

# POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES AND *PANTAYONG PANANAW* IN PHILIPPINE HISTORIOGRAPHY: A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

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## Abstract

This paper offers a platform for a mutually critical imaginary dialogue between two different anti-Eurocentric analytic approaches, Postcolonialism (PC) and *Pantayong Pananaw* (From-Us, For-Us Perspective, PP). The dialogue foregrounds key areas of engagement between these approaches and allows in the process to revisit a number of vexing issues that interrogate them as well as the nature of an engaged, pro-marginalized scholarship. It suggests that while each approach can profitably learn from the other, it seems that a truly progressive aspiration may be better served by going beyond the current orientations or foci of the two approaches.

## Keywords

critical theory, indigenization, Postcolonialism, power/knowledge, progressive scholarship

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## INTRODUCTION

The early, long, and ambiguous colonial experience of the Philippines situates Filipino historians in a very favorable position to engage with what is called Postcolonialism or Postcolonial Studies (PC hereafter). If we take Ato Quayson's suggested definition of PC as that which involves "studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the level of local societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire" (93-94), and if we momentarily set aside the high-sounding theories common in PC, the postcolonial discourse that developed in the Philippines may have had an earlier provenance. It goes as far back to Rizal and other Propagandists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Possibly even earlier to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century poet Francisco Balagtas, as suggested in Fred Sevilla's *Francisco Balagtas and the Roots of Filipino Nationalism*. However, while the Subaltern Studies group has been in the mainstream, their Philippine counterparts were hardly heard of. The absence of reference to any Filipino scholars (or work done by any of them) in John McLeod's *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonialism*, as well as in the more recent *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* by Pramod Nayar is telling. It was only in 2008 when an article on *Pantayong Pananaw* (For-Us-From-Us Perspective, hereafter PP) appeared in an internationally recognized postcolonial studies journal, *Postcolonial Studies*.<sup>1</sup>

This situation may be due to a number of factors. By its very nature, PP addresses a particular audience, the members of the Filipino nation. Its proponents' use of P/Filipino language in academic discourse effectively limits the accessibility of their work for foreign scholars who do not know the language. The hierarchy in the global structure of academic discourses may also play a role by privileging views emanating from the metropolitan centers where diasporic scholars from, say, India, Africa, and the Middle East have already had a sufficient level of influence. Domestically, the strong grip by the left-leaning historiography (e.g. Constantino; Agoncillo) as well as by colonial nationalist historiography (e.g. Zaide) since the 1950s-1960s proved unfavorable for a largely non-materialist and post-nationalist critical theorizing like PC to flourish.<sup>2</sup> Another important factor was the timing of the rise of the indigenization movement spearheaded by scholars such as Virgilio Enriquez in psychology and Prospero Covar and Zeus Salazar in *Pilipinolohiya* (Philippine Studies), history and anthropology. The movement was underway from the late 1960s up to 1990s at the University of the Philippines while poststructuralism and postcolonial theory were on the rise in the West (Mendoza 61-100; Paredes-Canilao and Babaran-Diaz). This development may have created an atmosphere that nurtured suspicion, even hostility, towards views or approaches inspired by high theories from France, Germany, and elsewhere. To many historians based in

the Philippines, with a notable exception of Resil Mojares,<sup>3</sup> postcolonial theory was downplayed, ignored, dismissed, or was simply unheard of.

There are certain areas in Philippine academia, however, where PC has found fertile grounds: literature and cultural studies. The works of Neil Garcia such as *Postcolonialism and Filipino Poetics* and Lily Rose Roxas-Topé's *(Un)Framing Southeast Asia* are fine examples. So is the volume *Philippine Postcolonial Studies: Essays on Language and Literature* edited by Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo and Priscelina Patajo-Legasto. That said, it was also in the same field where PC met its most staunch critique. Reminiscent of Aijaz Ahmad's scathing book, *In Theory*, as well as of Benita Parry's *Postcolonial Theory: A Materialist Critique*, E. San Juan Jr.'s book *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* is a damning illustrative example.

Certain key elements of PC, such as anti-colonialism and anti-Eurocentrism, are among the long-standing features of the Philippine nationalist historiography. The inclusion of Renato Constantino's piece, which made no mention of PC, in the five-volume *Routledge Handbook on Postcolonialism* edited by Diana Brydon indicated that Constantino and other Filipino scholars who follow similar analytic trajectories were "doing" PC. Two of the finest works on Philippine history in the 1970s and 1980s, Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* and Vicente Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism*, are postcolonial in character. Drawing from my personal memory of my experience as a student of history at the University in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I remember that ambivalence or suspicion, if not outright rejection, characterized the attitude of at least some of key historians from the University of the Philippines towards these works. Mila Guerrero's pointed critique of *Pasyon*, which appeared in the journal *Philippine Studies* in 1981, seemed emblematic of the overall attitude shared by a fairly sizable section in the community of Filipino historians. For some time Ileto's and Rafael's outstanding works appeared to be more appreciated and utilized outside than inside the country. What explanation there might be for this situation is beyond the scope of this paper. That it was a Japanese scholar, Yoshiko Nagano, who published in 2007 a compilation of their essays and explicitly labeled the volume *Postcolonial Studies in Philippine Historiography*, is suggestive of the continuing lack of appreciation or recognition for PC among many Filipino historians.

This paper proceeds from the assumption that the more limited platform there is for intellectual engagement between proponents of different schools of thought, the less the benefit for the entire community of scholars and the public in general. What this paper seeks to do, therefore, is to provide a space for engagement where "imaginary" dialogue takes place between PC and PP with the view towards revisiting long-standing issues that remain relevant until today. The dialogue is imaginary

because proponents of the two sides did not actually engage. The idea is to imagine what they would say if they have had a chance to know each other's work.

Inasmuch as PC is merely an umbrella term of convenience which masks the variety and sometimes conflicting nature of thoughts and approaches subsumed under it, I limit my scope to some ideas elaborated or developed by the key scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. These include power/knowledge, anti-essentialism, strategic essentialism, anti-foundationalism, hybridity, mimicry, anti-Eurocentrism, and "provincializing" Europe, which will be clarified below. It is relevant to note that just as Subaltern Studies, one of PC's main feeders, has evolved fairly rapidly (Ludden 2), PC has also been a moving target. Aware of the shifting terrain and the danger of putting up a straw man, the objective here is not to take-stock of the development in PP and PC, nor to provide a nuanced description of the two schools. The idea is to select outstanding features that allow for a critical engagement between them. The aim of the whole exercise is to revisit and highlight a number of issues that are germane to the contentious nature of "progressive scholarship," which is defined here simply as pro-marginalized scholarship. I should note, and this will be factored in the analysis here, that the substance, actors, and actual beneficiaries of progressive scholarship may shift depending on who uses it, for whom and for what purpose, as well on the broader social context of actual knowledge production and consumption. In other words, the focus here is the idea of progressivism, and not the "progressives."

