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This special issue is dedicated

to the memory of

Dr. Paul T. Lauby
President emeritus
United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia,
the one constant in the life of Silliman University,
for leaving the unique legacy that the world can only be understood
by doing something and serving others

and to

Dr. Edith L. Tiempo

First Managing Editor, Silliman Journal 1954,
National Artist for Literature,
Professor emeritus,
poet, fictionist, literary critic, and teacher
who taught by example that the true teacher is one who
also learns from the students

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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 20 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.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Some people see things as they are and ask why;
others dream of things that never were and ask why not.
George Bernard Shaw

A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it,
bringing with him the image of a cathedral.
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.
T. S. Eliot

Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth –
that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too.
W.H. Murray, The Story of Everest

In this issue. On September 1, 1954 the first issue of *Silliman Journal* was entered as a second-class mail matter at the Dumaguete Post office. Published with grants from the James W. Chapman Research Foundation, this inaugural issue was edited by Pedro Dimaya and had for its managing editor, Edith L. Tiempo. Constituting its Board of Editors were Dioscoro S. Rabor representing the Biological Sciences, J. Elliott Fisher for the Social Sciences, Gerardo A. Imperial for the Physical Sciences, and Edilberto K. Tiempo for the Humanities. Lino Q. Arquiza served as the Business Manager. At that time, the annual subscription was P6.00 and individual copies sold for P1.50.

Envisioned as a quarterly academic publication for disseminating results of scholarly inquiry, *Silliman Journal* was intended principally as a means of communicating knowledge among scholars in the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities, and mediating the conversation among these disciplines long before the terms multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary have gained currency. The impetus behind its creation has been the recognition of the centrality of its place in promoting the development of academic research and high quality scholarship in particular and advancing the quality of education at Silliman University in general. With this inaugural issue, SJ joined a growing list of

academic journals dedicated to establishing and maintaining critical and objective scholarship.

It has been 50 years since the first issue came out and the intervening years have seen a succession of preeminent members of the Silliman University faculty taking over the reins of *Silliman Journal* and producing admirable collections of articles contributed by equally renowned names in the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. Much of what Silliman Journal has achieved in the span of 50 years owed largely to the works of several generations of editors and members of the editorial board who strove to produce publications of the highest academic and production standards in every issue and thus ensured the reputation of the journal as a scholarly publication. On this golden anniversary celebration, *Silliman Journal* recalls with gratitude the men and women who have been instrumental in its growth and progress. In dedicating these special issues to them, I harken back to the words of Alice Walker:

> To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves, that the line stretches all the way back, perhaps, to God; or to Gods. We remember them because it is an easy thing to forget: that we are not the first to suffer, rebel, fight, love and die. The grace with which we embrace life, in spite of the pain, the sorrows, is always a measure of what has gone before.[1]

In conjunction with this tribute, the special humanities edition honors two of *Silliman Journal*'s most illustrious forebears whose dedication to excellence continues to animate the pages of *Silliman Journal* and whose life and works provide us with a model to emulate

in guiding *Silliman Journal*'s destiny towards its next golden anniversary:

- Dr. Edith L. Tiempo, National Artist for Literature, Professor *emeritus*, poet, fictionist, literary critic, and teacher, served as *Silliman Journal*'s first managing editor.

- The late Dr. Paul T. Lauby, President *emeritus*, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, chaired the Editorial Board while concurrently serving Silliman University as Vice President for Academic Affairs. In his various capacities as administrator at Silliman and at the United Board, Dr. Lauby was instrumental in sourcing funds that facilitated the development of the university as center of academic excellence in the region. Largely through his efforts, *Silliman Journal* has been the recipient of a number of grants from the United Board that enabled the production of special issues.

It is a humbling experience to walk on the same path on which such distinguished predecessors have trod and to follow in their footsteps. I can only hope that as heirs of their legacy, my colleagues and I will prove worthy of this inheritance. It is said that, "the measure of any tribute is not how it commemorates a person, but in how it creates new ways of imagining the future once he or she is gone...in the best scenario, it is to witness the lighting of a symbolic candle and to take part in keeping it burning". This golden anniversary celebration is for us a reminder of this duty—the duty to continue the dissemination of results of scholarly inquiry, to hold sacred the unique exchange between authors and readers, to endeavor to create opportunities for Silliman faculty and other scholars to engage in writing and publication, and to strive to maintain excellence in academic research, scholarship, and publication.

Yet, keeping this duty has been for us—as much as it must have been for those who came before us—a constant challenge, familiar as we have all become with the vicissitudes of academic journal publication—heavy production costs, the waxing and waning of scholarly manuscripts, much editorial preparation, complex typography and artwork, low print runs due to their limited market, and very low financial returns—all of them combine to create irregular publication, late release, and uncertain continuity. That SJ has survived these vicissitudes through 50 years attests as much to the vision and courage of those who shaped its early years as to Silliman University's support for it and commitment to academic excellence.

For these reasons alone, there is much to be proud of this milestone and much to celebrate the changes that have taken place over the span of half a century. This golden jubilee gives us an occasion to review some of our accomplishments. For lack of space, I mention only three major accomplishments over the last six years: (1) the introduction of the peer-review process, (2) the inclusion of the Overseas Editorial Board, and (3) the use of information technology in journal production. The review of the editorial policies in 1998 and the consequent overhaul of the editorial board membership ushered in one of the most creative periods in the life of *Silliman Journal*. This was a time marked by many creative agitations that manifested themselves in both the content and format of the journal. One of the most significant changes introduced during this time has been the peer-review process. An important aspect of academic publications, the peer-review process is used to assess the quality of a manuscript submitted for publication and evaluate its importance. In providing a standard level of qualitative assurance, it allows for the selection of the best materials while influencing what enters the public domain. In this way, it helps to improve the quality of research and the papers that appear in print. From this period onwards, all manuscripts

submitted to *Silliman Journal* for publication have followed standard academic peer review processes by specialists of respective disciplines both from here and abroad.

Hand-in-hand with the introduction of the peer-review process was the inclusion of international specialists in the Overseas Board of Editors. Coming from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, these scholars and specialists review submissions and assist in locating other reviewers among their network of experts. The professional, functional, and geographical variety of their institutional affiliations reflects the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of *Silliman Journal*.

But perhaps our greatest achievement so far is in exploring the impact of technological change on the production of the journal. Because *Silliman Journal* had no headquarters to speak of, it helped that I was also the Chair of the Department of English and Literature when I became Editor and Chair of the Editorial Board in 1998. Consequently, the English Department has not only provided SJ a home for the last six years, but since that time has also been generously lending its equipment for the production of the first of the subsequent issues using desktop publishing systems and special word-processing software. With this new technology, we have been able to produce the issues much more efficiently and prepare camera ready copies, thus providing a higher quality output, while reducing production cost and time.

About this time, too, the English Department had started subscribing to a private Internet Service Provider in the city and was among the first unit in the university to have its own Internet connection long before the campus computer network was in operation. From this time on, the Internet connected SJ to the outside world facilitating call for papers, submissions, and peer-reviews in less than half the time it would have taken these communications to reach their destinations. Contact with prospective authors, reviewers, and potential subscribers around the world not only became possible but widened considerably at a speed

undreamt of just a few years before. Needless to mention, the impact of the technology of the Internet on the processes of journal production, in enhancing the quality of the finished product both in terms of content and format, and in particular in creating for SJ a larger audience worldwide cannot be overstressed. By this time, SJ has become a fully peer-reviewed publication combining the highest standards of traditional scholarship and the possibilities and opportunities offered by information technology. While continually exploring new ways to improve both its quality and service, SJ commits itself to making available new research and facilitate effective communication between scholars, students, and the general public.

The making of the special anniversary editions provides yet another evidence of some of the wide-ranging possibilities offered by information technology particularly how it has radically altered the way we work at present and the space on which this work takes place. In 2002, I took a leave of absence from teaching and administration and moved to Germany, bringing with me *Silliman Journal* on what was envisioned to be an experiment in distance editing. Since then, four issues have successfully come out from my base in Germany. During these last two years, Cybertechnology has allowed me to breach the physical boundaries of space and remain connected with our production staff and the Editorial Board at Silliman as well as with authors and reviewers worldwide by Internet. In enabling me to carry out my editorial job and oversee the production of Silliman Journal from another part of the globe, information technology opens up yet another opportunity—allowing people to live in one place and work in another.

Nevertheless, in comparison to advancements made in the uses of information technology in teaching, learning, research, and publication in the developed world, which continue to challenge the traditional notion of a university as a teaching space, our experiment in distance editing seems light years behind. At this stage, our efforts are

embryonic at best, but they signal the beginning of what is possible. Yet, just a few years back this was a completely impossible enterprise. Fifty years ago, our elders never guessed such a notion as the World Wide Web would come to pass or that most of the tools and information needed by authors, editors, and publishers could be Google-searched or retrieved through the Internet Explorer with a single click of the mouse. No other metaphor captures more aptly the kind of world we live in today in which an ubiquitous Internet connects information to an infinite and expanding web that is both accessible and more researchable than any collection of books or library, rendering knowledge available literally at one's fingertips.

This brings me to reflect on the future directions of SJ, but I will begin by mentioning some of the challenges facing SJ at present, which have implications for its growth in the coming years. One of the greatest challenges determining the fate of most academic journals is the escalating cost of production. Unless systematic funding arrangements are made whereby adequate funds are set aside specifically for research and publication, the continuity and regularity of appearance of issues will be difficult to ensure. Although SJ abides by the philosophy that the real value of scholarly publications does not lie in the revenues they generate but in their impact upon the scientific, socio-economic development of the society, there is an urgent need, in the face of fiscal constraints, to design new marketing or promotional strategies aimed at attracting more individual as well as institutional subscriptions. What may also help to mitigate high production costs is the availability of improved printing technology. This will mean, for instance, that SU Press need not farm out printing jobs such as color reproductions to commercial printers at exorbitant prices. Finally, the importance of providing SJ a permanent home and a full-time editorial staff who will no longer work on stolen moments or do balancing acts between teaching and administration and sundry professional and personal roles and responsibilities—and

to be able to carry out the job in an especially-designated office accommodation with its own equipment—cannot be overstressed.

These problems notwithstanding, our experience working on SJ these last six years points to unsatisfactory local authorship as the root cause of long delay in the appearance of new issues. Unsatisfactory not so much in the level of quality as in the extremely limited number of submissions from members of the Silliman academic community. For the past several years, constituting an issue purely from Silliman University faculty submissions has been for us among the greatest challenges. If this issue is any indication, then the state of faculty publication in campus leaves little to be desired. Of the eleven full-length as well as shorter articles represented in this issue, only three are written by members of the faculty, representing roughly 1% of the entire faculty population. On the other hand, the number of international scholars sending submissions to SJ is steadily increasing, attesting to the respect and recognition the journal continues to receive in the international community of scholars and researchers. To date, in addition to the production and exchange of academic knowledge, *Silliman Journal* continues to aid the university's efforts in assessing research and scholarly work as well as appointments and promotion of its faculty. That this seems to have only minimal impact on faculty publication input perhaps requires some reexamination of the use of publication as performance indicator. Perhaps, too, there is a need to reassess the university's institutional investments to research and publication, and if necessary, design one which will provide better environment, resources, time, and encouragement for the faculty to publish.

In the years to come, I can see SJ remaining as a print-based publication, increasingly dependent for its production on technology such as more sophisticated desktop publishing systems, and on the Internet for information or electronic transmission. It will face the

challenge presented by fiscal constraint, escalating cost of production, new technological developments, and an explosion of information while maintaining the values of peer review and protecting the copyright interests of its contributors. However, as the experience of our elders suggests, technology can only do so much. In the end, the future of SJ lies in the quality of institutional support, creative imagination, dynamic and inspired leadership, and committed vision of the people who will guide its destiny on to the next 50 years. It will be up to these people to make sure that SJ publications and manuscript submissions are of the highest quality, especially in light of new technological opportunities and challenges. They have to incorporate the best that technology has to offer, while revising and improving upon the best of its traditional methods, and redefining and maintaining standards of quality in publication.

The idea of an electronic journal is a prospect, but at this stage online or Cyberpublishing is still in its infancy even in the developed world. There is little doubt that electronic publication will eventually redefine the field of academic publishing, but I do not believe it will ever displace print journals. Nevertheless, for online publishing to become a reality at Silliman means that the university computer technology must become a properly integrated university activity and not just the sole property of one unit. Until Silliman University develops strong technological infrastructure to be run by competent and highly creative IT specialists who know not only the latest in technology but how best to use it to enhance teaching and learning and to develop new educational services and products, on-line publishing of the quality that can approximate the standard reached by the paper-print SJ publication, will not happen in the nearest future.

Although our continuing efforts at improving the quality of *Silliman Journal* have also increased work pressures, there is also much personal and professional

satisfaction gained from association with an academic journal like SJ.

This volume resulted from an open call for submissions. As such, it does not claim to be representative or comprehensive. On the other hand, we have intended the collection to be broad in scope, yet thematically coherent; diverse in style and focus, yet consistent in quality and rigor, the measure of diversity making for a rich and lively conversation. But they do share one thing in common—they represent some of the best writings by people who, at various times, have been connected with Silliman University as former students, graduates, including alumni of the Writers Workshop, or are members of the faculty at present.

Leading this collection is Gina Fontejon-Bonior's provocative essay questioning the concept of "objectivity in qualitative research". Entitled "The 'I' in Interpretive Research: Positionality in Qualitative Studies", the paper argues that the dynamics of the research process and the subsequent writing of results cannot be objective or neutral, influenced as they are by powerful stakeholders, such as the authorities in the academic institution, the participants, the community, among others, all of them exerting pressure on the researcher in varying degrees. This combination of forces continually exerts influence not only on the research process but also on the results, rendering the enterprise subjective and political. The writer thus posits a rethinking of this concept and suggests a possible strategy, namely the concept of "positionality". In this view, the researcher defines his or her stance in relation to the other participants in the research process and assesses their influence in the dynamics of research ever cognizant of the fact that one's self or identity is discursively produced by a network of multiple positions constructed through many chains of signification. In revisiting the research she undertook at the University of Hawaii, Gina performs her own critique

of the process she employed in this project. In writing about it and retelling the story of her project from her unique position, she engages in what is called from the poststructuralist/postmodernist perspective a meta-linguistic critique.

The next article, "The Writing Eye", by Antonino Salvador S. de Veyra is another performative critique this time of the writer's own creative process and surfaces with an equally provocative conclusion that what has come to be known in the literary world as poetic insight is really a sum total of everything that one apprehends in the external world. How this totality of impressions becomes a special way of seeing is a product of many negotiations by the poet who is him/herself a product of multiple and diverse influences. Although Nino does not mention Barthes, the article nevertheless reminds one of *The Death of the Author* (1977): "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture."

A path-breaking exploration in Feminist Studies in the Philippines, Maria Leovina Amante Nicolas' "*Excerpt from* Goddess Tongue: In Search of the Language of Feminist Motherhood" focuses on the early stages of motherhood as a metaphor for the creative process: the richness of the womb and of the mind, the susceptibility for the conception of an idea, and the discovery of that idea's beginnings. In this brilliantly conceived essay, Nicolas conflates the biological processes involved in motherhood with the aesthetic agitations that accompany the creation of a piece of art. As she describes it in her own words: "This work is about the conception, gestation, birth and mothering of words and child." And through this, with one and only goal—to learn about feminist mothering, to this day, a largely unexplored, albeit exciting, terrain. The essay sparkles with Ayvi's usual wit tempered with a sensitive

understanding and a profound awe of the miracle of birthing.

Following this article is an essay by Cesar Ruiz Aquino on "Scanning the Muse". Cesar begins with an argument that poetry springs from a sense of the beauty and terror in creation, personified as the Muse. This presence, according to him, is evoked in the poem. In this paper, he proceeds to provide examples from literary texts in which the Muse or the search for it is a pervasive presence. In addition, the paper also examines the various representations of the Muse/Goddess in different literary texts and literary traditions from the ancient to the modern period and concludes with a distinction between a true Muse poem and an Apollonian poem.

The next article, "Tagay-tagay Poetics and Gender in Cebuano Verse" by Merlie M. Alunan introduces readers to one of the traditional Sugbuanon poetic genres, the *balak,* and to the *tagay,* the socio-cultural context that has spawned its birth and continues to provide its backdrop. A Cebuano word referring to a gathering, often exclusively of men, for the purpose of drinking, *tagay* is also the occasion for literary discussions as well as poetry reading. In this insightful and equally absorbing paper, the author explores not only the poetry that has come out of this activity but the asymmetries in the gender structure entrenched in our culture as they are displayed in this exclusive male gathering and as they are embodied in the themes of the *balak.* In her usual inimitable style, Merlie Alunan at once provides enlightenment and fun in this exclusive on the *tagay* poetics.

The final article entitled "Revisiting the *Ulahingan* Epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos", Earl Jude Paul L. Cleope does revisit the Ulahingan Project established by the late Dr. Elena G. Maquiso in 1963 and rues at the lack of scholarly interest in the project despite the enormous collection of archived materials on the subject. In providing an update on the project, Earl Jude hopes to stimulate interest and draw the attention of

folklore scholars and students to this unique Filipino cultural heritage.

In the Notes section of this collection are five shorter essays. In the first of these, "Writing in a Time of Terror and the (mis)management of Grief", writer Charlson Ong exhorts his fellow writers at the Iligan Writers workshop "to stand by the integrity of the word, ...[to] write as well for those who cannot speak..." particularly in these dangerous times when, according to Charleson, "the stakes are too high...to leave the management of emotions and perceptions around the world to politicians, clerics, terror mongers, or to CNN".

The next essay by Luis Francia revisits the legendary chieftain of Mactan remembered as a national hero for successfully resisting the first European invasion of the Philippines. In "Notes on a Vanishing Hero", Luis examines the various images of Lapulapu in the Filipino imagination and his significance for a post-colonial people faced with the incessant Westernization and the erosion of the indigenous culture.

In "Film and Literature in the Philippines", the eminent writer-critic, Bienvenido Lumbera, provides a brief history of the close links between literature and films in the Philippines dating back to the beginnings of filmmaking technology.

In "Spirituality and Pedagogy: A Modest Proposal", Priscilla Lasmarias-Kelso writes about the need for pedagogical practices that do more than facilitate information gathering. The writer cites the need for curricular and instructional practices that affirm human values to counter the fragmentation and cultural dissonance that beset the academe at the present time.

In the last essay in this section, "Green Room Players of the Greenfield, Massachussetts: Bringing Theater to the Community", Ruby Leah O. Agnir, using the experience of the Green Room Players, the theater company she founded more than two decades ago and continues to direct to this day, explores the aesthetics of community

theater as well as the myriad possibilities for community involvement it offers, and by turn the positive effects of theater on the participants.

The Book Review section highlights the recently published novel by Edith L. Tiempo, entitled *The Builder*. The section is unlike the conventional book review format in featuring the author herself not only writing about her work but responding to critiques of the book in a form of a letter ostensibly written, by the tone of the letter, by one of her creative writing protégés. Alongside it is Vicente Garcia Groyon's "The houses we inhabit: A reading of Edith L. Tiempo's *The Builder*" providing an additional take on the subject.

The last section in this collection is a tribute to Dr. Paul T. Lauby. The writers, Proceso U. Udarbe, Patricia Ling Magdamo, and Nan Hawkins, take turns remembering the man whose entire life was lived wholly in the service of others. At no time do these words by Norman Cousins ring truer than when contemplating such a life: "if something comes to life in others because of you, then you have made an approach to immortality."

The epigraphs that introduce this issue provide the plot lines for the story that gave life to SJ's golden anniversary projects as well as the inspiration that carried us through the difficult stages of realizing them. In the middle of last year, I began to discuss with Margie Udarbe, Chair of the Editorial Board's Special Projects Committee, the idea of celebrating SJ's golden anniversary with a number of projects: a special humanities issue, a special

science issue, both showcasing the writings of Sillimanians, two volumes of abstracts, a volume of indexes, and the construction of the SJ's website—altogether six projects.

My colleagues in the Editorial Board at Silliman University responded to these ideas with plenty of enthusiasm and so, by phone and e-mail, we began working on the various tasks involved in getting the projects off the ground, plowed through ideas about the content of the issues or how the volumes might look, who would take charge of the monumental task of abstracting all articles published quarterly over a span of 50 years, which committee to handle the indexing project, or where the funding might come from. Margie was to take charge of abstracting all the humanities articles while Laurie Raymundo committed herself to doing the abstracts of all science articles. Meanwhile, I was to take charge of both special issues, while Philip van Peel, our production editor, was just the patient and experienced person we needed to supervise the completion of the projects. The indexing project fell expectedly on the hands of our library colleagues, Naty Sojor and Lorna Yso, while budget became the task of Norma Caluscusan. Ian Casocot was coopted to design the Journal's website. So that we have our sights trained on a particular goal, we set the University's Founders Day in August 2004 as a launching date. As yet, this was a most exciting time.

Little did we know at that time the difficulties and delays we would encounter in bringing these projects to life. Despite the excitement, there was also considerable frustration. Foremost, the projected budget needed for the six projects came to a million pesos—money we did not have! I decided to try raising funds and was directed to the United Board Alumni Program for help. Yet, even after dozens of emails, the University President's endorsement, and the United Board support, I had only minimal success in raising money for these projects. I decided to pour my energies into getting my issues together. By the summer of

2004, submissions were practically only trickling in and it was clear that unless we made a more aggressive call for papers, the issues will not materialize. In June, with deadline looming, Ian Casocot started forwarding several articles he solicited from writers he knew and finally the humanities issue was taking shape. Laurie took personal charge of soliciting the science articles and had plenty of success, except that by the time she was about to start on her abstracting project, she was also on her way out of Silliman to begin a tenure-track position at the University of Guam. Nevertheless, committed that she was to the project, she managed to get all her abstracts ready while also in the middle of a major relocation. Meanwhile, two deaths in Margie's family kept her away from her abstracting project for a time, but when she returned to it, it was with renewed vigor. Rechanneling grief into a frenzy of creative activity, she managed to turn out a monumental work, the quantity and quality of it a testimony to the transformative power of grief and the resiliency of the human spirit.

With the budget problem still looming large in our horizons, we got on with our respective tasks trusting that Silliman University will continue to support SJ as it has always done during the last 50 years. Peer-review of the manuscripts took longer than expected and their revision ate up even more time. As we feared, we missed our first launching deadline but managed to drum up some excitement for SJ's golden anniversary celebration with an exhibit of its 50-year history. A second deadline was set for the last week of November but that too proved too soon. In the end, we decided on simply getting the work done.

When I think how these projects were carried out under a variety of circumstances, sometimes tragic, oftentimes challenging, by people who have had to steal moments to do them while juggling time for many other duties at once, I cannot help but feel fortunate to be in an

Editorial Board inhabited by stimulating, intelligent, and creative colleagues who believe as Antoine de Sainte-Exupery does that, "A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bringing with him the image of a cathedral". A list is hardly adequate, but I cannot begin to say how much I owe, intellectually and personally, to Margie and Laurie, and to the rest of the colleagues in the Editorial Board for believing, when it mattered, that our golden anniversary projects will happen. I thank them for giving a face and a human form to George Bernard Shaw's words: "Some people see things as they are and ask why; others dream of things that never were and ask why not." To Margie and Laurie especially, for their selfless commitment and the numerous hours they expended making a dream come true—thank you for the friendship.

When an endeavor takes a long time in the making, many people become implicated in, and part of, the continuing process.

A special word of thanks goes to our colleagues in the Overseas Editorial Board for their continued support, invaluable feedback, and especially for sharing their time and expertise with Silliman Journal. Starting with the golden anniversary issues, two new members are joining the board and it is my greatest pleasure as Chair of the Editorial Board to welcome them here: Dr. Lawrence R. Heaney, Curator and Head, Division of Mammals, The Field Museum in Chicago, and Dr. Thomas M. Brooks of the Conservation Synthesis Department, Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, Conservation International in Washington, D.C. Dr. Heaney brings to *Silliman Journal* his internationally-renowned expertise in Philippine Mammals while Dr. Brooks' passion for conservation and expertise on birds will surely animate the pages of our coming issues. I thank Dr. Heaney and Dr. Brooks for honoring *Silliman Journal* with their acceptance of this membership. I also wish to thank Dr. Marc L. Miller of the University of Washington and Dr. Rozzano C. Locsin of

the Florida Atlantic University for sharing their time and expertise with SJ's Overseas Editorial Board for the last three years.

The authors in this collection deserve much credit and appreciation for their intellectual energy and receptivity to critical feedback, their diligent and inspired revisions, and their patience during the long months it has taken to bring this issue to press.

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the brilliance and keenness of insight of our reviewers who provided not only invaluable feedback but also enthusiastic support. Many thanks for giving the manuscripts an extraordinarily careful and thorough reading.

Several colleagues and friends have made the preparation of this enormously challenging project worth every frustrating moment. Much appreciation goes to colleagues at the Department of English and Literature, in particular the present Chair, Juliet Padernal, for continuing to host SJ, allowing Philip a space, both literal and professional, on which to work, and especially for the unlimited use of the office equipment; to Andrea Soluta for graciously consenting, at the nick of time, to provide Philip much-needed editorial assistance with copy editing and page proofing; to Ian Casocot for soliciting the submissions and designing SJ's website.

Nino de Veyra was my collaborator when I took over as editor of *Silliman Journal* in 1998. I haven't told him how much I have benefited from his creative mind—from him I learned much of what I now know about editing or publishing. I keep missing the times we used to work together till dawn to beat the deadline of a long-overdue SJ issue, the department's curricular revisions, or accreditation reports. But more than a great collaborator and colleague at the English Department, Nino remains a wonderful friend whose departure for UP-Mindanao in June of 2002 was for me a personal loss.

And even when she is not writing to me, I know that Naty Sojor is deep at work not only on the indexing

project but especially on keeping us financially afloat. She does not know it but her serenity in the face of many difficulties keeps us focused on the work rather than on the problem.

As I mentioned earlier, I had but minimal success in my fundraising efforts for our projects but those I managed to touch responded generously and promptly, their donations going a long way to help finance our endeavors and their encouragement providing the much-needed prop when our steps were beginning to falter. In "The Story of Everest", W.H. Murray is unequivocal in his faith that "concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth - the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too". I, too, am convinced that Providence saw the seriousness of our commitment and moved these friends to open their wallets and hearts to our call for support:

Prof. Frederick and Priscilla-Magdamo Abraham
Dr. Betty C. Abregana
Dr. Federico Agnir
Arnold and Shirlaine-Babol Castellino
Dr. Maren Gaulke
Dr. Efren and Julie Padilla
Bayani and Haydee Pioquinto

To them, and to Nan Hawkins of the United Board Alumni Program who facilitated these donations, my sincerest thanks and gratitude.

In my many other debts, more than there is space to repay, I wish particularly to acknowledge Dr. Agustin A. Pulido, Silliman University President, for his continuing support of all my endeavors whether it was in running the Department of English and Literature or editing *Silliman Journal*. Even at moments of quiet at his end, I know that he remains a steadfast presence. For so much confidence and support needed to carry out these projects and especially for believing in my ability to see these projects to

completion, my profoundest thanks, Dr. Pulido, for being there.

From this end, Dr. Christian K. Schales is *Silliman Journal*'s sole benefactor and biggest collaborator. Much appreciation to him for making our experiment in distance editing a great success with his contribution: a sunny working space, state-of-the art equipment, unlimited access to the Internet, generous donations of everything else that goes into the editorial process, and, especially, long hours on my own to work on these issues. For supporting my creative agitations and making these projects happen—many thanks beyond words.

From Maren Gaulke in Munich I received only endless encouragement—many thanks for providing the much-needed comic relief.

Finally, my deepest gratitude I reserve for many more individuals—colleagues, friends, and family—than there is space to mention their names who have contributed in a variety of ways to make SJ's golden anniversary projects a reality. As we always do, my colleagues and I have endeavored to give this issue the kind of close, intelligent, and creative attention we give all our other projects. I hope our readers and contributors will find in this issue a piece of work of the right proportion.

Ceres E. Pioquinto

[1] Alice Walker, "In These Dissenting Times", *Her Blue Body Everything We know: Earthling Poems 1965-1990.* Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1991.

foreword

On the Length and Breadth of Words

A JOURNAL may bedefined as a demonstration of the reach of words, the length and breadth that the words generate. The *Silliman Journal* has steered by this definition, as well-directed journals do, particularly those which are organs of academic institutions. Moreover, the *Silliman Journal*, through the years and up to its 50th anniversary, has always carried a third component to the reach of its word disseminations, thus: length, breadth, and significance – for the articles it has published along the durable length of its readership service and the breadth of disciplines it has covered are likewise marked by ideas and information that are significant and fundamental in the enrichment of human life and of the world we inhabit.

More to the point, with the judicious balance of the various disciplines represented by its published articles, there has been no particularly favored discipline dominating its pages; the inordinate concentration on articles pertaining to any one body of knowledge could misrepresent the character and objective of the institution from which it emanates. For instance, such misrepresentations happen when a journal's articles are preponderantly focused on technology, or business, or cultural concerns, a partiality resulting in the lack-luster treatment of the other subject fields.

In this connection, one of the best accomplishments of the *Silliman Journal* in its fifty years is the way it has allowed the readers the opportunity to regard all branches of knowledge as a homogeneous body rather than a mutually divisive points of view. A familiar example of the divisiveness is the popular perception regarding technology and science on the one hand, and religion on the other; or the belief that the various arts are impractical and diversionary compared to economics and business, which are largely considered as the important points of operation in society. Clearly, a unification of sensibility and understanding is crucial in ingesting the materials offered

by the various disciplines in their published works.

To my mind, the *Silliman Journal*, by its consistent academic tone and approach in the presentation of its materials, has given its share toward the nurture of broad and impartial reader-attitudes on issues, ideas, events, and even on matters that could turn polemical, like birth control, and the interdisciplinary curriculum, among other issues that have been covered by *Silliman Journal* in its time.

The *Silliman Journal* now looks forward to the next fifty years for its vision and challenge, when the reach of its word disseminations continues to sustain length and breadth and significance.

Edith L. Tiempo
National Artist for Literature

THE "I" IN INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH: POSITIONALITY IN QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Gina A. Fontejon-Bonior

ABSTRACT

This article problematizes "objectivity in research". It proposes that since research is inherently influenced by powerful forces that exert pressure on the researcher, e.g., the participants, authorities in the academic institution, and other stakeholders of the study, research is therefore subjective and political. The author then suggests that instead of "hiding behind the cloak of alleged neutrality" (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000, p. 109), the researcher must describe her/his positionality, i.e., the researcher's stance in relation to significant others in the research and how such influences the dynamics of the research process and the writing of the research paper. With such a section on positionality, the reader is in an informed position to critically evaluate the research output.

Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and the self of the researcher.

—Norman Denzin, 1994, p. 510

If objectivity refers to an "alleged neutrality" on the part of the researcher, then there is no such thing as objectivity in research. The choice of the research site and the participants as well as the framework and theoretical perspective within which the data are interpreted, the research questions raised, the methodology selected, and the inclusion or exclusion of data and artifacts deemed relevant or irrelevant by the researcher during data collection – these are all framed by the researcher and those who exert power over the research process. For instance, if such researcher is a graduate student, such decisions could most likely be influenced by figures occupying powerful positions in the

academe—the adviser, the panel members, the dean, even the head teacher, or school director who determines whether the researcher is allowed access to a group of participants and who may prescribe conditions for the collection of data in the prospective research site.

This is not to say, however, that the researcher is rendered powerless by the research process. In fact, the researcher constantly negotiates with other stakeholders in making significant decisions during the study. The research process is therefore pregnant with multiple "I's" – the multi-voices of subjective forces constantly negotiating and repositioning each other in the conduct of research and in the writing of a scholarly paper for consumption by the academia and other concerned audiences. All research therefore is subjective; all research is political.

As such, researchers need not "hide behind the cloak of alleged neutrality" (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000, p. 109). The challenge is for the researcher to inform one self of the way one's identity as a researcher as well as the influence of powerful others might influence the research process and product, and to inform the readers about such subjectivity. In other words, the challenge is for the researcher to determine how her/his positionality influences the way s/he collects and interprets data, how s/he presents the research findings (Villenas, 1996), and how s/he articulates the research output for the consumption of a journal readership, a workshop or conference audience, or any significant entity, e.g., the funding agency. "How" in this context, does not only refer to the format used or the organizational structure of the paper. More importantly, it refers to the writer's projection of his/her stance as researcher-writer vis-à-vis the research process and output. For instance, one must question how the relationship between the researcher, the participants of the study, and other stakeholders of the research explicitly or implicitly influence the researcher's interpretation and presentation of the data.

The writing process itself is highly political. What is communicated to the reader is mediated by the language used in

presenting the research process and product. The research paper is therefore also framed by the writer's (or the editor's) proficiency in that language particularly his/her maturity in projecting his/her voice; i.e., language, vocabulary, style, or attitude towards the subject that distinguishes him/her from other writers who may be working on the same subject. Thus, the ability to effectively project one's positionality can only be achieved by a mature, reflective writer since writing in itself is an act of discovery (Richardson, 2000, p. 929).

Positionality, in qualitative research, refers to the researcher's stance in relation to significant others in the research and how such influences the dynamics of the research process and the writing of the research paper. This signifies that research and all its elements are dynamic - not static. Each element exerts power over the other. For instance, one cannot claim that the data from the research site are "neutral" elements waiting to be "collected" by an "objective" researcher. One also cannot claim that the persons or community from which the data are collected are "subjects" that await the "treatment" of some "uncontaminated data" from a "sanitized" researcher. The participants in such community or site are no subjects. Nor are they passive, neutral elements of the process that await dissecting. If the participants are passive, it is because they choose to be or are perceived to be so by the researcher. That they choose to be "passive" may be influenced by their relationship with the researcher as well as significant others in the community who exert power or influence over their decisions, or their previous experiences with research in general or researchers in particular. A more localized example would be some of the exit interviews conducted in the recently concluded national elections. That the interviews conducted did not accurately predict the outcome of the elections could be influenced by the political climate of the community. In a forum at the ABS-CBN during the election period, some analysts explain that the interviewees claimed they voted for X when they actually voted for Y because they feared being perceived by the interviewer

as intellectually inferior. This phenomenon, sometimes called "the observer's paradox", happens when interviewees or respondents answer the questions to please or impress the observer/researcher. Since objectivity could not be ensured in the data collection and even in constructing interview or survey questions, despite filters or techniques employed to avoid "leading" questions, it is therefore imperative that the researcher describe her/his subjective position in the research process.

For example, when I conducted a study on the complex instances of silencing and marginalization experienced by students, faculty, and administration in a *barangay* high school, I had to describe my position both as an insider and outsider of the research site. I may be perceived as "an outside observer" – someone wearing the cloak of academia who has thoroughly familiarized herself with significant theoretical perspectives for the collection and analysis of data to comply with a major academic requirement for graduation. On the other hand, I may also be seen as "an insider" – someone who grew up in the same locality and who personally know many of the participants, but someone whose research agendum is politically motivated. Such description provides the reader an awareness of the emic (inside) and etic (outside) perspectives I bring into the collection, analysis, and reporting of the data. When readers are informed about the subjectivities of the researcher-writer, they are in a more enlightened position to critically evaluate the research output. Such transparency is particularly required of ethnographic researchers.

In the introductory part of my paper, I included a section on my positionality as a researcher. The section reads:

Positionality

I am in "a project of telling a life" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746). Researching in a community that I am so much a part of provides me with both emic and etic perspectives; i.e., an insider and outsider point of view on behaviors. I grew up in a *barangay* (village), and completed high school at a municipal high school.

Many of the participants in this study, including the parents, teachers, students, *barangay* head, and the school principal are friends and acquaintances. My interest in the site for research is not incidental; I have participated in conversations among parents, teachers, and students concerned about the future of Paglaum Extension School. Because I know the site and the participants well, I cannot "hide behind the cloak of alleged neutrality" (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000, p. 109). The challenge is to inform myself on how my identity as a "native" researcher might influence the way I position myself and other participants of the study, and how this positionality may influence the way I collect, interpret, and present my findings (Villenas, 1996). I need to develop the sensibility to describe stories with reflexivity, so that I will not fall into the trap of othering the very people I seek to represent.

In addition to describing who I am in relation to the research project, I also described myself as a neophyte as regards the qualitative research in general and ethnographic research in particular. I then briefly described the nature of ethnographic research and discuss the theories that inform my study and frame the selection, collection, and analysis of the data. The goal is to make readers see the researcher's attempt at transparency so that they could more critically evaluate the validity, reliability, generalizability, and transferability of the research output. Below are excerpts from my scholarly paper that describe the research orientation I employed in the study:

Ethnograhic Research

Tedlock (2000) defines ethnography as an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context. It is not simply the production of new information or research data, but rather the way in which such information or data are transformed into written or visual form. As a result, it combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and

personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives (p. 455).

Ethnography is not field technique.... Field techniques in-and-of-themselves cannot an ethnography make. A researcher could use techniques associated with ethnography such as triangulation, yet "not come up with an ethnographic study."

Ethnography is not length of time in the field. ... "Length of time doing fieldwork does not, in-and-of-itself, result in 'better' ethnography or in any way assure that the final product will be ethnographic. Time is one of the several 'necessary but not sufficient' ingredients of ethnography... Based on any one researcher's skill, sensitivity, problem, and setting, optimum periods of fieldwork may vary as much as the circumstances for pursuing it." Although "blitzkrieg ethnography" (Rist 1980) is discouraged, prolonged engagement in the field without recognition of the need for detachment can also be problematic (Wolcott, 1978).

Ethnography is not simply description.... Good description can lead to ethnography, but the good ethnographer is capable not only of good description but also of recognizing what elements most warrant attention. Some ethnographers provide detailed accounts "but falter in the essential and related task of trying to make sense of what they have observed" (pp. 38-42).

I further discussed in my paper that ethnography as an approach to research has taken several forms. Moreover, I mentioned that the approach I employed can be viewed as a combination of the following: auto-ethnography, reflexive ethnography, native ethnography, and critical ethnography. I then described each of the forms and presented a conceptual map that aims to show their interrelationship:

Auto-ethnography is a genre of research and writing that focuses on the self examination of the researcher's "multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural." (Ellis &Bochner, 2000, p. 739). The ethnographer takes the risk of being vulnerable as she undergoes what Ellis theorizes as "a process

of emotional recall" in which one brings herself emotionally and physically to focal points in her life" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 752). This "systematic sociological introspection" requires what Behar (1996) calls "the vulnerable observer". According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), this process requires ethnographers to... "gaze, first, through an ethnographic wide lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations.... In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language." (p. 739)

When the researcher/writer allows herself/himself to be vulnerable, the reader often responds vulnerably and engages actively in the on-going discourse. For Behar (1996), this is a significant aspect of ethnography because a social science "that doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 752).

