from the earth, which confirms his penchant for distancing himself from anything associated with the earth to be "a natural human instinct."

This aversion towards things associated with the earth finds its way in Rafael's picturesque memory of the workers in Hacienda Dimas. In his observation of the workers' routine during payroll time, it is their tough feet and nothing else that attract his attention. He describes their feet as "broad, solid, like the roots of an ancient tree, creased, and cracked, chalky ridges limning the whorls and calluses, skin the texture of guava tree bark" (110).

The condescension that whittles down the workers' identity to the appearance of their feet extends to the manner in which walking in Bacolod is said to be a social stigma for the affluent. Rafael observes that, in Bacolod society, only the obreros and lower classes walk and recalls an incident when he had to take a jeep going to a classmate's house in a subdivision that doesn't allow public vehicles entry. In his five-minute walk from the stop to the subdivision, a group of colegialas driving by in a car jeered at him, asking if he was on his way to the market. Since that humiliating scene, Rafael has always taken a taxi until he learned how to drive.

Curiously enough the symbol of ground is further particularized to accommodate suggestions of "dirt," shading "truth" to mean not only "what happened" but also the more loaded insinuation of indiscretions and peccadilloes. It is used in such a context in this substitution. An entry in George's journal narrates how George just listened to Marge's confession that her first son was actually Rodel's and not George's. Marge admitted to fooling George into thinking that that son was his. George made noises to indicate that he forgives her but later on reveals that he was fuming and admits that "I wanted to throw the real Truth back at her, and the real truth was out here so I had to go get it so I could push it in her face" (58). "Truth" in this passage is couched in terms that make it seem as if it were dirt or muck being hurled at someone's face. The strong verbs used indicate less an unburdening of guilt or a correction of lies and more a mudslinging match. Moreover, the three contiguous expressions of ground in the novel, referring to the workers' feet, the stigma of walking, and truth as dirt, resonate with the melodramatic Filipino derogatory expressions *hinugot ka lang sa putik* and *hampas-lupa*.

In contraposition to "ground," the symbol of "sky" in the novel is invested with more desirable and privileged values. It is conflated with ideas of distance, release, layering, and "telling," Among the characters in the novel, it is Rafael who stands for the wish-fulfillment registers of "sky" in the novel. As can be gleaned in an earlier excerpt, Rafael disdains things close to the ground, and as consequence, lives in Manila, in high-rise condos, away from the messy affairs of his family in Bacolod.

Because he didn't want to "get his hands dirty," a running euphemism in the novel which means being involved or implicated, Rafael was unaffected when support of the EDSA revolution was in full swing in Bacolod. The narration attributes his forgetfulness to "his tendency to pass judgment from a distance, or a great height" (132).

In the last chapter of the novel, written curiously in italics and from the point of view of an omniscience different from the existing one in the novel, Rafael sits in his apartment, pondering the contents of both George's and Faustino's journal, which he has

read over and over. As he is about to sleep, the narration turns to a contemplation of his figure:

> Still the question arises. It's always the last thing he remembers before he drops off to sleep. His gentle snoring—an inherited trait, naturally—releases it as an invocation to the sky, which remains unmoved and doesn't answer. (258)

This last paragraph of the novel establishes a connection between the sky and the idea of release in transforming Rafael's question about his family's story into a prayer thrown at something incapable of responding.

Another passage in the same chapter makes a similar reference although the import of the symbol has now shifted somewhat in significance.

> He's alone in his apartment, and he feels it especially in the way that the noise of the unseen traffic below wafts up to him, disembodied and ephemeral. High above him, the Pleiades trace their arcs with stately grace, as invisible to him, as vehicles on the streets below. (257)

Aside from the suggestive description of traffic noise as disembodied and ephemeral, adjectives that seem too ambitious to refer to something as banal as traffic and are clearly correlatives of the sky, the quoted lines take the focus of the narration to something as ridiculously high up as the Pleiades, a nebulous star cluster predicted to have dissolved some 250 million years or so. This particular and conspicuous articulation of the sky through the specter of the Pleiades as hazy and indeterminate is suggestive of the novel's dominant narrative gesture of fabulizing or "telling," which is only to be expected from historiographic metafiction. In the novel, gossip, fabrication, rumors, and telling crowd the narration and are construed to be one and the same provisional operation.

Aside from instances of narration, "sky" in the novel encroaches on the articulation of the other elements as the novel's way of asserting, sometimes in an overstated fashion, the impossibility of arriving at fact or truth when its expression can never really prove itself to be a faithful medium. Details of setting, character, and point of view are animated by this registers of the symbol. One of them is the Jarabas mansion whose architectural history is described as a series of indeterminate re-modellings and expansions which made the original architect's design impossible to ascertain. This detail about the house that

depicts its structure as indecipherable in its purpose from its many additions through time approximates the idea of layering as a contiguous expression of "telling," suggesting the impossibility of discerning which part of the house holds its basic block, core or essence. The manor in Dimas, which is bizarre and asymmetrically-developed, is also described in the same terms.

The notion of telling as fabulizing or fabricating undergirds the narration of both George's and Marge's family history. In fact, the novel constantly refuses to verify things as factual despite its prefatory statements "fact is" or "truth is" and qualifies most of the incidents surrounding the family's stories as gossip or speculation. In fact, all three Torrecarions resort to fabrication when the convenience arises. Rafael, for instance, admits to mixing truth with fiction when his girlfriend in Manila starts asking one too many questions about his past.

Writing his own diary, George notes that the statements in Faustino's journal are speculations and embellishments which accomplish the task of myth-making. Challenging the facticity of Faustino's memoir of his arrival in Negros, George identifies the many false notes in his great-grandfather's early life such as Faustino's being a subject of the Spanish Crown and his earning a plot of land through honest hard work. George scoffs at this, insisting that the proud and illustrious history of Faustino, before he came to cultivate sugar for the Spanish, is a tissue of hearsay and lies passed on from gossip to gossip, "until all of it took on the patina of Truth, by dint of having been repeated for so long" (31-32).

Such a tangential and accidental production of "truth" brought about by an accumulation of inventions, retellings, and hearsay is the novel's central thematic concern, underscoring the impossibility of knowing the truth or telling it straight. Given this focus, it is understandable why the novel privileges gossip and a collective perspective which attributes the source of pseudo-testimonial statements about the Torrecarion and Jarabas families to "all of Bacolod" or "all of Negros." In fact the repeated emphasis on fabulizing and telling, whose frequency in the novel inundates the whole story, can be read as an undermining of history's valuation as that which is "true," factual, and superior. As a corollary to this sentiment, fiction is not necessarily "false," feigned, and inferior. Thus the originary binary opposition is deconstructed in the novel in its swapping of signifieds. By marginalizing "truth" and privileging fiction, summed up as narrating a story or relaying what happened or what one has overheard, the novel accomplishes its task of provisionalizing history. Thus after George dies the fact seems to do so, so to speak, and causes a commotion, a celebration in fact among the residents in Bacolod who had their version of a "George story" to tell and re-tell.

In its overdetermined use of the symbols of "sky" and "ground, the novel further invests the pair with meanings related to genealogy in keeping with its subject of a family saga. In its suggestion of truth as something singular and straight and of lies or fabrications as something multiple and warped, the narration strikes a parallelism between truth as genetic normality and "logical outcome" and telling as degeneration, insanity, and class miscegenation. In this permutation of the binary, history, in its linearity, is conflated with the concept of bloodlines, which is illustrated mainly by George, who points an accusing finger at Faustino, so to speak, for bringing in what he perceives as the craziness in his family, his euphemism for the act of murder and other human grotesqueries. Thus Torrecarion, a "tower of carrion" aptly characterizes George's family as poachers on land, social status, and anything that secures either.

In contrast to this attribution of character to atavistic tendencies, members of Marge's family who stain the pureness of hacendero pedigree—the adopted Ansing, the illegitimate first son Rodel, the idiot Jan, the stillborn baby of Bernice—is representative of the idea of mutation. Jarabas, if traced back to the Spanish *jarabe*, is a colloquial expression for a glib talker; it is also informed by the term *pang-harabas*, loosely translated as "for the rough and ready," which, when referring to a person, is suggestive of someone coarse and indiscriminate about sexual partners—attributes which describe not only Marge and Aida but the other women in the Jarabas clan.

In fact, in what could only be called an over-privileging of "telling," George and Rafael's last moments in the story cast doubt as to whether the latter is actually the son of the former. In their final minutes together in Dimas, George marvels at how Rafael could very well be him when he was young given their striking resemblance. This affirmation of common blood, however, is suspended when George notices for the first time that Rafael has asthma and is puzzled since both sides of the family are not genetically predisposed to it. George wonders "where" his son got it, implying that the disorder could not have been inherited from either parent. The last lines of the novel seemingly make a ploy of the whole matter as it describes Rafael's snoring as "an inherited trait, naturally."

THE SKY OVER DIMAS AS A SYMBOLIC ACT

Although Groyon's novel is a variant of historiographic metafiction, a genre which is by itself already a symbolic act, and manifests its known textual features like multiplicity of stories, unreliable narration, and the impossibility of knowing the truth, its articulation of history is different from the novels in the generic series. More significantly, unlike the

historiographic metafictional novels discussed in the previous section, which foreground recuperative discourses of postcolonial writing, the postmodern narrative strategies of *The Sky Over Dimas* do not take up the task of restoring subjugated knowledge/s or surfacing marginalized or subaltern subjectivities to the frame of history. As such, the novel's appropriation of the metafictional mode can be read as a deviation in content from its immediate generic background. This departure from the established generic practice, Jameson claims, is instructive in revealing a significant absence in the text and engenders a rerouting of the diachronic generic construct via what he calls a negative intertextuality, which locates a literary text in its generic series in order to track the missing element and its substitute or replacement in the text. This maneuver, Jameson holds, enables an inventorying of the substitutions that occur when a given feature in the incipient or dominant form disappears or is muted by the present text and is replaced by another content or element. Such a replacement strategy is not to be mistaken for a random or trivial switching of details but should be read as the text's strategy of repressing certain formal contents upon sensing how such former content and its ideological charge, which is a fixture in the emergent form of the genre, has become a source of societal anxiety in the present. The text then shifts the place and urgency emptied by the muted element into some other formal feature or a substitute code that becomes a necessary distraction for the reader whose reception of a particular genre is regulated by its standard set of formal features and content. In *Dimas*, the repressed content, which should have generated the narrative/s of the Ex-centric or silenced voices in Philippine history, themselves already repressed in conventional history, is displaced into the narration of a *de-buena pamilya* melodrama, itself an available semantic possibility, where the elite characters themselves, in their feigned madness and psychological excesses, assume the role of the e(x)ccentric as if the narrative tried to fit into this missing content a highly-stretched characterization of the elite family as hapless and helpless victims of the feudal dynamics of the sugar industry in Negros. There is hence an attempt by the novel to characterize its elite figures as dramatic, larger than life, and yet persecuted and almost marginal in their being fodder for gossip, derision, and entertainment, which comprise the social content of melodrama.

The impetus behind this displacement, which represses the presence of marginal identities, is further pressed into service in the novel's provisionalizing of history, its postmodern strategy of dissolving the actuality of events illustrated. Unlike the former texts of historiographic metafiction, what the relativization of history in Groyon's novel actually demonstrates is the improbability of knowing the truth about the crimes and the acts of taboo committed by members of the *Torrecarion* and the *Jarabas* families since the

text at this point had already suppressed what could have been the unwanted presence of class tensions between the landed elite and the working class in Negros as content; hence, such former content had to be replaced with melodrama. Such a substitution in content stands out in relief when Groyon's novel is slotted in the line-up of earlier historiographic metafictions. These are historiographic metafictions whose appropriation of this genre is motivated precisely by what Linda Hutcheon claims is the denaturalizing or de-doxifying critique of postmodern narrative strategies. As such, these novels provisionalize history in order to foreground its status as a hegemonic construct and thus liberate the repressed stories of those whom traditional history of the nation has excluded. In stark contrast, the texual motivation or rationale for *Dimas*'s "invention of the past" is invested by a melodramatic impulse which foreground the twists and turns of a family saga.

This provisionalizing instance in *Dimas* lends itself to further articulation in the binary opposition between the sky and the ground. As discussed in the previous section, both sky and ground are overdetermined symbols in the novel, the former invested with the privileged metafictionalizing trope of *telling* (gossip, speculation, freedom, release, distance, and forgetfulness) while the latter is associated with the hidden *told* (truth, family secrets, land/dirt, corruption, and the past). The projection of this binary that privileges the telling over the told/truth and the displaced generic content in Groyon's novel at this point may be read as the juxtaposition of ideological codes that disclose the text's vision of history or political unconscious that comes into being as the text's symbolic resolution to certain social contradictions or anxieties that mark the historical moment of the novel.

As discussed in the earlier sections of this paper, a literary genre or text is a symbolic act in that it is a response to certain historical dilemmas or situations. As symbolic acts, genres are acts of mediation themselves in that they embody a correspondence or relationship between the formal features of a literary work and its subtext, the result of a text's contact with the absent cause of History, which the text draws it into its surface while constituting a reaction to it. Hence, although the text's response to its confrontation with History is imaginary and symbolic, this response is simultaneously an act that represses, compensates for, resolves or revolts against a determinate situation. The text thus at this interpretive level is itself an ideology, a strategy of containment that in proposing a solution to a social contradiction also registers the limit beyond which the consciousness in the text cannot go. This ideological limit that clears symbolic space in the text's "reading" of History makes possible a fantasizing about history, which is the text's political unconscious.

In *Dimas*, the main characters are clearly allegorical equivalents of the families of sugar hacenderos in Negros whose protracted ownership and monopoly of the land has assured them of social and cultural power as well. This feudal system of the sugar industry in Negros, which is marked by the abject poverty of its sugar workers, inequitable labor relations, military and NPA violence, and the conspicuous consumption of its landed elite, constitute the socio-historical situation that the novel itself is an answer or response to (Aguilar 2, Billig 1-250, Berlow 63-199). Although it is clear in any history of Negros that such feudal practices are perpetuated by the clique of hacenderos in order to maintain their dominant position in the status quo where all but five percent of the population control the circulation of wealth in Negros, *Dimas* represses this fact in its depiction of George as a reluctant, sugar-weary hacendero and instead explains this iniquitous and volatile situation by stating that "sugar is evil," a *reification* which naturalizes its operations, as if to say that sugar is self-explanatory or sufficient in itself or that it is bound to cause misery wherever it is planted. This view of sugar is replicated in the novel's statement about blood, which once again becomes George's and Rafael's convenient scapegoat, the former blaming his bloodline for his amoral acts, and the latter, demonstrating that there is no escaping one's genetic inheritance. These naturalized modes in the novel are not mere metaphorical instances or stylizations but are extensions of the text's provisionalizing of history. These narrative gestures humanize its elite characters by absolving them of guilt, making them sympathetic figures, and construing their failures as inevitable outcomes of blood and object logic.

These three formal features in the novel—its repressed postcolonial counter-discourse, its provisionalizing of history via a binary opposition that privileges the telling over its object (truth), and its objectification of sugar and genealogical atavisms (which betray an anachronistic modernist explanation of a pre-modern, feudal concrete practice and will likely be a significant element in the third interpretive horizon)—project a fantasy of the elite which is a denial and also a justification of their historical role in the perpetuation of the unjust feudal dynamics of sugar production in Negros. Such a political unconscious may be read as a disavowal that expresses itself in the statement that "it did not happen." In contrast to the earlier function of historiographic metafiction, Groyon's text is a symbolic act that had to orchestrate a far more complicated system of displacements and appropriations, in its articulation of a unique solution to the dilemma or contradiction presented by the troubled production of sugar in Negros. It is this social contradiction that the novel finds itself confronted with and symbolically resolving in its reading and textualization of history.

POLITICAL FANTASY OF THE NOVEL

In one of George's entries in his journal, he relives the circumstances which brought him and his wife Margie together. He wonders whether his marriage to Margie could have worked out differently, whether Margie could have been special and he could've grown to love her had the sinister circumstances not happened. In George's expression of "what could have been, only if," Groyon articulates the fantasy content of the novel, which is simultaneously a wishing away of history that the imaginative gesture of the novel insists "had to happen." This moment in the novel distills and illustrates the impetus and function of genres given their determinate position in a historical period. It is to this critical insight that Groyon's novel functions as a symbolic act in its necessary appropriation of discontinuous and contradictory "already-read" narrative contents.

Melodrama, in its dominant form, is a mode whose "deep structure" expresses the struggle between good and evil beneath its formulaic surface of emotionalism and excess (Brooks 4-6). Although *Dimas* substitutes this mode for the displaced element, its adoption of melodrama is emptied of its effectual content, which is the moment when virtue and villainy clash. In the novel, elite and working class characters in the novel are not figured forth as ethical polarities and as such, no climactic encounter occurs between the two groups. Secondly, this hollowed out form of melodrama, its insertion in the novel a mere ploy, moreover exposes how the novel's provisionalizing instances, its privileging of telling, makes "unknowable" not the events of the (constructed) past as they happened, but the crimes committed by the Torrecarion family as if these violations were constructs by themselves. Lastly, the provisionalizing impulse or condition of unknowability is substantiated further by the text's objectification/fetishizing of sugar and genealogical traits. What these three generic material project is a fantasy of the elite that denies and justifies their role in perpetuating the iniquitous feudal economy of sugar in Negros.

By a reconstruction of the novel's sequence of ideological assimilation, Groyon's novel may be read as a symbolic act. The text thus is this process of displacing and selecting pre-existing narrative givens, which themselves contain incipient social charges that the text mutes in some places and accentuates in others. In this process may be gleaned the novel's doing the work it is supposed to do in delivering what it perceives as its contract with a readership. This contract, regardless of the genre, is that which demands a resolution, a "doing something to the world," which is expressed in the form of a totalized causality among persons, places, and objects, or narrative, as compelled by the dictates of Necessity. It is inevitable that our knowledge of the past is limited, distorted even and yet

the way in which we propose an estimate of it always takes a recourse to causality, that is we comprehend what happened as necessary. In its projection of elitist political fantasy, Groyon's novel discloses the moment in history to which the imaginative act is intended as a resolution.

Although Groyon is not himself a member of the elite but the middle-class, he did send himself to college through the auspices of the Dizon Foundation, a charity organization funded by one of the wealthiest sugar families in Negros, which might have been a likely motivation for the kind of allegiance to the elite that his novel is a repressed expression of. That Groyon might have felt indebted to the landed class is compounded by his belonging to an intellectual family. Moreover, although Groyon's family is of Negrense descent, Groyon himself was born and raised in Manila, a fact, which when lined up with the previously-mentioned points about his background can perhaps account for the glossy and impressionistic version of Negros history in his novel. This history, no matter how entertaining and melodramatic, as the paper has argued, is nevertheless marked by social contradictions, impasses in which the minute and daily struggles of the contending groups are enacted. That these struggles are invisible to us, hidden from our consciousness is a symptom of the literary work's success in estranging our ordinary lives from our Real existence.

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DISCIPLINING THE TIMES AND SPACES OF MODERNISM

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Abstract
This introduction provides an overview of selections from *Disciplining Modernism* (Palgrave 2009), an anthology of critical works that consider disciplinarity in conceptualizing the times and places of modernism. The selections provide extended examples of how a scholar writes about a particular modern artifact or phenomenon, not so much to illustrate how modernism and modernity can mean different things in different disciplines, but to provide various conceptual models for comparative studies of modernism and modernity.

About the author
Pamela L. Caughie is Professor of English at Loyola University Chicago and President of the Modernist Studies Association (2010).

Author's note
This paper was presented at the 2009 Modern Language Association Convention on a panel arranged by Janet Lyon, "Where and When Was Modernism?" In summarizing chapters from *Disciplining Modernism,* I have used the authors' language, including my own in the Introduction, without always quoting explicitly.

Editing *Disciplining Modernism* (Palgrave 2009) brought home to me the need for considering *disciplinarity* as a third vector, so to speak, along with temporality and location, when conceptualizing the times and places of modernism. *Disciplining Modernism* grew out of a seminar at the 2005 convention of the Modernist Studies Association in which eighteen scholars from a range of disciplines discussed the various ways the terms *modern, modernism*, and *modernity* are understood and deployed in different disciplines. Philosophers, for example, typically date *modernity* from the 16th century, historians from the 19th. In architecture *modernism* designates a reform in design in response to industrialization and mass production which is, according to Charles Jencks, "the direct opposite of the more widespread Modernism in the other arts" (28). Social scientists use the term *modern* to refer to the professionalization of social services, while education specialists employ it to denote a pedagogy and curriculum adapted to individual needs and capacities. And as Glenn Willmott points out in his chapter in *Disciplining Modernism*, Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee in *The New Economic Criticism* (1999) note that

the "dearth of attention" to economics in modernist studies is due in part to the conflict between definitions of modernism in literature and in the social sciences (Willmott 197).

Clearly consistent definitions of *modernism* and *modernity* across disciplines are neither possible nor necessarily desirable. In fact, in the past fifteen years, scholars have begun to question the appropriateness of these key concepts for new *inter*disciplinary work, the kind that defines the *new modernist studies*. In their frequently cited essay by that title (*PMLA* 2008), Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz write that the recent expansion of modernist studies temporally, spatially, and vertically (crossing the high/popular divide), has exerted a "disruptive force" on the field and led to a "rethinking of relations among the terms *modernism*, *modernization*, and *modernity*" (738).

However, the diverse and often conflicting ways of conceiving the *modern* in different disciplines have not always been explicitly articulated, if even acknowledged, in the very scholarship that has produced the kinds of rethinking Mao and Walkowitz survey. An important exception to this elision is Susan Stanford Friedman's "Definitional Excursions," one of the two reprinted essays that bookend *Disciplining Modernism*. Noting that definitions "emerge out of the spatio/temporal context of their production [and] serve different needs and interests" (16), Friedman thoroughly and self-reflexively explores the range of definitions of *modern*, *modernity*, and *modernism* in what she terms the "*multi*disciplinary field of modernist studies" (11, my italics). Such multidisciplinarity makes confronting "the contradictory status of meanings" (16) all the more imperative, for "disciplinary boundaries have ceased to function," Friedman says, "as people appropriate all forms of the root concept to serve their different purposes" (17).

And indeed, disciplinary boundaries ceased to function at that MSA seminar on "Disciplining Modernism." Our effort to clarify disciplinary differences was thwarted by the fact that no clear disciplinary boundaries emerged. For example, a participant from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration, whose research is primarily on urban political economies, presented on the jazz artist Sun Ra; a historian discussed literary modernism; and two literary scholars presented on sociology and economics. In other words, disciplinary confusion was already in play before we could even articulate the discipline-specific definitions of our key terms. And yet that very disciplinary slippage raised anxious concerns among the seminar participants about disciplinary rigor as well. Those who were already crossing disciplinary boundaries and who were open to expanding the range of what falls under "modernist studies" were nonetheless resistant to saying "anything goes." They still wanted discipline, if not necessarily their own.

As a result of this disciplinary confusion, the objective of *Disciplining Modernism* changed. Each of the fourteen essays provides an extended example of how a scholar writes about a particular modern artifact or phenomenon, not so much to illustrate how *modernism* and *modernity* can mean different things in different disciplines (the initial goal), but to provide various conceptual models for comparative studies of *modernism* and *modernity*. I have time here to discuss very briefly only three examples.

In her chapter on "Religion and Modernity," French historian Suzanne Kaufman notes that among historians of western Europe the claim that modernity is synonymous with secularism has long been an orthodoxy. Many historians of the west, she writes, have embraced an appealingly simple notion of modern progressive development that runs something like this: As societies modernize, with scientific rationality emerging hand-in-hand with capitalist economic development and liberal political democracy, they experience the progressive "disenchantment of the world" (Max Weber's phrase). In this scenario, the emergence of modern life is predicated on the inevitability of religious decline. Given this orthodoxy, which defines modernity in terms of modern mass culture and new consumer practices, historians treat popular faith as a holdover from the past. One consequence is that the interrelation of religion and commerce has remained virtually unexplored.

Kaufman offers a different approach to the study of popular religion, one that emphasizes its commercial character. Analyzing the historical development of the Lourdes sanctuary, a Catholic pilgrimage shrine in rural France, in the late 1800s, she sheds light not only on modern devotional practices but on *modernity* itself. Developments in new modes of travel, new advertising techniques, and in the mass production of goods—all adapted and even innovated by the clerical and lay promoters of the shrine—effectively transformed what had been a set of locally defined pilgrimage practices into an organized mass spectacle. The appeal of Lourdes lay precisely in its ability to fuse older pilgrimage practices with a new commercial culture, infusing religious life with powerful elements of the ephemeral, the contingent and the spectacular. It is in this sense that going to Lourdes on a pilgrimage was, for the devout, a distinctly *modern* experience.

By taking seriously the technological innovations of capitalist development as well as new social practices that emerge along with them, Kaufman's understanding of modernity focuses on the interconnections between a commodity-driven mass culture and the lived experience of ordinary people. Religious sites and practices are not immune to these commercial developments, Kaufman argues. Indeed, they may even help to create them. Thus, Kaufman departs from the historian's treatment of modernity as a periodizing

concept and instead defines it as a set of representational practices reflecting a new and profound awareness of temporality.

Jessica Berman's chapter, "Imaging World Literatures," draws on the new comparative literature to offer a model of a comparative modernist studies conceived as a mode of reading rather than as a canon-building activity. Rejecting three prominent assumptions in both fields—the division between world and located literatures, the forced separation of comparative literature from national or area studies, and the assumption that modernism represents the triumph of internationalism—Berman calls on us to discard any set definitions of modernism so that we might generate a new global modernism attentive to the local. If we are genuinely interested in shifting the center of gravity within modernist studies to other locations, and other time frames, she says, then we will need to alternate between close and distant reading, that is, reading in relation to local communities as well as across a variety of locations to reveal share traits. She calls for a specifically cosmopolitan model, where interlocking circles of affiliation would allow specific local modes to co-exist with a dynamic and varied global interconnection. Her model of cosmopolitanism derives from modernist writers themselves who, Berman says, rarely set up a choice between the local and the worldly but instead emphasize community-belonging as a primary condition of modern social life.

Finally, Garry Leonard, professor of cinema studies, in his chapter, "The Famished Roar of Automobiles," offers the internal combustion engine as a model of modernity. The dynamic of volatile forces, systematically exploded at regular intervals, in order to be contained, redirected, and used as a force to create controlled movement is, Leonard notes, the dynamic of the internal combustion engine. Leonard traces this dynamic in the production and distribution systems of modernity across various fields—including modernist poetry, modern economics, self-help books, Hollywood cinema, and, most obviously, perhaps, psychoanalysis.

Freud took as his model of the psyche the modern phenomenon of hydraulics, the mechanics of using compressed water and steam to produce pressure. The key to a successful pressure system designed to generate a controllable force is the continual maintenance of contrary energies in such a way that *at no point are they able to resolve themselves*. A model of a combustion engine and a model of modern subjectivity, Lenoard says, become oddly similar and mutually constitutive in that both generate energy from irreconcilable dynamics (explosion and containment) that are nonetheless envisioned as productively and efficiently "moving forward." In Lacan's model of desire, the constant "failure" caused by a chronic "lack" does not threaten modern subjectivity, Leonard says, it *is* modern subjectivity.

Lacan's theory of desire, with its constant deferral of gratification, also characterizes economic modernity. Leonard notes that the modern money economy is not so much the discovery of greater energy resources and how to utilize them, as it is the reallocation of the profits thereby generated in an unprecedentedly *unequal* manner. In order to rationalize the stark contrasts in the distribution of wealth and resources that modernity allows, modernity generates a number of interrelated ideologies, most prominent, the myths of progress, of efficiency, and of perfectibility. These are ideologies of deferral and as such, they, too, mimic the perfect hydraulic system by creating a productive state of perpetual irreconcilability.

Hollywood genres, in Leonard's formulation, can also be conceived as "engine designs" insofar as cinema is a succession of moments that nonetheless is a continual moment, producing forward motion. Perhaps one reason Hollywood cinema is never viewed as "modernist," Leonard says, is that classical film appears to foreground its ability to tell stories, to smooth out discontinuities and ruptures through seamless editing. Yet it is the sheer fact of the visual, the succession of optic moments, that fascinates. If we want to understand Hollywood cinema as an example of modernism, Leonard says (invoking Miriam Hansen's essay on vernacular modernism, which closes this collection), we have to ask how Hollywood offers up the sensation of modernity. What this formulation suggests, Leonard concludes, is that while we will never agree on what modernity *is*, we might be able to agree on how modernity *feels*. And what it feels like, Leonard says, is a bewildering but exciting onslaught of aggressively promoted compensations offered to combat unacknowledged deprivations. Understanding this dynamic of deprivation and compensation permits another way to think about modernism.

What emerges from these and other essays in the collection is an understanding of modernism as an epistemological construct rather than a form of cultural production specific to a given time and place. "Since there is no definitional consensus within disciplines and across disciplines," writes Susan Stanford Friedman in her Afterword to *Disciplining Modernism*, "each of us needs to bring to consciousness what assumptions shape our thought" (263). That is precisely what the essays in this collection do. "Such reflexivity," Friedman continues, "doesn't fix what is fluid and diverse so much as it establishes the parameters for specific work" (263). Establishing such parameters does not "discipline" modernist studies in the sense of delimiting the field, but rather makes evident the ways *disciplinarity* informs our various conceptions of modernism's temporal and spatial locations.

Disciplining Modernism
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FORUM KRITIKA: RADICAL THEATRE AND IRELAND (PART 1)

"NOT ALWAYS, BUT OFTEN":[1] INTRODUCTION TO A SPECIAL ISSUE ON RADICAL THEATRE AND IRELAND

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ABOUT THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Victor Merriman convened "Radical Theatre and Ireland: A Colloquium" on February 6-7, 2009 at Liverpool Hope University. The project to publish the proceedings of the colloquium in *Kritika Kultura* is suggested by David Lloyd, Visiting Professor at Hope and member of the *Kritika Kultura* International Advisory Board. The articles for this project will be published in installments, in consecutive issues of *Kritika Kultura*. This issue features Victor Merriman's introduction and two articles from the colloquium.

Abstract
This article sketches Irish history and how Irish nationalism deployed cultural production – including radical theatre – as a means of asserting itself as a political and moral force. "Radical Theatre" prompts questions around what both Baz Kershaw and Herbert Blau refer to as "efficacy," insofar as it implies engagements with content, form, and audiences outside of those which characterise accepted, dominant or commercial manifestations of theatre practice. And yet, scholars and practitioners of radical theatre confront the slipperiness of the concept of radical theatre: it shifts emphasis between theatre as cultural intervention for social progress (a critical, subversive, ethical vocation), and theatre as aesthetic invention (privileging formal experimentation). Also, the radical gesture itself is always at risk of compromise and co-option to that which it seeks to critique. To be efficacious, radical cultural work must inevitably confront the state, and will have to come to terms with, and produce, a narrative of the past. All of these characteristics problematise the practice and understanding of radical theatre in Ireland.

About the editor
Victor Merriman is Associate Professor in Drama and Theatre Studies at Liverpool Hope University, where he will chair the Centre for Performance as Cultural Intervention, from March 2010. He publishes regularly on contemporary Irish theatre, postcolonial theory, drama pedagogy and public policy. He was a member of An Chomhairle Ealaíon/ The Arts Council of Ireland (1993-1998), and chaired the Council's Review of Theatre in Ireland (1995-1996). His monograph "*Because We Are Poor": Ireland's Dramas in the Long 1990s* will be published by Carysfort Press in 2010. He worked as dramaturg on Ricardo Abad's workshop production of David Lloyd's *The Press* at the Ateneo de Manila University (July 2008).

Keywords
1916 Rising, Irish theatre, nationalism, radical

"'He Calls His Dada Still': Nineteenth-century English Radicalism and the Drama of Pádraic Pearse" by Jim Moran, and "Socialist Shenanigans and Emerald Epiphanies:

The Case of Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden" by Tim Prentki first appeared as papers presented at *Radical Theatre and Ireland*, a colloquium convened at Liverpool Hope University's Cornerstone building, on 6 and 7 February 2009. The occasion of the colloquium was an invitation to me from Dr. Luisa F. Torres Reyes, editor-in-chief of *Kritika Kultura*, to guest-edit a special issue of the journal on the theme of the colloquium. The event was attended by an invited group of leading scholars of Irish theatre and radical criticism, and set out to map the possible contours of debate around perceived attractions or repulsions between radical theatre practices and ideas of Ireland. Contributors were enticed to the table by means of the provocation that for many scholars and theatre professionals, the coincidence of the words "radical," "Irish" and "theatre" in one sentence is somewhat unusual. The essays published here, and those to follow in the next issue of *Kritika Kultura*, capture the spirit and flavour of an event made possible by the happy constellation of the editors of the journal, and the Department of Drama, Dance and Performance Studies at Liverpool Hope. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with all concerned to bring these debates to a wider public.

Raymond Williams (252) dates to the late eighteenth century the "extension to political matters" of the word "radical," and mutations in its use testify to movements, and convulsions, in public life and politics ever since. It can be conscripted as a synonym or disguise for "subversive," "political," "ideologically-driven," "communitarian," "vanguard," "avant garde," "self-indulgent," "narcissistic," and for both "elite" and "popular." "Radical Theatre" prompts questions around what both Baz Kershaw and Herbert Blau refer to as "efficacy," insofar as it implies engagements with content, form, and audiences outside of those which characterise accepted, dominant or commercial manifestations of theatre practice. Even where the radical theatrical emerges as an affront to the latter, it always exists in relation to its forms. This is all too apparent to Kershaw, who sees "alternative" theatre in Britain permanently negotiating "the dialectic between successful opposition and debilitating incorporation" (8).

I want to reflect on accounts of two moments in which the shape of a version of the radical theatrical crystallised. Concluding his survey of the state of radical theatre in mid-1970s New York, Arthur Sainer characterises radical theatre as follows:

> *Our* theatre, the theatre that challenges the supposedly fixed relationships of spectator and performer, the theatre that turns the body of the performer into a musical and psychic instrument, into a living organism rather than a static mouthpiece for dialogue, the theatre that plunges itself into the world

> of myth, ritual, politics, that dares to ransack the treasures of the unconscious, that dares to be *alive*. (364)

Sainer's *The Radical Theater Notebook* chronicles intense contests over the nature and purpose of theatre among a collection of extraordinarily productive individuals in an unquiet city at a time of cultural convulsion. His passionate insistence on the radical theatre as, primarily, a project of arts workers, a programme of aesthetic renovation and formal renaissance, is somewhat at odds with Joseph Chaikin's admonition, in the volume's "Introductory Dialogue":

> It seems to me absolutely essential that people not only ask themselves, "How can I work from myself in a true way?" but also, "And in what way does this connect to my community or to my whatever – you know, whatever group that I would also perform for?" You can't do it alone any more. (3)

And therein lay the rub. Sainer's exhortation concludes his "Open Letter to the Radical Theatre Community," which includes an account of the cut-and-thrust of "an extraordinary meeting [that] took place at the Performing Garage on Wooster Street, New York," in May 1972. I quote the passage in full because of its dramatisation of the seeming impossibility among avowed scholars and practitioners of radical theatre of reconciling art as individually-inspired aesthetic invention with art as collective, revolutionary, action:

> All of us wanted to be useful, but what did that mean? (Richard) Schechner wanted an exchange of ideas. "There are theatrical techniques we can teach each other," he proposed. But the Becks (founders of the Living Theatre) wanted revolution. Judith and Julian pleaded for others to join them in the cause they had been espousing since their return from a Brazilian prison the previous autumn. "We must go out to the workers, to the poorest of the poor, and teach them our techniques so that they can make their own theatre." To help the workers, and those for whom there is no work, liberate the imagination – ultimately in the cause of the revolution.
>
> But how, Alec Rubin and others wanted to know, can we liberate the workers when we haven't yet liberated ourselves? Our own psyches need working on (presumably through theatrical encounter situations). Schechner agreed;

> he pointed out that he himself (recently returned from India) had work to do on his own soul. Again he suggested a kind of workshop for the different ensembles, in which there would be an exchange of ideas. But Judith (Beck) had no patience with that. "Richard," she said, "we don't need to call two hundred people together to exchange techniques. We can do that with one phone call."
>
> Steve Israel returned to the theme of going to the workers, but his colleague, Jim Anderson, cried out at him from across the room, "The workers? Man, what do you know about the workers? Go out and get a job if you want to know about the workers!"
>
> Julian (Beck), not to be discouraged by resistance or apathy, nor by Erica Munk's charge of overheated rhetoric, persisted. "For five thousand years the ruling classes have ripped off the imaginations of the workers." And then, to all of us, exhorting, pleading, challenging: "When are you all going to stop being the lackeys of the ruling class?" (361-62)

These debates foreground the slipperiness of the idea of radical theatre; the concept itself shifts between two broad emphases: theatre as cultural intervention for social progress – a critical, subversive, ethical vocation – or theatre as aesthetic invention, privileging formal experimentation, innovation in aesthetic practices, specific to times, places and circumstances, while claiming "universal" appeal. The seeming impossibility of reconciling art as individually-inspired aesthetic invention with art as collective revolutionary action rehearses arguments around bourgeois and proletarian positions which frame discussions of radical theatre, all through the twentieth-century. Herbert Blau might have had such arguments in mind when he wrote, "I shall refuse to take for granted that this form of theatre or that is ever conclusively either the repressive or the liberating thing it appears to be" (34).

In evaluating alternative theatre in Britain from the 1960s, Baz Kershaw locates the movement as an important contributor to socially progressive developments:

> the possibility that [alternative theatre] did contribute significantly to the promotion of egalitarian, libertarian and emancipatory ideologies, and thus

> to some of the more progressive socio-political developments of the last three decades, cannot be justifiably dismissed. (18)

For both Blau and Kershaw, the touchstone for progressive, purposeful theatre is Bertolt Brecht's lifelong struggle with an aesthetics of engagement. Blau argues that "it was Brecht who virtually initiated the discourse on ideology and performance" (28). Kershaw's influential work is framed by an epigraph from Brecht:

> We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.

Kershaw's work benefits from another tradition in British radicalism that organised around the remarkable work of Raymond Williams. From Williams, he takes a processual model of cultural change which simultaneously enables his argument and drives it toward a particular limit, to which I would like to draw attention. Kershaw's application of Williams's dominant-residual-emergent model to his account of a typical trajectory for oppositional theatre crystallises the problem. Modelled along these lines, oppositional theatre begins as a set of emergent counter-cultural practices – aspects of a movement composed of "a range of cultural alternatives" (7) – and, in time, becomes the dominant culture of a succeeding period. This rather fatalistic view of the generation, purpose and potential of oppositional cultural forms is critiqued by Lloyd and Thomas (1998) and by Lloyd (2008).

Lloyd and Thomas (1998) argue that Williams's foundational opposition, Culture and Society, is less enabling than their teasing out of the problematic, Culture and the State. To apply this to Sainer's debate, Schechner's "soul" might be located in a construct of "society," and Beck's "workers," in an account of the state. Schechner's concerns speak of identity politics; Beck's of revolutionary politics. Allow me to speculate that, as important as identity politics may be to the location of groups and individuals within society, they are neither a guarantee of, nor a substitute for, the exercise of power in the state. For Renato Constantino, radical action must be oppositional to state power, not aesthetic convention: it is "counter-consciousness which alone could restore to identity its dynamic content and which would necessarily oppose … [the colonial state]" (66). Kershaw's summary of Theodore Roszak's description of the ideological foundation of the counter-culture chimes

well with this: "an opposition to hegemony by a utopianist idealism which promoted an egalitarian ethic through the advocacy of participative democracy on a localised level" (40). Radical efficacy, then, is not a function of social or personal change, but of political transformation, of fundamental change in the state itself.