The caveat noted above on PC applies also to PP despite its being a relatively more homogeneous group within the community of Filipino historians, most of whom were trained at the Department of History of the University of the Philippines. In the article "Exposition, Critique and New Directions for Pantayong Pananaw," Ramon Guillermo warned, for instance, that while Zeus Salazar is the founder and by sheer strength of personality remains the dominant, and some would say "domineering," intellectual prime mover of PP, he is not the whole of PP. With blessings or perhaps consternation of its founding father, PP has gone beyond its early, rather dogmatic stages. Sympathetic critics like Guillermo himself have suggested what Myfel Paluga calls a "minimalist" approach by shedding off some of the hard core characteristics of PP. These characteristics include the heavy emphasis on cultural holism and relativism, linguistic rigidity and the downplaying of political economy, class, gender, and intra-national ethnic differences. These features are all reflective of Salazar's ethnological orientation. The most recent volume that came out from the PP collective, a *festschrift* in honor of Salazar, indicates a more plural and minimalistic approach (see Navarro, Rodriguez-Tatel and Villan, *Pagyabong ng Talastatasan*). PP is chosen in this paper as PC's engagement partner because its sharply differing views on key issues offer a potentially productive opportunity to revisit or reflect anew on a number of persistently vexing questions.

While both PC and PP deal with postcoloniality, in a sense that they seek to transcend or neutralize colonial mindset, they are nonetheless poles apart in a number of important aspects. While PC may be considered as cosmopolitan or global in aspiration, PP may be said to be inward-looking, even “indigenist” in proclivities. While the earlier is theory-savvy and post-nationalistic, the latter shuns high theories and is unabashedly nationalistic or ethnocentric. It must be noted that such position seems meant to be temporary or strategic, until a certain level of *pantayo* development is attained, as will be further discussed below. We can, therefore, see in this encounter how two groups, while responding to more or less the same set of stimuli (colonial experience), came up with a different set of theoretical and methodological responses. From this engagement, I hope to see what important insights observers can generate.

In the next two sections, what will be done is to distill the key features of “classical” PP and PC. I emphasize “classical” to underscore my strategic decision to focus on the core features of the two approaches, both of which have morphed, as already noted above. In the fourth section, areas of engagement between the two groups will be discussed. Finally, I will conclude by revisiting a number of long-standing issues to highlight or reiterate still relevant but often sidelined points.

### **PANTAYONG PANANAW (PP)**

The development of PP was an interesting story that unfolded against the contested terrain of historical knowledge production in the Philippines in the post-War period. It also reflected the continual efforts of scholars to provide a kind of historiography they believed more suitable to the needs of the country. As details of this story and features of PP were discussed in various works by Salazar (“Pantayong Pananaw: Isang Paliwanag”; “Ang Pantayong Pananaw Bilang Diskursong Pangkabihasnan”; “Pantayong Pananaw: Kasaysayang Pampook, Pambayan at Pambansa”), Navarro, Tatel and Villan (*Pantayong Pananaw: Ugat at Kabuluhan; Pantayong Pananaw: Pagyabong Ng Talastasan*, Reyes (“Pantayong Pananaw and Bagong Kasaysayan”; “Fighting over a Nation”) and Mendoza (*Between the Homeland and the Diaspora*), there is no need to retell it here. Suffice to note that PP developed since the late 1960s at the Department of History of the University of the Philippines, which has a proud tradition of activism and anti-colonial nationalism. PP flourished under the intellectual leadership of Zeus Salazar. With a PhD in Ethnology from University of Paris-Sorbonne, Salazar’s ethnological training was reflected in the strongly cultural approach he employed in historical analysis.

From the works of scholars noted above, a number of outstanding features of PP may be identified. First, it is a world view that is unreservedly nationalist in aspiration and anti-colonial in attitude. It seeks to establish a national discourse (*talastasang bayan*) to unify and strengthen the nation and to allow self-determination (Salazar, “Pantayong Pananaw: Isang Pagpapaliwanag”). Pulled by centuries of colonization away from its supposed originary cultural anchor, the *dunia Melayu* or the Malay world (Salazar, *Malayan Connection*), PP envisions to combat or neutralize colonial influences—foreign language, western mindset, sense of inferiority—as a pathway to a robust, cohesive, and self-determined nation.

Second, it is internalist or closed-circuit in orientation. *Pantayong Pananaw* literally means “from-us-for-us perspective.” In Tagalog, the pronoun *we* has two equivalents: *tayo* and *kami*. The first is used when the speaker includes the one spoken to and all other members of a group (either clearly identifiable or imagined) to which both of them belong. The latter, on the other hand, is used when the one spoken to is not included in the group the speaker is engaged with (Reyes, “Pantayong Pananaw and Bagong Kasaysayan” 376-378). This seemingly very simple differentiation has far reaching implications when applied to historiography. It identifies with whom the speaker (or the historical narrative) is engaged in discourse. In PP, the discourse is between or among members of a closed-circuit group who may constitute a community, region, nation or even a civilization. In the *pang-kami* perspective, on the other hand, the speaker (or the historical narrative) is talking to people other than the members of one’s own group (Salazar, “The Pantayo Perspective” 124–127). If, for instance, one says that “we Filipinos are not like that, we are like this,” the speaker is presumably talking to somebody who is not a member of that in-group.

Corollary to the question of *with whom* one is engaged in a discourse is *for whom* and *what for* is historical knowledge.<sup>4</sup> From this emanates PP’s next major feature: the specificity of target audience and transparency of purpose. For PP, historical knowledge is for the consumption of the members of one group or one nation and that it is for their better understanding of themselves as a group (Reyes, “Pantayong Pananaw and Bagong Kasaysayan” 379-380). In the *pang-kami* perspective, on the other hand, historical knowledge is designed to enable one group to present itself to another, as their equal or superior. Knowledge, therefore, is for the consumption primarily of the one spoken to and the onus is on her to understand the group being presented.

Another important implication of the *pantayo-pangkami* differentiation rests on the question of comparative importance. Certain stand or measuring gauge is assumed when a comparison is made. In history or in any other body of knowledge, there are metanarratives or a set of assumptions that provide the

basis for underlying standards. A tribal society, for instance, may be considered less developed or less advanced than others based on its level of technology and the complexity of its economic activities. The validity or acceptability of these criteria hinges on the assumptions rooted in a culture-economic-based metanarrative of progress. PP has been developed with an aim, among others, of avoiding this kind of a comparative trap. At the heart of this approach is the postulation that each group of people has its own worldview or way of life that developed in response to conditions and situations peculiar to their environment. This idea highlights the third key feature of PP, which is cultural relativism. With this view at hand, all attempts at comparison to determine which group is more advanced or more superior fizzles out, as each group deserves to be weighed on its own terms.

