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PUBLISHER

Department of English, School of Humanities
Ateneo de Manila University
Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines 1108
Tel. Nos. +63 (2) 426-6001 loc. 5310 or 5311
Telefax: +63 (2) 426-6120
Email: kritikakultura@admu.edu.ph

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WHERE AND WHEN IS MODERNISM: EDITING ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Mark Wollaeger
Vanderbilt University
mark.wollaeger@vanderbilt.edu

Abstract

The paper explores some longstanding definitional problems in literary modernism with specific reference to studying modernism on a global scale: What counts as modernism once we start to look for signs of it across the globe? The author examines the question in the context of his recent editorial project, *Global Modernisms,* which draws together multiple international and disciplinary perspectives in order to create a discursive space in which a wide range of foreign language productions can be brought into productive dialogue. Raising the question of whether a distinction between "modern" and "modernist" can be sustained, he suggests the need for continuing efforts of recursive definition as the field expands in order to maintain a viable object of study.

Keywords
alternative modernities, transnational modernism

About the author
Mark Wollaeger is Professor of English at Vanderbilt University and has published widely on modernism and modern fiction. He is author of *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (Princeton 2006) and *Joseph Conrad and the Fictions of Skepticism* (Stanford 1990). He is editor of *Joyce and the Subject of History* (Michigan 1996) and *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Casebook* (Oxford 2003). With Kevin Dettmar, he is founding editor of *Modernist Literature & Culture,* a book series from Oxford University Press, and editor of the forthcoming collection *Global Modernisms.*

Depending on who you ask these days, modernism is pretty much everywhere you look, and possibly always has been. Where modernity has found cultural expression, such expression (the argument goes) is by definition modernist. In theory, then, depending on one's definition of modernity, modernism can be found wherever and whenever rapid change has found cultural articulation. Such ubiquity does not always sit well with colleagues in adjacent fields, some of whom feel that modernist studies, like Conrad's Kurtz, has opened its gaping maw, and is ready to swallow the world whole. Of course loose definitions open borders to two-way traffic, and many Anglo-American modernists, comfortable with a longstanding span of 1880 to 1945, may look suspiciously at scholars inclined to debunk modernism's claims to newness by locating the beginnings of modernism earlier and earlier. Not content with the annus mirabilis of 1857, which

brought Flaubert and Baudelaire onto the global stage, Anglo-American criticism has reclaimed both national territory and priority by citing John Locke and David Hume.[1] A provocative roundtable at the 2009 Modern Language Association Convention, "Unboxing Modernism," pushed the temporal boundaries the other direction during the question and answer session by polishing off postmodernism like a leftover turkey sandwich. Further prompted by a question from the audience about the possible relevance of formal criteria, the panelists were ready to swallow realism whole before time ran out.

It may seem that I am positioning myself to pursue a critique of modernist studies' imperialist aspirations, but (perhaps not surprisingly for a modernist fully engaged in the global turn) I am confident that scholarly resistance to any attempt to establish hegemony will forestall a new world order underwritten by T. S. Eliot, Clarice Lispector, and Lu Xun. Indeed, as a member of the MLA's Delegate Assembly, I am quite certain that a resolution to rename the organization the Modern*ist* Language Association would fail. At all events, the "Unboxing Modernism" session (sponsored by the Modernist Studies Association) showed no such aspirations. It engaged instead in an exploration of what it means to "do" modernism when the field is changing so rapidly, and it asked questions about what kind of frames—and more importantly, how many frames—are brought into play these days in discussions of modernism. The session asked whether modernist studies has climbed out of the boxes formerly used to define it and expressed the hope that it would never again be placed in boxes that are too confining.

I found the roundtable particularly engaging because it raised questions of definition that bear directly on my current editing project. I am in the late stages of editing a collection of some thirty essays on global modernism for Oxford, *Global Modernisms*, and have found myself struggling, as I edit the essays and plan the introduction, with a set of difficult questions. What counts as modernism once we start to look for signs of it across the globe? If no single frame or closed set of criteria can be adduced to determine what counts as "modernist" and what counts as "modern," should we simply dispense with the distinction altogether, and instead think more broadly in terms of aesthetic expressions of modernity? Which is to say, why not dispense with "modernist" altogether in favor of "modern"? (Here, in English Departments anyway, one anticipates querulous objections from eighteenth century and early modern scholars.) In effect, this is the route taken by Robert Scholes in his *Paradoxy of Modernism*. Scholes's explicit aim is to enlarge the category of modernism to include all sorts of texts that canonical distinctions tend to exclude. He shows, for instance, that texts considered low often share qualities with those considered high, and vice versa; but ultimately it becomes hard to say just what for Scholes warrants inclusion under the rubric of modernism. One criterion might be called ethnographic: to the extent that a text helps fill out our sense of the full range of modernist culture—that is, to the extent that it helps criticism

produce what Clifford Geertz calls thick description—it should be included in the modernist canon. But the adjective here begs the question: is modernist culture the same as modern culture, and if so, why hang on to the term "modernist" at all?

We might ask what motivates a desire to preserve the distinction. Is it an analytic desire to delimit the object of inquiry or a residual investment in the cultural capital associated with an implicitly honorific term? And if criticism means to hold on to "modernist," can the grounds for doing so be specified with any rigor? Some scholars today seem reluctant to attach any formal criteria to the term, in part because questions of form seem to them to threaten to reinstate a limited canon of difficult, experimental works thought to be elitist. Call this the Pierre Bourdieu effect, whose bible is the first chapter of his *Distinction*. Of course not everyone takes this line—I don't, for instance—and it seems to me, as it did to most of the panelists in the "Unboxing Modernism" session, that what's wanted is not a box but something more like Wittgenstein's family resemblance. The challenge then becomes, can we specify a set of criteria, subsets of which are enough to constitute a sense of decentered resemblance? If aesthetic criteria are entirely ruled out, the definitional challenge is displaced, without being simplified, onto the problem of modernity: are there alternative modernities, or, only, as Frederic Jameson has argued, a singular modernity? For me, editing my collection, the question has become, does a coherent set of criteria emerge when the putatively modernist includes examples from across the globe? Michael Levenson observed over twenty-five years ago that if "modernism" is a vague term, vague terms still signify and often remain indispensable (vii). But now, with geographical and temporal coordinates rapidly multiplying, is growing ambiguity starting to date Levenson's claim?

At the moment of writing, I have not yet written the introduction to my volume (the editing having stretched out longer than anticipated—shocking, I know), but even after finishing, I expect to have better questions rather than definitive answers. I can, however, offer preliminary observations, and of course, more questions, designed to move the conversation forward. Let me first say a little more about the contents of the collection.

The essays include area studies of places that go beyond the usual suspects in English-language criticism of modernism: the Balkans, Scandinavia, Turkey, Algeria, China, Japan, and Spanish America. The collection also includes more familiar locales, such as the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa, that have nevertheless remained, owing to the tenacity of disciplinary and departmental boundaries, largely blank spots on the map for most Anglo-European modernists. Other essays target transnational nodal points: Andre Gide and Vietnam; Anglophone and Hispanic modernisms; futurism in Paris, Italy, and Russia; Richard Wright's photographs of Africa's Gold Coast; and the early-twentieth-century project of translating Russian literature in England. There are also theoretical-historical essays on comparativity, cosmopolitanism, modernism and

postcoloniality, lyric poetry and globalization, and little magazines as a global form.

My collection is of course not the first to take on the global or transnational turn in modernist studies. *Geomodernisms* (2005), edited by Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, and *Geographies of Modernism* (2005), edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, both aim "to undiscipline" (Doyle and Winkiel 7) modernism by embracing cultural projects that do not fall under the usual modernist rubric of textual experimentalism, such as Taiwanese cinema or modernist architecture and by pushing beyond Anglo-American boundaries. My volume will build on the considerable strengths of these but will differ from them as well. *Geographies of Modernism* is composed primarily of shorter, conference-length papers; *Geomodernisms* responds to the problem of scope—the world is a big place, and modernism was of course never a purely literary phenomenon—by adopting a primary focus on race and modernity. My volume will continue the project of diversifying the map of modernism by expanding the scope of these volumes with respect to modernist locations, in particular by devoting attention to the most surprising "awareness gap" in Anglo-American modernist studies, Latin American modernism; it will also include a wider range of theoretical perspectives on the challenge of studying modernism on a global scale.[2] And of course new volumes are coming out all the time, some targeting understudied areas (e.g., *Pacific Rim Modernisms*), others diversifying established movements (e.g., *Black, Brown, and Beige: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora*).

A major goal of my collection is to create within Anglophone scholarship a discursive space in which a wide range of foreign language productions can be brought into productive dialogue. Thus from the outset I sought as my ideal contributors scholars deeply versed in forms of modernism not well understood in Anglo-American scholarship but at the same time—and this is crucial—willing and able to open their fields of expertise to Anglo-American perspectives, whether by using a comparatist frame or by occasionally introducing points of potential contact or intersection. Which is to say that while an ideal but impossible volume would aim to speak as much to Brazilian and Vietnamese scholars as to Anglo-American and European scholars, the primary audience assumed for the book are Anglo-American scholars of modernism who hope to broaden their horizons by exploring comparative perspectives on the field. Thus the collection includes in the Locales section a contribution entitled "Modernity's Labors in Latin America: The Cultural Work of Cuba's Avant-Gardes" by Vicky Unruh from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Kansas University. Unruh's essay not only introduces readers to Cuban avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1930s (citing Henry James, Flaubert, and Ortega y Gasset along the way) but also offers close readings of literary texts by Agustín Acosta, Alejo Carpentier, and Dulce María Loynaz. Harsha Ram, from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of California, Berkeley, provides a comparative perspective on the futurist movements in Italy, France, and Russia while

also sketching a genealogy of the emergence of "literariness." To give one more example, Nergis Ertürk introduces Turkish modernism while also suggesting, along the way, the value of pursuing a comparative analysis of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's relatively unknown novel (outside Turkey) *The Time Regulation Institute*.

Insofar as my editorial duties have drawn me so frequently into materials far beyond my usual range of competence, this project has often made me more than a little anxious. At the same time, it is exhilarating to learn so much from experts in other fields, and if my recent attempt to teach Woolf and Tanpınar side by side in a recent graduate class was not an unqualified success, the effort certainly challenged the critical presuppositions of the class in profoundly useful ways. The scope of the collection also raises worries about inclusiveness, but one quickly learns to stop worrying about what might get left out. The answer, of course, is lots of things, and it would be foolish to aspire to the totalizing ambition of Google Earth. The title of my volume—*Global Modernisms*—may imply totality, but the plural "modernisms" is meant to undermine the implication that such a volume aims to encompass the whole world. I have to add, however, that "handbook" is somewhat misleading insofar as it implies a slim overview or a kind of schematic distillation; this large volume will take two strong hands to support and a good deal of time to absorb.

And so the volume aims to redress some obvious gaps without trying to scribble over all the blank spots in Anglo-European critical awareness; it aims to set forth fresh efforts to think new parts in relation to an ever shifting sense of the whole. If a conversation with two of my senior English Department colleagues is any indication, the book should provide an experience as radically decentering for its readers has it has for me. Hearing my account of the volume over lunch, they asked in some puzzlement, "But how can you have a book about modernism without any Pound or Eliot?" (I should add that both colleagues, far from being stereotypical white males with one foot in retirement, are women, one a woman of color, and neither as old as they seemed at this moment.) Of course, such stalwarts are not entirely shut out. Eliot appears in a footnote in an essay on Balkan modernism, for instance, and he figures in his role as an influential editor in essays on the translation of Russian literature into English and on the circulation of interwar Anglophone and Hispanic modernisms. Pound too crops up in many places, as do such monumental figures in the Anglo-European canon as Kafka, Conrad, Mann, Joyce, Faulkner, and Woolf. But rather than devote an entire chapter to any of them, each is typically seen on the horizon, from a perspective that knows them but does not privilege them.

In keeping with this decentered approach, I have tried as much as possible to implement a model of dialogue and exchange in the way I conceptualize relations among different strands of modernism around the globe, and in the process of composition. Thus rather than chart the

radiating influence of key modernist sites, the collection aims to map a multiplicity of sites, from the usual European cities to the role of urban cafes in Yiddish and Hebrew modernisms, and to focus on nodal points, such as the confluence of German expressionism and magical realism in Nigerian "inflationary modernism" (in an article by Sarah Lincoln) or film noir and vernacular modernism in South African film (in an article by Rosalind Morris). To put it in another way, just as Eliot and company become provisionally peripheral, so lesser known figures become provisionally central, to the point where the center-periphery model is itself permanently relativized. With respect to composition, I encouraged collaboration among contributors by posting all drafts to a password-protected website, and I grouped contributors into reading groups designed to draw out implicit dialogues among essays. In an ideal world, all essays would have undergone radical revision in relation to one another, but given the time constraints we all face, I was pleased that a good number of contributors at least incorporated cross references to one another, and a few substantially altered some key points. Finally, I also enlisted Laura Doyle to write an afterword in which she aims to tease out additional common threads among the contributions. But a commitment to decentering can require decentering in its turn. So while dialogue and exchange provide the dominant model in the collection, I also came to realize that at times a diffusionist perspective is not only appropriate and illuminating but necessary. The diffusionist model understandably comes in for a lot of criticism insofar as it can seem to reproduce the center-periphery binary and all the ideological baggage that goes with it. Here of course the key text is Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000), whose argument against longstanding accounts of the diffusion of modernity from Europe to the rest of the world (which he classes under the capacious rubric of "historicism") serves as a valuable touchstone for many essays in my collection. And yet some important cultural phenomena did spread out from a center. Consequently, while many contributions explicitly critique the center-periphery model, or emphasize instead processes of cultural exchange or the notion of coeval production, the collection also includes a set of contributions on film as vernacular modernism in which a new essay by Miriam Hansen is tested and expanded by additional essays on Indian (by Manishita Dass) and South African film.

Although the collection will not settle the problem of definition, it does throw into relief unresolved questions about modernity and about formal criteria for modernism. First, a few words about the question of alternative modernities (championed most influentially by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar) versus a singular modernity (see Jameson). Two contributions in the volume help clarify what is at stake in the debate. Neil Lazarus, writing on African modernism, offers a persuasive clarification of Jameson's argument in *A Singular Modernity*:

> Jameson understands modernity as representing something like the time-space

> sensorium corresponding to capitalist *modernisation*. In this sense, it is, like the capitalist world system itself, a singular phenomenon. But far from implying that modernity therefore assumes the same form everywhere, as Jameson has sometimes mistakenly been taken to suggest, this formulation in fact implies that it is everywhere irreducibly specific. Modernity might be understood as the way in which capitalist social relations are "lived"—different in every given instance for the simple reason that no two social instances are the same. Jameson emphasises both the *singularity* of modernity as a social form and its "*simultaneity*." (8)

Attempts to pluralize modernity, in this argument, fail to take into account the concept of uneven development: "singularity here does not obviate internal heterogeneity and . . . simultaneity does not preclude unevenness or marked difference" (Lazarus 9). Or, in Jameson's words, "modernism must ... be seen as uniquely corresponding to an uneven moment of social development, or to what Ernst Bloch called the 'simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous' ... the coexistence of realities from radically different moments of history—handicrafts alongside the great cartels, peasant fields with the Krupp factories or the Ford plant in the distance" (*Postmodernism* 307). The desire to postulate alternative modernities presupposes an "original" modernity formed in Europe that must be subjected to Eurocentric critique, but as Harry Harootunian has observed, the notion of a European origin inevitably entails the notion that modernity elsewhere is both "belated" and "derivative," "a series of 'copies' and lesser inflections" (62-63; qtd. in Lazarus 9). Rather than accept the logic of original and copy, Jameson's account of a singular modernity, as elaborated by Lazarus and Harootunian, aims to acknowledge difference and heterogeneity without instituting the hierarchical relations that follow from the positing of an origin. As Lazarus, citing Harootunian, writes: "the specific modes of appearance of modernity in different times and places—St. Petersburg in the 1870s, say, Dublin in 1904, Cairo in the 1950s, a village on a bend in the Nile in the Sudan in the 1960s—ought to be thought about not as 'alternative' but as coeval ... modernities or, better yet, peripheral modernities ... in which all societies shared a common reference provided by global capital and its requirements" (Harootunian 62-63; qtd. in Lazarus 9).

It is hard not to pounce here on the movement from "coeval" to "peripheral," which seems to reinstate the hierarchy dismantled by "coeval." But before we slap the dismissive term "diffusionist" on this line of argument, it is important to recognize that the deepest implication here is *all* modernities are peripheral in relation to a singular process of modernization developing unevenly across the globe. Following a similar line of thought, Sarah Lincoln also aligns herself with Jameson, arguing that "what constitutes modernity [for Jameson] is above all the impulse to make sense of—to document and to order or aestheticize—the disruptions, dislocations,

and disjunctures brought about by modernization itself. Neither material transformation nor innovative aesthetics, 'modernity' signifies instead the attempt to reconcile the two, to bring together 'modernization' and 'modernism' under a common conceptual and affective umbrella" (2). No doubt some may object to any model that implies a form of economic determinism. But in fact if such elaborations of Jamesonian thinking insist on global capitalism as a common frame of reference, they also leave room for the reciprocal influence of culture and economics.

Instead of trying to resolve a deadlock between competing versions of history, let me in closing turn instead to the issue of what counts as modernism. Lincoln cites "the disruptions, dislocations, and disjunctures brought about by modernization itself"; older, formalist accounts of modernism often used similar terms to describe its aesthetic qualities. Does shifting the concept of disruption from the domain of the aesthetic to the material constitute a correction, an over-correction, or a displacement? Perhaps all three, to some degree. Certainly many early accounts of modernism erred in trying to define modernism solely through aesthetic qualities, but it may also be that in some criticism the pendulum has swung too far the other direction. To return to the "Unboxing Modernism" MLA session in 2009: during Q and A, one audience member (OK, it was me) asked whether modernist studies could do without some longstanding points of reference, such as modernism as a crisis of representation, or modernism as anti-realist or anti-modernization? And is there any point in identifying particular aesthetic forms or techniques as intrinsically modernist, such as collage, montage, interior monologue, or the day novel? The question was meant as a provocation to what seemed an unstated ideal of "unboxedness," a conception of modernism liberated from definitional corners and dead-ends that seemed to me in danger of dissolving any coherent object of study. There was no time to debate substantial attempts to address the problem, of course, so after some veering between bravado refusals of limits and more cautious intimations that, in the words of E. M. Forster, "We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing" (38), the session concluded inconclusively.

Global Modernisms will not settle such disputes, but I hope it will help clarify the stakes of the questions that inevitably arise when modernism "goes global." For Lazarus, modernism clearly does not entail a particular set of formal qualities; rather, any cultural production that attempts to grapple with the realities of modernization or, more likely, the problematic of modernity, qualifies as modernist. Thus a novel written in a realist mode could conceivably count. Vicky Unruh, in contrast, retains an emphasis on experimentalism in Cuban literature, and Harsha Ram shows how what has often been understood as key formal feature of literary modernism—literariness—emerges from a specific set of historical pressures.

I myself remain skeptical about equating modernism too broadly with the aesthetic expression of modernity. The *struggle* with modernity, what one might call modernism's conative

dimension, seems to me crucial: whether the aesthetic expression of an engagement with modernity spills over into a sense of crisis or not, the felt pressure of desire, striving, and volition in response to disruptive change is fundamental to modernism. And with respect to *how* the grappling with modernity finds expression, some techniques and formal qualities are more likely to come into play than others. No exhaustive checklist of the modernist sine qua non is possible or even desirable, but I suspect that in the long run it will prove useful to bear in mind Roman Jakobson's distinctions among the six functions of language, and to explore the variety of ways in which a "set" toward "message" and "code," that is, towards "poetic" and "meta" functions, become variably dominant within specific geographic and historical coordinates (18-29). At all events, continuing efforts of recursive definition must accompany the current expansion of the term if the field of modernist studies is to remain coherent. Bringing together a wide range of perspectives, my collection aims to promote comparative discussions of modernism that will deepen our understanding by self-consciously unraveling the edges of the field.

NOTES

[1] See for instance *Modernism: 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, which, despite the subtitle, devotes much attention to *Madame Bovary* and *Les fleurs du mal*. For a Victorian perspective on modernism that reaches back to John Locke (*inter alia*), see Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics*. For a non-genealogical take on Hume's relevance to modernism, see Mark Wollaeger, *Joseph Conrad and the Fictions of Skepticism*.

[2] See also the 2008 recipient of the Modernist Studies Association Book Prize, the two-volume collection *Modernism*, ed. Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, which includes a section on locales that is designed to decenter the usual Anglo-American perspective on modernism.

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GLOBAL FEMINISMS AND THE POLISH "WOMAN": READING POPULAR CULTURE REPRESENTATIONS THROUGH STORIES OF ACTIVISM SINCE 1989

Magdalena J. Zaborowska
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
mzaborow@umich.edu

Justine M. Pas
Lindenwood University
jpas@lindenwood.edu

Abstract
This article examines ten interviews with Polish feminist activists conducted by the Women's Center "eFka" in Kraków and gathered by the Global Feminisms Project at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Employing intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches, it reads this collection in the context of Polish discourses on womanhood and femininity following the post-communist transition of 1989. The interviews offer a unique perspective on gender formations and invite us to think of the Other Europe beyond the clash of approaches to the region that have positioned it between the extremes of pre-1989 "communist oppression" and post-1989 "democratic freedom." As the GF interviews make clear, although initially influenced by western gender theory, Polish women's movements quickly crafted their own theorizations of patriarchy and the politicization of the private. Approaching the Poland Site interviews as examples of located oral histories shows that attention to women's experiences and self-narrated stories of activism complicates the geopolitical contexts, historical accounts, and popular representations of feminism in the East and West.

Keywords
gender symbologies, intersectionality, oral histories, post-totalitarian

About the authors
Magdalena J. Zaborowska is Associate Professor in the Program in American Culture and The Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, and the 2009-10 Hunting Family Fellow at the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research interests include African American literature, (trans)national/-Atlantic identities, twentieth-century immigrant literatures, American subjectivity and the city, and theories of gender, sexuality, race, and social space. She is the author of award-winning *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile* (2009) and *How We Found America: Reading Gender Through East-European Immigrant Narratives* (1995), as well as editor and co-editor of *Over the Wall/After the Fall: Post-Communist Cultures Through the East-West Gaze* (with Sibelan Forrester and Elena Gapova) (2004), *The Puritan Origins of American Sex: Religion, Sexuality, and National Identity in American Literature* (with Nicholas F. Radel and Tracy Fessenden) (2001), and *Other Americans, Other Americas: The Politics and Poetics of Multiculturalism* (1998).

Justine M. Pas is Assistant Professor of English at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. Her research interests include Comparative Ethnic Studies, American literature of immigration, literature of the Holocaust, and theoretical approaches to life writing, multilingual literature, and translation. She recently published "Writing American Literature in Polish: Post-Holocaust Jewish Identities in Jadwiga Maurer's Short Stories" in the *Journal of Jewish Identities*.

In his controversial and much publicized 2004 cartoon, "Polska wraca do Europy" [Poland Returning to Europe], Andrzej Mleczko comments on his country's revival after nearly half a century of Soviet political, economic, and cultural domination.[1] His Poland is anthropomorphized as a revolutionary female leading a crowd, a depiction that has a long tradition in his country and other parts of Europe. Nude, barefoot, and harried, Mleczko's Poland-as-woman is both traditional and transgressive: she struts her stuff while leading masses of men on a westward march to join the "civilized" nations of the European continent. Like the French Marianne, she holds the national flag. Unlike Marianne, she is being felt up by her countrymen (there are only three female figures in the crowd: a witch and two lugubriously smiling nuns) and seems to be enjoying it. Larger than any who follow her, Poland's ample body is a human battering ram, a vulgarized national symbol, and a sexual object. A bearded, wide-eyed Catholic god, sporting an aureole and clutching his head, looks down at this spectacle from the heavens.

FIG. 1 Andrzej Mleczko, "Polska wraca do Europy"

Mleczko's cartoon, no matter how trivial it may seem at first, provides a provocative representation of Poland's changing place in Europe by making clear the central role of women in the post-communist cultural, political, and social transition that has been taking place in that country since 1989. In blatant and hyperbolic ways characteristic of cartoon art, it suggests that gender and history, and to some degree even sexuality, must be key analytical categories in any reading of the many political uses and abuses of the representations of women's bodies and stereotypes of the feminine in Polish culture. By means of caricature, it also throws in sharp relief

what the eminent literary scholar, and one of the matriarchs of Polish feminisms, Maria Janion, terms the symbolic role of "Woman-[as] Freedom and [-as] Revolution" in European literary and visual culture imaginaries, a figuration of the feminine that "contains all the paradoxes of the creative process." Janion's claim that the concept of "woman" is based in the dual nature of what it symbolizes at the intersections of gender and history – the female is both the "creator of meaning and at the same time a concrete vessel for that meaning" (42) – suggests that women as creative agents and bearers of symbolic representations of the feminine stand at the center of the debate on national identity.[2]

Like the French Marianne, Poland-as-woman has been a symbol, indeed the meaning maker and its vessel, of the Polish nation during the times of hardship and moments of revolutionary and geo-political shifts. She inspired artists and resisters during the period of 18th-19th-century partitions of Poland and the time of its Soviet domination following World War II. Her images as mother, wife, nurse, and crone accompanied the many doomed uprisings of the 19th and 20th centuries; as comrade and laborer she appeared alongside brawny men in socialist-realist posters during the communist era; her ambivalent depictions in political and popular culture venues have illustrated the recent post-communist transition. While the patria-related notions of heroism, honor, freedom, and equality have been traditionally represented as masculine, Polonia, as she has been called, has signified the matria, or the nation's feminine qualities of homeland and hearth (Płatek 5-25). While Mleczko's cartoon riffs on these gendered histories and symbols, it also embraces the all-too-familiar objectification and fetishization of women's bodies and sexuality in Polish popular culture that accompanied their invisibility as social and political agents before and after 1989.[3] Akin to the drawings of his American contemporary, Robert Crumb, Mleczko's depictions of women are "politically incorrect," to put it mildly. They are often shocking; to some they may seem crudely sexist and misogynist. Yet Mleczko's images have been an important part of Polish visual culture's landscape for generations; they have had wide circulation and considerable influence on, and are in many ways a record and reflection of, the changing Polish national imaginary before and after the geo-political caesura of 1989. The artist's long career and his deployment of gender (and often racial) stereotypes to illustrate momentous historical shifts demand serious studies of their own.

Far from being able to do that in the pages that follow, we use "Polska wraca do Europy" as a framing device for our discussion of the representations of women and gender relations in post-communist Poland as reflected in the ten interviews with Polish feminist activists that were conducted by the Women's Center "eFKa" in Kraków, Poland, with whom the authors of this essay collaborated closely from 2002 to 2006. During that period, "eFka" conducted ten interviews with women whom they deemed to be most representative of "Polish feminist activism and scholarship," whose work and allegiances best traversed the spectrum of feminisms across regions,

generations, social classes, and ethnicities.[4] Accessible to students and scholars through the gateway to the "Global Feminisms Project" (GF Project) at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan,[5] these ten interviews provide the key archive for this essay. Poland was one among four sites comprising the GF Project, besides China, India, and the United States. Each site developed its list of interviewees independently, selecting on their own terms the issues and subjects that best represented aspects of their national histories and women's movement histories. Working at the intersections of the local and global, the collection of life histories from India, China, Poland, and the United States gathered in the GF archive offers scholars and students a nuanced understanding of the dense historical relations and long history of mutually influential interactions among women's movements in feminist scholarship from different countries and regions.

As part of the "Poland Site" team in the GF Project, the authors collaborated with the leaders of Women's Center "eFka," Slawka Walczewska and Beata Kozak, in ways that included observation and discussion of the interview process as it took place, close engagement with the transcription and translation of each of the videotaped interviews, review and sharing of each other's materials and thoughts on disparate ideas about the body, the public-private divide, the state, law and jurisprudence, and publishing that have emerged from the interviews. The historical frame of feminist thought and activism in Poland narrated in the ten "eFka" interviews stretch from World War II, through the communist rule and Soviet domination of Poland following 1944, to the period following the Round Table talks and first democratic elections in June 1989 that initiated the fall of socialist and communist governments all over Europe. These women's histories intersect strikingly with diverse institutions ranging from governmental bodies and forces, through underground dissident organizations, to religious organizations and injunctions. They reflect complex relationships with and reactions against these institutions while providing invaluable insights into individual women's daily negotiations of gender and representation as narrated by themselves.

While this essay relies on this rich archive of videotaped personal narratives, it also brings it in conversation with deliberately diverse and eclectic historical, literary, theoretical, and popular culture samples of material from Polish culture. Given the complexity of our subject, as well as our backgrounds as bicultural (Polish-American) and historically grounded scholars of literature, cultural studies, and feminist theory, we felt compelled to deploy an interdisciplinary analytical apparatus to shed some light on the intricate workings of gender and history within that elusive identity formation and set of cultural symbologies that can be named "Polish woman." Such an approach resonates with the mission statement of the Global Feminisms Project, which "by documenting individual life stories of activists and scholars, and considering them in their

particular historical and cultural contexts … records important differences in women's activism in specific local sites, and questions constructions of 'global' feminism that assume a common (Western) set of issues as universal to all women." In particular, by privileging the voices of the interviewees, scholars, artists, and critics from Poland, many unknown in the United States and inaccessible to those who do not speak Polish, we forward another important goal of the GF Project, that is, "to question conventional notions of global feminism as the 'internationalization of the women's movement,'" an approach which may have expanded the understanding of feminism in the Third and Second Worlds, but "which often assumes a transfer eastward of western feminist ideals."[6] As we hope to show through the Polish interviewees' life stories, these women's activism and scholarship give impetus to new readings of global feminist knowledge making.[7]

As we analyze the stories of feminist activism and scholarship gathered through the GF archive, we take into account the different, and often divergent, roles that images and meanings of "woman," "feminine," and "feminist" have played in the Polish national cultural imagination. Echoing Chandra Talpade Mohanty's concept of engaged feminist scholarship that reaches across borders of national and academic cultures, we situate our analysis at the intersection of personal, material, political, and theoretical vectors that propel these women's stories (190-96). We thus place the stories provided by the Polish feminists within the context of the print media and popular culture discourses about women that continue to circulate in postcommunist Poland. This approach allows us to interact with Griselda Pollock's theories of gender and visual culture as we interrogate historical stereotypes and images of Polish femininity and their impact on what Mohanty calls "'women' as material subjects of their own history" (23). The notion of femininity we explore here, then, does not reflect flesh-and-blood identities, but rather mirrors the dual role of the feminine in meaning making that Janion espouses, and what Pollock terms "a position within language and in a psycho-sexual formation that the term Woman signifies" (xvii). We analyze femininity as a "fiction produced within that formation" and "something of which its defining Other, masculinity, speaks, dreams, fantasizes" as it certainly does in the Mleczko cartoon (Pollock xvii). At the same time, we locate this fiction in the context of specific women's stories that map their lived experience as "Polish women" and that are located in the archive of the Global Feminisms Project.

The essay unfolds in three overlapping thematic blocks that interrogate the GF Poland site interviews in the context of historical representations of gender in twentieth- and early twenty-first century Poland. First, we offer an introduction to the relationships between symbolic feminine role models in Polish culture—to the "Polish woman" as Janion's meaning bearer or "vessel." Second, we examine the often paradoxical ways in which these roles have informed the representations of "woman" in diverse examples of post-World War II Polish popular culture that resonate with the GF interviews. Third, we highlight instances where these roles have affected women

as meaning makers and agents, where they not only clash with individual experiences vis-à-vis state institutions but also inspire survival strategies that have been employed and narrated by our subjects.

MAKING MOTHERS, VIRGINS, AND FEMINISTS: A MOSAIC OF FEMININE ROLE MODELS

The majority of symbols depicted in Mleczko's cartoon are recognizably Polish, yet some of them reflect the recent influence of western media on Polish popular culture – e.g., Poland's long-time political and cultural aspirations to be counted among the most "civilized" or "western" parts of Europe and its recent accession to European Union (hence the western direction of the march) or its governments' frequent support for and alignment with the US foreign policy, military interventions, and conservative social agenda on family values (hence the right-wing and militarized character of the marchers and the prominence of visibly Catholic religious leaders).[8] At the same time, Mleczko's image is an example of a masculine "fiction" of "woman" located in a specific historical moment that must be read against the background of the post-Cold War rise of feminist movements in Poland. While these movements were to some degree influenced by western feminist theory and political practice, they were quick to craft their own theorizations of patriarchy and the politicization of the private.

For example, one of the GF interviewees, Joannna Regulska, a social scientist who divides her time between Poland and the United States, gives an apt example of how American inspirations for making the electoral process legible to women during the post-communist transition were folded into the efforts to reinvent that very process from the ground up:

> We wrote a guidebook on how to win elections … I initiated contacts with the American organization … National Women's Political Caucus. We asked if we could use their materials, translated them and then made adjustments to Polish movements.… So we took it, did a translation, and kicked out all the American stuff, since we saw it was written for Americans, and we were creating this Polish reality. (124)

It is such Polish feminist theorizations and their practical applications, indeed, the experience of living them, that are clearly muted and ridiculed in, but are also key to understanding the full context of Mleczko's cartoon.

"Polska wraca do Europy" appeared on the cover of the prestigious weekly political and cultural review magazine, *Polityka* [Politics] on May 1, 2004. Its date of publication on the day of

that socialist version of Labor Day – May Day – harmonizes with the image of a parade depicted by Mleczko, whose imagery recalls obligatory annual marches through towns and cities that were sponsored by the Polish United Workers Party prior to 1989. But May 1, 2004 also marked a momentous political, historic, and economic event that was antithetical to this collective Cold War memory: Poland's accession to the European Union. One of the interviewees in the "Global Feminisms Project," Agnieszka Graff, contends in her recent book, *Rykoszetem: Rzecz o płci, seksualności i narodzie [Stray Bullets: On the Subject of Gender, Sexuality, and Nation],* that the cartoon's appearance on the cover of Poland's major political publication confirmed the importance, if not centrality, of the issues of gender equality, power, and representation to that historic moment and its aftermath (76-77). Drawing on a rich archive of popular news media, Graff points to the proliferation of similar images on the covers of other publications as indicative of a specifically Polish version of an anti-feminist backlash in the country where "feminism has not existed as a powerful social movement," but where women's and gender issues have been historically of central importance (77).[9]

For instance, Barbara Labuda, who served as the Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, tells stories of the male-dominated Solidarity movement and describes her attempts at breaking the glass ceiling of that otherwise progressive independent labor union. Another interviewee, Małgorzata Tarasiewicz, reared in a multigenerational female-centered family that instilled in her a strong sense of independence, describes her activism in the light of her disillusionment with Solidarity's politics vis-à-vis its Women's Section during the post-socialist transition, her "huge disappointment about how this struggle with communism ended, in what kind of an imperfect way, so far from what I have imagined" (139). In the country where, despite all the progress in the wake of the accession to the European Union, the word feminism still draws a range of hostile responses, where attempts at cultural openness and respect for racial and ethnic diversity often fuel anti-Semitic and anti-black sentiments, and where openly sexist and homophobic reactions coexist with a nascent gay and lesbian activism, women like Labuda and Tarasiewicz emerge as pioneers who support women's independence, develop structures to uphold women's rights, and fight discrimination against ethnic and sexual minorities.

Like Labuda's and Tarasiewicz's, all of the Polish interviews in the GF Project show how their authors' histories of activism on the local level, in cities and voivodeships, intersect or clash with state-sanctioned policies, but also with movements and organizations from which one would expect sympathy for issues concerning women. They contextualize Polish women's struggle against the backlash discourses of the right-wing organizations and their followers, such as the nationalistic and fundamentalist Catholic program "Radio Maryja" [Radio Maria] or the racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic organization "Młodzież Wszechpolska" [The All-Polish Youth]. The interviews dwell

on the personal effects of what Bożena Umińska terms the "ethnic cleansing of the spirit" or the ways in which the state- and Catholic Church-sanctioned censorship of feminist, Jewish, and pro-lgbtq discourses in Polish politics and culture, profoundly complicate the understanding of both the geo-political contexts surrounding feminist movements and the personal stories involved in them (66). While Polish culture, history, and people have been sometimes cast in simplified binary terms, that is, as forever split between the dark era of post-1944 "communist oppression" and the brighter era of post-1989 "democratic freedom," the women interviewed in our project offer public and private feminist histories of national and community activism that challenge such binaries.[10]

Labuda emphasizes that many women who were active in the anti-communist movement are still reluctant to identify themselves as feminists. One factor that may come into play, as the Polish-Jewish-American immigrant author and journalist Eva Hoffman explains, is that "the concept of feminism was corrupted by the former regime, by the 'shop-window women' of Communism, who were exhibited much like Potemkin villages to the unwary foreigners" (241). Writing from the United States, Hoffman is a returned immigrant, a visitor in her native Poland whose published account is a carefully edited travelogue of an outsider-participant. As the interviews with women like Uminska and Graff show, although with the advent of capitalism the images of ideologically correct Potemkin-village women have given way to the ultrafeminine models in glossies like *Glamour*, *Twój Styl [Your Style],* and *Elle*, the popular meaning of feminism has remained negative and reflects complex histories of sexism during and after communist era. It is true that some connotations of feminist today resonate in the United States – e.g., man hater, unnatural woman, dike/lesbian – but others are uniquely Polish and have been deployed trans-historically. For example, denoting meanings such as anti-(Polish) state, anti-Catholic, anti-(normal) family these new terms arise from both the legacy of communist-state manufactured illusion that women had completely equal access to politics and culture during the period of 1944-89 and from the more recent insistence of right wingers that they return to their "natural roles" as bearers of national cultures and barefoot-and-pregnant guardians of the hearth.

