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Harold Legaspi

Decolonising Transculturally via José Rizal's Life & Legacy as Motif

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

School of Art, Communication and English

The University of Sydney

Supervised by: Senior Lecturer Dr Peter Minter and Senior Lecturer Dr Beth Yahp

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Abstract

While José Rizal was not a separatist, he prompted the development for the Philippine Revolution from colonial Spain. His life and legacy are motifs for a movement away from colonial mentalities, which are evidenced in his writings, particularly his novels. This thesis encourages decolonisation as a praxis, by advocating plurilingualism and plurilingual literatures. By juxtaposing Rizal's life (i.e., reading and writing, novels) and legacy (i.e., plurilingualism) with theories from (decolonial) thinkers, we may look for a decolonised future beyond nation-ness, nationalism, and sovereignty to create a personal and collective consciousness through enlightenment and empathy—a pluriversal humanity where love is the main cause; the heart as the forerunner for a mental revolution. We engage with creative resistance for plurality from Mikhail Bakhtin and Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'polyphony' or 'dialogism' then delve into Jacques Derrida's 'Deconstruction of Language' and his critiques on Emmanuel Levinas; Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* then Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 'Politics of Language', in effect inverting canonical comprehensions of colonialism to reinscribe the linguistically, culturally and discursively marginalised. Imagining the nation as an evolving community of language and culture, this thesis moves normative colonial Western hegemony that occupies the front and centre of thinking and practise through local self-determination while emphasising global decoloniality. This may be achieved primarily through linguistic and transcultural transformation and translation, i.e., plurilingualism. Going beyond our hegemonic monolingual ideologies refracts our consciousness by dislodging the sense of entitlement held by dominant groups and languages. This thesis and poetry collections help through enlightenment of Rizal's polyglot consciousness—his life and legacy, and draws attention for Australians and regions of the world that remain oppressed where colonial subjugation are radically undermining ways of being, thinking, and relating.

By engaging in theorising through the plurilingual poetry, language is purposefully worked, enabling one to transcend via empathy. The leitmotifs of Rizal (a decolonised Filipino) may be inscribed through poetry to create consciousness through the heart. The diversity of positions in this thesis and poetry collections, not merely make representations of historical, linguistic and transcultural tropes, but a hauntingly albeit beautiful energised exploration of identity (soul) and spirit, by way of political portrayal of the Other, personal reconciliation of the mind through the heart and Rizal's life and legacy.

Authorship Attribution Statement

The poems from the following poetry collections, of which I am author, are published as specified:

Litany

Tayong Dalawa: Legaspi Harold. (2019). 'Tayong Dalawa' in *Future of Language* [Video].

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Utterance: Legaspi Harold. (2022, January). 'Utterance'. *The Philippine Community Herald*. Vol. 28, No 1. 24.

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Love is a Rebellious Bird: Legaspi Harold. (2022, July), 'Love is a Rebellious Bird'. *The Philippine Community Herald*. Vol. 28, No 7. 24.

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Requiem

No-one Listened: Legaspi Harold. (2019). 'No-one Listened'. *Cordite Poetry Review*. Edited by Lucy Van, Ling Toong, George Mouratidis. Issue 93.

<http://cordite.org.au/poetry/peach/no-one-listened/>.

Open Sesame: Legaspi Harold. (2020). 'Open Sesame'. *Meniscus Literary Journal*. Edited by Paul Hetherington. Vol. 8, Issue 2. 76. <https://www.meniscus.org.au/archive>.

Upon His Return: Legaspi Harold. (2020). 'Upon His Return'. *Australian Poetry Journal*. Edited by Eunice Andrada, David McCooey, Ellen van Neerven, Felicity Plunkett. Vol. 10, No. 1. 84.

Sabong in Taytay: Legaspi Harold. (2021). 'Sabong in Taytay'. *Cordite Poetry Review*. Edited by Winnie Dunn. Issue 100. <http://cordite.org.au/poetry/brownface/sabong-in-taytay/>.

The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation

Cool Kids: Legaspi Harold. (2022). 'Cool Kids'. *Southerly*. Edited by Melissa Hardie, Kate Lilley. Vol. 79, No. 3. 131. <https://southerlylitmag.com.au/harold-legaspi-cool-kids/>.