While it is focused on the formation and assertion of identity of Filipino nation, PP does by no means, confine itself within this boundary. PP is internalist and nation-focused in orientation, as noted above, but the exclusivity it promotes is strategic. This is PP's fourth main feature. Strategic exclusivity is meant to be a stepping stone to an expanding concentric circles that progressively cover more members. As clear in Salazar's essays "Pantayong Pananaw: Kasaysayang Pampook, Pambayan at Pambansa" and "The Pantayo Perspective as a Discourse Towards Kabihasanan," the trajectory of the *Pantayo* project leads from the localities (*pook* and *bayan*), to nation (*bansa*), to region (*banwa*), and ultimately to an encompassing discourse of *kabihasanan*. The concept *kabihasanan* is one of the two Filipino equivalents of the concept of civilization. The other being *sibilisasyon*. The main difference between the two dictionary equivalents is that *sibilisasyon* captures more precisely the western-oriented concept of civilization while *kabihasanan* is an attempt to correct the perceived pro-western bias of the latter formulation. *Kabihasanan* comes from the root word *bihasa*, which in Tagalog means skillful in or used to something. If certain groups of people is very much used to a certain set of conditions (ecological, cultural, etc.), they then develop a set of practices and ideas attuned to that condition and at which they are very skillful. The totality of all these practices, institutions, values, history, culture, etc. comprises the *kabihasanan* of such a group. Given a different set of conditions, another group of people is expected to develop a different set of practices, to which other groups may not be well adapted. Since the conditions are different between these groups, they should not be judged using only one standard. In the concept of civilization, there underlies an assumed existence of one yardstick which is defined mainly in accordance with the level of technological development and material progress, etc. these people have attained so far. In the concept of *kabihasanan*, which operates on the cultural relativist frame, a group of people is judged based on how well they have made use of their respective sets of practices/institutions that are attuned to their own environment or values. Whether the outcome is a big, high-tech city or a rustic tribal community is immaterial. They may be equal to the extent that

they provide equally effective adaptive mechanism for their respective people to be happy or content in life. In short, the concept of *kabihasnán* is aimed at resisting the universalist or totalizing aspirations of the Eurocentric concept of civilization.

Alongside cultural relativism is cultural holism as yet another key feature of PP, the fifth being noted here. Following the classical conception of culture that saw one society or one nation as having one culture, PP bewails the supposed Great Cultural Divide (*Dambuhalang Pagkakahating Pangkalinangan*) between Filipinos who were supposedly westernized and those who were not. It aspires to eliminate such a divide that hinders the formation of a unified nation. In Salazar's view, this cultural divide is one of the lasting negative impacts of colonization. Decolonization did not end with the formal independence of the country in 1946. It is a continuing struggle because the malaise was deeply rooted in this cultural divide ("The Pantayo Perspective").

The strong culturalist bent in PP analytics is closely tied to the attitude that borders on linguistic dogmatism. For its key prime mover, Salazar, the use of Filipino language is of fundamental importance (Salazar "The Pantayo Perspective" 125; Reyes, "Fighting Over a Nation" 247-250). Their forceful prescription of the use of the Filipino language rests on the recognition of language as a repository and transmitter of meanings all members of a group supposedly share and understand. The use of any other language, such as English or Ilocano, supposedly cannot achieve the aim of establishing a discourse among members of a group and thus hinders the process of achieving the goal of oneness or us-ness.

The epistemological basis of PP appears to have not been discussed or interrogated in the writings of Salazar and his close associates. Such epistemological questioning may be found in the commentaries of sympathetic critics and interpreters like Ramon Guillermo and S. Lily Mendoza. Apparently Salazar and other proponents, along with many other historians in the Philippines took for granted the conventional realist, foundationalist epistemology as basis for laying a claim to historical knowledge, and this is the sixth characteristic of PP. This means that historical knowledge may be justified by reference to evidences that are believed to be verifiable. The past is knowable only if the historian would be conscientious enough to carry out strictly the historical methodology.

There are other labels which may characterize PP, such as essentialism and nativism, but these are labels used by outsiders or critics. Proponents of PP do not use, even actively deny, them. These shall be discussed further below.

## POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES (PC)

Whereas PP is self-conscious, even assertive, of its home-grown origins and aspirations, international dynamics were crucial to PC's development. According to Arif Dirlik, PC began with the arrival of Third World scholars in metropolitan academic centers (328). His observation was in reference to the rise of PC in tandem with the increasing presence in major US and UK universities of the likes of Edward Said who wrote what many consider as a "mastertext" of PC, *Orientalism*; Homi Bhabha, whose ideas on psychoanalysis enriched PC; and Gayatri Spivak, whose expertise on Derrida and deconstructionism proved essential in shaping PC. Partha Chatterjee ("India's History from Below") and Dipesh Chakrabarty ("Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography") took issue with Dirlik's claim. Both of them have traced a significant part of the early development of PC to the evolution of debates on nationalist historiography in India since the 1960s. To refute Dirlik who also claimed in the same article that Subaltern Studies (hereafter SS) was no more than a repackaging of the long-standing British Marxist history from below as exemplified by works of EP Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, Chakrabarty and Chatterjee asserted that there were significant differences. These include the Marxist school's narrow conception of the political that had the peasants' mentality and behavior being mistaken as pre-political, and the SS's emphasis on power/knowledge and the resulting convergence with the linguistic turn. In short, while SS was significantly influenced by the British Marxist social history, the postcolonial moment ensued with the SS's diverging from the latter's disregard for the deeply political nature of knowledge production (Chakrabarty, "Subaltern Studies"; Chatterjee, "India's History from Below").

Notwithstanding the apparent factual missteps in Dirlik's claims, he seems to have a point in associating the rise to prominence and institutionalization of PC with the increasing presence in universities in the West of "diasporic" scholars from the "Third World." The sharp differences between the "First World" intellectual environment in which these diasporic scholars flourished and the "Third World" academic contexts in which home-based scholars grapple with on day-to-day basis serves as a relevant contexts in understanding the development of PC and the debates among proponents and between them and their critics. It is also important in understanding the engagement between PC and the advocates of "inward-looking" approaches such as PP.

Some of the key concepts in PC were drawn from poststructuralism and psycholanalysis. An understanding of these key concepts helps clarify PC's outstanding features. Very fundamental is the notion of power/knowledge. Drawn mainly from Nietzsche and Foucault (*Power/Knowledge*), it underscores the mutually constituting and reinforcing relationship between power and knowledge.

One is not possible without the other. This idea goes against the grain of the conventional understanding of what power and what knowledge is, and what is the relationship between them. The capillary and relational nature of power eschews the idea that it resides in, or is “possessed” by individuals, groups, or institutions. It instead refers to a state or an enabling condition that makes things (including “truth”) possible. The notion of power/knowledge was eloquently demonstrated in Said’s book, *Orientalism*. Among other things, it was a searing indictment of the pervasive and persistent colonial discourses that create the images of the Orient that conforms to, and feeds into, the fantasies, desires, and interests of the powerful groups in the West. This book has far-reaching implications beyond colonial discourses and postcolonial experience. It foregrounds the possibility that any knowledge, regardless of origin, object, and context, is power-driven and at the same time constitutive of power-relations.