A brief note on language and gender might be helpful here. We include it to emphasize that much of what is key to understanding the workings of representations of female gender in Poland cannot be compared, seen through analogies, or translated without peril since, in contrast to English, Polish grammar genders all nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Most nouns denoting professional occupations like doctor, lawyer, or writer have their male and female counterparts that are marked by recognizably feminine endings (e.g., "prawnik" [lawyer] – "prawniczka"[female lawyer], "nauczyciel" [teacher]-"nauczycielka"). But as Graff points out, when the feminine ending is used, it often implies something not entirely serious, in most cases something lesser than its grammatically masculine counterpart (the example of "poet" vs. "poetess" in English

might be helpful here). On the other hand, there are numerous professions where the masculine ending virtually never appears. These are understood to be the "feminine" jobs, which require a lot of "care, patience, hard work … and low wages" like nursing, childcare, teaching, and cleaning (Graff 35-36). In fact, the word "feminist" never appears in its grammatically masculine form in Polish as "feminista" but always as "feministka." Feminism has even been associated with murder: homemade signs, "feminism kills women," have been carried by participants in the so-called "marches for national tradition" that are sponsored by nationalist pro-life organizations. Given the relative absence of self-censoring among most publications in Poland, the term also invariably springs onto their front pages whenever words such as woman and freedom or equality, abortion, and minorities appear nearby.

Among these terms, "woman" or "*kobieta*" deserves an explanation across cultural and linguistic contexts, despite its apparent clarity. The terms "woman" and its Polish equivalent "*kobieta*" pose no apparent difficulty as far as nouns denoting a female of the human species are concerned. But when we take cultural connotations into account, the word in Polish requires explanation and contextualization in its attendant representations of femininity. Historically, there have been two basic, linguistically grounded, and closely interlinked ideologies of femininity that modify notions of woman, womanhood, and feminine in Poland. Though often unspoken, they resonate in all of the GF interviews. These ideological constructs bring together linguistic and visual representations of historically contingent gender in the way that Janion has posited it. As "creator[s] of meaning and at the same time … concrete vessel[s] for that meaning" they reflect and are represented by the symbolic archetypes and iconographies of Matka Polka/Mother Poland and Maryja Dziewica/Virgin Mary (Einhorn; Płatek).

The first image, Mother Poland, goes back to the 18th century and the time when Poland did not exist on the map of Europe for about 150 years, following the partitions by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. The second, Virgin Mary, originates long before, with Poland's 1000-year long Catholic history and arises from the embroilment of that history with the development of the Polish state and its institutions (Zaborowska; Porter). Matka Polka/Mother Poland symbolizes women as guardians of the hearth, soldier-bearing wombs, and bearers of national culture, language, and "family values." Its shadow, Maryja Dziewica/Virgin Mary has stood for the unattainable, chaste, perfect femininity sanctioned by the Catholic Church. The resilience and plasticity of this formation, and its complex links with female sexuality and reproductive rights, are especially important for understanding today's clashes around femininity and feminism.

While somewhat familiar in the US through its counterpart of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* that was described poignantly by the late Gloria Anzaldua, the Polish cult of the Virgin verges on goddess worship with specific political and practical results for the lives of ordinary women.

Mary was officially crowned the "Queen of Poland" by the authorities of the Catholic Church —Poland seems to be the only female divine monarchy in the world—and was proclaimed the nation's "Divine Mother." A feminist paradox incarnate, she is a monarch and a divine mother that everyone has to worship yet no one has to take seriously. She is the infinitely forgiving, passive, and merciful mother figure dreamt up by a patriarchal society in which all women are expected to be just like her: lovely visions to behold but never opinionated subjects. It is no accident that the right-wing radio station led by the anti-feminist, anti-Semitic, and anti-gay Father Rydzyk is named "Radio Maryja."

Both models, the Mother and the Virgin, have persisted, in various permutations, through the Cold War and capitalist transition. They continue to inform visual culture and are deliberately deployed by the propaganda machines of the Catholic church and conservative political organizations. Neither offers contemporary Polish women any help with envisaging full citizenship in the nation's post-socialist rebuilding. Both, given the intertwining of the most recent discourses of exclusion with the anti-feminist backlash under their auspices, exclude ethnic, sexual, and religious minorities.

OUR STORIES, OURSELVES: GROWING UP BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND (CATHOLIC) CAPITALISM

For women like Bożena Umińska, another of our interviewees, whose father changed their family's name from Keff to shield them from anti-Semitism, neither model offers a viable option – aside from their obvious restrictions - because both are Christian and nationalist.

Umińska told us that

> various human institutions … have this identity stamp, and they just stamp and stamp. And, for example, the Catholic Church stamps and says this: "You have a great Polish-Catholic identity, and simply everything is fine with you." Probably what's included is, I don't know, baptism, confessions, you know, offerings … I don't know, everything, so, "you're great." And then it's called… what's it called? A true Pole, you know, and we have this nationalist and fascist with a great identity. (181)

Umińska has also offered a trenchant analysis of race and gender in 19th and 20th Century Poland when she examined an array of literary texts that depict Polish Jewish women in *Shadowed Figure: Jewish Women in Polish Literature*. She found that the double bind of gender and race, as Jewishness was then considered a race in roughly the same way it was in the US, constricted these women's lives because it more easily confined them to anti-Semitic stereotypes. In a more recent

collection of essays, *Barykady*, Umińska links her feminist activism to patriotism, whose duties demand unequivocal support for the civil rights of gays and lesbians from each responsible citizen: "as long as homophobia endangers Polish democracy, we are all gays and lesbians and should march out in the streets with them" (66). To this, the out-lesbian poet and writer Izabela Filipiak adds that, in Poland, sexuality and sexual object choice have become forms of passing, dissent, and contestation similar to ethnicity: "It may be that the lesbian is – along with her body and desire – the litmus test of what is up with culture today. … [But] like Jewish women during the Second World War lesbians exist on others' papers … they cross over to the Aryan side … and like the best actresses enter the roles of a good auntie, devoted wife, social activist, businesswoman" (69).

The double burden of gender and sexuality to which Umińska and Flipiak point plays a constricting role for women like Anna Gruszczyńska, our youngest interviewee, born in 1978. Gruszczyńska's personal experience has led to local and national activism on behalf of Gay and Lesbian Rights. When Gruszczyńska was a graduate student of Foreign Languages and Literatures in Kraków, she came upon much resistance from a female professor for whom women's literature, let alone lesbian literature, was completely taboo and off-limits. Instead of continuing her research on the first lesbian novel published in Argentina, the professor insisted that Gruszczyńska study Spanish-Polish relations:

> For the whole year, my mentor didn't even pronounce the word lesbian; if at all, she talked about "relationships between women," and she'd try to persuade me to … I mean between the lines … that if I really had to work on such an awful topic as women's literature, and the starting point was that women's literature didn't exist, then why did I have to focus on lesbians? If it had to be, be on women, then let them be normal women, heterosexual, and preferably in novels. (31)

Undaunted by this relegation of lesbian and women writers to the realm of the invisible, Gruszczyńska continued her scholarship and plunged into activism that included spearheading of the well known action, "Niech nas zobaczą" [Let Them See Us], that posted photographs of maleand female same-sex couples on walls and billboards of Polish cities. To make this nation-wide action most effective, Gruszczyńska paid attention to Catholic religious holidays whose sequence dictates the rhythm of public and private life in Poland: "We did have some leaflet campaigns, right before Christmas," she recalls, "when, on a snowy day, we were giving out leaflets with the slogan "How Gay Men and Lesbians Spend Their Christmas" to remind everybody that gays and lesbians existed and had to take questions about grandchildren for Christmas (29).

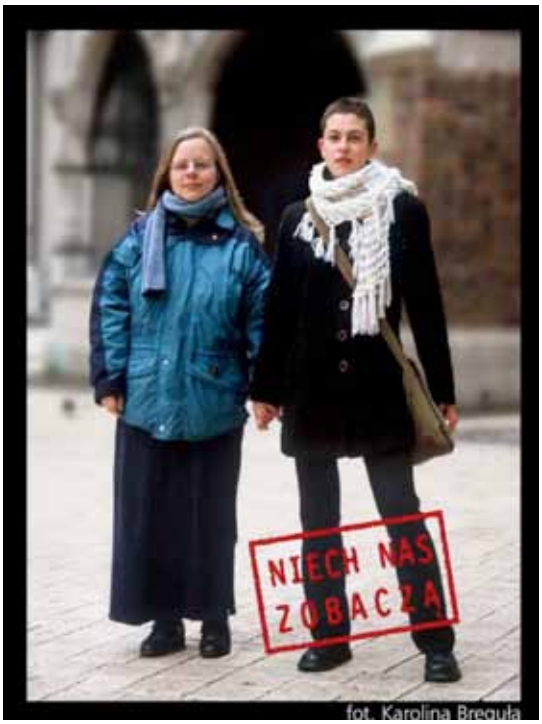

FIG. 2, Anna Gruszczyńska, "Let Them See Us"

Recent scholarship on lesbian life stories (e.g., Anna Laszuk's *Dziewczyny, wyjdźcie z szafy! [Girls, Come out of the Closet!]*), the fallout of homophobia on Polish public life and popular culture (e.g., Zbyszek Sypniewski's and Błażej Warkocki's *Homofobia po polsku [Homophobia in Polish]*), as well as attempts to recast prominent literary works in the context of gay and lesbian biographies of their authors (e.g., Krzysztof Tomasik's *Homobiografie [Homobiographies]*) gives us hope that things may change in the future. But for now, whether you are a Jewish woman, a feminist or a lesbian (or all of the above), or an atheist in the Poland dominated by Catholic values, your position as a real or true *kobieta* is contingent on a whole set of religiously and culturally prescribed functions. Like its counterpart of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* in Mexico, the Polish role model inspired by Catholic ideology and iconography that has put the Virgin Mary on a pedestal contributes strongly to the saintly and sacrificial role that many women feel they must follow to avoid alienation and isolation.

The other ubiquitous image of Polish womanhood, Matka Polka or Mother Poland, though neither virginal nor whorish, has long created a tight maternal box.[11] There is, of course, a direct link between the Virgin Mary and Mother Poland. Lech Wałęsa, the emblematic hero of Solidarity, has successfully employed feminine symbols to illustrate his social and political position. By wearing the badge with the image of the Polish Virgin, the famous Black Madonna of Częstochowa, in his lapel, he has been reminding Polish women, especially in their absence in the media, that

their role has been that of men's unwavering supporters, caretakers, and nurturers (Płatek). The image of Mother Poland as connoting these virtues emerged during the three partitions of Poland in the 18th Century, when nation building consisted of preservation of language, literature, Catholicism, and traditional gender roles in tandem with armed uprisings against the Russian rule. Though they often participated in resistance movements against the partitions, women were most welcomed as contributors to the nation insofar as their capacities for bearing sons-patriots-warriors were concerned. A model Polish woman who emerged from that period emulated the Virgin by being passive and self-sacrificing. A slave to her fertile body, she was nevertheless de-sexualized, and focused her energies first and foremost on bearing and rearing male saviors of and for the nation. In another gendered, romantic anthropomorphization, the partitioned and war torn Poland was at that time considered a "Christ of Nations" who would lead other beleaguered countries to freedom. So when one of her sons died on the battlefield, Mother Poland/Virgin sent another in his stead.

A curious version of this myth still thrives among conservatives and prominent right wing politicians as women who refuse, delay or are unable to bear children are represented by them as failures not only of motherhood but, indeed, of womanhood. Women who embrace their jobs and education, for example, rather than thinking of motherhood first, are often seen as threatening the very well being of the nation, at least according to the infamous former Minister of Education, Roman Giertych, who is part of the ultra right-wing Liga Polskich Rodzin or LPR [League of Polish Families]. Giertych and his ilk see feminists as something akin to what the American reactionaries term "femi-nazis," or as monsters who have to turn to work and lesbianism to bury their grief as unfulfilled females; who, supposedly unable to attract a man and bear children, attack and criticize men out of spite and certainly not out of any desire to fight inequality and gain political agency. Giertych's vision of Mother Poland overshadows even those women who do want to have children but have trouble conceiving and turn for help to modern reproductive technologies, such as in vitro fertilization. These women are seen as unnatural which is often shorthand for feminist, because they demand that their treatments be covered by national health care plans the way such treatments are covered in other countries of the European Union.

In "Święte życie, święty lęk" ["Holy Life, Holy Horror"], an article that responds to the conservatives' control over women's reproductive rights, Graff argues against the Catholic church newspeak. This newspeak, she argues, has monopolized the discourse on reproductive technologies in Polish media and it equates in vitro procedures with abortion and those who turn to in vitro with baby murderers. Graff emphasizes the link between language, politics, and women's right to health care free of ideology: "We must regain another, forgotten language in Poland. In this language a pregnancy is called a pregnancy, an embryo – an embryo, and patients are spoken about with

empathy.… [This is] about the respect of the state for women's privacy and women's subjectivity, about supporting people's decisions in the realms of fertility and how to become parents." Graff ends her article with a dire prediction about the future of a country in which the Catholic Church prescribes the one and only way to have children: "[The ban on in vitro] will pass. One will have to travel abroad to undergo tests and procedures, and only the very wealthy will be able to afford it.… In religion classes, the in vitro children will become objects of persecution as having been conceived against the natural law."

In addition to the omnipresent Mother Poland, another important model of femininity that emerged after World War II is the Female Comrade. During the Cold War, communist ideology promoted camaraderie among ethnicities, classes, and genders. Feminism was not mentioned much, but existed in a socialist-realist form that required, as eFKa Director Sławomira Walczewska observes, a "dogmatic representation of women's movements in the spirit of the ideology of the state, the workers' state and class struggle to be exact, that is, as dramatically different from the bourgeois fancies of the ladies from the haves class" who first fought for women's suffrage and reproductive rights in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (11). In some important ways, feminism was itself a "foreign" word and concept associated with the West and capitalism. Indeed, according to state authorities, it had no right to exist in Poland at all because women were not discriminated against under communism (5). To some extent, it was an organizational force without the label of feminism applied to it because, as Hoffman points out, "like socialism, feminism was co-opted and corrupted by its association with official ideology" (80).

When Hoffman compares the US and Polish political systems, she elucidates important ways in which Polish and American women struggled with very different post-World War II cultural contexts. For one, there was no equivalent in socialist Poland of what went on in the US in the 1950s. There was no cult of post-World War II domesticity. This was due to the simple fact that women rarely, if ever, were able to be only homemakers in a country that lost so much of its population and that transitioned into state-sanctioned socialist culture in an almost single staggering leap after the end of World War II. There was no suburban isolation in Poland of the 1950s, no room for a homegrown "feminine mystique," because women were not expected, or allowed, to ponder their condition, as excessive introspection was considered a "bourgeois" pursuit. As Labuda points out in her interview, Communism equalized genders, at least in the public discourse and national imaginary, and women were expected to get an education and jobs just like their male counterparts: "Higher education was more discriminatory by class than gender—discriminatory, that is, against the upper classes—and women entered the professions in relatively large numbers, and reached high levels of authority, if rarely the highest" (Hoffman 81). But glass ceilings existed even in the midst of this socialist gender utopia: the Party allowed only

a specific number of women members in its ranks, while in the world of academia, where women had been more often educated than men, they achieved fewer academic titles and honors, not to mention prominence and visibility in the media (Sawa-Czajka 109).

Like among university presidents and public intellectuals, in higher echelons of the government women were objects of discussion and background images rather than active participants. The Central Committee of the United Polish Worker's Party (KC PZPR), Walczewska observes, was a "men only" body. During the forty odd years of the KC PZPR's existence, its seven secretaries general were all men (2005, 6). Regardless of the few gains made on the ground by Polish women during this period, however, it was still the only era in Polish history when gender equality was part of the ruling party's official agenda. Like racism, sexism was prohibited; the proliferation of both in private lives, on the job, in the jokes and popular discourse notwithstanding. As a result, one of the concepts that Polish feminists, as well as women who refuse that label, cannot understand is "feminine weakness," or any such notion of "passive, ornamental femininity, of the half-childish doll-like women" exemplified by Donna Reed-inspired images of white middle class American women (Hoffman 80). Given Lenin's and Stalin's opposition to the oppression of women under both feudal and capitalist systems (the former referred to domestic work as both unproductive and barbaric), so-called prerevolutionary gender roles were routinely ridiculed and repudiated in socialist realist popular culture as "bourgeois." In popular films, for example, especially during the height of Stalinism in Poland of 1949-1955, there evolved a model of behavior for the female part of the proletariat, what Piotr Zwierzchowski describes as the "pedestrian stereotype of a socialist realist she-hero … the proverbial tractor driver, who personified the social ascendancy of woman" for the masses of movie goers (130). Engaged politically and socially, aware of ideological implications of their actions, such socialist heroes might fall in love and marry, but competed as equals against men who were part of the same work force. And yet, no matter that these women were represented as larger than life, as giantesses as Ewa Toniak describes them in her study of early socialist-realist visual culture, such depictions erased their sexuality and evoked curious fetishism, misogyny and abjection vis-à-vis the female body.

Amid other cultural and historic legacies of 1944-1989, it is virtually impossible to see Polish feminists in comparison to their white American counterparts of any "wave." In fact, if comparisons are to be made, Polish feminists who fought in the anti-Communist underground express views that seem much closer in political sentiment to those expressed by American feminists of color and Third World Feminists. One of the women Hoffman interviewed, for example, said this about gender cooperation in the anti-communist movement: "Well, you know, we've had all these problems we had to deal with together … we've always had to struggle, and in some respects, we tried to help each other" (181). Still, as Labuda recalls her years as a Solidarity activist, when push

came to shove men saw women in very specific, that is, subordinate positions; female peers were more often asked to serve their male colleagues tea than to join their discussions as peers (69).

Residues of the archetypal communist Female Comrade have survived the transition of 1989 and complicate the images, which we have depicted thus far. The following fragment of a newsreel celebrating International Women's Day on March 8, 1953 illustrates well the extent to which communist ideology attempted to shroud the reality of women's lives during the Cold War; the extent to which it normalized gender equality and thus attempted to make all citizens take it for granted:

> Constitutional Project of the Polish People's Republic, article 66: Women in the Polish People's Republic have equal rights with men in all respects of national, political, economic, social, and cultural life. Every morning all over Poland people rush to work. Women walk alongside men. Wacława Durniewicz is a forewoman in the Kasprzak Factory in Warsaw. She gets satisfaction out of her work and equal pay. With a bright smile, she teaches her female colleagues. Helena Wytrwał has a different workday. She is the chair of her community's local council. There were no such chief village officers in prewar Poland. She is like Helena Olszewska who is the chairperson of the local committee of the United Polish Workers Party. She is one of the many women who have been entrusted by the People's Government with the care for her co-citizens. Fryderyka Niewiadomska, a female District Attorney, is also among them. There is noble competition among men and women in all walks of life. (*PRL Propaganda*)

In People's Poland, constitutional law, however, was not enough to guarantee gender equality. Polish women's everyday life was different from this rosy picture of communist camaraderie, as they carried the double burden of homemakers and professionals, few, if any, had the means to rise to prominent positions or free themselves from the workload that awaited them at home (Corrin; Bystydzieński). But, as Labuda suggests in the following fragment, at least theoretically, women could fully participate in the political and professional life of their country:

> With all the criticism of that [communist] system, I nonetheless believe that it did something, that it caused the women's issue, the status of women, to be noticed and discussed, that social norms changed in Poland. And the situation of women in the Polish People's Republic, in my view, was decisively better than in France of the 60s and 70s. (69)

Between 1946 and 1989, women enjoyed benefits which have since disappeared from Poland's social map: free childcare, long paid maternity leaves (up to three years), and paid time off to care for sick children, not to mention state-sanctioned vacations, subsidized winter and summer camps for children, as well as workers' health resorts ("No Place to be a Woman 60). Abortion was legal and easily accessible, as was contraception, under socialized health care and so, unlike in France during the same period, Polish women had control over their reproductive rights. Not so after the fall of communism, when the pro-life forces of the Catholic Church and Solidarity got rid of these gains despite women's 50% membership in the anti-communist underground movement, and their vocal protests (Penn).

UNSPOKEN TRANSITIONS: BEYOND THE SOLIDARITY OF SILENCE

On March 15, 1993, the Law on Family Planning, Human Embryo Protection, and Conditions of Abortion was approved by the upper house of the Polish Parliament, overturning the liberal 1956 legislation (David and Titkow 239). Now, Poland has some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. As the Slavic Studies scholar Halina Filipowicz explains:

> Many Western observers find it difficult to reconcile the political transformation of postcommunist Poland with Polish society's fierce and enduring attachment to traditional nationalist scripts.… However, the "transition narrative" crudely falsifies postcommunist developments. What emerged from the Quiet Revolution of 1989 in Poland was a highly traditional culture, rooted in religious fundamentalism, nationalist ideology and patriarchal practices. Seen in this context, the reluctance of many Poles to challenge the "hidden" taboo of particular forms of inequality (such as gender discrimination) as well as "unspoken" (yet still active) nationalist narratives becomes less puzzling.... When communism collapsed, a need for clear-cut identities of "us" and "them" became especially urgent, and a demand for scapegoats was (and still is) at its highest to feed the totalizing desire for order, stability, control.

Such a turn of events has led our interviewees to struggle even more fervently for women's rights. For instance, Tarasiewicz, the director of The Network of East-West Women, recalls that the end of communism was a bitter disappointment for her, despite her active role in its demise—a moment when "the [gender] blinders kind of started to fall off" (2003, 139). Like African American feminists disillusioned with the male heterosexist agenda of the Black Power Movement in the 1960, she realized in Poland of the 1990s that the struggle for end of oppression were understood

as masculine. To her, the transition of post-1989 meant that male Solidarity and Church hierarchies replaced the communist rule:

> The news about my involvement in feminism somehow got around, and that's how I got my work in Solidarity, this next stage, already after 1989, when I became a coordinator of the National Women's Section, that is a person responsible for building this section from scratch. It was because … even though there were many women in Solidarity—after all, many women worked for the underground and played exceptionally important roles—later on it turned out that there were no women in the union's leadership and that there actually was no single unit within the union that would represent women's issues. (140)

Tarasiewicz goes on to explain that Solidarity's bosses agreed to form such an organization only because of international pressure, which insisted that women's voices be more explicitly represented. Solidarity's leadership also did so in hopes that such a section would be more of a symbolic figure-head, another Potemkin village rather than an effective activist arm of the labor union. When it turned out that the women under Tarasiewicz's leadership demanded that changes be made and women's interests represented in the government, "the Women's Section reached the end of its life," as she recalled, "in a rather sudden and dramatic way" (140).

Solidarity, closely aligned with the Catholic Church, proposed a restrictive anti-abortion law, which the Women's Section opposed. When Marian Krzaklewski became the leader of Solidarity soon after, Tarasiewicz remembered, "he undertook steps toward repressing and dissolving the Women's Section" whose stance against the anti-abortion law threatened his position in relation to the Catholic Church (2003, 142). As a result, Solidarity dissolved the Women's Section and a "façade Section was created, consisting only of women from the right" (143).

Asked in an interview what it was like to be a woman in a position of power in Poland, the well-known Solidarity activist and later editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza [Electoral News]*, the largest newspaper in democratic Poland, Helena Łuczywo, explained that it was "not any kind of a problem." She added that she "couldn't understand American feminists when [she] spent a year in the US" (Hoffman 49). Łuczywo admitted that women in Poland were in some ways worse off than their American counterparts – they had to wait in long queues after coming home from work to put food on the table, for instance – but she also thought that Poland offered women liberties not to be found in the West. She explained that there was a long tradition in Poland of "female activism and authority" (Hoffman 49). In recalling the 18th and 19th century Polish women's resistance movements, for example, Łuczywo linked women's participation in Solidarity to these earlier

uprisings and to the images of Mother Poland as a powerful cultural symbol. She acknowledged that even if women were deliberately held from direct positions of power in Solidarity, and later in the democratically elected government, women were able to develop "formidable examples of feminine strength." There was a common cause and it proved to be "a stronger force than the polarizing stereotypes of gender" (Hoffman 49). Unfortunately, when the communist system collapsed, many of the women who led to its demise "rejected any gender analysis, saying: we were all in it together, and we did what was needed, because it was the right thing to do," no matter that their hard work was not recognized, appreciated, or rewarded by their male colleagues (Grudzińska-Gross xii).

This unease with systemic gender inequality – no matter that Łuczywo suffered as a Solidarity activist who was not as visible as her male counterparts – is similar to the unease expressed by some activists of color in the Global Feminisms Project's U.S. interviews. Rabab Abdulhadi, for instance, advocates a complex gender analysis that addresses the victimization of Arab and Muslim men as well as women, which she finds necessary in the post-9/11 xenophobic atmosphere. As Abdulhadi observes, "women's oppression … does not disappear with the targeting of men" (36). Likewise, Cathy Cohen recognizes that feminism needs to change so that it can "take into account other factors, or the intersection of race, then you have to kind of really think through a position on … not a position on patriarchy, but the ways and contours, the nuances of patriarchy. How do we understand, for example, Black men's male privilege within a white supremacist or racist society" (128). However desirable such approaches are, in light of many of the GF interviews, it is rather revealing that men described in these interviews rarely make such pronouncements.

The women, who participated in and led the anti-government revolution in the 1980s Poland, went unacknowledged by the new government and their former Solidarity colleagues after 1989. As the interviewees in the GF Project like Labuda and Tarasiewicz made clear, this erasure did not bother many, including some of those it targeted or even hurt. At the same time, it served as a call to arms for others like the historian Shana Penn who documented women's work in the anti-communist underground. As the opening epigraph in her book, Solidarity's Secret (2005), Penn uses a revealing quotation from Labuda: "You've come to learn about Solidarity women, so I will tell you the truth, but who will care to publish it? Everyone in Poland knows that women started the 1980s underground, but no one bothers to talk about it."

As Penn observes, together with the Western press, male-dominated Polish society relayed a specifically male inflected portrayal of the revolution. As a result, virtually simultaneously with the so-called "birth of democracy," women activists were thrown out with the bathwater. It could also be argued that, caught between impossible gendered role models, seasoned independent trade

union fighters like Łuczywo or Anna Walentynowicz actually let themselves become invisible when their role in the national revolution went so blatantly unacknowledged (Penn). Helping to explain this paradox in the socio-historical context of lingering traditional gender roles and curious approaches to sexism, our "eFka" collaborator Sławka Walczewska stresses the power of yet another belief about womanhood in Poland, or the "notion readily spread among women that it is women who rule the world through men … that HE may be the head of the family, but SHE is its neck" (2000, 11). According to this logic, women have power and stay invisible as power brokers; it also implies that men need to be led and manipulated by women.

The interviews collected in the GF archive give us a view of women's reality on the cusp of the twentieth anniversary of the momentous shift of 1989, whose public celebrations the Polish government is currently undertaking. The current cultural and political climate fosters an image of the ideal Polish woman that may be more recognizable to American readers than to former Solidarity activists. As numerous fashion magazines, TV ads, and domestic soap operas suggest not too subtly, the *kobieta*/woman of today is someone who remains a vessel of meaning, a male-made fiction by fulfilling men's needs: she has "that miraculous and dependable something" and devotes every moment to learning how to catch and nurture a man. These images are often imports from the west, true enough, but they also reflect lingering and resurgent stereotypes of the contemporary, sexed-up, and westernized Mother Poland.

These new incarnations echo both Mother Poland and the Virgin Mary, as the latter appears in more conservative publications and programs promoting family values, such as the aforementioned program "Radio Maryja," a weekly *Nasz Dziennik [Our Daily]*, or in more genteel versions in the recent chick-lit hit by Malgorzata Kalicinska, *Dom nad rozlewiskiem*, and a TV program for children *Ziarno* [Seed]. The proliferation of these female fictions and figurations, their complex historic roots, as well as hybrid character in contemporary systems of gendered significations do not go unnoticed in more progressive publications, such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s magazine *Wysokie Obcasy [High Heels]*, or *Polityka*, and in academic feminist circles where some of the most trenchant gender analyses now take place.

Twenty First Century heterosexist fantasies are particularly jarring in the context of what has only recently emerged in Poland as a topic of public debate – domestic violence and its relation to gendered systems of power. Ironically and tragically, it is this new attention to an age-old problem, and de facto systemic covering up of women's victimization by state institutions and the media, that allows for a widening of gender analyses in public discourses to include men and masculinity. As our interviewee, the social worker Anna Lipowska-Teutsch, recalls, her advocacy for abused and battered women was discouraged and cost her her job. Initially aware of feminism only from stories of western activists, she felt in the 1980s that it had no place in Poland. But then she heard terrifying

stories of violence against women as the women themselves related their experiences to her: "These were women who showed up in the Acute Poisoning Clinic after suicide attempts and who had suffered some inhuman kind of abuse by their husbands, fathers, brothers, boyfriends and so on for many years. And finally they tried to take their own lives, because for many years, they had been seeking help, trying to escape, trying to get some protection from the law, trying really hard" (2005, 97). Women's accounts made Lipowska-Teutsch embark on activism that radically changed her outlook and that revealed to her the interlocking systems of male dominance between the private and public spheres. She was shocked and outraged that no one listened to these women's cries for help, that there were no institutions where they could turn for protection and understanding. Between the home and the state institutions designed to protect all of Poland's citizens, battered women had no place and were invisible. Most of all, Lipowska-Teutsch was amazed that many of these women internalized their invisibility and victimized status, as they blamed themselves for their abuse and saw suicide as the only option in a culture that expected and rewarded female sacrifice. One woman, a Catholic from the countryside, drank poison that would ensure she would die slowly, so that, while in agony, she could still undergo confession and gain absolution to ensure that she would go to heaven. For years, this woman was abused by her husband, who also molested her children; she lived through it all "with no result but silence and loneliness" (98). She died in a horrifyingly painful way but, as Lipowska-Teutsch emphasized, she tried to be "a good Catholic," to "save" herself in the afterlife by enacting in her death models of feminine sacrifice disseminated by the Catholic Church. This woman was certainly comforted by her deep faith and prayer, but she was just as certainly a victim of the culture and state that did not recognize her as a fully-fledged citizen and political subject. She died locked in a trap that was, ironically and tragically, set up and sanctioned by the discourses and institutions that embraced both the Mother and the Virgin models of womanhood, the models that were to secure her a good life on earth and a certain passage into an even better afterlife.

To compound the bitter irony of the lessons learnt through stories such as this one, Lipowska-Teutsch discovered that more often than not the role of the victim precluded the victimized woman from identifying herself as a feminist. The organizations that came on the scene during the 1990s to help battered women expected only the "classic" or "good victims," or those who deserved "to be believed and to receive help" mutely. Women who would "embrace a sense of empowerment and demand [their] rights," who would identify with a larger group to defend their place in the world, had little or no credibility:

> Here you are, dear ladies, here you have these suffering women, these women who are tortured, raped, killed, abused, who die, and take care of them, you know. Well,

> there is something about this that makes you talk about these women. It's a bit like a sound of a nail scratching a board, you know. There is something kind of tactless about this. This kind of showing … flaunting of this … this suffering. There is this talk about some kind of negative effect of the victim's feminism, this kind of showing the stigmata and baring the wounds, and that, on the other hand, feminism slides down into this kind of hole, where all well-meaning people meet and they want to help somebody, you know. But that kind of dulls the blade, let's say, the political blade of feminism and focuses on the universal suffering of a human person. (98)

As another interviewee, Barbara Limanowska, found out, she could become active on behalf of women victimized by human trafficking only by leaving Poland. Limanowska felt that she could not limit her activism to Poland, whose system and institutions she found constricting, even if she first embraced feminist consciousness while a university student there. Limanowska worked for the LaStrada Foundation, which allowed her to use her links with her home country and Eastern Europe, as well as with Asia and the West. Still, her international activism was inspired by what she sees as a distinctly localized feminist perspective: "We had this idea to go beyond the 'first world,' beyond the language and methodology, which kind of reflected Western feminist imagination, to look at it from some Eastern vantage point, and to try to describe this phenomenon, to work on it kind of… from the inside, from our perspective, without appropriatin g… or … or accepting the language, which, as we felt, didn't quite reflect what was really going on in trafficking" (88). On the other hand, for Anna Titkow, her feminism as a scholar of sociology and gender became confirmed only after her work had been included in the famous collection, *Sisterhood Is Global*, and after Robin Morgan told her that this publication already defined Titkow as a feminist. That was so, Titkow pointed out, because for her generation of women in Poland, the ones who are now in their sixties, the label of feminist could come only after having created a sense of a gendered self, after having developed what we would call a feminist self and story (149).

Remembering her own troubled road to feminist consciousness, literary scholar Inga Iwasiów, points to the complexities of exploring issues of gender and representations across cultures and languages that have inspired this essay. Iwasiów emphasizes that she was a feminist "since preschool" given her independence and strong-mindedness. It was in fact her repressive upbringing and education in the socialist Poland of the 1960s and 70s that gave her the first tools for gender analysis. Iwasiów saw her past and her road to her feminist self as framed with performances of womanhood, gendered gestures and a specific setup that accompanied her education at that time, which was also, as she came to see it later, the "pinnacle achievement of patriarchy." This was so, as Iwasiów explains, because

> the feminized teaching profession didn't guarantee that one would be in a space beyond patriarchy. Just the opposite, all these gestures performed there, this whole framing that accompanied education in the 70s and the 80s were, of course, top achievements of patriarchy, and in its communist version, there was, of course, some place for girls. It wasn't clearly specified which place exactly it was, but it was clear that one could hold a red flag and perform at a school assembly." (46)

It was in those performative moments, while a decorative element in political spectacles, that Iwasiów realized both her private "objectification as a girl" and her political "insightfulness" that later enabled her to voice her opinions as a scholar. It is on this intersection of the private and political meanings of woman, feminist, and feminine that we would like to bring this essay to its conclusion. And by way of an apt conclusion, let us offer an image of Polish womanhood that can confront Mleczko's cartoon with which we opened this essay.

Working with photography and socialist realist architecture, multimedia artist Zofia Kulik, who came of age in the 1970s, echoes Iwasiów's sentiments in "Self Portrait with the Palace." In this piece that was made entirely by hand, using traditional photographic and collage techniques, Kulik uses her own nude image to map out male and female bodies as fissured meeting places for gender and history. "Self Portrait with the Palace" both deconstructs and

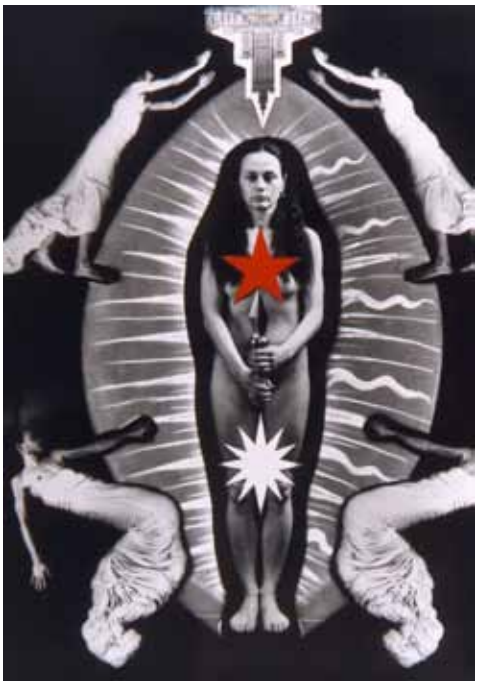

Fig. 3, Kulik, "Self-Portrait with the Palace" (1991)

disrupts the proliferation of monumental religious, political, and gendered symbols that represent Polish national identity during and after the Cold War. While doing so, it gestures ironically and powerfully toward the historic contexts we have examined through the interviews with Polish feminist activists: from the iconic Mother Poland and Virgin Mary, through the Communist Comrade, to the Super-Feminine Chick of today.

Bridging historic periods and generations, Kulik represents the wave of feminist artists who contended with a peculiar form of gendered internal exile in the world of the arts under and after communism, during the height of socialism in Poland and during the height of nationalist and religious frenzy unleashed in its aftermath. We see her work as positioned on the crossroads, in the uncensored space of creative practitioners and intellectuals, and as offering by means of a visual narrative a story of female resilience that is akin to those told by the GF Project interviewees we have examined in this essay. The woman at the center of "Self-Portrait with the Palace" is the Polish anti-Madonna and phallic anti-Virgin, at the same time as she can be read in dialogue with the depictions of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* by Chicana artists like Alma López, because the story that she tells cuts across multiple idioms and cultures. And as much as the woman in Kulik's image is imprisoned by the national religious and political symbols, imperilled by the spire of the upside-down Palace, she is also central and commanding attention; she is a formidable goddess with whom no one would want to mess.