What distinguishes native ethnography from any other form of ethnographic research is the colonial, marginalized experience of the researcher. In fact, this subjugation may not only be economic. The researcher may have experienced subjugation by other researchers who have manipulated her/him into becoming "subject" of the dominant discourses. Armed with both emic and etic perspectives, native ethnographers usually question those who attempt to interpret the lives of their communities (e.g., Rodriguez, 1983). As bicultural insiders and outsiders, native ethnographers such as Motzafi-Haller (1997) and Trinh (1989) "problematize the distinction between observer and observed, insider and outsider" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 741).

Critical ethnography is distinct from other forms of ethnographic inquiry because of its underlying emancipatory agenda. This form of ethnography aims "to help people imagine

and create better worlds". Critical ethnographers argue that mere description of the experiences of the participants might only perpetuate hegemonic practices and "contribute to maintaining the existing power relationships... that may be oppressive to some members of the community" (Egan-Robertson and Willet,1998, p. 7).

Critical researchers attempt to expose "the way power reproduces itself in the consuuction of human consciousness" through what Lather (1991, 1993) theorized as the "catalytic validity" of research. *Catalytic validity* refers to "the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it.... Research that possesses catalytic validity will not only display the reality-altering impact of the inquiry process, it will direct this impact so that those under study will gain self-understanding and self-direction." (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 297). The resulting ethnographic report must reflect such political stance. Denzin (1994) points out that "...a critical text is judged by its ability to reveal reflexively ... structures of oppression as they operate in the worlds of lived experience.... The text thus creates a space for multiple voices to speak; those who are oppressed are asked to articulate their definitions of their situations.... A good critical, emancipatory text is one that is multivocal, collaborative, naturalistically grounded in the worlds of lived experience, and organized by a critical, interpretive theory" (p. 509).

A recent innovation in critical ethnography, reflexive ethnography, views the ethnographer as an integral part of the object of the investigation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 301). This form of ethnographic research focuses on the researcher's personal experiences and how "it illuminates the culture under study." The continuum ranges from the researcher's writing about her personal experience [ethnographic memoir] to ethnographies where both the researcher's and the participants' experiences are studied [ethnographic dialogue] to "confessional tales" where the researcher's experiences of conducting the research is the focus

of the investigation. This study seeks to present both the researcher's and the participants' experiences.

Feminist studies are influential in the legitimization of this "autobiographical voice associated with reflexive ethnography" (e.g., Behar, 1996; Behar and Gordon, 1995; Krieger, 1991, 1996; Richardson, 1997). These studies show that the researcher's personal experiences are deeply embedded in the research process (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, pp. 740-41). In this study, I went into the site informed by my identity as a researcher doing a native auto-ethnography that is reflexive in nature and informed by critical ethnographic inquiry. I am a participant-observer, an insider-outsider. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship.

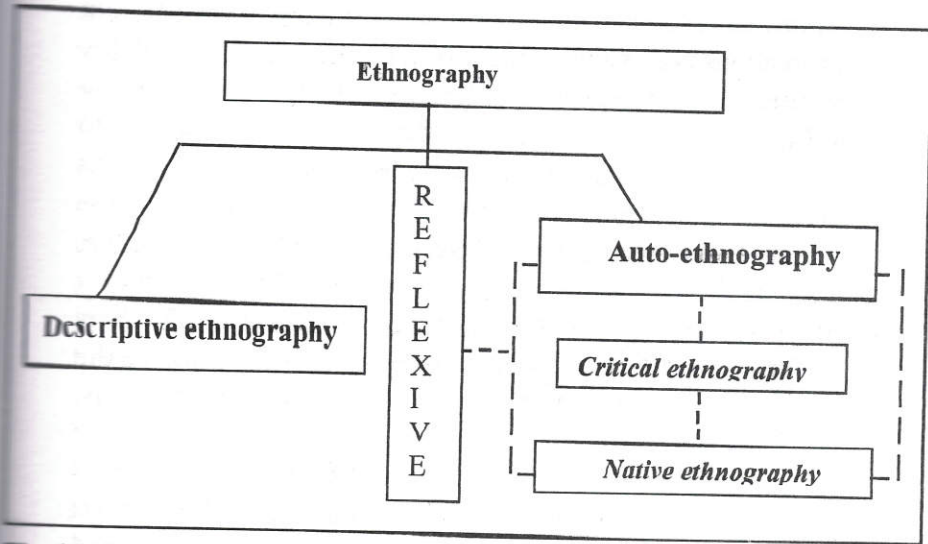

Fig. 1 Relationship of ethnographic perspectives that inform the study

After discussing the research perspectives used in the study as well as my positionality as a participant-observer, I presented terms in qualitative research that may not be exactly analogous to similar terms used in quantitative research. The assumption is that some of the readers may be familiar with the above terms in the context of quantitative research. As

such, terms such as validity, reliability, and generalizability need to be defined in the context of qualitative, ethnographic research:

Validity, reliability, and generalizability in critical autoethnography

In the article, *Autoethnography, personal narrative and reflexivity*, Ellis (2000) narrates a dialogue between her and a graduate student about the process of doing an autoethnography. The student, a novice researcher like me, raised issues that confound researchers with a quantitative orientation: validity, reliability, and generalizability. When asked how autoethnographers ensure the validity of their report, Ellis (2000) points out that researchers from different orientations view validity differently. For Ellis, defining validity requires one's perspective of language. Language, according to Ellis, "is not transparent and there's no single standard to truth." From this standpoint, Ellis posits that "validity, means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers the feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible." Validity may also be judged "by whether it [the research paper] helps readers communicate with others different from themselves, or offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or even your own" (Ellis, pp. 750-51).

When asked how reliability checks are conducted, Ellis explained that "since we always create our personal narratives from a situated location, trying to make our present, imagined future, and remembered past cohere, there's no such thing as orthodox reliability." Reliability checks, however, can be done by conferring with the people involved in the research and acknowledging their interpretations (p. 751).

Generalizability is determined by what Stake (1994) calls "naturalistic generalization", which means that the ethnography "brings 'felt' news from one world to another

and provides opportunities for the reader to have a vicarious experience of the things told." Although ethnographers study particular participants, the experiences of such participants are also "typical and generalizable, since... [people] participate in a limited number of cultures and institutions. A story's generalizability is constantly tested by the readers as they determine if it speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751).

Part of my subjectivity as a researcher is the theoretical perspective and epistemologies that inform data interpretation. Since different researchers may interpret the same data by using variable theories, they must thoroughly discuss the epistemologies or the theories that inform the interpretation of these data. With this, the reader is made aware of the context of interpretation and could take the research report with such limitations in mind. In my study, such theoretical perspectives include a) post structuralism as an approach to inquiry; b) the conception of power, agency, and identity from a post structural perspective as applied to pedagogy (Bourne, J. 2001; Davidson, 1996; Delpit, L., 1993; Eckert. P.,1989; Fine M., Weis, L., Centrie, C., & Roberts, R., 2000; Freire, P. , 1998; Kamberelis, G., 2001; Giroux, H. A., 2001; McKay, S., & W ong, S., 1996; Norton, B., & Toohey, K., in press; Peirce, B.,1995; Phelan, P., Davidson, A., & Yu, H.C.,1993; Stanton-Salazar, R. D.,1997; and Stevenson, R. & Ellsworth, J.,1993); c) the concept of literacy not simply as a decontexualized ability to read and write but as mastery of secondary discourses (Gee, 1996, 1998); and, d) the conception of learning as peripheral legitimate participation in a community of practice (Wenger, 1996, 1998). Such theories could be subsumed in what is traditionally labeled conceptual or theoretical framework. However, a growing number of qualitative research articles forego the use of such label. Instead, the heading specifically

cites the theory itself, e.g., *Literacy as Mastery of Secondary Discourses*. I wish to include here a summary of the above theoretical perspectives; however, since the purpose of this article is primarily to justify the importance of describing the positionality of the researcher as well as to outline some of the features and research terminology as used in interpretive qualitative literature, I will postpone the discussion of such concepts in another article.

For the purposes of this paper, it should suffice for me to point out that since the research process is framed by the constant negotiation and positioning of powerful stakeholders, the researcher needs to describe his/her positionality in writing the research output. This can be done in variable ways. In my research output, I did this by a) describing myself as an insider and outsider in relation to the participants of the study, i.e., from an emic/ etic perspective; b) discussing the research approach used; and, c) briefly discussing the theories and epistemologies that frame my interpretation of the data. The purpose for such a section is to raise the readers' awareness of the subjective nature of the research process and to allow for a more critical reading of the research report. Presenting one's positionality as a researcher-writer could better inform the reader as to the catalytic validity, generalizability, and reliability of the research output.

All research is situated; all research therefore is subjective. This claim extends to quantitative research as well since the regurgitation of statistical data can only be made contextually meaningful by the interpretation the researcher makes. Such interpretation, on the other hand, is informed by the multi-voices of the researcher: the works of other researchers s/he had read or mentioned in the literature review or in the theoretical framework; the methodology s/he chooses based on similar or related studies done previously; and the positioning of the various stakeholders of the research. Because of this, all research reports might, in the future,

require a section of positionality, where the author-researcher can find what Bhabha (1994) terms as the "third space" where s/he could critically evaluate the subjectivities of all participants of the research (the researcher included). This third space would then serve as a liberating space where the researcher could discover his/her positionality and inform the reader of his/her vulnerabilities. For as Behar (1996) in Ellis & Bochner (2000, p. 752) points out, it is only when the reader sees the vulnerabilities of the researcher–writer that the reader would most likely allow the self to be vulnerable and penetrable by the painful, unjust realities of the people that the research seeks to liberate. When research begets liberating possibilities, when it moves the researcher-writer, the participants, and other stakeholders as well as the reader into action, when it is able to transcend the proverbial 200-page paper that collects dust in some desk or library, it shall have been worth its name.

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THE WRITING EYE

Antonino Salvador S. de Veyra

ABSTRACT

In poetry and other literary texts, the writer's ability to look and see -- embodied in the term *insight* -- is deemed of prime importance. However, seeing is not as simple as it seems. It involves a negotiation between what we see and what we know of what we see. Moreover, seeing also requires a negotiation between how we see things and how others see things. It is in these negotiations, therefore, that we are able to investigate the other's way of seeing *and,* in the process, explore still more ways of apprehending the world and arrive at an insight

WE WOULD FIGHT who among us would get to sit where we could lean over and, puny arms parallel to our father's, hold on tightly to the handlebars and imagine one's self driving the motorbike. As kids, my siblings and I always thought of these rides a rare privilege. Yes, even if it was just to the public market a few blocks away to buy groceries or whatnot. There was no greater thrill for us than to feel the wind blowing across our faces as our father expertly drove his bike through the streets.

But what was more fascinating for me was not just the ride but also the view of the streets we passed by reflected in the bike's side mirrors. The familiar scenes of our town somehow became strange as these were reflected back. To look from the mirror then to the real thing, and back to the mirror again—there was some magic at work there. So even when the bike was parked and we were allowed to clamber over it, I would sometimes tire of imagining driving across faraway lands. I would instead just sit and stare at the length of our street cast in those mirrors. And even if it was a lazy hot afternoon and nothing was going on on our street, I would wait until even just a dog would make its way

across the frame. My waiting somehow became, in my young mind, my being able to will something to happen. And when something did happen within the frame, it seemed that I had something to do with it.

And my enchantment with the world reflected in "mirrors" did not end there. My siblings and I would borrow children's books from the public library. It seemed we would never tire of reading those books, sometimes going back twice in the day to borrow more of the same. (Our father had to explain to the librarian that we did read, and not just flipped through the pages for pictures, every book we signed out.) Among the books we would borrow were some that schoolchildren in the US most probably used to learn about their communities. It had stories about the different people who lived in these neighborhoods, what they did for a living, and how they all contributed to making their community into such an ideal place. Some even had maps or bird's-eye-view pictures that would show where the firehouse is, or the church, or the mayor's office, etc. At that impressionable age, we found ourselves calling the *sari-sari* store at the corner as "the grocer's". And because of the books we read, it was no surprise that we did not just play "house" but "town"—one of us would play a grocer, another would own the bank, still another would have a gas station where our make-believe bikes or cars would fill up for gas, and so on until we had our own make-believe town.

When television came to our part of the world, all of us—even the eldest who was in the higher grades—got hooked on *Sesame Street*. By then we were a lot older than the show's target audience, and our command of English made us aware of more than the program's ABCs and arithmetic. Yet, every time we came home from school we would all rush to sit so quietly before this magical box. What I found so entrancing about the show was the whole fictional community of people and puppets living in what seemed to be a New York neighborhood. There was the black couple and the Hispanic sweethearts and, yes, even the grocer himself. Of course there was Oscar the Grouch, the affable Big

Bird, the reclusive Mr. Snafflelapagus, the Count, and the roommates Ernie and Bert. There was also the voracious Cookie Monster, the gangly Grover who sometimes thought he was a superhero, there was Kermit the Frog, and so many other colorful characters.

Here was a "world" that seemed, if only it was not so perfect to my young eyes, so much like the one I lived in. Except mine did not have puppets for neighbors or brownstone apartments and stoops, and had a *sari-sari* store instead of a grocer's. But it was basically the same world to me. It was the same length of street in the mirror. It was those books all over again (though by this time I had graduated to juvenile and not-so-juvenile novels). There was something in that TV show that made me look at our neighborhood in a different and more comprehending light.

I had become the hapless prisoner taken out of Plato's cave (120). Suddenly, I could see not just the shadows cast by the light on the cave wall. I could see and comprehend what was real and what was illusion. But I also never forgot the flickering shadows and its magic play on the cave wall. This was what I wanted to do. To be able to create something magical out of what appears mundane. To show how the real world works by framing, to use the metaphor of the bike's side mirrors again, what I perceive essential to a particular truth. To see and show others what I see. Much later I read the multi-awarded scriptwriter Ricky Lee say of the writer's work:

> The writer's task is to see, and to show others what s/he sees. When we watch a magic show, we just don't enjoy it with jaws hanging in amazement. We go backstage because we need to see how the magic is done. And if we aren't allowed backstage, we imagine what is there. We writers like going backstage. [My translation.] (3)

BUT SEEING is not as simple as it seems. I read the neurologist Oliver Sacks's intriguing account of blindness and sight. He writes about the case of Virgil (not his real name) who lost his sight in early childhood but regained his vision at fifty years old. Before his "miracle," Virgil learned how to cope with his blindness. He became self-supporting—working as a massage therapist in the local YMCA—and grew contented with his independent life. At fifty, however, he meets an old friend, Amy, who herself had eye problems because of diabetes. Their renewed acquaintance develops into a romance and the two soon plan to marry. However, Amy entertains the idea of restoring Virgil's sight—for he could perceive light and dark, not being totally blind. Her ophthalmologist, after examining Virgil, gives her fresh hopes when he declares the possibility of Virgil being able to see again. With the news, Amy nurses some romantic illusions: "wouldn't it be fantastic if he could see? If, after nearly a lifetime of blindness, his first vision could be his bride, the wedding, the minister, the church!" (Sacks 59).

With the advances in medical science, Virgil indeed regains his sight. However, this gift of vision soon becomes a curse for him and his new wife. Accustomed to "seeing" with his hands, Virgil is unable to make sense out of this new world of light and colors and shapes. Amy writes her observations about Virgil's difficulties the day after the miracle: "'Trying to adjust to being sighted, tough to go from blindness to sighted. Has to think faster, not able to trust vision yet.... Like baby just learning to see, everything new, exciting, scary, unsure of what seeing means'" (Sacks 59).

Virgil's excitement and wonder at his new vision gradually erode his confidence when he feels "disabled" by it: he has problems putting things together—while he can identify individual letters, he finds it hard to read words. In a trip to the zoo, he feels disheartened when he thinks the gorilla looks like nothing more than a large man. Only when he is able to examine with his hands a life-size bronze statue of the

gorilla does he murmur: "'It's not like a man at all'" (Sacks 60). A few years later, Virgil experiences recurrences of momentary blindness—due to sensory overload and emotional stress—that eventually lead to total blindness which he accepts and embraces.

Sacks says that Virgil's difficulty is understandable considering that seeing is a learned activity. People see what they have been conditioned to see. A sighted person may not fathom the depth of Virgil's problem. However, Sacks points out that the ability to see does not necessarily come with the sense of sight. He says that "[w]hen we open our eyes each morning, it is upon a world we have spent a lifetime *learning* [emphasis provided] to see. We are not given the world: we make our world through incessant experience, categorization, memory, reconnection" (Sacks 61). He contrasts the sighted person's seemingly effortless ability to see with that of the artist:

> Most of us have no sense of the immensity of the [visual] construction for we perform it seamlessly, unconsciously, thousands of times every day, at a glance. But this is not so for a baby, it was not so for Virgil, and it is not so for, say, an artist who wants *to experience his*[/her] *perceptions individually and anew* [emphasis added]. Cézanne wrote to his son, 'The same subject seen from a different angle gives a subject for study of the highest interest and so varied that I think I could be occupied for months without changing my place, simply bending more to the right or left.' (Sacks 65-6)

What is meant by sight here, then, is not just the physical act involving the retina and the brain. It is not merely "a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli" (Berger *et al.* 7). Sacks says a person's ability to visually construct things also involves some psychological and social conditioning. John Berger describes it this way:

> It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world.... [But the] relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.... ¶ The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. ¶ [Moreover, we] see only what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach—though not necessarily within arm's reach.... [But we] never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving.... (7-9)

SEEING apparently allows us to conceptualize our relation to a thing. But this conception is always conditioned by our perception of other things and by what we know of these other things. So our understanding of the world is always a negotiation of what we see and what we know of what we see. It is looking at the actual world and then to the image in the mirror and back again.

And we name what we see to "freeze" (or frame) for a moment our understanding of a thing. However, our use of words puts us in a double bind for language itself has its built-in way of seeing. The poet Gémino Abad explains:

> language makes us its subject or, to say the same thing, a subject of/to our community. How this happens, without our knowledge or consent, tells us just how subtle language's hold is on us. ¶ For language, which the community continually invents, establishes all that the community perceives as "reality" and calls "our world." Its language secretes the community's way of looking and feeling about its "world." So, from birth we are *in-formed* [emphasis provided] (formed within) by our speech; and self-identity or consciousness—what the individual

> imagines himself to be—arises only from those words he can speak of himself. ("Lightness of Being" 31)

So even our choice of looking at something may not be a choice after all. We only see what we look at, but it may also be true that we only look at what we have been conditioned to see.

But Berger says that "[s]oon after we can see, we are aware that we can also be seen. The eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully credible that we are part of the visible world. ¶ ... The reciprocal nature of vision...explain[s] how...'you see things,' and...discover how '[the other] sees things" (9). We adjust our understanding of the world by negotiating between how we see things and how others see things. It is in these negotiations that we learn to look at things "individually and anew." For in seeing how another sees things, we investigate the other's way of seeing *and,* in the process, explore still more ways of apprehending the world. That is why Cézanne would spend months, bending more to the right or the left, contemplating an object. That is why Lee is fascinated with what happens backstage. That is why poets, according to Abad, are basically "curious [about] how [they] could look with words and see things clearly again" ("Why I Write" 14). There is in them that "urge to change [the] form [of writing/language] and make a special clearing within language for [themselves]" ("Why I Write" 13). And poets are able to devise new ways of seeing in the

> spaces between words, and between languages, where other meanings may take root—that is, other ways of looking, other modes of feeling. These are possible other "worlds" that the community's speech does not allow [individuals] to see lest [they] subvert its ideology or way of looking. (Abad, "Lightness of Being" 31)

SO IN POETRY and other literary texts, one's ability to look and see—embodied in the term *insight*—is deemed of prime importance. Abad defines poetic insight as the "illumination of a thought that no idea expresses, or illumination of a feeling that no thought catches.... ¶ That insight is what is sometimes called theme, provided we do not think of 'theme' as an abstraction that can be formulated.... It cannot be formulated; it is lived. It lives in the poem" ("What Does One..." 61-62). Edith Tiempo, National Artist for Literature, says that insight in poetry is usually "dredged up only in the *depth explorations* [emphasis added] of the poetic imagination. It is no accident that such concepts have been labeled as insights: *sighted in (the depths)* [emphasis provided]" ("Introduction" viii). For Tiempo, insight is something you look for under the surface of words, ideas, and feelings.

This lesson on insight was seared into my mind when I attended the 26th Silliman University National Writers Workshop, which Tiempo directs. What in essence she and the panel of writers suggested, after training their critical eyes on my poems and those of the other writing fellows, and after some kind words about the work at hand, was the re-visioning of our poems. They pointed out that poems fail because they are not well conceived. This simple advice was enough to deflate my greenhorn's enthusiasm for the art. Poetic conceptualization was not just about coming up with the right arrangement of words in a "frame." For the panelists' diagnosis not only pointed to problems in craftsmanship but, and more importantly, also to the failure to develop the incipient depth of vision the poems exhibit. The panelists were unanimous in saying that while young poets (like myself) may easily enough master the craft through practice and time, what was more difficult to achieve is poetic insight. And if that was not enough, they also cautioned that a poem's subject must be "reimagined and made fresh"; otherwise, "[w]ithout change, art stagnates" (Wallace and Boisseau xix).

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But while insight is valued as being "the center of making good poems" (Wallace and Boisseau 128), its treatment in poetry textbooks remains scant. While vision is said to be the measure of a poem being good or bad, discussions on insight (compared to, say, rhythm or imagery) are scarce. Such discussions on insight are usually given a cursory treatment in these books, with the implication that it is something that can never be taught. One exemption is Robert Wallace and Michelle Boisseau's textbook *Writing Poetry* that talks about how insight can be achieved by *peeling one's eyes open*. (Then again, that discussion is more or less two pages in length and is merely a part of a longer treatise on "subject matter" or "content.") Wallace and Boisseau say that:

> Discovering a good subject may be partly luck, but luck comes to poets who are alert, who keep their antennae out, who make new combinations, who truly *see* [emphasis provided].... Try to see everything with a cleansed eye. Look at things. Study a slice of bread, for instance; really see it and then write about what you notice. Free yourself of assumptions about the stuff of life and shimmering fields of golden grain. Look at the bread. Like the purloined letter in Poe's story, the secret is hidden in the open. Look. Notice.... ¶ Accurate perception is not just an aesthetic choice; we have a moral obligation to see what is truly there, not just what we would like to see. (127-8)

So I stayed on beyond the summer workshop, doing serious study on poetry, and "apprenticing" with Edith Tiempo. What I learned from these sessions can hardly be found in any book on poetry, literature, or criticism. Edith Tiempo would go over a poem I would submit, second-guessing what I meant in this line or that and then suggesting how I could improve the work. It felt invasive then, and made me feel ill-

prepared and inadequate for the vocation I had chosen. It seemed as if I lacked the words to fully limn the idea I wanted to explore in my work. And when Edith Tiempo would suggest a poem for me to read, because it might help me flesh out what I wanted to say in a work, I thought she was telling me I had nothing original to say about the subject.

It was only later that I realized the benefits of this apprenticeship. As I worked closely with my poet-teacher, I began to see how she conceptualized her poems and how she "re-imagined and made fresh" an emotion, a fleeting moment, or an idea in her works. It was as if I could go inside her head as she was giving shape to a poem. Through these sessions I had the chance to see how she saw what I saw in my work, and also to see what she saw as she worked out her poems.

I would like to believe that, through my apprenticeship, I gradually learned how to be "alert" and to see with "a cleansed eye." I would also like to believe that this alertness goes hand in hand with some degree of mastery of the poetic craft. For as Ricardo de Ungria argues, "mastery of technique also involves *one's perceptions of and relations* to [emphasis added] life itself and its own patterns, rhythms, and images" (xxiii). He quotes Seamus Heaney:

> Technique entails the watermarking of your *essential patterns of perception, voice, and thought into the touch and texture of your lines* [emphasis added]; it is that whole creative effort of the mind's and body's resource to bring the meaning of experience within the jurisdiction of form. (xxiii)

What de Ungria would like to understand of "form" here includes a

> meaning greater than that of simple poetic form to include the "form" of a poet's perceptions and even

> the "form" his life has taken so far and the "form" he has witnessed at work in life and in the universe—an expression of which he arrives at, consciously or unconsciously, in the poems he writes. (xxiii)

Ultimately this "form of a poet's perception," or simply a "way of seeing," determines how poets are able to discern that insight into an idea. While language forms poets' ways of seeing, their play in the spaces between words or language reveals other ways of looking and feeling. To quote Abad again:

> I also find that some words or phrases are routes to the poem-in-the-making, but some, blind alleys; and in the space between those offerings, a hum and drum of the void to which one listens without hope. I find, above all, that writing the poem isn't simply writing or dealing in words (their meanings and images); it would otherwise be quite rational. For the poet, writing the poem is *present* [emphasis provided] and living. I looked up the word "experience"; it is associated with faring and attempting, with peril and fear. Exactly: one's experience is the only point of contact with reality; one goes forth, tries and is tried, meets with chance and sudden danger, and nothing is sure. *But one lives and could make oneself aware, present. It is that experience, it is at that point of contact, where one feels and sees and knows. That insight is what exacts the poem* [emphasis added]. If one had been aware, the poem would be given. ("Way to a Poem" 21-22)

This awareness is difficult to come by, however. This state of being present or aware is "the very point of contact with reality where an insight flashes" (Abad, "What Does One..." 61). As Tiempo suggests, a meditative state helps: "I think it's because I allowed myself to be quiet, not to run

after thoughts. Meditating really imposes a complete quietus, in the mind, in the heart, in the body.... And I think that's why the images come more clearly, more lucidly" (Manlapaz 66).

When the images do come in this aware state, Tiempo continues, the next joyous task is to recognize what is given. "The only right that we have to the images is what they give to us and that is recognition. We become aware of what it is in the objects that is also in us. We do not impose, we do not take away. We recognize" (Manlapaz 66). That recognition leads to insight. When there is no awareness or recognition, then what is in the image remains untapped. "It's in the object, but it is locked and it is the poet who unlocks it by allowing the object to speak" (Manlapaz 68).

Recognition, then, becomes a paramount requisite to achieving poetic insight. The poet may be able to look at something but not see. Such was the case of Virgil. To truly "see," he had to navigate between two ways of seeing—his restored sight and his sense of touch. It is the poet's negotiation, this intelligence and instinct to recognize insight that I refer to as the Writing Eye.

I CAN ONLY PRESENT my own process as demonstration of how one comes to such a recognition. While this venture may seem immodest, I recall what Stephen Spender says on writing about one's work: "One poet's example is only his adaptation of his personality to the demands of poetry, but if it is clearly stated it may help us to understand other poets, and even something of poetry" (qtd. in de Ungria xii). I hesitate to make such claims even while acknowledging that an understanding of my own process may indeed add to the knowledge of poetry and how poets write. I cannot assume that whatever I come up with can be used by other poets in their own writing. However, I would like to think that such an investigation may help teachers and students understand the creative process involved in the production of literary works.

Traditionally, the sources of poetry are attributed to mysterious and metaphysical powers: gods or God, the Muses, the chi, the White Goddess, the unconscious, genius, energy, emotions, memory, etc. Poets are supposedly "inspired" or "possessed" by these forces and are thus able to write their works. However, as the French poet Paul Valery says:

> Graciously the gods give us the first line for nothing, but it is up to us to furnish a second that will harmonize with it and not be unworthy of its supernatural elder brother. All the resources of experience, and of intelligence are hardly enough to make it comparable to the verse which came to us as a gift. (qtd. in de Ungria xv)

This unconscious or unknown element in poetry is tempered by the poet's will in what is, according to Paul Engle, "intelligence playing over against intuition, each bracing the other, the mind giving form and sense, the intuition giving immediately of impression, the stored-up memory, the deeply instinctive phrase" (qtd. in de Ungria xxi). Abad echoes this view in his description of the poet as passive and active: "[a] passive instrument, since the inspiration, whatever it is, triggers the rage of the thinking and the desiring of the poem-of-it.... But also, he is active, because of the thinking and the desiring for the poetic disclosure..." ("To the Reader" 6).

This play between intellect and intuition requires a unique kind of "management," according to Brewster Ghiselin:

> The mind in creation and in preparation for it nearly always requires some management.... The larger objects of management are two: discovering the clue that suggests the development to be sought, that intimates the creative end to be reached, and assuring a certain and economical movement toward that end. The indispensable condition of success in either stage of production is...freedom from the established

> schemes of consciousness.... It is essential to remember that the creative end is never in full sight at the beginning and that it is brought wholly into view only when the process of creation is completed.... What is necessary is to be able to look into the wings where the action is not yet organized, and to feel the importance of what is happening off stage.... The young artist is likely to feel that it is nothing, to go on imitating. Yet it is only there, behind the scenes that are so largely given over to the impressive play of traditional activity, that the new can be prepared. No matter how meager, dull, disorderly, and fragmentary the off-stage action, it must be attended to. For only on the fringes of consciousness and in the deeper backgrounds into which they fade away is freedom attainable. (qtd. in de Ungria xix-xx)

With this "curb and spurs" kind of management (akin to Longinus) are poets able to conceptualize their works. They do so by involving themselves in this

> play of forces whereby a particular poetic end (out of many possible ends) is arrived at through a set of rules which it has itself engendered and which assume an increasing prominence such that certain thoughts, images, and rhythms gravitate towards it to effect a whole (which is the particular poem), whereas other thoughts, images, and rhythms are allowed to slip back into their unknowns, perhaps never to return. (de Ungria xi-xii)

This "play of forces" follows what is also traditionally considered the recursive four stages of the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification (de Ungria xvi). The recursive nature of these four phases is best demonstrated with my own experience in writing "Garden Jungle" (the final version below):

Garden Jungle
(for Marj)

we plant next season's blooms
we trim the hedges, mow the lawn
we hang the wind chimes
from the bamboo grove
we have clipped and pruned
and trained to plot
the rising full moon's arc
across our sky
and then we sit under its arch
listening to the bells filling
spaces we have made our own
while beneath us weeds
break through the ground

The preparation stage for this poem began way back in 1988. On a visit to the metropolis, I stayed at Marj Evasco's home. She lives in a townhouse in Mandaluyong City that has become a haven for several kindred probinsiyano/ probinsiyana caught in the city's grind. I was witness to how several of her friends who come from the Visayas would often gather in her tiny front garden. Sitting or lying on a mat in that garden with its bamboo grove, they would be transported back to the idyllic province in their minds. On one such night, I realized that what I was seeing could be a poem. Even as I listened to the conversation and sipped wine with that night's company, my mind was looking at this idea from several angles.

A year passed before I wrote down the first draft of the poem. Before that time, I had put away the idea that had been overtaken by more pressing concerns. It was just there, tucked away somewhere in my mind. In this incubation stage, the idea would sometimes pop up and I would play around with it in my mind. But I do not recall really thinking about it that much.

Then while writing to a friend in Manila, the idea suddenly flashed in my head. And in this stage of illumination, the idea came complete with an image. At that instant I knew how to put together the poem. I discovered what Ghiselin says is "the clue that suggests the development" of the idea into a poem. It would definitely have the bamboo grove as its central image.

I latched onto this image because on a later visit to Marj's place, I almost could not find her house because the front garden was gone. But it was not gone, really. Marj's father had recently come over from Bohol for a few weeks' visit. During his stay, he had replanted the bermuda grass and had laid out a pebbled and winding path from the street to the front door. He had also pruned the lush bamboo grove and lashed together the topmost and slender stalks so it would form an arch diagonally across the small front yard. Marj's father, who had taught her how to look for beauty in nature (see Evasco 101), had designed the arch like a bridge that would carry the moon as it made its way across the sky. So there was the poem in the making. All that was left for me to do was to write it down, which I did originally in my first language (Waray) and then translating it into English (talk about "spaces between words...between languages").

Kagurangan han Kasingkasing
(para kan Marj)

Kasayun mawara
Iton mga hardin
Nga aton tinitipigan:
~~Pangabuta iton mga tanom~~
~~Tabuga an huni han mga tamsi~~
~~Simentoha iton dalan~~
~~Ngadto han imo kasingkasing.~~

Kalimti an kawayan

Nga imo gintutdu-an
Pagtulay han kalangitan
Ngan an kagurangan
Han imo paniplat
Igwawara
An mga bituon
Ngan an hangin.

Hinumduma:
~~An huyop han hangin~~
~~Ha kadahunan han kawayan~~
~~Ug an kanta han mga tamsi.~~

Pagbasul maudlot.

English translation:

Jungle Heart
(for Marj)

How easy it is
To lose the gardens
That we keep:
~~Uproot the plants~~
~~Shoo away the birdsongs~~
~~Cement the path~~
~~Leading to your heart.~~

Forget the bamboo
You learned
To bridge the sky
And the wilderness
Of your glances
Shall mislay
The stars and the wind.

Remember:
~~The wind blowing through~~

~~The bamboo leaves,~~
~~And the songs of birds.~~

Regret buds.

But this verification stage did not end with that first draft. Somehow I did not feel right with that draft, which dealt with loss and the garden growing wild because of neglect. It was back to the preparation and incubation stages for me then. I would sometimes go over that draft in my mind, or not think about it at all. Then while on a long bus ride one time, it all came to me: with no pen or paper on me I revised the draft in my head. And when I reached home, I typed down the revised lines of the draft and fine-tuning it along the way to its final version.

That above description of the poem's genesis does not fully account for the conscious, but more often subconscious, process of deciding how to write each line. It does not also tell us how I came to the final two "apocalyptic" lines that are really just prepared for by the preceding lines. But that defining bus ride offers a clue. Sitting in such confined space over a period of time, and staring out the window without really seeing the passing scenery, provided me the luxury of meditation. Once the thought of that first draft came to mind, I was able to look at it closely and yet from an aesthetic distance. And becoming "aware of what…in the objects [or images were] also in us" (Manlapaz 66), I came to recognize the poem's insight. Loss thus becomes an active taming of the garden, and the "garden growing wild" is only suggested at in the final poem.

But more significant in this revision is something that Tiempo and the other workshop panelists always remind the writing fellows: "Show, don't tell." Here in the final version of the poem, the insight gained is shown to readers of the poem so that they too can negotiate their own ways of reading and seeing the world.

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EXCERPT FROM GODDESS TONGUE: IN SEARCH OF THE LANGUAGE OF FEMINIST MOTHERHOOD

Maria Leovina Amante Nicolas

ABSTRACT

What creativity really is, its truest metaphor, is the steady growth of life, like the life of a baby in a mother's womb. This work follows that development—in visible and invisible ways. Using the stages of motherhood as form to discuss motherhood as content, my work is my personal search to answer the question: what is feminist mothering? This excerpt focuses on the early stages: the richness of the womb and of the mind, the susceptibility for the conception of an idea, and the discovery of that idea's beginnings.

For Isis who, at 3 years old, knows me better than anyone and for whom I will change the world as much as I can

> I do not delude myself, as Man does, that I create in proud isolation… Woman's creation, far from being like Man's must be exactly like her creation of children; that is, it must come out of her own blood, englobed by her womb, nourished with her own milk. It must be a human creation, of flesh, it must be different from Man's abstractions.
>
> ~ **Anais Nin**, from the *Diaries*
> (an epigraph from Judy Chicago's *Through the Flower*)

Before the beginning…

Someday you will ask where you came from and people will tell you about Genesis, humankind's greatest landmark where the margin ended and the paragraph began. They will

tell you that you came from a lowly rib and that they came from earth and were formed by god himself. Someday they will tell you to worship a word, just one word because that word created the world.

It is one of the most beautiful stories you will ever hear. Empty space and right beside it a letter begins to break its whiteness, its chaos. It is a beautiful story but it is just one of the many.

In the beginning ...

The world began when god spoke. And when god spoke he became real. And all who can hear and see him are saved. Men, some of them even holy, will teach you their language in order to see, in order to talk to their god.

Isis, my daughter, I write to you now across time and space to show you there are many ways of speaking. Women are joyfully and sadly margins; men, deceptively, paragraphs. But if you look closely, press your ear on the pages, you will hear how the tongue of the Goddess speaks in volumes, how she speaks of another word. If you learn it, you will never be voiceless.

Is an idea an ejaculation? In the conceptual silence a voice spurts out an utterance bright with truth. Is art a sudden existence in the void, something from nothing? Or is it a climax that builds up in intensity and passion until it is brilliantly released to the world, impregnating barren minds?

To a woman, the creation of art or the beginning of an idea is an internal quake that rocks the softest, most secret places. Creation is imperceptible, except for convulsions that can only be perceived by touch. To a mother, creation is a long, arduous journey of nurture. The work of art or a new thought is grown alternately in love and in painful necessity. It evolves as it makes use of blood and flesh, mind and soul. It runs through veins and

explodes at nerve endings. It usurps through an umbilical cord, sucking in both love and rage. The process takes its time until involuntarily new art, new thought is born in a laborious series of moments to become an entity on its own, getting ready to learn how to walk.

This work is about the conception, gestation, birth and mothering of words and child.

I began with foraging in the wildlands of feminist ideology, in search of sustenance for my infant-daughter/thesis in my womb. An ARM of women, that is Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) based in Toronto, Canada identified a dearth in resources for feminist mothering. ARM president Andrea O'Reilly, in a call for papers wrote, "... numerous scholars have documented how and why patriarchal motherhood is oppressive to women. In contrast, little has been written on empowered, or more specifically, feminist, mothering."[1]

There is no self-help book on feminist motherhood and mothering. The rich and contrasting terrain of feminism just shows that there are still unexplored territories. Feminist mothers must learn how to forage through feral lands to find little nuts of enlightenment and berries of clues. But I believe some women have gone into those wildernesses. They are now prophets who proclaim their faith and in my search I have stumbled upon some of them in moments of grace.

PART ONE: CONCEPTION

> Pregnancy starts with conception.
>
> This happens when an ovum, or egg is shed from a woman's ovary about midway between menstrual periods, and becomes fertilized by the male cell, or sperm, usually in the outer end of the Fallopian tube.
>
> —**Stages of Pregnancy and Labour,**
> Department of Health, NSW

> To seek visions, to dream dreams is essential, and it is also essential to try new ways of living, to make room for serious experimentation, to respect the effort even where it fails.
>
> —**Adrienne Rich**, Of Woman Born

November 5, 2002

Adrienne's words find a place on my wall where they are to remind me not to be discouraged or embarrassed to have found the essence of living as a woman of intuition.

In *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous implores that women write their bodies and my dilemma was I didn't know my body well enough. But I was determined to be an expert on my body through every possible way: lovers, sickness, food, health, vice.

Medusa was, for me, the start of writing, teaching, studying and even loving through a language that is of the feminine. I wanted to discover how eloquent my body could become by letting it speak to lovers, celebrate the senses, and manifest itself on paper.