In addition to the statements above, in cases where I am not the corresponding author of a published item, permission to include the published material has been granted by the corresponding author.

Harold Jubert Legaspi

As supervisor for the candidature upon which this thesis is based, I can confirm that the authorship attribution statements above are correct.

Dr Peter Minter

Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Harold Jubert Legaspi

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgements | 9 |
| Notes on style | 11 |
| Chapter One: Introduction | 12 |
| Chapter Two: José Rizal's Life & Legacy as Motif | 38 |
| Section A: Rizal's Life & Legacy – History, Scholarship and Empiricism | 38 |
| Section B: Mental Revolution – Rizal's Novels & Theoretical Locations | 58 |
| Chapter Three: Conclusion – Movement with Consciousness | 120 |
| Section A: Consciousness Through the Heart | 122 |
| Section B: Decolonising Transculturally – Beyond Monolingualism | 146 |
| Bibliography | 167 |
| Poetry Collections | |
| <i>Litany</i> | |
| <i>Requiem</i> | |
| <i>The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation</i> | |

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The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation: Dr Melissa Hardie and Dr Kate Lilley (*Southerly*).

Notes on Style

In footnote citations throughout this thesis, very long titles, journal issue titles and subtitles have been shortened, where possible, without losing significant detail. All this detail is contained in the bibliography. Online source references, where possible and practicable, are also contained in the bibliography to assist with access.

In some cases, definitions have been included, sourced (and paraphrased) from *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online*, except ones which I created for this thesis.

Decolonising Transculturally via José Rizal's Life & Legacy as Motif

Chapter One: Introduction

To begin this thesis is to write about a dream I once had, where a voice told me with lament that José Rizal's legacy had been destroyed. At that time, I didn't know *how*. Only that the Philippines, the country where I was born, no longer represented the ideal of a homeland, from the notion that we, as a family of migrants, have no intention of going back there to live permanently. However, 'home' is not necessarily defined by the place where one lives, but rather exists in memories, where heart and mind are at peace; where spirit and soul originate.

Growing up in Australia had been peaceful, more than, I think, if it had've been in the country where I was born, the Philippines. Yet, I am haunted by the memories of migration, and the servitude my parent's experienced to raise their children as one. I am beginning to realise the weight of the battles we encountered. As migrants, our mother tongue was foreign/imported in Australia. We were forced to speak in English which distanced us from who we truly were. It was a kind of enjambment which created tension, disrupting the pace of our lives and our sense of being.

It is known that Australia is a multicultural society. Yet, this multiculturalism is premised around the 'inside/outside' dialectic with political ramifications, namely, that if there is a central position, there must also be one in the margins. Gayatri Spivak notions that the strategic thing to do is to absolutely present oneself at the [front and] centre; yet for her, the [front and] centre is always constituted in terms of its own marginality.¹

Australia's notion of 'we', 'assuming an Anglo-Australian narratorial position—about how some rather homogenously other "they" arrived to live here, has been extremely

¹ Plunkett Felicity. (2006) 'You Make Me a Dot in the Nowhere': Textual Encounters in the Australian Immigration Story (The Fourth Chapter). *Journal of Australian Studies*. 30(88). 46.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050609388074>.

dominant'.² 'We', as a pronoun of choice, evokes a sense of unity, but is demarcated from attitudes that 'eschew an apology, arguing with indefatigable repetition for the first person singular: "Why should I apologise for something I didn't do?"'³ Our history (of colonisation) deliberately, if not subconsciously, evades the reasoning that we are all migrants on this continent.⁴

Attitudes detailed above led me to think that our problems are deeply engrained by our differences. These differences cause lack of empathy, which is the essential ingredient in attaining harmony, and any prospect of peace. The principles in this thesis therefore aim to propel positions that are not static nor fixed. Its politics rests on the notion that *we*—all *Homo sapiens* (evading the temporalities of countless generations and ageist sensibilities), never really matured, nor did we become free from our dependency from nature à la 'tragedy of the commons'. A metaphor for our condition is one that depicts humanity upon mother nature's umbilical cord, never severed. '*We all depend*'.⁵ In life, even a hermit who intentionally lives in seclusion would still depend on nature in order to survive. As such, we are all *in need*; *we can learn from each other and ourselves*, no matter our position in society. Hence, the importance of not only empathy, but observation as a means to enlighten a path that is ever more considered.⁶

² Plunkett Felicity. 'You Make Me a Dot in the Nowhere': Textual Encounters in the Australian Immigration Story (The Fourth Chapter). 46.