Like the images and stories included in the *Nieoczekiwane Archiwum Kobiet [The Unexpected Women's Archive]*, a catalogue from the ground-breaking multimedia exhibit, "Polka: Medium – Cień– Wyobrażenie" (2005) [Polish Woman: Medium – Shadow – Vision], that brought together feminist scholars, artists, and activists, Kulik's image suggests a choral vision and a collage of voices that comprise the Polish feminine. And that is why the image of Kulik's socialist realist goddess that clearly anticipated and inspired *The Unexpected Women's Archive* is a perfect visual homage to the women whose stories constitute the Global Feminisms' archive and who inspired and inform this article. It is also a perfect answer to the cartoon by Mleczko with which we have opened it: you have to listen to the stories and voices that animate the pictures. They defy neat narratives and historical categorizations, escape theory, and challenge disciplinary divisions. As is the case with all the stories gathered in the Global Feminisms archive, we learn from them one woman, one voice, and one listener/reader, at a time.

NOTES

1 Andrzej Mleczko is best known for his political drawings. He is the author of thousands of cartoons and drawings published in dozens of newspapers and magazines over the past forty years. For more information on the artist and his work, see the web site of the Andrzej Mleczko Gallery at <http://mleczko.interia.pl/andrzej-mleczko>.

2 This issue opens up a fertile ground for engagement with the rich US scholarship on this subject. We choose not to follow this lead and focus instead on the voices of Polish women featured in our primary archive.

3 Our purpose in this paper is not a detailed account of women's history in Poland, but rather an interdisciplinary and cultural studies-inflected unpacking and contextualization of some of the notions of womanhood and the feminine that are employed by the interviewees whose stories comprise the Poland Site Global Feminisms Project archive.

4 "eFKa" (Fundacja Kobieca) Women's Foundation is a feminist organization, founded in March 1991, whose main goal is to support solidarity and independence among women, to counteract discrimination against women, and to develop women's culture. See <http://www.efka.org.pl/en>.

5 The "Global Feminisms Project" was funded, beginning in 2002, by a grant from the Rackham Graduate School, with additional funding provided by the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, the Women's Studies Program, and the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Global Feminisms Project's detailed description, interviews with feminist scholars and activists from China, India, Poland, and the United States, as well as transcripts, contextual and bibliographic materials can be found on the Project's web site at <http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem>. So far, the archive has been used by many scholars and students, and has provided a basis for several courses on global feminisms at the University of Michigan and other institutions.

6 23 Sept. 2009 <http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem/en/about.html>.

7 Although aware of the emergent scholarship on this subject in the US, we choose to focus on the voices of Polish activists included in the Global Feminisms Project and rely on the work of Polish feminist scholars, most of whom publish in Polish only, as our primary sources. We do so to offer a perspective that is rooted in between the US and Polish academe theoretically, but that brings to the table primary and secondary sources that may be unavailable to readers with no command of Polish.

8 As a Catholic country, Poland has been read as a culture awash with conservative religious symbologies and its nationalisms as directly related to the hegemonic social role of the Catholic Church and conservative family policies associated with its power and influence. See Porter 2000 and 2001.

9 With the exception of the Polish GF interviews and unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own.

10 Many scholars of Eastern Europe have been critical of the effects of the postcommunist transition on women and they also reject such binary terms. See Funk and Mueller; Einhorn; Gal and Kligman.

11 While scholars like Einhorn and Piątek analyze these stereotypes, they, and others, have also traced many ways in which these images and dictates have been contested and resisted by Polish women. See Jolluck and Fidelis.

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CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S FICTION: RESILIENCE, AGENCY, AND EMERGENCE OF NEW GENDER NORMS

Rosario Torres-Yu
University of the Philippines-Diliman
rosetorresyu@yahoo.com

Abstract
New awareness of re-thinking childhood in the emergent field of childhood studies inspires production of new discourse on social construction of childhood in literature. This paper looks at contemporary children's literature in the Philippines from this perspective and within the context of the globalization and transnationalization of care giving. Its interrogation of selected children's books and literature for young adult reveals that the traditional concept of childhood is now being challenged and resisted. Cognizant of the need to sustain this direction of literary production, this paper posits that children's literature in the country should mainstream this new thinking so that it can become a meaningful venue for Filipino children's socialization and construction in light of the increasingly complex world that children need to deal with.

Keywords
childhood studies, migration, transnational families

About the author
Rosario Torres-Yu is Full Professor of Philippine Literature and Philippine Studies at the College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philipines-Diliman. She has published works on Philippine literary criticism, gender and writing, peace and children's literature, and the Philippine labor movement under Martial Law. She won numerous awards for her essays and books on Philippine literary criticism. Notable among these are her critical essays on two National Artists on Literature, Amado V. Hernandez *(Tudla at Tudling: Amado V. Hernandez)* and Bienvenido Lumbera *(Bayan at Lipunan sa Kritisimong Lumbera)*. She has also won major prizes for her creative nonfiction in Filipino from the Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature. She was Visiting Professor at Osaka University of Foreign Studies in Japan from 1988-1992 where she taught Philippine Studies and helped in the development of the Philippine Studies graduate curriculum.

She is the founding president of Pilandocan, Inc. (National Research Society for Children's Literature), an association of writers, critics, and researchers that aims to contribute to the development of Filipino children's literature through research and criticism. She is a member of the International Research Society for Children's Literature.

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is a very powerful ideological concept in the Philippine socio-political and cultural landscape. The passing on of former Philippine President Corazon C. Aquino on August 1, 2009 and the response of the people to her demise enacted this power. Reminiscent of the 1986 People Power Revolution which brought down dictatorial rule, people lined the streets wearing

symbols and flashing signs signifying the struggle for democracy, as they paid their last respects to the first woman president of the Republic, who in death had become an icon, " Ina ng Demokrasya" (Mother of Democracy). She is now remembered as a leader whose commitment to justice, democracy, and peace had become her legacy.

In national-political and family life, maternal ideology which ascribes to motherhood women's highest, and perhaps, most noble aspiration remains pervasive. In the operation of this ideology, motherhood and childhood have become two poles which are inextricably linked to each other. Children need nurturance and care from mothers to reach maturation while mothers need children to realize their socially and culturally constructed life-world. Following this, family relations are defined along economic and social roles, with gender underlying both.

Mothers play a key role in child-rearing practice in the Philippines as in many other societies. This is expressed in a saying, "Ang ina ang ilaw ng tahanan" (The mother is the beacon of the home.) Traditionally, mother and children spend most of their time together at home, while father earns a living.

The child receives nurturance and care primarily from the mother who also presides over the introduction of the child into the core values of obedience, filial piety, and duty in the context of the family. The child's learning of these values are reinforced and built on with more social, moral, and civil codes, in school and in the practice of religion. The disciplining of children, on the other hand, is the domain of the father who is expected to be firm and unwavering, an attribute of child-rearing practices inscribed in a number of the often quoted work of eighteenth-century poet Francisco Balagtas which is part of canonical literature being read in public schools today.[1]

The foregoing describes the traditional place of a child in the family. I shall return to this in relation to the concept of childhood. Connectedness and interdependence are highly valued in family relations as inscribed in another popular saying, "Ang sakit ng kalingkingan ay nararamdaman ng buong katawan" (The whole body feels the pain of the little finger.) It means that if a member of the family is afflicted, the whole family suffers and the rest of the members, therefore, are expected to deal with it to restore the family.

The subjects of motherhood, childhood, and family relations described are the focus of this paper's discussion of children's literature and its representation of these subjects in the context of changes in the family structure and relations caused by labor migration and, recently, female overseas work. These changes have led to the rise of different forms of family structures such as single-parent families, mother-headed, father-headed, child-headed, blended families and many others, and in the process have probably affected the child's position in and in relation to the family. Presumably, children's literature may be creating venues for rethinking present conceptions of childhood and family relations, and if it does, children's literature for Filipino

children may be helping children by providing them with "mirror books" (Gangi and Barowsky) with which to understand the complexity of their present world. One way of knowing this is to look at children's literature and its representation of the subject. An exploration of these representations in terms of themes and ideological messages found in the literature may suggest to adult readers whether the socialization of children to traditional concepts and values continue or whether some kind of interrogation and subversion of old ways of thinking is already taking place. Apart from its educational use for children, it is hoped that this reading may instruct adults involved in the production and consumption of children's literature on the importance of critical engagement with these texts which, for children's literature scholars Peter Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, require "a deeper consciousness of the pleasure texts offer, how they offer it, and why they offer it—in the service of what values can only benefit both adults and the children in their charge" (23).

This reading of selected texts of contemporary children's literature combines the perspectives of the emergent field of Childhood Studies with its recognition of the need to rethink ways of understanding childhood in light of the reality of different kinds of childhood and in its rejection of the universalism of the North American and Western European conception, and literary criticism in its interrogation of ideological messages which these texts present to its implied child readers. These ideological themes, once revealed through the method employed in the critique of ideology of texts for children, are further analyzed in the context of the changing world of Filipino children in relation to their social construction through literature and an understanding of Filipino childhood deploying the categories of agency, class, and gender.

OUTSIDE THE TEXT: FILIPINO CHILDREN IN SOCIETY

Writing for children usually invokes the principle of reflection, of crafting stories taken from day to day experiences of real children following the didactive impulse. Realism in this sense is believed to be an effective way to teach children to get to like reading by allowing them to relate to characters and events in the stories about them and in the process learn about themselves and the world they inhabit. Others call these uses of the narrative mode "mirror books." Having said this, fantasy and magic are not less valued than realism. They are equally employed in canonical and modern children's fiction, but in most instances their themes relate to real concerns of children. Hence, in this discussion it is necessary to look at Filipino children and what constitutes their social reality in order to give readers of children's literature a larger social context for seeing through narrative discourse and determining its social significance or meaning.

Filipino children below 17 years old constitute nearly 40% of the country's population. For this reason the Philippines is considered a young society. In 2002, 33 million children constitute a

population of about 85 million. Population grows at a rate of 2.11% which is expected to bring the number to 102.8 million by 2015 with an estimated 45 million children to support with education, health, and other services that will require huge resource allocation from the government. As a country with a weak economy also called "developing "as opposed to "developed" economies of the First World, majority of Filipino children who belong to the poorest of the poor families live in an environment characterized by abject poverty, neglect, violence both physical and structural, death, sickness, abuse, economic exploitation, lack of access to education and other basic children's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC). The Philippines is also one of the countries identified by the United Nations as having children in need of special protection (CNSP) as is common in many other poor countries. To this particular group of belong street children, child soldiers, child workers, children in conflict with the law, indigenous children, and children in the flesh trade. The numbers of children who belong to this category are in millions and continue to grow as population expands while government's support falls behind the demand for services and interventions.

A recent study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) titled "The Filipino Child, Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities: Philippines" reveal that Filipino children suffer from economic and multiple dimensions of poverty. According to the study:

> Aside from the rising income poverty, it is a disturbing situation when about half (44%) of all Filipino children are living in poverty. The lack of income can have more adverse impacts on them because unlike adults, children are still in certain developmental stages where proper nourishment is necessary and are most vulnerable to diseases. Moreover, families with inadequate income may be discouraged to send their children to school. (1)

Translated into numbers, there were 12.8 million children below the age of 15 in 2006 living in poverty which represented a 4% increase from 2003 or around one million more children. Apart from income poverty, the study considered other dimensions which include "deprivations in terms of food, shelter, health, education, water, sanitation facilities, electricity and information." Needless to say, this situation of Filipino children calls attention to the need for an "overall development of children" perspective and immediate action. Notwithstanding the alarming reality of the situation of Filipino children, the study acknowledges some significant improvements in child survival indicators such as significant decline in infant mortality under five years of age, decrease in the proportion of children deprived of electricity over the years, and improved access to radio,

television, telephone, computer, water and sanitary facilities ("The Filipino Child" 2).

FILIPINO CHILDREN AND OVERSEAS WORK

The situation of Filipino children with OFW parents may be different from children living in poverty described above since their parents work abroad and away from home to earn income and provide for their needs. According to a recent report, there are now three to six million children of OFW parents. In this and in other studies, which will be discussed in succeeding sections, concern over the social cost of transnational families on child care and development calls for a rethinking of the policy and practice of overseas work. On the reasons for overseas work such as better income and increased opportunities for education of children, UNICEF Director Tobin doubts whether these are in fact the case and cites studies which reveal that the money sent to the Philippines is barely enough for the families (Rufo).

TRANSNATIONAL CARE GIVING AND FILIPINO CHILDHOOD

Globalization has been transforming family structures and family relations, bringing fundamental changes to social and cultural worlds of Filipino children. This process invariably implicates mainstream Filipino children's literature in ways that re-affirm, as well as challenge, traditional representations of family and childhood.

The absent-mother seems to be the emerging common form as an increasing number of women continue to join the international labor market. According to Yinger, recent assessment shows that men no longer constitute the majority of international migrants. In the Philippines, 70% of Filipino labor migrants are women, and it is estimated that about 10 million children are growing up without a mother (Carandang and Lee-Chua 109). Migrant women labor came into demand when the need for household work and care giving in rich countries opened new work opportunities for women from poor countries. Feminization of migrant labor thus went hand in hand with the transnationalization of care giving. This trend is most evident in Asia where women migrant workers come mainly from Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, while the main destinations are Hong Kong (China), Malaysia, Singapore, and the Middle East (Yinger).

Studies have looked into globalization and the phenomenon of transnational care giving, and one that examines the experiences of children in transnational families from the lens of gender was done by Parreñas in 2006. The study reveals that the "gender paradox defines the transnational family in the Philippines, and that gender norms are being reified and transgressed" (7). Put plainly, gender role switching is not taking place in Filipino families with migrant parents. The

study shows that "each group reinforces gender boundaries in the caring work that they do for the family" (11). Of particular relevance to this discussion is the study's examination of the discourse of abandonment among children of migrant mothers. Even if care is provided by substitutes, children in these families feel abandoned by their mothers. This strong emotion increases as families deviate from conventional practice, i.e., with father doing care giving role, and mother doing income-earning role.

An in-depth study of overseas Filipino workers' families by Carandang et al. in 2008 describes children in families where both parents are labor migrants as "seasonal orphans." Drawing from several case studies, it is revealed that although there is a pervasive sense of powerlessness and hopelessness among fathers and some of the children, resilience is present especially among children who try to look beyond the present and imagine a happier, complete family in the future (1-124).

Other studies cited by Parreñas qualify the generally assumed negative effect of migration on the family as a social institution. She cites Asis who acknowledges the effects migration may have on the family such as infidelity, strained kin relations, and "wayward" children, but adds that these are not as extensive as media and other scholars claim. In another study of more than 700 schoolchildren, Batistella and Conaco (1996) confirm that "severe cases of emotional disturbance" and "disruptive behavior" do not necessarily occur in transnational households but emphasize that "the single most important finding in the survey is that absence of the mother has the most disruptive effect on the life of the children" (Parreñas 94).

CHILDHOOD AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN LITERATURE

Understanding childhood is currently undergoing rethinking in the emerging field of Childhood Studies in the last two decades. Social scientists' discontentment with the way their discipline dealt with childhood led to critiques on key notions found in conventional approaches such as "development" in psychology and "socialization" in education and sociology. This new impetus produced studies in which childhood was examined as social construction and children were seen as social actors in their own right (Prout 7). Childhood studies scholar Alan Prout, in his own critique of the "new social studies," however, is dissatisfied with its framework that rests on implicit assumptions of oppositional dichotomies of social construction versus biologically-centered notions of childhood, of culture versus nature. He insists that "social relations are already heterogeneous, that is, they are made up from a variety of material, discursive, cultural, natural, technological, human and non-human resources," and proposes a perspective that childhood as a social phenomenon be viewed in the same way. Following this theoretical position, Prout sees the

need for a "broad set of intellectual resources, an interdisciplinary approach and an open-minded process of enquiry" (2).

This examination of the social construction of Filipino childhood in contemporary children's literature draws inspiration from this new perspective. Using categories of class, gender, and power in cultural studies employed in the current practice of reading cultural texts, this paper explores representations of childhood and family, brings to the surface ideological assumptions and ideas on Filipino childhood and family, and critiques such representations in the larger context of prevailing social conditions. The preceding discussion on Filipino children and society provides a social context against which this reading is being undertaken. What follows is a discussion of some theoretical concepts and assumptions related to social constructions in literature and a brief explanation of key concepts and assumptions involved in an adult reading of children's text which this particular reading employs.

The function of children's literature in education is well established in theory and practice as a fairly good venue for teaching children skills, moral, religious and social values, and aspirations, as well as for modeling social roles. This thinking rests on theories of growth taken from developmental psychology (Piaget, Vigotsky), social learning in education (Bandura), and theories of social and cultural construction in sociology (James, Prout).

In literary study and criticism, children's literature is attracting new interest as an interdisciplinary area for those in childhood studies, literature, education, development and culture. In mapping out this development, Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs observe that in Western discourse the tradition of criticism of ideology of the 1960s prevails, as with the tension between pedagogy and aesthetics which continue to influence our understanding of children's literature. Relevant to this discussion is their observation that the cultural studies framework, with its emphasis on the critique of power and the criticism of ideology, infused criticism and the production of children's books with new insights and energy and brought back discussions of the political dimension. Cultural studies gave way to a more serious consideration of marginalized forms of cultural expression such as children's literature. These theoretical insights on children's literature and its relation to childhood construction inform this project.

Literature's stable position in the social construction of childhood from the perspective of these literary and critical approaches is pretty much established which remains central to the theoretical discussion defining children's literature, then and now. Scholars continue to deal with a fundamental question regarding the function of literature written for children in an effort to differentiate it from other kinds of literature. Whether it serves a socializing or subversive function is a question that has been pertinent to the field for as long as there has been children's literature (Flynn 311-12). It is widely accepted that literature written for children teach children to learn about

and embrace society's many assumptions and values that the dominant authority favors at any given socio-historical milieu. This didactive impulse that influences the production of this kind of literature remains strong. As a matter of fact, observers like Hoffman insist that "even the most seemingly subversive children's books about School Picture Day reaffirm social and educational authority … and potentially all of children's literature" (Flynn 311). Conscious of this function of literature for children, literary critics engaged in critical practice took interest in exposing ideological biases and values which prove that children's literature is not innocent on the issues of class, race, power, gender, ethnicity, and the like. And by doing so, they are led to conclude that a new radical children's literature is possible as a countercultural practice. In his critical survey of the development of ideas on the balance of power in children's literature, for instance, Charles Sarland recalls the critique of mainstream children's books as a result of the contention in Britain and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth century that these books represent certain groups in a certain way that privileges being essentially white, male, and middle class. Such representations, therefore, are class biased, racist, sexist, and promote discrimination and violence (Hunt 31). Joosen and Vloeberghs best capture the direction and underlying assumptions of this critical practice in these words:

> The enlightened concept of childhood helps to explain the dominance of criticism of ideology in the study of children's literature: the belief that literature exerts a direct influence on the child governs and fuels the need to question the norms and ideologies that this literature conveys. More affirmatively, the enlightened view of children's literature values its potential to educate, to provide *Bildung* and guidance to the young. It thus invests literature with a transformative force to improve society and raise humankind to a supposedly more advanced level. (xi)

Such thinking allows for an adult reader of children's literature, say a critic, to interpellate texts, surface assumptions, and ideological ideas, and construct an understanding of childhood and society. This discussion of Filipino texts that follows takes this perspective on children's literature and grounds its reading using John Stephens's analyses of ideologies in children's fiction and, in particular, his categories of explicit and implicit ideology. Stephens offers a methodology which synthesizes "the elements of narrative theory, critical linguistics, and a concern with ideology and subjectivity" (4). He argues that:

> within a literary text, relations of power and domination exists in two ways, conceptually and narratively. Conceptually, there is the dilemma for both writers

> and readers that on the one hand ideological practices may be more or less directly advocated while on the other hand ideological assumptions (not necessarily the same ones) will always pervade discourse because they are always implicit within discourse itself. Narratively, these relations exist separately on the planes of "story" (what is represented) and discourse (the process of representing): that is, characters within the text are represented as affected by the operations of power, and the various mediations between writers and readers are also a form of power relations. A fictional narrative's "meaning," in its broadest sense, will incorporate all four possibilities, and this principle will apply to any fiction. (44)

EMERGENT CHILDHOOD: RESILIENCE, AGENCY AND NEW GENDER NORMS

Philippine stories on children belonging to families with migrant mothers (transnational families) show the child-protagonists capable of acting on their own. Whether narrating the travails of a much younger child who imagines she has special powers (Rivera, *Ang Lihim ni Lea*) or a much older child (Pacis, *OCW, A Young Boy's Search for His Mother)* who leaves home to search for his mother and succeeds in bringing her home, albeit temporarily, these stories portray characters who have agency and in this sense, these texts advocate a different kind of childhood from the widely constructed one in mass-market picture books which foreground innocence and passivity.

AGENCY, CHANGING GENDER NORMS AND ASPIRATIONS

A number of stories illustrate children acting on their own in different circumstances. Agency is exemplified in different situations. InVibiesca's "Tahooey," a mimicking of the sound of "taho" or bean curd that vendors shout when peddling this sweetish snack, a son and a younger daughter take over selling taho when their father gets sick. In Vibiesca's "Ang Kumot ni Dora" (Dora's Blanket), a young girl from a poor family understands what her parents say about being content with what they have while resources are limited and shares her blanket with them in the end. In Molina's *Ang Silya ni Titoy* (Titoy's Magic Chair), a boy born without legs is able to explore the world around him on a magical chair. In another story, Coroza's *Imbisibol Man ang Tatay* (Invisible Though My Father), a boy who rarely sees his father and suffers doubts and peer judgment believes in the power of a charm that comes from a banana blossom to make him invisible whenever he needs to be; he discovers that he was born out of wedlock but learns to appreciate his mother's and grandmother's love for him, and resolves to become a good father someday. In Patindol's *Papa's House, Mama's House*, the main characters – children in middle class families

whose parents have separated – are able to comprehend the reasonableness of living apart and the different ways their parents nurture them. And lastly, in Floresta's *War Makes Me Sad*, a girl who lives in war-torn Mindanao (southern part of the Philippines with a long history of armed conflicts) expresses insecurity, anxiety, and fear, unable to understand why there is war, and prays for it to end.

These characterizations are further helped by the use of the first person child narrator, which projects the child's voice and wisdom in no unclear terms. These narrative voices are effective because in the act of reading, an atmosphere of children speaking to each other (presumably the implied child reader) is easily established, avoiding the didacticism characteristic of traditional storytelling. Authorial power is diminished and rapport is created between text and reader. Uncanny links to harsh realities of childhood in the Philippines serve to inform children of the real world they are in, but at the same time empower them through the use of magic and fantasy.

It is interesting to note that in contemporary representations of Filipino childhood, none of the stories show child characters who aspire to seek work overseas. This is in great contrast to the fact that transnational families have become dominant in the Philippines.[2]

Filipino children's literature socializes children to conform to dominant gender roles but at the same time manifests a counter-cultural voice. Many stories on motherhood teach children the codes of domesticity by glorifying the work of mothers at home, including domestic work of migrant mothers. Mothers are almost always characterized as compassionate, self-sacrificing, and sensitive to children's needs.

Hence it is interesting that, in one of the stories, a mother has decided to take on the role of breadwinner after her husband passed away. In struggling to be able to send the child to school, the mother decides to drive the pedicab her husband had used to earn income to earn for her child's schooling. She thus has to wear clothes like that of a male driver which her child resents, embarrassed of what has become her mother's "ugly" look. The child eventually discovers that other mothers in the neighborhood and even her teacher liken her mother to a heroine and describes her as "may trabahong lalaki at may pusong babae" [with a man's job and a heart of a woman] (Chong 22). From a feminist perspective, the story socializes children to the idea that women are strong, capable, and responsible. It puts in question the common concept of feminine beauty when the child finally understands that her mother, who does not wear make-up and whose hands are not soft, possesses inner beauty, a concept taught to her by her teacher. In another sense, this story challenges gender boundaries as critiqued by scholars of transnational families.

Other new images of women presented to children include single professional mothers, mothers in separated households, and women bonding with women. On the other end of the

spectrum, unconventional images of fathers who are equally nurturing as mothers are deployed as well. There is the shoemaker who makes her daughter, born without legs, a dozen pairs of shoes as an expression of his love (Gatmaitan); a grandfather and a grandson's special bonding made strong with grandpa's stories and the child's genuine love (Gatmaitan); and a man who finds inner peace when he discovers that his life can be made more meaningful when shared with others, particularly children living in the streets (Villanueva). These images provide children with new windows with which to understand changing gender roles already evident in their lived experience.

WHEN MOTHER LEAVES HOME FOR WORK OVERSEAS

Two collections and a novel for children deal with the subject of a mother who leaves home to work abroad as a domestic helper and/or caregiver and entrusts the care of her children to the father and/or grandparents. The storybook *Uuwi na ang Nanay Kong si Darna* (My Mother *Darna* is Coming Home), written by Edgar Samar and illustrated by Russel Molina, projects a happy child in the care of his father who meets his mother for the first time when she arrives home after a long time. The picture book *Ang Lihim ni Lea* (The Secret of Lea), written by Augie Rivera and illustrated by Ghani Madueño, is a story of a girl who survives sexual abuse by her own father. A novel in English by Carla Pacis, *O.C.W. A Young Boy's Search for His Mother,* tells the story of a young boy, Tonyo, eldest of three children, who embarks on a journey to find his mother, a domestic helper in Hong Kong, and succeeds in his goal of bringing his mother home.

AFFIRMING FEMALE OVERSEAS WORK IN UUWI NA ANG NANAY KONG SI DARNA

Story books or picture books, according to Stephens, have "a tendency to reflect dominant social practices, advocate values widely regarded as socially desirable … but conflicting practices may also be expressed" (199). The storybook *Uuwi na ang Nanay kong si Darna* is informed by the first tendency; that is, it reflects the widespread practice of overseas work for Filipinos and advocates its acceptance by addressing the absence of a parent (a mother in this case) using parental manipulation (father's view poised to the child). The argument in the story appears to be that if the child in this absent-mother family is happy with this arrangement, and then society should not worry. In Stephens' classification, this represents the explicit ideology of the story.

The story uses the first-person voice of the child narrator, from which vantage point he narrates the series of actions that make up the story of his mother's homecoming and projects the child-protagonist's subject position. The dual discourse of text and visual image set the dilemma of Popoy in the beginning of the story: the visual image of a thought bubble "Uuwi na!" ("She's

coming home!") is in big colorful letters set off from a background of small black and white letters, possibly a letter, and the text that describes this image as "balita ng tatay" (report of father) and describes the father's excitement which the child knows from what he sees, "nasisilip ko na halos ang ngala-ngala niya sa pagtawa" (I can almost see his palate as he laughs). The child, however, says he cannot tell whether he, too, is happy, because he has not really seen his mother ("hindi pa nakikita nang totohanan si Nanay"). The narrator then mentions details explaining why he feels ambivalent: he sees her only in photos, talked to her only once over the telephone, was very young when he last saw his mother during the family's send off in the airport. This ambivalent feeling is compounded by the child's curiosity and excitement to know one thing: is Darna really his mother? This is what his father tells him when he describes his mother's work in Hong Kong in reply to his question why his mother left, "Bakit po umalis si Nanay?" (Why did mother leave?) Listening to his father narrate how his mother fights millions of bacteria as she uses her *wonder walis* or magic broom, her power conveyed to the child reader by the visual image of a woman on top of a giant broom and giving her command "attack" while bacteria hover in fear, and in other instances that depict the mother in a fighting mood, the child infers that his mother is like Darna, a fictional character in Philippine print and popular media (film, television) who possesses magical powers. Parental authority is exercised by the father when he corrects the child's idea and insists that mother is in fact Darna herself. The child, however, seemingly not fully convinced, asks his father why mother would not just fly to arrive early, to which father replies she will indeed fly but, she needs to fly across a wide ocean. This conversation between father and child ends with the text and visual images revealing the subject position of the child—caught between belief and doubt, unsettled by fear that his mother will no longer be able to recognize him, but sure, however, about his feeling proud of her ("Aba, ipagmamalaki ko siya sa mga magiging kaklase ko sa pasukan. Si Darna yata ang Nanay ko."/ I will proudly introduce her to my would-be classmates. After all, my mother is none other than Darna.) The story ends confirming the father's version of the mother's identity with the image of the child holding a card that says "I love (heart) DarnaNanay " when the child gets to meet his mother and the image (in full spread) of the child flying with Darna. Affirming the social practice of overseas work for Filipinos, and the idea that this brings wealth both at the level of the family and national economy, the story depicts the widespread practice of visiting OFWs who bring gifts as a way of sharing "wealth," as the mother gives relatives "pasalubong" (gift by one who returns from abroad or some distant place not necessarily another country) such as electric appliances. The child receives crayons and books, signifying the oft repeated reason why parents seek overseas work, which is to send their children to school. The approving stamp on the ideological position of this text relative to the culturally constructed image of OFWs as modern day heroes is further expressed in the 2002 Salanga Writer's Prize, Grand Prize

that this book received both for story and illustration. That the story book belongs to the mass market also explains its wholesale endorsement of female overseas work.

WHEN ABSENT-MOTHER FAMILIES ENDANGER THE CHILD AND ANG LIHIM NI LEA

This story book merges two thematic ideas in a rather complex plot not usually witnessed in this genre: there is hope for a child who may suffer sexual abuse and the child is safe and happy living with his/her mother. There are two different homes which frame the story of a girl-child named Lea: one in the Philippines in which most of the story takes place, and the other, a new home away from the old where the child protagonist lives with her OFW mother, a nurse who works in London. Lea's story narrates how she is left to the care of her father while her mother works abroad, becomes a victim of sexual abuse by her own father, survives this traumatic experience, and lives with her mother in their new home in a foreign country where her mother works. The character in this story represents a child who experiences two kinds of social phenomena: an absent-mother family and child abuse. This text acquires social significance in terms of the subjects it depicts and in its use of several narratological elements that explicitly and implicitly project rejection of child abuse and separation of mother and child.

The story very clearly and explicitly advocates education in order to prevent the sexual abuse of children by providing a context by which both child and adult readers become aware of this problem. Published by Soroptimist International of HOPE (Helping Through Outreach Programs and Expertise) in Baguio, the proceeds from the sale of the book, according to the group, will help fund the establishment of a shelter for young women and children who are victims of abuse.

The story uses a third-person narrative voice which describes the girl's external situation, feelings and thoughts. Its use is appropriate if the observation of therapists and psychologists that children who experience trauma may be easily helped in the context of a story, not really their own, is to be considered. One easily recognizes the connection between the word "lihim" (secret) and the visual image of a closed and open door. Throughout the book, this image changes in color, conveying the changing atmosphere and emotions of the main character. The identical doors of many rooms in the condominium which became her new home are always closed whenever she walks its corridors, conveying a feeling of coldness. This new home, for Lea, seems to isolate her from the outside world which she seeks whenever she is at home or in their unit with her father. This changes when she discovers one day that she has the power to pass through those doors without opening them. The changes in her facial expression (image of her face drawn on the inside of different doors) may be read as her varied responses as she sees different people doing

different things. These range from surprise in the case of the old woman snoring while scratching her dog's tummy, joy as she listens to a girl practice her violin, and laughter and fun at the sight of a househelp watching TV startled by the ringing phone. This child's magical experience suddenly changes when she confronts a closed door, inside their own bedroom, her face showing fear while looking at her father seated at the edge of the bed holding a cell phone. The room is dark purple, which is the same color of the room that the father enters while Lea is shown afraid and helpless in one corner of a sofa before a television. This purple door, later on, changes to white, conveying light, as the image of her handcuffed father is being taken out.

Again, visual images effect, together with the discoursal text, the changes in the quality of the girl's relationship with her parents. The first illustration shows Leah cuddling her stuffed toy with her eyes wide open, facing the reader while the father, with his back turned, looks at the condominium. This positioning which is repeated in other frames clearly suggests distance between daughter and father. Mother and daughter, on the other hand, hug each other when the mother arrives, are shown again going out of a lightly colored open door, happy and holding each other, after the girl has gone through her therapy sessions and is deemed healed. In the last illustration which ends the story, mother and daughter are shown going out of a door of a brick-walled house and a neighborhood that suggest a foreign setting, perhaps some place in London.

The ideological position of this text is implied in the way the problem of the child is resolved. Lea stays with her mother in a happy accommodation of continuing work overseas which is possible because the mother in this case is a professional who, we may surmise, can afford to take her eight-year-old child. In a way, this resolution seems to challenge the dominant practice of handing children (of mothers working abroad) over to the care of other members of the family when the father is unavailable. However, it obviously affirms the mother's overseas work by "resolving" the issue of separation. This story educates readers, both child and adult, that sexual abuse ("things happen") may happen even when mothers are present, an idea which the teacher in the story shares with the mother by way of correcting the misconception. Moreover, this story book seems ambiguous in its portrayal of the child's character. Throughout the events in the story, the protagonist's identity evolves from an innocent child who needs protection and help from caring adults and social institutions (teacher, psychologist, social worker, and child protection unit) to a victim, and finally a survivor. Her response to sexual abuse of imagining she has magical power simply suggests escape, not resistance. The writer of the story could have explored this element to show some agency on the part of the child-victim, thus preparing readers in conceptually accepting her ability to survive and be healed later on.

WHEN A CHILD TAKES CHARGE

Nodelman and Reimer observe that "stories in which escape from home allows the preservation of some innocence tend to be for adolescents. The discovery of a secure home in which one is free to be childlike is often the culmination of novels for young people … in which characters journey from a broken or disrupted home to a new home" (198). The novel *O.C.W. A Young Boy's Search for His Mother*[3] written by Carla M. Pacis with illustrations by Yasmin B. Ong, straddles this pattern and the typical home/away/home motif in children's stories because the home at the end of the novel does not represent the "new home" in the story but rather an ambiguously restored home. This point will be argued later in the discussion.

The pattern follows the story of a family of three children with the main character Tonyo, already in high school, a father who drives a pedicab for a living, and a mother who works as a maid in Hong Kong. They live in a village called Lauan, far from the city of Manila, and of course, too far from Hong Kong. The novel opens with the third person narrator detailing how the mother was recruited as a maid in Hong Kong and why she is excited though sad at times at the thought of leaving. The mother, in talking to her eldest Tonyo, expresses the usual reason shared by Filipinos who seek work overseas which is to be able to send all children to school and even to college, buy father a jeep, or maybe buy a piece of land to grow rice. Things happen within three months since the mother left, inciting Tonyo to distance himself from home. The father is unable to cope with his wife's absence, spends most of his time in the cockpit, comes home very late and drunk, and eventually starts beating Tonyo in feats of anger over his wife's absence. Tonyo stops going to school because he starts taking over most of his mother's chores apart from working in the rice fields. Tonyo leaves home to prevent his relationship with his father from worsening and to go to his mother while he, too, works, or asks his mother to come home. The events that follow Tonyo's departure depict his growing maturity, although it should be noted that before he leaves home, Tonyo already displays some maturity in the way he responds to his situation: not to escape but to deal with the problem. This part of the story not only depicts the child in the world outside the home, experiencing new life in the city so different from the familiar village setting, but also exposes the social problems children in the city without homes suffer and embrace as a way of life in order to survive, which the main character himself goes through. Tonyo experiences hunger, sleeping next to street children who sniffed glue, hooking up with street gangs, eating leftovers; he gets involved in dangerous errands like snatching bags and selling drugs, but also lands a job in a bakery through the help of a priest after escaping from the street gangs and seeking refuge in a church. All these experiences teaches Tonyo to become street smart and, as a consequence, he loses his innocence. But he does not lose sight of his goal, although he would feel confused for a

while, not knowing what to do, and would even entertain the idea of going back home. Brave and resolute, he is able to refocus on his purpose for leaving home, reaches the shores of Hong Kong as a stowaway, finds his mother with the help of some Filipinos and eventually goes home with his mother.

What is the social significance of the story? What concept of childhood does it inscribe? What does the text advocate on the question of absent-mother families brought about by the transnationalization of care giving? The answers to these questions are interrelated and constitute the ideological position of the text.

Tonyo, the main character, and other child characters in the story represent concepts of childhood that the novel advocates and in some way resists. The family's low economic status, as well as the location of his home, a far flung agricultural village with limited opportunities for growth, provides the argument for several attributes of the child-character. Education is a normal aspiration of poor families in the hope that formal schooling will enable social mobility. In the case of Tonyo who is already in high school, he must be able to go to college while his two siblings will have to be schooled when they reach the proper age. Tonyo has to help raise income from their small makeshift piggery and has to divide his time between this and his studies. When his mother leaves for work overseas, shouldering her home chores pressures him to drop from school, a decision which reflects a child's orientation toward the family, rather than himself. He represents another common aspiration of adults for children, which is to become responsible members of the family. His going away to bring back his mother is an act of responsibility in the sense that he is taking charge, in great contrast to the father who shows weakness and succumbs to distractions. In every sense, Tonyo is an example of a child who knows his priorities, makes decisions, and acts on his own. This concept of childhood is evident in this characterization of Tonyo and in the choice of events that would end the narrative. Tonyo is responsible for the restoration of the family – the return of the mother and, hopefully, the return to family life and all its arrangements before it was disturbed by the temporary absence of the mother. As for himself, he knows he is going back to school ("I have to finish school first") (171). He changes his attitude toward his father in the end; pity replaces his deep-seated anger and this suggests that respect and love for his father is likewise restored.