I explored new ways of writing, and even reading, to understand Cixous' *ecriture feminine*. Having gone waist deep into the waters of feminism, I began to dread returning to the disappointing shores of man and his tiring, boring language. Though there was a threat of drowning, I wanted to learn how to breathe underwater because women's writing is fluid and unexplored like oceans.

During that exploration, form and content fused. Thought and text became inextricable from one another. There was no difference between what I write, how I write, and who I am.

Judy Chicago's *Through the Flower* is an example of a woman speaking and creating art through her body. It tells the story of a feminist artist's struggle with form and content in a patriarchal world of the visual arts in the 1970s. Though focusing primarily on her sculptures, installations, paintings, personal life, and advocacy, I saw in Chicago's book a beacon so as not to lose my way in rendering my work in this intuitive way. In her introduction to Chicago's book, Anais Nin briefly describes this new rhetorics of women, "I consider this the particular contribution of woman, the ability to blend the personal with the objective beyond the personal... The work requires fortitude. And when heart, intuition, emotion have played their part, the intellect can make a synthesis."

I saw that the established and accepted forms of writing within and around the academe, formerly dominated by men, were limiting. To begin with a problem and to test a hypothesis for a solution using a prescribed process to come up with a conclusion was too ideal if not simplistic. Add to that the requirement of adding a body of readings to show erudition, scholarship.

In Robin Morgan's introduction to *Sisterhood is Powerful*, I found a couple of lines of a non-poem, non-letter—one of those pieces that defy genres—that puts in cadence one of my assumptions:[2]

> except that Women's Liberation has taught me not
> to be afraid of being incorrect, and most of all of
> being personal

I found that process went against what I wanted to do; it was trying to dictate my experiences. When I read poets, novelists, and feminist theorists, my experience of them is unlike a student in a library but more of a woman amongst grandmothers, mothers, sisters, friends, and women strangers and enemies.

For what is the purpose of a prescribed academic form than to assure the high court of scholarship that a student knows how to follow instructions, that she uses the best known process there is and that she can't come up with a discovery on her own?

I can use the energies I would have put into writing a graduate thesis about some major literary phenomenon that needed posterity for finding an answer to a pressing personal question. How must a feminist, new mother like me raise a daughter?

To write about women is to write about an unpredictable subject matter of relative novelty. Not that to be novel is any compliment for us. The experiences of women, being a recent object of scholarly investigation, must already indicate that the existing methods of study and forms of composition need to be reconsidered.

All writers know that life and writing are so lovingly entwined and that in such kind of embrace one would not be able to determine where one ended and the other began.

And so, my work seeks to enflesh that embrace. This is being rendered with passion and rage, in celebration and in mourning, with ambiguous tenderness. This is replete with my stories and readings, researches, narratives, and interviews of other women who are mothers and who are not, who are feminists and who are not. My language is not put on or chosen like the rhetorics of "learned men". Its language is natural, harmonic and changing, honest and brooding. This is an infant, seed of possibilities—to be planted in the reader. I seek to encourage women students to write from their bodies, to discover how mothers can be feminist mothers and to illustrate that the body is the key to how women can speak more clearly and more forcefully.

In writing about feminist motherhood and mothering using the language of the feminist body, men are doubly removed by the experiences of being a woman and of being a mother. This

concerns me because feminist mothering is not limited to women. Fathers, too, must learn how. I follow Judy Chicago's lead on why I still choose this form, "It is not enough for us to learn to identify with men; we have done that all our lives. *Men have to learn to identify with us*, and it is this process that feminist performance and feminist art can promote."[3]

Fertility

What could an ordinary, single woman of typical middle class origins bring to the forefront of feminist discourse when she had been spared of living on the "battlegrounds"? I am not saying that there is a war between men and women, I am saying there is a war between women and oppression. I dare use war because oppression kills or maims the spirit and body in both explosive and insidious ways.

In the Philippines in the past, feminism was linked to nationalism or political activism.[4] Today, that war is fought on the grounds of rape, marital or incestuous abuse, reproductive rights or non-rights, equality in legislation, poverty, equal access to opportunities, and child protection. Outside of these war zones, in more peaceful areas of life the battles are ambiguous. I neither earned medals nor battle scars. I was fighting on a purely theoretical plane in the relative safety of peacetime academe. I was a propagandist and not a revolutionary. And when I did find myself in the middle of feminist struggles I discovered that I was inadequate and alien. I began to ask, what is an authentic feminist?

First, the word *feminist*.

I have retyped and deleted that word in this paper over and over, debating with myself whether to use the word feminist or not. *Feminist* has acquired some negative definitions through the years. No woman would easily say "yes" to the question of whether she is a feminist.

In her book *Who Stole Feminism?: How Women Betrayed Women*, Christina Hoff Sommers distinguishes "equity

feminists" from "gender feminists". The latter is identified with personal outrage and resentment. They are "articulate, prone to self-dramatization, and chronically offended". In a way, they are the feminists even women dislike and don't want to be associated with these days. However, gender feminists are warriors who have "a concern for women and a determination to see them fairly treated".

On the other hand, Hoff Sommers describes equity feminists, women with First Wave or "mainstream" feminist influences: "Now that it has overthrown most of the legal impediments to women's rights, equity feminism is no longer galvanizing; it does not produce fanatics. Moderates in general are not temperamentally suited to activism. They tend to be reflective and individualistic. They do not network. They do not rally. They do not recruit. They do not threaten their opponents with loss of jobs or loss of patronage. They are not especially litigious." An equity feminist's demands are simple, she "wants for women what she wants for everyone: fair treatment without discrimination".

There are various kinds of feminists ranging in principles, purposes and methods. Their clashing definitions are complicated and impossible to classify and their interactions are much like mother-daughter and sister-sister relationships. After all, all feminisms are the daughters of one Mother Feminism and sibling rivalry is nothing new.

So I contemplated using the word womanist, the way Alice Walker defines it, simply because it is beautiful and I understand it. She writes in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, "Womanist Prose":

> Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness

> of entire people, male *and* female... Traditionally universalist [meaning sees all color of skin]... Traditionally capable... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*... Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.

Who would not want to be a womanist? Who isn't? Oh well, feminist will have to do. Feminist will always do. There must be nothing to be afraid of the word. It holds its original power.

I do not believe that to be an authentic feminist I must consciously expose myself to victimization or that I must nit-pick in order to identify my own "oppression".[5] Where I am and who I am is a ground for feminist discourse at closer scrutiny.

Let's look back at one of the basic concepts of Feminism as identified by Marilyn French in *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals*:

> Feminism is the only serious, coherent, and universal philosophy, that offers an alternative to patriarchal thinking and structures. Feminists believe in a few simple tenets. They believe that women are human beings, that the two sexes are (at least) equal in all significant ways, and that this equality must be publicly recognized. They believe that qualities traditionally associated with women—the feminine principle—are (at least) equal in value to those traditionally associated with men—the masculine principle—and that this equality must be publicly recognized. Finally, feminists believe the personal is the political—that is, that the value structure of a culture is identical in both public and private areas, that what happens in the bedroom has everything to do with what happens in the boardroom, and vice

> versa, and that, mythology notwithstanding, at present
> the same sex is in control in both places.

Even if asked to accept a general definition of feminism as such, at present young women do not call themselves feminists. They do not believe that feminism is still relevant to their lives or they never even acknowledge that feminism *is* the reason why feminism *seems* to be irrelevant to their lives. They just assumed an aimless definition for feminism. (Young women think that feminism is all about going Dutch on a romantic date or that it is all about hating and blaming all men.)

For feminism, the personal is the political. There is a glass ceiling. There is a bell jar. There are unreasonable expectations. There are double standards. There exists aesthetic and physical stereotypes, and if not stereotypes, they are impossible ideals. There is the objectifying gaze, the lecherous glance. There is verbal or implied inattention or rebuke. There is merely condescension, not true respect. There is no safety. For other women, no ease.

The "encounters" I've had struck me as trivial. I neither had the experience nor the language to present an effective testimony before a convention of women or even just among a small circle of women friends. My brand of feminism seemed to me to be superficially all in my head, in my readings, and purely confined to the literary. Not all women bring their politics to the streets. Not all women have eloquent issues. I knew all the signs and can identify a threatening predicament and protect myself from victimization. But no area in my life then called upon me to question or abandon that comfort zone.

I never realized that I belonged to a class of women. I was unattached. Neither rich nor impoverished, I could practically do whatever I wanted. I was neither bogged down nor hoisted up gender-wise by any particular religious belief.

I was an admirer of feminist principles and discourse but I never participated in activism nor was I a member of any feminist collective. In the academe, the lectures I gave were infused with a more than satisfactory level of gender awareness making me literally an armchair feminist and no more. Looking back, I saw that my identity was unexceptional. A lot of single women out there would never really align themselves with feminism but nevertheless are assertive of their rights and very aware of the issues that involve them as women.

Simply teaching feminism was like teaching History, relevant as far as it has affected past lives or the direction of our collective narratives. Naturally, that effect is hardly self-evident in the present context and in the personal realm. Women in this country have been voting since 1937. The Filipino suffragists started lobbying in 1906. Today, we think voting is as natural as taxes. Most of the young women I was teaching didn't see anything wrong with participating in the pageant of the blackest, straightest hair or the whitest, smoothest underarms. They thought there was no need to analyze the differences between gestures of love and acts of submission. Most of the young men think that they are honorary women just because they couldn't imagine hitting their girlfriends. Feminism in my ordinary classroom is textbook material, all theory.

It seemed to me, I was over with feminism. It was like a religion in which without grace, without being "touched" there is no possibility of belief and baptism. For the young women I taught, feminism *is* history. How does one make something new out of an "incident" as "far out" as feminism? I believe many women out there speak out without acknowledging that the vocabulary and syntax they use are all gifts of the women's movement. I believe many women sneer at the word feminism without attributing that freedom to sneer, to express themselves and the phenomenon of

actually being listened to as feminism's influence. I believe they think that it is enough that they know their rights and can choose and act.

What I considered as the end of thought was the awakening of answers.

This work aims to find a way to make feminism relevant and understandable to a younger generation of women, our students and our daughters, who may be led to believe that there is no need for vigilance. We need a new language for mothering these young women who think equality has been achieved and as Marilyn French says is "publicly recognized":

> If feminism is a culture, how do we pass it on? I need to know what to say to my daughter. I need to know how she can be freer than me.[6]

Yes, feminism may impress one as passé these days. But what we must look out for are the moments when we would need feminism to process certain past experiences and moments when, like an exhibitionist wearing a tattered coat in a public park, patriarchy would flash its ugly little head.[7] Most importantly, we need feminism when we consider the future—being mothers and fathers of that future. We must all be adept at feminist mothering to assure that one day the oppression will stop.

Ovulation

A woman's body is most fecund during ovulation. Some women claim that they can tell when they are ovulating. It is said that the sexual drive of women is strongest during this time because the nature of life is it always wants to be born.

We've often heard that ideas evolve. I want to say my work is ovulated.

According to the Mayo clinic, if you are a woman who sometimes experience a pain on one side of your lower abdomen and you don't know what it is, keep track of its

timing. Chances are it occurs midway through your menstrual cycle, about 14 days before your next menstrual period.

During the time I prepared to write about feminist mothering, I felt what many women who can tell they are ovulating say they feel. It is called *mittelschmerz* which means "middle pain"—pain during ovulation.

After giving birth, I became an expert on my own *mittelschmerz* but before that it must have been easy for me to monthly dismiss it as some other gastro-intestinal manifestation.

Now I see that women's writing—all women's art—begins as an ovulation. In the last two years, since I joined the print media, writing has become half the time an obligation and half the time a challenge and mental exercise. But *Goddess Tongue* is different. There was pain during its initial stages, in some indistinct part where my body, mind and spirit converge. It was something like a drawn out ache from longing or like quiet tremors of excitement. Often ideas would come to me but they would turn out to be just minor gastro-intestinal disturbances of the playful mind. But in this one, I knew something was happening. I was metaphysically ovulating.

My work was not a spurt of enlightenment nor a bulb suddenly switched on. It was a tiny egg that moved, a tiny egg that is not yet, a tiny egg that did not know what it was going to become but instinctively knew where it was heading.

So it is no wonder that the form of my writing has followed the process of motherhood. There is a distinct correspondence between how this, my work, came about and how my daughter Isis came into my life. Both would take years before birthing. Both would be brought about by seemingly unrelated events and images. Both would be a work in progress and would grow side by side.

I know when my daughter was conceived. I have the date written on a journal. I know the exact time, the exact place. Not that the date or the moment bordered on the

mystical, not that I knew then my life has reached a turning point where it inevitably surged on uncontrolled by me. I was simply following what Anne Wilson-Schaef fervently advised, "You need to claim the events of your life to make yourself yours." I didn't know that on the days when I claimed the events of my life through zealous journal writing—to points of maniacal logbook notations—my life was growing another life of its own. That was 2000, towards the turn of the real millennium.

But the more significant thing is my daughter was ovulated years ahead, on a day unmarked in my journals. She came to me in the summer of 1999, one afternoon on a concrete bench on Dumaguete's boulevard.

I sat there with a friend talking about what young people who want to be poets talk about when the image appeared as if pages of a book of poetry were riffled through by a sudden breeze and it stopped on a page with a poem about a mother and her young boy walking on the breakwaters, playing hide-and-seek with crabs. I started to conceive of my daughter then that one moment when I truly, honestly desired to have a child. Even if the rest of my life was a testimony of disinterest in children and my not so recent years were spent running away from family.

T.S. Elliot said poetry communicates before it is understood. I dare say, so do the metaphors of life and love.

One thing about imagery is it is absorbed through the senses. My body wanted to protect that image; it kept my mind ignorant of the signs. My body said it was time as in the words of Adrienne Rich, time for a new way of living. It was an anguished leap of faith into motherhood; pregnancy was a poem that insisted to be written.

The way I look at it, I could have gotten pregnant at any other time. But it happened then, at that point when I was going at 140 kilometers per hour on a highway leading nowhere. Oh, I had ideas, projects lined up, a research on the planning

stages, hundreds more of students to teach and love affairs that would be a pity to give up. But it was all in my head, all up there—even the enthusiasm.

I was single and living in my head. My world was the books, the bed sheets and the beers. Every day seemed like any other day. I tried to know my body but it was in suspended animation and never really moved while everything else orbited around it.

No, it wasn't a manifestation of Backlash as in the chronicles of Susan Faludi. My arrival at motherhood was more accurately caused by a steering of the force that moves the pen.

On the night of the pregnancy test, I took a shower and as soon as I looked into that small window on the test strip, rain came in torrents and thunder and lightning struck. It is my favorite pregnancy anecdote, my proof that the Goddess has a sense of humor.

All of a sudden, without foreboding. I realized then it was the signal of a new life—or should I say two new lives.

On the highway, I came upon many exits. There were endless choices. I surveyed the map for abortion. I surveyed the map for marriage. I surveyed the map for single parenthood. And all the many combinations, all in my head. Ultimately, my decision was, whatever it took, I was going to live the moments of this detour fully.

But that was a decision, execution was a different thing. I was no better prepared than Anne Lamott. In *Operating Instructions* she writes about herself—and me: "It occurs to me over and over that I am much too self-centered, cynical, eccentric, and edgy to raise a baby". Better her talking than me.

There is only one moment when I truly, honestly felt I could be a mother, all the time I believed I was not built to mother. I never lived with my biological mother. All my other "mothers" are their own loving inventions and devoted improvisations. I had no grand illusions about motherhood, no ideals at all. That was the real deal, let the Freudian critics analyze that to bits.

Before I got pregnant I was planning to get one foot in the door of ethnographic research. Now, here I am and I tell you, motherhood is the ultimate research challenge. Biology, anatomy, anthropology, economics, psychology, children's literature, early childhood education, medicine... you name it, this research assignment is the ultimate in multi-disciplinary investigation. And the really challenging part is, I've got one chance of getting it right.

On another note, I got to know my own body, learned to listen to it. I became watchful and alert of its slightest throb and shiver. I found out it was not hard to speak for it because it has a language all its own. Not since menstruation has a woman ever intensely listened to her body than during pregnancy.

It took a while for me to realize that in the end, I got everything I wanted including that one thing that would make me an active feminist. This goal of learning about feminist mothering.

Here's the tricky part. The end of this excerpt and still there are no answers. Well, this one is a work in progress, still about to go through gestation and is a long way from birth. But who says answers always come in the form of answers?

I end with a quote from *Of Woman Born* by Adrienne Rich:

> I know no woman—virgin, mother, lesbian, married, celibate—whether she earns her keep as a housewife, a cocktail waitress, or a scanner of brain waves—for whom her body is not a fundamental problem: its clouded meaning, its fertility, its desire, its so-called frigidity, its bloody speech, its silences, its changes and mutilations, its rapes and ripenings... There is for the first time today a possibility of

converting our physicality into both knowledge and power.

The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of the means of production by workers. The female body has been both territory and machine, virgin wilderness to be exploited and assembly-line turning out life. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. In such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions, the thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence—a new relationship to the universe. Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community, intimacy will develop new meanings; thinking itself will be transformed.

This is where we have to begin.

Notes

[1] Andrea O'Reilly, Associate Professor at York University, aims to come out with a full-length publication which examines, from different racial perspectives, theories and practices of feminist mothering. She identifies the following topics as springboards: analysis of feminist mothering in literature and popular culture; sociological/anthropological/psychological studies of feminist mothering; and theory/theorizing on feminist mothering. <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/2003-06/0142.html> My work aims to examine such topics as I have encountered them in my own experience as a struggling feminist mother. In a way, this is my response to ARM's call for papers.

[2] Excerpts from **Letter to a Sister Underground.** I am attracted to the current trends, or I'd like to say tendencies, of breaking the barriers of genres. Women writers are most active in pushing for that ultimate breakthrough.

[3] To expose a private world like motherhood into the public sphere can make men feel uncomfortable as they are used to wallowing, sometimes hiding, in the public and ignoring the private. This is how Judy Chicago

puts it: "Because women have always taken responsibility of the private in life, men have been totally relieved of that responsibility. Not only do women have to move into the public life, but men have to share the burdens of private life before any real change can take place. This means that men have to be educated emotionally, and the first step in that education is to be made to "see" women, to feel us, experience our point of view."

[4] Fe Corazon Tengco-Labayen in her book *In Every Woman* traced feminism in the Philippines from colonization to the suffragist movement in the early 1900s, through the Marcos dictatorship to the Filipino women's own brand of feminine mystique.

[5] Something about what Hoff Sommers wrote regarding New Feminism struck a reverberating note in my mind. "Indeed, one of the main hallmarks of the New Feminism is its degree of self-preoccupation. Feminists like Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were keenly aware of themselves as privileged, middle-class, protected women. They understood how inappropriate it would be to equate their struggles with those of the less fortunate women, and it never occurred to them to air their personal grievances before the public."

Though I am not that privileged and I could not decipher what Hoff Sommers meant by "protected", I see my struggles are nothing compared to what other women go through each day. Hence, my "self-preoccupation" is this search for feminist mothering.

On the other side of the privilege spectrum though, I consider it a true gesture of sisterhood to respect all feminist endeavors. It bothers me up to now to have come across an article written by an elitist columnist in a local broadsheet calling feminists Gloria Steinem wannabes and stating "Feminists are chauvinists". Her audacity almost jolted me out of my "self-preoccupation" and made me want to hit her with, not my copy of Steinem's *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (how fitting) which was soft bound, but with my hard cover of *The Word of a Woman* by Robin Morgan.

[6] There are many ways in which women are not free. We are still shackled by ideals of beauty, myths of motherhood, illusions of romance, etc. These are the constant battering of outside forces that make us susceptible to self-doubt. I think women still believe that showing emotion is a universal weakness and so forth. There are still things women envy about men. Envy is not a bad thing; it can be a sign that men are still

privileged because of their gender as indicated by their rights over certain things and absence of responsibility over other aspects of everyday life.

[7] On my way home at 5:45 am from The Philippine STAR office where I spent the night to work on this paper, I experienced another incident when life imitates art. On the jeepney ride home a man sat across from me fumbling with what I thought was his leather coin purse. Turns out it was his penis and pubic hair peeking out of the open fly of his white trousers. What I thought was his fishing for some change was actually his carefully studied maneuver of exposing himself to me, as we were the only passengers. All I could do was move away, pay my fare, and pretend that the day's paper was more engrossing than usual. After all, he was my metaphor for patriarchy. I couldn't walk out on him. I could have lashed at him and stirred up a storm; I was angry enough. He was oppressing me, mocking me. Men are disgusting. What would he do if I flash him my uterus? Could I do that, threaten him, intimidate him with my uterus? And then I thought he's really just one sick man. He may be my metaphor for patriarchy but at that moment he was just one sick man who would be incapable of comprehending that my rage was personal and political. He kept on staring at my face, maybe expecting me to shriek, cry or faint. With a rolled up newspaper in one hand and an umbrella in the other, I looked at his face as I got off the jeepney, his legs apart and crotch slightly thrust forward. I thought, "You will not get a rise out of seeing me shocked or afraid because I am not. I am angry. I understand you are sick but if you try to assault me I'll whack your dick with the day's news."

References

(This is a list of resources that fertilized, shaped, challenged, mapped out, accompanied, bewildered or enlightened my writing, within this excerpt and beyond. I think it is impossible to identify which specific parts any resource imprinted itself upon as I intend that the form of my work is seamless and persistent.)

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SCANNING THE MUSE

Cesar Ruiz Aquino

ABSTRACT

Poetry springs from a sense of the beauty and terror in creation, personified as the Muse—whose presence is evoked in the poem. The presence can be identified with the sense. A bird's-eye-round-up of poetry through the ages will consistently confirm this -- from the Song of Solomon to the work of Francisco Balagtas. Thus poetry can be considered religious, in a qualified sense of the word, in nature. It is essentially in praise, at times in dread, of the Muse or goddess, who is a metaphor or symbol for the creative force in creation. True poets, even when they have not been instructed in this esoterica, come to it by intuition or instinct.

We find the Goddess authentically described in the two fictional masterpieces of Roman Classicism.

The Golden Ass by Apuleius contains, according to Robert Graves, "the most comprehensive and inspired account of the Goddess in all ancient literature" (Graves WG 70). We quote amply from the passage:

> Not long afterwards I awoke in sudden terror. A dazzling full moon was rising from the sea. It is at this secret hour that the Moon-goddess, sole sovereign of mankind, is possessed of her greatest power and majesty. She is the shining deity by whose divine influence not only all beasts, wild and tame, but all inanimate things as well, are invigorated, whose ebbs and flows control the rhythm of all bodies whatsoever, whether in the air, on earth or below the sea...

> I had scarcely closed my eyes before the apparition of a woman began to rise from the middle of the sea with so lovely a face that the gods themselves would have fallen down in adoration of it. First the head, then the whole shining body gradually emerged and stood before me poised on the surface of the waves...
>
> Her long thick hair fell in tapering ringlets on her lovely neck, and was crowned with an intricate chaplet in which was woven every kind of flower. Just above her brow shone a round disc, like a mirror, or like the bright face of the moon, which told me who she was. Vipers rising from the left-hand and right-hand partings of her hair supported this disc, with ears of corn bristling beside them. Her many-coloured robe was of finest linen; part glowing red and along the entire hem a woven bordure of flowers and fruit clung swaying in the breeze. She wore it slung across her body from the right hip to the left shoulder, where it was caught in a knot resembling the boss of a shield; but part of it hung in innumerable folds, the tasseled fringe quivering. It was embroidered with glittering stars on the hem and everywhere else, and in the middle beamed a full and fiery moon.
>
> In her right hand she held a bronze rattle, of the sort used to frighten away the God of the Sirocco; its narrow rim was curved like a sword-belt and three little rods, which sang shrilly when she shook the handle, passed horizontally through it. A boat-shaped gold dish hung from her left hand, and along the upper surface of the handle writhed an asp with puffed throat and head raised ready to strike. On her divine feet were slippers of palm leaves.... (Apuleius 261-264)

The other Roman narrative masterpiece, although what has come to us is only a fragment, is *The Satyricon* of Petronius.

Embedded, as it were, in this novel (using the modern term broadly) is the following poem:

> All visibles obey my words. All this flowered world,
> at my command, must wilt, the saps run sluggish in the stems;
> they spring again as I give leave. These barren cliffs,
> at my bare word, must rivers spill, each crag a Nile.
> For me the sea falls still, the spanking waters hush;
> the winds of winter gentle at the passing of my feet.
> As I please the rivers flow. Dragons and tigers,
> like puppies, wag their tails and follow where I go,
> tamely at my feet. (Petronius 154)

This strikes us as possibly the most perfectly crystalline instance of personification ever written. In other words, the Goddess here, who speaks in the first-person, is figurative. She is Nature itself. But the figure of speech is a bit complex, for we have not only personification but quite a bit of hyperbole. Moreover, Petronius, whose genius was comic, frames the poem in a devilishly clever device and succeeds in raising the level of the poem above the conventionally romantic—giving it, that is, a toughness: the words are spoken by a character in the story who speaks on behalf of the Goddess; i.e. as her oracle, as it were, and who happens to be an old woman!

This tempts one to wonder if Petronius was satirizing even the idea of the Goddess. But there is another element in the poem that belies such an interpretation: its torrential, sweeping rhythm which wonderfully evokes the elemental and the two-fold, creative/ destructive aspect of Nature. The rhythm does not encourage us to laugh.

We qualify this statement by admitting that it is applied only to the translation; the most we can do is suspect or intuit that the translation, in this regard, is only being faithful to the original. Which brings us to the point we wish to emphasize above all about this poem and its author: Petronius' evocation of the Goddess is both knowing and powered by a true poet's natural feel for his material.

Thus we see how the Goddess is powerfully and knowingly described by two major poetic works of late antiquity. These were pagan poets, i.e. in a qualified sense pre-Axial, by which we mean they were closer to the Old Religion than to the Judeo-Christian, and had the Goddess consciously in mind as she had stepped full-grown from the Neolithic like, in a later age, Botticelli's Venus. Thereafter she was to survive only in the subconscious of poets, in varying degrees of authenticity. And not only the poets, as the following demonstrate:

The English novelist, J.G. Ballard, a current cult figure, makes her an African child-woman in *The Day of Creation*, his best novel to date. Here is that haunting, surreal work's short and lyrical final paragraph:

> I am waiting, but not for a plane. I am waiting for a strong-shouldered young woman, with a caustic eye, walking along the drained bed of the Mallory with a familiar jaunty stride. Sooner or later she will reappear, and I am certain that when she comes the Mallory will also return, and once again run the waters of its dream across the dust of a waiting heart. (Ballard 254)

Similarly the last paragraph of a European novel bears her unmistakable presence. This work is the masterpiece of a writer regarded by many as the best in science fiction Evidently we find her even there.

> Must I go on living here then, among the objects we both had touched, in the air she had breathed? In the name of what? In the hope of her return? I hoped for nothing. And yet I lived in expectation. Since she had gone, that was all that remained. I did not know what achievements, what mockery, even what tortures still awaited me. I knew nothing, and I

> persisted in the faith that the time of cruel miracles was not past. (Lem 211)

The great James Joyce, in his autobiographical *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, paints her thus:

> A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long, slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and softhued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face. She was alone and still, gazing out to sea, and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither; and a faint flame trembled on her cheek. (Joyce 176)

In *Finnegan's Wake*, Joyce's third and final novel, she becomes Anna Livia Plurabelle whose last name, Graves recognized, is an allusion to the many-named, universal Goddess and therefore shows the mature Joyce to know her in a more than intuitional fashion. Graves, who had a bias for learned people

especially those with a solid classical training, evidently regarded Joyce as a true poet, and not just on the basis of Joyce's poems which made for very minor poetry. Graves said that one yardstick with which to approach poets is how authentically or faithfully they portray the Goddess.

But it is ridiculous to think that, in order to write a poem—in order to be a poet—all one has to do is fall in love and sing of the joy or the pain of being in love. To write a poem that reveals the Goddess is not an easy thing to do; that would be like saying all a man has to do in order to win the woman of his fancy is to declare his feelings to her. It may in fact be easier "to justify God's ways to man".

But of course the great love poems reveal the Goddess in an outright way. The scriptural *Song of Songs* is no exception.

The *Song of Songs* provides us with a very interesting example because people in fact are puzzled why what appears to be a perfectly profane poem of physical love is included in the Bible.

The Bible is an Axial product. But that is as far as the editing and the redacting goes—there is much in the good book that is very ancient, i.e. that goes back to oral tradition. The *Song of Songs* is an outstanding instance. Its authorship is traditionally ascribed to Solomon, but scholars maintain otherwise; it is so obviously much more ancient than that. The authoritative, scholarly view is that it has been handed down from a remote oral past.

The lyricism, as in all love lyrics or love poems in subsequent ages, centers on the delightful physical qualities of the opposite sex. What, indeed, is a thoroughly sensuous and sensual poem like this, the legomenon, one might say, of a fertility ritual so hated by the priests and prophets of Israel, doing in a place like the Bible? How does one explain its inclusion into the Scriptures? How did it elude the Axial editors and redactors, i.e. the religious leaders who had led Israel back

from the Babylonian Captivity sometime between 500 and 400 B.C.? And when in the first-century A.D. its canonicity became the subject of passionate controversy, why did Rabbi Aqivah defend it in words that were boldest hyperbole? "(T)he whole universe is not worth the day that book has been given to Israel because all the Ketoubim (Scriptures) are holy, but the *Song of Songs* is the most holy." (Suares 226)

The cabalist Suares from whom we have quoted is of the belief that these words were mysterious and could only mean that the Song of Songs is a cabalist text and possesses a secret, arcane meaning. We believe, on the other hand, that even if that were the truth, the literal level of the poem—the objective correlative, the tenor—is the secret of its great literary appeal (no matter what profound interpretation of Moby Dick a reader can come up with, the sheer physical adventure of the story is what primarily engages our attention as we read it). As a consequence, the more familiar, popular explanation offered by the authorities and experts—to wit, that the *Song of Songs* is allegorical—has little appeal to people who do not have a special religious orientation or special religious temperament. "These love songs got into the Bible because they were interpreted allegorically by the rabbis who established the Bible Canon, the lover being God, and the beloved, Israel" (Levine 162). Christianity took this interpretation as its own, only substituting, for God and Israel, its own terms Christ and Church.

But the allegorical interpretation, though different from the cabalistic, may nonetheless have an esoteric or mystical origin. We are thinking of two such orientations. First, there is the well-known fact that two Catholic mystics, St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa of Avila, described their mystical states of union with the divine in erotic imagery. The popular explanation for this phenomenon goes something like this: the mystical state of ecstatic union with the divine that these two saints frequently experienced cannot be rendered except in

imagery from the level of experience that most closely approximates the mystical ecstasy, namely the erotic. This means that the experience described in the ecstatic poems of St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa is not erotic at all; it is religious and mystical.

Second we have the phenomenon of Sufism. The Sufis are the Muslim mystics who were held in disfavor by orthodox Muslims. The Sufi experience can be summarized thus: they believed that God is experienced ecstatically, because they did. They were the drunk or intoxicated ones—drunk with God. The Persian poet, Rumi wrote: "Before garden, vine or grape were in the world/ Our soul was drunken with immortal wine." The Sufi poets described the experience of God in three fundamental images of intoxication: wine, dancing, and love—erotic love in which the beauty of the beloved is perceived as a theophany. Most traditional interpreters of Islam tell us that a Sufi poem that appears to be a celebration of the beloved is really a celebration of God. This calls to mind the traditional interpretation of the *Song of Songs* as an allegory that in reality describes the love between God and Israel (or between Christ and the Church), not between a man and a woman. But Robert Graves, in his introduction to Indrie Shah's book, *The Sufis*, cites an interesting incident from the life of the great Arabic Sufi, Ibn El-Arabi: "Ibn El-Arabi, summoned before an Islamic inquisition at Aleppo to defend himself against charges of nonconformity, pleaded that his poems were metaphorical, the basic message being God's perfection of man through divine love." This suggests a lively inversion of the popular explanation of Sufi poetry; that is, Sufi poets had to pretend that they were, allegorically or symbolically or metaphorically, writing about God, not about a human beloved. In other words, Ibn El-Arabi was really writing love poems in a manner no different from Robert Burns or Christopher Marlowe.

In truth, Ibn El-Arabi knew the Muse, and he appeared to have experienced a love that served as a model to Dante's

love for Beatrice. However, just as Dante's Beatrice became, in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a symbol for the beatific vision, Arabi's beloved—whoever it was in biographical terms—also proved to have assumed, for El-Arabi, the dimensions of the transcendent. What we are saying here is that El-Arabi's Muse was a real, literal woman, but she also gave Arabi a glimpse of the divine in more than the metaphorical sense. Essentially, this is akin to, if we may recall, Eliade's concept of hierophany.

Which brings us full-circle to the goddess of Primal Religion and the poem in question—the *Song of Songs*. In the Sacred Marriage or hieros gamos, groom and bride catch a theophanic, or hierophanic, glimpse of the eternal in each other. We offer this as the true explanation or justification for why the *Song of Songs* was accepted as canonical or scriptural. It is a triumph of the primal vision. If it is true, as El-Arabi says, that "beauty is the theophany par excellence," then the Muse of the poets, even the non-mystical ones like Robert Burns or Christopher Marlowe or John Donne, is, pushed a degree or two further, a theophany.

from The Book of Theophanies
by Ibn El-Arabi (12th-century, Arabic)

Dearly beloved!
I have called you so often and you have not heard me.
I have shown myself to you so often and you have not seen me.
I have made myself fragrance so often, and you have not smelled me,
Savorous food, and you have not tasted me.
Why can you not reach me through the object you touch
Or breathe through sweet perfumes?
Why do you not see me? Why do you not hear me?
Why? Why? Why?

This is the Sufi idea that the divine or transcendent is in the things of this world that one delights in, e.g. the Muse or the beloved. Here the speaker is clearly the transcendent or the divine saying that He/She inheres in the things of this world that we grasp with our senses—hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch—and take pleasure in and love so much. It does invite comparison with the sensuousness of the *Song of Songs*, but with the difference that the mystical idea is stated or abstracted. There is a strong metaphysical feel to this poem, and it is therefore more frankly theological in intent. The mystical idea that stares us in the face is that God is revealed in the sensuous things that delight us, and that the sensuousness or delightfulness of these things is a manifestation of his love for us.

This mystical idea is expressed in another world scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

> The Bhagavad-Gita
> *(an excerpt from the Hindu scripture)*
>
> I am the fresh taste of the water, the radiance in moon and sun, the sound in the ether, the fragrance of earth, and the brilliance in fire. I am the reason of the reason-endowed, the splendor of splendid things, the strength of the strong.

This is nothing less than a rendition or demonstration of Eliade's idea of hierophany. As in the preceding poem, we are told that the divine or transcendent is in the things of this world as caught by our senses. The world as it appears to man through his senses is a theophany, to use the term of Corbin; a hierophany, to use that of Eliade. This thing is clear in either of the two poems just considered, and less consciously so in the *Song of Songs* which can give the impression of being innocently pagan or profane. Write imaginary gardens with real toads in

them, advised Marianne Moore; in the *Song of Songs,* we say yes—a sacred wedding with real lovers in it.

The quality of being "innocently pagan or profane" is to be found in all poems celebrating the love between man and woman. But, as in self-conscious Sufi poetry, this love is raised, quite naturally, to a symbolic or metaphorical level. The loved woman in a love poem becomes the Muse or the Goddess. This would then make love poetry, when it is true poetry, essentially religious, but "religious" in the primal sense. Consider the following classics which we do not have to reproduce here: "My Love Is Like A Red, Red Rose" by Robert Burns and "Come Live With Me And Be My Love" by Christopher Marlowe.

It is doubtful that either Burns or Marlowe intended the Muse in his poem to be a theophany, the way El-Arabi and Dante did. It is even open to doubt that they were conscious of any Muse-oriented poetics, as John Skelton of the 15th-century or Robert Graves of our day were. They came to the Muse or Goddess intuitively. But for this very reason, there is a purity in their lyricism, as shown by these poems, that makes their sensibility so primal.

Faust *(a one-line excerpt)*
by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Stay, thou art so fair!

Yet, the Goddess that all true poetry—not just love poetry—evokes is, in a given work, not always a literal woman. The object of the poet's address in this radiant single line by Goethe, for example, is a fleeting instant or moment, personified as the Goddess. In a previous chapter, we cited similar instance in the Biblical evocation of Wisdom as a frolicsome young girl who was the delight of the Lord when He created the world.

The amazing French boy genius, Arthur Rimbaud, did exactly the same thing in a prose poem. Daybreak is personified as the goddess.

Dawn
by Arthur Rimbaud *(French, late 19th-century)*

I embraced the summer dawn.
Nothing yet stirred on the face of the palaces. The water was dead. The shadows still camped in the woodland road. I walked, waking quick warm breaths; and gems looked on, and wings rose without a sound.

The first venture was, in a path already filled with fresh, pale gleams, a flower who told me her name.

I laughed at the blond wasserfall that tousled through the pines: on the silver summit I recognized the goddess.

Then, one by one, I lifted up her veils. In the lane, waving my arms. Across the plain, where I notified the cock. In the city, she fled among the steeples and the domes; and running like a beggar on the marble quays, I chased her.

Above the road near a laurel wood, I wrapped her up in her gathered veils, and I felt a little her immense body. Dawn and the child fell down at the edge of the wood.

Waking, it was noon.

The dawn is a dawn on the literal level and as such it is personified, as in Goethe's line, as the goddess. In this poem, the goddess appears to be the giver of all gifts, and whose essence is a mystery that, alas, he violated when he "lifted up her veils." This led to his Edenic fall, for she fled, and now he sees that without her, he is "a beggar." When he woke up, it is noon—this means that once the poetic trance is gone, one is back to drab, ordinary

reality. Without the goddess, without the intuitive sense of wonder and mystery that was so full at the dawn of time—when it is noon, i.e. all is reason and logic, without mythos, without the goddess, everything is arid wilderness.

Kay Selya
by Francisco Baltazar *(Filipino, 19th-century)*

Nasaan si Selyang ligaya ng dibdib?
Ang suyuan namin bakit di lumawig?
Nahan ang mga araw na ang isa niyang titig
Ang siyang buhay ko, kaluluwa't langit?

Where is Celia, heart's happiness?
Why did our love not prosper?
Where are the days when her
One look was my life, my soul, my heaven?

The departure or loss of the Goddess can be the literal loss of the beloved. The effect is essentially the same: a kind of death. We see this theme in this excerpt from our own Francisco Baltazar (Balagtas)—really far superior to Ben Jonson's "Song to Celia," which is cavalier by comparison. On account of the poem's intensity, which reaches and touches the mystical, the true comparison would be to the authentic lyricism exhibited by the Christopher Marlowe and Robert Burns poems just taken up. The Muse that is Selya, whom the I-persona, unabashedly Francisco Baltazar himself, was permanently separated from when he was unjustly, treacherously imprisoned, perfectly echoes John Donne's experience of the Muse as we find it in the following poem, one of his lesser known.

