

# SILLIMAN JOURNAL



*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

T.S. Eliot (1942)  
Four Quartets: Little Gidding

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We will never cease  
from exploration;  
But the end of our journeys will be to arrive  
where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

T. S. Eliot

### NOTICE TO AUTHORS

The SILLIMAN JOURNAL welcomes contributions in all fields from both Philippine and foreign scholars, but papers should preferably have some relevance to the Philippines, Asia, or the Pacific. All submissions are refereed.

Articles should be products of research, taken in its broadest sense; a scientific paper should make an original contribution to its field. Authors are advised to keep in mind that SILLIMAN JOURNAL has a general and international readership, and to structure their papers accordingly.

SILLIMAN JOURNAL also welcomes the submission of "Notes," which generally are briefer and more tentative than full-length articles. Reports on work in progress, queries, updates, reports of impressions rather than research, responses to the works of others, even reminiscences are appropriate here. Book reviews and review articles will also be considered for publication.

Manuscripts should conform to the conventions of format and style exemplified in this issue. Whenever possible, citations should appear in the body of the paper, holding footnotes to a minimum. Documentation of sources should be discipline-based. Pictures or illustrations will be accepted only when absolutely necessary. All articles must be accompanied by an abstract and must use gender fair language. All authors must submit their manuscripts in duplicate, word-processed double-space on good quality paper. A diskette copy of the paper, formatted in MSWord 6.0 should accompany the submitted hard copy.

The Editorial Board will endeavor to acknowledge all submissions, consider them promptly, and notify authors of its decision as soon as possible. Each author of a full-length article is entitled to 25 off-print copies of his/her submitted paper. Additional copies are available by arrangement with the Editor or Circulation Manager before the issue goes to press.

*IN THIS ISSUE:* Silliman Journal welcomes to this edition a collection of subtle, sophisticated, and powerful thoughts — of the sort that provokes the most articulate inquiry and vivid and compelling writing. Representing various worldviews, writing styles, and academic disciplines, the articles are organized to follow a deliberate progression, one that creates a spiraling structure that opens with a personal account and then moves through the next selections that discuss the shaping influences of community and culture and the convictions that inform them. The subjects of these articles encourage readers to rethink ideas they might take for granted and to reconsider the cultural construction of the ideas one might deploy

to impose order on the world, including the world of words. For this issue, T. S. Eliot's famous lines inspire the philosophical underpinnings for our journey theme, functioning like direction signs to plot pathways through these intellectual tracts that attempt to transform experience into knowledge.

Setting the stage for our rhetorical exploration is the intriguing essay, *In Turbulent Indigo: A Literary Journey with Joni Mitchell* by a young graduate student, Ma. Leovina A. Nicolas. In this essay, Nicolas starts out to fuse criticism writing with non-fiction narratives as part of a final examination requirement for a class in Contemporary Literary Theory and Criticism and ends up addressing the con-

nection between autobiography and her writing. Combining a poststructuralist, postmodern, deconstructionist, and feminist reading, she examines a familiar terrain—songs—or more precisely, Joni Mitchell songs, as her text, searching in the songs' journey themes landmarks to guide her own journeys and finding there transformational moments in her life. What begins as an intellectual exercise progresses into a personal journey propelled by the dynamics of self-exploration and self-identity and becomes an assertion of the body not only as a marker of identity but as a site of meaning. In this work as well as in her other recent writings Nicolas seeks to blur the boundaries between autobiography and fiction-writing, inserting, in the Cixousian fashion, the voice of her body in her writings in order to obliterate the traditional dichotomy between body and mind.

Turning now from a more personal exploration of

the psychic terrain to focus on the creative writers' own journeys to discern the shape of the literary territory under their gaze, Timothy R. Montes writes of *Young Writers and the Tradition in Philippine Short Fiction in English*. In this lively and insightful essay, Montes engages the question of whether a definable tradition for Philippine short story in English exists by making an analogical connection between the situation of young writers in English in this country and that of the young warriors who must first apprentice themselves to Jedi-Masters in the vastly popular George Lucas' film, both respecting the past while resisting it. Montes moves beyond the issue of canon making in Philippine short story in English to focus on young writers' need to break away from Anglo-American tradition of modernism in fiction.

The articles that follow move from an exploration of the self out into the wider world, from the individual to whole groups of people. The

collaboration by Betty C. Abregana, Enrique G. Oracion, and Rolando V. Mascuñana entitled *Forced Alternative: Making Multigrade Schools Work for Children in Need in Rural Areas* walks us to two elementary schools in the province of Negros Oriental to examine the situation of multigrade schools assisted by the Unicef. Multigrade schools are an indexical sign of the sorry state of this country's elementary education that is perennially plagued by acute budgetary shortage, lack of teachers, and poor facilities. In this system, a teacher teaches two or three grade levels at the same time and in the same classroom as a way of meeting the educational needs of schoolchildren in far-flung communities. Oppressive as the situation might seem, and fraught with challenge, this system, ironically, affords the government the rare opportunity in which to operationalize its thrust of providing "education for all". As the findings of this study show, the proper administration of multigrade schools

may yet make this mechanism a workable alternative, one that will ensure that the right of every Filipino child to basic education is met.

The final article in this issue by Joseph T. Raymond journeys back in time to the war years in this country to reexamine the vital role the Spanish-owned enterprise, Tabacalera, played during the Japanese occupation. In this study, Raymond argues that in opting to pursue the policy of passive resistance, Tabacalera managed to retain hold of most of its major business installations and properties spread all over the country, including Central Azucarera de Bais. Raymond's article specifically focuses on the mechanisms of resistance employed by the Central to hold at bay the total control of its operations by the Japanese forces that had encamped in its premises. Raymond concludes that despite the large losses in revenues from a staged-managed shutdown that paralyzed the company's operations, Tabacalera's posi-

tion was a brilliant strategy that allowed the company to preserve most of its major assets. Raymond's reassessment of Tabacalera's war-time posture is important to clarify for us the real role of this Spanish-owned company in our history. But its greatest contribution is in taking us back down memory lane to confront, although painfully, a part of our history so that, as T. S. Eliot suggests, we will "know the place for the first time."

Time has proven to be this issue's most daunting challenge. Although as early as last year we managed to complete the four forthcoming issues and set deadlines for each of them, a number of unforeseen events overtook our plans and left our deadlines in total disarray. Such vicissitudes of publication are becoming more and more familiar each time so that when at last we succeed in shepherding an issue to print, relief rather than exhilaration attends its journey to the press.

Many people from a va-

riety of disciplines have contributed to this issue at various stages of its development.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome to this issue Prof. Philip van Peel of the Department of English and Literature who takes over from Nino Soria de Veyra the demanding job of a production editor. Prof. Van Peel brings to this new assignment his journalism background from the Instituut voor Journalisten van België in Brussels as well as his intelligence, tenacity and equanimity. If this issue's cover which he designed is any indication, then we can look forward to seeing more and more sparks of creativity in our future issues. Because I know Prof. Van Peel's other myriad commitments, I owe him many thanks for accepting this additional responsibility.

Special thanks go to our contributors for their perceptive and engaging articles, especially for their extraordinary patience and understanding during the long time it has taken us to send this issue to

press.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to our reviewers for taking time from their busy professional lives to do a thorough scrutiny of the manuscripts and make incisive and creative comments.

Although the journal will miss his uncommon touch, I wish Nino Soria de Veyra all the best as he turns his creative energies towards the completion of his master's thesis. To him, special word of thanks for setting the standards of excellence in technical design for all our future issues.

For his much-appreciated technical intervention and much-needed crash course in Page-maker, Ian Fermin Casocot deserves so much gratitude.

As it has always been, Naty T. Sojor's quiet and unflinching efficiency has managed to keep us afloat despite the ever-present threat of scant financial resources.

The steadfast support of my colleagues in the Editorial Board continues to provide me much elbow room in

which to be creative. Their continuing faith in my ability to deliver an issue, no matter how delayed, is a constant source of inspiration especially in times when I feel I have lost that faith myself.

As usual, the Department of English and Literature continues to provide *Silliman Journal* a home. Special word of thanks to all my colleagues who sit as midwives at the birthing of this issue and for the unlimited use of the department's equipment that facilitated its delivery.

Finally, I would like to remember the support I have been privileged to receive from Dr. Agustin A. Pulido, Silliman President, whose Midas touch might yet materialize the journal's much-needed budgetary infusion.

Working on this journal continues to be a richly rewarding experience.

Ceres E. Pioquinto

IN TURBULENT INDIGO:  
A LITERARY JOURNEY WITH JONI MITCHELL

Maria Leovina Amante Nicolas

Ceres,

Since you are my imagined reader, I will tell you the framework of this summary application paper through a letter. Doing so gives a post-modernist effect, a meta effect—meta-paper!

*L'écriture feminine inspired me to unsheathe my wings and take flight. You'd say, ah, how Cixous. Yes, I chose to be "arational, contrallogical, and circular" in this paper, but not necessarily Cixousian. In my judgment, it seems to be more like Meese... (I wish!)*

*My friend, who read this paper, asked me what was the point. I thought, it was a good start. His comment did not worry me for my friend is male and the fact that he could not "get it" may possibly confirm that I have done it, write as a woman. Also, he made the comment after I hurt his ego by writing a note to him which said, "this paper does not follow your typical male logic or phallic reasoning," among other things. But of course, he could be right, that I have actually written an incomprehensible paper. In the end, it would be your judgment that would decide it all.*

*Anyway, I chose Joni Mitchell just to part from the typical literary text that I have always written about. I knew her lyrics are considered poetry by many and the music would add to the feel or tone of the paper I was writing.*

*Remember I mentioned to you Geoff Dyer's talk about imaginative criticism? I aimed for the same. What Dyer did in *But Beautiful* was he fused the novel with music criticism. Since I did not have the time or the resources to do the same, I decided to fuse criticism writing with non-fiction narratives. I had a special affinity with the personal essay and I wanted to use that strength in writing the summary application paper.*

*I put together several theories that we discussed in class, it is like taking the word 'summary' literally. Whatever theory the Joni*

*Mitchell text or my narratives were open to, I absorbed it in the paper.*

*The framework of this paper, though, is largely Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-Modernism, and Feminism. I wanted to deviate from the typical scholarly paper and put some mush, some schmaltz into this project. I like what Dyer wrote in his introduction. He talked about how in criticism, one would discover that there are not enough jargon to capture everything and that most of the time one will have to resort to metaphors, symbols, narratives... elements found in creative writing.*

*In poetry, I learned that either you come from a center and move outwards (centrifugal) or from the periphery moving in (centripetal). I chose the latter. My friend said, "So it is opposite of the shit hitting the fan..." What could I say but, "Yeah, it's more like you take a video of the, uh, shit, hitting the fan, and then you play it backwards." So it is my hope that the paper had actually reached a center, that the elements I had infused in it, had come together in the end. Well, I could always give the excuse that I wrote using stream of consciousness. You know, wallowing and never arriving at a center and knowing that it is the point.*

Ayvi

*Oh what do you know about  
Living in Turbulent Indigo?<sup>1</sup>*

When postmodernism killed the author, it did not spare the critic. Everyone is getting killed these days. Back in college we killed a god in a poetry reading. Nietzsche only said that god is dead. That was just an observation. We made it happen on stage to the tune of *The Grateful Dead*.

My friends, Pastorius

and Satriani, called me Pollyanna. I was looking through rose-tinted glasses they said. I was Catholic. I adored Monet. I had *The Ascent* at Mount Carmel in my bag. I wrote with blue pens. They called me a girl and my body did not enfeeble nor threaten them. As far as they were concerned, I was asexual—like an angel. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar<sup>2</sup> explained what being an angel

meant. I was trapped in one of the double-binds which has evolved to keep women in their place. There were only two things I could have been: "angel" or "monster." In their eyes, I was not Error, or Lucifera, or Medea but I was Beatrice, or Beth, or worse, the Virgin Mary.

I was the transcendent, angel figure. My waking up in the arms of a stranger in a cheap motel was an absurd joke. After all, it was something I could never do because I was, yes, an angel. I could have done it just to prove a point yet it would merely be a crossing over to the other side. If I were not an angel, then I must be a monster.

Simone de Beauvoir identified five myths of women: flesh, nature, poetry, mediatrix, and immanence.<sup>3</sup> She saw all the five classifications in five authors namely, Montherlant, Lawrence, Claudel, Breton and Stendhal. Of the five, Montherlant is the blackest swine. Imagine a man who, in the words of de Beauvoir, "likes war because in war one gets rid of women,"

and tell me what do you see? Exactly! "For Montherlant transcendence is a situation: he is the transcendent, he soars in the sky of heroes; woman crouches on earth; beneath his feet; it amuses him to measure the distance that separates him from her; from time to time he raises her up to him; takes her, and then throws her back; never does he lower himself down to her realm of slimy shadows."<sup>4</sup>

Angels are supposedly mute creatures. An angel could not sing a Joni Mitchell song. Pastorius and Satriani gathered around a mermaid and taught her how to sing Joni while I stayed at the far side of the living room strumming Lisa Loeb's *Stay*. The mermaid had hair to her waist and shells that held her breasts while I was practically wearing a cassock and pathetic white wings. My friends were sea-men and they had to respond to her siren calls. The only time Pastorius ever helped me out with any indigo turbulence was with his playing the guitar while I sang about Pink Floyd's *two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl year af-*

*ter year*. That song is Beckett's *Waiting for Godot!* It is Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* set into music. A woman would know how it is to live in a fish bowl, to be trapped; it is to live in *Turbulent Indigo*.

\* \* \*

*You wanna make Van Goghs...*

Joni's jacket cover for *Turbulent Indigo* was her self-portrait which spoofed Van Gogh's famous 1889 self-portrait. The painting must have opened discussions in art reproduction, an issue that has come to the attention of critics. Did she paint her self-portrait or did she reproduce Van Gogh's? Was it Joni as Van Gogh or Van Gogh as Joni? You know a Van Gogh when you see one, so was the painting a Van Goghed Joni or a Jonied Van Gogh? Between Joni Mitchell and Vincent Van Gogh, which is the noun and which is the adjective?

Critics have not agreed over the issue of art reproductions. Cynthia Ozzick addressed that issue in her story

*Puttermesser Paired*.<sup>5</sup> In this story a fifty year old woman re-lives, to some literal extent, the lives of George Eliot and George Lewes with a copyist by the name of Rupert Rabeeno. They actually met in a museum after Rupert, to the astonishment of his audience, made a copy of Jacques-Louis David's "Death of Socrates." Puttermesser asks Rupert, "Shouldn't you begin with a new idea?" To which Rupert responds with, "Whatever I do is original. Until I've done them my things don't exist."

Joni's re-interpretation of van Gogh is original in that sense. The effect Joni produced is different from the meaning found in the original Van Gogh. In an article in *Vogue* by Charles Gandee,<sup>6</sup> Joni's painting reflected "her black comedy...her ironic allusion." What Joni has done is of course far from being considered as forgery since her work never posed as a substitute for the original. But the openness of a work of art to adaptation or even alteration by recent artists is a good location for discourse.



In the same article, Joni expressed her concern that people might miss the point, "It's true, a lot of people don't know what a Van Gogh painting looks like, so they're not going to get a big guffaw off of it." The sensibility of today's art consumers may not be so rooted in the classicism or modernism of canonical art. Pierre Bourdieu points to the direction of social class and education as determinants of competence in "decoding" the message in a work of art. As he argues, "consumption is, in this case, a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code."<sup>7</sup> Even as Joni Mitchell is identifiable with popular music, certain characteristics or subtleties in her craft may just go unnoticed.

For example, there is a Derridian quality to what she has created. We can assume that Vincent Van Gogh and Joni Mitchell are binary oppositions and Joni's painting is a deconstruction of that structure. It is the fusion of the du-

alities: Mitchell-woman-alive-novice/Van Gogh-man-dead-master. In this painting you can see that the seeming oppositions are really components of each other. These dualities are really unities up to the bandaged ear. This leads us back to Ozick. Puttermesser insists on the duplicity of Rupert's copies, "A painting isn't alive." Rupert answers, "Well, I am—that's the point. Whatever I do is happening for the first time. Anything I make was never made before." Between Van Gogh and Joni, she is at an advantage because she is the one alive, the one still creating—in the same way woman eclipses man because *Feminisms* are alive and whatever opposes it does not have a name and must be dying if not paralyzed.

\* \* \*

I found Joni's *Hits* in a record store. I bought it without second thoughts. My only regret was I could not find *Mises*. There was something so New Critical about those twin albums. It was ironic that Joni got run over by the songs that

hit the charts.

I got to know her through the songs that "killed" her. Anyway, I revived my walkman by feeding it two new batteries and Joni and I talked without Pastorius nor Satriani knowing. She told me this story.

*Yesterday a child came out to wonder  
Caught a dragonfly inside a jar  
Fearful when the sky was full of  
thunder  
And tearful at falling of the star...*

*Sixteen springs and sixteen summers  
gone now  
Cartwheels turn to car wheels thru  
the town  
And they tell him, take your time,  
it won't be long now  
Till you drag your feet to slow the  
circles down*

*So the years spin by and now the  
boy is twenty  
Though his dreams have lost some  
grandeur coming true  
There'll be new dreams, maybe better  
dreams and plenty  
Before the last revolving year is  
through.*

*And the seasons they go round and*

*round*

*And the painted ponies go up and  
down  
We're captive on the carousel of time  
We can't return, we can only look  
behind from where we came  
And go round and round in the  
circle game.*

Mikhail Bakhtin<sup>8</sup> said that we are in a carnival with all the dizzying parades and palavers of meaning: "We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of 'inside-out,' of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings." Joni extends that analogy a little by saying that yes we are in a carnival but look, we are not even on our feet. We are all in this merry-go-round together. The merry-go-round is the perfect carnival mechanism that illustrates Bakhtinian festivity for does it not go up and down and around and around? Imagine my friend Pastorius with his stringy body, long hair and goatee on a pink pony. Then

there is my friend Satriani with his receding hairline and pot-belly on a yellow one. Of course there is the mermaid with her seaweed hair and silver scales on a black seahorse. And Joni, Van Gogh, Ozick, de Beauvoir, Georges Eliot and Lewes... Montherlant not on a pony but on a pig... And then there would be me in my nightgown and chicken wings...going round and round...

I saw the blur of colors and faces. And if ever I picked up anything remarkably familiar, I turned to look and felt the strain behind my neck all the way the stretch of my back to my waist. But there was really nothing, just a blur and a dizziness that would not go away. There was only the bend up ahead.