Second is nonfoundationalism. If knowledge is dependent on power relations, and such relation is shifting or fluid, there is therefore no absolute or unassailable basis or foundation for knowing. Knowledge is contingent upon various socio-political and economic factors. It also means that one’s access to reality cannot be direct but through the mediation of socially constructed linguistic mechanisms. Unlike realist or foundationalist epistemology that believe in the possibility of one-to-one correspondence between words or concepts and their supposed referents in the real world, nonfoundationalist epistemology claims that what these words or concepts refer to are not the real world, but instead another representation of the real world, which also relies on yet another representation. The Derridean idea of *differance* (perpetual deferment) or the oft-cited aphorism “there is no outside-text” (or more popularly Spivak’s original translation, “there is nothing outside the text”) (*Of Grammatology* 158) captures the main idea behind PC’s nonfoundationalist orientation. This orientation is also reflected in the paramount emphasis in PC on discourse which may be defined, following Hayden White, as “the ground whereon to decide what shall count as a fact in the matters under consideration and to determine what mode of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted” (3).

Corollary to nonfoundationalism is anti-essentialism. This philosophical stance points to the possibility that the true nature of things may not be known for sure because both the observer and observed are not fixed entities. Both of them are subject to contextual factors that perpetually shift or redefine their “nature.” The textual or representational tools such as words and concepts that we humans use to describe them are the ones that create the impression of fixity or identity, which in reality they do not possess. Deeply critical of essentialism that underpins racism, gender heteronormativity, cultural or linguistic purism and other modes of much of identity politics, PC critics draw from anti-essentialist ideas for

support. The realizations that anti-essentialism ultimately undermines all forms of politics including progressive, pro-marginalized ones have prompted some scholars to support certain forms of essentialism as necessary. Gayatri Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism is an example ("Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography"). It refers to the forms of essentialism that is supposedly permissible given the need to support a morally or politically acceptable cause.

Fourth, the notions of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence highlight the complexity of colonial and postcolonial experience. It cannot be reduced to the black and the white, the good and the bad, as are easily assumed in much of the anti-colonial criticisms. These ideas were drawn, among others, from Lacan's psychoanalysis as applied or interpreted by scholars or activists like Franz Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*) and Homi Bhaba (*The Location of Culture*).

The last key feature of PC that I highlight here is ambivalent anti-colonialism. PC analytics have grown so much more sophisticated and nuanced through the years, and as the fourth point noted above indicates it has gone beyond plain anti-colonialism. PC is deeply rooted in the anti-colonial, nationalist discourses that developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it has also accommodated the idea that colonialism had contradictory impacts both on the colonized and the colonizers.

## A CRITICAL DIALOGUE

Let me imagine interlocutors for both PP and PC meet and engage in a dialogue. They would find mutual interests in a number of academico-political concerns. One of these is recognition of the adverse effects of Euro-centric mentality, a kind of mental colonization that endures long after the colonizers had physically left the confines of the Third World. They both insist on the need for a fundamental change in ways people think. Said's passionate indictment of the body of knowledge he called Orientalism foregrounds the deeply political nature of knowledge which is produced inadvertently or not with a view to dominate and exploit. Dipesh Chakrabarty's notion of "provincializing Europe" underscores the situatedness of knowing. This idea resonates strongly in PP which is well aware of the dangers of the universalist claim associated with knowledge that originated from the "West," or Euro-America.

Another area where the two agree on is in the effort to provide ample spaces in history writing for subaltern sectors—peasants, women, minorities, etc. Overcoming the tyranny of the archives, both PP and PC expanded historiography to accommodate sources and methods that were discouraged or shunned by

conventional, positivistic, documents-based history. With intent to write “history from below,” both PC and PP accommodate the internalist, phenomenological, analytic approaches. They also produce a growing body of historical works that cover historical topics or areas previously considered not worthy of historical considerations. Examples from PP include ethno-astronomy, indigenous technologies, amulets or *anting-anting*.<sup>5</sup>

Both PC and PP are postcolonial in a sense that they wish to transcend and combat the adverse legacies of colonialism in its variety of incarnations. As I will explain below, however, the ways they attempt to do it are a study in contrast, which reflect the divergent assumption and goals they uphold. For instance, while PC and the PP both recognize the need for an alternative mindset, they differ in the kind of alternative that they adopt or propose. PP proudly draws from the arsenal of “native” world view, culture, and traditions the basis for its counter discourse. PC, on the other hand, rejects the tendency to be bound within the confines of nation or culture and makes use of sophisticated, wide-ranging theories including post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, etc.

#### Issues with PP: PC View

The imaginary PC interlocutor noted above voices a number of concerns about PP. The first is nativism. According to Wiley-Blackwell’s *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, “(t)he term ‘nativism’ is used by postcolonial critics to describe the desire to return to pre-colonial cultural values and native traditions...” (461). In addition, I define nativism for the purpose of this paper as the belief or attitude that assumes, asserts, privileges, and naturalizes the supposedly deep cultural origins of a group of people (the native) as basis for claiming authenticity or primordial identity and the rights that supposedly go along with it. The uneasiness of PC towards nativism, in short, goes against the historical contingency and social constructedness of identity, which is among the well-accepted analytic norm in PC.

Nativism, so the PC interlocutor observes, manifests in PP’s tendencies to dichotomize sharply between the foreign or foreign-influenced and the native or supposedly non-foreign influenced and to reject or downplay the former and promote the latter rather offhand, as exemplified for example in Salazar’s idea of the Great Cultural Divide. More about this issue will be discussed below. Nativism may also be reflected in Salazar’s penchant to look back in the deepest past before the Europeans came (Salazar, *Kasaysayan ng Kapilipinuhan: Bagong Balangkas*) apparently driven by an assumption that indigenous, truly native Filipino-ness awaits being recovered or rediscovered therein (“Ang Pantayong Pananaw Bilang

Diskursong Pangkabihasnan”). In Salazar’s view only about 5% or even less—a thin layer of elites and educated ones—were really affected by Spanish colonization. Being Westernized, they had been detached from the supposedly native cultural anchor. The remaining 95% were hardly affected (Salazar “Pantayong Pananaw: Isang Paliwanag”) and they were the bearers of native, or authentic, Filipino culture. I imagine PC interlocutor being dismayed by Salazar’s downplaying of the over three centuries of colonial experience as a superficial disruption that barely altered the fundamental characteristics of Filipino culture—a culture that was supposedly deeply anchored in the Malayo-Polynesian cultural base (Salazar, *Malayan Connection* 62).

For PC theorists like Homi Bhabha (*Location of Culture*), identity presupposes its opposite, and thus tends to be ambivalent or hybrid. It grows out of the dialectics between various forces at any given point in time. From this viewpoint, the long period of colonial experience, simply because it was a historical fact, is forever an indispensable ingredient in the dialectical process of constituting postcolonial Filipino identity, if there is ever such a thing at all. The majority who were supposed to be not Westernized could have not escaped foreign influences in the course of over 300 years of Spanish and American colonization. The notion of “Filipino identity” (or Filipino culture) in the singular and fixed term seems untenable with the huge number of Filipinos living in a wide range of socio-economic and cultural conditions both inside and outside of the country across historical periods, and given the shifting contexts open to transnational and global flows of influences particularly in the past several decades. Things are made to appear otherwise only as a reality-effect of hierarchical power relations that enable a particular standpoint to prevail over others.