A Fever
by John Donne (English, 17th-century)

Oh do not die, for I shall hate
All women so, when thou art gone,

That thee I shall not celebrate,
When I remember, thou wast one.
But yet thou canst not die, I know
To leave this world behind, is death,
But when thou from this world wilt go,
Thou whole world vapors with thy breath.
Or if, when thou, the world's soul, goest,
It stay, t'is but thy carcasse then,
The fairest woman, but thy ghost,
But corrupt worms, the worthiest men.
O wrangling schools, that search what fire
Shall burn this world, had none the wit
Unto this knowledge to aspire,
That this her fever might be it?
And yet she cannot waste by this,
Nor long bear this torturing wrong,
These burning fits but meteors be,
Whose matter in thee is soon spent.
Thy beauty, and all parts, which are three,
Are unchangeable firmament.
Yet t'was of my mind, seizing thee,
Though it in thee cannot persevere.
For I had rather owner be
Of thee one hour, than all else ever.

Robert Graves' remark on the poem: "Donne worshipped the Goddess blindly in the person of the woman whom he made his Muse; so far unable to recall her outward appearance that all he could record of her was the image of his own love-possessed eye seen reflected in hers. In "A Fever" he calls her "the world's soul," for if she leaves him "the world is but her carcasse" (Graves WG 427).

Poets who are esoterically or theoretically in the know with regards to the idea of Muse poetry describe the Muse with a measure of self-consciousness. They are, in the true sense of the word, the initiates. Their work, as a consequence, have a deliberate, almost artificial neo-classic character no matter how faint. This need not be inevitable, of course. Consider the following:

from The White Goddess
by Robert Graves *(English, 20th-century)*

Not the faintest image. Worself I close my mind's eye
I might dream nothing.
What if I heard
Your name and it will ring no bell?
Stranger and stranger until I'd run
Into you and know of course
This must be why. Here
Is why. This face.
This sheer sight that leaves no trace.
This strangest thing
Now under the sun.
Green sap of Spring in the young wood a-stir
Will celebrate the Mountain Mother,
And every song-bird shout awhile for her;
But I am gifted, even in November
Rawest of seasons, with so huge a sense
Of her nakedly worn magnificence
I forget cruelty and past betrayal,
Careless of where the next bright bolt may fall.

from Tiradores de Muerte
by Erwin E. Castillo (*Filipino*, 20th-century)

Her eyes are deep
onyx lakes in the midnight
where jasmines and the Three Marys
swoon away to swim.
Wild winds
delirious with flowers
make caravels of her blown hair.
For her elf-ear
they sing and the fine down
stirs between her breasts.
Her face is pale as a pearl from the South.
Her tongue, snake-quick, lights in my mouth.

Love in Talisay
by Wilfredo Pascua Sanchez (*Filipino*, 20th-century)

That's how I came to love you,
you are mine
though I pity the man that
cannot know his blindness
from his love. May you not blame
me, sweet Josephine, for putting you
in this terrible mess.
You call me Joe, and I for joy
tremble at your innocence
and what of it is left? You and I,
perhaps in abundance of knowing,
and also in revenge
God teased when our backs were
turned, in an absolute way
in your body I knew the guidings
of my dream.
Towards night, we would walk
streets away into the woods
for you are all my virtuous sisters
seeking me in vain.
I'm lost time and again in
illuminated roads.
The world owes you a hearing,
but my pen is late.
Josephine, we shall write no words,
but only walk in rain
so I may feel your breasts,
and kiss your feet
and in a blaze of madness wake
the buried spring.

Yet, to repeat, it is not as if to write of the Goddess or the Muse guarantees that the outcome will be authentic poetry. Even a major poet can fall flat on his face in the attempt, though

this will escape the attention of students of literature who have been trained to appreciate almost exclusively only the Apollonian qualities of poetry. Because we do not wish to go far afield in attempting to give an elaborate explanation of what Apollonian poetry means, we would only cite that aspect of it which is most relevant here. Apollonian poetry puts great emphasis on perfection of form in the external sense. It thus also emphasizes a poet's virtuoso abilities or technical skills. In a word, the Apollonian poet is a performer, a wizard whose essential quality is that he can write at will.

The Muse or the *duende* or the divinity (Graves' term and Lorca's and Plato's, respectively) can be missing. In which case the poem may appear to be enduring, but the success is limited to readership among students of literary history and teachers of literature—who, luckily for the Apollonian poet, can always be counted on to be there. Thus—we have such "immortal" love poems as Ben Jonson's "Song to Celia"; George Lord Byron's "She Walks in Beauty Like the Night"; Percy Bysshe Shelley's "The Indian Serenade"; Edgar Allan Poe's "To Helen." These poems appear to be Muse poems but in reality are not; they are Apollonian poems. What we have is rhetoric—an ersatz Muse poem. The poet has managed to display his talent or technical proficiency. But we have a lack of real feeling for the Muse. There is a certain cavalier attitude to Love, which it purportedly praises.

We submit the following to the reader's perusal:

X SIGHT

Strange is your facelessness when I try
To picture you. You don't jell,
Not the faintest image. Worse
If I close my mind's eye
I might dream nothing.
What if I heard

Your name and it will ring no bell?

Stranger and stranger until I'd run
Into you and know of course
This must be why. Here
Is why. This face.
This sheer sight that leaves no trace.
This strangest thing
Now under the sun.

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TAGAY-TAGAY POETICS AND GENDER IN CEBUANO VERSE

Merlie M. Alunan

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an introduction to a Sugbuanon poetic tradition, the *balak,* and to the *tagay*, the socio-cultural context that has spawned its birth, shaped its development, and which, to this day, continues to provide the backdrop for its expression. A Cebuano word referring to a gathering, often exclusively of men, for the purpose of drinking, *tagay* is also the occasion for literary discussions as well as poetry reading. Because of its association with male bonding and poetry, *tagay* is widely perceived as a nurturer of Cebuano verse and male poets, through a system by which the young writer may receive mentoring, inspiration and affirmation, and critical attention from his peers, who provide the audience for his poetic endeavor. In this sense, *tagay,* offers a glimpse of the communal processes where Philippine creative life thrives freely and naturally, most notable of which are the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures that are so much a part of this gathering, albeit governed by the peculiar ethos of male engagement.

However, this paper explores not only the poetry that has come out of these occasions but the asymmetries in the gender structure entrenched in our culture as they are displayed in this exclusive male gathering and as they are embodied in the themes of the *balak*. For noteworthy is not only the absence of women poets in the body of traditional Cebuano verse, but alsothe absence of the female voice and the dominance of the voice of the male in the *balak* tradition.

The *tagay* is a gathering for the purpose of drinking, a popular and absolutely common activity among Filipinos, so common indeed that it would be quite easy to ignore it as antecedent of anything more serious than a hangover. In the

annual NCCA Writers Conference held in Bohol last January 2000, the young Cebuano poet, Myke Obenieta, refers to the *tagay* as the veritable stewpot of literature in the Visayas. The *tagay*, Obenieta claims, nurtures Cebuano verse.

He describes in rollicking style how, as a young poet, the *tagay* provided him with the mentoring and affirmation he needed to persevere in writing. The monumental headache of a hangover the day after seems little price for the opportunity to commune with older and wiser postulants to the muse. Indeed the smoky and beery atmosphere of the *tagay* seems to be an excellent place for encountering one's creative daemons, and other humans similarly affected.

Until Myke called our attention to it, it was difficult to imagine something as ordinary as the *tagay* as a generator of serious poetics. But Myke speaks from direct experience, and shows understanding about how it works. His playful reference to the "spirit of the glass" deserves a second look (Obenieta, 2000). He reprises his own adventures thus:

> I was just 23 years old when I wrote and published my first Cebuano poem entitled "Balibaran Ko Ikaw sa *Balak*"...[1] Earlier that poem became finalist in a poetry writing contest sponsored by Cebu's leading newspaper, *SunStar Daily*, and by the Doña Modesta Gaisano Foundation. I was the youngest finalist. Two Cebuano poets [whom] I had met earlier at the awarding ceremony of the Cebuano poetry writing contest, Ernesto Lariosa and Pantaleon Auman, asked me to join a post-congress powwow with a rowdy bunch of *bisdaks*[2] with *tuba*[3] and Tanduay.
>
> Tasked to be the *tigtagay*,[4] I passed the glass around in awe and amusement as the members of the Bathalad[5] ... reeled me over in a binge of Cebuano songs, poetry, and tall tales, sousing me up in its undercurrents of folk wisdom

> and wise crack. It was there that I heard Temistokles Adlawan ... waxing whimsical about his misadventures as a tricycle driver; Pantaleon Auman with a glass of Tanduay in his hands ardently [singing], *Bulan pagkatahum mo, sama ka sa maanyag nga bulak akong gimahal*[6] ... ; Ernie Lariosa, a big mole nestling on his upper lip, hushing us down with roaring voice and robust gestures. Do you know how Sitio Panadtaran in San Fernando [his hometown] got its name? ... Ernie would [then] narrate the legend of Juan Diyong, a farmer who spurred the folks into a relentless rampage against the invaders in the olden times. With such energy, too, did he keep us awake, knocking the bottles off the tables at Bayanihan Beerhouse while stressing the prerequisite of the four S's in writing poetry—Sound, Story, and Social Sense. And because the waitresses don't care a bit about the gist of his CCP-prize winning essay in Cebuano poetry, his baritone would be tender enough with *Patayng Buhi*[7] dedicated to them." (Obenieta 2000)

He cites two other groups where the *tagay* tradition among Ccbuano writers lives. There was a poetry group in the 60s consisting of the writers, Melquiadito Allego, Urias Almagro, Romeo Virao, Sozimo Cabuñal, Ernesto Lariosa, Edfer Rigodon, and Antonio Villaveto, and later on Marcel Navarra, Laurean Unabia, and Diosdado Alesna. As a matter of fact, the group's name (ALVICALARIVI) comes from the first syllable of the respective names of the founding members. Then there is the Bathalad, one of the largest aggrupation of writers in Cebuano. The tradition continues to the Tarantula, a group of the youngest generation of Cebuano writers, namely, Januar Yap, Adonis Durado, Corazon Almerino, John Biton, Dindin Villarino, Ulysses Apparece, Noel Rama, Ronald Villavellez, Joshua Cabrera, Orly

Cajegas, Delora Sales, and Myke Obenieta himself. *Tagay* remains unchallenged as the institution where the passions of poetry and the ways of writing in general are handed on.

The *tagay*, Myke points out, "is replete with discussions, literary or otherwise, [and] poetry reading." His paper reaffirms his own irrevocable entry into the circle of initiates to both *tagay* and poetry. He says, "I know the Bathalad writers and the ancestral voices that passed through them are pleased as punch, seeing we don't cower at the table of tradition as they pass on the torch to us. Yes, along with the glass" (Obenieta, 2000).

Social dynamics of the *tagay*

The *tagay* is an almost exclusive male activity, for the simple reason, it might seem, that drinking is a pleasure allowed mostly to men. The woman who drinks is still frowned upon, though in these recent times, women are seen to hit the bottle just as gallantly as any man. The *tagay*, however, remains preeminently a site for male bonding. It may take place at home in sight of every member of the family, but men frown on their wives and daughters sitting in on these sessions. In these exercises of male bonding, confidences may arise, man to man, so to speak, that are not for women's ears. They may be on call, however, to bring out the *sumsuman*, replenish the ice, or furnish more cola for the *tuba* or the rhum.

The young human male's acceptance into a *tagayay* signals his acceptance into the world of real men. Here he learns how to drink, finding out by example or direct instructions the ethics of drinking as well as the dangers of liquor. Here he might get really soused up for the first time under the good-natured surveillance of his seniors. The fellow who can hold his liquor well is admired. On the other hand, there is much tolerance for the fool who does not know his own measure and embarrasses himself by throwing up or becoming nasty as he digs into his cups.

The *tagay* as site for male bonding, is also venue for much display of machismo. Drinking quantities of liquor without toppling over is one of the *tagay*'s grosser displays of machismo. Or the participants could get into an argument and try shouting one another down. The one with the bigger voice, right or wrong, takes command. The happy occasion could deteriorate into a brawl if nobody yields. Machismo may also take other forms such as the exercise of wit calculated to up one's status over another, a display of argumentative brilliance, for example, or cleverness, or learning, all designed to project oneself as the focus or center of the gathering. I have observed this process of gaining dominance as a fundamental part of male culture. We shall have occasion later on to see this as an element of Cebuano poetics. We shall have further reference to this later in this paper.

I have sat at the edge of many a *tagay* session with some of the gentlemen Myke mentions. A number of them are personal friends. Like him I have enjoyed the complex and exhilarating discussions that could happen in a *tagay*. Though I am not much of an imbiber of spirited drinks, I do appreciate their power to set the mood for the kind of spontaneous intellectual free-for-all that he describes. The topics may range from politics to poetry to good old gossip. Inebriation can be real, caused by the liquor itself, or figurative, brought on by the stimulating conversation going round the table along with the glass. Differences of opinion is rampant, hence there could be noisy arguments, not always friendly, nor logical, nor sensible.

I enjoyed Myke's paper very much for its appreciative presentation of the communal processes where Philippine creative life thrives freely and naturally. It corresponds to my own knowledge and experience. However my reactions to it may not be entirely the same as Myke's on account of gender.

The gender question

Post-session *tagay* is an inevitable part of any writers' workshop in Cebu to which I get invited on occasions. I get to gatecrash these affairs as an "honored" member of the critics' panel. Here my status and position subtly change. My opinions, accepted and valued in the sessions, lose their edge in the *tagay*. I am transformed into the "muse" of poetry, or something similarly frivolous. I am no longer a coeval, a fellow creator as they are all striving to be. The men reserve the honor of creativity for one another. As "muse," I become their "inspiration," I rise to "supremacy," albeit opinionless now in their midst. I become somewhat like the *hara sa karnabal* whose main role in the festival gathering is supposedly to be beautiful and to inspire those around her with her charms.

Once one sees past the ritual with which these social interactions are observed, it becomes easy to see that male gallantry on these occasions is purely a cliché and therefore meaningless. Both the men and women understand this tacitly. The transaction may start with a few loose complements and mild teasing, and progress to outright flirting as the drinkers' cup deepens. The unsolicited attention could get more outrageous as the night progresses. The only reasonable option for the woman who cannot brave the brawly, bristly, bawdy dynamics of the *tagay* is to leave, for there is nothing to gain by quarrelling with drunken fools. Her necessary—and expected flight—excludes her then from sharing in the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures that are also so much a part of the gathering.

It seems that men of a certain age (past forty and over?) react to the presence of a woman in these social occasions by reflex, almost as if there were no other way to deal with a woman in their midst except to treat her as a sexual object. Could this be, I had often asked, a subtle form of reprimand to women who intrude into what is traditionally considered male

turf? She then has to suffer the role that women play in gatherings of this sort—as servant and entertainer. There are a number of taboos operating against women in the *tagay*. First, nice women are not supposed to drink. Second, nice women do not expose themselves just like that to the presence of men. Third, it is unwomanly to be assertive. Fourth, the woman of quality is humble and prudent and does not flaunt herself and her abilities in public. Both men and women understand these taboos and obey them as an implicit part of the social order.

The poetic uses of the *tagay*

One may note first of all the general aridity of the Philippine literary landscape. There is so little understanding and appreciation of the value of literature to individuals and society. Venues for publication of the works of the imagination are still hard to come by. The landscape is even bleaker for off-the-mainstream literary productions. These are the works written in languages outside English and Filipino, the languages of academe, politics, and commerce. The language situation in the Philippines has invested non-mainstream language with a sense of inferiority. The low status of literature in the home grown tongue is bolstered by the formal academic curricula which have consistently and deliberately kept them out in favor of materials drawn from English and Filipino resources.

Balak is the Cebuano genera for verse. Resil Mojares points out in his introduction to the first volume of *Sugbuanong Balak* the broad uses of the *balak* in the social formation. "Poetry permeated local life: there were verses for practically every occasion and everyone was a poet" (Alburo, Bandillo, Dumdum, and Mojares, 1988:3). Versification is a public act and serves many social functions. Hence it is an activity reserved for men. Inured to privacy and silence, women kept out of it almost as a matter of course. The man's claim to public self-expression

parallels the woman's habitual inhibition and self-effacement.

It occurs to me that the poetic tradition of Sugbuanon is shaped by the durable tradition of the *tagay*. It devises a system by which the young writer may receive mentoring, inspiration and affirmation, and critical attention, all of which he needs to persevere in his poetic pursuit. It provides the audience for the poetic endeavor. As poets recite or read their verses to one another while passing the cup, the *tagay* also functions as a most accessible venue for "publication," or bringing to public attention one's literary efforts. The rowdy and rambunctious comments he receives from his peers might be as much mentoring and criticism as he will ever receive in his career as a *magbabalak.*[8]

Myke describes how older poets pass on the flame and passion of poetry in the *tagay*. We dare not dispute the verity of this first-hand experience. We can only affirm it by suggesting that it might be responsible for a number of factors characterizing Cebuano literature in general. One may note, for instance, the near absence of women poets in Cebuano poetry. The twin volumes of *Sugbuanong Balak* issued by the Cebuano Studies Center of the University of San Carlos in 1988 bear this out. The first volume of this collection includes popular folk forms and the *balak* up to 1940. The book presents a total of thirty-three poets, of whom, only one is a woman.[9] The second volume showcases 44 poets, of which only three are women.[10] Could it be that the exclusion of women in the *tagay* is related somehow to their absence in literature?

We have earlier mentioned the *tagay* as a venue for "publication" of literature. The *tagay* upholds the tradition of orality. It is the perfect setting for showing off one's skill in the *duplo*[11] and the *balitaw*.[12] The raconteur finds an audience for his tales in the drinking round. These activities

are important to an ethno-linguistic culture deprived of opportunities for print. By being excluded from the *tagay*, women have no chance at all of participating even in this informal mode of publication.

The poetry of *tagay*

It is not only the absence of women poets, however, that we note in the body of traditional Cebuano verse. It is the absence of the female voice and the dominance of the voice of the male that we consider noteworthy in the *balak* tradition. The situation seems to confirm the idea that Obenieta has so enthusiastically advanced—the *tagay* as the nurturer of Cebuano verse and of male poets.

We are prepared to go further than this, indeed to see the *tagay* also as the precursor of the poetics characterizing the traditional *balak*. These characteristics are implicit in the dominant male voice and the scope and range of its preemption. There is the primary claim to power which the male speakers use to construct the world and coerce the listener's or the reader's perception. The cold and heartless beauty, so common to early examples of the *balak*, is a poetic conceit.[13] In real life, women are kinder and not so demanding and are certainly not so gullible. The poor, suffering lover [read: man] deliciously languishing in the bathos of unrequited squalor is another conceit. Most men in real life are taciturn and inarticulate and strive to win their women by other means than inundating her with pretty speech.

The lushness and floridity of the traditional *balak* is part of that claim to power. It is a claim exercised within the very frontiers of language itself. Mastery of language is a given of the male culture. The ability to articulate one's feelings and thoughts with elegance is a desirable trait for the male who seeks to get ahead in the world. The one so gifted gains distinction among other men and ostensibly wins the women

too. Language is one more field where the human male may make his display and show his authority.

Other elements may be mentioned too. One is the blown up or hortatory tone common to the *balak*. The persona never just speaks; he declaims or orates in the most emphatic fashion. The poem might be addressed to one person, yet the tone is more suited to public delivery. The diction strives for elevation in keeping with the tone. The most successful usage of this expressive mode achieves what Mojares observes as "genuine impulses within native poetry: the values of play, fancy, incantation, and orality." At its worst the *balak* becomes synonymous with *balaknon* or 'poetic' which means "purple speech, 'sentimental,' declamatory and biased in favor of certain modes of diction and sentiment" (Mojares in Alburo, *et. al.*, 1988, vol. 2:4). Mojares himself takes no note of gender considerations as a possible precursor of this poetic impulse.

The *balak* seems preeminently a product of the *tagay*, that great social institution which we have earlier pointed out as a site for male bonding and display of machismo; where, as Myke Obenieta points out, the young poet receives instruction on the process of getting besotted in both alcohol and poetry. We shall now sample a few lines from the *balak* to illustrate our point.

Power play and display in the *balak*

The ability to use language in the way of the *balak* is the poet's extraordinary claim to power. The poet is charged with the potency of the word. Words used well can move the heavens as in a prayer. Words instruct men and women on the right moral sense, set the path for the humble, and clear the way for the dreamer and the adventurer. The man who can use words effectively has in his means the power to influence events.

Amoral

Man-woman relationship comprises a large portion of extant Cebuano poetry. The *balak* is essentially a love poem. It is an instrument of choice for the courtship game. The well-spoken word can win a woman's love. Or alternately, it could punish her for being cold, unfaithful, or hardhearted. The lover's suit is colloquially (and appropriately, we might say) termed *amoral.*[14] The floridity of the *amoral* is intended to turn a woman's head and make her receptive to the man's pleas. The *amoral* may praise her beauty, or it could avow a man's undying love, or lay out grand promises to convince the woman of his affection and seriousness of purpose.

Saloma[15] is an example of the *balak amoral.* The poem declares a man's passion for a cold and unresponsive woman. Here are some sample lines:

Tapat ako magsakay sa mabalod
Nga dili sa dagat nga malinaw
Kay sa unos dili ako malunod
Malunod ako sa kamingaw.

Ang pagpungasi sa Habagat
Gipangahas ko pagpamaroto
Kay bisan ako tabunan sa wakat
Antuson ko, Inday, tungod kanimo. [16]

(Alburo *et. al.,* 1988, vol. 1: 22-25)

The man brags about his suffering and his willingness to undergo hardships for the sake of the beloved. Impliedly, the woman is cold and indifferent, or she could just be playing coy. The lover's task as the poem implies is to dissolve the coldness through elegant language, that is the *amoral.*

Interestingly, the cover design of *Sugbuanong Balak* Volume I depicts the towering figure of a woman, her

resplendent hair spreading around her like an aureole. She is surrounded by dwarf figures of men in supplicant postures. Male swaggering of the *Saloma* type finds its counterpart in the *duplo,*[17] a poetic joust, usually on the theme of love. Here it is the woman's turn to do some swaggering of her own:

> *Kung matuod kang nahigugma*
> *Sumalom ka sa ilalom sa linaw*
> *Dili ka gayod mutunga*
> *Kung dili mo madala ang gamot sa Adlaw.*
>
> *Kung buot ka, Iyo, mangasawa*
> *Atuay balay namo ayuha*
> *Ayaw pagtagkusa sa ulay*
> *Tagkusa lamang sa imong laway.*
>
> *Kung buot ka, Iyo, mangasawa*
> *Atuay balay namo ayuha*
> *Ang atop niya kugon*
> *Alisdi sa pako'g alimukon*
>
> *Kung buot ka, Iyo, mangasawa,*
> *Atuay balay namo ayuha*
> *Ang salog niya pulos kawayan*
> *Alisdi sa lunsay bulawan.*[18]
>
> (Alburo *et. al.*, 1988, vol. 1: 22)

Students of Cebuano culture note that the flamboyant metaphors in the form are stock phrases available within the culture. They are taken from the popular reservoir and are familiar to performers as well as their audiences.

Within the matrix of the social convention in which the *balak* subsists, men talked and listened to one another. The women stayed in the sidelines overhearing the conversation, thinking their own thoughts, and keeping their own counsel.

On the few occasions when women allow themselves to share their thoughts publicly it would likely be to say what they are expected to say. Women are well schooled in the texts of their culture and will not deviate from their rote out of a sense of self-preservation. The utterances of women, even in the *duplo*, are derivative and cannot be said to reveal what they really think and feel.

The *balak* as site for male display

A 14-quatrain, 56-line poem by Vicente Ranudo (1936) entitled *Hikalimtan?* talks about a disdainful beauty who shuns a lover' s offering. The rejection casts him in the throes of delicious suffering. He speaks extravagantly of the woman he ostensibly adores, but his praises of her refracts self-consciously on his own performance as a virtuoso dealer of words. The poet is enamored of his own cleverness. He is engrossed with his own wit and adroitness. He skims over the surface of the emotional field, staying clear of the depths.

The last two stanzas prove the tension between sincerity and irony. Beneath the glib posturings of grief, we sense the clever and deceptive rake whose suffering is merely at the tip of his tongue.

Dili mahimo nga ikaw hikalimtan
Akong Bathala sinimba sa tago,
Kay kun wa ka sa sulod ning dughan,
Unsa pay ako, Inday, unsa pay ako?

Silaw sa bulan, tipik sa bituon
Nga nagpabilin ning yutang malaay,
Kun daw buot ka nga dili simbahon,
Iuli sa langit ang imong panagway.[19]

(Alburo *et. al.*, 1988, vol. 1:186-189)

Bugal-bugal

The girl who proves resistant to the *amoral* may become subject to *bugal-bugal*,[20] a kind of speech dripping with irony and sarcasm, intended to deliver insult for insult. The *bugal-bugal*, however, could be disguised in pretty words which makes it difficult to counteract. Note Leonardo C. Dioko's *Inday* (1959). Here the male persona addresses the girl:

> *Buot ko ikawng hubaron sa mga pulong*
> Buol kong and imong mga hiyas hugpongon
> *Tunawon sa tubig ug imnon.*[21]
>
> (Alburo *et al.*, 1988, vol. 2 : 84-85)

The lover seeks mastery of the object of his affection. He reduces her into a substance that water would melt. Then he could drink her up and thus transform her completely into himself. He admonishes her to guard her heart carefully and not to entrust her affections to just anyone,

> *Kay daghan*
> *Ang mga kawatan sa pagbati,*
> *Daghan ang hakog sa kalipay*
> *Ug buta sa kaanyag.*[22]

He then proceeds to declare his intentions, which the girl impliedly rejects. He hits back by asking her forthrightly:

> Ako na Inday ang imong kaanyag
> Kay akong tunawon sa usa ka tasang kalipay.
> Saglan sa gugma ug paghalad
> Ug isula ko sa tinapay,[23]

He asks the girl for her beauty which he would then melt in a cup of joy, to which he would add love and adoration to accompany a diet of bread.

It is hard to fathom what the persona really wants to say. However, one cannot miss the air of condescension in the speaker's attitude towards the woman that he addresses. He projects an awareness of his dominance in the social construct. The woman he addresses is defenseless against his verbal display. His rhetorical adroitness drips with sarcasm, proof of his superior wit. Who is the woman who can stand up to his whimsical display? He builds her up one moment, then demolishes her with triviality. Dioko's *amoral* descends into *bugal-bugal*, so expertly couched that no retort seems possible. Dioko may actually just be taking a swipe at the bombast in the traditional *balak*. But if he is, it seems rather unfair that he would hone his wit at the expense of the speechless Inday.

Slick surfaces and shallowness

We might observe that in general, the dominant male voice in the *balak* makes women mere creatures of masculine caprice. Male personae adopt the worshipful stance and install women as objects of seeming idolatry. This ploy sets the psychic space from which men could maneuver for emotional control. Then they did not have to deal with the reality of woman, her true nature, and her right to a quality of personhood all her own. In the same way, the male personae did not have to consider the complexities of love and desire, the pain of loss, infidelity, rejection in a more personal way.

The poetry of worship is simply an exhibitionist performance, glib, shallow, facile, and cold. In his foreword in Volume 2 of *Sugbuanong Balak*, Resil Mojares takes Carlos P. Garcia to task for being what he calls a poet of the mundane. "Garcia took his listeners on a tour of the familiar, and even then archaic ground, instead of bringing them to a new level of speaking about themselves and their society" (Mojares in Alburo *et. al.,* 1988, vol. 2:4). The mellifluity of Garcia's poetry

is insufficient to make up for its empty triteness, as for example in the following lines:

Ug kung si Adlaw sa kasadpan molundag
Ug si Bulan magdumili sa pagsanag,
Kita ko gihapon ang nindot mong larawan,
Sa bughawng langit sa akong dalindaman.[24]

The poem goes on for many more lines and ends thus:

Ug kung kanako isalig mo ang palad mog kinabuhi,
Dad-on ko ikaw sa akong payag
Ug didto sa salag sa akong gugma
Ikaw bugtong mutya ko ug hari,
lmong kasalo pag-inom sa alak sa kalipay,
Ug imong kaunong paglad-ok sa apdo sa kasakit,
Kauban mo pagpanaw sa kahayag ug kangitngit,
Hangtod atong makab-ot ang sidsid sa langit.[25]

(Alburo *et.al.*, 1988, vol. 2:74)

In Garcia's poetry, the very slickness and extravagance of the language calls attention to itself. There is no need to go beyond the surface of the words. If one does, however, one would find the words eroding their own meanings in the very act of utterance because they are not anchored to some objective or concrete human situation. In the hands of the men, Cebuano verse or the *balak* seems not to have grown in perceptiveness, insight, and breadth of understanding of the human condition. It remains afflicted by a kind of self-absorption over the very idea of maleness and the habits of thought and feeling they engender.

Male fantasy of female desire

In 1985, Don Pagusara wrote *Balitaw sa Bag-ong Rosas Pangdan.* Pagusara locates the poem within the sensibility of a female persona. It is doubtful, however, whether

women will recognize themselves in Pagusara's Rosas Pangdan, a prostitute who talks about her sexual adventures with extreme candor. Here the supposed female persona is raving about her white male partner's sex:

> *Ug ang iyang kuan?*
> *Pagkalalim sud-ongon!*
> *May senyal nga dolyar*
> *Sa balhiboong punoan!*
> *Labi na gyug iya ka nang dalitan*
> *Nianang ... Wow, puthawng hinagiban!*
> *Makalimot ka gyug kagahapon, karon ug kaugmaon!*
> *Makasinggit kag Bahala nag unsay dangatan!*
> *Bahala nag mangabitas akong kuan!*[26]
>
> (Alburo *et. al.*, 1988, vol. 2:156)

The poem is less about a woman's true feelings as it is about a man gloating in the power of his maleness and his imagined sense of conquest with the weapon of his sex. Is this how men fantasize about how women should react to a desired male? But not all, surely, only women of a certain kind! The prostitute persona in Pagusara's poem may well represent the male fantasy of a sexual partner with whom one may have fun but to whom one owes no responsibility. The prostitute is a facile means to construct a subject for the poem's purpose, a feminized instrument to glorify the male's self-concept. Its insight is not about women hungering for men, but men wanting to be desired a certain way by women.

The focus of the exchange is physical and rooted in the trite concept of the superior male with his all-conquering penis. Even granting that the speaking female is a prostitute, the language is still all male. It reflects the male gloating over his own sexuality, the penis, *"puthawng hinagiban,"*[27] and other resources of male power, wealth. The white male's penis carries the dollar sign: *"May senyal nga dolyar / Sa*

balhiboong punoan."[28] For this the woman will do anything, even brave the danger of disease. The commerce in conventional gender relations demeans not only the woman but also the man. The allusion to race, though lightly handled, lends a touch of bitterness to the tone and strengthens the idea of a male disguised as a female speaking in the poem. In sum the poem is a high-handed tirade against whoredom from a disguised male point of view. The attack is done without compassion and understanding of the conditions that precipitate women to this terrible choice.

Poetics of the *tagay*

The *tagay* is a humble and democratic vehicle for all kinds of transactions which social interaction may smoothen. It is accessible to all levels, both the high rollers in big finance and politics, and the ordinary folk. Whatever the occasion might be or the setting, the fundamental dynamics would remain imaginably similar. The participants would predominantly be men, and the rules of interaction governed by the peculiar ethos of male engagement.

The theme of the *balak* is not limited to love. As in any body of poetry, the *balak* may strive for serious and profound notes on morality, patriotism, life and death, God and nature. It is important to note the broader themes of the *balak*, for even here, where man-woman relationship is not at issue, one may still note the male propensity for assertiveness and aggression. The first volume of *Sugbuanong Balak* carries Vicente Padriga's *Palabilabi* (1940).[29] The poem deals with the error of arrogance or pride, which, the poet claims, is God's most hated sin. He shows how arrogance is punished and humility rewarded through the allegory of a *lawaan*[30] tree and a *manan-aw*[31] fern. The tall and proud *lawaan* tree is felled by a storm and people cut it into lumber. The lumber was made into a lowly floor that people step on everyday. On the other hand, the lowly *manan-aw* fern growing on its trunk was

carefully removed and made to adorn the window of a caring maiden. The poet forces this lesson upon his audience:

Ang katahum sa langit nga way tupong,
Ang tanaman nga wala sa atong yuta;
Tanaman nga nagtagik ug mga sugilanon,
King tanan didto gayud akong makita.[34]

(Alburo *et. al.*, 1988, vol. 1:184)

This sentiment is a verity of the popular imagination, stock of ordinary everyday thought. The idea could imaginably arise in any serious or light conversation, be it among peers or other forms of group combinations. The allegorical presentation and the rhyme and verse patterns create the poetic effects. It is certainly good stuff for display of verbal adroitness and high moral sense in a *tagay* session.

In Ignacio Fernandez's *Hunahuna* (1933), height is alluded to as a symbol of human pride. The poet's concern is hubris of the imagination. Pride compels the poet to build a fort *"Sa tumoytumoy sa hataas nga panganud"*[33] from where he could see both heaven and earth, all the things of creation and even those devised by the imagination:

Busa dili, dili gyud maayo
Nga ang palabilabi pagahimoon,
Kay si Bathala dili makaako
Nga ang timawa daugdaugon.[32]

(Alburo *et. al.*, vol. 2:150)

But the pleasure of dreaming contends with life's realities. In the end the poet submits to actuality and admits that the ladder he uses to get up to his cloudy heights *"Binuhat sa bakakon kong hunahuna.*[35]

Emiliano Batiancila's *"Pagkaligong Way Tubig"* (1932)[36] turns upon an analogy. The act of bathing is used as a

metaphor for consequences of certain human acts. The achiever or the successful man bathes in the praises of his peers; the person who attends to his friends in the expected manner bathes in their smiles of approval; living in harmony with others allows one to bathe in the dew of laughter. But this pleasant order hangs on a fragile balance. You could tell your friend that you are on the brink of suicide and you will surely bathe in the shards of gossip. Treachery in friendship will choke with weeds the way of your relationship, problems will come your way and you will then bathe in the chill of the night. The concluding stanza goes thus:

> *Duna ka nay madungog nga unsa dinha,*
> *Mga paglibak til-as sa hunahuna;*
> *Maugkat na ang mga ginamos unya*
> *Nga gikaligo dugay na sa suka.*[37]

(Alburo *et. al.,* 1988, vol. 1:186)

None of the figures used in any of the poems above may be said to be original. They are drawn mainly from popular resources, used and reused in poem after poem and by writer after writer. The words may vary but the concept remains the same.

Rote seems to play a large part in traditional Cebuano verse, whether oral or written. Poets have resorted to stock methods, themes, figures, and even phrases common in the social milieu. In 1965, Ricardo Baladjay was still using the same technique in *Ang Liso,*[38] proof of the durability of these materials in the Sugbuanon imagination. It might also signify the observation of Mojares that "Cebuano poetry seemed mired in tradition" (Mojares in Alburo *et. al.*, 1988, vol. 2:3). About this time, however, Cebuano verse has entered another phase of its evolution in the works of college-bred writers who no longer depend on folk resources for their creativity.

We are closer now to the poets who have acted as gurus to Myke Obenieta's generation, Ernesto Lariosa, Junne Cañizares, Pantaleon Auman, Rogelio Pono, Temistokles Adlawan, Robert Lim, Leo Bob Flores, and Ricardo Patalinghug, to name a few. The themes, methods, and subjects of the *balak* have become more sophisticated, infected, one might say, by western models. The *tagay* remains alive as the locus for passing on the reason and rhyme of the poetic passion. But the ghosts around the circle of the cup are no longer just the faceless, and often nameless bards of the tribe. There are strange guests haunting the mind and the imagination, speaking in other tongues, in accents so inviting and profound. Some of these guests are women.

Women writing

It may be impossible to prove that the entry of women writers has strongly affected the landscape of contemporary Cebuano verse. But it is important to note how women writing brought in new dimensions of thought and feeling to complement the literature of the canon as we might refer to it in general. More women have entered the literary mainstream over the last fifty years. Predictably, the women have their own things to say at last. The silent or silenced woman has broken through and discovered that she has something to say of her own—thoughts, feelings, and experiences that had been ignored or set aside as unimportant because they dealt only with the private and intimate world of domesticity and childbearing. After centuries of modeling after the men, the women might be coming into a usage of language distinctively their own. Thus, women writing has broadened the contemporary literary terrain in both style and content.

Today women no longer have to sit at the edge of the *tagay*. They have learned to form circles of their own, not necessarily around whisky or tuba, but around work which women do by virtue of their sexuality or gender. The women

have arrived, full-throated and with a new confidence in their own ability to harness the power of words.

Women writing in Cebu

The number of women poets writing in Cebuano has been steadily growing. But my own introduction to Cebuano women poets came in the works of Ester Tapia and Erlinda Alburo. A few notes first on these two poets.

Ester Tapia started writing, small poems of exquisite lyricism in both English and Cebuano. She was married then to the poet Vicente Bandillo. For many years she played the role of the self-effacing wife. Hence some of her earlier works were published in her byline of Ester Bandillo. When her marriage to Bandillo was annulled she reverted to her maiden name which she has been using ever since.

Erlinda Alburo holds a Ph.D. in English from Silliman University, one of the country's first institutions of higher learning to set up a Creative Writing Program. Since finishing her degree in the late 80s, she had gone on to work extensively on Cebuano Studies at the University of San Carlos, concentrating on Cebuano Literature and cultural history. She also began writing poetry in Sugbuanon.[39] Alburo writes in the folksy style, using traditional rhyme and measure. But the humor and irony in her treatment of her themes give her works a contemporary flavor.

In earlier times women writing have limited stylistic options. Male prerogatives have dominated the literary canon for as long as anyone can remember. If this is so in a general sense, it is even more so in the love poem, whether in Cebuano or in English. There is no tradition of women writing love poems in Cebuano. While the men have ranted, raved, and pulled through decades of the *tagay*, *balak*, *amoral,* and *bugal-bugal*, women have kept their thoughts mostly to themselves. They wrote letters or kept diaries and journals but hid these

works from the public eye. Filipino women writing in English have the entire Western tradition from which to validate their works. Women writing in the native language hardly had anything within the culture to provide a back up of tradition.