There is another risk attendant on the application of Williams's processual figuration, and that is the controlling potential of an assumption that as an emergent becomes a dominant, then a gradual generational legitimation of a "structure of feeling" takes place. Lloyd's (2008) recent work on the figure of the ruin is instructive in disturbing the neatness of this conceptual trope. At any given moment, truly radical formations – including remnants of earlier emergents which never achieved dominant status – remain available as models for cultural resistance to the state, even if their vestiges are abject ruins. When Blau suggests, "in a new historical phase, a new relative weight may be given to dispossessed or discredited elements of older ideological formations" (37), he is alert to a phenomenon more thoroughly, more radically, explored by Lloyd (2008, 1-9). Radical cultural practices, then, may be seen as oppositional to and not sanctioned by the state. They advocate and perform non-formal models of collective living, and their underpinnings include constructs of public(s) and political engagement, marginal—and threatening—to the homogenising fantasies of the state. Vestiges of the past are readable, and appropriable, both as blasted remnants and enduring options for ethical living. From these reflections, then, radical theatre emerges as a site of struggle between progressive innovation and further consolidation of an oppressive social model. The radical gesture is always at risk of compromise and co-option to that which it seeks to critique. To be efficacious, radical cultural work must inevitably confront the state, and will have to come to terms with, and produce a narrative of the past. All of these characteristics problematise the practice and understanding of radical theatre in Ireland.

***

Ireland is a small island to the west of its colonizer, Britain, and north-west of the European landmass. It underwent radical transformations from the 1840s to the 1990s. In the space of a century and a half or so, it experienced the Great Famine (1845-1847), two failed revolutions (1848, 1867), a cultural revival in the service of a nationalist project (1880-1916), the emergence of militant, organised labour (1911-1913), an armed insurrection and war of independence against the British Empire (1916-1922), partition of the country, with operational independence for twenty-six of thirty-two counties (1922), a civil war (1922-23),

the hardening of the independent Free State (1922-1949) and Northern Ireland (1922-date) into political entities irreconcilably divided on ethnic and religious grounds, a bitter war in Northern Ireland (1969-1996) which had profound consequences for both jurisdictions, and an unexpectedly successful internationally-brokered peace process. Although many of its citizens served in the British armed forces during World War II, the southern Irish Free State remained neutral in that conflict, and declared itself a republic in 1949, unilaterally repudiating its dominion status within the British Commonwealth.

Despite such frenetic changes in its constitution, I see the independent state as a neo-colonial entity, which has never decolonised (Merriman). Independent Ireland has struggled economically since 1922 and has been blighted by emigration, particularly during the 1950s, the 1980s and again since 2008. Under British colonial rule, Ireland was a convenient laboratory for modernity and free market capitalism. In the neo-colonial successor state, indigenous elites have conducted a full-blown neo-liberal economic experiment in Ireland, notably since1997 (see Kirby 1997 and 2002) with catastrophic consequences for its peoples. Since 2002, an aggressive "competition state" (Kirby and Murphy) has mobilised an undemocratic coalition of print and broadcast media (especially the national broadcaster, which has become a coercive organ of the state), rapacious indigenous "business" interests, and a familiar raft of apologists for the adventurism of globalised capital. As the first decade of the twenty-first century draws to a close, the full extent of the instance and cover-up of organised child sexual abuse on the part of the dominant Catholic Church and the state has been exposed. Its enormity is such as to warrant the re-writing of Irish history since independence, and, along with economic collapse which can be credited to an equally unholy allegiance between financial administrators, business and politicians, grounds emerging calls for the constitution of a "second republic."

As it developed from the 1840s on, Irish nationalism deployed cultural production as a means of asserting itself as a political and moral force. 1898 saw mass mobilisation in Ireland in commemoration of the centenary of the revolution of 1798. Both urban and rural landscapes were liberally provisioned with heroic memorials of armed peasants resisting superior forces in example after example of noble self-sacrifice. The commemorative narrative has them falling in pursuit of an ideal of liberty for an ancient Ireland, figured in pitiable female forms such as Kathleen Ní Houlihan, the *Seanbhean Bhocht* (the Poor Old Woman) and the Hag of Beare. Those centennial memorials, and the poems and ballads produced contemporaneously, single out for especial honour heroic Catholic priests, such as Father Murphy of Boolavogue. In this, they testify to the extraordinary

success of Cardinal Cullen's "devotional revolution" (Lee 42-49) begun some twenty years earlier, in overlaying on anti-colonial consciousness a specifically Catholic tone.[2] Cultural organisations, such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884) and Conradh na Gaeilge (1893), were busy codifying Irishness in sport, language and music. And whatever else Irishness might be, it was above all that which was not English.

In the anti-colonial period, cultural production—including political, artistic, religious and social activities—was directed at the realisation of a nation in open subversion of the colonial province. Many of the characteristics of radical performativity are visible in the work of nationalist organisations. Increasingly, nationalism – the republican, or revolutionary version – commandeered the ground available for the articulation of radical consciousness, and, as events moved toward revolution, radical gestures external to the formations controlled or approved by nationalism began to find themselves excluded from what Cairns and Richards refer to as "the people-nation." It is instructive that one of the first public events at which the Catholic nature of this construct was articulated was the riotous objection to JM Synge's play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, widely cited as indecent and blasphemous. It illustrates that interests outside the narrow understanding of republicanism resulted in a refusal of "the price of inclusion in the people-nation … [and insisted instead on an] acceptance in one form or another, of the supremacy of Catholicism" (113). O'Mahony and Delanty point to the enduring significance for Irish people of the condemnation of Synge's work: "Within the core of a true national identity for all a conservative social vision had been forged that would dominate the twentieth century" (127).

The opportunity for radical social change that the founding of the Free State may have offered was lost in post-1916 Ireland. "David Fitzpatrick has suggested that "if revolutions are what happen to wheels, then Ireland underwent a revolution between 1916 and 1922 … social and political institutions were turned upside down, only to revert to full circle upon the establishment of the Irish Free State" (qtd. in Cairns and Richards 114). As neo-colonialism was imposed on the people of the Free State, all aspects of Irish life and experience were expected to take their tone from a particular national narrative, centrally concerned with "scripting national memory" (Whelan 145), and which indigenous cultural production was expected to legitimate. Central to this project were the events and the persons of the anti-imperial insurrection of 1916, until very recently the historical and cultural touchstone of the successor state. Both James Connolly and Pádraig Pearse wrote and staged plays in the period leading up to the Easter Rising (see Moran). The objective of their works was to persuade people either by argument (Connolly) or inspiration

(Pearse) of the necessity of armed resistance to Imperial Britain. To the extent that their goals were radical, their appropriation of theatre as a platform constitutes an example of radical theatre in Ireland. Of more abiding significance is the theatricality with which their mythicised personae play out in the script of the national memory in Independent Ireland. Connolly is described "by some considerable distance the most remarkable man of his generation in Irish politics" (Lee 150)—and his explicitly radical politics were subordinated to a national drama of "As You Were." Pearse became the centrepiece in a project of "prevalent nation-building myths [which] obscured the real problems of post-independence Ireland" (Fanning 4). This saw his person co-opted to a cold travesty of the self-critical intellectual described by Joseph Lee: "Whereas in 1907 he disapproved of Synge's *Playboy* almost as intently as he despised the mob who howled it down, by 1913 he reproached his earlier self: 'when a man like Synge, a man in whose sad heart there glowed a true love of Ireland, one of the two or three men who have in our time made Ireland considerable in the eyes of the world, uses strange symbols which we do not understand, we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him'" (146-47).

The essays that follow here, and inaugurate this first special issue of *Kritika Kultura* ('"He Calls His Dada Still"' by James Moran, and "Socialist Shenanigans and Emerald Epiphanies" by Tim Prentki), critique official nationalism's positioning of Connolly and Pearse in the self-dramatisations of the successor state. The suppression of the impact on Pearse's personality of his father's secular political radicalism is challenged by Moran, and the veneration of a version of Connolly abstracted from the man incarnate in an ostentatiously radical theatrical gesture is critiqued by Prentki. Taken together, the two essays raise profound questions concerning practices of historiography, processes of canon formation – both cultural and political – and of critical interpretation and valorisation of artefacts and ideas in a national state. I have no doubt of the necessity of raising such questions, and not just for theatre scholarship or Irish Studies. Cultural practices which define how images and narratives of "founding and forging" (Lloyd 1993, 60) a nation come both to constitute a national narrative and demarcate the limits of national consciousness, inspire intense debate especially within countries in which colonial pasts continue to delimit present and future ambitions. Both Moran and Prentki take us into the heart of official nationalist mythmaking (see Hayward), with significant consequences for how we understand the provenance and purpose of iconic figurations, such as "revolutionary socialist" and "romantic nationalist." That they do so by means of critical engagement with plays points to the political *radix* of what are all too often marginalised as effete arguments over aesthetics. Specifically, they respond to Gerry Smyth's insight that

"Irish culture cannot express, reflect, embody – or any of the other favoured metaphors – the decolonising nation until it is so constituted by an enabling metadiscourse: criticism" (52). If the drama of Irish history has yet to be radicalized on stage, it can be similarly argued that Ireland itself remains to be radically reformed.

NOTES

[1] Morash 29.

[2] See Norman Porter's reference to "Catholicism's Attempted Hijacking of All Things Irish" 109.

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FORUM KRITIKA: RADICAL THEATRE AND IRELAND

"HE CALLS HIS DADA STILL": NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH RADICALISM AND THE DRAMA OF PÁDRAIC PEARSE

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Abstract
This essay explores the extent to which some of the political upheavals of twentieth-century Ireland, and their related theatrical manifestations, might reveal a series of affinities with the organised political radicalism of nineteenth-century England. Specifically, the playhouse dramas written by the executed leader of the Easter Rising of 1916, Pádraic Pearse (also known as Pádraig or Patrick) point back to the earlier Liberal reform meetings that took place in the English midlands. The key connecting figure is the revolutionary leader's father, James Pearse, who spent his life between Birmingham and Dublin, but who has tended to be overlooked by historians in the years since 1916.

This paper will explore the way that throughout the twentieth-century a focus on Pádraic Pearse's mother has tended to obscure the influence of James Pearse. Yet I suggest that James—influenced by Liberal thinkers such as the MP John Bright—helped to link one kind of waning English radicalism with the developing nationalism of twentieth-century Ireland. It is in this context that my paper explores the political implications of Patrick Pearse's theatrical writings, *The King, The Master* and *The Singer*, tracing connections between these plays and the Birmingham radicalism of James Pearse, with a particular focus on James's nonconformist reformism and day-to-day involvement with the Catholic pomp of the Hardman church-furnishing company.

Keywords
Ireland, nationalism, Pearse biography, radical theatre

About the author
Jim Moran is head of drama at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *Staging the Easter Rising* (Cork UP, 2005), which was labelled "a brave, confident book" by the *Times Literary Supplement* and "timely and provocative" by the *Irish Times*. He has also edited *Four Irish Rebel Plays* for Irish Academic Press and his *Irish Birmingham: A History* will be published by Liverpool UP in March 2010.

Philip Larkin famously observed:

> They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
> They may not mean to, but they do.
> They fill you with the faults they had
> And add some extra, just for you. (Larkin 180)

In almost a century since the Easter Rising, the reputation of the leading rebel Pádraic Pearse has vacillated between the saintly and the risible. At times, iconoclasts have followed Larkin's formulation, and portrayed Pearse's personal life as one that was "fucked up" during childhood or because of an abiding sense of childishness. For example, in an influential study published shortly after the fiftieth anniversary of the Dublin insurrection, William Irwin Thompson writes: "Accused of being foolish, Pearse made a metaphysic out of foolishness. Throughout his plays, poems, and stories, he celebrates children and fools, for in them he is steadfastly resisting maturity" (118). According to this line of thinking, Pearse was a kind of early twentieth-century Michael Jackson, inhabiting a Peter-Pan realm of bizarre behaviour and suspected pederasty in the years leading up to an untimely and self-inflicted death.

Just as Martin Bashir revealed Michael Jackson's psychological problems to be the consequence of the child-star's relationship with a bullying father, so Pádraic Pearse's family life has been subjected to similar analysis by "revisionist" historians (Bashir 2003). At the start of *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*, Ruth Dudley Edwards writes of Pádraic's neglectful father James and clinging mother Margaret:

> James became increasingly involved in his self-education, and left his children for most purposes to his wife's care. Patrick's devoted mother cosseted his body and his ego, but offered no mental stimulation. The only one to bring news of a broader, more exciting world was his mother's octogenarian Aunt … who would tell him stories and sing him songs. (8)

Ruth Dudley Edwards then includes some fascinating details about the Pearse's family life in her book, and is one of the few commentators to have found James Pearse himself worthy of serious enquiry. But she concludes that the home environment would have been "suffocatingly dull" for the young Pádraic, and states that:

> Besides providing a good material existence for his family, James confined his attention to his family to occasional expensive presents, and in their reminiscences he is a shadowy figure. Dominant though he was intellectually he was too distant from Patrick to counter-balance the narrow and often maudlin nationalism with which the boy was being fed through maternal influence. (11)

Thus Dudley Edwards's influential book, which remains in print three decades after its original publication, presents a Pádraic Pearse whose personality was forged by a "maudlin" maternal influence, and whose father remained on the sidelines, unable to exert any particular influence over the young revolutionary. As Anthony Cronin asserts, such a focus on the maternal influence meant that Pádraic Pearse was "turned into an utterly unreal and boring figure, a mother-lover" (qtd. in Holohan 184-85).

However, such assertions about James Pearse's distant relationship with his children appear at odds with the surviving correspondence that exists between James and his wife, in which he repeatedly asks her to "Kiss the children dearest for me," and exhorts his wife to give the children "nourishing food" and to "be extremely careful with the kiddies." Indeed, when James travelled from Dublin to England, his youngest son William (who would be killed alongside Pádraic for taking part in the Easter Rising) missed James so much that Margaret recorded, "he calls his dada still" (James Pearse "Correspondence").

In this paper, then, I would like to question whether the "fucking up" of Pádraic Pearse is as uncomplicated as writers such as Thompson and Dudley Edwards have assumed. Perhaps James Pearse necessarily appears "shadowy" in those pieces of writing penned by his family in the aftermath of the Easter Rising, as these relatives strove to commemorate their sacrifice in a way that gave the Pearses a central role in the narrative of the Irish state. James Pearse's disconcerting atheism and Englishness scarcely dovetailed with the ideas of Catholicism and Irish self-sufficiency that his son was increasingly understood to have died for, and which were persuasively articulated by the new state's leaders after 1921. So James has tended to remain overlooked and marginal during historical debates about Easter week.[1] Yet if we look again at the writings of Pádraic Pearse, we may well find a number of connections with the ideas and affiliations of his father.

This paper will begin, then, by charting the way that Pádraic Pearse and his mother themselves began the process of sidelining James Pearse by respectively writing and endorsing jail-cell poems about maternal love. Yet I will argue that these poems owe a debt not only to Margaret Pearse, but to James Pearse as well, just as Pádraic's earlier plays about rebellion repeatedly revolve around the relationship between boys and father figures. I will then explore the kind of radicalism endorsed by James Pearse, who encountered a particular brand of political thinking in Birmingham that was articulated by the local MP John Bright. In later years, James himself drew upon his memories of this radical rhetoric when writing polemically about Ireland. And in turn this brand of Birmingham thinking—at once politically transformative and socially conservative—coloured Pádraic's last plays, which similarly endorse political change but eschew a wider

reassessment of societal values and hierarchies. Finally, this paper will consider the way that the aesthetics and the violence of Pádraic's plays also point to a series of affinities with the staging of particular forms of piety and political radicalism in nineteenth-century England, the enthusiasm for which had been carried to Dublin from Birmingham by James Pearse in the 1860s.

THE MOTHER LOVER?

James Pearse grew up in Birmingham when the town was a centre of English "radicalism," that is, a home for many on the extreme wing of the Liberal Party who called for a reform of the social and parliamentary system. James had in fact been born in London to a poor, nonconformist family in 1839, but the family moved to Birmingham when he was still young, and at the age of eight he started working in a local chain factory (Dudley Edwards 1). He married his first wife in the town, and they had four children here, although sadly only two survived infancy. He later found employment in Birmingham as a stone carver with one of Britain's leading church furnishing firms (Chinn 92). But Catholic emancipation meant that Ireland was experiencing a church-building boom, and James Pearse, whose Birmingham boss grew increasingly infirm and would die three years later, decided to seize the opportunity and relocate to Dublin in about 1864, where in spite of his personal beliefs he prudently converted to Catholicism along with his wife (Gillow 128-29). However, she died in 1876, and James then met the nineteen-year-old shop-worker, Margaret Brady, with whom he set up home in Great Brunswick Street in 1877. Their first daughter Mary was born in 1878, followed by Pádraic in 1879. James continued to live and work in Dublin until the end of the century, but maintained business interests in Birmingham and was attempting to set up a headquarters there in Bristol Street at the time of his death in September 1900, when his son Pádraic was twenty years old (Crowley 72, 75-76).

James's second wife, Margaret, was the daughter of a native Irish speaker from Meath, and she exerted a powerful influence on her son Pádraic, who as an adult showed real sensitivity towards Irish language, story, and culture. Indeed, after her son's death Margaret herself described the way that she had affected her son's thinking:

> He always called me "Little Wommie," and "Little Mother." In that beautiful play, *The Singer*, when Mac Dara [*sic*] rushes into his mother's arms, it was of me, his own mother, that Pádraic was thinking. I knew that, instinctively;

> and Willie afterwards confirmed my belief when he told me that I was the prototype of Mac Dara's mother, Máire. His own "Little Mother" was in my boy's brave heart when he wrote that play. (qtd. in Pádraic Pearse *The Home Life*, 47)

Elsewhere, Margaret said:

> In the play of the Singer I am the supposed mother. Don't I feel proud of this, that dear Pádraic favoured me so and gave me the credit even before I deserved it, and am I, not, [*sic*] the proud mother to have given my two loving sons so willingly for the freedom of their beloved country, poor dear suffering Ireland. (qtd. in Walsh 12)

Pádraic Pearse himself also steered readers towards seeing the maternal influence behind his plays *The Master* and *The King*. He explained that:

> One of my oldest recollections is of a kindly grey-haired seanchaidhe [storyteller], a woman of my mother's people, telling tales by a kitchen fireplace. She spoke more wisely and nobly of ancient heroic things than anyone else I have ever known. Her only object was to amuse me, yet she was the truest of all my teachers. One of her tales was of a king, the most famous king of his time in Ireland, who had gathered about him a number of boys, the children of his friends and kinsmen, whom he had organised into a little society, giving them a constitution and allowing them to make their own laws and elect their own leader. (Pádraic Pearse "By Way of Comment" 13)

This story formed the basis for the text of both the *Master* and *The King*, two plays that revolve around young boys and their priestly teachers in monastic schools. Indeed, Pádraic structured his entire teaching methodology at St. Enda's along similar lines, believing that such ideas derived from a *seanachie* of "his mother's people."

After 1916, Margaret Pearse was also elevated to the position of symbolic mother to the nation by the Fianna Fáil party, by the *Irish Press*, by her interventions in the Dáil treaty debates, and by her appearance at the Abbey Theatre to protest against O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (Ward 179, Deputies of Dáil Éireann 221-22, Belchem 285, Morash 163-71). But perhaps the poems that Pádraic wrote in his jail cell before his execution were

most important in terms of catapulting Margaret to national prominence. In these verses he imagines himself into his mother's mind, and in a strange act of ventriloquism, addresses the Virgin Mary:

> Dear Mary, that didst see thy first-born Son
> Go forth to die amid the scorn of men
> For whom He died,
> Receive my first-born son into thy arms,
> Who also hath gone out to die for men,
> And keep him by thee till I come to him.
> Dear Mary, I have shared thy sorrow,
> And soon shall share thy joy.
> (Pádraic Pearse "A Mother Speaks" 22)

After Easter week, Pádraic Pearse's mother-centred poems became widely known, undoubtedly owing much of their popularity to their engagement with Marian devotion. By late 1916 the Dundalgan press had published a picture of Margaret Pearse as the first page of its edition of Pádraic's *The Mother and Other Tales*; and Small, Maynard and Company produced a revised edition of *Poems of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*, which included Pádraic's poetry about his mother (O'Brien 40).

Yet these poems also owe a debt to the example of Pádraic's father. After all, the poems had been inspired by Margaret's request "to write something for me—as your father used to. He wrote such beautiful things when your Auntie Kate and Grandfather died" (qtd. in Pádraic Pearse *The Home Life* 51). Furthermore, one of the recent acquisitions at the National Library of Ireland is James Pearse's diary, in which, during an anguished passage debating the merits of religious belief and atheism, James Pearse wrote the following poem:

> 1
> Good bye dear mother
> A long and agonised
> Good bye
>
> 2
> Good bye to your dear
> Face your tender
> Patient heart

3
I feel my own will burst
If this I do not cry

4
O God! How have with
Sweet hallowed[?] need[?]
Mother to part!

5
Yet I will not spare[?]
As me of all hope herein.

6 [verse crossed through]
God may in justice
Take, what he in bounty gave
(James Pearse "Diary")

Such a poem puts quite a different slant on Pádraic Pearse's famous jail-cell poems. Rather than simply using his mother to inspire him, Pádraic had self-consciously replicated the example of his father, who used similar verse to commemorate Pádraic's English grandmother, and who elsewhere had written of "dear mother gone to rest" (James Pearse "Correspondence"). Pádraic's father had made a habit of writing elegies about dead members of the family, celebrating the deaths of those close to him in a way that might perhaps be expected from a man who earned his living from carving tombstones and memorials. Yet this example showed Pádraic Pearse how the memory of the dead might live on and be celebrated by the living. One of the distinctive things about Pádraic Pearse's brand of revolutionary nationalism is his awareness that far-reaching political reform could be achieved through the verdict of posterity, in the face of the indifference or hostility of the present. If Pádraic Pearse wanted to show the potential rebels of 1916 what exactly they were engaged in, a struggle to the death that—although involving despair and pain at the time—would be commemorated in years to come, he needed to look no further than the literary example set by his father. James Pearse had celebrated the dead both through poetry and grave-stone carvings, and Pádraic Pearse similarly sought to encourage the potential rebels of 1916 with those

final plays that culminate in the victorious demise of the title characters, *The Singer*, *The Master*, and *The King*.

Of course, the assertion that we might glimpse James Pearse in his son's plays is somewhat counter-intuitive. *The Singer*, for example, is dominated by a mother figure, and set in a household where the father is entirely absent. But if, as Margaret Pearse suggests, this work was in some way an autobiographical portrayal of the Pearse household, we might note that the onstage family is haunted by a lost member, and by a grief so intense that the mother of the household hallucinates about her loss when she is about to receive Holy Communion. As the mother-figure of the play explains, "We have both been lonely for him. The house has been lonely for him" (Pádraic Pearse *The Singer* 9). In the play of course, the mother is pining for her exiled son MacDara, who does reappear before being killed, but if Pádraic was basing this idea of a house of grief upon his own experiences, then it may be that he was thinking not of a son but of James Pearse. After all, there is something paternal and not necessarily brotherly about the fictional MacDara's relationship with those around him: he holds the child Sighle in his "strong" arms, for instance, and recalls teaching a young boy who was "a winsome child, and he grew into my heart" (Pádraic Pearse *The Singer* 30).

Pádraic's two other late plays are more obviously set in a paternal rather than a maternal environment. In the all-male setting of *The King*, a group of children and monks live under the care of an abbot, whom they address as "father" and who responds to them as "my children." Indeed, when one of the boys describes having seen the king by saying "I saw him once in my father's house," we perhaps hear an echo of that moment in the New Testament when the child Christ, having been separated from Mary and Joseph, is found teaching in the temple (Luke 2:48-49). If that biblical incident revolves around questions of fatherly attachment, then Pádraic Pearse's play also goes on to emphasise the importance of the paternal bond: indeed, much of the dramatic tension of the end of the play is dissipated if we do not see that the abbot has a parental care for the child whose life is sacrificed for the community. The child's death can easily be justified in utilitarian terms, but the audience relies on the abbot to articulate the terrible individual cost of the child's loss, to point out that "I have given you the noblest jewel that was in my house. I loved yonder child." And the abbot then goes on to state, with biblical echoes of Abraham and Isaac, "Thou hast been answered, O terrible voice! Old herald, my foster child has answered!" (Pádraic Pearse *The Singer* 63, 66).

The same kind of all-male environment is found in *The Master*, where a group of young boys are again schooled by an attentive teacher. As in *The King*, Pádraic Pearse may

have wanted us to see this master as having a paternal relationship with his charges; whom he calls "My boy," whom he spends time "caressing," and whom he calls "my good little lad" (Pádraic Pearse *The Master* 87, 92). At one point, one of the boys draws particular attention to the master's quasi-parental role, remembering that:

> I served his Mass yesterday, and he stayed praying so long after it that I fell asleep. I did not stir till he laid his hand upon my shoulder. Then I started up and said I, "Is that you, little mother?" He laughed and said he, "No, Breasal, it's no-one so good as your mother." (Pádraic Pearse *The Master* 84)

Perhaps these close relationships in Pádraic's plays between older male teachers and their pupils, then, if read through the lens of James Pearse, start to look less like versions of Michael Jackson and the boys of the Neverland ranch, and more like the relationship that exists between a father and a son.

JOHN BRIGHT AND BIRMINGHAM RADICALISM

There is a danger, of course, that emphasising the significance of James Pearse in his son's writings opens the door to the claim that the key ideas of Irish politics originated in England to begin with, somewhat akin to that classic imperial move of reinforcing the importance of the administrative centre at the expense of the "periphery." But in this case a number of the influential political views and radical sentiments that James Pearse encountered in Birmingham, and which went on to affect Pádraic Pearse, actually originated in Ireland in the first place.

In the early 1800s, Daniel O'Connell had transformed the way that mass meetings could be used to push for political reform, and his emancipation campaign inspired reformers in Birmingham. Indeed, the Birmingham reform organisation, the Birmingham Political Union, consciously modelled its activities on what O'Connell had done, and he became the group's most high-profile member, making regular visits to Birmingham in the 1830s and 1840s to show his support for, and approval of, Birmingham's radicalism (see, for example, "Birmingham, Jan. 23, 1832" and "Daniel O'Connell"). The Birmingham radicals emulated O'Connell's emancipation meetings by hosting a series of monster meetings on Newhall Hill, and these were probably the largest political gatherings ever seen in Britain, long remembered in Birmingham as forcing through the great reform act of 1832. Indeed, after the reform act was passed, there was also a remarkable meeting of

hundreds of thousands during the following June when those in Birmingham campaigned not for themselves, but to "confer upon Irishmen those constitutional rights which Englishmen now enjoy" ("Irish Reform Bill" 2).

James Pearse, of course, had no personal experience of these O'Connellite monster meetings, which occurred before he was born. But his family came to live in Birmingham shortly afterwards, and when growing up in the town, James Pearse could scarcely have avoided learning about the town's radical history. In particular, when he gained employment he worked for a church furnishing company that was based on Newhall Hill, proudly remembered by residents as the site where hundreds of thousands had gathered to persuade the government to pass the great reform act (St. Chads, par. 3). Furthermore, James Pearse's employer in Birmingham was the Hardman company, whose founder had an intriguing and well-known confrontation with Daniel O'Connell's main supporters in Birmingham over the building of St. Chad's cathedral (Gillow 375).

In addition, whilst James Pearse lived and worked in Birmingham, the area experienced something of a revival in radical sentiment, with James being particularly influenced by the Quaker politician, John Bright. Bright became Birmingham's MP in 1857, and, every year afterwards, spoke before large and enthusiastic crowds in the town about the main issues that faced radicals in the year ahead (Ward 57).

John Bright had previously been MP for Manchester, where he campaigned for greater expansion of the franchise and for assistance for Ireland. He had seen first-hand the appalling conditions suffered by the Irish immigrants to Lancashire, and felt that something needed to be done to help such people to enjoy good living and working conditions in their home country (Sturgis 136). In Bright's opinion, the real problem in Ireland revolved around land ownership, and he felt that tenant farmers ought to be given a stake in the soil. Bright also recognised that the existence of an established Anglican Church in Ireland served as a lingering cause of discontent. Indeed, Bright became the first English politician of note to recommend tenant rights and long-term reform measures, by contrast with the majority of MPs who wanted to deal with the Irish famine by providing temporary relief (Ausubel 27-28).

In the summer of 1849, when parliament went into recess, Bright travelled to Ireland, where he found that his campaign for Irish justice had won him a great deal of support and admiration. Indeed, he ended up staying for more than a month, and only eventually returned to England because his wife was due to give birth. He returned to Ireland again in 1849, and then in 1852, 1866, and 1868, and made a number of pro-Irish speeches in England, pointing out that "Ireland has had no rulers who ruled *for* Ireland" and asking

"Can the cats wisely and judiciously legislate for the mice?" (qtd. in Sturgis 118, Trevelyan 166-67).

Bright also felt concerned to continue the legacy of the 1832 reform act, and these twin concerns about enfranchisement and about Ireland made him well suited to Birmingham. When Bright's high-profile stand against the Crimean war resulted in his being defeated as Manchester's MP in 1857, the Liberals of the English midlands decided to offer him one of Birmingham's seats and pay all of his election expenses. When his candidature was announced the Conservative candidate withdrew, leaving Bright to be elected unopposed (Trevelyan 262). He was greeted with great excitement in Birmingham, and here, in 1858, quickly set about pointing out the need for justice to Ireland and reminding the town of its radical history. He declared that the condition of Ireland gave Birmingham's reformers "no reason to be self-satisfied and contented with our position," and discussed reform in terms of the town's earlier agitation: "I esteem it a great honour to be permitted to act with the inhabitants of Birmingham on that question which a quarter of a century ago they did so much to advance, and on which their potent voice is once more about to be heard" ("The Birmingham Banquet to Mr Bright" 9, "Mr Bright upon Reform" 11).

In the years before James Pearse travelled to Dublin, he saw the excitement caused in Birmingham by Bright's election. And when James and his family arrived in Dublin in the 1860s, they would have found that, because Bright had expressed his strong feelings about Ireland for so many years, the Birmingham representative was the most admired English MP in the Irish capital. James Pearse had—either in Birmingham or Ireland—attended Bright's meetings, and for many years remained greatly impressed by Bright's oratory. Indeed, in the mid-1880s, James Pearse remembered hearing Bright speak in 1868 and making a "large and most touching appeal for justice to this country [Ireland] (James Pearse "England's Duty to Ireland" 16). If James remembered the year correctly, then he may have seen John Bright in Ireland in 1868, when the politician visited the country and addressed a public breakfast given in his honour in Limerick. It may be that James Pearse knew of this event, at which Bright declared "Ireland, like every other country in Europe, had a right to desire national independence" ("Mr John Bright MP at Limerick" 6). However, it seems likely that James Pearse, in referring to Bright's heartfelt appeal for "justice" to Ireland may in fact be remembering a speech that Bright gave when visiting Dublin two years before the Limerick address. James Pearse may well have attended this meeting on 2 November 1866 at Dublin's Mechanics Institute, where Bright repeated the refrain of "justice" for Ireland: reminding the audience that he supported

"complete and equal justice" and "substantial justice" for Ireland, he looked forward to the time when "justice may come," and pledged he would continue to "stand as a friend to the most complete justice to the population of this island" ("Mr Bright in Ireland" 5).

Such a striking oratory may have been on James Pearse's mind when he returned home and taught his young son Pádraic how to deliver speeches. At an early age, Pádraic was schooled in the skill of public oratory by his father, assisted by a magic lantern that James had purchased from a Dublin optician (James Pearse "Pearse Papers"). As Pádraic's sister later wrote:

> At least eighty slides—generally more than that!—would be shown, all dealing with many different subjects; yet for every one of them the clever boy lecturer found something worth saying. It was quite remarkable that so young a lad could have gathered such a fund of useful and reliable knowledge. The style of his compositions and the delivery of them were admirable. Father, a keen and honest critic, was always thoroughly pleased with his son's efforts. (qtd. in Pádraic Pearse *The Home Life* 108)[2]

Something of Pádraic Pearse's initial attraction towards drama and public oratory might therefore be attributed to these sessions of coaching from his father. And Pádraic Pearse's awareness of how speaking before a public audience might have a real political efficacy—something that we find both in his own speeches and in his playwriting—may also have been derived, albeit indirectly, from that Birmingham radical tradition.

It is clear that James Pearse had listened to John Bright on more than one occasion, as James also recalled listening to another example of Bright's oratory:

> I remember a speech made by John Bright—although I cannot call to mind the occasion, and perhaps not the exact words—he said: If it were possible to unlode [*sic*] Ireland from her moorings, and let her float some thousand miles away from England, the then—to us—humiliating state of that country [Ireland] could not be maintained for twenty-four hours. (James Pearse "England's Duty to Ireland" 19)

Again, it is difficult to know exactly which speech James is referring to here, but Bright had addressed another meeting in Dublin on 30 October 1866, and on this occasion had dwelt on Ireland's geographical position in the sea next to England. Bright had talked

about how the Irish might be "looking more to America than they are looking to England," and described how, for an Irishman, "the aspiration of his heart reaches beyond the wide Atlantic" ("Mr Bright in Ireland" 12).

James Pearse's admiration for Bright may also have been increased in later years by Bright's support for the atheist MP, Charles Bradlaugh, a figure who championed a number of advanced causes such as birth control, female suffrage, and Home Rule for Ireland. In 1880 the Liberal Party split over whether Bradlaugh, who had been newly elected for Northampton, should be allowed to take his seat in parliament, as Bradlaugh led the Freethought movement, which questioned whether MPs ought to be compelled to swear allegiance to God. John Bright felt that it was ridiculous to try to exclude the elected representative—whether an atheist or not—from the House of Commons, and addressed the House to support "the freedom of the elected to sit in Parliament" (Ausubel 210). In Dublin, James Pearse admired Charles Bradlaugh, owned the MP's biography, and seems to have maintained some degree of personal contact. In fact, James sent a letter to Bradlaugh's daughter to enquire about her father's health on the day of Bradlaugh's death (Crowley 74). James might therefore have continued to approve of Bright, even if in the 1880s, Bright's own language had started to change in relation to Ireland, denouncing Parnell's obstructionist tactics and lambasting Gladstonian Home Rule. Bright's language in fact started to sound more like that of his fellow Birmingham Liberal MP, Joseph Chamberlain, who was now bending Bright's ear and redefining what "radicalism" meant in the town, ensuring that Birmingham would be "the rock upon which Home Rule was wrecked" and would elect Unionists MPs until the middle of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, in the 1880s, James Pearse in Dublin continued to remember John Bright's earlier rhetoric, and in 1886 strove to echo Bright's language in a pamphlet called "England's Duty to Ireland." James printed this 20,000-word essay in angry response to a pamphlet written by a Trinity College fellow, Thomas Maguire, who had asserted that the intelligence and wealth of Ireland resided mainly in the Protestant community, and that strong law-enforcement was needed to deal with the rest of the population (Dudley Edwards 9). In reply, James Pearse expressed Ireland's "unalienable right to be free and self governed, which the very constitution of England sanctions, which the lives of Reformers and Patriots of all times sanctify" (Pádraic Pearse "O'Donovan Rossa" 137, James Pearse "England's Duty to Ireland" 54). James Pearse continued:

> This intense and unquenchable desire to be free, is—coupled with Catholicism—the one great trait of the Irish character. It asserts itself at all points, and at all times. The history of Ireland since its connection with England, is the history of one long struggle for "Faith and fatherland." That struggle is not yet finished. ("England's Duty to Ireland" 23)

Perhaps the ultimate expression of Ireland's twin desire for freedom and Catholicism would come in the sections that Pádraic Pearse drafted of the proclamation of the Irish republic, and the assertion that Ireland strikes for her freedom "In the name of God and of the dead generations." Yet twenty years before the Rising, James Pearse had been relying on the Birmingham radical tradition, as expressed most recently in the words of John Bright, to describe the desire for freedom as an intrinsic part of the Irish character and to assert that "the struggle is not yet finished." If the then seventeen-year old Pádraic Pearse had heard such rhetoric at home it may well have influenced his own thinking, perhaps guiding him towards drafting his own statements about the relationship between England and Ireland.

PÁDRAIC'S THEATRICAL WORK

Of course, we know that the playhouse was one of the places where Pádraic articulated a particular nationalist vision in the lead-up to 1916. In the decade before the rebellion, he composed a number of scripts to be performed by the boys who attended the school he ran in Rathfarnham. These works tend to depict rebellion against unjust authority, conclude with the sacrificial death of the main character, and seem to connect—albeit allusively—with Pádraic Pearse's wider preparations for the real-life Rising. Watching and acting in plays might be an unorthodox way to train for revolution, but these works formed part of a broader insurrectionary strategy, that, if looked at in the long term, did prove successful in ridding most of Ireland of British rule and providing a foundational moment for the inhabitants of the new state to remember and to celebrate.

Pádraic Pearse's work was certainly designed to appeal to the more advanced wing of nationalist opinion when acted out in venues such as his St. Enda's school or the Irish Theatre in Hardwicke Street, a playhouse that had been set up by his fellow rebels, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett. Those who came to watch Pádraic Pearse's version of *The King* performed in Irish in 1912 at St. Enda's included men and

women who shared his view of education reform, and of the centrality of restoring the Irish language, whilst those who saw *The Master* at the Irish Theatre in 1915 included members of the Irish Volunteers. But Pádraic Pearse of course had little intention of initiating a more widespread reordering of society. His revolutionary colleague, James Connolly, may have seen national liberation as a necessary first step towards reconstituting Ireland along more equitable lines, but Pádraic's reforms focussed in the main around anti-imperialism, and showed no interest in redistributing property, promoting feminism, or curtailing the power of the clergy. As Charles Townshend has written of the IRB, "It focused almost entirely on winning Irish independence and establishing a republic, which it conceived as a one-step process; it showed little attraction to the wider social reshaping that had marked the great French Revolution" (Townshend 4).

Accordingly, Pádraic Pearse's play *The King* emphasises the importance of casting off an unjust and bloodthirsty monarch, and of valiantly fighting in a self-sacrificing way in order to achieve victory. However, the play does not advocate the abolition of the idea of kingship itself, or a reassessment of this particular monarchy, only a change in the person of the king. And the monks and their pupils at the end of the play look as though they will be carrying on with their religious duties much as they did before, declaring, "Let shouts of exultation be raised and let a canticle be sung in praise of God" (Pádraic Pearse *The King* 67). Their religious faith has not been shaken or reformed by the fact that God ordained that an innocent boy has had to die in order to win the battle. Indeed, the author evidently thought that such a storyline might even bolster Christian belief, with the play's sacrifice evidently providing a stark reminder of the torment of Calvary.

Similarly, at the end of *The Master*, an evil monarch has been shown the error of his ways by a militaristic archangel, whilst the teacher whose Christian faith has previously been questioned and mocked by this king is now vindicated. Such a message had a parallel with the unpopular position that the advanced nationalists occupied at the start of the First World War. And Pádraic Pearse highlighted the play's links with real life by taking members of the cast to parade with the Irish Volunteers in Limerick on the day after the performance, where they were attacked by a hostile crowd and feared being ambushed by Crown forces (Sweeney 98). However, again the conclusion of the play is socially conservative, showing that those who question Christian faith are misguided, and it idealises a monastic and patriarchal kind of society from which women are notably excluded.

The final play that Pádraic Pearse wrote before he died was never staged during his lifetime. He scripted *The Singer* in the autumn of 1915, and intended this last play to be

acted in the week before the real-life Rising by the same schoolboy cast that had previously performed in *The Master*. For the men who might be about to lose their lives in a real-life rebellion, Pádraic's play might help to prime them for action, showing them the nobility of taking radical action against imperialism. However, any move towards articulating a radical new societal vision is once more stymied in the play, particularly when the play reinforces a very traditional Irish mother's role, with MacDara's mother coming to prominence through her ability to run a home, care for her sons, encourage nationalist sentiment, and mourn the death of her offspring. The mother scarcely thinks about taking action herself, or envisaging a role for herself outside of the domestic sphere. As with the two previous plays, then, Pádraic Pearse's radicalism may not have extended to any desire for widespread societal reform, but he did articulate a radical political position, encouraging revolution in such a forthright way that both Thomas MacDonagh and William Pearse, Pádraic's younger brother, eventually persuaded the writer that describing anti-British rebellion in such terms might well let the cat out of the bag if performed immediately before the Easter Rising, and so the first performance did not take place until after Pádraic Pearse's death (Walsh 12).

