



AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES  
DECEMBER 2022 – VOLUME 1 NO. 1  
ISSN 2980-4922 (Online)

#### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Laurence Marvin S. Castillo, PhD

#### ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Jea Agnes T. Buera, DComm

Emmanuel V. Dumlao, PhD

Pauline Gidget R. Estella

Hjalmar P. Hernandez, PhD

Mary Cita M. Hufana, PhD

Nicolo M. Masakayan, PhD

Cheeno Marlo M. Sayuno, PhD

#### MANAGING EDITOR

Diane A. Manzano

#### LAYOUT and GRAPHICS EDITOR

Kahreina A. Salvador

#### COPY-EDITORS

Ivan Emil A. Labayne

Michael Ian T. Lomongo

Jonelle E. Marin

Marc Stanley I. Mozo

Ma. Cassandra Ysobel R.

Teodosio

#### Cover Design

by John Daryl C. Alcantara

#### INTERNATIONAL ADVISERS

Earvin Charles B. Cabalquinto,

PhD (Deakin University)

Jeffrey Arellano Cabusao, PhD

(Bryant University)

Conchitina R. Cruz, PhD

(UP Diliman)

Nimrod L. Delante, PhD

(James Cook University Singapore)

Allan Alberto N. Derain, PhD

(Ateneo de Manila University)

**Makiling Review** is a bilingual refereed journal of the Department of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Los Baños. The journal seeks to promote critical and interdisciplinary scholarship in engagement with contemporary discourses and issues in the arts and humanities in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and more broadly, the Global South.

The journal welcomes contributions from researchers, creative writers and artists in the areas of communication, media and film studies, linguistics and language education, literature and literary criticism, cultural studies, theatre arts and performance studies, philosophy, visual arts, and other related disciplines. It aims to publish scholarly articles, reviews, and creative works that appeal to interested readers within and beyond academic spheres.

Vladimeir B. Gonzales, PhD  
(UP Diliman)  
B.J. Epstein, PhD  
(University of East Anglia)  
Caroline Sy Hau  
(Kyoto University)  
Jesus Federico C. Hernandez,  
PhD (UP Diliman)  
Edwin Jurriëns, PhD  
(University of Melbourne)  
Tracy Llanera, PhD  
(University of Connecticut)  
Aldrin P. Lee, PhD  
(University of the Philippines Diliman)  
Martin Löffelholz, Dr.phil  
(Technische Universität Ilmenau,  
Germany; Turkish-German University)  
Gene Segarra Navera, PhD  
(National University of Singapore)  
Fernando dIc. Paragas, PhD  
(UP Diliman)  
Carlos M. Piosos III, PhD  
(De La Salle University)  
Rolando B. Tolentino, PhD  
(UP Diliman)

#### **EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATION**

Jacklyn A. Cleofas, PhD  
(Head, Department of Humanities  
Research Committee)  
Leonora M. Fajutagana, PhD  
(Chair, Department of Humanities,  
2013-2022)  
Katrina Ross A. Tan, PhD  
(Chair, Department of Humanities,  
2022- present)  
Maribel L. Dionisio-Sese, DSc  
(Dean, College of Arts and Sciences)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I am pleased to introduce the maiden issue of the *Makiling Review*. The journal began as an initiative of the Department of Humanities (DHUM) Research committee, then headed by Assistant Professor Pauline Gidget Estella. Mindful of the difficulties, yet elated at the prospect of establishing a humanities journal in a science-dominated university, we started to conceptualize *Makiling Review's* research thrust and vision in 2021. Through the endorsement of then DHUM Chair, Dr. Leonora Fajutagana, and later the support of current Chair, Dr. Katrina Ross Tan, we subsequently embarked on the process of securing institutional approval from the university by early 2022. College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Dean Maribel Dionisio-Sese warmly welcomed the journal to be part of the CAS 50th founding anniversary. Upon endorsement from the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension Nathaniel Bantayan, the journal finally received institutional approval from UPLB Chancellor Jose V. Camacho. Throughout the process, we also benefited from the intellectual generosity of esteemed academics from various universities in the Philippines and abroad who graciously agreed to be part of the journal's advisory board.

The release of the maiden issue of *Makiling Review* also kickstarts the DHUM's 50th anniversary next year. The journal embodies the Department's active engagement in ongoing and emergent conversations in areas that range from communication, literary and cultural studies, visual and performing arts, creative writing, communication, language studies to philosophy. It is therefore fitting as a testament to our institution's evolving intellectual preoccupations, while also providing another avenue for creative and research work by both emergent and established writers and scholars.

This issue features five research articles. Lexter Castro's linguistic study offers an analysis of the nuances of "sobra" as an adjective through its deployment in social media. Rayji de Guia's article interrogates the translational claims in selected Philippine fiction in English, pointing to the potentialities of disruptive, multilingual and untranslated writing in capturing the complexities of Filipino sensibility. Ivan Labayne's contribution looks into Angelo Suarez's

work to examine conceptualist writing and the ways through which it reveals the dynamics of social production underpinning artistic practice. Larissa Suarez's article explores how Philippine fiction constructs the middle-class family and reveals the various tensions, particularly along class faultlines, that inhere within this social unit, and the nation as a whole. Alvin Alagao's essay examines Oscar Zalameda's work to deploy queer optimism as an affective resource to navigate the dark times of political terror and fascism.

The maiden issue also features two creative contributions that explore ways to reclaim practices of faith towards contrarian and subversive ends. Cris Lanzaderas' suite of poems offers an erotic reimagination of Biblical verses to explore the dynamics of desire and love. Andrew Estacio's short story, which won the Palanca award in 2018, centers on a Catholic gay beauty pageant that sends shockwaves across the social and political institutions in the small town.

Mariyel Hiyas Liwanag reviews Gonzalo Campoamor's *Wika at Pasismo: Politika ng Wika at Araling Wika sa Panahon ng Diktadura* (SWF, 2018) to highlight the book's significant contribution in understanding how fascist politics deploys language as part of the Marcos dictatorship's bid to hegemonize its oppressive rule.

As can be evinced from these brief descriptions, these contemporary critical and creative forays demonstrate interventions into how linguistic, creative, and literary operations are enmeshed in questions of power, desire, and subjectivity. In various ways, they are affirmative of the enduring value of the critical imagination in addressing various social concerns, particularly at a time when historical distortion and disinformation encourage public approval of the erosion of the nation's already fragile democratic foundations. *Makiling Review* stakes a claim in spurring and hosting such conversations, and sets out to do so for the coming years.

**Laurence Marvin S. Castillo**  
Editor-in-Chief



TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Editor’s Note**  
Laurence Marvin S. Castillo, PhD

ARTICLES

**Deskriptibong Pagsusuri sa Gamit ng ‘Sobra’ bilang Sumisibol na Pampasidhi ng mga Pang-uri sa Wikang Filipino** **05**  
Lexter A. Castro

***Malansang* Fish: Mistranslation and the Fact of Translation** **35**  
Rayji de Guia

**Adventures Past Circuits: Sociality in Philippine Conceptual Writing** **61**  
Ivan Emil A. Labayne

**Caught in the middle: Narratives of family and class in Philippine short fiction** **83**  
Larissa Mae R. Suarez

**Finding Queer Optimism in the Art of Oscar Zalameda** **110**  
Alvin Emmanuel Alagao

**CREATIVE WORK** **131**  
**(Re)berso**  
Cris R. Lanzaderas

**Ang Kanonisasyon ng Santa Santino** **135**  
Andrew A. Estacio

REVIEW

**Wika at Pasismo: Politika ng Wika at Araling  
Wika sa Panahon ng Diktadura ni Gonzalo A.  
Campoamor II**  
Mariyel Hiyas C. Liwanag

**162**

---

## Deskriptibong Pagsusuri sa Gamit ng 'Sobra' bilang Sumisibol na Pampasidhi ng mga Pang-uri sa Wikang Filipino

Lexter A. Castro

Mataas na Paaralang Rural ng UP

[lacastro4@up.edu.ph](mailto:lacastro4@up.edu.ph)

---

### Abstrak

Kabi-kabila ang nagsisibulang mga gramatika sa wikang Filipino. Sa katunayan, karamihan sa mga ito ay hindi pa lubusang napag-uukulan ng pagsusuri maliban sa mga panaka-nakang pagtatangkang pagbangit at paglalaan ng maiikling paliwanag. Ayon kay Malicsi (2008), marami-rami na ang dapat pag-isipan sa kalakaran ng wikang pambansa mula sa palatunugan, mga salita, at maging sa pagbuo ng pangungusap. Isa sa mga halimbawang sumisibol na gramatika sa wikang Filipino na binanggit niya ay ang palasak na paggamit ng *sobra* bilang pampasidhi ng mga pang-uri. Inilarawan pa nga ito ni Ceña (2012) bilang isa sa mga “paboritong pampasidhi” ng kabataan na itinuring niya rin bilang isang pang-abay. Batay naman sa isang aklat ni Malicsi (2013) na siya nang may pinakakomprehensibo at pinakaimpormatibong pagtalakay hinggil dito, nilinaw niya na may kaibahan ang pagiging pang-abay na panggaano at pagiging pampasidhi ng *sobra*. Ilan sa mga tampok sa kaniyang pagsusuri ang pagiging obligatoryo ng paksa sa nauna kumpara sa ikalawa. Ipinaliwanag din niya na ang mga pangungusap na may pariralang pang-uring pinasidhi ng *sobra* ay nanggaling sa mga batayang pangungusap na pinagsasanib sa pamamagitan ng *embedding*. Bunga nito, nakakaltas ang makauring panlaping ma- sa mga maylaping pang-uri na siyang

nagiging sanhi ng kawalan ng paksa ng mga pangungusap. Maliban sa mga ito ay wala nang iba pang nabanggit na detalye tungkol sa pagiging panggaano at pampasidhi ng *sobra* sa wikang Filipino.

Ang nabanggit na puwang ang siyang isinaalang-alang sa papel na ito upang magdagdag ng higit pang kalinawan sa gamit ng nasabing pampasidhi sa Filipino. Isinakatuparan ito sa pamamagitan ng pagsasagawa ng deskriptibong pagsusuri sa mga kinalap na *post* at *tweet* na may taglay na *sobra* na nagbibigay-turing sa mga pang-uri. Gumamit din ng mga istruktural na lapit gaya ng paghihimay ng proseso ng *Embedding* at pagsasagawa ng *Movement Test* upang mailatag ang mga dagdag na obligatoryo at di-obligatoryong tuntunin sa pagpapasidhi ng mga pang-uri gamit ang *sobra*. Bilang resulta, nakapaglatag sa papel na ito ng dagdag na mga tuntunin sa pagpapasidhi ng mga panaguring pang-uring may kayariang hubad, maylapi, inuulit, at tambalan gamit ang *sobra*. Nakapaglatag din ng ilan pang mga obserbasyon sa pampasidhing ito tulad ng asimilasyon sa sunurang *sobra + -ng + hed* na pang-uri, ang pagiging konstiyuwent ng nasabing sunuran, at pagpapasidhi ng mga panuring na pang-uri.

**Mga Susing Salita:** *Sobra, Pampasidhi, Panggaano, Embedding*

## Introduksyon

Maligalig na wika ang Filipino dahil sa mabilis at patuloy na mga pagbabagong nababakas dito bunga ng mga pangyayari sa mga lipunan kung saan ito sinasalita. Kung babalikan sa pilas ng kasaysayan ng Pilipinas, tatlong mananakop ang noon ay kumubkob dito. Bunga nito, umusbong at unti-unting nanuot ang mga bakas ng kontak ng mga wika ng mga mananakop sa mga wika ng Pilipinas. Patunay rito ang mga salitang Espanyol, Ingles, at Hapones na naging malaking bahagi ng ating pang-araw-araw na pagpapahayag gamit ang wikang Filipino. Unti-unti rin itong sumailalim sa ilan pang mga pagbabago dulot naman ng pagkakaiba ng mga tagapagsalita ayon sa lipunan at panahong kinabibilangan. Arbitrario kung ilarawan kaya kapansin-pansin din kung papaanong nagsusulputan ang mga varyant ng wikang pambansa batay sa konteksto.

Sinabi pa nga ni Batnag (2009) na may sumisibol pang mga pagbabago sa gramatika na hindi pa naitatala sa mga aklat panggramatika o kahit napag-ukulan man lamang ng mga pagsusuri. Kuning halimbawa ang obserbasyon nina Malicsi (2008) at Hernandez (2008) sa kanilang tugunan sa *Adyenda sa Saliksik Wika Ulat ng Kumperensiya*. Anila, marami-rami na ring maaaring pagnilayan kaugnay ng wikang pambansa mula sa imbentaryo ng mga tunog nito, mga kalakaran sa pagbuo ng mga pangungusap, at iba pa. Isang partikular na halimbawang ibinahagi nila ay ang pagiging gamitin ng *sobra* bilang sumisibol na pampasidhi o *intensifier* ng mga pang-uri sa wikang Filipino.

Ang pagdagsa ng mga sumisibol na tuntuning pangwikang ito ay isang matinding dahilan upang pangatwiranan ang pangangailangang patuloy na subaybayan at saliksikin ang wikang Filipino higit lalo sa mga pagbabagong nagaganap dito. Sa pamamagitan nito, mahahawi ang mga palaisipan sa likod ng mga tuntuning umiiral sa wikang pambansa.

## ***Ang Pagpapasidhi ng mga Pang-uri sa Filipino***

Marami-rami na ring bumuo ng mga pag-aaral sa wikang Filipino ang nagtangkang talakayin ang mga kasidhian ng mga pang-uri nito. Upang mas masubaybayan ang naging pagbabago at pag-

unlad sa pag-unawa hinggil dito, maaari itong simulan sa *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa* noong 1939 ni Lope K. Santos. Sa aklat na ito, unang ipinakilala ang mga pampasidhi bilang pamaraan ng panukdulan sa Tagalog—nukleyus ng wikang pambansa—noon.

Naisasakatuparan ito sa pamamagitan ng sumusunod na tuntunin:

1. paggamit ng mga *panlaping kay-, ka-...-an/han, napaka-, pagka-, at pinaka-*;
2. paggamit ng mga salitang tulad ng *ano, lubha, totoo, ang lalong, sakdal, labis, pisik, hari, ulo, ubod*, at *wala*; at
3. pag-uulit ng pang-uri sa pamamagitan ng pang-angkop.

Mga bandang 1972 naman noong mailathala ang *Tagalog Reference Grammar* nina Paul Schachter at Fe T. Otanes. Kaiba sa aklat ni Santos noong 1939, dito ay tinalakay nila ang proseso ng pagpapasidhi ng mga pang-uri bilang “intensipikasyon” at hindi panukdulan. Ayon sa kanila, naisasagawa ito sa pamamagitan ng (1) pag-uulit ng salitang-ugat ng pang-uri; (2) pagkakabit ng unlaping *napaka-* pagkatapos ng pagkakaltas ng unlaping *ma-* sa mga *pang-uring ma-* kung saan hindi nagiging obligatoryo ang pagkakaroon ng paksa liban na lamang kung ang pangungusap ay nasa di-karaniwang ayos (e.g., *Napakabait ni Ben -> Si Ben ay napakabait*); (3) paggamit ng *kay* at unlaping *pagka-* at *disyllabic duplicating prefix* (e.g., *kay lakas-lakas* at *pagkalakas-lakas*); (4) paggamit ng mga pariralang *ubod ng, hari ng, at ulo ng*; at (5) paggamit ng mga salitang *totoo, lubha, masyado, totoo, at tunay*.

Samantala, itinuring naman ni Gonzales-Garcia (1999) ang mga panlapi, salita (naidagdag ang *di-hamak* at *ang*), at mga parirala (isinama ang *sukdulan ng*) na naisa-isa sa unang dalawang aklat bilang pambanghay ng mga pang-uring pasukdol (pansinin kung papaanong itinuring muli itong panukdulan gaya ng kay Santos (1939)). Idinagdag pa ng may-akda na nagagamit ang *napaka-, ang*, at *kay* upang lumikha ng mga pangungusap na paghanga kung saan hindi obligatoryo ang pagkakaroon ng paksa. May tuwiran din siyang pagbanggit sa panlaping *napaka-* bilang pampasidhi ng mga pang-uri sa Filipino at maliban dito ay wala na.

Sa aklat naman nina Santiago at Tiangco (2003) na pinamagatang *Makabagong Balarila ng Filipino*, ipinaliwanag nila na may kaantasan ang kasidhian ng mga pang-uri sa wikang Filipino na kinapapalooban ng tatlong antas—*lantay*, *katamtamang antas*, at *masidhi*. Sa huling antas, ang masisidhing pang-uri ay nabubuo sa pamamagitan ng (1) pag-uulit ng salita (e.g., *mataas na mataas*), (2) paggamit ng mga panlaping *napaka-*, *nag-...-an*, *pagka-*, at *kay-*, at (3) paggamit ng mga salitang gaya ng *lubha*, *masyado*, *totoo*, *talaga*, *tunay*, at iba pa.

Itinuturing din nilang pang-abay ang *totoo* at *lubha* na makikita sa ibinigay nilang halimbawa rito: *Totoong lubhang nagulat sila sa iyong balita*.

Batay naman kina Ceña at Nolasco (2011) sa aklat na *Gramatikang Filipino Balangkas*, ang unlaping *napaka-* ay kadalasang ginagamit upang banghayin ang mga pang-uri ayon sa kasidhian nito. Sa dahilang hindi tinataglay ng panlaping ito ang unlaping *ma-* (anila, hindi makabuluhan ang pangungusap na *Napakamarunong \*ni/\*si Ampí*), kadalasang walang simuno ang pinasidhing pariralang pang-uri (e.g., *Napakasuwerte ni Ben*). Gayunman, napansin nila na unti-unti na rin namang tinatanggap ang pagtatagni ng *napaka-* at *ma-* ngunit hindi pa rin obligatoryo ang paksa (e.g., *Napakamasigasig ni Ben*). Pinahihintulutan pa rin ang kawalan ng paksa sa mga pinasidhing pang-uri gamit ang pinagtagning *napaka-* at mahugnayang panlapi tulad ng *maka-*, *mapag-*, at *mapang-* (e.g., *Napakamakaama ni Ben*). Ayon pa sa kanila, ang pampasidhing *napaka-* ay isang mahinang panlapi na walang kakayahang lumikha ng pantiyak na nagiging dahilan kung bakit hindi obligatoryo ang paksa sa mga pangungusap na masidhi.

Sa hiwalay na aklat naman ni Ceña noong 2020 na pinamagatang *Morpholohya ng Filipino*, ipinaliwanag niya dito na kadalasang ginagamit ang mga panlaping *napaka-*, *ka-*, at *pagka-* upang mapasidhi ang mga pang-uri sa Filipino. Aniya, makatutulong din ang pag-uulit para banghayin ang mga pang-uri ayon sa kasidhian na kinapapalooban ng mga padrong *maDWr* o pag-uulit ng buong halaw na salita (e.g., *magandang-maganda*), *lipat-diin-DWr* (e.g., *hilóng-hiló*), *(pa(g))kaRWr* o pag-uulit ng ugat (e.g., *pakabait-bait*,

*pagkabait-bait, at kaibig-ibig), at (ka)SCVr (e.g., bali-baligtad at kabali-baligtad).*

### **Ang ‘Sobra’ bilang Pangngalan, Pandiwa, Pang-uri, Pang-abay, at Pampasidhi**

Kung rerepasuhin ang mga diksiyonaryong KWF *Diksiyonaryo ng Wikang Filipino* at *Diksiyonaryo.ph*, parehong isinasaad ng mga ito na ang salitang *sobra* ay nagmula sa wikang Espanyol. Maaari itong mangahulugan ng (1) pagiging labis o (2) kalabisan. Sa naunang diksiyonaryo, ipinaiiilalim ito sa mga salitang pangngalan na maaaring banghayin bilang pandiwa (e.g., *sumosobra*).

Noong 2012, sa aklat ni Ceña na pinamagatang *Sintaks ng Filipino*, ipinaliwanag niya na may mga pang-abay na may kakayahang pasidhiin ang mga pang-uri tulad ng *lalo, lubha, tunay, talaga, masyado*, at ang inilarawan niyang dalawa sa mga paboritong gamitin ng kabataan bilang pampasidhi ng pang-uri—ang *grabe* at *sobra*. Pansinin ang inilaan niyang mga halimbawa:

1. *Sobrang sarap ng papaet.*  
*?Sobrang masarap ang papaet.*
2. *Grabeng kulit ni Colette.*  
*?Grabeng makulit si Colette.*  
*Ipinahihiwatig ng simbolong ‘?’ na posibleng gramatikal din ang mga ito.*

Sa isang tala naman mula sa papel na *Contact-induced Change in Heritage Tagalog: Evidence from Adjective Intensification* ni Umbal (2016), idiniin niya na ang mga pampasidhi ay may kakayahang bigyang-turing ang iba pang mga sintaktikong kategorya gaya ng mga pang-abay. Sa papel ding ito, tuwirang ipinakilala ng may-akda ang pagiging malayang morpemang pampasidhi ng *sobra* na isinalin sa Ingles bilang “excessively”.

Sa aklat ni Malicsi (2013) na *Gramar ng Filipino*, itinuring namang isang pang-uring panukat ang *sobra* na may komplementong minamarkahan ng *sa* (e.g., *Sobra ang niluto niyang laing sa sili*). Bukod pa rito, inilarawan din ang *sobra* bilang intensibo ng pang-uri na kadalasang ginagamit sa mga karaniwang pag-uusap kabilang ang *super* (hindi na rin nakapagtataka dahil nabanggit na niya ito mga bandang 2008 pa lamang sa *Adyenda sa Saliksik*



*Wika Ulat ng Kumperensiya*). Tingnan ang ibinigay niyang halimbawa sa ibaba:

mahirap ang eksam  
sobra/super hirap ng eksam

Dito, makikita kung papaanong may mga pagbabagong nagaganap sa hed na pang-uri pagkatapos pasidhiin ng *sobra*—nawalan ng unlaping *ma-* ang hed na *mahirap*. Aniya, katangian ito ng ikatlong porma ng intensibo ng mga pang-uri tulad ng *ang, kay, at ano*.

Dulot din nito, hindi nagiging obligatoryo ang pagkakaroon ng paksa kapag ginamit sa pangungusap. Sa mga sumunod pang talata, binanggit ng may-akda na maituturing din itong pang-abay na panggaano na kadalasang ipinupwesto sa unahan ng mga pariralang pang-uri (e.g., *sobrang sinungaling ng/ang nasasakdal*) at pariralang pandiwa (e.g., *sobrang nagsisinungaling ang nasasakdal*).

Tinangka ring ipaliwanag ang paglitaw ng *-ng* sa *sobra* bilang pahiwatig na may nagaganap na proseso ng *embedding*. Sa kaniyang halimbawa:

*sobra (ito) +*  
*mayaman si Henry* → *na mayaman si Henry*  
*sobrang mayaman si Henry*

Makikita rito kung papaanong (1) walang nabago sa hed (mayaman) at (2) napanatili ang paksa ng pangungusap gamit ang pang-abay na panggaanong *sobra* pagkatapos nito sumailalim sa proseso ng *embedding*. Gayunman, nilinaw niya na iisa lang ang nais ipakahulugan ng *sobra*, ito man ay intensibo ng pang-uri o pang-abay na panggaano kahit pa nagkakaiba sila ng epekto sa hed at sa mga tuntunin kapag ginamit sa pangungusap.

Mahalaga ring masipat ang ilang mga materyal panturo na ginagamit ng mga paaralan sa pagtalakay ng mga aralin sa gramatika. Sa paraang ito, makikita kung papaano ipinakikilala sa mga mag-aaral ang pampasidhing *sobra* partikular sa gamit nito.

Halimbawa, sa modyul nina Tadeo-Taduran at Bardonado-Marmol (2020) na *Filipino Kwartar 3 – Modyul 2: Ugnayang Pang-abay, Pang-uri, at Pandiwa sa Paglalarawan*, itinuring nila ang mga salitang tulad ng *talaga*, *sadya*, *sobra*, at *talaga* bilang mga pang-abay. Bukod sa sintaktikong pagkakategorisa sa mga ito, nagbigay sila ng isang halimbawang pangungusap na may taglay na mga *label* upang ipakita kung papaano ito nagagamit sa mga pangungusap:

*Sobrang nakakatakot*  
(*Pang-abay*) + *Pang-uri*

Anila, ipinakikita ng halimbawa na ang *sobra* ay nagbibigay-turing sa pang-uring *nakakatakot* kung kaya maituturing itong pang-abay na siya namang matagal nang itinuturo sa mga paaralan. Ito marahil ang dahilan kung bakit walang pagbanggit o pagdiriin dito bilang pampasidhi o intensifier sa nasabing modyul.

Hindi naman lubhang naiiba ang isinasaad sa teksbuk nina Agbon at Sy (2013) sa naunang modyul. Anila, maituturing ang *sobra* bilang isang pang-abay na napapaloob sa mga pang-abay na nagbibigay-turing sa mga pang-uri.

Sa isa pang teksbuk na binuo naman nina Dayag, Baisa-Julian, Lontoc, at Esguerra-Jose (2017), itinuturing nila ang *sobra* bilang pambanghay ng mga pang-uri sa Filipino ayon sa kasukdulan nito. Bukod pa rito, inihanay rin nilang pampasukdol ang mga panlaping *napaka-*, *pinaka-*, at *pagka-*, mga salitang gaya ng *sakdal*, at mga pariralang gaya ng *ubod ng* at *hari ng*. Wala ring naitalang halimbawa ang mga may-akda sa gamit ng *sobra*.

Kung susuriing maigi ang mga nirebyung aklat, artikulo, teksbuk, modyul, at iba pa, mga bandang 2013 hanggang sa kasalukuyan pa lamang panaka-nakang naipakilala ang *sobra* bilang pang-abay, pang-uri, pandiwa, at/o bilang pampasidhi pa nga. Hindi rin naman na ito nakapagtataka dahil taong 2008 na noong maobserbahan ng ilang eksperto ang pagiging gamitin nito. Mababakas pa sa mga nirebyung babasahin na si Malicsi (2013) na ang may pinakakomprehensibong pagtalakay hinggil dito. Gayunman, nangangailangan pa rin ito nang higit pang pagsusuri

upang mas maipakita ang lawak maging ang hangganan nito bilang sumisibol na pampasidhi ng mga pang-uri sa wikang Filipino.

Bunga nito, binuo ang papel na ito upang maglaan ng deskriptibong pagsusuri sa mga kinolektang *tweet at post* mula sa mga social networking site na Facebook at Twitter na pareparehong nagtataglay ng mga sunurang *sobra + -ng + hed* na *pang-uri*. Upang higit itong maisakatuparan, sasagutin sa pagsusuring ito ang mga sumusunod na tanong:

1. Ano ang panlahat na tuntunin sa pagbuo ng mga pariralang pinasidhing pang-uri sa Filipino gamit ang *sobra*?
2. Ano-ano ang mga tuntunin ng obligatoryo at di-obligatoryo kapag ginagamit sa mga pangungusap ang mga pinasidhing pang-uri sa Filipino sa pamamagitan ng *sobra*?

## Metodolohiya

Napatunayan sa itaas na kakarampot pa lamang ang mga pagsusuring napoproduktsiyon ng *sobra* bilang pampasidhi ng mga pang-uri sa Filipino. Ibig sabihin, hudyat ito ng higit pang pangangailangan para sa ibayong imbestigasyon upang magalugad ang mga tuntunin sa paggamit nito.

*Sa pagpili ng pagkukunan ng mga datos*, napagpasiyahan sa papel na ito na gamitin ang social media.

Ayon kay Baclig (2022), sa kasalukuyan, kinikilala ang Pilipinas bilang ikalawa sa mga bansa sa daigdig na may pinakamahalagang oras na inilalaan sa social media (tinatayang 10 oras at 27 minuto ang iginugugol ng mga Pilipino na may edad 16 hanggang 64 sa pagbababad sa mga social networking site araw-araw).

Partikular na pinagkunan ng mga datos ang Facebook at Twitter. Binanggit nina Magwaro, Odhiambo, at Owala (2018) na ang Facebook ay may kontekstong impormal kaya malayang nakapagtatakda ang mga tumatangkilik nito ng mga padron (pattern) ng wikang ginagamit nila. Hindi lubhang nalalayo ang Twitter sa katangiang ito ng Facebook. Ayon kay Zimmer (binanggit ni Nordquist 2020), ang Twitter ay nagsilbing bagong

daigdig para sa mga linggwista dahil ang mga tweet ay mistulang mga *speech-like* na diskursong pasulat na kung susuriin ay makapagbibigay-linaw sa mga itinatakdang tuntuning pangwika ng mga gumagamit nito.

*Sa pangongolekta ng mga post at tweet mula sa Facebook at Twitter, pinili lamang yaong mga may taglay na sunurang sobra at pang-uri. Hindi isinama ang mga naibanghay bilang pandiwa (e.g., sumosobra), mga ginamit bilang pangngalan (e.g., ibigay mo ang sobra), at ang mga nagsilbing pang-abay na nagbibigay-turing sa kapwa pang-abay (e.g., sobra talagang magaling).*

*Sa pagsusuri naman ng mga kinolektang post at tweet, deskriptibo ang magsisilbing metodolohikal na lapit yamang nais ng papel na ito na ilarawan ang mga tuntunin kung paano ginagamit ang sobra bilang pampasidhi ng mga pang-uri sa Filipino. Angkop ang nasabing metodolohikal na lapit sa mga ganitong uri ng pagsusuri dahil tinitiyak dito na inoobserbahan at inilalarawan lamang ang wika upang kalaunan ay maipaliwanag ang mga linggwistikong gawi ng mga tagapagsalita (Genetti 2019). Bunga nito, maaari ding gumamit ng mga istruktural na lapit (e.g., proseso ng *Embedding*, pagsasagawa ng *Phrase Structure Test*, at iba pa) upang higit na matamo ang mga layunin ng pagsusuring ito.*

## Resulta at Diskusyon

Sa kabuoan, nakakalap ng 34 na pinagsama-samang mga *post at tweet* na may taglay na sunurang *sobra* at hed na pang-uri. Tingnan ang sumusunod na koleksiyon:

- (1) *Sobrang ganda!*
- (2) *Sobrang bait talaga ni Ella.*
- (3) *Sobrang bait nila at responsive pa sa mga concerns.*
- (4) *Sobrang bagay sa inyo, girls!*
- (5) *Sobrang lapit na sa goals.*
- (6) *Sobrang bilib po kami sa inyo!*
- (7) *Sobrang sarap sa pakiramdam.*
- (8) *Sobrang lungkot ng Wandavision.*
- (9) *Universe Binder na sobrang laki.*
- (10) *Natatakam ako sa sobrang sarap na kape sa 1919.*
- (11) *Sobrang tanga ko sa part nayan.*

- (12) *Sobrang tahimik nila.*
- (13) *Sobrang masaya ako para sa iyo.*
- (14) *Humans cage pigs and sobrang siksikan sila sa kulungang madumi.*
- (15) *Sobrang iyakin niyan.*
- (16) *Sobrang maasikaso ng mga doctor at nurse.*
- (17) *Sobrang maasikaso po kayo sakin at inalagaan nyo po akong mabuti.*
- (18) *Sobrang maalaga iyan si Jayda.*
- (19) *Sobrang kukulit!*
- (20) *Sobrang gaganda ng nmixx Members.*
- (21) *Sobrang babait niyo guys!*
- (22) *I just realized na sobrang tatalino ng mga kadepartment ko.*
- (23) *Sobrang takot na takot ako.*
- (24) *Sobrang tawang-tawa ako kay shi.*
- (25) *Sobrang bilib na bilib ako sa mga iyan.*
- (26) *Sobrang balatsibuyas!*
- (27) *May mga opisyal talaga ng gobyerno na sobrang balat sibuyas.*
- (28) *Sobrang asartalo si Vincent.*
- (29) *Sobrang bigay todo ni Jin and I love it.*
- (30) *Sobrantanga mo.*
- (31) *Sobrambobo mo gian.*
- (32) *Sobransakit na ng mga mata ko.*
- (33) *Sobransakit ng tyan ko.*
- (34) *Sobrambait mo talaga!*

### 3.1 Tuntunin sa Pagpapasidhi ng mga Pang-uri Gamit ang 'Sobra'

Maaaring simulan ang pagsusuring ito sa pagtutuo ng pansin sa mga pariralang pang-uri ng mga pahayag na binubuo ng *sobra*, linker na *-ng*, at hed pang-uri. Nagsisilbing ispesifayer ang *sobra* na isang salitang pandigri. Pangunahing gamapanin nitong tiyakin ang magiging kahulugan ng mga hed (Paz, Hernandez, at Peneyra 2003a). Ang mga hed naman ay tumutukoy sa mga binibigyang-turing ng mga ispesifayer. May pagkakataong ang mga ito ay maaaring isang salita lamang. Kadalasang nagiging hed ng mga parirala ang mga salitang pandiwa, pangngalan, at pang-uri (Paz, Hernandez, at Peneyra 2003b) gaya ng mga halimbawa sa itaas. Samantala, ang linker namang *-ng* na kapansing-pansing nakakabit sa lahat ng *sobra* ng bawat halimbawang pangungusap ay maaaring sabihing nagsisilbing partikulo lamang na nagpapakita

ng relasyon sa pagitan ng nagbibigay-turing (ispesifayer na *sobra*) at binibigyang-turing (mga hed na pang-uri) gaya ng ipinaliliwanag ni Buhain (binanggit nina Cubar at Cubar 1994).

Gayunman, kung babalikan ang paliwanag ni Malicsi (2013) sa ipinahihiwatig ng *-ng*, *aniya*, malinaw na may naganap na embedding o proseso kung saan pumapaloob ang isang batayang pangungusap na nagtataglay ng *sobra* sa isa pang batayang pangungusap na nagtataglay naman ng hed na pang-uri. Sa kaniyang halimbawa, dalawa ang posibleng mangyari pagkatapos ng nasabing proseso: (1) makakaltasan ng makauring panlaping *ma-* ang mga *pang-uring ma-* sandaling lapatan ito ng *sobra* na nagiging sanhi ng pagkawala ng tuon nito sa paksa at (2) mananatili ang kayarian ng hed na pang-uri pati na ang tuon nito sa paksa. Binibigyang-diin ang mga pangyayaring ito sa nasabing proseso sapagkat ito ang ginamit ni Malicsi (2013a) na paliwanag upang tukuyin kung pang-abay na panggaano o pampasidhi ng pang-uri ang gamit ng *sobra*. *Aniya*, nagsisilbing pang-abay na panggaano ang *sobra* kapag nananatiling buo ang mga pang-uri pagkatapos mabigyang-turing. Dahil dito, hindi nawawala ang tuon ng hed na pang-uri sa paksa ng pangungusap. Nagiging pampasidhi naman ng pang-uri ang *sobra* kapag nawala ang tuon ng hed na pang-uri sa paksa bunga ng pagbabago sa kayarian nito pagkatapos itong turingan ng nasabing pampasidhi. Upang higit itong maunawaan, suriin ang mga hinimay na embedded na pangungusap at ang mga batayang pangungusap na pinaggalingan ng mga ito:

(1)  
sobra +  
maganda (ito) → na ganda (nito)  
**sobrang ganda (nito)**

(2)  
sobra +  
mabait talaga si Ella → na bait talaga ni Ella  
**sobrang bait talaga ni Ella**

(3)  
sobra +  
mabait sila at responsive pa sa mga concerns → na bait nila at responsive pa sa mga concerns  
**sobrang bait nila at responsive pa sa mga concerns**

(4)  
 sobra +  
 bagay sa inyo, girls → na bagay sa inyo, girls  
**sobrang bagay sa inyo, girls**

(5)  
 sobra +  
 malapit na sa goals → na lapit na sa goals  
**sobrang lapit na sa goals**

(6)  
 sobra +  
 bilib po kami sa inyo → na bilib po kami sa inyo  
**sobrang bilib po kami sa inyo**

(7)  
 sobra +  
 masarap sa pakiramdam → na sarap sa pakiramdam  
**sobrang sarap sa pakiramdam**

(8)  
 sobra +  
 malungkot ang Wandavision → na lungkot ng Wandavision  
**sobrang lungkot ng Wandavision**

(11)  
 sobra +  
 tahimik sila → na tahimik nila  
**sobrang tahimik nila**

(12)  
 sobra +  
 tanga ako sa part nayan → na tanga ko sa part nayan  
**sobrang tanga ko sa part nayan**

Ang mga inilapat na *sobra* sa hed na pang-uri sa mga pangungusap bilang 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, at 8 ay mga pampasidhi dahil nakaltas ang makauring panlaping *ma-* sa mga ito nang lapatan ng *sobra* na naging sanhi ng pagkawala ng tuon ng mga ito sa paksa.

Gayundin sa mga bilang 11 at 12 na ang tanging kaibahan lang ay walang pagbabagong nabanaag sa kayarian ng mga hed sapagkat hubad na pang-uri ang mga ito. Nakatatayong mag-isa kasi ang mga ganitong tipo mga pang-uri bilang hed kahit walang panlapi

(Ceña at Nolasco 2011a). Ang *sobra* naman sa pangungusap bilang 6 ay pang-abay na panggaano. Kapansin-pansing napanatili nito ang tuon sa paksa pati na ang kayarian ng pang-uri dahil hubad din ito. Mahirap tukuyin kung pampasidhi o panggaano ang nasa bilang 4 (*sobrang bagay sa inyo, girls*) dahil likas na walang paksa ang orihinal na batayang pangungusap nito. Ang hubad na pang-uri naman nito ay kayang magpanatili ng kayarian, mawala o mapanatili man ang paksa (e.g. *sobrang bagay (ito) sa inyo, girls* at *sobrang bagay (nito) sa inyo, girls*). Hindi rin isinama ang bilang 9 dahil panuring lamang ang pariralang pang-uri dito na nilapatan ng *sobra*. Gayundin ang bilang 10 dahil komplemento lamang ng pandiwa rito ang pariralang pang-uri.