And as Joni told me the story of the boy who caught a dragonfly (I read somewhere that Joni wrote the song for Neil Young), I immediately thought of my friends Pastorius and Satriani. They had gone past the twenty seasons. This song has stopped telling their story a long time ago.

When I asked Pastorius

about Joni's *The Circle Game* and enthusiastically expressed my complete enchantment over that song, he simply said it is one of Joni's popular songs and that people play it during children's pre-school graduation. He added that he listens to Joni not because of it and that she has written far better songs. It was so Bourdieu. I knew what he was saying being the musician that he was. I had mainstream tastes. *Circle Game* was as far as my education could make me understand. In my mind I still believed pre-school graduation was the most fitting occasion for the song. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine what my painted pony looked like.

\* \* \*

*Dear Pastorius,*

*-By the way, do you remember that night at Caribana with Carlo and the three of us were making a list of the fifty books that we would take to the moon? It occurs to me now that what we were doing was forging our own canon. You know that the question of the canon is one very controversial issue. We were treading on highly*

*political ground. When we meet again, remind Carlo to bring that list. I need to count how many women, Asian and black writers we included in it. We need to discuss any form of marginalization that we shamelessly committed. We did vow to go over that list once a year.*

*Thank you for the Joni tapes that you gave me. I am waiting for more.*

*Ayvi*

\* \* \*

We were at a bar called Naked Ear, which was three blocks away from UST. This was a time when the peripheral areas of UST did not look like Malate yet. It was just one of those old tiny Sampaloc houses which was remade into a bar. Naked Ear was not a sleazy joint but it was not exquisite either. For Pastorius and Satriani, it was a museum. For me, it was the house of my decadence, one of the first few beer joints where I suffered my first bouts of inebriation.

It was really a museum though for on the walls of this lowly bar were framed black

and white photographs of earlier jazz masters. There was John Coltrane leaning on a stool with his alto saxophone in hand and Miles Davis in a very languid pose as if seducing his brass woman. You would be, in a drunken stupor, hunched over your beer and Ella Fitzgerald would be looking over your shoulder. Yes, we found ourselves transported back in time. Who could help it when just above Satriani's head would be Billie Holiday smiling down on you like a dark angel?

It was the music after all which we went there for. The jazz masters were not only pictures hung on the beige walls. Naked Ear was anachronistic and through it we got transported back into their world as we listened to them play their music, creating the illusion of the smoky jazz bars of old.

Naked Ear was also a lying-in clinic for me. It was in this place where John Coltrane fell on my lap like a shiny, slippery baby, newly-born and immaculate. It was Pastorius who wrote *India* on tissue and it was

he who gently tapped my shoulder and said, "Hey, listen to this one."

I saw snakes draped on the steps going up the mezzanine, snakes nudging at my feet as they slithered under me, snakes curling up on the ledge by the window. They were of all colors, blue and green and yellow, black and brown and red and of course, indigo...

I felt like Coltrane was just in one dark corner of Naked Ear blowing his life into the saxophone. I felt smoke purl on the floor like sea froth and curl around my legs like tiny wavelets. The music rose to my thighs and around my hips like rising tide. I swam that night in the rivers of Coltrane's *India*.

"They don't have it."

Pastorius' voice bounced off the liquid surface of my trance. He was saying he asked for another song but they could not play it because the compact disc was with the owner of the bar. He turned to me and said, "If you liked *India*, you might like *Hejira* better. It is by a woman." He flashed his knowing, but at

that time to me, rather condescending, semi-smile, proud to let me know that he had become well aware of my growing feminist sensibilities.

\* \* \*

What would my essentialist feminist sisters say if I tell them that my friend, Pastorius, a man, really knows my soul well? I know Hélène Cixous would not mind because Pastorius is one of the many sons of James Joyce, having read the whole of *Ulysses* and half of *Finnegan's Wake* and understood. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan parenthetically pointed out Cixous' observation, "It should be noted that for writers like Cixous, feminine writing also characterizes the work of male writers like Joyce."<sup>10</sup> And so when I said Pastorius understands my soul, I also meant my woman-soul.

I listened to the tape that Pastorius gave me as a going-away-again present. He said that side A of that tape was his "Hits" and that Side B of it was his "Misses". What he did was he, using the term quite

loosely, deconstructed the Joni Mitchell *Hits* and *Misses* albums and put together his own version.

I scanned the listing. *Hejira* was in his *Misses*. That meant Pastorius thought it should have been a hit if only people knew what to listen to or how to listen. And so I listened, intent on going beyond the *Circle-Game*-Joni-Mitchell that I knew. Perhaps I even listened too well and too hard....

It is magical how the first strains of the song enter your ear one after the other. First, your right ear. Then, your left. Then the music hits you as the notes, coming together, are measured by a plucked string and held by taps on drums struck from far away.

And then the words, or more aptly, the poetry starts flowing.

*I'm travelling in some vehicle*

*I'm sitting in some café*

*A defector from the petty wars*

*That shell shock love away*

I have associated bus rides with music. I have gone all the way to Nueva Vizcaya

with Sheryl Crow and farther North to Pangasinan with Enya. I even have crossed a sea and went to Palawan with Tori Amos. I have lived in Zamboanga with Tuck and Patti. Now here I am in Dumaguete with Joni Mitchell. It is not only the geographies that could designate the changes that have happened in me neither could the miles measure how far I have gone from who I had been. The music is the motif of my journeys and the singers are the bards of my stories.

In my travelling, I have been a deserter. I have hid in the buses, in the ships, in the planes. I have hid in the anonymity of being a stranger. I have run away from trivial battles that destroyed for me many beliefs, many friendships. Journeys necessitate loneliness. In loneliness, I have dodged pains.

*There's comfort in melancholy*

*When there's no need to explain*

*It's just as natural as the weather*

*In this moody sky today*

Clifford Chase, in his

article *Trouble Child*, wrote, "There are two kinds of people in the world: those who find Joni Mitchell depressing, and those who, already depressed, find her comforting."<sup>11</sup> I do not think I am depressed. I find in her simply, accuracy, and there is nothing depressing about accuracy. Melancholy is comforting. It is steady and even—and yes, oh yes, natural, like the weather.

*In our possessive coupling  
So much could not be expressed  
So now I'm returning to myself  
These things that you and I suppressed...*

We hold out from ourselves and from our families, lovers, and friends so much. It took the context of lesbian love to recognize how much we lose when we are not careful with how we express what we feel. For Hélène Cixous the body is the word. This idea is taken to its limit as Elizabeth Meese saw the difficulty in that equation. "There is no properly spoken body, no body properly speaking, it being always 'more' or 'less.' We speak it improperly

as an always imperfect translation, a bad match of flesh and word, but also as a violation of the law, its spirit if not its letter, identity and language."<sup>12</sup> What is possessive coupling but an ignorance of the difficulty of expression and interpretation. On both ends, the word-flesh never meets. Neither words nor touch could quite articulate the idea and neither the ears nor the skin could quite decipher what is needing to be said.

*You know it never has been easy  
Whether you do or you do not resign  
Whether you travel the breadth of extremities  
Or stick to some straighter line*

I have kept on telling everybody. Whether I stay with them or leave them, it is the same. I chose not to give up that which I owed myself and if it seemed to mean that it is them whom I have given up, then that means I have chosen the breadth of extremities and not the straighter line. In this era of extreme contradiction or extreme relativity, one can

barely distinguish oppositions. Jacques Derrida has deconstructed all dualities to be unities. The mere fact that taking the straighter line is as difficult a decision as going the breadth of extremities shows they are the same after all.

*I'm porous with travel fever  
But you know I'm so glad to be on my own  
Still somehow the slightest touch of a stranger  
Can set up trembling in my bones*

Maybe the thought that my journeys terrify me never occurred to them. Sometimes I reeled with the height or the expanse before me. During long bus rides I would sit sleeping and feverish, my head bobbing between sleep and wakefulness. Bus rides are like momentary paralyses, the body sleeps but the mind is awake. Yet for the body to awaken from a bad dream into new territory is the bliss I merit and the kind of joy that justifies me. And to alienate oneself deliberately from places or people welcomes familiarities that could never be described. In

intimacy, a kind of solace is lost. In my journeys, I find it in strangers.

*I know—no one's going to show me everything  
We all come and go unknown  
Each so deep and superficial  
Between the forceps and the stone*

If there is somebody who can show me everything, it is myself. They have their own lives. Do I still assume that they owe me anything? I have lost friends. They have come to me and I, to them, deeply. Now they have gone and I have gone, unknown. Sometimes I think of them and I can not remember. Sometimes I think of them and I mourn.

*Well I looked at the granite markers  
Those tribute to finality — to eternity  
And then I looked at myself here  
Chicken scratching for my immortality*

My friend Jupiter says that he wants to travel, just like me. But unlike me, he says he does not want to stay in one place for a long time. He says if some people go around look-

ing at churches, or resorts or hotels, he wants to tour cemeteries. Graves are sometimes granite markers, too. Finality? Eternity? It seems Joni does not want to be certain. Well, we shouldn't be. But how does one chicken scratch for immortality? I am pecking at metaphors, and lining them up like seeds.

*We're only particles of change I know, I know  
Orbiting around the sun  
But how can I have that point of view  
When I'm always bound and tied to someone*

Why does Joni insist on that phrase, "I know"? It must mean something. As Boris Eichenbaum, paraphrasing Osip Brik, wrote, "...repetition in verse is analogous to tautology in folklore, that is, that repetition in these instances plays some aesthetic role in its own right."<sup>13</sup> Is it a musical necessity, an expression of doubt and she needs to convince herself, a chant to make it come true? It has the same

reverberating, hypnotizing effect as Frost's *And miles to go before I sleep/ And miles to go before I sleep*. She repeats that phrase as a plea. We must believe her that we are miniscule entities thrown around by forces of the fickle universe. We must learn to move with these forces. Any relationship is contradictory to these energies, relationships need immobility and uniformity no matter what idealists would say.

*I'm travelling in some vehicle  
I'm sitting in some café  
A defector from the petty wars  
Until love sucks me back that way*

To come full circle, to return—and one can **only** know this if one has actually moved. Joni says, *some vehicle, some café*. Specificity can show affinity and one can not be attached if one knows that there is a need to come full circle.

In AD 622, Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina to evade persecution and that event ushered in the Muslim era, the Hejira. When I recall my reasons for leaving, I, too, feel like I have escaped persecution, that I have

journeyed to a more sympathetic place. But sometimes I think of T. S. Eliot tapping on my soul like a ghost saying, *We will never cease from exploration/ But the end of our journeys will be/ To arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time.*

\* \* \*

*I've got a blue motel room  
With a blue bedspread  
I've got the blues inside and outside my head  
Will you still love me  
When I call you up when I'm down...<sup>14</sup>*

The last time I visited Satriani, he was singing this song. I answered, "Of course I would still love you even if you, drunk and obnoxious, would call me at two o'clock in the morning." Even when I was still in Manila, Satriani would simply disappear for days and then would suddenly call me at home during the wee hours of the morning. We were friends after all. He bore the furtive glances from people who would mistake him for a cradle snatcher as he would give me a light hug. It was I

who converted him to vegetarianism, although since I left he had become a meat-eater as a means of spiting a previous relationship. He was my tutor in Jazz 101, the one who would translate the difficult language of jazz for me. With Satriani and me, we would always begin and end with Joni every time we met and parted and met and parted. Of us three, Joni was closest to him for he named his daughter Joni.

\* \* \*

Joni Mitchell was, foremost, a folk singer and even as she has made a crossover to jazz, the old Joni would of course never disappear. Satriani, Pastorius and I were literature majors after all and our affinity with Joni Mitchell was also because of her words, just like the affinity of literature with folk music.

Joni wrote songs about leaving, going somewhere, just somewhere... Don't we all have the *urge for going*? If only we are like ducks then we could fly south when winter comes. But we are wingless and we

have to do with the mere dream of summer all year long. Lorrie Moore has a story, *Lucky Ducks*.<sup>15</sup> It is about a gay couple going on a road trip and staying in a hotel where people gather around to wait for the ducks flying in for summer. Ducks would return to the same place and when the hotel was built, they continued to roost there. People made it into a tradition and even rolled out red carpets as soon as they knew the ducks would come flying in. Yes, there are lucky ducks and we are mere, unlucky people. See

*the geese...flapping and racing on before the snow... They got the urge for going and they got the wings so they could go...*<sup>16</sup>

If we could not fly away then maybe we could skate away but we would need a river for that. *Oh, I wish I had a river/ I could skate away on/ I wish I had a river so long/ I would teach my feet to fly...*<sup>17</sup>

\* \* \*

Joni's music was not only poetry, it could tell stories,

too. Joni sang my life in many ways, the way art would always almost inevitably feel like it singles us out from everybody else.

*I know you don't like weak women  
You get bored so quick  
And you don't like strong women  
'Cause they're hip to your tricks*<sup>18</sup>

I fell in love with one of those men who read and liked Norman Mailer. It would only be several years later that Kate Millet would warn me about Mailer and the men who love him: "Mailer's *An American Dream* is a rallying cry for a sexual politics in which diplomacy has failed and war is the last political resort of a ruling caste that feels its position in deadly peril."<sup>19</sup> I should have seen his lugging around *An American Dream* as a warning to the danger that would pounce on me. It seems that all of my love affairs were fought on the battlegrounds of politics. Like Joni, I had my James Taylors and Graham Nashes. I had my share of coyotes<sup>20</sup>, too.

*And we're dancing close and slow  
Now he's got a woman at home*

*He's got another woman down the ball...*

Yes, men are too often like coyotes. Women just have to stand up, brush their skirts and walk away. Ophelia Alcantara-Dimalanta has a poem about foregoing the risk of pain, better to be spared from loving, severing all bonds, cutting clean. *one is less bound to be broken, less bereaved, little violated.../ martyrs have such short shelf lives.*<sup>21</sup> From martyrdom to indifference, we just have to stop taking it too personally and see men the way Joni does. They are coyotes *jumping straight up and making passes/ He had those same eyes.* They just have to chase a prize down and treat you like a prey. I would have wanted to turn around and shoot my coyote in the face but I looked him in the eye instead, packed my bags and said:

*No regrets coyote  
I just get off up aways  
You just picked up a hitcher  
A prisoner of the white lines of the freeway.*

Although at times to be strong meant to be callous. One would think hurt people

are the last ones to inflict pain on others but no... There is the tendency to overdo fortifying one's defenses. As much as the worst men have hurt me, I have hurt the best of them.

*But I'm so hard to handle  
I'm selfish and I'm sad  
Now I've gone and lost the best baby  
That I ever had...  
Oh I wish I had a river  
I made my good baby say goodbye*<sup>22</sup>

\* \* \*

It is not just my stories though that Joni tells. In the three decades of her career she has told all our stories and commented on our histories. Joni has the eye for the ironic, the amusing and the tragic. In *The Sire of Sorrow*,<sup>23</sup> Joni sings the mind of Job, the most beloved and most unfortunate of God's sons.

*Let me speak, let me spit out my bitterness —  
Born of grief and nights without sleep and festering flesh  
Do you have eyes?  
Can you see what mankind sees?*

*Why have you soured and curdled me?  
Oh you tireless watcher! What  
have I done to you?  
That you make everything I dread  
and everything I fear come true?*

What this song does is to point out that we are all Jobs, punished by God and tortured by the forces of the world. The song reflects our fears that perhaps God does not care or that he never even bothers to listen. Joni stands out there in the open fields and dares the lightnings, *Tell me why do you starve the faithful! Why do you crucify the saints? And you let the wicked prosper...* This lone voice, this warrior that dares to speak out the sorrows of the world before God sums up what freethinkers of the past have taught us. The song, though, has a call and response structure. Between the lines are retorts from what Joni identifies as antagonists.

*Why give me light and then this  
dark without dawn?  
(Antagonists: Evil is sweet in your  
mouth  
Hiding under your tongue)*

People can not fully believe that they are good, that they have dignity worth the entire universe. There is the little voice, also a person's voice, that tells us we are evil, sinners, and that we are sires of sorrow and have no right to face God. Do we ask forgiveness from God? Louise Gluck defines forgiveness, *Do you know! what forgiveness means? It means! the world has sinned, the world! must be pardoned—*And to be pardoned, man must be punished first? And what is the sin, in the first place?

\* \* \*

*It may be that we shall  
even be able to retire sex from the  
harsh realities of politics, but not  
until we have created a world we  
can bear out of the desert we in-  
habit.*<sup>24</sup>

We may never know what is *humankind's* greatest sin but women can tell you *man's*. For Hélène Cixous: "Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their im-

mense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs."<sup>25</sup> It is true, the cruelest detractors of women are women—other women or themselves. But Joni, refusing to be destroyed, faced women's predicaments squarely as she sang songs which reflected her own life. In *Magdalene Laundries*,<sup>26</sup> she comes so close to her own life as she sang the story of a twenty-seven year old woman who got pregnant out of wedlock. Joni got pregnant in her early twenties and gave up the child, her daughter, for adoption. Joni bravely sings her story, women's stories, *Branded as a jezebel! I knew I was not bound for Heaven! I'd be cast in shame! Into the Magdalene Laundries.* It is in the *Magdalene Laundries* where women are *trying to get things white as snow.*

Pregnancy is a seeding. Men do not only seed. They could plow through your body, too. In *Not to Blame*<sup>27</sup>, Joni speaks to a wife-beater, *The story hit the news! From coast to*

*coast! They said you beat the girl! You loved the most.*<sup>28</sup> When a woman gets bruised or bleeds, the reaction would be it is her fault and she deserved it. Joni became that woman in her song and she refused to merely receive all the blows, *I bleed — / for your perversity —! These red words that make a stain! On your white-washed claim that! She was out of line! And you were not to blame.*

\* \* \*

Clifford Chase<sup>29</sup> wrote a deeply personal essay about Joni Mitchell and the history of his sadness. While I read his essay, I felt like I was comforting one of my gay friends, cradling his head on my lap and finding solace in each other. Joni's songs passed between people's relationships and separations. Chase mentioned about coming across a Joni Mitchell line in an obituary:

*Jim.*  
*"Show them you won't expire  
not till you burn up every passion  
not even when you die."  
—the Other Jim.*

Clifford puts the feeling into words for both of us, *a pleasure so private and so out of style that I wouldn't have dreamed anyone else shared it...* It is through her music that people, complete strangers to each other, find a raw connection.