It is important to note, however, that apart from employing focalization in creating the character of Tonyo, there are some elements in the narrative, such as statements made, and other use of details, which point to a counterdiscoursal position on childhood and family. For instance, the narrator comments in connection with the scene on leave-taking:

> The children crowded around Nanay. They would all miss her, especially Ryan who

> was only five and Neneng who was three. **They were still too young to be without a mother**. But Nanay tried not to be sad and promised she would send them toys and clothes as soon as she could. (13, underscoring in original)

The portrayal of street children, child labor, children engaged in criminal activities, and children without home and family call attention to social problems that children in poor families experience. Such representations of childhood have the effect of questioning many of society's values and priorities. With their presence, the text invites readers (adult and young adult) to reflect on these realities in relation to the culturally accepted notion of Filipino childhood which regards children as "gift of God," "hope of the future," and "blessing." The author's note is also relevant to the discussion of the novel's position regarding overseas work and its negative effect on children. She explicitly expresses her rejection of overseas work for women especially mothers and maintains that:

> Because of this diaspora, many families have come undone, those suffering most being the children. This is a sad reality of the OCW. Hopefully, with the help of the government, our OCW's can come home to stay, to enjoy their families and their hard-earned prosperity. (Pacis 177)

Filipino sociologists have pointed to Filipinos' special concern for children and specific sensitivity to the future of a child (Dalisay). One may ask in consideration of prevailing social conditions of Filipino children discussed in the earlier section of this paper whether this "special concern" really and substantially translates to social practice and policy. As long as these harsh realities put the majority of Filipino children to risk, such "special concern" remains an ideological mask that literature for children should continue to interrogate and reject.

Filipino children are living in an increasingly complex world brought about by changes in the socio-cultural and economic conditions at the national and global levels. Their social construction through literature is likewise undergoing changes that reflect the complexity of this world, and puts into question assumptions of childhood, traditional notions of care and child-rearing practices, and gender construction. In this way, contemporary children's literature serves as a venue for re-educating Filipino children to better prepare them to discern and deal with future challenges – a function that, however, has yet to be fully realized.

NOTES

[1] These are: "Ang laki sa layaw karaniwa'y hubad/sa bait at muni't sa hatol ay salat (202); "di dapat palakhin ang bata sa saya, /at sa katuwa'y kapag namihasa, /kung lumaki'y walang hihinting ginhawa" (197); "sa taguring bunso't likong pagmamahal/ang isinasama ng bata'y nunukal/ang iba'y marahil sa kapabayaan /ng dapat magturong tamad na magulang" (203). (Balagtas *Florante at Laura* 1838)

[2] It is relatively easy to understand that in a country where transnational families have become dominant that children would "naturaly" aspire to seek jobs overseas just like their parents did. This is evident, for instance, in Malano's "Coping with Life with OFW Parents."

[3] There is a discrepancy in the title of this work. In the cover it reads *O.C.W. A* ***Young Boy's*** *Search for His Mother,* while in the title page it reads *O.C.W. A* ***Young Man's*** *Search for His Mother.* Underscoring mine. There is no explanation offered in the book for this.

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HOMO TROPICUS: A YEARNING

J. Pilapil Jacobo
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
jjacobo@ateneo.edu

Abstract
Variations on the theme of the tropical diptych suggest a temporality whose percussion presents a counterpoint to the habit of symphonic time, that is, temperate time, one premised on a quadruple measure of exuberance (summer), descent (autumn), cessation (winter), and nascence (spring). What I am trying to introduce here is a sense of a choreography that may be akin to a primal *fort-da* —a kinesis that elicits at the same time that it donates an attunement to the earth that is more displaced than located. Hence I begin the utterance, even an ululation, of a desire to seek out what remains from this movement—what could be that creature of stasis that may as well be a worldling, an indigene, a subject whose promise is a species whom we name *homo tropicus*.

Keywords
anachronistic space, autochthone, homotropy, Manila, time of the Other, tropology

About the author
J. Pilapil Jacobo is a candidate for the PhD in Comparative Literature at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook, where he enjoyed a fellowship from the Fulbright Foundation. He teachers literature and literary theory and criticism in English and Filipino at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he graduated with an AB-MA in Filipino Literature. His critical essays have been published in *Bulawan, Ideya, Loyola Schools Review,* and *Unitas,* while his poetry in Filipino is anthologized in *Ladlad 3* and *Likhaan*. He is President of the Film Desk of the Young Critics Circle of the Philippines.

> As long as the waiting can only be directed toward some other and toward some *arrivant*; one can and must wait for something else, hence expect some other—as when one is said to expect *that* something will happen or that some other will arrive.[1]
>
> - Jacques Derrida

I

In my tropics, I had been taught to yearn for *tagsaldang*, the "time of the sun." One could not help desiring this time, especially if the "time of the rains," *tag-uran*, had seemed to extend its welcome.

Tagsaldang, tag-uran:

Luminance, and of things lutescent in their exposure: a *langka* halved at the ripest spot, the now-swarthy hand that picks up the sappy flesh, and the afternoon that allows the delectated to look out and catch the gleam of another fruit—perhaps the mango drooping from a branch, perhaps the banana already fallen from its stalk, perhaps the passion fruit demure among the scorched fronds.

Precipitation, and those worn and carried to be safe from the torrents. Straw hats and rubber boots, plastic raincoats and silk umbrellas. And thoughts spun with hope ("He shall be home tonight, the carabao is sturdy enough for him to ride against the flood") and unraveled in defiance ("I don't care if the crops drown, my wife will labor for our firstborn until midnight").

The tropical year, as far as the Philippine rendition is concerned, is one that is measured in *double* time. The matheme can only be 2. The tempo of the folk rests on this rhythm. In the enactment of this premise, when double time is rehearsed and repeated in daily life, that is where the desire is syncopated.

Yearning for another time can happen in *tagsaldang*, especially when one, scantily clad and yet still perspiring, awakes at high noon and remembers that it is also *tag-init*, "hot time." If the plantation is found dire because of the drought, the morning can't get any worse. While one may yearn for rain, and even perform a rite to summon the waters above to descend and salve the parched earth, another simply skips the idea of the wet months to dream of *taglipot*, that "cool time" from December onwards. Until the body can no longer take the breeze, and it starts to yearn for the respite of March to come, in order to have a reprieve from those diseases brought by the cooling. *Tagsaldang, tag-uran. Tag-init, taglipot*. Between the sun and the rain, the hot and the cold. Such is the way we kept track of the passing of "time," or, *panahon*. Or, such is my remembrance of those times.

II

Variations on the theme of the tropical diptych suggest a temporality whose percussion presents a counterpoint to the habit of symphonic time, that is, temperate time, one premised on a quadruple measure of exuberance (summer), descent (autumn), cessation (winter), and nascence (spring). What I am trying to introduce here is a sense of a choreography that may be akin to a primal *fort-da*[2]—a kinesis that elicits at the same time that it donates an attunement to the earth that is more displaced than located. Hence I begin the utterance, even an ululation, of a desire to seek out what remains from this movement—what could be that creature of stasis that may as well be a worldling, an indigene, a subject whose promise is a species whom we name *homo tropicus*:

III

To comprehend *homo tropicus* as an epiphany in time, one needs to keep in mind that her figuration has been fraught with ethical contention. Taking to task anthropological discourse, Johannes Fabian has argued that while ethnography writes the autochthone as if she had revealed herself in the present of the interlocutor's document, that writing depends on a ruse of temporal co-presence. The reportorial verb may act as if the anthropologist is keeping up with the native, but the tense does not conceal

> the all-pervading denial of coevalness which ultimately is expressive of a cosmological myth of frightening magnitude and persistency. It takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West (and to anthropology) if its temporal fortress were suddenly invaded by the Time of the Other. (35)

The ethnographer's retrogressive maneuver is more a privilege of his modernity than a respect to the purported nobility of his object, the savage. Whatever prose may have been produced to describe the exception of the Other, the turn of phrase can only emphasize the difference—*the time difference*—between the ethnographer and she who signifies the ethnic essence.

Anne McClintock takes the critique of this "denial of coevalness" to the literary, where the discovery of the difference may subtly execute the fictions of exoticism while insisting on its axiomatically factitious coordinates:

> The colonial journey into the virgin interior reveals a contradiction, for the journey is figured as proceeding forward in geographical space but backward in historical time, to what is figured as a prehistoric zone of racial and sexual difference … Since indigenous peoples are supposed to be spatially there—for the lands are "empty"—they are symbolically displaced onto what I call *anachronistic space*. (30)

Like the anthropologist, the narrator enters the realm of the autochthone only to describe an awakening to his departure from modernity, which is nevertheless preserved in the inhabitation of anachrony: the world seems uncanny because the figures do not cohere temporally. The space is anachronistic insofar as it does not suit the habiliments of the one arriving. This makes him resort to witness the unknown with temporal omnipotence. Again, McClintock: "By *panoptical time*, I mean the image of global history consumed—at a glance—in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility" (37).

The character may express discomfort with the transport to a prehistory, but that time-lag enables him to realize that his modern placement severs him from the habits of the prehistoric. It is the Other who does not cohere with his time.

I am a literary critic. In imagining *homo tropicus* as a trope for the time that has been taken away and could be regained from these denials of coevalness, I hope, like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, that literary reading may "come close to the irreducible work of translation, not from language to language but from body to ethical semiosis, that incessant shuttle that is 'life'" (13). In a series of comparative readings, I would like to open up the interval between texts to delay, if not deter, the chances of the exotic to thrive as natural if not commonplace when the accomplice is tropology. This comparative literary gesture is one that takes into account time as, to borrow from Achille Mbembe, "precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future)" (16). This time of "entanglement" could be the cusp where the future perfect present of *homo tropicus* emerges.

IV

How does *homo tropicus* come into being? How does her living struggle from the earth to a world? How does she account for the turn from *terra* to *mundi*? What happens when she is transformed from being the earthling into a worldling? Where can the question of the origin, represented by the indigene, be posited in this scheme? And what about a sense of the *final* figure in the name of a subject? Does she arrive after all the living, or before the dying?

I derive the distinction between *terra* and *mundi* from Martin Heidegger's differentiation between *Erde* and *Welt*. For him, the earth is a matter of descent, it is where "everything that arises is brought back … and sheltered" (21). This downward motion suggests not only the gravitational force that holds the earthling to be a creature of the ground but also that understanding that she is to be found there—*as a home/body*. That is where she is kept and protected. On the other hand, the world is that which is opened up by the creation of a release from the said concealment. This emergence, this "'setting up' no longer means merely putting in place" (22). It is in this sense that Heidegger's example of the temple is not just an erection but an ascent as it aspires to "consecrate" (22) presence.

The figure that makes possible this raising is raised as well in the ritual as she passes from being a riddle of creation into a name that answers for creation itself. This shift is indeed paradigmatic, not merely a semantic change from the earthling into a worlding. Nonetheless, I will not leap, like Heidegger, in saying that this "self-opening openness" of the world refers to the

"broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people" (26). The path towards that destiny is painful. It necessitates a turning away from the point of origination and an acceptance of originality itself. Heidegger names this encounter *strife* (Riss). Conflict arises between the earth and the world, and neither sphere wins the contest. A wound insists on being marked out after the deference, before the defiance. An indigenal moment may be collective in the process of national nomination, but at the moment of birth, the native is alone. To be *born and raised* from the womb of the earth is also to be taught one's difference from it: as life, as indignation, as insistence. Nativity is the wounding.

V

On a promontory, a figure looks over:

Delhi
        dos torres
plantadas en el llano
                dos sílabas altas
Yo las digo en voz baja
acodado al balcón
                clavado
no en el suelo
                en su vertigo
en el centro de la incandescencia
Estuve allá
                no sé adonde
Estoy aqui
                no sé es donde (Paz, "El Balcón" 170)

Delhi
        two towers
planted on the plains
                two tall syllables
I say them in a low voice
leaning over the balcony

nailed
not to the ground
to its vertigo
to the center of incandescence
I was there
I don't know where
I am here
I don't know is where (Paz, "The Balcony" 26-27)

In this poem, emplacement in a locale is declared by the persona, or at least it is remembered to have occurred, the being-located and the located-being. The locus is made uncertain however. Delhi, and yet not Delhi. The simplicity of the past tense points to this (Estuve allá). When the time shifts to the present (Estoy aqui), the hope of the location, its naming, is brought back, however simply so, again. And then the ignorance of Delhi (displacement) is affirmed to be one's knowledge in it (emplacement).

This being-lost/lost-being is made clearer if we examine the lines which precede those which we have just read above. The said lines speak of the city as architecture (dos torres/plantada en el llano), but its structures are made up of language that is elevated (sílabas altas): sounds making sense with an tense tone, phonemes vibrated by a voice in bass (voz baja); because of this shuttling, between height and depth, between cord and chord, such a metropolis is lost and unlocated. And yet the topos appears, because of a locus, an illumination (incandescencia) that points to a certainty of place. This light is immanent in language. Could this luminance be the ornamental reverie that dislodges the commonplace of the architectural logic? Perhaps, if we augur that the sounds indeed shine tropical, if the syllable can be a photon that summons no less than a second of sun, that touches that surface which can either be skin or ground?

While the reader may be sure that it is *tropicus mundi* that is the referent here, one is not certain that it is *homo tropicus* summoning that world into verbality. One can speculate that it may be one indeed, if one foregrounds the implied author, the subject intimated by Octavio Paz speaking of the tropics from his own experiences of it. Hence, the tropics, as configured by the chronotope[2] of the garden in Paz's comparative imaginary, is repeated from India to and through Mexico (however merely implied this garden in the collection may appear to be) and vice versa:

No la tierra
el tiempo
en sus manos vacías me sostiene ("El Balcón" 170)

Not the earth
time
holds me in its empty hands ("The Balcony" 27)

With the tropics as time (el tiempo) and not as space (no la tierra), the two gardens are now finally almost sequential (read: non-adjacent) in a moment that is indeed *empty*, because it provides for the occupancy, and *homogeneous*, because of the enabling moment of resemblance.[4] This imitative chance provides for a simultaneity *now* being fulfilled in a single scenography. The mimetic empowerment happens because of homotropy, a human talent to figure the world out in turns of phrase which propel the desiring for a species that ever dreams to be closer to its object of reference—*itself*:

Más allá de mí mismo
en algún lado mi llegada ("El Balcón" 170)

Beyond myself
somewhere
I wait for my arrival ("The Balcony" 27)

Who is to come? Or, what is to arrive? If this subject is indeed a homotrope, and she imagines her futurity through a métissage between the world on the wane and the world unfolding, the wish that Paz intones rests on a certain anterior moment that is neither antiquated nor prescient. While *homo tropicus* may be a declension of the posture (erectus), mobility (habilis), and cognition (sapiens) of a certain humanity, what Paz announces is a subject of both promise and predicament, if this figure is dreamed in time and not in space. It is this cusp that we aspire to anticipate if not apprehend.

Elsewhere, another arrival:

> El jardin botanico ahuyento sus risuenos recuerdos: *el demonio de las comparaciones* le puso delante los jardines botanicos de Europa, en los paises donde se necesita mucha voluntad y mucho oro para que brote una hoja y abra su caliz una flor, aun mas, hasta los colonias, ricos y bien cuidados y abiertos todos al public. (Rizal 43, my emphasis)

> The sight of the Botanical garden drove away his gay reminiscences: *the devil of comparisons*[5] placed him before the botanical gardens of Europe, in the countries where much effort are needed to make a leaf bloom of a bud open; and even more, to those

> of the colonies, rich and well-tended, and all open to the public. (Rizal trans. Lacson Locsin 67, my emphasis)

Here is the picture of the returnee struggling with the time of his homecoming, since the point of arrival is interrupted by the place of departure. Again the garden as a chronotope asserts itself as commonplace in the instigation of a differential moment (comparaciones/comparisons). And yet, whereas in the poem above the analogy rests on an angelic epiphany that *the* time will be coming, that there shall be a coincidence between prophecy and presence, this comparison unfolds in a temptation scene (demonio/devil). The garden at hand reminds the native of another one that he has visited elsewhere; instead of recognizing similarity however, the subject sees difference. The immediate space presents a disjuncture to the returnee not so much because the garden fails to summon the memory of a previous promenade but because the latter invokes the phantasm of that passage. This reminiscence castigates the return; one awakes to the insight that one has indeed missed the other site by an already distant time, in spite of a certain degree of recency. The comparison is diabolical because of this taunt to succumb to a vision that is really at best a disappearance, deny the substance that is there (da), and declare its urgency as already gone (fort). The temptee's impending offense is the repetition of nostalgia, but a reprise done perversely, since the yearning is now for an alien shore within the vicinity of one's indigenal zone. If this is the case, then this scene of arrival is an erasure of its own performance. Its fulfillment can only be another departure.

In the example above, the comparison rests on a binary opposition, and not a dyadic partnership. One image is deemed major and the other picture minor. Manila is antithetical to Madrid, Asia to Europe. Can this preference be attributed to climatic differences, between horticultural spaces tropical and temperate? In the latter, the returnee muses that the garden is a delicate niche, that there is a specific economy that dictates the care of foliage. Or can the choice stem from the affective labor that is behind all manner of beauty and arrangement regardless of the elements? When the comparison proceeds to describing the colonial garden,[6] it is delineated to flourish better not only because of imperial funding nor the exuberance that nature grants to the horticultural space but the industry that this context embraces (ricos y bien cuidados). And yet the question is whether Manilan space is considered to be part of this zone of imperial exception. José Rizal's claim is clear—that within the Spanish empire, Manila does not possess the inflorescence of garden cities like Lima or Havana. It is for this reason that he averts the glance that could have been inspired, adulatory, and loving:

> Ibarra aparto la vista, miro a su derecha y alli vio a la Antigua Manila, rodeada aun de

> sus murallas y fosos, como una joven anemica envuelta en un vestido de los buenos tiempos de su abuela. (Rizal 43)
>
> Ibarra removed his gaze, looked right, and there saw old Manila, still surrounded by its walls and moats, like an anemic young woman in a dress from her grandmother's best times. (Rizal trans. Lacson Locsin 67)

Manila is a city that has not matured. It is perennially adolescent. What's more, its civility has not yet been performed, *sartorially*, unlike the other key cities of the empire, from Mexico City to Buenos Aires. It has not yet *worn* the proper comportments of a colonial city, like Santiago or San Juan. This occurs, in spite of the homotropy in the narrative, because a promise of nature cannot be fulfilled. Or, not yet. The wish to return to *temperatus mundi* thus finds its rationale here. Perhaps, only when this is achieved can the anticipation for *tropicus mundi* resume. Or even for the world, just the world, before any form of subjectivity?

VI

This theme of the tropics in an anachronistic relation with the world temperate and temperated is at the heart of Claude Levi-Strauss's work on the area. In the particular passage below, the tropics seems not to have arrived, because it has not attained modernity:

> Les tropiques sont moins exotiques que démodés. Ce n'est pas la végétation qui les atteste, mais de menus détails d'architecture et la suggestion d'un genre de vie qui, plutôt que d'avoir franchi d'immenses espaces, persuade qu'on s'est imperceptiblement reculé dans le temps. (Levi-Strauss 70)
>
> The tropics are less exotic than out of date. It is not so much their vegetation which testifies to their identity as minor architectural details, and the suggestion of a way of life which gives one the impression that, instead of covering vast distances, one has moved back imperceptibly in time. (Levi-Strauss trans. Weightman and Weightman 87).

Because of this premodernity of the tropics, whatever attempt to transport it to progressive time is somewhat defeated at the outset, for the zone will always remain a version of some *prior* temperate success. Even within its terms, the tropics—as time—will always be anachronistic. While we are

looking towards the anterior, Levi-Strauss gazes at the archaic. But isn't this sentiment the stuff that sustains the exotic?

> Le hazard de voyages offer souvent de telles ambiguïtés. D'avoir passé à Porto-Rico mes premières semaines sur le sol de États-Unis me fera, dorénavant, retrouver l' Amerique en Espagne. Comme aussi, pas mal d'années plus tard, d'avoir visite ma première université anglaise sur le campus aux édifices néo-gothiques de Dacca, dans le Bengal oriental, m'incite maintenant à considérer Oxford comme une Inde qui aurait réussi a controller la boue, la moisissure et les débordenements de la vegetation. (Levi-Strauss 24)

> The accidents of travel often produce ambiguities such as these. Because I spent my first weeks on United States soil in Puerto Rico, I was in future to find America in Spain. Just as, several years later, through visiting my first English university with a campus surrounded by Neo-Gothic buildings at Dacca in Western Bengal, I now look upon Oxford as a kind of India that has succeeded in controlling the mud, the mildew and the ever-encroaching vegetation. (Levi-Strauss trans. Weightman and Weightman 35)

To reiterate, "el demonio del comparaciones" is that which forces one, while caught in a dissimulating trance, to recognize an ominous difference, struggle with its refusal to cohere with familiarity and homeliness, and surrender to its power to possess the subject of comparison with a gaze that doubts the veracity of one's immediate worlding. On the one hand, Puerto Rico, an *American* locus that looks Spanish. On the other, Dacca, an *Indian* topos that might as well be English. Spaces which invoke the *unlikely* and the *unbecoming*, that is, to the Parisian sojourner who cannot perform flânerie on a promenade that is not French. Because the uncanny occurrence of what is otherwise considered as a particularly European template is parodied in a mere aspiration of it, in a province, the reiteration of Europe in its Other puts into question the very logic of the repeatability of a worlding as an epistemological possibility that rationalizes the proliferation of a prior civilized space in another that *seamlessly* allows for the completion of the historical sequence. This seamlessness, we have been told elsewhere, is the ethos of colonial temporality; as flux, this time inserts itself into colonial space as the instantaneous fulfillment of what had been prefigured as the advent of the modern to the anticipations of the archaic.

While the time of the colonial mimesis is allowed some temporal adjustment (Dacca before London, Latin America before Spain), this neo-similitude must nonetheless encounter a limit. The

reordering in time, however allowed in a turn of phrase, is a phantasmatic token. England cannot be India; its modernity has tended its gardens, and carefully so (a controller la boue, la moisissure et les débordenements de la vegetation).

This temporal solitude causes the tropics to internalize, as the totality of Levi-Strauss's treatise claims, a certain sadness:

> Le ciel fuligineux du Pot-au-Noir, son atmosphère pesante, ne sont pas seulement le signe manifeste de la ligne équatoriale. Ils resument le climat sous lequel deux mondes se sont affrontes. *Ce morne element qui le sépare, cette bonace où les forces malfaisantes semblent seulement se réparer*, sont la dernière barriere mystique entre ce qui constituait, hier encore, deux planètes opposées par des conditions si différentes que les premiers témoins ne purent crioire qu'elles fussent également humaines. (56, my emphasis)

> The inky sky over the Doldrums and the oppressive atmosphere are more than just an obvious sign of the nearness of the equator. They epitomize the moral climate in which two worlds have come face to face. *This cheerless sea between them, and the calmness of the weather whose only purpose seems to be to allow evil forces to gather fresh strength*, are the last mystical barrier between two regions so diametrically opposite to each other through their different conditions that the first people to become aware of the fact could not believe that they were both equally human. (Levi-Strauss trans. Weightman and Weightman 74, my emphasis)

In this context, the equator presents itself as a paradoxical imaginary: it reconciles as much as it demarcates. It was at this point of encounter that the comparative devil remained to terrify the monovision of the *altitudinal* northerner as he met his *abysmal* counterpart from the south, with the former realizing that the latter could be as homotropic as he is, and perhaps more so because this other is also *homo tropicus*, with whom the turn of the sun can cohere, with whom the turn of a phrase may finally cease, as the cadency might meet its reference—the other's time wholly for itself. The tropics remain melancholic, for the ones crossing it could not really get over this sense of *global* justice.

As a tropical genre, bossa nova affirms this forlorn "music of the spheres," however via a pathos that gestures beyond the discourse of civility detected by Levi-Strauss. For it is *homo tropicus* himself singing both his promise and his predicament. Antonio Carlos Jobim, Luis Bonfa, and Vinicius de Moraes would launch this new syncopation of jazz, along with the ethos of *tropicalismo,* through the soundtrack of the film *Orfeu Negro* (1959).

The film's thesis rests on a radical pigmentation of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. This is signaled by the opening image of the star-crossed pair carved in a bas-relief of white stone but abruptly broken by the screen filled by Afro-Brazilian bodies very much invested in the daily life of Rio de Janeiro but also gyrating themselves out of these rites as they usher in the coming of the Carnaval.

That Orpheus is reincarnated as Orfeu tells us that it was the homotropy that created *homo tropicus*, a crucial diversion from our examples earlier. It is the text that engenders the species.

On the day that Orfeu applies for a marriage license with his girlfriend Mira, Eurydice appears in the neighborhood in search of her cousin Serafina, to escape a man whom she says is bent on murdering her. Later on we shall recognize this figure as Death himself.

As soon as Orfeu and Eurydice remember the ill fate that they have suffered in a Past, the mythic time of the Underworld is raised and levels up with the folk rhythm of the Brazilian tropics, promising that in the present, what had been discontinued could be ultimately relived. The morning after they make love, Orfeu serenades Eurydice with "A Felicidade" (Happiness):

> Tristeza ñao tem fim,
> felicidade, sim.
>
> A felicidade é como a gota
> de orvalho numa pétala de flor.
> Brilha tranqüila depois de leve oscila
> e cai como uma lágrima de amor.
>
> Sadness has no end,
> Happiness does.
>
> Happiness is like a drop
> of dew on a flower's petal.
> Brilliant and tranquil, then quivering,
> then falling like a tear of love.[7]

The predicament here is articulated as an *intimation of an immortality* whose long durée has arrested its subjects as indeed only temporal beings: subjects-*in*-time as well as subjects-*of*-time—as selves deathly and deadly, with lives *merely* defined by their evasion of the time of death. It is thus that

they are rendered life-less. While Orfeu awakes into the eternal promise that he has made to his beloved, he also realizes that such an encounter, along with the joys of chance, can only be transient, now that their human hands hold the redemption of myth. Orfeu trembles before this fragility. Once the beatific moment is not seized by the visionary subject, so will the bliss vanish as quickly as it has made itself apparent to the witness.

The image of happiness as a dewdrop (a gota de orvalho) suspended on a bloom (pétala do flor) intensifies the impermanence of this mortal sentiment. Dew can be beautiful indeed, emanating light and calmness (brilha tranquila), but soon it shakes (oscila) and gravitates (cai) toward the ground, threatening to disintegrate. The tremor is both tension and intensity. And yet the metamorphosis of this fluid as a loving tear (lágrima de amor) also transforms the doleful reflection into hope, as the downward movement is really not a loss but an arrival, to the earth, that is. It is a tear, but one shed out of passion, thus nourishing the ground of the flower that we thought had been abandoned because of the drop's breakage. What is promised from this irrigation? The sensorium between pollinating caress and nectarine succulence. Yes, another blooming. And perhaps even more: fruition.

The song acts as a refrain for the whole film. A most significant repetition is found at the narrative closure, as Orfeu, carrying the dead Eurydice, walks home in the dawn. Eurydice dies at the tram station. She is electrocuted by the wires of the tram she was holding on to elude Death. It is Orfeu who turns on the switch but he does not realize what the act does to his love. After waking up from a swoon that Death cast on him, Orfeu searches Rio for Eurydice. After running through a hospital and a building where files of missing persons are kept, Orfeu finds Eurydice speaking in a *macumba* ritual, but loses her after looking at the medium. Through the help of his friend Hermes, Orfeu finally finds Eurydice's body in the morgue. Hence, the song again, to mark out the darkening rite of the matrimony:

> Tristeza não tem fim,
> felicidade, sim.
>
> A felicidade do pobre parece
> a grande ilusão do carnaval.
> A gente trabalha o ano inteiro
>
> Sadness has no end,
> happiness does.

The happiness of the poor man
is like the great illusion of carnival.
We work all year long

Sadness has become eternal anew for Orfeu with the knowledge that his beloved has gone back to the Underworld. The brevity of this bliss is made more poignant by the amorous encounter coinciding with the Carnaval, when the infinity of Dionysiac revelry is allowed for the night then taken away by daybreak, when another god's suffering as a human body is made historic. And yet the Christian mythos can only enter with the proper leave-taking of the residual narrative: the Orphic death. When he is hit on the head by a stone hurled at him by Mira (who has just burned her former lover's cot on the hill), Orfeu falls off the cliff, and perishes.

With the corpses of Orfeu and Eurydice pictured in a mortal embrace, their reinsertion into the anterior time of myth redeems their tragedy. The sadness ends, but only with their return to the earth now contemporizing itself with another passional narrative. The figure of Orfeu recedes, but only as *pharmakos*, the prime victim of carnival profanity that prefigures the ultimate sacrifice of Lenten sanctimony—Cristo, who is *pharmakos* as well after the justification of a redemptive victimage.[8] The radical pigment then is not only black, not just the chromatic marker that alters the mythic into cinematic but also red, the color of the blood that turns the whiteness of stone into the earthiest hue of skin. Blood, whose shedding is both indicative of the time that is life and the time that is death.[9]

The coincidence of these times in the sonority of the Orphic image and the reconstitution of the latter as an apparition that is ultimately tragic and yet humbly surrendering to the Christological scene are all intimations of the occurrence of millennial time. What I am trying to suggest here is that the carnival death that marks the closure of the film points to the final moments of a *saeculum*, a long time whose duration can only manifest in the recurrence of myth, its eventual telling and its necessary culmination, in order for another long durée to take place.

The millenniality of the Orphic departure, that receding unto death, makes the question of arrival resurface however. Homotropy enables *homo tropicus* to be born, raised, but also vanquished in *tropicus mundi*. With the facticity of death now made certain to us by this phantasm of the image, our yearning for the articulation of that other possibility called life, becomes all the more pressing. For it is that which is threatened.

VII

In an ellipse, I encounter once more our provisional possibility where I began as an insister,

or better yet, as an insistent of the tropics:

> April is the cruelest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain. (Eliot 20)

The said lines from T. S. Eliot operate on the quadruple measure of temperate time. And yet while the part of that tempo that is being inscribed above is that of the nascence of spring, a wintry wrath is portrayed to be contaminating the scene. While life is announcing its return with nature convalescing from the postponements of the previous season, there is a certain travesty of time in the appearance of blooms and in the falling of rain. A travesty since the flowers are conjured from a site of death and because the rains interrupt that zone of dying. April's cruelty stems then from nature operating out of time, that is, out of its own ending. This movement reaches its full destructive arc because the life that it proposes to rise is an imposition. Or a life that comes too close, and too soon. The cycle arrives again, but it comes when the waiting has not rendered itself complete—when the anticipation does not yet attain the level of hope because despair has not been fully respected. Because of this, the welcoming is again an adieu. *The arrivant is a departee*. And where else can these two visitations coincide but at that cusp between the earth and the world:

> The more instransigently the strife outdoes itself on its own part, the more uncompromisingly do the opponents admit themselves into the intimacy of their own belonging to another. (Heidegger 27)

It is with this familiarity with the April of the temperate earth that I find myself again comparing. Now, in my vision, the April of the tropical world renders itself uncanny:

> Ang abril ay marikit na kalupitan
> ng kalikasan …
> ngunit ako'y mamamasyal na walang balanggot
> at hubad ang mga paa;
> ako'y hindi nangangamba sa kagandahan. (Mangahas 1)

> April is a loving wrath
> of nature …

but I shall walk around with my head uncovered
and with my feet bare;
I do not fear beauty.

Here catastrophe is taken for what it is. It is April and while it is not spring—while it is *tag-araw*, the time of the sun—the Eliotic line is reverberated most potently. But instead of the persona prolonging the agony of one's witnessing of *time working against its own timing*, what we read is intention, the willingness of a body to treat the sublime *as* beautiful and transform terror *into* tenderness. This is a body that recognizes the aesthetic because there is no longer a supersensible desire to contest what looms larger than humanity. Even the disaster of the summering no longer becomes an ordeal. Since it is a matter of the earth, it is a matter of the earthling that one attempts to be part of it—to be sheltered, kept, protected. The persona, embracing the calamity of the tropics, sees the threat as part of existence. Hence, a resilience, a move to elevate. By this gesture, the persona *worlds* oneself. One arrives, for one welcomes, accepts, yields.

VIII

This prose has been an attempt to evoke the temporal premise of the *homo tropicus* as an imaginal possibility to vivify the tropological procedure but this time by way of the tropics. In a series of comparative readings on the colonial cosmopolite (Octavio Paz and José Rizal), the melancholy incarnate (*Tristes Tropiques* and *Orfeu Negro*), and the vernal/estival existent (T.S. Eliot and Rogelio Mangahas), I have tried to theorize on the arrivance, pace Derrida, of a figure that could perhaps reconcile the strife, pace Heidegger, between the resisting earth and the oracular world.

I punctuate this essay where I had began, not so much to gesture into a sense of an ending but to open up the oneiric textile further:

Sarung banggi
sa higdaan,
nakadangog ako
nin huni nin sarong gamgam.

Sa loba ko, katorogan.
Iyo kundi simong boses iyo palan.

Dagos ako bangon,
si sakuyang mata iminuklat.
Sa diklom nin banggi
ako nangalag-kalag.

Si sakong paghiling
pasiring sa itaas,
simong lawog
nahiling ko maliwanag.

One evening,
while in bed,
I heard
the song of a bird.

I thought it was a dream,
but it was you singing.

I rose
and opened my eyes.
In the dark of night,
I unraveled my gaze.

When I looked up
into the sky,
I saw your radiant countenance.

How hapless, these misprisions of the voice and the face as birdsong and moonlight! And yet precious is the daze between dream and waking life that a nocturne composes itself to diligently cope with abandonment in metonyms of trace and apparence.

In anticipating, one becomes the arrivant oneself. Now that there is nothing to fear, one ends in yearning, where and when no finale insists. *One becomes Them*: homotrope and homo tropicus. Such beauty shall have been desired. *And They become One*. Such beatitude will have been awaited.

NOTES

1 In invoking homo tropicus, I align myself with Jacques Derrida the way the arrivant haunts his work *Aporias: Dying—Awaiting (One Another at) the "Limits of Truth"* (65).

2 Although I am articulating this term in a different context, I am still most indebted to Sigmund Freud for illustrating the discursive possibilities which surround the *fort-da* game invented by Freud's grandson to cope with his mother's absence. See *Beyond The Pleasure Principle,* Volume 18 of the Standard Edition of *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.*

3 Mikhail Bakhtin's term for the event in the text where "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole." For the full discussion of how the chronotope works, especially in narrative, see Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics" in *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays* (84-258).

4 Here, of course, I am alluding to Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations* (264).

5 Benedict Anderson translates "el demonio del comparaciones" as "the spectre of comparisons" to describe the inability of Ibarra to "matter-of-factly experience" the gardens and see them "simultaneously close up and from afar." See *The Spectre of Comparison: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (2).

6 It is here that the presumed dichotomy in the comparison reaches an aporia, since the climate of the Spanish colonies spans from high temperativity to deep tropicality.

7 The words of the song and its translation are Antonio Carlos Jobim, Luis Bonfa, and Vinicius de Moraes's, as they are performed and subtitled in *Orfeu Negro.*

8 For a discussion of the pharmakos as the scapegoat, see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (41).

9 But I also believe that Orfeu Negro's death cannot allow an aberrant birth. The radical pigment of black cannot be effaced in a whitewash. The pathos of the latter's narrative can only pave the way for the passional of Cristo Negro. Although I must still provide for this linkage, I am guided by the figure of the Black Nazarene of the Philippines which finds a most productive genealogy alongside the Black Christs of Latin America. I thank my colleague Patrick D. Flores for this valuable instruction. See his "Moving Image, Touching Moment" (unpublished manuscript).

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FORUM KRITIKA

PHILIPPINE STUDIES: TRANSNATIONALISM AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Introduction

A special session titled "Philippine Studies:Transnationalism and Interdisciplinarity" was held at the Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention on January 6, 2011 at Diamond Salon 7, J. W. Marriott Hotel in Downtown LA, California, USA. The special session had been conceived, proposed, organized and presided by Dr. Maria Luisa Torres Reyes, founder and present Editor-in-Chief of *Kritika Kultura* and faculty member of the Ateneo de Manila University Department of English. The panelists included Vicente Rafael (University of Washington, Seattle), Cynthia H. Tolentino (University of Oregon), Ruanni Tupas (National University of Singapore), Jeffrey Cabusao (Bryant University), and Charlie Samuya Veric (Yale University).

This special session, which was also billed as part of the "travelling" Kritika Kultura Lecture Series, addressed the complex legacy of the Philippine experience of multiple colonialisms, to wit, by Spain, the United States, and Japan, each similar in strategic expansionist trajectories but unique in tactical colonial technologies. Among the questions asked were: What is empire about from the perspective of Philippine Studies, at once a product of colonial discourse and critique? What gives, what takes, between center and periphery within the empire and in the course of empire building? What strategies of "containment" confront the borders? What counterstrategies destabilize center and periphery beyond or despite the constraints borders?

Following the lectures, the discussion among the panelists and the members of the audience revolved around the following specific and general issues:

- Encouraging further research concerning the responses of African-Americans to the Filipino-American War;
- Critiquing the apparent marginality of Philippine Studies within Latin American Studies;
- Understanding how Philippine Studies could be truly "transnational" and "interdisciplinary";
- Developing and institutionalizing Philippine Studies on predominately white college campuses in the context of the United States;
- Developing Philippine Studies in other parts of the world from transnational perspectives as a form of "borderless studies";
- Developing Philippine Studies that is both post-national and post-disciplinary;
- Expanding the field of Spanish language and culture to include early historical texts from the Philippines;

- Developing a historical understanding of the development of Philippine Studies as a formal field of inquiry from its inception in the 1970s through pioneering collections such as *Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature* (1967);
- Developing new forms of literacy to understand the complex colonial histories of the Philippines;
- Acknowledging the ways in which the push for Philippine Studies challenges students, teachers, and scholars to confront the history of US Empire which is deemed significant given the deep historical amnesia within the United States regarding its own history of imperialism; and
- Examining the connection between African Americans and Filipinos during the Philippine-American war and its implications for forging contemporary connections between the African American struggle for reparations and the Philippine struggle for independence.