(13)

sobra +

masaya ako para sa iyo → na masaya ako para sa iyo

**sobrang masaya ako para sa iyo**

(14) pagtutuunan lamang ang ikalawang sugnay

sobra +

siksikan sila sa kulungang madumi → na siksikan sila sa kulungang madumi

**sobrang siksikan sila sa kulungang madumi**

(15)

sobra +

iyakin iyan → na iyakin niyan

**sobrang iyakin niyan**

(16)

sobra +

maasikaso ang mga doctor at nurse → na maasikaso ng mga doctor at nurse

**sobrang maasikaso ng mga doctor at nurse**

(17)

sobra +

maasikaso po kayo sakin → na maasikaso po kayo sakin

*sobrang maasikaso po kayo sakin*

**sobrang maasikaso po kayo sakin at inalagaan nyo po akong mabuti**

(18)

sobra +

maalaga iyan si Jayda → na maalaga iyan si Jayda

**sobrang maalaga iyan si Jayda**



Sa mga pangungusap namang ito na pare-parehong maylapi ang mga pang-uri, pare-parehong pang-abay na panggaano ang ginamit sa mga bilang 13, 14, 17, at 18 dahil napanatili ang kayarian ng mga hed na pang-uri kaya nanatili rin ang tuon ng mga ito sa paksa. Samantala, pampasidhi naman ang mga nasa bilang 15 at 16 dahil kahit walang pagbabagong nakita sa kayarian ng mga hed na pang-uri, nawala ang tuon ng mga ito sa paksa pagkatapos ng proseso ng embedding.

May dapat pang pag-isipan sa mga bilang 13 (sobrang masaya ako para sa iyo), at 16 (sobrang maasikaso ng mga doctor at nurse). Pansinin na ang hed na panaguri sa mga ito ay may makauring panlaping *ma-*. Binanggit nina Schachter at Otones (1972a) at Ceña at Nolasco (2011b) na madalas na tumatanggap ng paksa ang mga *pang-uring ma-*. Subalit pansinin sa bilang 16 na ang pang-uring hed na *maasikaso* sa pangungusap ay walang paksa. Obserbahan pa kung paanong sa bilang 17 (sobrang maasikaso po kayo sa akin...) na gumamit ng parehong hed na pang-uri ay nagtaglay naman ng paksa. Samantala, sa 13, hindi posibleng mawala ang paksa at palitan ng paukol na panghalip panao (hindi gramatikal ang *sobrang masaya ko para sa iyo*).

Sa kaso ng pang-uring *maasikaso* sa mga bilang 16 at 17, madaling sabihing maaaring kabilang talaga ito sa mga *pang-uring mangunit* sa pagsusuri ng nasabing pangungusap, mapapansing may natatangi itong fityur na naiiba sa karaniwang katangian ng mga nasabing tipo ng pang-uri-*pwedeng mayroon o walang paksa*. Sa pagbabasa ng aklat ni Ceña (2020) na *Morpholohya ng Filipino*, maaaring kabilang ang pang-uring gaya ng *maasikaso* sa mga *pang-uring ma-pandiwa + -in* (e.g., maawain, maramdamin, at iba pa). Subalit, kailangang masagot kung bakit ang pang-uring *maasikaso* sa dalawang pangungusap ay parehong walang hulaping *-in*.

Ipinaliwanag sa papel nina Aldea, Chu-Santos, Katigbak, at Perez (n.d.) na ang mahugnayang panlaping *ma...-in* ay hindi magkasabay na ikinakabit sa mga pang-uri. Ipinaliwanag ng mga

may-akda na ang panlaping *ma-* ay may prominenteng katangian (salient) na nakatutulong upang isaad na ang pang-uri ay may estadong “di-nagmamaliw” (lasting state) habang ang hulaping *-in* ay ikinakabit naman para magsaad na ito ay may katangian ng “pagkamadalas”. Dahil dito, ipinanlalapi ang *ma-* upang maitatag muna ang di-nagmamaliw na katangian ng isang entidad bago ang *-in* para maidiin naman ang pagiging madalas ng di-nagmamaliw na katangian ng inilalarawan. Ito marahil ang dahilan kung bakit nalalaglag ang hulaping *-in* sa “maasikasuhin” (naging “maasikaso”) imbis na ang unlaping *ma-*.

Ang pangyayaring ito ay maaaring suriin gamit ang suri-tangkay na isang uri ng pagsusuri sa pagbuo ng mga salita na nakatuntong sa paniniwalang may sinusunod na tiyak na sunuran ang paglalapi ng mga salita (Nolasco 2021). Sa madaling sabi, ganito nabubuo ang mga *ma-pandiwa* + *-in* (gagamiting halimbawa ang *maasikasuhin*):

*ma-* + *asikaso*

Pu. [ma-[asikasoh]]

*maasikaso* + *-in*

[[maasikasoh] -in] Pu.

Bukod pa rito, kailangan ding masagot ang dahilan sa paggamit ng *maasikaso* imbis na *maasikasuhin*. Ang pinakamalapit na paliwanag dito ay ang usapin ng “markedness”. Ayon kay Millar at Trask (2015), ang pagiging ordinaryo ng isa o higit pang tuntunin (ponolohikal, morpolohikal, sintaktiko, at iba pa) sa isang wika ang nagsisilbing batayan upang ituring ang mga ito bilang markado (marked) samantalang nagiging di-markado (unmarked) naman yaong mga tuntuning di-ordinaryo (maaaring pana-panahon o bibihira lamang ang mga pagkakataong ginagamit). Mula rito, maaaring ang nasabing kayarian ng pang-uri na *ma-pandiwa* ay unti-unti na ring nagiging markado kagaya ng orihinal na anyong *ma-pandiwa* + *-in*.

(19)

sobra +

makukulit (sila) → na kukulit (nila)

**sobrang kukulit (nila)**

(20)

sobra +  
magaganda ang nmixx members → na gaganda ng nmixx members  
**sobrang gaganda ng nmixx members**

(21)  
sobra +  
mababait kayo, guys → na babait ninyo, guys  
**sobrang babait niyo, guys**

(22) *pagtutuunan lamang ang complementizer phrase*  
sobra +  
matatalino ang kadepartment ko → na tatalino ng kadepartment ko  
**sobrang tatalino ng kadepartment ko**

(23)  
sobra +  
takot na takot ako → na takot na takot ako  
**sobrang takot na takot ako**

(24)  
sobra +  
tawang-tawa ako kay Shi → na tawang-tawa ako kay Shi  
**sobrang tawang-tawa ako kay Shi**

(25)  
sobra +  
bilib na bilib ako sa mga iyan → na bilib na bilib ako sa mga iyan  
**sobrang bilib na bilib ako sa mga iyan**

Sa mga inuulit na pang-uri, pampasidhi ng pang-uri naman ang mga *sobra* sa bilang 19 hanggang 22 dahil may pagbabagong naganap sa kayarian ng mga hed na pang-uri nito. Mula sa orihinal na kayariang *ma- + inuulit* (*reduplikasyon lamang ng unang pantig ng salitang-ugat*), nakaltas ang mga makauring panlaping *ma-* ng mga ito na nakita sa orihinal na batayang pangungusap pagkatapos ilapat ang *sobra*. Ayon kina Schachter at Otones (1972b), madalas itong mangyari sa mga *pang-uring ma-* na may reduplikasyon sa unang pantig ng salitang-ugat kapag pinasisidhi.

Pang-abay na panggaano naman ang *sobra* sa mga pangungusap bilang 23 hanggang 25 na kapansin-pansing napanatili ang kayarian ng mga hed na pang-uri pati na ang tuon ng mga ito sa paksa.

(26)  
sobra +  
balatsibuyas → na balatsibuyas  
**sobrang balatsibuyas**

(28)  
sobra +  
asartalo si Vincent → na asartalo si Vincent  
**sobrang asartalo si Vincent**

(29) pagtutuunan lamang ang naunang sugnay  
sobra +  
bigay todo si Jin → na bigay todo ni Jin  
**sobrang bigay todo ni Jin**

Sa kayariang tambalan naman, may taglay na pang-abay na panggaanong *sobra* ang bilang 28 dahil napanatili ang paksa rito samantalang pampasidhing *sobra* naman ang nasa 29 dahil nawala ang paksa sa proseso ng embedding. Muli, sa 26 at 27 ay mahirap tukuyin ang kalikasan ng mga *sobra* sa mga ito dahil sa 26, wala talagang paksa ang orihinal na batayang pangungusap nito kaya hindi rin mabakas sa embedded na pangungusap ang tinutukoy. Posible ring gamitin ang tambalang pang-uri nito (balatsibuyas) nang may paksa man o wala habang napapanatili ang kayarian nito. Samantala, panuring naman ang pariralang pang-uri sa 27.

Gayunman, sa kabila ng mga pagkakaibang ito, nilinaw ni Malicisi (2013b) na magkatulad pa rin ang *function* o gamit ng pampasidhi at panggaano. Tanging ang epekto lamang ng mga ito sa pang-uring hed at pananatili o pagkawala ng paksa kapag ginamit sa pangungusap ang pagkakaiba.

Sa tulong din ng papel na ito, may maidaragdag pa sa mga tuntunin sa paggamit ng *sobra* bilang pampasidhi ng pang-uri na una nang inisa-isa ni Malicisi (2013) sa kaniyang aklat. Nakita sa pagsusuring ito na hindi lahat ng payak na pang-uri na pinasisidhi ng *sobra* ay galing sa mga *pang-uring ma-* dahil ang iba ay likas na

walang panlapi sapagkat hubad ang mga ito (gaya ng mga bilang 11 at 12). May kakayahan ang mga ganitong pang-uri na panatilihin ang pagiging payak ng kayarian ng mga ito bago at pagkatapos ng proseso ng embedding.

Magkagayunman, hubad o orihinal mang may panlaping *ma-* ang mga hed na pang-uri, pare-parehong nawawala ang tuon ng mga ito sa paksa sandaling pasidhiin ng *sobra*. Napag-alaman din na kayang maging intensibo o pampasidhi ng *sobra* sa mga pang-uring maylapi dahil nagagawa nitong alisin ang tuon nito sa paksa nang walang pagbabago sa kayarian (e.g. pagkakaltas ng makauring panlapi) pagkatapos ng embedding (balikan ang bilang 15 at 16). Sa mga bilang 19 hanggang 22, mapapansin namang nakakaltasan ng makauring panlaping *ma-* ang mga pang-uring may pag-uulit sa unang pantig at nawawala ang tuon sa paksa. Bagay na hindi gaanong napagtuunan ng pansin ni Malicsi (2013) sa kaniyang aklat. At huli, sa tambalan, may katangian ang mga ito na kagaya sa mga hubad na pang-uri. Hindi nababago ang kayarian ng mga hed na pang-uring tambalan kahit maiwala ang tuon ng mga ito sa paksa dulot ng pampasidhing *sobra* pagkatapos ng embedding.

### 3.2 Mga Obligatoryo at Di-Obligatoryong Tuntunin sa Pangungusap

Sa bahaging ito, iisa-isahin naman ang mga tuntuning obligatoryo at di-obligatoryo kapag ang mga pinasidhing pariralang pang-uri ay ginagamit sa mga pangungusap. Tatanggalin na sa mga ito ang mga pangungusap na natuklasang may pang-abay na panggaanong *sobra*. Ayon kina Schachter at Otanes (1972c), ang mga pang-uri ay kadalasang nagagamit bilang panaguri, panuring, nominalisadong paksa, komplemento, at iba pa. Kapag siniyasat maigi ang koleksiyon ng mga pangungusap sa itaas, pwedeng maibukod sa apat na kategorya ang gamit ng mga pinasidhing pang-uri sa tulong ng *sobra* gaya ng sumusunod:

*Bilang Panaguri (iitiman ang mga panaguri samantalang sasalungguhitan naman ang mga komplementong nagpapahayag ng tinutukoy ng hed)*

#### (1) Sobrang ganda!

- (2) **Sobrang bait** talaga ni Ella.
- (3) **Sobrang bait** nila at responsive pa sa mga concerns.
- (4) **Sobrang bagay** sa inyo, girls!
- (5) **Sobrang lapit** na sa goals.
- (7) **Sobrang sarap** sa pakiramdam.
- (8) **Sobrang lungkot** ng Wandavision.
- (11) **Sobrang tanga** ko sa part nayan.
- (12) **Sobrang tahimik** nila.
- (15) **Sobrang iyakin** niyan.
- (16) **Sobrang maasikaso** ng mga doctor at nurse.
- (19) **Sobrang kukulit!**
- (20) **Sobrang gaganda** ng nmixx Members.
- (21) **Sobrang babait** niyo guys!
- (26) **Sobrang balatsibuyas!**
- (29) **Sobrang bigay todo** ni lin and I love it.

*Bilang Panuring (iitiman ang mga panuring samantalang sasalungguhan naman ang mga tinuturingan)*

- (9) Universe Binder na **sobrang laki**.
- (27) May mga opisyal talaga ng gobyerno na **sobrang balat sibuyas**.

*Bilang Komplemento (iitiman ang mga komplemento samantalang sasalungguhan naman ang panaguri)*

- (10) Natatakam ako sa **sobrang sarap** na kape sa 1919.

*Bilang Bahagi ng Complementizer Phrase*

- (22) I just realized **na sobrang tatalino ng mga kadepartment ko**.

Pagtuunan naman sa lahat ng mga ito ang nagsilbing panaguri. Bagaman walang paksa ang mga ito, ang mga tinutukoy naman ng mga ito ay nagsilbing komplemento ng mga pinasidhing pang-uri. Sa 2 at 29, ang tinutukoy ay naging komplemento lamang ng panaguri sa pamamagitan ng *pariralang ni*. Bagaman walang halimbawa sa koleksiyon, maaari ding gamitin ang *nina* kung dalawa o higit pa ang tinutukoy dahil ito ang pangmaramihang anyo nito (Gonzales-Garcia 1999a). Sa mga bilang 8, 16, at 20, ang tinutukoy ay naging komplemento lang ng panaguri sa pamamagitan naman ng *pariralang ng*. Sa 3, 11, 12, 15, at 21 naman, ang tinutukoy ay naging komplemento lang din muli ng panaguri sa tulong ng mga panghalip panaong paukol gaya ng *nila*,

*ko, niyan, at ninyo.* Kahit wala ring nabakas sa mga halimbawa, maaari ding maging komplemento ang iba pang panghalip tulad ng *mo, niya, namin, at natin* dahil pare-pareho ring panghalip panaong paukol ang mga ito (Santiago at Tiangco 2003a). Maaari ding gamitin ang mga panghalip na gaya ng *nito, niyon, at iba pa.* Para naman sa mga bilang 1, 4, 5, 7, 19, at 26, ang mga tuntunin na kaiisa-isa pa lamang ay opsyunal sa mga ito.

Pansinin din na ang mga pinasidhing pang-uri sa pamamagitan ng *sobra* ay may mga tinatanggap na komplemento. Sa datos, may apat na komplemento lamang na namataan gaya ng ipinapakita ng sumusunod na talahanayan.

Talahanayan 1

Mga Opsyunal na Komplemento ng mga Pinasidhing Pang-uri Gamit ang *Sobra*

| Komplemento         | Hed             | Halimbawa                            |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| ∅                   | sobrang ganda   | sobrang ganda                        |
| PP ni/ng/nina       | sobrang bait    | sobrang bait [ppni Ella]             |
|                     | sobrang gaganda | sobrang gaganda [ppng nmixx members] |
| PH nila/ninyo/niyan | sobrang bait    | sobrang bait [pph nila]              |
|                     | sobrang babait  | sobrang babait [pph niyo]            |
|                     | sobrang iyakin  | sobrang iyakin [pph niyan]           |
| PP ng (palayon)     | sobrang lungkot | sobrang lungkot [ppng Wandavision]   |
| PP sa               | sobrang sarap   | sobrang sarap [pps sa pakiramdam]    |
|                     | sobrang lapit   | sobrang lapit [pps sa goals]         |
|                     | sobrang bagay   | sobrang lapit [pps sa inyo]          |

Ang ∅ ay nangangahulugan ng kawalan ng komplemento gaya ng makikita sa mga bilang 1, 19, at 26.

Kung gayon, ipinakikita ng resulta ng mga naunang pagsusuri na ang paggamit ng *sobra* bilang pampasidhi ng mga pang-uri sa Filipino ay ginagabayan ng padrong ito: *Ispesifayer + Hed na Pang-uri + (Komplemento)\**. Ang () ay nangangahulugang opsyunal ang komplemento. Samantala, ang \* naman ay nagpapahihiwatig na maaaring may higit sa isang komplemento ang mga pang-uring hed na pinasidhi ng *sobra*.

### 3.3 Ilan pang mga Obserbasyon

#### 3.3.1 Asimilasyon sa Sunurang Sobra + -ng + Pang-uri

Isa pa sa mga naobserbahang katangian ng mga pinasidhing pang-uri sa Filipino gamit ang '*sobra*' ay ang pagkabit/pagdikit ng mga ito sa mga hed na pang-uri. Sa pagkakabit na ito, may nagaganap na asimilasyong di-ganap. Kapag ang kinabitang pang-uri ay nagsisimula sa tunog na /t/ at /s/, ang linker sa salitang '*sobra*' ay napapalitan ng tunog na /n/ samantalang /m/ naman kapag ang ikinabit na pang-uri ay nagsisimula sa tunog na /b/. Tingnan ang mga halimbawa sa ibaba:

- (30) Sobrantanga mo.
- (31) Sobrambobo mo gian.
- (32) Sobransakit na ng mga mata ko.
- (33) Sobransakit ng tyan ko.
- (34) Sobrambait mo talaga!

#### 3.3.2 Pagiging Konstityuwent ng Sobra

Maidaragdag ding patunay sa pinagkaiba ng pang-abay na panggaanong *sobra* at pampasidhi ng pang-uri na *sobra* ang paggamit ng *movement test* sa mga pariralang pang-uri na nakalap sa itaas. Sa bahaging ito, kukuha lamang ng tig-isang halimbawa sa mga pangungusap na may pampasidhi at pang-abay na panggaano. Tingnang maigi ang sumusunod:

- 13 *Sobrang masaya ako para sa iyo.*
- 13a *Para sa iyo, sobrang masaya ako.*
- 13b *Para sa iyo, masaya ako (nang) sobra.*
- 13c *Sobra akong masaya para sa iyo.*

Sa 13a, bagaman nailipat ang pariralang pinasidhing pang-uri sa kanan, makikita na magkasunod pa rin ang ispesifayer na *sobra + -ng* at hed na pang-uri. Subalit, sa mga 13b (opsyunal ang *nang*) at 13c, nagkahiwalay ang mga ito ngunit hindi nagbabago ang kahulugan mula sa orihinal na sunurang ipinakikita ng 13.



Subalit, pansining naaapektuhan ang kahulugan ng pangungusap na may pampasidhi kapag inilipat-lipat ang *sobra* sa alinmang bahagi nito. Gagamitin ang bilang 21:

21 *Sobrang babait niyo guys!*

21a *Babait niyo sobra, guys!*

21b *Babait niyo, guys sobra!*

21c *Babait sobra niyo, guys!*

Sa isinagawang *movement test* para sa 21, maaaring makabuluhan pa rin ang 21a at 21b ngunit mapapansing naiwang hubad ang hed na pang-uring inuulit ang unang pantig. Matatandaang sa proseso ng embedding, ang mga pang-uring inuulit ang unang pantig ay nagmula sa batayang pangungusap kung saan ang mga ito ay orihinal na may makauring panlapi na *ma-*. Maaari namang ipinahihiwatig ng 21c na ang mga pampasidhing *sobra* ay hindi puwedeng ipuwesto pagkatapos ng hed nito.

Sa isinagawang test, lalo lamang nitong pinalilina ang pinagkaiba ng *sobra* bilang pang-abay na panggaano at bilang pampasidhi. *Kapag ito ay ginamit bilang pampasidhi*, obligatoryo ang sunurang *sobra* + *-ng* + *pang-uri*. *Kapag nagsilbi naman itong pang-abay na panggaano*, may pagkakataong masusunod ang orihinal na sunuran gaya sa 13a ngunit may pagkakataong malalabag ang sunurang ito kagaya sa 13c.

Pahihintulutan din ang opsyunal na paggamit ng *nang* bilang pananda na ito ay pang-abay na mababanaag naman sa 13b. Ibig sabihin, ang mga pang-abay na panggaanong *sobra* ay maituturing na isang konstityuwent habang ang pampasidhing *sobra* ay nagiging konstityiwent lamang basta't kasama ang hed na pang-uri.

*Sa madaling salita:*

11 [ <sub>PA</sub> *sobrang*] [ <sub>PU</sub> *masaya*] [ <sub>PH</sub> *ako*]

[ <sub>PKL</sub> *para sa iyo*]

21 [*PU* *sobrang babait*] [*PH* *niyo*] [*PNG* *guys*]

*Mga Daglat:*

*PA - Pariralang Pang-abay*

*PU - Pariralang Pang-uri*

*PH - Pariralang Panghalip*

*PKL - Pariralang Pang-ukol*

*PNG - Pariralang Pangngalan*

### 3.3.3 Pagiging Katanggap-tanggap ng Kawalan ng mga Pinasidhing Pang-uri ng Tinutukoy

Sa mga bilang 1 (*sobrang ganda*), 19 (*sobrang kukulit*), at 26 (*sobrang balatsibuyas*), pansinin kung papaanong nagiging makabuluhan pa rin ang mga ito kahit na walang komplementong nagpapahiwatig ng tinutukoy ng mga pariralang pang-uring pinasidhi ng *sobra*. Ni wala ring iba pang komplemento, kahit isa man lang, ang mga ito. Sa mga pagsusuri nina Gonzales-Garcia (1999b) at Santiago at Tiangco (2003b), ang mga ito ay maaaring iklasipika sa mga pangungusap na walang paksa, partikular sa pangungusap na *paghanga*. Sa mga ganitong uri ng pangungusap, may paksa man o wala, may komplemento man o wala (ayon sa nakita sa pagsusuri sa papel na ito), maituturing ang mga ito bilang pangungusap na nagpapahayag ng diwa.

### 3.3.3 Ang Kaso ng mga Bilang 9, 10, at 27

Madalas na binabanggit kanina na nagkakaiba ang panggaanong *sobra* at pampasidhing *sobra* ayon sa epektong hatid nito sa kayarian ng hed na pang-uri at ang kakayahan ng mga ito na maapektuhan ang pag-iral o pagkawala ng paksa sa mga pangungusap.

Subalit, sa koleksiyon, nakita sa mga bilang 9, 10, at 27 na may taglay rin ang mga itong *sobra* ngunit hindi madaling tukuyin kung pampasidhi o panggaano. Hindi kasi nagsisilbing panaguri ang mga pang-uri nito kundi bilang mga panuring. Pansinin ang sumusunod:

(9)

*sobra +*

malaking universe binder → na laking universe binder  
*sobrang laking universe binder*  
**universe binder na sobrang laki** (Post-posed)

(10) *pagtutuunan lamang ng pansin ang komplemento*  
 sobra +  
 masarap na kape sa 1919 → na sarap na kape sa 1919  
*sobrang sarap na kape sa 1919*  
**natatakam ako sa sobrang sarap na kape sa 1919** (Pre-posed)

(27) *pagtutuunan lamang dito ang tinuringan at ang panuring*  
 sobra +  
 balatsibuyas na mga opisyal ng gobyerno → na balatsibuyas na  
 mga opisyal ng gobyerno  
*sobrang balatsibuyas na mga opisyal ng gobyerno*  
**may mga opisyal talaga ng gobyerno na sobrang balatsibuyas**  
 (Post-posed)

*Post-posing* ang nangyari sa mga bilang 9 at 27 dahil nauna ang mga pariralang pangngalan (universe binder at opisyal ng gobyerno) kaysa sa mga panuring ng mga ito (sobrang laki at sobrang balatsibuyas). *Pre-posing* naman sa bilang 10 sapagkat nauna ang panuring (sobrang sarap) kaysa sa tinuturingan (kape).

Inilapat man sa panuring o panaguri, mapapansing parehong naapektuhan ng *sobra* ang kayarian ng nilapatan. Sa bilang 9 at 10, ang panuring na *malaki* at *masarap* ay nakaltasan ng mga makauring panlaping *ma-* pagkatapos ng paglalapat ng *sobra* kaya nabuo ang mga panuring na *sobrang laki* at *sobrang sarap*. Sa kaso naman ng bilang 27, walang nakitang pagbabago sa panuring (balatsibuyas) dahil gaya ng natuklasan sa papel na ito kanina, may kakayahan ang mga tambalang pang-uri na panatilihin ang kayarian nito gamitan man ng panggaano o pampasidhi.

Sa madaling salita, kapag ginamit bilang pampasidhi ang *sobra* sa panaguri, maaari itong magdulot ng epekto sa kayarian ng hed na panaguring pang-uri maging ang pag-iral ng paksa sa pangungusap.

Samantala, kapag inilapat naman ang pampasidhing ito sa panuring na pang-uri, ang epekto lamang sa kayarian ng panuring ang maaaring makita. Magiging mahirap lamang tukuyin kung pampasidhi pa rin ang *sobra* kapag inilapat sa mga tambalang

panuring dahil ang ganitong kayarian ng pang-uri ay may kakayahang magpanatili ng anyo, pampasidhi o panggaano man ang *sobra* na inilapat.

## Kongklusyon at Rekomendasyon

Matapos ang pagsasagawa ng deskriptibong pagsusuri sa mga nakalap na *tweet* at *post* na may mga pinasidhing pang-uri, nakapagdagdag pa ng ibang tuntunin sa inisyal na suri ni Malicsi (2013) gaya ng (1) nananatili ang kayarian ng mga hubad na pang-uri habang naiaalis naman ang tuon nito sa paksa kapag sumailalim sa proseso ng embedding ang *sobra* at isa pang batayang pangungusap na may taglay na hed na pang-uring hubad; (2) bagaman hindi napapasidhi ng *sobra* ang mga *pang-uring ma-* liban na lamang kung tatanggalin ang makauring panlapi ng mga ito, may ilang mga maylaping pang-uri mula sa datos na nagagawang pasidhiin nito nang walang pagbabago sa kayarian (e.g., yaong kinabitan ng hulaping ng *-in*, at mahugnayang panlaping gaya ng *ma-...-in*); (3) nakakaltasan ng makauring panlaping *ma-* ang mga pang-uring inuulit ang unang pantig na siya ring nagiging sanhi ng pagkawala ng tuon nito sa paksa; at (4) pagiging magkakatulad ng tuntunin sa pagpapasidhi ng mga hubad na pang-uri at mga tambalang pang-uri kung saan walang nagaganap na pagbabago sa kayarian ng mga ito at pareparehong nawawalan ng pokus sa paksa sa kasagsagan at katapusan ng proseso ng embedding.

Bagaman obligatoryo sa mga pangungusap na may parialang pang-uri na pinasisidhi ng *sobra* ang kawalan ng paksa, sa pamamagitan ng komplemento, maaari pa ring malaman kung ano o sino ang tinutukoy ng mga ito sa tulong ng mga panandang *ng*, *ni*, at *nina*, mga panghalip na paukol na gaya ng *ko*, *nila*, *niyan*, *ninyo*, *niya*, *namin*, *nito*, *niyon*, at iba pa. Bukod pa sa komplementong ito, napag-alaman na tumatanggap pa ito ng iba pang komplemento gaya ng *pariralang sa* at *pariralang ng* na nakita sa datos.

May ilan ding naitalang obserbasyon sa papel na ito gaya ng lumitaw sa resulta ng *movement test* kung saan naipakita ang isa

pang pagkakaiba ng mga pang-abay na panggaanong *sobra* at pampasidhi ng pang-uri na *sobra*.

Sa nauna, hindi absoluto ang sunurang ispesifayer na *sobra + -ng* at hed na pang-uri dahil maituturing na konstityuwent ang panggaanong *sobra* sapagkat naililipat-lipat ito ng puwesto sa pangungusap nang hindi naaapektuhan ang kahulugan nito. Samantala, ang mga pampasidhing *sobra* naman ay hindi naililipat-lipat dahil naaapektuhan ang mga obligatoryong tuntuning pangkayarian ng hed na pang-uri (e.g. naiiwang hubad ang mga pang-uri). Napag-alaman ding posible ang pag-iral ng proseso ng asimilasyon ng ispesifayer na *sobra + -ng* at pang-uring hed. At huli, sa tulong ng talakay nina Gozanles-Garcia (1999) at Santiago at Tiangco (2003), napangatwiranang opsyunal sa mga pangungusap na ang tanging komponent lamang ay pariralang pang-uring pinasidhi ng *sobra* ang kawalan ng komplementong nagpapahiwatig ng tinutukoy nito gaya ng nakita sa ilang halimbawa sa itaas.

Napag-alaman din na pwedeng pasidhiin ng *sobra* ang mga pang-uring panuring bukod sa mga pang-uring panaguri. Natutukoy naman ito ayon sa epekto ng pampasidhi sa kayarian ng panuring.

Para sa mga susunod na kaugnay na pag-aaral, maaaring saliksikin at suriin pa ang sumusunod:

1. Iba pang tipo ng maylapi at inuulit na pang-uri na maaaring pasidhiin gamit ang *sobra*;
2. Iba pang opsyunal na komplemento ng mga pariralang pang-uring pinasidhi ng *sobra*;
3. Iba pang gamit o *function* ng mga pariralang pang-uring pinasidhi ng *sobra*; at
4. Iba pang epekto ng pampasidhing *sobra* sa mga panuring na pang-uri ano man ang kayarian nito.

## Sanggunian:

Agbon, Z. Z., at Sy, M. C. (2013). *Pang-abay. Filipino: Daan Tungo sa Pagbabago at Pag-unlad Baitang 4* (p 310). SalesianaBOOKS, Don Bosco Press, INC.

Aldea, A. J., Chu-Santos, C. A., Katigbak, L. C., at Perez, C. G. (n.d). *Adjectives? Think Again: Statives in Tagalog*. University of the Philippines, Diliman. <https://academia.edu/resource/work/5298479>

Dayag, A. M., Baisa-Julian, A., Lontoc, N. S., at Esguerra-Jose, C. (2017). Pasukdol. *Pinagyangang Pluma, Ikalawang Edisyon* (p 183). Phoenix Publishing House, Inc.

Bacalig, C. E. (2022). Social Media, Internet Craze Keep PH on Top 2 of World List. *Inquirer.Net*. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1589845/social-media-internet-craze-keep-ph-on-top-2-of-world-list>

Batnag, A. E. (2009). Sumisibol na Gramatika sa Filipino: Ilang Obserbasyon sa mga Bagong Kalakaran/Pagbabago sa Wika. *Ang Manghahasik sa Edukasyong Pangwika* nina Pat V. Villafuerte, Teresita T. Fortunato, at Aurora E. Batnag (pp 8-22). Suatengco Publishing House, Caloocan City.

Ceña, R. M. (2012). *Pariralang Pang-uri. Sintaks ng Filipino* (pp 64-97). Pambansang Komisyon para sa Kultura at mga Sining.

Ceña, R. M. (2020). *Pang-uri. Morpolohya ng Filipino* (pp 225-276). Books Bisoo.

Ceña, R. M., at Nolasco, R. M. D. (2011). *Pangungusap. Gramatikang Filipino Balangkas* (pp 78-81). The University of the Philippines Press, Diliman, Quezon City.

Cubar, E. & Cubar, N. (1994). Instances of Relativization in Filipino. *Writing Filipino Grammar: Traditions & Trends* (pp 64-161). QC: NEW DAY PUBLISHERS.

Diksiyonaryo. (n.d). Sobra. *Diksiyonaryo.ph*. <https://diksiyonaryo.ph/search/sobra>.

Gonzales-Garcia, L. (1999). *Morpoloji. Makabagong Gramar ng Filipino* (p 25-103) Maynila: Rex Bookstore.

Gonzales-Garcia, L. (1999). *Sintaks. Makabagong Gramar ng Filipino* (p 107-133) Maynila: Rex Bookstore.

Genetti, C. (2019). *Introduction 1.3 Linguistics. Language, Languages, Linguistics* (pp 17-18). Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.

Hernandez, V. V. (2008). Tugon ni Viveca V. Hernandez. Adyenda sa Saliksik Wika Ulat ng Kumperensiya (pp 17-19). Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, Unibersidad ng Pilipinas.

Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino. (2021). *Sobra. KWF Diksiyonaryo ng Wikang Filipino*.  
<https://kwfdiksiyonaryo.ph/?fbclid=IwAR0SDfjtVHeZupxuGWht5SaVf6C01dwQ-zVqf2aHUIwRakzsSMQn4Cu1qSg>.

Malicsi, J. C. (2008). *Adyenda ng Pananaliksik sa Estruktura ng Wika*. Adyenda sa Saliksik Wika Ulat ng Kumperensiya (pp 1-16). Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, Unibersidad ng Pilipinas.

Malicsi, J. C. (2013). 1 Batayang Pangungusap. *Gramar ng Filipino* (pp 1-102). Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, Unibersidad ng Pilipinas.

Magwaro, G. R., Odhiambo, E., at Owala, S. (2018). *An Analysis of the Linguistic Features Used in Selected Social Interactions on Facebook*. Macrothink Institute, 4(1), pp 35-44.  
<http://doi.org/10.5296/elr.v4i1.12589>

Millar, R. M. ay Trask, L. (2015). Shift of Markedness. *Trask's Historical Linguistics* (R. M. Millar, Ed.). Routledge.

Nolasc, M. R. D. (05 May 2021). *Ang Dulog Sapin-Sapin sa Pagbuo ng mga Salita* [Status Update]. Facebook.  
[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid07u6XNnEzeZcSEiaBjbY3FaRicmbew5LpTYtAs1WKYGhvMzhMaM1zmodaT35XzSxl&id=754488599&mibextid=uevf24](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid07u6XNnEzeZcSEiaBjbY3FaRicmbew5LpTYtAs1WKYGhvMzhMaM1zmodaT35XzSxl&id=754488599&mibextid=uevf24)

Nordquist, R. (2020). *What is a Tweet? How Twitter is Changing Our Language*. ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/tweet-definition-1692478>

Paz, C. J., Hernandez, V. V., & Peneyra I. (2003). Chapter 5: Sintaks. *Ang Pag-aaral ng Wika* (pp 71-122). Lungsod Quezon: UP Press.

Santos, L. K. (1939). Ang Pang-uri. *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa* (pp 167-231). Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino.

Santiago, A., & Tiangco, N. (2003). Kabanata IV: Morpolohya (Palabuuan). *Makabagong Balarilang Filipino* (pp 102-231). Maynila: Rex Bookstore.

Santiago, A., & Tiangco, N. (2003). Kabanata V: Sintaksis (Palaugnayan). *Makabagong Balarilang Filipino* (pp 249-271). Maynila: Rex Bookstore.

Schachter P., at Otones, F. T. (1972). *Chapter 4: Adjectival and their Expansions. Tagalog Reference Grammar* (pp 195-280). University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.

Tadeo-Taduran, C., at Bardonado-Marmol, J. (2020). *Ugnayang Pang-abay, Pang-uri, at Pang-abay sa Paglalarawan*. Namoro, L. C. (Ed.). Grade 4 Filipino Modyul (pp 1-19). Kagawaran ng Edukasyon.

Umbal, P. (2016). *Contact-induced change in Heritage Tagalog: Evidence from adjective intensification* (pp 1-53). University of Toronto. [http://pocholoumbal.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/3/8/21380710/umbal\\_gp2\\_final.pdf](http://pocholoumbal.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/3/8/21380710/umbal_gp2_final.pdf)

---

### Bionote:

Si Lexter A. Castro ay kasalukuyang guro sa Filipino ng Mataas na Paaralang Rural ng UP. Nagtuturo siya ng mga kursong Filipino 7 – Maignaying Wika at Maunawang Pagbasa at SH-FIL 1 – Komunikasyon sa Wika at Kulturang Filipino. Nagtapos siya ng programang Batsilyer sa Edukasyong Pangwika sa Filipino na May Sertipiko sa Pagtuturo ng Mataas na Antas sa Sekundarya (Filipino-SHS) sa Pamantasang Normal ng Pilipinas noong Abril 2019. Kasalukuyan naman siyang kumukuha ng programang Master ng Sining sa Araling Pilipino na May Konsentrasyon sa Wika at Linggwistiks sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas-Diliman.



---

## **Malansang Fish: Mistranslation and the Fact of Translation**

Rayji de Guia

University of the Philippines Diliman

[rdsalcedo@up.edu.ph](mailto:rdsalcedo@up.edu.ph)

---

### **Abstract**

The article criticizes the failure to capture the Filipino sensibility in contemporary Philippine short stories in English, primarily using the fiction pieces in *Writing the Philippines*, a special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal* in July 2018. With poets Ricardo M. De Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil as guest editors, it is one of the more recent collations of literary work that explicitly focus on the Philippines as location and on the local sensibility. The editorial, “The Pinoy Sensorium”, claims that the contributors were “attuned to their localities across different parts of the country.” There is a mistranslation, so to speak, with how some writers of English write the Filipino sensibility, a consequence that is attributable to the pitfalls of cultural translation and untranslatability, criticized by Brian James Baer for their shared ambivalence to what he calls “the fact of translation” (140). This fact of translation is similar to J. Neil Garcia’s recognition of the translated nature of Philippine literature in English. In contrast to Garcia’s criticism against the realism of Philippine literature in English, the article argues that translation renders realist the English prose, when monolingual English, as purported by the *Tiempos* in New Criticism, is recalibrated with the disruption of the multilingual and translational.

On the first day of 2018, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal* called for submissions for their then upcoming special issue, *Writing the*

*Philippines*, to be guest-edited by poets Ricardo M. De Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil: “If you have something original to say about the Philippines, we would like to hear from you” (“Cha — Call for Submissions”). This was posted on their blog, after similar calls on Japan and Hong Kong in the previous year, and soon followed by calls on Singapore and Vietnam.

Released on *Cha*’s website by July 2018, the issue featured works in poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, photography & art, and book reviews by Filipinos within the country and elsewhere. The editorial titled “The Pinoy Sensorium”<sup>1</sup> prefaces *Writing the Philippines* and remarks that “[m]any of the pieces reckon with a Philippines that is seen from a distance and in retrospect, but entirely alive in the mind” (De Ungria and Ypil). It celebrates, ultimately, the Filipino sensibility in the contributions, exhibiting how attuned the writers were “to their localities across different parts of the country”:

Wherever they may be, it seems that the Pinoy sensorium remains alive not only to the many kinds of violence—their nearness and imminence—within and around it, but also to the depths of human connections plumbed in spite of and in response to such conditions. Whatever the response may be—serious, ironic, comic—it is mostly delivered with the coolness of a bottle of local beer. (De Ungria and Ypil)

The anthology celebrates writing that is grounded in the Philippines, but I must point to the lack of more concrete definitions of the Pinoy sensorium: First, what qualifies as “a multiplicity of identities and a porous sense of place” or being “attuned to [one’s] localities”? And second, how can an anthology claim to write about the Philippines without acknowledging the tension inherent in writing the Filipino sensibility in English? And so, the absence of definition for the Pinoy sensorium engenders its own glaring absence in some included pieces, indicative of the recurring lapses in Philippine literature in English. This article interrogates the creative practice of writing fiction in English as it is demonstrably entangled with postcolonial conditions of the Philippines, and points towards a more critical and conscious poetics that is attentive to language.