³ Plunkett Felicity. 'You Make Me a Dot in the Nowhere': Textual Encounters in the Australian Immigration Story (The Fourth Chapter). 46.

⁴ Bruce Pascoe cites Wade Davis, who analysed evidence for early Aboriginal occupation, to be 60,000 years ago, when modern people began to leave Africa. Pascoe writes it is 'the generally accepted figure of 60,000-65,000 years ago for Aboriginal occupation of Australia, [making] us one of the first, if not *the* first, to leave the African continent'...However, 'Aboriginal burning as the most likely cause of vegetation changes...implies that people have been present on the Australian continent for at least 140,000 years'. See Pascoe Bruce. (2018). *Dark Emu*. Broome, WA: Magabala Books. 60-61.

⁵ Legaspi Harold. (2021). *Letters in Language*. Markwell: Flying Islands Pocket Books of Poetry series. 19.

⁶ According to Thich Nhat Nanh, the appropriate Buddhist term is '*vipasyana* (insight, or looking deeply). "Looking deeply" means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears'. See Hanh Thich Nhat. (2007). *Living Buddha, Living Christ: 20th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Riverhead Books. 10-11.

This thesis and the collections of poetry nurtures thought. Dreaming of our ill-fated condition evoked memories of dragonflies (Filipino: *tutubi*) that I'd seen in our garden, growing up in the Philippines. I am inspired by the *tutubi*'s way of flight—silent; multi-directional; able to halt mid-air to remain stationary. It may be novel to revere the *tutubi*'s way of flight in nurturing the consciousness of others. This thesis and collections of poetry reveres the *tutubi*'s way of flight as inspiration because it nurtures through the written word, which may be read to fuel thought and imagination. Yet, as a pre-cursor to the rest of this thesis, I should posit that my *being*, in writing it, is hampered by the paradox one may consider in light of Humberto R. Maturana's 'Biologie der Sozialität' (1985), where I contend with balancing the act of placing truth (*objectively*), *with and without parenthesis*.

By *objectivity without parenthesis*, one has 'a passion for changing the other', as opposed to *objectivity in parenthesis*, which Maturana explains, as 'all views, all verses in the multiverse are equally valid...[one] lose[s] passion for changing the other'.⁷ Maturana explains further: 'To other people [one] may seem too tolerant. However, if the others also put objectivity in parenthesis, [one] discover[s] that disagreements can only be solved by entering a domain of co-inspiration in which things are done together because the participants want to do them. With objectivity in parenthesis, it is easy to do things together because *one is not denying the other* (italics added) in the process of doing them'.⁸

Thus, the mode of addressing this paradox, in this instance, may be by 'changing the other' (i.e., objectivity without parenthesis), while having deep regard of the notion that decolonisation prefers objectivity in parenthesis (i.e., lost passion for changing the other).⁹

⁷ Maturana Humberto (1985) as cited in Mignolo Walter. (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham; London: Duke University Press. 27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jqbw>.

⁸ Maturana Humberto (1985) as cited in Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 27.

⁹ Objectivity without parenthesis, to the n^{th} degree may 'result in a closed political system ready to be taken by totalitarian regimes and fertile for an economy in which increases of production and wealth take priority over human lives and life in general'. See Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 70.

This is because, ‘Inter-cultural dialogue...based on the premise of objectivity without parenthesis, could prove deadly when agencies defending opposite objectives without parenthesis confront each other. Dialogue becomes unsustainable’.¹⁰ Indeed, as Mignolo says, ‘the realisation of objectivity in parenthesis...is predicated on the difficult task of overcoming objectivity without parenthesis’.¹¹ While the theoretical aspects of this thesis relate to decolonisation, its praxis privileges the solitary acts of reading and writing because it balances the domain of co-inspiration, and negates deadly confrontation of opposing views, thus attempting to influence or ‘change the other’ through these modes (i.e., truth objectively *with and without* parenthesis), as Rizal had done.