Icons come and go or have never seemed to come or go at all. What many gays and lesbians today don't know is what Chase discovered himself, that "Lots of fags still love her. And dykes, too. They're [We're] her most loyal fans." Joni crossed barriers. She lived poor and she lived rich. She painted herself as Van Gogh and got on the cover of her album as a black man.<sup>30</sup> She could be woman, man, gay or lesbian, *I see something of myself in everyone! Just at this moment of the world*<sup>31</sup>

Chase saw Joni as a gay icon. He enumerated songs which to him had gay content. Yet the most lucid of all his stories was about an impersonation of Joni which was done by an actor during a gay rights demonstration. The last song was *Woodstock*.

*We are stardust  
We are golden  
And we've got to get ourselves  
Back to the garden*

*By the time we got to Wigstock  
We were half a million strong  
And everywhere there was song and  
celebration...*

*And I dreamed I saw the drag  
queens  
And they were all dressed up like  
maids  
And they had the cure for AIDS  
Across every nation*

Chase wrote:

*It began to rain again...  
I held back tears, putting up my  
umbrella. My brother had been sick  
maybe a year now; he was dy-  
ing.... Everything has intersected  
in that hushed moment, just before  
the rain began: my old love for the  
song; my slightly ironic love for it  
now; and the new, daily sadness  
that this music might now soothe.*

*She had gone thoroughly out  
of style, in part, because introspec-  
tion went thoroughly out of style...  
But grief is private as well as  
political... And anyway, Joni has  
kept on singing all these years...*

*somehow she kept going, she made  
it through these waves...*

Yes, Clifford Chase is right. Joni Mitchell would always manage to mutate so as to fit in, remain significant even in the queerest circumstances. Sometimes, I would listen to *Both Sides Now* and chuckle thinking that if deconstructionists<sup>32</sup> would have an anthem, this would be it.

*I've looked at life from both sides  
now  
From win and lose  
And still somehow  
It's life's illusions I recall  
I really don't know life at all...*

\* \* \*

*No mercy Sweet Jesus!  
No mercy from Turbulent Indigo.*

Joni has a pet cat by the name of Nietzsche. Even as she had been one of those who were anti-intellectual, she could never quite learn how to be in-

ane. An interview proved that Nietzsche was not only her cat as she quoted from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, "the poet is the vainest of the vain... he muddies his waters that he may appear deep."

Sometimes I would go around town with Joni Mitchell singing for me, and only for me and I would have a certain look on my face. It is difficult to describe one's face. Joni had to use Van Gogh's self-portrait to be able to know the expression on her own face. Maybe it is Van Gogh who knows about faces....

In the end, what have I gathered? My stories, my metaphors, my soul, and all the colorful people who have helped me muddy the waters. Was there really a theory, a philosophy, an art that could put order in chaos? What about Joni's art? Nah, Joni's *Turbulent Indigo* thrives in it. In the confusion and anguish, one must never beg for mercy.





## Notes

<sup>1</sup> From Joni Mitchell's *Turbulent Indigo* (1994)

<sup>2</sup> See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "The Madwoman in the Attic" (1980), in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998) Most theories were taken from this anthology. According to Gilbert and Gubar, men have forged "mythic masks... over her [a woman's] expressive face both to lessen their dread of her 'inconstancy' and by identifying her with the 'eternal types' they have themselves invented to possess her more thoroughly."

<sup>3</sup> See Simone de Beauvoir, "Myths: Of Women in Five Authors," in *Feminist Literary Criticism* p. 1087.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Ozick, "Puttermesser Paired," in *Fictions*, ed. Joseph F. Trimmer and C. Wade Jennings, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994) p. 947-81.

<sup>6</sup> See Joni Mitchell site <http://www.jonimitchell.com/Vogue.html>

<sup>7</sup> From Bourdieu, "Distinction," p. 1029.

<sup>8</sup> See Bakhtin, "Rabelais and His World," p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> The war on and of the canons is a highly controversial direction which literary criticism has wisely taken.

<sup>10</sup> From Rivkin and Ryan, "Feminist Paradigms" p. 530.

<sup>11</sup> From <http://jonimitchell.com/TroubleChildPart1.html>

<sup>12</sup> From Elizabeth Meese, "When Virginia Looked at Vita, What Did She See; Or, Lesbian : Feminist : Woman - What's the Differ(e/a)nce?," in *Feminisms*, p. 468

<sup>13</sup> Boris Eichenbaum, "Introduction to the Formal Method." Eichenbaum discusses repetition in verse by focusing on alliteration, rhythm, or generally the musicality of the verse. The way they are seeing how poetry's meaning relies on sound is quite obvious in music, how a phrase repeated, with variation in tone or not, holds the meaning in its melody and not in its imagery only.

<sup>14</sup> From *Blue Motel Room*

<sup>15</sup> Published in *Harper's* (March 1998)

## YOUNG WRITERS AND THE TRADITION IN PHILIPPINE SHORT FICTION IN ENGLISH: DOES THE FORCE EXIST OR IS THE JEDI COUNCIL PULLING OUR LEGS?

Timothy R. Montes

### ABSTRACT

*The paper tackles the problematic of establishing a definable Tradition for the Philippine short story in English. From the point of view of a creative writer, establishing a tradition in the genre is as fuzzy as defining the Force in Star Wars.*

*The canon in Philippine short story in English was established by the academe and young fiction writers, most of them college-educated, emerged from the country's institutions of higher learning. Nevertheless, despite the consensus that several short story writers are significant, creative writers themselves are wary of defining the tradition in this genre. Of more relevant concern is how young writers can break away from the Anglo-American tradition of modernism in fiction. The paper ends with the answers of three contemporary young writers to questions about their awareness of a literary tradition in the genre they are working in.*

### Tradition: The Phantom Menace

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away there were young warrior-writers who, before they could learn to master the Force (or what writing workshops now call The Craft, yes, something as mysterious as Witchcraft), had to apprentice themselves to Jedi-Literary

Masters. A young writer, perhaps a little bit older than Anakin Skywalker, had to stand in the middle of the Jedi Council (in a scene reminiscent of a writers workshop) and prove to the Masters that he (or she—although feminists have not yet deconstructed Star Wars for after all Princess Leia was the twin sister of Luke and could become a Jedi instead of

a princess) had the Force, that he was the Chosen One. After being accepted into the literary priesthood, a young warrior-writer had to go through a long, arduous training to make him master the Force. (In fact, he had to finish a masters degree in creative writing.) But first a Jedi master like Obi-wan Kenobi or Yoda the Yul-Brynnner-Ears had to take him under his wings—a writer had to study under the Tiempos of Silliman or Arcellana and NVM Gonzalez of the University of the Philippines to learn how to use the light-saber (although in this case the instrument had to be as modest as the pen).

The Force, The Force—it was a mysterious energy that permeated the Universe, and a warrior-writer had to live and breathe the miasma of it until its very rhythm became second nature to him. What was It? Did It exist or was it merely an old wives'—no, to be politically precise, George Lucas'—tale? For the Force was a Presence that was an Absence, and Darth Vader had more of it compared to Luke Skywalker. A warrior had to master the Force or else

without literary training in the academe under a Jedi Master, he would end up selling scraps of iron on a desert planet all his life. Or if he up and left without finishing his training like what Luke Skywalker did in *The Empire Strikes Back*, a warrior would end up on the Dark Side—a Black Hole that sucked in the literary incompetents into the whirlpool of oblivion.

But then some strange things began to happen. The Jedi Masters started to die one by one—first it was Bienvenido Santos, then Edilberto Tiempo followed by Jose Garcia Villa and NVM Gonzalez. The old order was passing away and the new breed of warriors discovered that there was a less medieval order existing in the universe—their world was changing. The narrative archetype of Baldo riding on a carabao cart as he drove into the sunset of Nagrebcan or of Lupo and the river was being supplanted by surface images from MTV, pop songs, and, yes, movies like *Star Wars*. In a way, the Force, whatever it was, was losing its mythico-religious character, perhaps because the Deconstructionists were gnaw-

ing away at the foundations of the Jedi order.

It is into this world that the young warrior-writer enters. His name is Anakin Skywalker—"wild, precocious young talent, disapproved of by the Council, and destined to bring doom and ruination through his misuse of the Force"<sup>1</sup>—and we have the primal battle between the old and the young, between light and darkness, or, in the words of T.S. Eliot, between "tradition and the individual talent."

#### The Use of Force

In last year's conference, I mentioned the word "tradition" in a more positive light. It did not carry the dark connotations of "the Force" in *Star Wars*. I associated it with another word: *agon*—a writer's imaginary dialogue, a struggle, a conversation, a wrestling—with writers from the past. It was T.S. Eliot who wrote in his influential essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919) that tradition was the force to reckon with for any writer. He said that if young writers worth their salt want to continue writing beyond their

twenty-fifth year, they have to develop a sense of history, of tradition. Young writer can begin writing in their teens from a host of motives—to win a Palanca, to get the attention of a classmate in Introduction to Poetry, to preserve childhood memories, to be inspired by early Joyce: "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." But young writers are apt to lose steam and fall along the wayside if they rely on romantic, adolescent obsessions alone. One simply outgrows them when the sordid realities of life overtake him: marriage, work, payment of insurance—what philistines call "reality." Eliot's prescription was for the writer to take the long view: in his case he carried on an agon with the past, with the Western Canon. Eliot was carrying on an artistic dialogue with his predecessors—Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, Wordsworth, etc. "No poet," according to him, "no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists."<sup>2</sup>

There is therefore something darkly onerous about this concept of tradition

by Eliot. The burden of literary excellence, of obeisance to the golden past, can be unnerving when he wrote that "...the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this *will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.*"<sup>3</sup> In this case, since the yardstick has been established by the past, the contemporary young writer has to take the responsibility of critical judgment by the standards of the past. It is as if our predecessors were millionaires who have bequeathed such accumulated wealth to us and we can not afford to lose that inheritance in the money market of free enterprise. The past, therefore, can be an object of imitation, of inspiration, or of derision by contemporary young writers. It behooves us to have the gall to say: "Dear literary idols Nick Joaquin, Greg Brillantes, and Kerima Polotan—I am singing a different song and dancing to a different beat but I am not afraid to be subjected to a police line-up with you." (Of peripheral concern for the writer

these days is the ascendancy of literary theories which interrogate aesthetics to a discourse of power based on class, race, and gender; it is getting to be more and more difficult to hang on to the old standards of sublimity in the works of the past without dragging politics into the arena.)

There is therefore an ambivalent attitude among young writers like me towards the juxtaposition of the label "young writer" with the semantically fuzzy word "tradition." Sure, many of us are enthusiastic interpreters of the stories by Nick Joaquin, Kerima Polotan, and Greg Brillantes to our undergraduate literature classes every year. (Most young writers, if they are not into teaching, are into advertising or journalism.) So we cannot help but feel like featherweights to these Muhammad Alis of literature: they know how to float like a butterfly and sting like a bee, while we make hit-and-miss shots at the Palanca or the Free Press or

### Graphic Awards.

But in a way Eliot was right. A sense of tradition can be a source of direction for us young writers in the same way that political/religious conservatives, instead of being portrayed as ugly villains with outmoded ideas and values, are actually the guiding force behind the efforts of young liberals and radicals. Young rebels and iconoclasts do not just foment revolutions and instigate innovations—they must, in the first place, have something to rebel *against*. Tradition is the tapping board in our basketball ring without which our ball will seldom get back to us for a literary rebound. It provides resistance, guidance, new shooting angles for games we want to play in our own way. This is perhaps what Cesar Ruiz Aquino had in mind when he described his teacher Edilberto Tiempo this way: "He was establishment, we were future shock."

### The Academe, The Canon, and the Problem Of Establishing Tradition

"Young writing in the Philippines today," begins Bienvenido Lumbera in an address to the First Iligan Writers Workshop, "is largely a production of the academe."<sup>4</sup> I agree. But more than the influence of school-based writing workshops, creative writing centers, and the emergence of student literary journals, is the fact that it is in schools, especially in institutions of higher learning, where most young Filipinos get their first taste of Philippine short stories in English. For most students who grew up with Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew and Sidney Sheldon and Danielle Steele, a college course in Philippine literature is usually their first time to get acquainted with the writers of their own country. (For my part, my encounter with the Palanca canon came earlier; the Palanca Foundation donated a whole set of anthology to the small library of my high school in Samar.) How many young writers today were

inspired into writing in college after their first reading of *Dead Stars* by Paz Marquez Benitez, *May Day Eve* by Nick Joaquin, or *The Witch* by Edilberto Tiempo? Not a few student writers start out as imitators of F. Sionil Jose after discovering him in the college library. (Pity those schools without a respectable Filipiniana section.)

The influence of college courses in Philippine literature in English to the emergence of new writers cannot be underestimated. And yet when we make a cursory survey of the titles in college textbooks, we cannot help but notice a certain kind of parochialism in the choice of selections: the textbook used at the University of Santo Tomas has large dollops of selections written by graduates of the school, while University of the Philippines and Silliman University and De La Salle University have their own gallery of writers to highlight. This has resulted in a less catholic, less varied line-up of selections. Students at University Santo Tomas are exposed to the stories of Wilfrido Nollado, but students in

Mindanao are ignorant of him. Sinai Hamada's *Tanabata's Wife* is studied in Baguio schools but not in the Visayas, in the same way that Anthony Tan's *The Cargo*, a wonderful story set in Muslim Mindanao, is largely unknown to many students.

There are, however, stories which are taken up by most, if not all, schools but it is risky to group them under one umbrella and label it as a definitive canon.<sup>5</sup> The pedagogical consensus seems to agree on the importance of stories like *Dead Stars*<sup>6</sup> by Paz Marquez Benitez, *May Day Eve* by Nick Joaquin, *The Virgin* or *The Sounds of Sunday* by Kerima Polotan, and *Faith, Love, Time & Dr. Lazaro* by Gregorio Brillantes. It is not therefore surprising to note that Joaquin, Polotan, and Brillantes are often cited by young writers as their favorites.

Nowadays, having been subjected to a regional Balkanization by a recent Commission on Higher Education memorandum, the domain of Philippine short stories in English is getting smaller and smaller. The course

in Philippine literature I took fifteen years ago was called "Survey of Philippine Literature in English," and in one semester I was introduced to the stories by Benitez, Villa, Daguio, Rotor, Santos, Tiempo, Polotan, Joaquin, Cordero Fernando, Arcellana, Gonzalez, and a host of other writers. By the time I started teaching, the subject was changed to "Contemporary Philippine Literature" and the sense of literary tradition was lost in the unclear definition of what "contemporary" exactly meant and the teacher was free to choose his or her own favorites from among the living writers of our country. Recently this course has been changed into a subject which emphasizes the plural case—"Philippine literature[s]"—where stories in English have been pared down to three or five selections in a semester, stories that share the same room, cheek-by-jowl, with Tagalog and other regional writings. I am not sure yet how this will affect the sense of literary tradition among our students and would-be fictionists

in English especially now that the Palanca Foundation also stopped publishing anthologies of the prize-winning stories in English.

But of this I am sure: young writers serious enough to go about learning the craft will find a way to get acquainted with the works of their literary forebears. At a time when a course called "The Tradition of Fiction" is required of all literature and creative writing majors, it would be worthwhile to develop a lateral, comprehensive reading list for writing students in order to make them feel the firmness of the ground on which they stand. This tradition of fiction should be capacious enough to be able to embrace the best stories in English written in the past. And along this line I think of the two-volume *Philippine Short Stories* (1925-1950) edited by Leopoldo Yabes<sup>7</sup>, *the Anthology of Palanca Award-Winning Stories* (1950-1975) edited by Kerima Polotan, and, a more recent project, *The Likhaan Book of Fiction and Poetry* (1995-1996) undertaken by the University of the Phil-

ippines Creative Writing Center.<sup>8</sup> Young writers who are impressed by a story written by particular writers in an anthology will not be contented with a single helping; they will look for other stories written by these writers, read their collections of stories, or even their whole *oeuvre*.

Worth noting here is the presence of a lacuna, a gap in the chronological continuity of the tradition of fiction in English. There is a gaping silence between 1975-1994. During Martial Law, even as the Palanca contest continued, there was no publication of "best of" anthologies so that the generation that came after Polotan and Brillantes is largely unknown to the young writers today. This is perhaps the reason why young Jedi-warriors are not in awe anymore of the people sitting in Writers Workshops; they may even doubt the artistic ascendancy of these unknown second-liners. The aspiring writers who start writing in college will have read Joaquin, Polotan, Arcellana, Tiempo, Jose, and Gonzalez but not

Dalisay, Deriada, Susan Lara, Charlson Ong, Alfred Yuson, or Connie Maraán simply because their undergraduate teachers did not take up their stories in class. Maybe if they decide to pursue a graduate degree in creative writing, these student will get to meet these writers before they will have read them. Worth noting, too, perhaps, is the absence of the *enfants terribles* of the 60s and 70s—Wilfredo Pascua Sanchez, Cesar Ruiz Aquino, and Erwin Castillo. Except for Alfred Yuson, these writers who rode the wave of postmodernism have been ignored by academia.

I discovered Erwin Castillo, for example, when I was already in graduate school. He wrote amazing stories like the Free Press Award-winning "Ireland" while he was still in his teens during the early seventies. When I finally got to meet him in the early 90s—graying hair, garrulous voice, and heavy-drinking as Hemingway—this owner of an advertising agency was trying to get back to writing after a 20-year silence. Feeling like a

child abandoned by his father, I asked him why they (his generation) stopped writing. Joaquin, Polotan, and Brillantes were our literary grandparents but I felt that we were deprived of the guidance of the generation that came before us. The Jedi warriors of the 1960s and 70s seemed to have gone over to the Dark Side. Erwin's answer to my question, of course, was "Martial Law," the Evil Empire. ("Marcos was a most fantastic character no fiction can come up to." At heart, with the collapse of the division between fiction and reality, Erwin was still faithful to the spirit of postmodernism.) But the happy thing about this delay in their writing and publication was that many of them from that generation—Erwin, Ninotchka Rosca, Cesar Aquino—have gone back to writing; those who were supposed to be part of the pantheon of tradition have also become our contemporaries in the 80s and 90s. We are, in a way, playing basketball with our fathers and the game has become more challenging. The

last time I drank beer with Erwin, he was still nursing with his bottle the resistance to the tradition of realism in fiction writing. "The trouble with Greg [Brillantes]," he said without losing that edge of respect for an elder, "is that he plays it safe. He is afraid to go farther, to explore the unexplored." Erwin never made it to the ranks of the Masters and here he was in his forties, still a Jedi knight respecting the past while resisting it. Now I hear he is writing a novel set in the future, carrying on an agon with his literary forebears, trying to out-Pynchon Pynchon.