Despite the politically revolutionary subject matter of Pádraic's plays, then, they seem largely content with the social status quo, perhaps recalling an earlier kind of English radicalism. After all, the Liberal-radicals of the English midlands were quite clear that, although they wanted parliamentary change, they objected to any wider revolutionary sympathies becoming associated with their cause. Although the rise of the factory system in northern English regions brought conflict between employer and worker, Birmingham remained a town of small workshops where there was regular contact between small-scale employers and skilled employees, and an established pattern of inclusive agitation which drew together people of different backgrounds (Briggs 208-9). Unlike in Liverpool, this relative conservatism of Birmingham's workers meant that reformers were not fearful of inspiring revolutionary excesses. As Richard Cobden commented, "the industry of the hardware district is carried on by small manufacturers, employing a few men and boys each, sometimes only an apprentice or two; whilst the great capitalists in Manchester form an aristocracy, individual members of which wield an influence over sometimes two thousand persons" (qtd. in Trevelyan 263). Perhaps James Pearse, one of these small Birmingham manufacturers, passed on something of this attitude of political radicalism edged with social conservatism to his son Pádraic during the final years of the nineteenth century.

JAMES'S SCULPTURAL WORK

However, it may not only have been the political message of Pádraic Pearse's plays that was affected by his father's thinking, but also the aesthetic way in which those ideas were expressed. After James's death, his two Irish sons agreed to run their father's sculpting business together under the name of "Pearse and sons," and Pádraic took to describing himself officially as "Pádraic H. Pearse, Sculptor" (Dudley Edwards 46). However the two brothers had little business sense, and with the church-building boom having run out of steam, the brothers wound up the company in 1910 (Dudley Edwards 112).

Yet Pádraic Pearse had learned from his father the way that certain imagery could be used to inspire feelings of religious passion and devotion, and filled St Enda's school with inspirational artworks. For example, one of Edwin Morrow's works at the school was a panel showing Cuchulainn taking arms, framed by the hero's famous words: "I care not though I were to live but one day and one night provided my fame and my deeds live after me" (Dudley Edwards 117). Another painter, Beatrice Elvery, described the effect that such art had upon the pupils, noting that when she met one of the schoolboys he told her that such imagery inspired him "to die for Ireland!" (Dudley Edwards 117).

In the same way, at moments in Pádraic's playwriting, he summons up the kind of familiar ecclesiastical images fashioned by his father in stone so many times. *The Singer* and *The King*, for instance, call to mind the image of Christ hung upon the cross, whilst *The Master* ends with the vision of an angel "winged, and clothed in light" (Pádraic Pearse *The Master* 100). Indeed, the settings of Pádraic's plays may have seemed familiar to anyone who had seen the church architecture that had been designed by his father. Pádraic's play *The King* begins on "A green before the monastery," and his play *The Master* demands the setting of "A little cloister in a woodland. The subdued sunlight of a forest place comes through the arches … In the centre of the cloister two or three steps lead to an inner place, as it were a little chapel or cell" (Pádraic Pearse *The King* 47, Pádraic Pearse *The Master* 83). With this latter setting, we might remember James Pearse's familiarity with Pugin's gothic style from Birmingham St Chad's cathedral, where James saw the ideas that Pugin had originally learnt as a stage designer at Covent Garden. As Pugin's biographer Rosemary Hill puts it, one of his recurring architectural themes was "The space within a space, the Picturesque ideal of revelation by partial concealment" (Hill 83). When Pádraic Pearse chose to fight at the Dublin GPO in 1916, the classical architecture was hardly reminiscent of this gothic style with

which James Pearse had been most familiar, but by directing the rebels to occupy the main building that dominated Dublin's central throughway, Pádraic Pearse showed that he still maintained his father's aesthetic sense of where onlookers might focus their attention. If Pádraic's father had carved iconic images such as "Erin Go Breagh" and "The Marriage of the Virgin and St. Joseph" into local churches and public buildings, Pádraic knew that the stonework of the GPO's portico would bear the memory of the Easter rebellion for many years to come (Crowley 79-80).

EASTER 1916

Finally, we should perhaps acknowledge that, although there is some debate about Pádraic Pearse's personal capacity for violence, he did lead an armed rebellion in Dublin and his plays do repeatedly refer to violent ideas and imagery. At the end of *The Master* the archangel Michael appears as a "mighty warrior" and announces himself as "I am he that turneth and smiteth" (Pádraic Pearse *The Master* 100). In *The King*, Pádraic Pearse's most bloodthirsty play-script, the boys at the start of the work shout to the army "Take victory in battle and slaying," and the abbot praises the notion of wanting to "smite foes" or to fight "with flaming swords" (Pádraic Pearse *The King* 62-63). Although the hero of *The Singer* decides not to use his pike, even he still decides to "go into the battle with bare hands" at the conclusion of the drama (Pádraic Pearse *The Singer* 43).

James Pearse himself opposed political violence, and so at this point Pádraic seems to diverge from his father's views. However, James did remain close to his brother, William Pearse, who lived at Great Russell Street in Birmingham and worked as a gun-maker, a profession that had attracted controversy in the 1860s, when police seized large quantities of ammunition and arms en route from Birmingham to the Fenians (James Pearse "Pearse Papers," "Fenianism in Birmingham" 629). Despite James Pearse's professed opposition to violent revolution, he held that Irishmen working in Birmingham had the right to send guns back to Ireland ("Fenianism in Birmingham" 629). He wrote "I maintain that a working man in England who sends a rifle home, to help in the work of establishing self-government; is by that much remedying the evils caused by Absenteeism" (James Pearse "England's Duty to Ireland" 104). Such an assertion chimes quite strikingly with his son's latter words, notoriously and unflatteringly recycled by Seán O'Casey, that "it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands" (Pádraic Pearse "The Coming Revolution" 98).

Pádraic Pearse himself wrote little about his father, perhaps worried that an admission of English ancestry might diminish the rebel's own claim to speak for the Irish nation. James Pearse, like the fathers of Eamon de Valera and Christy Mahon, has therefore been escaped and evaded, or discussed in brief and disparaging terms. Yet to incorporate only Pádraic Pearse's mother into the story of his life and work is to end up with a historical blind-spot, ignoring the particular kind of radical thinking that came from Pádraic's father. After all, long before Pádraic had written any speeches, newspaper articles, or plays about Irish sovereignty, his father James Pearse had condemned the kind of peace in Ireland that was "begot of inferiority and Slavery" and looked forward instead to hearing "the free voice of a willing, and therefore a self-governed people" (James Pearse "England's Duty to Ireland" 12). Little surprise then, that James's son should come to advocate Ireland's "sovereign nationhood," and should write plays that sought to prepare the way for that independent Ireland (Pádraic Pearse "The Spiritual Nation" 320).

ENDNOTES

[1] A notable exception is in the work of Brian Crowley, the curator of the Pearse Museum, who has recently written an excellent article on the way that James Pearse may have influenced Pádraic, based on detailed knowledge of James Pearse's possessions and remarkable library, which are still held at the museum (Crowley 71-88).

[2] When Pádraic later established St. Enda's school, the printed prospectuses almost obsessively emphasised the use of this technology, repeatedly describing how lectures are "illustrated, where possible, by the Magic Lantern" (Pádraic Pearse "St Enda's School Prospectus").

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FORUM KRITIKA: RADICAL THEATRE AND IRELAND

SOCIALIST SHENANIGANS AND EMERALD EPIPHANIES: THE CASE OF MARGARETTA D'ARCY AND JOHN ARDEN

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Abstract
This essay explores the two meanings of "radical" – the popular one of "sharp-edged"'or "extreme" and the original one of "rooted within the culture" – in relation to selected works of D'Arcy and Arden: *The Non-Stop Connolly Show* (1975), *Vandaleur's Folly* (1978) and *The Little Gray Home in the West* (1978). Within the space of contradiction between these meanings, the paper considers such issues as the political function of the outsider, the rival claims of reform and revolution, relationships between text and means of production and between forms and audience ownership. The perennial question of the battle between republicanism and socialism frames much of the discourse. In concluding, the essay considers where these works stand in the aftermath of Thatcherism and the Celtic Tiger Economy, and whether there is any "radical" legacy left by these works in Irish theatre.

Keywords
Ireland, theatre and politics

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Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden have been living and working in Ireland for thirty years and yet it remains a moot point whether Arden in particular can, in any sense, be considered an Irish playwright and theatre maker. *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Irish Drama* does not include a single mention of either, even though its opening editorial statement informs the reader that "In addition to studies of individual playwrights the collection includes examination of the relationship between the theatre and its political context as this is inflected through its ideology, staging and programming" (back cover). Yet much of D'Arcy's and Arden's theatre writing and production activities

since they settled in the west of Ireland have been overtly concerned with that relationship. Fintan O'Toole has offered an explanation for this neglect, describing Arden as:

> an interestingly displaced figure. He is the heir of the English literary dissident tradition of Blake and Shelley and yet he is now being framed in an Irish context which is quite different. The literary discourse in Ireland has been shaped by forces like land, Catholicism, and nationalism. None of which are really part of Arden's language. And it seems a pity that more is not made of the rich set of Irish historical and cultural resonances around the English language and the politics of the colony. But I suspect he might not really fit in either country as in England he is seen as a lost writer and over here he is still slightly exotic. (qtd. in Wroe)

Such a position presents serious difficulties for any consideration of radicalism in relation to D'Arcy's and Arden's contribution to theatre in Ireland. Their work at once qualifies under the popular definition of radical since it advocates social change through revolutionary action, as endorsed by Michael Etherton's unequivocal statement that "they not only write difficult and radical works: they see them into radical performance" (214) and is perhaps disqualified within the discourses of contemporary Irish studies, according to the original meaning of radical as "naturally inherent, essential, fundamental" ("Radical"). This paper will attempt to explore the reasons why this work has put down no roots in the soil of Irish culture and whether the political vision, as expressed through their plays, is one which is fundamentally foreign to the rooted discourses of Irish politics.

If only in terms of quantity, the six-part, twenty-six hour *Non-Stop Connolly Show* is D'Arcy's and Arden's largest claim to a place in Irish theatre. That the 1916 Irish revolutionary James Connolly was selected as the subject for this epic says much about not only the political affiliations of the playwrights but also about their self-perception of their situation within Irish culture. On one level Connolly is the obvious choice of writers committed to advocating for an all-Ireland socialist revolution. Of those who participated in the 1916 attempt to end British rule, Connolly alone had a social vision based upon a class analysis rather than one which, however democratic in intention, was, at its core, nationalist. As the authors make clear in the Preface which is included in all five parts of the published texts, their intention is to rehabilitate Connolly against the grain of revisionist histories that seek to erase any socialist legacy:

> In Dublin our aim was primarily to counteract what one might term the "Conor Cruise O'Brien historical revisionism," currently much in vogue in Irish intellectual circles, and closely associated with the policies of the Fine Gael-Labour Coalition government. (v)

In order to achieve this aim more effectively, it would have been necessary to connect Connolly more explicitly with the roots of an Irish peasant and working-class radicalism as manifested in both the pre-capitalist formations of Irish rural society and in the mobile proletariat of Irish labour unleashed by the Industrial Revolution on both sides of the Atlantic. David Lloyd's analysis of Connolly's connections to both these formations points the way to a possible, at least partial, resolution of the paradoxes of radicalism in a specifically Irish context for socialism:

> As the long history of successive British attempts to impose "civility" on Ireland suggests, Irish cultural formations continued to be among the many resistances that capitalist colonialism had to overcome in the course of its becoming and, as Connolly seems to have grasped, the coercive force of that overcoming produced as its differential counterpart a persistent if apparently discontinuous set of counter-modern discourses and practices. (124)

It may be that, at some barely conscious level, the decision of D'Arcy and Arden to move to the west of Ireland and work in the local community can be read as an attempt to connect themselves to those same well-springs of resistance, singularly lacking in Britain in the 1970s. Ironically, like their subject himself, they found themselves to be out of time, rather than out of place; a vanguard cut off from the slowly advancing cohorts of Irish cultural studies where they might have received a more sympathetic hearing, by the clamorous modernist voices of nationalism and their revisionist allies among materialist historians.

In all aspects, it is a workers' story that D'Arcy and Arden are determined to present through the episodes selected for dramatisation, through decisions about the visual effect:

> The backcloths are described in the text. The style we have in mind should be based on the formal emblematic tradition of trade union banners, and should be carried in bright colours with no attempt at impressionism or naturalistic

> representation. The cloths should include appropriate slogans and captions (*Non-Stop* vii).

and through the choice of the Dublin venue, Liberty Hall; signifying both its importance in the life of Connolly and its iconic role as a rallying point for contemporary Irish trade unionism. However, there is another, unacknowledged level, on which the choice of Connolly is appealing to these playwrights. He is the rootless outsider who owes no dues to a particular community and for whom the search to belong is destined for failure, at least this side of the grave. His home town was Scotland's Victorian Edinburgh, where the tight-knit Irish ghetto was itself a community outside the mainstream and which he left at an early age in a quest for work and purpose in Ireland and America. As D'Arcy and Arden's *Non-Stop Connolly Show* illustrate, both senses of Connolly's radicalism meet in the employers' invocation against him:

> I'm as Irish as the Cross of Cong:
> I invoke the Pope the whole day long!
> It is a sin to be a socialist:
> The very word of the parish priest.
> Stand firm for the faith and the ould Irish sod:
> A vote for James Connolly is a vote against God! (58)

According to this trope Connolly is not really Irish as evidenced by his radical, political views which have somehow been born out of his detachment from any roots in the Irish soil and from the Catholic religion which has been nurtured over centuries by that soil, nor will he ever be unless his radicalism can be linked to pre-colonial, rural formations of the kind suggested by Lloyd. The title of the essay Arden wrote with D'Arcy about this project, "A Socialist Hero on the Stage" in his collection *To Present the Pretence,* contributes further to a feeling that Connolly never quite relates to the world around him, being more than human. The hero is a species once removed from humanity as Galileo tellingly observes in Brecht's play: "Unhappy the land where heroes are needed" (98). Connolly's political and personal agendas are beyond the pale until they can be, *post-mortem*, manipulated for admittance into an acceptable social history. Perhaps the same will be the case for D'Arcy and Arden with reference to theatrical history.

Arden's essay clarifies the playwrights' thematic intentions for the whole dramatic cycle and, in doing so, reminds us of the great weight of ambition that Connolly has to

carry through the play; an ambition which effectively separates him from the world he inhabits:

> The Socialist parties in the early 1900s were comparatively obscure on the field of world affairs: but their purpose was nothing less than the turning of the whole world upside-down in the interest of the entire future of the human race – and in a few years they had done it: we were in no doubt that the drama to reflect this must be built on a traditionally heroic scale. (*To Present* 98)

It is this sense of Connolly, as the agent of chaos tearing up the familiar world, that is picked up in the line where the character Yeats quotes his own poem to describe the effect of Connolly upon the changing world: "Who is this dangerous man/Slouching, as it were, towards Bethlehem to be born?" (*Non-Stop* 20). The "rough beast" of "The Second Coming" recreated here as Connolly is the successor to Christ, the half-human creature who remakes the world. In echoing Yeats, the playwrights, consciously or otherwise, contribute to the removal of their hero from the orbit of human relations even as they promote his singleness of purpose in contrast to the compromises and class interests of Yeats and Maud Gonne who are aligned with those who cling to the contours of a familiar world in their desire to reform capitalism, rather than sweep it away. In "A Socialist Hero on the Stage," D'Arcy and Arden are unequivocal in their analysis of the central issue with which they are dealing through the epic tale of Connolly's life:

> We found out very quickly that the essential Conflict of the fable, which ostensibly was that between Capital and Labour, seemed often lost in the tributary struggle between opposed factions of the latter: and that this struggle itself could time and again be summarised as the Fight between Revolution and Reform. (*To Present* 98)

The use of the word "fable" here is deceptive if we should be tempted into reading Brecht's understanding of it. This is no fable along the lines of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* where a story is told to illustrate a point of political praxis but rather an epic tale, "series of digressive stage-presentations of the events of his time which influenced his political views and consequent actions." The enemy is capitalism in the shape of the variously masked form of Grabitall who, Hydra-headed, plays off the reformist politicians

– liberal, nationalist, orange – against each other in order to secure the continuity of his business interests and the defeat of revolution in the shape of Connolly. The playwrights' notion of a binary opposition between Reform and Revolution, conceived as personifications in the manner of a medieval morality play, is given unambiguous utterance in the mouth of the protagonist:

> The one tune needful for the present day:
> True revolution is the enemy of reform! (*Non-Stop* 59)

Where that "present day" is 1900, Connelly's declamation carries a prophetic air and suggests that he was in tune with international movements even as he was impatient with their slowness to act, as Lenin's comments on the premature nature of the Easter Rising tend to confirm. However, as Arden makes clear in *To Present the Pretence*, this is also the position of the playwrights in 1975. They are equally impatient. Although it is not helpful to judge them through the hindsight of the post-Thatcher, post-Celtic Tiger period and even if current events may lend relevance to revolutionary sentiments, there is a sense in the mid-seventies that Arden and D'Arcy have retreated back into history in search of a radicalism that is absent from their own time and the accompanying political analysis emphasises their detachment from contemporary realities; again radical in both senses. They share their hero's single-minded socialist republicanism without regard for any impact which an altered historical context might have upon that discourse.

Vandaleur's Folly, though written after *The Non-Stop Connolly Show*, offers a glimpse of the struggle between revolution and reform that Connolly was to inherit. Set firmly in the period of colonial Ireland, the playwrights present the Ralahine experiment as an example of a potentially revolutionary organisation undone by the reformist tendencies of its organisers, for although inspired by the ideals of cooperative reform, the organisers of Ralahine never desired revolutionary restructuring of society. Drawing on agrarian discontent, revolutionary nationalist groups thrived in rural Ireland throughout the 1800s. (See Fintan Lane's *The Origins of Modern Irish Socialism, 1881-1896* for a detailed discussion of the historical context, 11-17.) In the rural Irish county of Clare, a landowner, John Vandaleur, conceived of the idea to set up an agrarian cooperative commune among his tenants to prevent them from being attracted to the nationalist revolutionary secret societies. Vandeleur asked help from John Edward Craig, who worked closely with Robert Owen in England, to oversee the Ralahine experiment. In the play, Craig, in a direct

address to the audience, provides an epitaph on the commune that sums up the view of the playwrights:

> Ralahine had been an Irish point of interrogation erected amidst the wilderness of capitalist thought and feudal practice, challenging both in vain for an answer. (*Vandaleur's Folly* 96)

The challenge never quite escapes the colonial benevolence that ensures that capitalism does not come under threat. Instead it is of a piece with the aspirations of Robert Owen as analysed in the play by William Thompson: "Co-operation from above, extended to the people by the idealism of their controllers" (27). This exactly describes the position of Vandaleur who, both by class (landed gentry) and nationality (Anglo-Irish colonial), can never belong to the Irish land that absorbs his schemes and hopes. Unwittingly, he articulates the bewildered ambivalence of a situation which guarantees ultimate failure:

> I have lived in this country all my life, as a gentleman. Philosophically scientifically endeavoured to lift up the poor people toward a condition of humanity. (61)

The principal strength of the play lies in the way the form provides the ideal complement to the content. Its subtitle is "An Anglo-Irish Melodrama" and it is melodrama which dictates both the structure of the tale and the manner of the characterisation. Most importantly, melodrama is the form associated with the depiction of Victorian reform, both on the stages of its theatre and in the pages of Dickens' novels. It is a form which highlights defects of character as the barrier to social progress, rather than revealing the deep structures of inequality. Its appeal is to innate goodness, not to a revolutionary call to arms. Arden is at his best when playing unconventionally with conventional forms; as in the scene where the typical melodrama of the duel is transformed in an instant to farce:

> Vandaleur's *pistol goes off, terrifying him. The bullet hits* Baker-Fortescue *across the midriff – his belt-buckle flies off and histrousers fall down. The* Peasants *cheer exuberantly.* (72)

The subtlety of this formal switch is that it enables the audience to cheer the momentary triumph of Vandaleur until the shout sticks in our throats as we realise that

his agreement to submit to the gentleman's convention of the duel signals his fatal return to the colonial aristocracy, and doom for the Ralahine project. It is, in farcical mode, the equivalent of Connolly's heroic decision to throw in his lot with the nationalists, thereby signalling the beginning of the end of socialist aspirations in Ireland.

Arden demonstrated a similar lightness of formal touch for *The Non-Stop Connolly Show* by combining the two dominant forms of late medieval England – the Mystery cycles and the Morality plays; forms not rooted in Irish theatrical traditions. From the former the playwrights take the idea of a chronological series of incidents, structured allegorically into partially repeated cycles; the different phases of Connolly's life substituted for the books of the Old and New Testaments. From the latter comes the idea of abstract moral qualities presented as personifications with the one constant battle uniting the cycle being that between Good and Evil, Connolly and Grabitall. The lesser devils of Reform stimulate the actions of specific scenes. The essence of the Morality play, however, was the fall and redemption of Man; whereas Connolly, if he is the equivalent of Everyman, does not suffer from the doubts or temptations that might compromise his stance unless, that is, his final casting of the lot of the Citizen Army with the Irish Republican Brotherhood for the 1916 Easter Rising is deemed a fall from socialist grace.

Arden, throughout his career alive to the possibilities of neglected theatre forms, was well aware of the importance of formal choices for establishing the aesthetic through which meaning is communicated to audiences:

> It is, as it were, the scenario for late-medieval morality play. Every time the Revolutionist Cause (Connolly's cause) gained ground, the Capitalist lost ground: whenever the Reformists succeeded in muffling a Revolutionary demand, Capitalism was made the more secure in its stronghold. It was this repetition of political theme that eventually decided us to write six plays about Connolly instead of just one, and to present them non-stop in one vast theatrical "event." (*To Present* 98-99)

Though the structure of the whole cycle can be read as a reworking of these ancient forms, the playwrights exploited a whole range of styles derived from both theatre and literature in the development of specific incidents. Much of the vitality and energy of the whole comes from the way in which verse and prose are modulated for the purposes of irony, satire, caricature and direct address as, for example, when one of the lesser devils, an employer, introduces himself through the form of the mummers play:

> Here come I, McHook by name –
> I had not thought to play this game. (*Vandaleur* 59)

This rich variety of forms shares a common theatrical purpose in enabling the actors to use them as vehicles through which action and attitude can be depicted emblematically without running any risk of seducing the audience into speculations of a naturalistic kind. The actors present their characters as a social "gest" in the manner of Brecht. But whereas Brecht would introduce complexity by presenting the character behaving differently according to the different demands of a changing social situation, there is a tendency here for characters to be remorselessly consistent throughout. This is, perhaps, to be expected of Grabitall, the arch fiend of Capital, who is essentially the same in all six parts, no matter how many masks he works through. I would argue, however, that, for the most part, this consistency of character is also true of the presentation of Connolly and results in a fundamental lack of interest in him through long passages of the action. He is almost always the hero and only rarely the man.

This may appear at first sight to be an unlikely criticism for a character whose life is depicted in twenty-six hours of performance during most of which he is on stage. There is, however, a clue to this flatness of characterisation in the original concept as revealed by the playwrights:

> The great length of the cycle of plays, and their deliberately repetitive structure, made it possible to dramatise the contradictions and complexities so fully that we felt all the various objections that could be raised by particular factions might be answered by pointing to at least one of the episodes in the cycle and the argument implied by it. (126)

The writers work from a defensive position, picturing themselves fending off the sectarian axe-grinding of that spectrum of groups broadly defined as reformist. The verbal tonnage of *The Non-Stop Connolly Show* is devoted to ensuring that all arguments get an airing, rather than exposing Connolly himself to the demons of contradiction, self-doubt or ambiguity. The "little rhyme" created by the authors to keep their noses to the grind-stone:

> My name it is James Connolly
> I neither smoke nor drink:

> Come to the theatre for twenty-six hours
> And watch me sit and think. (*Non-Stop* 96)

discloses some of the limitations of his theatrical presence. His thoughts are offered at every twist and turn but they are often disembodied in the manner of an immense series of mini-manifestoes and take the spectator no further into the mind and imagination of Connolly than could have been achieved with half the quantity. The starting points for the creative process of bringing him to life on stage are primarily ideological and emblematic, rather than emanating from lived experiences and passions. Connolly, as conceived by D'Arcy and Arden, represents many things but in that process is often disabled from representing himself:

> D'Arcy divined a basic image for his character on which we could build the play (neither of us can get down to writing dialogue unless we first have one basic image or analogy in our mind for the chief action of the story) – she saw him as "The Little Tailor" whom no one takes seriously, but who waddles on through the forest of giants, resourceful and cunning, and eventually succeeds in winning the hand of the princess. Connolly of course "failed": but insofar as he had placed the Socialist vision firmly in the tradition of Irish revolution (hitherto a primarily nationalist concept) we regarded his life as a triumph: what he did can be built upon, and the principles he discerned need never be invalidated. We had now a degree of understanding, between us, as to the general shape and "flavour" of the play. (106-07)

Once more the initiating concept pays great structural dividends in the construction of the cycle but offers little by way of insight into the man who supplies the motive for the rich range of visual and verbal forms that drive it. A large part of the problem of Connolly's character development stems from the lack of relationships to underpin the dramatic action. For most of the cycle we witness him dealing with adversaries, employers and politicians, who stand in a fixed and known relationship to him. In other words he does not recreate himself as a reflection in the eyes of others in the way that most of us do. Lillie, his wife, though the source of occasional bouts of guilt or pangs of conscience, does not figure largely enough to perform this function. The one other character who has the potential to challenge Connolly to remake himself is the Irish union leader Jim Larkin. He takes a prominent role in Part 5 and threatens to hold a mirror up to Connolly as he challenges

him for leadership of the socialist movement. Whilst Larkin might seem to offer a way in to the social and cultural roots that elude Connolly, he shares the latter's tendency to think in abstractions on the grand scale, rather than anchor his rhetoric in the lived reality of working people, thus separating himself from those whom he would lead:

> We who are born with the microbe of discontent in our blood must of necessity live the strenuous life, one day down in the depths of despondency, and the next day lifted up on the peak of Mount Optimism. (20)

Whilst the smoothness and ease of the rhetoric contrasts with Connolly's hesitant and deliberate delivery, there is a similar tendency to work on a scale too large to be encompassed by the lesser minds of their followers. The power struggle between them carries the dramatic potential to catch light as a conflagration of human interest and revelation of egotistical motives mixed in with the sacrifices made by both to the labour movement:

Larkin: The steam packet blacked!
Repudiate my solemn act…?
Jim Connolly, what the hell's been going on!
What word had you from me to do this thing?
You've thrown the whole contrivance out of true –
The scabs in Dublin now have firearms, thanks to you – !

Connolly: All right: your turn has come: I must give ground:
The floor is yours.
So do you make your play, my brother,
Make sure you win your own applause. (*Non-Stop* 82)

The playwrights do not change the style of the delivery for this exchange with the consequence that the protagonists skirt around each other like shadow boxers. The distance between the style and the character makes it impossible to feel from the audience that the whole trajectory of these two men's ambitions is at stake. Instead it is all part of the game with Larkin; just another giant of the forest over whom Connolly will ultimately triumph.

At other moments the epic register is appropriate and effective; a large language to suit the scale of events it is describing. When Connolly is left to his not so dark night of

the soul, pondering the action of the morrow like Richard III at Bosworth, the poetic style captures the nationalist revolutionary schoolteacher, Pádraic Pearse succinctly:

> This poet possessed,
> This fledgling schoolteacher quite lost
> Between the broken eggshell of his safe and bourgeois past
> And the new huge flapping flight he means to launch tomorrow – (68)

Soon after the argument between Larkin and Connolly, the pair are depicted on an empty stage prior to the passing of a funeral procession for a woman striker of the Connolly's Citizen Army, killed by a scab during the Great Lockout. (In Dublin, 1913, workers of the city's major tram and transport company were forbidden to join a workers' union. Suspected union workers throughout Dublin were locked out of their workplace and the resulting strike was supported by Jim Larkin and opposed by the city's major employers and the national police.) The play's pace quickens towards the climax of Part 5:

> Connolly: They grunt and shout against us and they yell
> Like wolves and badgers of the dark wild wood –
>
> Larkin: No, rabbits, lurking in their safe protective hole.
>
> Connolly: We Irish workers must once more go down to hell –
> We eat no bread of common sacrifice and brotherhood
> But choke our tongues with dust of black betrayal.
> Dublin, defeated, now is left alone.
>
> Larkin: Can we continue all upon our own?
>
> Connolly: The red flag of the peoples of the world
> Has no room in it for a single patch of green…? (88)

Connolly's lines end with a question mark on which hangs the fate of his whole enterprise and the purpose of his existence. His mission is to bring an Irish socialist party into the international socialist movement. The emblem of the flag captures the ambivalence of the issue (the red symbolizing the international socialist movement and the green symbolizing

Ireland). On the one hand there is bitterness at the failure of the international movement, in particular the English Labour movement, to make intellectual space for the contextual specifics of Irish socialism, while on the other, if the purpose of the peoples' flag is to unite the workers of all nations, why should that purpose be compromised with a little patch of green? Ironically, it is Connolly himself, and behind him the playwrights, who insist upon the ultimate incompatibility of nationalism with socialism. No quantity of stirring speeches and powerful emblems can mask this contradiction.

The relationship of action to character lies at the heart of the problem of the audience reception of these plays. It is evident from the Preface included before each part of the cycle, that the playwrights have strict views on the playing style to be adopted throughout:

> Essentially the plays need *speed* – and close attention to *rhythm.* Each scene or episode should be understood as a self-contained combination of voice, movement, colour and music, with a precise dramatic momentum of its own, which makes its point as sharply as possible, to be replaced by the next grouping. We would emphasise finally that the play will work only if the actors are more concerned with understanding the political arguments and implications of the story than with "creating character" in the normal theatrical sense. (*Non-Stop* vii)

This reads like a director's note to an Eisenstein film; an ambitious demand for a largely amateur set of performers working in a space not designed for performance. But aside from the scope of the ambition there is some confusion around the function of the audience in the theatrical event. If the performers are the ones who have their political consciousness raised through the process of rehearsing and performing, the instructions make sense and are achievable, somewhat in the manner of Brecht's *Lehrstücke* where he wrote of abolishing the bourgeois distinction between actor and audience. Everyone involved takes a role and there is, therefore, "in the normal theatrical sense" no audience. However, the audience who attended the cycle in Dublin's Liberty Hall were there as a "theatrical" audience, whether "normal" or not and as such, were entitled to be entertained by the plays. By entertained I mean having a sufficient engagement with the characters represented to care both intellectually and emotionally about what happens to them. D'Arcy and Arden, in their anxiety to avoid the creation of character, have not appreciated that character is the empathetic hook which draws the audience into and implicates them in the action. From this very implication political understanding can flow but without it the audience is left

watching shadow puppets darting across a cyclorama. The same problem is revisited in the 7:84 touring performance of *Vandaleur's Folly*. In the Preface to the printed text the playwrights write disparagingly of the acting company:

> We discovered that socialist-minded actors of quality committed to placing their art at the service of their politics were more or less unavailable: they had all done their stint for 7:84 in the past and were physically unable to take any more … So we ended up using "ordinary" actors with no particular political bent, who were not opposed to "socialism," and who were prepared to give it a try, after all, it was a job. (x)

This somewhat jaundiced view of the company who fell a long way short of the fierce Marxist ideologue, D'Arcy is, not surprisingly, challenged in John McGrath's own account of the production difficulties surrounding this play:

> John wrote a draft of the play while Margaretta was in New York, and we were very excited about it. Margaretta came back and she went off with John to re-write what he had done. It was very long, but it was very exciting. It was called a melodrama and was written in this kind of rollicking doggerel that went along at a cracking pace. During the writing process the company was being put together. All were interviewed by 7:84, John and Margaretta … When I saw it all the natural spontaneous contribution of the actors was being taken out and replaced by a kind of staccato, fast, rather flat delivery – nobody seemed to be able to pause to develop a moment or a character. As the awareness came that it was still very long, lots of cuts happened and I think a lot of cuts came at the wrong places and some of the most effective moments were cut in almost a masochistic way. It had the effect of hitting the audience repeatedly, like a boxer hitting a punch bag. The audiences got rapidly tired, though intrigued, then more tired and slightly bored, then more tired and a bit angry. By the end, most audiences were left indifferent, a great pity because I thought the play was good and the company were very talented. (107-08)

McGrath's analysis echoes the experience of *The Non-Stop Connolly Show* in that the actors are once more required to sacrifice performance skills to political education and,

ironically, the directorial functions undermined the innate possibilities of the scripts. It is once more a failure to bring education and entertainment into a dialectical relationship for either performers or audiences.

From the outset of Part 1 of *The Non-Stop Connolly Show* it is clear that we, as audience or reader (and there is, perhaps, insufficient distinction between the two categories here), are being presented with a play of ideas, rather than people. The running motif of the battle between Nationalism and Socialism is starkly laid out by two mouthpieces: the Nationalist Agitator and the Socialist Agitator who has the last word because he presents the thesis of the playwrights:

> There are riots all over England because work is not to be had: there are riots all over Ireland because land is not to be had. Yet those over there who cannot find work are supposed to be the national enemy of those here who can't find land: and your Parnells and your Gladstones with their talk of Home Rule are in fact doing nothing other than confirming that supposition! They are dividing you, and they are ruling you: if you won't lie down to London, then you must lie down to the power of Dublin, and either way there's troops of soldier-boys in their red jackets to see you do. But if all of you were to determine to destroy capitalism once for all – take away its enormous power and the power of its lackey parliaments – then with what could we replace it? I'll give you the word – *socialism*! (24-5)

Here is the conceptual framework for the whole cycle, delivered in the manner of a political meeting; in other words without theatricality and yet as part of a theatre performance. My complaint is not that the discussion was irrelevant, staged as it was during the Irish Troubles, but that it is a thesis perhaps still fiercely relevant today which now only remains to be illustrated through twenty-six hours of performance. There is great dramatic potential for the contradictions between Nationalism and Socialism to be played out through the character of Connolly but because of the way he has been conceived by his authors, he is not allowed to deviate from certainty into complexity:

> Milligan: Socialism in the north can never be republican.
>
> Connolly: Republicanism in the south can never be socialist. I've heard both notions *ad nauseam.* I don't believe either. (33)

The struggle with Nationalism is one which the audience is invited to undertake as part of its political education, rather than one which is allowed to play out through characterisation. The only appearance, for example, of Arthur Griffith, the Sinn Fein leader, comes in the form of a direct address to the audience in Part 5:

> If ever Arthur Griffith becomes the ruler of this state
> The like of Larkin will find his liberty
> Within the hinge of a prison gate! (71)

While this may be read from our own times as a prescient insight into the reactionary attitudes and establishment posturing of contemporary Sinn Fein, within the cycle there is little dramatic pay-off because Griffith is never brought into the action. Therefore the possibilities and dangers of Nationalism in relation to the development of the Irish state are largely side-stepped in favour of the much easier debate between Republicanism and Socialism whose outcome is always recognised by the playwrights and is, therefore, devoid of tension:

> Socialism in Ireland without Republicanism and Republicanism without Socialism are mirror-image concepts like two lamp-posts in a bog – bright but quite useless. (120)

Although the abduction of Connolly by the Nationalists in order to force a meeting with Pearse and his subsequent night of deliberation about whether to join forces with the nationalists might indicate a moment of interior debate about the nature of Irish Socialism, it is clear that Connolly's concerns are only tactical; only about whether the moment is right. Any notion that Connolly may have betrayed either his principles or the Citizen Army is counteracted by the warning he issues to the Army on the eve of the Rising:

> Citizen Army – come here a moment. Whatever happens tomorrow, hold onto your rifles. Those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached: remember *we* are out for economic as well as political liberty. (92)

Any lasting claim for a place in the radical pantheon of Irish theatre for *The Non-Stop Connolly Show* does not rest upon its depictions of the machinations between the factions which came together for the 1916 Rising, nor even upon the formal choices made by the

playwrights, but upon its presentation of the battle between working people and capitalists. Capitalism's capacity to remake itself in order to maintain social inequality by securing the allegiance of the middle-classes is laid bare by Grabitall's monologue at the start of Part 3:

> Lord Salisbury's Tory Government has a plan –
> Lest separatism, independent aspirations, once again
> Rear up their strength and break the empire's bond,
> Coercion now is done with: we are *kind*…
> More liberal than the Liberals – we will grant
> Reform of land, local elections; oh we will freely plant
> Hope of commercial growth to stultify
> All racial disaffection amongst the middle class. (1)

"Hope of commercial growth" was the fuel that powered the global sweep of late twentieth-century neoliberalism, and its manifestation in Ireland as the Celtic Tiger economy. Did that period strengthen the position of Grabitall or provide the economic liberty for which Connolly fought until the end? Contemporary overtones increase in volume in Part 5 when the abstract manifestations of Grabitall give way to the concrete embodiment of Murphy (William Martin Murphy was the major employer and opponent to unionism during the Dublin Lockout) who bears an uncanny resemblance to present Irish multimillionaire businessman, Tony O'Reilly, with his control of media and tourism born of financial manipulation:

> By knowing when to sell and when to buy
> When to combine and when to destroy
> I have enlarged myself into my present size.
> Down any street in Dublin shoot your eyes:
> Much, if not all, of what you see
> In that august perspective belongs to me.
> There is a tram, by electric current fed,
> The hand of Murphy drew it from its shed:
> There is a ragged man sells papers on the curb,
> Printed by Murphy, filled with Murphy's word:
> There is a huge hotel where men and women,
> White-tied, bare-shouldered, champagne and diamonds gleaming,

> In wine and waltz defeat their immortal souls:
> Murphy supplies the bed, the liquor, and the lascivious bath … (46)

Here, writ large, is the Edwardian equivalent of the "loads of money" culture we associate with the days of greed and excess so recently passed into history. Murphy epitomises the erosion of social justice into a world of have-everythings and have-nothings. Grabitall's skills are not confined to financial dealings. He understands more sharply than the politicians where the danger to capital lies and thereby prepares the battle-ground of neoliberalism where the politicians are relegated to ventriloquist's dummies in the hands of the capitalists. In terms of a legacy of radicalism, the question is: does Connolly's story, in the hands of D'Arcy and Arden, offer insights into how an Irish working class might be forged which would be capable of resisting the depredations of neoliberalism? The ability to control the means of communication is identified as a core element in the strategy of building class-consciousness:

> But third, and perhaps most perilous because of the place whence it issues –Liberty Hall, the home of Larkin, the home of syndicalism, the home of red revolution and destruction of all that is held most dear to the soul of the Catholic Gael – the third paper, Prime Minister, is James Connolly's *Irish Worker* – the one rag responsible for every strike, every picket, every union agitation from the Dingle Peninsula to the top of Loch Foyle. (61)

In the debate with Pearse which precedes the 1916 Rising, Connolly makes clear to him that his objection to the Nationalists' notion of one nation is that it retains the space in which capitalists can continue to work their exploitation at the expense of the rest:

> Your word "nation" includes all, excludes none. "We can support ourselves," said Wolfe Tone, "by the aid of that numerous and respectable class of the community, the men of no property." "Merchants," said Wolfe Tone, "make bad revolutionaries." Company directors, says James Connolly, turn government into mass murder, religion into a confidence trick, and nationality into an increased margin of profit upon their books. Don't you see, if you once permit their way of life its very existence, it will continue to amass power, and there will be nothing for anyone else except the servitude of that power? (75)

When Connolly knows that the game is up and that the Rising is destined to fail, he determines upon an emblematic act of defiance: to fly the flag of socialism (the Plough and the Stars) from the bastion of capitalism:

> Take the Plough and the Stars, make a dash across the street: and hang it on Murphy's hotel. (100)

The antagonist in all these plays is the figure who represents capital: Grabitall/ Murphy here and the two incarnations of Baker-Fortescue in *Vandaleur's Folly* and *The Little Gray Home in the West*. The ancient antagonisms of sectarianism merely mask the real operations of power:

> Baker-Fortescue: King Billy and the Pope now both inhabit
> The yielding mattress of your Wall Street whore –
> (*The Little Gray* 25)

The days of the absentee English landlord may be numbered but his power is onlyusurped by "the filthy modern tide" of Irish business in the character of Tim Hagan, inheritor of the Tiger economy and Irish nationalist politics:

> Padraic: Remember his business interests
> By politics are reinforced –
> He's a climbing lad and a grasping lad
> And a power in the Fianna Fail! (*The Little Gray* 34)

This is the consequence of socialism's defeat at the hands of nationalism as predicted by Connolly. Politics is now, and will remain, the hand-maiden of neoliberal economics with the politicians merely acting as the agents of business. There is, in effect, no political opposition to free market capitalism.