Like Rizal, I feel the act of reading and writing to be purposeful.¹² I do not know another way *to be*, seeing as reading and writing nurtures ideas, theories, concepts, cultures, languages and history. However, there are perils from reading and writing that encroach on time and space, and with it come the difficulty of being able to freely articulate thoughts borne from contemplation, despite the fact that *being* a writer aligns with my ontology.

One should bear in mind, this thesis and collections of poetry encourages transcultural decolonisation. As Walter Mignolo says, decolonisation (and dewesternisation) operates to mediate by delinking from (colonising and Western) actors and institutions (e.g., organisations, corporations, universities), away from control and management of knowledge.¹³ Coloniality of power constitutes a matrix (i.e., Colonial Matrix of Power), a

¹⁰ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 70.

¹¹ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 70.

¹² There is still reason to place importance on the Indigenous people’s tradition of orality, as opposed to reading and writing—as a way of life. For one, not all people are lettered, yet it is vital to be able to reach them. Orality as a way of life, is contrary to Jacques Derrida’s dismantling the notion of the native speaker as occupying a position of privilege. See Derrida Jacques. (1997). *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. I think speech as opposed writing harnesses thought in different ways. The effect of sound from speech as a speaker and listener tends to ‘cut the air’; the air absorbs the energy from the sound wave attenuating (weakening) it. I often think of not being in a position to be the *speaker*; but I do have a *voice*, which may be experienced through the silent, contemplative acts of reading and writing.

¹³ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 65-66.

term coined by Peruvian sociologist and humanist thinker, Aníbal Quijano, which operates through control or hegemony over economy, authority, gender/sexuality and knowledge. Colonial Matrix of Power presents itself in the dominance of the nation-state, capitalism, the nuclear family and Eurocentrism. The delinking Mignolo advocates ‘consists of “disputing the imperial definition of humanity”—and thus [questioning] humanism as its spokesperson or “bodyguard”’.¹⁴ This may be expressed, from a position of ‘exteriority’, ‘as the difference between changing “the content” as opposed to changing “the terms” of the conversation’.¹⁵ And, as Maturana writes, ‘If we follow this path of explanation, we cannot demand the subjection of our fellow human beings, but will listen to them, seek cooperation and communication’.¹⁶ Thus, ‘all Being’, necessitates ‘observ[ation]’, rather than subjection.¹⁷

This thesis and collections of poetry re-imagines Rizal’s life and legacy to decolonise transculturally via plurilingual literatures. Rizal’s life was nothing short of inspiring. His writing was influenced by the Enlightenment, French *siècle des Lumières* (literally ‘century of the Enlightened’), German *Aufklärung*; a European movement and state of mind of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, premised on reason, and inspired by a common faith in the possibility of a better world—a worldview that edified Rizal’s novels, *Noli Me Tangere* (‘*The Noli*’) and *El Filibusterismo* (‘*The Fili*’); and Rizal’s ‘Malay Turn’; as well as Rizal’s ‘Turn to Tagalog’.¹⁸

¹⁴ Mignolo Walter, Tlostanova Madina V. (2012). ‘Who Speaks for the “Human” in Human Rights?’ In *Learning to Unlearn Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Ohio State University Press. 160. See also Smiet Katrine. (2022). ‘Rethinking or Delinking? Said and Mignolo on Humanism and the Question of the Human’. *Postcolonial Studies*. 25(1). 76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2022.2030595>.

¹⁵ Exteriority, in this instance, also requires recognising and recovering non-Western ways of living and knowing. See Smiet Katrine. ‘Rethinking or Delinking? Said and Mignolo on Humanism and the Question of the Human’. 82.

¹⁶ Maturana Humberto, Poerksen Bernhard. (2004). *From Being to Doing: The Origins of the Biology of Cognition*. Carl-Auer Verlag. 42.