Editor's Note: The information here has been culled from the notes from Dr. Jeff Cabusao and Mr. Charlie Veric.

FORUM KRITIKA

PHILIPPINE STUDIES AND THE END OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

Cynthia Tolentino
University of Oregon
ctol@uoregon.edu

Abstract
The current struggles over US military bases and territorial sovereignty in the Pacific, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the phenomenon of globalization, alongside what is being called the "end of the American Century," have pushed interdisciplinary scholars to develop new frameworks for engaging US Empire. The paper attempts to draw out the various figurations of "Philippine Studies" and "US empire" in the papers, which may include analyses of comparative colonialisms, class and participation in social justice movements, as well as the intersections between globalization and imperial conquest. By considering the papers' insights on disciplinary formation and knowledge practices, the present analysis will also attend to their entanglements with contemporary articulations of exceptionalism and containment. The paper is especially interested in how recent incarnations and positionings of Philippine Studies generate insight on notions of the unique, particular, special, and relational that have intellectually and institutionally structured colonial discourse and critique.

Keywords
decline narratives, overseas Filipino workers (OFW), transnational Americanity

About the author
Cynthia Tolentino is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Oregon where she teaches courses on cultures of US empire and Asian Pacific American literature and film. She received her PhD from the Department of American Civilization at Brown University. Her book *America's Experts: Race and the Fictions of Sociology* was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2009. As a study of US ethnic literature in the mid-twentieth century, the book argues that writers such as Richard Wright, Carlos Bulosan, and Jade Snow Wong were the subjects of the US state's sociological interest in narrating problems of racial identity and assimilation as well as the narrators of such problems themselves. Tolentino's articles appear in journals that include *American Literature and Novel: A Forum on Fiction* and also in edited collections. She is now at work on a book-length study of US legal categories for the Philippines and Puerto Rico, a project that examines representations of the unincorporated territory, the commonwealth, and the special economic zone in twentieth and twenty first century Filipino and Puerto Rican fiction, film, and visual art. It has received support from the Oregon Humanities Center and the Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences at National Sun-Yat Sen University in Taiwan. She lives in Eugene, Oregon in the United States and also in Paris, France.

Following the US bombing of Afghanistan that also launched the "War on Terror" in October 2001, a cottage industry of United States decline books has expanded and flourished. Written primarily by historians and political scientists, these books chart the global rise and fall

of United States hegemony. To list just a few examples, this genre includes titles such as Charles A. Kupchan's *The End of the American Era: US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century,* Emmanuel Todd's *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order,* and Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Decline of the American Power: The US in a Chaotic World*. Whereas earlier books such as Paul Kennedy's Rise and Fall of the Great Powers may have served as templates for an outpouring of decline narratives that asked whether the United States would repeat the fate of empires such as France, the Ottomans, and Britain, these recent works are preoccupied with questions such as "Since when has the United States been fading as a global superpower?" and "What superpower(s) will take America's place at the top?"

Yet a significant feature in United States decline narratives over the past decade is the use of Henry Luce's influential notion of "The American Century," an idealized vision of the twentieth century as an era of United States leadership and world dominance. In his famous 1941 editorial, Luce, the publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazine, emphasized the significance of Asia in his model of post-World War II United States ascendancy. Situating Asia as the stage for the unfolding of "The American Century," Luce outlined a process by which the United States could adopt a broad economic perspective that he deemed necessary to expand its reach into Asian markets and manifest its destiny as a postwar global leader.[1] Inscribing Asia as the key to United States's shift from a provincial nation to world power, Luce writes, "Our thinking today on world trade today is on ridiculously small terms. For example, we think of Asia as being worth only a few hundred millions a year to us. Actually, in the decades to come Asia will be worth to us exactly zero – or it will be worth to us four, five, ten billions of dollars a year. And the latter are the terms we must think in, or else confess a pitiful impotence" (171). As he suggests, conceptualizing Asia as an exploitable resource was a prerequisite to developing the proper and necessary perspective for realizing the US's grander role in the emerging world order.

Paradoxically, the Philippines does not figure in Luce's narrative, even though it is clearly part of the Asian stage upon which Luce's "American Century" will unfold and also a US territory undergoing a ten year transition period mandated by the 1935 Tydings McDuffie Act that was intended to result in Philippine independence. It is, on the other hand, implicitly present in Luce's figuration of the United States as a training site for workers who will eventually be exported globally. "Closely tied to this model for United States economic expansion," he explains, "is a US-trained technocracy, a set of globally oriented experts that could convey a 'picture of an America' and produce the conditions that would enable the United States to accept its destined role of global leadership." Envisioning the United States as the "training center of the skillful servants of mankind," Luce suggested that an American-dominated world order—and by extension, postwar democracy and liberty for all nations — could be secured through the development, reproduction,

and dissemination of American expertise (171). By framing the flow of skilled workers as a "humanitarian army of Americans," Luce cast the United States as "the Good Samaritan" and defined its central task in the postwar world as the dissemination of US trained experts and knowledge practices (170). He thus identified knowledge production as the quintessential American activity of the post World War II era in a way that inadvertently gave Filipinos, as US colonial subjects, a purchase on United States identity. If American-style education was to be the distinguishing feature of the "American Century," then Luce's model opened up a way to recognize benevolent assimilation, the US colonial policy of tutelage for Filipinos, and to view Filipinos as ideal subjects of the American Century.[2]

Ho Wi-Ding's 2010 road movie *Pinoy Sunday* thematizes the "End of the American Century" by jointly situating Filipino migration and Taiwan within a discourse of American empire. More specifically, the film registers the trace of American influence in the Pacific by presenting the dreams of Filipino migrant workers as intersecting a discourse of Taiwan's modernity. Through its focus on Filipino migration in Taiwan, the film engages Luce's conception of Asia as a key site for the "American Century" while also exploring its less visible possibilities for theorizing the Philippines.

Pinoy Sunday is the story of Manuel (Epy Quizon) and Dado (Bayani Agbayani), two Filipino migrant workers who find a discarded sofa on a Taipei sidewalk on their day off. Propelled by their dream of having a comfortable seat for lounging, drinking beer, and gazing at the stars after long days on the bicycle factory assembly line and lacking enough money for car transport, they attempt to carry the sofa to their dormitory on the city's outskirts before the evening curfew. The film is inspired by Roman Polanski's absurdist short film *Two Men and a Wardrobe (Dwaj ludzie z szafa),* the story of two men who emerge from the sea carrying an enormous wardrobe. Whereas Polanski's 1958 film focuses on how the two men are shunned and physically attacked by locals on their way into town, *Pinoy Sunday* frames the journey of Filipino migrant workers through the city of Taipei as one that is defined by hostile interactions to their status as foreign workers.

If cultural and political ties with the United States shape the superstructure of Filipino migration in Taiwan, then the economic dependence of the Philippines and Taiwan might be seen as defining their base. *Pinoy Sunday* contains numerous references to American slang, Hollywood movies, advertising slogans, and commodities, but it also figures "America" as more than the consumption of American culture and goods. By presenting "America" as a location that structures both Taiwan and the Philippines, *Pinoy Sunday* reveals an Americanity that is articulated in Taiwan through Filipino migration.

According to Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, Americanity is more than a conception of America as a country or a place; it is also an idea that generates an image of

modernity that is been disseminated throughout the world (549-56). If "America" signifies a utopian dream, Quijano and Wallerstein argue that it is also a racialized nation and modern empire that is founded on a history of conquest. This racialized and imperialist America, they contend, is the underside of the American dream that is built on capitalist accumulation and uneven development (Wang 138). Integrated into discourses of the American dream and Taiwan's economic development, Filipino migration in Taiwan emerges through capitalist accumulation and uneven development (Quijano and Wallerstein 549-56).

As a story about Taiwan's economic development and modernity, *Pinoy Sunday* is, I believe, is especially concerned with what Quijano and Wallerstein identify as Americanity's forward-looking orientation. As they point out, the Americas were not incorporated into the existing capitalist world economy; rather, the creation of the idea of the Americas was also the originary moment of the modern world system. On the other hand, they also explain that the Americas gave rise to a mode of cultural resistance to oppressive conditions that took its definition from the flight forward to modernity than its claims of historicity. The Americas were the New World, a badge and burden assumed from the outset (549).

DECLINE, CIVILIZATION, NEOCOLONIALISM

In recent narratives of United States decline, the end of the American Century is invoked as a catalyst for global shift. Citing the Iraq War as a contributing factor to the steady erosion of the United States's image and stature in the world community and domestic well being, these narratives envision the dynamic economies of India and China overtaking that of the United States and bringing about a critical transformation of the global landscape (Mason). Attempting to imagine what this transition will feel like for US citizens, historian Alfred McCoy remarks, "When Washington's global dominion finally ends, there will be painful daily reminders of what such a loss of power means for Americans in every walk of life. As half dozen European nations have discovered, imperial decline tends to have a remarkably demoralizing impact on a society, regularly bringing at least a generation of economic privation. As the economy cools, political temperatures rise, often sparking serious domestic unrest." Following McCoy's formulation, the effects of the "end of the American Century" will primarily be felt in terms of the domestic economy and political stability, following the pattern of decline established by European imperial nations. Whereas Luce, writing in 1941, emphasized the significance of Asia as a purportedly "new" frontier for US economic expansion and the key to US prosperity and international ascendancy, McCoy, writing in 2010, pegs United States decline to that of European empires.

The parallel that McCoy draws between the United States and Europe is not confined to

economic explanations of decline, but also engages a discourse of civilization. The outpouring of United States decline books also intersects a broader literary category of the Decline of the West. Indeed, a comparable genre of writing is proliferating in Western Europe, composed of books that explain the decline of European nations, often through racist arguments of national mission and civilization. German economist Thilo Sarrazin's bestseller *Germany* does away with itself, which argues that Germany is being brought intellectually low by genetically inferior Muslim immigrants and their children, and Eric Zemmour's *French Melancholy*, a book that laments that France, under pressure from immigration and outside influences, has lost touch with its Roman roots, are cases in point ("Good Things Can Grow").

To consider how "the Philippines" appears in contemporary narratives that take up the "end of the American Century," it makes sense to note that narratives that link the Philippines with United States decline are hardly new. Indeed, turn of the century debates over United States annexation of the Philippines and other former Spanish colonies took the form of a battle over whether the Philippines would make or break the United States as a nation. Relating the idea of the Philippines to the definition and future of American civilization produced questions such as: Would annexing the Philippines enable the United States to rise from a provincial nation to a world power? Was becoming an empire in opposition to the essence of American political ideals?

Just as recent European decline narratives figured racialized immigrants as a cause of national decline, late nineteenth century United States debates over the annexation of the Philippines linked the "Negro problem" in the continental United States to the problem of the "little brown brothers" of the Philippines. The interpretation of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, also known as the First Lady of the Confederate States of America, exemplifies this position:

> The President probably has cogent reasons for conquering and retaining the Philippines. For my own part, however, I cannot see why we should add several millions of Negroes to our population when we already have eight million of them in the United States. The problem of how best to govern these and promote their welfare we have not yet solved ... The question is, What are we going to do with these additional millions of Negroes? Civilize them? (qtd. in Newman 15)

Davies expresses anxiety over the difficulty of transporting racial policies yet unrealized in the continental United States to the foreign "jungle" of the Philippines; in so doing, she frames the nation's failure to properly assimilate African Americans as a statement of dis-confidence in the nation's ability to assimilate overseas "primitives."

As literary scholar Victor Bascara notes, "The 'American Century' would unfold not only

despite a lack of direct American control throughout virtually the rest of the world, but because of it" (30). Whereas direct colonization that involved the incorporation of subjects deemed unfit for self-government was viewed as a contradiction of American ideals, United States policy on commerce and trade in China and Asia could be described as neocolonial in contemporary contexts. Although McKinley saw the commercial opportunity as merely "incidental" in 1898, neocolonialism would become the answer to the US "Philippine problem" (Bascara 30). But how does the "end of the American century" exceed the territorial borders of formal US empire? Put another way, what is the transnational imaginary of contemporary United States decline narratives?

AT THE EDGES OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

Located at the edges of the United States empire, Taiwan is not a US territory but has been deeply influenced by United States foreign policy and immigration history and by the idea of America. Most historical accounts of post World War II Taiwan remark on US influence in Taiwan through economic and military aid to Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist party and non-military aid through investments in infrastructure projects and especially in the textile industry from 1951 to 1964, towards the goal of developing an export economy. As Pei-Chia Lan points out, the increasing prosperity of East Asia and the Gulf countries has spurred a substantial international migration within the migratory route from Southeast Asia to Taiwan since the mid-1970s (2).

How, the film asks, is regional migration and culture part of Taiwan's history of economic development and discourse of modernity? Rather than figuring Filipino migrant workers are Pacific cousins to Taiwan's inhabitants, *Pinoy Sunday* suggests that the development of Taiwanese society is closely linked to the historic US presence in East Asian geopolitics. "Figuratively speaking," Chih-ming Wang contends, "Taiwan as a postcolonial nation is also in the passage to America, as it struggles to shake off the historical baggage of Japanese colonialism and KMT authoritarian rule." While Taiwan and the Philippines have been incorporated into United States Cold War and Post–Cold War systems, Taiwan has shifted in status from the recipient of economic aid from the United States from 1951-1965 to a major US trading partner following its rapid industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s. By constructing a Filipino narrative as a journey that passes through the United States by way of postcolonial Taiwan, the film makes it possible to apprehend the geopolitical discourse that links the United States with Taiwan and the Philippines in the last half of the twentieth century, or as what is known as the

American Century.

FILIPINOS IN TAIWAN'S TRANSNATIONAL IMAGINARY

On the return journey to the factory dormitory, Manuel and Dado use the Taipei 101 tower as a landmark. In making their way through Taipei's unfamiliar streets, they become hopelessly lost in the desolate areas surrounding the city. Remarking that they are "far away from Taipei 101," Dado registers their physical distance from the landmark and symbolic remove from attaining their dream of prosperous modernity. More than a city icon, Taipei 101 symbolizes Taiwan's affluence and the international visibility of its economy. At 1,671 ft, Taipei 101 is was the tallest building in the world from 2004 until the opening of the Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai in January 2010 and is the city's most prominent skyscraper. To achieve their dream of transforming the makeshift dorm into a home, Manuel and Dado need to keep the tower as a navigational coordinate. While losing sight of the tower will mean missing their curfew and possibly being deported, it would also symbolically move them further away from Taiwan's successful model of economic development.

In his review of *Pinoy Sunday*, film scholar David Bordwell interprets the sofa as the "tangible emblem of not just material comfort but the men's aspiration for a more stable life." Although Bordwell treats sofa as an expression of class, he misses the way that it visually and discursively brings together Taiwan and the Philippines. In one scene, Manuel and Dado are drawn to a billboard advertisement featuring the image of a man reclining on plush sofa, his head resting in a beautiful woman's lap. This image reignites their fantasy of finding a sofa for their dorm: for Manuel, the sofa is a site of romance and seduction, as he imagines himself kissing a woman as if he were in a movie. For Dado, the sofa conjures an image of peaceful domesticity, as he imagines himself on the couch holding his wife and young daughter as they sleep. These fantasies appear in color, with the look and feel of scene from a movie. In contrast, dreams of Manuel and Dado that refer to the Philippines are presented as individual black/white still images of landscapes, suggesting the many years that they have spent away.[3]

The images of Filipino migrant workers gazing at the Taipei 101 Tower and the luxury furniture ad are not the only ones that link Filipino migrant labor to modern Taiwan in the film. Indeed, the film brings two other images of Taiwan's modernity into focus: in one, a handcuffed Filipino contract worker is flanked by immigration police, as he is escorted away for deportation to the Philippines; in the second, a Filipina domestic worker pushes the wheelchair of an elderly Taiwanese woman. While Taipei 101 is the celebrated icon of Taiwan's modernity, the film offers the spectacles of deportation and modernity to suggest how the American Century. The spectacle, as Debord writes, is the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have

supplanted relations between people. Following his formulation, spectacle is not a collection of images, but rather a social relation mediated by images.

From the beginning of the film, *Pinoy Sunday* brings into focus the spectacular image of the deportation of Filipino workers to the Philippines. At the airport in Taipei, Dado meets another Filipino, who relates that he is "going home." The camera follows Dado's gaze as he takes in the handcuffs around the man's wrists. The deportation of migrant workers as an established part of modern Taiwan's economy is reinforced in another scene, as Dado witnesses a former co-worker being chased through the shopping mall by immigration police, who tackle him to the ground before attaching the handcuffs.

Parallel with the spectacle of Filipino deportation in the film is the less sensational, yet ubiquitous image of the Filipina domestic worker in Taiwan. By framing Filipino domestic labor as the subcontracting of filial duty in modern Taiwan, the film points to the negative consequences for individuals and families in Taiwan and Filipinos. While it gives voice to the feelings of anxiety, guilt, loneliness and frustration experienced by individual migrant workers and their families abroad, it also reveals the greater isolation and vulnerability of live-in domestic workers. Whereas the film's title implicitly refers to Manuel's and Dado's six day work week at the bicycle factory, Anna (Meryll Soriano), a Filipina domestic worker living in a private household as a maid and caregiver for the elderly mother of her employers, complains about having worked for two months without a day off. As Anna pushes the old woman's wheelchair around town and puts her to bed in their shared room, she closes the door to seal off the noise of her employers, who are arguing in another room of the dingy flat. Another Filipina domestic worker, Celia (Alessandra De Rossi), appears to be Manuel's unattainable dream girl, but it is later revealed that she is having an affair with her wealthy, married employer.

The film also suggests that widespread perceptions of foreign migrant workers as criminals have distracted locals from recognizing the domestic problems that have accompanied Taiwan's financial prosperity. In another scene, Manuel and Dado save a Taiwanese boy who is threatening to jump from the roof of a modern housing project. Rather than presenting Manuel and Dado as traditional heroes, the visual spectacle of the two Filipinos carrying the bright red sofa serve as a distraction to the suicidal boy, which in turn creates an opening for rescue workers to pull him back to safety.

ENGLISH IN THE LANDSCAPE OF DECLINE

In *Pinoy Sunday,* English is elevated in a way that devalues the United States as a geographic destination at the same time that it reinforces American cultural capital. Although the English

spoken by Manuel, Dado, and other Filipinos reference benevolent assimilation in the Philippines, the United States does not appear as a key destination or place in the film – an idea visually manifested in the factory dorm décor, where a miniature US flag appears as just one in a series from nations all over the world. To express his preferred effect in situations that are often bleak and disappointing, Manuel draws phrases from American pop culture. Using phrases and slogans such as "Chill…I'm The Man," "For special occasions: steak dinner for two," "See you when I see you"; and "Just do it," he acts out cinematic scenarios in which he successfully embodies masculine American personas of the hero and lover, in ways that feel distant from his situation as a low-paid migrant worker living under a strict curfew and policy of deportation.

In an analysis of narratives of British decline, John Marx contends that modernist novelists such as Virginia Woolf and Joseph Conrad were more concerned with mapping a cosmopolitan and interconnected world defined by a shared English language, rather than mapping the decline of imperial Britain. What have largely been perceived as narratives of the decline of the British empire, he explains, in fact mark the advent of modern globalization by presenting different articulations of English. During their journey, Manuel and Dado rely on a combination of gestures, English phrases, and situational logic to communicate with bystanders. Speaking English enables Manuel and Dado to communicate in minimal ways, but does not necessarily constitute a shared language that confers fellowship and connection onto them, as outsiders in Taiwan. In addition, the film emphasizes the linguistic diversity amongst Filipino migrant workers. While Manuel and Dado alternate between Tagalog, the dominant language in the Philippines, and English when speaking to each other, Manuel speaks the regional language Ilonggo with a Filipina who stops to help them on the side of the road and later translates the essence of the conversation for Dado. By emphasizing regional alliances and language in the Philippines as a factor in the formation of Filipino migrant worker networks in Taiwan, the film complicates dualistic conceptions of Filipinos as either English-speaking US colonial subjects and Tagalog-speaking Filipinos.

Through language, the film registers the specificity of Taiwan as a location for Filipino migration, asking us to explore the racialization of contract workers and domestic workers in institutional and discursive contexts. How do Taiwanese view these darker-skinned foreigners? When a drunk driver rams into the couch as they are carrying it across a street, he curses at them in Hoklo (Taiwanese) and insists that they compensate him for the damage to his scooter. When the police arrive to break up the fight, he quickly switches to Mandarin in order to argue that the migrant workers hit him with the couch. Manuel and Dado use gestures and a few English words (Drink … drive) to signal the driver's drunkenness to the police in order to counter the distorted, yet detailed account of the accident that he delivers to them in Mandarin.

More than once, interactions between Filipino migrant workers and locals, including a

TV reporter, policewoman, and passersby, reveal the costs of not speaking Hoklo (Taiwanese) and Mandarin and also of the limited benefits and mobility that English can secure for them in their negotiations with factory security personnel and Taiwanese locals, such as the drunk driver mentioned above. In contrast to the way that English enables them to express their frustrations and dreams, Manuel and Dado have minimal knowledge of Mandarin, including "Please," "Sorry," "Thank you," and "Goodbye," or words and phrases that are also specifically learned and deployed to help them stay out of trouble with factory management and immigration and police officials while also performing a subordinate and subservient status for Taiwanese locals that affirms the First World – Third World hierarchal relationship between Taiwan and the Philippines in which Taiwan is on top.

Taiwan's language politics became a controversial issue in the film's distribution. The film received financial support through from a Subsidy for Film Production grant from Taiwan's Government Information Office, but its use of English and Tagalog was viewed as violating the subsidy's rules that Chinese dialects should be the dominant languages spoken in government-funded films, as the projects are intended to promote Taiwan language and culture. Such arguments about local language politics found expression in doubts over the film's localness, as little local language is spoken in the film even though the story is set in Taipei. The filmmaker's response was to release a version dubbed in Hoklo, a local language spoken by roughly 73 percent of the island's population.

In addition to Taiwan's language politics, the distribution of the film brought the racialized criminalization of foreign migrant workers to the surface. Though the film received positive reviews at the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, only two movie theaters in Taiwan initially agreed to screenings. In an interview with the *Taipei Times*, director Ho Wi-ding recounted that most movie theaters passed on the film after hearing that the story focused on OFWs (Overseas Foreign Workers) and that the staff at one venue went so far to say that they didn't want foreign migrant workers hanging around in their lobbies and in front of the theater" (Ho Yi 16). It's worth noting, however, that newspaper reports of the movie theater's racist views towards migrant workers generated a burst in ticket sales for the film from outraged readers. In an interview, Ho Wi-ding expressed the desire to talk with the Government Information Office about how to make the regulations more flexible for movies about new immigrants.

PHILIPPINE STUDIES AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

What is compelling about *Pinoy Sunday* is that it articulates critical linkages about the Philippines and Taiwan in ways that open up intersections of language and Americanity in a

transnational context. After losing sight of the Taipei 101 skyscraper, Manuel and Dado use the river as a new landmark. Trading the modern icon for a natural one does not lead them to their destination and dream of lounging on the sofa, but instead puts them on a new route. Although Dado's expression registers the gravity of missing the dormitory curfew, his verbal acknowledgement of this fact conveys ambivalence about the prospect of remaining in Taiwan.

My purpose in this essay is not to add another site—in this case, Taiwan/Taipei—to Philippine Studies. Rather, I have attempted to show how Luce's "American Century" and relatedly, narratives that identify the end of the American Century, provide a way of studying the transpacific imaginary of informal US imperialism. In this sense, I suggest that the histories of Taiwan and the Philippines are linked by immigration to the US, but also discursively linked by the American Dream and Taiwan's modernity. Taking an epistemological approach to Filipinos and the Philippines allows us to consider how they are constituted as objects by the discourse of the American Century, not only through the colonial policy of benevolent assimilation and the US history of colonialism in the Philippines, but also through the passage to Taiwan.

In the dreamlike closing scene, Manuel and Dado play music side-by-side on the couch as it glides across the sea and eventually, to the Philippines. The final scenes show them on a beach in the Philippines, confirming their resettlement. To understand the significance of the end of the film, we need to see these final moments not as a migrant's return to the home country, but rather as a transpacific passage that provides a new perspective on the Philippines and its relation to Taiwan and the United States. To study the Philippines is to apprehend the ideological linkages between Taiwan and the Philippines and to untie the contradictions of the discourse of the American Century that Taiwan and the Philippines are part of.

NOTES

1 Henry Luce defines the measure of US "virility" in terms of the US's ability to exploit Asia: "Our thinking today on world trade today is on ridiculously small terms. For example, we think of Asia as being worth only a few hundred millions a year to us. Actually, in the decades to come Asia will be worth to us exactly zero – or it will be worth to us four, five, ten billions of dollars a year. And the latter are the terms we must think in, or else confess a pitiful impotence" (171).

2 I have analyzed the ways that Luce's American Century references the US colonial policy of benevolent assimilation and addresses Filipinos in a previous piece. See Chapter 3 in Cynthia H. Tolentino's *America's Experts: Race and the Fictions of Sociology*.

3 These images operate almost like pillow shots, or images that do not contribute to the progress of the narrative, but instead linger on inanimate objects in ways that refer to a character by re-presenting it out of a narrative context. "The essence of the pillow shot," Noel Burch observes, "lies in the tension between the suspension of human presence and its potential return" (161).

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FORUM KRITIKA

EMPIRE AND GLOBALIZATION: ON THE RECENT STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINES IN THE UNITED STATES

Vicente L. Rafael
University of Washington
vrafael@u.washington.edu

Abstract

This short paper traces two of the more important developments in the study of the Philippines in the United States in the wake of critiques regarding American Orientalism in the late 1990s. The first is a rediscovery of the American empire at the heart of US national history, and by implication, of the buried significance of overseas colonies to metropolitan developments. Second is the emergence of robust cultural critiques of globalization from the perspective of those who have been globalized from below. The paper talks these developments with reference to Paul Kramer's *Blood of Government* and Neferti Tadiar's *Things Fall Away*, books that mark critically important advances not only in Philippine Studies in the US, but of American Studies in the age of imperial globalization.

Keywords
affective economies, colonialism, feminized labor, history from below, immigration, war and race

About the author
Vicente L. Rafael is Professor of History at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is the author of *Contracting Colonialism*, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, *The Promise of the Foreign*, and has edited *Discrepant Histories* and *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines and Colonial Vietnam*. He has also written a number of essays on such topics as the politics of photography, and digital technologies in the contemporary Philippines, Filipino overseas workers, sovereignty and revolution the Spanish Philippines, and most recently on the link between translation and empire in the current US "war on terror." Prior to the University of Washington, Rafael has taught at the University of California, San Diego, Stanford, the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and at the Ateneo de Manila University.

What are the more recent developments in the study of the Philippines in the US or if you like, of American Studies of the Philippines in the last decade? I'd like to suggest at least two related but no less distinct tendencies. One has to do with the rediscovery in the wake of the so-called US global war on terror, of the American empire at the heart of American national history and by implication of the buried significance of overseas colonies in the formation of the metropole. Second, is the emergence of robust cultural critiques of globalization from the perspective of those who have been globalized from below. Taken together, these two tendencies open up pathways

to reconsider not just the persistent oppressiveness of empire but also the utopian conceits of the nation-state. I'd like to talk about these developments with reference to two books which to my mind exemplify some of the most promising approaches to the questions of empire and globalization: Paul Kramer's *Blood of Government* and Neferti Tadiar's *Things Fall Away*.

Let me first look at the question of empire by way of Paul Kramer's, *The Blood of Government.* Kramer shows how US colonialism involved a double invasion: on the one hand, Americans forcibly established their presence in the archipelago by way of a brutal and protracted war; on the other hand, Philippine products along with Filipino laborers "invaded" America, at least from the perspective of white nativists, farm lobbyists, American academics and politicians from the 1920s-1930s. The history of this double invasion suggests three things. First, that the Filipino-American war whose end was officially declared by Theodore Roosevelt on July 4, 1902 in order to speed the transition to a civilian administration and quell anti-imperialist protests in the US, was never really over. Indeed, the experience and legacy of war continued to shape the limits and possibilities of American policies and practice and Filipino collaboration and resistance both in the Philippines and in the United States. Second, that despite efforts to repress its memory and gloss over its effects, the war forces us to think of Philippine and American history within a common optic of imperial expansion, and thus of the trans-national orientation of the histories of both countries. Such makes a purely nationalist view of either US or Philippine history untenable as each is always already contaminated by the legacy of the other. And third, that US colonialism considered as a double invasion allows us to revise the history of racial formation from a more comparative perspective. The American presence in the Philippines and the Filipino presence in America amounted to what Kramer calls the "racial re-making of empire" as well as the "imperial re-making of race."

The mutually constitutive relationship between empire-making and race-making is richly documented in the history of the war and its aftermath. The idea of empire as a white man's burden realized in the violent encounter with non-white others had at least two effects. It not only added new terms to the rich and ever-expanding lexicon of American racism; it also resulted in the ethnic specification of the very meaning of whiteness itself. Given the ethnically diverse composition of the US army confronting Filipino fighters, American forces, with the exception of course of African American troops, came to be homogenized as "Anglo-Saxons." But just as empire re-made race, so too, did race shape the consolidation of empire. For example, during the war, Filipinos were subject to the most vicious racial invectives—"gooks," "niggers" "Injuns"—and subjected to what Kramer refers to as a war of "racial extermination" (not to be confused with "genocide). After the war, however, these racial slurs were transmuted into the more familial though no less patronizing term "little brown brother" in the interest of securing Filipino collaboration and promoting colonial

tutelage. At the same time, Filipinos were also classified into "civilized" and "uncivilized" groups, conflating religious with racial differences which determined whether they were to be ruled by a civilian or a military government.

By focusing on both the contingency and structuring agency of race, Kramer debunks the view that US imperialism was exceptional and different from Europe's. The unstable yet powerful significance of race helps to explain why the US decided to set its colony on the path of independence after a decade and a half of occupation. Kramer argues convincingly that the two independence laws, Jones Law of 1916 and the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1935 were in fact politically expedient responses to American nativists' desire to exclude Filipino workers as much as they were calculated ways to redefine colonial hegemony without the political complications of colonial occupation. These laws were less about granting the Philippines independence (for it has continued to be a neo-colony of the US) as they were about making the US independent of the Philippines. Where earlier scholarship had almost completely ignored or downplayed the significance of race, Kramer thus shows how race invariably *and* contingently figured in every aspect of colonial occupation.

Kramer's work along with several other recent works are all joined precisely by the task of making visible the workings of empire—as a way of life, as the context for redefining race and citizenship, as the pathway to bureaucratic and academic careers in and out of the metropole, as a conduit of disciplinary power, and as a determinant of metropolitan state formation. Nonetheless, while marking a significant advance over earlier works, much of the recent work on the American empire share with previous scholarship a common shortcoming. This has to do with the failure to engage vernacular source materials and the alternative views of empire, nation, and everyday life which these contain. Much of the new scholarship is based on archival resources primarily in English and Spanish. With rare exceptions, American scholarship, unlike British, French or Dutch scholarship on empire seems unable to invest the time and cultivate the sensibility required to develop a degree of fluency in the languages of the colonial periphery. Unlike the study of other regions in the world, the American study of the Philippines still tends to set aside the importance of local languages. Hence, much of the focus of the new scholarship on empire continues to be on colonial elites—American and Filipino—as well as metropolitan actors. This brings up the question: is there perhaps a danger that the critical study of empire with its inability to hear and read vernacular languages risks annexing the study of the Philippines into merely another branch of the postcolonial study of America? If a postcolonial understanding of US history requires the unearthing of the imperial as a structuring force of the national, and therefore of the ineluctable ties that bind colonial and metropolitan histories, what are the risks in continuing to set aside the varied worlds contained and conveyed by the vernacular languages of the former?

It is precisely the question of the vernacular and its potential for opening other routes to understanding the work of empire as globalizing power that is the subject of the second book I'd like to consider. Neferti Tadiar's *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience in the Making of Globalization*, in some ways takes up the cultural remainders of Kramer's book. It seeks to understand globalization from the perspective of those who suffer, in all senses of that word, its production. Focusing on the Philippines from the 1970s to the 1990s, Tadiar asks what we, its anonymous, cosmopolitan addressee, can possibly learn from the historical experiences and literary productions of Filipinos struggling with and against the demands of interlocking hegemonic forces. These forces include: an aggressively expansive global capitalist network, a Philippine nation-state in both its authoritarian and post-authoritarian moments, varieties of liberal cosmopolitan identities proposed by feminist, gay liberation as well as the new social movements; and an on-going marxist revolutionary movement under the aegis of the Communist Party of the Philippines. The author examines how these hegemonizing forces draw their sustenance from the living labor of Filipinos and how the latter in turn absorb and parry the shocks of hegemony's demands. She does so through a sustained reading of a wide range of writings: novels, poetry, journalism, as well as different strands of academic scholarship over the last thirty years, situating her project within the broad ambit of what has come to be known as subaltern studies.

What emerges from her analysis is a welter of contradictory practices. Such practices produce not only dominant forms of sociality and hierarchies of power. They also put forth alternative ways of being ordered towards other historical possibilities. Tadiar begins by arguing that the globalization of capitalist modes of production hinge on the conversion of living labor into something that is pliant and "feminized." Tadiar sees the feminization of labor as the realization of what Marx had observed to be the universal tendency towards the prostitution of labor power in the face of capital. Reduced as such, labor becomes homogenized into a resource for servicing the unceasing need for surplus value. The nation-state profits from this gendering of living labor. Tadiar shows how the discourse of nationalism similarly situates women's reproductive, domesticating labor as subordinate and merely derivative of masculine productive labor. But rather than reiterate the feminist-marxist condemnation of capitalism's reproduction of generalized prostitution and nationalism's patriarchal subordination of women, the author instead inquires into the productive capacities of the prostitute – which here includes the overseas contract worker--herself. In explicating the stories and poetry of Fanny Garcia, Ruth Mabanglo, and Luna Sicat, among others, she seeks to demonstrate the ways by which women reconfigure the terms of their subjugation and thereby resist their reduction into mere objects of value by both capital and the state.

These acts of self-fashioning, however are never unitary. They instead open up into different

tendencies. Such include: the invention of "woman" (*babae)* as a liberal subject, detached from its earlier social connections; the invocation of the self as a performative being, that is, a kind of medium which is hospitable to the comings and goings of otherness harking back to pre-colonial and Catholic practices of spirit mediumship; the embracing of contingency that makes for an ethic of risk and an erotics of gambling as a condition for freedom. Each possibility is implied in the other. Tadiar leads us to see from her consideration of Filipina writing the emergence of what she refers to as "pluri-subject", a subject that is essentially plural, always a "part-subject" (*Kapwa)* oriented towards proximate affiliations, not oedipal identification with others. In this way, the "prostituted", deracinated woman, whether at home or abroad, is shown to be not only the basis for the extraction of surplus value as well as the ground for the erection of nationalist identity. She also realizes herself as an agent and locus of historical experience, capable through her labor of creating a mode of being, an alternative temporality that "falls outside" the time and space circumscribed by capitalist progress and nationalist citizenship. And further, that it is precisely these experiences that "fall away and outside"–experiences that are regarded as marginal, the "accursed share" of capitalist and nationalist productions–which simultaneously invite domination *and* evade its full force.

The rest of this powerful book consists of tracking the obscured and suppressed practices which resist the assimilative pull of dominant systems for making subjects and objects. Tadiar looks at the literature of dissent produced during the period of Martial Law, for instance. In her close reading of the texts of Jun Cruz Reyes, Jose Lacaba and Tony Perez, she maps a set of responses to the pressures of an authoritarian modernity imposed by Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos at the bidding of transnational corporations and lending institutions and fed by an overt identification on the part of Filipino elites with the desires of and for Western modernity. These writers, Tadiar argues, situated their work amid the failed promises and debris of development that marked the city. They wrote to contest the "magical" capacities of martial law to make itself felt everywhere in the country. They parodied the fascist-like spectacles that accompanied tourism development. And they undermined the erection of novel metropolitan forms which sought to re-organize Metro Manila's spaces to speed the flow of capital by hastening the "liquification" and "social pulverization" of laboring bodies. Negotiating around the regime's censorship laws, these writers sought to register the traumas of development on the level of everyday lives. Narrating the quotidian struggles of male prostitutes, low level office workers, squatters, xerox machine operators, among others, their stories and poems relayed the shock effects of dispossession and unaccounted losses.