The early Ester Tapia did not write love poems. She wrote short lyrical pieces which have a dreamlike or surreal quality. Though her works may not have anything directly to do with man-woman relationship, they do provide a key to a woman's innerscape. In *Nanalingsing ang ulan*,[40] she writes:

nanalingsing ang ulan
ibabaw sa atop ug nanggamot
ania kita sa kadahonan sa ilawom
sa lasang so katulogon
ang atong buhok nagtubo
ang atong mga kuko migimok
sa tabunok nga sabakan sa ulan[41]

(Tapia in Alunan, 1999)

The tone is soft and the rhythm is irregular, the flow and the pauses are indeterminate as in the ebb and flow of consciousness and sleep in the dream state. Yet even in this semi-conscious state one catches hints of a lively sensuality:

sa kasikas sa sandayong
ug mugbong mga balisbisan
may mga langgam mikapakapa
ang iyang balhibo
nangatagak sa atong mga palad.[42]

The poem reveals an inscape of sounds. So delicate and intense is the sensibility of the female persona that sound becomes tactile, the unseen birds fluttering in the eaves are apprehended as intensely as feathers falling on the open palms. In *Ang Banga*, Tapia evokes the sense of water, wetness, the sound made by water inside a jar, water weighing on every

strand of hair, water in the very fibers of the fabric coiled to support the jar on her head:

Gisapwang ko sa akong duha ka palad
Ang hagawhaw sa napukawng tubig
Ang hinaganas sa ilang kahimungawong[43]

(Tapia in Alunan, 1999)

The overwhelming clarity of this sensation is the poem's epiphany. The world is brimful with water, the jar on her head, her hair, her clothes, the road floods with water at her every step. Tapia's persona evokes a fully aroused female sensibility responding to both an inner and outer state of being. She does not make any hard-fisted attempt to confine the poem's meaning to a sharply etched idea, but leaves the images to dissolve and fuse into the sensations they evoke so powerfully.

If Tapia is preoccupied with the inner landscape of the psyche, Alburo is more concerned with the social scene. Her poem *Padulong sa Baybayon*[44] is uttered by a wife who has seen better times:

Kagabii dihasa nayunyon tang higdaanan
sinalipdan sa naya'yang tabil sa tamboanan
mihagawhaw kag sugyol sa sinayon
nga mangikyas kita sa baybayon
diin ang dila sa hangin maparatparat
dayon sa dagat kita manglayat

manginhas kasag ug tamala nga makilaw
didto sa landong sa lubi diin way kisaw
magtiniil kita, sumala ba, sa kainit sa balas,
bisan kon ta-awon mora' nya ta'g ihalas.[45]

(Alburo in Alunan, 1999)

Lovers must eventually contend with social and economic realities. Love must be won against circumstances inimical to it, such as poverty and illness and environmental degradation. The wife's honesty cannot be bent, it sees clearly into the straitened conditions of her life. But her memory is alive with remembered pleasures such as the salt taste of the wind, walking barefoot on hot sand, even a sexual romp behind a big rock once upon a time. Without rancor and bitterness, she accepts what she has to bear and remains loving despite her circumstances.

> *Dinhi na lang la sa barong-barong mangiyawat*
> *Manursi sa gugmang buhi pa bisag nagkabayat*[46]

Uttered without fanfare, the statement hews close to women's realities and provides a glimpse of the complexity of their attitude towards their relationships. Severely unromantic, the poem dramatizes without straining the barriers of credibility the strength and loyalty of a woman's love.

We have not encountered love poems by women in Cebuano parallel to those written by men, say the kind written by Carlos P. Garcia in his heyday. Not until the 90s anyway, and certainly not in Garcia's style. In the past women wrote, if at all, about home, children, friendship, church, and country. They kept their lust and their anger out of print. Generations of men celebrated in verse the beauty of women, or mourned their lost loves. They ranted about cold-hearted women, their shallowness, vanity, and pride. The world took for granted the silence of women as the normal order of things, in the same way that it took for granted their absence from the drinking circle.

Both Tapia and Alburo might have sat at the fringe of many a *tagay* in which their men were participants. But in dealing with their own materials they had an entirely different frame of reference to work from. One of this is the taboo against

expressions of female sexuality. Good women do not talk about such things, whatever they might feel. Restraint is a good thing after all and demonstrates its virtue in the subtleties of Ester Tapia and the down-home tone of Erlinda Alburo. The poetics influencing these women derive more from the particularities of their own experiences than from the clamorous tradition of the *tagay*. They are either privately apprehended, or are shared from the larger tradition of women writing in general.

Alburo's *Akong sonanoy* is a 14-line adaptation of the sonnet, although it fails to approximate all other requirements of the form such as the linear syllabic count and the rhyming pattern. Still, the attempt at form yields admirable economies in the text, seldom encountered in the self-indulgent excesses of the *tagay* tradition. Note the following passage:

May adlawng modagsa ka ra gayud
Tinawag sa nagtingal nakong pangandoy
Magdalag sulo nga mao gayuy mohaling
Ug mopa-agiw unya niining nagsampong
Sa buot nang mobangon kong kasingkasing.[47]

(Alburo, Almerino and Tapia, 1999)

The poem is about unrequited love. A bit of hyperbole in the tone and imagery gives the poem a gentle irony that distinguishes it from the usual run of poems about loss.

Sinug-ang

Younger women poets are less restricted than either Tapia or Alburo. Sometime in the mid-90s Catherine Viado writes,

Natanggong taliwala
Sa dalan
Gigakos ko ikaw
Sulod sa akong hunahuna[48]

(Viado in Alunan, 1999,)

Such frankness had never been exercised before. It is only a matter of time before Corazon Almerino enters the scene. In 1999, Alburo, Tapia, and Almenino came out with a collection of poems in a volume entitled *Sinug-ang*, a book concept derived from the *sug-angan*, the traditional three-legged native stove or the tripod. The three poets are the three legs of the tripod or three stones of a hearth. They each produced poetry for 21 large themes. Almerino's *Tubag sa Manananggal (Human Hukmi sa Ginoo)*[49] truly expresses the liberation of women from the imaginative shackles of the earlier conditions in which women thrived.

Tam-is ra ba
Kaayo ang akong pagkahinanok,
Kay layo ang kab-ot sa akong
Mga pako. Walay manghulga nako
Og asin o abo. Walay holy water
Nga molimpyo sa akong lawas.

Lami kaayo ang mga tawo,
Ug tanan kabahin nila.
Lami kaayo. Kana bang kagumkom.
Aslom-aslom. Parat-parat. Tam-is...

Mananggal bitaw ko, Lord.
Akong mga pako makakab-ot
Og mga bitoon. Akong dila
Motila sa kinahiladmang dapit.[50]

(Alburo, Almerino, and Tapia, 1999)

In this poem Almerino tackles the issue of female sexuality and sensuality and claims fearlessly as her human right.

In effect she rejects the taboo on women's expression on matters of love and sex. This taboo might also be responsible for the silence of women in the game of love poetry. But the *Manananggal* poem also doublespeaks. This is not just about female sensuality, but about the fight of women to liberate themselves from the basic domesticity in which they had been trapped for generations, and to participate in the creative process. Almerino claims for women the freedom to use language to express their desire. The woman, too, may celebrate humanity in verse, and especially her own.

A tentative proposition

The entry of women into poetry in Cebuano balances the codes of poetic expression. Listen to Almerino toughing it up as she grieves for a lover's departure:

Oy, oy, ayaw'g patuy-asik
Anang imong mga saad,
Nga mosuwat ka, mobalik ka
Dinhi sunod tuig, ug uban pang
Padugang sa pusta.
Maayong masayud ka
Nga kanang tanan nalista
Na sa akong pahak.
Sa akong bahin
Dali ra kang kalimtan.
Ihubog-hubog ra na nako,
Ug sagunsong yupyup
Sa sigarilyo. Erase dayon.

Sayon ra lagi na!

Bitaw, tingalig sayon ra.[51]

(Alburo, Almerino and Tapia, 1999)

Myke Obenieta has this very tender love poem, *Sa Atong Panagkuyog, Ug Nganong Dili Ko Usahay Moagbay Nimo*. It is short enough to be read in its entirety.

Ayaw kahibuong nganong sa atong
panagkuyog kutob ra ko's honghong,
nganong ang akong bukton
sa iniong abaga dili motugdon.

Kini kay kasingkasing mo hugot kong
gikuptan sa tuo kong kamot
samtang ang pikas gasukod,
gadangaw sa gilapdon sa panganod.

Kon bug-at og kamot ang mangangayam,
kining gugma ko gaan samas' langgam.[52]

This is no longer the overpowering voice of the male remorselessly possessing and constructing its subject. The persona exhibits both humility and sensitivity, and a genuine and carefully restrained tenderness, a new note in Cebuano verse. Does this imply that Myke has been listening to other voices, his mother's perhaps, and other women poets who have led him to other terrains of sensibility than those he would find at the *tagay*?

A poem by Adonis Durado entitled *Balak Alang kang Yana* deals with his anticipation of the birth of his firstborn. We discover a rare note of tenderness in this poem, more remarkable for the reason that it comes from a father. Durado's persona contemplates the renewal that comes with the birth of a child. Even old routines take on a new meaning; random events prove meaningful in hindsight; we gain a second chance; we loam new ways to utter love. We experience rebirth, the dead returning to reclaim everything in life that they had left behind.

Sa imong pagbutho, dungan ba sab kahang
makaplagan sa himungaan
Ang gapiyak-piyak, nagkatibulaag niyang
mga piso—sa wala pa ang takna
Nga gidahik sa mananagat ang baruto niyang
gituya sa bag-ong taob?
Human, sayod ka, nga sa di mo pa malitok
ang unang uha, uban sa paglunga
Sa unang hinog nga kaymito nga namituon
sa ngiob niini nga punuan,
Gaapong kanunay ang akong mga palad
alang sa imong pagkapungga.[53]

'Upon your arrival, will the hen find / her crying scattered chicks before the time / the boatman drags in his boat rocked by the new tide? / Well then, you must know that before you could utter your first cry, along with / the first ripe *caimito* sparkling in the shadowy tree, / I wait eagerly, open-palmed, for your falling.' (Trans. Alunan)

We sense in Durado's poem a new depth of feeling and sincerity. One may argue that the work comes at another time and shares from other influences aside from tradition. On the other hand, we may consider the possibility of women writing as an influence in the new voices that we are hearing these days from our poets, men and women both.

May we attribute these positive developments in literature to women writing? This paper does not really try to prove it. It does, however, suggest its possibility. We should be reading more of these changes as women move confidently into the mainstream of literary arts, form circles of their own around drink, or food, or fire and shelter, playing their own rituals of pleasure and joy and pain, to which they may or may not invite the men. Should it be a man's fate to sit within or out in the fringes of these circles, may he too learn the wisdom and

humility that had stayed women through generations of silence, from which, patiently and purposefully, they devised the courage and the means to free the words in their own mind and heart.

Tagay niining malipayong hitaboa! Og padayunon ang pagmugna sa balak sa tinuboang dila! Drink to this happy event. And go on writing/crafting the *balak* in the native tongue.

Notes

[1] I'll say no to you in a poem.

[2] *Bisayang daku* or true-blue Bisaya

[3] Coconut palm wine

[4] The drinking buddy tasked to keep the glasses filled

[5] Acronym for *Bathalan-ong halad sa dagang* (trans. 'Divine offering from the quill'), largest aggrupation of Cebuano writers coming from as far north as Manila and all the way to the far south in Mindanao

[6] 'Moon, you are beautiful, just like the maiden I love'

[7] Title of a song, trans. 'Living dead'

[8] Poet, maker of verse

[9] Gardeopatra Quijano, "Kon," *Sugbuanong Balak*, Vol 1, p. 208-209

[10] Hilda Montaire, Fe Remotigue, and Ester Tapia Bandillo

[11] Cf. 17, below

[12] A musical joust, very often, on the theme of love.

[13] Elegant speech or expression. It could also refer to a person who knows how to use elegant language.

[14] *Amoral* —a barrage of florid speech commonly found in the popular *balak* or in love letters

[15] A form of Cebuano folk poetry

[16] 'I'd rather ride the waves, / not the peaceful sea / The storm could not drown me / But loneliness surely will. // The violence of the south wind / I gladly brave with my boat / And if I am covered by seaweed / I will bear it, *Inday*, for your sake'

[17] *Duplo* is a poetic joust on the theme of love. The jousters take traditional roles, the man plays the role of the aggressive lover

arguing for his love, the woman raises arguments to counteract the man's advances which the man attempts to overcome with more arguments of his own. Basically spontaneous, the *duplo* relies for effects on familiar phraseology shared by the jousters within the culture.

[18] 'If you truly love me / Plumb the deepest of a pool / Not coming up until / You can bring up with you the root of the sun // Uncle, if you want to marry me / There's our house, fix it / Don't use rattan as binder / Use instead the power of your saliva // Uncle, if you wish to marry / There's our house / It is roofed with cogon / Roof it now with dove feathers // Uncle, if you wish to marry me / There is our house / It's floor is made of bamboo / Change it with pure gold.' (Trans. Alunan)

[19] 'Impossible for me to forget you / Goddess whom I worshipped in secret / For if you are not inside my heart / I'll have nothing at all. *Inday*, I'll have nothing at all / / ray of moonlight, shard of a star. Left to stay in this dreary world / If you wish not to be admired / Then to heavens your beauty return.' (Trans. Alunan)

[20] *Bugal-bugal*—ironic and sarcastic speech intended to insult or demean its subject or the addressee

[21] 'I wish to unravel you with words / I wish to put your charms together / To melt it in water and then to drink.' (Trans. Simeon Dumdum)

[22] 'Because / There are many thieves of affection / There are those hungry for joy / And blind to beauty.' (Trans. Alunan)

[23] 'May I have, *Inday*, your beauty / I will melt in a cup of joy. / Add to it lots of love and devotion / And then I'll drink it with bread.' (Trans. Mojares)

[24] 'Perchance the sun might leap down to its doom / and the moon might refuse to shine, / I still would see your lovely image, / in the blue heavens of my daydreaming.' (Trans. Alunan)

[25] 'If you will give your hand and life to me / I will carry you to my hut / and there in the nest of our love / you, my lone muse and king, / will drink love's wine of joy with me, / together we will

drink the bitter bile of pain, / companions always in light and in darkness, / until we come to the very edge of heaven.' (Trans. Alunan)

[26] 'And his thing? / What a sight! / It bears the dollar sign / By the hairy root! / Especially when he offers you / That . . . Wow, weapon of steel? / You'll forget all about yesterday, today and tomorrow! / You could cry out, I don't care what may happen! / I don't care if it tears my uhrmm!'(Trans. Alunan)

[27] Literally, 'iron sword,' referring to the penis in erection

[28] 'Carries the dollar sign/ At the hairy base'

[29] 'Arrogance, pride'

[30] Philippine mahogany

[31] A tree fern with broad sword-like simple leaves endemic to the tropical forest and much appreciated in the Philippines as an ornamental plant.

[32] 'Therefore it is never never right/ To act in arrogance and pride / Because the Lord would never allow / The poor to be downtrodden.' (Trans. Alunan)

[33] 'At the highest point of a cloud'

[34] 'Beauty of heaven beyond compare, / A garden not found on earth / Garden that weaves stories, / All these will greet my sight.' (Trans. Bandillo)

[35] 'Made by my deceitful mind'

[36] 'Bathing without water'—figuratively it means being caught or immersed in an overpowering situation.

[37] 'You will then hear all kinds of talk, / Backbiting, which are worms to the mind; / *Ginamos* taken out at last / That had long been bathed in vinegar.' (Trans. Alunan) Ripened *ginamos* or salted fish gives off a rotten smell; hence it is an apt and popular metaphor for unsavory secrets exposed. One way to eat *ginamos* is to season it with vinegar—an irresistible combination to the connoisseur. The last line implies that gossip is like feasting on other people's rotten secrets.

[38] 'The seed'

[39] Sugbuanon and Cebuano are terms used alternatively in this presentation. They may refer to both the language and the widespread ethnolinguistic culture it covers. Cebuano or

Sugbuanon is spoken not only in Cebu but also, with some dialectal variations, in most places in Mindanao, all of Bohol, parts of Negros Island, Leyte, and the Biliran Islands.

[40] 'The rain sprouts'

[41] 'The rain sprouts / on the rooftops / here we are among the leaves under the forest of sleep / our hair lengthens / our fingernails quiver / in the rich womb of the rain.' (Trans. Alunan)

[42] 'In the rustle of rainspouts / in the low eaves of houses, / there are birds beating their wings / their feathers / flutter into our open palms' (Trans. Alunan)

[43] 'On my two palms I hold / The whisper of roused water /The rush of their awakening' (Trans. Alunan)

[44] 'Going to the beach'

[45] 'Last night there on our sagging bed / shielded only by the window's ragged drapes / you whispered, sort of, a wild invitation, / Let's go to the beach / where the tongue of the wind tastes of salt / then into the sea let us jump, / gather sandcrabs and *tamala*, eat them raw / under the shadow of a coco tree where everything's still, / we shall walk barefoot, shan't we, in the heated sand.' (Trans. Alunan)

[46] 'Let's just make the best of things here in our hut / Mend our love, still alive although in tatters.' (Trans. Alunan)

[47] 'The day will come when you will be washed in / Summoned by my dying dreams, /Carrying a torch that will ignite / And burn to ashes these barriers / To my heart as it strives for resurrection.' (Trans. Alunan)

[48] 'Stranded in the midst /of the Avenue / I embrace you / in my mind.' (Trans. Alunan)

[49] Trans. 'The *manananggal* answers God (after the Judgment)'— The *manananggal* is a mythic creature. It has a regular human form but when it wishes to fly, it detaches the lower half of its body from the waist down (root *tanggal*, 'to remove') and hides it. Just before daylight, it goes back to its lower half and reattaches itself to it. To prevent a *manananggal* from returning to its lower half, one may sprinkle it with salt or ashes, or holy water.

[50] Trans. 'So very sweet / my deep slumber / and very far is the reach / of my wings. / No one to threaten me there / with salt or ashes. No holy water / to cleanse my body. // The human is so

delicious / every part of it / is tasty. So crunchy / sourish, salt, sweetish. // True, I am a *manananggal*, Lord, / My wings can reach / for the stars. My tongue / can lick the deepest parts.' (Trans. Alunan)

51 'No, do not patronize me / With promises / To write, to return / Next year, don't call my bets / And raise the ante. You should know / All this is written / In my jaded brain. / For my part, / You're so easy to forget— // Drown myself in drink, / take endless drags /of this cigarette. Erased instantly. // It would be easy! // True, I hope it'd be easy.' (Trans. Alunan)

52 'As we go together, why don't I put my arm around your shoulder / Don't wonder why, as we go / together, all I could do is whisper, / why upon your shoulder my arm / never falls / / This is because your heart I hold // tightly in my right hand / while my left is measuring, / spanning the breadth of clouds. // If the hunter's hands are heavy, / my love for you is as light as a bird.'

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REVISITING THE *ULAHINGAN* EPIC OF THE LIVUNGANEN-ARUMANEN MANOBOS

Earl Jude Paul L. Cleope

ABSTRACT

This paper revisits the trailblazing research on the **Ulahingan** epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos spearheaded by the late Dr. Elena G. Maquiso in 1963. In particular, the paper focuses on one of the numerous unpublished manuscripts of the **Ulahingan** epic, the *kepu'unpu'un*. Scheduled for publication as Series 6, this transcribed version of the original translation of the epic recounts the migration of Agyu and his clan and their ordeals. In attempting to provide an update on the succeeding initiatives to continue the **Ulahingan** Research Project after the demise of Dr. Maquiso, this paper aims to draw the attention of folklore scholars and students to this unique Filipino cultural heritage.

Introduction

One of the pleasures of studying history in a multi and interdisciplinary manner is the endless discovery and rediscovery of materials for research and investigation. This paper revisits the research spearheaded by the late Dr. Elena G. Maquiso four decades ago on the **Ulahingan,** the epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos. This research project originally intended to publish ten volumes in a series. The first came out in 1977 and the fifth volume in 1994. The sixth volume was scheduled for release in 1995 but the untimely demise of the principal researcher/ transcriber and other circumstances ended the research work. At the time of Dr. Maquiso's death, the project had already recorded 3,380 hours of chanting, equivalent to 18 months and 6 uninterrupted hours a night of chanting. The more than twenty years of recording, transcribing, transliterating, and editing had produced voluminous materials for further study. To date, the

collection remains a mine of information practically waiting to become many more graduate theses or research reports.

This paper will try to examine Series 6 that was originally scheduled to come out in 1995. It deals with another version of the *kepu'unpu'un* by Jose Silay, and has already been edited and reviewed by Dr. Edith Tiempo, National Artist for Literature. In discussing this prospective volume, the paper will focus on Silay's *kepu'unpu'un* version entitled "Slavery to Freedom". To set the discussion in context, the paper opens with a brief background of the epic and its transmission and then proceeds to provide notes on the earlier volumes. Finally, the paper concludes by underscoring the urgent need for further studies on this immensely important piece of cultural heritage.

The Ulahingan Epic

The **Ulahingan** is the Manobo epic that deals with the story of creation, the life and exploits of Agyu and his people before reaching Nelendengan, and their subsequent life in a paradise on earth. In this epic, Agyu, also known by his heavenly names as Begyasan and Mendayawi, is one of the two sons of the first family chosen by the Supreme Diwata (God) to do his bidding on earth. The other son is known by his earthly name as Yugung and by his heavenly name as Pemulew. The epic also deals with the story of Beyvayan, the son of Agyu/Begyasan/Mandayawi.

According to the story, Beyvayan and his followers did not go with Agyu to heaven to receive the blessings of immortality and promise of paradise from the Supreme Diwata as a reward for being faithful. Wandering around the world, he and his followers were overtaken by hunger during a drought. The story goes that in the midst of this crisis, Beyvayan, chanting in a poetic style, prayed for food under a Kereis tree. No sooner had he finished chanting and food indeed fell from the tree. In the Manobo belief system, Beyvayan's style of praying by chanting in a poetic manner came to be known as *ulahing* and the particular prayer for food rendered in the form of a chant became the first *ulahingan*. It is said that after this miraculous incident, Beyvayan and his followers

ulahing every time they prayed for food. Today, Manobos believe that only those on earth who have been inspired by Beyvayan can chant the *ulahingan*. Thus was born the "**Ulahingan**".[1]

Literally, the word *ulahingan* is a contemporary indigenous Manobo version of the ancient Manobo words *uyegingan, lungbaton,* and *umanen,* which all mean "the chanting of the epic in the language of the gods". Nowadays, it refers to the widely known epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen residing in the Libungan river valley in North Cotabato.[2] The person who chants the epic is called the *tala'ulahingan*. In the strict Manobo tradition, chanting is only performed in the evenings because it is believed that daytime destroys the spell and charm of the epic.

The epic has two parts, the *kepu'unpu'un* or the beginning and the standard history of Agyu and his relatives, of which there are different versions; and the *sengedurug,* an episode or episodes that continue the story of Agyu and his relatives. The *kepu'unpu'un* tells the story of the chosen people's life on earth and this includes the story of the creation, the establishment and growth of the community, the people's submission to slavery and eventual freedom through the help of the gods, their wanderings and trials, and finally their claim of immortal life in a promised paradise here on "earth which is not of this earth" as a reward for their steadfast faithfulness. In this sense, the *kepu'unpu'un* deals with the past of Agyu and his people.

On the other hand, the *sengedurug* continues the story of the chosen people and their present life in paradise. In this narrative, Agyu and his relatives move from the plane of mundane existence to a utopian realm. So long as the belief that the chosen people lead immortal lives in paradise persists, and so long as there are versatile and imaginative *tala'ulahingan* to keep this belief alive, new episodes about their ancestors' celestial lives will be composed. As a consequence, there can be as many versions as there are traditional chanters, depending on their creativity and on the entertainment needs of the audience. The persistence of this belief makes this epic an infinite story for as long as there are chanters to *ulahing*. The **Ulahingan** is probably the Philippines', if not one of the world's, longest epics.[3]

At important feasts and occasions, people gather and listen to the chanting of their sacred story. Traditionally, the chanting of the epic follows a sequence starting with the *andal,* a sort of introduction in which a community member, acting like an emcee, gives the reasons for the gathering. Part of the task of this emcee is to moderate the chanting, at times to provide an intermission number to keep the entertainment level for the audience, or to relieve a tired *tala 'ulahingan*. The next part is the *pamahra* or prayer, which is basically an invocation to the Supreme *Diwata* for guidance during the chanting. Here, in addition to invoking the blessing of the deity to make him a worthy medium, the chanter also propitiates the *diwatas* around to insure that no disturbance takes place during the chanting. It is also here that he asks for apology from the audience for errors that he may commit during the chanting. The *undayag* is primarily an idiom or phrase used by the chanter to keep the listeners attention. Also used as a form of transistional expression when the chanter forgets or does not know what to chant next, the *undayag* may appear anytime during the chanting. The most common phrase is *edey edey Andaman,* which literally means, "oh, oh the chant goes on."

The Ulahingan Series

The **Ulahingan** first came to the attention of the late Dr. Elena Maquiso in 1961 when she was gathering materials on ethnic music for her dissertation on indigenous hymns that relate to Christian Education. Samaon Bangcas,[4] a Livunganen-Arumanen Manobo seminary student in Silliman University at that time, was the first person to mention this epic to her. Her interest grew as more information shared by two other Manobo students became available.

Although Dr. Maquiso's main interest at that time was the musical aspect of the epic, she later became fascinated with the text. Subsidized by the Divinity School, Samaon Bangcas made the first recording during the Christmas vacation in 1963. By the next school year, Dr. Maquiso took a leave of absence to carry out full time research in North Cotabato with funding facilitated

by Dr. Paul T. Lauby. Financial constraints hindered the research project for a decade until new funding enabled Dr. Maquiso and her team to conduct a follow-up field research in the second semester of school year 1974-75. Since then, funding support from Silliman University, Toyota Foundation, and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) sustained the research efforts until Dr. Maquiso passed away in 1995. Subsequently, despite various efforts to continue the research, funding issues and other circumstances have stalled the systematic study of the epic.[5]

Dr. Maquiso's pioneering efforts resulted in the publication of five volumes, which came to be known as the **Ulahingan Series**. The preparation of a series involves a six-phase process. The first phase begins with the recording of an epic material as chanted or recited.[6] The second phase is the transcription of the taped materials. In the third phase, the transcribed materials are turned over to a transliterator who goes over the text and provides English transliteration. The fourth phase involves the translation of the transliterated material into a syntactically and semantically understandable English version. The fifth phase is forming the English version into seven or eight syllable line count to adhere as closely as possible to the original Manobo text. Finally, the sixth phase is the publication of the material.

It is interesting to note that the five published series are more reflective of the way the research was conducted than the systematic presentation of the epic itself. It has been observed that this outcome, though obviously not intentional, mirrors closely the Manobo belief that "God moves in his own time", the philosophical underpinnings that permeate the epic. Perhaps anecdotal in some sense, this serendipitous turn of events was further strengthened by the "chance" circumstances surrounding the beginning of the research project when the epic was first introduced to Dr. Maquiso. This set things in motion and resulted in the preservation of the epic, then on the brink of extinction. Dr. Maquiso's pioneering efforts later paved the way for the appearance of the epic in the mainstream Philippine folk literary

tradition, as well as in Philippine literature courses of various universities.

When the first series was published in 1977, it contained only an introduction of the epic, as well as an account of the first nine prose versions of the earthly sojourn and pilgrimage of the chosen community. These materials were part of the *kepu'unpu'un* recounting the community's earthly existence, at that time considered to be the beginning of the epic. The initial presentation of the epic suggested that the Manobo tribe drifted down the waters of the Pulangi River and were scattered along the valleys of its tributaries. Four versions of the *kepu'unpu'un*, and one *sengedurug,* entitled "The Visit of Lagaba'an to Nelendangan," are included in this first series. The *sengedurug* alone took 9 years to complete.

Funded by a grant from the Toyota Foundation, Series 2 came out in 1990 and contained two *sengedurug* entitled "The Adventures of Impehimbang and Nebeyew" and "Begyasan's Visit to Insibey". The first is about the story of the toddlers Impehimbang and Nebeyew who fought the invaders. This *sengedurug* carries a moral lesson that problems faced by mankind are results of their own doing, and that invading other nations is a sin against the Almighty. The second is an episode about the old king Layunlayun who disguised himself as an infant and took up arms against his own kingdom because the women made fun of him and the men took him for granted. In the end, after much fighting, peace was restored with the lesson that old men should not be taken for granted because they keep the vault of wisdom.[7]

Series 3 was published in 1992, and like the previous series, also contained two episodes entitled "The Dream of Begyasan" and "The Golden Tree". These two *sengedurug* are the compositions of Pasid Mampayanang and Demetrio Bangcas, the same chanters who furnished the two episodes in Series 2.[8] These two *tala'ulahingan* were considered the last surviving members of the "old guards". The first episode is about the dream of Begyasan warning the people of Yendang about the coming of the invaders. The story describes the arrival of an honored ancestor

who disguised himself as a black villain in order to teach the people the ways of war and peace. The wisdom he imparted to them was that peace is better than war; nevertheless, they must be prepared to protect their land at all cost if enemies threatened to invade it. The second episode is about the story of Begyasan who became gravely ill as a result of the loss of the Golden Tree. To cure him the tree must be retrieved by Pinuklew from another kingdom. After many hardships, Pinuklew was able to retrieve the tree but only after a great battle and only with the intervention of the god Lagaba-an who arrived to tell the people to end the fight because they were only disturbing the peace of the land and that the tree was for everybody to appreciate. The lesson imparted at the end is that coveting what belongs to someone else will only lead to trouble.

Series 4 came out in 1993 although, by virtue of its narrative content, this should have been the first publication of the **Ulahingan** series. This series deals with the creation story or the *kepu'unpu'un* by Gobalia Silay and consists of 17,563 lines. The series is divided into three parts. The first part describes the story of the creation itself. The second part narrates the Supreme Deity's act of summoning all the deities to remind them of their responsibilities in taking care of humankind. The third part dwells on the stories about the building of the community and the spread of the population.

Its late appearance, however, was due to the fact that no creation materials surfaced when the research started 29 years earlier. Presumably, nobody mentioned or gave the impression that the epic should start with the genesis of things,[9] or that the chanting should follow a certain order. A more convincing reason, however, points to the nature of the Arumanens as being generally protective of their tradition and are consequently averse to sharing their sacred story with an outsider. Purportedly, the Arumanens believe that the Supreme Being, "Yegpinted (God), the Spirit, moves or acts in his own time." Hence, as explained by the Manobos themselves, the discovery of the creation materials at a later date was part of the divine design. Following this view, it is

believed that Yegpinted had finally given his permission to allow the researcher into the tribe's literary world and had provided the gateway for it. The appearance of the creation portion of the **Ulahingan** has finally placed the epic in its proper context.

Series 5 came out in 1994. Unfortunately, this was to be the last published series out of the many materials that have been recorded, transcribed, transliterated, and edited in the **Ulahingan** Research Project. Like the previous series, this material is about the *kepu'unpu'un* except that this series features four distinct versions of the creation stories by four chanters who recited their versions neither from a book nor from memory, but from their individual fluid and fertile imagination and artistic skill. As such, even if the theme is the same, each version is as distinct as each singer, reflecting the individual imagination and creative skill of each chanter. It should be noted, however, that since these versions of the epic have been handed down by oral means, it is possible that changes and additions have taken place in the course of time. Nevertheless, the same traditional forms, mythological motifs, and narrative plots used by each *tala'ulahingan* are evident in this published version. The translated version shows that each chanter had taken the liberty to expand his repertory through alterations and improvisations. As a result, certain motifs and events may be comprehensively chanted by one singer and only cursorily mentioned by another who in turn might focus on the description of other details and events.[10]

Slavery to Freedom (Series 6)

As mentioned earlier, although the project was supposed to publish at least ten series, only five series were completed, notwithstanding the fact that a lot of recorded and transliterated materials remain. In 1994 the Manobo Research Project was revived in the College of Arts and Sciences to carry out the original research project of Dr. Maquiso. Headed by Dr. Ceres Pioquinto, this group was charged to prepare for publication as Series 6 another *kepu'unpu'un* by Jose Silay. Funded by the National Council for Culture and the Arts, the publication project included

not only the text of the *kepu'unpu'un,* but a critical preface as well. In preparation for this task, the group, with funding from the government of Luxembourg, spent a ten-day fieldwork in December 1994 among the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobo community, which was in time for the Manobo Samayaan Festival. Results of that fieldwork were meant to constitute the papers for the critical preface of Series 6. Unfortunately, bizarre bureaucratic hurdles prevented the group from exercising full autonomy over the management of this project, which stalled its development. In the end, needless politics not only put an end to the planned Series 6, but also killed the creativity and the enthusiasm that animated the revival of this project during its brief life. Consequently, one of the products of that research, an article entitled "The Samayaan as Public Liminality: Some Ethnographic Notes" by Dr. Ceres Pioquinto, was instead submitted for publication to Silliman Journal (vol. 37:2, Second quarter 1994). This scholarly ethnographic article discusses the Samayaan Feast of the Manobos, which is an important venue for the chanting of the **Ulahingan** epic. Proceeding with a systematic argument from postmodernist, anthropology of performance, and cultural studies perspectives, the article discusses the Samayaan as public liminality.[11]

In revisiting the **Ulahingan** project, this present paper is a modest attempt to introduce the unpublished version to the public for the first time after a slumber of almost a decade.

In translating the 5,560 lines of this version for discussion, I was fortunate to work with Rev. Samaon Bangcas, the person who introduced the epic to Dr. Maquiso in 1961 and who was also the Manobo text editor of this version. This *kepu'unpu'un* was chanted by Jose Silay who came and volunteered to share the version with Rev. Bangcas in 1988, and recorded and transcribed by Jose Humabad in Barongis, Libungan, North Cotabato in the same year. The transliterator was Abraham Saliling and the translator was Rhoda Montes. Rev. Bangcas completed the editing of the Manobo text in May 18, 1991 and Nona Magtolis typed the original draft. According to Rev. Bangcas, this version is authentic and clearer to understand than the previous versions.[12]

What is special about this version is that it narrates the beginning of the Manobos by depicting them as originating from a place called Aruman. According to the story, the Manobos left Aruman for Cagayan, only to return to Aruman shortly after. Part of the text is a puzzling line describing Aruman as a place not found in the map.[13] Another significant aspect of this version is that although it carries the whole *kepu 'unpu 'un* version, it does not include a creation story, which is rather unusual.

This version narrates the migration of the Manobos from Aruman to Hulihuli – a place near Cagayan de Oro. It is said that in the course of their wandering along the river system, they met some foreigners although who these were is unclear in the story. According to the story, the foreigners established good relationships with the Manobos, accompanying them in all their journeys and offering to educate their children. However, shortly after he agreed to send their children to the foreigners to be educated, the chieftain Pamulew learned that the children were being beaten and whipped by "a tough elastic rod". When they protested against this cruel treatment of the children, some of the Manobos ended up being imprisoned by the foreigners. Oddly, the story records that despite this untoward incident, the Manobos continued to view the aliens as their "happy oppressors".[14]

The story continues that the Manobos, chased by their oppressors, fled, with the help of the gods, to the place of their ancestors. Upon their arrival, however, they found their old place already under the rule of the Maguindanawon Datu. Negotiating with the new ruler, the Manobos offered to supply forest products in exchange for clothing materials and food. But they soon found out that the barter system was not fair and that they were being cheated into the bargain. A spokesperson by the name of Kuyasu was tasked to talk with the datu. In the ensuing discussion, Kuyasu got mad, threw a spear at the datu and fled, leaving the spear on the datu's body. It is said that, learning of the incident, Agyu became furious because the spear Kuyasu left behind was a thing of great value to the tribe. Setting out to retrieve the spear, Agyu instructed his people to prepare to move out.

Disguising himself as a healer, Agyu offered to treat the datu on condition that nobody should be inside the room when the healing rites were taking place. After informing the Sultan's followers that healing could only be performed in the evening, Agyu also demanded food and clothing materials as payment for his services. As the story goes, Agyu, instead of curing the datu, pushed the spear even deeper into the datu's body, killing him in the process. It is described that when Agyu finally managed to remove the spear, pieces of the datu's internal organs also stuck to the sharp-shafted edge of the spear. Moving in haste, Agyu managed to make his escape, unnoticed by the datu's followers. With the spear back in his possession, he and his people moved out to begin another journey again.

At length, this version proceeds to describe the exploits of other important characters on their journey to Nelendangan (paradise), their various dreams and visions, as well as the appointment of Beyvayan as the leader of the people who will continue to inhabit the earth.[15] Stories such as these about endless wanderings, divine interventions, exploits of the people, various adversaries they met along the way, vivid descriptions of other kingdoms they encountered, the eventual promise of settling in paradise, and the planting of the bamboo as the gateway between heaven and the "place on this earth which is not found on this earth" are similarly told in the earlier versions.

The adventures of Beyvayan, who was initially barred from entering paradise because of his failure to participate in some important feasts, are also narrated in this version. According to the story, Beyvayan led his followers into many sojourns around the world. It is said that running out of provisions and encountering hunger one day, Beyvayan performed the first *ulahing* in supplication to the Supreme Deity, resulting in the miraculous appearance of rice wrapped on a leaf with viand by the side. From that day on every time his people needed food, Beyvayan performed the chant. The story concludes that Beyvayan and his followers were eventually ferried by a *sarimbar*[16] to paradise where he was given the eternal task of inspiring mortals to perform the

ulahing so that the exploits of Agyu and their ancestors will not be forgotten.

Concluding Notes

Inter and multi-disciplinary studies provide one of the most productive approaches in understanding the texts and textualities of a folk literature such as the **Ulahingan.** A cursory look at the epic reveals so many thematic and narrative strands that require the diverse methods and approaches of many fields of study. Like other native literary expressions in the country, here one finds theology, anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, language, music, literature, art, and others, each one adding a different perspective to the discussion and enhancing understanding of the lives of indigenous groups and their rich cultural heritage. Although five volumes have been published, many more materials have remained unexplored pointing to the urgent need for more research work.

The historical frame of the epic shows the Manobo as a people, particularly the process of acculturation that they underwent as they established contact with other groups both within and beyond the confines of their territory. That the tales present the Manobos as labeling their enemies as "happy oppressors" may point to one fundamental truth about them as a peace-loving people who fought only to defend themselves and protect their identity and freedom. The intrusion of the "happy oppressors" in the various epochs of the tribe's collective history is indicated by the way the presence and influence of these foreigners are interwoven in the various episodes of the epic. One will find here references to the coming of Islam, the Spaniards, the Americans, and migrants from other islands in the archipelago, but the extent of the influence of these various groups on the life of the Manobos still need to be scrutinized.