\*\*\*

My short story “Death for Serafina” was included among the nine fiction pieces in *Writing the Philippines*. It is about a religious woman in her sixties who lives in a decrepit, moldy house that used to be a school. Lonely in her old age, Serafina obsesses over her death, which she mentions in each and every call with her daughter, Norie. But instead of coming home herself, Norie sends her aunt Lucretia to take care of her mother. What ensues is a stubborn, humorous clash between sisters whose decades-long conflict gets brought out, finally, in the open.

This would become my third short story based on my hometown in Cavite. I developed the premise during an errand to the town water station along Kalye Barako across a large house in a state of dilapidation—my mother’s old elementary school building, where my grandmother, herself a religious woman, used to teach history. Having been explicitly framed in my mind as the municipality of Maragondon, the piece encountered multiple issues regarding how I would capture it best. I characterized Serafina as someone who is sensitive to the point of stubborn defensiveness, so much so that her filthiness is a cultivated habit that I made the house embody:

... the shambles that remained of the small school it used to be. The iron gates, peeling with layers of paint, barred an unkempt courtyard that sheltered feces left behind by strays. The wooden upper floor, where water seeped through, was breaking down in places, opening up for patches of mushrooms and moss. Most of the sliding capiz windows had yielded to the shifting weather, shells missing and panels wrecked.

Inside the building, there was a perpetually damp smell, exacerbated by days like this in the height of summer. In spite of this, there was an eerie calmness to it, quite the opposite of its façade. Every dingy shelf-space lent a space to a Mama Mary, a Sto. Niño or one of the other saints Serafina had managed to acquire over the years. The mirrors upon the walls stared at each passing visitor, surfaces blurry with age, a few cracked. (de Guia)

When I revised this story into the version published in *Cha*, I actively pursued uncleanness, for which Filipinos have numerous words without English equivalents of the same nuance. In the quote above, I settled for “feces” in place of the Filipino “tae” in my mind, because I wanted to relay the disgusting image that “poop” is too childish for, and “shit” too offensive. In this case, “feces” worked well enough. The problem of translating uncleanness would crop up again later. As Serafina sat in the courtyard, I had to evoke how she is, as my mother would say, *nanglilimahid* with her *pawis* and *libag*:

The weather was scorching hot, even as the sun was starting to set. Sweat had formed and dried repeatedly on Serafina's neckline and spread wide onto her chest, meeting the wetness from her armpits. When she scratched the back of her neck, bits of dirt wedged themselves under her nails. (de Guia)

As it turned out, however, the most challenging translation in this short story was “*malansa*” in the scene where Serafina was about to rub salt on the tilapia without removing its gills and blood. I imagined Lucretia to say, “*Ano ka ba? Magiging malansa yan!*” “Fishy” as an adjective is less intense and primarily denotes the olfactory, whereas the state of *lansa* is a grave development beyond fishiness; a fish that is not thoroughly cleaned will smell and taste bad when you eat it. Used in dialogue, I had less legroom to elaborate descriptively as I did with “*pawis*” and “*libag*”, and simply retaining the Filipino word—say, “That’s going to be *malansa!*”—is unnatural to my ears, as if spoken by a *conyo* yuppy in Manila, instead of a sixty-year-old *probinsyana*. Translation figured prominently in the process of writing “Death for Serafina” and the short story encapsulates mustiness, in every sense of the word, as my poetics.

It is the translational nature of writing in English that makes realism attainable in my practice. Conversely, J. Neil Garcia asserts that realism as description and genre for Philippine literature in English is a “category mistake” since “realism as a critical term presupposes monocultural verisimilitude in a first language” (101). Pointing out the *kaingeros* and their children in N.V.M. Gonzalez’s works, he remarks that their speaking in English to each other was

“obviously not realistic scenes” owing to the linguistic incongruence of what is being written about and the language used to write it. Garcia notes that unlike those who write in their first language, the Filipino writer in English cannot be wholly referential since the mimetic mode is a prerequisite to realism as a literary genre. He situates his argument upon the formation of realism as a Western literary tradition that is devoted to reproducing, through attentive details and descriptions, the real (102). But most importantly, the reader must believe the realism of what the author is saying, that they must share the same attitude and consequently same language and background. This requirement of reception meant that the translational nature of Philippine literature in English cannot adequately signify the surrounding culture into a realistic utterance, which is to say imitate it (103). In this sense, realism as conceptualized in the West, indeed, does not apply to the practice of a Filipino writer in English, but it is rather limited to presume that critics and writers of Philippine literature in English are not actively working with the conflicting nature of our multicultural conditions that necessitate translatedness, a self-awareness he readily assigns to Filipino critics—as if Filipino is not itself contested in many regions in the country (108-109). That realism is not possible or applicable because of linguistic incongruency is questionable when one delves further into the notion of referentiality as supposedly one-to-one. Garcia himself overturns his initial argument against the realism he earlier defined, that cultural systems vary in linguistic referentiality by the degrees of emphasis, and that referentiality is only one kind of representation, among others, for any language (113). In the end, he calls for critics to contextualize practices of writing in English that recognizes its “translatedness,” and the required description and interpretation of the literary practice itself: not only how the act of writing must be transparent and purposeful in its translation of local culture into English, but also how translatedness hinges upon the reception of the Filipino audience (121).

Demonstrated by my own practice, translation is clearly inevitable. Part of what Garcia is arguing—that is, the recognition of translation in Philippine literature in English—is comparable to the “fact of translation” in Brian James Baer’s criticism of the two

most popular conceptualizations of translation, cultural translation and untranslatability. Although the two appear to be opposites, they share an ambivalence to the fact of translation, defined as “the actual rendering of a text or utterance from one natural language or idiom to another”; cultural translation elides or mystifies the fact of translation through metaphorization of translation, whereas untranslatability impoverishes the fact of translation by focusing on a discrete set of “untranslatable” words (140). On cultural translation and translation as metaphor as abstractly defined by Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, Baer writes:

One must ask whether the fact of translation and translation as metaphor are interchangeable in these formulations, or was the metaphorical translation of these authors into international Anglophone culture so successful precisely because they did not depend on the fact of translation? In other words, translation as metaphor glosses over or mystifies, in the Marxian sense of the word, the class implications of fluency in English. (143)

Baer’s criticism is deeply informed by the recent rise of ethno-nationalist movements in the West, wherein translation and interpretation services are targeted by policies, which becomes a matter of life and death for migrants with no access to English as writers and scholars do (143-144). Moreover, the elision of the non-Western, non-English original text contributed to a new form of nationalism in multiculturalism—instead of promoting internationalism in publishing trends, they turned to hyphenated writers of foreign descent because everything can and should be English anyway (144). Regarding untranslatability, he posits it to be potentially ahistorical: “Who benefits from claims of untranslatability?” (148) The essentialist assertion of untranslatability mirrors ethno-nationalist sentiments of “unique national genius,” and was considered “a bourgeoisie fallacy closely tied to capitalist conceptions of private property” by Soviet translation scholars (148-149). What is glossed over as untranslatable is actually linguistic asymmetry or incommensurability, a characteristic that Translation Studies views as distributed across languages, and thus accepts “borrowing” to be a legitimate strategy in translation (147-148). As such, translated texts are inevitably hybrid texts of the source and target

languages, where full transposability or commensurability is not the goal, and where the fact of translation should be present (151-152).

The politics surrounding English, whose function as a global lingua franca stemmed from colonial and neocolonial domination, cannot be divorced from translation. In Philippine literature in English, the ambivalence towards the fact of translation manifests in two ways: the illusion of full transposability in monolingual English that elides the multilingual culture from which it is produced and the so-called untranslatables as ornaments on the otherwise monolingual English text for tokenized local color. The former often prevails in realist works, while the latter, in speculative works, though it is worth noting that this is not a strict demarcation, but rather a guide to analysis. Both can be encountered in a single text in *Writing the Philippines*.

The American disdain for non-standard, non-monolingual English and translation is consistently observed in various sources, past to current, colonial to postcolonial. The 1925 *Survey of the Educational System* in the Philippines refers to a “foreign language handicap” induced by the competing languages that a student at the time must contend with by engaging in ceaseless translation. To overcome this so-called disability, “the handicap of translation must be overcome” (Rafael, “Mis-education, Translation, and the *Barkada* of Languages” 9). Likewise, this attitude factored into the decision of using English as medium of instruction, relegating the burden of translation onto the colonial subjects (9). The process by which a student was expected to overcome translation is through the war of, and on translation:

The student learned to translate by way of putting the mother tongue in its place, under the domination of a foreign one, thereby coming to dominate the foreign language herself. Winning this double victory would then transform the student into a new subject standing atop and in control of the linguistic hierarchy. Colonizing both languages, holding each to their respective places, the educated subject can now command language itself in the service of her thoughts and expressions. Doing so meant putting an end to the labor of translation or at least

minimizing its visibility which could only detract from the appearance of thought. The war of translation was thus also meant to be a war *on* translation. It would conclude in the unequal peace among languages that would establish the rule of the thinking subject over the means and materials of its production. (10)

This is a war that was and still is waged today, even in the West, through the untethering of translation from the fact of translation and its politics (Baer 144). To use English, in this sense, one must aim to speak it as if one is not at all translating; and for poet Edith Tiempo, to write in English, one must be monolingual in the absence of the non-English, because “[o]ne cannot improve in one’s art unless there is continuity” (qtd. in Cruz 20).

When Edith and Edilberto Tiempo were in Iowa, their encounter with New Criticism was premised upon silencing—subjugating—their own foreignness. Edith was excluded from poetry workshops and was instead told by Paul Engle to read books on poetry (Cruz 16). An incident with Flannery O’Connor, due to her Southern accent being too thick and unintelligible, had the students begging for Engle to read her manuscript aloud for her instead, marking her as foreign despite not being so. This act of silencing seemed for Edilberto an equalizer for the American and the Filipino, making made him feel less insecure about his own accent. Rather than recognize the suppression of their otherness, the accent-less speech and consequently accent-less writing gets held up as pedagogical imperative (17). Brought to the Philippines, New Criticism conflates the dominant culture with the universal, and conceives excellence in craft as hostile to “committed writing”, which Edith compares to “an experience similar to going to the bathroom” where “there is relief but only temporarily” (qtd. in Cruz 19)—disposable because of its specificity as opposed to having “universal values”. The universal, thus, can only be achieved with writing in monolingual English. Translation, or what Tiempo refers to as compartmentalization, “works against the craft of the postcolonial poet” (21). Again and again, working with English requires the abolition of translation and non-English—the utmost refusal to interact with what is deemed foreign that underscores the very foundations of the Empire. The effacement has always been a part of this tradition and continues to haunt



contemporary Philippine literature in English. My own turn to mustiness as a poetics of disruption was a long struggle against monolingualism.

Birthered by the institutionalization of creative writing, Philippine literature in English cannot escape the postcolonial inheritance that is New Criticism. Therefore, a publication that claims to embody the Pinoy sensorium without interrogating the language that has continuously subjugated it understandably will result in a confused selection of works that, at times, veers away from the Pinoy sensorium it champions. What then is the “porous sense of place” that the writers of *Writing the Philippines* were attuned to? As an adjective, “porous” indicates small holes on a surface or an object, implying roughness or gaps in the text, but the largely monolingual selection of fiction suggests the opposite. English disorients the Filipino reader when monolingually unmediated in its illusion of fully transposing the Filipino sensibility into English. Take for instance “Terminal” by Matthew Jacob F. Ramos, whose setting of a domestic airport was difficult to place until later:

I sat up immediately and wondered why this man had to come all the way to this distant bench to bother me. But when I looked around, it was clear that our gated area had reached capacity. There were people sleeping on the marble floors with no thought to the shoes that had tread upon it. There was a pregnant woman standing by the entrance, disheartened by the lack of offers for seats; a number of kids shuffling into every open crevice they could find; a family that had just entered with nothing to look forward to. Besides my rude awakener, no one looked the slightest bit at home in this dreary place. (Ramos)

“Bench”, “gated area”, “marble floors”, a disheartened pregnant woman, rowdy kids, and a family in “this dreary place” —these are generic elements in any airport when domestic airports in the Philippines are quite distinct from international ones, especially from those of other countries. The paragraph illustrates how an unmoored setting is further displaced in prose that does not deliberately make space for specificities. The disorientation in

setting is also heightened by the preceding description of Mister Neilson:

He was a burly sort of fellow. Hanging over his collared shirt was a dirty jean jacket painted in all sorts of bright and clashing colours. Looking again, I could barely place his ethnicity. He didn't have the sort of leathery skin shared amongst other Filipinos. Instead, he wore a bird-like face alongside his meaty body. He came across as the sort of person who spent their entire lives trapped in one of these airports. On the other hand, I must have come across as someone completely anathema to him. (Ramos)

A reader would be surprised to find out that the “bright and clashing colours” the narrator could not place the ethnicity of is supposed to harken to Sarimanok, Philippine folklore, and, it would seem, indigenous textile. This odd way of describing, coupled with “the sort of leathery skin shared amongst other Filipinos” and names like Gale and Mister Neilson, give off the impression that the narrator is psychologically and physically distant from his destination to Manila. The decision not to specify the local repeatedly crops up, and the symptom of the Western sensibility overpowering the Filipino becomes more evident. The detachment is not intentional, unlike the Filipino characters in “Selfies in Crisis” by R. Zamora Linmark in their speculation of the shooting in Resorts World Manila while detached in terms of diasporic/tourist sensibility, class, language, and physical location. Nevertheless, the detachment in “Terminal” is palpable.

Once settled in the cabin, the reader is introduced to a barrage of names of Philippine mythological figures from various locations—Amanikable, Languiton, Kaptan, Muhen, and Upa Kuyaw—mentioned by a woman called Macky. The funeral where the narrator had come from extends into this flight as Gale, his lover who died in his absence and continues to haunt his dreams, is revealed to be the God of Wind, whose death was caused by the dwindling number of Filipinos who believed and worshipped her—she was replaced by the modernity of the airplane, signaling that “the little people no longer needed [her]. That they were slowly manipulating their world, so they could explain [her] away” (Ramos). She died because she was forgotten. Without the fact of

translation, Ramos writes under the illusion of transposability and “the Romantic rhetoric of loss and distortion that often accompanies the recognition ... that translation cannot ever achieve perfect transposability” (Baer 157). Gale’s death as the God of Wind exemplifies this within the text itself, in which the native faith is pronounced dead in forgetting, as opposed to its continued perseverance and transformation in the postcolonial.

Languages in the twentieth century have unequal status, and when one encounters a dominant language, it is easy to submit to its demands. Many Filipino writers believe that to write well in English, one must psychologically assimilate into English (Mojares 20; Cruz 23)—that is, to fully transpose the self without any trace of non-English. The notions of continuity, intelligibility, and clarity pervade what is considered correct and well-written English, which mainly serves the native English-speaking recipient, whether or not they are intended to be as such. But the standardization relies on its arbitrary development in Western countries, and for the postcolonial writer and reader, conforming to this obfuscates the source language from which the self exists. To echo Resil B. Mojares, “What then shall I have become?” To resist assimilation, he concludes that “the most productive encounter between two languages lies ... in the state of tension one is able to achieve between one and the other” (20). Writing my locality in English means I have to confront it as a site of tension for my conflicting postcolonial existence—tension I manifest linguistically in my prose by disrupting monolingual English with a multilingual, translational poetics that I call *mustiness*.

A basic condition of Philippine life, writes Mojares, translation is a given due to our maritime environment, but it is unfortunately also dictated by the “realities of domination,” when translation was a tool for conquest and conversion wielded by the Spanish-colonizers (12). This, however, is not a “one-way traffic” (13). In parsing Tagalog, the Spanish missionaries had to encode it in Latin grammar and express it in Castilian to make it intelligible to them (Rafael, “Confession, Conversion, and Reciprocity” 326). The notion of untranslatability was instituted concerning terms that pertain to faith, in which *Dios* could never be *bathala*, placing Tagalog far down in the linguistic hierarchy (325). This

simultaneously answers and exhibits Baer's aforementioned question on untranslatability. It is easy to assume that the enthusiasm of Tagalogs to convert and confess is simply submission, but Vicente L. Rafael showcases the complex negotiations at work in *confessionarios* vis-à-vis the native value of reciprocity that is *utang na loob*, and the *hiya* accompanying it. When one receives a gift, one has *utang na loob* which, following Rafael, is "a debt of, from and for the 'inside,' as indicated by the particle *na*", wherein *loob* is situated in a circular process of exchange rather than a hierarchical position within transactions, the "debt of gratitude" as understood by the Spanish (331-332). To experience *hiya*, often translated as "shame," is "to be in a vulnerable position as one available for an other's blows", and in *utang na loob*, *hiya* arises when one is unable to effectively read the value of the *kaloob* received, rendering one speechless (332; 336). Therefore, when the natives received the gift of a foreign religion that they could not fully evaluate, they found the *confessionario* to be a solution to overcome and defer the outbreak of *hiya* (333). Because the sacraments were utilized to contain *hiya*, the converts were noted to confess not the way they were expected to do: a native confession was labyrinthine and *bogtong*-like for its digressions and braggadocio, sometimes including the sins of their neighbors instead of their own (337-338). With this, the colonial deployment of translation is beleaguered by the native ability to deflect and also utilize it in return: "... Tagalogs 'submitted' while at the same time hollowing out the Spanish call to submission" (339).

This circumvention also persists in the imposition of English as the medium of instruction when the colony changed hands from Spanish to American. The domination of English in the educational system, for Renato Constantino, displaces the Filipino student as "tourist" to her mother tongue, thus rendering her inarticulate and unable to think and express in any language (Rafael, "Mis-education, Translation, and the *Barkada* of Languages" 4-5). On the other hand, American colonial officials saw plainly the failure of their policy and its inability to repress the vernacular (7). Determined as the greatest hindrance to the fluency of Filipino students, the vernacular instead Filipinizes the language by "dressing English in the clothes of 'Malay' sound patterns" (11).

The disruption of the vernacular becomes an affront that ranges from annoyance to more than that—a violent assault, ironically enough, against the colonizers, amounting to the “perversion, contortion, and mauling [of] our familiar phraseology out of most of its intelligibility” (Barry qtd. in 12).

The problem with Garcia’s criticism of realism and writing in translation is that it undermines the capacity of the colonized in utilizing and perceiving the imposed language, evidenced by Rafael to be the contrary. Like proponents of untranslatability, Garcia impoverishes translation itself. Despite arguing for the translatedness of a text in English in lieu of our multicultural conditions, he commits the same essentialist treatment of language and culture. That realism, in the Western literary tradition, is not applicable to our neocolonial situation and our complex process of referentiality brings to light the question of who gets to define reality and for whom. Realism as a genre, in this regard, is treated as untranslatable for the Filipino writer in English, subscribing to the notion “that the cultural values created in politically dominant cultures cannot become the property of other peoples” (Fedorov qtd. in Baer 150). When one’s culture is multilingual and translational, would that not itself be the reference?

\*\*\*

Particular to Philippine Literature in English is Philippine speculative fiction which is plagued by the same dubious practice exhibited by “Terminal”. In 2016, I presented and published a paper in the 4th Literary Studies Conference in Universitas Sanata Dharma that criticizes the problematic conception of this genre and how that manifested in the only young adult fantasy novel in English at the time, *Naermyth* by Karen Francisco. Dean Francis Alfar and Joseph Frederick F. Nacino, who were among the figures at the forefront of the movement, edited an anthology of fantasy fiction, *The Farthest Shore*. In the introduction, Nacino actively seeks to relieve the Filipino writer the burden of writing the Filipino: “Why can’t we be allowed to let our imagination roam free without the constraints of culture, location, or element?” (qtd. in Salcedo 182). He echoes what has always been a major issue in Philippine literature in English but with astoundingly less

recognition as he cites white, Western fantasy writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien and G. R. R. Martin whose secondary worlds are deeply influenced by Western culture, yet perceived as transcendentally universal. Likewise, in a different essay, Alfar chafes against the realities surrounding a Filipino writer in English: “A third world country should not be constrained to write third world literature, especially since at its core, speculative fiction is all about imagination—possession of which has nothing to do with social realities” (qtd. in 182) What the New Critical writer effaces in the service of craft, the speculative writer effaces in the service of imagination.

By ignoring “social realities,” the speculative writer mimics the practice of a white, Western writer like Neil Gaiman: taking from ancient world mythologies and freely molding them for whatever purpose in his narrative. Transplanted in the Philippines, the Filipino speculative writer turns to “precolonial mythology.” This exposes the writer as uprooted from the everyday experience of mythology that has, along with the vernacular, remained in contemporary Philippine cultures, neither dead nor precolonial. Drawing from my experience, I witnessed for the past decade how my family prayed to different Marian statues because they have hierarchy in power and ability, dealt with *kulam* for years that one healer alone could not counter, performed *pagpapa-usok* in our ancestral house to exorcise the ghost attached to a family member—all real, all current. This is to illustrate that one cannot just restructure these aspects on a whim, where random figures from Philippine mythology attend a funeral on a plane, their existence and death dependent upon the faith of people, without much basis. Just like the Spanish colonizers subsuming Tagalog under their languages, patterning these existing and evolving mythologies within Western frameworks and beliefs is akin to replicating the colonial displacement we are still dealing with.

The essay “The Music of Pestle-on-Mortar” discusses the possibility for an indigenous Philippine poetics, mapped through the story of Tuglibong, one of the creation myths of the Bagobo tribe. While Alfar views temporal and local specificity as impediment to being part of the world literatures, Rosario Cruz-Lucero writes:

Artists and writers who credit their native traditions for their accomplishments take pride in the fact that they have stamped their identity onto the world by allowing their native roots to diffuse themselves into the world. To be internationally recognized is to be deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of one's own nation. To be a functional global citizen, one must first be firmly rooted in the cultural traditions of one's own soil. (9)

Furthermore, what I would like to highlight as well is this paragraph, which I will quote in its entirety:

Perhaps the never ending debate in our literary circles between form and content, or social consciousness and art for art's sake, derives from our alienations from our cultural roots. Because of the sort of postcolonial literary education we are still having to submit to unquestioningly, we are immersed in the Western attitudes of nihilism and despair, of ennui and angst (or, in Visayan translation, *buangst*). And yet, we find ourselves remaining suspicious of, and uncomfortable with, them. "The racial unconscious," "national identity," "nativism"—call it what you like; but something in our soul cries for a way of ordering the universe that neither the gods of Mount Olympus nor the heroes of Homer not the antiheroes of Hemingway not even the chocolate-drinking, levitating priests of Gabriel Garcia Marquez can provide to our full satisfaction. (4)

This entails a reorientation of our creative practice. It is not to conceive of our own cosmos after the West; it is not to write how Tolkien, Martin, Gaiman, or other Western writers do. It should be the other way around. After all, detachment and fetishism are two sides of the same coin that is the absolute and unquestioned subscription to the Western tradition. Both present in "Terminal," they sustain our postcolonial alienation from our own culture and ourselves.

Another speculative short story in *Writing the Philippines* is "Hegira" by Pearlsha Abubakar, which uses elements of science fiction and fantasy. She falls into the same traps as Ramos does with regard to detachment and fetishism, although the text on

some level attempts to overcome these. Science fiction elements come, initially, in the form of a smart wristwatch called Geekbit endowed to the narrator Pawik by his American tutor, the once-mentioned robot that completely eradicates the need for translation between foreign tutors and the Sama people; and next, the date of the appearance of the ancient island Lubas on March 4, 2067, indicating futurism. All these would have no bearing beyond the convenient flow of the plot and in fact avoid explicitly tackling the political conflict with mainlanders in Kandungan which is central to the narrative. The unfortunate result is that the local elements are reduced to ornaments. There is also an uneasy implication that the intended audience does not come from the Mindanawon culture it draws from. After his legs were amputated, Pawik narrates, “Inda didn’t waste time crying over wasted seaweed,” from the English idiom of spilled milk. Twice, dialogues of Inda in English were appended with “in Sama”, and the utterance of *sungit* had to be explained:

“Ah, orang *sungit*,” Inda had hissed when she learnt that Isma’s whole family had gone. The *sungit* is the spirit of a termite-like creature that lived in rotten wood and couldn’t derive any satisfaction from anything even after it had sucked it dry. “They are getting restless again. We too must leave.” (Abubakar)

On the surface, it appears that Abubakar is signaling the fact of translation, but to whom and for what purpose? When the narrative has already established that Inda, Pawik, and all the characters are not English speakers even in 2076, who is it accommodating when it further clarifies that Inda does not actually speak in English? Or what *sungit* is?

“The Last of Sama-sellang” by Sigrid Marianne Gayangos becomes a breath of fresh air among the speculative short stories in the issue. It lingers on the last moments of a legendary creature from folktales, the sama-sellang, which soon succumbs to its demise caused by human greed and exploitation. Despite its similarities with the works of Ramos and Abubakar, the short story manages to avoid the problems besetting the two. Its success lies in how it presents the immediate setting as is. Unlike in “Terminal,” the narrator of “The Last of Sama-sellang” does not give a mere visual



checklist. The journey to the sama-sellang was a combinatory stimulation of the senses: the image of Mr. Tsai's house, against the "descending blood-red sun", on the calm sea, mentioning that the day before, there was a storm that made the waters dangerous; hearing the puttering sound of the motorboat, at the same time, smelling "the scent of decay and salt"; and the sight of terrifyingly disgusting cluster flies, "huge ones with blue and yellow sheen on the thorax," inside—the intimacy that is almost tangible, inducing familiarity. And this intimacy does not relent even in the face of the sama-sellang itself:

Inside the pool was a creature that looked like a human-whale chimera gone wrong: its eyes sunken into dark holes; a tear on its face, which could only be the mouth, revealed many sharp, fang-like teeth; its skin (or was it scale?) was blue-gray all over, all six feet of it, with patches of pink and green. Next to the pool, Mr. Tsai knelt and caressed the head of the wheezing creature. (Gayangos)

This is heightened by how Mr. Tsai mourns the creature in an extremely tactile manner—"The old, scrawny man held the sama-sellang's limb-like pectoral fins"; "he continued to caress the creature"; "the old man's hand had traced a path" and "getting into the briny pool himself, as he leant closer and clasped the dying creature's hands"—coalescing most effectively at the ending:

Mr. Tsai leant his forehead against the sama-sellang's. The creature's eyes peeled open for the last time and sought his face. Their bodies had merged into one: one forehead to another, hands and fins, sallow skin and intricate patterns on the old man's sash.

The sama-sellang let out a final sound, a growl that was at once pitiful and terrifying. It reverberated around the tiny house, and as the echo died away, so did the beating under my hand. And then, darkness descended unannounced.

Mr. Tsai continued to hold the creature in his embrace. I rose as quietly as I could and headed to the makeshift stairs that faced the quiet sea. (Gayangos)

The grounding of the setting forces the reader, whether Filipino or not, to be familiar with it. In having the narrator interact with the surroundings, the story was able to paint a believable location “across the Basilan Strait, past the two Santa Cruz islands.” Gayangos successfully overcomes the obstacles many speculative short stories, and as a whole, short stories in English, could not, allowing her to avoid explicating what is culturally specific. Moreover, the death of a mythological creature is not tied to the nebulous and romantic idea of loss, of forgetting; the sama-sellang’s extinction, like many animals, is by the world, and affects the world: “... the cicadas sang and the wind whistled. The waves joined in a mournful ebbing and flowing.” When it finally dies, the sea returns to unsettling quietness. In this portrayal, Gayangos skirts the alienating tendency of writing in English while affecting the everyday mundanity of mythology.

\*\*\*

Inherent to translation is the question of audience and reception. When one translates from one language to another, there is a target reader in that language. The overheard theory provides a framework for how one can achieve a translation that retains the foreignness of the source language into the target language. According to this theory, meaning is relayed to the reader as if they are simply overhearing the translated text (Villareal 10-11). The overheard, therefore, is able to signal the fact of translation through a variety of linguistic interventions, such as incommensurability and grammatic peculiarity without much regard for full understanding in the target language. Phyllis Bird used the concept of overheard on the task of Bible translation, stating that she is “not certain that the translator is even obliged to make the modern reader *understand* what is overheard” (qtd. in 11). And so the overheard defies monolingual fluency: “Listening to the overheard is actually a re-working of meaning through a re-working of language” (18). Instead of adjusting to the style and mode of English as Edith Tiempo had done, the overheard undermines the notion of English being “a fully formed language,” one that a Filipino writer can co-author away from the demands of fluency (Cruz 24; Villareal 18-19).

The last story in *Writing the Philippines*, “Salve” by Daryll Delgado, operates with a level of awareness of the overheard. The title itself is only the first in the series of multilingual wordplays that pepper the text: Salve as the name of the Bisaya narrator in Quezon City, the beginning of Marian prayers in Latin, the English word for something that heals or saves, and the implication of the local slang *salvage* paralleled with *tokhang*. Other examples are Libing Things Funeral Service from “living things”, how certain sections begin with “God” or “Lord” not as a call to the divine but as exasperated utterances, and the radio *panawagan* as various calls that could be anything. There are times that she explicates on her translations, but unlike in “Hegira,” the explications are not alienating; they serve a purpose within the narrative, such as the play on the *funeraria* name: “Libing Things Funeral Services. Still cracks me up. In Bisaya we say ‘lubong’ instead of ‘libing’ for burial, so the pun won’t work. Perfect in Tagalog, where we sometimes pronounce ‘living’ as ‘libing’ anyway.” Another example is on the word *ingat* later on:

Ingat. Take care, he says, driving off, leaving me staring after his red tricycle. Take care. How does one do that these days? How does he do it, still driving around Talipapa, still living in the house where his father was killed? I’m pretty sure the lola taking her apo to school two days ago was taking care. I’m sure she wasn’t expecting to get shot in the face that day. I know I was taking care of my family, my husband. (Delgado)

In either instance, the explication signaling the fact of translation is less for the convenience of the imagined English-speaking audience, but to highlight Salve’s own multilingual thought process, which is not only in English and Tagalog—she does not call it Filipino—but also in Bisaya. In fact, her voice as a nurse / caregiver narrating the story in fluent English effectively contrasts the multilingual reality she is faced with in Talipapa, both her and others’ problems that she desperately wants to detach herself from. A clear example of the deliberate contrast of Salve’s largely, although not entirely, monolingual internalizations vis-à-vis the multilingual external world, is when she interacts with the young tricycle driver, prior to her ruminations on the word *ingat*:

I almost get hit by a tricycle as I limp across the street. *Sorry, Doktora!* The young driver calls out, smiling in a too-friendly manner. *Sakay kayo?*

I am about to yell, *I'm fine, I can walk, and I'm a nurse, not a doctor, OK?!*, but I realise it is the young driver who brought me to the subdivision gate the last time. I can't recall his name, only his story, about his father.

*Uy, kumusta? How's everything?*

He shrugs, smiles sadly. I tell him I have to drop by a few other places, but will look for him later at the terminal, when I'm ready to go.

OK, Mam. *Ingat.* (Delgado)

In the flashback to the death of Salve's mother, who did mani-pedi service among many other menial jobs for a living, contrast is once again deployed, albeit in a slightly different manner:

*It happened in the afternoon, between noontime and the afternoon mass, they said. A las tres, the hour of great mercy. Others said she died in the hospital, while being treated. For what? Nobody could tell. A neighbour she was doing laundry for brought her there when she collapsed while in the middle of hanging clothes in the yard. She had been feverish for days. "She had been feverish for days. Some said it was sanib, a curse, an evil possession. She was as healthy as a carabao, all of a sudden she was so sick, so thin. Others said poison, hilo, lason. She was beautiful, but sometimes too friendly with the husbands of her jealous clients.* (Delgado)

Dialogues from various speakers are lined up in a single paragraph, capturing the back and forth of *chismis*. The vernacular exists with the English, not necessarily translated, but coming off as bursts of repetitive stutters in the stream of words.

Despite the demarcation in terms of class, gender, and profession, Salve consistently sees herself reflected among the "unskilled" workers in Talipapa, even as she resists any comparison, or even connection. She is much more comfortable admitting similarities

with other women in her life, such as Jenny, who is her employer and friend, as well as the daughter of her patient; her mother who died at her current age; her daughter who got pregnant a year younger before she did; the thin, young woman, half her age, that her husband left her for; and the dead woman on the news with a flabby stomach, like her belly, who may only be a few years older. All throughout the story, she wishes to untether herself from her worldly problems, from the problems of those around her—the same way her mother, husband, and daughter have left her. This is represented by her use of English as a distinguishing voice in the narration vis-à-vis other multilingual voices in dialogue.

When she goes to have her toe ingrown removed at the salon iPrettiserie, the languages inescapably merge from the radio playing a Tagalog song, the Bisaya-speaking assistants, the angry rants of one of the *parloristas* swiftly cursing between English and Tagalog, and the miserable sobbing of another for his boyfriend Ton, presumed arrested or killed *tokhang*-style for doing drugs. Her feet, especially her toe, immersed in warm water, she herself experiences comfort from the same act of caring that her mother did for her as a little girl. Rested for the first time in a long while, she wishes she “could close [her] ears, [her] other senses, too”, be desensitized to death as she claims she is as a nurse, be “nawara.” As the pain subsides, she, like her ingrown, “softens,” indicating a submission to her reality, a multilingual culture not limited to the middle class bubble she wants to lose herself into. Delgado’s careful attention to language-use demonstrates the gulf between texts like “Terminal” or “Hegira” and a critical and conscious poetics that harnesses the multilingual and translational.

\*\*\*

Prior to the *Writing the Philippines* issue’s release, I was able to preview “Death for Serafina.” Majority of the editorial changes were minor, although numerous, technical polishing. My American spellings were converted into British since that is the standard for *Cha*. I raised my concern to one of the main editors of the journal regarding the italicization of the non-English, such as *maestra*, *hermana*, *taho*, *capiz*, *funeraria*, *ylang-ylang*, and so on, because it is a political choice of mine that the English text does not treat the local as other in my creative work. However, they

must adhere to the consistent treatment of non-English in the issue and across the journal, a perspective I was asked to consider. So I acquiesced, this being my third fiction publication and first international one. Even though the editor kindly offered to negotiate this if it were truly important to me, I had already decided to forfeit it, much to my own dismay. With future publications, I will realize that local presses are less considerate with editorial interventions.

On the matter of italics, writer Butch Dalisay wrote in a column on Philstar why he chooses to italicize. It was a topic that came up twice in the NVM Gonzales Workshop he had attended, the second instance brought up by Filipino-Americans from the United States. His use of italics straddles technical grounds—in cases when local Filipino words look like English—as well as political grounds—highlighting the Filipino words signals that they are “special to [him] and to [his] culture”. Furthermore, he supposes that this is a concern for hyphenated Americans due to their specific, diasporic contexts. While it is true that needless peppering of Filipino terms for local color is exoticizing, his overall argument for italics and how this is a diasporic concern is shortsighted. Clarity for the sake of readability is too rigid and limited as a way to deliver meaning, and as I have argued, a submission to the domination of English. That he highlights the Filipino words because they are special is dubious, since inclusion in a literary work does not automatically frame something positively, and to defend italics for indicating specialness borders on the exoticism he claims he is against.

Pertaining to her then upcoming novel *America is Not the Heart*, Elaine Castillo talks about how she purposefully does not translate non-English in her writing. In “There is no single voice of America,” Castillo writes that she draws from her experience growing up in a multilingual household that spoke Pangasinan, Tagalog, and Ilocano, languages that floated “around in [her] head [her] entire life, flawed and fragmented,” as natural to her characters and herself as English. She refuses italicization to create an equal portrayal of languages in her work. As a Filipino-American writer, she notes the targeted demand for comprehensibility from writers of color, whose non-English is particularly non-Western. She elucidates on the very reason for the

multilingual reality of America, the history shared by both diaspora and non-diaspora: the violence that resulted from US imperialism and neoliberalism.

Castillo speaks from a diasporic context, but her resistance to italics and explanation of the non-English in her English prose reflect my practice. Moreover, she states that “it’s not by understanding everything perfectly that we are enriched”—when something is not quite grasped, then there is something to progress from, and to find articulation. Mustiness as disruption of English manifests my tensioned existence of being a Filipino.

In the end, my translation of “*malansa*” in dialogue did not entirely make it in *Writing the Philippines*, which finalized it as “terrible taste in your mouth” (de Guia). The smell *and* taste of fish that is cooked without proper cleaning ends up being portrayed as simply a matter of taste. I supposed the original did not qualify as coherent, intelligible English, but it is precisely why I wrote it as such. I still maintain that *malansang* fish gives you a terrible *stench* in your *mouth*.

## Works Cited

Abubakar, Pearlsha. "Hegira." *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, edited by Ricardo M. de Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/view/3212/673](http://www.asiancha.com/content/view/3212/673).

Baer, Brian James / باير جيمس براين. "From Cultural Translation to Untranslatability - الترجمة استحالة إلى الثقافية الترجمة من." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 40, 2020, pp. 139-163. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/26924869](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26924869).

Castillo, Elaine. "There is no single voice of America." *Literary Hub*, 17 Jan. 2018, [www.lithub.com/there-is-no-single-voice-of-america](http://www.lithub.com/there-is-no-single-voice-of-america).

"Cha — Call for Submissions — 'Writing the Philippines' Issue (June 2018)." *Cha Journal*, 31 Dec. 2021, [www.chajournal.blog/2017/12/31/the-philippines-2](http://www.chajournal.blog/2017/12/31/the-philippines-2).

Cruz, Conchitina. "The (Mis)Education of the Filipino Writer: The Tiempo Age and Institutionalized Creative Writing in the Philippines." *Kritika Kultura*, no. 28, Feb. 2017, pp. 3-34. *Ateneo Journals Online*, [www.ajol.ateneo.edu/kk/articles/80/908](http://www.ajol.ateneo.edu/kk/articles/80/908).

Dalisay, Butch. "Why I choose to italicize." *Philstar* 17 Jan. 2016, [www.philstar.com/lifestyle/arts-and-culture/2016/01/17/1543140/mothers-day-2019](http://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/arts-and-culture/2016/01/17/1543140/mothers-day-2019).

De Guia, Rayji. "Death for Serafina." *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, edited by Ricardo M. de Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/view/3242/673](http://www.asiancha.com/content/view/3242/673).

Delgado, Daryll. "Salve." *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, edited by Ricardo M. de Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/view/3214/673](http://www.asiancha.com/content/view/3214/673).

De Ungria, Ricardo M. and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, editors. Editorial. *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/blogcategory/410/671](http://www.asiancha.com/content/blogcategory/410/671).