But in articulating loss and trauma, such writers also made manifest what the regime sought to conceal and contain: the excess of desire and the overflow of affect produced by the sheer living

of life even, and especially, under the most oppressive conditions. There is exhilaration and release, compassion and sharing, intensities of grief and explosions of rage that punctuate the dullness and "noise," the pollution and the seeming abandonment of the city's streets and its population. And once again, contradiction. As Tadiar so astutely points out, the writers of this period share a common skepticism regarding Martial Law's claims of exercising a transcendent power over people's lives. They varied, however, in their tactics for addressing such claims. Their approaches included for example, ironic commentaries and sardonic word play of the regime's slogans. Writers rummaged through traditional aesthetic forms and reshaped these to serve avowedly modern, anti-authoritarian aims. Each literary strategy presented limits as well as possibilities. In her masterful reading of a novella by Tony Perez, for example, Tadiar shows the pitfalls of a psychologizing approach that tacitly prescribes a normative "emancipated" and individuated gay subject over traditionally constituted homosexual subjectivities (*bakla).* Perez's story concerns the lives of male prostitutes prowling the newly built shopping malls for homosexual johns to make money with which to satisfy their desire for imported consumer goods. One day, they stumble into a Christian revival meeting and are drawn to the preachings of a white American evangelist. Seeking redemption, they renounce not only their prostituted lives but also denounce the *bakla* as the source of their oppression. This tale of "liberation" and conversion ends with the author's plea for replacing the "degrading" sexual and cultural proclivities of local homosexual practices in favor of a Westernized, emancipated gay individualism. Thus does the story ironically reveal the ethnocentric, racist and homophobic grounds on which a kind of middle class, white-identified gay subjectivity can be erected. Yet, in another short story by the same author, Tadiar points out how the painfully routinized life of a lowly xerox worker brings moments of intense caring for cast-off objects such as a torn poster advertising a fast food chain. There is in other words always a contrapuntal tendency nesting within every literary work. This is because literature does not so much mirror life as it extends and intensifies modes of being otherwise ignored, marginalized and thrown away by dominant forms of existence.

The notion of literature as that which does not reflect life but instead preserves it from forgetting and destruction, extending and amplifying it, partaking in its production and therefore furnishing its readers and writers with a technology of social memory: such is a key insight proffered by Tadiar. For her, following the line of argument laid out by such thinkers as Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Giles Deleuze and Antonio Negri, the literary is that which insures not only the survival of life as particular living labor; it also provides assurances of an afterlife as the "sur" in "survival" already intimates. She refers to these matters of life and afterlife in literature as "historical experience." One of the most compelling contributions of this intensely practical (which is to say densely theoretical) book is its cultivation of the notion of "experience" as particular

living labor that is always doubly productive. On the one hand, it constructs and registers the conditions of oppression characteristic of modernity; on the other hand, it is also that which exceeds and thereby potentially subverts such conditions. Experience, to the extent that it is productive of agency, insures us against the end of history, as well as against the ends of those who seek to end historical change. In the last two chapters of her book, Tadiar shows the utility of this notion of experience as the power of producing history (and not simply as prostituted labor producing surplus value) in her analysis of revolutionary writings.

In looking at the revolutionary writings of Emmanuel Lacaba, Kris Montanez, Communist Party founder Jose Maria Sison, Felipe Granrojo and Ruth Firmeza, among others, Tadiar demonstrates how writing at its most radical becomes indistinguishable from what it writes about. The literature of the revolutionary movement, whose tortured history and shifting ideological tendencies Tadiar traces, yields modes of writing that are styled as instruments for uprising. Dissent here is ordered towards violent transformation meant to overturn the violent impositions of an oppressive order. Literature as a weapon of the revolution calls for a literary criticism that safeguards and furthers the aims of the movement. When it is successful, Tadiar points out, revolutionary writing not only envisions but effectively enacts a startling continuity among acts of literature, literary criticism, social critique, and everyday life. Unlike bourgeois notions that insist on the separation of literature from life, the policing of writing by criticism, and the reification of experience through its generic representations, the revolutionary texts Tadiar examines are sustained by other cultural logics and historical imperatives. Such literature emerges not only from the mandate to furnish weapons for the struggle emanating from the Party's ideologues. It is also wedded to more traditional modes of imagination ranging from the Catholic passion play, the colonial and nationalist melodramas, and indigenous forms of story telling. The latter are reshaped not only in response to the conditions confronting guerilla fighters. They are also deployed in producing the tactical exigencies and modalities of the fighters' lives. In this way, revolutionary writing occasions the emergence of those "pluri-subjects" that Tadiar had written about in the earlier chapters. Rather than stand out as authors of their own lives, as sovereign individuals vested with the social and economic capital with which to distinguish themselves from the masses, the characters in revolutionary texts seek to become one with the masses. This becoming one with the masses is in fact a becoming many, a dissolution of the notion of self-possessed individualism in favor of a self possessed by the movement of a multitude. Hence the common term of fighters for addressing one another, "kasama" (being as being with an other, as a being together with others), is also a term for denoting the filiation and relationality among things and people. The individual as "kasama" is one who is known and knows him or herself in terms of a seething, moving collectivity. Here, Tadiar illuminates this new kind of revolutionary subjectivity by situating it away

from the dialectics of identity and difference and towards the experience of finitude and infinity. The dialectics of identity and difference produce subjects who struggle for recognition and thereby find themselves in a hierarchical relationship, dominating and subordinating one another, while beholden to a transcendent source that underwrites their subjugation. By contrast, the experience of finitude and infinity that Tadiar sees working in revolutionary texts constitutes subjects as open ended rather than agonistic. They exist as beings proximate to rather than identical with one another. The revolutionary subject in literature is thus a part-subject integral to ever expanding "assemblages" of other part subjects.

Yet, revolutionary texts are also freighted with all sorts of contradictions. As Tadiar astutely points out, the Party's attempt to order literary expression as continuous with the everyday life of struggle at times recreate the very figures and conditions of oppression such a struggle had sought to overthrow. Indeed, the desire for the masses on the part of student activists and Party members of petty bourgeois origins often enough effect the instrumentalization of the "people." The masses as instruments for alleviating and overcoming the alienation of the bourgeois subject turned revolutionary is a common enough trope in revolutionary writing. In the Philippine case, the masses are at times idealized even as they are rendered silent. The real heroes are the fighters who support, live with, and die for the masses even as they are wholly dependent on the labor of the masses to sustain their movement. In a series of astute critiques of this tendency in revolutionary writing, Tadiar points out the ways by which even the most radical pieces of writing rely on the most conventional of tropes. For example, they associate the masses with the land, and both with a kind of feminine body on which to erect the heroic, sympathetic and masculine figure of the fighter. The militarization of the struggle places fighters in direct contact with the soldiers of the state. It is not surprising then that both in literature as well as in historical fact, the New People's Army would at times come to mimic the behavior of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, even if revolutionary writing systematically seeks to disavow such an identification. The violence of the revolution is overwhelming and contagious, as seen in the disastrous campaign to rid the movement of suspected counter-agents that resulted in mass killings in the 1990s. In order to contain what it regards as "irrational", "atavistic" and "feudal" practices, the Party has sought to privilege a masculinized and rational subject devoted to the masses yet acting to domesticate their practices and desires. The *literature* of the movement, however, continues, like the movement itself, to produce characters and stories that foreground experiences in excess of this normative revolutionary subjectivity. It is as if there is not one revolution, but several going on at the same time; not one radical project of transformation, but many, whose horizons are far from foreclosed. Thus does literature show the movement to be fissured. On the one hand, it invests in the messianicity of the masses–the masses as embodying the very movement of their emancipation

located at some imminent future; on the other, it seeks to sit in judgement of the masses, domesticating its excesses and uplifting it from its backwardness. Fetishized, the masses become the objects of desire constitutive of the revolutionary subject. Rather than become one with the masses, the fighter here becomes an agent of the Party, seeking instead to be the univocal representative of the very multitude on which it depends.

Related to but distinct from Paul Kramer's *The Blood of Government*, Neferti Tadiar's engagement with the imperialism of globalization moves away from a focus on governing elites to the point of view of those who produce globalization's conditions of possibility: living labor. Where Kramer's work is informed by Anglo-American cultural studies and the more progressive strains of US social history, Tadiar's book comes across as an assemblage of theoretical practices that include post-structuralist Marxism, existential phenomenology, feminist epistemologies and postcolonialism. Kramer excels at weaving together Spanish and US sources, comparing each other's colonial projects with those of other European, especially British, powers to deflate American imperial exceptionalism. Tadiar picks up where Kramer leaves off. In her close readings of literary texts, she exemplifies an ethical concern for the vernacular particularities of Filipino experiences (where her incisive translation of Tagalog texts, for instance, extends and safeguards the survival of these texts for new, ever emergent readership). In Kramer's book, we see new ways of articulating areas of historical inquiry—the imperial and the national, colonialism and immigration, war and racial formation, American, Asian and Asian-American histories—in ways that are as inventive as they are compelling. In Tadiar, we read highly textured and lyrical evocations of the affective economies of various texts, as the author dwells in the very excesses she finds thematized in those things that "fall away." Both books thus mark critically important advances not only in Philippine Studies in the US, but of American Studies in the age of imperial globalization.

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FORUM KRITIKA

THE NEW CHALLENGE OF THE MOTHER TONGUES: THE FUTURE OF PHILIPPINE POSTCOLONIAL LANGUAGE POLITICS

T. Ruanni F. Tupas
National University of Singapore
elcttr@nus.edu.sg

Abstract
For much of postcolonial language politics around the world, the fight has largely been between a foreign (read: colonial) language and (a) dominant local language(s). This is true in the Philippines where the debates have focused on English and Filipino, the Tagalog-based national language. In recent years, however, the mother tongues have posed a challenge to the ideological structure of the debates. Although local languages have long been acknowledged as positively contributing to the enhancement of learning in school, they have been co-opted mostly as a nationalist argument against English, American (neo)colonialism and imperialist globalization. The current initiatives to establish mother tongue-based education reconfigure the terms of engagement in Philippine postcolonial language politics: it must account for the fact that the mother tongues could be the rightful media of instruction. In the process, it must tease out issues concerning the decoupling of Filipino as the national language and Filipino as a/the medium of instruction, and deal with the politics of inclusion and exclusion in "bilingual" and "multilingual"' education. Nevertheless, this paper ends with a general critique of language debates in the country, arguing that "content" has been sidelined in much of the discussion. The future of postcolonial language politics in the Philippines should not be about language per se, but about how the entanglements of language with the larger (neo)colonial infrastructures of education where medium, substance and structures are needed to advance the nationalist imagining of the multilingual nation.

Keywords
Alternative Learning System (ALS), Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction (MLE), national language, politics of education

About the author
T. Ruanni F. Tupas is Senior Lecturer at the Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore, and the 2009 Andrew Gonzalez Distinguished Professorial Chair Holder in Linguistics and Language Education awarded by the Linguistic Society of the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

If one is to take stock of work done in postcolonial language politics around the world (e.g., debates, policy-making practices, research), the problem has been expressed essentially in terms of the tension between imperialist languages and local languages (Watson; Clayton; Ramanathan).

More often than not, the question has either been how to de-center the colonial/imperial languages from social life or how to slowly (re)introduce the mother tongues into the centers of power in society such as political governance and the educational system.

In this paper, the role of mother tongues in Philippine postcolonial language politics will be explored. Specifically, it will trace the reconfiguring of language politics in the country in recent years through an investigation of a range of mother tongue initiatives and discourses from national-level policy debates to grassroots projects around the country. The paper will show that, while the argument for mother tongues in education and social development is definitely not new, recent multi-sectoral, multi-level work in the area has opened up possibilities of a different discursive configuration of language politics in the country. These are the displacement of English and Filipino as media of instruction, the decoupling of Filipino as national language and as medium of instruction, and the re-mapping of the "nation" through the supposedly more inclusive mother tongues. The paper, however, also argues that postcolonial language politics in the Philippines should not be about language per se, but about the entanglements of language with the larger (neo)colonial infrastructures of education where medium, substance and structures are needed to advance the nationalist imagining of the multilingual nation.

MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION AROUND THE WORLD

The literature on the use of the mother tongues or the first languages of learners has been overwhelmingly positive (Thomas). The Global Monitoring Report of UNESCO (Education for All) summarizes the rich field thus far:

> The choice of the language of instruction used in school is of utmost importance. Initial instruction in the learner's first language improves learning outcomes and reduces subsequent grade repetition and dropout rates. (17)

However, this seemingly unproblematic fact about mother tongues becomes a highly politicized argument if it is located in specific sociopolitical contexts. Indeed, the role of mother tongues in society and education depends on whose society and education we are talking about. Benson, for example, notes that in many ex-British colonies mother tongue schooling has been a historical by-product of separate and unequal development, for example the institutionalization of Bantu education during the apartheid era of South Africa, although pedagogical strategies emerging from this discriminatory practice have become potential agents of change towards equitable education. Similarly, mother tongues have served as compensatory tools to reverse the

trend of illiteracy and high school dropout rates in many marginalized communities and countries around the world, for example in Guatemala where only less than half of its rural Maya language-speaking population is enrolled in school and further half drops out after first grade.

Moreover, still according to Benson, mother tongues have also served as representations of new political ideologies of many societies around the world, for example the explicit political valuing of pluralism in the constitutions of Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia; while clearly educational development objectives drive the institutionalization of mother tongue instruction such as the ones used in Mozambique, Nigeria, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea.

The point here is that, while mother tongue instruction has proved to be pedagogically sound, its valuing differs across communities and societies. The many layers of ideology and politics which undergird it reveal, in particular, a specific politics of language and education and, in general, a sociopolitical landscape characterized by tension between inclusionary and exclusionary policies. Mother tongue instruction does not and cannot happen in a vacuum; even as it argues for its superiority over other modes of instruction, it is enmeshed in many other social issues. Unpacking these issues surrounding mother tongue instruction can reveal rich information about postcolonial language politics in many societies today.

MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Recent initiatives on mother tongues revolve around *Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education* or MLE. It was institutionalized on July 14, 2009 through Order No. 74 of the Department of Education (DepEd), therefore it is believed to have supplanted the country's bilingual education policy (English and Filipino as media of instruction) which has been in place for close to three decades now. The difference between MLE and bilingual policy can be understood essentially in terms of which languages should be the media of instruction. Philippine bilingual education requires English and Filipino, the national language, as media of instruction depending on which subjects are being taught (see Gonzalez; Luzares). MLE, on the other hand, pushes for the mother tongues of students as media of instruction in all subjects. Currently, however, the debates seem to be limited to MLE and bilingual policy issues in the primary grades.

Order No. 74 is based explicitly on assumptions about the "superiority" of the use of mother tongues in education based on successful projects and empirical research which include the Lingua Franca Project of DepEd begun in 1999, an immediate precursor of MLE; the longitudinal study of the Lubuagan Experiment (Walter and Dekker; Dekker and Young) which showed that the educational performance of Primary 1-3 pupils taught in the local language outperformed those taught in English; and the DepEd study (e.g., Lim and Giron) which affirmed international studies

showing that pupils taught mathematics in their mother tongues performed relatively well in international tests.

Support for MLE (though limited to primary education as earlier mentioned) has come from a diverse range of sectors in Philippine society, creating an increasingly coalescing network of initiatives and alliances working for various levels of advocacy for mother tongue instruction, such as macrosystem values, policies and funding, research, and training and resources (Ball). There is currently a pending bill in congress supporting the vision of MLE. It is entitled "The Multilingual Education and Literacy Act of 2008" filed by Valenzuela Representative Magtanggol Gunigundo founded on similar premises as the DepEd Order No. 74. An opposing bill, also known as House Bill 4701 or the "Gullas Bill" (after its main sponsor Rep. Eduardo Gullas of the First District of Cebu), filed in 2006 but which has evolved into several versions through the years, attempts to re-instate the use of English as the sole medium of instruction in all levels of the educational system. This English-only bill currently has the support of the large majority of the members of the House of Representatives. The opposing bills (English versus the mother tongues as medium of instruction) deviate from past frames of debates in Philippine Congress during which the fight was mainly between English and Filipino.

Similarly based on the same assumptions about the superiority of mother tongues in the facilitation of effective learning in schools, several individuals, government agencies, and professional organizations have also taken an unwavering stand in favor of MLE. These include the Philippine Business for Education, Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines. But what is perhaps more meaningful are the many regional, provincial and school-based initiatives to implement the MLE. These include the National Training of Trainors (TOT) spearheaded by the Department of Education, the formation of new coalitions such as Akademiyang Bisaya Inc (ABI), and the holding of significant conferences such as the 1st Philippine Conference-Workshop on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education sponsored by the 170+ Talaytayan MLE Consortium in Cagayan de Oro City and the MLE-themed Annual Conference and General Assembly of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines in Metro Manila, both in 2010.

It must be highlighted, however, that the MLE framework is really not new (see UNESCO *The Use of Vernacular Language*). As will be discussed in a section below, mother tongue instruction has been vigorously pursued in non-formal/indigenous/minority schools in the country. The mother tongues in these schools have not only served as tools for effective learning, but also as channels for the expression and affirmation of local cultures and identities. These uses of the mother tongues have rarely been questioned because of possibly at least two reasons. The first is that the MLE framework in these places has usually been a part of a larger framework of social and community development where the mother tongues are the "natural": choice; the second is that it has been used

"outside" the mainstream education system where the bilingual education policy was put in place (Canieso-Doronila "The Emergence of Schools"; Tupas "Kalayagan"; Dekker and Young).

THE MOTHER TONGUE ARGUMENT THEN AND NOW

The "mother tongue argument" simply means the argument that mother tongues facilitate learning more effectively than non-local media of instruction based on empirical research (Cummins "Bilingual"; "Language"). This argument, however, takes on highly political and ideological dimensions if contextualized in specific situations and periods of time.

For example, the mother tongue argument in the Philippines has largely been used as part of the political ammunition against so-called imperialist English in Philippine classrooms (Tupas "Bourdieu") which, thus, must be replaced with Filipino, the national language. In other words, Filipino was packaged as "the mother tongue" which was superior to English, "the second language" (Fuentes and Mojica 54) in terms of facilitating better learning outcomes in school. Moreover, this local national language as "mother tongue" also represented the values, cultures, and dreams of the Filipino people, a role which English, being a foreign and colonial language, presumably could not assume (Tupas "Back to Class"). In short, historically the national language as mother tongue was used as one argument for the re-examination of the dominant role of English in "mainstream" Philippine education and society, especially in the light of the decolonizing and anti-elite agenda of different sectors in the country (Tollefson; R. Constantino) and the heightening of liberalizing infrastructures of neocolonialist globalization within which English serves as the major lingua franca (Ordoñez).

In the process, this argument provided a broad framework for the use of Filipino, the national language, as medium of instruction leading to the institutionalization of bilingual education in the early 1970s where English and Filipino would be used as media of instruction in particular subjects in school (Luzares; Gonzalez). Therefore, the terms of engagement in postcolonial language politics meant that the fight would be between English and P/Filipino, with the latter forming "part of the cultural project on the development of a nationalist consciousness" (Sugbo 5). Meanwhile, the rest of the mother tongues were "being completely lost from sight" (Smolicz 98) relegated to secondary roles to play in literacy development and in the imagining of the nation; or, were left to be used in MLE-based schools for marginalized communities such as minority ethno-linguistic groups (Dekker and Young; Hohulin).

Recent MLE-related articulations also draw on the effectiveness of mother tongue instruction. However, instead of arguing for the use of Filipino, the national language, as a/the medium of instruction by virtue of it being a mother tongue, these articulations push the mother tongue

argument further by arguing that, if indeed mother tongues are more effective tools of learning, then they should be the media of instruction, not English and/or Filipino. If Tagalog-based Filipino happens to be the mother tongue of a particular community of students, it should also be the medium of instruction for this group of students. It is this push for mother tongues as languages of education which has posed a new challenge to existing configurations of issues related to language politics in the country.

THE NEW CHALLENGE OF MOTHER TONGUES

Thus, while there is indeed nothing new with the assumptions of recent MLE work which argue that empirical research since the 1950s has consistently affirmed the positive contributions of mother tongues to learning in Philippine classrooms (see UNESCO), the same argument used earlier to rally support for the national language as medium of instruction is now deployed more vigorously to argue for the use of the mother tongues as media of instruction. The argument draws on the fact that Filipino is not the mother tongue of most Filipinos, thus its use as medium of instruction (together with English) still marginalizes those who do not speak it as their first language as has, in fact, been empirically proven in research. If the superiority of the mother tongues in education is brought to its logical conclusion, then indeed the first or local languages of communities, provinces and regions should be the languages of instruction.

The Displacement of English and Filipino as Media of Instruction

Perhaps the most obvious implication here is the displacement of English and Filipino as media of instruction at least in primary schools. This is one reason why DepEd Order No. 74 is believed to have both supplanted the official bilingual education policy of the country which has been in place for almost three decades now, and ushered in the possibility of a multilingual education in the Philippines. Whether MLE succeeds in the end still remains to be seen because of the many challenges it must hurdle (Nolasco), but one factor that needs to be recognized is that MLE claims to be additive (as opposed to subtractive) in its approach to multilingual education. That is, MLE does not treat multilingualism as a problem to be solved (Cummins "Bilingual"; "Language") but as a resource which can be tapped into in educating Filipino pupils.

Thus, while English and Filipino are displaced as media of instruction, they remain important languages that must be taught as subjects in school. In its most idealistic account, MLE envisions the flourishing of all languages in society through their promotion in school both as media of instruction and as subjects to be learned. MLE claims, for example, that its framework allows for a

more efficient learning of English and Filipino as subjects in school. The Lubuagan experiment has shown that primary pupils taught English through the mother tongue performed better in official government tests (in English) than those who were taught English through English. Similarly, Nolasco reiterates the importance of teaching Filipino as the national language through the mother tongues of pupils across the country. Thus, MLE claims that its framework not only supports the learning of both English and Filipino, but more importantly it can lead to more improved and successful learning of both languages. It only displaces these languages as media of instruction in primary grades but not as important languages of education and society.

The Decoupling of Filipino as National Language and as Medium of Instruction

A less obvious and less discussed implication of MLE is the decoupling of the twin issues of national language and medium of instruction. The status of Filipino as the national language has changed through the years, especially because its role as the country's *inter*-national lingua franca is increasingly becoming an undeniable fact to many, if not most Filipinos. Despite high-profile opposition to it even in recent years, the sentiment on the ground seems to have shifted in favor of the acceptance of Tagalog-based Filipino as the country's national language (Espiritu; Kobari). This shift could also relate to the fact that Filipino is widely used as the language of communication among Filipinos in the country and abroad.

A bigger problem, however, emerges if this "fact" about Filipino as the local lingua franca of the nation is used to argue for its (continuing) institutionalization as medium of instruction. If the mother tongues under the MLE framework are to serve as media of instruction because of the now familiar argument about their superiority in the facilitation of learning, then Filipino should cease to be a medium of instruction except in places where it is the mother tongue of majority of learners. MLE, therefore, de-links the national language question from the issue of medium of instruction. Filipino as the national language need not be a/the medium of instruction; to put it in another way, Filipino can still remain the national language even if it ceases to be a medium of instruction.

The Re-Mapping of the Nation through the Mother Tongues

The third implication of MLE is the possibility of re-mapping the nation through mother tongue instruction. But to fully understand this point, we need to locate multilingual education within the broader politics of education in the country.

First, aside from the fact that the essential argument upon which MLE is based is not really new, its implementation is also not novel. While the "bilingual debate" (between English and

Filipino) was raging on for decades, and while part of Filipino's legitimacy as national language and medium of instruction was based on the mother tongue argument as discussed above, the MLE framework had actually been put in place in many non-formal/indigenous/minority primary schools across the country (Dekker and Young; Hohulin). Therefore, what the recent DepEd Order No. 76 attempts to accomplish is to "mainstream" mother tongue instruction in formal, arguably non-marginalized, schools across the country where bilingual education has been the dominant framework.

A specific case in point is the institutionalization of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Curriculum for Indigenous Peoples (IPs) Education through DepEd Order No. 101 issued on September 14, 2010. This laudable effort to develop a curriculum to respond to the needs of indigenous communities began in 2006 and was prepared with the help of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and various indigenous cultural communities (ICCs). The learning competencies are based on the nationwide ALS curriculum, but the content is drawn from the Indigenous Peoples Right Act of 1997 which means that the content should be responsive to the specific needs and desires of indigenous communities and which can be modified further as it is used by different groups of IPs.

A key feature of the ALS curriculum – which differentiates it from the formal bilingual education curriculum – is the multilingual support provided by learning resources which are written in the mother tongues. The curriculum, in other words is framed within an MLE approach to education where the mother tongues, not English and Filipino, are the media of instruction through which identities are created and/or sustained. Indeed, while this "may be a positive development" (Sayed 25), the ALS curriculum is by itself not part of formal bilingual education and mainstreaming it into formal education is very difficult because of lack of certification and equivalency. "The danger," continues Sayed, "is that the ALS is seen as a second-best separate education track for indigenous peoples" (25).

Thus, while national imagining was envisioned by bilingual education through the use of the national language as medium of instruction to foster national unity and develop a sense of national consciousness (Sibayan and Gonzalez), people from minority or indigenous communities were, and perhaps still are, not part of this collective imagining. In a sense, many schools in marginalized minority communities have got it "right" through the mother tongue argument which has also been fundamentally espoused by bilingual education in its accommodation of Filipino as a medium of instruction. Yet in the process of getting it "right," the mother tongues have also been marginalized by bilingual education. In reality, then, there have in fact been two strands of education in the country for at least three decades now – the "mainstream" bilingual strand and the "non-mainstream" multilingual strand.

The issue in this case is not simply the fundamental mother tongue argument (which almost everyone does not seem to question), but the possibility of mainstreaming MLE in so-called formal education platforms. While the resistance is more explicitly about the need to sustain the efforts of the national language project in fostering national unity and national consciousness among Filipinos, the MLE challenge to bilingual education surfaces the covert ideological boundaries between those who are included and excluded in the collective imagining of the nation.

THE FUTURE DEBATES

Indeed, the new challenge of mother tongues requires new terms of engagement in postcolonial language politics in the country. As discussed in the earlier section, debates on language must account for the fact that the mother tongues could be the rightful media of instruction if the argument on their superiority in the facilitation of learning is pushed to its logical conclusion (Smolicz). In the process, the debates should attempt to tease out issues concerning Filipino as the national language and Filipino as a/the medium of instruction; can we speak of Filipino as the national language without necessarily speaking of it as a language of instruction? Moreover, it is also imperative for postcolonial language debates to deal with the politics of inclusion and exclusion in Philippine education. Who can imagine the nation through bilingual or multilingual education? And to widen the field of inquiry even further, does imagining through the mother tongues translate to puncturing (or perhaps broadening of) the social base of the (re) production of knowledge and power in country, usually dominated by those who are fluent in both Filipino and English? Can this begin with assertive or disruptive voices made audible through the mother tongues? (See Ileto; Rafael; Villareal.)

Thus, put together, how can a nationalist language argument, firmly grounded on the need for a national language to foster a national unity and a collective imagining of the nation, grapple with this challenge of the mother tongues? Can the mother tongues serve as the bulwark of nationalist ideals, capable of uniting the nation through a more inclusive politics of education? After all, the "telling and the re-telling of the narratives of demons and saviours of a people," dominant themes in Hiligaynon literature, is also "to engage in imagining the nation" (Villareal 65). Perhaps then even a more fundamental question should be this: do we need a national language?

There are, however, more questions that need to be asked, the most critical of which is perhaps the issue of content in Philippine education. If we scrutinize the network of issues concerning bilingual and multilingual education in the country, much discussion revolves around the (re)placement and (dis)placement of languages in schools as part of the country's struggle with its (neo)colonial legacies. This does not mean that the role of content has not been part of the

discussion; in the early 1960s and 1970s, the "mis-education" of the Filipino people (R. Constantino) was at the core of the nationalist argument against English and, in a more general sense, against the endemic colonial trappings of Philippine society. The bilingual education policy of 1974 thus became the first formal education platform to accommodate a local language, P/Filipino, as a medium of instruction, together with English, as a political solution to the enduring problem of (neo)colonialism in the country. Yet, the same bilingual education infrastructure was used by the Marcos dictatorship to consolidate its power through the propagation of its myths and through the institutionalization of neoliberal "manpower" programs put in place by its acquiescence to dictates of US-led global economic institutions such as the World Bank (Bello, Kinley, and Elinson; Schirmer and Shalom).

Similarly, at the same time when bilingual education was re-affirmed and Filipino was installed as the national language in the post-Marcos 1987 Constitution, Philippine education continued to be plagued by imperialist content. In a pioneering research, Canieso-Doronilla (*The Limits of Education Change* 74) found among pupil-subjects of her study an absence of ethnocentric affiliation with Filipino nationality, pride of country, support of nationalism before internationalism/globalism, and commitment to decolonization and national self-reliance. Canieso-Doronilla concludes that it "is fair to say that the young respondents have as yet no conception of what it means to be a Filipino, identifying instead with the characteristics and interests of other nationalities, particularly American" (74) (see also Mulder; L. Constantino). In short, postcolonial language politics must take into greater consideration the role of content in Philippine education.

CONCLUSION

As late as 2003 during which former President Gloria Arroyo issued a memorandum that would put English back as the "sole" medium of instruction in the country, the issues raised did not substantially advance the ideological structure of the debates. Those in favor of English as the main language of instruction justified it on grounds that English is the language of globalization, social mobility and global competitiveness; those against it (thus in favor of the "bilingual" status quo) argued that Filipino, the mother tongue and the national language, would be more effective in facilitating learning among pupils and in fostering national unity and a nationalist consciousness. The charge against Filipino came from "non-Tagalog" critics who claimed that Filipino is divisive and is indicative of Tagalog imperialism. The ideological genealogies of these arguments can be traced back to the linguistic battles of the 1930s, early 1970s, and mid 1980s during which questions about national language and medium of instruction framed the debates. In all of these, the "mother tongue" argument was central to many positions.

The recent challenge of the mother tongues, however, substantially reconfigures the terms of engagement in postcolonial language politics. *Who* can imagine the nation and *how* can this be done through bilingual (English and Filipino, the national language) or multilingual education (MLE)? Crucially, it is also important not to forget the polemics of content vis-à-vis the role of language in the reconfiguration of such politics. It should likewise account for *what* can be imagined in the unrelenting postcolonial project of (re)making the Philippine nation. The medium and substance of nationalism should animate the future of postcolonial language politics in the country.

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FORUM KRITIKA

DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGES: ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES, CARLOS BULOSAN, AND INSURGENT FILIPINO DIASPORIC IMAGINATION

Jeffrey Arellano Cabusao
Bryant University
jcabusao@bryant.edu
jeff.cabusao@gmail.com

Abstract
The current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have compelled interdisciplinary scholars to seek new methods of engaging US Empire. This essay will attempt to outline an emerging critique-al strand of Filipino Cultural Studies that challenges the limitations of the "cultural turn" through its connection to the larger goal of creating movements for social justice. Over the past few years, new forms of Filipino American scholarship have advanced a unique tradition of class analysis developed by earlier generations of Filipino cultural workers and activists. In addition to this new development, Filipino American cultural workers have created politically conscious art through their participation in social justice movements. I argue that this new form of Filipino Cultural Studies – one that is not strictly ensconced in the academy – might provide useful and timely suggestions for alternative and transformative ways of knowing and being.

Keywords
Filipino American public intellectuals, social activism

About the author
Jeffrey Arellano Cabusao is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Bryant University. He received his BA in English and Cross-Cultural Ethnic Studies from Oberlin College, his MA in Asian American Studies from UCLA, and his PhD in English from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. During the 2006-2007 academic year, he was a Mellon Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in the Department of English at Kalamazoo College. His teaching and research focus on US Ethnic Studies (specifically comparative approaches to Asian American and African American Studies), Cultural Studies (literary and cultural theory, critical pedagogies), and Women's Studies (feminist movement and social change). He's particularly interested in the relationship between interdisciplinary formations, cultural production, and social justice movements in the United States. Current research projects explore how the work of Filipino American author and activist Carlos Bulosan and the emerging field of Filipino American Studies might offer new ways of developing racial literacy in a "post-racial" United States.

During my undergraduate years at Oberlin College in the 1990s, I found myself involved in passionate discussions with classmates about the function of intellectuals in society. At that time we were involved in a national student movement to establish Asian American and US Ethnic Studies programs in colleges and universities east of California. This involved the occupation of buildings

and the formation of teach-ins and hunger strikes. Our student organizing on the Oberlin campus provided hard-won opportunities to invite renowned intellectuals, academics, and activists to our campus for discussion: Ronald Takaki, Cornel West, Angela Davis, Delia Aguilar, Yuri Kochiyama, E. San Juan, Jr., Ward Churchill, Elaine Brown, Bhairavi Desai, Edward Said, Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Urvashi Vaid, Karin Aguilar-San Juan, and bell hooks (*On Strike!*; Kochiyama appendix 18; Cabusao "The Social Responsibility"). Within and outside of the classroom, we engaged a variety of writers who provided different approaches to examining the function of race in US society from Toni Morrison to Carlos Bulosan. Some of us engaged the writings of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha in search of theoretical tools to help us make sense of the world. A running joke among student activists who were assigned Homi Bhabha was: "Yeah, Homi Bhabha is his name. But is Homi *really* your homey?" This kind of response to Bhabha's writing was symptomatic of a noticeable gap—within some forms of postcolonial scholarship—between theoretical articulations of "speechless" subalterns and the harsh material realities of US racialized Others coming to terms with the Winter of Civil Rights in an age of neoliberal globalization: corporate attack on worker's rights, the intensification of racialized poverty across the nation, and a rollback on Affirmative Action programs (Omatsu; Drucker; Duggan; Wolff).

Now as a teacher, I've become very aware of the contradictions of knowledge production within the contemporary academy. Oftentimes an institution's commitment to socially engaged and innovative intellectual production (especially in the humanities) is at odds with its commitment to its financial well being, especially at this time of severe financial crisis with nearly twenty percent unemployed in the United States ("A Superpower in Decline"; O'Hara; Chapman and Kelderman). A variety of institutions are now in the process of eliminating their liberal arts programs or redefining liberal arts to include some form of professional training as a way to attract more students who are interested in programs that will eventually pay off with a job after graduation (McSpadden). What this process of redefinition means is that liberal arts are to be restructured within the context of job training. Although I understand the circumstances (the extreme pressure placed on young people who must grapple with the increasing costs of a college education), I can't help but feel alarmed at the ways in which students are increasingly positioned as consumers instead of producers of knowledge. Faculty members themselves become commodified and the knowledges they produce reified. Today, graduate education in the humanities is also in the process of rethinking and "re-branding" itself for the 21st century ("Graduate Humanities Education").

The combination of a deep financial crisis, the destruction and privatization of public education, the emergence of a consumer model of higher education in the age of neoliberal globalization, and the absence of sustained mass movements for social change has created the

context for what US cultural critic Lewis Gordon calls the "market colonization of intellectuals." What Gordon means is that academics are trained – pressured – to "align the university with the sociology and norms of the market." The privatization of the academy and the subsequent rise of a managerial academic class have created the conditions within which academics produce their work. What Gordon means when he says that "[m]arket potentiality governs [what academics] produce" is that the view of what's possible—specifically the possibility of connecting academic inquiry with sustained public intellectual engagement—has become severely limited. According to Gordon, one consequence of the market colonization of the humanities is the privileging of form over content or the "appearance of education through textual familiarity" (technique or "textual marketability") over "research that challenges texts, produces new kinds, and may even transcend textual virtuosity" (innovative knowledge production). Another consequence is the silencing of a rich tradition of intellectual dissent that has informed the development of various interdisciplinary fields such as African American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Lesbian and Gay Studies, and Cultural Studies. Gordon cites several examples of engaged public intellectuals that might offer useful alternative narratives for developing a socially engaged humanities: W.E.B. DuBois, Anna Julia Cooper, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Gordon's critique, in many ways, builds upon the sentiments of French intellectual historian Francois Cusset who stated a few years ago in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that "one of the saddest things about the immediate post-9/11 climate in the United States' public space" was the fact that intellectuals, theorists and "campus radicals didn't have much to say about George W. Bush, Iraq, terror, national pride, and global democracy, apart from a distant feeling of horror and disarray." At this year's annual conference of the American Historical Association, a panel discussion was organized to address the silence of historians on the global "war on terror." Peter Schmidt at the *Chronicle* highlighted history professor Carolyn Eisenberg's comments at the event: "a great number of historians are profoundly at odds with the thrust of the 'war on terror' but their opposition 'has scarcely registered in the public debate – it is barely a peep."

When I think of hard-hitting public intellectuals who have critiqued the US war on Iraq, it's difficult for me to think of many coming from the contemporary academy. I think of investigative journalists like Naomi Klein, Chris Hedges, Amy Goodman, or progressive sportswriter David Zirin. There are, of course, those of an earlier generation like Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Terry Eagleton, and the late Howard Zinn. Promising developments exist among a few younger academics, which must be nurtured and sustained. Asian Americanist Vijay Prashad and political scientist Melissa Harris Lacewell in the United States and feminist philosopher Nina Power in the United Kingdom are examples of those who have combined innovative knowledge production with their engagement with traditions of intellectual dissent.

With regard to Filipino American public intellectuals, I'm hard-pressed to think of a handful. There are, of course, E. San Juan, Jr. and Delia Aguilar who continue to write, lecture, and mentor young people. But who are the public intellectuals among younger Filipinos? There is the conservative commentator Michelle Malkin. If we count Malkin, how about Manny Pacquiao? Or Oprah's favorite Filipina singer Charice Pempengco? I'm being a bit facetious here. To be sure, progressive minded Filipino intellectuals exist within the academy. My point is that we must be critical of the larger context within which a new generation of Asian Americanists and Filipino academics is conditioned to produce knowledge – a context that prevents progressive minded academics from developing and nurturing a collective approach to innovative intellectual and creative production that draws on traditions of intellectual dissent.