The full significance of Connolly in the minds of D'Arcy and Arden is revealed in the epitaph which they give him to speak over himself immediately after he is shot by a British army firing squad sitting down (he was badly injured and could not stand):

> We were the first to roll away the stone
> From the leprous wall of the whitened tomb

> We were the first to show the dark deep hole within
> Could be thrown open to the living sun.
> We were the first to feel their loaded gun
> That would prevent us doing it any more –
> Or so they hoped. We were the first. We shall not be the last.
> This was not history. It has not passed. (*Non-Stop* 106)

The timing of the 1916 Easter Rising and the overt reference to Christ's tomb are employed to suggest that Connolly's life is the spark for a continual resurrection of insurrection until such time as the socialist cause has triumphed. In one sense the playwrights are justified in this assertion: Connolly has not been forgotten and there are the statues and the history books to prove it. But his life and struggle were not immune from history and some elements have passed. The process of rewriting Connolly in ways that suit a particular Irish story began even in the moment of his martyrdom, ably assisted by the pen of W.B. Yeats:

> I write it out in a verse –
> MacDonagh and MacBride
> And Connolly and Pearse
> Now and in time to be,
> Wherever green is worn,
> Are changed, changed utterly:
> A terrible beauty is born. ("Easter 1916" 205)

And thus is Connolly swept up into the pantheon of the Nationalists and wrapped in a green shroud. His earlier question about whether the red flag might have room for a patch of green has been turned on its head and the lingering question for a radical legacy is now whether the green flag has any room for a patch of red. The birth of this "terrible beauty" also marks the "lingering dissolution" of Connolly's vision through the Irish Civil War and on to contemporary Ireland. As Samuel Beckett might have expressed it in *Waiting For Godot*:

> Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. (90-1)

I began by considering Connolly and his creators as outsiders, at once both radical and rootless, and therefore vulnerable to leaving no lasting impression upon the political landscape. These reflections have led me to wonder whether the theatre of D'Arcy and Arden conforms closely to the demands of radicalism in both these senses. Perhaps by definition the radical is always entering from beyond the pale, trailing ideas easily labelled foreign and dangerous. Perhaps, too, it is always the fate of the radical to seek (in vain?) for a place to put down roots and to leave her signpost in a place from where the generations to come can plot their course. D'Arcy's and Arden's contribution to theatre in Ireland is, therefore, marked through and through with the ambivalent badge of radicalism. Like their socialist hero whom they honour in their major work, they search for a radical discourse which is embedded in both the soil of the land and in the lives of those who work in its fields and factories, welding from the specifics of the Irish colonial experience a socialism capable of resisting colonial capitalism and its current neoliberal manifestations:

> it seems probable that Connolly, who in his own life traversed more than once the circuits of the North Atlantic and engaged in the myriad forms of labour that the migratory Irish took on, had reason to assert the radical potential of an Irish working class forged in the crucible of colonial capitalist dislocation. Far from fetishizing some originary Gaelic tradition, fixed in the irrecoverable past, his work begins the crucial task of mapping the interface between colonial modernity and the counter- modern formations that emerge in relation to it. (Lloyd, et. al. 126)

Just as the whirligig of time may be bringing around a reconsideration of the radical potential of Connolly's life and work as a "counter-modern" formation, so too it may be that, in time to come, the counter-modern tide will sweep the Irish theatre of Arden and D'Arcy to prominence as an example of the radical in the discourses of Irish culture.

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FORUM KRITIKA: PHILIPPINE THEATER AND MARTIAL LAW (PART 1)

Introduction
PHILIPPINE THEATER IN CONFINEMENT: BREAKING OUT OF MARTIAL LAW

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ABOUT THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Parallel with the colloquium "Radical Theatre and Ireland" held at Liverpool Hope University is a Kritika Kultura Lecture Series "Teatro Testimonio: Poetics and Politics of Performance in the Philippines Under Martial Law" held at the Ateneo de Manila University. As with the papers from the colloquium in Ireland, the lectures in "Teatro Testimonio" will be published in installments in consecutive issues of *Kritika Kultura*. This issue features an introduction by Bienvenido Lumbera, and three paper testimonials from the "cultural workers" of the period.

Abstract
The declaration of Martial Law during the Marcos administration brought about a period of censorship and a complete rejection of any form of protest against the established figures of authority. Activists then looked for other forms of communication through which they could channel their dissent and rally more people towards the cause. It was during this period that Philippine theater was taken out of the stage and into the streets, when the "art" of the "elite" was brought down to the masses. These efforts also shifted the language of Philippine theater from American English to Pilipino, marking the beginning of a new stage of development of drama in the country.

About the author
Bienvenido Lumbera is among the most multi-awarded Filipinos today. He was Ateneo's Tanglaw ng Lahi Awardee in 2000, recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1993, and winner of literary awards like the Centennial Literary Awards in Playwriting in 1998. He is among the country's most respected literary and cultural critics who has published books of poems, plays, librettos, essays, translation, criticism and literary history, and continues to mentor the country's best writers, teachers, and scholars. Detained during the Marcos dictatorship, he continues to be active in the movement for nationalism, freedom, and democracy. He was Irwin Chair Professor of Literature in the English Department of the Ateneo de Manila, and now Professor Emeritus of the University of the Philippines. He is a national council member of the multi-sectoral Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and chair or the Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) and an active member of other groups clamoring for nationalism and social justice. He is the National Artist for Literature in 2006 for outstanding contributions to the development of Philippine arts and culture.

Keywords
history of Philippine Theater, protest drama, student activism

It was student activists pursuing organizational work in the late 1960s who, without meaning to, found a language for theater people that would link them to a mass audience. In the previous decade, a common complaint by aficionados of theater was that Filipinos

did not know how to appreciate plays, perhaps because movies had spoiled their capacity to enjoy a live performance by actors onstage. Activists had made use of short skits about matters that concern ordinary people to win audiences to their cause, and found Tagalog an effective medium in drawing audiences and getting them to pay attention. Those who directed and acted in these skits called themselves "cultural workers" instead of "artists" and the distinction was significant. As "workers," they identified themselves with the "common people" in the audience, instead of raising themselves as belonging to an elite specializing in "art." The performance areas for the activist presentation were easily accessible—streets, plazas, factory sites, open fields—convenient sites where people can be gathered at any time with no need for special lighting or sound equipment. In brief, theater had returned to its primitive site and found itself communing with the people.

While mainstream theater, i.e., theater in school auditoriums and in the standard venues for play production, was in the process of solving its problem with a sparse audience, Pilipino was gaining acceptance as a language for the stage. Where before, the national language was thought *baduy,* it was being buoyed up by the tide of nationalism in universities and colleges that had been "infected" by the nationalist ideas in Teodoro A. Agoncillo's *A History of the Filipino People* and by Claro M. Recto's growing disdain, as expressed in his speeches, for the Magsaysay administration's subservience to the US Embassy.

Among theater people, the thrust was towards a definition of a sense of "national identity." Among the intelligentsia, there appeared a marked interest in antiques and artifacts recovered in excavation sites, and newsmen were making the "Philippine Past" a fashionable topic. Historical data related to the Reform movement, the Revolution of 1896, and Filipino-American war drew scholars and researchers, and even newspaper columnists and reporters, to archival collections.

In the Ateneo de Manila High School, young playwrights under the tutelage of Onofre Pagsanghan were writing and producing Tagalog plays as classroom exercises. Rolando Tinio abandoned his experimental theater and turned to translating standard American plays, like *The Glass Menagerie* and *Death of a Salesman*, even venturing into a revival of turn of the century *zarzuela* with a production of *Paglipas ng Dilim.* By the close of the decade, Tagalog had established itself as the language of Philippine Theater.

The decade of the 60s, by its political and cultural thrust, may be cited as a turning point in the history of Philippine Theater. The combined action of the activist political theater and the cultural direction of mainstream theater, it defined the path of development of the technology and thematic concerns of the staging and the writing of future plays.

The breakdown of proscenium staging, the cultural past and contemporaneous political experience as source of subject matter, the exploration through translation of foreign culture, and above all, the emergence of the people's language as medium—these are the legacy of the 1960s.

Proclamation 1081 sought to put an end to the political and cultural ferment of the 1960s. It put the movement for change under confinement. Letter of Instruction 1 ordered Marcos's Secretary of National Defense "to take over and control and cause the taking over and control of all such newspapers, magazines, radio and television facilities and all other media of communication wherever they are…." Such total control of media meant total control of the public mind.

Theater as a medium of communication is performative, with live actors acting out what the play wants to say to the audience. A performance puts the actors under risk of arrest when the content of the play is deemed by Martial Law authorities as inappropriate. In the early years of the American occupation, performances of anti-American plays had been stopped and the cast and the writer arrested and fined by the courts. Fear of the military under Marcos made drama groups very cautious, and the first two years of Martial Law saw them putting on safe Broadway musicals, entertaining *zarzuelas* and rock operas, and harmless comedies.

The times, however, were much troubled by military abuses perpetrated on suspected subversives and innocent civilians in urban poor communities. The military and the police have routinely raided communities where criminal elements were supposed to congregate. The Martial Law regime wanted to pride itself as having brought about peace and order in the country and any disturbance of the law would mar that image. It was supposed to have created a New Society, and the suppression of lawlessness was meant to justify the declaration of Martial Law. The prohibition of rallies and demonstrations then widespread in pre-Martial Law days was supposed to have created an atmosphere conducive to the entry of foreign investments in the cities and the countryside.

While open expression of dissent had been suppressed, the national democratic underground and other oppositionists were active in organizing among workers, students, and the religious. Cultural workers in pre-Martial Law youth organizations continued to secretly stir up discontent in communities. Then, in 1976, the labor union in La Tondena defied the no-strike ban and the workers received support from activists among the youth and the religious. Although there was no media coverage from the Marcos-controlled publications, the strike was well-covered by the underground press and by word of mouth.

The strike was a signal that dissent could break through the repressive measures of the dictatorship.

Protest theater under Martial Law had to camouflage its political intent in order to reach its public. Drama groups found the dictatorship's pretense at "development concerns" a convenient cover for their effort to expose the social realities that belied the dictatorship's claims for the gains of Proclamation 1081. When the batilyos of the Navotas fishport protested loss of jobs through mechanization of the delivery of the catch from the fishing boats to the shore, the 1976 play *Buhay Batilyo: Hindi Kami Susuko* was passed off as in line with the New Society's concern for the poor. Similarly, the resistance of the Ifugaos to the building of the Chico River Dam in Amelia Lapena Bonifacio's *Ang Bundok* (1976) was made to dovetail with the developmental goals of the New Society for the indigenous Filipinos.

The Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) took a bolder stance when it produced in 1977 Lito Tiongson's *Walang Kamatayang Buhay ni Juan de la Cruz Alyas*…. (Fernandez 111). Ostensibly, the play was supposed to depict a historical phenomenon when the American colonial administration developed the concept of zona whereby a community in the countryside is transplanted to an urban setting in order to deprive revolutionaries shelter among the rural folk. In Tiongson's play, the zona of the Americans was actually an allusion to the Martial Law military's zona by which it hoped to contain the activities of the New People's Army (NPA) in the countryside. The *alyas* in the title was a reminder to the audience of the underground elements who used pseudonyms as they mingled with the civilian populace. Furthermore, *walang kamatayang buhay* implies that no matter military suppression, the underground movement will continue to struggle against the New Society.

The University of the Philippines (UP) Repertory was even more blatant in its defiance of the Martial Law regime. Bonifacio Ilagan's *Pagsambang Bayan*[1] (1977) sought the cover of religion in exposing the repressive rule of the Marcos dictatorship, but it was quite openly provocative in voicing its exhortations to resistance (Fernandez 134-36).Various sectors (workers, peasants, students, indigenous peoples, urban poor, etc.) take turns in urging the priest (who serves as the central figure in the religious ritual that frames the narrative) to take the side of the suffering populace. The text of the play is derived largely from the bible, so that the priest had to yield to the insistence of his congregation for compliance to the teachings of the church which he represented. At the close the play, the priest takes off his religious garb and he is identified as a peasant prepared to take up the

struggle of the oppressed.

In 1983, the year Ninoy Aquino was assassinated, naked hatred for the dictator was evident in the street play *Ilokula, ang Ilokanong Dracula*[2] which did away with any protective cover and showed Marcos and Imelda along with their daughter Imee as a monstrous threesome. Marcos, who in actuality was suffering from lupus, underwent an operation in the play, and from his innards were retrieved body parts of the victims of Martial Law (Fernandez 133-34).

Perhaps the best of the protest plays of Martial Law, *Buwan at Baril in b# minor*[3] (1985) by Chris Millado consisted of four episodes that summed up the impact of the dictatorship on the lives of the Filipino people (Fernandez 200-15). The first episode is about two brothers, one a peasant from the province and the other a worker who is a city resident, who meet at a mass action in Manila, establishing the two classes which compose the majority of the Filipinos fighting Martial Law. In the second episode, we are told about a young woman at an evacuation center who turns out to have been gang raped by soldiers who raided a remote village in search of NPA rebels. The third episode provides a comic touch to the play, depicting a middle-class matron dressing up to join a rally talking to her maid, and in the process making the audience aware of the politicization of the social class quite active in the anti-dictatorship movement. In the same episode, another woman is shown—the wife of an NPA guerrilla fighter who had been killed in an encounter, on her way to claim her husband's body in the military camp. In the final episode, a student activist matches wits with a police officer who had been in his younger days also a student activist. The student had been picked up in the street for violation of the curfew set by the Martial Law government. The student is able to convince the policeman to let him off as a harmless sluggard. The officer shortly after finds out too late that he had set free a "notorious" student leader.

Theater under Martial Law was placed in confinement as per Proclamation 1081. Cultural workers with links in the underground movement, however, found ways of circumventing the prohibitions of the New Society, sometimes breaking out of their confinement by riding on the programs ran by the government or by taking the risk of outright defiance of the authorities. Making theater in perilous times was a challenge that brought forth the creativity of the cultural groups and enriched the practice of the art of make-believe.

NOTES

[1] A printed version of the play is in *Bangon: Antolohiya ng mga Dulang Mapanghimagsik,* 195-236.

[2] A printed version of the play is in *Bangon,* 293-300.

[3] A printed version of the play is in *Bangon,* 311-60.

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FORUM KRITIKA: PHILIPPINE THEATER AND MARTIAL LAW

PLAYWRITING IN THE TIME OF EXIGENCY

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Abstract
This is a personal testimony of a dramatist trained and honed in the craft of drama and stage during the Marcos dictatorship. Unable to finish college, and without a formal training in drama or playwriting, my main reason for writing and struggling in the field of theater was to be able to address the need for change in the Filipino audience's social consciousness. It will deal with the following topics: what my training ground had been like under the informal guidance of playwrights who had just a little bit more training than I had in the craft, the different dramatic styles used, dramaturgical devices that my colleagues and I developed in order to avoid the clutches of censorship and repression of the Marcos regime, what my dramatist collaborators and contemporaries and I drew from other political plays from other countries (like the agit-prop forms, dramatic theories of Brecht), as well as from the earlier political dramas in the country (seditious plays of the American colonial era), and the radical tradition that had taken shape in the Philippines prior to Martial Law, and how we tried to help in building the foundation of playwriting in the country, and developing the forms that were produced for lightning productions as well as the most effective dramatic strategies in the theatrical exposition of issues in order to persuade and enlighten the audience.

About the author
Rodolfo "Rody" Vera is a playwright, actor, and singer who first made a mark as Artistic Director of PATATAG singing group and as musical director to some of its album recordings. He went on to become Artistic Director of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) from 1995 to 1997, and has appeared in a few musicals and films, notably *Sister Stella L*. and the grand musical *1896*. His plays include: *Kung Paano Ko Pinatay si Diana Ross* (2nd Prize, Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards), *Ang Paglalakbay ni Radiya Mangandiri: Isang Pilipinong Ramayana, Balangiga* (2nd Prize, Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards), *Luna: Isang Romansang Aswang* (First Prize, Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards), and *Dreamweavers* (Second Prize, Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards). His latest, *Ismail at Isabel* (First Prize, Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards), is currently bring toured by PETA. *Senyor Paciano,* his first film script, won Second Prize in the National Centennial Literary Awards in 1998. He has co-written films for film director Ellen Marfil: *Mga Pusang Gala* and *Boses*.

I was asked to write a paper about playwriting during Martial Law. And since I'm not an academician, I've decided to write my story instead. So this paper is more of a personal account of what I went through as a young impressionable, idealistic playwright during the years of the dictatorship, in my case, specifically around 1977 through 1985. I will also talk about my friends, my colleagues, my mentors during this time.

When President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, I was barely 12. But while I was just a boy then, my sentiments against the prevailing regime were quite

clear to me. My two elder sisters were social action activists and I remember one time, I even saw my mother picketing the Malacanang Palace in 1971, on my way back home. I remember that night when Martial law was declared. I had broken something in the house and I got punished for it. The next day, the whole family was in a huddle, looking very worried; my little crime forgotten because a much bigger one, national in scale, has just been committed. I remember the fear in the eyes of my sisters. Fear for their own safety and the safety of their friends who were active in mass actions, etc.

I instinctively knew what censorship meant, upon seeing the fear in my sisters' eyes. Curfew hours were imposed. And since we lived very near the Malacanang Palace, our household was one of the first subjected to zoning. I remember one early morning call by the military. They herded all the adult males in each household, including my father, for what they called a "routine" security check. In one public school. My father. Along with all the male adult neighbors were lined up for inspection and interrogation. It seemed that the first few years of Martial Law attempted to be as systematic as the fascist dictatorship of Hitler.

But I guess, after a few years, when the dictator felt that he had virtually crushed any opposition, he had to project an image of progress and international recognition, instead of the fear and the tyranny.

By the time I was in high school, the general public seemed used to the routine of propaganda about the New Society's achievements. Interestingly, one of my sisters began to warm up to this as well. But I eventually took the other route, the route they would have continued to take about five years back, before Martial Law was declared.

Though my first exposure to theater was way back when I was in Grade 2—appearing in a Fr. Reuter production (*Francis of Navarre*, 1967)—I must say my first real encounter with the theater was when I was freshman in high school. The first full-length production I have seen at the University of the Philippines (UP) Abelardo Hall. It was a UP Samaskom production written and directed by Reijoo de la Cruz entitled *Programang Putol Putol* (1975). I was so taken by the play, I watched it a second time. That play stuck in my mind for quite a long time. I thought all plays were like that—structured in an "absurdist" style, cloaked in so many symbols and deceptive devices. My introduction to theater, therefore was through this route, which led me to read up on so-called absurdist dramatists like Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett, and I guess, Edward Albee—all of whom I read in my second year in high school. These plays I read and kept only to myself.

It was before my third year in high school that I enrolled in a summer workshop for teenagers in the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) (1976). In that workshop, I learned the value of theater not only as a medium of self-expression, but as a medium of advocacy. Of course at that time, we didn't call it advocacy. We called it, socially relevant.

It was in this workshop that I began to value the importance of social investigation, conducting exposure trips, interviewing people—meaning basic masses, realizing that the world around me is not a conglomeration of things that make up a meaningless, "absurd" world; that society is suffering not only from colonial mentality but, from extreme poverty, exploitation by greedy capitalists and feudal landlords, a terribly corrupt justice system, a deceptive and highly commercialized educational system, etc. etc.—problems which are far worse today. In short, this workshop was the start of my conscientization. Not a very popular word these days for conscientization meant a developing faith in an ideology for change.

That is why the very first play I wrote when I was in my junior year in high school had that mix of nihilist satire which I probably picked up from Reijoo's surreal productions and the unguided cry of protest against the educational system in my school. The title of this one act play, *Rises* (1977), seemed so controversial in the eyes of the school administrator that they decided to limit the showing to a select batch of students. It was my first brush with censorship, a qualified one.

My theater education was mainly, almost solely, provided by PETA. I became a member of the company, and eventually, too, became a member of the underground group of artists within the company. We all knew each other during short-term trainings conducted by PETA as a "legal" organization. We have become friends. But in the underground group. We weren't only friends. We were comrades. We had a single unifying purpose: to use art to advance the revolution that is silently gathering adherents among the different sectors of society. We called ourselves the "cultural" sector. In this underground group, we would conduct our own workshops—specifically for what we call revolutionary art and theater. It was not much different from what we were learning during the short-term workshop courses we've been taking in the "legal" setting. The main difference being that in the "underground" venue, we were exploring the craft in the context of revolution and armed struggle. Sometimes these workshops would, for some reason merge and lose their distinction. Probably because the members and the organizers of a particular workshop seemed to be all bona fide members of the mass-movement during that time, so it would sound ridiculous if we were keeping secret what everyone in the workshop

already knew: that we were all certified members of the National Democratic Front, at least. These workshops would then assume a category called "semi-legal." It became easier to deepen political discussions, which included more radical solutions, such as armed struggle and revolution.

The Palihang Aurelio Tolentino was one such workshop. It was a two week playwriting workshop course that, I believe, had three batches. I was in the third batch (1979). This was organized by theater artists from different groups, in UP and PETA. Combined with the PETA style of improvisatory learning and lectures by several professors from the universities, and interviews with key resource persons from basic organized mass sectors such as urban poor, workers and farmers, the Palihang Aurelio Tolentino aimed to develop playwrights for political/activist theater in the Philippines. My batchmates came from various "cultural" groups in Manila, Mindanao, and the Visayas. The main thrust of the workshop was to examine Philippine theater, its history and the various forms it has developed. We were supposed to know more about the various Philippine theater forms: Realismo, Ekspresyonismo, Traditional theater forms, etc. We hoped to discover various ways of contemporizing traditional forms, for instance the *sarsuwela* and the *panunuluyan* and how, by using these forms could the pressing political and economic issues be made clearer to the audience, along with the prescribed solutions to these problems, i.e., armed struggle, etc.

After this workshop, I was then tapped to write plays not only for PETA but for various events and organizations. I wrote scripts for cultural nights commemorating heroes of the mass movement, short skits that will be performed by "guerilla" actors in mass-actions such as rallies and/or picket lines, indignation rallies, etc. Other playwrights wrote scripts and skits that depicted the lives of contemporary heroes such as Dr. Bobby de la Paz, Eman Lacaba, etc. These small plays, and they are a lot, though largely undocumented, were in line with the agit-prop objectives of the organized movement. There was a pressing need to popularize not only the various theater forms, but the political issues in a way that ordinary people can understand. Songs and plays were the most flexible and easily disseminated.

But apart from these blitzkrieg productions in the streets and indoor mass action events, I and other playwrights wrote plays for the so called "legitimate stage"—which, again, to distinguish from the "illegitimate" productions I just mentioned. The "legitimate" plays were performed in theaters, or proper venues which the "general" public usually attend. Most of these plays were performed by theater companies in universities. The leading company in the university then, as far as I could remember, was the UP Repertory

company, headed by Behn Cervantes. Plays written by Bonifacio Ilagan and Ed Maranan were performed by this active group of cultural workers.

I have not seen all of these plays by the UP Rep because we were also quite busy writing plays for PETA, which, at this time had established a writer's pool. This pool's main objective was to churn out plays for PETA's season. The main resident playwrights of the company were Alan Glinoga, Al Santos, myself, Malou Jacob, and a few others. Other playwrights such as Reuel Aguila and Rene Villanueva were "freelancing." They were members of the writer's group GAT or Galian sa Arte at Tula back then. But Rene wrote more plays than he wrote poems. And his plays were performed by various companies such as: Gantimpala Theater at the CCP, Dulaang UP, PETA, and a few others.

Rene became my mentor when I started writing plays for PETA's teen theater component. We wrote this allegorical political satire set in an ant colony (*Kutsabahan sa Tirarang*, 1979). It was by far one of the worst theater productions in PETA. I remember Lino Brocka, who was then Executive Director of the company lambasting the play for its out-and-out propagandistic, entirely formulaic allegory of the Philippines under the dictatorship. Imagine American colonizer ants exploiting the worker ants, who eventually rose up and drove the greedy ant invaders away, along with their stooge dictator queen ant (traipsing like an Imelda Marcos.).

This was, in fact, a reflection of a brewing aesthetic crisis happening within the ranks of cultural workers all over the country. It seemed that a dogmatic rendition of the main objective of popularizing the revolution has stunted and stultified the numerous versions of plays performed by avid, young revolutionary cultural workers like … well, me.

Even in most of the showcases performed in PETA's workshops in organized communities, and most, appallingly, in the national cultural festivals held by PETA in 1983 and 1984 (dubbed the Makiisa Festival)—the same "formula" revealed itself.

The formula is this: The play usually starts with a community—it may be an indigenous community, an ant colony, a flock of birds, or maybe, even just a neighborhood. This community presents an ideal setting, albeit poor and backward, democracy reigns and the inhabitants live happy and simple lives. The second part of the dramatrugy introduces the intruder/invader, dangling carrots of promises of progress and wealth. The inhabitants are blinded by greed. The third part ensues—where the people suffer the consequences of this change: poverty and exploitation are enforced. When the inhabitants begin to complain, a dictator is installed. And because of this tyranny, the people begin to organize and unite to fight against this evil and drive both the installed dictator and foreign invader away.

There were of course many variations of this plot line. Some of them may have been successful I must admit, because of the sheer passion that went with the performance of the plays. However, the enthusiasm among organized mass audiences was quite encouraging. And yet, when the mass movement began to decline towards the latter part of the eighties, the enthusiasm for such productions also began to wane.

Nevertheless, brilliant plays have been staged and produced. Plays written by the likes of Al Santos, Malou Jacob, Reuel Aguila, and Rene Villanueva have reflected ingeniously the intensity of the times. Reuel Aguila's *In Dis Korner* (1978), for example, was a detailed anatomy of corruption in the boxing world. In many instances, the play itself mirrors the same corrupt system that pervades other sectors of power, namely the government. He has also written for PETA a play entitled *Mapait sa Bao* (1980), derived from an earlier, more schematic story by Len Santos. It is a story of a family of coconut farmers whose painful disintegration signaled the beginning of globalization and further disenfranchisement of farmers. Malou Jacob's *Juan Tamban* (1979) is an indicting commentary of poverty and the nonchalance of the middle class's apolitical stance. Al Santos's major works have been mostly musicals and dance dramas. He has written a considerable number of songs on nuclear disarmament, dictatorship and the US military presence in the Philippines. *Nukleyar* (1982), a dance essay, if I should dare to label it, has been performed likewise in Kuala Lumpur in 1985.

Alan Glinoga, one of the stalwarts of PETA's Writer's Pool excelled magnificently in translating a most difficult play by Bertolt Brecht, *Galileo* (1981). PETA's continuous

Galileo, by Bertolt Brecht. Translated by Alan Glinoga. This PETA production is directed by Fritz Bennewitz. 1981

CB Garrucho as Lady Macbeth in PETA's production directed by Fritz Bennewitz. Translation by Rody Vera.

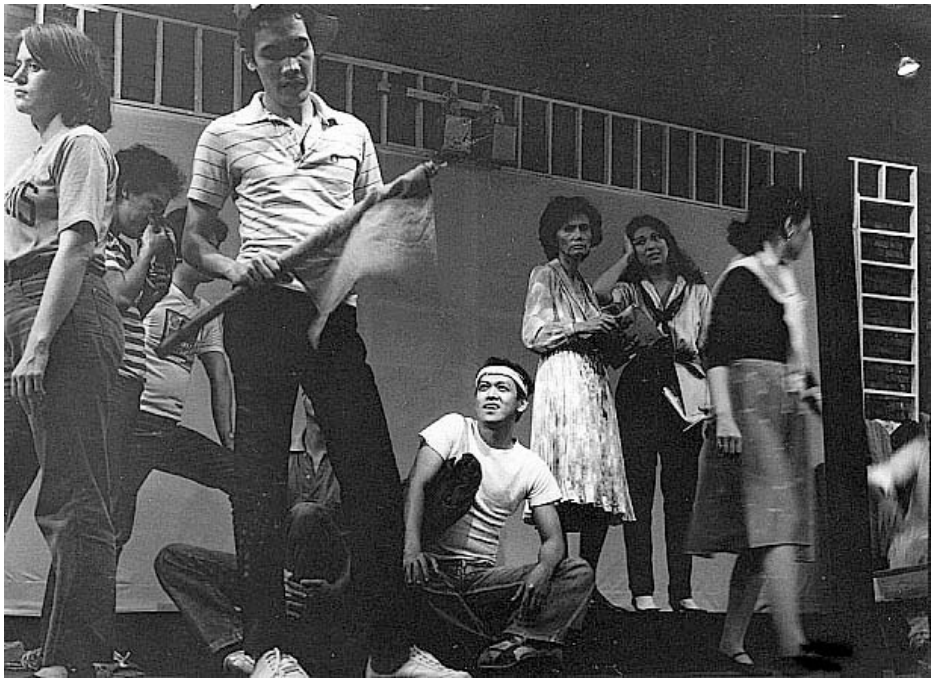
program of understanding, performing, and adapting Brecht's plays and dramatic theories became one of the company's distinguishing marks in Philippine Theater. I know of no other theater company that had performed and adapted Brecht more than PETA had done in its entire existence. This was further enhanced and deepened by PETA's long partnership with Weimar National Theater's Artistic Director Fritz Bennewitz. Fritz became my mentor in translating and adapting Shakespeare as well. And under him I had undergone a full course on play analysis and dramaturgy, which for me, became the most significant lesson in my career as a playwright.

Striving to understand fully well, each line and breath of a play, as Brecht himself would have wanted every writer to do, was what I learned from Bennewitz, who would spend hours under the scorching sun at the Rajah Sulayman theater going through Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1984) or Brecht's *Galileo* (1981) over and over again while conveniently getting a tan.

To summarize, Martial Law became my OJT in playwriting. Starting with a jocular brainstorming with Rene Villanueva on drafting political allegories, and then working with Al Santos on a contemporary, highly political version of the traditional *Panunuluyan* (1979)—like who could ever imagine, at that time, that a religious traditional play depicting the birth of Christ could transform into a passionate polemic on worker's rights, urban

Ang Panunuluyan ng Birheng Maria at San Jose sa Cubao, Ayala, Plaza Miranda atbp, sa Loob at Labas ng Metro Manila. Collectively written by Alan Glinoga, Al Santos, Rody Vera. This PETA production is directed by Joel Lamangan.

PILIPINAS Circa 1907. Written by Nicanor Tiongson. This PETA Production is directed by Soxie Topacio.



Rody Vera's *Isang Rihersal: Ang Pag-iensayo ng Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas ni Aurelio V. Tolentino.* 1983. Directed by Joel Lamangan.

poor struggle, and liberation theology? And finally working with Fritz Bennewitz, as he delineates in wondrous detail, a line by line explanation of *Macbeth* (1984) and the rest of Shakespeare's tragedies in Marxist terms—and how a Brechtian approach to Shakespeare could provide a much deeper and profoundly political understanding of theater.

Those were my formative years, the informal, intermittent courses on playwriting without the convenience of structured learning in the academe. For in between, we also knew we had to write with a high sense of urgency. The scripts we hurriedly typed, many times with no carbon copies, no matter how didactic, or formulaic, or highly propagandistic, were welcomed by the mass movement and the cultural sector because we thought what mattered most was how to rouse the audience, the masses to eventually take action against tyranny. These hurriedly written dramatic forms easily faded and became brittle and the power they had earlier eventually waned. But I would like to think that they have served their purpose at the time we wrote and performed them. Given the circumstances, I don't think any committed writer then would say, "No, I'd rather write a work that would endure for generations." Instead we told ourselves we needed to seize the moment and do what had to be done for that moment. In many ways, that stood to become the more heroic choice.

KRITIKA
KULTURA

FORUM KRITIKA: PHILIPPINE THEATER AND MARTIAL LAW

CROSSING BORDERS: PHILIPPINE ACTIVIST THEATER AND MARTIAL LAW

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Abstract
Positing theater as political, this paper intends to locate activist theater in the context of the Philippine cultural setting and political milieu on the eve of the Martial Law declaration in 1972. It shall illustrate why this kind of theater, frowned upon by some sectors in the artistic community, had taken unto itself the task of redefining the stage and employing it in a political mass movement that ultimately blazed a trail in Philippine theater and also challenged the socioeconomic structures of society. This paper integrates the theory and practice of the activist theater in the Philippines in the late 1960s until the initial years of Martial Law from the point of view of a direct participant.

About the author
Bonifacio P. Ilagan started out as a member of Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero's University of the Philippines (UP) Mobile Theater in 1968 and ended up founding Panday Sining, one of the three pioneer theater groups of the activist movement which President Marcos cited as a major security threat and reason for imposing Martial Law in the Philippines on September 21, 1971. After two stints as a political detainee in 1974 and 1994, Ilagan has stayed on in his unintentional theater career as playwright and director. He also writes for the cinema and directs video productions.

May I ask you to bear with me as I start this presentation with a homage to the fallen members of the Philippine activist theater, circa 1970s. There are too many of them to cite individually just now. But let me mention, in particular:

- Merardo Arce – architecture student, killed in a military checkpoint in Cebu on February 5, 1985; he was 31;
- Leo Alto – pre-medicine student, killed in an encounter with government soldiers on August 1, 1975, in Zamboanga del Sur; he was 23;
- Romulo Palabay – marketing student, abducted by paramilitary forces in Hungduan, Ifugao on December 14, 1974; three days later, he was found riddled with bullets and a shattered skull; he was 22;
- Armando Palabay, Romy's younger brother – economics student, killed in an encounter with the military in Sillapadan, Abra on November 27, 1974; he was 21; and

- Rizalina Ilagan, my younger sister – agriculture student, abducted in late July 1976 in Makati by intelligence operatives of a special licensed-to-kill group called Ground Team 205; she was 23; she remains missing to date (Ground Team 205 was a composite band of the 2nd Military Intelligence Group/ Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, 2nd Constabulary Security Unit, and 231st Constabulary Company directly commanded by Col. Alejandro Gallido who was even promoted to general during the term of President Cory Aquino).

All five belonged to Panday Sining, an activist theater group that I helped found and chaired in 1970. At that time, we were more conscious about our being activist, rather than being theater.

We didn't even realize that we were revisiting an unprecedented phenomenon during the turn of the last century. Professor Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio wrote a book about it, *The "Seditious" Tagalog Playwrights: Early American Occupation*. It told of how Juan Matapang Cruz, Aurelio Tolentino, Juan Abad, and other artists employed theater as a way of resisting US invasion at a time that the rifles of the Aguinaldo revolutionary army had already fallen silent, and the US was already conducting a war of "pacification" in these islands. This period in Philippine theater is also chronicled in the book *The Filipino Drama* by Arthur Stanley Riggs.

I don't remember encountering the word "activist" in these books. Cruz, Tolentino, Abad, and company were not described as such, but were instead variously called *insurrectos*, rebels, outlaws. "Activist" became popular as an aftermath of the First Quarter Storm of 1970. But I daresay that the theater artists of that bygone era were activists of the first order.

"Activism" is often used synonymously with protest or dissent. That could very well be the reason why activists are perceived to be belligerents. If you have wondered why not a few look at activists in an unpleasant light, shrugged them off as hostile characters, or simply shrugged them off—period, that could be the reason. But an activist, if we may need a generic definition, is one who consciously does things to bring about change. And the desire for change is at the root of activism.

In 1968, when I entered the University of the Philippines in Diliman, change was the battle cry of the resurgent activist movement. It was, however, written out and shouted out in a loaded, belligerent slogan: "Down with US imperialism, domestic feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism!" It meant changing the entire sociopolitical and economic system that had become the Philippines since the coming of the naval fleet of Commodore George

Dewey in 1898. Our politics and economy were lorded over by the US, notwithstanding Philippine independence, and that equated with US imperialism. The countryside was lorded over by a landed aristocracy that had been entrenched all throughout the centuries of Spanish rule, and largely preserved by the US, and that was domestic feudalism. Those who controlled commerce and industry and agriculture were also those who competed and won in the elections, and therefore ran the whole caboodle of government—read: bureaucrat-capitalism.

The activists translated the slogan against the three -isms in terms of the burning issues of the day: unemployment, unjust wages, landless peasants, elite rule and misgovernance, graft and corruption, lack of social services, miseducation, moral decay, etc. All these meant there had to be c-h-a-n-g-e.

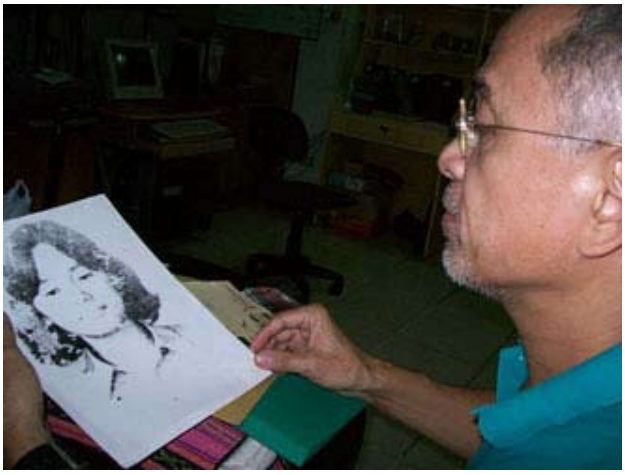
I listened to what the activists were saying, but safely stayed on the fringes. Like most of the students of the time, I had a personal dream that ran counter to the activist agenda. I wanted to go to law school right after my political science course. At the same time, I was more interested in joining the University of the Philippines (UP) Mobile Theater of Wilfrido Maria Guerrero, which I did.

One day, I mustered enough courage and knocked at his office door. I told him I wished to be a member. He asked me if I had any theater experience. Of course I had. In high school, I proudly mentioned, I played second male lead in *The Importance of Being Earnest.* Freddie let me read some lines in a script, which was his famous *Wanted: A Chaperon.* Then he said, "Stop already. You are in. Memorize the lines." I asked, "Which lines, sir?" He growled at me. "The Muchacho's [boy servant], what else?"

Thanks to Guerrero's theater group, I had my first taste of performing in urban poor communities where people gathered around us and followed us like we were some stars. But Guerrero's plays had to be translated in the native language, otherwise our audiences would not appreciate his satire and comedies of error. In a language that they understood, the common folk never failed to laugh at Guerrero's masters and ladies of the house, butlers and servants—little knowing that they were laughing at themselves.

While not exactly activist, the UP Mobile Theater was a big leap from the traditional notion of theater legitimacy. Colonial values had impressed upon Filipinos that theater could only be legitimate when performed in prestigious venues, couched in "respectable" language, and that means to say, written in English. This artistic valuation cast aside theater by indigenous artists. If native stuff was theater at all, it was of the lesser kind. But the most noteworthy accreditation of legitimate theater was that it hewed closely to the sociopolitical norms and beliefs that reinforced the status quo.

Rizalina, the author's younger sister, was a high school student in 1970 when she joined the radical youth organization Kabataang Makabayan (Nationalist Youth)



The author today holding the picture of his sister Rizalina

This is not to say that I knew about the colonial stuff in the UP Mobile Theater, no. I came to know about it when I became an activist. Like most of my generation, activism slowly but surely drew me in. My decision to become one happened as soon as I received one blow of a truncheon dealt by a riot police. The fascism and police brutality that the activists harped on became one real experience for me. I joined the Student Cultural Association of the UP and the Kabataang Makabayan (KM). I was crossing a border.

The stirrings of a new consciousness, the rising activism in the campus that charged the social system for the cycle of poverty and corruption victimizing the people rang louder. In the series of education sessions outside the classrooms, I learned to indict the ruling elite and its foreign patrons as the perpetrators of poverty, inequality, and injustice, as well as the beneficiaries of corruption. I understood why Filipino nationalism had to be aggressive, had to get hold of our national identity and the essence, not the mere trappings of democracy.