Garcia, J. Neil. "Translation and the Problem of Realism in Philippine Literature in English." *Kritika Kultura*, no. 23, Aug. 2014, pp. 99-127. *Ateneo Journals Online*, [www.ajol.ateneo.edu/kk/articles/75/757](http://www.ajol.ateneo.edu/kk/articles/75/757).



Gayangos, Sigrid Marianne. "The Last of the Sama-sellang." *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, edited by Ricardo M. de Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/view/3237/673](http://www.asiancha.com/content/view/3237/673).

Linmark, R. Zamora. "Selfies in Crisis." *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, edited by Ricardo M. de Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/view/3187/673](http://www.asiancha.com/content/view/3187/673).

Lucero, Rosario Cruz. "The Music of Pestle-on-Mortar." *Ang Bayan sa Labas ng Maynila - The Nation Beyond Manila*, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007, pp. 1-10.

Mojares, Resil B. "The Circuits of Translation: The Philippines and the World." *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature*, vol. 16, 2017, pp. 11-22. *U.P. Diliman Journals Online*, [www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescl/article/view/6721](http://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescl/article/view/6721).

Rafael, Vicente L. "Confession, Conversion, and Reciprocity in Early Tagalog Colonial Society." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 29, no. 2, Apr. 1987, pp. 320-399. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/179101](http://www.jstor.org/stable/179101).

—. "Mis-education, Translation, and the Barkada of Languages: Reading Renato Constantino with Nick Joaquin." *Kritika Kultura*, no. 22, Feb. 2014, pp. 1-29. *Ateneo Journals Online*, [www.ajol.ateneo.edu/kk/articles/80/908](http://www.ajol.ateneo.edu/kk/articles/80/908).

Ramos, Matthew Jacob F. "Terminal." *Writing the Philippines*, special issue of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, edited by Ricardo M. de Ungria and Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, no. 40, Jul. 2018. [www.asiancha.com/content/view/3246/673](http://www.asiancha.com/content/view/3246/673).

Salcedo, Rayjinar (Rayji de Guia). "Teenage Dream: Fantasy as a Tool for Writing Diversity in Literature for Young Adults." The 4th Literary Studies Conference: Children's Literature in Southeast Asia, 19-20 Oct. 2016, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, edited by Elisabeth Oseanita Pukan and Harris Hermansyah Setiajid, Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2016.

Villareal, Corazon D. "Listening to the Overheard: Philippine Literatures into English." *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature*, vol.

13, no. 1, 2013, pp. 2-34. *U.P. Diliman Journals Online*, [www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescl/article/view/4015](http://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescl/article/view/4015).

---

**Bionote:**

Rayji de Guia is a fictionist, poet, and illustrator. Her work can be found in *Asian Cha*, *The Deadlands*, *harana poetry*, *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature*, *The Pinch*, and elsewhere. She has received recognition from the Gémino H. Abad Awards and the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards. Currently, she is an instructor at the University of the Philippines – Diliman.

---

## Adventures Past Circuits: Sociality in Philippine Conceptual Writing

IVAN EMIL A. LABAYNE

University of the Philippines Los Baños

[ialabayne@up.edu.ph](mailto:ialabayne@up.edu.ph)

---

### Abstract

There is not much of a tradition of conceptual writing to speak of in the Philippines. A descendant of, and arguably a less popular exponent of the Western avant-garde, conceptualism is usually associated with Sol Lewitt's sentences-as-manifesto, and the more contemporary works of Kenneth Goldsmith and Vanessa Place. This paper looks at two works by Angelo Suarez, a writer, artist, and activist, who at some point markedly identified himself as a proponent of conceptual writing in the Philippines. Through a close analysis of *CIRCUIT (The Blurb Project)* and *Maliit Lang Yung Sa 'yo, Itabi mo, Magpadaan Ka: Adventures in Parataxis*, this paper aims to show the potentials of conceptualist practice in positing anew, and reframing old debates related to cultural production. Doing such can also expand the categories usually deployed in cultural analysis (form, content), bringing to the foreground the more obscured but no less important considerations such as the materials used in, or situations informing the work, or the very materiality of cultural work. *CIRCUIT* and *Maliit Lang Yung Sa 'yo* make explicit how one's social networks can figure in artmaking, and how a seemingly trifling event such as riding taxis can lead to the meaningful redistribution of roles in literary production. The paper will also try to establish possible links, however indirect, between the more long-standing oral tradition in the Philippines and Suarez's

conceptualist works, particularly *Maliit Lang Yung Sa 'yo*. In all, conceptual writing can reintroduce the social aspects of art objects and production, after having been effaced by an overemphasis on what does art convey, and how does it convey it.

### **Adventures Past Circuits: Sociality in Philippine Conceptual Writing**

The artist rides a taxi, carrying a tape recorder with him; he will use this to record the verbal exchange that will take place between him and the taxi rider during the ride; he will transcribe the exchange afterwards “in paragraph that downplays attribution on who says what” (2012, 3). The artist contacts his peers—“writers... w/in the curator’s contact list or ‘writing circuit’—and asks them to write a blurb for a book of, and about blurbs, including the blurb they will give, and then calls it a “critico-creative exercise in closed-circuit self-reference whose output would be a poem” (2013).

The artist, Angelo Suarez, is “pushing for conceptualist & performative poetics,” certainly not a menial task in the context of a poetic tradition whose main limitation for me is not so much the categories it employs and enlivens—form, content, poetic voice, among others— but the ways these categories and their relations are conceived, and then played out. In the midst of the possibly teleological—art for what’s sake?—and the formal—what is the conflict, what are the elements, and how do they relate with one another?—questions imposed on art, conceptualism attempts to shift and extend the field of vision and consideration. Instead of either merely interiorizing or exteriorizing the work—that is, either look at art or cultural works based on their self-enclosed elements, or look at them based on their outward directions or purpose—conceptualism can call attention to the diverse relations and issues the work puts to play and mobilize. This can be a more productive approach since it complicates and vigorously untangles the situation where art works reside, and hence avoid either reductive or programmatic attributions.

This paper looks at two of Suarez’ conceptual works: *CIRCUIT (The Blurb Project)* (2013) and *Maliit Lang Yung Sa 'yo, Itabi mo, Magpadaan Ka: Adventures in Parataxis* (2012). The former

collects blurbs from Suarez's network—self-referential blurbs in that they are about the very book containing all the collected blurbs. The latter collects verbal information during Suarez's various taxi rides around the metro. Both works are downloadable for free in the file-sharing site, and online bookstore *Lulu*. Both released almost a decade ago, the two works can be classified as belonging in Suarez' middle, experimental phase—superseding his early success as a young poet, and preceding his stage of greater commitment to the National Democratic movement.<sup>1</sup> Particular attention is given on what these works signify within the larger tradition of artistic and cultural production in the Philippines. A cursory glance might nod to the proposition that Suarez' conceptualist practice is heavily derived from Western traditions. This paper seeks to qualify or extend this proposition by also underlining the affinities between Suarez' works and Filipino cultural practices. Finally, in unveiling the different dynamics put to work in the creative process, the paper zooms in on how the texts treat, and act on their materials. All these discussions can then help elaborate, and map new trajectories for artistic production in the country.

---

<sup>1</sup> This periodization is just mine. I am also manifesting here a critical interest in the "trajectory" of Suarez' poetics and politics—something the current paper will not cover, and a future one can explore more thoroughly. He was famously dubbed as "the Kobe Bryant of Philippine poetry" (Yuson 2002), having joined the 41st Silliman Writer's Workshop when he was 17, and published his first poetry collection, *The Nymph of MTV*, at age 19. He would then publish another poetry collection, else it was purely girls, before releasing less traditional, more conceptual works like *Philippine English: a novel*, and *Poem of Diminishing Poeticity*. Somewhere in between, in 2007, he collaborated with Constantino Zicarelli to stage "Criticism is Hard Work" which "asked street kids to go do some wrestling in a boxing ring set-up in one of the CCP's spaces" (Stuart Santiago). This was an "event" I only peripherally encountered, as a fresh graduate, and only after the fact, maybe early 2010s, when there were no "newsfeeds" yet, and the Internet was not yet as ubiquitously diurnal. It was around the second half of the 2010s that Suarez would be more openly supportive of the ND mass movement. He is now active in SAKA (Sama-samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo), a group of artists campaigning for peasant issues.

## From Author to Curator

Conceptual writing, says Kenneth Goldsmith, has “no claim on originality... employs intentionally self and ego-effacing tactics” (quoted in Paris 2012, 189). This can be read as another iteration of the typical critique of the romantic Genius which conceptual artists also rail against. However, if this Genius, embodied by the artist, is the fount of all ‘fine’ creative works, the expressive mechanism that enables the formulation of organic or complete works, what happens at the moment it is debunked? It can be noted that not only conceptualists, but also postmodernists railed against, and called to revalue the idea of the “genius.” Instead of picturing the authorial genius as struggling to voice out a coherent message—a move that can be seen as a defense mechanism for a self, an ego destabilized by its social environment—the postmodernists depicted it in stutter mode, unable to dish out either a complete or a unified message but embraced this inability nonetheless instead of being disconcerted.

How does the conceptualist response differ from the postmodernist one? I posit that the postmodernist version is still heavily, if not fully immured in the realm of the linguistic or the textual. It reformed the Genius in terms of what it can(not) postulate and what is its attitude towards these postulations. Hence, the shift from the coherence to the open-endedness of cultural works. On the contrary, conceptualism not only altered what the Genius signifies but more radically, emasculated it. Marjorie Perloff, one of the leading theoreticians of the conceptual, and to whom Kenneth Goldsmith and Craig Dworkin dedicated their thick “anthology of conceptual writing,” *Against Expression*, spoke of “a poetry that plays down ‘originality’ in the sense of Wordsworth’s ‘overflow of powerful feelings’ in favor of framing, recasting the always already seen/read as something new” (Bayot 2013, 116). Stress must be given to the word “framing”—or more aptly reframing—tenably a principal method in conceptual writing. This method is applied not just on what is “already seen/read” but more generally on what is already out there: the already experienced, already said, already sensed. Following this, the creative output pertains less to an ‘original’ composition than an old thing or composition put in a new context, given a new use.

Hinting at social relations, Groys' description of conceptualism is relevant here as well. With conceptualism, "we can no longer see art as primarily the production and exhibition of individual things. Conceptual artists shifted the emphasis of artmaking away from static, individual objects toward the presentation of new relations in space and time" (*Global Conceptualism, Revisited*). Both the romanticized, individual genius, and the postmodernist image of this debunked genius embracing its stuttering are located in their proper historical and material contexts. This is reminiscent of Ranciere's discussion of Balzac's two kinds of poetry: first, the artificial, "poet of words ala Byron [who] expresses in verse the poet's intimate torments and the troubles of the times;" and second, the poet ala Cuvier the geologist who "reconstructs cities from out of a few teeth, repopulates forests from out of ferns imprinted on fossilized stones," making words out of things (16). Attention is shifted from the individual expression to both the material locations of, and the materials utilized for such expressions.

Again, if seen in the Philippine context, the conceptual tendencies can serve as a diversion, perhaps a much-needed one. The uproarious debates surrounding cultural works have mostly been framed in various dichotomies: emphasis on form, or on content; art for art's sake or socially committed art, among others. Often lost in these engaging, and not exactly futile exchanges is the issue of the materials fashioned to be cultural works, and the processes or methods applied to them during such fashioning.

The shift of emphasis to the process of cultural production aligns with the shift in the role of the creator from author to curator. The materials proffered to the author—previous artistic traditions, personal experiences, other texts or works, among others—are often left muted or vague—whereas the materials which the curator works on, and with, are more precise and mundane, concretely identified and identifiable.

For instance, in *Maliit Lang Yung Sa'yo*, the contents of the work are completely derived from Suarez's—or, curated completely from his—exchanges with taxi drivers. In this way, the resulting

materials are unpredictable even if, via the governing concept formulated by the curator at the onset, they are predetermined. The flow of the conversations can wander aimlessly or in a roundabout manner, but this is something that the work itself has desired, something that the work has set for itself.

In these conversations then, the accidental and the expected merge. The conversations can touch on unsurprising matters such as the drivers' knowledge of traffic situations in various locations at various times (*Tapos Buendia, matrapik din du'n e. Lagi naman hong matrapik yata sa may Buendia e*), complaints about the boundary system or the paperwork involved in operating public vehicles (*Fare matrix nila kung tawagin. Five fifty ang bili do'n Ano lang din naman 'yon—parang karton lang na itinype—Oo nga. Na nilalagyan lang ng plastic. Five hundred fifty sisingilin nila sa taxi driver sa—sa isang jeep*), or both taxi drivers and passengers' various observations and encounters on the road such as accidents (*Sumalpok ako sa EDSA. Saan? Diyan sa EDSA, pasahero ko Koreano, wasak 'yan. Naku, ano ginawa nu'ng pasahero? Ano, ano siya, may dugo gawa ng mga bubog, okey naman, hindi naman grabe. Buti naman! E kayo? Wala, wala namang nangyari sa akin.*), drug-racers or tricycle drivers getting on their way. They can also wander on, talking about the personal lives of the drivers, previous excursions (*Parang sabik na sabik sa ano, e masarap pa man din magbitaw ng manibela sa motor. A talaga? Oo, hangin kasi e. Makakatikim ka ng semplang, isang semplangan din, ayoko na, sabi ko, ayoko na magmotor.*), the hidden entrances in motels for one-night-standers, among others, sometimes prompted by a taxi driver's spouse calling (*Teka, Sir, excuse. Hinahanap na 'ko ni Misis. Hello? O? Bakit? Bumiyahe ako e. Ano'ng 'pabibili mo? Naku, hindi ko—oo. Tara—oo, oo.*)

With this, it can be said that Suarez's works have affinity with surrealism in that there is the element of chance and of surprise, but the presence of the concept or the curatorial procedure that not only precedes but governs the process of creation can reassure that the output will still be controlled. Hence, the vitality of curation is reasserted, paving way for the diminishment of the role of the creator in the creative process. That is, instead of creating



something out of nothing—or, more truthfully, out of ideas fashioned from old traditions and previous works—the artist-turned-creator will have the easier task of creating something new out of something that is already there.<sup>2</sup> Yet this is a rather simplistic way of describing how creatorship becomes curatorship. The creator engages in a curatorial process that only reveals the multiple layers of work that should be applied in conceptual projects. First, one comes up, builds, solidifies an idea, a governing concept—ride a taxi, record the conversations; select a book, copy the last sentences of each chapter. Then one enacts it, actualizes it. And then after the phase of data-gathering, of collecting the materials, one can start to think about the curation: how to assemble, how to organize, how to present these culled materials. A less linear logic can be put to work as well, so that it is not clearly mapped which step comes ‘first,’ which ‘third,’ which second.

Usually, the concept at the beginning has been greatly transformed once the latter stages are reached. The evolution of the concept need not be stated; the final outcome itself can demonstrate it.<sup>3</sup> In Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo, one can have a glimpse of the diverse ruminations and remonstrations of the taxi drivers. While they are kept within the bounds set by the work’s concept, one can be sure that they have not been predicted beforehand.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Related here is the idea of “undiscovered public knowledge” which Don Swanson coined in the context of knowledge production at large, specifically knowledge that can be used in solving practical problems. Against the tendency of research to be overly specialized and highly abstracted, the suggestion is that problems “may be tackled effectively not by commissioning more research but by assuming that most or all of the solution can already be found in various scientific journals, waiting to be assembled by someone willing to read across specialties” (Lethem). Applied in the more modest field of art production, one can envision the (re)discovery of the legion of previous works and their reworking or recombination to arrive at new works.

<sup>3</sup> In a way then, this is a miniaturized variation of Sol Lewitt’s 19th sentence on conceptual art: “The conventions of art are altered by works of art.” How this works in Suarez’ Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo is roughly as follows: the constraints of the work (the taxi rides, the conversations with drivers) are altered by the execution of the work (the content of the conversation, the curation of these contents afterwards).

<sup>4</sup> Notice the shades of uncertainty here, for instance, manifested both by the driver and the passengers, collaborators of this project: “Saan ko dadaan? Di ko kabisado d’yan a. A, magyu-U-tum yata ulit. Ba’t nila hinaharangan? Kabisado ba niyo d’yan, may daan ba tayo d’yan, bossing? Di ko rin kabisado e. Baka mawala tayo rito, tangina. Hinaharangan pala ‘yun... Ba’t kaya nakasara ‘yon?’ (Suarez 25).

Thus, the content of the work—the exchanges between the drivers and Suarez—enliven the concept as much as they exceed it. A transformative procedure was prepared, and then actualized. The exploration of the “paratactic relations between taxi driver and passenger” has fulfilled its promise and in doing so, it has exposed a multifarious collection of content: attitudes or thoughts on certain things, or observations about culture, and fleshly, living encounters: “kaya nga tayong mga Pilipino, alam na lubog na, nilulubog lang lalo” (6). “One week, sa GSIS patay na ‘yung tao, di pa makuha” (6). “Yung iba naman, pinoprublema, nagli-leak ‘yung LPG” (11). Meanings leaking, private conversations inside the cab leaking out: Suarez’s *Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo* puts to life Claire Bishop’s reimagination of the artist as “producer of situations” (2). These situations have been produced, designed beforehand, even though how they will take shape, and play out, remain open, unforeseeable.

This is one of the ways by which conceptualism has reopened the matter of the constitution of cultural works: alongside content and form are concept and method, and the relations among these elements. With these categories surfaced, a more complex field has emerged which can similarly complicate the ways cultural works and their manners of production are understood.

What we can see in *Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo* is a mode of surpassing—the method and its resulting content surpassing the concept which at the onset shapes the method. I fancy describing the process as the work surpassing itself, a self-surpassing. This mode is enabled by the very contact between abstract and foundational (hence untested, ungrounded) concepts and their various, vivacious, and unpredictable material and methodical enactments. Hence, revelations and engagements are made in more than a singular level: the work, seen as self-surpassing and self-developing could not attain such point without being enacted, without being situated in a particular social environment or scenario (taxi rides, blurbs asked from one’s networks). In turn, this social environment ‘speaks’—through the individuals that speak in it, and through the personal exchanges this environment enables.

## From Conventions to Institutions

In *The Return of the Real*, Hal Foster forwarded that the “historical avant-garde focuses on the conventional, the neo-avant-garde... on the institutional” (1996, 20). This formulation can also serve as basis for analyzing the way conceptualism has shifted the concerns and preoccupations of cultural practice. Following Foster’s formulations Suarez’ *CIRCUIT: (The Blurb Project)* exemplifies the neo-avant-garde. In the blurb, it found its focal point, its object of critique, and much of its content. As a feature of book publishing, blurbs mostly aid its predominant objectives: the marketing of books, attesting to their quality or whatever kind of value ascribable to them—literary, commercial, fetishistic. With their selective, if not also superficial treatment of the books they talk about, blurbs unsurprisingly fail to call attention to the larger and deeper issues involved in book production.

One can also speak of the trifling character of blurbs, how they act as a kind of matter comparable to a dispensable and useless surplus—for books can still be books without blurbs—or how they can misrepresent what the book really offers. As such, there is no clear-cut way of understanding and doing the blurb; there are diverse vantage points and contexts from which it can be comprehended. *CIRCUIT* can then be read as a way of mediating in this diversity, engaging the very field where blurbs operate and which they also sustain variously. To reiterate Suarez’ description of the project, it is “a critico-creative exercise in closed-circuit self-reference whose output would be a poem.”

A defining feature of the work, its reflexivity merits an elaboration. What differentiates *CIRCUIT* from other works containing a reflexive feature is that here, reflexivity permeates the entirety of the project. In other works such as Brechtian plays, or novels where narrators or characters talk as if aware of the constructedness (as a novel) of their situation, or French new wave films where characters look at the camera to ‘address’ the audience, reflexivity is manifested only in moments, only episodically. Instead of defining the work as a whole, these episodes serve only a stylistic purpose which mostly jar the readers

and alter their way of relating to, and comprehending the work as a whole. In these works therefore, the moments or episodes of reflexivity do not account for the point of the entire work (the play, the novel) but remain crucial to its formation. On the contrary, the entirety of *CIRCUIT* is self-reflexive.

If it is the case then, how can we make sense of its reflexivity? In the case of works where the reflexive is only a key feature, the reflexive parts can be interpreted with the rest of the work as background. How about *CIRCUIT*, what constitutes its background, the background which can help us contextualize, and make sense of what it has constructed, what it has done?

To answer the first: the concept behind the work serves as its background. This is pertinent to the postulation above about the multiple layers, neither coincidental nor parallel to one another, which figure in conceptual works. The concept is different from the content of the work. In *CIRCUIT*, the concept corresponds to the “procedure” Suarez belabored at the beginning. He spoke of “the attempt at a circular structure & the inescapable constraint that all writers involved were w/in the curator’s contact list or ‘writing circuit.’”

The mention of “constraint” resonates with the Oulipian axiom that Vaclav Paris mentions in “Poetry in the Age of Digital Reproduction”: “A text written according to a constraint describes the constraint” (2012, 87). *CIRCUIT* is about itself—a book of blurbs which arguably also functions as a constraint, for as Suarez described its making, “the book would talk about itself even before the book was complete, the participants **working blindly or w/ what few blurbs** were already available for their use” (my emphasis). Hence, one can add that if *CIRCUIT* is about itself, it is also about its own constraint. It strives to fulfill itself in the face of being constrained. With something that is not yet out there, not yet complete (the book to be composed by all blurbs), serving as its ‘speculative background,’ it completes itself gradually, even one by one, for it can be assumed that the project’s participants did not submit their contributions at once.

The same constraint does not apply to Suarez' own introductory note to this project; however, it presents dual functions, and mediates between two normally separated categories. After detailing "the procedure for assembling this work," Suarez begins the second paragraph of his curatorial note as follows: "The cover itself sports an introductory note by the curator, doubly functioning as the first blurb among over 60 more." This portion attunes with Terry Eagleton's point about the inseparability of the Searlean categories of the constative and the performative functions of language: "Constatives and performatives are interdependent not just in the sense that to make claims about how things are is itself performative, but because performatives tacitly involve accounts of how things are" (2012, 135). Hence, we can posit that Suarez's introductory note makes explicit what is an otherwise taken-for-granted, if not submerged idea. We can read *CIRCUIT*'s performance in the same light. It brings to the fore a host of ideas and statements about the blurb, a common textual feature among books variously deemed as extraneous or auxiliary, or conversely, aggrandizing or value-conferring. *CIRCUIT* mobilizes the blurb not exactly to reflect about its hidden importance but precisely to investigate its various forms of importance, and interrogate its simultaneous muteness and bombast.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, I wonder whether *CIRCUIT* can be considered as partaking in a kind of institutional critique, in particular, a critique of book production in the guise of exposing, or enabling a meditation on one of its features, one tenably allied with the marketing goal, the profit-driven orientation. Robert Fitterman's description of Institutional Critique (IC) prompted this thinking.

In "Notes on Conceptualisms," Fitterman defined IC as an undertaking "in which organs of art galleries, museums are critiqued via appropriating or simulating an institutional aspect in a new content... to expose the mystique or inner workings of the

---

<sup>5</sup> In her analysis of the novel *Democracy*, especially how the male, white, upper-class protagonists can both write off and talk about historically colonized regions and their people, sharing "major lessons in Southeast Asia," Elaine Castillo also describes the "typical, classically Didion line... [as] meant to say everything in the hopes that no one will notice it doesn't really say anything."

institution" (Fitterman 2009, 49). Can the same be said about *CIRCUIT*; that is, can we speak of the work "appropriating or simulating an institutional aspect in a new content" to say something about it, or offer an alternative way of valuing it? My surmise leans closer to the positive: *CIRCUIT* contributes to exposing the "inner workings" of blurbs in particular, and book production in general. Teetering in terms of its substance—to anoint the writer, or heap praises upon the work, to locate both in the larger literary traditions, to invite readers, or otherwise make them lose interest—the blurb correspondingly has ambivalent relations to the book-as-object and book production in general.<sup>6</sup>

All these processes remain in the saddle of Suarez but only as the curator of the numerous responses he received, not the principal or sole author. Given this, the ways of substantiating—either the notion of the blurb and its practice, or the book of, and about blurbs—are exploded. The resulting contents exemplify the diverse treatments and responses to the openings offered by the project. Others concentrate on the notion of the blurb itself: as "the back of the book. The glucose paste from the tree of History" (2); "these marginal annotations provide the prospective readers with a set of expectations regarding the significance of the books" (31).

Others play around the project's very reflexive trait: "the next blurb you read will be printed in ink in this very same book" (32); "This is a thirty-six lettered blurb if it says so" (66). While some others try to comment on, and make sense of the work itself: "blurb-ing for a collection of blurbs is to accent the emptiness of blurbs" (73); "never has a book before put the writer's 'block' on the witness stand and praised it as much as this one" (56).

---

<sup>6</sup> Notice how these two already transgress the notion commonly associated with the book: the book-as-text, a collection of words (cf. Stewart). One can also recall Patricia Jurilla's scholarship, focusing more on "The History of the Book... the book as a physical object, in the materials and processes used in the manufacture of texts. ... But the History of the Book is just as concerned with the multiplication, distribution, and reception of texts. It studies relationships among authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and readers as well as their histories, functions, and systems of operation (118).

With this explosion, can we also speak of a collapse of coherence, a flirtation with the liberal-pluralist that is not unlike what post-structuralism celebrates? What are the implications to hermeneutics of this kind of conceptualism? Put differently, what interpretive capacities and categories can be applied to this kind of conceptualism for it to be read productively? Maybe some conceptualisms will just give a snort and dismissively say, Nah, we don't care for readings and hermeneutics. But no conceptualist hermeneutics is yet to grow and even if there is, that does not stop other frameworks from getting their interpretive forks and knives to work on the conceptualist food that is out there—whether there is really something out there or not.

### Making Sense of Conceptualism

How can conceptualist writings be interpreted, especially in a Philippine tradition that has seen not much earlier iterations then? It is not hard to argue that despite the efforts from the likes of Suarez, conceptual writing in the Philippines remains immensely marginalized, unknown, unpopular, or all the above. One can resign and say that conceptual writing in the Philippines is just incipient, without a long and solid history and tradition informing it, and which can guide our understanding of it. But taking even a few works such as the ones discussed here, some affinities can be observed, starting points in describing how Suarez's conceptualist works can be located in—if not continues—specific cultural traditions and valuations in the country.

For instance, the oral mode of *pakikipagkuwentuhan* in *Maliit Lang Yung Sa'yo* can be said to recall the important role of orality in Filipino culture. Barring a nativist reading, it should be clarified that orality here pertains not solely to precolonial, indigenous cultures, if at all. In various guises, forms, and settings, Filipino oral culture evolves based on historical junctures and urgencies. Orality figures prominently in the research methods developed for *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*: such as *pagtanong-tanong* and *pakikipagkuwentuhan* (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 60). Alongside these two are other methods—*pakapa-kapa*, *pakikiramdan*, *nakikiugaling pagmamasid*, *pakikisama*, among

others—which suggest not orality, but being-there, being with the research participants, being with one’s co-researchers (59, 60). Scholars and researchers, as much as artists, are expected and encouraged to immerse in concrete situations with the wider public to supply substance and meaning to their scholarly and artistic works.

In her Introduction to *Verbal Arts in Philippine Indigenous Communities*, Meñez Coben characterized the varied forms of indigenous verbal art as “modes of social action” (1), echoing the familiar point about indigenous art practices being embedded, and participating in the daily lives of people, not mere objects for contemplation. The word emerges in social situations as much as potentially transforming them.<sup>7</sup> The more specific link between orality and indigenous poetry/verbal is evinced in a passage from Reyes’ *Ang Huling Dalagang Bukid at ang Authobiography na Mali*: “Si Lakandula... ay isang taong makata (madaldal), na siyang pangagalingan ng salitang makata. Ang mandudula ay dapat na gumagawa ng dula. Ang gumagawa ng tula ay dapat na tawaging manunula (tulaero) pero tinawag na makata.” (50).

Chapters later, Reyes stresses the tension in his belonging in his barrio in Hagonoy, Bulacan: “Batang palabasa? Lumabo ang mata kababasa? Kakaiba. Oral tradition pa rin ang alam ng baryo. Doon, ang lahat ay pinag-uusapan, problemang personal man iyon o panlipunan. Ang balita ay ikinukuwento, araw-araw, walang patlang. Hindi iyon binabasa ni isinusulat. Manunulat sa panahong oral?” (129). Suarez’s *Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo* relies on, and rehearses this orality ingrained in Filipino culture. He modifies it however, so that the verbal exchange has only two participants, and it takes place in the more ephemeral site of taxi rides in the capital city.

---

<sup>7</sup> On the function and efficacy of the word “kanu” in Ifugao rituals and performances, for instance: “Kanu, a marker of referentiality in ordinary speech, frames the entire performance of myth as the re-creation of a cosmological moment, ‘an instance of an ancestral type of action... one that may constantly recur’ (Meñez Coben 107). Kanu is vital not just in being repeated, but also for the significance of its repetition: invoking something ancestral, re-creating something past, as if reanimating them.



A look elsewhere can further characterize conceptual writing as it operates in Philippine letters and posit some of its possible limits, potentials, and future trajectories. In the West, one of the more dominant approaches to conceptual writing is by associating it with “strategies of copying and appropriation” (Against Expression, xviii).

For Goldsmith, the advent of Internet and the computer has greatly contributed in paving the way for these strategies to come about.<sup>8</sup> In the Philippines, ostensibly on the losing end of the global digital divide, and where there is an internal digital divide as well, the hurdles in the fuller development of conceptualist undertakings are much greater. Even if we choose not to adopt the Internet-reliant modes of conceptualism outside the country, old problems such as anemic or institutionally dominated book production, and arguably lackadaisical reading culture also present themselves as negative conditions.

In the face of these, how does the future of conceptual writing in the Philippines hold? Maybe there will be more taxi rides and blurb solicitations; more efforts to explicitly bring to the cultural products themselves the expansive terrain where writing and culture-making take place. For at best, conceptual works foreground the processes of cultural production; worst, they elevate them as having the same importance as the products themselves. Accentuating the processes mobilizes the larger field of sociality, and reveals the multiple social relations shaping and influencing the work and which the work itself also engages. This reveals and unfolds a novel dynamic. It is no longer just the authorial creator grappling with writer’s block or dallying with the Muse to bring to fruition yet another magnanimous magnum opus, ridiculously redundant in its razzle dazzle. It is no longer just the

---

<sup>8</sup> The chapters on his *Wasting Time on the Internet* can likewise be read as various odes to the Internet, often confronting the bad reputation it has received—not unjustifiably so—in the last decades, i.e. as exacerbating our sense of social isolation, as making us more digitally illiterate, as facilitating the onrush of both online scams and ‘unintelligent’ content, among others. It provocatively claimed that “Our devices, if anything, tend to amplify our sociability,” having allowed us to engage in “parallel play” and “fully interactive” exchanges (Goldsmith). It names our browser history as “the new memoir,” digital archiving as “the new folk art.” Generally, it hails how the Internet has multiplied the possibilities not just for making art but also the relationships that can be generated through it.

committed artist answering the call of the times, concretizing it through confrontation (opposing the oppressive system) or elevating the too isolated and specific by interlinking them (condemning lavish BBM parties, or the death of Jennifer Laude in the hands of an American soldier).<sup>9</sup>

What I risk positing is that conceptual writing can be an instrument in excavating and exposing more painstakingly and more subtly the intricate and nuanced elements of, and interrelationships within the social totality. This potential begins with how conceptualist writing understands and enacts cultural practice. Conceptual writing counts not just form and content—however ill-defined, however erroneously deployed as divided categories—as its elemental occupations. It pauses to think seriously as well about the materials, the sources and methods of its production, so that these will no longer just be ‘ideas’ extracted from one’s mind or from personal experiences, they will be more given or found in the concrete, part of the tangibly out-there, the tangibly already-there. It takes time to think seriously as well about the methods, the machinations that will be made on the materials.

These will not be limited to the concretization of the abstract (idea) in the act of writing; these could involve transcribing, recording, soliciting responses, sending emails, retyping old information, modifying the constraints as materials start coming.

Would it be farfetched to analogize these two—materials and method—to the object and the subject respectively? The materials as concrete objects which the method chosen or designed by the curator will transform. The transformation will no longer be just from the abstract to the concrete, but from the concrete to another

---

<sup>9</sup> Other variations of what is calling: the nationalist cause in the case of emerging, or young literature (mostly, the literatures of the newly decolonized nations). Pascale Casanova: The central question... around which the majority of literary debates are organized in emerging literary spaces (to differing degrees depending on the date of their political independence and the scale of their literary resources) involves the nation, the language, and the people” (191). Conversely, a variation of that variation: the absence, the erasure of a “nation” (Czech Republic after the Russian invasion in 1968) Milan Kundera rues in his interview with Philip Roth, and which serves as background of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

concrete form, with abstract thought mediating the process. With this new level of transformation comes the possibility of unearthing an added, if not higher plane where cultural production can dedicate its efforts. Transforming a preexisting concrete to a new kind of concrete can be infused with the goals of demystification, or even negation. In Suarez' works, the mundane experience of taxi riding is refashioned as "adventures in parataxis," consisting of verbal attempts—deliberate or not—to make sense of an array of social events. The mundane and often marginalized feature that is the blurb is simultaneously affirmed, interrogated, and outstripped in the creation of a platform for ruminating them.

Conceptual writing inaugurates shifts that are not just limited to this explication of materials and method—with the former expanding the "what" answered by the question of content, and the latter expanding the "how" answered by the issue of form. We can also reckon the way it transforms the distribution of roles in cultural production. In *Maliit Yung Sa'yo* for instance, both passenger-curator, and drivers supply what would be the work's contents. Authorship goes beyond the singular, even as the curator displaces the author. In *CIRCUIT*, the authors are as many as the possible roles they play. Some play the role of mere contributor; others act as interpreter or critic, annotator or mere "blurber," blurb-giver. These transgressions when it comes to the roles in cultural production also point to refreshing possibilities. For one, the work become internally discursive and the basis for its organicity, if one wishes to insist on its presence, will come less from its formal construction than its prior conceptual or situational configuration, its enactments, and enacted possibilities. Again, primacy is given to the enactment (of the concept) and the specific frames of situating such enactment.

This should prepare the final pronouncements: conceptual writing has the huge potential to trumpet both its materiality and the materiality of the social environment where it takes place, to which it responds. In this trumpeting, it is improper to conclude that conceptual writing forsakes the work itself to highlight only what are external to it. It would be more accurate to state that conceptual writing redefines the constitution of the work so that what are seemingly external to it are seamlessly incorporated into

the work itself. The work explodes its possibilities by literally taking in the concreteness of life and society to its own constitution. It follows that a more direct, more discernible, though no less complex relation can be established between work and life, between art and society.

Finally, Ramon Guillermo: in *Pook at Paninindigan*, he said “ang pag-aakda ng daigidig ay nangangahulugan din ng pag-akda ng mismong pang-akda” (2009, 76). Of all potentials attributable to conceptual writing, this is what I seek to underline the most: conceptual writing is not just about writing; it is also about writing its own writing tools, its own writing conditions. This second type of writing not only exposes, but also extends and contends with its tools and conditions. Conceptual writing attains this by asking us to look both at its inside and its outside, its outsides and its insides, the work and the context, the text and the constraint, its inside and its outside to the point that we conflate the two, grasp their animated relationships. It calls attention to the “akda” as much as the “pang-akda,” the sociality of the former emphasized with the exposure of the sociality of the latter.

The conceptual in *CIRCUIT* is the social in *CIRCUIT*: blurbs by writer-friends for a book of blurbs to be filled by blurbs of writer-friends, with sociality embodied by the participating writer-friends—an activation of the curator’s social network—and their reactions to the very social act of blurbing about blurbs, and for a book of blurbs.

The conceptual in *Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo* is the social in *Maliit Lang Yung Sa’yo*: multiple exchanges between passenger and taxi drivers, with all the verbal accessories prompted by the social environment finding their way in the work: “napaaway na ba kayo sa tricycle? Minsan, du’n sa Balara, bwisit na bwisit ako, maayos naman ‘yung takbo ko pero singit nang singit tapos ihaharang ‘yung paa. Ginawa ko, talagang tinuluyan ko. Tabi siya e. Humabol, galit na galit. Sabi ko sa kanya, maliit lang ‘yung sa’yo, itabi mo, magpadaan ka, hindi ‘yung humaharang-harang.”

The social is always there – *humaharang-harang* – defining the configurations of the enactment of any writing, any cultural work. What the works can do is to embrace this very configuration, *itong*

*harang na ito mismo*, this very limit posed by the social, in fashioning itself, in constructing itself. In the process, not only the specific obstacles but the larger social setup can be adjusted, paving way for new obstacles to face, and surpass.

No one will pave way for conceptual writing. No one will give away a cash prize, an academic degree, a hold of power. Nothing will give way, nothing gives away: we make our way to earn things; we make our way to create things; we make our way by creating things. Maybe it will bring us closer to this realization: the circuit may go round and round and—one more—round, but it has something outside it, there is something beyond it. We will make our way.

## Works Cited

- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Trans: M. B. DeBevoise. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Castillo, Elaine. *How to Read Now: Essays*. New York: Viking, 2022.
- Dworkin, Craig and Kenneth Goldsmith, eds. *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2011.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Event of Literature*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996.
- Guillermo, Ramon. *Pook at Paninindigan: Kritika ng Pantayong Pananaw*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2009.
- Goldsmith, Kenneth. *Wasting Time on the Internet*. London: Harper Perennial, 2016.
- Groys, Boris. (November 2011). "Introduction—Global Conceptualism Revisited." *E-flux Journal*. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/29/68059/introduction-global-conceptualism-revisited/>
- Jurilla, Patricia May, B. *Story Book: Essays on the History of the Book in the Philippines*. Mandaluyong: Anvil Publishing, 2013.
- Kundera, Milan. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. New York: Penguin Book, 1981.
- Lethem, Jonathan. "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism." *Harper's Magazine*, February 2007, <https://harpers.org/archive/2007/02/the-ecstasy-of-influence/>.
- Lewitt, Sol. "Sentences on Conceptual Art." In *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, pp. 106-109. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Meñez Coben, Herminia. *Verbal Arts in Philippine Indigenous Communities: Poetics, Society, and History*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2009.

Paris, Vaclac. *Poetry in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Marjorie Perloff's Unoriginal Genius and Charles Bernstein's Attack of the Difficult Poems*. Web. [http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/bernstein/books/attack/Paris\\_Vaclav\\_Perloff-Bernstein\\_JML\\_2012.pdf](http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/bernstein/books/attack/Paris_Vaclav_Perloff-Bernstein_JML_2012.pdf).