REFLECTIONS ON CARLOS BULOSAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES: INSTITUTIONALIZATION WITHIN THE ACADEMIC INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

One of our most prominent Filipino public intellectuals is Carlos Bulosan (1911-1956), a prolific writer of essays, poems, and fiction and a major figure of American, Asian American, and Philippine literary canons.[1] In this section, I'd like to explore a connection between the market colonization of Carlos Bulosan in the academy and the market colonization—or institutionalization of—Asian American Studies. Carlos Bulosan provides a point of departure into a brief examination of different methodologies of reading Filipino agency and subjectivity in Asian American Studies. I'll end by offering a few suggestions for engaging Bulosan as a model for producing decolonized intellectual work.

Through World War II, Bulosan worked on some of his most widely recognized works: *Laughter of My Father* (1944), a satirical indictment of Philippine class society, and *America is in the Heart* (1946), his classic "ethno-biographical" testament to the resourcefulness and militancy of the Philippine peasantry and Filipino workers. Bulosan occupied a prominent position on the US Cultural Left as well as in the popular imagination of the American public.[2] Though blacklisted in the United States and by CIA-supported Philippine President Magsaysay, Bulosan reaffirmed his political and artistic vision during the Cold War period. In 1949, he defended the rights of Filipino labor organizers charged for membership in the Communist Party, USA.[3] In 1952, Bulosan edited *the International Longshoreman's and Warehousemen's Union, Local 37 Yearbook* (Seattle), which includes a passionate call to release imprisoned Philippine-based poet/labor union leader Amado V. Hernandez. Around 1955, inspired by Luis Taruc's *Born of the People* (1953), Bulosan wrote *The Cry and the Dedication*, which dramatizes the anti-imperialist Huk peasant insurgency in the Philippines. It was posthumously published and edited by E. San Juan, Jr. in 1977 and 1995.[4]

Given Bulosan's rich history of involvement in working class struggles, I'm very concerned about the ways in which Bulosan has been read and remembered in the academy. Here I think of two literary anthologies that I've looked at for my courses in literature and Asian American Studies: Paul Lauter's *Heath Anthology of American Literature* (contemporary period from 1945 to the present) and Jessica Hagedorn's updated *Charlie Chan is Dead 2: At Home in the World*. In Lauter's 2010 edition, two chapters from part two of *America is in the Heart* are included. Bulosan is remembered primarily as an immigrant who, although subjected to multiple forms of racist violence, continues in his determination to make something of himself in America (the Asian American model minority in the making). While Lauter's selection introduces readers to the Filipino migrant experience in the United States (students are exposed to an inventory of racial and class inequalities from the perspective of the protagonist), Hagedorn's selected piece titled "Homecoming" commemorates Bulosan primarily as an exile yearning for home. The protagonist of "Homecoming" returns to the Philippines scarred and broken after years of brutal racist violence in the United States as a migrant worker.

Whether it's the postwar American literary canon or the post 9/11 Asian American literary canon, the figure of Bulosan as dissenting public intellectual is silenced either through the obscuring of the history of the US colonization of the Philippines (the conditions of possibility for the migration of Filipino workers and for the racialized exploitation of Filipinos in the United States) or the ahistorical framing and juxtaposing of Bulosan with contemporary Asian American writing that envisions empowerment through consumption and sexual desire/pleasure. I do, however, applaud Lauter and Hagedorn for including Bulosan in their anthologies. Their challenge of including Bulosan opens a space to consider larger challenges that confront all of us within American, Asian American, and Filipino/Philippine Studies: 1) the project of confronting and critiquing a history of US Empire (the Philippines was a colony of the United States beginning in 1899 and continues as a US neocolony); and 2) the project of exploring a history of Filipino intellectual dissent, progressive working class struggle, and sustained collective struggle for Philippine national sovereignty.

INTERROGATING THE CULTURALIZATION OF RESISTANCE

When I was assigned Hagedorn's anthology *Charlie Chan is Dead* (first edition) in an undergraduate Asian American literature course in the early 1990s, I was elated. I felt empowered because it spoke to my own experiences of marginalization as an Asian American/Filipino American college student who desired new ways of reading US literature and society. What's stunning about Hagedorn's collection is its representation of an extremely rich diversity of voices

(differences) within the Asian American literary community. While the collection was useful for my own process of identity formation and intellectual development, I soon yearned for other notions of empowerment (especially as the sounds of a youthful anti-globalization movement entered our classrooms)—an empowerment beyond affirmation of my multiple intersecting identities (race, class, gender, sexuality).

Hagedorn's approach to categorizing Asian American literature organized around the notion of "differences within" resonates with the theoretical assumptions of a key essay titled "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, and Multiplicity: Asian American Differences" (1991) by Asian American cultural theorist Lisa Lowe.[5] This pioneering essay in the field of Asian American Studies (one of the first in the 1990s to concretize a cultural materialist analysis of Asian American cultural production) "emphasizes the gender, class, and cultural differences within the Asian American community." Lowe challenges the essentialism of US racism that obscures the differences within the broad Asian American community and seeks to develop an understanding of how Asian American differences could be used to create new forms of pan-Asian ethnic solidarity in a post-Civil Rights era.[6]

A central concept for Lowe is material hybridity, which is an attempt to connect an analysis of culture with an analysis of capitalism. Material hybridity is the convergence of two processes. The "material" part of material hybridity highlights unequal social relations of power within capitalism. The "hybridity" part highlights strategies of "living, inventing, and reproducing different cultural alternatives." One example that Lowe uses to illustrate the idea of material hybridity is the "racial and linguistic mixings in the Philippines and among Filipinos in the United States," which function as the "material trace of the history of Spanish colonialism, US colonization, and US neocolonialism" (428). Lowe affirms the cultural (racial and linguistic) diversity (hybridity) within Philippine society and among Filipino Americans as that which "marks the history of survival within relationships of unequal power and domination." An affirmation, however, of cultural hybridity (difference) as a mode of survival (form of agency) within Philippine society and among Filipino Americans without an engagement with the history of subaltern struggles within the Philippines for national sovereignty inadvertently gives more power to colonialism in shaping Filipino identity and culture than it deserves. If Bulosan as dissenting public intellectual is forgotten under the sign of sexual pleasure in Hagedorn's anthology, the Filipino people's struggle for national sovereignty (as an alternative form of existence) is silenced (and deferred) under the sign of difference/cultural hybridity in Lowe's project.

According to feminist theorist Teresa Ebert, Lowe's material hybridity can be read as a form of discursive materialism "grafted onto deconstruction" (see also Mojab). What this means is that, given the theoretical underpinnings of "material hybridity" and deconstruction, the very system of

capitalism itself is reduced to a closed text within which a critique of its contradictions is produced. An immanent critique (a critique produced from within the closed confines of a text) can only destabilize and disrupt the dominant ideologies that give shape and form to a text; however, it can not create an alternative beyond the text.

The assumptions of Lowe's "material hybridity" are advanced in another key text in Asian American Studies by Yen Le Espiritu titled *Home Bound* (2003), a sociological study on the various ways in which Filipino Americans attempt to claim a home within a country that continues to sustain neocolonial relations with the Philippines. In her study, she challenges the dominant mode of knowledge production within immigration studies. This is one that is individualist and places the "immigration problem" onto immigrants themselves (6-7). In an attempt to produce a systemic critique of global capitalism, Espiritu develops the idea of a "critical transnational perspective." According to Espiritu, a "critical transnational perspective" focuses on "the global structures of inequality" that shape "Asian immigration and Asian American lives in the United States" (5). On one hand, Espiritu is concerned with the materiality of global capitalism and imperialism; on the other, she posits "immigration [as] a cultural system … that naturalizes unequal patterns of mobility and uneven integration into the nation" (208).

What's at issue here is that the "global structures of inequality" are themselves reduced to a closed cultural text within which everyday forms of survival of Filipino Americans in San Diego, California (creating communities, homes, and complex transnational identities within an inhospitable, racist environment) are read to deconstruct, destabilize, and denaturalize global capitalism and imperialism as totalizing forces on the lives of people of color.

> By living their lives across borders, Filipino immigrants, in effect, are challenging the nation-state's attempt to localize them; that is, to mold them into acceptable and "normal" subjects. As such, Filipino transnational activities must be understood in part as an act of resistance. (Espiritu 212)

In her admirable desire to resist positioning Filipinos as complete victims and to grant them some form of agency, Espiritu reads global capitalism through the lens of "scattered hegemonies," a network of power that is also culturalized—"modes of representation are themselves forms of power rather than mere reflections of power" (201). To be sure, hegemony is never totalizing; however, if power is diffuse and culturalized (discursive materialism), then resistance emerges along similar lines (destabilization from within): it's dispersed, scattershot, individualist, and within every existing interstices. In other words, everyday acts of getting by (survival) within global capitalism are read and affirmed as resistance.

Despite the culturally deterministic moments in her analysis, I appreciate Espiritu's effort to bring attention to the Filipino community in San Diego. One of the extremely useful aspects of Espiritu's text is its reminding us of the global context within which US racism functions. For example, the racialization of Filipinos is a process that is intertwined with the US colonial occupation of the Philippines. Also, I'd like to acknowledge Espiritu's opening a space to examine new forms of subject making among Filipino American youth and students in California.

In her final chapter, she interviews three young Filipino American women who, in the late 1990s, were radicalized by the Philippine Integration/Exposure Program "hosted by the Los Angeles-based League of Filipino Students" (218). Espiritu sheds light on the new forms of identity that these young women were able to create once exposed to the concrete conditions and various forms of activism in the Philippines: "the young women were most inspired and awed by the level of activism and political consciousness exhibited by the people and organizations in the Philippines" (220). Many young people who participate in the Integrate/Exposure Program hosted by the League of Filipino Students are able to work closely with social justice organizations in the Philippines committed to national sovereignty.

The information that Espiritu gathers about these women's experiences in the Philippine Integration/Exposure Program is extremely rich: working with indigenous organizations, urban workers, peasant farmers. What occurs, however, in her analysis is a privileging of the process of identity formation—specifically the formation of transnational identity—as a form of resistance within global capitalism. What's highlighted is the women's ability, upon returning to the United States from the Integrate/Exposure Program in the Philippines, to affirm their racialized and gendered identities ("to claim a 'sense of ownership' over one's Pinay identity") and to reconceptualize their sense of belonging to the United States and to the Philippines, both of which eventually lead all three to become committed to US-based social struggles for change. These developments are positioned as "new ways of living, seeing, and fighting … the tools of home making," while the question of Philippine self determination (as a key to imagining an alternative beyond the text, imagining home making beyond capitalism) is marginalized and deferred. To be fair, Espiritu provides detailed information about the vibrant connection between the Integrate/Exposure Program and the mass movement for Philippine national sovereignty. Unfortunately, this information is found in her endnotes to the chapter and not fully integrated into her analysis of how these young women are creating new forms of Pinay subjectivities (245-46). The US neocolonial subjugation and violent containment of the movement for Philippine sovereignty, which has intensified in our post 9/11 era, cannot be disconnected from Filipino Americans' yearning for identity, home, and belonging.

What's at stake in my critique here is the ability to understand the world that we inhabit so

that we can change and transform it – not just destabilize it from within with forms of discursive materialism. What's interesting to me is that the young Filipino American women who returned to the Philippines attempted to do what Bulosan did in his writings, which is to connect the struggles of oppressed people in the United States with subaltern struggles in the Philippines. This particular form of global cognitive mapping may help us come to grips with the contours of the contemporary Filipino diaspora.

The Philippines has a population of over 90 million attempting to survive within a society that's literally falling apart due to US military and economic intervention, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and various Structural Adjustment Programs (San Juan *On the Presence of Filipinos*; Aguilar "Class Considerations"). Over nine million Filipinos are scattered around the world as Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs). Approximately 70% are women. Each day an average of four Overseas Contract Workers, branded as "supermaids," return in coffins to an increasingly militarized Philippines that has witnessed, over the years, the return of US troops under the Visiting Forces Agreement and the intensification of the global "war on terrorism" (San Juan *On the Presence of Filipinos*; Aguilar "Class Considerations," "Imperialism"; *Modern Heroes*).[7] Massive abuses (from imprisonment to death) of progressive human rights activists from various sectors of Philippine society (youth and students, teachers, lawyers, clergy, indigenous communities, workers and peasants) occurred daily under the Arroyo administration (Macapagal). Since 2001 in the Philippines, over 1000 lives have been claimed by extrajudicial violence (KARAPATAN; People's IOM).[8] The situation has not improved under the new Aquino administration (Roxas).

On other side of the diaspora, we find that Filipino Americans live a contradictory existence as one of the largest Asian Pacific American groups; yet, their history, culture, and identities are rendered almost invisible. (Several semesters ago, one of my most intellectually curious students asked to meet with me. In the email message, I was asked two questions: What are your office hours? How do you identify in terms of race?) Filipino Americans, as ethnically indeterminate Others, are invisible on one hand, yet targeted by the state on the other: approximately 85,000 Filipinos have been racially profiled and targeted for deportation under the USA Patriot Act (San Juan *On the Presence of Filipinos*). In a corporatized, consumer culture, Filipino Americans have struggled to create a link between the formation of identity (politics of representation within the United States) and the formation of a genuinely independent Philippines (politics of redistribution within a global context).

FROM TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION TO GLOBAL FORMS OF RESISTANCE

I'd like to highlight a significant development among young Filipino American academics

and intellectuals, which opens a space for us to reflect upon ways of transforming academic scholarship into forms of intellectual dissent—of challenging the market colonization of the field by acknowledging the significance of collective forms of resistance. The Critical Filipina & Filipino Studies Collective (CFFSC), "a group of scholars and activists seeking to interrogate and challenge the legacies of Empire (US and Spanish Imperialisms) for past and present communities both in the Philippines and in the Filipino diaspora," was formed in California in response to the global "war on terror," specifically its consequences on the everyday lives of Filipinos in the United States and in the Philippines.[9] Members of the CFFSC have been involved in various campaigns to support Filipino immigrants targeted for deportation, Filipino American activists blacklisted by the US and Philippine governments, and campaigns to expose massive human rights abuses by the Philippine government.[10]

The CFFSC's critical analysis of the global "war on terror" challenges us to reflect upon how the legacy of US Empire gives shape to contemporary forms of domestic and international racism. Their work in the early and mid-2000s resonates with the ways in which scholars, artists, and intellectuals in other fields such as Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Critical Theory were challenging, at that time, the market colonization of intellectual production by questioning existing theoretical paradigms. African American feminist writer bell hooks and Chicana feminist artist Amalia Mesa-Bains in *Homegrown: Engaged Cultural Criticism* (2006) argue that the reality of post 9/11 forms of racism within the United States and its connection with the US occupation of Iraq "call into question all of our academic theories about postcoloniality" (132). Mesa-Bains states, "we're not 'over' colonialism. Just think about the undocumented workers who died on 9/11; their names were never added to any lists, and their families were never given any reparation" (hooks and Mesa-Bains 132). Literary theorist Terry Eagleton in *After Theory* (2003) questions how the institutionalization and professionalization of "theory" have led to the erasure of class analysis and the rise of forms of historical amnesia regarding the contributions of mass movements for social change in the Global North and South. In "Symptoms of Theory or Symptoms for Theory?" (2004), theorist Fredric Jameson pushes against the idea that we've reached the "end" of theory and argues for the necessity of developing theories that illuminate the process of creating collective forms of subjectivity.

In summer 2004, Robyn Rodriguez and Nerissa Balce, two members of the CFFSC, published an essay titled "American Insecurity and Radical Filipino Community Politics" in the *Peace Review*. This was one of the first essays produced by a younger generation of Filipino American scholars that pushed against the historical amnesia that informed dominant approaches (discursive materialism) in Asian American cultural studies by acknowledging the significance of collective forms of resistance and subject making. In addition to examining the everyday lived

experiences of Filipino Americans in a post 9/11 landscape (from Filipino airport screeners to the case of conscientious objector Stephen Funk), they highlight the ways in which Filipino American activists are able to connect the US occupation of Iraq with the long history of US-Philippines colonial and neocolonial relations.

Rodriguez and Balce document creative forms of anti-war protest and progressive Filipino community formations that enabled Filipino Americans to bridge their experiences of racial profiling with the political repression in the Philippines—from a vibrant "People's Choir" that performed songs/chants of global solidarity at multiple anti-war rallies in San Francisco to the development of Filipinos for Global Justice Not War Coalition, a broad network of Filipino "campus and community-based youth organizations, human rights organizations [supporting the rights of the people of the Philippines], immigrant worker organizations, and scholars' groups" (137). They argue that these progressive Filipino community formations build upon a legacy of struggle from an earlier generation of Filipino labor organizers in the United States that forged connections with movements in the Philippines. Rodriguez and Balce state,

> By the second half of the 1930s, as Filipino laborers were organizing farm workers strikes in California and across the United States, Filipino peasant farmers in Central Luzon organized chapters of the National Society of Peasants in the Philippines (Katipunang Pambansa ng mga Magsasaka sa Pilipinas), which staged farmers' strikes, pickets, rallies, and even armed uprisings in the Philippine countryside. (139)

Rodriguez and Balce interpret these forms of global cognitive mapping of two generations of Filipinos—the Manong generation of the 1930s and post 9/11 Filipino American activists—as transnational Filipino radicalism. Unlike Espiritu's "critical transnational perspective" that brackets the question of Philippine sovereignty in her theorization of Filipino American identity, Rodriguez and Balce see grassroots struggles for racial and economic justice in the United States and the struggle for Philippine national sovereignty as inextricably interconnected and central to the process of "becoming Filipino"—of creating forms of collective Filipino subjectivity.[11]

Dylan Rodriguez, another member of the CFFSC, published an essay titled "The Significance of 15 March 2005: On the Bagong Diwa Prison Massacre" in *Left Curve* (2005) that examines the case of twenty two Filipino Muslim prisoners who, as a response to their rebellion against inhuman treatment within the prison system, were murdered by the Philippine National Police "[a]ided by US-trained Philippine paramilitary and SWAT-style units" (20). Advancing the notion of transnational Filipino radicalism in Robyn Rodriguez and Nerissa Balce's essay, Dylan Rodriguez urges diasporic Filipinos to develop a "kinship of captivity" that will enable them to become

critical of the ways in which the US prison industrial complex, in its global expansion as part of the "war on terror" (Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo), has reemerged in new forms in the Philippines, a US neocolony, under the Arroyo administration. This transnational Filipino radicalism (Rodriguez's "kinship of captivity") can also be discerned in the popular culture of Filipino Americans. For example, Blue Scholars, a hip hop duo at the forefront of the underground Filipino American hip hop scene, have situated the everyday lived experiences of working class Filipino Americans within the context of the anti-war organizing efforts of Filipino American youth and students across the country. In the song "Back Home" (2007), they give voice to the experiences of Filipino and other working class communities that have sent their children to Iraq. Michael Viola's excellent essay "Filipino American Hip Hop and Class Consciousness: Renewing the Spirit of Carlos Bulosan" explores the ways in which other Filipino American hip hop artists such as Kiwi and Bambu not only advance this notion of transnational Filipino radicalism but also engage the specificity of Carlos Bulosan's unique tradition of Filipino intellectual dissent.[12]

TRANSFORMATIVE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION: LIBERATING BULOSAN AND SUSTAINING AN INSURGENT FILIPINO DIASPORIC IMAGINATION

The formation of the CFFSC is a significant development among Filipino American academics for its commitment to examining the formation of collective Filipino subjectivity as a process of struggle for Filipino self determination in the Philippines and throughout the diaspora. The CFFSC's interrogation of US Empire, specifically US-Philippines neocolonial relations, opens a space for reassessing Carlos Bulosan's work and life in ways that might be useful in challenging the market colonization of intellectual production that has become the hallmark of the contemporary academy. Here I'd like to highlight three dimensions of Bulosan's literary vision for further exploration in our work as teachers, scholars, and activists.

1) Bulosan's "Filipino subject-in- revolt": on race, class, and empire

If the figures of the assimilating immigrant or the homesick exile are privileged by Paul Lauter and Jessica Hagedorn's anthologies, it's the figure of the Filipino as subject-in-revolt that's central to Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*. E. San Juan, Jr. defines the Filipino as subject-in-revolt in the following passage from his essay "In Search of Filipino Writing: Reclaiming Whose 'America'?":

> Called "little brown brothers," barbaric "yellow bellies," "scarcely more than savages," and other derogatory epithets, Filipinos as subjects-in-revolt have refused

> to conform to the totalizing logic of white supremacy and the knowledge of "the Filipino" constructed by Orientalizing methods of American scholarship. Intractable and recalcitrant, Filipinos in the process of being subjugated have confounded US disciplinary regimes of knowledge production and surveillance. They have challenged the asymmetrical cartography of metropolis and colony, core and periphery, in the official world system. Interpellated within the boundaries of empire, Filipinos continue to bear the marks of three centuries of anticolonial insurgency. (443-44)

Bulosan's text resists a major convention of naturalism (where the protagonist is a mere victim of social forces) by bearing witness to the formation of a worker-peasant subjectivity critical of the unequal colonial relationship between the United States and the Philippines. In parts one and two of *America is in the Heart*, Allos is thrust into a "world of brutality and despair" and is in a "constant flight from fear" in the Philippines and later in the United States. As the text unfolds, Allos is able to break out of this despair and "flight from fear" by developing a systemic understanding of the social forces that have shaped and distorted his life. Later in the narrative (parts three and four), Allos immerses himself in the US labor movement and creates friendships with radical Filipino labor organizers who "bear the marks of … anticolonial insurgency" (who sustain memories of peasant revolts in the Philippines) and with progressive white labor organizers who understand that the process of abolishing their possessive investment in whiteness is essential to forging working class solidarity across racial boundaries. Allos' participation in the multiethnic US labor movement gives new meaning to the struggles of the Philippine peasantry during his childhood (part one of the narrative).

Part one of the text can be read as Allos' (and Bulosan's) homecoming, a return to the Philippines to recover a tradition of peasant revolt and insurgency, which also functions as a prelude to Bulosan's later novel *The Cry and the Dedication*. The entire narrative can be read as Bulosan's imaginative theorization of collective Filipino subjectivity that is only possible by grasping the interconnectedness of complex class struggles in the Philippines and the United States. As the narrative unfolds, the narrator learns through ideological and material struggle to fuse his multiple identities—Allos/Carlos/Carl as subject-in-revolt—that evoke different moments in time in the Philippines and the United States. Bulosan's radical internationalist—or global—perspective was influenced by some of the most militant Filipino American labor organizers who integrated radical traditions of subaltern struggles from the Philippines into the multiethnic labor movement: Pedro Calosa (who led the 1931 Tayug peasant revolt in the Philippines), Pablo Manlapit, Danny Roxas, Chris Mensalvas, Ernesto Mangaoang, Ponce Torres, Casimiro Bueno Absolor, and Joe Prudencio.

2) Bulosan's "Filipino subject-in- revolt": on gender and class in the Global South

In his skillful introduction to a collection of Bulosan's short stories, essays, and letters titled *On Becoming Filipino* (1995), E. San Juan, Jr. provides insightful comments on the short story "Passage into Life," which illuminate Bulosan's method of dramatizing the processes by which the Filipino subject achieves class consciousness (19). "Passage into Life" is a series of vignettes in which the young protagonist of poor peasant origins, also named Allos, comes to terms with various class conflicts of Philippine society.[13] One dimension of Bulosan's imaginative theorization of the Filipino subject-in-revolt that has gained attention by other scholars in recent years is a class analysis of women's oppression and exploitation in the Philippines (Alquizola and Hirabayashi; Higashida). I'd like to build upon San Juan's comments by shifting our focus to gender and class in order to consider the contributions of "Passing into Life" to the formation of "Third World" feminism.[14]

"Passage into Life" dramatizes the interconnectedness of gender and class in Philippine society. In one vignette, Allos' sister Marcia sits by her window every day until midnight waiting for a husband. He notices how this process has dehumanized Marcia by reducing her to her exchange-value on the marriage market: "Her eyes were lifeless when she looked at [Allos]" (55). When he asks his mother why it's difficult for Marcia to find a husband, she responds, "Because we are poor, son … Nobody wants to marry a poor girl" (55). Upon acknowledging this reality, Allos is compelled to question the world: he "rushed out of the house wondering why there were poor people." Allos' observations and his mother's response situate the specificity of Marcia's experience within a larger context—it is through gender (as a social relation) that Marcia experiences class oppression and exploitation in Philippine society.

Bulosan's examination of women's oppression in Philippine society anticipates the feminist movement and the creation of women's organizations such as MAKIBAKA in the late 1960s/early 1970s, which advanced the national sovereignty movement. In the 1980s, Filipina feminist scholar and activist Delia Aguilar began the groundbreaking task of concretizing an historical materialist critique of women's oppression and exploitation within Philippine society. In dialogue with fellow activists and cultural workers in the Philippines, Aguilar encouraged a dialectical approach to analyzing the economic exploitation and ideological oppression of women. She highlights the contributions of Marxist Feminists in the following:

> [Marxist Feminists] argue that the oppression of women and the sexual division of labor are entrenched in capitalist relations of production and must be analyzed in this light, stressing that Marxism must take into account women's domestic labor, their

> role as poorly paid workers in the labor force, and the familial ideology that heightens their oppression. ("Four Interventions" in San Juan's *Filipina Insurgency* 172)

Merely transforming the economic base is not enough. Sustaining the two ends of this dialectic—gendered exploitative social relations of production and patriarchal ideology—is crucial for understanding women's oppression and exploitation. This kind of analysis is necessary not only for the full participation of women in the Philippine movement for national sovereignty but also for the total and complete emancipation of women.

In vignette ten of "Passage into Life," we learn that there is "one thing that drove Allos to thinking, and it was watching his mother work all day and half of the night" (53). The vignette provides a lengthy and detailed inventory of the non-wage domestic labor that his mother must perform on a daily basis. She awakens at five in the morning to prepare breakfast. She cleans the house and begins to wash the laundry at the river—all before noon. She then prepares lunch and returns to the river to continue the wash. By evening, she prepares dinner and cleans up afterwards. When all family members are asleep, she irons the day's laundry by lamplight. By midnight, she retires only to awaken at five to repeat the labor intensive cycle. When Allos discovers that his mother has seriously injured her knee while carrying a large basket of vegetables to the market, he approaches a crisis in his worldview. His mother's cries of excruciating pain compel Allos to question the existence and purpose of God and humanity. Allos becomes cognizant of the ways in which his mother's productive and reproductive labor provide the necessary sustenance for the entire family.[15] Traumatized by the thought of losing his mother, Allos begins to distance himself from the oppressive ideologies of two patriarchal ideological state apparatuses—the church and the family.

In another vignette, in a desperate attempt to save his father's life, Allos runs to his wealthy cousin's house for assistance. Without speaking a word, the cousin throws a dime at Allos and speeds off with his wife in their expensive car. As his father dies, Allos "pick[s] up the small silver dime," which symbolizes the exchange value of his father's life, and "look[s] at it for a long time" (57). The death of his father is followed by two vignettes in which Allos encounters a stranger who tells him that death is not the end: "No one is really an orphan as long as there is another man living. As long as there is one man living and working and thinking on earth." The stranger escorts Allos to the top of a mountain where he encounters "an impenetrable darkness … a silence that had no voice… and [he] knew at last that there was a life without end." This moment of distancing crystallizes the narrative's process of denaturalizing the oppressive and exploitative ideologies of Philippine class society, which Allos questions throughout. In other words, Allos, now critically distanced from patriarchal and religious ideologies, is able to see that the collective human struggle

for new forms of social organization and new forms of subjectivity will sustain the memory of his father. This struggle will enable Allos to recover the true meaning (use value) of his father's life in relation to the lives of other members of his family who have suffered under the conditions of a semi-feudal society. Toward the end of the short story, Allos emerges with a new form of consciousness:

> Now Allos knew: there in the known world he must go to seek a new life, seek it among the living until he would have enough time to pause and ponder on the mystery of the dead. (58-59)[16]

In addition to the disintegration of the patriarchal family system, it is Allos' unique sensitivity toward women's oppression (which is central to his developing class consciousness in the narrative) that enables him to grasp the international scope of the stranger's call for solidarity—to venture beyond familial and national boundaries in order to seek others with whom he may struggle so that those very inhuman conditions that took the life of his father and destroyed the lives of his mother and sister might be radically transformed.

3) Bulosan's "Filipino subject-in- revolt": on culture and public intellectual work

It is within the context of forging international solidarity between workers in the United States and workers and peasants in the Philippines that Bulosan developed into a Filipino subject-in-revolt. While his imaginative writings (novels, short stories, and poems) dramatize the collective Filipino experience in the United States and in the Philippines, his essays and letters offer insight into his ability to theorize cultural production and the function of the public intellectual. Essays such as the "The Growth of Philippine Culture" and "Filipino Writers in a Changing World" lay out Bulosan's approach to producing and engaging literature and culture as part of the national struggle for Philippine independence. For Bulosan, literature is a realm within which women and men attempt to make sense of the contradictions of class society. In his essay "The Writer as Worker," Bulosan explains the function of the writer (or intellectual) in society. His theorization of the function of writers as public intellectuals is framed within a larger understanding of the dynamic relationship between cultural production and social transformation.

> Culture [is] a social product … Since any social system is forced to change to another by concrete economic forces, its art changes … also to be recharged, reshaped, and revitalized by the new conditions. Thus, if the writer has any significance, [he] should

> write about the world in which he lives: interpret his time and envision the future through his knowledge of historical reality… My making as a writer and poet is not mysterious, neither was I gifted by an unknown power. It was hard work and hard living. Suffering, loneliness, pain, hunger, hate, joy, happiness, pity, compassion—all these factors make me a writer. Plus, of course, my tenderness, my affection toward everything that lives. Plus, again, my participation in the people's fight for peace and democracy … I don't care what some writers in the Philippines think of me. That is their privilege. But I care about what they write, for or against war, for or against life. (*On Becoming Filipino* 144)

Sound of Falling Light: Letters in Exile, edited by Dolores Feria and published in the Philippines in 1960, is another rich resource for students, teachers, and scholars interested in exploring the formation of Bulosan's political consciousness and radical literary imagination. In his correspondence with close friends, Bulosan shares his thoughts on various writers and artists such as John Steinbeck, Richard Wright, Muriel Rukeyser, Hart Crane, and Paul Robeson as well as his thoughts on the process of using Philippine history and folklore in his own writings. While many of the letters shed light on Bulosan's view of cultural production ("I hope [*America is in the Heart*] will help arouse the consciousness of other Filipino writers toward social realities"), others provide insight into his view of society. Here is an excerpt from his letter to Dorothy Babb in March 1953:

> Human life could truly be paradise, in many respects, if the money spent for destruction were used for the elimination of disease, schools propagating tolerance, factories for necessary consumer goods, and research centers, clinics, hospitals, maternity wards, etc. In fact, we should have a Department of Peace in the cabinet, instead of a Department of War. Hate, greed, selfishness—these are not human nature. These are weapons of destruction evolved by generations of experimenters in the service of ruling groups … These destructive elements have finally become so subtle, so intricate, so deeply rooted in men's minds in our time, the era of international finance, that many people sincerely, though ignorantly believe them to be the guiding forces of nature. (*Sound of Falling Light* 264)

Bulosan's call for a Department of Peace and his critique of the commodification of everyday life (the naturalization of "hate, greed, selfishness") remain fresh and relevant close to fifty years after its publication in Feria's edited collection.

Bulosan continues to be relevant not only because of our current conditions—the market

colonization of intellectuals, the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a decade of human rights abuses in the Philippines under the global "war on terror"—but also because young Filipino American intellectuals, academics, artists, and activists are yearning for new ways to create collective forms of Filipino subjectivities-in-revolt that are inextricably interconnected with the struggle for Philippine national sovereignty. When we grasp the significance of Bulosan as a dissenting intellectual, we'll be able to look at his work as a useful model for decolonizing intellectual production. The efforts of a new generation of insurgent Filipino intellectuals and artists to reclaim Bulosan as engaged artist and public intellectual remind us that, borrowing from African American philosopher and activist Angela Davis, empowerment will remain powerless if structures and relations of power are not radically transformed.

NOTES

1 "Carlos Bulosan was born almost a decade after brutal US colonization of the Southeast Asian archipelago (Spanish American War 1898; Filipino American War 1899–1902). Uprooted from the Philippine countryside, Bulosan joined thousands of Filipino migrant workers on US plantations (100,000 in Hawaii and 30,000 in California) and in fish canneries along the West Coast during the Depression era. Arriving in 1930, Bulosan forged an alternative education, as an organic intellectual, through his involvement in the labor movement. Bulosan "died in poverty and obscurity" in 1956 (see Amy Ling and King-Kok Cheung in the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*). Bulosan participated in the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, and developed a lasting friendship with Filipino labor organizer Chris Mensalvas. In 1934, he edited the worker's magazine *The New Tide*, which connected him to Sonora Babb, Richard Wright, William Carlos Williams, and others. Hospitalized in Los Angeles for serious health issues (including tuberculosis) from 1936 to 1938, Bulosan received encouragement from his brother Aurelio, friend Dorothy Babb, and *Poetry* editor Harriet Monroe to nurture his craft. He enthusiastically studied a wide variety of authors including Gorky, Neruda, Tolstoy, Rizal, Bonifacio, and various Marxists literary critics. According to friend Dolores Feria, Bulosan sharpened his political analysis with issues of *New Masses*, *The New Republic*, and *Nation*" (Cabusao "Carlos Bulosan").

2 "[Bulosan] was listed in *Who's Who*, and commissioned by President Roosevelt in 1943 to write 'Freedom from Want,' which was displayed at the San Francisco Federal Building and published in the *Saturday Evening Post* with a Norman Rockwell illustration" (Cabusao "Carlos Bulosan").

3 Leading Filipino figures of the Local 7, FTA-CIO: Ernesto Mangaoang, Chris Mensalvas, Ponce Torres, Casimiro Bueno Absolor, and Joe Prudencio.

4 "Scholars and activists continue to reclaim Bulosan's imagination, which fuses US proletarian literary aesthetics and Third World subaltern resistance. In the late 1980s, revered Philippine-based playwright Bienvenido Lumbera created an opera in Filipino, the national language, based on *America is in the Heart*. During the 1990s, Bulosan was a prominent subject of dissertations (Timothy Libretti) and landmark publications in American Studies (Michael Denning) and US Ethnic/Cultural Studies (E. San Juan, Jr.)." (Cabusao "Carlos Bulosan").

5 This essay is significant in that it is one of the first major theoretical pieces emerging from Asian American Studies in the 1990s that, in a sense, Asian Americanized a key concept in British Cultural Studies—Raymond Williams' notion of cultural materialism.

6 Heterogeneity is used to "indicate the existence of differences and differential relationships [class, gender, national origins] within a bounded category." Hybridity refers to "the formation of cultural objects and practices that are produced by the histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relations;" thus, we can read Asian American cultural production/practices as exhibiting the "marks of the history of survival within relationships of unequal power and domination." And, finally, multiplicity designates "the ways in which subjects located within social relations are determined by several

different axes of power, are multiply determined by the contradictions of capitalism, patriarchy, and race relations, with particular contradictions surfacing in relation to the material conditions of a specific historical moment." Using the concepts of "heterogeneity," "hybridity," and "multiplicity," Lowe also challenges the limitations of the Asian American Movement of the late 1960s/early 1970s, its tendency to privilege masculinist cultural nationalist discourses, without abandoning its legacy of struggle.

7 In her 2002 essay "Imperialism, Female Diaspora, and Feminism," Aguilar states: "Fully 10% of the population of 82 million is overseas; 70% of OCWs are women, large numbers serving as domestic workers for families in 162 countries. These women have been lauded by Presidents Aquino and Ramos as 'the country's new heroines,' and by Ramos as 'the Philippines' contribution to other countries' development. Without the remittances these workers send home, $7 billion in 2000, the government would not have managed its debt-service payments to financial lending agencies. It is a widely acknowledged fact in the Philippines that the survival of the economy has been made possible by the remittances of OCWs, which represent the largest source of foreign exchange."

8 The militarization of the Philippines is connected to other forms of violence, especially against women. Consider the 2005 Subic Rape case in which a young Filipina (Nicole) in her early twenties "was gang-raped by four US military servicemen; one of the soldiers was found guilty in a trial … December [2006], only to be whisked away from a local prison by the US Embassy in the middle of the night" (Aguilar "Class Considerations").

9 "Critical Filipino/Filipina Studies Collective (CFFSC), a group of scholars and activists seeking to interrogate and challenge the legacies of Empire (US and Spanish Imperialisms) for past and present communities both in the Philippines and in the Filipino diaspora" <http://cffsc.focusnow.org/>; <http://www.barnard.edu/wmstud/bio_tadiar.html> <http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/sociology/living.html>.

Vision and goals of the CFFSC: "Since Marcos, many scholars, politicians, and commentators argue that the Philippines has become more democratic in its government and that social equality has been decreasing. In contrast, the Critical Filipina and Filipino Studies Collective (CFFSC) is compelled to present evidence that the US, its political and economic allies, and global capitalist interests dominate in new … ways the Philippine government, society, and economy than ever before.

"As result, this neocolonial domination and the further weakening of the Filipino state have produced conditions forcing Filipino workers and their families to leave the country and search for jobs and security. As Filipinos sought work and security elsewhere since the 1970s, they have created and transformed Filipino communities in Europe, Africa, North America, the Middle East, and other places in Asia and the Pacific. These diasporic communities nonetheless have faced racism, further social and economic hardships, and other forms of systemic oppressions.