Informed that I was a member of the UP Mobile Theater, the activist leaders gave me a special task. I had to help put up a play for an upcoming big event. It was fine that someone came to be our director. The only thing missing was the play. I had to write one even if I didn't know how. I also gathered the actors. On hindsight, we were a resounding success not because we were good, but because we were largely a novelty.

The KM, even if it was already a formidable organization at that time, didn't have a cultural arm, or a theater group. Our one-time director had left, and so the task fell upon me. The good thing was that I had a ready membership, which was the chapter of KM in UP Diliman, including those whom I mentioned at the beginning, save for my sister who

was studying in UP Los Baños. Among these wide-eyed theater wannabees, nobody was taking up a course that was even remotely associated with theater. The news about our theater in-the-making spread fast. KM members from other schools joined us.

On account of our maiden performance, invitations started coming in. We performed the play, which I remember was called *Sinipi sa Buhay,* many times over. Here was a movement hungry for theater. Here was a cause waiting to be told, to be rendered in paint and canvass, to be sung, to be dramatized.

At first, we were a motley band of student activists whose only asset was a fierce commitment to militant nationalism and revolutionary social change. Then, someone by the name of Leo Rimando joined us – and that made a whole world of a difference. Leo was not just a name. He was, together with Tony Mabesa and Edgar de la Cruz, an institution in theater in UP Los Baños. No matter that his theater was thoroughly bourgeois, when he joined us, we was already an out and out KM. The chemistry was enough to start a theater movement that eventually challenged and upset the theater of the status quo in the Philippines. Soon enough, we had a name for our theater group: Panday Sining, or as Ninotska Rosca translated it, Artsmith. We were crossing another border.

Political will and a keen sense of the power of the medium drove us to learn theater through actual and urgent theater work, like learning warfare through warfare. For story ideas, characters, conflicts, themes, and premises, there were the struggles and aspirations of the ordinary men and women who ran the factories and nurtured the fields. They were no extraordinary people with superhuman traits. But without their labors, surely society would stand still. We found in them a rich and continuing source of dramatic materials.

To better draw from their lives, we lived with the people for whom we created drama. We learned from them, participated in their battles, shared in their dreams.

We performed wherever the people were. Our venues were the town squares, basketball courts, churchyards, streets, rice fields. It was, in that limited sense, like my former mobile theater. But while my mobile theater acted out funny pieces as an outreach program, activist theater did its thing as a way of life. Activist theater made the people laugh, too. But its greater import was its power to push the great unwashed and the multitude of the unlettered to get organized, and to inspire them to act on their plight.

And then, there was not just one theater group, but two, and three and so on. Shortly before the declaration of martial law, there were four major activist theater groups that observed no season of performances because what they did all year round was to produce plays. These were, aside from Panday Sining, Gintong Silahis, Tanghalang Bayan, and the earliest of the lot, Samahang Kamanyang.

Our members were no longer students alone, but out-of-school youths, office employees, workers, and peasants. In theater, these timid souls became empowered to speak out their mind and vision for a better life.

From skits and agit-props, activist theater graduated to one-act plays, then full-length plays and even musicales.

No rally or forum was complete without activist theater. At the outset, protest demonstrations featured activist plays as intermission numbers to break the monotony of lengthy speeches. In many cases, the people anticipated the intermission numbers more than the speeches.

With practice came the ability to raise experience to the level of knowledge. With knowledge, activist theater was able to theorize and to instruct and train its members systematically. A tool, which we called mass criticism, became an imperative. We also conducted a thoroughgoing assessment of our strengths and weaknesses after each performance.

We had crossed many borders.

It was a time to be bold and daring for a cause that became my generation's badge of courage. Like most of the youth activists of the time, the experience was all I needed to affirm for life a dictum: Against an intrinsically oppressive and exploitative system, to rebel is justified! And theater proved to be an excellent arena to dramatize rebellion.

A familiar street march in 1970 spearheaded by Kabataang Makabayan

Student and youth activists break through the security cordon and threaten to attack the presidential palace on January 30, 1970

Activist youth and students, including the author, mass up at the lobby of the old Congress of the Philippines in a rally in 1970

Like the rest of the rebels of my generation, members of the activist theater were animated by three life-changing principles. First, to overcome reactionary or retrogressive attitude and the culture of subservience –"Makibaka, Huwag Matakot!" ("Struggle, Be Not Afraid!"). Second, to remold one's self and achieve truthful and correct knowledge –"Mula sa Masa, Tungo sa Masa" ("From the Masses, to the Masses"). And third, to light up one's path and find life's meaning—"Paglingkuran ang Sambayanan" ("Serve the People").

Nurtured by this nonartistic babble, some quarters tried to dismiss activist theater as nontheater and plain propaganda. We took it in stride because our audiences were telling us otherwise. Because, in the final analysis, what was not propaganda? What was not political? In a society in crisis, even the personal became acutely political.

The government took notice and monitored us. Increasingly, there were reports of harassment during rehearsals and performances. It became a common occurrence that the police or persons in authority would deny us access to performance areas. Or that the lights would suddenly go out when a play was in progress. Or that a play was interrupted by stone throwing and, sometimes, firing of guns.

The government did try to offset the impact of activist theater by putting up, every so often, glamorous theater productions that embodied "the true, the good, and the beautiful." They had impact, but mostly contained in newspaper reviews that only urbanites read. The longer-lasting and farther-reaching impact was still the activist theater's.

Eventually, there were arrests. These came in consonance with the increasing political turmoil. The situation was coming to a head. The government was losing arguments and was increasingly becoming shrill in its attacks on the activist movement as "a communist conspiracy."

In 1971, President Ferdinand Marcos suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus for one year. The act gave him extraordinary police powers. It was, obviously, a prelude to martial law.

On the eve of the martial law declaration, all activist cultural groups, including those in theater, literature, and the visual arts, formed an alliance to better coordinate their programs and secure their organizations. They called the formation Konsehong Tagapag-ugnay ng Rebolusyonaryong Sining, or Coordinating Council for Revolutionary Art.

Then, like a thief in the night, Marcos formalized his dictatorship with Proclamation Number 1081. All offices of all entities approximating opposition to Marcos were closed down. The military raided the headquarters of the activist artists.

In fact, Marcos had sown a singular fear across the land in September 1972. Prohibited by the constitution to run for a third term, his evil genius worked out a situation to justify martial law and perpetuate him and his family in power. That declaration gave him absolute authority, which he wielded in lightning fashion. Even before his spokesperson, Francisco Tatad, officially informed the public about the martial law edict, Marcos had already ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to arrest all leaders of the political opposition, including—and especially those—of the activist people's organizations.

Another border had to be crossed.

Our short-lived coordinating council helped in the transition from working aboveground to working underground. After the initial shock was over, activist actors tried to do what they called "lightning performances." These were done where people usually converged, like market places and churchyards. In a flash, a team of three to four activists acted out a scene that denounced the dictatorship and exhorted the people to reject and fight it. The experiment, however, proved too risky.

How to go around martial law became the burning question. Activist theater in Manila took up the challenge by forming a seemingly innocent group, which it named "Babaylan," a name for a local shaman. It revived the religious drama and folk rituals, infusing them with a running subtext to assail the dictatorship.

Meanwhile, the anti-dictatorship movement sounded the call for activists to work among the people in the countryside. Our artists' coordinating council formed small teams of three to five members who were writers, theater persons, and visual artists. They were sent among the peasants and the mountain folk to participate in the creation and development of a liberated and liberating culture.

To many among the city-bred activists, it was a difficult process of remolding and unlearning to survive and rise beyond the self. Not everybody withstood the test. But those who remained proved to be the best.

In that great exodus, countless activists went underground in cities and countryside to reinforce the resistance against the Marcos dictatorship, employing theater to arouse, organize, and mobilize the masses. In the process, an undetermined number were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, raped, and killed—including Leo Alto, Merardo Arce, the brothers Armando and Romulo Palabay, and my sister Rizalina.

They had shown that to activists of the people's revolutionary theater, no border, not martial law, not even the ultimate personal sacrifice, seemed impossible to cross.

FORUM KRITIKA: PHILIPPINE THEATER AND MARTIAL LAW

SPECTACLE!
THE POWER OF PROTEST DRAMA DURING MARTIAL LAW

Spectaculo!
Ang Halina (Sa Mga Eksenang Buhay sa Gitna at Gilid ng Bayang Sinawi at Bumawi) ng mga Dulang Protesta ng mga Kabataang Mandudula

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Abstract
The paper aims to identify the streams and influences of protest drama in the rich theatrical productions during Martial Law 1972-1986. The focus is on the different perspectives and commitment that shaped the struggles in form and content in the plays staged by selected groups in a number of provinces in the country. The primary staging ground for discussion is the politics of the spectacle which will be traced through the different dynamics of creating a play from the staged text through the process of producing a play.

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Keywords
history of Philippine Theater, protest drama, street theater, student activism

O the True, o the Good and o the Beautiful
These are the goals of the City of Man
Freedom is basic for creativity
This is the motto of the City of Man![1] (*Oratoryo ng Bayan)*

Sapul pagkabata ay pangarap ko nang maging *performer* at mang-aawit. Pero ano't naluklok ako sa dulang protesta noong panahon ng batas militar, dito, kung saan ang pagiging artista ay katumbas ng pagbibilad sa kalye, pag-eensayo sa mga gilid at sulok at pagtatanghal habang umiiwas sa pagsikat kaya't kubli ang identidad. Maningning at kinukuryente ng enerhiya ang mga pagtatanghal na naglalayong makayanig sa mga makasasaksi, sapat upang sila'y matigatig at kumilos upang baguhin ang kanilan kalagayan. Nagbabanyuhay ang mga dula mula sa kung saang sulok ng lansangan upang magbandila ng mga usaping hindi hayagang mapag-usapan sa mga popular na pahayagan subalit buong ringal na itinatanghal sa mga pagsasadula. Totoong spektakulo!

May halinang taglay ang ganitong katangian ng pagsasadula—kagyat, pumuputok sa enerhiya, mapanghikayat at naghahamon ng pagbabago sa komunidad. Hindi ito pasok sa *poetics* ni Aristotle nang ikatergorya niya ang *opsis* o *spectacle* bilang pang-anim lang sa mga katangiang salik ng isang *tragedy*. Sa aklat na *Theories of the Theatre* ni Marvin Carlson, ang salitang *opsis* ay hinalinhan na ng salitang *spectacle*. Sa *Dictionary of The Theater: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, ang salitang *Opsis* ay tumutukoy sa "that which is visible, offered to the [gaze], hence its connections with the notions of spectacle and performance."

Maituring mang *tragedy* ang temang tinatalakay sa mga dulang nalikha sa panahon ng batas militar, lagi itong nagtatapos sa matimyas na pag-asa ng paglaya at pagtatagumpay. May element ng *catharsis*, pagpupurga ng mga sakit at sama ng loob tungo sa pagwawagi ng mga inaapi. Ang karanasan ng spektakulo ay higit na napagtitibay ng paglalarawan ni Antonin Artaud sa theater:

> For if the theater is like plague, it is not only because it affects important collectivities and upsets them in an identical way. In the theater … there is something both victorious and vengeful … theater also takes gestures and pushes them as far as they will go; like the plague it reforges the chain between what is and what is not, between the virtuality of the possible and what already exists in the materialized nature … The theater restores us all our dormant conflicts and all their powers, and gives these powers names we hail as symbols: and behold! before our eyes, is fought a battle of symbols, one charging against the other, in an impossible melee. (Artaud 27)

Ang pag-iral ng spektakulo sa panahon ng batas militar ay katulad ng binabanggit ni Artaud sa *theater and plague*. Inihahalintulad niya mga pangyayaring tulad ng paglalantad ng mga sakit at dumi ng isang tao. Kung ang gamot ay sa katawan ng taong

may sakit, ang teatro ay sa kulturang nagnanaknak at naghihintay ng kasyong iluluwal ng interaksyong dulot ng dula. Biswal mang maituturing ang karanasan sa panonood ng mga dulang protesta, lumalawig ito sa paglikha ng isang tiyak na karanasan at sa ilang pagkakataong ay tiyak na paglahok sa paglikha ng karanasan bilang ensayo tungo sa pagbabago ng isang malagim na kalakaran o dikaya ay pagkakataon para sa kolaborasyon ng mga mamamayan.

May ganitong hibo ang pagsasadula ng mga dulang protesta sa panahon ng batas militar at higit pa. Mula sa pagkakatali sa teksto, ang spektakular na katangian ng dula ay nasa nakatitigatig na paraan ng paglalahad ng dula na madrama, mapanuya, mapanlibak, at nagbabadya ng pagtatagumpay ng mga nagigipit sa mga nanggigipit.

Katapat ng spektakulo sa pagsadula ang madramang kaligiran at karanasan sa panahong ito. Mga larawan ng mga *missing* na kamag-anak, mga babaeng nilapastangan, mga kabuhayang nailit ng pulitikong makapangyarihan, kulungang puno ng mga detenidong pulitikal, mga di-kilalang kalansay sa gitna ng tahiban, mga nguso ng M-16 na nakaamba sa sinumang nais pumalagpag, mga TNT sa sariling bayan sa gitna ng nakalatag na larawan ng *Iron Butterfly* habang nakikipagsayawan sa *yacht* kapiling ng mga kaibigang *socialite*, mga higanteng ukit ng mukha ni Marcos sa isang tinapyas na bundok, mga makikinang na sapatos, alahas, at kotse sa gitna ng gutom at kawalan ng kabuhayan ng maraming Pilipino. Malagim at tigib ng paghihinagpis ang panahon ng batas militar ni Marcos.

Ngunit hindi lahat ng alaala ukol sa batas militar at puno ng sakit at paghihinagpis. Ang alaala ng kalagayan ng dula sa panahong ito ay madrama rin ngunit di lang dahil sa iyakan. Madrama ang alaala ng batas militar pagkat ang panahong ito ay saksi sa isa sa pinakabuhay at makulay na yugto sg kasaysayan ng dula sa Pilipinas. Kaya rin ito spektakulo.

Spektakulo ang salitang maaaring kumatawan sa kakaibang halinang taglay ng mga dula sa panahong ito. Sa isang naunang papel, tinawag kong mga "eksenang buhay" ang mga dula sa panahon ng batas militar upang patungkulan ang mga isinasadula ng *live* dahil panahon na rin ito ng teknolohiya kaya't hindi na rin bago ang pagsasadula sa telebisyon at pelikula. Ginamit ko ang "eksenang buhay" upang kilalanin ang mga tao, dinamiko, at prosesong nakapaloob sa paglikha at pagpapanatiling buhay ng dula sa panahon ng paniniil at ligalig. Lunsaran ang konsepto ng gitna at gilid sa pagtukoy sa iba't ibang espasyo ng pagsasadula, hayag at di hayag, na nalikha sa panahon ng batas militar.

Mahalagang puwersa ang mga kabataang mandudula mula sa mga paaralan at komunidad sa paglikha ng mga dulang ito. Palibhasa'y taglay ng kabataan ang gilas,

lakas ng loob, panahon upang sumabak sa malikhaing gawa, at talas ng isipan at lakas ng loob na tumuklas ng bago, nailuwal ng mga kabataang mandudula ang ilan sa pinakamaningning na dulang marmamarka sa mga dula ng protesta. Nasa kanila ang oras, kasanayan sa pagsusuri, at panahong maglimlim ng karanasan upang maisalin ito sa mapangahas at malikhaing pamamaraan. Kasama sa mga kabataang mandudula ang mga mag-aaral na nasa haiskul at kolehiyo, ang mga mag-aaral na tumigil sa pag-aaral bunsod ng mga pangyayaring pulitikal, ang mga bagong gradweyt, at ang kabataang nasa hanggang edad 30. Tampok sa pagsusuring ito ang mga uri ng dulang nalikha ng mga kabataang mandudula, ang proseso ng paglikha ng mga dula, ang mga mandudula, manonood, at tanghalan ng mga dulang bukod-tangi sa panahong ito.

FRONT ACT: ILANG PASAKALYE BAGO MAG-BATAS MILITAR

May pinagmulan ang mga nakilalang dula sa panahon ng batas militar.

Una, laganap ang pagtingin na ang mga dulang maganda ay nakasulat sa Ingles, at kung hindi man mula sa Kanluran ay gumagamit man lamang ng wikang Ingles. Ilang manunulat tulad nina Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero, Marcelino Agana, Severino Montano, at Alberto Florentino ang nagsikap na magsulat ng mga dulang ukol sa mga suliraning panlipunan. Nalimita rin ng gamit ng Ingles ang naaabot na manonood pagkat suliraning panlipunan man ang tinatalakay nito ay nakalilikha pa rin ng paghahati ang kakaibang wika na gamit sa diyalogo.

May mga manunulat pa ring nagsusulat sa wikang sarili, ngunit naipapalabas lamang ito tuwing Linggo ng Wika sa mga paaralan. May pagtingin din na ang mga ito ay hindi sing-husay ng mga dulang Ingles pagkat ang pamantayan ng kahusayan ng dula ay kung ito'y Kanluranin at nasa Ingles. Nauso ang mga dulang Shakespeare, Broadway *musicales,* at klasikong Kanluranin bilang sanayan sa pag-aaral ng Ingles (Tiongson, "Ang Dulang Pilipino"). Sinubukan ng ilang manunulat tulad ni Onofre Pagsanhan ang pagsasalin at adaptasyon ng mga dulang Kanluranin, halimbawa ay ang dulang *Sinta*. Nakapagbigay ito ng kakaibang pagtingin sa mga dulang nasa wikang sarili (Fernandez).

Nanatili ang ganitong kalakaran at pagtingin sa dula bilang isang likhang kaya lamang gawin ng ilang may angking talino, marunong mag-Ingles, at nakauunawa ng mga pamantayang Kanluranin. Isinasagawa pa rin ang mga dulang nasa wikang sarili ngunit bilang mga "gawi" na matatagpuan lamang sa mga probinsiya at mga sulok-sulok ng lipunan, sa mga lugar na hindi naaabot ng Amerikanisasyon. Samantala, ang ang aktibismo at nasyonalismong nahuhubog sa panahon ng dekada sisenta at sitenta ay nakahubog rin

ng uri ng dulang magkakaroon ng malaking impluwensiya sa mga dulang makikilala sa panahong ng batas militar.

Kasabay ng muling pagtatatag ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, naging bahagi ng kilos protesta ang pagsasagawa ng mga dulang kumokondena sa mga batayang suliranin ng lipunan. Sa isang artikulo ni Bienvenido Lumbera, "Philippine Theater (1972-1979): A Chronicle of Growth Under Constraint," pinansin niya ang pag-unlad ng mga bagong manunulat sa kabila ng mapaniil na kalagayan ang siyang pinakamahalagang katangian ng panahong ito: "it was the original activist drama groups that provided the opening breakthorugh. Those scripts were often improvised and therefore necessarily crude and uneven, but they exerted compelling power to which audiences responded passionately" (103).

Sa pamamagitan ng mga grupong pangkultura na nabuo noong panahong ng Unang Sigwa (l970-l971) tulad ng Panday Sining, Tanghalang Bayan, Gintong Silahis, at Kamanyang, muling napopolarisa ang gamit ng mga dulang mula sa karanasan ng mga tao noong papatapos ang dekada sisenta. Susing katangian ng mga dulang ito ang gamit ng wikang Filipino bilang midyum ng pamamahayag sa mga dula. Bukod sa wika, ang mga tema ng pagtuligsa sa kalakaran sa lipunan ang naging sukatan ng katapat nito sa karanasan ng mga tao. Tinalakay ang mga tema ng kahirapan, pang-aapi ng mga naghaharing-uri sa mga dula. Gumamit rin sila ng mga pangalan ng tauhang makapagpapakilala sa mga manonood ng kinakatawang ideya nito, hindi man siya nakagarbo ng kasuotan o ng kagamitan sa entablado (PAKSA).

Tampok na katangian ng mga dulang tulad nito ang pagiging handa sa lahat ng uri ng rebisyon mula sa pagbabago ng banghay ng dula hanggang sa pagbabago ng tauhan. Sa dulang *Welga! Welga*! (1970-1971) ng Panday Sining, sinulat ni Bonifacio Ilagan ang dula ngunit lagi itong binabago ayon sa mahigpit na konsultasyon ng direktor na si Leo Rimando. Maraming bersyon ang dulang ito, nababago ayon sa mga kahinaan na nakikita ng direktor mula sa nakasulat na iskrip at mula sa pagtatanghal. Ang dulang *Masaker sa Araw ng Paggawa* (1970) ni Bonifacio Ilagan, halimbawa, ay pinasulat ni Leo Rimando kay Ilagan isang umaga bago ito itanghal sa *steps* ng Vinzons' hall sa University of the Philippines (UP). Inensayo ito kinahapunan upang maipalabas kinabukasan (Rimando).

Ganito rin ang kuwento ni Levy Balgos dela Cruz ukol sa kanilang dulang *Kalbaryo ni Juan dela Cruz* (1970) na itinanghal ng Tanghalang Bayan sa komunidad ng Tondo. Ang dula ay pagtatanghal ng buhay ng isang karaniwang taong dumaranas ng pandarahop katulad ni Kristo. Ginanap ito sa kalye ng komunidad sa Tondo kaya't nasaksihan ng mga nasa komunidad sa harap ng kanilang bahay. Walang isang tiyak na entabladong

Contemporarized versions of religious rituals were used in trainings by the Basic Christian Community Organization to bring social issues closer to the people (La Paz, Iloilo, Philippnes, 1981)

nalikha liban lamang sa ilang *makeshift* na platforms. Ang pagpapahirap ng mga Hudyong kinakatawan ng mga tauhang militar sa dula ay naranasan ng mga tao habang ipinapasa-pasa at tinatapon-tapon si Kristo habang papunta sa Kalbaryo. Habang pinalalabas ito'y nababago nang nababago ang pagtatanghal, depende sa sitwasyon at sa manonood (Balgos dela Cruz).

Nariyan din ang mga itinatanghal sa lansangan, kapag may *rally* o di kaya ay kilos protesta. May mga kilos protesta ang mga estudyante na humahantong sa pakikipaggitgitan sa mga Metrocom. Umaawit ng *Tamad na Burgis na Ayaw Gumawa* (1970) ang mga estudyante habang nakikipaggitgitan at kapag nasa harap na ng mga pulis ay kukutusan ang mga ito sabay takbo papalayo (Lamangan).[2]

Pinakatampok sa mga pagsasadula ang tinatawag na pista ng mga anyong pangkultura ang *Pest of Badway*, na isang caricature ng mga Broadway *musicales* na galing sa Amerika.

> Billed as "Sining ng bayan," it was the first artists' happening that transformed the Plaza Miranda into a huge gallery of people's art. Against this background of huge murals depicting the "United Front" and caricatures

> of the US-Marcos dictatorship (collectively painted by visual artists froups from Sining Bayan and Nagkakaisang Progresibong Artista) poets of PAKSA declaimed poems on economic and political as well as cultural issues. Dancers performed choral numbers and a modern-dance interpretataion of protest song. And towards evening, when people were on their way home from their offices, about five theater groups presented a mini-festival of committed plays, which employed a whole range of styles—from the heavy and serious, hard-line Peking opera style ... to the light and comic and even the slapstick. Then, as now, crowds reacted most favorably to the choral numbers which infused new words into popular balitaws or balses, featured traditional sway-balance movements, to the comic skits which burlesqued topics like the Dovie Beams scandal and to the musical spoofs on the Filipino's Americanized education. (Tiongson, *Politics of Culture* 3-4)

Satirika ang isa sa mga labis na kinalulugdang paraan ng pagsasadula sa panahong ito. Nakakatawa at lubhang mabilis na maintindihan dahil sa mga biswal na kagamitan na agad na nakikilala ng mga nanonood bilang ang pinatatamaang opisyal ng gobyerno o makapangyarihang tao. Marami sa mga bahagi ng grupong ito ay mga estudyante at artistang naniniwala sa kahalagahan ng sining na naglilingkod sa mamamayan.[3] Tampok ang elemento ng katatawanan bilang isang paraan ng pagtuligsa mga katiwaliang nagaganap, pati ang paglikha ng isang pagtatanghalang puntahin ng tao. Dito, maaaring nilang pagtawanan at laitin ang mga tumbalik na kalakaran sa lipunan hanggang sa nais nila na hindi nangangambang madadampot ng militar.

ANG SPEKTAKULO NG BATAS MILITAR: "THE TRUE, THE GOOD, AND THE BEAUTIFUL" DEPENDE SA TUMITINGIN

Spektakulong totoo ang pagkakapataw ng batas militar sa buong kapuluan mula sa huwad na *lifting* noong 1981 hanggang sa 1986 EDSA Revolution, at naging popular ang ang konsepto ng "true, good, and beautiful" lalo na sa larangan ng sining at kultura. Ngunit magkaiba ang pakahulugan dito, depende sa tumitingin.

Para sa administrasyong Marcos, nangangahulugan ang "true, good, and beautiful" ng pagpapalabas ng mga dulang hindi makatitigatig sa status quo. Halimbawa ng mga ito ay ang mga pagtatanghal ng mga dayuhang artista tulad nina Van Cliburn .Sa kabilang banda, ang pagpapakita ng "true, good, and beautiful" mula sa punto-de-bista ng mga

pinaghaharian ay nangahulugan ng pagtuklas ng iba't ibang uri ng dulang may iba't ibang antas ng pagpapakita ng tunay na kalagayan ng mga Pilipino sa panahon ng batas militar.

Orihinal at nasusulat sa wikang sarili ang mga napaunlad na dula. Pumapaksa ito sa mga usaping panlipunan na nakikita sa mga tampok na sektoral na usapin kaya't nataguriang mga dulang sektoral. Sa dula-tulang *Iskolar ng Bayan* (1976) ni Richie Valencia at Ed Vencio, nilarawan ang proseso ng pagkamulat ng isang tipikal na estudyanteng napapasok sa UP. Tinuligsa naman sa *farce* na *Ang Sistema ni Propesor Tuko* (1980) ni Al Santos ang kadahupa ng sistema ng edukasyon na hindi naiaangkop sa pagbabago at pangangailangan ng panahon. Sa dulang *Mapait sa Bao* (1980) ni Reuel Aguila, inilarawan ang buhay ng mga manggagawa sa niyugan at ang halina ng pagpunta sa Saudi upang makabayad sa nakababaong utang. Ang diyalogong *May Isang Sundalo* (1980) ni Rene Villanueva ay pagtatapat ng isang puta at sundalo na kapwa napilitang magbenta ng kanilang serbisyo bilang pantawid-buhay. Pinaksa naman ni Manny Pambid ang gipit na kalagayan ng mga batilyo sa *Batilyo* (1976). Sa *Pagsambang Bayan* (l977) ni Bonifacio Ilagan, hinarap ang usapin ng pakikisangkot ng simbahan sa paghahanap ng solusyon sa mga hinaing ng mamamayan sa anyo ng isang misa. Sa *Buwan at Bari sa Eb Major* (l984) ni Chris Millado, binigyan ng mukha ang pag-angkop ng mga mamamayang nasangkot sa pagpapatuloy ng rebolusyon sa balangkas ng konsiyertong klasikal. Sa *Masaker* (l985) ni Joel Albolario, inilarawan ang masaker ng mga magsasaka sa Escalante na gumigunita sa anibersaryo ng batas militar.

Marami ring mga dula ang sumalig sa mga katutubong anyo na nilalangkapan ng mga bagong isyu upang maiugnay sa kontemporaryong buhay. Ang pagtatanghal ng *Kahapon Ngayon at Bukas* ni Aurelio Tolentino at *Estados Unidos Bersus* (1979) ni Bonifacio Ilagan na halaw sa dulang *Hindo Aco Patay* ni Juan Matapang Cruz. Ang kalbaryo sa *Kalbaryo ni Juan dela Cruz* (1970) ni Levy Balgos dela Cruz at ang *Kalbaryo ng Maralitang Tagalungsod* (l980s) ng Ugnayan ng Maralitang Tagalungsod, misa sa *Pagsambang Bayan* ni Bonifacio Ilagan, luksa at prusisyon sa *Luksang Bayan* l983 , bodabil sa *Ilokula ang Ilokanong Drakula* ni Chris Millado at Peryante, balagtasan sa *Masaker* (l983) ni Jess Lopez at Armand Sta. Ana, at alamat sa *Ang Lihim ng Prinsesang Di Tumatawa* ni Louie Sevilla, ay binigyan ng bagong interpretasyon sa pamamagitan ng kontemporarisasyon.

Mayamang bukal din ang kasaysayan bilang materyal sa mga dulang may paralel na paglalarawan ng mga karanasan sa kontemporaryong buhay. Ang usapin ng pagpapatuloy ng rebolusyon, paniniil sa karapatang pantao, pakikisangkot ng mamamayan para sa pagbabago ng lipunan ay inilarawan sa mga dulang ukol sa buhay ni Bonifacio at ng Katipunan. Halimbawa ng mga ito ang *Sigaw ng Bayan* (l977) ni Bonifacio Ilagan, *Ang*

Walang Kamatayang Buhay ni Juan dela Cruz Alyas (1975) ni Lito Tiongson, *May-i, May-i* ni Eman Lacaba, *Ang Tao, Hayop o Tao*" (1975) ni Fernando Josef, *Sampung Mga Daliri* (1978) ni Richie Valencia at Nannette Matilac, *Mayo a Beinte Uno* (1977) ni Al Santos.

Ang pagsasalin sa Filipino at adaptasyon ng mga dula sa kontemporaryong buhay ay nakapagbigay din ng ligtas ng kublihan sa harap ng militarisasyon at krisis pampinansiya. Sa pamamagitan ng mga kilala ng dula, natatalakay ang mga kagyat na isyu samantalang napamumukhang walang banta pagkat klasiko ang dula. Gayundin, malakas ang hila nito para sa manonood na takot pang masangkot sa banta ng panghuhuli. Ginamit na backdrop ang giyerang Muslim at Kristiyano sa pagtalakay ng isyu ng pagmamay-ari sa lupa sa dulang *Ang Hatol ng Guhit ng Bilog* (1978) nina Franklin Osorio at Lito Tiongson mula sa *Caucasian Chalk Circle* ni Bertolt Brecht.

Ang mga nabanggit ay mga halimbawa lamang ng mga pagpupulutong pagkat napakaraming dulang nagsulputan sa panahong ito. Kakatwa rin banggitin na ang mga dulang ito, nabanggit ay yaon lamang mga dulang may pamagat at tiyak na awtor pagkat itinanghal sa isang dulaan tulad ng Raha Sulayman Theater sa Fort Santiago o dili kaya ay Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero sa UP. Mangyaring kilala din ang mga nagtanghal ng mga ito tulad ng PETA, UP Repertory, at Dulaang UP. Ngunit ang maganda ring bigyang pansin ay ang mga walang pangalang dula ng mga walang pangalang awtor na madalas maipalabas sa mga kalye.

MGA DULANG WALANG PANGALAN SA LANSANGAN

Sa Cebu, halimbawa, sa gitna ng mainit na pakikipaggitgitan ng mga maralitang tagalungsod sa pagpigil sa proyektong reklamasyon ng lupa sa siyudad para patayuan ng malalaking *shopping complexes*, mahalagang bahagi ang ginampanan ng mga grupong pangkultura. Ang grupong nakabase sa simbahan, ang Dulaang Katilingban ng simbahang Redemptorista, ang nanguna sa pagsasagawa ng mga dulang iglap sa gitna ng lansangan habang nakikipaggitgitan ang mga tao sa mga militar. Ayon Nenita Pacilan, isa sa mga lider ng grupo, nagtatagal sila ng kung ilang araw sa lansangan kaya't kailangan nilang magpasimuno ng mga awitan at drama upang mabuhay ang diwa ng mga tao. Habang nasa gitna na ng negosasyon, kinailangan nilang mag-imbento ng mga dula sa oras ding iyon na maglalarawan ng mga iginigiit ng mga tao bilang panlaban sa pambabatuta ng mga militar. Kinailangang buhayin ang diwa ng mga tao habang nasa gitna ng gitgitan. Kaya't kasabay ng magdamagang *chanting* at ahitasyon sa pamamagitan ng mga kanta ay naroon din ang mga dula upang manatili ang mga tao sa hanay (Pacilan).

Sa kampanyang boykoteo ng eleksyon noong l984, may mga pagsasadulang nagaganap maging sa mga palengke at *jeepney* o sa mga lugar na matatao. Halimbawa, isang grupong nakabase sa Bulacan ang nagsasagawa ng "invisible theater" sa palengke. Pasisimulan ang pagsasadula ng dalawang aktor na namamalengke. Sa pamamagitan ng pagtatalo ukol sa patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng bilihin, ma-iuugnay na ang mga usapin ukol sa eleksyon. Malakas ang boses ng mga mandudula kaya makapupukaw ito ng atensyon ng iba pang mamimili. Kapag napapalibutan na ng mga tao sa palengke ang dalawang aktor, susumahin ang talakayan sa pamamagitan ng konklusyon na dapat ngang iboykot ang eleksyon. Saka lamang nila pasasalamatan ang mga manonood sa pagtangkilik sa kanilang palabas at mawawala na sila sa dagat ng mga taong nakapalibot sa kanila.[4]

Bukod sa mga rali, nagaganap din ang mga happening sa mga kabundukan bilang bahagi ng selebrasyon ng Hukbong Bayan. Sa isang iskrip ng selebrasyon ng pagtatatag ng *provisional revolutionary government* (PRG) sa lugar ni Ka Migo sa Mindanao, ang iskit ay naging paraan upang maipaliwanag ang PRG at upang mabigyan ng pagkakataong magsama-sama ang mga tao. May palitan ng diyalogo at talakayan at magtatapos ang iskit sa pagyayaya sa lahat na maglaro ng *basketball* ("Ang Atong PRG").

Samut-sari ang balon ng materyal ng mga dulang nalikha sa panahon ng batas militar. Maaaring sumahin sa mga sumusunod ang mga katangiang ng mga ito.

Una, mariin ang pagpapahalaga ng mga dula sa pagtalakay ng tunay na nangyayari sa lipunan na hindi nababasa sa dyaryo o naririnig sa balita. Ang dula sa makatwid ay nagiging buhay na pahayagan o *living newspaper* ng mga usaping hindi tuwirang

The actors in the play Boboy and Kokot *wore zorro-like masks when they performed during boycott the election rallies in Liwasang Bonifacio*
(Philippine Collegian *July 6,1981)*

natatalakay sa media. Pangalawa, samu't sari ang mga pamamaraan ng pagtatanghal na kinailangang gamitin upang makaligtas sa mata ng militar. Malawak ang *range* ng mga anyo mula sa realistiko hanggang sa lahat ng uri ng ekspresyunistikong anyo. Kapansin-pansin na may malawak na pagsalig sa konsepto ng *total theater* ang karamihan sa mga ito, ibig sabihin ay gumagamit ng iba't ibang anyo ng sining bilang paraan ng pagtatanghal. Pangatlo, kapansin-pansin din na ang mga dula ay nagtatampok sa mga tauhang hindi maganda o yaong *marginalized*. Kadalasan din ay naibabaling sa ang bida ang grupo; walang mga tiyak na pangalan ang mga tauhan noong simula kundi mga *generic* na pangalan tulad ng "manggagawa 10" o "magsasaka 30." Nauso din ang konsepto ng *ensemble acting* o maramihang pagganap na tulad ng *Greek chorus*. Pang-apat, nagkaroon ng tila pormula ang maraming dula tulad ng simula sa pagpapakita ng suliranin, kumplikasyon, at paghahati at *isolation* ng kaaway tungo sa pagkakaisa ng mamamayan at pagtatagumpay. Lagi na'y masayang panoorin ang mga dulang nagtatapos nang may pag-asang inihahain sa gitna ng malagim na kalagayan ng batas militar. Panglima, ang mga pagtatanghal ay tuwinang nakaugnay sa konsepto ng pagbubuo at pagtataguyod ng isang pambansang kilusan kaya't lagi itong nakaugnay na isang konsepto ng sama-samang pagkilos ng mamamayan para sa kagalingan ng lahat. Pang-anim, ang pagsusulat ng mga dula ay nangyayaring sinusulat ng isang tao o di kaya ay isang grupo. Sa ilang pagkakataong iglap ang pagsusulat—mula lamang sa balangkas ng ideyang ihinanay ng grupo saka unti-unting bubuuin ang mga eksena at diyalogo sa tulong ng mga artista. Kinilala itong prosesong ito bilang improbisasyon o *improvised.*

MGA EKSENA SA LIKOD NG MGA EKSENANG BUHAY

Lalong kilala ang proseso ng paglikha mula sa iskrip tungo sa dula. Sa panahon ng batas militar, napaunlad na ibang proseso ng paglikha ng dula bunga na rin ng ilang salik. Una, may pangangailangang magpaunlad ng mga bagong dula mula pa sa kadahupan ng mga dula sa sariling wika nang unang panahon. Pangalawa, mahalagang anyo ng pamamahayag ang dula dahil hindi ito madaling i-kontrol ng militar bunga ng pagiging *live performance* nito. Bagaman may mga karanasan ng pagha-*harrass* ng mga militar sa mga pagtatanghal at panghuhuli sa mga nagtatanghal at sa mga nanonood sa ilang pagkakataon, mainam pa rin ang dula dahil sa katangiang nitong *live* at maaaring dalhin kung saan naroon ang tao.

Mayroon nang nagbabagong pagtingin sa pagtatanghal, di lamang bilang anyo ng libangan kundi bilang gawaing pangkultura o *cultural work* na layuning hubugin at

patalasin ang kamalayan ng tao tungo sa isang malaya, siyentipiko, kritikal at mapanlahok na kultura. Mahalagang salik ang konsepto ng *mentoring* sa hanay ng mga kabataang mandudula. Nagsagawa ng mga pagsasanay sa dula tulad ng Palihang Aurelio Tolentino, para sa mga manunulat. Ang higit na naging popular ay ang mga maiikling kurso sa pagsasanay sa dula na nakilala bilang mga *workshop*, BITAW o basic acting workshop na binibigay ng mga grupong tulad ng Dulaang UP, UP Repertory, at PETA. Sa mga ito, ang PETA (Philippine Educational Theater Association) ang may malaking impluwensiya sa pagbibigay ng pagsasanay pagkat sila ang nakaabot sa mas maraming komunidad at rehiyon sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigya ng tinagurinag *basic integrated theater arts workshop* (Fajardo and Topacio). Mahalagang ang impluwensiya rin ang mga director at manunulat mula sa ibang bansa tulad nina Bertolt Brecht *(theater of alienation),* Paolo Freire *(pedagogy of the oppressed),* at Augusto Boal *(theater of the oppressed).* Ang malaking ambag ng PETA ay ang pagpapayaman ng konsepto ng pagkakaugnay ng sining (*integrated arts*) sa pamamahayag na ang sintesis ay ang dula. Taglay nito ang kaisipan na ang dula ay maaaring likhain ng kahit na sino pagkat ang batis ng materyal ay ang payak na karanasan ng mga karaniwang taong lumilikha ng dula (Labad and Garrucho) sa pamamagitan ng mga ehersisyong nakapagbibigay laya sa mga partisipant na magpahayag mula sa anumang elemento ng sining. Pangkaraniwang pormat ng mga palihang ito ang pagpapakilala sa iba't ibang elemento ng malikhaing pamamahayag sa paraang laro at *exploratory*. Binigyan ang mga partisipant ng pagkakataong matuklasan ang sarili nilang kakayahan sa pamamagitan ng laro at tuwirang paglikha ng mga akdang sining. Spektakulo ito pagkat nababali ang dating turing na ang pag-aakda ay para lamang sa ilang mga talentadong nilalang.