#### Apologetics, Polemics, Problematics

This leads me to the problematics involved in the writing of Philippine short stories in English. Philippine writing in English is hounded by the question: What is Filipino about our stories in English? Is it a question of language? Is it a matter of sensibility and style? Is it the material? For whom are we writing? This constellation of political questions are often hurled at us by

some critics who consider us a dying breed of priests in a dying religious order, still murmuring prayers in a dead language under our breath.

But I do not want to indulge in apologetics and polemics. My concern is with how porous, how prone to cross-fertilization, how transnational in influence fiction writing in English can be. In the first place, the form is very Western and the aesthetics that go along with the genre were established by Americans and Europeans. In the Philippines, many of the literary masters of the genre studied, and even taught, in American schools—Santos, the Tiempos, NVM Gonzalez, and, in our own time, Butch Dalisay. Writing workshops like the ones in the University of the Philippines and Dumaguete were patterned after the one in the University of Iowa from where many of our literary luminaries graduated. Inevitably the Filipino fiction writers in English do not only fix their eyes on their native coast; the waters that come to shore, they notice, also come from foreign

lands. And yet, despite the fact that Kerima Polotan was influenced by the writing of Carson McCullers, or NVM Gonzalez by Hemingway, or Gregorio Brillantes by James Joyce and Graham Greene, this does not make their work less Filipino than, say, the works of Amado Hernandez. The tradition we follow carries with it heavy influences from the West and our literary education in the academe is steeped in reading from the Western Canon, not to mention our favorite contemporary authors from Britain, the U.S. or Canada which we may read without the blessings of our teachers.

No wonder then that Butch Dalisay, in his introduction to the most recent anthology of young short story writers, described us this way: "True, their inspirations remain largely Western; but even the Western writers they look up to are dissident voices, or remakers of the form. Perhaps more tellingly, many of these young writers seem to know little about, and have little to do with, Southeast Asia and its culture, or—except for the very

highly-educated—with the classical and historical past.

"Their politics will be bourgeois-liberal. . . . Their locales and sensibilities are overwhelmingly urban, even cross-continental. They are generally well-schooled, well-read, and well-traveled, which lends their work a certain consciousness of form, a de-liberation of design."<sup>9</sup>

As to the language "question" (for I do not think it is a "problem") most of us just go ahead and write in English because we feel we write best in it. Or if we want to have a critical shield against the criticism of elitism of our writing in English, we now go to post-colonial theories that claim we can strike back at the Evil Empire of Anglo-American history and tradition—we shape their language according to our native sensibility and purposes. This is perhaps the most challenging aspect of contemporary writing in English: to interrogate not only the past but even the language itself. If we have to believe in Gemino Abad, we are whacking away at the forest to make a native clearing within the language and this departure is signaled by the new label "Philippine literature *from*

English," not *in* English.

Another challenge facing the young writers in English has something to do with how to break away from the Anglo-American tradition of modernism in fiction. Bien Lumbera, noting the prevalence of the Western standards of literary excellence in our schools, calls for "the subversion of the academe." The modernist tradition which greatly influences the young writers earnestly toiling at their graduate degrees in creative writing at the University of the Philippines, Ateneo, Silliman, or La Salle ought to be broken from these traditional constraints in order for the writer to find an authentic voice. "[It] might be worthwhile to ponder," Lumbera said, "the ways by which a Westernized academe had determined the norms by which the canon of Philippine literature has been constructed. Writers using English as their medium ought to be specially concerned about this problem. . . . [and] face up to the questions it raises: "To what extent has the Filipino writer, whether writing in English or

in the vernacular, allowed himself/herself to be constrained or constricted by norms imposed by encounters in college with creative and critical works from the U.S. or England?"<sup>10</sup>

Although I heartily agree with this injunction, this can also be problematic because the artistic expression of "Filipino-ness" when it comes to our short stories in English can be varied and multifarious to be contained in a particular norm. Many young writers, for example, dream of getting published in America, of studying there, even of participating in the diaspora. Filipino writers based in America have come up with their own workshops and launched their own anthologies which explore cultural borders. If they follow a certain tradition in our literature, it would be the tradition of exilehood explored by Ben Santos and Carlos Bulosan.

I believe, though, that as the young writers try to plot the coordinates of their aesthetics and politics, their own search for authenticity will make them confront and redefine tradition, whatever that may be. The anti-western,

postcolonial decentering project calls for a new aesthetics, but only the writers will determine their direction as they slash through the thicket to create the native clearing within the English language.

#### Kuwarta o Bayong?

After so many qualifications and divagations, we go back to the question "Does the Force exist or is Tradition merely a critical mumbo-jumbo?" *Kuwarta o bayong?*

I asked the help of seven young fiction writers in English to answer this millennium question. Of the seven, three responded. Of the three, only one made the claim that there is a Tradition in Philippine Short Fiction in English. One wrote an essay; the other two answered the questions point by point. I will end this paper with their answers to my questions to introduce the new voices emerging from the literary carnival.

#### Question 1:

*Do you think there is a tradition in Philippine short fiction in Eng-*

*lish? How would you describe this tradition? Which Filipino short story writers have influenced you and which of them would you include in the canon?*

#### Anne-Marie Jennifer Eligio<sup>11</sup>:

There is no tradition. Filipino short story writers who have influenced me are Brillantes, Polotan, Dalisay. I would include them in the canon.

#### Gad S. Lim<sup>12</sup>:

I think there is a globalization, maybe? Krip Yuson had a similar evaluation in his column roughly, I think, two weeks ago.

The writers I like (I tradition and, outside of Valentine romances, is probably one of the most vibrant among the different streams of Philippine literature today. Credit would not dare claim influence since that would mean their works produced some definitive change in my own. Or in some cases, claiming Arguilla, Greg Brillantes, Kerima Polotan. I might be missing one woman author here, or maybe not. After them, maybe Nick Joaquin

(influence might sound as if you are putting yourself on the same level. Doesn't help them any, only myself.) include Bienvenido Santos, Manuel because it would be a sin to omit), GCF [Gilda Cordero Fernando]. Surely not, though maybe this you should omit, F. Sionil Jose (why him who gets Random House to publish his books? Can't figure it out.) This you didn't ask, but I'll say it anyway. Bienvenido Santos I like for his sad, melancholy, sentimental strain. Santos, Arguilla, Polotan for a vaguely romantic strain that is probably everywhere in Philippine lit (ah! *Dead Stars*, the flowers bloom in unchanging freshness, the dear dead loves of vanished youth!), Brillantes for the place of faith in his fiction. For some reason, I think Philippine fiction in English had its heyday in the 60s, maybe until politics changed things in the 70s. We probably haven't produced anything since which has a grand view of man, stories which deal with issues of import, universal experiences, etc. After the moon, where else?

#### Question 2:

*How do you situate yourself in that*

*tradition? Do you feel you belong to that tradition or do you feel like breaking it?*

Eligio:

Since there is no tradition, I don't feel I belong to anything.

Lim:

I would like to think that I write, or at least try to write, stories like those from that past time. Maybe for that reason I feel I do not belong with people who chronologically are of my generation. I do not particularly care about post-modern topics or concerns, and am maybe beginning to develop a bias against certain kinds of technology. Is this a kind of rebellion?

On another hand, for the longest time I consciously decided not to write Filipino-Chinese stories. At that time I felt it would marginalize me, and keep me away from the mainstream of Philippine literature. I don't think Charlson Ong will or can escape it, though he is trying. There is not much of a Filipino-Chinese tradition in Philippine lit. So, if ever, I was not "rebellious" from a literary

tradition but from an ethnic-racial one.

I did write my first Filipino-Chinese story in 1998, and my thesis adviser (I'm working on a collection of stories now) thinks it's the best story I have ever written. I wonder what that means? Is that where I belong? My own answers to this question should be clearer in a few weeks, as I work on and write on.

*Question 3:*

*Aside from Filipino fiction writers, what other cultural influences have affected your writing? Which foreign authors have influenced or inspired you? Have foreign writers become more influential to you compared to Filipino writers?*

Eligio:

There were several cultural influences. Mostly these were from the many racial and social distinctions of people I met in books I read. They are Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, D.H. Lawrence. Yes, I can say that foreign writers became more influential than Filipino writers, especially since the first "serious" books I read were

highly Western influenced.

Lim:

Culture is such a big word, and I think it would not be wise for me to say that I've figured out the different threads that have wrapped around me. Foreign authors? Updike wrote a whole series of Maple stories, and I like the idea of interlinked stories (B.N. Santos' *You Lowly People* was also a collection of such stories.) Most of my stories have companion sequels. Does this mean my stories are incomplete and so I need another installment? Read a lot of E.B. White in college. (Not a fiction writer.) Like Dante a lot, (maybe for the Beatrice romance angle). Graham Greene I like, maybe for the faith angle. Foreign writers are maybe beginning to influence me more now. Have been reading a lot of short fiction from *The Best American Stories* series, from other collections, the *New Yorker*, people who have been in Iowa, etc. I think I have recently set a goal of publishing in the United States, so I have been reading up to see what flavor there is.

*Question 4:*

*What can you say about the allegation that Filipino writing in*

*English is elitist?*

Eligio:

I agree that Filipino writing in English is elitist. Writing in that second language has become the privilege of the highly educated and those who have attended prestigious schools. Often, writers are "judged" according to their grammar and not according to their work's essence.

Lim:

If ever it was, I would not really mind. No one can target all audiences. Erap for a long time catered only to his adoring masses. Whynot accuse him or a reverse elitism?

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**By the Light from Extinguished Stars: Writing Philippine Short Fiction From English**  
*An essay by*

**Luis Joaquin Katigbak<sup>13</sup>**

People tend to refer to the "Tradition" of Philippine



Short Fiction in English—or from English, to borrow a notion from Gemino Abad—as if there is a huge body of work with a definable set of common traits. In fact, what they are usually referring to is a vast union of all the stories we have gleaned from English ever since Paz Marquez published *Dead Stars*. One would be hard put to identify an actual tradition—from generation to generation—in the history of Philippine Short Fiction in English. (Let's call it PSFE for short).

Even a cursory examination of the grand sweep of PSFE will reveal a startling diversity: a diversity of styles, of underlying tenets, of subject matter. I don't believe there are "schools" of writing as such in the history of PSFE—there are the famous arguments like Villa's "Art for art's sake" versus Arguilla's "Writing for a better society, and there are legendary writers' groups such as The Ravens and the Veronicans—but it's hard to label a specific writer's output as belonging, or being excluded from, a single particular tradition. Is Francisco

Arcellana "traditional"? He is widely lauded and recognized, he is a National Artist, but his prose works from decades ago are still more experimental, more playful, than much of what is being written—and ignored—today.

One could also equate Tradition with The Canon—namely, with a group of writers or works deemed by the powers that be to be Essential, as being the only writers or works worthy of critical attention. However, I have to admit that the idea of a canon does not sit well with me. I disagree with the idea that there exists a strictly defined, inviolate set to which all "valid" works belong. I will not deny the usefulness of a canon, in terms of drawing attention to certain works, and of defining one's standards—but there should not be an inflexible "Canon" with a capital C. There should be a wide array of personal "Best-of" lists—a whole armory of canons, if you will excuse the horrendous pun. Every teacher (actually, every reader) has his or her own personal ideas about which writ-

ers and works are worthy of attention and which are not.

My own list of essential Filipino short story writers would include Francisco Arcellana, Gregorio Brillantes, Jose Y. Dalisay, and Kerima Polotan. These are the writers I continue to reread, and recommend to others. I do not know if they have had a discernable influence on my writing—I do not consciously try to emulate their work—but they have certainly been inspirations. Also noteworthy is Gina Apostol, whose *Bibliolepsy* was the last Filipino novel I thoroughly enjoyed.

In a broader sense, of course, our writing is influenced by the very age we live in, by everything we take in—by our knowledge of current events, by the TV shows we watch, the conversations we have. "Input equals influences." We are influenced by CNN, MTV, NU 107, the Internet. And, of course, by the works of foreign authors. Another personal "Best-Of" list follows: Jorge Luis Borges, Truman Capote, Haruki Murakami, Renata Adler, and

James Thurber. I do not know if you can compare levels of influence—certainly I read more works by foreign authors simply because of the sheer amount of worthwhile books that are out there—but while foreign authors show me what can be done with the English language, local writers show me what can be done with that selfsame language here, in this country, fused with our histories and sensibilities.

And so we are all significantly influenced, in subtle or obvious ways, by local writers of days past and by our own contemporaries. However, in a very real sense (going back to the question of our local "tradition"), perhaps because PSFE is still a comparatively "young" phenomenon, or because as writers and readers in English we are constantly reacting and being enamored of such a huge number of movements and schools of thought from a number of different milieus, it seems that every Filipino writer who writes in English constitutes his or her own tradition. As young writers, we are rarely subjected to such onerous com-

parisons as "He's the new NVM Gonzalez!" or "She's continuing the tradition of Kerima Polotan!"

The easiest and most practical way for any practicing local writer to "situate" himself, I believe, is quite simply, chronologically. "I am one of a number of Filipinos under the age of forty writing short fiction in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century." Boring, but accurate—and it is a statement that does not set limitations on our writing.

Of course one can always identify similarities, parallels. However, to tell oneself that one is continuing a tradition of experimental wordplay as defined by Arcellana, or a tradition of stark realistic stories as defined by Arguilla is to perhaps constrain (or, on the other hand, delude) oneself. Let the critics decades from now "situate" us, if they have to, or are at all inclined to—that is not our job. Feeling that one belongs, or is excluded, from a tradition should not, in the end, affect one's desire to write what one wants to write. And that is what it's all about.

Which brings us to my next notion. There may not be a strictly defined "Tradition" per se—but there is definitely a local literary establishment. The membership of this establishment (established writers, editors and others) may fluctuate, but they always possess considerable influence in the literary community. I believe that literary paralysis is not necessarily caused by the sense that unless one writes like a dead writer (or a living, multi-awarded one) that one's works will be denied publication, recognition, validity. I am not bothered so much by the thought that Nick Joaquin, through his undeniably remarkable output of short fiction, set the bar for writing in English so high that I cannot reach it. Rather, I am bothered by the thought that if I write, say, a story with science-fiction elements, it will automatically be denied "serious" attention by most editors or literary-contest judges. It is this, I believe, that the young writer instinctively feels like rebelling against: this notion that one has to conform to a set of

standards that one may violently disagree with.

Again, though, nothing can really stop one from writing what one wants to write. To sum up (and, in a roundabout way, address your last question too), let me join two of my favorite quotations—one from Francisco Arcellana and one from NVM Gonzalez, to create a mantra for myself and for anyone else who is also trying to tell stories: "Write the story that only you can write, and don't worry about the language."

### Conclusion

My foregoing correspondence with other young Filipino fictionists confirms the problematic of establishing a tradition. We seem to have read (and even admire) the same Filipino writers and yet we also refuse to make the claim that this list of best-ofs constitutes a Tradition. These literary predecessors (a more apt term) can be considered more from the point of view of inspiration than from a critical

paradigm of continuity/discontinuity.

Tradition, I feel, should not be viewed as a chronological parade of great works—from *Dead Stars* by Benitez to *Penmanship* by Dalisay. The Mindoro of N.V.M. Gonzalez and the Tarlac of Brillantes are two different worlds which cannot be lumped together under one school, movement, or period. And even if the new generation of short story writers in English read more foreign than Filipino writers, they cannot be faulted with not having read their literary forebears.

In the post-Jedi order, young Filipino fictionists, despite the necessary egotism that sustains artists, are more modest about their efforts unlike the preceding generation of short story writers which also dreamed of writing the Great Filipino Novel. There is something about the short story form that defies the bravura of novelistic genius—Chekhov was more modest than that. What we follow is a tradition of small gestures that open up to revelations beyond words—Alfredo Salazar looking up at the

stars, Baldo smelling the fragrance of papayas in bloom, Badoy Montiya listening to the midnight call of a watchman, Miss Mijares's flesh leaping as she turns to the man in the cold rain. The aesthetic of the ineffable is itself a hard thing to master and we

continue to write, tradition or no tradition, in the hope that we would come by these moments of grace. In this way, writing, for us, is more an act of faith than a pass-the-torch relay of tradition.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is Luis Katigbak's description of Anakin in my Star Wars analogy.

<sup>2</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Literary Criticism and The Greeks to the Present*, ed. by Robert Con Davis and Laurie Finke, Longman, p.588.

<sup>3</sup> Eliot, p.589, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Bienvenido Lumbea, "Young Writing and the Subversion of the Academy: Stoking the Fire: The First Iligan National Writers Workshop and Literature Conference," ed. by Jaime An Lim and Christine Godinez-Ortega, *MSU-Iligan Journal of Technology*, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Like Luis Katigbak, I think there is no such thing as a Canon. What we have is a pluralistic hodge-podge of "best of" selections chosen by textbook writers and Philippine literature who assemble course outlines from pirated materials.

<sup>6</sup> If modern Russian fiction came out of Gogol's overcoat, the modern short story in our country came from the light of this story.

<sup>7</sup> The reprinting of this book by UP Press is a cause for celebration.

<sup>8</sup> Gemino H. Abad has done a similar commendable effort to anthologize Philippine poetry in English. Three volumes have come out: *Man of Earth*, *A Native of Mindanao*, *A Habit of Shores*.

<sup>9</sup> Butch Dalisay, Foreword to *Dream Noises: A Generation Writes*, ed. by M. Go, Anvil, 1999, vi-vii.

<sup>10</sup> Lumbea, pp. 6-7

<sup>11</sup> A graduate of the creative writing program of Silliman University, Jenny U.P. Mindanao.

<sup>12</sup> Gad is a Fil-Chinese who is currently working on his masteral thesis in creative writing. He teaches at Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>13</sup> Luis Katigbak is the most recent recipient of the CCP grant for young artists. He studied creative writing in U.P. Diliman.