"Today the Filipino struggle against the global and national elites remains ever more committed and vigilant, challenging social, economic, and global injustices. Its quests for social equality and economic justice continues."

10 See Critical Filipina & Filipino Studies Collective's "U.S. Government Post 9/11 Actions Threaten

Filipino Immigrant Rights," which is a pamphlet that includes overview of impact of US Patriot Act on the Filipino community in the United States as well as information for support and assistance from the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns/NAFCON and the National Lawyers Guild. See also Rodriguez and Balce: "In one major campaign, the CFSC [Critical Filipina/o Studies Collective] introduced an anti-war resolution at the 2003 Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) Annual Meeting in San Francisco, which was successfully passed" (138).

[11] Rodriguez and Balce: "Filipino radicalism in America has been transnational in its organization and consciousness, as Filipinos have worked in solidarity with radical movements of the Philippines and have articulated their critiques of American domestic policy as linked to the project of U.S. imperialism" (139).

[12] See other hip hop artists such as Suheir Hammad (Palestinian American) and Lupe Fiasco (African American) who are using the genre of hip hop to critique the global war on terrorism. Hammad's "Refugees" powerfully connects the Hurricane Katrina disaster (displacement of African Americans) with the displacement of Palestinians. See also Lupe Fiasco's "American Terrorist," which situates the notion of "internal colonialism" within the contemporary context of US racism under Homeland Security.

[13] Published in San Juan's *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan*. This short story is from the personal collection of Dolores Feria.

[14] In the introduction to *On Becoming Filipino*, E. San Juan, Jr. provides some excellent comments on "Passage into Life." It is my hope to advance San Juan's reading by focusing on how this short story generates a "Third World" materialist feminist critique.

[15] Delia Aguilar reminds us that "we need to look at what Marxist economist Lourdes Beneria refers to as women's 'reproductive work,' that is to say, the sum total of the work performed in the home setting in which gender division of labor is often distinctly elaborated. What does the woman do in the home? She not only produces children but also reproduces the social relations and the existential basis of daily life; and produces and reproduces the working capacity of the wage earner (increasingly, the category of wage earner includes herself). Household work involves meeting the needs of the wage worker in tangible (e.g., feeding and clothing him) and in less tangible ways (servicing the husband's emotional needs, managing psychological tensions, creating a 'good family environment,' etc.). The woman is responsible for socializing the children congruent with society's requirements, her own enactment of what the culture defines as 'feminine' and her husband's playing his 'masculine' role serving as models for them to imitate. In doing so, she also reproduces the social relations necessary to maintain the hierarchical, gender-based structures of our semi-colonial and semi-feudal society" ("Four Interventions" in San Juan *Filipina Insurgency* 180).

[16] See also page 19 of the Introduction, San Juan. The urgency underlying the protagonist's desire to forge local and international forms of solidarity ("there in the known world he must go to seek a new life") stems from the ways in which the narrative unrelentingly dramatizes (through multiple vignettes) the (gendered) processes by which poor peasants are exploited as well as complicit in their own oppression (hegemony through consent). The narrative simultaneously opens a space to theorize

how the peasantry is able to negotiate their collective agency (hegemony is never totalizing).

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FORUM KRITIKA

WHAT, AND WHERE, IS PHILIPPINE STUDIES? A RESPONSE

Charlie Samuya Veric
PhD cand., Yale University
charlie.veric@yale.edu

Abstract
The paper responds to the papers on Philippine Studies presented in the 126th MLA Annual Convention. The panel consists of T. Ruanni F. Tupas, Jeffrey Arellano Cabusao, Cynthia Tolentino, and Vicente L. Rafael. The paper contends that what is most instructive of these papers is their cogent treatment of Philippine Studies as a problem, a mode of critical inquiry, more than a field of studies. The paper challenges scholars to explore Philippine Studies in a truly transnational perspective, to look for Filipino imaginaries beyond the United States, in unexpected sites.

About the author
Charlie Samuya Veric is a PhD candidate, member of the Working Group on Globalization and Culture, and poet. He is the editor of *Anticipating Filipinas* and co-editor of *Suri at Sipat*, and has published in *American Quarterly*, *Rethinking History*, *Common Knowledge*, and *Kritika Kultura*, among others. His current projects include a dissertation on the techniques of the face, which looks at the everyday uses of the face from a postcolonial perspective; a study of planetary forms of imagination from below; and an English translation of the selected poems of E. San Juan, Jr. He had been educated at the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University prior to coming to Yale University for his doctorate in American studies.

I want to start with a bit of provocation. What exactly, and where, is Philippine studies? I raise this question in order to imagine what Philippine studies can be like from a transnational perspective. So, can we divorce the Philippines from its geography and deny the temptation of turning space into history?

Indeed, the papers inquire into the cultures of Philippine studies as a transnational practice and limit the contours of a borderless study. But what is most instructive, it seems to me, is how the papers compel us to see Philippine studies not so much as a field, but rather as a problem, that is, as a mode of critical inquiry.

For Rafael, for instance, the problem entails the work of making empire visible. The problem of Philippine studies, in that sense, is a problem of historical and cultural excavation. For Rafael, moreover, works such as Paul Kramer's *The Blood of Government* and Tadiar's *Things Fall Away* embody this kind of work because they not only show the salience of comparative and transnational scholarship, but also the importance of attending to the nuances of vernacular experiences.

If Rafael suggests the necessity of historical and cultural excavation, Tolentino suggests the importance of what she calls the work of interpreting the barely apprehended. She explores this idea by closely reading the film *Pinoy Sunday*. For her, to read the film is not only to apprehend the lives of Filipino migrant workers, but also to see the hidden narrative of the end of the American century in which Taipei displaces Washington as the new site for the dreams of migrant workers like Manuel and Dado.

Meanwhile, Tupas shows us that the apprehension of the nation is not the sole property of official Philippine languages such as English and Filipino. The Filipino nation, he suggests, is also imaginable in other Philippine languages. Here, I think, is where Tupas departs from Rafael and Tolentino. If Rafael and Tolentino imagine the study of the Philippines as a critical inquiry, Tupas illustrates that Philippine studies is also, rightly or wrongly, a political project.

It is precisely in this light—in imagining Philippine studies as a political project—that Cabusao's paper is able to speak to Tupas's. That is to say, if Tupas suggests the importance of recovering the many marginalized mother tongues in the Philippines, Cabusao suggests that the project of recovering the radical hope of Bulosan's works in the US should be connected to the project of self-determination in the Philippines. On the face of it, Tupas and Cabusao's papers may seem unrelated. Upon a closer analysis, however, they share a deep affinity, one that has to do with how multiculturalism in empire, as signified by the battle over the reading of ethnic literature, actually coincides with linguistic multiculturalism in the postcolony in which regional linguistic communities contest the legitimacy of the nation by insisting on the utility of marginalized mother tongues.

Thus, what appear to be unrelated issues—the inclusion of other languages as the medium of instruction in Philippine schools and the recovery of radical ethnic literary traditions in the US—are, in fact, mirror images of each other in that both are profoundly inspired by the spirit of multiculturalism. A connection such as this can only be made, however, if we denaturalize the boundaries of Philippine studies, that is, if we open the floodgates of transnational inquiry in the hopes of making unsuspected connections in impossible places.

Indeed, the transnational is invoked in all four papers—say, the movement of ideas between the US and the Philippines in Rafael and Tolentino, the politics of English in Tupas, and the transnational legacy of Bulosan in Cabusao. But is Philippine studies really transnational if it deals almost exclusively with the relations between the Philippines and the US and the languages that bridge these two polities? What about the Philippines and the rest of the world? The Filipino, after all, is all over, blanketing the planet.

Ultimately, then, Philippine studies can call itself truly transnational only when its scholars go beyond the US and start looking for Filipino imaginaries in unexpected sites. So, are we ready

for Philippine studies in Dubai, Tokyo, Beijing, Milan, Berlin, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Bangkok, Rio de Janeiro? For Philippine studies in Mandarin, French, German, Swahili, Arabic? Having started this discussion with a provocation, I wish to end with another provocation.

KOLUM KRITIKA

CONFESSION AS A NARRATIVE MODE IN GAY INDIE FILMS

Gary C. Devilles
Department of Filipino
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
gdevilles@ateneo.edu

Abstract
This paper is interested in confession as a narrative mode of media, specifically gay independent films, and the specific codes and mechanisms inherent in a confession that enable one to generate pity over the viewing public. I would discuss four gay indie films, *Ang Lalaki sa Parola, Daybreak, Sagwan,* and *Selda,* and look specifically at how these films use confession in their narration, as a cinematic style to develop their characters, and ultimately as a form of politics of viewing by which gay films in general become a sort of "public confession" constituting their viewers as their preferred "confessors."

Such understanding of confession as a narrative mode therefore will have a bearing on the notion of "independence" in gay indie films—in particular, how these films advance the cause of being "independent" from mainstream films oftentimes characterized as commercial and lacking in artistic merits. My point is that confession as a narrative mode is still not enough and what is considered as a "gay indie" can ultimately be contained within the culture of homophobia caused by the uneven relations of power between these films and their target audience.

Keywords
contrition, politics of viewing, pornography, recall

About the author
Gary C. Devilles teaches Philippine Literature, Art Appreciation, Literary Criticism, and Political Economy of the Mass Media at the Ateneo de Manila University.

> My decision to keep quiet is not because my brother Noynoy will be sworn in on June 30…Who knows, with the help of science, I may still look good. But then again, six years from now, maybe I'm the one who'll be sworn in.
>
> *- Kris Aquino on national TV regarding her split with husband James Yap*

That said, let me tell you how I personally feel. I recognize that making any such call was a lapse in judgment. I am sorry. I also regret taking so long to speak before you on this

> matter. I take full responsibility for my actions and to you and to all those good citizens who may have had their faith shaken by these events.
>
> *- President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on national TV on June 2005*

INTRODUCTION

The confession of Kris Aquino about her break up with husband James Yap on national TV three days before her brother's proclamation as president of the Philippines is indicative of how media constructs and influences people's consciousness. All of the sudden, Kris can steal the limelight from her brother, and whatever political will or insight that ensues from our experience of the recent election is oftentimes sidetracked by controversial gossips and news on personal lives of actors. Kris knows how to handle the media since she has been hosting a program that generates gossips on media personalities for quite some time. Her confession on TV therefore should be seen as a media apparatus in itself by which viewers are conditioned to think about her and by extension, her family. Kris is not the only one who uses confession to her advantage; former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo uses the television also to confess her lapse of judgment[1] over election protocol almost five years ago. Both Kris and GMA try to win public consent using specific speech codes and mechanisms that generate pathos for their target audience.

This paper then is interested in confession as a narrative mode of media, specifically gay independent films, and the specific codes and mechanisms inherent in a confession that enable one to generate pity over the viewing public. I would discuss four gay indie films, *Ang Lalaki sa Parola, Daybreak, Sagwan,* and *Selda* and look specifically at how these films use confession in their narration, as a cinematic style to develop their characters, and ultimately as a form of politics of viewing by which gay films in general become a sort of "public confession" constituting their viewers as their preferred "confessors." Such understanding of confession as a narrative mode therefore will have a bearing on the notion of "independence" in gay indie films, in particular, how these films advance the cause of being "independent" from mainstream films oftentimes characterized as commercial and lacking in artistic merits. My point is that confession as a narrative mode is still not enough and what is considered as a "gay indie" can ultimately be contained within the culture of homophobia caused by the uneven relations of power between these films and their target audience.

CONFESSION AND SUBJECTIVITY

Confession as a religious practice is not unfamiliar to a country where Catholics are

majority and had been colonized for almost three centuries by Catholic Spain. For Catholics, confession is the Sacrament of Penance, a method of the Church by which individual men and women may confess sins committed and have them absolved by a priest. Only the priests are able to absolve penitents with their sins and such is the power they wield based on the tradition and history the Catholic Church.

One of the earliest Catholic manuals on confession is one written by Fray Sebastian Totanes. His work is instructive as a historical document that records not only his view of Filipinos back then but also a way of understanding the efficacy of such practice in their lives (73). Such understanding of the power wielded by priests then and now in extracting truth or demanding confessions will enable us to understand how we become complicit and enamored by any truth-telling discourse, or why there is a fascination among Filipinos for controversies and gossips.

Totanes wrote a guideline on how to examine penitents for confessions. Some of the questions listed in *Preambulo de la Confesion* are attempts in extracting recent memories of the penitent such as "Cailan ca nag compisal? (When was your last confession?)" or "Hangan sa huli mong pagcocompisal, ilan nang taon magpangayon? (Since your last confession, how many years have passed?)" However, some questions can be extremely probing such as "Ynubus mo cayang sinaisay ang lahat? (Did you tell everything?)" or "Mey ipinagcaela ca bagang tiquis alin mang casalanang malaqui doon sa pagcocompisal mong huli? (Is there anything that you withheld in your last confession?)" (75).

These questions are not only meant to set remorse; they are predicated on a more fundamental speech in the art of speaking in Christian spirituality and pastoral, namely, Revelation, such that all manner of speaking must always refer back to these fundamental truth of revealing or revelation. Since God is truth then it is necessary that men must aspire to these truths and that truth-telling must somehow be part of their regimen, their Christian upbringing and formation. Confession therefore is a truth-telling device by which penitents are subjected and taught of the fundamental speech in Christianity. Totanes further wrote in his guideline, "Ang tunay na catotohanan (anac co) ang sasabihin mo dito paran naalaman nang P. Dios. Cun totoong iquinahiya, cun iquinatacot mo sa Pare, at caya di mo ipinagcompisal, sabihin mo: ipinagcaela mong tiquis. Houag cang mahiya, houag matacot sa aquin. (My child, you tell me only the truth because God knows everything. If you are ashamed and afraid not to confess, then exert with utmost effort. Do not be bothered, and be afraid of me.)" (76). The priest therefore attains absolute power by his sense of command among penitents. Their belief in God is a belief in truth and forgiveness becomes possible only if one remains truthful. Shameful acts should be confessed to the priest and they are to be pardoned only by God through him.

The Church has in its disposal this truth-telling device in confession and it is not surprising

that some of these confessions were used primarily for knowledge-production so that the Church would have a firm control of their subjects, a better way of dealing with them. Any form of secrecy among natives would be considered as a threat to the Church's power. It must be noted that one of ways by which the Katipunan, a secret society of Andres Bonifacio that revolted against the Spaniards, was discovered through an alleged confession of a wife of a member of that society. Vicente Rafael discussed in his *The Promise of the Foreign* how all secret societies such as the Masonic lodges or Liga Filipina were banned since their secrecy would always be interpreted as a threat to the truth-revelation speech act of the church and the government (167-68). Our confession therefore assumes an Althusserian ideological apparatus[2] in which the relation between the confessor and the penitent was uneven, the former demanding truth and loyalty while the latter submits to his power.

Again in Totanes, this power can be incredibly probing especially on the mores and sexual practices of the Filipinos such as incest, masturbation, bestiality, and orgy. Some of the questions to be asked are "At mey guinaua ca caya anomang cahalayan sa alin mang hayop? (Did you have any filthy acts committed with an animal?) At cun ano caya yaon? (And what is that exactly?) At kung macailan? (And how many times you commited this act?) At mey caharap na tauo? (Did you do it in front of somebody else?) Ylan catauo? (How many were watching you?)" (112+). These questions not only hint at bestiality but also on the possibility of orgy. The last question about doing the sexual act in the presence of other people will be repeated in other questions such as the one intimated in this question "At paano caya yaon? (How did you do it?) Nag aaglahian, at nag dorocotan cayo, at nag hihipoan caya, cun nagpaquitaan naman cayo doon sa inyong catouaan? (Were you playing with yourselves and were you showing your naked bodies to one another?) At nilabasan ca nang marumi? (Did you experience orgasm?) Cun pinalabasan mo caya ang manga cabiroan mo? (Did you help your lovers to orgasm also?)" (112+). These questions are definitely questions that elicit not only truth but graphic depiction of sexual acts of the penitents. To answer these questions therefore is not just to admit guilt and be remorseful but to perpetuate and perform the act for a particular and special audience, and in this case, to the priests, who together with the theatricality of the church and the confessionary, are able to wield power against the performing penitents. Confession becomes a performance as the guidelines of Totanes become the very script by which penitents are transformed into unwilling actors.

However, the extent of power of confessor can also be gauged not only in the manner of questioning but also in the supposed act of contrition of the penitent that proceeds from his confession. Accordingly, contrition is an admission of sin and the resolution not to sin again. To seal this act of contrition, the penitent is asked to pray for forgiveness. It is important to note that Totanes used the word "pagtitica" and this is given as a form of command from the priest: "Nasonor mo caya ang parusa nang Pare sa iyo sa confesion mong yaon? (Were you able to follow

all the instructions during your last confession?)" (76). The power to forgive sins is a privileged act accorded to priests only, as to how this power has been secularized and utilized by the media and indie films can only be understood in the context of the proliferation of radio programs that later turned into TV programs that highlight public confessions of common folk and actors during the late 70s and early 80s, the height of Marcos era.

CONFESSION AS A NARRATIVE DEVICE

It is quite surprising that the 70s would be the time when truth-telling or confessionary radio and TV programs flourished. Eddie Ilarde's *Kahapon Lamang* that started on radio in the 50s was later turned into TV program from 1976 to 1986 and Helen Vela's *Lovingly Yours* which also started in DZBB was later turned into TV anthology program from 1980 to 1996. Both shows would actually feature the life stories of their letter senders and occasionally at the end of the show, the hosts would actually give an advice. There were TV shows that would concentrate on the lives of actors. These were shows started by Inday Badiday or Lourdes Carvajal in real life, also known as the "queen of showbiz talk shows" and "queen of intrigues." She began her broadcasting career as a radio host who talked about the private lives of Filipino actors. One of her first shows was *Nothing but the Truth* and later *See-True* and *Eye to Eye*.[3] These showbiz talk shows would appropriate the mechanism of confession, from the recall of past deeds to narration and elaboration, and finally through an appeal for understanding and help in which case the host readily dispenses an advice or words of wisdom to audience, usually accompanied by a melancholic music.

The proliferation of showbiz talk shows up to the present can be one of the factors that influence the narrative techniques of most gay indie films, primarily because these talk shows have already a sizeable and target audience, so the adaptation from TV to movies can easily be facilitated without much resistance from their audience since they were also the former radio listeners as well. However, it is also important to note that the fascination for gossips and such shows has been cultivated during the Marcos regime, when there was a systemic repression of freedom by Martial Law, thus creating an overwhelming desire of the people to be informed and to know what's going on. The confession of ordinary people and actors fill this void that made institutional churches irrelevant and obsolete. As the number of confessional TV programs grew, including the branching out of media to public service, people would naturally gravitate to TV as the relevant institution that educates, informs, and gives them livelihood. It is not surprising that TV networks would necessarily have an influence on the formation of a national consciousness.[4] Furthermore, both radio and television mimic the confessionary box of the church. An ordinary confessionary box preserves the anonymity of the penitents because the window by which a penitent confesses is

partly covered. This anonymity is important in so far that radio and television can actually disguise their letter senders with aliases and reenactments or dramatization.

Gay Indie Films like *Ang Lalaki sa Parola*, *Daybreak*, *Sagwan,* and *Selda*, despite their claims of being independent from mainstream cinema, will also appropriate confession in their narrative styles. In *Ang Lalaki sa Parola*, the story of Mateo's alienation from his father and pitiable relationships with Suzette and Jerome is intermittently interrupted by the confession of the old man, Tisho, who according to the story has seen the fairy in the lighthouse. In *Daybreak*, William discloses to his lover JP his plans to leave him and migrate to Australia and live with his wife, and it is in this disclosure that the story becomes complicated, with the two characters struggling against the truth about their relationship. Despite being drawn to each other, William and JP call it quits in the end. In *Selda*, the confession of Rommel comes towards the end of the movie when his relationship with Esteban begins to bother him and he accidentally kills his own daughter. The last scene of *Selda* shows Rommel trying to write a letter. In *Sagwan*, Alfred is haunted by a traumatic incident in his childhood that will be revealed in the end when his relationship with his girlfriend Cecilia and fellow boatman Emman is finally consummated.

In these films, we have the confession within the story itself. The confession of the main characters will necessary involve a remorseful recall of past events. In *Ang Lalaki sa Parola*, Tisho is expectedly bothered and haunted by a past that he is confessing to Mario. The story itself is clearly demarcated by the constant question-and-answer dialogue of Tisho and Mateo. Their dialogue will also be crucial in the whole story itself since what is happening to Mario is already intimated or suggested in Tisho's confession. His confession somehow constitutes Mario's story and this narrative device tells audience that what Mario is going through is something pardonable and understandable. In this way the audience is conscripted to sympathize with Tisho and by extension to Mario. Such device is already imbedded in the story that makes Mario's story a reiteration and therefore familiar, something not entirely otherworldly and bizarre. Viewers then accept Mario's story as a reiteration, something that has already happened in the past and is happening now.

Confession in *Daybreak* is more subtle yet equally powerful since confession is not only used as a narrative device but the crux of the story where William is hesitant to tell JP his plans. William's disclosure of his plans to migrate to Australia will end their relationship and this ending only affirms the power of confessionary discourse that characters can wallow on their sins and guilt, tell their stories and then in the end make a remorseful exit via a moral closure or a tragic ending. I was told by film critic Yason Banal that there were two versions for the ending of the *Daybreak,* one ending with a break up and the other with their reunion. These versions only attest to the power and efficacy of confessionary mode of the film. Confession as a performance needs an audience. In this case, it is important to ask to whom the film is actually making a confession? Why

is there a need for an alternate ending? Could the alternate ending be a ploy to a specific audience so that confession becomes pleasant or agreeable?

In most confessions like in *Selda* and *Sagwan*, the voice over of the main characters intrudes in the story. In *Selda*, towards the end, we hear Rommel reiterating something that Esteban told him while they were still in prison, a sense of being dead, trapped, and without any direction in life. It is in this form of confession that the film makes a closure or moralizes. From the onset, the characters are already guilty of their sins, they are forced or compelled to narrate their stories, and in the end, their remorse or *pagtitica* would always be articulated in the form of a moral lesson. In the case of *Selda,* Esteban would ask the rhetorical question, "Sino ang mananagot? (Who will be responsible?)" and we see towards the end, Rommel, smoking, quite distraught, writing a letter inside a dilapidated room. Again the ending is quite convenient, the tragic ending of gay characters is the very formula for making their story palatable and agreeable. One gets the impression that gay stories are okay as long as in the end we know the moral lesson; gay characters end up as loonies looking for fairies, as repressed or closeted, prisoners, or being butchered or killed. In *Sagwan*, Alfred who is confessing is also explaining everything from his sense of alienation to his problematic relationships. Just like in *Selda*, Alfred's confession is seemingly structured in his guilt, his exposition and narration of the sex trade in his area, and his attempt to moralize and rationalize his fantasies towards Cecilia and Emman. The convenient ending of their ménage â trois is the very formula by which their target audience must have a disavowal of the film and submit to a prescribed morality.

CONFESSION AS A HOMOPHOBIC DISCOURSE

Laura Mulvy in her seminal work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* argues that viewers must be able to break the cinematic codes of films constituted by the overpowering male gaze and the illusion it creates and invokes to viewers. The cinema depends on three gazes: the camera, audience, and the characters. Illusion is achieved by downplaying the first two and enhancing the third. In most of the gay indie films, there is a tendency for the whole film to become the penitent while the audience becomes the priest who will absolve the gay film in the end. In other words, a politics of viewing is created, a politics of uneven relations where like before, Filipinos were expected to remember their sinful acts, be remorseful, and ask for forgiveness while the priest in return must listen and absolve.

With the proliferation of confessional type of TV programs and gay indie films, the function of the priest is relegated to the viewers. However, this does not result in a sense of empowerment of the audience. This simple role reversal in which the audience assumes the role of the priest only

reaffirms the uneven character of confessional discourse. Unlike before when the priest asks the probing questions, this time the film has been hailed enough to answer even if not being asked. The films and media in general have internalized this act of probing, have set the questions asked by priests as their rubrics, have studied their target audience and marketing strategies, and fully utilized the mechanisms of confession.

Gay films therefore become a matter of one variety after another, one daring role and scene after another, a bit different in performance but ultimately uniformly recognizable. Gay films with tragic characters only reiterate and such reiteration has the ideological effect of containing the radicalness of gay lifestyle and philosophy. This is the illusion that a lot of gay indie films are trying to project, primarily that they are free of any commercial value, but with the plethora of confessionary films they have only succeeded in visualizing the pleasures of gay lifestyles and their concomitant commodification. The representation of tragic gay characters in these films is a ploy for sympathetic reading or identification. But what is achieved by the repetitiveness of these tragic representations is not a critical engagement on the part of viewers but rather a sense of disavowal. Gay films create the illusion of the free play of desire yet such desire must also be ironically contained in a moral dilemma and tragic ending of characters.

One should take note how recent these films have eroticized and exoticized the provinces and remote rural barrios such that the setting is not so much about the story but only an expedient backdrop in reinventing a familiar story. At some point the audience need not identify therefore with the gay characters; the film has already made a fetish out of this sympathy such that whatever anxiety the audience has is already controlled and determined. This kind of manipulation is teetering on homophobia, or the fear of gays and their lifestyle can only be accepted in certain agreeable situations and terms. One can recall the famous TV show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. At the onset one can see the boldness of such program in relation to a very conservative public, yet such shows reinforce only the conservative attitude of their target audience. Gay lifestyle is acceptable only if it is in the service of the straight guy, the very norm by which queer is actually being "straightened" so to speak. Similarly, characters in gay indie films are straightened out: Tisho and Mario are remorseful repentants seeking absolution, William and JP are the star-crossed lovers who will find love somewhere in their memories and dreams but not in their present situation, Rommel is the prisoner asking for an understanding of his failures and struggles, and Alfred and Emman are the unwilling victims of the flesh trade in their community. In each of these characters, their confession as the very mode of most gay indie films tend to be a "straightening" technique, making their attitudes, lifestyle and way of thinking palatable and agreeable to a conservative audience.

At some point as well, this straightening technique compels the audience to renounce gay

indie films as pornographic. They have no choice but to become like the priest hearing a public confession, only this time more theatrical and spectacular. Like the priest, the audience is compelled to absolve and forgive the gay character since the gay character has a tragic ending. Ultimately, gay indie films are definitely complicit to a culture of homophobia by structuring their narratives as confessions with all the mechanism of recall and the act of contrition, evoking a dual formulaic and cathartic effect of pity and fear.

Martin Manalansan discusses in *Global Divas* how his interviewees, all AIDS victims, use imaginative terms and coinages for their illness, sometimes using tragic heroines or characters to engage their subjectivity and agency. However, he also cites the problem of such identification with suffering for some gays in the US that with the advent of possible treatment of the disease, pathos is something associated with the gays in the Third World, gays who simply cannot afford the medication for their illness (180-82). Pity, in as much as it is a powerful emotion, can also bring about the unevenness of social relations. As in the case of films depicting suffering, pity can only heighten the unequal relations of the viewers and the object of their gaze. It is not surprising that sometimes films exploit tragedy for such commercial purposes and in history, the so called Third World has been the site of producing colonial fantasies and postcolonial identities. Sometimes it is within these desires and fantasies that the suffering gay character is depicted, and all because such depiction is an elaboration of masculinity of the West (Chari 277+). This is when gay indie films become pornographic, not because of graphic depictions of sexual acts and gay lifestyles, but because of the coerced pathos generated from viewers, pathos that does not critically engage their worldview but pathos that reinforces their conservative outlook, their superior stance, and their irrational fear of gays. One can argue, however, that pathos worked with Lino Brocka's gay films in the 70s, but then again one must also remember that pathos generated by Brocka's films has a politico-social context, it militated against the state-sponsored image of Manila and the Philippines back then. At a time when the Marcoses were promoting Manila as the city of man, a progressive city, etc., Brocka's films provided an alternative view of Manila. In other words, Brocka knew his politics; even if he is using the conventions of tragedy or confessionary mode in storytelling, he knew his purpose. The demand for gay indie films today do not necessarily adhere to Brocka's philosophy, although a lot of these films are direct copies, if not derivatives, of Brocka's films.

There is a growing need for the gay indie films today to articulate their politics, their way of thinking, and their specific intervention. The renewed interest in gay indie film and their continued exhibition abroad in various international film festivals, where they reap recognition and awards, are not enough to advance the cause of queer politics. They have to engage the viewing public to question their beliefs, norms, and values. If not, then what else is a gay indie film for?

NOTES

1 Part of the text read by President GMA over national TV on June 2005: "That said, let me tell you how I personally feel. I recognize that making any such call was a lapse in judgment. I am sorry. I also regret taking so long to speak before you on this matter. I take full responsibility for my actions and to you and to all those good citizens who may have had their faith shaken by these events. I want to assure you that I have redoubled my efforts to serve the nation and earn your trust. *Nagagambala ako. Maliwanag na may kakulangan sa wastong pagpapasya ang nangyaring pagtawag sa telepono. Pinagsisisihan ko ito nang lubos. Pinananagutan ko nang lubusan ang aking ginawa, at humihingi ako ng tawad sa inyo, sa lahat ng mga butihing mamamayan na nabawasan ng tiwala dahil sa mga pangyayaring ito. Ibig kong tiyakin sa inyo na lalo pa akong magsisikap upang maglingkod sa bayan at matamo inyong tiwala.*

2 Louis Althusser is a French Marxist philosopher. His contributions to the theory of ideology as interpellation and his concept of the ideological apparatus have been very influential among psychoanalyst and Marxist critics. See Louis Althusser's *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays.*

3 See Vicente Rafael, "Your Grief is Our Gossip," in *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History,* pages 204+.

4 Benedict Anderson believes that the birth of nationalism is catalyzed by the breakdown of religious communities and political dynasties on one hand, and the emergence of capital and technologies of communication, on the other. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.*

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LITERARY SECTION

FIVE POEMS

Michael M. Coroza
Department of Filipino
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
mcoroza@ateneo.edu

About the author

Michael M. Coroza is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Filipino, School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University. He has received numerous national and international awards for his poetry, essays, and short stories for children. In 2007 he received from the Royal Family of Thailand the prestigious SEAWRITE or Southeast Asia Writers Award. He holds a PhD in Filipino from the University of the Philippines and is constantly engaged in language, literary, and cultural studies aside from creative writing and performing the kundiman and other vintage Filipino songs. He is the newly elected Secretary General of the Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas (Writers Union of the Philippines).

1)

Dalitiwan

Lagaslas mo ay eternal
Na pagkabasag ng kristal;
Banyaga kong talampakan
Ay naakit, nasugatan.

Sa daloy mo ay lumahok
Ang tumagas kong himutok;
Sa pampang nang makaabot,
Ang dibdib ko'y nagkalumot.

Dalitiwan[1]

Your rustling: the eternal
Breaking of crystal;
My alien feet
Are seduced, bruised.

Into your stream
Spill my resentment;
As I reach your bank,
My heart gathers moss.

Translation by Marne L. Kilates

[1]A place name in the town of Majayjay in the province of Laguna, actually a river, which combines, felicitously, the words dalit (a Tagalog poetic form of lament) and iwan (which means to leave or abandon).

2)

Palaging May Ulan

Palaging may ulan ang pamamaalam
Kaya binabaha ng lungkot ang lungsod
Ng panandaliang pagsasama't lugod.

Huwag kang lilingon at baka malusaw
Na asin ang mithing pagbabagong-loob.
Palaging may ulan ang pamamaalam
Kaya binabaha ng lungkot ang lungsod.

Bangkay na lulutang ang panghihinayang
Ngayong nalunod na ang lahat ng pusok
At kuyom sa dibdib ang basang alabok.
Palaging may ulan ang pamamaalam
Kaya binabaha ng lungkod ang lungsod
Ng panandaliang pagsasama't lugod.

It Rains Always

It rains always as farewells are bid
and so sadness floods this city
of fleeting unions and delight.

Do not look back for it may dissolve
like salt, this yearned for change-of-heart.
It rains always as farewells are bid
and so sadness floods this city.

Regret will float like a carcass
now that all passion has been drowned,
and a wet fistful of ash is clenched in the chest.
It rains always as farewells are bid
and so sadness floods this city
of fleeting unions and delight.

Translation by Mikael de Lara Co

3)

Paslit

May paslit na pinapaslang natin
Sa isip, nilulula sa mga panaginip,
Tinatagtag sa mga pagsisikap. Mula

Sa tore ng pananagumpay, inihuhulog
Natin siya sa limot, ngunit hindi
Namamatay. Lingid sa atin ang kaniyang

Pamamahay sa kamalig ng malay, bumabalangkas
Ng mabibisang hakbang sa pagsalakay upang
Mabawi ang kaniyang teritoryo na mula

Nang ating sakupin ay nawasak ang pagiging
Payak at panatag. Sa sandaling naglilibang
At nahihibang tayo, darating siyang

Isang dambuhala. Walang kamuwangan
Sa lupit at sákit, ibubuwal niya ang lahat
Ng ating itinindig. Mapapabungisngis,

Aakalain niyang ang lahat ng nangyari
Ay laro, samantalang tayo ay walang
Katinag-tinag at nakatitig sa malayo.

Child

There is a child that we slay
In our minds, make dizzy with dreams,
Jerk with our labors. From

The towers of our victories, we drop
Him into oblivion, yet
He does not die. We know not of his

Nostalgia for the storehouse of thought; he outlines
Effective schemes of attack to
Wrest his territory which since

We conquered was stripped of
Simplicity and calm. In the moments we amuse
Or drive ourselves to insanity, he arrives

A leviathan. Knowing nothing
Of cruelty and suffering, he topples all
That we have built. Snickering,

He thinks everything
A game, while motionless we are left
To stare at the distance.

Translation by Mikael de Lara Co

4)
Magnanakaw

Tulad ng nasusulat, dumarating
siyang ni walang pasabi
kung kailan sinlalim ng gabi
ang ating kawalan
ng pag-intindi.

Dilim siyang nakapaglalagos
sa lahat ng ating pasadyang
pag-iingat, nakapaghahalungkat
sa bawat lingid na silid o sulok
ng ating mga lugod at pag-iimbot.

Ginigising tayo ng alinsangang
dulot ng kaniyang pangahas
na hininga ngunit dagling
naglalaho siya sa pagmulat
ng ating pangamba.

Napapabalikwas ang ating
takot, at kahit bantulot,
hinahagilap natin ang ikinubling
tapang, iniuumang saanman
may hinalang kumaluskos.

Ngunit tulad ng dapat
asahan, tanging tagumpay niya
ang ating nasusumpungan
sa pinto o bintanang
kaniyang dinestrungka.

Malaking puwang sa ating
loob ang iniiwang bakas
ng kaniyang pagdalaw sapagkat
tinatangay niya pati ang liwanag
sa palad nating binutas ng bagabag.
.

Thief

Like what's written, he comes
without warning
when, deep as the night,
we simply lose
our guard.

He is the darkness
barging, no matter how
cautious we are,
shuffling through
every secret nook and shelter
of our joys and loathing.

We're startled where his warm
breath dares,
but quickly he darts
off even as our trembling
stirs, its eyes wide open.

Our terror comes
alive and quite fickle,
we fumble for the secret courage,
pointing it at every place
where conspiring noises stir.

But expect it,
to meet his victory, at last,
on the door or window
through which he has broken.

A gaping void he
leaves within
when he comes visiting,
taking even the torch
that slips off our palm,
all shot through with fear.

Translation by D. M. Reyes

5)

Matanda sa Bintana

Mahusay sa kulay ang kamay
na nagkuwadro sa iyo, abuhing
anino na parang sinadyang
iadorno, lapat na lapat, sa pagitan
ng mga kapis na panarang babahagyang
binuksan. Agaw-buhay ang araw
sa iyong mga mata, lusaw na ang ingay
at gulo sa kalsada. Sayang at hindi ko
marinig ang ritmo na iyong tinitipa
sa pasamano: marahill pananabik sa isang
pagbabalik o pagkainip sa katuparan
ng malaon nang panaginip.

Sadyang mahusay ang kamay
na nagkuwadro sa iyo, napatigil
ako at nagawang mapaglimi sa kabila
ng aking pagmamadali. Kumakaway
ang lumbay ng iyong mga kulay,
yumayakap sa malay nang napakahigpit:
gumuguhit ng alinlangan sa aking noo,
nagtatatak ng takot sa aking anino.

Dalubhasa ang kamay na nagkuwadro
sa iyo: nagbubukas ng bintana
ng kaluluwa, nakapagpapadungaw
ng pag-alaala. Nilulusaw ng pusyaw
ang aking kasibulan na ngayon
ay nakakuwadrong iyong pinagmamasdan.

5)

Old Man at the Window

The hand that framed you
knew color—a grayish
shadow consecrated at will,
placed well between
the nacre shutters, now parted
a little. In your eyes, the sun
is fading while, down the street,
the rush and din have slipped away. Too bad,
on the ledge your fingers tap
a rhythm I can't hear: perhaps a longing for some
return or your sweet impatience, while
waiting for an old dream
to happen.

Fine hands framed you;
despite my rush, I
stopped and begun musing.
Your pensive colors
Wave, clinging to my mind,
Etching doubts on my forehead,
and against my own shadow,
impressing fear.

Masterful hands framed you,
parting open the soul's
shutters, asking me to look out
and to strain. As you gaze on,
your fading colors shame
my youth, which stands
framed, as well.

Translation by D. M. Reyes