PP interlocutor responds by pointing to Guillermo’s denial of the charge of PP’s nativism. To note, Guillermo is, along with Mendoza, easily the most perceptive and incisive analysts of PP. In his words: “Closer acquaintance with PP’s programmatic statements and corpus of writings would frustrate any responsible scholar who wanted to pin it down to fixed nativist . . . (position)” (“Exposition, Critique and New Directions for Pantayong Pananaw”). (In my view, however, by declaring that “no one among the PP can *consciously* take” the “strongest and blatantly ‘nativist’ position,” he effectively conceded that at least some PP proponents may be guilty of at least less blatant as well as unconscious forms of nativism. Critics of PP’s alleged nativism, so I surmise, might have misconstrued the intent or nature of the return-to-the past trope in PP. Drawing from the logic of Guillermo’s claim that “PP has no stake in adopting either an essentialist or anti-essentialist position as a philosophical standpoint” (“Exposition, Critique and New Directions for Pantayong Pananaw”), I think the same idea also applies to the case of nativism. Because PP is forward-looking, to develop “tayo,” its return-to-past moves may just

be an instrument or a strategy to attain its goal. By not taking it as a philosophical and analytic starting point, it does not have to worry much about the potential epistemological contradictions that emanate from a philosophical position. It is a sort of a contingent device, to borrow from Heather Sutherland's terminology, which highlights the usefulness of a concept to a particular and evolving context. It will change or evolve according to, among other possibilities, the stage of development of the *tayo*. When the time comes the *tayo* is strong and encompassing enough, and the members or potential members now have a different set of identity-related concerns, there might no longer be a need to nurture nativist longing. With the political goals of PP transparent from the very start, it does not have to be weighed down by epistemological and methodological issues. What takes precedent is the need to achieve the political goal.

The second problem in PP, so PC interlocutor notes, is essentialism. Essentialism refers to "a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity" (Fuss xi). It underpins, for instance, the rather dogmatic prescription for the use of Tagalog-based Filipino as the sole language of discourse. Following the logic of cultural holism, hard core proponents of PP such as Salazar view Filipino as the only language which is capable of fostering understanding and unity among people, in addition to expressing the true essence of Filipino experience ("Ang Pantayong Pananaw Bilang Diskursong Pangkabihasnan" 85-86). While they recognize the plurality of languages in the Philippines, they nevertheless push for the use of Tagalog-based Filipino as the legitimate medium to be used in schools all throughout the land. The fairly rigid stance can be shown in the fact that they chide those scholars who write and speak in English even if the perspective is obviously Filipino-centric (e.g. Iletto and Agoncillo). Critics like Serena Diokno take it as an act that smacks of favoring the form over the substance ("Philippine Nationalist Historiography and the Challenge of the New Paradigm"). From PC standpoint, the idea of unity or coherence among language, identity, and culture that classical ethnology presupposed has long been supplanted by the dynamic conception of culture as site of struggle rather than locus of harmony (Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms").

Another area where essentialism operates, so PC interlocutor proceeds, is in the notion of the Great Cultural Divide between the elite and the masses. In Salazar's view this divide was engendered by colonial experience that created a layer of Western-oriented elites who were imbued with the culture and values of the colonizers. They also had supposedly grown alienated from the indigenous traditions and from the masses. From the standpoint of PC, such a formulation is overly simplified and essentialist. It presupposes an authentic and hardly changing essence of Filipino culture that was supposedly not tainted by foreign influences. It is unmindful of the complex gradations in cultural, economic, gender, ethnic, religious,

and political terms between and within the two groups. Even a sympathizer of PP, Portia Reyes, who has (had) been in the inner circle of the group observes rather disapprovingly:

PP overly dichotomizes the country's class structure. PP constantly refers to the division of the elite and the poor, rarely shedding light on the vast range of socioeconomic status within these two labels. We only need to consider the landless peasant, the sharecropper, and the small land-owning farmer to see how the monolithic label 'the poor' begins to crumble sociologically and economically. Unfortunately, this dualistic misconception at times renders PP's conclusions predictable and staid. ("Fighting Over a Nation" 253-254)

PP interlocutor explains that PP proponents such as Salazar do not take culture as fixed or hardly changing, but that change happens slowly in the *longue duree* (Guillermo, "Exposition, Critique"). This view justifies the idea of coherence and stability in historical patterns which supposedly allow pinning down certain essential features evident in the patterns. For her part, Mendoza defends PP against the charge of essentialism by invoking Spivak's idea of "strategic essentialism." It is a form of essentialism supposedly necessary for a pro-marginalized political project (*Spivak Reader* 204-205). This idea of selective essentialism was disparaged or avoided by many. Even Spivak eventually distanced herself from it. Rather than be dismissed as flawed, I think the idea's honesty about the political character of knowledge makes it deserving of a serious attention. In a separate article, I tried to demonstrate, among other things, that essentialism may be a fundamental feature of knowledge production (Curaming, "Beyond Orientalism"). That is, words, concepts, theories, and the logic that puts them together are all premised on the idea of an essential meaning, which is a precondition of analysis. From this view, scholarly constructs may just be either more or less essentialist; they cannot really escape essentialism altogether. Rather than defending PP from the charges of essentialism, it might be more productive analytically to embrace it as one of PP's key features. The task is to explicate the political ramifications of PP's essentialism.

Thirdly, binary logic poses a challenge to PP. PC interlocutor chides PP for defining identity, such as Filipino identity (the "us" in from-us-for-us), with the Other (the "them" such as Spanish or Americans) in mind. Doing so will just replace one ethnocentrism with another ethnocentrism. In Appiah's apt observation, this view leads one to "remain trapped in a position of counter-identification which simply reverses the terms and the arguments of colonialism, as well as the trajectories it has traced out" (paraphrased in Williams and Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* 14). One may not be playing the "identity" game on terms set by the Other, which is a point oft-asserted by PP to be one of its features. However, the very notion of "tayo" (us) presupposes the existence of "sila" (them), and thus

indicates that PP merely inverts the positioning. An unseen hand, thus, that drives the formation of “tayo” and the Other needs to be exposed to free both from the manipulative clutches. There is where the potency of deconstructionism lies. It uncovers metanarratives that insidiously govern our ways of thinking. From the viewpoint of PC, in short, PP does not go far enough. It rejects colonial discourse and its immediate auxiliaries but it allows itself to be bound by the same logic that made colonialism and colonial discourse possible.