## FORCED ALTERNATIVE: MAKING MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS WORK FOR CHILDREN IN NEED IN RURAL AREAS

Betty C. Abregana, Enrique G. Oracion,  
and Rolando V. Mascuñana

### ABSTRACT

*This case study was conducted in two elementary schools of Negros Oriental to examine the situation of multigrade schools assisted by the Unicef. In particular, it aims to assess the opportunities offered by the program as well as identify the challenges associated with the teaching of multigrade classes.*

*A multigrade school assigns to one teacher two or three grade levels as a way of meeting the educational needs of schoolchildren in far-flung communities where there are not enough teachers because of budgetary constraints. Through this mechanism, the government's thrust of "education for all" is operationalized. In Negros Oriental, almost one half (48%) of elementary schools are combined or multigrade schools. Even among the combined or multigrade schools, more than half (57%) are incomplete schools. Yet, without the multigrade schools, basic education would have remained beyond the reach of a big number of elementary school age children in the province, especially in remote barangays.*

*Among other observations, this case study shows that the proper administration of multigrade schools can be a workable alternative to providing the educational needs of children in the uplands and the countryside. Teacher training, improved school facilities and equipment, administrative assistance, LGU support, and community participation contribute to making multigrade schools work for children in need. The application of innovative teaching strategies enables teachers to be effective in handling multigrade classes and sustains children's interest to learn. However, the study also shows that there is a continuing need for re-tooling our elementary school teachers to provide them skills to respond to the realities of a school setting in outlying communities.*

## Introduction

Consider the following case:

Mary Jane belongs to a family of three girls and five boys, all unmarried. At 14 years, she attends grades 6 and is the brightest in her class in which her 13 year-old sister also belongs. She has a 19 year old sister who finished only grade 3. All the girls help their mother plant corn and peanut in the family-owned farm as well as take care of the family's several heads of chicken, a pig, a calf, and a carabao that is used for plowing the field.

Her eldest brother takes care of plowing the field and works closely with his father in the farm. While her second brother is a work student at a polytechnic college taking up a course in elementary education, the third and fourth brothers attend adult literacy classes in a nearby *barangay* and hope to qualify as grade 6 graduates at the end of the school year. The youngest among her brothers finished grade 4 and, like the rest of the family, he works in the farm.

Mary Jane believes that without a grade 6 school in their upland *barangay*, she would not finish elementary schooling. Even with the prospect of finishing first in her class, she doubts if she could continue with higher studies. Her dream is to finish a college education and become a teacher so that she can help her family as well as the children in her own upland community to have

the opportunity to finish at least the basic education.

In a country where more than half of its population live below poverty line, the struggle to build social capital for poor children represents one of the most pressing challenges. Education is allotted a measly 30 percent of the

1998 Philippine budget. Although they constitute the majority of the Philippine population, children between the ages of 7-12 are deprived of their right to a decent education because resources available are barely able to meet the requirements of compulsory basic education.

Of the 628 elementary schools in Negros Oriental, 300 (48%) are multigrade schools. Of these multigrade schools, 130 (43%) are complete elementary schools and 170 (57%) schools are classified as incomplete or not having all the grade levels from 1 to 6.

A multigrade school assigns to one teacher two or three grade levels as the educational system's way of meeting the needs of schoolchildren in far-flung communities where there are not enough teachers because of budgetary constraints. Through this mechanism, the government's thrust of "education for all" is operationalized. A complete multigrade school is one where all grade levels (1 to 6) are taught. An incomplete multigrade school does not have all the grade levels and has only up to either grade 2 or grade 4 level. Still other schools have a combination of monograde and multigrade levels, that is, one teacher handles grade 1, another handles grade 2, and another teacher takes care of both grades 3 and 4 levels. There are few cases

where one teacher handles grade 1, another handles grade levels 2, 3 and 4, and a third teacher takes care of grade levels 5 and 6.

The primary factor that influences the decision to resort to multigrade schools is the availability of budget item for additional teachers and facilities as well as the number of pupils who enroll per grade level. In determining which classes are to be monograde or multigrade in schools that adopt a combination of these strategies, the number of pupils in a given level is the key factor. Due to a bigger number of enrollees in lower levels, grades 1 and 2 are usually monograde classes.

In effect, multigrade schools come about because of budget constraint, lack of teachers, poor or inadequate facilities, and low enrolment. In a number of instances, multigrade schools are forced by circumstances such as the slow process of replacing teachers who have retired or are on maternity leave or sick leave, or the lack of public funds to open a new school in remote

communities. Among local education administrators, the widespread perception is that "the government is not in a hurry" to respond to the educational needs of a growing number of children. To many of them, therefore, a multigrade school is better than not having a school at all.

The elementary schools covered by this case study are two of the 300 multigrade schools in the province. Both are the beneficiaries of the Multigrade Schools Project of the United Nations International Children Fund (Unicef). The selection of these two schools as Unicef program beneficiaries, from among the many multigrade schools in the province, is based on the following parameters:

- based on estimates and available community information, the school population is not expected to grow within the next five years and, as such, will not likely have a monograde class within the same period of time;
- there are several other multigrade schools in the district

where the beneficiary school is located;

- the local government unit (LGU) is willing to put in a counterpart fund to the Unicef assistance; and,
- the supervisors of the district where the schools belong are willing to administer the project.

#### The Methodology and Sites of the Case Study

This case study was conducted to examine the performance of Unicef-assisted multigrade schools in the province of Negros Oriental, assess the opportunities offered by the program, and outline challenges associated with the teaching of multigrade classes. Four groups of stakeholders served as sources of information for this study: the school administrators (district supervisor and designated head of the multigrade school), all the teachers in the school, the representatives of the parents and community members, and samples of pupils from all grade levels.

Two sets of questions were asked of all the informants: (a) the general questions

which pertain to their views about the positive and negative aspects of multigrade classes and (b) the specific questions which look into their participation and perception about the implementation of multigrade schools in their respective communities. Panel interviews were conducted among the school officials and the teachers. The parents and community members as well as pupils participated in separate focus group discussions. English was the language used in the interviews of school officials and teachers while the focus group discussions among parents and community members and pupils were conducted in Cebuano in order for them to understand the issues at hand and freely express their ideas.

The gathering of data was done simultaneously in different classrooms by three faculty researchers of the Interdisciplinary Research Group (IRG) of Silliman University. They were responsible for gathering data from among the school officials, teachers, parents and community members and pupils of grades 5 and 6. Meanwhile, two graduate students also

conducted the focus group discussion among pupils from grades 1 and 2 and 3 and 4.

Each of the schools was given one day for the data gathering. The dates were scheduled in advance and the corresponding schools to be visited were informed through the coordinator of the multigrade schools of the provincial division of DECS of Negros Oriental. Additional statistical data relevant to the narrative presentation of the report were derived from the district and provincial division offices of DECS. Data collection was done in November 1998.

The multigrade elementary school studied in Manjuyod is located in San Isidro, an upland barangay which is about 3 kilometers of rocky road from the *poblacion*. On rainy days the road becomes slippery and can only be traversed by a four-wheel drive. During good weather, *habal-habal* (big motorbikes used as passenger vehicles) are the common mode of public transportation. As a complete

multigrade school, this school has all the grade levels required of an elementary school in this country. There are three teachers who each handle two combined grade levels (grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6).

The teacher who takes charge of grade levels 3 and 4 is designated as the teacher in-charge (TIC) of the elementary school. As TIC, he oversees the day-to-day routine function of the school and reports directly to the head teacher. The head teacher in an adjacent elementary school, concurrently supervises the operation of San Isidro multi-

grade school. The district supervisor of Manjuyod oversees the general implementation of the multigrade program of activities in this school.

The distribution of pupils across grade levels and teachers is seen in Table 1.

In general, multigrade classes in Manjuyod are found in 11 out of 25 schools. In other multigrade schools in the district, only one is a regular teacher and others are teacher aides. The latter are remunerated from local funds as recommended by the local school board. There are 10

Table 1. Number of pupils per teacher and grade level

Grade Levels	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
I	18		
II	24		
III		22	
IV		11	
V			17
VI			15
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>

teacher aides in the district financed by the local municipal fund. The other six teacher aides are paid out of provincial funds. Of the multigrade schools in the district of Manjuyod, eight have combination classes *i.e.*, two grade levels in one class, two have monograde and combination classes, and one school has three grade levels in one class.

Meanwhile, the multigrade elementary school studied in Tayasan is in Nabilog, a *sitio* of Barangay Tambulan, about 18 kilometers from the national highway. Barangay Tambulan already has a complete elementary school. Before this multigrade school was opened, the children in Nabilog studied either in Tambulan or in Tambo in another municipality where complete elementary and high schools are in place.

When the multigrade school in Nabilog was newly opened, a good number of parents continued to send their children to the complete elementary schools in adjoining barangays despite the distance. Parents felt that it was better

for their children to start and finish elementary education in the same school than have them moved to another school. At that time, Nabilog was just offering primary education, that is, grades 1 to 4. But when Nabilog started getting support from Unicef and receiving special attention from the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in May 1997, notable improvements were observed which motivated some parents to transfer their children there.

At present, there are only three female teachers handling combined classes of 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6. One teacher is a resident of Nabilog while the other two are from Tanjay, a coastal town of the province south of Tayasan. One of them also acts as a teacher-in-charge. Similar to San Isidro, the district supervisor of Tayasan oversees the implementation of multigrade program of Nabilog. The principal of Tayasan Central School concurrently supervises Nabilog Elementary School.

Table 2. Number of pupils per teacher and grade level

Grade Levels	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
I	38		
II	23		
III		16	
IV		22	
V			25
VI			11
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>

Table 2 shows the distribution of pupils across teachers and grade levels.

Nabilog is just one of the 18 multigrade elementary schools in Tayasan district. Eleven of these multigrade schools have combination classes, six have both monograde and combination classes, and one has classes with three grade levels under one teacher.

### General Views on Multigrade Classes

#### *Views of administrators*

To the local administrators, multigrade schools came about not of their own deliberate or willful choice but because of circumstances which pushed them to take this alternative. Under the existing educational system, there are not

enough teachers for an increasing Filipino population. While this lack may be due in part to fewer qualified or certified basic education teachers, the main factor is the inadequate budget allocation to support the hiring of new teachers, construction of new buildings, and provision of equipment and facilities to ensure quality elementary education across the country. The school districts of Manjuyod and Tayasan have experienced a shortfall of teachers when retired teachers were not immediately replaced or when teachers on maternity leave or sick leave were not readily substituted. These instances result in fusion of classes. The teachers charged to handle combined classes take the additional responsibility without the corresponding increase in pay. In some cases, new schools are opened as petitioned by residents and local officials but funds are not always adequate to hire a teacher for each grade level. This and fewer stu-

dents in each grade level often result in combined classes. In most cases, however, merging of grade levels increases the number of pupils to more than 30 in a combined class.

The value of having a multigrade school is in assuring the rights of children to basic education despite meager resource allocation. Under the system, children in distant barangays can be in school and finish elementary education in spite of some constraints. With Unicef assistance, two multigrade schools receive grants for the improvement of school buildings and facilities. With counterpart from the LGU and DECS, the schools are able to acquire books and equipment and train teachers to make them more adept at handling combined grade levels. Moreover, the memorandum of agreement with Unicef stipulates that the DECS division of schools must assure the maintenance of equipment and facilities as a counterpart of the local government unit through the local School Board. Another positive outcome of Unicef assistance is that these multigrade schools tend to be highly motivated by the regular visits of local authorities, school administrators, and guests.

From the perspec-

tive of administrators, however, the level of quality of teaching and learning in multigrade schools is generally low. It is widely perceived that few multigrade teachers are adequately equipped to handle multilevel classes. Among teachers who are trained, some had no prior experience in elementary school teaching and are immediately assigned to multigrade schools. For instance, in a big class of learners from combined grade levels, teachers face horrendous challenges in providing individual attention to pupils. The realities of the situation and the magnitude of work expected of them overwhelm teachers who have no prior exposure. Compounding this already dismal situation is the fact that despite special funds to some multigrade schools, resources remain insufficient to provide decent facilities and equipment for classrooms, library, science laboratory, and co-curricular activities. For these reasons, local school administrators, when given a choice, prefer a monograde to a multigrade school.

### *Views of teachers*

In San Isidro, the three teachers understand the multigrade approach in teaching to be the handling of more than one grade level per teacher who has to teach all the subjects in a day. The activity usually takes place in one classroom setting. Teachers consider this arrangement advantageous to learners in the lower grade levels for they are given exposure to content areas designed for a higher grade level at an early stage. Furthermore, this arrangement provides pupils the opportunity to listen to the discussions of combined class levels. To facilitate the teaching-learning process in this context while at the same time easing their additional burden, teachers employ techniques and strategies such as ability-grouping and peer-teaching. Pupils are grouped according to their learning ability. Fast learners are directly involved or tapped by the teachers to help their classmates who are considered slow learners.

As identified by the teachers themselves, the main weakness of the multigrade approach involves time management. In addition to preparing

two sets of lesson plans for both grade levels, teachers consider the shifting from one class to another as an extra burden on their part. They strongly agree that this situation leads them to the problem of divided time and attention for their pupils. Another weakness they have identified is the forced shortening of contact time with one group which happens when the other class level requires additional time because of the level of difficulty of a particular learning task. A demotivating factor identified by teachers is that despite the extra work and the additional time and effort on their part, they receive exactly the same salary and allowance that public school teachers generally received.

The classroom for grades 5 and 6 in San Isidro Elementary School is much smaller than the classrooms for the lower grade levels and teachers and pupils feel that this situation is not conducive to learning. Apart from the inadequacy of its size, the room has no ceiling and is very hot at noon while the roof leaks

when it rains. In a separate building, the classroom for Grades 3 and 4 is a renovated Marcos-type structure and is found to be a much more pleasant learning environment.

The multigrade approach in teaching is implemented in San Isidro Elementary School mainly because there are only few children in the area who go to school. The teacher-pupil ratio (1 teacher to 45 pupils) for one grade level (in a monograde class) is not met. Such a small enrollment does not justify the provision of additional teachers and classrooms. Because of the small population of the school, the head teacher of Sacsac Elementary School also handles the administration of the San Isidro multigrade school.

The teachers of Nabilog Elementary School describe the multigrade approach as the handling of two or more grades by the teacher. To them, the advantages of this approach are the integration or fusion of lessons or subject matter, the use of Multi-Level Materials (MLMs) for the vari-



ous grade levels, the introduction of some educational games related to the subject, and the use of the strategy of grouping pupils according to their ability level.

Spelled out by teachers as a major disadvantage is the preparation of lesson plans. They feel that this activity takes so much of their time when in actual teaching, time is never enough to cover all the details in subject areas like English, Arithmetic, or Science in combined classes.

Considered as another disadvantage of multigrade approach is the problem with contamination in learning as evidenced by the answers to a test in a particular grade level. For example, while doing seatwork, pupils of one level can also listen to the lesson discussed by the teacher for the other level. When test comes, some of the answers given are those of the lesson that the teacher took up with the other grade level.

Teachers in the multigrade set-up express anxiety that they cannot individually attend to their pupils'

needs despite their concern for the latter's learning process. Remedial lessons intended for the slow learners are rarely possible because the time intended for this purpose is used in continuing the lesson. Teachers consider the multigrade learning activities as tiring for these leave them no time to rest. Like their grades 5 and 6 counterparts in San Isidro, teachers in Nabilog are unanimous in pointing out the size of their classrooms as inadequate for multigrade classes.

In Nabilog, the multigrade approach in teaching is implemented because the pupil ratio of 1 teacher to 45 pupils, which is a requirement for a monograde class, is not met. The Nabilog Elementary School is located in an area that has access to three big monograde schools in the area: Tambo Elementary School and Tibyawan Elementary School, both of Ayungon; and, Tambulan Elementary School of Tayasan. Many schoolchildren go to any of these schools. Worth noting is that the principal of Tayasan Central School, a trained in multigrade teacher, concur-

rently supervises Nabilog Multigrade School. The teacher of grades 3 and 4 in Nabilog is designated as the teacher-in-charge of the school.

#### *Views of learners*

To the schoolchildren, a multigrade school is one that assigns a teacher to two grade levels in one classroom. The children are quick to say though that each grade level in the room is given one blackboard each. According to the children, the teacher gives seatwork to the other while she discusses a lesson in one grade level.

According to the learners, being in this particular multigrade school allows them to benefit from donations given to the school such as textbooks, tables, and chairs. They are happy to read storybooks, use a dictionary, or refer to a globe. They also point out that their school has a mimeographing machine. They say their parents helped in the renovation of their school building and their classroom has a toilet.

With the available learning materials, equipment, and facilities, they feel they are more blessed than the regular monograde schools in adjacent communities. Besides, their school is much nearer to their homes than the complete elementary school in the next barangay.

Pupils consider their teachers in multigrade classes to be good at explaining the lessons, ready with learning materials, and solicitous in following up the progress of their activities and the quality of their performance. At the same time, they claim to like the company of other pupils in the room. Those in the lower grade level feel they can approach those in the higher grade for assistance in their school work while those in the higher level gain satisfaction in being of help to others. In addition to reading, writing, computing and other subject requirements, learners appreciate being exposed to singing, dancing, and acting.

The pupils, however, complain about noise and distraction created by those who

are already done with their seatwork. Pupils point out that when the teacher is busy with the other grade level, those taking tests or doing seatwork can cheat or copy their seatmate's work. Others feel that distractions caused by other pupils affect their concentration and leave them little time to finish their class activities. There are others who wish their teachers can give them as much time as their more assertive classmates.

The pupils remark that their school is a multigrade school because of a lack of teachers, few classrooms, and not enough space to build additional rooms. Not one of the pupils mentioned budgetary constraints on the part of the government or that enrolment size is small in their locality.

#### *Views of parents and community residents*

For parents and community members, managing two grade levels in the same room at the same time is a most demanding job for a teacher in a multigrade school. From their observation, the teacher

begins by arranging the seats in a way that both grade levels would be given instruction alternately. Within this arrangement, the teacher is able to attend to one grade level while the pupils in the other level are doing their seatwork. Parents and community members observe that this strategy of classroom management maximizes the time and expertise of the teacher and often leaves her exhausted at the end of the day.

Parents and community members are happy to observe that because of the special setup of multigrade schools, teachers are often on time for flag ceremony and to begin their classes promptly. They pointed out that in the past, the usual practice by teachers of starting classes at 9 o'clock in the morning and ending at 3 o'clock in the afternoon shortened the time for actual classroom instruction and deprived the children of valuable opportunities to finish their lessons or review them. One of the heartening developments parents and community members note about the multigrade school in

their area is that teachers now take the children's education more seriously. This attitude, according to parents, likewise inspires their children to give serious attention to their studies. These positive manifestations of behavior demonstrated by teachers and pupils are acknowledged by parents and community members as a direct result of the multigrade program. To the parents, these changes could be attributed to the training of teachers in the implementation of the multigrade approach.