¹⁷ Mignolo ‘seemingly rejects the possibility of an “observer” who stands completely outside of the Colonial Matrix of Power. He acknowledges it as the position that Donna Haraway would call a “God trick”: a view from nowhere’. See Smiet Katrine. ‘Rethinking or Delinking? Said and Mignolo on Humanism and the Question of the Human’. 83. See also Maturana Humberto, Poerksen, Bernhard. *From Being to Doing: The Origins of the Biology of Cognition*. 42.

¹⁸ Nery John. (2011). *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore Studies. 46-68. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814345064>.

If Rizal's main turning points (towards Tagalog and his 'Malay' roots and routes) symbolised his inherent will to return to his cultural origins by way of ethnicity and language, and if these turns yielded (the Philippine) aspirations for a collective consciousness and independence, then our *Imagined Communities* (i.e., 'distill[ed] of complex "crossing" of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, become "modular", capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness' (n.b., not necessarily denoted as 'nations'), anyone may benefit by 'looking within' from a position of exteriority, as Rizal had done, to inspire personal and collective consciousness and liberty.¹⁹

This thesis and collections of poetry are aware of the 'violence of framing' communities. The formal universality of nationality, juxtaposed as nations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism is a modern conception, with 'state sovereignty' fully, flatly and operatively functioning to sustain rule over territories in populations over time.²⁰ This differs from older imagining of states and/or 'Country' defined by centres, porous borders that are indistinct.²¹ As such, while this thesis and collections of poetry are dedicated 'Para sa bayan /

¹⁹ Anderson Benedict. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso. 4.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt writes: 'If it were true that sovereignty and freedom are the same, then indeed no man could be free, because sovereignty, the ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership, is contradictory to the very condition of plurality'. See Arendt Hannah. (1998). *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. 234.

²¹ For First Nations and Torres Strait Islander people, 'Country' (with a capital "C") encompasses an interdependent relationship between an individual and their ancestral lands and seas. This reciprocal relationship between the land and people is sustained by the environment and cultural knowledge. According to The Uluru Statement from the Heart: 'Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from "time immemorial", and according to science more than 60,000 years ago. This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or "mother nature", and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown'. See Uluru Statement From the Heart. (2017). *The Uluru Statement From the Heart*. <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/>. Arendt on sovereignty: 'Sovereignty, which is always spurious if claimed by an isolated single entity...in the case of [a nation,] many men mutually bound by promises, a certain limited reality. The sovereignty resides in the resulting, limited independence from the incalculability of the future... of making and keeping promises...bound and kept together, not by an identical will...but by an agreed purpose for which ... shows itself quite clearly in its unquestioned superiority over those who are completely free, unbound by any promises and unkept by any purpose. This superiority derives from the capacity to dispose of the future as ... the present'. See Arendt Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 245.

For my country', they move beyond the limits of the national Australian paradigm (i.e., land/continent frame as an organising principle)—'my country' transcends these borders.²² While this thesis and collections of poetry are addressed to the colonisers first, the spirit of its letters, and the work to be performed, are addressed to readers who have transgressed our monolingualisms—those who have experienced *another* culture and *another* language apart from the dominant Anglo-Australian, to claim ground for plurilingualism. While plurilingualism may be defined as 'fluency in a number of languages', this thesis inculcates a kind of resistance to monolingual ideologies by arbitrating colonial and indigenous (or mother tongue) relations to languaging, such that it advocates for a 'middle ground'.²³ The irony is, just as Rizal is believed to have written his last poem 'Mi Ultimo Adios' in Spanish as he awaited execution at the hands of colonial imperialists, this thesis and collections of poetry (for the most part) are written in the colonising English language. As such, it meets the colonisers upon *their* terms, linguistically, but is marked by a complex relationship between cultures, firmly grounded on language plurality via plurilingual literatures, empathy and hospitality (to be discussed in Chapter Two, Section B: Mental Revolution – Rizal's Novels & Theoretical Locations).

A deeper understanding of our consciousness imagines the nation as an evolving community of language and culture, as well as presents the nation ethically (i.e., as a community where 'members are bound by a commitment to the common good'). To evade rhetorical arguments of denotation and connotations of 'the common good', I have abstained from propagating Christianity, bearing in mind that it was brought to the Philippines by the

²² Australia unlike the USA has not yet established a treaty with First Nations people, furthermore its Constitution fails yet to recognise them. However, an Australian referendum to acknowledge an Indigenous Voice to Parliament is being held on 14 October, 2023 and recognise First Nations people in the Constitution, which at the time of this thesis submission, has not yet occurred.