Pe-Pua, Rogelia and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino. (2000). "Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology): A Legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez." *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3: 49-71.

Perloff, Marjorie. "(Un)framing the Other Tradition: On Ashbery and Others – Interview with Gregorz Jankowicz." In *Poetics in a New Key: Interviews and Essays*, ed. David Jonathan Y. Bayot, pp. 110-120. Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2013.

Place, Vanessa and Robert Fitterman. *Notes on Conceptualisms*. Ugly Duckling Press. Web. [http://www.uglyducklingpresse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Notes\\_free.pdf](http://www.uglyducklingpresse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Notes_free.pdf). 2009.

Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Literature*. London: Polity, 2011.

Reyes, Jun Cruz. *Ang Huling Dalagang Bukid at ang Authobiography na Mali: Isang Imbestigasyon*. Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2011.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narrative of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.

Stuart Santiago, Katrina. (2013) "The State of Art and Criticism." *GMA News Online*, Jan. 23, 2013, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/artandculture/291627/the-state-of-art-and-criticism/story/>

Suarez, Angelo V. *Maliit Lang Yung Sa 'yo, Itabi mo, Magpadaan Ka: Adventures in Parataxis*. Web. <http://www.lulu.com/us/en/shop/angelo-suarez/maliit-lang-yung-sa-yo-itabi-mo-magpadaan-ka-adventures-in-parataxis/ebook/product-21278219.html>. 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_. *CIRCUIT (The Blurb Project)*. Web. <http://www.lulu.com/shop/angelo-suarez/circuit-the-blurb-project/ebook/product-21278206.html>. 2012.

Yuson, Alfred. "The 41st National Writers' Workshop." Newsflash. <http://www.newsflash.org/2002/05/ht/ht002585.htm>.

---

**Bionote:**

Ivan Emil A. Labayne is part of the Faculty of the Department of Humanities, UP Los Baños, and the art collective Pedantic Pedestrians. He has an MA in Language and Literature from UP Baguio and is currently pursuing a PhD in Philippines Studies at UP Diliman. As part of Pedantic Pedestrians, Ivan helped in organizing BLTX Baguio, *Book Launch without a Book*, *Kalsada sa Rengga*, and in releasing *Tila, Bionotes in Negatives, As a matter of stilling: shots on work from home*, among other projects. His creative and critical works have appeared in online platforms *Asian Cha* and *Jacket2*, in journals *Daluyan*, *Kritika Kultura*, *The Cordillera Review*, *Katipunan*, and in the anthology *Hindi Nangyari Dahil Wala sa Social Media: Integorasyon ng Kultura New Media sa Pilipinas*.



---

## Caught in the Middle: Narratives of family and class in Philippine short fiction

Larissa Mae Suarez

University of the Philippines Diliman

[lr Suarez@up.edu.ph](mailto:lr Suarez@up.edu.ph)

---

### Abstract

Depictions of the Filipino middle-class family have been popular in Philippine short stories in English since the inception of the form, with families utilized as a milieu for exploring the conflicts and conditions arising from the material condition of class inequality and exploitation in the Philippines. This paper examines various perspectives on “family,” situating it within a Marxist and Philippine context, while utilizing the concept of the “middle class” as a framework for literary analysis. By looking at a selection of Philippine stories in English, the paper discusses how the fantasies of the middle-class regarding family and identity have been used not only to produce successful, well-crafted literary works, but also texts that reveal the contradictions in our country’s history and culture, as characters grapple with the dissonance between the paradigm of the ideal, traditional family and the lived experience of real, fractured families. As seen in these stories, Filipino families in fiction can provide a valuable vantage point for the consideration of social, cultural, and political issues pertaining to class identity and struggle.

During a postgraduate writing workshop, as we discussed a story about outsiders crashing an invitation-only party in a gated subdivision, our professor said: “All stories in the Philippines are about class, if you look closely enough.”

From a Marxist perspective, *everything* is about class. In the Philippine context—with its massive economic inequality; a still-largely agricultural economy, with its attendant semi-feudal and semi-colonial relations; and the persistence of some of the longest-running revolutionary and secessionist movements in the world—the presence of class discourse in literature, whether overt or implicit, is particularly stark. The “repeated colonization” (Pantoja-Hidalgo 300) that characterizes Philippine history is also often identified as a root cause of the class disparities in the country, and it is in this context that literature in general and fiction in particular can be said to have “both repressive and emancipatory potential” (San Juan 101). This is evident in the ways the country’s short fiction in English has limned Filipino families over the past century. In this framework, this paper seeks to articulate how the existing class discourse in the Philippine context can be enriched through an analysis of how significant works in our country’s literary canon have mined the real contexts and circumstances of middle-class Filipino families for conflict and themes, deconstructing how class is embedded in the enactment of the concept of family both in our literature and in our society.

### **Intersections of Family and Class in Philippine Short Fiction**

Many notable short stories in the Philippine literary canon primarily feature characters in their role as family members, and deal with class conflict and other social issues. There is no dearth of stories that fit these criteria, for the importance and significance of the family in Philippine society has made it a popular theme in our fiction. The stories discussed in this paper are selected from those that have won national awards, such as the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for the short story in English, and those that have been included in fiction anthologies released by both commercial and academic publishers. These are not intended to be representative of the full scope and diversity of Philippine short

fiction throughout its history, but to show a trajectory in the depictions of the middle-class Filipino family in our stories.

The various iterations of what we recognize as “Filipino families” have been shaped by precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial history, as well as extant socioeconomic and cultural factors, which are always present in our stories, whether in the foreground or in the background of the plot. Depictions of family in our fiction over the past several decades are a rich opportunity for studying not only the evolution of “the Filipino family,” but the ways in which questions of class dominate our lives, even in the enactment of basic values such as “respect for elders” or “unconditional love for family members” which are often treated in popular culture as ideas that transcend material conditions or class considerations.

Consider the 1925 story “Dead Stars” by Paz Marquez Benitez, “universally regarded” for its “historical significance” as the first true Filipino short story in English (Grow 3), and the 1934 story “How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife” by Manuel Arguilla, “probably the most famous Filipino short story in English” (Cruz 82). Both are ostensibly stories about lovers, in keeping with the general thematic concerns of the literature of the period, heavily influenced by Western tales of romance and adventure. Yet they are also about families. In “Dead Stars,” Alfredo Salazar turns away from an attraction to a woman named Julia to marry his long-term fiancée, Esperanza. He is impatient with Esperanza’s “unvexed orthodoxy,” while she is hurt by his indifference, yet it is also clear that his family would not approve of Julia and would be shamed by him breaking a long engagement so close to the wedding. So the marriage pushes through. Years later, when a case brings Alfredo to Julia’s hometown, he visits her and realizes that he has become indifferent to her too, and that his cherished memory of their almost-affair was merely “the light of dead stars, long extinguished, yet seemingly still in their appointed places in the heavens.” In the build-up to Alfredo’s final encounter with Julia, Benitez writes:

He was not unhappy in his marriage. He felt no rebellion: only the calm of capitulation to what he recognized as irresistible forces of circumstance and of character. His life had

simply ordered itself; no more struggles, no more stirring up of emotions that got a man nowhere.

Benitez' reference to "irresistible forces of circumstance and character" clearly denotes those aspects, portrayed in the text, which have made Alfredo who he is: his family, his social standing, and his economic status. Indeed, the story opens with his sister and father speculating about the sheer length of Alfredo and Esperanza's engagement, wondering why at thirty Alfredo is defying class conventions of responsibility and courtship by remaining a bachelor.

Similarly, "How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife" is not just about Leon and Maria, the young couple in love, but about the expectations and duties of Leon's family in Nagrebcan, Ilocos. The first-person narrator of the story is Leon's younger brother Baldo, and readers feel his wonder at his new sister-in-law's beauty and strangeness. Baldo notes that "her nails were long, but they were not painted," and he observes her high-heeled shoes as she gets on the cart that will take them to the family house. Leon takes note of the fact that Baldo has been sent to fetch them with cart and carabao instead of a horse and calesa. Upon their arrival at home, they go to see their father, who is waiting upstairs with an aching leg—for he is a veteran of the revolution—and their father asks Baldo if Maria was afraid of Labang. He reports truthfully that she was not.

Arguilles' story is a deceptively simple portrayal of the culture and sensibilities of middle-class families in a rural area, far from the urbanized capital. Just like the Salazar family in "Dead Stars," Leon's family is expected to pass judgment upon his relationship and his chosen partner, in deference to a value system that privileges the family above the individual.

In Marxist theory, the conceptualization of the concept of family is fundamentally pragmatic, with Engels stating that "it was the first form of the family to be based, not on natural, but on economic conditions—on the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property." He goes on to describe how the family unit became centered around a monogamous marriage, further arguing that the family as an institution is based on "the

subjugation of the one sex by the other” (Engels). Althusser further characterized the contemporary nuclear family as an ideological state apparatus which plays a crucial role in entrenching the status quo of class divisions and contradictions. He wrote that the family is one of the most powerful cultural and educational influences on children while they are “most vulnerable” and provides them with “the ideology which suits the role [a child] has to fulfill in class society” (20).

Like Althusser, Bourdieu discusses the way in which family operates as a site of reproduction, whether ideological or social. Bourdieu mentions “rites of institution” which constitute the family as “a united, integrated entity which is therefore stable, constant, indifferent to the fluctuations of individual feelings,” stating that “acts of creation (imposition of the family name, marriage, etc.) have their logical extension in the countless acts of reaffirmation and reinforcement that aim to produce... family feeling (conjugal love, paternal and maternal love, filial love, brotherly and sisterly love, etc.)” (22).

Bourdieu does not assert that such feelings are fake or insincere. Indeed, he emphasizes “the practical and symbolic work that transforms obligation to love into a loving disposition and tends to endow each member of the family with a ‘family feeling’ that generates devotion, generosity, and solidarity” (22). He noted that “social realities are social fictions,” and the “family” is used as a “classificatory concept” both descriptively and prescriptively (Bourdieu 20).

### **Perspectives on the middle-class family**

The short stories written in subsequent decades further demonstrate how the material conditions of middle-class families provides fertile ground for complex characters and a variety of conflicts. National Artist Francisco Arcellana wrote two of his most famous stories two decades apart, and both feature the same family. In “The Mats,” published in 1938, Mr. Angeles brings home a set of custom-woven mats for his wife and children, including those children (Josefina, Victoria, and Concepcion) who have already passed away. He demands, “Is it fair to forget them? Would

it be just to disregard them?" (Arcellana 77). Then in "The Flowers of May," published in 1951, readers learn that Josefina died as an infant and Concepcion was stillborn, but Victoria died at the age of sixteen after a long illness. The first-person narrator of the story is one of Mr. Angeles' seven children, and as he wanders into a church on May afternoon, he recalls another May in 1934, two months after Victoria died, when his sisters arrived home with flowers and accidentally provoked in their father an agony of sorrow:

"The flowers are gone. The flowers of May are gone. I saw that Victoria did not want to die. There was nothing I could do. There was nothing one could do," Father says helplessly.

His grief is terrible and deep. (Arcellana 161)

These classic stories are windows into some of the main concerns of Filipino families: rituals of love and marriage, and of death and grief; their attendant joys and tragedies managed as best as they can. They are also vivid examples of the heterogeneity of the middle class in terms of professions, practices, and culture, which are informed by the competing ideologies that dominate the Philippines as a semifeudal and semicolonial society. Benitez' philosophizing lawyer, Arcellana's traveling inspector, and Arguilles' provincial young boy are all distinct from each other, though they all belong to various subsectors of the Philippine middle class. And while these early classics are not explicitly about class conflict, to read them with a critical eye towards the material circumstances of their characters enriches our understanding of both their specific situation and the culture and history of the country as a whole. As Sison wrote in a series of essays on culture and art, "To know best the character of a society, it is necessary to make a class analysis " (2021).

Traditionally, the family is defined as "a social unit composed of interdependent members, usually related to one another by blood or consanguinity, and often occupying the same residential abode" (Torres 136). The core of the family is traditionally the parental couple, who by the acts of marriage and procreation institutionalize and expand their unit. This much is evident in many of the Philippines' early short stories. However, it must be

noted that several researchers caution against overgeneralizing “the Filipino family” as a concept, with Torres stating that “it is erroneous to assume that family structures, relationships, and norms are homogenous across the archipelago;” Medina further adds that “the *barrio* family is certainly different from the family in Forbes Park or in a Quezon City squatter area” (9).

In the 1960s, adding to the body of realist stories featuring families as central characters and filial relationships as their main thematic concern, Estrella Alfon released one of her best-known stories, “May.” The story is by a woman who recalls a May Day in her youth when a young man tries to serenade her. But her mother catches him and sends him away, leaving the narrator irate at her mother. In the peace before that argument, the narrator recalls the changes taking place in her life, her diction emphasizing all the ways that her identity is tied to that of her mother:

This particular May that I remember, I was getting to be quite a young woman, as Mother's friends would say. I was having the first serenades sung under my window that had the manol vine covering it. I was learning to hide away love letters that came to the house and which my mother matter-of-factly opened and read before she gave them to me. The grandmothers were constantly admonishing me that I knew nothing of the household arts, and if I was old enough to hide love letters and have boys serenading me so that I lost my sleep sighing over their songs, I was old enough to learn to cook and hang the curtains and do a little of the mending that was ruining both their old eyes. (Alfon 173)

The story then flashes forward several years, to when the narrator is a young adult. She learns that her mother is accusing her father of infidelity. Alfon adroitly handles the transition from anger to understanding in the narrator, who sides with her mother in the latter half of the story, recognizing the pain her father has caused her.

Stories of love are popular across all classes in the Philippines, yet the middle-class approach to love in real life is distinctly romanticized compared to other classes, where aspects such as wooing, weddings, and marriages can be more practical and transactional. Despite the failed serenade from her youth, both the

narrator and her mother have expectations of romance and loyalty from ideal partners in Alfon's "May," and the realization on the narrator's part that her mother has not gotten that is what facilitates the transition from the myopic perspective of her youth, when she used to see her mother as the embodiment of "the unjust, the tyrannical, the old." Such attitudes towards the grim realities faced by many families (in these two stories, infidelity and molestation) can be historically traced to the influence of ideologies such as Catholicism and Western liberalism. The conflicts in "May" arise from the clash between fantasies of purity and fidelity and the actual experiences of the families in these stories.

A key development in the advent of the contemporary Filipino short story was what Yabes described as a move from "love stories" in the early period of Philippine fiction, towards topics and concerns that were "wider in range" (xxi). Consider the 1974 story "Agua de Mayo," by Ruben Balane. This text, a winner of the *Focus* literary award, is one of the first major anthologized stories to deal in some way with immigration as growing concern among Filipino families. The main character, Rico, is a lawyer at the City Legal Office whose siblings have all gone abroad, and he looks back fondly on a month-long visit to his brother Ben in the United States, which was (in Ben's words) "all expenses paid, no sweat" (76). Later, it is Ben who visits the Philippines, after their father was indicted with graft and died of a heart attack while imprisoned ("Laxity was his fault," Rico assures himself, "not dishonesty"). Ben urges Rico to join him in the US, arguing, "We've been disgraced here, after what happened to Papa, we tried our best, [or] at least Papa did, to live good, decent, honest lives, and what did we get for all that? Bitterness and failure. A sullied name. Let's all find our place somewhere else and start again" (79).

After Ben leaves, Rico's wife Mani is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Rico does not inform his brother of her death. A letter comes, urging him again to move (with Mani) to the US, and Rico considers replying thus:

Someone has to stay, you know; who will light the tapers for Papa, for Mani (who has followed Papa), and most of all, my dear brother, for you, who have died the most complete death



of all. Let me keep vigil and light the tapers for the dead. Your brother, Rico. (Balane)

Rico decides not to send that, writing instead a blander and more cheerful letter declining Ben's invitation. And so Rico stays in his homeland, with the graves of his wife and father. He moves in with his Tia Pacita after Mani's death. The story ends with a conversation between the two of them—as it drizzles with the first rain of May, Tia Pacita muses on the superstition that the later the *agua de mayo*, the richer the harvest would be for the year, and Rico jokes that he will not consider moving abroad for they do not have the *agua de mayo out there*.

In Balane's story, the *agua de mayo* signifies the cultural and geographic rootedness of the Filipino family in Filipino soil; for Rico, who loved his wife and father, moving away would be tantamount to abandoning not only them but his own sense of self and of what is demanded by family. Rico, whose professional career has not been as successful as he'd once dreamed, is tantalized by the idea of trying his luck in the US, but the weight of his filial obligations exerts a stronger pull on him. "Agua de Mayo" thus enacts a paradox that would only be possible for middle class families, for it is his socioeconomic status that allows Rico to have a choice and experience this conflict fully; for many poorer families, going abroad to earn a sufficient wage to support the family is a necessity rather than an option.

In Medina's comprehensive sociological manual on the Filipino family, the author emphasizes the importance of utilizing structural, social, developmental, and gender-based frameworks in conjunction with each other in order to gain a more complete understanding of the Filipino family. Indeed, Medina's discussion of various aspects of the family, such as "conjugal power structure," the "role of parents in [the] socialization of children," and "respect for the elderly," among others, is undoubtedly a useful resource for the formation of any critical perspective on the Filipino family. While recognizing the many conflicts and problems that confront the Filipino family, such as poverty, violence, and separation, Medina also hopefully notes that "the government has enacted many laws to support and protect the family" and is working with "many social, religious and civic

organizations, as well as educational agencies... to discuss and analyze problems of the family and plan and develop programs to solve them" (287).

In the Philippines, however, the lived experience of family often deviates sharply from what is deemed desirable or permissible by institutions such as the government and the Church, and from what is commonly celebrated in mass media outputs such as commercials or blockbuster films, even as the versions of "family" they tout remain the ideal to which people aspire. This ideal embraces Filipino cultural traits in allowing for extended families, or families wherein one or more of its members live and work abroad. However, it usually minimizes or rejects "deviations" arising from gender, and the illegality of both abortion and divorce in the Philippines contradicts expanding notions of what can be construed as family in the rest of the world.

### **Narratives of family as class discourse**

The concept of the "middle class" has long been an important topic in research, for two reasons: first, because it is viewed as an indicator of the status of economic growth in the country; and second, because of the crucial part played by that sector in the country's historical and political development (Rivera 363). In an essay on the role of the middle class in Philippine society, Rivera mentions the difficulty of defining the term "middle class" to a common international standard. He suggests differentiating between a "gradational" approach (based predominantly on factors such as income, education, standard of living, etc.) and a "relational" approach, which "seeks[s] to situate classes in the overall context of understanding trajectories of social change... [and] classes are linked in social relations of production that are essentially antagonistic and exploitative" (363).

In both frameworks, "classes" are defined in a socioeconomic context as divisions of society. The gradational approach is a utilitarian and hierarchical term where a person is categorized as belonging to a certain class level based primarily on their financial status. In this sense, the term "middle class" denotes a specific income bracket, which varies in accordance with economic

factors. In contrast, the *relational* approach—which correlates closely with the Marxist conceptualization—“class” is a historical and political term, whereby one’s class is determined based on their role in the process of production. Essentially, there is a ruling class comprised of the comprador bourgeoisie and landlords, whose ownership of the means of production allow them to exploit the labor of the proletariat and peasant class. These material, economic conditions are the base for a cultural and political superstructure that maintains the dominance of the ruling class.

In this framework, the predominant class characteristic of this sector is the instability and variability of their status in a capitalist society: like the peasant and working class, the middle class are also oppressed, their intellectual labor utilized by the ruling class for their own benefit. But at the same time, the Filipino middle class often embraces, reinforces, and perpetrates the status quo of the ruling class, ensuring their own comfort and stability relative to the poorest sectors of society—a liberalism arising from our colonial heritage, which emphasizes “individualism, narrow family interest, ethnocentrism, religious sectarianism, chauvinism and a pro-imperialist sense of globalization” (Sison, 2021). Yet, just as any individual member of the middle class may be reactionary or reformist, they may be progressive and radical. Such contradiction arises from the competing value-systems to which many members of the middle class are exposed, for they are educated in contemporary concerns and modern cultural shifts and technological advances, while still bound to limitations imposed by obsolete or myopic belief systems.

Class identity is interiorized and exteriorized, enacted consciously and unconsciously at both the individual and collective level. The term is used in this paper, in discussing the middle-class families of Filipino stories, within the framework of hegemony and counter-hegemony. Williams elaborates upon the Gramscian concept of hegemony, noting that it includes ideology but goes beyond it, encapsulating “not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values” (109), “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living, [which] constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society” (110).

Thus, in the relations between dominant and subordinate classes, the latter must struggle to develop its own ideology against the hegemony of the ruling class, and the concepts of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony must be articulated as this “lived hegemony” is constantly “renewed, recreated, defended and modified... [and] continually resisted, limited, altered, [and] challenged” (Williams 112). As such, middle-class characters (such as...) in literature are marked by ideological vacillation, caught between hegemonic or counter-hegemonic ideas.

Such conceptualizations of class are particularly enriching when reading stories from the 1980s, a period wherein literary production was set against the backdrop of People Power and the fall of the Marcos dictatorship. Many powerful works of short fiction exploring socially relevant themes were written in that time frame, including “The Flood in Tarlac” by Gregorio Brillantes, which won a first prize Palanca in 1987. In that work, the limited third-person narrative perspective belongs to Dr. Jose Caridad, a surgeon whose relationship with his landlord in-laws governs his attitude towards an ongoing land dispute involving his wife’s family in Tarlac. His brother-in-law is claiming that the land which local farmers have worked on for generations is actually his property, not theirs, and the farmers ask Dr. Caridad to intervene on their behalf. Of the doctor’s response, Brillantes writes: “Dr. Caridad no longer relished having anything to do with these things, not since the old man had turned perceptibly aloof...” (362).

And in that single line, an entire history has been rendered—instantly, readers can imagine the tenor of previous conversations and visualize the old *hacendero* becoming impatient with this outsider and all his misguided ideals. The barrier between them arises not only from age, but from the distance in their class perspectives. As a landlord in Tarlac, evidently patterned after the real-life landlords of the controversial Hacienda Luisita, Dr. Caridad’s brother-in-law is one of the wealthiest men in the country, while Dr. Caridad’s comfortable income level as a doctor delineates him squarely as a member of the upper middle-class. As such, he is sympathetic to the claims of the farmers that their land is being stolen from them, yet he has determinedly trained himself

to ignore their plight in the interest of remaining on amicable terms with his wife's family.

The flood in that story acts as both plot device and allegory, for in the end, Dr. Caridad's refusal to acknowledge the concerns of the dispossessed farmers leads to his family's death. Several farmers violently enter the house in a *banca* during the flood, killing his wife and children, and Dr. Caridad fights back and kills them. In the final line of the story he says, "They had no right... coming into my house that way... my house... absolutely no right..." And this characteristic, too—his fixation on "rights," his bedrock belief in the importance of institutionally granted privileges—exposes his character as middle-class, for after all neither his wealthy in-laws, intent on landgrabbing, nor the poverty-stricken farmers, trying to exact some form of justice, have shown themselves to be similarly limited by consideration of the law in their actions.

Brillantes' story is a nuanced portrayal of a man in a difficult situation: the doctor is flawed, acting in accordance with his own class character. He does not think of himself as a bad man. Unfortunately, from the perspective of the farmers he is a bad man; he has elected to be indifferent to issues that are matters of life and death to a large number of people, to maintain good relations with his wife's family.

No doubt many Filipino readers can relate to Dr. Caridad's ill-fated desire to keep the peace in his own family; the filial instinct to sweep perceived wrongdoings by family members under the rug; the struggle to accept the stark differences in values that divide them from beloved family members, a process hampered by the desire to avoid confrontation. These middle-class characters are marked by a "sense of the comfortable"—and accordingly, a natural inclination to preserve it—which is "suggestive of a confidence made possible only by a form of withdrawal from the entanglements with an active world. The unassailed consciousness reflecting on its own condition is self-justifying, investing itself with a privilege and mastery within its own circumscribed ground" (Montañez 56). Strong political themes in social realist literature are often criticized for lending itself to a mechanical, predictable, or propagandist tone, but Brillantes' story serves as an example of

how to tackle such loaded subjects while paying attention to what is perhaps the most common adage in creative writing pedagogy: show, don't tell.

Another of Brillantes' stories that should be highlighted is "Faith, Love, Time and Dr. Lazaro," published in 1960, which vividly renders one of the most common preoccupations of the petty bourgeoisie: pondering questions of god and eternal life. Dr. Lazaro, a country doctor, brings his son Ben with him to the barrio to treat the sick infant of a poor family. However, the baby cannot be cured, and Ben baptizes the infant before it dies. Dr. Lazaro has hoped that his son will follow in his footsteps and practice medicine, but the lay baptism shows him that Ben's vocation will probably diverge from his own. On the way home, father and son converse, and Brillantes writes:

God: Christ: the communion of saints: Dr. Lazaro found himself wondering again at the world of novenas and candles, where bread and wine became the flesh and blood of the Lord, and a woman bathed in light appeared before children, and mortal men spoke of eternal life, the vision of God, the body's resurrection at the end of time. It was like a country from which he was barred; no matter—the customs, the geography didn't appeal to him. But in the car suddenly, driving through the night, he was aware of an obscure disappointment, a subtle pressure around his heart, as though he had been deprived of a certain joy... (285)

In his historical analysis of the middle class in the Philippines, Rivera observed that the those belonging to that sector were heavily influenced by "conservative and radical schools of Christianity... and in particular in the Southern Philippines, Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism" (366). Yet the Filipino middle class is "not a homogenous entity;" those in the middle class are also shaped by non-class factors such as education, religion, and gender, among others (Rivera 363). Extant in the character of Dr. Lazaro is one of the great dilemmas of the intellectuals in the Filipino middle class. In a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society, what Marx described as the contradiction between idealism and materialism remains present, and faith is generally categorized as an idealist phenomenon, rooted not in concrete conditions but in

inconsistent abstraction. Those in the middle class have the education and cultural exposure to challenge the superstitions of the masses, yet they envy the certainty of faith, the promise of salvation after a lifetime of hardship. In contrast to the skepticism of Dr. Lazaro, his son Ben has a faith that arises from both principle and pragmatism. Like his father, he wants to help others; like his mother, a devout woman, he wants to do it through the rituals and values of Catholicism.

Meanwhile, Susan Lara's "The Reprieve," awarded a first-prize Palanca in 1984, begins with Leo's wife leaving in the middle of the night to take care of a patient. Leo, who is a doctor, is unable to join her as he is bedridden and recovering from a stroke. Their son Sandy takes charge while his wife is gone, and Lara writes:

"You need anything, Pa?"

"Just a glass of water," Leo said, giving his son an indulgent smile.

"I'll get it, don't get up."

"For God's sake, it's only a glass of water! Stop acting as though it's a monumental task only you can do!" Leo turned away as soon as he said it, but not quickly enough to miss the pain that dimmed the young boy's face. For a minute he concentrated needlessly on putting on his slippers. When he looked up again to say he was sorry, Sandy had gone back to his room, slamming his door with a vengeance. That's more like it, Leo thought. Now the boy's beginning to act his age again. (355)

Leo's preoccupation with children "acting their age" is not a sentiment that everyone can afford to live by; many poorer families often have children who must work and take on other adult responsibilities from a young age, in order to help alleviate conditions of poverty. This is another aspect of class that is explored in Philippine fiction: how the children of comfortable, relatively stable families grapple with their changing relationships to their parents. Like the other authors in this paper, Lara's style, her realist, intimate portrayals of family, is perfectly suited to the subject matter, and whether consciously or unconsciously, there is in the works of these authors an evident capacity for observation, an ability to write about the personal without masking or effacing the political.

## Fictionalizing the contemporary Filipino middle-class family

In the 1940s, Yabes asserted that “the Filipino short story in English is a definite cultural force in our national life” (xxxiv). Later critics and writers have echoed similar sentiments; as Hau observes of Philippine fiction in English, while “most of its practitioners belong to the middle classes... it seeks to speak not just of and for these classes, but for and to the Filipino ‘people’” (317).

Today’s writers “recognize no taboos, writing with ease about incest, prostitution, child abuse, abortion, euthanasia, gender, globalization” (Pantoja-Hidalgo 309). Dalisay further describes the modern Filipino short story in English as a “site of political engagement,” and says that many contemporary writers “have material aplenty,” usually issues such as “gender and sexuality, the environment, cultural identity, and individual freedom” (144). Such broadening and increased complexity in the scope of common understanding of social issues can also be seen in the concept of family. While institutional definitions remain narrow—the Philippine Constitution declares that “the Filipino family [is] the foundation of the nation” (Art. XV Sec. 1); the Family Code defines marriage as “a special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman” (Art.1); and there are legal penalties for adultery and concubinage—there has also been a slow but marked shift to alternative views. Torres described Filipino families in the 1990s as largely nuclear or extended in composition, and observed a downward trend in legal marriages, suggesting that “couples may have formed unions without the benefit of church or civil rites,” as well as a higher population of illegitimate births and lesser dependence on the part of children (on parents) and wives (on husbands) in terms of economic sustenance, as more women and youth entered the workforce (Torres). Modernization and industrialization have also led to a migration from rural to urban areas that “alters the family composition and has effects on income, aspirations, gender roles, and youth-dependency patterns” (Torres 135).

It is interesting to observe, in recent decades, how the landscape of thematic concerns has expanded. Stories about families were now also about many of the contemporary issues facing Filipinos



in a deteriorating and fragmented society, and the characters in such stories began acting in more modern ways. For instance, Lakambini Sitoy's "Touch," published in the Philippine Graphic in 1999, explicitly describes how a father beat his children:

When they were young he used to beat them, rapidly, one after the other, as they scrambled and slipped on the wooden floors... most of the year when their father was at sea the children could do as they pleased, but for the month or so that he was home they had no choice but to obey him. At the slightest mistake the house would resound with a peculiar rhythmic thwacking, like strips of meat being processed on the butcher's block.

It had been a good belt, fragrant and heavy, from "abroad," as so many of her father's things had been in those days. Wound about his hand, it had been a deadly weapon... The one sound that had survived the years without distortion was that of leather on flesh, like baseballs slamming into mitts in the children's park back of her apartment block.

The story begins with Dora, now a grown woman, returning home to care for her ailing father. He is bedridden, forcing her to clean up his urine and excrement from the bed, both father and daughter contemptuous and begrudging of each other. She knows that it was her father's earnings as a seaman (and a seaman, he always emphasized, was different from being an ignorant worker fleeing to some Middle Eastern country) which made it possible for her and her brother to live comfortable lives, yet she resents the misery he inflicted on his family for reasons she would never understand. In the end, watching a *mananambal* attempt to treat her father, she recognizes that she is incapable of letting go of her hatred for him.

Sitoy's story is a stark portrayal of how the brutal demands of capitalism can fracture the bonds between family members. Dora admits to "a sense of bitter regret" for never truly knowing her father, a man who spent years in "the dungeon of his vessel," while no one in his family bothered or dared to ask him how he felt. "After all," Sitoy writes, "he was a man. Men endured" (720). The constraints of filial hierarchy and gender roles in middle-class families further ensured that Dora and her father were doomed to be strangers to each other.

In December 2001, Dalisay's "Some Families, Very Large" was published in the *Philippine Star*. Aptly, the story is set on Christmas Eve, when nine-year old Sammy finds himself at a funeral parlor after a long day traipsing around the city with his father Felipe, a barker. His mother has gone, "very far down South to take care of her own dying father," so he and his father will be spending Christmas without her. On the day before Christmas, the father's self-proclaimed *dilihensya* and *abilidad* takes the pair from one stop to another across the city. Sammy is excited to help his father hustle money and favors from supposed distant relatives and former employers, unaware of the danger posed by a bodyguard waving a gun, unaware of the disdain everyone has for his father.

There is in this story a sense of how "family" works in the Philippines, for both good and bad. Near the end, as his father gambles away the money he wheedled from his targets, Sammy decides to sit and wait for him inside a funeral parlor, which is empty except for a white coffin (ostensibly containing the body of his "distant uncle"). Sammy eventually finds himself conversing with the Mrs. Navarette, the mother of the dead man:

"Where's your mother, by the way?"

Sammy fell silent, and he looked fervently in Felipe's direction, wanting to go home. The lady took his hand and her fingers felt like a bony animal perching on his. "Some families are large, very, very large," she said. "Some families are small – very, very small."

"My Papa says – " Sammy began, then paused, seized by a sudden doubt.

"Your Papa says?"

"My Papa says he knew your son. My Papa says they were cousins in Dipolog."

"Is that soooo?" the woman said, arching her eyebrows again.

"What did you say your name was, again?"

"Samuel Dinglasan, ma'am. Samuel Occeña Dinglasan."

"Dinglasan.... Weeell..... Like I said, some families are very large..."

Evidently, his father invented the filial connection, and just as evidently, Mrs. Navarette—alone at her son's wake and herself part of a very small family—is willing to overlook this for some company on Christmas Eve. She assures Sammy that he can call

her “Lola Connie” and tells him and Felipe, “Rest up a bit and tell me stories, that’s all I ask, tell me stories.” Of course, Felipe has lost all his money by now, and he stays so Mrs. Navarette will give him the fare for the ride home with Sammy in the morning. While this story may seem to be a condemnation of the urban poor, since Felipe is portrayed as an amateur con man and typical of his class, a closer reading reveals the diversity with which Dalisay has populated the world of the story, reflecting the different motives, circumstances, and dreams of those in the lower middle-class. Felipe has grasped that connections are paramount in Philippine society, and that whether you have a very large family or not, it’s better to pretend. The poignant final scene of the story features him with Sammy and his newly minted “Tita Connie,” closing their eyes and pretending that the cheap funeral snacks are “ham and cake and grapes and cheese,” unaware for a moment that the flickering lightbulb above them has finally gone out. In this story, as it is commonly is in practice, the idea of family is both elastic and sacred.

Meanwhile, Angelo Lacuesta’s “Siren,” published in *Likhaan* in 2012, opens with Anna following her mother, literally. She follows her through the house, through the garden, and into the maid’s quarters in the back yard. There she watches as her mother pries open the locked cabinet of their maid, Clara, to look through her things. She is looking for her pearls, which have gone missing. The mother is convinced that Clara took the pearls and hid them somewhere in the house, so she kicks her out to find them before Clara sells them to someone. “That’s their *modus operandi*,” she tells her husband.

Of course, it is Anna who stole the pearls. She fears for a moment that she might be caught and wonders how to explain herself. She needn’t have bothered—not only does the mother believe that she and her daughter and husband are automatically above suspicion, she believes that Clara, in contrast, is automatically under suspicion, guilty until proven innocent. Clara is both physically and figuratively small in the story. Her smallness is repeatedly referenced (“Clara was so small that when she sat on one of the chairs, her feet would not even touch the floor”; “They [her clothes] looked like little girl clothes”). Lacuesta also gives the

family a nouveau riche background. Because their socioeconomic status is relatively precarious—he writes that the family had just moved from a small apartment into this new house, presumably able to afford a live-in maid for the first time, and the mother proudly uses the term “investment” to describe her purchase of new pearls to her daughter—the mother guards and enacts her self-perception of bourgeoisie superiority fiercely, unwittingly reproducing it in her own daughter.

Such stories show how families function towards “the accumulation and transmission of economic, cultural and symbolic privileges,” and how “the family plays a decisive role in the maintenance of the social order [as] one of the key sites of the accumulation of capital in its different forms and its transmission between the generations” (Bourdieu 23). As seen in Lacuesta’s story—particularly, the dissonance between the daughter’s guilt and the mother’s absolute certainty that she is innocent—it is through the juxtaposition of “real” vs “ideal” that family emerges as a “fantasy-production,” not simply as an imaginary representation, but as “the symbolic-material practice that organizes what we take to be ‘reality’” (Tadiar 29). The sociopolitical role of the middle class in propping up the ideology of the dominant ruling class can be said to rely heavily on the fantasy of the ideal family—“family” is often perceived as something that is above and apart from the vagaries of blatant politics or vulgar ideologies, yet it is at this level, Zizek argues, that fantasy operates most effectively: “external ritual materializes ideology by internalization.” In the Filipino short story in English, the fantasies of the middle class regarding themselves (faith in liberal ideas such as freedom and self-determination), the upper class (dreams of upward social mobility), and the lower class (fear of downward social mobility) are evident in depictions of family. Moreover, there is an “inherent antagonism” (Zizek 698) in the impossibility of the ideal family—with a traditional structure, happy, economically stable—and the horror of the “real” family, the fractures in attempts to enact that ideal.

Notably, the contemporary stories cited here have as their main characters children (young and adult) who watch, resist, and align themselves with the various actions and beliefs of their parents. In

Anna's case, her mother shows her that the poorer socioeconomic classes are not to be treated as equals; for Dora, her father's abuse instills the sense that family is a trap and gives her a lifelong aversion towards forming a family of her own; for Sammy, the concept of "extended family" has been at once distorted and delineated by his father's transparent attempts to use nonexistent filial connections to extort favors from others. All these texts explore similar themes of fantasy construction and destruction in the ways the main characters navigate the roles, expectations, and privileges that arise from the families to which they belong.

## Conclusion

This paper explored the twin thematic concerns of class and family in our country's stories—in particular, how Filipino families in short fiction can provide a valuable vantage point for the consideration of social, cultural, and political issues pertaining to class identity and struggle. The first section of this paper looks at the initial intersections of family and class alongside the emergence of the Philippine short story in English as a distinct genre in the early 1900s, then the subsequent section looks at various perspectives on Filipino middle-class families through the lens of other stories over the next decades, showing how class persistently shapes character, conflict, and setting even as the notion of family changed and expanded over time.

Selected texts from the 1980s, a tumultuous period in our country's history, were used to show how narratives of family can be analyzed as a kind of class discourse, and the final section shows how the contemporary Filipino middle-class family remains a popular subject in our fiction, functioning as crucibles for questions of class identity and struggle. Reading these texts in this manner does not equate to a condemnation of middle-class families, but an elaboration of what they may reveal about society; as seen in our country's stories, while the family can be an interpellator for hegemonic views and reject any deviations from the ideal, sometimes the family is also a crucible for the formation of counter-hegemonic ideas.

In this context, the family unit operates as one of the core components of social institutions in capitalist society. Thus, analyzing the middle-class family in literature as a fictional elaboration of real sociopolitical issues must rely on Marxist understanding of class as one of the most fundamental divisions in society, with families and family members driven by the conditions and contradictions of their own class. The middle-class family has been a fruitful subject not only for the production of well-crafted literary works, but also the production of texts that reveal the contradictions in our country's history and culture, as characters grapple with the dissonance between the paradigm of the ideal, traditional family and the lived experience of real, fractured families.