Parents and community members especially appreciate the various forms of assistance provided by the Unicef, benefits that are not enjoyed by other schools in the same municipalities. Every pupil in this school is provided with a table and chair and there is funding for the acquisition of various reading materials, for the upkeep of classrooms, and for the construction of comfort rooms in every classroom. For these reasons, parents are grateful for the Unicef assistance on their school in their respective communities.

The parents in Nabilog have a specific reason for considering the multigrade program as being of value to them. Having a school within their locality has assured them of the safety of their children since learners do not have to travel a far distance to study. For them, even if their school is multigrade, the kind of instruction their children receive is much better than the other schools in the upland barangays. They report that at a district contest in oral reading, their children could very well compete with children of other schools, including the monograde schools in Tambo and Tambulan.

Parents and community members of the two communities visited differ in their views regarding the deficiencies of multigrade classes. Those in Nabilog cite the lack of teachers who can attend closely to the increasing pupil population and the lack of classrooms particularly in grades 1 and 2 as a major concern. On the other hand, their counterparts in San Isidro single out the behavior of pupils

as a disadvantage of a multi-grade school. According to them, pupils who finish their seatwork ahead of others usually make noise and disturb the other grade level. San Isidro parents and community members believe that having to attend to two groups at the same time must demand so much from the teacher. They are convinced that one could not serve two functions at the same time without affecting one's efficiency and the quality of either task.

Nevertheless, to them, having a multigrade school is better than having no school at all. Besides, a multigrade school is accessible to the children in the area. The parents and community members are also aware of the low pupil population in their locality as well as the budgetary constraints as major reasons for not being able to put up complete elementary schools.

#### Role, Practices, and Experiences of Administrators

##### *Skills and practices in managing multigrade schools*

Administrators agree that their education and previous training have not oriented them to the practice and management of combined classes. They acknowledge that teachers assigned to multigrade programs are usually left without a choice and at the outset often hesitate or feel inadequate in accepting the responsibility. To encourage them, local administrators challenge the teachers to do their best despite some constraints such as the teachers' lack of experience, more students to handle, and multiple subject assignments. In the event that teachers make comments or observations that are somewhat inimical to quality teaching, administrators tend to show consideration and understanding of the teachers' feelings.

In most cases, multigrade teachers are pretty much on their own in handling everyday teaching-learning concerns and in managing classroom affairs. Since local administrators practice delegation of responsibility in the matter of school and commu-

nity relations, teachers have a free hand in eliciting the parents' participation in the school's learning activities. In managing multigrade schools, administrators are one in considering that the skill that works best is the superior's ability to motivate teachers to carry on and assure them that they always have the school officials' support.

##### *Extent of teamwork with teachers and supervising personnel*

The head teacher and/or supervising principal, together with the district supervisor, see to the effective implementation of the multigrade school project with full consideration of the complex and multiple roles played by the classroom teacher. When the teachers request assistance for repair or maintenance of school facilities, immediate supervisors usually strive to facilitate the granting of the request.

In discussing the strategies or approaches that work best for them, teachers find teamwork an effective process

to reach a consensus. In a number of instances, teachers help one another in designing the instructional materials for classroom use or visual aids to facilitate pupils' learning. Each one is open to making the necessary revisions in the assignment, implementation, and assessment of subjects. As a means of achieving the objectives of the multigrade program, teamwork is rated by administrators as excellent.

##### *New skills acquired*

The implementation of multigrade schools develops new skills which otherwise would not have been honed under the monograde system. Administrators report that they have learned the principles and concepts for multigrade schools from the Unicef-assisted training. With this exposure, they acquire the ability to assess modules developed for specific subject areas for different grade levels. They have a better sense of classroom structures appropriate to a particular classroom activity. With the multigrade schools, they

have come to appreciate various classroom management styles and teaching strategies.

Administrators rate themselves above average in their skill to assess lesson plans designed for combined classes (Grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6). Their rating generally shows that at present teachers' skills in lesson planning and time management have improved. Before the Unicef training, teachers usually complained about the demands of their work. For instance, lesson plans had objectives that did not have the corresponding strategies appropriate for multigrade teaching. Presently, teachers are more confident, more adept in handling classroom activities, and are able to share their experiences with other teachers in the province who handle multigrade levels.

#### *Perception about other stakeholders*

Administrators per-

ceive the quality of pupils learning to be above average. This is so because learners in Unicef-assisted multigrade schools are exposed to trained teachers and enjoy the benefits of the grant. Students who are assertive and achievement-oriented are likely to benefit most. However, slow learners in multigrade schools cannot be given enough attention and time for remedial instruction.

Parents and community members are actively involved in school affairs. They regularly attend meetings and participate in the school's activities. Parents are directly involved in the renovation of buildings and construction of toilets through the system of unpaid collective labor, locally called *dagyaw*. They also contribute money and materials like bamboo for the construction.

Administrators rate their teachers in multigrade schools above average in their dealings with parents and local residents. The re-

lationship between teachers and community members is described as open and very good.

#### *Role, Practices and Experiences of Teachers*

##### *As classroom learning facilitators*

Teaching under the multigrade approach, according to the San Isidro Elementary School teachers, needs a lot of patience and understanding. All find it difficult to manage two different classes at the same time. One method that the teachers employ as a working strategy in lesson planning is to combine the same topics for discussion for each grade level. This method is called lesson integration of similar subjects. This is done to meet the class objective in the Weekly Plan that the teachers have prepared. For instance, if the lesson is on values, the lesson plan reflects the content and strategies about the topic for the two grade levels. It is like hitting two birds with one stone. As learning facilitators, teachers

often apply or use the skills and techniques learned from the seminars attended as well as from sharing or conferring with other multigrade teachers in their school during meetings. The teachers mention that they regularly attend multigrade classes in other schools and observe their colleagues' techniques in classroom management. On one occasion, the school of San Isidro hosted a teaching demonstration.

Among those strategies learned and applied in classroom setting are group work and group discussion or seatwork and discussion. These particular classroom activities are usually facilitated or led by pupil leaders or "little teachers" in class. Of course, the teacher does not entirely relegate the task to the "little teachers" but does a follow-up every now and then. In this way, the teacher is able to attend to the other class. When the teacher shifts or attends to the other class, say from Grade 6 to Grade 5, the pupils in the other level are given seatwork or educational games in support of the lesson for the day.

One activity that usually involves mental exercise is the use of available multi-level materials (MLMs). These multi-level materials are learning devices that encourage self-learning among the pupils. In Science class, pupils learn through experiments. In other classes, pupils learn through group work or group discussion and their ideas or opinions are processed afterwards by the teacher-facilitator. The teacher here supervises, facilitates, and monitors each group by taking note of their progress as well as problems. According to the teachers during the interview, an effective learning strategy is one in which the teacher does not spend much time giving lecture but instead allows the pupils to perform some activities through educational games or experiments. Teachers have observed that pupils are challenged to think better and learn more through these methods.

The teachers consider allocation and management of time as a major problem in teaching a multigrade class. They feel that time is never

enough to do many of the schoolwork assigned to them. In particular, they consider the preparation of lesson plans for two grade levels as a time-consuming activity. Likewise, they find the making of self-learning activities like modules and activity sheets as well as filling out school forms as both time and labor-intensive chores.

To cope with the problem of time management, the teachers integrate the lessons by combining objectives and using the "TTh-MWF Scheme" weekly plan for the combined grade levels. They also train "little teachers", pupils who are fast learners, as group leaders and moderators to assist them in a variety of classroom activities. Teachers train their fast learners to help in "peer-teaching".

Although the classroom for grades 1 and 2 and the one for 3 and 4 are big enough, another problem reiterated by the respondents is the size of the classroom for grades 5 and 6 in San Isidro Elementary School. The problem of leaking roofs during rainy season has already been reported

to the local school board and the district supervisor and proper action is expected in due time.

Another problem mentioned involves the pupils' absences, seemingly a perennial problem faced by the teachers. As teachers are very much concerned about class attendance and absences, they always ask parents to notify the school when the latter's children are absent from class. For tardiness, the attention of the pupil is called. In some cases, teachers personally make home visits to find out why their pupils are often absent from class.

Multigrade teachers in Nabilog and San Isidro often share the same experiences in managing their pupils. Teachers from these two multigrade schools regularly attend the same seminars that prepare them for the job and consequently use the same strategies they have learned in managing their classrooms. Both groups rely on the use of seatwork in one grade level and a discussion activity in the other as a strategy to make the pupils in both levels attend to their re-

spective lessons. When subject matters are related, the teacher's presentation is made to the two group levels to save time. This is reflected in the Budget of Work or in planning the lesson for the week. Other teaching strategies teachers employ include instructional materials and educational games, the involvement of "little teachers" to handle the class to which they belong, and the utilization of para-teachers to assist the teachers in the making of instructional materials. Para-teachers are mothers who volunteer as unpaid assistants. In this kind of learning process, the teachers act as facilitators of learning with the help of various "ready-to-use" techniques.

Both Nabilog and San Isidro teachers also encounter similar problems in the teaching of a multigrade class. Some of the problems they have identified include the making of the lesson plan and the production of instructional materials, two major tasks requiring plenty of time. The teachers also mention class management and the poor study habits of pupils as

additional challenge. Discipline problems are a frequent cause of distraction in the classroom. Most often when the teacher is attending to the other class level, some pupils do not do their seatwork but rather make noise, play, or sneak out of the room without the teacher's permission.

As in San Isidro, pupil absences constitute an issue in Nabilog. During harvest time and every Friday, the teachers note poor class attendance. This is because Friday is *tabu* or market day in Nabilog proper and school children miss classes to attend the various activities there. As a result, teachers are challenged to come up with strategies that will entice or force students to stay in this classroom during the weekly event.

#### *Involvement in community affairs*

Teachers of both San Isidro and Nabilog rate their involvement in community affairs as Above Average, which is to say that they are involved in some, but not all, community affairs. According to them,

they are usually the ones who initiate the involvement of the community in their school activities rather than the community involving them. The involvement of teachers of San Isidro and Nabilog in community affairs varies and includes activities such as collecting the entrance fee for the barangay dance during the fiesta, serving as master of ceremonies in community programs, acting as judge in the local singing or dancing contest, decorating the stage, and sitting as member of the *Lupong Tagapagtataya* (barangay justice). Occasionally, the teachers take part in fund raising, coordinating the Non-Formal Education (NFE) intended for parents, and in teaching parents some action songs. At least once a month, they teach parents how to play educational games so that the latter could participate in teaching their children at home.

#### *Relationship with superiors*

The teachers in general feel that the successful implementation of the multigrade project is mainly due to their good working relationship with their superiors. They point out that their superi-

ors have given moral and financial support. They can talk to the administrators freely and openly about whatever problems they have. For their part, the superiors closely supervise them and encourage good teamwork to achieve their goals in teaching, but allow them freedom to select from among the several learning strategies those they think will make their teaching more effective. The teachers agree that there is always proper coordination between them and their superiors. During the regular monthly school visit of their superiors, the teachers use the occasion to discuss with them the problems they face in school.

Multigrade teachers feel that their role allows them to contribute something to improve the community where they are presently teaching. For instance, they encourage parents to help children with their studies and monitor the learning process of their children as well as urge them to be aware of the lessons taught in the classroom and related school activities. To do this, teachers introduce parents to instructional materials needed in class and encourage them to make

instructional materials at home using indigenous materials. Teachers often involve parents as facilitators in educational games aimed at improving the learning of their children. Underlying the practice of involving parents in the teaching-learning process is the belief of teachers that to educate the children, they also have to educate the parents.

For their part, children are constantly encouraged by their teachers to be always present and to come to school on time. Even more so, they are always encouraged to do better than the learners in the regular monograde class.

#### *Perception about learners and other stakeholders*

The quality of learning of pupils under the multigrade approach is rated Average by the teachers. When the study was conducted on November 1998, teachers estimated that only few pupils in Grade 1 remained unable to read, write, and count while there was no longer any non-reader in Grade 2. Having no pupil retained in

any of the grade level is perhaps indicative of the quality of learning in these multigrade schools. That the Nabilog Elementary School ranked third place in the recent English Quiz Show in the whole District of Tayasan is also a good indication. The results of the National Elementary Aptitude Test (NEAT) administered last school year were also encouraging to the teachers of both multigrade schools. It was reported that four of the graduates of Nabilog Elementary School are presently doing well in high school.

A manifestation of improvement among pupils in the multigrade approach is seen in the learners' reading ability. Teachers have observed that pupils actively participate in the class discussion, cooperate with each other during group work, and relate well with each other. Likewise, teachers have noticed that pupils are no longer shy perhaps because they are exposed to more children from other grade levels. Furthermore, pupils are able to make their own educational games similar to the ones in-

troduced by the teacher with little supervision and guidance from the teachers. With real objects they could manually manipulate, pupils learn while also having fun. As a result, pupils look forward to participatory learning approaches such as the educational games and multi-level materials. Class attendance has considerably improved, estimated at 95% per day. The teachers admit that pupils easily get bored with lectures or copying notes from the board. Under this condition, the result most often is a poor class attendance.

The extent of involvement of parents and community members in school affairs is rated Above Average. Parents and community members are supportive of such school affairs as DECS sa Barangay, Christmas program, tree planting, PTCA meeting, and *dagyaw* (parents themselves participate in cleaning the school premises or surrounding, and in performing minor school improvement such as repair or construction of "dirty

kitchen," or water tank).

#### *Description about the implementation of multigrade classes*

The quality of management of school administration (division superintendent, division supervisor, district supervisors, principal or head teacher) is rated by the teachers Above Average. However, the Division Superintendent is rated Average by the teachers because the superintendent has not personally visited San Isidro and Nabilog. Teachers rated the supervisor on the basis of his support of requests for funds for seminars or training intended for multigrade teachers. The rest of the administrators, on the other hand, are rated Above Average for having made personal contact with teachers and pupils in their area. On the whole, the rating given to the multigrade approach in teaching is Above Average. The teachers justify this rating on the basis of their performance in class. According to them, they are

still adjusting to the new setup and experimenting with new strategies that will help them teach a multigrade class effectively. They feel that they still have a lot of things to learn about handling multigrade school. The teachers believe that they could still benefit from additional training through seminars or workshops.

The teachers suggested that para-teachers (or the parent-volunteers who help the teachers in handling class, assisting pupils during seatwork and other classroom activities) be given honoraria. The teachers also suggested that there should be a complete revision of the weekly plan. They stressed that available books should be maximally used to suit the Weekly Plan.

All things considered, teachers still prefer monograde teaching over the multigrade program. This reaction is understandable since with only one grade level to attend to, teachers feel that they would be able to apply most effec-

tively the various teaching strategies they have learned as teachers of multigrade classes. Most importantly, teachers believe that having a class consisting of one grade level will allow teachers to give all the pupils the attention they truly deserve.

### Role, Practices, and Experiences of Parents and Community Members

#### *Involvement and participation in school programs and activities*

The parents of San Isidro rated the extent of their involvement in school programs and activities Average while Nabilog parents rated themselves Above Average. Both groups of parents describe how they formed themselves into work groups (*dagyaw*) in order to clean the school's surroundings, plant trees, construct the toilet for each classroom, and set up a rainwater collector. Members of both communities often help prepare food for visitors during school programs and other meetings. They also bring ad-

ditional kitchen utensils to be used on these occasions. In the community of San Isidro, parents donate bamboo and wooden poles for the fence of the school.

According to the parents in Nabilog, they help in cleaning the school surroundings because they do not want their children to miss some classes when they are pulled out to do general cleaning. They also contribute a minimal amount to partly finance the labor cost for the construction of toilets. In these projects, the grant from Unicef funds the cost of materials while the municipal government shoulders the cost of labor.

The parents in San Isidro go as far as helping teachers in preparing learning materials for their children. The mothers report that they help cut out materials for the show cards to be used in reading and solving exercises. They also help put covers on textbooks acquired by the school.

Parents and community members rated Average their participation in debates and discussion on matters rel-

tant to the school. For example, both school communities participated in the Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA) deliberations when deciding where to construct the rainwater collector. At this meeting, they discussed about organizing a work group (*bagay*), when to do the task, and what to contribute.

San Isidro parents and community members have also involved themselves in the decision to renovate an old school building to accommodate another grade level. They also agreed that the barangay should allot an amount as a counterpart fund for the construction work in school. Together with the teachers, the parents of San Isidro raised funds to buy among other equipment, a cassette player for classroom instruction, plates, and cooking pots for use during school affairs, a wall clock, an extension wire. In planning school programs like Christmas and commencement ceremonies, the parents help in decorating the stage, in choosing the speaker and

the master of ceremonies for the occasion.

#### *Promotion and appreciation of cultural values, proper health, sanitation and nutrition*

Parents and community members express satisfaction with the way the school promotes cultural values among their children. San Isidro parents and community members rated this aspect Excellent while those in Nabilog gave a rating of Above Average. They described their respective roles in promoting cultural values as supportive of the teachers' endeavors in school. According to them, they reinforce the teaching of good values in school by letting their children practice at home values such as *pagtabod* (respect), right conduct, and other forms of good behavior. During school programs, parents willingly participate and perform cultural dances for their children to see. According to the parents, they also teach their children these dances for school presentation.

Their role in promot-



ing proper health, sanitation, and nutrition is rated by both groups of parents as Above Average. They all reported that they encourage their children to eat vegetables for good health. They also tend a vegetable garden in their yard and raise domestic animals like chicken as a source of meat or, as in the case of parents in Nabilog, buy them from traders who come to the barangay. Moreover, according to the parents in Nabilog, since the school solicits less financial contribution from them now, they are able to spend more on food for their children.

All parents claim that they regularly check if their children are neat and clean all the time by requiring them to take daily baths. They keep their home surroundings clean by building a garbage pit or recycling waste materials, thus helping prevent the spread of diseases caused by a dirty environment.

When asked about their reaction when their children inform them about health practices learned in school (like taking a bath daily, eating veg-

etables, washing hands before eating or after using the toilet), parents generally say that they apply whatever is possible at home with the cooperation of their children. They claim that most health practices are familiar to them. But one parent admitted that she has learned something from her child that she did not know before.