PP interlocutor explains that PP is clear from the start about the scope and focus of its project, which is the formation of an encompassing, self-directed, and strong *tayo*. Whatever happens beyond the boundary of such in-group is beyond the purview of the group’s concern. Operating from the position of weakness made possible by centuries of colonialism, PP can only focus its still limited resources and power for self-strengthening. In time when the group is strong enough, it can afford to pay greater attention to what is happening beyond.

Fourthly, another problem with PP from the PC viewpoint lies in its nationalistic aspirations—to promote a truly national discourse (*talastasang bayan*) via a Filipino-centric history with the view towards recovering or re-discovering the true essence of Filipino-ness and developing national consciousness and a unified Filipino nation. While PP recognizes the importance of local history (*pampook*, *pambayan*) and civilizational discourse (*pangkabihasan*) as indicative of the multiple levels of *pantayo*-ness, Salazar nevertheless declares that local history cannot be autonomous from, but a constitutive part of, national history (Salazar, “Kasaysayang Pampook, Pambayan at Pambansa”). In short, PP is an unabashedly nationalist undertaking. Proponents of PC such as Chakrabarty, Chatterjee, Said, Spivak and Bhabha express strong sentiment against nationalist projects. Drawing from the experience in Africa and India where misuse of nationalism by political elites was rampant, critics are skeptical of who actually benefit from the move to make nationalism the overarching principle. For all the inclusionary rhetoric of nationalism there are people who simply do not fit but were nonetheless forced to reshape themselves so they could be accepted within the framework defined by the dominant group. As Parta Chatterjee warns nationalist project could be as oppressive as colonialism that it sought to replace (*Nations and Its Fragments*).

In my observation, many in the community of Filipino historians in the Philippines take nationalist history as almost a fundamental good. Lulled in the long-tradition of anti-colonial discourse, it proved difficult to imagine a post-nationalist or anti-nationalist discourse among them. That an article that savages nationalist historiography like “Postcolonial Fissures and the Contingent Nation: An Antinationalist Critique of Philippine Historiography” could come out in the Philippines only in 2013 indicates this point. It was written by Philippines-based

scholar Lisandro Claudio who, as an overseas-trained young PhD whose undergraduate degree was not in history, was virtually an outsider in the field.

Fifth, PC interlocutor observes that PP has reduced colonial and postcolonial experience to almost a black-and-white phenomenon. It finds difficulty in grappling with the fact that colonialism, as Franz Fanon and Homi Bhabha among many others have shown, was a deeply ambivalent experience. It was ambivalent both for the colonizer and the colonized. In my own understanding of the trajectory of PP analytics, many of the key problems in the country were viewed either as direct effects or residues of colonialism. The causal link may be schematically simplified like this: the Philippines has many problems because Filipinos are not united (no huge and robust *tayo*). This situation sprang from their failure to understand each other well enough. It was due in large measure to the divisive and lingering impact of colonial experience, like colonial mentality and the continuing use of English among elites and others in the society. As there is no well-developed and encompassing *tayo*, the solution is to work towards developing it, and one key step towards this end is to use the national language, Filipino. It is a major instrument in expanding and strengthening the *tayo* (or nation). Under this analytic scheme, easily glossed over is the culpability of the politico-economic elites who have plundered the country for personal, family and class interests. PP tends to interpret such rapacious behavior as an indication of their alienation from the nation—alienation which is supposedly a lingering effect of colonialism and it ostensibly manifests in, say, being *inglisero* (English-speaker). If only they were one of us, speaking and thinking like other natives who are member of the in-group, so this line of thinking goes, they would not do that. They would instead do that which promotes the welfare of the nation. Easily forgotten is that greed, the impulses to take advantage of fellow Filipinos, and the tendency to commit corrupt practices, may have been driven by more fundamental factors like capitalism and or the prevalence of self-interest.

In my view herein lies one of the ironies of PP. Salazar categorically stated in my interview with him in 2004 that at the heart of PP as an intellectual project was the need to stop blaming the foreigners for the ills of the country and for Filipinos to hold themselves responsible for their own history. By rendering Filipinos the prime mover in their own history they can move in a direction beneficial for them, rather than threading along the path designed by others for, of course, their own interests. I believe it is a worthy goal, and I can only wonder how the analytic trajectory of PP ends up undermining this aspiration by providing a smokescreen for the sins of Filipino political and economic elites.

### Problems with PC: The PP View

It is now the turn of PP interlocutor to articulate PP's misgivings toward PC. The main problem, so PC interlocutor avers, lies in the contradictions that possibly draw from PC's aspiration to be a critique of knowledge. For all its virulent attacks on Western hegemony, including that in the prevailing knowledge systems, for example, PC ends up re-inscribing Eurocentrism in its attempts to provide an alternative. How can it not, so PP asks rhetorically, when the very methods and theories used by its proponents, and the very platform from which they launch their critiques, are all derived from Western traditions? Dipesh Chakrabarty concedes the inescapability of "Europe" when he noted that "the institutional site of a university whose knowledge protocols will always take us back to the terrain, where all contours follow that of my hyperreal Europe" and thus "the project of provincializing Europe must realize within itself its own impossibility" (Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History" 22).

Grounded on foundationalist epistemology, PP views PC's nonfoundationalism, which refers to the philosophical position that denies any unassailable ground where knowledge claims can stand on, as the root of contradictions. The logical consequence of a nonfoundationalist stance is that PC's critiques of key issues like binary logic or Othering, essentialism, identity, metanarratives, and power/knowledge cannot but be self-referential and thus undermines itself. The reason for this lies in the fact that PC itself is a form of knowledge. As such, it shares with the object of its critique the same conceptual, theoretical, and logical properties. Contradictions manifest, for example, in the critiques of Eurocentrism that end up allowing re-entry for Europe through the backdoor (e.g. Wallerstein's "avatars" of Eurocentrism), as well as in the anti-essentialist critique that cannot but sanction a certain form of essentialism (Spivak's strategic essentialism), just to mention a few. Noting the firm grounding of PP on realist or foundationalist epistemology, PP interlocutor insists that the contradictory character of PC undermines the efficacy of its critiques.

I should note that proponents of PC are aware of the contradictions. Other proponents, however, have taken this rather paradoxical character of PC as integral to the whole challenge. Chakrabarty, for one, calls for "history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices." It is, he adds, a "history that will attempt the impossible: to look toward its own death by tracing that which resists and escapes the best human effort at translation across cultural and other semiotic systems, so that the world may once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous" ("Postcoloniality

and the Artifice of History” 23) For her part, Gayatri Spivak has noted that the nature of deconstruction, which is a key element in PC, entails auto-criticism. She declared that there is no escaping from “metaphysical enclosures” and that is the reason why there is a need for “a persistent critique of what one cannot not want” (*Spivak Reader* 27). “As a feminist, Marxist deconstructivist,” so she avers, “I am interested in the theory-practice of pedagogic practice-theory that would allow us constructively to question privileged explanations even as explanations are generated” at the same time (*The Spivak Reader* 28). Deconstruction, in short, entails simultaneous construction, which calls for another round of deconstruction, and the cycle goes on.