As seen in the middle-class characters of these stories, conceptualizing "family" and "family feeling" as natural, autonomous, and uncontestable ideas is an act of privilege. Yet it is important to avoid being too deterministic or reductionist in this analytical framework, recognizing that the possibility of transforming or transcending class interests and limitations always exists, and is sometimes even realized. Neither class nor family are fixed portents of individual identity; as Bourdieu argues, "within a given family, not all members have the same capacity and propensity to conform to the dominant definition... the forces of fusion, especially the ethical dispositions that incline its members to identify the particular interests of individuals with the collective interests of the family, have to contain the forces of fission, i.e. the interests of the various members of the group, who may be more or less inclined to accept the common vision and more or less capable of imposing their 'selfish' point of view" (23).

In the fantasies of the ideal, value and success are framed in terms of filial duties; hegemonic ideals like patriarchy, heteronormativity, and classism are reproduced; capitalist norms such as transactionality, alienation, and exploitation are enacted; and the "family" itself is considered sacred, resistant to any kind of interrogation. In contrast, the real family is fractured, divergent, its members often strangers to one another, limited by the responsibilities and expectations associated with their filial roles. Conflict is rooted in the contradictions among characters whose

class-driven desires and motivations are formed, changed, and shattered, even as they unwittingly strengthen and challenge the very ideology which allows class struggles to ferment in the first place. Yet none of this is inevitable. None of this is inherent in the concept of “family.” These class conditions are constructed, and as can be seen in our country’s stories, the chief characteristic of such constructs is not permanence, but the possibility of change.

## Works Cited

Albert, Jose Ramon, et al. "Profile and Determinants of the Middle-Income Class in the Philippines." Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Discussion Paper Series No. 2018-20, Dec 2018.

Alfon, Estrella. *The Stories of Estrella Alfon*, edited by Lina Espina-Moore, Giraffe Books, 1994.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." '*Lenin and Philosophy*' and Other Essays, Monthly Review Press, 1971, <http://www.csun.edu/~snk1966/Lous%20Althusser%20Ideology%20and%20Ideological%20State%20Apparatuses.pdf>.

Arcellana, Francisco. *Favorite Arcellana Stories*, edited by Emerenciana Arcellana, UP Press, 2009.

Balane, Ruben. "Agua de Mayo." *Underground Spirit: Philippine Short Stories in English 1973-1989*, edited by Gemino Abad, UP Press, 2010.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "On the Family as a Realized Category." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1996, pp. 19–26., <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327696013003002>.

Brillantes, Gregorio. "The Flood in Tarlac." *An Anthology of Winning Works: The 1980s Short Story*, Carlos Palanca Foundation, 2000.

Brillantes, Gregorio. "Faith, Love, Time, and Dr. Lazaro." *The Best Philippine Short Stories of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Isagani Cruz, Tahanan Books, 2000.

Cruz, Isagani. *The Best Philippine Short Stories of the Twentieth Century*, Tahanan Books, 2000.

Hau, Caroline. "The Filipino Novel in English." *Philippine English: Linguistic and Literary Perspectives*, edited by Ma. Lourdes Bautista and Kingsley Bolton, Hong Kong University Press, 2009.

Dalisay, Jose Jr. "Some Families, Very Large." *Philippine Star*, 24 Dec 2001, <https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/arts-and-culture/2001/12/24/144748/some-families-very-large>.

Dalisay, Jose Jr. "The Case for Fiction." University of Asia and the Pacific, 2002.



Dalisay, Jose Jr. "The Filipino Short Story in English: An Update for the 90s." *The Likhaan Anthology of Philippine Literature in English from 1900 to the Present*, edited by Gemino Abad, University of the Philippines Press, 1998.

Dalisay, Jose Jr. "The Other Side." *An Anthology of Winning Works: The 1980s Short Story*, Carlos Palanca Foundation, 2000.

Engels, Friedrich. "The The Family." *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/ch02d.htm>.

Galvin, Kathleen. "Diversity's Impact on Defining the Family." *The Family Communication Sourcebook*, edited by Lynn H. Turner and Richard West, Sage Publications, 2006.

Garcia, J. Neil. "Revaluing Value: An Introduction." *Likhaan 10: The Journal of Philippine Contemporary Literature*, edited by J. Neil Garcia, UP Institute of Creative Writing, 2016.

Gardner, John. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*, Random House Inc., 1991.

Grow, L.M. "The Art of Paz Marquez Benitez." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1991.

James, Henry. "The Art of Fiction." *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, edited by Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy, Leicester University Press, 1996.

Lacuesta, Angelo. "Siren." *Likhaan 6: The Journal of Philippine Contemporary Literature*, edited by Gemino Abad, UP Institute of Creative Writing, 2012.

Lara, Susan. "The Reprieve." *Philippine Studies*, Vol 33. No 3, 1985, pp. 353-360, Ateneo de Manila University.

Lee, Gabriela. "Mix and Match: A Thematic Analysis of the Depictions of Alternative Family Arrangements in Philippine Children's Picturebooks." *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016.

Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. Penguin Books Ltd, 1992.

Lopez, Salvador. "Literature and Society: A Literary Past Revisited." *Literature and Society: Cross Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Roger Bresnahan, Eleventh American Studies Seminar, 1976.

Lukács, Georg. "Marxist Aesthetics and Literary Realism." *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, edited by Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy, Leicester University Press, 1996.

Lopez, Salvador. "Literature and Society." *The Likhaan Anthology of Philippine Literature in English from 1900 to the Present*, edited by Gemino Abad, University of the Philippines Press, 1998.

Lopez, Salvador. "Literature and Society: A Literary Past Revisited." *Literature and Society: Cross Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Roger Bresnahan. Eleventh American Studies Seminar, 1976.

McGann J., Griffith J., Kroeger R., et al (2001). "Reading Fiction/Teaching Fiction: A Pedagogical Experiment." *Pedagogy*, vol. 1, Issue 1, Winter 2001, pp. 143-165, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/26327/pdf>.

Medina, Belen. *The Filipino Family*. 3rd ed., University of the Philippines Press, 2015.

Mojares, Resil. *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel until 1940*. University of the Philippines Press, 1983.

Montañez, Kris. *The New Mass Art and Literature*. Kalikasan Press, 1988.

Pantoja-Hidalgo, Cristina. "The Philippine Short Story in English: An Overview." *Philippine English: Linguistic and Literary Perspectives*, edited by Ma. Lourdes Bautista & Kingsley Bolton, Hong Kong University Press, 2009.

Philippines. The President of the Philippines. "Article 1." *The Family Code of the Philippines*. 1987. *Official Gazette*, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1987/07/06/executive-order-no-209-s-1987/>.

Rivera, Temario. "The Middle Class in Society and Politics." *Routledge Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines*, edited by Mark Thompson and Eric Vincent Batalla, *Routledge*, 2018.

San Juan, E. Jr. "Global English Versus Filipino; or 'Sneaking into the Philippines,' by the Rivers of Babylon." *Essays on Philippine Language*

*and Literature*, edited by Ruth Mabanglo and Rosita Galang, Anvil Publishing, 2010.

Sison, Jose Maria. "Class Struggle is the Key Link in Revolutionary Social Change." *On Culture, Art and Literature*, edited by Julieta de Lima, International Network for Philippine Studies, 2021.

Tadiar, Neferti. *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order*, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004.

Torres, Amaryllis. "Rethinking the Filipino Family: Tracking Changes Across the Years." *Social Science Information*, vol. 23, issue 1-2, 1995, pp. 54-66.

Williams, Raymond. "Hegemony." *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Yabes, Leopoldo. "Pioneering in the Filipino Short Story in English." *Philippine Short Stories, 1925-1940*, edited by Leopoldo Yabes, UP Press, 1975.

Zizek, Slavoj. "Fantasy as a Political Category: A Lacanian Approach." *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader. 3rd edition*, edited by Vincent Leitch, W.W. Norton & Co., 2013.

---

### **Bionote:**

Larissa Mae Suarez is a faculty member of the Department of English and Comparative Literature in the University of the Philippines, Diliman. She studied creative writing at the Philippine High School for the Arts and graduated with a Journalism degree from the College of Mass Communication in UP Diliman.

She won a Palanca Award for a short story in 2016, and her works of fiction and creative non-fiction have been published by the UST Press and Diliman Review, among others.

---

## Finding Queer Optimism in the Art of Oscar Zalameda

Alvin Emmanuel G. Alagao  
University of the Philippines Diliman  
[agalagao@up.edu.ph](mailto:agalagao@up.edu.ph)

---

### Abstract

Queer theorists have traditionally advocated for the adoption of an outlook of queer pessimism in order to develop a criticality that helps the queer community effectively address the issues it presently faces. Some queer theorists, however, have instead advocated for an outlook of queer optimism—an outlook which allows space for celebrating joy and embracing optimism without forgoing the criticality needed to fight for queer rights. This paper touches on the validity of having such a disposition even in the dark times we currently live in—specifically how art can move us to embrace queer optimism. In discussing the formal techniques the queer artist Oscar Zalameda employed in his art practice, this paper aims to provide a phenomenological/hermeneutic explication of how he formed affects of queer optimism through his works. These paintings continue to preserve these forces, and our encounters with them in the present give us hope. Considering the political potential of queer optimism amidst the current realities queer persons are facing in the Philippines, it is important to take a critical look at the works of Zalameda and other queer artists embracing such a disposition.

What is it like to live as a queer person in the Philippines? In a 2021 piece by the investigative journalist Corinne Redfern, she notes that there is no “national legislation that would protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination in the Philippines” and that “at least 50 transgender or gender non-binary individuals” have been murdered in the country since 2010. She also notes that the number of murdered transwomen is probably higher and that this is because “When a trans woman is murdered, the Philippine National Police (PNP) logs her gender as male (and vice versa for trans men), while . . . the stigma that continues to shadow homosexuality and queer identities often dissuades family members and friends from speaking out.” The Philippines may have a reputation for being “one of the more LGBTQ+-friendly countries in south-east Asia,” but this does not mean it is some sort of queer utopia (Manalastas and Torre 61). It is a country where a president’s “war on drugs” has led to the killings of transgender people who were forced to go into the drug trade because of a lack of opportunities resulting from “discrimination and transphobia” (Redfern). It is also a country where hostile attitudes towards queer persons have been significant enough to be associated with an increased risk of suicide among lesbian, gay, and bisexual Filipino youths (Manalastas, “Sexual Orientation” 9-11; Manalastas, “Suicide Ideation” 113-115).

Despite these distressing realities, queer activism is alive and well in the Philippines. Indeed, “For many members of the Filipino LGBTQ+ community, joining a Pride March every June is almost second nature” (Jaucian). More encouragingly, many of these people know that activism is not just a matter of merely going to a Pride March every year. The militant national democratic LGBTQ+ organization Bahaghari, for one, holds protest rallies against injustices that harm not just members of the queer community, but all the other Filipinos who suffer under the abuses of the state and the ruling class. The group does this as the need arises: in the last decade, it initiated protest actions after the brutal killing of transgender man Ebeng Mayor and after the introduction of a draconian anti-terror bill. Protest actions against the latter led to the arrest of twenty Bahaghari members (Langara; Jaucian), but the group remains undeterred in their fight for a freer Philippines.

However, as the writer Don Jaucian says, while “queer spirit is brighter than ever in each Pride March,” certain members of the queer community unfortunately “only think of Pride as a parade”—a party. They do not want the Pride March to be “political,” either because they do not understand the need to make it so, or worse, because they actually support the existence of an illiberal regime. One might chalk up such tendencies to a misplaced optimism, and one might be correct in this regard. This is because optimism, for all its positive valences, can actually be cruel.

For the queer theorist Lauren Berlant, “A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing,” and this desire might involve something as seemingly innocuous as food or something as grand as a political project (1). “Whatever the *experience* of optimism is in particular, then, the *affective structure* of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way” (2). The desire of some members of the queer community to treat Pride as merely a party and to do away with protests, which address problems such as “contractualization, the rising prices of basic necessities and the privatization of social services to misogyny and the displacement of indigenous peoples” (Casal), is rooted in the fantasy that the queer community can truly be free in a neoliberal-capitalist world they can put their faith in.

Because of such a tendency (among other factors), it is not surprising that some queer theorists have dismissed the political potential of optimism in advancing queer rights, positing that *queer pessimism*, which is “articulated in the field’s attention to negative affect, melancholy, shame, the death drive and shattering,” is the only valid outlook we can have (McCann and Monaghan 228, 236).

Considering that optimism can be cruel and subtly work against the goals of queer causes, does it mean that there really is no place for it in the movement? Although Michael D. Snediker notes that there is an “antagonism between optimism and knowledge” that

“cozens liberals (queer and nonqueer) into complacency,” he asserts that optimism can be built on a foundation of “emphatic responsiveness” and a “solicitation of rigorous thinking”—he calls this “*Queer Optimism*” (1-3). Snediker explains that

Queer optimism, immanently rather than futurally oriented, does not entail predisposition in the way that conventional optimism entails predisposition. It presents a critical field and asks that this field be taken seriously. Even as my investigation extends, at certain junctures, to the likes of happiness, this is not because if one were more queerly optimistic, one necessarily would feel happier. Queer optimism doesn’t aspire toward happiness, but instead finds happiness *interesting*. Queer optimism, in this sense, can be considered a form of meta-optimism: it wants to *think* about feeling good, to make disparate aspects of feeling good thinkable. *Queer Optimism*, then, seeks to take positive affects as serious and interesting sites of critical investigation. (3)

Indeed, the 2019 Metro Manila Pride March was an example of an event that wholeheartedly embraced queer optimism by providing a platform for militant protest whilst embracing the possibility of queer joy in the present. It was both a protest and a party. Optimism and happiness need not make us abandon the lofty goals of working towards a better world in the present. We can continue holding on to these things when we embrace queer optimism, which respects the ideal of happiness while moving us to work towards a better society in the here and now, not just for our own community, but for all the other marginalized sectors of society.

### Optimistic Affects

One thing that separates art from science and philosophy, at least according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, is that it is partly made up of affects. More specifically, Deleuze and Guattari define art as “*a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*” that is “preserved in itself” (620, 634-636). But what exactly are affects? Deleuze and Guattari are of the view that “affect is not the passage from one lived state to another but man’s nonhuman becoming” (625). Affect has also been described as “feelings, emotions, or subjectivities,” as “separate or distinct from reason or rationality,” that “shape how we come to understand the world” (Klages 200). We can also say that

Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability. (Gregg and Seigworth 1)

No matter how one defines affect, what we can all agree on is that our encounters with it can effect a change in us—it has the capacity to transform us in ways big and small.

When we talk about queer optimism in art, we are dealing with works that “introduce epistemologies not of pain, but of pleasure; aestheticize not the abdication of personhood, but its sustenance” (Snediker 41). All of these are involved in the formation of the affect of queer optimism that we can find in a piece of art. Through an encounter with a work that preserves such an affect, we are moved to develop feelings of queer optimism. We may even, in turn, end up carrying the affect and then spreading it in the environments we inhabit through our actions, thus changing their emotional atmosphere.

Artworks should not be treated with suspicion for simply embodying an optimistic affect. This is what should be the case. Still, it is important that a piece of queer art *specifically* embodies the affect of queer optimism. If a work of art embodies cruel optimism or some other questionable variant of optimism instead, we are justified in being suspicious of the work as the affect it preserves could be a negative influence on anyone who encounters it—the affect may become an infection that turns them into someone who is complacent about the status quo.

Two specific examples of art embodying the affect of queer optimism—Hart Crane’s poetry and Sean Baker’s film *Tangerine*—can illustrate its operation.

Following Snediker, Hart Crane’s poetry exhibits queer optimism through “the proliferation . . . of the figure of the smile” in it.



Snediker adds that “More vexing than any one of these smiles is their mysterious, collective force as a serial trope. ...The collective force of these incessantly iterated smiles is matched by the force of even a single smile’s given instance, in that many of these smiles . . . are explicitly associated with the petrifications and resistances of stone” (36). Crane describes smiles with adjectives such as “unyielding” and “unmangled,” and Snediker suggests that it is through this that Crane “conjures a personal will that yields or doesn’t yield, a body that has survived some violence unmangled (and simultaneously, the bodies that have not)” (36-37). All of these add up to a “poetic optimism” which Crane consciously embraced (37). Snediker tells us that because Crane was known for his alcoholism in life and died by suicide, the poet was “uniquely available . . . to pessimistic readings” (36). But notwithstanding these aspects of his life, Crane wrote poetry that celebrates queerness and which gives us a more hopeful disposition. His poetry can therefore be read through an optimistic lens.

In the case of *Tangerine*, Andreas Stoehr writes that the film “doesn’t merely center a pair of black trans women as its protagonists, it lets them be funny, too.” Indeed, Stoehr also writes that

Baker and co-writer Chris Bergoch weren’t bent on teaching an inspirational lesson or making a statement. They just tell a set of tartly funny stories with on-the-fly fleetness, emphasized by the iPhone-shot street photography. It’s worlds away from the staid likes of *Dallas Buyers Club*, and while neither Rodriguez nor Taylor appear likely to net any Oscars for it, *Tangerine* is right in a vanguard of movies starting to shake up a transphobic status quo.

Unlike queer films which focus on death and suffering, *Tangerine* presents a comedy. It does not ignore the stark realities affecting transwomen—in one scene towards the end of the film, urine gets thrown at the character Sin-Dee’s face and transphobic slurs are hurled at her—but at its heart, *Tangerine* shows us that the queer experience does not have to end in tragedy or sadness and that there is always room for hope. For this reason, it is a perfect example of a film embodying queer optimism.

## Who Is Oscar Zalameda?

Queer optimism can also be found in Philippine art—it can be encountered in Emiliana Kampilan’s comic *Dead Balagtas Tomo 1: Mga Sayaw ng Dagat at Lupa*, for one. In the two stories focusing on queer couples coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds and religions, one sees the possibility of living a dignified life as a queer person in the Philippines. But while *Dead Balagtas* is very much a great work of art that is worthy of serious academic study, for this paper, I would like to concentrate on the works of another artist that has recently helped me cope with the political realities of our country—the art of the queer painter Oscar Zalameda.

Born in Quezon Province in 1930, Zalameda earned a bachelor’s in fine arts from the University of Santo Tomas before pursuing further studies at the Art Students League of California, the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, and Paris-Sorbonne University (Pilar). The artist also ended up “studying mural techniques under Diego Rivera” (“De Zalameda and Quezon’s Festive Artistry”). Zalameda lived a very eccentric life before dying in a state of relative obscurity in 2010. Upon the artist’s death, one writer for a newspaper wrote that

As his remains were brought to the cemetery, where the family mausoleum that he built for his parents awaited him, a dark and tumultuous sky wept, as though expressing not just sympathy, but that something was wrong or amiss. It was, after all, the final procession of the cosmopolitan artist who, upon his return from his highly successful European sojourn in the mid-1960s, wowed his countrymen and, in turn, was wined, dined and feted by the crème de la crème. This was the burial of an important man, the toast of society from the late 1960s all the way to the 1970s. But where was everyone?” (Silvestre)

The writer tells us that in stark contrast to the scene of his funeral, Zalameda, decades before his death—during the height of his hedonism—went about befriending and partying with the wealthy and fashionable, adopting an aristocratic air and speaking with a Parisian accent when dealing with them. He called everyone

"Dahlin" and often said "I just arrived" as if he had just come from "Beirut or Paris or one of those capitals" when in reality, he just came from "his apartment or Lucban"—such behavior, believe it or not, fooled socialites into thinking that he was born into high society (Silvestre). A friend of Zalameda's told the writer that "When someone in the press shortened his middle family name, Deveza, to De, he intentionally did not ask that it be corrected. 'It fit him to be called De Zalameda because he behaved like an aristocrat in public.'" Considering his personality (and the formal excellence of his art), it makes sense that he was the favorite portraitist of Manila high society. Indeed, it is an unfortunate fact that Zalameda became a favorite portraitist of Imelda Marcos, who in 1966 invited him to hold a one-man show at Malacañang ("De Zalameda and Quezon's Festive Artistry"; Lerma; Silvestre). This connection to Imelda is a very ironic fact for me because Zalameda's art has helped me cope with the recent, very much undeserved win of her son Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in the presidential election. But as the cultural theorist Mieke Bal says, the paintings left to us by artists from earlier times have an "ongoing vitality" that enables them to speak to issues we face in the present, where "the participation of the contemporary viewer in the construction of the meaning of age-old images is relevant for a sense of history as, simply put, *change over time*" (Bal, Reading Rembrandt v). The way works from earlier times speak to the conditions of the present may be surprising because they can be radically different from the way they spoke to the conditions of the times they were made in. Also, while Zalameda might have enjoyed the patronage of the Marcoses, the images he left us (at least those that will be discussed in this paper) do not glorify them and indeed contain certain truths about queer life that provoke us to feel a sort of critical joy. Whatever personal affections Zalameda may have had in relation to the Marcoses, the affects we find in his art are quite removed from the former. For all of these reasons, Zalameda's works have the unintended effect of helping us cope with the current political situation we are facing.

To put things in perspective, affects are not the same thing as affections; the affects produced by an artist do not necessarily have to correspond with whatever affections they may have. As Deleuze and Guattari say, "By means of the material, the aim of art is to

wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations" (622). Affects are autonomous—"they go beyond affections" (Deleuze and Guattari 622). An artist may even be able to invent "unknown or unrecognized affects . . . that are all the more imposing as they are poor in affections" (Deleuze and Guattari 625). And so while Zalameda's lived affections cannot be separated from his bourgeois decadence and his problematic relationship with the ruling class, the affects he formed in his art need not necessarily be connected to these and can even have a liberating effect. This is actually the same reason why monstrous men are able to create works of utmost empathy, and this is why such works can continue to affect us positively even as we stop celebrating the artists behind them. It is valid to criticize Zalameda's involvement with the Marcoses, but it is also valid to continue gaining strength from his work. We can still encounter the affect of queer optimism in his art despite the questionable facets of the life he lived. This is the nature of affects: they work outside the realm of rationality and, again, are autonomous.

When one compares the art of Zalameda to the art of Kampilan, one easily sees how the latter is a lot more progressive in character. Indeed, the two queer stories in Kampilan's graphic novel combine a national democratic orientation with an outlook of queer optimism. Still, it cannot be denied that Zalameda's art holds the same affect (if nothing else), and so it cannot be denied that it also functions in a way that promotes queer liberation, even if not on the level that Kampilan's art may work on.

Before we move on to dissecting his art, it bears mentioning here that the contradictions I have just laid out are not the only ones we see in the story of Zalameda's life. For one, although a socialite has said that Zalameda was "fun" and that "his presence was refreshing and never boring," the artist was also given to "occasional moods or histrionics." It has even been said that in the artist's "melancholy moments . . . he painted in gray" (Silvestre). Perhaps we can connect this pessimistic side of Zalameda's to the "stabbing incident" involving him and the fashion designer Pitoy

Moreno, an incident which marked the beginning of Zalameda's retreat from high society (Sioson). Zalameda later on suffered a stroke and retreated to Lucban, Quezon, where he was laid to rest, away from the eyes of his former friends (Pilar; Silvestre). His family, who, along with fellow townsmen, were the recipients of Zalameda's generosity (the artist "set up a foundation underwriting the schooling of many students in his hometown"), and his partner, the recipient of a love that could kill (if one were to believe the rumors surrounding the stabbing incident, that is) and which lasted until death, were by his side at the end of his life (Silvestre; "De Zalameda and Quezon's Festive Artistry").

### Painting Time and Joy

Like other artists, Zalameda employed different styles of making art throughout his life. This paper will only concentrate on his cubistic paintings as they are the ones that most strongly embody the affect of queer optimism. Zalameda's cubistic paintings, unlike those of Vicente Manansala's, H.R. Ocampo's, and Cesar Legaspi's, do not aspire towards a severity that forces itself upon the viewer. Rather, they are breezy, and the best of them employ such exuberant colors and bold geometric shapes smartly placed in the background to produce the highest formal pleasures in the viewer. On the other hand, just like the other cubistic paintings produced by Philippine painters in the 20th century, Zalameda's works also channel the structure of Philippine folk art through the use of its characteristic rhythms. Ricarte Puruganan, one of the Thirteen Moderns, posited that paintings channel the structure of Philippine folk art produce a "dynamic rhythm" that impresses a sense of motion on the viewer (Fernandez 16). But even as his art shares this character with the art of the three aforementioned neo-realists, Zalameda's treatment of motion differs from theirs in one important respect: the use of elongated planes and bold straight lines we often see in the background of his paintings makes us see *the movement of time*, and somewhat paradoxically, we see it as something that has been frozen in his works. Even in landscapes that do not feature the colorful people which populate his paintings and only show static scenes, the artist's characteristic use of abstract geometric forms makes us see the movement of time frozen in a single moment.

Why am I focusing on how Zalameda uses formal techniques to depict temporal motion? What does it have to do with the affect of queer optimism? To begin with, it is through this element of the artist's works that we are given a sense of present-ness, and this present-ness is the site of queer optimism. As Snediker says, queer optimism "is not promissory. It doesn't ask that some future time make good on its own hopes. Rather, *Queer Optimism* asks that optimism, embedded in its own immanent present, might be interesting" (2).

But how exactly does the depiction of frozen temporal motion orient us towards the present? To understand this, we first need to go back to the idea of the "pregnant moment." It has been argued that "since a painting can only depict one single moment in time, such a select moment must be chosen very carefully so that the implied potential of the entire action can be seen in a nutshell. The painter must think of the most pregnant moment without giving away too much and thereby restricting the imagination" (Allert 112). More specifically, "the observer must see *more* in the work of art than what is given in the fruitful or pregnant moment it presents" (116; emphasis mine). What this means is that when a painter captures the pregnant moment, they "represent a single moment, but one that can only be understood as following the past and announcing the future" (Bal, *Narratology* 179). A perfect example of a painting capturing the pregnant moment is American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein's *Whaam!* (1963):

The left-hand canvas features an American fighter plane firing a missile into the right-hand canvas and hitting an approaching enemy plane; above the American plane, the words of the pilot appear in a yellow bubble: 'I PRESSED THE FIRE CONTROL... AND AHEAD OF ME ROCKETS BLAZED THROUGH THE SKY...'. The outline of the resulting explosion emanates in yellow, red and white; the work's onomatopoeic title, 'WHAAM!', jags diagonally upwards to the left from the fireball in yellow, as if in visual response to the words of the pilot. The painting is rendered in the formal tradition of machine-printed comic strips – thick black lines enclosing areas of primary colour and lettering, with uniform areas of Ben-Day dots, purple for the shading on the main fighter plane and blue for the background of the sky (Goodwin).

The scene depicted in the painting is a frozen moment that lets the viewer imagine the rest of the story, from beginning to end. And because the pregnant moment moves the imagination to stretch towards these two opposite poles, the viewer's consciousness is also oriented towards both the past and the future—this, even as one is viewing the immediate present of the painting's scene.

Unlike Lichtenstein, who consciously tried to embrace the pregnant moment in his art, Zalameda laid out the entire history of a specific moment in a single scene. Through the use of the characteristic bold, dynamic bands that permeate the backdrop of his genre scenes, Zalameda's cubistic paintings present both an abstract accounting of the movements that led to the figural scene presented in it and an abstract accounting of the movements that will spring from it. We do not exactly see the concrete particulars of these movements. We do not see the fishermen in Zalameda's *Manginisda* settling on the shore and leaving with the day's catch. Rather, what we feel we see in the vibrantly colored dynamic bands that surround them are the abstract essences of the presented moment's past and future. By making us feel that we are already in contact with the moment's past and future through the use of their signifiers (the rhythmic bands), *Manginisda* and the other cubistic paintings made by Zalameda keep us oriented to the present. This is the inverse of what happens when we view a painting such as Lichtenstein's *Whaam!*, which captures the pregnant moment.

Zalameda's use of bands to evoke a specific sense of temporality can be compared to Barnett Newman's use of "zips" in his paintings. As the art historian Claude Cernuschi writes, these zips mark "significant moments in the stream of time" (116). In the case of Newman's *Onement I*, "in line with the time-as-moving-object metaphor, the central stripe will stand for the spectator existing in the present, with the left and right halves of the painting as signifying the past and future, respectively" (116). Indeed, "canvases such as *Onement*, by virtue of the beam's central placement, and their strict adherence to bilateral symmetry, compel us to focus on the center zip as a visual analog for a human presence in the 'now'" (117). The difference between Zalameda and Newman is that the former used his bands as backdrops for

Philippine genre scenes—the presence of human figures frozen in a single instant has the effect of making Zalameda’s jewel bands embody the past, present, and future, rather than just act as markers that separate temporalities.

Of course, the present is merely the site of queer optimism. Zalameda’s use of formal abstraction to situate us in the here and now is not enough to make us encounter such an affect. It is entirely possible to encounter queer pessimism in a painting that orients us to our immediate experience. So how exactly do Zalameda’s paintings form the affect of queer optimism? I would argue that the affect primarily derives from the artist’s stylish use of jewel tones.

Whether he was painting genre scenes depicting rural life and labor or instances of middle-class leisure such as two men playing tennis—whether he was painting people having sex, even—Zalameda made use of emeralds, rubies, and other vibrant gemstone colors in all sorts of combinations to make us feel the joy of everyday life.

Just as Hart Crane was able to evoke queer optimism with his use of the figure of the smile, the simple use of jewel tones was enough for Zalameda to evoke the same kind of feeling.

---

<sup>1</sup> I do not have the rights to the images of the Zalameda paintings I would have liked to show in this paper. The good news is that they can be found online. The reader can view them by visiting the following webpages:

Mangingisda - <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Mangingisda/C88C41CEf8D8C635>

Compositional Boats - <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Compositional-Boats/561D8B5DEBC24CD9>

Fisherman - <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Fisherman/873F63D72BA8DA53>

Untitled - <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Untitled/14D5CF4DBBD61EFF>

Flower Vendors - [http://www.artnet.com/artists/oscar-zalameda/flower-vendors-Mb7w\\_qlarvcLoix3B7\\_m\\_w2](http://www.artnet.com/artists/oscar-zalameda/flower-vendors-Mb7w_qlarvcLoix3B7_m_w2)



To further illuminate this phenomenon, we should refer to a passage Eugenie Brinkema wrote in *The Forms of the Affects*, a book where she argues that “affects have structured forms and that form has an affective intensity that must be read for”:

*Gaudere* (to rejoice) is that from which we also derive *gaud* (a grammatical doublet for joy), gaudy, and jewels or ornaments, for it was gaudies, the beads on the rosary, through which a joy not tethered to the Earth, a mysterious joy of the Joyful Mysteries of the Virgin, took place. Cognates in Romance languages (such as *joya* in Spanish) also mean “jewel,” precious stone, and in diminutive forms a valuable trinket; *gioja* in Italian is both a jewel and joy or mirth. [This] link to ornament and bead also sutures joy to other forms of surface and artifice . . . joy is simultaneously marked by its intimacy with faceted gems, angled objects that reflect light, break it down into its constituent parts (what is valued in a diamond is precisely this working-over of light, its treasured and cultivated dispersion, scintillation, and brilliance) . . . joy’s merriment hovers in the pleasure or gladness in the glittering surface of *things*. The light-reflecting/refracting qualities of joy bind it to the material objects of the world, the specific, certain, and concrete, the jewel that reflects and breaks up light, but also to the bibelot, the bauble or the trinket, to a gaud, a ribbon, a dead flower—something. (243, 252)

The forms we see in the paintings of Zalameda, with their jewel tones, simulate the operation of gemstones on our affective perception. Because of what Brinkema posits as the “intimacy” between the affect of joy and jewels, any person may be infected with the former when they look at the artist’s paintings. And in line with this, I also believe it is the case that the Filipino queer, whether consciously or not, knows that the particular way Zalameda uses jewel tones is rooted in a queer way of seeing—this enables the Filipino queer to open themselves up to the affect of queer optimism that Zalameda’s paintings embody. Although this might seem like an odd claim, it has to be noted that even the museum studies scholar Victoria Mills says that “The gem functions as a way of thinking about queer visibility” (147). In fact, she even asserts that the “collecting of jewels suggests a way of ‘seeing things differently’” and that the “ocular perspective on the gem constructs non-conventional forms of male identity” (149). Indeed, Mills writes that authors such as Joris Karl Huysmans and

Oscar Wilde used the idea of collecting gems in their works to foreground *queer ways of seeing* (149-150), and even more interestingly, Huysmans believed that the symbolist painter Gustave Moreau was able to make “dreams visible” in his works by borrowing from, among other things, the art of jewelry (qtd. in Mills 157).

Manansala, Ocampo, and Legaspi all made cubistic paintings full of vibrant colors, but in comparing their bodies of work with Zalameda’s, one sees that the queer painter’s use of color is far removed from theirs. He openly showed us the way he saw the world—his phenomenal experience of it—through the rendering of Filipino life in a queer gaiety of hues. Through the use of jewel tones, he gave a formally astute camp aesthetic to the realities we often see portrayed in Philippine paintings. Philippine genre scenes that embody a camp aesthetic—an aesthetic intimate with feelings of celebratory transgression—could only easily resonate with the Filipino queer’s way of seeing. If Gustave Moreau was able to enchant us through the gemlike sheen of *Salome Dancing before Herod*, then Oscar Zalameda made his dream of queer optimism visible to queer eyes through the bejeweled radiance of his wonderful paintings. Even if Zalameda’s evocation of queer optimism did not lean on an outspoken celebration of the queer experience or explicit homoerotic imagery, it nevertheless has a fine sprightliness that makes the affects it contains palpable to the beholder of his art.

The things I have said in this section were the result of my phenomenological/hermeneutic reading of Oscar Zalameda’s paintings. It might be possible to do a much more critical reading of his works, and it would be interesting to see other scholars try to give more negative takes on the artist’s oeuvre. For as much as I would like to indulge readers who expect a more critical engagement with Zalameda’s art, my lived experience prevents me from doing so. To force myself to give a harsher take on the artist’s work would only result in a reading that is simply *untruthful*. Also, as much I would like to include the history of the reception of the artists’ works among other members of the queer community, the fact of the matter is that Oscar Zalameda is one of those artists that have long been neglected by art scholars/writers. To the best of my

knowledge, this is actually the first scholarly paper to deal with Zalameda's work that comes from the perspective of a queer scholar. And sadly, art writers from outside the academe have also not dealt with the queer reception of the artist's paintings. Still, through my reading of Zalameda's art, I hope that I was still able to reveal important truths that will prove useful not just to the queer community, but to everyone else who desires freedom in some form or another.

### **The New Society Restored**

Less than a month ago, we saw the restoration of the Marcoses with the electoral win of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. I had hoped the nightmare that was the past six years would end already, but unless Marcos Jr. is ousted, it will be here to stay; it will simply continue to affect everyone living in the country, especially those belonging to marginalized sectors. I can only imagine what harm the coming administration will inflict on those who are both queer and poor, those who are oppressed in more ways than one.

But while things may seem dire and hopeless, I do not feel sad at all. I am still very much angry, but I do not feel as sad as when Rodrigo Duterte was elected president. I believe this is because, for one reason or another, I have developed an outlook of queer optimism. I do not want to wait for the coming of a queer utopia before I can work on being happy. I know that I can still feel joy in today's world, and I know that I do not have to give up caring for the world even if I am happy. Make no mistake, Marcos Jr. will be a terrible president. But this should not make us feel guilty about feeling happy and optimistic in the present. So long as we use these feelings to fuel the drive to emancipate ourselves and others, there is no harm in embracing them.

Of course, I do not want to discount the validity of queer pessimism as an outlook. In a world where "the traditional infrastructures for reproducing life—at work, in intimacy, politically—are crumbling at a threatening pace," in a situation that "increasingly imposes itself on consciousness as a moment in extended crisis, with one happening piling on another"—when the spirit of the times is defined by "the attrition of a fantasy, a

collectively invested form of life, the good life”—it is logical to be “skeptical about optimism, at least in its appearance in contemporary regimes of compelled, often-repressive, happiness” (Berlant 5-13). When optimism is weaponized by the state and the ruling class to keep us from seeking accountability (e.g., when the state promotes resilience narratives during times of ecological disaster and when dissent is silenced through the idealization of “unity”), it is only natural—productive, even—to embrace pessimistic affects.

Again, in writing this paper, I did not set out to invalidate queer pessimism. What I aimed to do was to defend the idea of queer optimism. Whichever of the two outlooks one develops, it can be said that they are on the right path—both lead to a critical presentness. It just so happens that in my case, queer optimism was the outlook I had come to develop. I hope that through this essay, I have provided a good argument for the validity of embracing queer optimism even in these dark times. So long as what we are feeling is not a cruel optimism leading to a complacency that works against the goals of the queer community and other marginalized sectors, then there is no problem with feeling optimistic. Indeed, it is through my queer optimism that I am able to think that we do not need to wait another six years to start fixing things. The electoral system is not the only means by which we can effect change. We can fight for our rights as queers and the rights of other oppressed people outside it. And we can do this in the here and now. Let queer optimism inspire direct action and dispel the notion that we can only achieve change through our vote!

A lot of factors led to me adopting an outlook of queer optimism—it would be unfair to say that only one thing was behind it. Still, it has to be noted that the art of Oscar Zalameda, as well as those of the other artists who make use of the affect of queer optimism, helped move me toward this direction. Indeed, perhaps I can say that Zalameda’s generosity did not end with his passing: his generosity is still at work today in the art he left behind, which gives us hope for the present. Today, I see many examples of queer art made by Filipinos that exhibit a similar sensibility and which even overtly embrace more progressive positions. While they are filling the shoes left behind by Zalameda, I hope that we do not

forget that as early as almost half a century ago, one painter was already interested in being queer and happy at the same time.

## Works Cited

- Allert, Beate. "Lessing's Poetics as an Approach to Aesthetics." *A Companion to the Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, edited by Barbara Fischer and Thomas C. Fox, Camden House, 2005.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 4th ed., University of Toronto Press, 2017.
- . *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*. Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
- Berlant, Lauren. "Cruel Optimism." *Cruel Optimism*, Duke University Press, 2011.
- Brinkema, Eugenie. *The Forms of the Affects*. Duke University Press, 2014.
- Casal, Chang. "5 Heartwarming Moments at This Year's Metro Manila Pride March and Festival." *CNN Philippines*, 30 June 2019, <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/2019/6/30/pride-march-2019.html?fbclid=IwAR>.
- Cernuschi, Claude. "The Visualization of Temporality in the Abstract Paintings of Barnett Newman." *The Iconology of Abstraction*, Routledge, 2020, pp. 114–25.
- "De Zalameda and Quezon's Festive Artistry at SM City Lucena." *The Philippine Star*, 18 Sept. 2006.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Percept, Affect, and Concept." *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, edited by Félix Guattari, Routledge, 2011.
- Fernandez, Doreen G. "Philippine Vibrations: Ricarte Puruganan and Folk Art." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 6 Apr. 1987.
- Goodwin, Arthur. "'Whaam!,' Roy Lichtenstein, 1963." *TATE*, Nov. 2018, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lichtenstein-whaam-t00897>.
- Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Jaucian, Don. "A Look into Organizing Pride March in the Philippines (and Why It's Still a Protest)." *CNN Philippines*, 26 June 2020, <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/2020/6/26/pride-march-as-protest.html>.