²³ Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, October). *Plurilingualism*. OED Online. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/view/Entry/146204>.

colonisation of the Spaniards, and is now practiced by the majority of its population.²⁴ Not only is Christianity prevalent in Filipino culture, it is embedded in the fabric of its society, from familial, social, and professional ties. The Philippines remains the only majority Christian country in South East Asia. Yet, Rizal's novels, particularly *The Noli*, are predicated on the perceived inequities of the Spanish Catholic priests and the ruling government.

Moreover, the Christian conception of time translates into the colonality of knowledge and power. As Mignolo explains, 'the linear concept of time was introduced in the Ancient Testament, or what is also referred to as the "Judeo-Christian tradition" during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', and this thesis departs from such temporalities (i.e., 'an imaginary chronological line') because conceptually, it in itself is a colonising strategy which had presented 'Europe in the present and the rest in the past', where 'the present was described as modern and civilised, the past as traditional and barbarian'.²⁵ In other words, 'time', had become 'a fundamental concept of colonality at large'.²⁶ Time, as colonising strategy for knowledge and power, fundamentally pits the continuous present against the faulty knowledge of our past—a past whose memories remain (in part) faded, buried and/or erased, and thus severed from humanity's plight towards enlightenment and empathy. While

²⁴ While Christianity is prevalent in Filipino culture, Arendt notes that the 'Modern loss of faith is not religious in origin—it cannot be traced to the Reformation and Counter Reformation, the two great religious movements of the modern age—and its scope is by no means restricted to the religious sphere... The historical evidence, on the contrary, shows that modern men were not thrown back upon this world but upon themselves. One of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes... has been an exclusive concern with the self... to reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself'. See Arendt Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 253-254.

²⁵ Mignolo's posits: 'Time' is a fundamental concept in building the imaginary of the modern/colonial world and an instrument for both controlling knowledge and advancing a vision of society based on progress and development. He describes a hierarchy and order of *being* ('chain of beings') with two features: (a) primitives closer to nature, civilised at the peak of culture; (b) primitives as traditional, Europeans as modern. Notably, 'knowledges beyond epistemic European imaginary from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment were disqualified as sustainable knowledges, although recognised in their past as traditional values'. The concept of time brought the 'distinction between modernity and tradition', and cultural differences were classified according to their 'proximity to modernity or to tradition', which hides the 'logic of colonality and imperial differences'. See Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 151-156, 160-161.

²⁶ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 152.

Rizal existed only for a brief period of time in the late nineteenth century, his legacy lives on and future generations can learn from his writings. This thesis and collections of poetry (re-) remembers and (re-)imagines, and attempts to shed light on one man's quest to enlighten through his writings, in a time which formulated the bedrock for a (national) consciousness of a peoples, whose characteristics is diverse as it is unique.

Yet, Rizal made explicit that he believed that God existed, because he 'was convinced of [his] own existence...[He] who recognises the effect recognises the cause. To doubt God would be to doubt one's own conscience and, consequently, to doubt everything; and, then, what is life for?'²⁷ Rizal believed that God was not like the God of the Catholics, as his God was far above such things—the God [he] 'surmise[s] is much greater, much better: *Plus Supra* (Far Above)!'²⁸ Rizal believed the best way to connect with God was through connecting personally through *nature*. God was the origin of nature; it was the expression of God.²⁹ This thesis and collections of poetry heeded the importance Rizal placed upon nature, and were inspired with walks (and reflection) in The Blue Mountains, as a way to connect with God(s). This aligns with Indigenous beliefs that 'landscape alone holds the key to understanding the unrevealed nature of the Dreaming'. Landscape is the 'true language of myth'—'words are only adjuncts, as are chants and ceremonies'.³⁰

While I am convinced of God(s), it is such that life remains a spiritual conundrum, necessitating a pluralistic understanding of differing beliefs.³¹ In consequence, this thesis and

²⁷ Palma Rafael. (1966). *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. Translated by Roman Ozaeta. Quezon City: Ken Inc. 244.