Masaya man at mapagpalaya ang mga *workshop* na ito'y hindi naman naging ligtas sa suspetsa ng militar. Maraming pagkakataon na ang mga palihan ay dinadalaw ng mga militar na nagsususpetsa sa mga palihan bilang mga gawaing subersibo. Dahilan sa hindi mapigilan ang pagsasalaysay ng mga kuwento ng mga taong bahagi ng palihan, hindi rin maiwasang matalakay sa mga isinasadula ang mga karanasan sa karahasan, paniniil, at kahirapan na tuwirang nakakaharap ng mga bahaging palihan.[5]

ANG MGA DULANG LUWAL NG PALIHAN

Sa pagpopularisa ng mga *workshop*, napopularisa rin ang paglikha ng mga dulang hindi nakaasa sa nakasulat na iskrip. Sa pangkalahatan, mahahati sa dalawang uri ang mga dulang nabubuo sa pamamagitan ng improbisasyon . Una, ang mga dulang nabuo

sa improbisasyong tuwiran, ibig sabihin ay nagsimula ang mga pagsasadula sa ideya tungo sa pagiging dula; ikalawa, ang mga dulang nabuo mula sa balangkas ng mga ideya at pangyayari at napagyaman at nagkahugis sa pamamagitan ng improbisasyon batay sa ilang panimulang eksenang nakasulat. May kani-kaniyang katangian ang mga batis na pinagmulan ng pangunahing materyal ng bawat uri.

Mayroon ding mga iskit na nabubuo na ang panimula ay ang sining biswal na nalikha. Noong l983, nagsagawa ng pista ng mga dula ang iba't ibang grupong pangkultura sa buong bansa. Ginanap ito sa Raha Sulayman Theater at nakilala bilang MAKIISA I at nagbandila ng pagtataguyod ng mapagpalayang kulturang bayan. Sa pistang ito, dumalo ang iba't ibang artista mula sa iba't ibang larangan at bawat grupo ng artista ay mayroong *showcase* na ipinapakita bilang bahagi ng mga gawain sa pista. Isang grupo ng mga artista sa sining biswal, ang ABAY, ang nagsagawa ng palihan at nakalikha sila ng tila *cartoon* na *frames* na kapag pinagsunu-sunod ay nagsasalaysay ng karanasan ng mga mambubukid sa militarisasyon sa kanayunan. Bawat *frame* ay may butas na maaaring lusutan ng mga mukha at kamay ng mga tauhang gaganap sa iskit upang ang mga *frame* ang magsilbing kasuotan at *set* na rin ng mga eksenang nagaganap. Nakakakiliti ang epekto ng ganitong estilo. Nakakalibang samantalang naisasalaysay ang malagim na pang-aabuso ng mga militar sa kanayunan.[6]

Marami ring mga dulang nalilikha mula sa mga *exposure trips* na bahagi ng mga pagsasanay na ibinibigay. Nariyan halimbawa ang dulang *Sounds of Manila* (l979) na nalikha ng isang grupo ng mga tinadyer na nag-exposure trip sa Divisoria. Sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay pokus lamang sa tunog, nakalikha sila ng isang mala-radio dramang pagtatanghal ukol sa mga buhay ng tao sa Quiapo at Divisoria. Nakalilibang ang dulang ito pagkat kasama sa mga tauhang bahagi ng dula ang pag-i-*spoof* sa mga kilalang artistang tulad ni Vilma Santos (na naging Vanilla Santos) at ang paglalarawan ng mga karaniwang taong nagdedebosyon ng paluhod sa Quiapo upang makakuha ng trabaho, makakuha ng asawa, at iba pang kahilingan sa buhay.[7]

Ang dula-tulang *Salaming Nahihibang* (1979) ay produkto rin ng karansan ng mga *teen theater class* na namasyal sa mga magagarang hotel na katatayo pa lamang noong l977. Pinaghambing nila ito sa mga nakita nila sa buhay iskwater sa isang komunidad sa Dakota, Harrison. Ang resulta ay isang isinadulang tulang pasalaysay na ginagampanan ng anim na aktor na nagpapalit-palit ng mga ginagampanang tauhan sa pamamagitan ng pagpapatong ng mga kostyum na magpapahiwatig na sila na ang tauhang iyon. Habang tinutula ang mga unang linya ng dula, nakahanay ang anim na artista at sabayang bumibigkas. Kapagdaka'y isa-isa nang nagpapalit ng mga tauhang ginagampanan sa

pamamagitan ng pagtalikod upang ipahiwatig na nagbago na siya ng tauhan. Nakikita ng manonood na nagbabago ng tauhan ang mga aktor pagkat nagbibihis ang mga ito sa harap mismo ng mga manonood. Masaya at nakalilibang ang makulay na pagtatanghal nito. Maiiwan na lamang sa manonood ang matinding pahayag ng huling linya ng dula.

> Oo, ikaw ay pugad ng karangyaan,
> Sa isang lupalop ng bansang lubog sa utang.[8]

Sa maraming pagkakataon, ang mga grupong bumubuo ng dula ay laging higit sa tatlo. Nasa grupo ang lakas ng mga pagtatanghal kaya't kung kaunti lamang ang mga aktor tulad ng sa *Salaming Nahihibang* (l979) nagagawang magmukhang marami ng mga ito sa pamamgitan ng pag-arte ng iba't ibang tauhan at pagpapalit at pagpapatong ng mga *suggestive costumes*.[9] Lalong napakakapal ang bilang ng mga gumaganap sa pamamagitan ng katatawanan at *audience participation* na isinasagawa sa pamamagitan ng paglikha ng sitwasyon mararamdaman ng manonood na sila'y bahagi ng pagtatanghal o di kaya ay sa pamamagitan ng pagiging bahagi ng manonood sa pamamagitan ng pagpalakpak o paggawa ng mga tunog para sa palabas. Naitanghal ito sa iba't ibang haiskul sa Maynila. Bahagi ito ng paraan ng pag-oorganisa ng grupong Metropolitan Teen Theater League (MTTL) upang mahikayat ang mga haiskul na magtatag ng *drama club* na nagtatanghal ng mga orihinal na dulang Pilipino.[10]

Bukod sa sa tula, ang awit ang isa ring madlas na gamiting balangkas ng mga dulang nalikha. Popular ang ganitong uri ng dula bilang mga dulansangan o dulang isinasagawa sa lansangan o kalye. Sa panahon ng kampanyang boykoteyo laban sa "huwad na eleksyon" noong l984, nagsagawa ng dulang tinawag na "kilos awit" ang mga miyembro ng UP Peryante at PETA. Nilagyan ng kilos ang mga kilalang awit tulad ng "Pagbabalikwas," "Awit ng Rebolusyonaryo," at dalawang awiting mula sa mga dula ni Bertolt Brecht. Mula sa rota ng martsa mula sa Cubao hanggang Welcome Rotonda, isang grupo ng mga aktor ang nauuna sa nagmamarsa upang itambuli ang pagdating ng martsa. Isang miyembro ng grupo ang nag-aanunsiyo ng layunin ng martsa habang nagtatanghal naman ng kilos awit ang iba pa. Mayroon ding nakaantabay sa anumang posibleng banta sa seguridad tulad ng isang nakabantay na militar o potograpo ng militar.[11] Sa ibang pagkakataon ang mga *chanting* at *sloganeering* na bumubuhay sa mga martsa sa rali ay likha ng mga mandudulang bahagi nito. Halimbawa nito ang *slogan* na sinasagot at inuulit ng mga nagmamartsa mula sa pangunguna ng isang *chanter*.

Bayan (Bayan)
Tayo na at lumaban.
Tayo na at kumilos.
Magmartsa at kumilos
Para sa kalayaan.

Isa pang halimbawa ng popular na awitin na ginawang *chant* ay ang *jingle* ng "Eat Bulaga" na nilapatan ng bagong titik:

Mula Aparri hanggang Jolo
Ang Pilipino'y nilolоko
Sanlibo't 'sang pandaraya
Buong bansa, binulaga.[12]

Mayroon ding mga dulansangan na nalilikha mula sa pinagsama-samang eksena mula sa iba't ibang dulang nalikha na. Halimbawa, isang dulang itinananghal ng PETA noong Setyembre 21,l983, ang *Luksang Bayan*, bilang pagkondena sa deklarasyon ng batas militar ang ipinarada mula sa Liwasang Bonifacio hanggang sa dating gusali ng Kongreso at pabalik sa Liwasang Bonifacio. Nakagayak ang mga aktor ng mga kalahating maskara at sumasayaw at umaawit ng mga bahagi ng dulang *Nukleyar*. May nagbabasa ng tagulaylay ng Inang Bayan sa mikropono habang ipinaparada ng isang itim na ataul ng kalayaang nagpapahiwatig ng kamatayan ng kalayaan ng bayan.[13]

Ang mga nabanggit ay ilan lamang sa sanlaksang halimbawa ng mga dulang nalikha sa prosesong improbisasyunal noong panahon ng batas militar. Mangyayaring hindi mabanggit ang karamihan sa mga ito pagkat maaaring wala naman itong tiyak na pamagat kundi ang isyung taglay nito noong itanghal. Maaaring ni hindi ito nakuhang itala sa pamamagitan ng pagsusulat ng kinalabasan ng iskrip o di kaya 'y nakunan man lamang ng larawan, *stills* man o pelikula, bunga na rin marahil ng usaping seguridad na sadyang nagturo sa karamihang huwag kumuha ng larawan. Nananatili lamang ito sa alaala ng mga tao bilang mga buhay na karanasan. Sa ilang pagkakataon, ang ganitong uri ng dula ay hindi lamang naging mga pagtatanghal kundi mga pamamaraan na rin upang maghanda para sa isang isasagawang aksyon ng isang grupo o komunidad.

ANG MGA GUMAGALAW AT GINAGALAWAN NG MGA EKSENANG BUHAY

Nakahubog din ng kakaibang paraan ng proseso ng paglikha ng mga dula. Sa panahong ng batas militar, ang konsepto ng mandudula ay hindi na lamang limitado sa manunulat ng dula. Dahilan sa kolektibong proseso ng pagsulat at paglikha ng mga eksena na nakilala, maging ang mga aktor na maituturing na ring mga nadudula pagkat bahagi sila sa pagsusuri, pagpapayaman at pagtiyak ng mga eksena at diyalogo. Sa maraming pagkakataon, ang mga mandudula (artista, direktor, disenyong pamproduksyon, musika at iba pa) ay bahagi ng pag-aaral at pananaliksik kaugnay ng dula. Maraming mandudulang nakilala sa panahon ng batas militar, ngunit marami rin ang hindi nakilala. Maaaring dahil ito sa pinili ng mandudulang hindi magpakilala upang hindi magkaroon ng suliranin sa seguridad. May iba naman na grupo ang nagsulat kaya't walang iisang taong maaaring magsabing kanya lamang ang dula.

Sa mga artista o gumaganap naman, higit na napopularisa ang konsepto ng artista pagkat hindi na lamang it nalimita sa iilang may talento kundi maaaring gawin ng sinumang may karanasang nais ipahayag. Maging ang mga manonood ay nagiging mga artista rin sa ilang mga pagkakataon. Bukod rito, ang mga mandudula ay nakahubog ng konsepto ng artista o mandudula na nakalaang maglingkod sa manonood bilang kagamitan ng pagpapahayag. Hindi lamang ang pagtatanghal ang kanilang gawain kundi ang pagsasanay ng sarili upang maging epektbo sa pamamahayag .Nakapaloob ang responsibilidad na maging bahagi sa pagsasanay at pagpopopularisa ng kaalaman sa pamamahayag kaya't nakararating din ang mga mandudula sa mga komunidad at rehiyon upang maibahagi ang kanilang kaalaman sa pagsasadula. Karamihan sa mga lakad na ito ay walang bayad, sagot lamang ng mga komunidad ang pamasahe at pagkain ng mga mandudula. Sa mga pagkakataon namang may pondo ang komunidad ay nabibigyan ang mga mandudula ng kaunting pambili ng pasalubong. Isang karaniwang reaksyon noon ng mga mandudula ang pagtanggi sa mga bayad Ang diyalogo pa nga ay "Bakit, binabayaran mo ba ang commitment ko?" Sa ganitong pagkakataon, ang konsepto ng pagiging mandudula o artista ay napalawak at uminog sa pagiging isang manggagawang pangkultura o *cultural worker* na may tungkuling linangin at patalasin angkamalayan at kaisipan ng mamamayan.

Nagbabago rin ang bahagi ng mga manonood. Hindi na lamang simpleng mga *spectator* o tagamasid ang mga manonood. May pagkakataong din ang mga manonood ay nagiging mga kalahok sa proseso ng pagtatanghal bilang artista o bilang mga manunulat .Nagbibigay sila ng mga *account* ng mga karanasan na siyang isinasadula ng mga

mandudula. Sa pagsasadula nito ay muli nilang tinitiyak kung tama ang pagkakasadula kaya't nagkakaroon ng malaking bahagi ang manonood sa paglikha ng dula. Kung minsan naman ay sila ang nagmumuwestra ng mga kilos at pangyayari batay sa kanilang sariling karanasan. Ganito ang nangyari sa isang pagtatanghal ng mga estudyante ng St.Eliabeth Academy ng Janiuay, Iloilo, sa harap ng isang grupo ng mga dumaan. Ipinakita ng mga estudyante ang kanilang pagkakaunawa sa suliranin ng pag-oorganisa sa asyenda. Matapos manood ng mga dumaan, nagbigay sila ng mga puna ukol sa paraan ng paghabas ng mga tubo at maging sa tunay na paniniil na nangyayari sa mga dumaan na nag-oorganisa sa asyenda. Ang mga estudyante na ang nanonood sa pagsasalaysay at dramatisasyon ng mga dumaan ng kanilang buhay.[14]

Pansinin din ang gamit ng espasyo sa pagtatanghal ng mga dula: mga bakanteng bakuran, sabungan, plasa, simbahan, kanto ng lansangan, ibabaw ng trak, mga di-pangkaraniwang tanghalan ng mga di-pangkaraniwang pagtatanghal. Susi sa pagpili ng mga lugar kung saan naroon ang manonood, kung saan naroon ang mga taong sentral sa buong proseso ng paglikha ng dula.

ANG SPEKTAKULAR NA KAPANGYARIHAN NG DULANG PROTESTA NOON, NGAYON, AT BUKAS

Spektakular kung paanong ipinapara ng mga mamamayan ang kanilang buhay maipahayag lang ang kanilang saloobin sa paraang hindi kinikilala ng lipunan bilang isang lehitimong anyo ng pamamahayag. Dito rin nakasalalay ang kapangyarihan ng dula sa panahong ito. Samantalang ginagapang ng estado ang pagkontrol sa mga maka-teknolohiyang pamamahayag tulad ng radio, dyaryo ,telebisyon, at pelikula, ang lantay na kantangian ng dula bilang isang karanasang buhay at isinasabuhay ng tuwirang interaksyon ng mga kalahok nito ang nakapagbandila sa kanyang kapangyarihan bilang kasangkapan sa pagsusuri at edukasyon ng mga mamamayan. Napanatili ng dula ang interaksyong buhay, tao sa tao, nang hindi napakikitid ng *technological innovations*. Kritikal ang turing sa paggamit ng teknolohiya at laging nakatuon sa balangkas ng tanong na "Mapakikinabangan ba ito ng nakararami bukod sa aking sarili?"

Mahalagang palaisipan ang higit na pinong kilatis ng spektakulo bilang isang karanasang tumitimo sa kamalayan ng mga nagiging bahagi nito, hindi lamang bilang isang *visual engagement* kundi higit lalo ay bilang isang pulitikal na karanasan. Narito ang binabanggit na pagtulak sa pagsasadula bilang isang pagkakataon ng pagwawagi at pagbabaligtad ng pagkakataon. Nakasalalay ang spektakulo ng dula sa pagsasalin ng

teknolohiya at paraan ng pamamahayag sa kamay ng karaniwang tao, bagay na naghain ng kakaibang gitgitan ng kapangyarihan sa mga nakapangyayari sa lipunan. Napanghawakan na ng mga mandudula ang teknolohiya ng pamamahayag. Kritikal ang pagturing sa gamit ng sining ng pagsasadula bilang kasangkapang makatutugon sa pangangailangan ng nakararami pagkat panahon ito ng gitgitang may malinaw na paghahati sa mga puwersang nagtutunggali.

Spektakulong maituturing kung paanong naging huwarang pagkakataon ang dulang protesta sa paghahanda ng kamalayan ng mamamayan. Naging larangan ito ng ensayo para sa pagbabago kaya't *low tech* mang maituturing (dahil de mano) ay nagawang maging pinakaabanteng teknolohiya ng paglinang ng kaalaman dahil sa katangian nitong organiko at tuwirang nakatuon sa pangangailangan ng mga taong gumagamit at lumalahok dito. Ang mga *techno innovations* ay kinasangkapan upang lalong mapalawigang layuning pagyamanin ang kaalaman ng mamamayan. Spektakulong higit kung paanong ang pagpapasulong ng indibidwal na interes ng mga mandudula upang sumikat at magpasulong ng kanilang karera ay napaloob sa higit na malawak na layunin ng paggamit ng sining bilang kasangkapan sa pagsusulong ng interes ng higit na nakararami.

Ang aral ng yugtong ito sa kasaysayan ng dulang Filipino ay mahalagang isaalang-alang sa panahong napapayabong ng teknolohiya ang makabagong teknolohiya ng pamamahayag. Ngayong napalolobo ng teknolohiya ang realidad ng lipunan sa pamamagitan ng makabagong dimensyon ng ugnayang pantao tulad ng *cyberspace*, makabagong hamon muli ang nakaabang sa mandudula. Mula sa interaktibo at makataong ugnayang nalikha ng mga dulang protesta sa panahon ng batas militar, ngayo'y nararahuyo ang tao sa halinang likha ng makabagong espasyo ng interaksyong *cyberspace* at *interactive media*. Muling hinahamon ng mga inobasyon sa lipunan ang kritikal na kamalayan ng mandudula. Sa panahon ng interaksyong nakakulong sa *computer gadgets* at makina, may nakaamba bang panggigipit ng karapatang-pantao? Mayroon bang nakaambang pagkitil sa karapatang mabuhay ng payapa?

Kuwarenta'y siete anyos ako nang muling magdeklara ng batas militar sa bayang ito. Mahigit limampung mamamahayag ang walang habas na pinaslang habang sinasamahan ang isang magrerehistrong kandidato sa nalalapit na eleksyon. Nakaupo sa di mabilang na puwesto ng gobyerno ang dating pinunong unipormado, naguunahan maging ang pulitiko sa pangangampanya para sa nalalapit *presidential election* habang may presidenteng nangangampanya para sa pagkakongresista. Spektakulo. Nakabitin sa ibabaw ng ulo ng mamamayan ang banta ng cha-cha na maglelehitimisa sa pagbebenta ng malaking bahagi Pilipinas sa balangkas ng *no nation boundaries* habang naglulubid

ng *application forms* ang milyon-milyong *graduates* na nakapili para sa mga trabahong *contractual* dito man o sa ibang bansa. *Global* na ang usapan, hindi na bayan, *virtual* na ang pagawaan, *call center agents* na ang tawag sa manggagawang nagpapatakbo ng industriyang global habang nadaragdagan ng libu-libong dimensyon ang realidad ng buhay sa bisa ng *microchips* at *computer generated realities*. Samantalang tinutulay ng teknolohiya ang ugnayang pantao, nananatiling kulong ang ugnayan sa kuwadradong mundo ng *computer*. Indibidwal sa halip na grupo. Malaya na nga ba ang buhay? Ligtas na nga ba ang tao sa angil ng panunupil ng batas militar?

Isang spektakulo muli ang hinihingi ng pagkakataon upang muling likhain ang kakaibang init ng mapanlahok at mapagpalayang pamamahayag. Kung paanong muling uulitin ang mapanlahok na proseso ng pagsasadula, sa malapitang gabay ng mga mandudulang nakatatanda sa mga mandudulang nakababata. Dito nakasalalay ang hamon ng aral mga dulang protesta sa panahon ng batas militar.

NOTES

1 Ang mga linyang ito ay halaw sa Canto Siete ng dulang *Oratoryo ng Bayan*. Itinanghal ito ng PETA noong Disyembre 30, l983 sa Raha Sulayman Theater bilang bahagi ng MAKIISA People's Culture Festival.

2 Pakikipaghuntahan kay Joel Lamangan, dating miyembro ng Samahan ng mga Mag-aaral sa Filipino, UP, habang isinasagawa ang Roots Consolidation Process ng PETA, OMI Retreat House, Quezon City, l985.

3 Ang mga grupong pangkultura na mula sa mga grupo ng kabataan at estudyante ay sumusubay sa pamantayang pansining na nabuo ng grupo ng PAKSA (Panitikan para sa Kaunlaran ng Sambayanan) na naitatag noong panahon din ng Unang Sigwa. Ang mga pamantayang pansining nito ay halaw kay Mao Tse-tung, "Talks at the Yenan Forum," nasa *Mao Tse Tung on Literature and Art* (London: Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, n.d.) pp.1-43.

4 Ang karanasang ito ay mula sa salaysay ni Lepoy Lopez at Armand, Sta. Ana ng Bulacan, Mayo l985.

5 May ganitong karanasan sa pagbibigay ng *workshop* sa Aparri, Cagayan noong Enero l982 kasama ang mga pari mula sa Archdiocese ng Cagayan. Minanmanan din ang palihan sa Altavas, Aklan noong Marso 1982 na dinaluhan din ng mga pari at madre kasama ang mga tindera, mananahi, estudyante, magsasaka, at mangingisda ng baryo.

6 Naging bahagi ako ng MAKIISA Festival l983 sa Fort Santiago Manila kung saan ko nasaksihan ang pagsasadulang ito.

7 Kasama ako sa nagtanghal ng dulang ito noong Setyembre l977 sa UP Diliman at noong Enero l978 sa Raha Sulayman Theater, Maynila.

8 Isa ako sa mga nagtanghal ng dulang ito sa mga haiskul sa Maynila noong l980-l981.

9 Anim lamang ang aktor sa dulang ito. Batay ito sa pagiging bahagi ko ng grupong nagtatanghal ng dulang naturingan.

10 Malawak ang pagtalakay sa mga dulang ito sa aking undergraduate thesis na "ang Karanasan ng PETA-MTTL sa Pag-oorganisa ng mga dulaan sa mga haiskul ng Kamaynilaan 1975-1981" (Di-nalimbag na BA tesis, University of the Philippines, l983).

11 Mapalad akong naging isa sa mga nagtanghal ng mga dulang ito noong l984. Malawakang tinalakay ang dulansangan sa tesis ni Ma. Josephine Barrios "Tungo sa Estetika ng Dulaang Panlansangan: l980-l990" (Di-naimbag na MA tesis, De La Salle University, l991).

12 Ang mga *chant* na ito ay mula sa pangunguna ng Peryante at natutunan ng may-akda mula sa paglahok sa mga rali.

13 Nasaksihan ko ang deliberasyon ng pagsali ng PETA sa kilusang bayan pagkamatay ni Ninoy Aquino noong l983. Ang dulang ito ay bahagi ng pakikiisa ng PETA sa protesta laban kay Marcos.

14 Nasaksihan ko ang pagtatanghal na ito noong Enero l984 sa Janiuay, Iloilo.

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NEW SCHOLARS FORUM

OROSIPON KAN BIKOLNON: INTERRUPTING THE NATION

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Abstract
If narration points to notions of fixity in terms of the position of the narrator and the subsequent structuring of events, *orosipon,* a Bikolnon word for "story," suggests a refusal to fixity both in terms of the location of the narrator and the structure itself of the story: the story never stops being formed as it passes through multiple speakers. Orosipon, coming from the root word *osip* which approximates the verb "tell," points to more than one person involved in an act of telling, which makes the act of telling proper to no one in particular: indeed, it is improper for any one to act as the sole teller. Orosipon suggests a multiplicity and fluidity that is prohibited by the homogenizing structuring of narration and community. Orosipon reminds us that any speaking necessarily entails a hearing, which is another instance of speaking as well. That is, orosipon points to the structural relationality of speaking which thus necessarily prohibits absolute control. This preliminary study follows the logic of orosipon in reading Valerio Zuñiga's short story "An Sacong Aginaldo" published in the December 20, 1939 issue of the newspaper *An Parabareta.* Taking American colonialism and Tagalog nationalism as two stories in the process of being narrated during the period, the study reads the story as an instance of hearing-speaking, or of the insistence of the logic of orosipon itself.

Keywords
Bicol literature, Philippine vernacular literature

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Orosipon[1], an old Bikolnon word for "story," was used by early twentieth century *Bikolnon*[2] publications to label most of the stories they published. It was used by *Almanaque o Kalendariong Bikol*,[3] the regional almanac published by the region's first printing house, Libreria Mariana. It was used as well as by *Sanghiran nin Bikol* (The Bicol Academy[4]), the publication of the Bikolnon writers' organization of the same name. From the extant 1939 issues of the newspaper *An Parabareta* (literally, "the announcer of news") all stories were also labeled as "orosipon" except for "Huring Panambitan" ("Last Words"[5]) by Juan Nicolas published on August 9, 1939, which was labeled as *halipot na novela* ("short novel") occupying barely a page of the newspaper. The date of the publication of *Huring*

Panambitan suggests the reason for the sudden change of labeling: within the same month a new magazine was launched, the *Bikolnon,* published by Roces Publications, publisher of the influential Tagalog magazine *Liwayway.*

The Bikolnon writers welcomed the magazine *Bikolnon* with *An Parabareta*, even announcing its launching. The writers' enthusiastic welcome was immediately rewarded: barely five months after its launching, *Bikolnon* sponsored a regional competition for short story and poetry writing. The launching of the competition signaled the turn to academic literature by Bikol writers, who were previously more preoccupied with political, journalistic, and linguistic concerns. While older publications offered a few of their pages to stories, *Bikolnon* devoted many of its pages to short and long stories. In its announcement of the short story competition, *Bikolnon* names the Bikolnon story as "orosipon." Most of its published stories of various lengths were also labeled "orosipon." Other stories, however, were labeled differently. "Bitay na Paglaom" ("Dashed Hope"), for instance, written by Cirilo K. Labrador of Sorsogon, Sorsogon, was labeled as *katha.* The story appears to be a serialized story as the *Bikolnon* issue of July 20, 1940 provides the *gotos na kasaysayan kan mga enot na luas* ("summary of the events in the previous issues"). That "katha" was used to designate this longer story is contrary to the labeling of written works in the magazine's table of contents, which designates stories as "orosipon" and essays as "katha" such as Elias Ataviado's "Bakong aki ni Bonifacio" ("Not the Child of Bonifacio") and Augusto Presentacion Alvarez's "An Halaga Kan Pagbasa Nin Pahayagan" ("The Importance of Reading the Newspaper"). Instead of indecision, this play with the labeling indicates rather a moment of decision for the Bikolnon writers: what is our story? The indecision indicates a pause in the thinking of the Bikolnon writers and thus an act of control, of decision. This moment of naming of the Bikolnon story was of course corollary to the intellectualization of the production of stories, allowing intellectuals and writers to take the position of authority as producers and critics.

At the moment, however, we are less concerned with the Bikolnon writers' growing consciousness of a literary form that they were then attempting to label. We are more concerned with their growing consciousness of the word "orosipon" itself as the Bikolnon's word for "story."

Kellog and Scholes, studying the nature of the narrative, specify speaking as that which makes a tale, a tale: "For writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required" (4). It is, however, precisely this structure of a story predicated upon the notion of a speaker—or as Kellog and Scholes put it, a teller—that determines the social. For as Jacques Ranciere argues, not all speakers are sensed as such, making their

stories inaudible as well.[6] Speaking's ontological non-relation translates into epistemic and material domination, authorizing the various forms of social domination. The notion of a speaker is predicated upon the sense of sight: the speaker who sees. The seer is the subject who is completely present to herself and in full control of herself. The self-presence of this subject enables her to see as well, and to speak of what she sees. The object seen, and spoken of by this self-presence, has thus been narrated/created. There is no relating in the speaking and seeing of this self-presence: the object seen and spoken of remains distanced and muted. Speaking thus erases multiplicity as such not just by dominating the arena of communication but by monopolizing it: the speaker has the sole rights to speaking. The epistemic control that results from this monopoly orders the social as well distributing and organizing spaces and bodies.

It is the determination of space, and the occupation of space established by speaking, which at the same secured speaking's place in the distribution of places. Movement itself is prohibited, Ranciere finds, in Plato's world. The establishment of Plato's world—the community of citizens where there is justice—is accomplished by the determination of time, which is to say, the determination of space. Plato achieves this through the figure of the artisan, which Ranciere finds as to have a double function in Plato's just community of citizens: the artisan is, on the surface, the member of the community who makes shoes and houses, but also and more importantly, the member who is reminds everyone to be in their proper places in the community, at all times. That is, no one is to occupy two places at the same time. The regulation of time and space among the members of the community achieves the organization of the community, orders the community as such. For Plato, the order of the community is achieved and maintained by the solidity and fixity of space: members are determined by functions and their functions determine their proper place. The instance that the fixity of space, and with it the proper occupation of places of the members of the community, is poked even by just a movement of a member occupying two places at the same time, movement itself will ensue, revealing reason's locatedness.

This speaking has already been revealed to be nothing but a narrating of a narrator.[7] That is, that which is spoken of is but a creation of this narrator, and that this narrator is always already circumscribed by her locatedness. It is to this violent reduction of being that Fanon issues a simple and direct answer: "The negro is not" (231). Fanon's speaking is a wrenching of the position of speaker, the establishment of a new language and thus of a new world.

Orosipon provides us with an alternative notion of being. Coming from the root *osip*, roughly meaning "to tell" as well, orosipon allows a different thinking of speaking as

such, and of stories. For orosipon[8] is structurally multiple; a telling of more than one teller, a speaking of more than one speaker. It is also, in its very multiplicity, structurally fluid. That is, the orosipon never gets completed or solidified into a completely enclosed story. The complete one-ning, the communion that refuses difference as achieved by speaking, is structurally prohibited by orosipon.

In orosipon, we move from the immobility of non-relation that solidifies into essences to the movement of relating which prohibits solidification. The image of movement comes as a threat, as Ranciere had shown in his reading of Plato, and in no other way, as it challenges the very idea of what it is to be a human being, which cannot not be defined without the notion of language as speaking. We have seen, however, that "to be" is not really "to speak," but "to hear-speak." In other words, this movement is in the order of an encounter, of a relating. It is Mikhail Bakhtin who takes us furthest into the intensity of the movement of language. Bakhtin refuses to understand language either as langue or as parole but as that which incessantly moves between the language users—who are all at once speakers and understanders. For Bakhtin, then, there is no stillness at all at any time. There is never a "now" that is occupied by a presence. It is here that we understand (or come close to understand) what is at stake in writing or literature, which ultimately brings us to language as such. If we have been trapped for a long time in the thinking of the human being as that being who speaks, which is also to say that being with reason, the notion of a being who becomes in hearing-speaking, or in relating, takes us to the fluidity that structures language and the human being, who can no longer be properly called a human being. Language, writing, is the relating, that is also the hearing-speaking being.

Or more properly, as Marx reminds us, hearing-speaking beings, as language, does not appear in isolation. Language appears at the same time as a group of hearing-speaking beings acquire a certain consistency in their encountering as to effectuate a web of articulation in their hearing-speaking. We say at the same time, but for Marx, language is the property of the hearer-speaker beings, appearing as part of their property, and not as a separate entity. The hearing-speaking does not solidify into a speaking of a single speaker; it maintains the structure of a hearing-speaking, or of fluidity. It maintains the flow of fluidity, or in other words, its consistency.

It is this consistency of a relating which Jean Luc Nancy perhaps means when he argues that articulation actually takes place in a non-place, in a spac-ing. The emphasis remains on the movement, on the on-going-ness, the fluidity, of the taking which points as well to the multiplicity of the hearer-speakers. Nancy's spac-ing is the consistency that is achieved by the articulation of hearer-speakers. Consistency provides another way of a

coming together that still recognizes difference in its coming together. Orosipon suggests this consistency of an articulation of a commonality that never achieves a complete communion.

Orosipon thus allows a different thinking of telling a story, one which denies the monopoly and thus dominance of a speaker. The story of a coming-together then is an orosipon—a story indeed, but one that is continuously told and changed by the continuous hearing-speaking of hearer-speakers.

Orosipon allows us to remember what is at stake in the thinking of what we have variously called "writing" or "literature," which as Marx reminds us is the constitution of language and the language-users as such. While the notion of orosipon might seem to undermine anticolonial nationalist thinkers' efforts towards a national unity that is strong enough to withstand the global and capitalist discourse, it only provides an alternative image of a coming-together in a self that remains fluid in its multiplicity. It is a unity that is not an immanence that totalizes, thereby erasing difference itself. The unity that is suggested by orosipon remains an orosipon, an articulation that has enough consistency to have achieved togetherness. Recognition of difference as such in a coming-together as suggested by orosipon does not break apart the orosipon into a total non-understanding. An orosipon maintains its multiplicity in its coming-together in a consistency, precisely in an orosipon.

Still paying attention to Marx, we remember that as it is the property of the human being to be related not only to other human beings but also to the conditions of production, and that this relationality structures the language as well, epistemic domination translates into the domination of the social goods. The dominance of Tagalog in the national imaginary functioned, or has been justified to function, to counter Hispanization and Americanization, but it also dominated over other ethno-linguistic groups in the archipelago.

The orosipon of the Bikolnon, the particular focus of this short essay, relocates speaking in Bikol. Recalling here, however, the continuous movement of the orosipon, the relocation of speaking is not a movement that stops in the new location but a sensing of other locations, other speakers in the continuous orosipon of the Philippine nation. That is, the study recognizes that the narrative of the Philippine nation-state, in conjunction with the narrative of capital, are but two strands, two locations, of speaking in the continuous and differently located simultaneous speakings of the orosipon of the Filipino nation. In the early twentieth century Bikolnon publications, Bikolnons hear-speak the orosipon of the

Filipino nation and take the position of hearer-speakers as well, thereby taking up space in the national imaginary.

AN OROSIPON KAN BIKOLNON: DETERMINING THE BIKOLNON

In its December 20, 1939 issue, the Bikolnon magazine *An Parabareta (El Noticiero)* published Valerio Zuñiga's "An Sacong Aginaldo," labeling it as *pamascong orosipon* ("Christmas story"). Ziuñiga's orosipon is significant for Bikolnon writing in several ways. Let us take a look at the orosipon's opening.

> 23 nin Disyembre, Antebispera o ika duwa na sabang aldaw can ka-aldawan nin pagsubang sa kinaban nin Dios-aki. An kaagahon malipot asin an panahon malomlom ta natititiniktinik. An aldaw garo nasosopog magpahiling can saiyan liwanag, ta an sapot na mahipot nin alopoop natatahoban an saiyang saldang; alagad, can naghihigñodto na, garong napanale sanang hinapoy idtong mahibog na alopoop, tominonong an pagtitiniktinik asin an nagñising pandoc nin si aldaw luminowas sa iyong nagpaliwanag asin nagpaogma caidtong caaldawon.
>
> It was the 23rd of December, *antebispera* or two days before the day when the Child-God was born. The morning was cold and gloomy because of the light drizzle. The sun seemed to be ashamed to show its light since the thick clouds cover its rays. However, at around noon, the thick clouds suddenly disappeared, the drizzle stopped and the smiling face of the sun appeared which shone and made the day happy.

The choice to open and set the orosipon with nature, particularly the sun, is not new to Bikolnon writing in itself; stories[9] by Nicolasa Ponte de Perfecto published in Kalendariong Bikol in the same decade used nature as well to characterize not only the stories but Bikolnon as a geographical and cultural location as against the nation's metropole, Manila. What differentiates Zuñiga's orosipon, for one, is its unhurried and detailed characterization of the sun, and two, its temporal specificity (December 23) from which previously published orosipons shied away.

As Benedict Anderson has shown, the precision of the calendrical-clock time of narration works wonderfully as a homogenizing machine; mentioning December 23 as the

specific day when the orosipon happens immediately takes the readers into that single day. Zuñiga's choice of the day is especially effective as Bikolnons, like other Filipinos, have been Christianized enough to know exactly what happens two days before Christmas. The orosipon's opening, thus, immediately swallows its readers to its time, effectively wrapping them into a community of readers.

While Ponte de Perfecto's orosipons published in An Kalendaryong Bikol make use of nature to start and ground the story (Barbaza), Zuñiga's orosipon is markedly more specific. The description of the morning sun as initially shamefully hiding behind the clouds because of the light drizzle works to pull its readers to its orosipon as well. It is a familiar enough sight to Bikolnons for it to be overlooked in its very everydayness image. Like the smile that the sun lets out around noon in the orosipon when the drizzle finally stops, the readers might very well smile as well in recognition of the sun's characterization. The recognition of what in fact is an everyday reality in Bikol (as well as in most parts of the archipelago) works then as a recognition of Bikol as a self: yes, that is Bikol, our land. This narrative technique called by formalists as defamiliarization seems to be the first time such specificity in description was used.

The precision of time in which the readers are gulped into one synchronized and thus homogenized time is also the horizontalization of space. The determination of time into a simultaneity is the determination of space: the distribution and occupation of a smooth uninterrupted space. Readers sucked into the homogenized time are also thereby sucked into the occupation of the horizontalized space. The horizontalization of space works to trace the contours of the geographical body of Bikol, thereby solidifying the entity defined: narrating thus the Bikolnon body.

The first sentence, however, immediately betrays as well the instability from which the orosipon itself issues. After specifying the day on which it happens, *23 nin Disyembre* (December 23), the narrator follows it up with "antebispera o ika duwa na sabang aldaw can kaaldawan nin pagsubang sa kinaban nin Dios-aki" ("antebispera or two days before the day itself of the birth of the Son of God"). The narrator stops and recognizes the foreignness of the occasion itself, the foreignness announced by the Castilian word *antebispera*, by translating it to the Bikolnon language with the translation signaled by the "or." The hump in the reading, and in the imagining of the readers as occasioned by the "or," throws the narration from its smooth flow into a movement away from the narration's now—Bikolnon, as a presence. The foreign, marking the discontinuity in the narration, however, will be immediately lodged within the stability of the familiar self of Bikolnon nature. Thus, the solidified self cushions, absorbs the undesirable effects of the foreign.

Here, the foreign is already comfortably absorbed such that the self is imaged as unmoved (unaffected) by the not-self. The self then appears to have been sufficiently solidified.

The community of readers as a self that turns out to be multiple as announced by the "or" indicates the need to address at least two groups of readers: one readily understanding the Castilian *antibispera,* and the other group who may not readily understand this word, thus the subsequent translation into the Bikolnon word for it. Indeed, the pages of the *An Parabareta* do not hide the multiple self indexed by at least three languages: Bikolnon, Spanish, and English. The multiple self will be further revealed to be in fact more than three, as the different varieties of the Bikolnon language is addressed by some of its writers. This multiplicity, however, will later be perceived as undesirable by some of the Bikolnon writers, and will be attempted to be controlled. The instability engendered by this multiplicity was addressed precisely by the writers of the *An Parabareta* and of the other publications. Its writers, including its very own publisher Estaquio Diño, engaged in a series of essays debating on the properties of the Bikolnon language.

Time, however, interrupts the smoothing of the plane of the Bikolnon body. The interruption of space comes in the form of absence. The first interruption mars the assembly of the Bikolnon writers where Diño took part as a lecturer: Casimiro Perfecto, publisher of *the An Kalendaryong Bikol*, could not make it to the assembly as he was busy with his tasks as a member of the Instituto de Lengua Nacional. Diño, publisher of the *An Parabareta,* appears to be regarded as a reliable authority among Bikolnon writers as he was invited to speak at the conference of Bikol writers which was held in the same year when Zuñiga's "An Sacong Aginaldo" was published. The assembly of Bikolists was organized by another publication, the *Bikol Pioneer Herald.* Diño was asked to talk about the orosipon of the Bikolnon and titles his lecture accordingly as "An Orosipon sa Bikol." The first part of the lecture was published in *An Parabareta* in its November 1, 1939 issue.[10] We recall here that the magazine *Bikolnon* was launched in August of the same year. Diñ's lecture thus coincides with *Bikolnon*'s launching of the orosipon writing contest, and the subsequent academization of the writing of orosipon. The conference itself must have been the same assembly held in October 28-29 announced by *An Parabareta* in its October 23, 1939 issue. Diño starts his lecture by immediately confessing his lack of authority on the topic and proceeds to invite his fellow writers to fill in whatever his lecture lacks. This lack, of course, is precisely the lack which the assembly has gathered to fill: the fullness of the Bikolnon presence, the proper identification not only of orosipon, but specifically that of the Bikolnon self.