Klages, Mary. *Literary Theory: The Complete Guide*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Langara, Rosanna. "Loud and Proud: Resisting Authoritarianism in the Philippines." *The Diplomat*, 24 June 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/loud-and-proud-resisting-authoritarianism-in-the-philippines/>.

Lerma, Ramon E. S. "For Zalameda, 'Art Should Command a High Price.'" *Philstar.Com*, <https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/sunday-life/2010/07/25/595950/zalameda-art-should-command-high-price>. Accessed 31 May 2022.

Manalastas, Eric Julian. "Sexual Orientation and Suicide Risk in the Philippines: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Sample of Young Filipino Men." *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1–13.

---. "Suicide Ideation and Suicide Attempt among Young Lesbian and Bisexual Filipina Women: Evidence for Disparities in the Philippines." *Asian Women*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2016, pp. 101–20.

Manalastas, Eric Julian, and Beatriz A. Torre. "LGBT Psychology in the Philippines." *Psychology of Sexualities Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2016, pp. 60–72.

McCann, Hannah, and Whitney Monaghan. *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures*. Red Globe Press, 2019.

Mills, Victoria. "Dandyism, Visuality and the 'Camp Gem': Collections of Jewels in Huysmans and Wilde." *Illustrations, Optics, and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Literary and Visual Cultures*, edited by Luisa Calè and

Patrizia Di Bello, Springer, 2010.

Oscar De Zalameda, Philippine Artist. Directed by Philippine Art Gallery, 2019. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0f78fTIWpK0>.

Pilar, Santiago A. "Zalameda, Oscar." *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*, edited by Rosa Concepcion Ladrido, <https://epa.culturalcenter.gov.ph/3/17/3839/>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2022.

Redfern, Corinne. “‘I’m Scared Every Damn Day’: In the Philippines, Violence Shadows Trans Lives.” The Fuller Project, 7 Jan. 2021, <https://fullerproject.org/story/im-scared-every-damn-day-in-the-philippines-violence-shadows-trans-lives/>.

San Juan, Thelma Sioson. “Behind the Scenes with Teyet | Inquirer Lifestyle.” Philippine Daily Inquirer, 25 Nov. 2012, <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/77763/behind-the-scenes-with-teyet/>.

Silvestre, Jojo G. “Dahlin’, Zalameda Is Gone!” Philstar.Com, 25 July 2010, <https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/sunday-life/2010/07/25/595949/dahlin-zalameda-gone>.

Snediker, Michael D. *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

---

### Bionote:

Alvin Emmanuel G. Alagao is a graduate of the University of the Philippines Diliman’s MA Art Studies (Art History) program and is currently a lecturer at the Department of Humanities, University of the Philippines Los Baños. His current research interests are the history of Philippine modern art, the history of Philippine painting and its aesthetics, Philippine art and technology, etc.



---

## (RE)BERSO

CRIS R. LANZADERAS

University of the Philippines Los Baños

[crlanzaderas@up.edu.ph](mailto:crlanzaderas@up.edu.ph)

---

*Pinag-uusig, ngunit hindi pinababayaan;  
pinababagsak, ngunit hindi nawawasak*  
**2 Corinto 4:9**

**Awit 1:2:**

Ang talim ng iyong mga halik,  
parang pagpupog ng mga tinik.

Masahol pa sa lason,  
ang dulot mong pag-ibig.

**Mangangaral 4:9-10:**

Nasusulat na mabuti ang dalawa kaysa  
isa  
dahil mabunga ang dalawa at hindi ang  
nag-iisa.

Sa gunita ay ang isang kakilala  
nang mailuwal na kanilang bunga,  
iniwan ng kasama. Nasusulat:  
kawawa ang nag-iisa sapagkat  
walang tutulong sa kaniya.

Hindi man nasusulat  
subalit higit ang lakas sa pagbangon  
nang mag-isa.

**Genesis 29:20:**

Pitong taon ang paniwalang  
ang mga dibdib nga'y tulad ng mga  
pinapastol na tupa,  
pinag-iisa;

tulad ng pinagsasaluhang salukan ng  
inumin  
kung saan nagdidikit ang mga labi  
samantalang hindi naman talaga  
nagdidikit.

Lumubog na ang inalay niyang araw,  
lumamlam na ang ningning ng kaniyang  
buwan.

Ang pitong taon ay may katapusan.

**Juan 16:19-33:**

Palagi mong sinasabi  
na sasaatin ang kapayapaan at,  
hindi tulad ng mga talinghaga,  
maliwanag ang iyong mga salita –  
*dumating na ang oras at*

*dumating na ngayon*  
subalit nasaan ang kagalakan, ang  
katotohanan.

Wala ang lakas ng loob at sa  
kalumbayan kumakapit  
ang iyong sambahayan.

Bulag ang sanlibutan at maaaring bingi  
rin;  
sinasadyang di makarinig ng mga  
panalangin,

**Ruth 1:16-17:**

Hindi na ako makikiusap at  
maninikluhod.  
Hindi ko ididipa ang aking mga kamay  
sa pakiusap  
Nakahanda na akong bumitiw

sa nakasasakal mong mga yakap.  
Sa paglisan naroon naman ang  
pagdating ng aking umaga,

Sapagkat ang aking mga gabi'y  
lumilipas na lamang  
bilang mga gabi at ang aking bayan ay  
hindi na ang mapa  
sa iyong mga palad.

Sasampalataya na ako sa aking mga  
nais,  
at sasamba sa sarili kong panginoon,  
sapagkat ang ating kamatayan ay ang  
aking kalayaan.

**1 Juan 4:19:**

Umiibig ang puso hindi dahil ito ay  
tinuruan.  
Tumitibok ito dahil dumadaloy sa aking  
dugo  
ang takot.

Mahal, may kasamang takot ang  
pag-ibig;  
hindi pag-ibig ang pag-ibig  
na hindi naduduwag. Ganap ang  
pag-ibig  
kung ito ay nangangamba.

**1 Corinto 13:4-15:**

Sapagkat mainggitin ang iyong pag-ibig,  
mainipin,  
mayabang, magaspang, makasarili't  
mapagtanim.  
Nagagalak sa masama ang iyong puso,  
nasusuklam  
sa mabuti't matamis, sa mapagtiwala't  
matangkilik. *Ganap na*

*ang pagkakaunawa ko sa iyo.* At asahan  
ang aking paglalaho

na parang asal ng bata sa sandaling  
makilala ang sarili sa salamin.  
Darating ang araw na lubos mo akong  
makikilala,  
malulubos mo  
ng kaalaman at sasambulat sa iyong nasa  
harapan:

*hindi dakila ang pag-ibig.*

---

**Bionote:**

Si Cris R. Lanzaderas ay isang guro sa UP Los Baños. Kasalukuyang subject area coordinator ng Departamento ng Filipino ng UP Rural High School at nagtuturo ng wika, panitikan, at malikhaing pagsulat.

---

## Ang Kanonisasyon ng mga Santa Santino

Andrew A. Estacio

University of the Philippines Los Baños

[aaestacio@up.edu.ph](mailto:aaestacio@up.edu.ph)

---

### Sinopsis

Matunog sa Bulacan ang Regional “Santa Santino” LGBTQ+ Beauty Pageant na gaganapin sa liwasan ng Malolos. Marami ang nawiwili at nagagaraan sa itatampok ng patimpalak—ang tema ay tungkol sa mga Katolikong Santo’t Santa. Labanan ngayon ng mga patron saints ng bawat bayan at ang gaya ng mga kalahok, fashion ng mga poon. Tapat sa kapistahan ng Inmaculada Concepcion de Malolos ang kauna-unahan nitong paglulunsad. Ngunit sa mismong araw, biglaan ang naging desisyon ng munisipyo’t katedral na ipasara ang naturang produksyon dahil ikinanlaki ng kanilang mga mata ang tago nitong kampanya: blasphemy. At nahuhulog ngayon ang mga organisador sa matinding krisis. Subalit palaban ang mga puno ng kalipunan, sina Tita Minerva at Tito Jet na matagal nang nangangarap ng ganitong genre simula pagkabata’t pagtanda. At lalong mapangahas ang binabalak nilang taktika sa araw ng Fiesta. Hakot- hakot ang mga kadeboto’t kababayan, kailangan ngayong iprotesta ang pagtutuloy ng Santa Santino sa ngalan ng tunay nitong kampanya: kasarian, kabanalan, kalayaan.

Rumesbak ang kulumpon ng mga pageant organizer sa munisipyo ng Malolos ala-sais pa lang ng umaga. Sarado pa ang tarangkahan kaya lalong nag-iinit ang puwit ng mga matatandang doon naghihintay. Naroon sa gitna ang pinakamaingay, sina Tita Minerva at Tito Jet, ang krem de la krem ng grupo. Ni hindi pa dinadale ng rayuma ang dalawa, mag-bestfriend kasi simula pagkabata at kambal-tuko sa pagiging senior bakla at lesbiyana.

Lahat sila'y nag-iisip kung ano ang gagawin. Ang iba'y pinipigilang tadyakan ang gate dahil sa malala nilang problema. Biglaan kasi ang pagpapatigil ng Mayor ng Malolos sa kauna-unahan nilang Santa Santino LGBTQ+ Beauty Pageant. Ilulunsad dapat iyon sa harap ng munisipyo't katedral. Buong buhay pa namang nangangarap ang tito't tita na magbarikada sa liwasan at magbandera ng regional rampahan. Kung kailan ba naman mamayang gabi rarampa ang mga pambatong tomboy, bakla, trans, queer at iba pa sa fiesta, ngayon pa sinumpong ang punongbayan.

"Putragis naman! Blasphemous daw tayo sabi n'ya sa text." sabi ni Tito Jet, kunot na kunot ang noong marami nang kulubot, at nakakuyom ang kamaong parang manununtok.

"Hay, naku, oo. Si Mayor Kamoteng ire'y Mayor Kamote talaga. Kabisoteng-kabisote na kokote, papundi-pundi pa!" sigaw naman ni Tita Minerva habang nagbubuga ng apoy ang pulang bunganga. Mahaba pa naman ang wig ng baklang lola at nagsusumigaw ang bulaklaking bestida. Pang-iinis pa niya, kung hindi rin daw narinig ng maligoy na Mayor ang pahayag ng Obispo ng Diyosesis tungkol sa kanilang pageant, hindi rin niya matututunan ang salitang 'blasphemous.'

"Diyosmiyo! Kilalang kilala ko talaga 'yang balimbing na 'yan, bata pa lang. Aba'y magaling lang talaga 'yan sa boksingan, chaka doll naman makipagtalastasan! Paliguy-ligoy!" hirit pa ni Tita habang nagwewelga ang lusak na make up.

"Kagabi lang nag-notice opisina ni Kamote sa'kin e. Kagabi lang, at 'nak ng tipaklong, sa text pa. Binabawi permiso sa venue. Taksil din talaga ey!" paliwanag ni Tito Jet, inis na inis ang mukha.

Idol na idol pa n'ya noon si Nora Aunor sa kanyang pelikulang *T-Bird at Ako*, at handang harapin at tapatin si Vilma para magsabi ng tunay na nararamdaman. Ngayong tumandang T-Bird na si Tito Jet, haharap at haharap talaga 'yan sa Mayor mamaya para sabihin ang tunay na nararamdaman, "Taksil ka, hayup!"

Ngunit sa kabila naman ng mga kaaligagaan, merong namumukod tanging maliit na boses na animo'y nais ring mag-rally ng karapatan: "Dis is ridikyulus!" sabi ng ninyong boses ni Senior Pit, na t-bird din, *with a small t*. "Andito na tayo! Dis is da target date! Diskartihin natin para makita ng munisipyu't simbahan pinaglalaban natin! Oki?" giit ni Senior Pit, pinipilit maging optimistic. Siya rin ang Production Manager, sing-liit ng Pit Señor pero terrible. Tinapon ni Senior ang hawak n'yang yosi (na dapat ay munting globo), nilapitan ang mga kasama, at saka tumindig ang niño:

"Mga frens and childrin of God! What ar we doing? Papayag ba tayung masayang pinagpaguran natin? Kalahating taun na gumagapang ang pageant! Kumbinsihin si Kamote!"

"Pit, dear...nag-aalala tuloy ako sa mga anak-anakan kong byukunera't byukunero," nanlumo si Tita Minerva, pusong nanay pa naman sa mga bagets na sumasali ng beucon. "Hindi naman p'wedeng goodbye suklay na kaagad ang pageant. Malamang excited na mga anakis nating rumampa at mag-istar-istariray for the first time." Saka siya napatulala sa kaharap na katedral, doon sa tuktok ng toreng batingaw, kung sa'n buong buhay nakatindig ang higitang estatwa ng Birheng Inmaculada.

Mabuti pa raw ang Inmaculada, sabi ni Tita, hindi nadadaan sa rampa-rampa upang tingalain. Ngayon din dapat ang araw para silang mga bahaghari't bahagrey na ng Bulacan ay tingalain din, at ituturing na mga Santa Santino. Sa gabi'y magniningning ang mga magagarbo nilang baro. Dadaigin ang Inmaculada, rarampa rin nang may korona, kapa, at halo sa ulo—fuma-fashion ala rebulto! Mga bakla't lesbiyana, trans, queer, sangkabaklaan at sangkatibuan ay sasambahin ninyo!

“Ayan, mga mars. Kaya tayo naba-blasphemy ni Bishop,” dagdag ng nega-negang si Binibining Diana. Mas mabata-bata itong si madam na isang transwoman at siya naman ang Punong Stage Manager.

Una nang nagduda itong si Diana sa pag-eeksperimentong ito nina Tito’t Tita. Paano’y tampok ba naman sa pageant, mga representasyon ng mga santo’t santa sa bawat baranggay:

“Contestant #5! Josephine Viray from San Isidro Dos, Paombong!”

Rarampa ang contestant, may dala-dalang pang-araro at siyempre, suut-suot ang costume na may panibagong estilo. Ang magsasakang santo’y nagka-mini-skirt, may mga machong escort na kalabaw, nagkapakpak pa at may malobong dibdib: “Ako ang diyosa ng inyong sakahan! Ahh..ahh...araruhan na!!!”

At mapapa-antanda ng krus si Binibining Diana.

“E, ‘yaan mo sila! Kaya nga protest pageant e, nanghahamon. Simbahan ang tinatarget ng ating kampanya, sabi ko nga umpisa pa lang.” Seryoso makipagtalos ang filibusterong si Tito Jet.

Dati pa nila ni Tita minamata ang ganitong genre. Paano’y mayroon silang dalawa na fetish—ang Santa Santino Complex. Sila lang din ang nag-imbento. Sila ba namang lumaki sa pamilyang mananahi ng mga damit-poon, aba’y dinamitan na rin nila ang sarili.

Noong mga batang paslit pa’y itong sina Tita Minerva ay laging iimbitahin si Tito Jet sa kanilang bahay at siya ang laging naglalaruang damitan. Pareho silang nagpantasya. Akala nila’y kasing-awra nila ang mga diyos at diyosa. Kay sarap daw sigurong magmodel-modelan sa altar, sopistikadang sopistikada! “Huy! Try mo ‘tong damit ni Santa Clara!” sabi ng batang Jet kay Minerva, “Para mabuntis ka!” tsaka maghahaglpakan.

Nang tumanda na’y tinukso-tukso na sila. Drag kings and queens daw sila, simbahan edition. LGBTQ plus aktibista rin ang dalawa,



ngunit sawa na sa pride march mag-organisa. Kaya't pageant naman daw.

"Itong pageant na ito, may advocacy rin! Ilang mga manay na nagtangkang ituloy 'to para naman ma-canonize ang kanilang mga beauty. At gaya ng ating mga patron saints, tayo'y mga Catholic models din no!" dagdag ni Tita Minerva.

"Yang put'ragis na mayor na 'to...akala ko ba naman, maka-LGBT, hanggang una lang pala!" nagpupumiglas ang Tito Jet. Mas mainitin kasi ulo niya't ayaw na ayaw nang naaapi.

Kating kati na silang mag-alas otso't desperadang makakita ng kung sino mang dapat sugurin. Kelangan na raw nila agad ng resolusyon bago pa abutan ng prusisyon.

Sa tapat naman nila'y bonggang bongga ang gayak ng katedral at naghuhumiyaw ito sa mga bahagharing banderitas. Mayroon ding singkaban sa harapan ng simbahan, iyong magagarbong arko na gawa sa kawayan na tatak-Bulacan. Bongga ang liwasan at dinudumog ito ng mga deboto kapag ganitong fiesta ng Inmaculada Concepcion de Malolos.

Nagsisidatingan na rin ang iba't ibang magagarbong karosa ng mga santo't santa, mga 'alagang' poon iyon ng mga mayayamang pamilya sa lalawigan. Pinakanagpapasaya sa piyesta ang mga mananayaw na mga matatanda't kabataan. May hawak silang magagarbong kawayang posteng may disenyong singkaban. Mas bongga't kaaliw-aliw kapag tinugtugan na sila ng musiko ng *Sta. Clara Pinung-pino*, pang-Obando ang sayawan.

Sa isang banda, si Binibining Diana'y kabibili lamang ng kape. Pagkaraan niya sa kalsada'y bigla namang sumalubong ang truck ng lights and sound na kanilang kinontrata. "Oh my, yawa! Patay!" sabay buga ng kape.

Bumalik siya agad sa grupo, "Nandito na mga bad boys! Anong sasabihin natin?"

At bumaba sa truck ang mga mabibigat na yabag ng ilang kalalakihan. Aba't tila sampung palapag din ang kanilang eyebags.

Paano'y kung kailan natapos nang ayusin ang set kagabi, saka agad 'yon pinakalas ng mga pulis na alipores ni Kamote matapos silang pagbawalan. Kaya't nakauwi na sila nang ala-una ng madaling araw.

E, etong mga Tito't Tita'y mapilit, pinapunta ba naman sila ulit, baka sakaling may mangyaring himala sa utak ni Kamote. Matutuloy daw, magtiwala sila.

"Good morning, my boys" bungad sa kanila ni Bb. Diana, handa na namang mambola at manghalpirot kanwari. "Kape muna? Mukhang...parang ang sarap humigop, right?"

"Ano na ba'ng balita?" sabi nung isang damulag.

Sabay singit naman si Senior Pit liit, "Wer still waiting kung anung magiging usap kay Meyor. Bat dont you wori, may frens! Kapag nakuha na namin s'ya, pwede na tayung mag-set up mamaya-maya lang hano? Orayt? Orayt!"

Kanina pa natataranta si Senior pero magaling lang magpakita ng composure. Sa loob-loob, ino-overthink na niya ang mga gastusin. Mga daang libong pera kaya ang masasayang nila sa mga binayaranang pailaw, pa-screen, pa-entablado, pa-sponsor, pa-publicity, pa-staff, pa-blablaba kung 'di sila matutuloy. At ano na lang imumura sa kanila ng mga contestants? Mga laman ng isip ni Senior, puro produksyon, produksyon, at naiipon lang 'yan sa dibdib n'ya kahit patag.

"Dayan! Dayan!" sutot ng bwisit na Senior sa pachika-chikang SM.

"Entertainin mo nga lang nga 'yung mga big boys mu. Kembut-kembutan mo muna't make sure, bati-bati kayu. Kontakin ko 'reng point person ni Meyor. At 'pag hindi pa 'yon sumagot, we pray da rosary!"

Kaalinsabay ng mga ito'y hindi napigilan ng buong grupo ng Santa Santino, Incorporated ang pagwa-wang-wang ng iba't iba nilang mga bungangang punong puno ng problema:

"Mga manay, mga manoy, paparating na mga taga-Norzagaray, Pulilan, at Obando mamaya-maya! Ano na gagawin naten?"

"Mamaya pa naman pala e!"

"Susmaryosep, anong papakita natin? May madadatnan ba sila?"

"Hoy, ika-cancel na ba natin si Regine Velasquez, 'yung impersonator?"

"Inang ko po, sayang ang intermission! E 'yung impersonator ba ni Jolina? Bulakenya din pala starlet na 'yon.'" "Ilagay niyo muna kaya guests natin sa accommodations?"

"Boba, wala tayong accomodations! Chipangga kasi si Kamote, walang binigay na budget."

"O, e, ba't mo ko tinatarayan? Mas maganda ko sa'yo?"

"Gaga! Mas maganda ko, pang-Miss Universe ang beauty ko!" Sa bugso ng mga pambubulabog, tumakbo bigla si Tita Minerva palayo, at sa biglang pagbukaka ng kanyang bibig, siya'y sumabog:

"Waaaah! Magandang gabi, Bulacan! Magandang gabi, Malolos! Ito na ang kinaaabangan ng lahat, ang koronasyon ng mga Santa Santino!"

At walang hiya-hiyang rumampa ang matandang bakla sa tapat, habang dumaraan ang mga sasakyan, busina nang busina sa taas-diwang nilalang, "hoy! tabi!" "Di ito runway!"

"Pak! Pak! Pak!" Paikut-ikot si inang sa monumento ni Marcelo. Kembot pa, sabay, "Ako si Maria Inmaculada M. Concepcion, tubong Maloleña, diwata ng kalsada, aking idedeklara, Santa Santino, tuloy na tuloy na!"

Napapatawa tuloy si Tito Jet, nasurpresa sa katangahan ng kaibigan. Gan'to talaga ang talent niya, mahusay magpataas ng morale. Hinatak siya bigla ni Tita at dinala sa gitnang hagdanan.

"Narito naman po ang Ginoong Santino ng Taon, si Tito Jet!" At sa pakiki-agos, rumampa si Tito Jet, paalug-alog nga lang maglakad, at sa huli'y nakuhang mag-pose na may kamay ala-Santo Niño.

"T'ragis laang. Si Senior Pit dapat gumawa neto!"

Na-bipolar na ang grupo.

Nasa ibayong sulok naman si Senior, natatanaw ang mga halakhakan, ngunit abalang abala pa rin siya sa kanyang cellphone, tinatawagan ang sekretarya ng punongbayan. *Kring! Kring! Kring nang kring!* Ayaw pa ring sumagot.

At habang pilit nagrarampahan ang mga Tito't Tita, biglang lumobo ang mga mata ni Senior Pit, "Ooh, uhuh-uhuh...Yes, uhuh! Santa Santino, Inc...we need explanation...wat happened?...Yu sure?...uhuh-uhuh..."

"Hala!...bira!" at sabay baba ni Senior ng cellphone.

Kumaripas ng takbo ang Senior kahit maliit ang hakbang at tumalun-talon.

"Hoy, wala pang bagong taon!" sabi ng isang kasama. Nagpapapadyak siya, hindi makapagsalita. Pagka ganitong mga balita'y naninigas ang dila n'ya.

"t-burcio, ano na'ng balita?" tanong ni Tito Jet.

At para makita'y tumungtong siya sa hagdanan, "Da Kamote is coming! Payag kausapin tayo right away!!!"

Tuloy-tuloy nang nagsisidatingan ang mga magsisimba sa unang misa ng katedral ng alas-nuwebe. Naroon na ang mga abay, ang mga sakristan, mga katekista't taong-simbahan.

Naroon na rin ang kapita-pitagang Hermana at Hermano Mayor. Kilala din nina Tita Minerva't Tito Jet ang Hermano, bilang suki siya kapag magpapagawa o magpapasadya siya ng barong Tagalog sa kanila. Kwento pa niya'y dati raw siyang silahis at nagmahal din naman ng lalaki, pero pinili raw mag-asawa't magpamilya. Kaya't excited daw ang Hermano sa gagawin nilang Santa Santino LGBTQ+ Beauty Pageant. Pero mukhang hindi matutuloy.

Nagsisidatingan din ang mga taga-munisipyo. Bwisit nga rin sila't 'di pa pinasususpende ng Mayor ang pasok. At kakabukas lang ng pintua'y nagulantang sila sa buong pulutong ng Santa Santino. Minartsa nila ang opisina ni Kamote.

Naaasiwa nga ang mga tao sa munisipyo, ang ingay-ingay kasi nila sa pasilyo. At may mga bitbit na silang Jollibee take out, cake, saging, at softdrinks. Parang mga pa-alay lang sa misa, ngunit para raw kay Mayor, pampalubag-loob.

"Mga frens, will dis work?" tanong ni Senior. "Of course, Pit!" pagmamalaki ni Tita. "At kapag darating na 'yang si Kamote, iwe-welcome natin siya ng 'Happy Fiesta po sa inyo, pinakamatalino't pinakamagaling na Mayor ng Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines!!"

Ngunit nagseseryoso na si Tito Jet, "ano'ng mas matinong posisyon ba sasabihin natin, ha?" Natatahimik na ang grupo.

"Alam n'yo, kailangan nito ng motion for reconsideration. Hindi pu-pwedeng basta-basta niya lang balewalain ang pageant kung kailan niya gusto. Ni hindi pa nga nagbibigay ng magandang explanation, blasphemy daw sabi sa text. At iyun pa, napakapormal naman, tinext lang tayo at wasak na lahat?" lalong namula ang mata at kumunot na naman ang noo ni Tito. "'Di pu-pwede 'yun! E, ni 'di pa nga niya 'to nakikita. Put'ragis naman, gaya-gaya sa pangulo, mahilig mambitaw ng tao kung kelan gusto?"

"Ihinahon mo lang muna, Jet, rinig na rinig ka," pagpapahimasma ni Tita Minerva.

“Hindi, ‘wag dapat tayong magkompromiso. Sabi ko talaga’y bumobobo ‘tong gobyerno. Kung ako, ‘pag nagtaas talaga ‘ko ng boses mamaya, aba, sige. Paninindigan ang paiiralin ko rito.”

Aba’y nasa bibig lagi nito ang makipag-balagtasan sa ‘di niya gusto. Siya pa naman ang laging kinatatakutan kapag may kinagagalitan.

“Ayaw ko na kasing minamaliit na naman tayo. Malamang, iyan lang naman ang rason. ‘Di ba Minerva, sinimulan natin ang pangarap na ‘to. Tatapusin natin ‘to.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Noong Hunyo pa nila inabisuhan ang punongbayan hinggil sa pagdarausan ng Santa Santino. Si Mayor Kamote’y trapong trapong nakabarong, bundat ang tiyan at puti ang buhok. Ngunit may katangi-tangi siyang nunal sa baba, na ‘di n’ya maiwasang kamutin. Pang-aasar nina Tito’t Tita’y nanggagaling sa pagkamot ng nunal ang pagiging balimbing.

Nang makita niya muli sina Tito at Tita, nanumbalik ang alaala ng dekada sitenta.

Noong mga nagdadalaga’t nagbibinata pa sila’y itong si Kamote ang hari-harian sa eskwela. Laging tinutukso-tukso ang dalawa sa klase, sinumpa raw sila ng mga engkanto, nagpalitan daw ng ari. “Nunal, nunal!” tukso naman ng batang Minerva. “Pasas! Pasas!” at susunggaban naman ni Kamote si Minerva. Ngunit ang munting Tito Jet, kaagad na reresbak at magtataas ng manggas, susuntukin si Kamote at tatabingi agad ang mukha. Takot din s’ya sa tomboy e ‘no.

Simula noo’y sinagad niya ang pagte-training sa boksingan para laging makaganti. Pabida sa suntukan, kamote naman sa exam. Paano nga ba s’ya umangat sa pedestal? Ay, alam ng sambayanan ang padrino. Lahat ng koneksyon, pinatos—principal ang kanyang ina, teacher ang mga tito’t tita, at ang punongbayan, dynasty ng mga kalolo-lolohan—lolo sa tuhod, lolo sa noo, lolo sa alak-alakan, sumunod ang kanyang ama, at ngayon, siya ang nakasalang.

“Aba’y eto pala mga ka-batch ko sa Marcelo High! Ano ba, kamusta?” bati ni Mayor sa dalawa. ‘Di naman siya makatitig nang diretso, napatitingin sa alampay ni Tita Minerva at amerikana ni Tito Jet.

“Ngunit, subalit, datapwat tila bagong tahi ang mga kasuotan natin, a?” at kasabay ng kanyang waring malalim na pananagalog ay hihimasin at kakamutin niya ang kanyang nunal sa baba. Mapapansin ito nina Tita Minerva’t Tito Jet, at pipigilan ang kanilang pagtawa sa ala-ala ng tuksuhan. Ando’n pa rin daw pala ang kanyang lucky charm.

“A, Mayor, disenyo namin ang mga ito, gawa sa pinakadekalibreng tela from Paris,” taas-kilay ni Tita Minerva.

Batid naman ni Mayor na malayo na nga ang narating ng dalawa sa buhay. Buong buhay silang nagpalago ng panahian ng mga damit-poon at Filipiniana at kasama sila sa mga nominado sa Dangal ng Lipi ng Bulacan para sa pagpapaunlad ng mga kasuotang lokal.

Sa takbo ng usapa’y napapagulat ang punongbayan, “Ano kamo? Magpapa-pageant kayo d’yan sa harap? Dumarami ata kwarta natin a! Hmmm, ngunit, subalit, datapwat...”

Nagtitimpi muna siya, ayaw niyang maging lunsaran ng bakla-baklaan ang plaza, ano! Pero nakokonsensya siya, ngayon pa ba niya ulit gagalitin ang dalawa kung ‘di s’ya papayag? At ayaw din niyang mabahiran ang kanyang pangalan, taklesa sila ‘pag nag-ungkat ng nakaraan.

Sa paglalalim ng usapan ay nagka-tongues of the Holy Spirit ang dalawa: “This is not just about pageant, Mayor,” pag-i-Ingles ni Tita. “It is a protest pageant in which kaming mga LGBTQ plus ay kumakatok din kami sa simbahan, na dapat din kaming ituring na mga anak ng Diyos. At eka nga’y isinilang kaming walang orihinal na pagkakasala, na kami ri’y mga deboto ng Inmaculada.”

At lalong nagliiyab din ang dila ni Tito Jet, “God, diversity, family. Mayor, hindi ba’t iyan naman ang tagline natin nung kampanya,

ano? ‘Yan ‘din ang aming adbokasiya, kalinya lamang ng iyo. I-welcome ang kaibahan ng aming sektor at ituring kaming kapamilya at kawangis ng Maylikha. At kumakatok din kami ‘di lang sa simbahan, kun ‘di sa inyo, sa puso niyo, Mayor.”

Oo nga ‘no, sabi ni Mayor sa sarili. May logic daw pala ang tagline na ‘yon. Sa pakiwari niya’y palaban talaga ang mga ito. Sa bagay, aktibista nga pala sila’t lumalabas din sa mga balita.

Sa isip-isip ni Kamote, nanunumbalik na’t nangongonsensya ang kanyang mga kababata. At mukhang panahon ng kanilang paghihiganti. Subalit gusto rin niyang bumawi. Baka rin naman magkaroon siya ng share sa business nina Tito’t Tita, galawang mukhang-pera.

“Subalit...sapagkat...datapwat” at saglit na napapakamot ng nunal si Mayor. Dinadalangin nina Tito’t Tita kung magiging swerte o malas ang kanyang desisyon.

Bigla-bigla’y lumabas ang kanyang pakpak at lumitaw ang halo sa ulo, tinatakan niya ang mga papeles-- aprubado! Pinal ang lugar at rarampa na sa gabi ng ika-walo ng Disyembre. Tuloy pa ang pagpapasara ng kalsada. Ayos!

“*Ambot sa imo*, what’s his problem ba? Alam naman n’ya mga ganap ng pageant a. ‘Kala ko ba, close-close na kayo sa kanya?” tanong naman ni Binibining Diana. Kakarating lang niya sa pasilyo’t pinag-siesta muna sa truck ang mga alagang lalaki.

“Si Obispo Hipokristo, inudyukan ‘yun malamang,” ani Tita Minerva.

Nagwika nga si Hipokristo—tanggalin lang ang s. Nang napansin kasi ng mga taong-simbahan ang mga naglipana nilang tarpaulin, kumatok agad ang Obispo sa munisipyo:

“Lubhang nakakukurot ng budhi nang makita namin ang tarpaulin ng Inmaculada...sa katauhan ng isang bakla! Si Kristo, nagmukhang lesbiyana! Ito ay blasphemy!” Sabay hanap ng diksyunaryo si Kamote, “ay, oo nga, blasphemy! ‘Di ko ‘to



inaasahan!” At saka nag-indoktrina ang simbahan sa kanyang opisina.

Kalahating taon pa naman ng puspusang paghahanda ang iginugol sa patimpalak. Si Bb. Diana nga, all around lagi ito. Madalas rumampa sa buong probinsya’t maghagilap ng mga sasali-bibigyan ng imbitasyon at saka sila ipage-ensayo sa tamang postura, pagrampa, at paghahanda sa question and answer. Nakuha nila lahat ng munisipalidad, bente unong pares ang lalahok. Kaya’t laking tuwa ng grupo nang lumaki ang kanilang saklaw, at nakuha ring mangaral nina Tito’t Tita hinggil sa kinakampanya.

“Dito’y pakiramdaman niyong lahat kayo’y mga kamahal-mahalan at dapat tingalain at maging huwaran, sapagkat lahat tayo’y nilalang ng kataas-taasan.” Akala nila’y kulto ang sinalihan. Ngunit naliwanagan naman sila sa bagong konsepto. Saka sila pinagkalooban ni Bb. Diana ng kanya-kanyang Santa Santino costumes, tahi pa nina Tito’t Tita ‘yan, simbolo raw ng kanilang pagiging divine rainbows at mabisang pananggalang sa mga patriarkong diablo.

Usap-usapan ngayon ang gaganaping kakaibang pageant. Ang mga tao, sabik na sabik, patok ngayon sa Facebook ang mga pambatong ka-baranggay.

Nakita nga ito ni Obispo Hipokristo’t ang mga poster album nila’y may nakahihilakbot na fashion, me naka-Santa Ana, San Pascual Baylon, maski Mother Teresa meron ding imitation. Kaya’t sinulatan niya agad ang organisasyon—HINDI ito pwedeng ituloy. Marami munang dinahilan e, baka maantala raw ang prusisyon, perwisyo trapiko, baka mayurakan ang kataimtiman ng kapistahan. Sa huli’t huli, sinabing, “Magpakatotoo po tayo sa ating kasarian, isinilang sina Adan at Eba, babae o lalaki, blablabla”, the rest is history.

Siyempre, nang nabasa ng buong organisasyon ang liham, pina-photocopy pa nila ito, at nagkaroon ng seremonya, imbis na sedula—punitin mga chakang letra!

At ngayon, akala nila’y tapos na ang pagsagabal ng simbahan, ngunit bigla silang nagkampihan ng munisipyo. “Ang pamahalaan,” paghugot ni Tita, “hanggang salita sa una, hindi rin naman pala napapanindigan.”

\*\*\*\*\*

“Weyt! Da secretari texted! Padating na daw!” sabi ni Senior Pit. “Si Mayor?” tanong ng isang kasama. “Baka! Lets pray! Sana matuloy ‘tu, sana matuluy!”

At lalo pang pinagbubulabog ng text at tawag si Senior, “Damn! Kumalat na pala mga rumors ‘di na tayu matutuluy?!” At nagsiparadahan sa kanyang inbox ang mga taong puro tandang pananong: “Nde na ma22loi?” “Toto0?” “Anek nang nangyari sis?”

“Paano na?” “Got place?”

“Listen, mga dear. Kanina pa tayo umaatungal. Wala tayong mararating n’yan!” at humingang malalim si Tita Minerva, “magdesisyon tayo.” Bago pa raw sila tubuan ng sungay, sabihin na nila kamo ang mga maibabatong solusyon:

“Lusad ang pageant sa ibang araw?”

“Ito na huling huling usad ng petsa!”

“Ilipat sa Barasoain?”

“Bawal na dun!”

“Kung gawin nating pambaranggay contest?”

“Baklitang ‘to, chipipay!”

“E, kung ayaw niyo, saan pa? Hindi matutuloy kung ayaw ng mga nasa taas!”

“E, ano’ng gusto niyo? Kung hindi tayo kikilos, sino ang kikilos? At kung hindi ngayon, kailan pa?”

“Wag na daw ba nating ituluy?” tanong ni Senior, nanghihina na mga tuhod matapos babaan ng kanyang mga katawagan. Napanganga ang lahat at saka kumalembang ang batingaw ng katedral, tumatawag ng mga makasalanang, magbalik-loob na raw.

Ngunit, subalit, datapwat biglang may dumagundong sa pasilyo, naririnig ang mga higanteng yabag. “O, Lord!” napasigaw si Senior,

“Da Kamote is coming! Paakyat na ng hagdan!”

Malakas ang kabog sa kanilang dibdib. Paparating na nga ang anino. Nakahanda na ang mga desperadang alay, ang Jollibee takeout, cake, saging, biscuit, at softdrinks, kapalit ng pagbabago ng desisyon.

Pagkalitaw ng anino:

“Ay! Happy Fiesta po sa inyo!”

Panggugulat ng dalagang sekretarya. Nganga ang lahat ng nakakita.

“Si Mayor?” tanong ni Tito Jet na nagpipigil ng pagsabog ng dibdib. Ngunit maligoy kausap ang babae, mana sa amo: “Wow! Ang dami niyo naman pong handa. Sa amin po ba ‘yan?”

Kapal din ng apog netong punyetang ito, sigaw ni Tita Minerva sa isip, “Hindi, ang tanong iha, na’san si Mayor?”

“Ayun po, sorry, hindi ko agad kayo na-text since nawalan po ko ng load, ngayon lang din pumasok sa isip niya na aligaga ang mga tao ngayong pistang bayan, kaya, ano, pinasususpende na niya ngayon na half day ang opisina.”

“Andito nga ba s’ya?! Kanina pa nga ho kami ‘intay nang ‘intay para makausap ang Kamoteng pagkabali-balimbing na ‘yan e!!!” ayan na’t sumabog na si Tito Jet.

Nag-suicide bigla ang sekretarya.