²⁸ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 244.

²⁹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 245.

³⁰ Cowan James. (2002). *Aborigine Dreaming*. Thorsons. 84.

³¹ Why should monotheistic religions, such as in Christianity, subject or exclude polytheists, agnostics or atheists? The paradoxes from differing beliefs may range from solipsism (i.e., where self is all that can be known to exist) to absolutism (i.e., reality, truth, or morality as 'absolute'—the same for everybody, everywhere, and every-when, regardless of individual culture or cognition, or different situations or contexts). C.f. 'Anthropos', in Gnosticism—the first human being; in the New Testament—son of man. Regardless, there are many verses in the Bible that teach us there is only one God. A couple of these include: **Deuteronomy 4:35, 39** — (35) 'You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no

collections of poetry prolongs God(s) work, but also yields empathy for the Other through equivocal insights, premised on advocating diverse human languages.³² It is an ethical project, one that includes written works in English and Tagalog (i.e., Filipino). It *moves* normative colonial Western hegemony that occupies the front and centre of thinking and practise. Its praxis is the divisions of language, intersectionality in society, and pre-supposes local self-determination while emphasising global decoloniality.

The dynamics of transculturalism in settler colonies such as the Philippines and Australia requires enactment of scholarship from universities to choreograph into being transcultural decoloniality. Just as the decolonised Filipino was the real goal in the Philippines from the time of the Spanish conquest, the decolonised Australian is the real goal of our time.³³ According to Mignolo, ‘the future of the planet, not just of Western civilisation, can hinge on whether the balance is tilted in [universal and totalitarian conceptions based on truth without parenthesis] or [pluriversality and truth in parenthesis]’.³⁴ Mignolo notes: ‘the [indigenous notions of] “communal” (as well as “common”...and the “commonwealth” or

other. (39) ‘Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other’.; and **1 Kings 8:60** — ‘so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other’. See Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). (1995). *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. 248, 483.

³² In the parable of the Tower of Babel, the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly’. They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth. But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other’. So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth. At Pentecost, Jesus, now exalted to heaven, sent the Spirit to his people, empowering them to worship in others’ (all) languages. See Genesis 11:1-9, Acts 2:4. Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. 22, 1,648-1,649.

³³ Constantino Renato. (1972) ‘Veneration Without Understanding’. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. 1(4). 12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472337185390141>.

³⁴ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 52.

“common good” in the liberal universe of discourse) could coexist in a pluriversal world, a world in which *truth and objectivity in parenthesis [are] sovereign*’ (italics added).³⁵

Rizal as an *Ilustrado* was writing *for*, not necessarily *of* the *Indios*.³⁶ His contribution was in the name of Filipino as a race, the recognition of people, and the re-imagining of the *Indio* into Filipino; an orientation which manifested itself in his novels. While his upbringing, and his (foreign) education were profound influences, his motives patriotically undergirded the pre-existing conditions for revolt towards liberty.

While Rizal was not a separatist (in fact, he repudiated violence and full decolonisation), he inspired a collective consciousness, which prompted the development for the Philippine Revolution in 1896 from colonial Spain.³⁷ Thus, the motifs are a movement away from colonial mentalities, which are rendered by juxtaposing theories, ideas and concepts from (decolonial) thinkers along with his life and writings (particularly his novels).³⁸

Chapter Two of this thesis imparts Rizal’s life and legacy as motif, according to an historical and decolonial theoretical framework, and makes meaningful connections between

³⁵ Mignolo, aided by Franz Hinkelammert, Jacques Derrida, Édouard Glissant and Zapatistas’ logic claims: pluriversality as not the rejection of universal claims, but rejects its mono-logic and conceptual structure. Diversity as universal is a ‘world composed of multiple worlds, the *right to be different* because we are all equals (instead of assuming that *since we are all equal* what we have in common is our difference)—to obey and rule at the same time’. See Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 52, 234. Note: ‘sovereignty’ implies hierarchy, or preference for a given order, which is a colonial mentality in itself.