The modesty with which Diño decides to open his lecture might have also been a gesture towards the convention of starting an *agi-agi* or *plosa* (metrical romance) with the humble recognition of the limits of one's talents, but the main body of the lecture itself attests to the lecturer's confession: the body of the Bikolnon and her orosipon are still to be defined. Diño chooses to trace the Bikolnon orosipon from its beginnings but finds himself not with an originary beginning of the Bikolnon and her orosipon, but with the Bikolnon's not-self, its Spanish colonizers: "An pagugid sa Orosipon sa Bikol, mahihimong poonan niyató sa kapanahunan nin mga kastilá na an dating pagsurat nin mga pilipino sinangléan kan abakada o alpabetong latina" (2). ("We might as well begin the tracing of the Bikolnon orosipon from the Spanish period when the Filipinos' old system of writing was replaced with the alphabet or the Latin alphabet"). The lecture discloses the self of Bikolnon as blurred not only by Hispanization but by Tagalog as well, with Diño crossing to literary works written in Tagalog and going back to what is Bikolnon. As such, not only was the self of Bikolnon undefined, but its orosipon as well. It was, however, precisely the goal of the conference and the lecture itself to define what was properly Bikolnon. The conference was for Bicol vernacular writers to discuss the different aspects of the development of the Bicol dialect, considered one of the richest dialects in the Philippines" (6). Another announcement claims that the assembly was the first of its kind to be held in Bicol. It must have been the first academic assembly of Bikolnon writers and intellectuals, but the first organization of Bikolnon writers and intellectuals was the *Sanghiran nin Bikol* founded in 1927. A letter written to the editor in *An Parabareta* by Reyna Purita of Villareal, Gubat-Sorsogon, published in August 20, 1939, recalls the pioneering efforts of the writers and organizers of the *Sanghiran nin Bikol*, and calls on writers to take up once again the worthy cause of the *Sanghiran* writers. Purita lauds Diño in his August 2 column Takiux[12] which declares the paper's agreeing to the editor of *Pioneer Bicol Herald,* Leon Sa. Aureus, published in July 29, 1939, which calls on Bikolnon writers to organize and work on the sanghiran of the Bikolnon language.

The letter suggests three things. First, the efforts of the *Sanghiran* Bikolists, based mainly in Nueva Caceres (now Naga City), reached a wider audience with Purita, the letter writer residing in the southernmost tip of Bikol, Sorsogon. Secondly, the *Sanghiran* work was serious enough for Purita to have remembered it, more than a decade later. However, the letter also suggests that the efforts did not last long enough. Thus, the need for another conference on Bikolnon language and literature.

Diño's lecture in the conference illustrates the Bikolnon writers' growing consciousness of the institutionalization of literature. Zuñiga's orosipon published barely a

week after the conference further suggests the increasing conceptual intrusion of academic literature in the orosipon of the Bikolnon. The labeling of most of the published stories before the launching of the magazine *Bikolnon* as "orosipon" could be suggestive of the conceptual distance that the Bikolnons still hold vis-a-vis the conceptual colonization of academic literature. However, Zuñiga's writing of the orosipon "An Sacong Aginaldo" itself was a move to recognize the other, the colonial categories of literature, as much as it was a move to define and establish the properties of the Bikolnon. That is, the writing of the orosipon was a move to bridge the perceived gap between a proper way of writing and what was still the perceived way of writing printed short narrative prose in Bikol. This move to establish the self as the same as that of the other is a move to establish the equality between the self and the other, the movement of the articulation of Bikolnonness anchored on the proper as established by the image of the other. This writing of the Bikolnon self, however, is a writing that will be structurally determined by orosipon, by the restless *orosiponic* character of writing, of language as such, pulling and pushing the writing into different directions.

Among the extant orosipons, Zuñiga's "An Sacong Aginaldo" is the first orosipon whose formal characteristics (as the more detailed description of the sun discussed above) approximate that of the western realist short story. What immediately distinguishes it from previously published orosipon is its length. Its length required its readers to turn the pages of *An Paraberata* six times. In the same year, *An Parabareta* published two orosipons in Bikolnon both written by Juan Nicolas, another orosipon in Bikolnon written by Aniceto Gonzales, and two orosipons in English both written by Johnny Belgica. Four of these orosipons are short enough to fit a single page of *An Parabareta.* "Ang Tolong Magtorogang" by Gonzales is the longest, occupying two pages of the publication. However, Gonzales's orosipon is not properly fiction as a retelling of a folk tale. Among the extant copies of the *An Kalendaryong Bikol,* there are four orosipons by Nicolasa Ponte de Perfecto which were published in 1938 and 1939. These four orosipons are narratives that, like Zuñiga's, fall under the category of fiction. Perfecto's orosipons, however, only occupy one and half pages of the almanac's pages. Zuñiga's "An Sacong Aginaldo" thus comes across as something foreign in Bikolnon writing.

If the first paragraph of Zuñiga's orosipon cushions the effect of the presence of the not-self in the comforting solidity of the self as discussed above, the second paragraph of the orosipon gives way to the confusion of receiving the foreign. In the first paragraph, the presentation of the self succeeds in enveloping the not-foreign as to make it already part of itself. The second paragraph takes on the foreign in its foreignness.

In the first paragraph the foreignness of the occasion, the *antebispera* was translated into Bikolnon, signaling its foreignness. The image of the Christmas tree in the second paragraph as not being part of the Bikolnon self is announced loudly in having the words themselves rendered untranslated and in the upper case amidst all the words in Bikolnon, which are in the lower case. More than the visuality of the word, however, Christmas tree intrudes as a presence as the narrator proceeds to describe the confusion that the invasion of this not-self engenders:

> Sa harong in Ninay, kanigoan an riboc, ta an saiyang tolong saraday pang aki, si Bading, si Oro asin si Liling nagpapasuruhuay con anong palong pong o cahoy an marhay na saindang gibohon na "CHRISTMAS TREE." Si Bading na iyo an matua sa gabos, na gñogñotiil na an "agoho," iyo an marhay, ta taranos an mga sagña minsan saraday an mga dahon. Si Oro na iyo an ika-duwa, nakikipasuhay man na an "miyapi", na palongpong iyo an maninigó ta dakol an mga sagña asin maramoong an dahon. Si Liling na iyo an gñohod, nagñigñdit man ma an "hagol," iyo an marhay, ta haralabá an mga sagña asin rawong rawong an mga dahon. Garo an mag-iiriwal si tolo, asin haralangkaw na an saindang pagtaram na iyong nakasadol sa saindang iná na dolokon kan saindang tolo, sa pagugid con ano ano an saindang pinag-iiriwalan.
>
> In Ninay's house, her three children, Bading, Oro, and Liling, are noisily arguing over which kind of tree would they use to make their "CHRISTMAS TREE." Bading, the eldest of the three, insists that "*Agoho* is the best tree since its body is straight and the leaves are small." Oro, the second child, argues that *miyapi* is the best tree to use since it has a lot branches and the leaves are many. Liling, who is the youngest, protests that *hagol* is the best tree since its branches are thick. They are already close to fighting with their voices already shrieking when their mother speaks and asks them what is it they are arguing about.

From pulling its readers into the community and land of the Bikolnons in the first paragraph, the narrator then zooms in on a specific house, that of Ninay's. From the warmth that the sun finally decides to bestow, the narrator brings its readers to the heat of an argument—that of Ninay's three children. Here we have narration and its homogenizing

powers stopped loudly (*riboc* literally means "noise" in Bikolnon, although figuratively used to mean argument) in its very tracks by orosipon.

The narration brings with it the narrating powers of Christmas tree, intruding as it were the warmth of the Bikolnon land. We know very well that the image of the Christmas Tree goes beyond its religious function. As it homogenizes the religious belief and the rituals that come with it, capital enters as well, translating the tree into a need and eventually becoming a commodity. Yet, we see orosipon, language as such, stopping the narration. The children ask: which of our trees here makes the best Christmas tree? The eldest argues for *agoho* since the branches are straight and the leaves are small, the second child argues, on his part, for *miyapi* since there are many branches and leaves, and lastly, the youngest, Liling, argues that *hagol* will make the best Christmas tree, since the branches are thick. Ninay, the mother, wrenches the meaning from the tree and establishes it on the basis of practicality: the best tree is the tree nearest to our house.

Between the image of the Christmas Tree and its presencing there lies language as such and the materiality of its production. The arrival of the Christmas Tree as the real of the image is delayed by the undecidability, or as Derrida puts it, in the iterability that structures representation as such. The undecidability that occurs in the transfer has to do with the materiality of the geologic condition of the peninsula as well—the trees that are produced by the Bikolnon land on which the children base their question. With the mother stilling the movement of meaning with practicality, the children proceed with the preparation of the tree, making all sorts of decorations by hand. It is not just the children who are busy with the Christmas preparations; the mother, too, is busy preparing her children's clothes to be worn in the traditional midnight mass. The narration thus proceeds.

To be sure, the writing of the orosipon is an articulation of the Bikolnon. The orosipon is published by the publication *An Parabareta,* whose banner head proclaims "Parasorog sa capacanan nin magna Bicolnon" ("Defender of the welfare of the Bikolnon"). The pages of the *An Parabareta* trace the contours of the geographical self of the Bikolnon as the readers partake of various writings about different events happening all over the peninsula and even the two island provinces of the political region of Bicol. Fiesta in Libon is reported as well as the preparation for a grand celebration for the town fiesta in Virac. An old woman got hit by a car and died as a consequence. A new hospital inaugurated in Legazpi where a meeting of communists was also held with the lone female member attending. A meeting of Bikolists in Naga City for the *sanghiran* of the Bikolnon language. The towns where the events are reported to have happened serve as points that spread out horizontally on the smooth plane of the geographic body of the peninsula of Bicol. The

publication, with its news articles, traces the limits defining the geographic inside of the Bikolnon as a separate self with its specific geographic body.

Zuñiga's orosipon treats space smoothly, almost uninterrupted. The movement of the characters from one place to another, one house to another, or from the house to forest does not make time appear. That is, there is no interval—a dog barking in the corner while a character walks, or the sound of people chatting when a character passes by a neighborhood store. Space is interrupted when time enters the orosipon. Time comes in the form of a letter announcing an absence. Rosa's husband, Carlos, works in a mining camp in Aroroy, in the island of Masbate, southwest of Sorsogon, the tip of the peninsula of Bicol. Absence wedges itself in space by its very absence. The narrator explains Didoy's absence:

> ta huli sa kadaihon nin paghanap buhay, poon can sinda kasalon, na paduman sa dudulagnan o mina nin bulawan sa Baliti, baryo nin Aroroy, sa paghanap nin pangamlang o trabaho.
>
> since the day of their wedding Didoy had not been able to find a job, he went to the mining village of Baliti, in the town of Aroroy, to look for one.

Thus Didoy's presence in the orosipon, like Perfecto's in the conference, is his absence. Although the island is still part of the political unit of the region, certain factors prevent Carlos from coming home as frequently as he would have wanted. In fact, he has been away from home for nine months. He sends home his 1.50-peso daily salary from work at one of the canteens at the mining camp, like what present-day Filipinos working overseas do with their salaries. Didoy, however, works not just within the Philippine archipelago but within the geo-political unit of the Bicol region. We might guess that the reason for Didoy's not being able to come home is the state of the system of transportation within the region. Yet, when Rosa hears the whistle of the ship, it is familiar enough for her to immediately recognize it as belonging to a specific ship:

> An macosog na pito nin motor "Perla del Oriente," pagpondo sa dorónga n na halé sa Aroroy, iyong napacobacoba can daghan asin naca paogma can pusó ni Rosa, ta idtong pito nagpapaisi saiya na ominabot na an saiyang namomótan na agom. (8)

> Rosa's heart thumped wildly when she heard the loud whistle of "Perla del Oriente's" engine as it docked from its trip from Aroroy. It announced the arrival of her beloved husband. (8)

The specific information that the ship sailed from the port of Aroroy and not from any other port could very well be the insertion of the narrator's voice within Rosa's thoughts, informing the readers that what Rosa heard was really the whistle of the Perla del Oriente. Yet, Rosa immediately picks up her child, tightly embraces him, and whispers to him, "Nonoy, anion na si papa mo" ("Nonoy, your papa has arrived"), and with her child in her arms she goes over to the window and asks her Tiyang Ninay (Aunt Ninay): "Tiya, nadagnog mo an pito can motor Perla?" ("Tiya, did you hear the whistle of Perla's engine?") Ninay's response to Rosa suggests that the ship from Aroroy docks frequently enough for them to recognize its whistle or know the time of its arrival: "Garong na-alomatignan co, alagad, na pasibayaan co, ta may pig-gigibo ako" ("I think so, but I was doing something so I really did not notice it.") If not for Ninay's preoccupation with the preparations for Christmas Eve, the whistle announcing the docking of the ship would also have been audible for Ninay.

Still, the orosipon remains silent on Didoy's inability to come home earlier and more frequently. This silence is buried, and thus is made more pronounced, in the happy preparations for Christmas Eve. The orosipon details the picking of the tree, the making of decorations, the cooking of the *noche buena*, and the preparation of the clothes to be worn for the traditional midnight mass. The orosipon, in other words, presents all these exotically. But what of the silence on Didoy's job in the mining camp?

The *An Parabareta* itself, however, was not silent about the mining in Aroroy, Masbate. An article by Ramon A. Alejo with the title "The Mining Camp: One-Man Government" supplies the readers with the information unsupplied in the orosipon:

> The typical mining camp in Baguio, Paracale, and Aroroy Mining District is a complete city in itself. Like the International Settlement of Shanghai and ... in China, it has an independent government run by one man and he is known as the General Superintendent or Resident Manager. Like Louis XII, The Tyrant of France: he can say: I AM THE STATE.

This absolute power that is allegedly held by the Resident Manager of the mining camp allows him to run the camp like military camp:

> The premises are fenced with barbed wire. At the gate are guards, stationed to prevent outsiders from entering the premises of the company. Mine workers are inspected at the gate when leaving the property and stripped of their clothes. (6)

It is not clear whether Alejo was also a Bikolnon since his articles discuss the general situation in three mining camps, or whether he writes in the Bikolnon language. The presence, however, of his articles on the pages of the *An Parabareta* suggests the need for the article to be published. His article further details the kind of surveillance that the mining camps maintain to ensure the continuity of production without the interruption of protests from the laborers.

The orosipon's image of Didoy, the mining camp worker, however, does not reconcile with Alejo's description. Didoy does not come home tired, angry and yelling at his wife. Instead, like the image of present-day Filipino overseas worker, Didoy happily comes home with all the presents to compensate for his absence. Stashed safely away from the orosipon is the hardship of living and working at the mining camp.

Another absence brings more exotic things. Ninay's own husband, Carlos, arrives that day as well "hale sa Juban sa pagpahagot, asin may dara na daraculang pipatos can saiyang binacalan" ("from Juban, from abaca harvesting and was carrying big bags of things he bought") (15). While the orosipon mentions *pagpahagot,* referring to abaca stripping, it remains silent as to the specific reason for his absence. Does he own an abaca farm? Is he a *parahagot*? The orosipon instead enumerates again the things that Carlos brings home:

> Pagbucaha ni Ninay can sindang pinatos na dara can saiyang agom, na hiling niya an magna vestido asin sapatos para sa magna aki, igwa man nin tagasarong kilong nueses, abalyanas, castanyas, asin tagsarong dosena na mansanas asin peras asin duwang kilong pasas, duwang kilong ubas, dacol na naranhitas asin lansones.
>
> Ninay unwrapped the presents brought by her husband and saw the clothes and shoes for her children. There were also a kilo of one dozen each of apples and pears, two kilos of raisins, two kilos of grapes, and a lot of oranges and *lanzones*.

Except for the *naranhitas* (Philippine orange) and *lanzones* (a Philippine fruit grown in Laguna and in Davao), the rest of the fruits are imported. Constantino writes that "in 1899, the Philippines purchased only 9% of its total imports from the United States; by 1933 the proportion had risen to 64%" (307). Indeed, among the first laws enacted concerning the Philippine colony were those which would allow the free flow of American products into the Philippine market. The series of Tariff Acts enacted from 1901 protected American businesses by eliminating competition and lowering the tariff rates on some of the American products. The Treaty of Paris allowed Spanish products to be imported for ten years but the US Congress immediately passed the Payne-Aldrich Act, which finally allowed unlimited quantities of American goods to enter the Philippine soil tax-free.

Although the narrator does not specify the town where the story happens, there are two indications pointing to a coastal town in Sorsogon, the southernmost most tip of the peninsula. The townspeople can hear the whistle of a docking ship and Ninay's husband, Carlos, comes home from Juban, a town in Sorsogon. In Sorsogon, Bikolnon historian Luis Dery writes that the commercialization of hemp (*bandala* in the Bikolnon language) significantly changed the lives of the Sorsogaños. Hemp has long been part of the lives of the people of Bikol with its fiber providing the people various uses in their housing, fishing, and clothing. Its importance to pre-colonial Bikolnons is strongly suggested by archeological findings of "fibrous-like materials with the dead" (Dery 106). Certainly, the Spanish colonial authorities discovered the bandala's importance early on and subsequently made it part of the colonial tribute exacted from the peninsula's inhabitants. A decree was established as early as December 10, 1646 mandating the cultivation of the abaca plant by all the natives. By 1661, Dery finds the abaca plant already an expensive commodity with its price pegged at four reales per *chinanta* (equivalent of 6.326 kilograms) of abaca. The Spanish colonial authorities made use of the abaca to make the ropes and riggings for their galleons. Eventually a Royal Rope-Making Factory was established in the Bicol region to supply the Spanish galleons with all their roping and rigging needs. The Spanish, however, limited themselves to using the abaca in their ships. It was the English and especially the American traders from the early nineteenth century who linked Bicol to the global economy by transforming abaca into an export commodity. The integration of the region's economy, especially the abaca-producing provinces of Albay and Camarines Sur, to the international fiber market by the latter half of the nineteenth century was such that "the economic cycles of the industrial West are clearly reflected in the local crop prices, wage rates, government revenues (including cockfight admissions), and even the rate of marriage" (Owen 96).

There are no articles in the *An Parabareta* that reveal the otherwise unknown living and working conditions in abaca farms. There are, however, news articles announcing changes in government policies on abaca trading, approval of the quality of abaca by inspectors. Abaca as Dery writes has long been integral to the Bikolnon life. The silence in Zuñiga's orosipon and in the pages of the *An Parabareta* then must be the silence of the already known, the commonly sensed.

Carlos's absence, however, like Didoy's absence, results to an empty space which must be filled. Both Didoy and Carlos fill the empty space with foreign, exotic food and goods. These foreign, exotic things are welcomed into the very intimate spaces of their houses. The foreignness is made more pronounced as the narrator tells of the neighbors who are enticed to come up to the house of Carlos and Ninay by the beautiful voices of the children singing Christmas carols, and are amazed at the beauty of the Christmas Tree, its decorations and the children's toys. All of which, the narrator reveals, the neighbors have not seen before. The giddy happiness felt by everyone with the presence of all the amazingly beautiful exotic goods makes the absences of the men of the families justified. The children are the happiest as they are all given what they have been desiring the most: automated toys, all grimly hinting at the impending war that will reach the archipelago in a year:

> Si Bading sarong tren na may guyod na duwang bagon na macadalagan ta igwa nin cuerdas; ki Oro sarong aeroplanong bomber na pagcuerdase na layog asin naghahagobohob asin ki Liling sarong corocanyon na automatico na pagcuerdas man sonodsonod an potoc. (16)
>
> A train for Bading which has two wheels and can run. A bomber airplane for Oro which is also automatic. And an automatic canyon for Liling. (16)

Zuñiga's orosipon does appear to be a clearing and taking up of space. Like the specifications on the Bikolnon language and its orthography, which the Bikolnon writers debated on in the pages of the *Sanghiran nin Bikol* and the *An Parabareta*, the orosipon takes up space by giving the Bikolnon a body. The orosipon makes the Bikolnon visible: the Bikol geographic body in the details of the setting, the Bikolnon in Rosa and Didoy, Carlos and Ninay and the three children.

The appearance of the self, however, as in any self-ing, comes in its recognition of the not-self. In publications such as *Sanghiran nin Bikol* and the *An Parabareta*, writers like

Estaquio Diño, Herrera, Guray, Casimiro Perfecto, and Luis Dimarumba argued in print as to the specifications and categories of the Bikolnon language by placing it side by side with the English and Castilian languages. In making the geo-body of Bikol and the Bikolnon people visible, Zuñiga's orosipon differentiates the Bikolnon from the not-Bikolnon. In other words, the Bikolnon appears at the moment that the not-Bikolnon appears for the Bikolnon.

The appearance, however, is not the clear and transparent eruption of a presence which thereby takes position in space. The debate on the Bikolnon language bares the multiplicity of speakers and thus the fluidity of the Bikolnon. Zuñiga's orosipon presents the community as being grounded in absence. The absences in the orosipon filled up, as they were, by the material foreign things were not exactly absences, an emptiness that stands still in its very emptiness. The empty space created by the absence, on the contrary, points to a movement: the encroachment of another spatial order. The absences, compensated in the narratives with exotic goods and food, point to another speaker, speaking from a different location, and of a different order already summed up by Marx around one and a half centuries ago: "Capital by nature drives beyond every spatial barrier" (524). Capital reaches Ninay's home with Didoy and Carlos, going away to make a living and going back home on Christmas eve (Carlos) and on Christmas day (Didoy), giving everyone their Christmas presents bought by their very absence from their homes.

The spectacularity of the foreign goods which fill in the space vacated by the absence obscures the presence of this differently located speaker. Thus the absences in the Bikolnon narratives are not absences as such that translate into spatial emptiness, breaking apart the orosipon of the Bikolnon. The absences are engendered by the movements of insertions by the epistemic and spatial configurations of American capital and the Philippine nation-state. The presences of these orosipons take up space in the orosipon of the Bikolnon engendering gaps and movement in the orosipon of the Bikolnon.

Still, the orosipon ends with the ultimate gift: Rosa's child born in the absence of Didoy. Apparently Rosa is already heavy with child when Didoy leaves for Aroroy. The child, Rosa's surprise Christmas gift to her husband, is born a few months after he left. As the child takes his presence in the orosipon, the orosipon of the Bikolnon begins to maintain consistency in the orosipons of its writers. As the Bikolnon orosipons take more and more space, however, the statist and capitalist discourses hem in the orosipon of the Bikolnon.

Any speaking, however, is always already a hearing, as these Bikolnon writings indicate. The speaking of these Bikolnon writings is a hearing of the nation's narration. If

speaking is an ordering of spaces and the distribution of the social goods among the bodies, orosipon is an interruption of this ordering. As these Bikolnon writings show, however, an interruption as another speaking is also always already interrupted in its interruption.

Thus the Bikolnon orosipon interrupts the national orosipon. Orosipon, however, is the uninterrupted interruption: Bakhtin's incessant movement of the word. A word, which if we stay close to Bakhtin, we understand to be more of a word-ing: a becoming rather than a being.

NOTES

[1] I thank my anonymous reader/s for the valuable suggestions and helpful comments.

[2] Based on the extant materials.

[3] Sometimes spelled as *Kalendariog Bikol, Almanake okon Kalendaryong Bikol,* or *Kalendariong Bikolnon*.

[4] The banner head of the publication itself translated *Sanghiran nin Bikol* as *Academiang Bicol.*

[5] Translation by Maria Lilia F. Realubit, page 243, in *The Bikols of the Philippines.*

[6] My reading of the notion of speaking is primarily from the work of Ranciere. His most sustained discussion of this is in *Disagreement: Politics and History.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota,1999.

[7] See for example Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

[8] Osip itself illustrates language's iterability in the various ways the word and its derivatives are used. Osipon could also mean gossip (osip-osip), rumor, or casual conversation. In the late 1990s, while osipon [usipon] was still being used as story in the town of Bacacay, Albay, according to people I interviewed there, osip [usip] was already then being used to mean "to squeal" in Naga City, revealing a verticalized view of the social order (the presence of an authority to which the person will "osip" something against somebody). This *orosiponic* journey of the word osip merits perhaps another paper to explore what the change illustrates in the formation of the social. I thank my anonymous reader's suggestion to discuss the other meanings of the word.

[9] *An Maimon* (1938), *An Binayaan* (1938), *An Ina Kan Parahabon* (1939) and *Parabibingka* (1939).

[10] It was supposed to be continued in the following issue but the last part of the lecture was never published, at least in the remaining 1939 issues which are the only extant copies of the newspaper.

[11] From his first name Estaquio.

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LITERARY SECTION: POETRY

THE POEM AS ANAGRAM: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK OF VINCENZ SERRANO

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There is much disorientation to be had in the poetry of Vincenz Serrano. At times it is the outcome of radical manipulations of lineation and layout to approximate simultaneity—subjecting the reader to dilemmas such as which line follows what, which section of the page to read first, and so on—the kind of disorientation that is immediate, blatant, unwavering in its intensity. Other times, it unfolds rather than assaults, discreet in its descent upon the reader, much like getting high on (as it turns out) pot being smoked in the next room. How the latter discloses itself while somewhat disguising the plot of its arrival is intriguing, especially since the disorientation seems driven by "a method akin to derangement"—a calculated, supervised chaos. It does not bear the markings of the surreal (whose network of associations permit and even seek the option of not adding up) and most certainly not of chance operations (whose idiosyncratic results are accountable to nothing, not even the terms which yielded them). Like the most serendipitous of highs, it almost but doesn't quite spin out of control, and the poem, while loosening its tethers, doesn't slip its moorings, the widening gaps only making discernible the filaments at work to constrain them.

Serrano's method of composition could be described as anagrammatic, engaging the generative properties of a fixed set of terms. An anagram delights for its capacity to turn into something other than itself while remaining completely of itself, its transformation confined within the finite, governed not by addition, or deletion, but the rearrangement

of its parts. What you see is still what you see—and also not quite, and also, not at all. In Serrano's work, the peril of dissolution is confronted and kept at bay through a measured unhinging and reassembly, a steadily paced opening of the doors of perception. It is a practice of Serrano to begin a poem by establishing a pool of terms and affixing their relations to each other, and then, in the course of the poem, dislodging them. Words take flight and migrate, trade places and contexts, and relations, in turn, shift, bleed into, and transform each other, the effect of which, at times, is the textual equivalent of an optical illusion—the poem intact yet altered, still yet makeshift, simultaneously itself and another, multiple others.

The perspective of choice in Serrano's poetry is that of the flaneur in the city, whose outings are also anagrammatic in quality, fixed and unfixed in place, the routine always new, the collisions reliable and reliably various in configuration. In Manila, of course, dismantlement and disparity are defaults, and any attempt to diminish their grip on the city and the one who walks in it—any attempt toward the ideals of cohesion and coherence—is at risk of futility and therefore heroic. The balance between dissolution and resolution which allows an anagram to exist tips in favor of the former, the parts more susceptible to fragmentation than attachment, more prone to hurl into disorientation rather than avert it. "Definition of metaphor: the collapse of what separates us." It is this collapse that is sought in every poem of Serrano, the convoluted wording indicative of a clear-eyed recognition of contraries built in the ideal, the desire for union unfettered by its prerequisite violence, the violence enacted again and again in juxtapositions and collaborations always struggling to surpass the identities of autonomous parts, the friction at most producing disfigurement but never union. And still the walker walks, thwarted but not swayed, uttering plea, or perhaps prayer, or perhaps command: "let me merge with who I am,/and come out undisguised."

LITERARY SECTION: POETRY

SELECTIONS FROM *THE COLLAPSE OF WHAT SEPARATES US*

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Vincenz Serrano is part of the academic staff (on study leave) of the Department of English at the Ateneo de Manila University. At present, he is a PhD student in Creative Writing and English and American Studies at the University of Manchester. This year, he will take part in the Pathways to Cosmopolitanism research exchange programme between the University of Manchester and the National University of Singapore.

MAKING SCENES

She and her husband once lived in Sagada, a mountain town half a day away from Manila. The town was so remote not even cellphone signals could reach it. One day, two friends visited. After dinner, they would choose a film and reconstruct it entirely from memory. The husband would describe the opening scene. She would comment on music, then on the transition to the next few scenes. One friend would talk about cinematography. The other friend and the husband would recreate dialogue. Often, they would contest each other: at this point, the camera shows the entire room, not a close up of the lovers' faces. The mise-en-scene is cramped; the relationship is stifling. That may be so, but silence makes the room seem larger. Why is footage of a housing shortage riot included when most of the action happens in corridors, rooms, kitchens. It was like putting together a cut up map of a city where there is so much rain, and using that map to go through a city where there is so much sunlight.

Distance makes artifice possible. Someone may mention details—wet empty streets, lampposts—when, in fact, it may have been otherwise. Someone may tilt the angle of her telling too sharply. Someone may impute melancholy when there was none: rain fell as a man and a woman, who may or may not have been lovers, were having noodles in an alley,

talking. When she told me this, we were in Manila: it was a sunny day and she sounded happy. Now, she, her husband, and I are elsewhere. It rains all the time. Memories fade like towns in a map folded so many times that their names vanish into the creases. In my room I write them scenes I can remember. Edges of details seem to fit, but the image formed seems inaccurate, as when four people in a room talk about a scene's angle of light and roughness of noise, while outside, the night is as dark and still as a grand perhaps. Nobody contests me. I produce ghosts to make solitude bearable. Remembering starts with shortage, then ends in perplexity. Memories emerge from, then disappear into, the folds of artifice: long take, depth of field, dissolve.

Ora Pro Nobis

After the child was shot, the man carried her in his arms. The crowd in the background did not leer and gawk like extras in a spectacle. No music, only ambient sound. The camera focused on the man carrying the child. Silence was a character imposing itself on the scene. It was as silent as watching a cloud taken apart by wind coming from this direction, then that.

John en Marsha sa Amerika

When the policeman chanced upon John, he had already taken a leak. "Hey fellow," he said, "that's against the law." John said, "No, it's against the wall." Reverse consonance, by then, had fallen out of fashion, but the policeman was amused and let John go. Passersby kept to themselves and walked along, though if this had not been a comedy, they would gather—at a distance but within earshot—waiting for an arrest to be made.

Batang West Side

In a dream, water jars fell one by one from a balcony. A woman walked across the foreground, taking several minutes to cross from end to end. Her dress trailed behind, her shadow was beside her. Water splashed on the pathway. Pieces of jar scattered on the ground, like severed ears straining to hear her shadow's faint footsteps.

Batch '81

"Did Martial Law help or harm the country," the master asked the initiate strapped to the electric chair. The batch was ordered to watch as the master hit the switch. Little did the batch know that this was a test: should they obey the master and watch their friend get shocked, or should they disobey and get expelled. The wide angle shot took everything: the master's face, the batch's hesitation, the initiate's voice, help help help. Look at one of them pressing against the frame as if he wanted to break through to another life.

Darna

Narda ate the stone, shouted "Darna!" and became Darna. She could defeat the villain who had snakes instead of hair. She could run fast and rescue people in distress. She could fly: watch her image (close up) superimposed on a view of the city (panorama). An anagram is a sign of distress: a riot rearranges crowds, an incantation rearranges names, a villain rearranges lives.

Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag

The man from the province failed to find his lover—Ligaya Paraiso—in the city. In despair he killed the Chinese man who he thought held her captive. A mob chased him down the street. He was unfamiliar with the city. He ran into a dead end. The crowd caught up with him. As he was being lynched, the camera focused on his face. A close up holds in captivity the range of possible expressions. After a few moments, her image appeared—her name, translated, means "Happy Paradise"—then his face and her image faded into black.

Bayaning Third World

The name of the national hero was everywhere: matchboxes, streets, funeral parlors. His statue was in every plaza. His books were in all the libraries. "I am just as how you want me to be," he said to the filmmakers who wanted to make his biopic. The mise-en-scene conflated past and present: near the hero were dungeons and prison bars, near the filmmakers were cameras and computers. "But you cannot know me even if you tried." The hero lit a cigarette. The smoke moved from one side of the scene to the other: from there and then, to here and now.

SHORT WALKS

To walk through a city is to cut it into parts: like a wound or a landscape the city opens, then like a scab or a room it closes. My scholar and I move in a pace so slow it is like postponement. When we walk through a city we hurt it, my scholar says: we make it aware of how much it is against itself. Our shadows are the bruises of buildings, our slowness keeps the wound from healing, our being together means we are prone to surprise: this church, clouds, that house, chance, this sweat, glance, that touch.

Show your face, dear city, then hide, says my scholar. How you reveal yourself is inseparable from how you conceal: it is a gesture called history. My scholar loves a street that leads to a point along a riverbank, ends where another street begins, ages along with its buildings, becomes blind corner, betrays its old name for a new one. In the ache of opposites, the city knows it is alive: crowd and solitude, old and new, beauty and decay, feeling and fact, silence and noise, grasp and emptiness. Make sense of this with me, says my scholar: if we talk to the city, how the city responds is a clue to how we shall be together.

I disagreed with my scholar's way of thinking. I wanted to take things apart. In the city there is a steel church whose parts were made in another country and then sent here on separate ships. I thought to do the opposite: pry things apart, set the parts adrift, observe how dismantlement leads to the new: a dialogue between buttress and transept, nave and steeple. The streets which my scholar loved made sense to me, but only after going through a method akin to derangement: arriving at the unknown after a long period of poison, suffering, disorder. Melt the steel of the steeple and create money. Take in water from the river and make thirst. Put two people side by side and produce silence.

My scholar believed that separate things, even if they were in pain, comprised a whole; I believed that the distance between particulars, the space between statues and plazas, the blank between noise and sublimity, a gap between a river and the knowledge of itself, had to be maintained by force: the parts would cohere only when they could overcome the force that kept them separate. But this would entail so much violence that when the parts merged they would no longer be recognizable. In other words: ugliness. In other words: the new.

On the day we parted, my scholar said: in another time, walking was slow incision, people walked led by tortoises. Umbrellas, boots, liquor, curl of shopkeeper's moustache, history of objects on display: the slowness made shapes and sounds and stories clear. I cannot describe my talent for causing a swiftly-ruined thing, but for penance I took walks,

without tortoises but pilgrim-slow: hence these words that follow, hence silences, hence the blanks that link you and me, hence crowds, hence clues, hence a kind of motion that opens shut things, as when one is in a room collapsing into the size of departure, one sees bodies approaching each other—which one is me, which one is you—like lips of a wound that never close into a kiss.

R. Hidalgo

Cliché to say crowds reside in a loner cliché to say in you
there are multitudes cliché to say a crowd is an image of loneliness look
at that woman going down the underpass who will she be once
she emerges on the other side like an aphorism about to fall in love
with gossip.

Anloague

For years he built houses made of wood and thatch and when stone and tile became fashionable he swam down the river and was never seen again.

Quiapo

There are two statues. The head of the first
is true. Its torso and limbs are copies. The torso
and limbs of the second are true. Its head
is a copy. If I tell you which one goes out every year
to be touched by crowds you would see
how much of you inhabits me. Truth copy
limb crowd twin touch copy torso.

Bilibid Viejo

Hands tied, eyes blindfolded, feet bound.
Passersby talk about where they had gone.
Listening is the only way you can travel from now on.

Estero Cegado

I was open.
In consequence, moments were taken from me without my knowing.
I was unkind.
Nevertheless, desire looked at me from head to foot.
I was occupied.
In the meantime, from inside buildings voices spoke into mirrors.
I did not know how to love without ruining the other.
In another city, shadows teach
light how to shine by refusing to cast themselves on surfaces. In the absence
of shadows light burns more brightly, out of horror.

Hormiga

Perhaps smallness perhaps longing perhaps the linking
of streets perhaps laughter perhaps satiation perhaps
a way of entering another wherein compassion was
indistinguishable from violence perhaps pausing
perhaps a glance perhaps breathing perhaps another.

Ongpin

A walk is a form of tenderness not slow enough to mean *let's be still,* not fast enough to mean *let's flee.*

San Sebastian

There was little time left before parting.
We stayed there the longest.
It has withstood war and earthquake for it knows how it began:
in pieces, complete only in the mind, then in fragments coming in—pillar, steeple,
buttress, altar—parts of a lack longing for the opposite of upheaval,
one by one arriving from far away.

LITERARY SECTION: FICTION

INTERVIEW WITH JOSE Y. DALISAY

Daryll Delgado
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Introduction

Dr. Jose Y. Dalisay Jr., or Butch Dalisay as he is known among his colleagues and his students, is the author of the first novel by a Filipino (*Soledad's Sister*) to be short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize. Early this year, Dalisay was one of eight internationally acclaimed authors at the main event of the Fifth Annual PEN World Voices Festival. With him on this event were major international writers such as Salman Rushdie (India/USA), Raja Shehadeh (Palestine), Muriel Barbery (France), Narcís Comadira (Spain), Edwidge Danticat (Haiti), Péter Nádas (Hungary), and Sergio Ramírez (Nicaragua).

Dalisay writes in both English and Filipino. Prior to *Soledad's Sister*, he had previously published a novel, and fifteen other books of short fiction, plays, and essays. Five of these have received the National Book Award from the Manila Critics Circle, and several have been awarded the prestigious Don Carlos Palanca Award for Literature. He has received several international writing grants, and has been invited to deliver papers and handle lectures in the US, the UK, and Australia. He continues to teach English and Creative Writing at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, currently heading the UP Institute of Creative Writing.

Here, Daryll Delgado converses with Jose "Butch" Dalisay about the narrative design in his fiction, and zeroes in on the particularities of voice, the limits of conventional novelistic discourse, and the implications on and issues of identity that the author explores in the novel *Soledad's Sister*.

Daryll Delgado (DD): Do you use yourself as a central character to meditate on certain questions, certain issues, such as those that you explore in your novel, Soledad's Sister?

I suppose that is inevitable with authors. But I try not to. I try to see things from the POV of my characters. But in this novel, since it is told in the third person omniscient, I suppose this is where my own views on things come into play. For instance, in the way I describe and narrate the things that happen at the airport, in the city … It can't be helped that my own sense of things comes into the picture.

I suppose there is value in that. I think it is really impossible, especially in a novel, to even try to be too objective in a journalistic sort of way.

DD: Yes, I guess it is rather impossible to detach yourself completely from how you do view or how you have been used to viewing things …

Right. The very fact that you focus on some things rather than on others already conveys a certain attitude. I would think that my general attitude towards life here and towards my fellow Filipinos is largely sympathetic or, at least, that is what I always try to convey. Yet, there has to be a certain amount of indifference, in order to write about it. By that, I mean, realize that bad things happen to us, and bad things happen to my characters who also do bad and stupid things, and I do not mean to romanticize them or what they do in any way.

DD: I thought that the voice that you chose to narrate the story in the novel did sound a bit detached and, at certain parts, almost indifferent … How do you reconcile this with your intent, which is to convey sympathy?

I think the sympathy is less in the description than in the depiction of what happens to them, what they do … Sure, we make mistakes, but our motivations our impulses are to do good, to do right, to improve our lives. Of course, things get in the way but, apart from that, I still believe that, to some extent, we do have free will.

I do not want to go out of my way as an author to tilt things in a certain direction. That's why I try to avoid romanticizing poverty, *kamalian*, *kamalasan* (mistakes, misfortunes). Because people do try to do their best to survive, to do well.

DD: And this was clear to you, from the very first day you decided to write this novel, that this should be the tone, the voice that should come out?

No. I never really know until I'm in the writing itself.

I suppose I always bring to the writing a certain sensibility. When I write, most of the time, I am not angry, I do not have a visible agenda, I just want to render the scenes and the characters as sharply as I can, and go on from there.

I did not know I was going to write this way about these people. I did know that I was going to write a novel, a dark comedy. That was very clear to me. I told myself, we've written so much about ourselves, but they were always sad, depressing. Of course, this one is also depressing. But there is, I think, irony there, and humor. Maybe they're difficult

to see … But I wanted to do something comic, even if in a very dark way. That was my intention. I'm not sure if I achieved that.

I wrote this over several years ago. One of the reasons I kept stopping was that it kept getting darker and darker, the sense of the comic was lost. That was the spirit which the book originally had; that is why it opens with the scene where confusion ensues over the corpses … I don't know if it's inevitable, that it always eventually ends in melancholy.