PP interlocutor finds PC’s self-consciousness of its own contradictions baffling if seen from the standpoint of PP. PP proponents could only wonder why despite the recognition of the Western mentality as among the deep roots of many problems, and notwithstanding the deconstructionist injunction that nothing is transcendental which serves as open invitation for subversion of its very own claim, PC advocates like Spivak and Chakrabarty choose to take the Western-ness of the academia as inescapable, as if it is already a fait accompli. Rather than reject it, as PP explicitly does, PC followers have opted to work with or around it, thinking perhaps they can effect reforms from within. In the maiden issue of the flagship journal of the field, *Postcolonial Studies*, the editors Sanjay Seth, Leila Gandhi and Michael Dutton were evidently not oblivious to Chakrabarty’s and Spivak’s warnings as noted above, but they nevertheless raised questions whose answers, so PP interlocutor believes, were clear to PP proponents long before:

For all its apparently oppositional energies, can the postcolonial project ever liberate the cultures/histories it represents from the shadow of ‘alterity’, from the consolations of ‘difference’, from the language of ‘otherness’? Indeed, how far is the postcolonial intellectual implicated in the relentless ‘othering’ of her own cause? And, finally, is it possible to dissolve the disabling oppositions of centre/margin, metropolis/province, West/rest without submitting to the feeble consolations of ‘hybridity’ and ‘syncretism’  
?(9)

PP interlocutor underlines that PP’s answer to these questions was a resounding no. But for PC proponents, so PC’s interlocutor reports, these are precisely the challenges. That the journal is almost twenty years old now indicates the robust efforts to address the challenge. I imagine that the PP interlocutor asks with a tinge of cynicism regarding the longevity of the journal. At the heart of PP, so PP interlocutor clarifies, is a deep-seated antipathy towards what its advocates pejoratively call *comprador* scholarship. Reared in centuries-long tradition of dominance of colonial scholarship, and locked in a protracted and fiery polemics against scholars who remain not only steep in Western-oriented scholarship but

seem to be deliberately taking the cudgel for Western hegemony, PP advocates find such a declaration as quoted above to be no more than a self-serving justification for a *comprador* scholarship. It may be likened, so PP interlocutor continues, to a machine whose function is not mainly to solve real socio-economic and political Third World problems, but to generate intellectual capital for PC scholars' own benefits.<sup>6</sup> The wary attitude of critics such as Aijaz Ahmad, Epifanio San Juan Jr., Arif Dirlik, and Vasant Kaiwar towards diasporic or "Third World" academics who push for PC is generously shared by PP advocates.

The point noted above foregrounds PP's second main criticism of PC. With self-assurance of the purpose of their scholarship, I imagine PP finds PC so confused. PP, for instance, is categorical about what is historical knowledge, for what purpose and for whom it is created. In PP's view, historical knowledge is that which happened in the past based on all sorts of evidences (both empirical and inferential). It is meaningful for a group of people and is important for recovering or re-building their personal and national identity. On the other hand, the same unmistakable sense of purpose cannot be said of PC. At an initial glance, it is clear in its aim to counter the hegemony of the West and to fight for the interests of the marginalized. Things begin to dim quickly, however, when all of a sudden the colonizers and the colonized, the self and the Other, the victim and the perpetrators, are no longer very clear categories as they emerged from Fanon's and Bhabha's kind of psychoanalysis. With a stroke of Spivak's deconstructive wand, speaking on behalf of those who are muted and oppressed by social and political forces became no longer a plainly legitimate and altruistic scholarly undertaking. It may be an act of "symbolic or epistemic violence." With all the postcolonial diatribe against the Enlightenment project that underpins the whole process of colonization and modernity, Spivak points to "enabling violence" and the "enabling violations" that go with colonization conceding that it is impossible to deny the "civilizing power of socialized capital" (qtd. in Gilbert-Moore 76). With such kind of pronouncement, I can imagine proponents of PP scratching their head, perplexed.

### Measuring on their Own Claims

If assessed based on their own logical yardstick, how do PC and PP measure up? As already noted PC is ridden with contradictions. Critical analytic traditions that are epistemologically discordant such as poststructuralism and Marxism have converged in PC. Various complaints (e.g. Kaiwar; Goh) about PC's tendency to undermine the foundation for progressive, pro-people scholarship seem rooted in the political implications of this epistemological disharmony.

The nonfoundationalist or deconstructivist aspirations of PC tend to clash not only with the realism of Marxism but also with the foundationalist and constructionist/constructivist ethos of modern scholarship in general, including PC. At a more elementary level, PC's anti-essentialist and anti-reification stance runs in tensions with fundamentally essentialist functional role of words and concepts (Putnam 215-271). At its core, PC seems to be deeply contradictory.

PP appears to fare better than PC in terms of internal coherence. It has, however, its share of contradictions. At the heart of PP lies relativism of various shades, such as those based in shared culture or historical experience. This relativism serves as basis for asserting equality among different groups of people. Following this logic, it does not make sense for PP to deny the different "life world" in which contemporary Filipinos—having been colonized, modernized, globalized—exist, compared with that of the natives of the pre-colonial days. Thus, contemporary Filipinos ought to be judged on their own terms, their own *tayo*, and not based to the presumptive purity and goodness of the precolonial experience. This is not to negate, of course, the negative impact of colonialism, but a wide-covering phenomenon like colonialism had had ambivalent effects. It may be beneficial for some and disadvantageous for others in a particular and historically contingent context. On the other hand, the concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity in psychoanalysis as appropriated in PC do indeed make it appear less shameful, or even better, for one to be "tainted or contaminated" by colonial experience. From this standpoint, being a hybrid is itself an indication that colonizers were not totally successful in imposing their culture upon the "natives." Also for millions of present-day Filipinos, including several million OFWs spread out across the globe, the colonial experience that afforded them exposure to foreign cultures such as English language and Western orientations may be considered advantageous, even essential, for them to survive or get ahead. PP easily dismisses such a view as a product of the despicable colonial mentality, which is precisely what needs to be corrected. If the logic of PP, however, is to be employed, rather than expelling them outside of PP's preferred boundary of *tayo*, the boundary ought to be redefined to include them. Existential reality dictates that they are Filipinos not just by citizenship but, more importantly, by self-identification and by sharing common experiences of, say, being looked down upon overseas, or being sidelined and taken advantaged of by elites at home. Experience may prove to be a more effective agent of solidarity ("tayo-ness") than, say, language, which PP is keen to emphasize. Excluding them on the basis of language risks exposing PP's dogmatic and exclusionary tendencies, which is rather ironic, given the inclusionary nature of their starting point, *tayo*.

Similar questions may be raised on PP's attitude towards English. Following PP logic, the use of English along with other widely used local languages may not be despicable as PP's hardcore proponents wish us to believe. After a century of

use in the country, English has been acculturated, used in everyday life by at least segments of society and more broadly in business and education. The crystallization of Filipino English as an internationally recognized variety of English attests to this acculturation. Arguably, the contemporary Filipino identity cannot be defined without facility in English as one of its components. As PP logic covers everything that is already part of a certain group, it can be argued that English has already become a part of Filipino groups; it is already a part of the “pantayo.” PP’s objective of facilitating greater and inclusionary understanding among Filipinos is likely to be served better if these languages are allowed to coexist.