A cursory look at how far the contemporary Manobos have progressed in their aspirations for freedom throughout history reveals the sad fact that their struggle continues to this day. The unabated cultural and political pressures that hound the tribe's

existence remain the biggest threat to their very existence. Indeed, complicating the Manobos' response to these challenges are the underlying motives of the various groups and government agencies that are trying to help them. In the end, as Karl Popper puts it, "there are unintended consequences of intended actions." Needless to mention, these systemic interventions have only created havoc on the aspirations of the indigenous group.[17] Whereas in the epic their ancestors always triumph in the end with the help of the gods, hence the title "Slavery to Freedom,"[18] contemporary Manobos have little to look forward to but a bleak future. At the same time, the image of this paradise and its splendor and perfection provides a stark contrast to the impoverishment of their present life and the scarcity of their everyday existence. Thus, for the Manobos, Nelendangan will always be "a mythic past as well as future yearning".[19] In view of the present circumstances and in the context of the dynamics and power play in the area, freedom will remain for the Manobos an elusive dream.

Because the ultimate dream of the tribe is to preserve their history, tradition, and identity, the Agyu epic and its reminders of the Manobo vision of paradise will always have an enduring appeal. Appropriately, the usual reference to "finding place on this earth which is not of this earth" is a concrete manifestation of this aspiration. As the epic chanter recites, the Arumanen will never stop until they have "arrive[d] into the room of the mansion".[20]

A close reading of the texts reveals that the original language of the epic has been altered in the process of retelling, in all likelihood, owing to the nature of oral transmission. In many places in the texts, Cebuano terms can now be found, possibly due to the interactions of the tribe with other ethnic groups. It is equally possible that new words or terms may have entered in the process of translation. Yet even in translated form, the kaleidoscope of themes and motifs unique to the indigenous Manobos' concept of faith, culture, values, and worldviews have the power to transport the reader into another realm.

It is interesting to note that the concepts that deal with the environment, integrity of God's creation, human relations, and

practical moral lessons which have universal application can also be found. In one instance, the epic deals with the concept of boredom, which is explained as the result of the lack of entertainment and recreation.[21] Another aspect associated with human relations is portrayed in the male-oriented concept of entertainment, explicitly described in the line: "watching bathing naked maidens is one of the best forms of entertainment."[22]

However, in reading the printed text of a chanted tradition in translation, one has to be aware of the possible errors or biases in translation, some of them inadvertently introduced as a result of the peculiar cultural background of the translators and interpreters of the text. A case in point is illustrated in the translation of these two lines:[23]

Te uyangu ne kem' eman	This headwear of the 60's
Ne tubew ne kelima'an	This headdress of the 50's

Although at a glance nothing appears to be wrong with the translation, a closer look, however, reveals a glaring inconsistency. Since the epic deals with a timeless world, why are there specific dates? If this was correct, what century? Providentially, the Manobo text editor was around to explain the lines as referring to the style of wearing the Manobo headdress.[24] The word *kem'eman* means six times, thus referring to the number of times a piece of cloth is wound around the head; *kelima'an* means five times, thus to wind a headdress around the head five times. Whether this varying style is purely a question of fashion or has a more symbolic significance in tribal hierarchy, for instance, is a matter of speculation and warrants further study. Given these peculiar problems, there is a dire need for further research on this epic as well as studies of it from different perspectives.

The challenge therefore is tremendous and this is an opportune time to exhort folklore scholars and enthusiasts, especially the Mindanao-based, to do further studies. As the significance of the **Ulahingan** epic as a cultural treasure suggests, there is an equal need for a systematic study of the traditions of other indigenous

Filipino communities. Such systematic studies, however, recognize the importance of active community participation in the preservation of its own traditions. Consequently, the preservation of Filipino epics and other folk literature in general should be a priority for the entire nation and not just for the individual ethnic groups. In the age of globalization, there is an even greater, more urgent need to concern ourselves with our history, tradition, and identity. It reminds us of the richness of our heritage in the midst of our diversity.

Needless to repeat, the study of the epic is unfinished. Other materials are still expected to surface and new perspectives and approaches will become available as research tools. What is essential is to encourage research initiatives in this area and to sustain these initiatives. In this light then, it is time that a study of all the epics relating to Agyu, such as the **Olaging** of Bukidnon, the **Tulalangan** of Cotabato, the epic of **Agyu** of the Ilianon, and the epics of other cultural minorities in the area, are gathered for in-depth study and comparison.

Finally, the **Ulahingan** is the epic story of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos, their way of life, and that of their ancestors. Conveyed by simple folks, the epic expresses the Manobos' own unique social, political, religious, and ritual contexts and provide a picture of their aspirations, values, and goals. Yet, despite being an epic of a distinct group of a cultural community, the **Ulahingan** offers texts that shed light not only on the identity of the ancestors of this group, but on their relations with other Manobo tribes as well as with other cultural communities in Mindanao. The story of Agyu and his people contains the typical elements of folk literature but embedded in it is the story of a people driven away from their ancestral lands on threat of physical and emotional pains caused by injustice, human greed, and cultural dislocation. Long been part of the dynamics of current Philippine society, these factors continue to influence the development of Mindanao to this day. While the preservation of the epic will remind the Manobos of the importance of the **Ulahingan** in the development of their cultural identity and self-confidence, their indigenous belief in the

sacredness of all things in the cosmos can teach us a view of life that is holistic, where meaningful human relations stem from respect for one another and for all of God's creation.

Notes

[1] Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 2. (Dumaguete City: Negros Chronicle Press, 1990). P. 6.

[2] Another epic is the **Tulalangan**, about the adventures of Tulalang and his brothers who were cousins of Agyu. See Jesus Amparo, The Manobo Epic , Sunday Times Magazine , January 3, 1965 p. 43. It is also closely related to the epic of **Agyu** of the Ilianon. See. CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art vol. IX Philippine Literature, p.380.

[3] Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 1. (Dumaguete City: Silliman University Press, 1977). P. 1.

[4] Pastor Bangcasis now retired from Silliman University, having served as Museum Curator and Instructor of Sociology and Anthropology. He served as consultant and translator for this paper as well. He willingly reviewed the Kepu'unpu'un of Jose Silay.

[5] Interview with Philips Munar, who once served as proofreader, and Bernie Aranas, who once served as encoder for the Ulahingan Project, Katipunan Hall, Silliman University, Oct 7, 8, 10, 2003. The author also interviewed Dr. Christopher Ablan, who was Research Director of Silliman University when the Ulahingan Project was revived by Dr. C. Pioquinto and her team on September 15, 2003. I thank him for providing me the draft for printing of the Kepu'unpu'un. See also 'The Ulahingan Episodes: The Creativity of the Manobos," **Silliman Journal**, 4th quarter, 1969, pp. 360-374.

[6] Referred to as **Mantukaw** versions.

[7] Maquiso, Elena G.. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 2. (Dumaguete City: Negros Chronicle Press, 1990).

[8] According to the Dr. Maquiso's notes, the decision to publish the series was not a deliberate choice but because these materials happened to be ready for publication earlier than the others. See. Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 3. (Dumaguete City: Silliman University Press, 1992). P. 5.

[9] The author noted that when the research team inquired why there were no creation materials recorded earlier, their sources told them that these were not provided because these were not asked for in the first place. Apparently

in the Arumanen culture, they do not volunteer information. From the unpublished notes of Dr. Maquiso found at the Special Filipiniana Collection of the Silliman University Main Library. The librarian, Mrs. Selah Golosino, is the niece of Dr. Maquiso and is the one responsible for keeping all her materials. See also Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 4. (Dumaguete City: Caballes Press, 1993). P. 1.

[10] Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 4. (Dumaguete City: Caballes Press, 1994). P. vii.

[11] Pioquinto, Ceres E. "The Samayaan As Public Liminality: Some Etnographic Notes." **Silliman Journal,** 2nd quarter, 1994, 27 – 37.

[12] Interview with Rev. Samaon Bangcas, October 9, 2003 at the SU-PAEF Office.

[13] Bangcas explained that the line "it is on this earth but not of this earth" simply means it is a place that is not in the map but is existing.

[14] Line 810

[15] An attempt to make the **kepu'unpu'un** versions of the Ulahingan become more popular and readable was made by Melchizedek Maquiso in 1968. See Maquiso, Melchizedek, "An Edition and A Critical Study of the Manobo Epic, Ulahingan Part I For Use in Philippine Literature Courses In College." (MA Thesis: Silliman University, 1968). This material includes a popular version of the epic and the writer feels that incorporating the edition and the version of Jose Silay will indeed enrich the epic for popular reading.

[16] Boat

[17] Based on the conversation with the Manobo timu'ay (Frank Bidangan). I know Frank quite well because we are both in the executive council of the NCCA.

[18] It was the chanter himself who provided the title.

[19] Melendrez-Cruz, "Introduction," *Agyu*, **Anthology of ASEAN Literatures: Epics of the Philippines.** Jovita Ventura Castro, *et al.*, (eds.) 1983: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, p. 191.

[20] Line 5560, This incidentally, is the last line of the Silay version.

[21] Line 4170

[22] Line 4320

[23] Lines 3494 and 3495

[24] In Manobo, this is a triangular piece of cloth known as "tubao".

WRITING IN A TIME OF TERROR and the (mis)management of grief[1]

Charlson Ong

An artist without an art form is a dangerous person, reads a line from Toni Morrison's *Sula*. And indeed many of the characters in Morrison's works, especially her women, seek to transform their own lives into art. Amid the squalor of slavery and post slavery, denied the possibilities for decent livelihood, much less self expression, these characters often defy convention and follow the urgings of an inner spirit to produce a life that if not, arguably, well lived or well remembered is at least *remembered.* At the end of her short life, Sula—ill, alone and despised by her neighbors—says to her best friend Nel, "but my lonely is *mine"*. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Now ain't that something? A secondhand lonely?

Rebellion in art, says Albert Camus, is the refusal to be a victim. In and through art, the victim's tale sees the light of history or becomes its own history. In this light, there are many histories rather than a single narrative so that the notion of an End to History becomes absurd for the tale that Francis Fukuyama claims to have ended is but the one he chose to tell.

I do not, agree, however, with the notion that all truths are equal. Certainly, the planet earth I think I live on is roughly round, the heaven above me is about 100 kms of polluted air. And the hell below, mostly molten rock. The artist or writer as historian must tell his or her tale in the light of reason as much as revelation, clinical data as well as tradition. It can only be a story of his or her time, suspect to both past and future.

When the artist is ready, society may provide the means for the telling of the tale: in song or in dance, in water or in stone, in print or celluloid, by body or by spirit, mummified or digitized. But what of those whose circumstances preclude any non-violent mode of expression?

Is destruction, including self-destruction, the obverse of creation? Is there a suicide bomber lurking within every artist? To the Chinese the God of poetry, Guan Yu, is also the God of war. To

Hindus, Brahma the creator and Siva the destroyer are two Gods of the cosmic triumvirate.

I think it was Henrik Ibsen who said that the fantasy of any writer, at least for a certain season in one's career, should be to torpedo the Ark - that is, Noah's Ark- rather than to pick the survivors a la Noah.

No doubt the events of 9/11 and their consequences have cast a shadow over our work as writers. Already, fictionists like Salman Rushdie and Haruki Murakami have responded with important works. As a nation, we have been victim to political and sectarian violence even before the catastrophe in New York. People in Mindanao have had to live with war or the threat of it for many decades. But now, our involvement in America's 'war against terror' threatens to engage us in a broader conflict.

Historically, conflict and catastrophe often bring out the best in artists. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* deal with the drama wrought by profound changes in Russia at the end of the 19th century. WW II spawned such novels as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, and Stevan Javellana's *Without Seeing the Dawn*. The Spanish Civil War inspired Picasso's *Guernica*. Lu Xun wrote *Ah Q* during the 1920s as China suffered imperial collapse, strife, and foreign aggression. So too the excesses of the 'Cultural Revolution' of 1960s became the subject of the new wave of Chinese cinema as well as the work of Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian. Apartheid in South Africa was the canvas across which Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetze painted their intimate literary portraits.

Political strife and terrorism often make for good fiction. One of my favorite stories, and one which I often teach in class, is the "Management of Grief" by Bharati Mukherjee. It is the story of Shaila, an Indian-Canadian woman who along with her neighbors in Toronto have just lost their loved ones as a plane enroute from India explodes in mid-air. They are the victims of the very sectarian violence they had left India in order to avoid. Shaila too has lost her husband and son but being among the more Westernized of the community, Shaila is recruited by the social worker Judith Templeton to help the other victims deal with the catastrophe.

Shaila's most urgent task is to convince an old Sikh couple to sign documents which will entitle them to the benefits left behind by their son who was aboard the flight. The couple refuse to do so as it remains their duty to hope for their son's survival. Shaila realizes the futility of trying to explain one side of the cultural divide to the other. Grief, after all, like anger and hatred cannot be managed in the manner a modern bureaucracy wishes they could. In the end, Shaila manages her own grief by returning to Toronto after a brief sojourn in Calcutta, in order to 'carry on' what she and her dead husband had begun. Though seemingly affirmative, the story's ending suggests darker possibilities.

The management of public emotion, as much as war technology, is a task confronting political leaders whenever nations face adversity. Has the war on terror been mainly to flush out Bin Laden, or seek out weapons of mass destruction, or to assuage the anger and salve the pain of the American public? Are emotions being allowed to boil over across Central and West Asia?

In Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, the Hindu girl Lata, pained by the suffering caused by the violence between India's Hindus and Muslims shortly before that nation's partition in 1949, gives up her own desire for her Muslim suitor, Kabir, and marries instead her co-religionist Haresh, who is himself forced to give up his suit for a Sikh girl. Two victims of tradition decide to forsake passion, which has wreaked so much havoc, in order to do their bit in restoring decency in their world.

There is little wonder that works which deal with political and cultural strife are often written by authors of multi-cultural backgrounds. More than others they appreciate the view from opposing camps; more than others, they court the displeasure of those who brook no re-valuation of their own beliefs, as in the case of Rushdie.

His work in the French resistance during the Second World War led Jean Paul Sarte towards the existentialism for which he is best known. Reflecting on Nazism, Sarte declared that,

> *Evil is not an appearance...knowing its cause does not dispel it...it is not opposed to Good as a confused idea is to a clear one...it is not the*

> *effect of passions which might be cured, of a fear which might be overcome, of a passing aberration which might be excused, of an ignorance which might be enlightened...it can no way be diverted, brought back, reduced, and incorporated into idealistic humanism. Perhaps a day will come when a happy age...will see in this suffering and shame one of the paths which led to peace. But we are not on the side of history already made. Therefore, in spite of ourselves, we come to the conclusion, which will sound shocking to lofty souls- Evil cannot be redeemed.*

A challenging thought, certainly, in these times of terror and counter terror and evil mongering. Still, the problem of evil is one that writers always deal with. Every short story, every novel or drama is about Good and Evil though not necessarily in Biblical or religious terms. But what differentiates our work from that of the sociologist is the moral choice that our characters must make at the climax of the tale.

It is the terror of that decision that confronts every story. The terror of the void that annuls all meaning. In the face of that terror the writer only has language and memory.

A writer is an editor of memory. Writing well is the best revenge, someone once said. In writing you can stand up once again to the school bully or steal kisses from the school beauty this time with better results. In writing we make the loves we should have made, wage wars we should have waged. It doesn't always make up for the real thing, but it does have its rewards.

Remembering is the only way to learn, the only way to grow. The fear of death is not the fear of losing the future but of losing the past. It is the fear of forgetfulness, of Alzheimer's. But remembering is also the great problem of politics. When a big power wants to dominate a smaller one, says Milan Kundera, it uses the method of 'organized forgetting'.

To be deprived of memory is to be orphaned. And being an orphan, says a character in Arturo Perez-Reverte's erudite thriller, the *Seville Communion*, "means being a slave. Memories give you some security; you know where you are going. Or where you're not going. Without them you are at the mercy of the first person who comes along and calls you daughter. To defend one's memories is to defend one's freedom. Only angels have the luxury of being spectators."

Every song, every story is a hedge against death, against forgetfulness. We remember for ourselves, we remember for others.

There are no formulas for writing or writing well. Anyone who says otherwise is just trying to earn a living. But I have always gone by what I call the four Ms of writing- Myth and Memory, Magic and Metaphor. If you are true to your memories, the myths will reveal themselves. If you serve well your metaphors, the magic will descend.

Discover your terrain as a writer. Philippine literature is a banquet being laid out continually. What do you intend to bring to the table? There is a line in Sam Mendez' film "Road to Perdition," wherein Paul Newman's character says to Tom Hank's character: "This is the road we have chosen. There is only one thing certain—none of us will see heaven."

Well, writing, like mobstering, may or may not be the road to perdition, but it often is the path to penury so you best be prepared for the worst.

We live in dangerous times. I do not say that art salves all pain or that the politics of hate is anyone's franchise. One person's martyr is another's mad bomber. But the stakes are too high for us to leave the management of emotions and perceptions around the world to politicians, clerics, terror mongers, or to CNN. We must do our part. As writers we must stand by the integrity of the word, we write as well for those who cannot speak, for where words may not be heard, says the anonymous poet of Palestine, bombs rejoice.

When I was as young as most of you I said that I wrote because it was the only way I knew how to live. And that remains true today. I write the way I do because it is the only way I know how. Often, I find no other cause for writing except to echo James Baldwin that although the tale of how we suffer and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be told. There is no other tale to tell, it is our only light in all this darkness.

But I say the writer today must also be an interpreter of grief. In the end, like Shaila, we too might find it impossible to be a bridge between cultures, to translate meanings, to hold the center. Life might just be too powerful for art. But the attempt should be worth the effort. I have no more desire to torpedo the ark, to fancy myself a Brahma or Shiva, but only a Vishnu, a preserver.

In days of anthrax and HIV we might be reminded, by the master storyteller himself, Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, how the human spirit has always prevailed over the ravages of time, bombs, and viruses.

Finally, as the main preoccupation of any writers' workshop is really to gossip about writers, let me share this anecdote about two of our great fictionists. When Manuel Arguilla was executed by the Japanese during WWII, Francisco Arcellana was so pained he wrote that Arguilla had no business dying. "I will never forgive him his patriotism," wrote Arcellana. "He was no patriot, he was a poet, we have many patriots," Arcellana lamented, and "too few poets." I pray that I will never have to recall those lines in memory of anyone of you here in this gathering.

But that's not the story. This, according to Franz was what Manuel Arguilla wrote in his dedication to Arcellana when he had his copy of Arguilla's book signed: "Dear Franz, more life in your art, less art in your life."

I suggest the same for all of us.

[1] Keynote Speech delivered at the opening of the Annual Iligan National Writers Workshop of the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, April 26-30, 2004, Iligan City.

NOTES ON A VANISHING HERO

Luis H. Francia

On April 27, 1521, LapuLapu and his men slew Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese navigator in the service of the Spanish crown, and a few other members of his fighting party. Today, on Mactan Island, not far from the beach where the battle took place, stands a statue of LapuLapu, paired with the earlier monument to his vanquished foe, that is very much in the heroic mode. LapuLapu here has a perfectly developed physique (though marred by a tacky necklace), with six-pack abs, muscular lats, and terrific quadriceps—this LapuLapu is clearly a gym rat, oversized *kampilan* in hand to match his oversized body and fierce determination oozing from his every pore.

By slaying Magellan, Lapulapu unknowingly inscribed himself in history as the first pre-Hispanic inhabitant of the archipelago to resist the incursions by a colonizing Spain. That martial derring-do made him into a mythological someone who in all likelihood bears little resemblance to the flesh-and-blood man. Who knows what LapuLapu really looked like? I have yet to read an account that describes him in any detail. Not that it would have mattered. For the popular imagination is an irresistible, transformative force, more often oblivious of facts than heedful, so that the representation of LapuLapu in larger-than-life terms—as, for instance, embodied in the Mactan statue—is inevitable. The pop LapuLapu is as we want, need, him to be: a quasi-Hollywood creation—noble, beautiful, uncomplicated, an accomplished warrior of integrity and extraordinary bravery. A romanticized makeover, this LapuLapu is one way of mediating how we would like to view ourselves as Filipinos. If he did not exist, we would have had to invent him.

As with that of every hero, LapuLapu's image acts as a kind of tabula rasa. Here is someone whose legend, if not actual life, has made me aware, almost 500 years after, of how that

event on April 27 resonates as a metaphor for the very same things we as true postcolonial Filipinos contend with, most notably, how to deal with the incessant Westernization, and its implied (if conventionally so) erosion of the indigenous, already and greatly affected and even irrevocably altered, by several centuries of exposure to the winds of change. When we were kids my late father used to tease us that we were descended from this Mactan warrior. Did LapuLapu's name just spring suddenly into my father's mind? Did he mean to offer this heroic figure as a model? I would like to think so, but can't really say. It is reasonable to believe that the historical LapuLapu may not have recognized his own legend. Then again he might have. After all, he must have been a supremely confident man to square off against Magellan, who had, by then, gotten pretty much his way with Rajah Humabon (or Humabad, in some accounts), chief of the larger, wealthier Cebu (a few miles across the straits), who had bowed to the Spanish crown.

Some years ago I started writing a long poem, with the Mactan battle as the central event around which I could explore its principal characters: LapuLapu, Magellan, Enrique (the navigator's Malay slave), Antonio Pigafetta (the expedition's Italian amanuensis), and Humabon. I have since proceeded in fits and starts; the work is far from finished, and I continue at it. Subsequently, I also thought to write a play, so last winter I began sketching scenes for a drama with the same characters, but this time with Enrique as the dramatic focus. If LapuLapu stands for the Filipino as a proto-nationalist, then Enrique is he who has come, by force of circumstance, to an accommodation, albeit uneasy, with both the West and East. He is our version of La Malinche, the noble-born Aztec woman who served as Cortez's interpreter and bridge between two formidable empires, the Spanish and the Aztec. She also, for a short while, shared his bed, and bore him a son, a mestizo named after his father and considered to be the first Mexican.

Viewed this way Enrique emerges as a more mysterious, certainly more complex, character than LapuLapu, who did not

need to deal with any kind of cultural fusion—at least, not one at the tip of a sword—only with defending native turf and his indigenous way of life. In contrast, Rajah Humabon, by converting to Christianity and being christened Carlos (after the then Spanish king), lays down the seeds for Spanish conquest of the archipelago and the eradication of much of pre-Hispanic culture, though he surely did not foresee the latter. But Humabon's acquiescence, though perhaps not Queen Juana's, is a prudent gesture of realpolitik, meant to placate the savage Spanish breast. In contrast, we find no moral ambiguity in the case of LapuLapu, no clay feet—just concrete and steel. Isn't that how we like our heroes? It's certainly how we've treated them, tending to avoid any discussion of their warts, their foibles, their humanity—something Nick Joaquin recognized in his study of legendary Filipinos, *A Question of Heroes*.

This interplay of the imaginary with the actual has always fascinated me. To mark clearly the borders of either one however is not my intent; I find that counterproductive. The blurring, the merging, at the same time the elucidation of that state between dreaming and waking—that is what I find most exciting. In 2003, courtesy of an Asian Cultural Council grant, I spent the summer at the University of San Carlos's Cebuano Studies Center, going over its materials, aided by its director Erlinda Alburo, and by the writer/scholar Resil Mojares. What I found was a wealth of creative and factual works dealing with that period. But very little historical records on either LapuLapu or Enrique, due mainly to the paucity of accounts from the islanders' side.

Certain facts about that particular encounter between East and West are not in dispute, principally because of Pigafetta's journals. However, I temper that assessment with the knowledge that this Italian narrator had his own point of view, not to mention cultural biases, that came into play. So while it is fairly safe to conclude that he did witness what he says he witnessed, not as much certainty can be ascribed to his interpretation of events. On one hand, he is a keen observer, with a practiced eye, whether

describing the Cebuanos' sexual mores or Humabon as "a short man and fat, [who] had his face painted with fire in divers patterns." He has a fine ear, too. Many of the words he transcribed we recognize and still use today, e.g., *ilon, baba, matta, acin, itlog, balai*. On the other hand, as a European, an imperialist, and a Catholic, his views of peoples of color have a distinctly Orientalist outlook, long before Orientalism was even acknowledged to exist—a worldview consistent with travel narratives from the West concerning the mysterious East (a point of view that, by the way, is far from passé). Content as an observer, he doesn't question the values undergirding Magellan's mission, the manner in which it is being carried out, and so his account betrays little irony and certainly no skepticism.

Otherwise, so many aspects remain unknown and will likely always remain so. Was LapuLapu, for instance, descended from the legendary 10 datus said to have emigrated on their barangays from Borneo to the islands circa the 11th century? Was he a follower of Islam? Had he sailed from Mindanao with his men and lay claim to the island of Mactan? Or did he and Humabon conspire secretly against Magellan—a kind of good cop, bad cop routine—so as to neutralize his superiority in firepower? How many men did he actually have arrayed against Magellan and his small band of about 60 volunteers? (Magellan, aware that many in his expedition saw the impending confrontation as unnecessary meddling in the natives' internal affairs, wanted only volunteers for his war party.) Pigafetta states unequivocally that there were 1050 warriors arrayed against them. This is doubtful. He may have had the inclination but certainly not the time to count enemy ranks. He was intensely loyal to the Captain-General, having grown to respect and admire him, with excellent reasons for doing so. But the Captain-General had boasted to Humabon that each of his men could handle a hundred natives. It would be a letdown for posterity had LapuLapu's force been, even if numerically superior, less than overwhelming. So it is perfectly understandable for Pigafetta to, as Blair and Bush did

with Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction, sex up the facts.

With regards to Enrique, did he in fact come from, if not Cebu, one of the surrounding islands—Negros? Bohol? Mactan? We know that Magellan had purchased him from the slave markets of Malacca, but he could very well have been captured elsewhere in Southeast Asia. And if he did come from the Visayas, we could claim then that he, rather than anyone on Magellan's expedition, was the first known individual to circumnavigate the planet, as many have suggested. What happens to him in the aftermath of Magellan's death and the subsequent slaughter of several officers and men at a banquet given by Humabon—a feast of vengeance probably proposed by Enrique? And there's the priest who goes along to the banquet, but whose life is spared, as apparently he had helped cure one of the rajah's subjects early on. How would things have turned out had he too been put to the sword, and the icon of the Holy Infant smashed by the rajah's chief consort? As for Pigafetta, he would normally have gone along to the banquet as the ever-curious chronicler but, wounded in the fray against LapuLapu, stayed on board.

By the time of the encounter, Magellan proved the acuity of the Greek belief, that he whom the gods would destroy they afflict with hubris. Full of himself, the brilliant navigator, battle-hardened soldier, uncompromising leader, turns arrogant, and greedy. Already envisioning himself as the Spanish viceroy in these islands, he thinks the insolent Lapulapu and his followers are no match for even a small crew made up of his men and himself. He turns down Humabon's offer of his own warriors but invites him to come along and watch as he dispatches his friend's foe. He turns a deaf ear to the advice of his own men, forgetting the primacy of his mission—to discover a new route to the Spice Islands and afterwards sail back to Sevilla. And this wily strategist and survivor of so many harrowing ordeals gets suckered in by LapuLapu, who requests that he wait until dawn before commencing battle. Why? Because he is *awaiting reinforcements*. Magellan, as any right-thinking

military commander would, suspects a trap and resists the temptation of immediately attacking, before those reinforcements arrive. He waits until dawn; by then, the tide has gone out, forcing the ships to drop anchor farther from shore and thus putting the beach out of range of the ships' guns, and forcing Magellan and his men to wade a considerable distance from the rowboats. LapuLapu may have spoken the truth after all—the last thing Magellan would have expected from an enemy on the battlefield. And on that beach the valiant but foolhardy navigator and soldier breathes his last, a long, long way from home, prompting Pigafetta to pen one of the most lyrical lines in his chronicles: "...They slew our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide."

Magellan's and LapuLapu's bones lie in that vicinity, if not underneath Mactan soil. Or they may have been washed out to sea. As though echoing similar Homeric scenes, Humabon offers to ransom the navigator's body but LapuLapu refuses. It isn't, I don't think, so that he can mutilate Magellan's corpse (as Achilles does when he drags the vanquished Hector's body with his chariot) but rather because he respects a worthy foe, and deems the lifeless Magellan a worthy talisman to hold onto. Pigafetta: "They intended to keep him as a perpetual memorial."

That battle, as I have said, thrust LapuLapu into our collective memory. Nothing else of his life seems to have been recorded—the case of the vanishing hero. But history's deficit is the creative writer's asset. In the case of LapuLapu this tabula rasa is something I intend to utilize fully. Nevertheless I must resist, even if not completely successfully, the impulse to project onto him, or the *thought* of him, the motivations and ideas I so fervently wish for him to have. To do so would be a betrayal of him, and ultimately of my art. I need to flesh out, infuse him with blood: to paraphrase Marianne Moore, in the imaginary garden of literature, LapuLapu has to stand on his own, as a real person, warts and all.

FILM AND LITERATURE IN THE PHILIPPINES[1]

Bienvenido Lumbera

Film and literature is a pairing that in the Philippines was already established when the technology of filmmaking was barely two decades old. In 1915, Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* was made into a film by an American to star his Filipino wife, zarzuela star Titay Molina. Edward M. Gross had earlier engaged another American, Albert Yearsley, in a race to make the first "feature film" in the country. That was in 1912 when Gross made *La Vida de Jose Rizal* and Yearsley made *El Fusilamiento de Dr. Jose Rizal.* In 1916, Gross also made a film version of *El Filibusterismo.* It is unfortunate that these early films are no longer available for viewing, so we are reduced to simply noting their production by way of introducing the subject of filmmaking in the Philippines. We must also note that early in the history of film in the country, productions capitalized on subject matter that exploited audience interest in current and recent events. The execution of Jose Rizal continued to be a topic of nationalist poems and essays, and the two novels had been translated into English and had therefore become accessible to the rising generation of university students whom the educational system had begun to wean away from Spanish.

Literary material in the form of the zarzuela served as the narrative source of the first film made by a Filipino. Hermogenes Ilagan and Leon Ignacio's *Ang Dalagang Bukid* had been such a hit onstage, and turning it into a movie was worth investing in. Producer-director Jose Nepomuceno saw the potential of the play to attract a broad audience consisting of people from outside Manila who would wish to see a show that was much talked about in the newspapers. So in 1919, Nepomuceno dismantled his photography studio and went full time into the business of making movies.

By 1930, he felt he was ready to do his own version of *Noli Me Tangere.* Rizal's novel, with its multiple narratives and

complex themes, must have seemed such a formidable challenge to filmmakers that, after Nepomuceno's version, only in 1960 would another director attempt to come out with a new film translation of the Rizal classic.

Less daunting as material for a film adaptation was the species of narrative poetry hugely popular among the masses, the *awit*. The first movie to be made from an awit was *Don Juan Tiñoso*, the story about a prince who became the victim of a curse that turned him into a leprous beggar whom only the love of a woman willing to accept him in his condition could restore to health and social acceptability. It is interesting to note that this tale was made into a movie the same year that Rizal's realistic novel was filmed by Nepomuceno. The monumental awit by Francisco Baltazar, *Florante at Laura,* must have been undertaken by a film company inspired by public reception of *Don Juan Tinoso*. In 1939, Vicente Salumbides, a director much respected for having spent some years working in Hollywood, undertook producing and directing Baltazar's narrative poem. Aware that the Filipino audience would expect from him fidelity to the characters and the language of the classic work, Salumbides made sure that his script incorporated much of Baltazar's poetry. Recalling his production many years later, Salumbides noted in his account of the history of Philippine movies that his script "consisted of about 1200 lines of poetry, 400 of which were directly quoted from the book..." Salumbides in 1950 did a re-make of his production of *Florante at Laura,* with assistance from an actor in the 1939 version, who in the 1950s was on his way to becoming a popular director of swashbuckling costume movies. The actor-turned-director was Nemesio Caravana, himself a literary man familiar to readers of the popular weekly *Liwayway* for his awit-inspired serial novels.

Since 1922, when it was born as a weekly publication dedicated to popular fiction, *Liwayway* had worked itself into the consciousness of Tagalog readers as an outlet for short stories and serial novels offered as light reading fare for the masses. In many households during the pre-Pacific War years, the day of issue of *Liwayway* was eagerly awaited, and family members

would gather around the person assigned to give an oral reading of a favorite serial novel from the new issue. For an industry whose products are intended for a mass audience, *Liwayway* was the magazine to tap as a source of narratives for movies.

The decade of the 1930s, especially in its latter half, was a time when the names of novelists were prominently featured in the advertisements for new movies. Fausto Galauran, Lazaro Francisco, Inigo Ed. Regalado, Antonio Sempio, Gregorio Coching, Simeon P. Arcega, and many others had made themselves familiar to readers of weekly magazines, and their literary works were guaranteed to have readers who would want to see their favorite characters take on the looks and voices of screen idols. Fausto Galauran's *Ligaw na Bulaklak* (1932) was one of the early popular novels that proved the ability of serial novels to capture audiences for Tagalog movies. The introduction of sound in 1933 made movies based on literature even more attractive to audiences who by now were able to enjoy through spoken dialogue more narrative content than was previously conveyed by the intertitles in silent movies.

The role of literature in providing movies with a broad audience would have its impact on the aesthetic norms audiences would use in judging the entertainment value of a movie. Chief among these norms was the primacy of narrative as a component of film. The Tagalog mass audience would call this "istorya," and by this term they would be referring to the complications of the plot and their satisfying resolution which was usually characterized as "a happy ending." "Literary" Tagalog, i.e. language tending towards prolixity and metaphoricality (*matalinghaga*), came to be such a persistent element in dialogue because the source of the narrative was literary and fidelity to the source necessitated dialogue with a register above that of daily conversation. By the measure of the mass audience even as late as the 1950s, a movie less than three hours long was "maigsi" and that was damning criticism for the expression usually implied "walang istorya." In short, if a movie had something worthwhile to say, it would be long, its narrative complicated, and its tenor elevated.

Realism as a style in Philippine movies would set in only in the 1960s when the industry went into the production of cowboy movies and *bomba*.*

But realism as filmic replication of real life would seem to be the influence of literary realism in the materials introduced by young writers from the 1960s and the 1970s. When Lino Brocka took Clodualdo del Mundo's screenplay based on Edgardo Reyes' *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* and turned it into the film we now know as *Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag,* the relation of Filipino film and Philippine Literature entered a new stage. Brocka's manifest respect for Reyes's novel gave the film adaptation a gritty quality as it narrated the gradual degradation of an innocent provincial within a milieu ruthless in its exploitation of a human being uprooted from his native community.

As a result of the success of *Maynila* among reviewers, Reyes caught the attention of the industry and his other serial novels in *Liwayway* were snatched up by production companies. *Ligaw na Bulaklak* (1976) was turned by Ishmael Bernal into a critical and popular hit, its story about an innocent girl emerging from adolescence in the corruptive environment of a cheap dance hall yielding complex roles for Bernal's cast and satisfying the mass audience's voyeuristic interest in newcomer Alma Moreno's body as the young woman coming of age. Director Nick Lizazo picked up Reyes' story about prostitution in the city, *Sa Kagubatan ng Lunsod (*1975) and Romy Suzara made *Mga Uod at Rosas* (1982) into a caustic comment on a young painter relentlessly clambering up the city's socio-economic ladder. In 1984, Reyes would turn director himself when he filmed his own screenplay *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy,* which picked up the narrative of one of the novelist's characters in *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag.*

When Martial Law was imposed on the Philippines in 1972, the repressive Marcos dictatorship inadvertently occasioned a new phase in the relationship between film and literature. The dictator

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* bold films

Marcos had set up an elaborate media infrastructure that would ensure a favorable press for the regime. The traditional censors board was tasked to keep surveillance on the industry, and the Board of Review for Motion Pictures and Television stipulated as one of its rules that producers had to submit to the Board a finished copy of the script before the start of production.

The requirement of a finished script started producers on a hunt for creative persons who knew how to construct a film script, and they turned to young writers.

Ricardo Lee, Jose Javier Reyes, Bienvenido Noriega Jr., Jose F. Lacaba, Jose M. Dalisay Jr., Wilfrido D. Nolledo, Rene Villanueva, and Fanny Garcia were writers whose names did not figure in the pages of *Liwayway*, but they could construct a script that would be acceptable to the BMRPT. Thus, the filmmaking process in the local film industry came to include a screenplay writer in the creative team. This had never happened before in the Philippines. The writers, as was the case among those who published in *Liwayway*, were the source of narratives, but these were simply treated as materials out of which movies could be made. This time, they were part of the team and participated in many cases in the conceptualization of the film project. Film and literature had come together.

This paper is not intended to romanticize the entry of creative writers into the film industry. The writer of the screenplay is still subject to the demands of other factors in the production process. The director remains as a strong determinant in the shaping of the film, with the writer usually as some kind of secretary. The producer's concept is normally inviolable.

And the lead actors impose many demands on the way the script is going to go. What is important to underscore is that the maker of literature has ceased to be a plain story-teller whose tales can be twisted any which way depending on the whims of key participants in the process. Now it is even possible for the writer to have his concept prevail or, at worst, survive.

[1] Keynote Address, Silliman University Symposium on Film and Literature, 22 November 2002

SPIRITUALITY AND PEDAGOGY: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Priscilla Lasmarias Kelso

ABSTRACT

The place of spirituality in higher education is increasingly becoming part of academic discourse as institutions confront the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Teaching and learning can be elevated to a higher plane through pedagogical practices that affirm human values and other essential elements that create a vital learning community. A vision of education as transformative and spiritually-based is particularly imperative at a time when academe struggles with fragmentation and cultural dissonance. How does a teacher create a climate of learning that transcends mere information-gathering? How does a student connect subject matter with the larger context of life? How can a university support curricular and instructional practices that nourish the spirit? All in all, the assumption is that teaching is a vocation and learning can be a bridge to wholeness.

"I teach because teaching offers something. It offers love – not only the love of learning and of books and ideas, but also the love that a teacher feels for that rare student who walks into a teacher's life and begins to breathe."

The writer of this teaching philosophy, though anonymous, articulates the ideal that elevates teaching into the realm of spirit and of "breathing lessons" which can transform a classroom into a safe and hospitable environment for exploring human issues. Based on the premise that the contract between the teacher and the student should go beyond the mere transfer of information, this concept affirms that it is possible to uphold values in higher education, particularly in a post-modern, deconstructionist period of academic history.

To this end, three books on the place of spirituality in higher education are worth noting – *The Courage to Teach* by Parker J. Palmer, *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education*, edited by Steven Glazer, and *Education as Transformation*, edited by Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr. and Peter L. Laurence.[1] All three complement each other by gently insisting on the following principles: (1) The "what" and "how" of teaching should also embrace the "why" as a valuable dimension of the learning process; (2) Teachers and students have interior lives that may be in harmony or in dissonance with the culture of an academic institution; and, (3) It is possible to infuse spirituality into the structure and content of learning through effective pedagogy.

Wherever good teaching is at stake, we need to ask: What shall we teach? What methods and techniques are required to teach well? For what purpose and to what ends do we teach? And the deeper question: How do we guide students on an inner journey as we deal with subjects as large and as complex as life, humbly acknowledging that which often eludes our grasp? In other words, where is the place of spirituality as we plow through the daily demands of the classroom and trudge through the mire of administrative tasks?