Ngunit dinahan-dahan niya ang pagpapaliwanag. Aba, sabi'y pupunta raw, ngunit nag-iba pa rin ng isip, kilalang kilala mo naman, at may business affair daw sa ngayon.

"Business affair?! Sa kanyang pa-holiday?!" bara pa ni Tito Jet.

Nagwawala ang sangkatibuan at sangkabaklaan at muntikang batuhin ng saging ang sekretarya. Pinasasabi pa ni Mayor na paumanhin daw, kagabi rin kasi'y inudyok siya ni Bishop na ipatigil ang pageant kung hindi'y kukundinahin nila ang kanyang opisina.

Sabi ni Mayor, isa raw siyang God-fearing citizen, at kailangan niyang protektahan ang image niya, at kailangan daw ay good influence pa rin ang ipakikita sa taumbayan.

"A, e, ano'ng tingin niya sa sarili n'ya?" naghimasik lalo ang Tito Jet.

"Aba! Nagsalita ang kababatang sutil! Magsama-sama kayo ni Hipokristo!!!"

Si ateng sekretarya, sinikap pa ring iabot ang isang envelope, naroon ang papel ng revocation ng event, pinal na, kasama ng kasunduan nila ni Bishop. Nakasulat pa ang '*God bless you and Repent*' sa hulihan ng letra. Ngunit mayro'n pang surpresa. May nakalakip na dalawampung libong piso, pampalubag-loob sa mga nagastos din nila.

"A...e...ssi-iyempre, ma-mabait naman po talaga si Mayor, b-busilak pa rin po ang puso sa mga nasa lay-lay-laylayan," sabi ng sekretarya.

Ngunit saksakang talas naman ang pagtitig ni Tita Minerva sa babae. Ikinalusaw niya ang kanyang matang namumula sa laser at tumagos ito sa kanyang utak-Trapo hanggang sa mabura na siya sa mundo!

"Iha, wala kaming tatanggaping maruming pera!" at biglang bulong na parang multo, "magnilay-nilay kayo...itutuloy namin ito sa ayaw at sa gusto niyo!"

Nangyanig ang sukob na kampana. Walk-out ang buong grupo. Walang pagsidlan ang init ng ulo at ang pagkadismaya sa naglalahong mga pangarap.

“Mga manay, mga manoy, next time na lang kaya ito,” sabi ng isang maluha-luhang kasama.

Hinarap nila ang mga nagsi-siestang kalalakihan sa truck, at ibinigay na lang din sa kanila ang mga pakunswelong pagkain. “I’m sorry, boys. Next time na lang daw. Nag-signal na din sa’kin si Pit,” sabi ng nanlulumong Binibining Diana.

At malakas ang bang ng pinto ng sasakyan, saka dumura ang galit na drayber sa kalsada’t kumaripas ng harurot palayo sa natahimik na kalipunan ng Santa Santino.

Ang Senior Pit naman, nag-iiyak sa isang tabi. Nag-breakdown na’t hindi na kinaya ang pagiging optimistic. Sumabog na ang kanyang patag na dibdib at ‘di na kayang kimkimin ang mga hinanakit, “Inang Maria, Salvi Rigina! Walang hiya ka, Kamote! Sinayang mo mga pira’t pinagpaguran namin! Tatangkad aku’t dudurugin kita!!!” at grabe ang kanyang pagsinok na parang bata lang ang Senior kung umiyak.

“Tama na ‘yan...tahan na, tahan na ha. Halika na kayo, magsimba na lang tayo,” sabi ni Tito Jet na nagpipilit-lakas ng damdamin. Lahat sila’y nasasaktan. “Makiluhod na tayo’t baka magkaro’n ng himala.”

Doon sa katedral, nagsiparadahan ang mga karosa ng mga santo’t santa, nang-iinggit ang mga suot-suot nilang baro. Gan’to sana ang ipuprasisyon din nila sa rampahan. At unti- unting pumapasok ang mga maliligayang gunita ng kanilang pagkakapamilya. Ang Imaculada Concepcion, ang kanilang patrona, mukhang dismayado rin sa kanilang kinahinatnan. At gusto nilang magpayakap sa inang birhen.

Ngunit, subalit, datapw—ay basta, itong si Tita Minerva, palakad-lakad sa labas at humihithit pa rin ng sigarilyo. Pilit nag-iisip kung

ano pang pwedeng gawin. Desidido ang punong suprema, “Ano ‘ko? Baklang pala-suko? Itutuloy ito sa ayaw at sa gusto nila!”

Aba, wala atang programang hindi natutuloy kay Tita Minerva. Siya pa namang dating organisador ng mga LGBTQ plus rally sa Kamaynilaan. Kasama pa niya si Tito noon at dati’y manghahatak at mananabunot pa ‘yan magkaroon lang ng mga palamuti, burloloy, at mga abubot ang mga alaga niyang baklang gustong gusto niyang iparampa sa daan. Buong puso niyang ipinagmamalaki ang kanilang kulay. At nangangalampag ‘yan ng buong baranggay nang magsilabasan ang mga tao—“Hoy, kayo d’yan! Look at my beautiful unicorns!”

Ngayo’y malalim pa rin ang pagmumuni-muni ni Tita. Palingalinga siya sa mga abay at mga dagsa-dagsang deboto sa labas ng simbahan. Walang anu-ano’y agaw-pansin ang isang munting abay na babae na nakikipaghabulan sa gitna ng palumpon. Pumunta siya sa higanteng krus at saka tumuntong sa may hagdanan, “Hello! My name is Marie Victoria Tiongson. I am your Little Miss Philippines!” Naingayan tuloy ang mga tao saka siya sinuway ng kanyang nanay na kanina pa aligagang-aligaga sa kanya. Ang kulit.

Nanlaki ang mga mata ni Tita Minerva sa bata. At nawili pa siyang suriin ang linya ng mga tao at pailaw ng mga karo, at pati mga abubot, at burloloy at mga barikada sa daan. Pati iyong mga higanteng speakers at ang espasyong dapat na paglalagakan ng kanilang patimpalak. Mukhang kinailangan niya ng inspirasyon.

“Thank you so much, Little Miss Philippines!” at nagka-bumbilya sa bumbunan si Minerva. Dali-dali niyang tinapakan ang kanyang yosi at pinuntahan niya ang mga kumare’t kumpadre sa loob, taas-diwang hinatak palabas at nagka-emergency meeting—“mayroon tayong pasabog!”

\*\*\*\*\*

Sumapit ang gabi, prusisyon nang muli at nagsaboy ng liwanag sa mga kalsada. Umaariba na mga tao sa saliw ng musiko. ‘Nga lang, ba’t parang wala namang stage na nakikita ang mga tao, umaasa

pa naman ang ilan sa isang LGBTQ+ beauty pageant. ‘Di bale, tuloy pa rin ang kapistahan at paglarga ng prusisyon.

Ngunit walang anu-ano’y sa hulihan nito’y tila ba nadaragdagan ang mga abay. Aba’t dinaig pa ng kanilang mga baro ang mga naka-Filipiniana, pati ang fashion ng Hermana Mayora. Hindi rin sila inaasahan ng mga taga-diyosis.

“Sino ang mga ‘yon?” sabi ng ilang mga taga-panood nang may nadaraan silang magkapares na tomboy at bakla, suot-suot ang kanilang magagarang pang-abay. May pakpak ng anghel ang isa, at ang isa’y may makinang na kapa’t bola ala Santo Niño. Me isang tomboy namang suot-suot ang outfit ni San Roque, may dala-dala pang aso. Ang iba’y may de- bateryang halo, umiilaw. Lalo ang isa, may kasama pang machong anghel de la guardia.

Tuwang tuwa tuloy ang mga batang palaboy, “Ke ganda laang!” At habang pinagmamasdan sila nina Tito’t Tita, sabi’y tawagin dapat nila itong pride march! Sabi na nga ba’t nakaisip na naman ng pakana si Tita kanina nang pinagbulay-bulay ang pagrampa ng bata kanina sa simbahan, “e pwede naman palang iparampa sa kalsada mga alaga ko, aba.”

At unang napagpasyahang taktika, ipasingit sila sa hulihan ng pila nang walang pasabi-sabi. Alam naman na ng mga contestants ang buong sitwasyon, ngunit kung todo rampahan maski doon, tuloy-tuloy na!

Ngunit ‘di pa pala natatapos ang biglaang proyekto. Pangalawang hakbang—pasuutin ang contestant ng mga sash na may pangalan ng kanilang bayan, at dapat silang kumaway at makipagkamay, “Ako si Mara Santa Clara! Ako si Pascual Philip Baylon! Tubong Obando, manood na ng Santa Santino mamaya pagkatapos ng parada!” At nakuha ngang mag-promote ng mga mauutak na contestants.

“Siyempre, pam-PR din ito!” sabi ni Tita Minerva. Kailangan nating ipadama na tuloy na tuloy ang pageant at lahat dapat sila’y mapa-oo’t dumalo. Sang-ayon naman sila sa plano, bastos pero masaya. Tignan natin ang mangyayari susunod.

Marami tuloy ang nagtsismisan hinggil sa kababalaghan sa buntot-prusisyon. Kanina pa raw sila nag-iingay at halos lahat ng tao mula sa bandang unaha'y doon nagsipuntahan at nakipag-picturan. Payat tuloy ang prusisyon sa ulo, mataba ang sa dulo.

May mga sakristan ding sumugod doon, pinakiusapan na humiwalay sila sa banal na gawain. Ngunit tuloy pa rin sila sa kalalakad at kakakaway, hindi rin mapaawat. Humaling na humaling tuloy ang mga tao.

Kanina'y sabi ni Tita, "matapos kuhanin ang puso ng masa, saka tayo umaksyon, magsasalita tayong mga bakla't lesbiyana. Kahit ano pa man, itutuloy natin ito't magbabandera ng kulay! Game?" at nagpustahan sila. Ito na sana ang pinakabanal na programa na maioorganisa nila.

Matapos ang ilang oras, bumalik ang prusisyon sa simbahan, at pawis na pawis na ang mga ipinaradang contestants. Dali-dali silang pinahilera ni Binibining Diana sa labasan, doon sa may higanteng krus. Ito namang si Senior Pit, marami pa ring katawagan, pinag-aasikaso ang mga staff para sa gagawing pakana matapos ang palabas nina Tito't Tita. "O, uhuh! uhuh! Mission: Oplan Balik Pageant, copy tayu? Orayt!" tawag niya sa cellphone.

Dumaan ngayon sa kanila ang mga naaasiwang kaparian, ayaw mamansin, at nasa dulo ang Obispo. Pumunta sa unahan sina Tito't Tita at pinangunahan ang kanilang hanay. Taas-kilay naman ang nagtataakang Hipokristo, patay-malisya. Ang mga tao'y panay usap-usapan, "Ano? Dito itutuloy ang pageant? Saan?"

"Minerva, sigurado ka na ba sa gagawin natin?" natatakot si Tito Jet. Hinawakan ni Tita ang kanyang kamay, "Ano ka bang Tiburcio ka! Ngayon ka pa manlalata? Ituloy natin. Mula pagkabata hanggang pagtanda, pangarap natin 'to." At napangiti itong si Tito, tumingala sa langit at binuo ang tiwala sa matalik na kaibigan na tinuring na ring kapatid. Siya talaga ang kanyang sandigan, mabuti na lang may Minerva s'yang kasama panghabang-buhay.



“Kaya tiwala ko se’yo e,” sabi ni Tito habang nanggigilid-luha.

At sa isang buntong-hininga, singlakas ng kampana ang nangingidlat na boses ni Tita Minerva. Nagwika siya ng mabuting balita:

“Magandang gabi, mga kababayan! Mabuhay!” nagulantang ang lahat.

“Ito ang Santa Santino LGBTQ plus Beauty Pageant! Bago ho tayo mag-umpisa, gusto kong makarinig muna ng hiyawan!”  
Diyosmiyo! inatake ang kaparian. Pati mga rebulto, nawindang.

“Ilan ba sa inyo ang gustong manood?!” Nagsigawan ang ilan at sinaliwan ng buga ng musiko!

“Kitang kita ko naman sa mga Facebook at sa social media na marami kayong gustong manood at sumuporta. At ine-expect n’yo na gaganapin s’ya ngayon sa fiesta. Gusto ko kayong pasalamatan dahil ang dami-daming mga deboto ang nandidito at marami ring mga debotong mga bading, tomboy, bayot, lesbiyana, trans at kung sinu-sino pa na umaasang makapanood!”

At naghiyawan ang mga tao sa gilid, may dala-dala pa silang mga bandera, watawat na rainbow, at may picture ni Mama Mary na naka-drag.

“Gusto ko kayong tanungin. Nais ba natin ituloy ang pageant na ito?”

Natahimik ang marami. Wala pang sumasagot.

Walang anu-ano’y lumitaw mula sa kumpulan ng mga tao ang Hermano Mayor, ang suki sa panahian nina Tito’t Tita, “oo!” sigaw n’ya.

“Na’ko ang ating Hermano, o, full support! Palakpakan naman natin ang kapita-pitagan nating Hermano Mayor!” At nagpalakpakan naman ang mga tao.

Sabi naman ng Hermano, “Basta kayo nina Tito Jet support ako sa ipinaglalaban n’yo!” sabi ng Hermano.

“Diskwento ‘yan sa susunod na gown ay este, barong mo, Hermano a.” Tawa naman sila.

Nabuhayan si Tita Minerva at tinuloy pa ang talumpati:

“Nais ba natin ng pagkakataong ibandera ang kabanalan at kabonggahan ng LGBTQ plus sa piyestang ito? Ng pagkakataong irampa ang sariling nating mga flying colors at rejuvenating skins? Meron ako n’yan!” Tawanan muli.

“Nais ba natin ng pagkakataong iparamdam naman sa harap ng munisipyo at simbahan na tayo’y katinga-tingala at kapuri-puri sa ating mga ganda, kabonggahan, talent, talino, at siyempre, mga special din tayong mga tao, ano! May karapatan tayong maging proud sa’ting mga sarili, kung ga’no tayo ka-special at ipinagmamalaki ng minamahal nating buong bayang Bulacan! At wala sa’ting dehado dahil mapa-babae, lalaki, bakla, tomboy, trans, queer, mga nasa gitna, taas, dulo, baba, taga-simbahan man ‘yan o hindi ay welcome na welcome manood at makipag-participate sa laban ng ating Santa Santino LGBT plus Beauty Pageant! Dahil may ‘pinaglalaban ang pageant na ito, ayan ay ang pagmamahalan nating lahat sa gitna ng mga pagkakaiba!”

At naghiyawan nang mas malakas ang mga tao.

Umalingawngaw ang suporta at kasabikan ng mga tao. Sabik na sabik din ang mga mata ni Tito Jet, sa realisasyong may pag-asa pa pala sa ipinaglalaban n’yang ito.

“Pwes, hinahamon namin ang lahat. Ituloy natin ‘to! Igora na natin ito, mga manay, manoy, at mga bagets ng Malolos! Santa Santino goes street pageant!”

Nakapangingilabot. “Simulan ang pagbabarikada!” sigaw ni Tita. Purong kababalaghan. Panalangin na yata’y kinalugdan.

Abot-langit ang tuwa ng mga kasama, staff at contestants, sa nakikita nilang kakaiba at pambihirang kapangahasang ito nina Tita at Tito. Tinuro’t dinirehe naman ni Senior incredible ang

pangyayarihan ng pageant at pinamunuan nila ang pagpunta ng mga tao palabas. Nagpauna ang mga co-organizers hanggang sa bumuntot pati ang mga nakasaksing bakla't tomboy sa prusisyon.

Matagal kasi nilang kinaaabangan ang magarang patimpalak gayong sa kanilang Facebook, Twitter at pati na rin alter, laganap na promotion nito. Sigaw tuloy ng ilang millennial at Gen Z na naroon, "Jesus loves Adam and Steve!" Chant naman ng mga empowered tibo sa likod, "Church and State for LGBTs! Lavan!"

Sumigaw din si Tita Minerva, "Sangkatauhan, sangkabaklaan at sangkatibuan, doon tayo magbarikada sa ngalan ng Inmaculada!" Mas maraming kabataan ang nagpunta at mas marami rin silang mga nahatak na kaibigan, kapamilya't kaparokya, na nag-unahan papuntang munisipyo at iniwanan ang mga karo. Marami rin ang nakikiyoso. Dinaig ng pageant ang prusisyon.

Tuloy-tuloy sa pagkilos ang Santa Santino. Aba't doon nga lumikha sa kalsada ng biglaang tanghalan. Todo sila sa pangangausap na mahiram ang mga pailaw at generator. Mabuti na lamang, pinayagan sila lalo ng Hermano Mayor na ipagamit ang mga kasangkapan galing sa prusisyon. Inalok n'ya ang mga speaker, mga pailaw, at mga mikropono na gamit pa kanina sa pagrorosaryo. Pinalipat din ang musiko para patugtugin sa pageant. Nag-unat din ng mahabang tela pam-background set. Kanya-kanya ngayon ng pag-iimprobisa. Hanggang sa ang harap ng munisipyo'y dinagsa ng mga tao mula sa mga tambayan, kalye, at tyange.

Ang daming nagsabing nito lang daw nila naramdam ang tunay na diwa ng fiestang bayan, ang buong komunidad para sa dakilang rampahan!

Pinautos ngayon ni Senior Pit sa kanyang mga tauhan, buhatin ba naman nila ang mga barikada sa daan. Saka nila pinaghihilera at sinimulang isara ang kahabaan ng espasyo mula monumento ng Veterans hanggang monumento ni Balagtas. Hindi na nga nakaraan ang mga sasakyan sa Tulay Tampoy kaya't lumipat ang trapiko padiretso sa tyange. Ayan tuloy, busina nang busina.

Ngayon pa lamang na-alarma ang mga kapulisan, akala'y parte iyon ng prusisyon, ngunit "Santa Santino Pageant daw?! Anong katarantaduhan?!" Kaya't nilusob nila ang namumuon ng pageant at pinag-aagaw ang mga barikada! Nagpatunog tuloy ng kampana ang simbahan, na tila nagwiwikang "May kaguluhan! may kaguluhan! Lumayo kayo, mga kampon ng Sodom at Gomora! Sa ngalan ni Hesus!"

Ayan tuloy at nagkagitgitan, nagtakbuhan ang mga baklang takot sa mga pulis. At nag-wangwang ang isang sasakyan, nag-announce sa speaker ang isang kalbong kumander: "Illegal po itong pageant na ito! Binabalaan po namin kayo. Kapag hindi kayo umalis sa bilang ng sampu, aandar po itong sasakyan namin at mapipilitang buwagin na ito!"

Ngunit sina Tito't Tita, makapangyarihan, pinapunta sa harapan ang mga alagang contestants at mukha na silang nalosyang. Aba't nakuha pa nilang magkapit-bisig, sama-sama ang mga tomboy at bakla, hinatak pati ang katabing mga kaibigan, kapitbahay, at katandaan, dinala na ang People Power sa Malolos!

Hindi tuloy mapigilan ang bugso ng mga damdamin, e gusto lang namang makapanood ng pageant, ipagkakait pa. Pambihira! Natatabunan na tuloy si Senior Pit ng mga puwit ng mga kaharap. Si Binibining Diana, napapagitnaan ng mga binatilyo, "Ang babaho, pero tabi kayo sa'kin!"

Nagbilang na, "anim, pito, walo, siyam," at sa malakas na pagharurot, may biglang sumulpot na nilalang at hinarangan niya ang sasakyan! Diyosmiyo, dumating bigla ang mayoryang panauhin:

"Huwaaaaaag!!!" mahabang sigaw ng isang Kamote.

Huminto tuloy ang oras. Huminto rin ang ingay ng lahat hanggang sa makarinig ng kuliglig sa kalsada. Nailawan tuloy ng sasakyan ang kanyang mukha at ang kanyang nunal.

"Si Mayor! Anong gagawin n'ya?" pag-uusisa ng mga tao. Namumuti-muti pa rin ang kanyang buhok, bundat, at iyon pa rin

ang suot na barong. Paglingon niya sa likod ay nakatingin din sa kanya sina Tito't Tita, nagkatulalaan ang mga maiinit na mata. Nag-aapoy ang mga mukha nila, ang kay Mayor ay ga-yelo sa pangongonsensya.

Ngunit...subalit...datapwat sa gitna ng pagtititigan, tila nakaramdam ng pangangati sa kanyang nunal ang traponng Mayor. Bigla siyang tumango. May ipinahahayag ang kanyang mukha.

"Hayaan niyo na sila," sabi n'ya sa kalbong kumander.

At natigil ang kaguluhan.

"Kung kelan naggugulpihan na, saka na naman magbabago ang isip!" sabi ni Senior Pit sa kaharap na puwit.

Lumapit ang Mayor kina Tito't Tita. Bumalik sila bigla sa pagkabata, sa panahong pinagbabati sila ng kanilang titser.

Doon sa mainit na opisina'y nakayuko si Kamote, naging iyaking damulag, "Suntukin n'yo rin ako, batukan, gulpihin, i-bully n'yo nang i-bully, duraan nang duraan. Mga kagaya ko po ang salot! Sorry po! Sorry! Sorry!" Saka buga pa ng iyak. Pinatahan naman sila ng titser.

Ngunit itong dalawa'y mas naawa pa 'di sa kanilang mga sarili kun'di sa kanya, sa paurong niyang pag-iisip.

Naibsan ang pula sa mga mukha nina Tito't Tita. Sumenyas din ang kamay ni Kamote na muling ipagpatuloy ang kaganapan.

Sabi ni Tito Jet sa kanya, "Aba, himala! Kanina ka pa namin hinihintay, Mayor. Gusto lang naman namin...e, suportahan mo kami."

Si Tita nama'y nagsalita nang mahinahon, "Mayor...simula ngayong gabi, iba na ang magiging pananaw mo sa amin, ng buong bayan sa amin. Rerespetuhin n'yo kami, pupurihin din at dadakilain. Hindi na kami 'yung tulad ng dati mong inaapak-

apakan, Mayor. Kami ang mga Santa Santino. At may puso't paglaban ang aming ginagawa."

"...Tama kayo," sabi ni Mayor. At nagkamot pa siya ulit ng nunal sa baba, "Jet, Minerva...tama kayo sa sinabi n'yo... 'God, diversity, family.' Dito ko pala matatagpuan 'yon."

At napakamot din sa ulo sina Tito't Tita. Ewan, kakaiba ang naramdaman nila, parang maluwag at magaan sa kanilang loob ang pagtatagpo nilang iyon sa gitna ng mga salungatan. Kahit mahirap magbati-bati, nagsang-ayunan sa bandang huli ang dalawang panig, at lalaon nawa'y magbunga ng pambihirang pagkakaunawaan.

Nagtipun-tipon muli ang taumbayan, nagpagtugtog muli nang malakas ang musiko't naghiyawan sa matagumpay na pagpapatuloy ng Santa Santino! Panay sigawan ang mga tao sa kanilang mga pambato! Aba't buong probinsya'y nagtipun-tipon sa lunsaran, kanya-kanyang performance, kanya-kanyang Santo at Santa, at ang mga pagpapakahulugan sa nirerepresentang huwaran.

"Anong mensahe ng inyong mga santo?" sabi sa Q and A.

"Si San Isidro, may layuning puksain ang pang-aabuso sa palayan, aanihin ang pag-ibig sa may piniling kasarian! Ah! Ah! Araro na!!! Aribaaa!"

"Si Santo Niño, nanghahamon sa kabataan, lumabas sa kloseta at nang matikman, kalayaan!" sabay gaya ng contestant ng kamay ni Santo Niño, ngunit fierce.

Sigawan at palakpakan ang mga tao, aba talaga'y marami pa ang nanood.

Ang Obispo'y palinga-linga rin sa bintana ng kumbento, gusto rin yatang saksihan ang koronasyon, "pa-kyeme, gusto rin naman pala ng bayot na 'to," pang-o-okray ni Bb. Diana at nagtatawanan na lang sila ni Senior Pit sa gilid.

Panghuli’y sa punto ng pag-aanunsyo ng kauna-unahang Santa Santino, lumabas si Tita Minerva, nakadamit sa anyo ng Inmaculada Concepcion, siya ang magpuputong ng korona sa mananalong Santa. At si Tito Jet, nakadamit-Santo Kristo, siyang magpuputong sa mananalong Santo.

At nagwika si Tita ng pamamanikluhod, magsilbi nawa itong koronasyon, gaya rin ng Inmaculada Concepcion, na isang ritwal ng paglilinis sa kanila sa ano mang panghuhusga ng mortal na pagkakasala. Bababa ang basbas ng mundo sa kanilang kaluluwa’t kaanyuan, hahangaan din, at ituturing na Inmaculada. Nang ipinutong sa ulo ang nagigintuang mga korona, bumaba ang sanlibong pulutong ng mga kerubin at saka nagbuga ng mga trumpetang musika na nagpaparampa sa kanila. Tila abot-langit ang tamis ng tagumpay, pakiramdam nila’y kinilala ng uniberso ang kanilang kanonisasyon.

“Aleluya vongga de Santa Santino!” ang malakas nilang chant. At ang laking buntong hininga ngayon nina Tito’t Tita, Senior, ni Binibining Diana, at iba pa, ‘di nila akalaing kalulugdan sila ng pinakabonggang himala sa tanang lupa, magtutuloy-tuloy anu’t ano pa man, hanggang sa langit ay rumampa. Amen.

---

### **Bionote:**

Si Andrew Estacio ay kasalukuyang instruktur sa ilalim ng Dibisyon ng Wika, Departamento ng Humanidades sa UPLB. Siya ay nagsusulat ng maikling kwento at dula na may mga paksa hinggil sa danas ng LGBTQ+, mga panlipunang komentaryo, at mga kwentong may kinalaman sa kasaysayan. Nagtuturo siya ng mga kursong GE hinggil sa wika, kultura, lipunan at sa Batas Militar. Kasalukuyan niyang tinatapos ang MA Malikhaing Pagsulat sa UP Diliman.

---

## **Wika at Pasismo: Politika ng Wika at Araling Wika sa Panahon ng Diktadura ni Gonzalo A. Campoamor II**

REBYU

Mariyel Hiyas Liwanag

University of the Philippines Los Baños

[mcliwanag@up.edu.ph](mailto:mcliwanag@up.edu.ph)

---

Ngayong ika-50 taon ng paggunita ng bansa sa deklarasyon ng diktadura ng administrasyon ng dating Ferdinand E. Marcos, Sr. at madilim na yugto ng kasaysayan ng bansa, napapanahon ang pagbasa ng mga pananaliksik at libro hinggil sa katotohanan noong panahong Batas Militar. Sa gitna ng disimpormasyon na pinalalaganap ng iilan na mayroong makauring interes, nararapat lamang na patingkarin ang mga akdang tangan ang kasaysayang tila umuulit sa kasalukuyan magmula sa krisis ekonomya hanggang sa wika bilang instrumento ng pagpapanatili ng kalagayan ng mga Pilipino at ang pagpapanaig ng interes sa kapakinabangan ng iilan.

Unang inilimbag ng Sentro ng Wikang Filipino ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas Diliman ang *Wika at Pasismo: Politika ng Wika at Araling Wika sa Panahon ng Diktadura* ni Gonzalo A. Campoamor II noong 2018 at lumaon ay ipinabilang sa proyektong Aklatang Bayan na naglalathala ng mga elektronikong pananaliksik at panitikan sa diwa ng bukas na risors pang-edukasyon. Malaking ambag na napabilang ang pananaliksik ni Campoamor sa kilusan ng bukás na risors pang-edukasyon dahil mas naging aksesible ang lathalain para sa mga Pilipino at libreng mababasa ng mga taong mayroong internet, lalo pa at sa espasyong cyber naging talamak



ang disimpormasyon na may layong burahin ang mga tunay na pangyayari sa panahon ng Batas Militar.

Isinalaysay ni Campoamor sa libro ang mga tunguhin ng araling wika bilang isang disiplina, ang lente ng pagsusuri na akma para sa piniling milieu, at ang materyal na batayan sa likod ng politika ng wika sa panahon ng diktadura. Sa unang bahagi ng libro, masinsing tinalakay ang mga sanga-sangang tunguhin ng araling wika magmula dekada '60. Makatutulong ang unang tatlong bahagi ng libro para sa sinumang nagsisimula sa araling wika. Una, ang pagpili na isulat ang paksang ito sa wikang Filipino ay isang malaking bentahe para sa mga Pilipinong nais magkaroon ng pagbubuod sa mga teorya at kaisipan sa araling wika na ginagamit ng mga Pilipinong mananaliksik sa wika, mula sa lenteng estruktural tungong diskursibo, kabilang na rito ang Marxistang Pilosopiya. Ikalawa, masinsin na ipinaliwanag ni Campoamor ang lenteng Marxismo sa pagsusuri ng wika sa panahon ng diktadura, kung papaano magagamit ang usapin ng kontradiksyon at tunggalian ng mga uri mula sa diyalektikong materyalismo ng mga lathalaing Marxista sa pagsusuri ng wika. Mahusay niyang binigyan ng mga halimbawa kung papaano ito mailalapat hindi lamang sa iba pang mga disiplina sa agham, kundi maging sa wika, partikular sa panahon ng Batas Militar.

Sa pagtalakay ni Campoamor ng kaisipang repleksyon at repraksyon ng wika na naka-angkla sa orihinal na ideya ni Volosinov at ng kontra-hegemonya sa wika, parehong umuugat sa Marxistang Pilosopiya bilang gabay na teorya sa pagsusuri ng wika, tuluyan niyang pinabulaan ang mga argumentong hindi siyentipiko at isang passe na teorya ang Marxistang Pilosopiya. Bagkus, ipinaliwanag niya nang mahusay at malinaw sa akda na nakabatay ang pagiging siyentipiko ng teoryang ito, isa sa mga pamantayan ng pag-aaral ng wika. Bagaman mayroon siyang pasintabi na hindi niya ito itinuturing na isang teorya sa wika kundi bahagi lamang ng panlipunang teorya, makikita ng isang mag-aaral ng wika ang bentahe ng kanyang pundasyon para sa pagsusuri, isang malaking ambag para sa pag-aaral ng politika sa wika na magkaroon ng isang pundasyon na nakabatay sa siyentipikong mga pag-aaral at naka-ugat sa kalagayan ng bansa. Inilahad niya ang kakayanan ng wika na salaminin (repleksiyon)

ang politika at ekonomya, gayundin ang kakayanan ng iilan na ibaling ang wika (repraksiyon) para sa interes nitong makauri na panatilihin sa kapangyarihan ang kanilang grupo. Pinalawig niya ang ideyang ito sa pamamagitan ng pagbubuod sa kasaysayan ng bansa sa lente nito. Nakatulong ang mga footnote sa bahaging ito para magkaroon ng konteksto at dagdag impormasyon ang mambabasa hinggil sa mga paksa lalo na para sa isang nagsisimula sa araling wika at sa Marxistang Pilosopiya.

Marami nang mga lathalain hinggil sa panahon ng Batas Militar ngunit natatanging ang akda ni Campoamor ang tumalakay nang may tuon sa wika sa piling panahon. Hinimay sa librong ito kung paano ginamit ng Diktaturyang Marcos ang wika para sa makauring interes. Kamangha-mangha kung paano isiniwalat ni Campoamor sa kanyang pananaliksik ang paggamit ni Marcos ng salitang “tadhana” na malapit sa paniniwalang metapisikal ng mga Pilipino para ipangatwiran ang kanyang pagtakbo at paglihis sa luma at tradisyunal na nosyon ng mahirap-naging-mayamang naratibo na ipinamayagpag ng kanyang katunggaling si Macapagal at mga lumang politiko. Tulad nga ng sinabi ni Campoamor, “mas pinili nilang gamitin ang tadhana bilang terminong makasasapat sa makauring tunguhin nila.” Sa yugtong ito pa lamang ng akda, masinsin na ipinaliwanag ng may-akda ang kabuuang estratehiya ni Marcos para ipagwagi ang kandidatura sa pagkapangulo. Nakamamangha ang suri hinggil sa kung paano ginamit ni Marcos noon ang salitang tadhana para likhain ang imahen na tila isang tagapagligtas at itinakda siya ng kapalaran sa isang posisyon, bitbit ang pangakong i-aahon sa kahirapan ang mga Pilipino. Sa ganitong uri ng suri, binibigyan ang mga mambabasa ng halimbawa kung paano dapat kritikal na suriin ang mga salita at imahen na ginagamit ng mga politiko lalo na sa panahon ng eleksyon.

Hindi natapos sa panahon ng eleksyon ang paggamit ng Marcos sa wika at makauring signipikasyon para lumikha ng mapanlinlang na imahen sa gitna ng krisis. Tinalakay rin ni Campoamor ang edifice complex ng Rehimeng Marcos at ang pagkahumaling sa imprastruktura kasabay ng paglilimita sa mga imprenta at paglalathala sa midya ng mga balitang paborable sa administrasyon sa panahong ito sa kabila ng pasismo. Tinalakay sa

akda ang gampanin ng asawa ni Marcos na si Imelda Marcos para tiyaking nakasandig ang imahen ng pamahalaan noon sa pormularyong “maganda ang maputi” at “mabuti ang palabas” na dalawa sa apat na pormularyong nakatatag sa mga Pilipino. Tinalakay rin sa akda ang mapanlinlang na mga estratehiya ng Rehimeng Marcos na hindi naman talaga makamamamayan kundi maka-Estados Unidos batay sa mga batas na ipinanukala at mga gawi ng administrasyon sa harap ng mga Amerikanong administrador. Sa gitna ng krisis na kinahaharap ng mga Pilipino noong panahon na iyon, isiniwalat rin sa akda kung papaano ibinali ang makauring gamit ng wika bilang bahagi ng pasismo ng rehimen mula sa mga libro hanggang slogan at pangalan ng mga proyektong tumatakip at kabaligtaran sa realidad.

Malaki rin ang ambag ng akda para payamanin ang mga pananaliksik hinggil sa pasismo. Habang lumalakas ang mga kilusan laban sa pasistang rehimen at dumarami ang mga kilos-protesta dahil sa krisis na dinaranas noon ng mga Pilipino tulad ng hindi makaagapay na sahod sa pagtaas ng mga presyo ng mga bilihan, lumolobong populasyon ng mahihirap at lubog sa utang na bansa, hinimay sa akda ang imaheng nais ipinta ng Rehimeng Marcos sa panahong iyon: disiplina sa anyo ng Bagong Lipunan. Sang-ayon ako sa suri ng may-akda hinggil rito dahil ipinamumutawi ng imaheng ito na tila disiplina ang kulang sa mga Pilipino kung kaya at naroroon ang bansa sa krisis noon at ikinukubli ang kapalpakan ng administrasyon na i-ahon ang bansa mula sa mga isyung kinahaharap ng mga mamamayan sa panahong iyon.

Hinimay rin sa akda kung paano kinasangkapan ng Rehimeng Marcos ang wika para isulong ang pasistang pamumuno nito o ang karahasan upang supilin ang mga kritiko at oposisyon ng diktaturyang pamamahala nito. Tinalakay sa libro ang usapin kung papaano binansagang *komunista* ng Rehimeng Marcos ang mga estudyante at manggagawang lumahok ng mga kilos-protesta noong panahong iyon at minarkahang “prente ng mga gawaing makakaliwa” ang mga unibersidad at kolehiyo kasabay ng mga mararahas na aktibidad ng pamahalaan tulad ng pambubuwag ng mga mapayapang demonstrasyon at mga raid sa mga paaralan. Tinangka pa ng Rehimeng Marcos na baguhin ang kahulugan ng

salitang *rebolusyon* na nakasandig sa interes nitong panatilihin ang sitwasyon ng bansa at ang kapangyarihan ng kanyang uri.

Sa kabuuan, isang bentahe ng akdang ito ang masinsin na pagtalakay sa wika sa panahon ng Batas Militar. Katunayan, bilang bahagi ng pagiging obhetibo at pagsandig sa katotohanan ng akda ang paglahok nito sa mga lathalain at mga pahayag sa panahon ng Batas Militar. Makatutulong ang ganitong malalim at mabusising pananaliksik sa mga guro na nagtuturo ng wika. Malaki ang puwang na kinakailangang punan para sa mga risors panturo lalo na para sa disiplina ng Filipino at makabuluhan ang ambag ng lathalaing ito para sa isang matalas na suri at paninindigan na bitbit ng isang guro sa pagtuturo at pananaliksik sa araling wika.

Makabuluhang basahin ang akda ni Campoamor sa kasalukuyang kalagayan ng bansa. Sa pagbabalik-kapangyarihan ng pamilyang Marcos at sa laganap na disimpormasyon sa bayan, mahalaga na balikang muli ang tunay na pangyayari sa malagim na yugto ng ating kasaysayan. Sa pagbabasa ng kanyang akda, maaaring mahinuha ng isang mambabasa ang pagkakahawig ng panahon ng Batas Militar sa kasalukuyang konteksto ng paggamit sa wika para panatilihin ang iilan sa kapangyarihan — ang paggamit sa wika para ipinta ang isang imahen na kabaligtaran sa realidad ng nakaraan at nakakawing sa kasinungalingan, ang paggamit ng wika upang panatilihin ang ekonomya at pulitikang nakasandig sa iilang pamilya lamang habang lumulugmok sa kahirapan ang Pilipinas. Lalo na nitong nakaraang eleksyon na naging mga maigting na impluwensya ang disimpormasyon, mga troll at ang lawak na kayang abutin ng social media at vlogging sa gitna ng pandemya. Gayundin, hindi maikakaila at maiiwasan na ikumpara ang mga suri sa wika noong panahon ng Batas Militar sa wika ng mga nagdaan at kasalukuyang administrasyon, mula sa halimbawa nito na edifice complex ng diktaturang Marcos at ang programang Build, Build, Build sa kasalukuyan, o ang paulit-ulit na naratibo na kulang sa disiplina ang mga Pilipino sa panahon ng Batas Militar at sa nagdaang pandemya upang ikubli ang pagkukulang ng mga administrasyong nanunungkulan, at ang patuloy na redtagging sa mga kritiko at oposisyon. Magkaiba ang panahon ngunit pareho ang estratehiyang ginamit — wika na

malapit sa masa ngunit makauring interes talaga ang sandigan at motibasyon.

### **Akdang Sinuri**

Campoamor, Gonzalo A. II. *Wika at Pasismo: Politika ng Wika at Araling Wika sa Panahon ng Diktadura*. Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, 2018.

---

### **Bionote:**

Si Mariyel Hiyas Liwanag ay guro ng wika sa UP Los Baños. Nagtapos siya ng MA Linguistics sa UP Diliman at ngayon ay kumukuha ng Doktorado sa Araling Pilipino sa De La Salle University Manila.