#### *Perception about learners and other stakeholders*

Parents and community members of San Isidro rated the quality of learning of their children at present as Average while parents of Nabilog rated the same as Above Average. San Isidro parents and community members explained that they could not give a higher rating because even their brightest pupil in school is not likely to outdo pupils of monograde schools in the district. However, they said that their pupils do not fall far below the rest in the competition, so an Average rating is appropriate.

Nabilog parents and community members justified

their rating with the improvement in the study behavior of their children. For example, a father narrated that when his children were still studying in Ibuluan Elementary School, they were not motivated to study and to go to school. According to him, it was his own children who requested to be transferred to Nabilog. Parents report that their children are eager to study and do their homework, behavior not common before. According to Nabilog and San Isidro parents, their children prefer to study than to watch television programs or do housework. To further justify the improved quality of learning among their children, the parents of Nabilog pointed out that the total of grade 6 pupils currently in school perform better in the national examination than those who graduated last school year.

San Isidro parents also mentioned that mature-age pupils go back to school. They considered this an indication of the pupils' own strong motivation. Those in school right now, according to the parents,

are said to be trying their best to perform well and live up to their teachers' expectation. It is widely perceived that pupils do not want to fail and be retained in the same grade level while their friends already move to the next level. Aside from the improvement in the study behavior of their children, San Isidro parents have also noted that their children are more obedient, respectful, and disciplined than before.

The Above Average rating given by Nabilog parents to the quality of teaching is consistent with their rating of the quality of learning of their children. San Isidro parents gave an Above Average rating for the quality of teaching but Average for the quality of learning of their children. Worth noting is that while the two groups of parents gave the same high rating for the quality of teaching, they were not similarly inclined to give the same rating to the area of teachers' involvement in the community. San Isidro parents and community members gave a rating of Average while their Nabilog counterparts gave an

Above Average rating.

The Above Average rating given by parents to the quality of teaching in their respective schools is justified by their perception that the multigrade teachers are all active and committed to their tasks. Parents have observed that teachers come to school regularly and make an effort to follow up the learning activities of their children. This change in teachers' performance maybe attributed in part to the close monitoring of school officials and the special attention that they give on the program. Parents in Nabilog continue to observe that the teachers do extra work at night to prepare their classrooms for instructional activities the following day. As two of the three teachers assigned in Nabilog come from Tanjay, they use their classrooms as their living quarters and go home only in the lowland during weekends.

Generally, the parents and community members of both communities attest to the good relationship the teachers maintain with them. They reciprocate this gesture by in-

volving themselves in the various activities of the schools. According to them, before the Unicef-assisted multigrade program was formally introduced in their communities, the teachers did not show much willingness to get involved in community affairs nor in getting the parents to participate in the activities of the school.

At present, however, there is an open line of communication between the teachers and community members. Parents claim that the teachers are willing to talk to them about the academic problems of their children and do things in school with them in a friendly manner. For example, the school in San Isidro allows the community to initiate barangay projects on its premises, something unheard of in the past when enmity marred the relationship between the school and the barangay captain. According to parents, the present group of teachers do not just absent themselves from class without advising parents in advance. The usual reason for their ab-

sence is participation in district meetings or training activities. This allows the parents to take over temporarily and supervise their children's lessons and assignments. By involving parents in every aspect of the teaching-learning process, the teachers acknowledge the important role parents play as stakeholders of the school.

#### *Perception about quality of implementation of the multigrade classes*

The parents and community members were asked to assess the quality of school management. This included their perception of the conduct of visitation of school officials, the processes of consultation and supervision, and the provisions that are made for teacher training.

In general, the parents and community members of both schools gave a rating of Above Average to all these parameters of school management. They are convinced that the quality of teaching and the performance of pupils are

enough evidence to support the rating given. In their view, the visible improvement in the study habits of their children and their positive attitude towards education more than imply that the management of the school is effective.

As to the implementation of multigrade education in their community, the parents and community members of San Isidro gave a rating of Excellent while Nabilog gave a rating of Above Average. Parents say that the Unicef assistance in their school has benefited them and their children in various ways. It made possible, among others, a collection of new books in their small library, learning devices and office materials, and a refurbished building with a toilet in each classroom. Thus, it is possible to speculate that the excellent rating given in San Isidro is a reflection of the parents' sense of gratitude for the physical improvement of their school.

On the other hand, parents and community members in Nabilog made special mention of the improvements in the teachers' teaching methods, including the quality of the visual materials they pro-

duce for classroom instruction, and the personal touch teachers put into teaching their children. Parents and community members of Nabilog also feel proud of the new features of their school which they claim to be missing in other elementary schools in surrounding communities.

Nevertheless, despite these developments, the parents and community members of both communities continue to wish for more than what their schools have at present. Common wishes are the provision of additional classrooms and teachers to cope with the increasing pupil population and the construction of a concrete fence around the school campus to ensure the safety of their children and school property.

Compared to San Isidro parents, however, Nabilog parents and community members, have other things to ask. They suggested that the school should provide a facility for drinking water, a janitor to clean the campus in order to spare their children from being asked to sweep the yard or mop the floor, and a

Home Economics building.

Although both communities are pleased with the results of the multigrade education in their respective schools, they still express preference for a monograde type of classroom instruction, despite their awareness of budgetary constraints. According to them, time will come when the pupil population in their communities will increase and that will make multigrade teaching impractical. In anticipation of this development, they suggested that one teacher should be assigned to each grade level. This way the teacher could provide more attention to each child in the classroom. If monograde classes are to be implemented in these schools, three additional teachers and classrooms will have to be allocated in each school.

It is noteworthy to mention that the parents and community members are very much in favor of the way multigrade teaching is presently done by teachers

Parents comment that although they prefer a monograde school, the kind of teaching must follow the multigrade approach. This suggests that parents in these communities associate improved instruction with the benefits of multigrade teaching brought about by the Unicef assistance in teacher training and school infrastructure which are not enjoyed by schools in the surrounding barangays.

#### *Experiences of Learners*

##### *Participation in teaching-learning process*

Pupils in both San Isidro and Nabilog Elementary Schools expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend classes in their respective communities. Aside from being able to write, read, count and draw, learners reported that they also enjoy the games, dances, and songs introduced by their teachers. According to them, they are encouraged by their teachers to work on their assignments at home and to

raise questions in class. In the classroom, they have to be prepared to answer questions and to take examinations. When they fail to answer the questions asked by their teacher, San Isidro pupils said they are asked to stand in front of the class. When asked what they think about standing in front of the class, learners viewed this practice as a way of encouraging them to try harder in their studies.

Pupils reported that they are active participants in the process of learning. They are asked to report on assigned topics, act as tutor to some slow learners, monitor class attendance, and check on the performance of their classmates during seatwork. Learners believed that cleaning around and within the school premises is part of the learning process.

##### *Impact on thinking-behaving dimensions*

Learners observed that their multigrade teachers engage them in varied teaching strategies like drawing, dramatization, and oral reporting. In science, they conduct experi-

ments and are taught to see interrelationships between animals and plants. They prefer teaching activities that allow them to be actively involved in the process of learning.

According to the learners, they are discouraged from rote memorization and are encouraged to attend to their assignments, be good stewards of school or home properties, and to pray for God's help as well as in thanksgiving. Pupils claimed that they are able to learn about values and apply these values in their day-to-day interaction with family members and schoolmates. Being in school makes them feel optimistic that their ambition in life can be realized.

To the Grades 1 and 2 pupils, the multigrade schools allow them to acquire skills in reading and writing. Pupils in the lower level think that being combined with a higher level grade enables them to have a preview of the lessons to be taken up when they advance to the next grade.

When asked some examples of knowledge applica-

tions in real-life situations, pupils mentioned a number of practical activities such as cleaning their surroundings to prevent diseases, asexual reproduction (marcotting) of plants, sewing torn clothes, reading the label of medicines, displaying good manners and proper conduct, obeying parents and helping in household chores, studying hard, and performing good deeds for the benefit of others.

#### *Improvement of self-esteem*

According to the pupils, learner-centered teaching strategies develop among them confidence in their ability to learn while peer learning facilitated by their teachers establishes closer relationships among classmates. Having a new or improved school building with new tables and chairs as well as reading materials gave pupils a sense of pride for their school. Having school administrators and guests frequently visiting them make pupils and teachers feel that they are important. Being

asked their opinion by teachers, administrators, and visitors make pupils think that they are important. In effect, frequent visits by and interaction with important personalities boost learners' ego. In addition, fast learners feel that being asked to tutor some classmates is a recognition of their capabilities and this leads to a better sense of self.

Multigrade schools are perceived to implement a cooperative and democratic approach to learning. When some learners experience difficulty in their lessons, others in the class are willing to help out. Role plays, experiments, oral reports, and other pupil-oriented teaching strategies are found to foster cooperation and participation among or between learners.

#### *Development of basic learning skills*

Learners in San Isidro generally rated their reading, writing and arithmetic skills to be between Average to Above Average. Nabilog learners, on the other hand, generally rated their basic

skills as Average. San Isidro learners compare themselves with learners in an adjacent barangay who attend a school perceived to have less facilities and equipment than their own multigrade school. Nabilog pupils compare themselves with learners in bigger and better equipped schools in adjacent municipalities.

Pupils report that they have acquired healthful habits from lessons learned in school. Most habits mentioned have something to do with cleanliness which includes personal cleanliness such as taking daily baths, brushing teeth regularly, cutting nails, cleaning nose and ears, changing clothes everyday, combing or grooming the hair, wearing clean clothes, washing hands before and after eating as well as after using the toilet. Others include habits of washing dishes, cleaning the yard, and cleaning the toilet. Some pupils also mention developing the habit of eating a balanced diet with fruits and vegetables and planting vegetables in the home garden.

#### *Perception of other stakeholders*

San Isidro pupils rate the quality of teaching of their men-

tors as definitely between Above Average and Excellent. Pupils in Nabilog generally rate their teachers Above Average. What accounts for this difference in rating seems to be that San Isidro learners compare themselves with a school in a nearby upland barangay that is less-equipped than theirs and has teachers who are not as effective as their own. They consider themselves as having teachers who are more skilled and school facilities that are much better than what others in an adjoining community have. Nabilog pupils for their part compare themselves with those from bigger schools in the adjacent municipalities and thus tend to downplay the benefits gained from their own school.

On teachers' involvement in the community, both groups of learners rated their teachers between Above Average to Excellent. Pupils in both schools appreciate seeing their teachers actively involve themselves in the affairs of the community.

### *Insights and Lessons Learned*

1. In a province where almost one half (48%) of elementary schools are combined or

multigrade schools, multigrade schools embody the concept of Education for All (EFA) adopted by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Without the multigrade schools, a big number of our elementary school children, especially in far-flung *barangays*, would have been deprived of basic education. Yet, even among the combined or multigrade schools, more than half (57%) are incomplete schools.

2. The examples of San Isidro and Nabilog schools show that proper administration of multigrade schools can be a workable alternative in providing the educational needs of children in the uplands and the countryside. Teacher training, improved school facilities and equipment, administrative assistance, LGU support, and community participation contribute to making multigrade schools work for children in need.

3. The application of innovative teaching strategies enables teachers to be effective in

handling multigrade classes and sustains children's interest to learn. Nonetheless, there is a continuing need for re-tooling our elementary school teachers to provide them skills to respond to the realities of a school setting in outlying communities.

4. Pupil centered approaches to teaching introduced in the multigrade schools under study require learners to take an active role in the teaching-learning process. Children's exposure to such strategies develops in them a sense of personal responsibility and allows them to be directly involved in their own learning. As an outcome of the ownership of responsibility, pupils manifest willingness to extend learning beyond their classroom.

5. Bringing the lessons from the classroom to one's home encourages parents to be involved in the learning process. In the schools under study, parents serve as para-teachers. They assist the teachers in various aspects of learning such as production of educational materials, conduct of games, and monitoring children's school-

work at home.

6. Human relations play a major role in teachers' level of motivation. The regular presence of supervisors as well as visits of observers and other personalities promote among teachers industry as well as pride, and among pupils a positive attitude towards learning.

7. Since parents usually serve as volunteer workers when supervisors and guests visit the school, they are able to interact with the teachers and develop good working relations with them. Such occasions bring not only parents and teachers together but also foster good relations among parents by bringing them closer together.

8. Being residents of communities with Unicef-assisted schools gives parents a sense of pride and motivates them to work harder to live up to the expectations of the donor agency.

9. When asked to choose between monograde and multigrade schools, all sample groups favor monograde classes. However, learners, par-

ents and community members are unanimous in wanting to have the learning devices and teaching strategies applied in the Unicef-assisted multigrade schools carried over to monograde classes.

10. Parent volunteers who help in handling the class, assisting pupils during seat work, and managing the conduct of classroom activities deserve to receive honorarium for time and effort spent.

#### Notes

This study is a slightly revised version of the report submitted by the Interdisciplinary Research Group (IRG) to the Unicef through the Negros Oriental Schools Division Office which commissioned and funded the study. The IRG decided to publish the results of the study in order to facilitate wider dissemination of the data gathered and to gain public appreciation of what multigrade school is able to provide, particularly in the province of Negros Oriental, in the midst of financial constraints faced by the Philippine educational system.

The authors would like also to acknowledge the assistance of Angelyn Mansing and Nisan Puracan in data gathering and to the institutional support provided particularly by Dr. Catalina Credo, the Multigrade Demonstration Schools Project Coordinator of Negros Oriental and Dr. Metodio M. Gapasin, then the Schools Division Superintendent when the study was conducted, and to Dr. Jane Faburada, the present Schools Division Superintendent.

And most especially, appreciation is extended to the local school officials and teachers, community leaders, parents and school children who were very cooperative and accommodating during the gathering of data. However, the ideas and opinions contained in this paper are all the responsibility of the authors and not the Unicef and the Negros Oriental Schools Division Office.

Multigrade teachers, given the multifaceted teaching responsibilities that become additional burden, deserve additional compensation and benefits such as hazard pay.

11. In both schools, there are no clear plans to ensure the sustainability of the program once Unicef's direct assistance runs out. A concrete plan of action needs to be in place to make the innovative multigrade programs sustainable.

## A TASTE OF BITTER SUGAR! THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF THE CENTRAL AZUCARERA DE BAIS

Joseph T. Raymond

### ABSTRACT

One of the objectives of the Japanese Forces when they arrived in the eastern side of the island of Negros was to acquire and control the resources they needed to fuel their war effort. They planned to realize this objective by occupying the Central Azucarera de Bais, a sugar central that has been in operation since 1918. Owned by the Spanish company, *Compania Central de Tabacos de Filipinas*, or *Tabacalera* as it is more popularly known, the Central had much to offer—from stocked sugar, communication facilities, a paper factory, alcohol for fuel, and housing facilities for soldiers. However, by a strategy of passive non-cooperation, the Central remained in the control of the *Tabacalera* management despite the Japanese occupation of its premises. Passive resistance was expressed in many forms, from plain stubbornness on the part of the administrators to providing clandestine support for the guerrillas and the American forces in the island. This gesture not only allowed the *Tabacalera* to continue in business in the archipelago but also provided it an avenue in which to manifest the company's commercial philosophy in its long existence in the Philippines as a Spanish-owned enterprise.

#### Introduction

The events which led to the six-year war that started in the autumn of 1939 may be conveniently divided into three chronological periods. As noted by Taylor (1996:176), the first

was the successful take over of Poland and the establishment of Germany's western frontier during the winter of 1939-40. The second phase began with the German offensive on the other countries of Europe which resulted in the taking

over of France and the evacuation of British military forces from the continent, ending with the failed aerial campaign by Germany to take over Great Britain. The last phase marked the escalation of the European war into a world war which drew the Soviet Union and then the United States into the conflict, resulting eventually in the destruction of Nazi Germany and its two Axis allies, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan.

Resistance to the occupation of the Axis powers both in Europe and Asia came in two distinct forms—the armed response and passive opposition. Of the two, the former has been well documented and has a mine of information which can be readily sourced. Exemplifying this form of resistance were the French underground movement, the guerrilla partisans led by Draza Mijalovic and Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia, the combined communist and Kuomintang forces of Gen. Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Tse-Tung in China, and finally, the guerrilla groups that continually harassed the Japanese forces in the Philippines.

Unfortunately, very lit-

tle has been said about those who engaged in a non-armed approach as a means of resistance mainly because the significance of patriotic acts is often gauged by how they are tangibly manifested and the concrete results they bring about. Specifically for this reason, this paper will examine this form of resistance and assess the degree of its effectiveness as demonstrated by an institution located in the province of Negros Oriental, Philippines. In particular, this analysis will focus on the efforts of the *Compania General de Tabacos de Filipinas* or *Tabacalera* to oppose the attempted take over of the company by the Japanese during the Japanese occupation.

The *Compania General de Tabacos de Filipinas* or *Tabacalera*, as it is more popularly called, is a Spanish owned company that started its business in the Philippines since 1882. Besides tobacco, its vast business operations included sugar and the liquor industry. Its interests in sugar eventually established the first sugar central in the province of Negros

Oriental, the *Central Azucarera de Bais (CAB)* in 1918. Its installations were located all over the archipelago, spanning offices, warehouses, and factories in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The events that took place in the third phase of the war directly affected the activities of *Tabacalera*, especially in the area of sugar production. When the US became directly involved in the war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, it placed all civilian ships under its control as a precautionary measure (Raventos, 1981: 162). As a result, *Tabacalera* was no longer able to transport its products to the U.S. market and was forced to reroute the sugar shipment to Japan and sell it at very low prices (Raventos, 1981: 162). Thus, the initial effect of the war was the loss of revenues.

Long before the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, the United States had already observed the steady rise of power of Japan in the Pacific and viewed this as a threat

to American interest. This perceived threat led to the forming of the USAFFE under General Douglas MacArthur based in the Philippines and the stationing of a bomber squadron in the country. Nevertheless, this did not effectively deter the eventual invasion by the Japanese (Agoncillo, 1990: 388). The destruction of Pearl Harbour took by surprise the elite American Navy in the early morning of December 7, 1941 Hawaiian time (Agoncillo, 1990: 388). According to Keylor, Japan's surprise carrier raid on the American naval base erased the naval power of the United States in the western Pacific (1996:242). This event subsequently led to the invasion by Japan of the countries of Southeast Asia which were then organised as the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (Keylor 1996). Four hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Philippines was attacked. This was to be the start of the steady invasion of the country (Agoncillo, 1990: 390). The fall of Manila on January 2, 1942, and that of the last two strongholds,

Bataan on April 9, 1942 and Corregidor on May 6, 1942, placed the Philippines under the total control of the Japanese Imperial Army (Agoncillo, 1990: 392-394). This unfortunate string of events later led to the total shut down of the businesses of the Compania General de Tabacos de Filipinas.