DD: As you would always say in class, Sir, it is more difficult to write something funny, never mind that we are a very funny lot …

Always more difficult to write something humorous, or comic. A very strange thing, since we are a very funny people, we love jokes, we laugh all the time. But when it comes to the writing of novels, there's always the shadow of Rizal. Every novel always has to be the next *Noli* … We need to be liberated from this shadow, somehow. Definitely, every Filipino novelist, unless they're very young, those no longer in touch with Rizal, no longer indebted, everyone will feel that influence, that pressure bearing down on you, which is at once exhilarating and terrifying to feel… That people will measure you in terms of what Rizal has accomplished, in terms of his novels.

DD: How long did it take you to put this whole thing together? What made you think of venturing into the writing of this particular novel?

I started writing this in 1999. This was the idea I brought with me to my David Wong fellowship. *(Please see: http://www.uea.ac.uk/lit/awards/wong).*

It started with a news report headline about 600 OFWs arriving in NAIA, coming home in coffins every year … Almost two a day! That's crazy. It's crazy that we don't notice it anymore. It's the same old story, keeps repeating itself.

The cost of sending all these people out … I toyed with the idea, and it became a story about a woman in the box, and a "what if"… What if *magkapalitan ang katawan…?* That's where it started. I suppose the David Wong people found it startling enough.

DD: How long did you stay in Europe for this grant?

I was there for nine months. There was not much pressure. We could do what we wanted to do. And I did: travel around Europe, and sleep, and enjoy the beauty of the

place. I did write about 200 pages but, eventually, I wasn't even able to use many of those pages, when I resumed writing the novel again, because it took a different shape. So, I told myself, I'll just use these for some other project, some other thing.

DD: How long did it take you to write? When did you finally decide to wrap it all up?

Off and on through the years, I would look at it, write a few paragraphs, I didn't really pick up on it, until I heard from Charlson Ong, who was my roommate during the UP workshop in Baguio, the year you guys were there as fellows, at the Igorot Lodge. Charlson was working on a manuscript and it was he who told me about the Man Asian prize. Only ten thousand words were initially required, and submissions would be done by email.

DD: You mean, before this, you had not been doing any work on it?

No, not at all. Between 1999 and 2007, I must have published at least 10 or 15 books, but none of them was the novel … And again after submitting to Man Asian, I forgot about it. For a few months. Until I received news that I was long-listed. I was happy enough then, I wasn't seriously thinking of finishing it until, again, I received another message.

DD: Even when your manuscript made it to the long list, you still did not feel the drive to finish it?

No, not really. I thought, what are the chances? Long list, from 243 entries, 23 are listed. I was the only Filipino on the long list. And then, a couple of months later, I received a phone call. I almost did not take that call. I was informed that I was on the shortlist but, to be qualified, I needed to submit the full novel in two weeks. That's why I abandoned it for a while. No way could I finish the novel in two weeks. After about the third day, I started thinking about my friends who did not make it to the list, and felt ashamed … I decided to work on it for a week, gave my classes a week off. I played one last round of poker before I locked myself in the house.

DD: Was it very difficult to finally sit down to it and work on it again?

Surprisingly, once I knew what I wanted to do, it wasn't so difficult.

DD: So, what was it, and when did you know what you wanted to do, exactly?

I took another long look at what I had. Practical considerations came in. Once I knew that I had a week to do it, I had to think of what I could do given a week. I had to abandon certain scenes. Originally, I had a spectacular ending! There was supposed to be a funeral procession, across a bridge that would collapse, and the coffin would topple back into the water.

DD: That sounds like a very cinematic ending …

Very cinematic, indeed. But since I had real constraints, I had to reconsider the story arc. I decided to structure the narrative around three days of real time.
What I wanted to do, what I really was going after was, to bring the body back to the water, and that's where the story ends.

The manuscript I finally submitted to the Man Asia was much shorter than the novel that you read. It did not contain the back stories that take place in Hong Kong and Jeddah. It was very bare. There was just a straight narrative – a coffin was stolen, and it fell into the water. It was only later, after the awards, after I found an agent, a very good one… and she also happened to be a very good editor. She got back to me and we discussed how to go about the book again, and I realized that, yes, I had to write out those scenes, what happens to the character in Hong Kong and Jeddah.

DD: How long did it take you to put those crucial scenes together?

For those additional scenes, maybe another month. In a somewhat more relaxed pace, and also more fun. Since there were no longer any constraints, since the structure was already there, I guess it was more like a matter of filling in the blanks and expanding certain scenes.

DD: Were there any other conditions, for the prize, from the awards-giving body?

No other conditions. The objective of the prize is to get new Asian books out in the market. It is really for that… that's why they wanted to seek unpublished novels in English. So publishers will take interest.

DD: This agent whom you met in HK, what were her own interests, which direction did she want the novel to take? Whom did she represent?

A couple of agents contacted me, but she was the one I hooked up with. She represented an Indian company, a big conglomerate – industry, entertainment, literary agency. The sad part is they decided, eventually, to dissolve the agency, but my agent brought the book with her to the new company. Meanwhile arrangements were being done with Anvil here.

Contract with agent is for publishing and distribution worldwide, except for the Philippines. These are just global terms, for a relatively small market. The final copy that is circulating out there, picked up by an Italian publisher, is slightly longer.

DD: What parts did you have to add?

After the body is lost, what happened to the body, I added a scene, upon the agent's suggestion. A couple of scenes … the police hoist up two bodies now. Rory is asked to identify and she screams "That is not my sister!" But nobody believes her because everyone thinks she is denial. Then I just explain a bit more.

Foreign readers found it hard to believe, for example, why Rory would insist on leaving even after what had happened. To Filipinos it's not a mystery … we do not let those things bother us. Well, they bother us, but they do not stop us.

DD: I find it amazing that you started this novel about ten years ago, but the issues are still very much relevant, maybe even more so, they still resonate … Also kind of sad, that the issues are still there, that they've even become more complicated.

It's true, the situation hasn't changed, only worsened. Writing the novel over such a long time, the aging shows. When I started this, the cell phone was a new thing. In the novel only the Vice Mayor had a phone.

DD: So, you didn't want to change those parts, the ones hinged on that particular time … to update the descriptions of the setting?

I would have wanted to … But I decided to keep it set in the '90s, but I think that nuance would be lost on a lot of people.

DD: Minor detail, but the cell phone does seem to be integral to the character, to the setting, even if this element effectively dates the book …

Yes, they are significant to the character. The fact that this is published in 2008, however, obscures that. Most readers won't care about that. But if they do cue in on this, it can also create for them a better sense of the time.

I don't mind those little details, except that in this case, they create some kind of a problem. But yes, those details can get really distracting. If I am going to write about the here and now, however, I am going to look for those things, include them in the writing to effectively date the setting. So it's a judgment call.

DD: I agree, and the thing is, in this novel, the vital issues, the vital elements of the narrative did not really have to be changed, and are, after all, still relevant, even more poignant now. And to nitpick on little elements like the gadgets used by the character seems a little funny in this light … But, just to go back to the setting, where is Paez?

I made it up. Where do you think is it?

DD: South of Manila? Not so close. Not so far. What I retain of the setting is the sense of space between houses, and the idea that some parts of the place are still dark, or in the dark, and then somewhere in the middle of it all is an oasis, a videoke bar, of course!

Right, of course! I think it's in Quezon Province.

DD: And the newly developed subdivisions. For me, this was the test that it was written for Filipinos. Not that it has to be tested, or that all books coming out of the Philippines have to be tested in any way. I just find this to be a significant feature of the novel. That it does not have to explain where the setting is, why it is there, what is going on … If you're a Filipino reader, you just know where it is and why this kind of story unfolds there.

Right. I just wanted water in the area. I needed it to be a certain driving distance, about five to six hours. So I suppose that settled it for me. I don't even know why I put the story there. I don't have any connections to that part of the country.

DD: Why did you choose to write the novel in the third person? It's interesting that it is in the third person, but his is a very subjective voice, the voice is a character in each scene, like a reporter who is always on the scene. I was wondering how you developed that kind of voice, and why.

Yes, it does sound like a canned voice. I am comfortable with that. Maybe also drawing on other things that I do as an essayist or columnist so that's where the voice comes out.

In my work, on fiction, since it is realist fiction that I do, I make a lot of descriptions. I do not mind creating long paragraphs of descriptions. I like doing that.
And it can best be done with this choice of narrator.

DD: Is it important to you that the voice is not only clear, but functions like a character, that one can almost imagine what this voice looks like …

Yes, I think it is important that the authorial voice be able to convey a certain attitude towards the materials, towards the characters, and I keep hoping that it is a voice that is gently critical, that doesn't condemn the characters … but at the same time, one that understands.

DD: Does this voice then have to be representative of a particular sector that represents a particular attitude? If this voice has to be not only critical but also sympathetic, I would think that it would have to come from a more or less stable, position. Here, you write about a particular group of people, a particular milieu … How do you also get out of that position, limiting as it is?

I suppose my perspective on this, is the perspective of someone from the middle class, an educated middle class, who did not have to go through these things; who thinks he understands how things happen, and why, without directly being involved. That's both a good and a bad thing. Because if such a novel were written from the POV of one the characters the treatment would be very different.

One of the things I wanted to do from the very start of this novel … one thing I told myself: I am going to write about people not like me. I am going to write about ordinary Filipinos leading ordinary lives. I did not want any academics, artists. No quotations from Nietzsche. That sort of thing.

I would like to think that in all my other stories this is how I am, that is how my characters are. I really do not like to write about writers, it gives authors an excuse to preach about aesthetics.

I also decided: no more of the semi-autobiographical. With my first novel, I've scratched that itch, gotten it out of the way. I realize that the test of one's skills as a storyteller comes after that first novel. After you've mined your own experience, now what else can you write about? So, I had really decided early on that I am going to write about different people.

Which is not to say that I do not know these people. Because, in a way, I do. My father was an ex policeman, before I was born. He was looking for a better job, he did not finish college. The very first picture in his album is that of him in a police uniform. I was also a police reporter for the Philippines Herald … I know that world.

DD: And also its language…?

Yes. I was a constant figure in the police department. Every day somebody dies there. That is probably why, in this novel, many people die … But, also Rory's world. I know that world, too.

I felt comfortable with these characters. I didn't think that you really need to go to college to find interesting people to write about.

DD: Who or what were you reading at that time, when you were working on the novel?

I do not really remember. I think I was reading a lot of non-fiction. Essays by Julian Barnes. Reflective non-fiction pieces. I'm engaged more by these. The problem sometimes with a fictionist reading fiction, I can't help looking at the artifice … and it gets in the way. Sometimes, it can still get engaging but, really, I feel I am getting older and older. There is this rush in me, to know about other things … history, travel, science, books abut the discovery of mammoths in the arctic.

Although, I still want to just pick up a novel and be swept away by it. That hasn't happened recently.

DD: In your own novels, stories, do you design the narrative structure, do you try to achieve a particular effect from the outset?

Yes, in fact for this novel, I told myself three days, that's the design. I had to work with three days of real time. I like to give myself technical problems. Like, I will say, O.K., this story will contain this element, or this word, or this story will not contain semi colons. I need to do this to keep myself interested. Every story to me is a game, a technical challenge. So, here, I tell myself, you have three days to work on. And there will be some kind of narrative arc.

This is all made up, of course. But I had a design in mind, although I'm not used to conceiving of novels. While I was going through the novel, as a short story writer, I always felt that I have said enough. But, novel readers want more … One of the comments on *Soledad's Sister* is that it's not really a novel, it's a long, long short story. That's valid. It doesn't the have peaks and valleys one expects from a novel. And I really am much more comfortable with that. After writing this, in fact, I don't even know if I really want to write a real novel.

DD: That's why I was interested to know how you discarded those conventions. Now that you said that you imposed on yourself three days of real time, I think it explains a lot, and it worked really well for this novel. The short narrative line allows for the simultaneity and parallels to take place, the many things happening in different worlds … which is what makes this novel the novel that it is, and a discourse that I find beautiful.

Those just came out as a result of the description, I guess. The concept, I think, is alien to me. *Yung mga chapter, chapter… [laughter].* I also told myself to stick to three days as a sort of a reaction to our propensity to write novels on such grand scales, spanning generations, centuries, *a la* Jose Arcadio Buendia …

I am not against that. Something there resonates with us, obviously … But it's that grand, epic scale that I want to veer away from. I want to write a quiet novel which takes place within a short period.

DD: I think that narrative strategy here is perfect. It effectively diffuses the single, heavy effect of the death, and the coming home. It opened up the narrative to so many possible things, many possible voices, for a particular novelistic discourse …

Another one of those things I wanted to do, create many characters, each one important, necessary, with his or her own story. I had fun there. I ended with a new

character who was completely removed from everything else. I felt that, I wanted to end it with this; suspended …

DD: And the title, how the characters and their names are hinged on each other, their implications … Rory, Soledad's Sister, also sort of vanishes, her identity is gone, erased. The implications are endless, terrifying.

Yes. You're not really sure until the end who had died. You're not really sure where Soledad is, what happened to her … I actually just thought of these toward the end. I had to do a lot of reading for this. News accounts … A lot of foreign girls do vanish into these districts … But, I also wanted to bring out the point that, when Rory says it is not my sister, maybe it is not. But, does it matter all that much if we know? Is Soledad better or worse off if she had just vanished into the prostitution district? Is that another kind of death? And does it matter?

In the end, [this is what happens], she is just another statistic, another curiosity except to the people close to her. And there's not many of them. She might as well have completely vanished.

LITERARY SECTION: FICTION

AGCALAN POINT

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Editor's note

Written 35 years ago, in July 1975, "Agcalan Point" is the one unpublished short story of Jose Y. Dalisay. It won him his first Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Award, one of two second placers, in 1975. The author has chosen to preserve his younger voice in the printing of this story in this issue of *Kritika Kultura*.

About the author

Dr. Jose Y. Dalisay Jr., or Butch Dalisay as he is known among his colleagues and his students, is the author of the first novel by a Filipino (*Soledad's Sister*) to be short-listed for the prestigious Man Asian Literary Prize. Early this year, Dalisay was one of eight internationally acclaimed authors at the main event of the Fifth Annual PEN World Voices Festival. With him on this event were major international writers such as Salman Rushdie (India/USA), Raja Shehadeh (Palestine), Muriel Barbery (France), Narcís Comadira (Spain), Edwidge Danticat (Haiti), Péter Nádas (Hungary), and Sergio Ramírez (Nicaragua).

Dalisay writes in both English and Filipino. Prior to *Soledad's Sister*, he had previously published a novel, and fifteen other books of short fiction, plays, and essays. Five of these have received the National Book Award from the Manila Critics Circle, and several have been awarded the prestigious Don Carlos Palanca Award for Literature. He has received several international writing grants, and has been invited to deliver papers and handle lectures in the US, the UK, and Australia. He continues to teach English and Creative Writing at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, currently heading the UP Institute of Creative Writing.

APPROACHING Ginbulanan harbor from the west, as it is the only entry the sea leaves open short of tearing your craft apart with its sunken teeth, the traveler meets Agcalan.

From afar you perceive a decrepit Spanish fort more than a thousand feet above the bobbing horizon, thickly overhung with clouds in the month of August. From that crown Agcalan plunges madly downwards into jagged slivers of gray sandstone into the sea, carpeted by a fine silken spray.

Treachery lurks but a fathom below; ships passing this point must have crews of redoubtable courage. So far from the open sea, so near to land – and there the danger lies, to founder on some ill-anchored reef or be crushed against the immutable cheek of Agcalan.

Agcalan has always been there, and you have only seen it now. It has seen everything, and you know nothing, a speck of flotsam in time and space, and you are overwhelmed. There is majesty in the primeval, some godly attribute magnified by the prism of the transparent mind, and it is here.

The rudder strains mightily against the current; now you fear it to snap, as may the muscles of the crewman who pulls hard and tells you to take your place belowdecks. You fear, and yet cannot heed his words. At this junction the sailboat must veer a little out to sea, in a circuitous but entirely reasonable manner, if it is to reach port the one and same vessel you boarded five islands away. Beyond that point, your eyes and rising spirits say, lies the happy resolution – Ginbulanan harbor, quaintly and quietly returning your senses like a garland on your neck. Houses of native brick and straw front the harbor one-deep; lights from a dozen Coleman lamps mark your berth, shielding you, to the final step, from the caprices of nightfall. You smile and disembark and do not care to notice the boys who scurry for your baggage. You have survived Agcalan Point. And soon quickly forget.

* * *

AGKAL-ANG sank below the bushes, waiting for the buck to emerge from behind the rock and underbrush. He had pursued the chase for the last hour and it had to end soon. The profile of the deer's rear darted into view and Agkal-ang's fingers tensed on the arrow. No, not yet. It was no way to shoot a buck. It was also his next to the last arrow. He would wait. Sweat dripped from his brow and his loins ached in their posture. The arrow was a good one, oiled with pig fat and its tip honed to the utmost. The rear vanished. His eyes followed the flick of the antlers.

The buck, gleaming in the afternoon sun and too lately aware of coming death, arced upwards in an effort to leap and abruptly sank as Agkal-ang let loose. The arrow had cut deep at a point just below the deer's neck, and he knew it had torn through the heart. Agkal-ang rose, rubbed the grease off his palms and knelt beside the hoarse-breathing animal.

The catch was a good one as he had hoped for in those parts, big, and as it was, made wily by a dozen encounters, pursuits and evasions. Up in the buck's hindquarter Agkal-ang's forefinger surveyed a hairless lump – the scar of a previous battle. Truly they came about too rarely now. Men had hunted hard for days and had to be content at times with a wild boar or two, either suckling or aged enough to be good only for their fat. There was less of even such game now.

The deer would bring smiles upon him in the village. There would be food for some time. Malay-on would be waiting. And Kaliwas.

Datu Kaliwas. The people loathed him, Agkal-ang foremost. The white men had come and bought peace with Kaliwas, and gave him a new name, doing the same to his wife Lintag. The demon that guided Kaliwas' hand caused the death of Duldul-og. And Agkal-ang, now twenty-three and a full man by his elder's count, could not forget that. It was written on his brow and that of Malay-on, his mother, waiting in the house of Duldul-og.

Agkal-ang pulled thongs from his waist and tied the buck's feet. Kneeling, he seized the antlers and heaved the blood-caked neck over his shoulder. It was a fearful burden but could not be left even for a night in the wilds. The forest's parasites hungered for a feast, as did Kaliwas' men. He would reach the village just after nightfall. He was not to be seen in these parts.

MALAY-ON's hand danced expertly across the buck's body with a thin knife in its firm grip. Agkal-ang sat on the mat spread over the earth floor, chewing nuts Malay-on gathered and kept in a jar.

"The whole village saw you come in," Malay-on said, not looking up.

Agkal-ang spat out a fibrous wad. "So they did."

"Kaliwas must know you are here."

"I do not fear him. He fears me."

Malay-on looked at him briefly. "It would be better if you were gone soon. He does not want you here."

"I have done nothing to be banished. The elders know it."

His mother cut open the buck's haunch. "They are afraid of Kaliwas. The datu has the friendship of Ma-alnak. Even the Spaniards are afraid of Ma-alnak, so they let Kaliwas rule for them."

The demon. High above the cliff that fell treacherously behind the thick growth of trees in the forest, Ma-alnak lived in mist and legend. His hair was of reddish gold, and his eyes blazed like the green stones that lit the sea like flickering tongues at night. It was said, too, even by those who had not seen him, that his body was layered with scales of stone, that no arrow nor spear could pierce this armor. Only the datu had met his awesome countenance – and indeed, only those who had done so and come out alive became datus of the village. Thus even in the people's fear and despise of him, Kaliwas was held in a

certain esteem. Duldul-og had failed, setting out in the forest to the kingdom of Ma-alnak. The demon willed him over the cliff – and favored Kaliwas, who knew how to parley with his god and kept his secrets, to reign.

"I have been in Ma-alnak's forest. There are only trees. And this deer."

Malay-on's hands froze. "No!"

"We need food. The other lands are barren."

"Kaliwas will have you killed." She began weeping, covering her face with hands bloodied by the buck.

"No one saw me. I was alone."

"Ma-alnak will tell. Ma-alnak knows all, sees all. You cannot escape him."

"I did not see him. He did not see me. He cannot be wiser than the deer." Agkal-ang rose to pick up a knife and fashion shafts from a pile of rough branches.

"Kaliwas forbids it. No one can hunt in the land of Ma-alnak. No one goes there."

"Someone has. The deer has scars. Look."

Agkal-ang pushed over the carcass to reveal the lump.

"He must have been punished terribly."

"Mother, whose body was it was picked up last on the rocks?"

Malayon's eyes fell. "You know. Your father's."

"Yes. When I was a boy. And this deer can be no older than the son of Duldul-og. Someone goes there, and has come back unpunished."

Limply, Malay-on's hand resumed their work on the buck, stripping meat from bone. "Ma-alnak must favor him."

Agkal-ang cracked a nut with his teeth and smiled.

"No, mother. Kaliwas favors himself."

THE MEAT was cut and dried in the sun, hung in strips outside Agkal-ang's hut even before the sun rose. The grass was damp with a fresh coat of dew. But Agkal-ang heard the feet coming and rose.

The steep figure of Itneg emerged. Agkal-ang muttered an oath, loathing Itneg. He was Kaliwas' chief spy and henchman. Itneg grinned, revealing blackened teeth, and tapped the meat.

"Good catch you have here."

"I hunt well. You do nothing but watch and beg. What brings you here? The smell of food?"

Itneg held up a hand. "Don't be annoying so soon. Kaliwas sent me."

"Yes, he always does." Agkal-ang dipped a ladle into a clay jar and washed his face.

"You must pay tribute," Itneg said, looking desirously at the strips.

"Pick up your tribute and leave us." Itneg proceeded without further prompting to select the six best cuts. Agkal-ang's hand arrested Itneg's after the fourth.

"Enough." Itneg turned and lifted Agkal-ang's hand. His grin soured.

"Don't try my patience. We need tribute. Are you against that?"

"You take too much."

"We need much. Two parts for Kaliwas, two for Ma-alnak and two for the white god."

Agkal-ang snorted. The last was a new addition, and he in truth expected it.

"We have so many gods to please."

Itneg stuffed the meat into a straw pouch. "You should be grateful, in your ignorance about the gods. They please us in many ways." He turned and left, having fulfilled his bounden duty.

Itneg was gone from sight when Malay-on rose to find Agkal-ang chipping stone furiously for his arrows.

"We have just been visited by the gods' collector, mother," Agkal-ang said, nodding at the sparse strips left.

"It is our duty. The gods protect us." Malay-on stoked the ashes of last night's fire and prepared new firewood.

"From what? Why do they take everything away?" He cursed, hitting the sliver of flint hard.

"Do not question their ways."

"Soon there will be more of them than will be left of us. Do you not see that day coming?"

"We can do nothing. Ma-alnak will be displeased, if he is not already, and I fear for you." Her voice trembled slightly.

"Ma-alnak – pah! If he is a demon, why do not the Spaniards fight him? Why does not Kaliwas lead them to Ma-alnak? Surely their fire-weapons can defeat Ma-alnak."

"Speak lightly! Ma-alnak is too powerful. Kaliwas has told them so. They must believe him."

Agkal-ang held up an arrowhead against the sun, breaking its ascendant circle in two.

"I do not think so. They are playing with him, and will sooner make peace with Ma-alnak themselves."

"Hold your tongue, Agkal-ang. You have not seen the wrath of the gods, as your father did."

Agkal-ang rose.

"There are no gods who would destroy what good we do, who take away what we need to live. No, mother. I do not believe in the strength of Ma-alnak, nor in this new white god even Kaliwas has not seen, much less in that old boar himself. Their power rests on our assent, and it is time to withdraw it. The village must know this."

Malay-on gasped, in grief and disbelief. She seized his broad shoulders and dug her hands deeply.

"No, Agkal-ang. ou must not say that! You will be put to death! Ma-alnak will punish you!"

"And the truth will emerge! Do you not see that, mother? You must live for it. I will fight Ma-alnak and end this foolishness."

"It will be your end, too." Malay-on wept, and Agkal-ang went inside the hut.

Some distance beyond, where Malay-on and her son would have seen bushes, Igneg lifted his elbows from the dust and hurried off. Let Agkal-ang have his way, he thought, and let out a high-pitched laugh.

THE CORDS Kaliwas' men had made of vines were tough. All tugging was useless, Agkal-ang realized and soon stopped. The binds had loosened enough for the barest movement. Perhaps it was best this way. He would have his day with Kaliwas and his gods.

It was night-dark inside the hut, although the sun was baking the earth dry outside, and even the straw roof could not keep the heat from seeping in. Presently the door creaked and opened slightly, unleashing a shaft of light onto his bent body. Itneg peered into the room.

"Feeling warm?" The goatlike face taunted. Agkal-ang did not answer.

The door parted wider and Itneg strode in.

"Playing brave and wiser than the gods, are you? Let's see what they have to say about you." He tugged the prisoner's cords sharply.

"Where are we going?"

"The council is meeting. Get up!"

Agkal-ang struggled to his feet. The elders held council in a long hut at the center

of the village, seated before small clay bowls where their spit gathered, red with juice of the betel nut. In Kaliwas' presence and in their fear of Ma-alnak, Agkal-ang knew he could expect little.

"Come here." Kaliwas had grown old, but nonetheless wilier. Around him sat the elders, many of them so honored out of sheer age and now infirm, but all fearful of the gods to Kaliwas' liking. Kaliwas' hair hung in sparse, white-streaked strings. Glass beads framed his upper chest and a large yellow cross was tied to them – golden and the symbol of a new god's favor, adding prestige to the mixture of hate and awe he was held in. Outside the coconut trees swayed to gusts that blew in from the sea.

"Agkal-ang, son of Duldul-og and Malay-on: listen to what I have been told of you, and hear me well. You complain against the tribute we pay our gods. You dare dishonor the gods with a boast to do battle with them. These are very grave acts that defy the code of our people and our protectors. You know that the punishment for such crimes can be no less severe than death."

Kuti, among the eldest of the people, nodded. "It is a hard task upon us, Agkal-ang. We do not with to do what we must with you, but you have called it upon yourself."

"I have said nothing untrue."

"There are witnesses against you," Kaliwas said.

"I do not fear their words. They speak rightly."

"Then you do not deny the accusations?"

"No. I will prove to you my words bear truth."

"Ah, then you must pray for your soul! You will die tomorrow," Kaliwas announced.

Agkal-ang's eyes blazed.

"Let me speak! Hear me!"

Kaliwas clouded and the furrows showed deeply across his brow. He had wanted the proceedings done with.

"Speak? Your crimes are known. You have acknowledged them before us. You are condemned and must say no more."

"Then condemn me a second time, or a third as you wish, but I will speak! – " Agkal-ang breathed hard and shut his eyes against the sweat.

"You are cowards who have survived on ignorance and fear. You fear those demons only one man claims he has seen. The white man came and you feared their fire-weapons, and now you share their god with them, and pay them in fear of disfavor. Now you fear what I have to say, for I lead your minds to such thoughts Kaliwas would not have of you—"

"You are mad to be doing these things. The gods will not forgive you," Kaliwas cried.

"No. Kaliwas has kept you in fear of Ma-alnak while he thrives on the tribute we pay them both. Fathers and uncles, you must see what blind fools we appear, offering payment to gods whose favors only Kaliwas enjoys. It is him who has erred and must be punished, not I!"

"Insolent youth – you are truly fit to die. You dare test the fury of Ma-alnak?"

"Ma-alnak and the white god protect our datu. Kaliwas cannot be wrong!" Kuti said. "Agkal-ang knows nothing of the gods. Ma-alnak speaks with the voice of thunder. Ma-alnak will seize you with his hair and burn you with his eyes. When you have breathed your last, he will fling you against the rocks. Such is the power of Ma-alnak!" Kuti shrieked, the others nodding quickly.

"You have never seen him," Agkal-ang accused.

"The datu has, and shares his power."

"Ma-alnak is a demon. Kaliwas rules by evil."

"Ma-alnak is a good demon. He does harm only to those who deserve it," Kaliwas replied, thrusting a finger at Agkal-ang.

"And was my father, Duldul-og, so deserving?"

The datu winced. Kuti spat into his bowl and gazed at the slime, as if to divine some answer therefrom.

"Your father tempted what was beyond him." Kaliwas declared. "Ma-alnak was undefeatable. So I made peace with him."

"You lie! Kaliwas killed my father, envying him. Ma-alnak helped him."

Kaliwas sat mutely, speechless with rage.

"How do you know this? Can you prove your accusation?" Kuti asked.

"I cannot, as yet. But I will. I only tell you now what reason told me long ago."

"Surely you do not know everything. Tomorrow you die!" Kaliwas thundered.

"Kill me and be cursed forever!"

"The gods protect me," Kaliwas said, thumping his beads and these jangled.

"Your gods are worthless."

"Enough!" Kaliwas said. "The council does not agree with you. You must be punished."

Agkal-ang's wrists chafed, steeling against the bounds. "There is no justice one can expect of a murderer, a tyrant and yet a coward like you, Kaliwas."

A murmur rippled across the council, among whom a few looked away as children avoid lightning, and yet cannot escape thunder. Kaliwas stiffened. "Say what you will. But lest you believe that your blasphemies should soften my heart, you die when the sun lights the crown of Ma-alnak's mountain tomorrow. And still – lest you too believe that no merciful good remains with Kaliwas, I shall follow our customs of condemnation. The choice of what path you take to your death is yours."

Agkal-ang spat. "You cut my heart open with a lance, and now ask if vinegar or saltwater is to be poured into it."

"If you do not choose," Kuti warned, "we must leave you to the river-gods. It is a sad fate that brings you to this end, but such is the law against those who dare the datu and Ma-alnak. The peace is threatened."

"The covenent with the demon is broken! If I must choose, let me battle Ma-alnak!"

The datu rose, sprung like a tethered coil. "Fool! You are courting a fate worse than death. You will leave Malay-on with ragged flesh and bones to mourn. Choose another!"

Agkal-ang stared at Kaliwas, their eyes clinging, and his desires, hatreds and fancies welled in his chest, seeking resolution.

"No." His eyes fled past the room.

"Fathers and uncles, could it be that our datu, feeling ragged and bent now fears the son of Duldul-og to succeed him? To have his treachery revealed? What is Ma-alnak that he must now hide behind the skirt of Kaliwas? If he be truly great and powerful, let him dash me against the rocks and my questions will die with me!"

"I do not fear you. Ma-alnak favors only those who serve him." Kaliwas flexed his hands and rested them on his laps.

Kuti raised a hand. "If Agkal-ang so wills it, then let him die in the manner he pleases. There can be no worse death than that in the grip of Ma-alnak."

Murmured assent crossed the lips of the elders.

Kaliwas wiped the sweat off his brow. The veins shone brightly at his temples, bulging and throbbing as did his heart within, and he pounded the floor with his fist, crushing earth into dust. "Then let it be so! Let Agkal-ang die at the hands of Ma-alnak!" He looked at the hunter.

"You have said too much, knowing too little. You threaten the gods, and threaten me. Then let our power be tested against yours! Pray to your god, whomsoever he may be. Before the sun passes tomorrow, Malay-on's boat will bear your body from below the mountain of Ma-alnak."

"I have no god but reason, Kaliwas."

IN THE darkness of the hut, Agkal-ang squatted and waited for the day. He thought of Duldul-og with whom he had played and fished, learning how to catch food beneath the river stones.

And Duldul-og had told him of Ma-alnak, who made datus of men in rites so secret that only datus dead and the elders alive knew, the latter by fear and faith. It was the secret of power and rulership, its true meaning unknown even by the elders who kept alive the terrible vision of Ma-alnak in the minds of fathers and children, for it enhanced the datu's power.

Agkal-ang believed in Ma-alnak, and yet felt foolishly impudent enough to taunt him. He had gone to the demon's mountain, courting the wrath of Ma-alnak, and yet nothing had come about of it. And this no one knew but Malay-on. Perhaps not even Ma-alnak. And if it was so, Agkal-ang felt he could outwit him again on the morrow.

The palm leaves rustled outside. The village seemed asleep, and yet Agkal-ang knew its eyes were upon him. Malay-on would be weeping, praying Duldul-og's assistance to their son, and kaliwas would be renewing his pact with Ma-alnak.

Silently he thought of Malay-on. Mother – I will end this plague upon us, even if I must die. I shall catch a ray of gold from Ma-alnak's hair and weave it for your neck to wear. Of his eyes I will make a lamp, that the village may pass the nights without fear of evil shadows. Of his body I will make a shield, that no men may come again from across the sea and lay our warriors by my father's side. I know I shall prevail. Did not the sea open her wealth for Duldul-og and me, when we ventured forth to bring you food? Did not the sky favor us with a rainbow, when our pots were dry? There must be gods more powerful than Ma-alnak, and man's reason brought Agkal-ang into peace with them.

A surge of strength ran through his body, though he had not eaten. Not it had come, the supreme trial, to pit all the sharpness of human skill, guile and courage against the secret forces of Ma-alnak. He would become datu, and share not power with the demon, but with his people. That was just. Let Ma-alnak come. Let him come. Sleep fell upon Agkal-ang.

RELEASED at the edge of the forest, where the mountain touched the flat earth with its feet, Agkal-ang breathed deeply and took stock of his complement.

He had a bow and some arrows, and a flat sword that had once been Duldul-og's. They would be enough. Perhaps they would even be of no use. He counted on his wits to drive the demon into his own grave.

He wondered where Kaliwas had gone. It was known that when a new datu made peace with Ma-alnak and gained his favor, he who had ruled before would at the same time vanish – perhaps plucked by Ma-alnak's hair – and be found, in various parts, strewn on the rocks at sea. That was the way of succession. And the new datu would return home jubilant, speaking broadly of Ma-alnak's power and their agreement. But it was not so certain for everyone who aspired to rule. Was it, now? Kaliwas had served Ma-alnak well, Agkal-ang could not deny. Too well. Ma-alnak would favor the old man still.

Agkal-ang sped into the forest only he among his people, apart from the datus, had come to know well. He had been there before. It was now for Ma-alnak to catch him.

When Agkal-ang had passed through the woods for a half-hour, finding little but tracks of boar and wild fowl, he knelt beside a stream to cool his face. Did Ma-alnak know he was coming?

From a corner of the forest, Agkal-ang did not see where, Ma-alnak came. His eyes turned too late to catch sight of the arrow flying, but he heard it cut through the air and bury itself a finger's length from his bent head on the stream bank. He whirled. Nothing. He inspected the arrow. It was unusual, with the plumage of a strange bird trailing behind its shaft. Reddish-gold. Perhaps this was Ma-alnak's fabled hair, that caught one where he could not see.

"Ma-alnaaak!" Agkal-ang cried to the nearby trees and rocks, the sound echoing, quavering and fading, but no answer came. Agkal-ang rose.

Another arrow sped towards him, this time nicking him on the shoulder, and it was the same as the first. The blood welled on the wound's surface and began to dribble. Agkal-ang clamped a palm around it and looked about. The arrow had come from a different direction. Ma-alnak was either so huge, as to straddle his environment and toy with him as it was amusing, or perhaps – perhaps Ma-alnak, like him, moved.

Then came the sound, round and hollow, winging back and forth among the rocks, hemmed in by the trees. The voice of Ma-alnak.

"Agkal-ang – you have come!" It was the voice, but no one, no god, appeared.

"Why do you hide? Emerge where we can fight like men!" The hunter turned about him. The woods shuddered with Ma-alnak's laughter.

"Fool! I am Ma-alnak. I am a god! Before me your arrows are nothing. Go back or you die!"

The terrifying peals of laughter broke out again, rushing into that forest space like a cataract unleashed, and Agkal-ang knew he was in Ma-alnak's lair. The sound was not

itself so awesome. It was the creeping fear that he had overstepped his bounds that seized Agkal-ang and made his head whirl to escape the holler of Ma-alnak.

Before him through the trees the sun broke. And Agkal-ang was to know this the first time. The sun's rays seemed to sear the treetops as it seethed into view, and the next moment the trees split the sun's brilliance into arrows of light, spreading in many directions. Where they caught two twin rock tips the light bent back into Agkal-ang's eyes, and lingered, and was gone. Yes, two emeraldine bursts from the face of the armor rock, and in that instant Agkal-ang roared. Ma-alnak was here, and he was no god.

"Agkal-ang! Now you know my secret, but you will tell no one. You will die!" The voice thundered but Agkal-ang would not listen, his ears picking up the rustle of snapping twigs instead, and his arrow was in its place.

Ma-alnak's arrow flew past him again. The bushes parted some distance beyond, and Agkal-ang struck back, instantly. The hunter rose in Agkal-ang's spirits and he knew the fight was even.

Agkal-ang rushed forward. Ma-alnak was gone, but blood spots on the matted leaves marked his trail. He would not be far beyond – the cliffs began where Ma-alnak sought refuge. A few paces more, Agkal-ang paused to pick up his arrow. Blood coated the tip. Ma-alnak was mortal, if not a man.

Agkal-ang drew his sword and cut a path before him, and shortly picked out a blood-specked leaf in a bush. Ma-alnak had passed here. He reached the tall trees that were said to mark the mountain's plunge into a cliff.

"Agkal-ang!" The voice was human. Agkal-ang turned.

It was Kaliwas, slumped against a tree and clutching a chest wound. Strung across his back, a shell-horn dangled. Ma-alnak and the demon's voice. Agkal-ang sheathed his sword and approached Kaliwas warily.

"You – you have won. The secret is yours," Kaliwas rasped. He groped for the shell-horn and flung it at Agkal-ang's feet. "Take that. You will find it useful. It is power. Ma-alnak is power!" Agkal-ang's arrow had torn a rough-edged hole, from which Kaliwa's life flowed fast.

Agkal-ang kept his distance. "No, Kaliwas. I have sworn to put an end to this. The people must know."

Kaliwas craned his neck to look into Agkal-ang's eyes. "Fool, still a fool. You are too weak to seize power." The old man laughed and grimaced from the pain of the effort.

"Power based on reason is strong, Kaliwas. The truth will give us power. More than you ever held."

"Ma-alnak favors you now. Use him!"

"Ma-alnak is no more."

Kaliwas forced a smile. "So you think you have killed Ma-alnak. No. You will meet him again, surely as the Spaniard will break his peace with us when he wills it. Ma-alnak will wear new robes of white, Agkal-ang … and he will favor the new masters of the village. Use him now! Taste power while it lasts…."

"No!"

"Now I must go – " Kaliwas raised himself, pushing his weight against one tree, and the next. "I must be gone. The people must believe in – in the power of Ma-alnak…."

Agkal-ang's head throbbed, and faintly he saw the figure move. It was hard to understand everything clearly, and as quickly. He had prayed for this chance – to reason, to fight, to be the first of his village to know and let the truth be known. It was hard to be the first, easier to continue as before. Kaliwas had vanished.

"Kaliwas!" Agkal-ang's senses snapped awake. "No!" Agkal-ang rushed after the datu.

It was his last sight of him, bloody and struggling, tumbling over the cliff's edge. For a moment the sun caught the body in its light and then it was gone.

Panting, Agkal-ang returned to Ma-alnak's chose earth and saw upon it the shell-horn. This he picked up and in anger flung into the sea below, after he who had last used it.

"Ma-alnak! You are dead, dead forever!" Agkal-ang cried out, but the sea would not answer, would not listen.

Agkal-ang walked back down the forest among the trees and stones. Surely Ma-alnak was gone. His reason had won. He would teach the people reason. And they would use it, even if Ma-alnak lived again and wore robes of white.

But that was yet to come.

* * *

NOW THE drink flows freely in Ginbulanan when the story of Agcalan Point is told. Is that all? What happened next? You ask, your rice-wine losing its potency so suddenly. The people shrug and yawn.

Why don't you run up there and visit the fort? If you want to see so much. But you won't see much, just a clump of moss-covered stones, a piece of a flagstaff. A few arrowheads, if the children haven't dug them all up yet.

Oh, our ancestors took that fort, they did, the people say. Once when they met and

swore to fight, and gathered with bolos and spears … and the Coleman throws a dim light on their story, ever dimmer.

"But Ma-alnak, will I see Ma-alnak?" You cannot help asking, then feeling silly.

And the people laugh at you, the old toothless women and the children caught in their laps, even when the gas is gone.

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