## CONCLUSION

A mutually critical engagement between PC and PP foregrounds a number of long-standing and vexing issues that need re-visiting. First, it raises anew challenging questions, such as: what does critical or progressive scholarship really entail? For whom it ought to be done? Is there a necessary trade-off between clarity and consistency of purpose and target beneficiary, as PP values, on the one hand, and theoretical sophistication, as PC offers, on the other? Both PP and PC claim that common people including the marginalized are the target beneficiaries of their critical projects. It seems easier to believe in the case of PP than PC dogged as the latter is by charges of undermining progressive politics and of “aestheticisation of poverty and human misery” (Kaiwar 166). While Spivak in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* seems theoretically justifiable in insisting on the need for deconstructive auto-criticism in knowledge production, it reinforces and at the same time deprives a solid platform for any form of scholarship, progressive or not. The possibility of cancelling each other out is enormous. Something must be done to address its de-politicizing tendencies beyond invoking strategic essentialism. For its part, PP would be well served by heeding at least some aspects of PC’s critique of essentialism, nationalism, and nativism. Hamstrung by emphasis on perspectival and cultural roots of many problems, PP’s clarity of purpose would be enhanced by expanding its critical register. The wide-ranging, complex and deeply rooted problems of Filipinos may be better understood and addressed if one goes beyond the culturalist analytic lens. In this sense, the concerns of the group who split from PP, particularly Kasaysayang Bayan (Llanes, “Kasaysayang Bayan”), need to be paid greater attention.

Second, despite representing two opposing critico-analytic traditions, both PP and PC are self-conscious of the desire to be progressive or pro-marginalized. Notwithstanding such an aspiration, however, both were liable to (mis)appropriation by reactionary or elitist forces. PP’s critique of Eurocentrism and other foreign

elements inadvertently gives support to the self-serving political and economic elites in the Philippines by, among other means, diverting peoples' attention away from their rapacity and destructive quarrels and channeling the blame for the sorry state of the country on to the "wrong" cultural orientation or the lingering impact of colonialism and Western imperialism. For its part, PC has been chided for undermining the critique of inequality, exploitation, and discrimination by directing the focus on cultural and epistemic differences between the West and the rest, and away from the political economic structural roots of these problems (e.g. Ahmad; Kaiwar; San Juan). These are cases, in other words, of the subversives being subverted. It is a situation which owes to the possibly inherent double, or multi-edged character of knowledge. As knowledge assumes life of its own while circulating in a social space, "progressive" authors' output may be interpreted and appropriated for purposes contrary to the original intent. If expressly progressive scholarly projects can be used for reactionary or conservative purposes, and PC and PP may be good examples, what hopes there might be for the future of progressive politics in general?

Third, both PC and PP set Eurocentrism as their core target of critique. With its reliance on the arsenal of European intellectual tradition, PC finds it difficult to extricate itself from the object of its critique. PP seems able to acquit itself more effectively in this respect. Be that as it may, to what extent has anti-Eurocentrism remained valid as an anchor for contemporary progressive agenda? The circulation of ideas, goods, and humans has been regional or even global in scope. While it is true that the North-South divide is expanding and such divide still overlaps considerably with the old East-West split, local elites in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have long appeared to be, if not more, at least as greedy, discriminating and exploitative of their compatriots and fellow "Third Worlders" as former colonizers from Europe and America. In addition, with rise of China, which is obviously not of the "West," but nevertheless shows imperial ambitions we normally associate with the West, all the more the long standing critique of East-West binary makes sense. Critical scholarship, thus, needs to pay more attention to internal colonialism and non-white imperialism and racial discrimination, than what PP has done. PC has been more responsive than PP to these issues earlier on, but particularly in the past two decades.

What does progressive scholarship entail now given the quickly evolving global, regional, and national environments? This is a contentious and challenging question which underlies this critical engagement. There have been serious efforts to re-orient or re-route PC, such as that which is evident in the volume *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium* edited by Janet Wilson, Cristina Sandru, and Sarah Welsh. As for PP, things are also changing, albeit in a seemingly slower pace and in smaller scale as may be glimpsed in Ramon

Guillermo's and Myfel Paluga's penetrating critiques of PP and the latest volume, *Pantayong Pananaw: Pagyabong ng Talastatasan, Pagbubunyi kay Zeus A. Salazar*, edited by Navarro, Rodriguez-Tatel, and Villan. Whatever direction these changes will eventually lead to, there are two key elements that, I believe, pro-marginalized scholarship would be better to keep and pursue in earnest, namely, PP's clarity of purpose and its focus on the general public as target beneficiary, and PC's emphasis on the fundamentally political nature of knowledge production and consumption. The public sphere will be better equipped to participate in democratic governance if power/knowledge relations are rendered fully transparent. This can be done by pushing the logic of power/knowledge to its utmost so as to completely map out and account for the matrices of power relations that inform each knowledge production regime. How it may be done is an intellectual project that may take a long and collective effort to pursue.

## Notes

1. Portia Reyes's "Fighting over a Nation: Theorizing a Filipino Historiography." Zeus Salazar's article "The Pantayo Perspective as a Discourse towards Kabihasanan" appeared earlier in 2000 in *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* (now *Asian Journal of Social Science*), but this journal is not known for its postcolonial bent.
2. Efforts to inject an analytic mode with a materialist bent epistemo-cultural "classical" PC were not really absent, as exemplified, say, by Gayatri Spivak's intervention, but it was in the later stage of its development, partly in response to critics such as Ahmad (*In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*) and Parry (*Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*), among others, when such efforts gained clearer impact.
3. See for examples Mojares's *Waiting for Mariang Makiling*.
4. See Reyes ("Fighting over a Nation") and Mendoza (*Between the Homeland and the Diaspora*) for a more comprehensive and in-depth discussion of this point.
5. See, for example, B. Abrera (1992), *Ang Numismatika ng Anting-Anting: Panimulang Paghawan ng Isang Landas Patungo sa Pag-unawa ng Kasaysayan at Kalingang Pilipino (The Numismatics of Amulets: A Preliminary Exploration Towards Understanding Filipino History and Culture)*, an unpublished thesis, History Department, UP-Diliman, Quezon City.
6. Insofar as I know there is really no debate involving PP where PC was referred to this way. But the unfavorable attitude of PP advocates such as Salazar to what they call *comprador* scholarship applies well with "Third World" PC scholars who mediate between the West and their respective countries of origin. I based my approximation of PP proponents' attitude to *comprador* scholarship on my interviews with Salazar in 2004 and in the exhilaratingly heated debates on Facebook between Patricio Abinales, on the one hand, and sympathizers and advocates of PP on the other.

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