To speak of spirituality in teaching is to evoke varied reactions. However, if one assumes that education is ineluctably a spiritual matter, one can address "the fundamental values to which we commit ourselves and trust to secure significance and meaning in our lives" (Bennett, 2004). This also takes into account the student's interior life and self-understanding, whether implied or overtly expressed. Also assumed is that education is more than a mere commodity transacted between an institution and its "customers," and that it can be a salvific means of developing the whole person.

"Spirituality" also implies a larger context than religion in general, but may be related to it. It points to such interlocking values as creativity, empathy, inspiration, and community, as alternatives to fragmentation, linear thinking, and individualism. It

cultivates the inner landscape of teaching that can bear fruit even in the often barren soil of academe. Above all, spirituality embraces mystery as a component of learning itself. In the words of Albert Einstein, "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true Art and Science."

Spirituality can also be defined as a major organizing principle in one's life, a source from which we often derive meaning and informs many of our life choices. It is also one's personal relation to the sacred, an inherent part of our existence that cannot be ignored in the educational setting" (Lauzon, 2003). Ultimately, if one's work is also one's vocation (the root word of which is *voca* = "calling"), weaving one's intellectual work into holistic teaching is a means of humanizing the job description and the academic contract. Vocation at its best is "the place where the heart's deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (Buechner, 1993).

In addition, spirituality also points to "the reliable centers of meaning and value (Bennett, 2004) that are not optional but are part of being human. Thus, infusing the curriculum with a sense of purpose beyond the pragmatic and the quantifiable is a task worth pursuing. If spirituality is inherently present in the working environment, acknowledging it also means developing a sensitive pedagogy.

Several assumptions undergird the theory of spiritually-based teaching—that higher education can offer opportunities for developing the interior lives of students beyond cognitive skills, that the college years comprise a developmental stage among young adults engaged in issues related to their sense of self and the larger world, and that certain instructional practices can be developed to transform the classroom into an authentic place for exploring human values.

Current studies have confirmed that the college years are a life stage when students become increasingly committed to matters beyond academic concerns.[2] Between the age of 16 and 25, they move through "uncharted territory where they begin to

build a provisional life structure through choices in relationships, career orientation and work, organization of their priorities, and even through personal life style....One's spiritual quest has the potential to sustain and to preserve a sense of coherence against chaos" (Nino, 2002).

How then should institutions of higher learning respond to this opportunity and challenge?

As faculty and students gain new competencies, several questions should also arise: "What difference does my knowledge make to who I am?" " How has it challenged my view of the universe and of my existence?" "Are there moments of connection and human beauty in the learning process?" In other words, what has puzzled, stirred, provoked, intrigued, surprised, or even outraged the student in the pursuit of knowledge and competence in the subject? Is the classroom a safe place to explore questions beyond the syllabus and the grading of academic performance? In the task of teaching, is there room for the transforming power of education?

Current writings such as *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* by bell hooks and *Finding God at Harvard* by Kelly Monroe advocate for "the transformative space of the classroom" that combines care, commitment, respect, and trust in creating a climate for teaching.[3] Instructional practices that give students permission to pursue questions beyond cognitive data often results in education that is not alienated or isolated from the larger meaning and purpose of an authentic academic experience. As a scholarly act, "teaching is a dynamic endeavor involving all the analogies, metaphors, images that build bridges between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning" (Boyer, 1990). This further involves differentiating information from wisdom and advocating for the return of imagination and mystery to education "so we are not merely educating technicians and pragmatic thinkers but are calling forth new vocations" (Halifax, 1999).

Consequently, educators can practice certain pedagogical approaches that present faculty and students with opportunities for spiritual exploration. Foremost is cultivating a space where genuine and respectful sharing can take place. This method confronts the very competitiveness of "marketplace education' (Lauzon, 2003) which often elevates competition for grades and classroom performance as the supreme goal. If the only message coming through is that the total worth of a student is solely based on how he or she excels in tests and required assignments, the classroom becomes a Darwinian setting merely for the survival of the fittest. It is not enough that students can reproduce large amounts of information on demand or that they pass examinations successfully. Neither is it enough for teachers to merely supply answers without giving students the space to ask questions or to connect the subject matter with the larger context of their lives. "The best teachers tend to embed the discipline's issues in broader concerns...and remind students how the current question relates to some larger issue that already interests them" (Bain, 2004).

The teaching environment should therefore be more open and hospitable to include "an ethic of care" (Albert, 2000) that reflects the social, emotional, and intellectual connectedness of the total learning process. This approach makes room for the student whose contribution to classroom discourse may be more reflective than informative and whose approach to the subject matter may be more holistic than linear. As one educator succinctly argues, "You do not teach a class. You teach a student" (Baker, 1997).

Encouraging and requiring students to take responsibility for their own learning is also another pedagogical means of creating meaning, purpose, and motivation. This includes the creation of "learning communities" that foster supportive relationships and offer more opportunity for personal interaction and collaborative learning beyond the traditional transfer of information from the lecturer's podium to the student's

notebook. With learning communities, power and control do not reside in the teacher or in a few selected members of the class. In contrast, the distribution of learning tools and the ownership of results is more egalitarian. Such an approach also allows for such inquiries as "What major conclusions have emerged?" "What questions remain?" "Does this make sense?" What have we learned here?"

Similarly, creating a culture of empowerment and teamwork means trusting collective effort over individual achievement. "We are, therefore I am," has a communal resonance, is less hierarchical, and connotes a more expansive worldview. When learning communities are in place, transformative learning also becomes increasingly possible. To illustrate, a class in introductory literature can approach the poetry component of the course differently. Instead of the usual graded assignment for each individual student on his or her interpretation of an assigned poem, the instructor divides the class into small groups. The shared task is to study a poem on war and to listen to the group's responses to the images evoked by the text. What results is a deeper connection among the participants, as one student, for instance, verbalizes for the first time his fear of dying and another reflects on her belief in love as a power stronger than death. These shared discussions can also be reinforced by journal writing that enables the individual student and the group to articulate their responses to the objective and subjective content of the course. As a result, this not only makes the subject matter relevant to students' lives but it also opens up the discourse to a higher level of consciousness and exploration.

In this regard, the course content, in an introductory literature course as an example, can use a holistic approach in the teaching of the humanities. Based on the premise that both wonderful and terrible things happen to human beings, the assigned readings should ideally include a balance of the

literature of hope and the literature of despair.[4] For instance, a course on the short story may include a fictional account of an obsessed young man's doomed search for pleasure and the gilded life, as a contrast to the story of an elderly woman—poor and socially marginalized—who defies obstacles so she can keep her dying grandson alive.

"Paul's Case" by Willa Cather and "A Worn Path" by Eudora Welty (Perrine, 1998) respectively dramatize the folly of self-delusion and the depths of courage that the human spirit is capable of. One without the other would merely present a lopsided view of the human condition. In this case, a balanced choice of readings guides students toward greater authenticity in their search for truth and offers more than a purely reductionist view of life.

In addition, the syllabus as a teaching tool should have some flexibility. The tendency to "cover the material" at whatever cost has to be balanced by the more creative option of using the syllabus as a guide that is responsive to the needs of students. On a highly dramatic scale, sticking to the assigned material for a class that met on September 11, 2001 would have been untenable, as terrorist attacks against the United States stunned the nation.[5] In less catastrophic settings, it is just as important to listen to the psycho-social configuration of a class in determining whether what the syllabus requires breathes life into the classroom or stifles it. In some cases, it may involve "teaching less but teaching deeply" (Weimer, 2003).

What of the educator who is committed to infusing a greater sense of well-being and wellness to the art of teaching? In academe, to what extent are faculty encouraged to integrate innovative learning strategies with traditional pedagogy? Are the spiritual dimensions of one's work congruent with teaching as vocation? Is the teacher, a key player in day-to-day classroom transactions, supported by the academic institution?

If the academy is "a place of fierce combat over small stakes" (Austin, 2004), the task of surviving in an inhospitable environment leaves little room for imaginative teaching. If only individual professional achievement is rewarded and the strong undercurrent of fierce competition is not questioned, defensiveness and lack of trust dominate the workplace. If the institution has a near-total absence of reflectiveness, teaching inevitably becomes fragmented and ultimately irrelevant.

On the other hand, if the sphere of values in an institution of higher learning includes a sense of community and caring, much can happen. Interdisciplinary programs and collaborative work among faculty and students become the norm. The quality of life in the university is no longer measured solely by its ratings in research, funding, or test scores, but also by a shared purpose and collegial integrity. Faculty development takes into account the values, beliefs, hopes, fears, and frustrations of teachers in addition to technological advancement and performance evaluation. Students, the ultimate stakeholders in higher education, subsequently benefit from an academic climate that encourages the development of the whole person.

In *The Courage to Teach,* Parker J. Palmer, one of the foremost proponents of spirituality in higher education, proclaims that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher…Good teachers are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves." The subtitle of the book: "Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life" further illustrates that identity and integrity encompass both the "shadows and limits … the strengths and potentials" that one brings to the vocation of teaching.

William Butler Yeats, the poet, uses metaphor to describe education as "not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Beyond the accumulation of facts, figures, or skills, learning at its best awakens and inspires the spirit. Furthermore, teaching as an ongoing relational process poses enormous challenges for growth and transformation. Palmer's (1998) notion that "[t]echnique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives" presumes life-long learning. That teaching requires courage is not mere hyperbole but a reference to the vulnerabilities inherent in the work of guiding and inspiring.

In conclusion, spirituality and pedagogy in higher education are worth considering in light of the nature of teaching itself. Ignoring the realm of spiritual formation in the lives of students, particularly at a time when artifice abounds in the culture, can be detrimental. In the words of Diane Chapman Walsh, president of Wellesley College, supporting students in the process of transformational growth means guiding them "in developing not only knowledge and skill but also qualities of mind and spirit that will carry them through their lives: wide-ranging curiosity, a taste for scholarship, for ideas, for intellectual challenge and exchange; a willingness to take responsibility for what they count as truth, and why; an openness to multiple viewpoints, and a commitment to self-critique."[6]

One starts with the belief that education, being more than the transfer of cognitive information, is undergirded by the human need to connect knowledge with wisdom, learning with transformation. With institutional support, the teacher then proceeds to translate this concept through curricular and instructional practices that value spirituality. What results from this partnership could, in fact, be insightful and even joyful. When both teacher and student agree to create safe spaces for creative dialogue, the craft of teaching is well-served. When an institution of higher learning gives its blessing to education that inspires and transforms, it joins a growing number of colleges and universities around the world

committed to exploring new approaches to education in the twenty-first century. In the end, teaching reclaims the heartbeat it truly deserves.

Notes

[1] These 3 books represent a growing trend in American higher education that advocates for holistic teaching. In 1998, a national gathering attended by 1000 participants from 250 educational institutions convened at Wellesley College in Massachusetts to discuss religious pluralism, spirituality, and a new vision for academic life in America.

[2] In 2001 – 2002, a survey funded by the Pew Charitable Trust at the University of California in Los Angeles tracked over 3,000 college students from 50 colleges and universities regarding the role of spirituality and religion in their academic life. Representing a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, the participants noted that spiritual and religious concerns affected their academic, social, and emotional well-being. See *The Journal of College Development*, Volume 44, number 6, November-December, 2003.

[3] Women writers in particular have consistently supported the concept of spirituality and pedagogy in higher education. This is strongly reinforced by Mary Rose O'Reilly in *Radical Presence, Teaching as Contemplative Practice.*

[4] I developed this theme in a Centennial lecture on "A Long Night's Journey into Day: Reclaiming the Literature of Hope" at Silliman University, Philippines, August, 2001.

[5] In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published several articles on soul-searching in academe. Among the topics were questions asked by Ph.D. candidates on the seeming irrelevance of their research in light of global terrorism and matters of life and death.

[6] The Religious and Spiritual Life program at Wellesley College, led by a team of chaplains, advisers, and student leaders, support the spiritual, educational, and worship needs of many different faith traditions. This is seen as fundamental to the college's core educational mission.

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GREEN ROOM PLAYERS OF GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSSETTS: BRINGING COMMUNITY THEATER INTO THE COMMUNITY

Ruby L. Ordinario Agnir

ABSTRACT

Well documented as being the most widely attended venue for theater in America, community theater is a very important vehicle in establishing many aspects of a community's cultural and social life. Community theater puts into practice notions of how plays could energize and benefit all those who had dealings with it. Since its founding in 1983, the Green Room Players has offered opportunities for the full diversity of the community to engage in meaningful exploration through play production. By presenting new or unfamiliar, as well as familiar plays, the Green Room Players brings the transformative power of theater to audiences of Greenfield, Massachussetts. For the Green Room Players, every performance draws an impressive commitment from each individual as they share a sense of having created something significant both in terms of the play and its effect on the intellectual and emotional development of their community.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY THEATER?

It is the form of theater, perhaps the most popular form, in which all or most of the people involved are amateurs, that is, unpaid. Usually, only the director, the musicians, the choreographer, the set designer, the set builders, and the lighting designer are paid fees. The actors, however, receive no remuneration.

This does not mean that community theater is of lower quality than professional theater. A great number of community theaters in the U.S. have gained a large degree of respectability. Personally, I have watched many, many Broadway and off-Broadway

productions, and can say unflinchingly that I have worked with community theater actors who are as good as or even better than some of the paid performers in New York. In fact, a great number of professional artists in the theater admit beginning their career in community theater.

Actors and staff members of community theaters are diverse individuals who are usually in other professions as well. From church ministers, health care providers, lawyers and teachers, to students, waitresses, janitors, or even jobless persons, community theater finds nuggets of theatrical talent that eventually explode into full-blown stage artistry.

Needless to say, a great difference between professional theater and community theater lies in the stage director's expectations of the actors. Because a professional actor's job is the theater production he or she is in, the actor's timetable is based on the requirements of the production. Rehearsal time and frequency are nailed down and the actor has to "punch the clock" accordingly. Because the production is the actor's job, the actor puts 100% into the role, studying it, researching into the relevant aspects of his role and the play as a whole, and learning the lines within the expected time before "off-books." If the play is a musical, music and words must be memorized very early in the preparation period. Dance routines call for mastering the dance steps and developing the precision and grace needed in as short a time as possible. An actor's entire physical state and mental set have just one focus—the strength and exactness of the characterization to contribute to the director's vision of the play, which in turn ensures the success of the show.

In contrast, community theater performers have to juggle their time, physical state, and mental set between the various hats they wear—most especially their careers, their families, their membership in civic organizations, their church, and whatever emergencies and conflicts may come up relative to all these. Sometimes, community theater is at the lowest end of an individual's priority totem pole. To many others, involvement in community

theater is very important, so that it could rival the importance of some of their other activities. This depends greatly on what they get from such an involvement. To most non-professional actors, the theater gives them the opportunity to escape from the real world; to become someone different from what they really are, to exhibit their histrionic and musical talents that they know they have, and to have fun. More importantly, community theater is a place to find and meet other people with the same interest and following the same quest. Where the production's atmosphere is pleasant, lasting friendships and even love relationships have been known to flourish.

QUESTIONS ABOUT HAVING AN ACTIVE COMMUNITY THEATER IN A COMMUNITY

What good is having a theater in a community? What does a theater offer that movies and TV shows do not or cannot? My experience as founding and artistic director of a community theater group in Massachusetts, U.S.A. can provide some answers to these questions.

Franklin County, located in Western Massachusetts, has its seat in a small (18,000 population) town called Greenfield. Although merely a small dot on the map, this New England County boasts of a decades-old symphony orchestra, a 100-voice symphony chorus, an opera company, several concert bands, a few coffeehouses that provide a venue for budding folksingers and improv actors, a dozen or so dance studios, and numerous community theater organizations.[1]

In 1974, when we arrived in Greenfield, there were two community theater groups in existence, Arena Civic Theater and The Country Players. After getting involved with both of these companies, and liking the experiences, I decided to form a third theater company, Green Room Players, in 1983 to help meet the burgeoning interest in and tacit demand for theater in the county. "Green room" refers to that room or area backstage where actors prepare before a performance or wait while they are not needed on stage. This became the name of the company.

Although GRP was not established to be a rival, it had to be different in some aspects from the existing ones. Ideas emerged that gave rise to objectives for the new company.

OBJECTIVES OF GREEN ROOM PLAYERS

- ***To provide a training place for those who have talents in the theater arts, young or old, novice or experienced.***

At no time does one really achieve one's optimum level. There is always room for improvement, and the pursuit of excellence must continue. Participating in my company, actors realized this was what I offered and some of those who started with me are now professionals on the stage, including Broadway, as well as in California, Germany, and elsewhere. Working with the inexperienced and the very young, one needs to bear in mind that a child never forgets his/her first director. If the experience was genial and pleasurable, that child would continue to pursue theater. Conversely, if disagreeable, theater would not become a future endeavor. Happily, those who had their start with Green Room Players have continued to get involved in succeeding plays of the company, as their schoolwork allowed them to, as well as in their own school plays.

Once a teacher always a teacher, so the saying goes. I became known as a "teaching director," for I loved sharing what I knew and believed in, as well as relaying "trade secrets" gleaned from my experiences as an actress and director. Green Room Players suddenly became a hands-on training ground in the theatrical arts. Comments or remarks to correct and improve a scene or a character interpretation have been given like classroom lectures and how-to instructions to the entire company. This way, the entire company learned, instead of an individual performer singled out for correction.

- ***To provide an opportunity for the staging of unknown or relatively unfamiliar plays, as well as familiar plays that had not been shown in the area for at least 9 or 10 years.***

There are thousands and thousands of plays waiting to be performed, as several theater library catalogs attest. The Samuel French, Inc. Catalog itself has at least 4,000 titles. Green Room Players offers only two productions a year: a full-length (i.e., 3-act) comedy in the spring and a full-length musical in the summer. Among the first productions of Green Room Players were the comedies *The Second Time Around, One Toe in the Grave, Let's Murder Marsha, Our Gal Sal*, none of which was known nor performed to area audiences. The earliest musical production was composed of two unfamiliar fairy tales: *The Magic Nutmeg-Grater* and *The Toymaker*. This was followed by Rodgers and Hart's *Babes in Arms*, and the heretofore-unperformed (beyond Broadway) musical plays: *Snoopy, A Wonderful Life,* and *Barnum.* Ten years after I played Bloody Mary in *South Pacific*, I decided to bring the play to the community once more, this time under my direction. It was followed by *Grease*, which had not been performed in the area and for which a special permit to produce had to be obtained because it was currently being performed professionally in New York and by a touring company. A favorite staple of high schools but not of community theater groups, *Bye Bye Birdie* followed. *Pajama Game* was next; it had never been shown in Western Massachusetts. Happily, in spite of the unfamiliarity of most of the plays to audiences and critics, all of these productions were well received and given rave reviews by community critics, one of whom referred to this director as "the community's musical theater maven."

- ***To provide clean entertainment — no smut, no nudity, no gore***

Great care needs to be taken in choosing scripts. Green Room Players' productions have always been known to be suitable

and enjoyable for the entire family, which means delightful G-rated entertainment. They had to be clean in language and action. "Dirty" language in any chosen play needs to be replaced — unless it is essential to characterization of a particular role. More often than not, "dirty" words are not essential and good plays can stand without them. In addition, since suggestion is powerful in art, violence need not be recreated in detail in community theater. Unless it is the core of the play itself, such as the torturous and brutal death of Jesus in Mel Gibson's acclaimed movie, *The Passion,* violence in community theater should only be suggested via the acting and reacting of the performers. Similarly, nudity can only be hinted at or worked out so that the nakedness of an actor, if indeed necessary, is not exposed to the viewers. What would be the purpose of nudity on the stage or realistic violence for that matter? The question that needs to be answered concerning dirty language, nudity, or gore is "Can the play communicate the playwright's message without rendering such objectionable things realistically? "

- ***To be a vehicle for fund-raising to benefit charitable and non-profit organizations.***

This is the objective that truly differentiates Green Room Players from all the other theater groups. The only people who receive any kind of monetary remuneration are the technical and professional members of the staff, such as the lighting designer, music director, and pianist, set designer and construction, and choreographer. The rest, including the director, actors, and stage crew, give their time and talent as a labor of love. A few times, because of the generosity of the sponsor of a particular production, this director received a gift of 5%-10% of the proceeds. Otherwise, all the proceeds have gone to non-profit agencies picked for a particular production.

In order to be able to donate a respectable amount of money, the productions have had to cut corners. First to do away with are *expensive sets*. An insightful director will choose a script

carefully. There are so many scripts designed with a "bare stage" in mind, that a good one which requires very little alteration can be easily found. It is one of the particular knacks of being a director in this genre. The director can work in earnest with the set designers so that minimal sets are used. One interior set is generally sufficient in the case of many plays. Believing in the power of suggestion in any artistic endeavor, actors recognize that it is the quality of their acting, singing, or dancing that could mesmerize the audience, and not spectacular sets or backdrops. Having jaw-dropping sets seldom guarantees a great production.

Extravagant costumes are the next to reject. The director either chooses a play that does not require them or, following the idea of the power of suggestion, hires a costumer who can create apparel that just hints at the actual costumes. *Technically complex lighting design and equipment* can be rejected, too. A truly creative lighting designer can produce suggestive lighting instead of elaborate and expensive technical effects.

Because cuts in expenses have been taken, Green Room Players has been able to give respectable amounts of monetary donations from the proceeds of each production. Beneficiaries of GRP productions include churches, public schools, The Salvation Army, as well as charitable organizations including the Order of the Eastern Star, Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, and ALS Research under the aegis of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. MDA honored Green Room Players with an award for strengthening awareness in and supporting the research for ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), to which it has donated a total of $9,000. Needless to say, the cast and crew of each production have been living up to the GRP motto: "Helping Others while Having Fun."

- ***To develop a family-type environment that can result in long-term friendships among members of the company.***

Over the years of GRP's existence, about 50 people have continued to be in its productions. The warmth and congeniality that was fostered in every GRP production company have resulted in life-long friendships. A mother-children relationship between director and the actors continually emerges. The actors are the director's "surrogate children." Such a relationship is impossible to achieve without the director working hard at establishing it and making it a personal goal. One of the ways a pleasant working atmosphere can pervade is the rejection of "prima donnas" and other destructive personalities—the know-it-alls, the I-am-better-than-yous, the directorial and managerial individuals, and the like. Jealousies must be nipped in the bud, although sometimes it is good to give these people a second chance if they have potentially great talent.

While actors are given leeway to express their own interpretation of the characters they are playing, they have to understand and accept that the director is the authority, right or wrong, and that a production must be the director's vision. If their interpretation agrees with the director's vision, then it is acceptable and, therefore, incorporated. If it is not, then what the director wants goes.

THE PRODUCTION IS THE DIRECTOR'S VISION

Many times, the director's vision is vastly different from how a play has been shown in film and other theater productions. There is no "one way" of producing even the most popular plays. The Broadway production or a movie rendering is not the only way a play can be interpreted. A case in point is *Brigadoon,* the popular musical about a Scottish island that appears only once in a hundred years. The film version was reoriented to showcase the dancing talents of Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly. The stage play, on the other hand, requires that the characters Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly portrayed sing beautifully and do not need to dance. *The King and I* is another example of a play that can be produced in many ways. Yul Brynner, although much touted as the

consummate "king," interpreted the role in a way unacceptable to this director. Brynner was so strong a personality that he failed to convincingly show moments of weakness when the king's passion for bringing western culture to his country clashed with his desire to be a good king to his people. (Also, King Mongkut, the historical basis for this character, had a full head of hair!) Fortunately, some succeeding "kings" have done better — Lou Diamond Phillips and Stacy Keach, to name a few.

Furthermore, the actors need to understand and accept that when they are not cast in the role they want there is only one reason: the role does not fit them or they do not fit the role, according to the director's vision. Another more appropriate role in another play may be waiting for them. It is as simple as that. This attitude encourages actors to be happy with whatever roles are assigned to them, and to recognize that there are no small roles. When all of this is achieved, a wonderful ambience is generated.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY GAINS FROM HAVING A COMMUNITY THEATER

To go back to the questions posed earlier, what does a community gain from community theater?

First, people's participation in the arts, in general, and theater, in particular, has a profound influence on their future life direction. Once-introverted personalities have become more outgoing and more confident in social intercourse. Drifting, aimless teenagers have found a niche in community theater in which they find better use of their time and have learned to handle responsibility. Other people have become leaders in the community and they find that delivering speeches in front of an audience has become a comfortable undertaking when earlier they would have refused to do so. Still others have become happier realizing they have a world to escape to from their day-to-day cares. Participants in community theater have become individuals whose self-esteem has been elevated to a

high degree, and are psychologically ready to get involved with other community activities.

Second, working with various kinds of personalities toward a common goal is a great training tool for handling non-theatrical community goals. People-skills are developed. Respect for authority becomes second nature. Community theater can lay the groundwork for good citizenship and leadership - especially for the young.

Third, because of the participants' involvement in other aspects of their community, community theater usually has a broad base of support. Its productions are patronized by people who know some of the members of the cast or the production crew, people who otherwise would not attend theater productions. Giving support to community theater becomes a familiar and even traditional activity for many people, which eventually leads to a willingness to give support to non-theatrical activities of the community.

TYPES OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community support comes in various forms. The community can show its support for and meet the needs of community theater by many ways.

The most obvert is *monetary donations from businesses and individuals*. Thus, a production can have a list of donors that could be categorized according to the amount they give. A common way of categorizing is the use of such terms as "Benefactors," "Patrons," "Angels," and "Friends."

Another type of support is *buying of advertising space in the playbill* (the show's printed program) by businesses and institutions. An entire page can be worth $100; half page $50; and a quarter page $25. $10 could include a person's name on a list of "Friends."

A third type is *donations of food and cold drinks by grocery stores*. During the intermission, a food concession stand

may be opened to sell soda and cookies at a low price. The grocery-store donations can help boost proceeds.

In addition, *other simple moneymaking activities* can be held at the entrance to the auditorium. Souvenir T-shirts, ball caps, magnets, etc. could be ordered from a local printing company at minimal cost, or even as a donation in exchange for ad space in the playbill, and then sold to the theatergoers. A "telegram" table could be set up where "telegrams" are sold to theatergoers. These are handed by runners to friends or family who are members of the cast. Other souvenirs, such as fans for a hot evening, could be sold at minimum cost, perhaps 50 cents or less per fan.

One very important community theater need is space. The community could *provide performance and rehearsal space*. If there is no auditorium with a stage specifically designed for theater, community buildings with large halls are often utilized for theater productions. Churches, schools, and other buildings with lecture halls either rent their space out to the theater company or sometimes offer it for use free of charge.

STRAIGHT DRAMA

As director, I have stayed away from heavy or straight drama for one reason. Experience has shown that people go to watch a play that entertains them and makes them forget for two hours their day-to-day problems. This has been proven time and time again by the small number of theatergoers that attend straight drama presentations compared to those who fill the house to watch musicals and comedies.

There is a place for what can be termed as a "community play" or "political play." These plays are specially written and adapted for the community to express specific wishes, needs, concerns, political beliefs; or to celebrate an event. The production of such a play is usually of interest to a specific group. An example would be a play about battered women. There are other media that address social, political, moral,

ethical problems in a serious manner, even write plays and produce them. They should be encouraged to do it.

KEY PERSONNEL OF A COMMUNITY THEATER COMPANY

Community theater requires the collaboration of a number of talented people. Not counting the playwright, (and composer and lyricist, in case of musicals), the top business person is the *Producer*. He/She enters into a contract with the theater library that holds the rights to the chosen play, and orders the scripts and other relevant books and materials. The producer raises the seed money for the production and hires the needed personnel. Among those hired are: *Stage Director* (or simply *Director*), who is in charge of the artistic elements of the production; *the Stage Manager,* the *Designers* (scenery, lighting, sound, costumes, makeup, hairstyles); the *Props Master*, who is in charge of obtaining hand props (things handled by performers, such as a book, food, or a watch) and taking care of set props which are integral part of the set design (such as furniture, wall decor, lamps); the *Press Agent*, who is in charge of publicity; the *Playbill Editor*, who puts together the printed program; and various *assistants* to these people. For a musical, a few additional important professionals are hired: the *Musical Director*, who is in charge of all musical matters; the *Choreographer*, who creates and directs the dancing; the *Orchestra Director*, who conducts the orchestra or pit band; the *Musicians* who play the various instruments needed; and the *Rehearsal Pianist* who may also be the *Performance Pianist.*[2]

With so many "leaders" in specific aspects of the production, it would not be desirable for all of them to have different interpretations of the show. For this reason, the Stage Director is given the responsibility of controlling the overall artistic impression of the production. The Stage Director, therefore, must have the patience and communicative skills to get everyone working on the play to make it succeed—according to his/her vision. In turn, these

"leaders" must respect the authority of the Stage Director, consulting with him/her before making final decisions on how to carry out their individual responsibilities. Scheduling of rehearsals, especially, is a matter of grave importance and needs to be agreed upon before rehearsals begin to avoid unnecessary conflicts.[3]

The Stage Director schedules tryouts ("auditions") to select the performers. If the play is a musical, the Choreographer and Musical Director join the Stage Director in evaluating each auditionee. The Stage Director may want to have an Assistant Director, or even a Co-Director, depending on how complicated the play is. This person would also be at the auditions and gives his/her input on whom to cast in what role.

There are instances when roles are pre-cast and no auditions are held. When done, this is usually for lead roles. This sub-form of community theater is referred to as Pro-Am Community Theater. It involves both paid professionals and unpaid amateurs with equal chances for principal roles. They turn up to take part in a production at the discretion of the director.[4] Because of the number of Green Room Players' "alumni" who have become professional, appearing on Broadway and other noted theaters in the U.S. and abroad, the summer 2004 GRP production of *The King and I* exemplified Pro-Am Community Theater. The roles of Anna, Luntha, and Eliza were given to professionals, but the King was played by an experienced, although not a professional actor.[5]

Conclusion

Bringing community theater, regardless of type, into the community is an exciting, pleasurable, and fruitful endeavor. However, a symbiotic relationship between the community and the theater company (or companies) is necessary to achieve the optimal gain for both. As Neil Beddow writes in his *Turning Points*, community support for community theater "gives the chance to gain recognition for the arts as an integral and essential part of people's lives, rather than a peripheral activity for an intellectual or privileged elite."[6]

Notes

[1] This culturally rich area has been home to the Agnir family for close to 30 years.

[2] Elaine A. Novak & Deborah Novak. *Staging Musical Theatre*. Cincinnati, Ohio, Betterway Books, 1996, pages 1 ff.

[3] Elaine A. Novak & Deborah Novak. *Staging Musical Theatre*. Cincinnati, Ohio, Betterway Books, 1996, page 1.

[4] *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. An open-content, multi-lingual online encyclopedia. 2001.

[5] Federico Agnir, an experienced actor but not a professional, played this role.

[6] Neil Beddow. *Turning Points, the impact of participation in Community theater*. ed. by Mary Schwarz. Bristol, England: South West Arts. 2001

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THE HOUSES WE INHABIT
A reading of Edith L. Tiempo's *The Builder*

Vicente Garcia Groyon

One isn't quite sure what to make of a novel like *The Builder* (Anvil Publishing, 2003). On the one hand, it sets up certain expectations by virtue of the elements that it assembles in its opening pages, and then proceeds to thwart those expectations as though it were unaware of them. On the other hand, its modest length and scope are weighted down by its author's stature and reputation, demanding more of it than it is prepared to deliver. This tug-of-war between the textual and extratextual creates an uncertainty, a paranoia, in the reader that could enhance his appreciation and understanding of the novel, or leave him clouded by more ambiguity than the author intended.

The notion of a "literary" writer attempting a "popular" genre inevitably raises the bar for the work in question. The reader expects a balancing act between remaining true to the genre while reinventing it, and expects it to be done in as dazzling a fashion as possible. For such a writer to produce "just" a genre piece is unthinkable, even if it was done well, and even if the writer were to dazzle, the consensus would be that he or she was merely slumming.

This is the dilemma of National Artist Edith L. Tiempo and *The Builder*, a novel which is, to all appearances, a whodunit. The dilemma of the reader of *The Builder* is to resolve the paranoia, or at least marshal it to serve the pleasure of reading the book.

The hasty pigeonholing of this novel into the detective fiction category is due primarily to the murder that serves as inciting incident to the main plotline of the story. One minute Physics graduate student Valeria Bituan-Uy (of the Dumaguete Bituan-Uys) is chatting with her professor, Felix Acuña, on a tree-lined street outside her school, and the next minute she is brutally killed in broad daylight: "Behind them the motorist had zoomed his [motorcycle] across the street and when he came

abreast of Val, he lifted a short iron rod and whammed it at the back of her head" (17-18).

The simplicity of the crime's rendering makes the flash of violence even more shocking and unexpected. The perpetrator is described as "a dark man, not tall but well set up, the build of an athlete about him" (17).

Before she dies, Val manages to whisper the words "Sa gawas lang" (Outside only, 18) to Acuña who, unwitting and unwilling eyewitness, is immediately drawn to solving the mystery of the killing, becoming the novel's ad hoc detective.

At this point, most similarities to the standard whodunit disappear. Although the novel is also concerned primarily with determining the killer's identity and motives, and the police are depicted (realistically) as ineffectual, the other conventional elements that typify the genre are conspicuously missing, and readers expecting a mere whodunit will be sorely disappointed.

To begin with, the killing itself is not constructed as an elaborate puzzle, and is performed in plain view, with witnesses. The detective is not eccentric, flamboyant, or deceptively unassuming. Discoveries of crucial pieces of information are made by secondary characters and relayed to the hero second-hand. The murder case is abandoned by the narrative for long stretches as we follow our ad hoc hero through his mundane routine or reminiscences of his childhood. There is no colorful line-up of suspects, since the criminal could easily be identified by the witnesses to the crime, and no grand unmasking of the villain after a detailed explanation by the detective of how the murder was carried out.

Instead, we have a staid, boring academic assisted by a Watson/Girl Friday figure in the person of Debbie Ferraris, a close friend of Val's. We also have a murderer who, while sinister at first, gradually earns sympathy, even respect, until he is absolved totally by the end of the novel. Finally, we have a narrative that takes its sweet time getting to its resolution, wandering idly in and out of the past, updating us on the mystery

at hand almost as an afterthought.

For the most part, *The Builder*, like detective fiction in general, is concerned with the restoration of order in a world thrown into disequilibrium by a murder. The return to order, the sense of justice being served, as signified by the capture and/or punishment of the murderer, is what makes the genre so satisfying and pleasurable to readers.

Justice is also Tiempo's concern, but her numerous deviations from the rules of the genre clearly indicate that she is after a more complex sense of justice and order. A closer examination of the novel's plotlines, characters, and motifs bears this out. On the whole, Tiempo is not interested in convention or reinvention. This is a story about fathers and sons, succession and permanence, and lasting legacies, set against the easy, comforting atmosphere of Dumaguete and its neighboring towns. It only happens to be incited by a murder.

The city's smallness and the familiarity of its inhabitants with each other make their reactions to the crime, and their emotional involvement in it, plausible. This is a place where everyone knows everyone else, and it is still possible to genuinely care for someone outside of one's immediate family and circle of friends. Tiempo captures both the flavor and the relaxed pace of the city in the rhythms of her dialogue as well as in the leaps of time that occur: A week, ten days, a month pass without little comment in between sections, but the characters—literate, articulate, and sensitive as they are—remain thoroughly immersed in the complications of the case.

The novel's main plotline follows Acuña's gradual coming to awareness of the identity and motives of the murderer. Colluding with Debbie Ferraris and hounded by Police Inspector Dolmes, he pieces together the meaning of Val's last words and other pieces of evidence, chief among them the notes that the killer had been exchanging with Val. Acuña's detecting style is rather passive, though, being a professor steeped in the predictable laws of the physical world and complacent in the knowledge that

what goes up must come down, sooner or later. Sure enough, the killer soon enlists Acuña as an intermediary through whom he can explain his side of the matter, thereby forcing Acuña to increase his stake in the case.

A document in the possession of Val's mother is the object of contention, and after Mrs. Bituan-Uy refuses to turn it over to the killer or even say what it contains, he takes it from her at gunpoint and flees, first to Cebu, then Davao.

By this point, the killer has already been revealed to be Pastor Liwanagan Gimod, missionary, trained nurse, and tribal community leader. From then on, the focus of the plot is on why a man of such a moral, ethical background would resort to violence.

After his escape, Acuña, Ferraris, and Dolmes glean what they can of his background, but otherwise nothing much else happens for some time, until they receive word that Gimod lies dying of a brain tumor in a Davao hospital. Debbie goes to see him and brings back a sealed confession letter in which Gimod partially explains himself and his actions.

Later, the son of Gimod's wife (from a previous marriage) pays Acuña a visit and fills in the holes in his stepfather's story. Abel Alampayen's real father, it turns out, was Don Vicente Bituan-Uy—Valeria's father. The document that Gimod stole was Don Vicente's admission of paternity, and Gimod hoped that the hitherto unrecognized blood ties could help Abel, fledgling scientist, source funds to start a research company. Despite all that has happened, however, Abel declines his new lineage and goes on his way, and Acuña and his wife and son finally rest easy.

The inheritance twist is a standard device in 19th century British novels; interestingly, these novels are regarded by many to be the direct ancestors of the country manor murder mysteries that flourished in the first half of the 20th century.* In *The Builder*, Tiempo intends it to be a major theme, as the other plotlines would suggest.

The most dominant subplot revolves around Acuña's desire to build a house in the town of Cantil-e outside Dumaguete City proper, on a plot of land inherited from his mother, in time for the birth of his first child (a boy). A whole chapter (out of only five in this slim novel) brings us to a picnic he, his wife, and his architect enjoy on the plot of land while planning the construction. Throughout the novel we are also treated to flashbacks to Acuña's peripatetic childhood when, as the son of a government auditor, he and his siblings were moved from place to place depending on where their father was assigned. The flashbacks each take place in a specific house they lived in, each house creating its own memories. By the end of the novel, Acuña and his family are living peacefully in the house, at home in a permanent spot at last.

A secondary subplot involves one of Acuña's graduate students, Paolo Cortobuena, who happens to be reluctant heir apparent to the directorship of the Cortobuena Institute of Science and Technology, where Acuña teaches. Don Lope Cortobuena bluntly makes it Acuña's responsibility to whip the wayward youth into shape before taking over the institute. Acuña manages to, after a fashion, but only by adopting the role of friend-father rather than authoritarian-father. He manages a stop-gap compromise in which both the elder and younger Cortobuena get what they want, if only temporarily.

Even a cursory appraisal of these plotlines reveals common themes. All three, in different ways, are about creating balance and harmony in situations disrupted by violence, transience, or differing priorities. All three involves fathers natural and surrogate, and sons illegitimate and adopted.