### Tabacalera: A Japanese Interest Denied

Predictably, the massive military campaigns of the Japanese military drained Japan's resources for to launch a campaign as large as the one they had envisioned commanded no cheap price. Consequently, Japan needed all the resources of the occupied territories to fund its war machine. Being one of the biggest corporations in the country, Tabacalera and its vast assets became one of Japan's most coveted enterprises. This desire, however, was for the most part dampened by the shrewdness of Tabacalera's highest administrators in the Philippines and in Spain and their use of subterfuge in deal-

ing with the Japanese. This attitude was echoed all throughout her enterprises and eventually resulted in an organized non-compliance policy towards the Japanese authorities. For the entire duration of the Japanese occupation, the Company fought the interests of the Japanese military organization in this manner (Raventos, 1981: 220).

It is important to note that during the war, Spain, together with Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland, was among the few countries which opted to maintain a neutral, albeit precarious, status (Keylor, 1996: 180). Spain remained in this state and refused to heed Adolf Hitler's pressure to join the war despite its leader, Francisco Franco's indebtedness to Nazi Germany for helping him during Spain's civil war. A cautious and pragmatic leader, Franco instead began shifting his loyalties and revised many of his foreign policies as the Allies began winning the war (Encarta Encyclopaedia, 1997, CD-ROM). For its part, Tabacalera took advantage of Spain's neutral stance to pur-

sue non-cooperative policies in all dealings with the Japanese thereby frustrating Japan's attempts to make full use of the company's installations and equipment.

A few days after the occupation, a representative from the Japanese company, Mitsui Bussan Kaisha, expressed interest in tobacco business and proposed to the administration of Tabacalera in Manila to invest capital in the La Flor de la Isabela, Tabacalera's cigar and cigarette factory (Raventos, 1981: 215). The directors of the company plotted to out-manuever the Japanese by fabricating three reasons which served as alibi to deter the planned takeover. First, the company officials claimed that they did not need any capital. Next, they told the Japanese that the company's highest officials responsible for such agreements were out of the country. Lastly, the administrators of the company managed to convince the representatives of the Mitsui Bussan Kaisha that Tabacalera was already cooperating with Mitsubishi, another Japanese

company. From that time on, the Mitsui company never bothered the Company again (Raventos, 1981: 215).

The last reason given above had much credibility since Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha was known to be "head over heels" over one of the Company's subsidiaries, the Celulosa paper factory, situated within the complex of the Central Azucarera de Bais and managed by the sugar central. The Japanese authorities were desperate to control this facility that they published in Manila through a Japanese-controlled periodical a report announcing that they had "built a factory of paper [*sic*] in Bais, being the first in the Philippines, an economic success, etc., etc., etc..." (Raventos, 1981: 219). It was evident from this report that the Japanese wanted to be known as the builder of the factory. In truth, however, Tabacalera had already established this factory before the war. To keep the facility from falling into enemy hands, the Company, according to Raventos, started devising ways to do so with some suc-



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cess (1981: 291).

First, the Company administrators sought through diplomatic channels the help of the Spanish Consulate in Manila to confirm that Tabacalera, being dominantly Spanish-owned, belonged to a neutral country (Raventos, 1981: 219). Second, they barred four Japanese workers, three of whom were technicians and the other a manager, from reaching Bais. In Raventos' account, the Company was able to prevent the arrival of the "manager" in Bais. Although the same account makes no mention of the fate of the three technicians, an interview with Carlos Bell Raymond (see p. 104) who was in-charge of the soap factory in the Central at that time, however, revealed that no Japanese technicians ever arrived in the paper factory. This suggests that their departure from Manila was probably also thwarted by the Tabacalera administration there. Third, to discourage the Japanese from pursuing their interest, the company deliberately went into low production with the full cooperation of its employees.

Consequently, for the duration of the Japanese occupation, the Company, according to Raventos, lost as much as 1,287,796 pesos (1981: 219). This loss was incurred even though the Japanese continued to import from Taiwan pulp which was a primary material and made Tabacalera pay for the importation. But there were other related causes for such losses. In an interview, Augusto Ybanez (see page 104), a former CAB employee, narrated that many workers fled to the mountains during the occupation while those who were left behind lived in fear of the Japanese and willingly participated in the policy of non-cooperation. This situation had grave consequences on the normal operations of the company. Eventually, the lack of personnel to run the operation and the non-cooperation of the few who were left behind later paralyzed the company's entire operations.

The same fate also befell the production of sugar and alcohol, the latter being produced in small quantities in the Bais Central factory. Besides its social significance, alcohol was an important product because CAB also used it as fuel to run

their vehicles. Carlos Bell Raymond reported that in the area of sugar production, the absence of people to work in the fields led to a total stoppage of all activities. In Raventos' account, the only sugar left in the Central warehouses were about 350,000 piculs, of which 86,000 belonged to the planters (1981: 219). The planters did not realize any profit, however, since the Japanese companies controlled all the sales and purchases of sugar and dictated the low prices.

Throughout the war the employees of the Central, according to Carlos Bell Raymond, continued to look up to Mr. Barrata, the CAB manager, as the figure of authority. Even the Japanese recognized his authority and made all their orders only through him. Meanwhile, according to Leopoldo Omoso, Sr. (see p. 104), the management of Tabacalera continued to exercise control over everything in the Central. This state of things signified that the Japanese not only acknowledged the fact that they did not own the Central but also respected the authority of the Company. It was evident that

the stage-managed decline in sugar, alcohol, and paper production succeeded in keeping at bay the Japanese plans to take over the company. Since all authority continued to be exercised by the official representatives of Tabacalera, Japanese interest in the company remained at best on the level of desire.

Meanwhile, in Tabacalera's Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, the Japanese employed a different strategy to control the installations in that area. It was their intention to see the industries fail in order to use this as a legitimate reason to takeover the management (Raventos, 1981: 217). This they achieved by forcing the planting of cotton on 500 hectares of land against the advice of Tabacalera officials. According to Raventos, losses from this failed venture amounted to 69,000 pesos (1981: 217). Next, they contrived the failure of the distillery and caused a loss totaling 3,473,204 pesos from 1942-1944. Yet, despite these manipulations by the Japanese, the Company managed to retain control of the Hacienda. The Company succeeded to prevent the Japanese takeover by claiming once more that owing to the for-

eign ownership of Tabacalera by a neutral country, it could not be sequestered. Amazingly, the Japanese agreed to respect this claim until they pulled out from the area.

Thus, all throughout the occupation and after the liberation the Company was able to maintain its ownership and control of all its properties and facilities. Although they proved costly to the production, the strategies for resistance employed by the management clearly demonstrated the Company's intent to reject Japanese occupation. Although, the Japanese were able to occupy the properties of the Company, they were not able to gain ownership of the same and authority remained vested with Tabacalera. Moreover, despite their access to the resources of the company, they never fully benefited from them. In the end, Tabacalera's claim to diplomatic immunity, the evident lack of manpower, and the stage-managed "failure" of production proved effective in forcing the unsuspecting Japanese to drop their interest in the company.

Tabacalera's support

for the liberation of the Philippines was manifested in the many ways it aided the resistance movement, the Americans before and during the occupation, as well as the free government of the Philippines. In examining the Memoirs kept in the archives of the Company, Raventos found records attesting to the attitude of passive resistance adopted by the Company. Moreover, these records revealed that the management of the Company themselves collaborated very closely with the resistance movement.

#### **Tabacalera: Aid to the Resistance**

It should be stressed that even before the Japanese took over Manila, Tabacalera had already made up its mind to help the resistance movement from the onset of the war. As Raventos reports:

*...Already before the United States entered into the war, the Administrator of the Company, D. Lorenzo Corres Perez, offered to the military authorities the services of the Company and her*

*personnel, giving a map of the islands with all the haciendas, agencies, and holdings. In particular, what was offered were the warehouses in Aparri where the Company could install ten thousand soldiers. On the eighth of December after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the administration called the headquarters of Gen. MacArthur to inform him that the Company and the personnel were at his disposal. A few days after, two of the warehouses in San Marcelino were rented to the Americans for one dollar per annum (Raventos, 1981: 222-223).*

It is noteworthy to mention that Tabacalera's many installations in different parts of the country provided support to the resistance in a variety of forms. Raventos' account provides several examples of the Company's numerous involvements in the resistance movement in many parts of the country (1981: 223). After the fall of Manila and the eventual complete surrender of the last defenses of the country, and after the defeat of USAFFE in Bataan and Corregidor, Tabacalera took an active part in providing aid to civilians and prisoners of war alike. For instance, in the aftermath of the infamous "Death March" from

Bataan to San Fernando, Pampanga, that left prisoners huddled together like animals, hungry, and sick in Capás, Hacienda Luisita's employees installed a water pump that provided water into the camp from the hacienda's own water supply.

In Luzon, the resistance movement led by Col. Eduardo Alabastro, whose center of operations was in Batangas, was the recipient of tobacco and medicine supplied by the Company (Raventos, 1981: 223). When an American commander by the name of Cushing was killed at an encounter in Echague between the Japanese and the guerrillas, he was carrying in his pockets letters of introduction to the personnel of Tabacalera who worked in the haciendas of the Cagayan Valley (Raventos, 1981: 223). At Hacienda Luisita, Eduardo Pueyo and Rolando Goita facilitated the smuggling of alcohol to be used for sanitary purposes for the prisoners of camp O'Donnel, as well as falsified the passes that allowed members of the resistance to travel (Raventos, 1981: 223-224). These passes were

registration cards with a red dot in the middle (Rodriguez, 1989: 37). In the island of Negros, the Company donated 10,000 pesos to the guerrilla leader Montelibano (Raventos, 1981: 223).

### Bais Central

Prior to the coming of the Japanese to the island of Negros, the Tabacalera management in Manila issued instructions to the officials the Central Azucarera de Bais urging cooperation with the Filipino authorities to prepare for the coming of the Japanese. Consequently, Ramon Barrata Molins, the Central's manager, and Ramon Altonaga, its secretary, went to Dumaguete to offer help to the Philippine authorities. Ramon Barrata later became a member of the Civil Emergency Board that was assigned to coordinate civil acts with the armed forces. At the same time, he also instructed the employees of the Central to offer their services to the army. The sympathetic attitude of the Company's leadership toward the resistance movement in-

spired many of its employees into performing numerous deeds in support of it.

When the last defenses in Corregidor collapsed, Manuel L. Quezon escaped to Negros and landed in San Carlos on board the ship *Princesa de Negros* (Rodriguez, 1989: 10). From here, he traveled to Bais by land where he stayed for almost three weeks to install the free government of the Philippines (Rodriguez, 1989: 10). His other reason for staying was the Company's paper factory, the *Celullosa*, which was printing emergency money to be used by the guerrillas in the island of Negros (Raventos, 1981: 224). The President had prior knowledge of the paper plant from his pre-war one-day visit to Bais aboard the ship *Don Isidro* on its way to Cebu and Mindanao (Sugar News, 1961: 678). It was Roy Bell, the Civil Affairs officer, who disseminated the information that the paper factory had already manufactured the special paper for the printing of the money (Rodriguez, 1989: 10).

On this trip, President

Quezon was accompanied by Vice-president Osmeña, Gen. Basilio Valdes, Col. Manuel Nieto, and a number of Americans (Raventos, 1981: 24). However, when Vice-president Osmeña and Gen. Valdes crossed the channel to go to Cebu, they were chased by a Japanese cruiser but were lucky to escape (Rodriguez, 1989: 10). Because of this, Bais was deemed a safer place to stay than Cebu for President Quezon. Aside from this, the Central was equipped with communication facilities such as telephones which had long distance capability, not to mention the availability of basic needs such as water, electricity, soap, and alcohol for fuel. In other words, the Central had all they needed. During his stay, the President met with various provincial officials to discuss matters of national concern. However, the growing tensions made it unsafe for the President to stay much longer. Thus, from here Quezon proceeded to Oroquieta, Misamis Oriental and on the eve of March 26, 1942 two American bombers took him and his group to Australia (Agoncillo, 1990: 415).

Thus, prior to the coming of the Japanese military to

Negros Oriental there were two major factors that augured well for the strengthening of the resistance movement against the invaders. One was the assured support of the province's strongest socio-economic force, the Central Azucarera de Bais, and the other, the prestige of having the country's President in the province. Among the employees of the Central as well as the general populace, these factors further bolstered their feelings of animosity for the unwelcomed "guests."

Upon their arrival in Dumaguete on May 26, 1942, the Japanese wasted no time and installed a garrison in the Bais Central compound (Rodriguez, 1989: 33). The reason for such a move was evidently the availability of facilities and amenities that at the Central. Despite their physical presence in the Company's premises, the Japanese army officers only directed the operations of the Central as supervisors. The control of the Central, however, remained in the hands of Tabacalera. A Japanese national who had been

working as a gardener at the Central before the war became the intermediary in the negotiations between the management and the Japanese soldiers who were represented by an officer by the name of Sakemori who spoke fluent English. According to Omoso's account, it was the gardener who had the final say in the negotiations and who also exposed the identities of employees or citizens supportive of the resistance movement or sympathetic to the guerrillas. By an interesting coincidence, it was also a Japanese gardener at Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac, who became one of the "bosses," as revealed by Jesus Martinez (See p. 103).

This served to bolster the claim that Japan had already been sending out individuals on intelligence mission long before they started the war in the Pacific. Following this logic, these intelligence missions, evidently carried out with much success, were thus designed to pave the way for Japan's grand plans to dominate Asia.

In comparison to reports of rampant acts of bru-

tality associated with the Japanese all over the country, the Japanese occupation of the Central seemed relatively peaceful. Research found only a few gruesome incidents perpetrated by the Japanese army at the Central's premises. As witnessed by Carlos Bell Raymond, the first incident involved the beheading of a suspected guerilla whose severed head was later stuck on the gates of the main entrance to the Central. The other incident involved the torture of a musician, Felicisimo Manopol, who played at the Central during a dance held by the Japanese (Rodriguez, 1989: 51). According to accounts by Rodriguez, two revolvers reported missing from the Casa de Solteros, the building occupied by the Japanese, were allegedly found inside the violin case owned by the musician. After this discovery, he was tortured and then brought to Dumaguete where he died (1989: 51). Company officials themselves were not spared the attention of the Japanese. The manager, Ramon Barrata, along with other department

heads, were repeatedly interrogated by the Kempetai, the Japanese secret police (Raventos, 1981: 224).

The Company's support for the resistance movement came in various ways. Barrata allowed the guerrillas access to the facilities of the Central, such as radio battery chargers, and secretly allowed the employees to help the guerrillas, according to Carlos Bell Raymond. In December of 1941, the Central contributed four trucks and one car to the Americans who were leading the resistance movement (Raventos, 1981: 231). Alvero Peypoch, the assistant accountant of the paper factory authorized the smuggling of bundles of paper, believed to have been used as passes, out of the Central for the guerrillas. According to Omoso, the guerrillas came in and out of the Central from time to time. This seemed to suggest that they either had fake passes or had been helped by some employees to enter the Central.

The first signs that the Japanese defeat was imminent began to show by June of 1942

when the Japanese fleet suffered its first major beating at the hands of the American navy as it tried to take Midway Island, west of Hawaii (Keylor, 1996: 244). The final blow came with the two bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945.

When Gen. Douglas MacArthur and his men landed in Leyte on January 9, 1945, they used the two ships belonging to Tabacalera, the Marchen and the Huda. (Sugar News, 1961: 678). As history shows, this event led to the eventual liberation of different areas in the archipelago from Japanese control. In Rodriguez's report, the liberation of Negros Oriental began with the arrival in Dumaguete of the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment which launched the Operation Victor II (Rodriguez, 1989: 163). According to Ybañez, Japanese soldiers encamped at the Central quickly escaped to the mountains upon hearing of the coming of the Americans. Omoso further revealed that both management and employees meanwhile welcomed the news with much excite-

ment and relief. Carlos Bell Raymond, together with the Assistant Manager Miguel Franco and some guerrillas, met an American plane that landed in an airstrip in Maralag, Tanjay, built by the Japanese using some CAB employees as laborers. According to Raymond, this aircraft was from the 13<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force stationed in Leyte and was piloted by Maj. John Satterstrom together with three crewmen. They stayed at the Central for one night and left the next day. Since that time, Raymond and Maj. John Satterstrom have been in contact and over the years have developed a lasting friendship. Bais was finally liberated on November 21, 1945.

### Conclusion

Throughout the duration of the war, Tabacalera remained resolute in its policy of passive resistance and non-cooperation against the invader and this stance was echoed through out her installations. The personnel of the Central Azucarera de Bais followed this directive without question, utilizing all its resources to disrupt the

planned takeover of the Japanese. This means of resistance proved successful in at least two important ways. First, the control and ownership of the sugar central as well as the other installations remained in the Company's hands. Second, it gave the resistance movement access to valuable resources that undoubtedly contributed to the cause of the guerrilla movement. As a result, the Japanese were deprived of a valuable source of raw materials and equipment that could have fuelled her war machine in the Pacific and possibly made the liberation of the Pacific islands an insurmountable task for the Allied Forces.

This paper represents an initial attempt at examining the role of non-armed resistance as a form of defense strategy. In doing this, the analysis has focused on the concrete examples provided by the Compania General de Tabacos de Filipinas or Tabacalera during the Japanese occupation. As the Tabacalera experience shows, a well-calculated, well-executed passive resistance policy carried out concertedly, consistently, and shrewdly has as much chance of success as an

armed response. Although in the end when the Company managed to retain this decision greatly placed control of its economic activities at risk, such a gamble paid off Tabacalera's interests at risk, such a gamble paid off

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hope that he, a disciple of T. S. Eliot, would take to heart his master's admonition not to cease from exploration so that at the end of his journeys he will arrive where he started "and know the place for the first time".

Maria Leovina A. Nicolas, until her impromptu departure for yet another journey, was among the most exquisitely sensitive minds to grace the graduate program in English at Silliman in the recent times. Reading this article after her furtive departure is like reading a suicide note after the body has been found—it gives way to a moment of illumination that is as startling as it is bizarre.

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