In juxtaposing three sets of fathers and sons, Tiempo is apparently exploring the question of fatherhood and the responsibilities it entails, the demands it makes of a man. Her three fathers—Acuña, Cortobuena, and Gimod—all desire a stable future for their sons, although each one takes radically different steps to achieving it. Cortobuena is perhaps the least successful, though not necessarily the least well-intentioned. Gimod's methods

may be unacceptable to many, but his act is essentially a selfless sacrifice of his life and of any claim to fatherhood of Abel, since he ultimately seeks, at any cost, Bituan-Uy's paternity for Abel and the sort of opportunities denied to one of his origins. Quiet, plodding Acuña takes the most conventional path, working steadily to construct the home he longed for as a child (in an apparent irony, on land inherited from his mother, not his father). In their quest to establish solid foundations for their progeny, these fathers demonstrate what Tiempo spells out in the novel's epigraph and reiterates in its closing lines: "*...[W]hat's in whatever amazing accomplishment anyone built in a lifetime?—it's the builder, the father of his works, he has the honor*" (144).

Moreover, these two men represent opposing moral and ethical worlds, one dominant, the other subordinate. The intrusion of the subjugated world (Gimod's indigenous background, with its codes of vengeance and justice by the sword) into the ruling world (Acuña's "civilized," lawful, bourgeois environment) is the struggle from which the narrative gains its movement. Clearly, the story is told from within Acuña's enclosure, and Gimod—his actions and motives—form an obscure "other" that must be probed and understood before order can be restored and peace of mind attained.

Tiempo daringly rationalizes Gimod's crime by portraying the Bituan-Uys as arrogant, abusive, and unable to control the power they hold; and emphasizing Gimod's nobility, honesty, and good deeds. Debbie Ferraris, driven by her need to understand, visits Gimod in the hospital, then the Mandebaan settlement he established. She relays to the Acuñas her newfound respect for Gimod upon seeing the thriving, simple home he created for his people. In their final discussion on the case, Acuña, his wife, and Ferraris finally gloss over Gimod's violence in the light of the good he had done and was trying to do.

However, the very same daring hints at Tiempo's own moral bias. For all the sympathy with which Gimod is portrayed,

he remains the dark Other, a cipher to be understood, an anomaly to be tolerated for his "tribal" origins, conveniently afflicted with a brain tumor that could have affected his judgment. The relative ease with which Acuña, by the luck of his social position, is able to build a foundation for his son's future contrasts sharply with Gimod's fight to maintain claims on his people's ancestral lands which are constantly threatened by encroaching urban development (a situation echoed by Acuña's decision to build his home outside of crowded Dumaguete City). In the novel's final scene, Acuña's wife correctly (and incorrectly) sums up Gimod's actions as compounded by his "tribal defensiveness" (143). Gimod himself admits of his people, "I want them to hurt—that's the only way" (129).

Intriguingly, Abel Alampayen's final decision thickens the ambiguity of the politics of the novel: He simultaneously refuses easy entrance into the dominant world (as facilitated by his secret lineage) while working on his own to "mainstream" himself (through his work as a research consultant for manufacturing companies). Debbie Ferraris also observes that in the Mandebaan settlement, the young men and women are studying or working in nearby cities, rather than remaining farmers in the town. These signs are clearly meant to indicate progress, but it is a progress defined by the dominant world. Abel seems clear about his reasons, though. Of the three fathers he has known, he chooses his second stepfather—"the only father I needed," he says (143)—but only on the basis of the intangible gifts that Gimod bestowed on him—love, pride, and honor—as opposed to more concrete legacies (like a house, for instance).

The house as a physical structure is the prominent motif of this novel. Houses are constructed, moved into, lived in, or visited, blown away by wind, burned down. The sense of belonging that comes with ownership and prolonged habitation is a driving need in Acuña and Gimod, but there are also intimations of the darker aspects of such a structure.

The novel begins and ends with scenes of cozy domesticity: first of Acuña's father playing a game of "Guess-the-Capitals" with his brood at twilight on the porch of their rented home, and finally a tableau of permanence—Acuña, now grown up, in his own newly-built home with his own wife and son, watching another man's son walk away into a certain, stable future.

Legitimate and illegitimate children, and the places where they find their respective freedoms and happinesses, are set against each other, indicating that the houses we inhabit are, at best, only symbols. Paolo Cortobuena finds a father figure outside the home in Acuña. Valeria Bituan-Uy, although living a comfortable life, is beset by domestic problems arising from her father's misbehavior and lives in what appears to be an emotionally distant, sterile home environment.

And yet, one cannot do without the comfort and security of a physical structure. A flashback shows the distress of Acuña's friend when his home is threatened by fire and the lengths to which an anonymous woman goes to save her old sewing machine from the flames. Later we witness Acuña's own unease at spending the night at a relative's house (symbolized by his fear of an elemental said to live in a wooden house-post). In a subsequent scene, a secondary character suggests that a person not associated with a house may as well be a wandering spirit. However, in a sly inversion, a passage describes how, at the birth of Acuña's son, his brothers and sisters telephone their congratulations one after the other, from different parts of the world.

This tension between the concepts of "house" and "home" lies at the heart of *The Builder* and brings it to its leisurely, inevitable epilogue. What goes up must come down indeed, the author seems to affirm, even when we don't always want it to. Still, the novel's optimistic ending hints that although Acuña has only begun taking root for his family, he is better equipped by having seen and felt the differences between physical and metaphysical homes.

A life without foundations, Tiempo suggests, is a life without order. In this novel the restoration of order lies not in punishing the murderer, but in building foundations. Those who take firm root and allow others to prosper in their shade are honorable, if only because they have cleared a space in which things greater than they will ever be can be allowed to happen.

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*This insight comes from Steven Johnson's perceptive essay on Robert Altman's film *Gosford Park*, "The ghosts of 'Gosford Park'" found at http://archive.salon.com/ent/movies/feature/2002/01/24/gosford_novels/print.html.

A Note on *The Builder*

By Edith Lopez Tiempo

26 May 2004

Dear Dave,

That tropical depression three weeks ago played havoc with many travel plans; it derailed the schedules of two of the Workshop panelists—you in the second week and Rofel Brion in the third week. Dr. Brion arrived in Dumaguete City by the skin of his teeth, arriving late, in the midst of the afternoon session of Tuesday that week. Of course the Workshop in Bohol missed your cool and astute critiquing, Dave, but there is always the next year's summer to look forward to, for which I hope you will be free from duties to join us.

Your letter received yesterday was a "shot in the arm" after the post-Workshop threatening doldrums; the literary juices were quickly stirred reading about your very understandable unease with the ending of *The Builder*. I can understand your sense of justice jarred, given the strong moral aspects involved, in particular the blatant moral violations. Predictably, I was touched by your faith regarding your old mentor's dirrogations (?) from the so-called tried-and-true because, yes, indeed, there is a quantum leap into an abrogative but tenable moral stand that is meant not only to justify, but is more an attempt to startle into a new perception of evil and of what is morally assented in society.

Dear Dave, your belief in my deliberate "mal-sorties" is dead-center correct, especially in this case. And I could see by your quoting the passage from John Sparrow that you are—in this particular case—teetering on the edge of "heresy" yourself, or perhaps more accurately, on the fringe of certain heterodoxic clarifications. So let me now explain the not-too-tortuous "inversions" and "moral ambiguity," quoting from D.M. Reyes' generous blurb on the back cover:

> *Inversions*. An energetic high-minded religious, a pastor, is the murderer. But examine Pastor Lawanagan Gimod's portrayed character (attested to by others, *not* by his say-so)—look high and low for any evil tidbits in his depicted life and look in vain, for *this murderer is the noblest character in this story*.

Even the act of murder is, first, morally justified, as well as justifiable in the court of law: the law would acquit, for the reason that any man could get distressingly, harmfully erratic being afflicted with a pernicious brain tumor, and who in fact dies in the operation to excise it. Second, consistently his life's magnanimous motivations are vigorously carried out, but never on his own account, each effort undertaken for others: for his deprived stepson—not even his own son; further, he struggles by himself to save a tribal minority from extinction; further, there are the eight years spent on a boat assisting a suspectedly ambiguous defector, albeit a dedicated missionary doctor ministering to minority groups to the most deprived and forgotten in our society.

Of course the word *evil* may not be used to describe Valeria's proud and dismissive treatment of her half-brother's right to carry his natural father's name. And, in fact, in the end it turns out that with Abel, it's not a matter of pique on his part that he chooses not to bear his natural father's name; it is simply that Abel could tell who is his one and only "real" father—"... I had a choice of three—but he [Gimod] was the only father I needed," Abel's (and this book's) accolade to a great and noble self-effaced character who murdered a completely "blameless" young woman. Going back to Valeria, what sort of person is this that would spurn with insulting words and a categorical denial a reasonable request? One could at least give the request an audience—*and* politely then refuse. Her entire arrogant behavior in the matter flies grievously in the face of Micah the prophet's "... He has shown you, O man, what is good ... And what does the Lord require of

man but *to do justice, to love kindness, and to work humbly with God ...*" [emphasis mine]. By this measure her behavior is judged devoid of my moral justification.

Other characters in this story (like Debbie, Agnes, and Justice Victor Manolo) may be considered "fictionable" in the light of normal judicious behavior.

Inversion. The author of *The Builder* does not intend to impose her unorthodox viewpoint of morality or of justice, but only to show by these inversions that new viewpoints on the absolutistic terms "good" and "evil" could open up richer, more human and merciful enhancements of these moral principles. To carry out this intention, the author found the near-impossible (and impertinent, some would say) literary challenges of inversion in the risky use of the **non-hero** (the understated Felix Acuña) and the **anti-hero** (the minority tribal man, the pastor-cum-murderer Lawanagan Gimod). Some sharp literary critics may even write off this work as my insight on the possible literary effectiveness of "proclaiming" the non-hero and anti-hero and rather impertinently taking up the foolhardy enterprise!

Perhaps I erred on the matter of too much control; Acuña, who receives the central revelation of the story, may be too carefully non-heroic and even borders on the boresome side at times. It's true that both men are clearly purposive—but are definitely not cast as dashing heroes. Even Gimod, despite his exemplary lifetime of selfless efforts, is merely projected as sympathetic and with no overt justifying of the man or of his crime.

And to your everlasting credit, Dave, it's plain to me it never crossed your mind to read *The Builder* as a whodunit! Readers there are who are prone to think so, not taking the murder as a simple page-turner device, or a not-too-simple instrument to work the inversions which otherwise would offer difficulty in inventing a suitable plot.

In broad terms, this novel, no whodunit, is about fathers and sons and the legacies passed on: the call for roots and rootedness, a quiet, non-sensational love of life; the sense of

rightness beyond the narrow bounds of absolutism—in this latter connection to see the truly heroic individual who is non-heroic, who is even an anti-hero; say, a criminal.

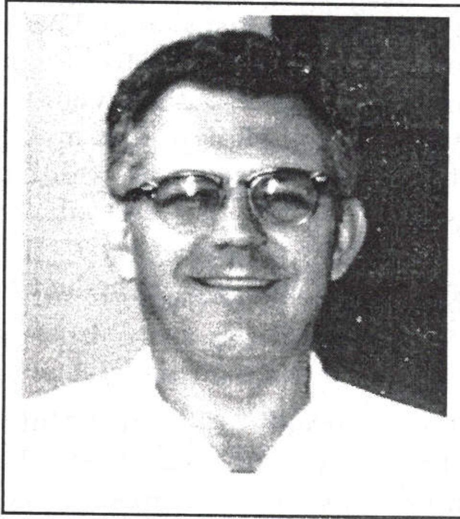
Be that as it may, I am really grateful for your quoted passage from Sparrow descanting on the controversial because its implications are useful both for the created work and its critic. And I wish to thank you for your considered reactions on *The Builder*, and for any other future reactions, to which you will find me

Ever interested and concerned,

Mom E.

IN MEMORIAM

DR. PAUL T. LAUBY
1924 - 2003



President *emeritus*, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia
Former Vice President for Academic Affairs, Silliman University
Former University Pastor, Silliman Church
Former Dean, Divinity School, Silliman University

I live my life in widening rings
which spread over earth and sky.
I may not ever complete the last one,
but that is what I will try.
I circle around God's primordial tower,
and I circle ten thousand years long;
And I still don't know if I'm a falcon,
a storm, or an unfinished song.

Rainer Maria Rilke

PAUL T. LAUBY: A MAN FOR OTHERS

Silliman's Tribute to a Great Friend, 1924-2003

We mourn the death in May 2003 of Paul T. Lauby. But more than mourning, we celebrate his *life*. For he has been a friend of a lifetime; he came to Silliman in 1953 and was still doing something for Silliman in 2003. He was last year and before his death writing the history of Silliman. His daughter Jennifer (Ph.D., Harvard) is his co-author who, we trust, will bring the project to completion. That makes his service a period of 50 years. However, we think not in terms of years (duration) but in terms of *donation*—the quality of his legacy to the University, the Church, and to many people whose lives he had touched.

I

A staunch friend of Silliman University, Paul left his footprints in many areas. Before he left for the United States to assume the prestigious position of General Secretary of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA), and later its President, he was Silliman University's Vice President for Academic Affairs. Describing his VPAA office as the *nerve center* of the academic, student personnel, and religious programs of the University, he vigorously pursued curricular enrichment, created the office for faculty improvement, and designed the faculty evaluation instrument. This passion for excellence, the concern for academic credentials, the desire to help the rest of the university catch the vision for becoming scholar servants to serve God with heart and mind led him to embark on a faculty development program and succeeded in getting the Ford Foundation to fund

it. As a result, a number of faculty members became the recipient of this program and went on to pursue higher degrees in the United States.

When he left for his new post, I took over the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Succeeding him in this position was a truly awesome task. His style of leadership—revealed to me on a cardboard inside the drawer of his desk—became from then on the guiding light of my own professional and personal life:

It is amazing how much can be accomplished if you do not mind who gets the credit.

What a principle of service as a legacy from Paul Lauby! He did not simply believe in it; he lived it!

As president of the UBCHEA, Paul is best remembered by Silliman for his life-long attachment and emotional connectedness to this university. Occupying a special place in Paul's heart, Silliman enjoyed the generous support of the UBCHEA. During Martial Law, UBCHEA, under Paul's presidency, continued to give its usual grant even during the period when the government did not allow the school to reopen. This enabled the university to keep its commitment to the welfare of its faculty and staff. Mainly through his efforts, Silliman became the recipient of a large endowment. Throughout his lifetime, Paul made special grants to the university and continued to fund scholars in a variety of ways. We had the feeling we were a favored institution among colleges and universities in Asia.

II

Early in his career (1956) at Silliman, Paul Lauby served as Pastor of the University Church. He was a deeply committed friend of the Church, not only locally, but widely. As Pastor, he was decidedly the most prophetic of our Church preachers to this day. The first sermon I heard him preach was on Amos who called on his people to let justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. In the very last sermon I heard him preach only recently, he spoke on the Word of Jesus, "No one puts new wine into old bottles", his way of reminding us to be creative in our academic programs and church life and come up with new strategies in facing this hour. Before this one, he preached on the deep commitment of the early Sillimanians to the University's reason for being.

Paul's pulpit eloquence is remembered by many members of the SU Church:

Dr. Paul T. Lauby became my patron saint in preaching ever since I took my first course in the art of preaching. In my student days I would not miss a sermon that Dr. Lauby preached in Silliman Church. I became an avid collector of his sermon.

Bishop Erme R. Camba, *Dean, Divinity School*

Paul Lauby was a fine and powerful preacher, probably the best preacher Silliman Church ever had. When he mounted the pulpit to preach, a great change took place in him. He came to you with a scary, frightening face, a big booming voice, and a bad temper. He seemed like Jehovah himself.

Dr. Levi V. Oracion, *Theologian, World Council of Churches*

Paul was always sure of himself, evoking trust from his audience whenever he spoke. He always spoke with eloquence and authority; it was difficult to disagree with what he said.

Dr. Angel C. Alcala, *Former SU President*

When later I became a pastor myself, I drew inspiration from Paul's indelible footprints so palpably manifest in his preaching, pastoral work, administration, and in his total commitment to ecumenism. It was during his pastorate that the Roman Catholic Bishop Surban preached at Silliman. It was a historic occasion.

Paul Lauby's love for the church showed in his service to the Divinity School where he was a Professor of Bible and Preaching, and later its Dean. In this position, he worked for excellence in curricula, established relationships with other Asian seminaries, and initiated housing for students. Just before I became Dean myself, he spearheaded the construction of the McKinley Hall classrooms, the Rodriguez library, and the Chapel of the Evangel, making us the privileged beneficiaries of first-class facilities for the training of students for the Church!

This congregation still remembers the parsonage built by Paul when he was still the University Pastor. In 1987, however, this parsonage was unfortunately reduced to ashes by a fire. At this time, Paul was President of the UBCHEA. Having lived in this house while serving as the University Pastor, he and his family felt a deep sense of loss and committed themselves to its restoration. Paul raised money among his fellow mission secretaries for this project and their gift was so generous that the Church needed only an additional Php100,000 to build a new parsonage.

III

There are many who will express gratitude for the legacy of a man who did not blow his own horn, who never spoke of his accomplishments and what he

had done for those whose lives he has touched. One faculty member wrote to me from Germany after she heard of the death of Paul:

I can certainly put Dr. Lauby in my list of people who helped to put me through school. More than being the guiding spirit behind my doctoral studies, he set up the funds, though there was no program for it yet, which sent me to Indonesia to begin my intensive language studies in preparation for entering the University of Sydney. For he was a great listener and attended dreams, even of a young faculty that I was then, with equal enthusiasm. He had that rarest of gifts: belief in the full worth of human endeavor. He brought out the best in people by believing in their capacity to achieve whatever they had set out to do regardless of all the evidence pointing to the contrary. He had a heart as big as his body – I was beginning to believe he was indestructible. To many who knew him, Dr. Lauby was like a giant tree that one could lean against. His passing away is my loss too as that of the many others whose lives he had touched in his lifetime. His presence made a difference to all who came in contact with him. We were all enriched. He will be missed by many, as I will miss him.

Dr. Ceres Pioquinto, *Professor of English and Literature*

Former Senate President Jovito R. Salonga, former Trustee of Silliman University as well as of the UBCHEA, and a living icon in the country pays tribute to Paul's efforts to help secure his release from prison during Martial Law. In his best-seller, *A Journey of Struggle and Hope* (2001), Dr. Salonga includes the letter written by Paul Lauby which, without doubt, helped his eventual release from prison:

You will understand that those of us who have worked with Senator Salonga and know beyond doubt of his profound commitment to non-violence are especially concerned at his imprisonment. It is inconceivable to us that he could have been involved in the tragic events that have distressed all the friends of the Philippines. Because

this Board has urgent need of Senator Salonga's counsel, we are deeply distressed by his being prevented from attending this meeting. This letter is written in response to a resolution adopted unanimously deploring his being denied his civil rights. We are confident that our record of service to your nation demonstrates the spirit of friendship to your people that permeates our concern for Senator Salonga's welfare and that motivates our urgent plea for his immediate release.

I am only one of the thousands who have been beneficiaries of Paul T. Lauby.

When I was a doctoral student in San Francisco, I encountered problems in the writing of my dissertation. I was required to know German, Greek, and Hebrew in order to write it. It was so rigid a requirement that I had a nervous breakdown. Then VPAA, Paul Lauby appealed to the UBCHEA to provide me the necessary assistance, including financial support for psychiatric treatment. Without this help I would have given up my studies and would not be standing here today to give witness to the generosity of his spirit.

During Martial Law (1974), shortly after Dr. Quintin S. Doromal assumed the Silliman presidency, the UBCHEA, on Paul Lauby's behest, sent me on a year's sabbatical in the US and helped arrange for my wife Leonora and children Karl, Margie, and Marc to join me. We attended the best schools—Harvard, Boston, and the public schools. Then, in 1981, when I retired from the VPAA post, we again went on a sabbatical year. At both times, I worked on a book *Biblical Foundations of the Faith* that is now in the hands of hundreds of church workers. Over time, Paul was my teacher, mentor, collaborator, colleague, and friend. Of all the appellations, however, I felt most privileged to be able to have called him friend. Paul was a unique and wonderful person, and, like his family and the many whose lives he touched, I shall miss him.

You see, I have a lot of *utang na loob* to a great friend, in good times and in bad. When Leonora died not too long ago, he sent me a personal note saying, "Proceso, we too will miss a wonderful person, but it should comfort you to know that you live in a country where many admire and love you." Because he made service for others the hallmark of all his undertakings, Paul was not the type to remind Silliman, Silliman Church, myself, and others that he had done great things. And this is the wonderful thing about him. In his long and fruitful life, one finds an eloquent testament that much indeed can be accomplished if one does not mind who gets the credit. (No word of self-congratulations came from his wife, Edna, either; all Edna has been proud of are the hundreds of children she has taught as a kindergarten teacher!). Paul's professional generosity was a wonderful example to all. Those who knew him personally are fortunate to have been enriched by his insights and through his sincere friendship. His loss is deeply felt by the many people worldwide whose careers he influenced and whose lives he touched.

Let me say to Edna, Jennifer, Malinda, and Timmy: Paul was one of a kind. We do miss him. We were looking forward to his visit again this year. But we in the Philippines assure you he has left with us an enduring legacy. Those who worked with him will miss his patience as a teacher, his dedication to academic excellence, and his generosity and good will toward all. Paul was one who tried to live and serve according to the example of the *Man for Others*, the bearer of goodwill without desire for recognition.

May we find echoes of him in our individual lives.

Proceso U. Udarbe, Ph.D.
Divinity School, Silliman University

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE
DR. PAUL T. LAUBY: The Silliman Years

Paul Lauby loved preaching and he loved teaching, and Silliman University was his arena. During the sixteen years he spent there, he flourished and nourished a large community of students and faculty.

Later in his ministry he was to assume administrative duties in addition to his initial assignment, which prepared him well for his subsequent work with the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia—a much larger canvas on which to work.

What follows are what I call a few Pauline vignettes—of one who was my supervisor and pastor, mentor, and who became a colleague and friend over a span of forty-six years. Paul and Edna, with daughter, Jennifer, arrived in Dumaguete City in 1953, assigned to teach church history at the College of Theology. Silliman University is a comparatively small institution, a residential campus located in a beautiful setting on one of the islands in central Philippines. Paul took on an expanded role as interim pastor of the Silliman University Church in 1956. The church was both a university and a parish church, serving a large population of faculty and students as well as the wider community.

In 1957, it needed a temporary replacement for its Christian Education director. Paul, ecumenical in his outlook and keen on international exchanges, learned of an available candidate with the requisite credentials and experience but who lived in another Asian country. Undaunted, and typical of the risks he often took, he got the church council to issue an invitation to fill the temporary position. All this, on the

strength of a written resume and no interview—sight unseen!

That is how I took the long journey from my home in what was then Rangoon, Burma, (now Myanmar) to the Philippines and how the Laubys entered my life. I found that he had made careful arrangements for my housing; for assistants to help me with the many programs; and for my personal welfare and orientation to the University.

To work with Paul was to learn many lessons in planning, responsibility, accountability, management, and other skills. I recall that Silliman Church had two worship services every Sunday. Paul prepared and preached two different sermons on the same theme, the earlier service slanted towards high school students. Each was well attended. As a former student remarked, "When Dr. Lauby preached, I really listened!" It could have been due to his big, booming voice in that large sanctuary.

He would rise early on Sundays, delay or forego breakfast till he had gone to the church and checked that everything was in order. Not quite a morning person myself, and reluctant to give up breakfast, I jolly well learned to have my programs ready by Saturday as I trailed after him to the church.

Although gifted with the capacity to see the larger picture, the wider perspective, he still minded the details. He involved every staff member in program and worship plans, believing strongly that everyone should be aware of everyone else's responsibilities, holding us accountable, yet understanding of our weaknesses and omissions. I remember weekly staff meetings that included the church secretary, the student pastor, the sexton, and even the church messenger (those were the days before e-mail and we had unreliable cranked-up army field telephones). By the

way, most of those church messengers graduated to be leaders in their fields—one a bishop of the UCCP, another in an ecumenical human rights position in Geneva!

His pastoral duties went alongside teaching at the College of Theology and working on his doctoral dissertation.

At the College of Theology, Paul taught Christian Ethics and Practical Theology. As usual, he set a high standard for his students. When his former students learned of his death, they responded and e-mailed their own memories. One tells of auditing a Practical Theology course with Dr. Lauby. He was then a student in a Manila seminary but was visiting his family in Dumaguete. He had to preach at Silliman Church and recalls that he was not spared a thorough critique of his weak points. "I was only auditing the course," he wrote. He added that Dr. Lauby was a strong nurturer and model for the development and direction of his own ministry.

By virtue of his office, Paul headed the Religious Life Program on campus for some years. Students and faculty remember Religious Life Emphasis Week when a series of Galilean Fellowships brought them into faculty homes for small-group discussions on issues of faith and life. One year, when the committee was trying to be more creative and enlivening, we asked ourselves what students really liked to do. The answer was go to the movies! At that time, the two or three cinemas were the only entertainment in town. For the equivalent of 15 cents US every one could afford it!

Dr. Lauby marched downtown and talked to the managers. He found four suitable films that were to be shown over a period of time. Four all-university convocation dates were set, meeting in the huge gymnasium. The students had to view the films and be

ready for discussions. Most had never had to analyze their entertainment before—the ethical issues involved, the cause and effect of certain behaviors, and such. The place was packed each time!

In 1961, Paul assumed the deanship of the Divinity School, upgraded from a college with a new curriculum. A new building anchored by a small, lovely chapel, was constructed. The Divinity School became a member of the burgeoning South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, including it into a regional consortium, thus expanding its horizons.

His administrative skills propelled him to the position of Vice-President for Academic Affairs, where he worked alongside the president and could carry out many of the improvements he had advocated earlier. He was a man of wide interests: in the creative arts, in books and travel, in food and fashion, in the political and social issues of the Philippines. They found their way into campus life: the development of an extension outreach into the provinces; supporting a research lab for the anti-rabies program that was to help an entire region; the preservation and presentation of folk songs from the various ethnic groups; a rich music and dramatic program on campus; and resource people to guide the improvements in the library and financial offices of the University. He encouraged, supported, or provided the means for many of these programs.

By the time Paul became the Vice President for Academic Affairs, I had joined the faculty. He was a man of strong opinions and opinionated people tend to rankle other opinionated people, especially in a university setting! One important lesson we learned from working with him was being able to disagree and raise questions, defend one's position rationally, and still maintain a good relationship. It may seem obvious

small church and was caught in a rebellion in the area. He was devastated by her loss.

He kept up with the Silliman alumni in North America, finding time to speak at their functions, attend their parties and family events, and to advise them. He came to see in their numbers the future support of the university.

On the first weekend in May—just about a month ago—Paul gathered a few faculty members in Chicago for a delayed reunion. He had in mind a small group who had worked with him over several years. We shared our old photos, recalled fond memories, and simply enjoyed the time together. For his agenda, Paul described plans for the history of Silliman he was in the process of researching and writing together with his daughter, Jennifer. Ever the big picture person, he spoke of Silliman in a wider historical context. He led us in a discussion of particular concerns relevant to his research. As one of our group exclaimed, "Your voice sounds like you're preaching at Silliman Church."

We had signed cards for the ones absent because of serious illnesses. Little did we know how ill Paul himself was and how much will power it took to come to Chicago. It was the last time for us to see him. A colleague wrote, "Looking back, it was a review of his life there."

Dr. Jun Almiron, the president of the North American Silliman Alumni Association, expressed best the feelings of the alumni at news of his death: "A mighty oak is fallen." It is an apt metaphor—of strength and shelter. Remember, the oak produces acorns that grow into more oak trees.

There will doubtless be memorials to honor Dr. Paul Lauby, in programs and Centers named for him. His truest legacy, however, is <u>people</u>. I speak for those who studied and worked with him over the years

though I assume that there are others, too, who knew Paul in many Asian institutions. In a world with so much turmoil and in need of moral authority, it is they who must now speak of justice, mercy and right living.

Dr. Patricia L. Magdamo
Given at the Memorial Service for Dr. Paul T. Lauby
Union Congregational Church, Montclair, NJ
June 14, 2003

Paul T. Lauby, *in Memoriam*

The staff and trustees of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia mourn the death of Dr. Paul T. Lauby, its president *emeritus*, on May 20, 2003.

Dr. Lauby was a committed Christian and distinguished educator who dedicated his career to the cause of Christian higher education in Asia. Before coming to the United Board, Dr. Lauby served for sixteen years as a United Church of Christ missionary educator at Silliman University in the Philippines. During his tenure at Silliman, he served as senior pastor of the University Church and on the faculty of the Divinity School, where he taught Christian Ethics and Practical Theology. In 1961, he was appointed Dean of the Divinity School; his years of leadership as dean included the construction of a new campus and the seminary's achievement of university graduate school status. In 1965, he was appointed Vice President for Academic Affairs of Silliman University. When he left Silliman in 1969, the university paid him the highest tribute by conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

On leaving Silliman, Dr. Lauby joined the United Board. He was appointed general secretary (analogous to today's president) the following year, when Dr. William P. Fenn retired. Serving during an especially challenging time in world and United Board history, Dr. Lauby's leadership was characterized by his readiness to respond to opportunities for service and Christian involvement. He oversaw the expansion of the United Board's work from seven colleges when he first arrived to nearly one hundred institutions in nine countries by the time

he retired in 1989. In 1980, he led the United Board when it resumed its work in China after a thirty-year absence. He initiated the alumni program to connect the schools in Asia with their graduates living in North America and led the effort to support institutions in South Asia.

Ordained as a minister of the United Church of Christ, Dr. Lauby received his bachelor's degree from Pasadena College, his B.D. and Th. M. degrees from Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in religion and history from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. In addition to the honorary degree awarded him by Silliman, Dr. Lauby received honorary degrees from Yonsei University and Soongsil University in Korea and from De La Salle University in the Philippines.

Dr. Lauby's books included *Sailing on the Winds of Change: Two Decades in the Life of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, 1969-1990* and *A Man Without Guile: the Life of P. T. Chandi*. At the time of his unexpected death, he was working on a definitive history of Silliman University with his daughter, Dr. Jennifer Lauby.

The mission and work of the United Board will long be influenced by the enduring legacy of Dr. Lauby's vision, inspired leadership, and deep commitment to Christian higher education in Asia.

Nan Hawkins
Director of Alumni Giving and Communications
United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Ruby L. Ordinario-Agnir finished her undergraduate degree in Speech and Drama at the University of the Philippines, graduating in 1959. Moving to Silliman University a few years later, she joined the faculty of the Speech and Theater Department and became deeply involved in many major theater productions either as actor or director. Migrating to the US with her family, she founded Green Room Players in Greenfield, Massachusetts and has remained to date its Artistic Director. A member of the American Guild of Organists since 1972, Ruby is a professional musician of many talents—organist, pianist, choral conductor, and soprano soloist. A consummate artist, she also composes music, writes exquisitely lyrical poems, and paints landscapes in oil.

Merlie A. Alunan finished her M.A. in Creative Writing at Silliman University in 1975. Poet and social historian, she has published several collections of poetry as well as *Kabilin*, a social history of Negros Oriental spanning 100 years. Her poems and poetry collections have been recipients of many awards, notably the Palanca, the Free Press Literary Awards, Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Creative Work, the Lillian Jerome Thornton Award for Nonfiction, and the Likhaan Workshop Award, among others. Her recent interest includes running Creative Writing Workshops in English, Cebuano, and Waray in Central and East Visayas.

Cesar Ruiz Aquino, Ph.D., is one of the country's most awarded poet-fictionists. A professor of literature and creative writing at the Department of English and Literature of Silliman University, Dr. Aquino has just recently published *checkmeta*, a collection of narratives, poems, essays, songs, and criticisms described by critics as "displaying the constituent elements of the magical, of wonderment, of amazement or startlement in the face of the paradoxical and mysteriously inexplicable, of the awesome meeting with events and manifestations that are occult and even bizarre in nature".

Gina Fontejon-Bonior returned not too long ago from the University of Hawaii in Manoa, Department of Second Language Studies

graduate program in ESL where she spent 2 years as Fulbright Fellow. One of the most dynamic of the current crop of language teachers at the Department of English and Literature in Silliman University, Gina is at the forefront of course and curriculum design introducing innovative teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and language testing approaches. Before leaving for the University of Hawaii, Gina served as the Department's Basic Communication coordinator, a position which gave her plenty of elbow room in which to pursue her interest in TESL, while fulfilling her commitment to faculty training well beyond the confines of Silliman University. Despite her own heavy teaching schedule, Gina decided to embark on another kind of life after her return and is now looking forward to motherhood with great anticipation.

Earl Jude Paul L. Cleope, Ph.D., chaired the Department of History and Political Science until his departure for the US as Fellow of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. Part of that fellowship he spent at the International Christian University in Tokyo. Back from this year's stint abroad, Earl Jude has returned to teaching at Silliman while also serving as Vice-Head of the Executive Committee for Historical Research of the National Council for Culture and the Arts as well as Vice President for the Visayas of the Philippine National Historical Society Inc. (PNHSI).

Luis H. Francia is a Manila-born poet, critic, and journalist. He is the editor of *Brown River, White Ocean: An Anthology of 20th-Century Philippine Literature in English*, a seminal book exploring the vigorous and imaginative works of many little-known Filipino writers in the United States. He is the author of two books of poetry, *Her Beauty Likes Me Well* (with David Friedman) and *The Arctic Archipelago and Other Poems*. He has published in various literary journals, including *Caracoa*, *Linden Lane*, *The Literary Review*, *City* and *Bomb*. He writes on politics and the arts for *The Village Voice* and *A. Magazine*, and he is currently at work on a nonfiction semi-autobiographical book on the postcolonial Philippines. Francia has been the recipient of the Palanca Memorial Award in Poetry, the Philippines most prestigious literary prize.

Vicente Garcia Groyon is a young lecturer at De La Salle University's College of Communication Arts, and also a web and graphics design consultant. Although his academic background in De La Salle University is film directing (where he won several awards), Vince has branched out into graphics design and multimedia, for a time working as Creative Director/Graphics Editor for Business World Online. An exquisite writer, Vince won the Grand Prize of the 2002 Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature for his novel "The Sky Over Dimas", hailed by critics as displaying the author's astute understanding of the human psyche through lyrical prose that belies "the sheen of premature wisdom and a heart beating of pure pulp".

Nan Hawkins is the Director of Alumni Giving and Communications of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia in New York. The alumni program which she heads seeks to promote effective, productive connections between the Asian schools and their alumni and friends in the United States and Canada. Part of her job is to assist schools in developing projects and implementing fundraising materials, and to meet with alumni groups, conduct workshops, and assist in building and strengthening alumni organizations.

Priscilla Lasmarias-Kelso finished her undergraduate studies, *magna cum laude,* from the Department of English and Literature at Silliman University in 1961 and her graduate studies in English and American Literature from Stanford University. A member of Phi Beta Lambda, an honor society for international scholars, and the Cap and Gown Honor Society of Stanford University, Prof. Kelso has been included in the prestigious list of Who's Who Among America's Teachers. In August 2004, Prof. Kelso was honored as Outstanding Sillimanian in the field of Education during the 103rd Founders Day of Silliman University.

Bienvenido Lumbera, Ph.D., is one of the brightest stars in the Philippine literary constellation. Critic, teacher, multi-awarded poet and playwright, and revered man of letters, Dr. Lumbera was honored with the Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and

Creative Communication Arts in 1993 for his tireless efforts in restoring the poems and stories of vernacular writers to an esteemed place in the Philippine literary canon. A prolific writer and lecturer on literature, language, drama, and film, Dr. Lumbera occupies a central place in the literary circles and organizations in this country, mentoring a new generation of literary scholars and imbuing them with his own love for the country's rich artistic traditions and languages.

Patricia L. Magdamo, Ph.D., was born in Rangoon, Burma now Myanmar but came to Silliman in 1957 to work with Dr. Paul T. Lauby, then pastor of Silliman Church, as its Christian Education director and later a member of the faculty of the Divinity School. Her own career path was closely influenced by her mentor, Dr. Lauby. Following his footsteps, she became in the early 1990s the Vice President of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, a position Dr. Lauby himself served for a long time after he left Silliman University in 1969.

Maria Leovina Amante Nicolas, until her departure for yet another soul-searching journey, was the keenest mind in the graduate program in English and Literature at Silliman University and also the most courageous in facing up to the challenge of Cixous and *ecriture feminine*, Kristeva, Derrida, or Foucault. At present, she has redirected her talents towards journalism editing the kiddie section of a weekend magazine of the Philippine Daily Star. Otherwise, she has just embarked on yet another journey, this time with 3-year old Isis, on the direction of the still largely unexplored, but promising to be exciting, terrain of feminist mothering, perhaps even pioneering such a study in this country.

Charleson Ong is a fiction writer and Professor of literature at the Department of English and Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines. He has edited both The China Post (Taipei) and The Daily Globe (Philippines), and is the author of *Men of the East and Other Stories*, *Woman of Am-Kaw and Other Stories*, *Conversion and Other Fictions*, and *An Embarrassment of Riches*. He was a recipient of the 1990 National Book Award for Fiction.

Edith L. Tiempo, Ph.D., is a poet, fictionist, teacher, and literary critic, and one of the country's finest writers in English whose works are characterized by a remarkable fusion of style and substance, craftsmanship, and insight. Two of her much anthologized pieces, "The Little Marmoset" and "Bonsai" have been hailed by critics as intricate verbal transfigurations of significant experiences. As fictionist, Tiempo is equally morally profound. Professor *emeritus* and National Artist for Literature, Dr. Tiempo is an influential figure in Philippine literature in English. She and her late husband, Edilberto K. Tiempo, founded and directed the Silliman National Writers Workshop in Dumaguete City, which has produced some of the country's best writers. To this day, Dr. Tiempo continues to direct the Summer Writers Workshop in Dumaguete City.

Proceso U. Udarbe, Ph.D., is one of Silliman University's most distinguished alumni. His equally distinguished career includes serving Silliman University as Vice President of Academic Affairs, Acting President, Professor of Theology at the Divinity School, and Pastor of the Silliman University Church, among others. In recognition of this exemplary service, Silliman University honoured him with the Outstanding Sillimanian Award in 2000. Although now retired, Pastor Udarbe is deep at work on his 9th book of sermons.

Antonino Salvador S. de Veyra is currently the Chair of the English Department at the University of the Philippines in Mindanao, in Davao City. Until his move to Mindanao, Nino was one of the most creative members of the Department of English in Literature at Silliman University. This creativity was expressed not only in his poetry but also in his teaching where he was constantly introducing new contents to standard courses and innovative approaches to teach them, as well as pioneering in new courses, many of which became the core of the revised English and Literature curriculum of the undergraduate and graduate programs of the department. The new face of Silliman Journal owes much of its beginnings from his creative agitations.