³⁶ *Ilustrado* were the Filipino educated people during the Spanish colonial period in the late nineteenth century in the Philippines, usually espousing Spanish liberal and European nationalist ideals. Miguel Syjuco’s book of the same name, published in 2010, follows the late Crispin Salvador’s student, Miguel, to understand the death of his teacher: a story spanning four generations. See Syjuco Miguel. (2010). *Ilustrado*. Vintage Books.

³⁷ Constantino Renato. ‘Veneration Without Understanding’. 10.

³⁸ Chadwick Allen, in *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, like Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, re-invigorate the notion of ‘border thinking’. Allen thinks ‘beyond national borders of contemporary (settler) nation-states and focuses on Indigenous-to-Indigenous relationships instead’, by ‘juxtaposing indigenous texts from Native North America, Aotearoa New Zealand, Hawai’i, and Australia’. *Trans-Indigenous* is responsive and responsible scholarship by working *across*—scholarship *across*, making *across*, reading *across*, identities *across* and patterning *across*. See Huang Hsinya. (2014). *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* by Chadwick Allen (Review). *College Literature*. 41(1). 195–198. This methodology—‘comparative’ in practise, ‘reads *across* and *through* texts “close together placed” rather than “together equal”’. See Allen Chadwick. (2012). *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. University of Minnesota Press. xxviii. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt2jcckc>.

past, present and future to re-enforce pluralism (e.g., plurilingualism).³⁹ It is worth being clear: my subjective view privileges literatures which re-enforce plurilingualism, because it guides and underpins the principles in this thesis and collections of poetry: enlightenment and empathy. My engagement mostly centres plurilingual literatures because I feel retaining connection with my mother tongue (Tagalog) vital, as much as English and its place in my culture.⁴⁰ Yet, I concede that Tagalog in my sensibilities is dying. The motifs arise, by way of Rizalian history, scholarship and empiricism, and urges for transcultural decolonisation, bearing in mind the shared colonial heritage of the Philippines and Australia.

Chapter Two thus delves into decolonial transcultural and Rizalian politics, between the colonisers and the colonised, which have retained Rizal's legacy in history. Rizal was executed at the hands of the Spaniards; the Americans used him as a tool for imperial gains. Yet, his writings, particularly his novels undermined the divisions that were associated with nationalist thought, and the general idea of nations as the natural units dividing the world. Thus, his writings exposed Philippines (the colony) on colonised terms and created a consciousness that revalued those terms, seeking to decolonise with a view to inspire the people to *think freely through the heart*.

Chapter Two explores theoretical locations for a Mental Revolution—*thinking freely through the heart*. (Decolonial) thinkers, from Mikhail Bakhtin and Fyodor Dostoevsky then Jacques Derrida; Édouard Glissant then Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, have written the potential for a

³⁹ An interesting perspective of 'truth' and 'time' by Yin Paradies references thinking by Bawaka Country, Michael Christie, Vanessa Andreotti et al, and posits: 'If "truth" is about the future as much as it is about the past, then it is also equally about the present. Like most Indigenous political activists, I will consider the past, present and future as nested and folded together, encircling linear goal-centred dissected "clock" time through rhythmic, cyclical, spiral sensing that necessitates a careful remembering of the future'. See Paradies Yin. (2020). 'Unsettling Truths: Modernity, (De-)coloniality and Indigenous Futures'. *Postcolonial Studies*. 23(4). 439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1809069>.

⁴⁰ Bruce Pascoe in *Dark Emu*, presents his case to explain to 'our children that Aboriginal people *did* build houses, *did* build dams, *did* sow, irrigate and till the land, *did* alter the course of rivers, *did* sew their clothes, and *did* construct a system of pan-continental government that generated peace and prosperity', (Back Cover of *Dark Emu*) beginning 'from sources upon which Australia's idea of history is based: the journals and diaries of explorers and colonists' (2). Pascoe dedicates his book 'to the Australians'. See Pasco Bruce. *Dark Emu*.

decolonised future to be determined by our past and present, thus developing a truthful understanding of the heart of our humanity. Chapter Two theoretically underpins this thesis and delves into the nuances surrounding languaging and Rizal's plurilingual literatures, with his life and legacy as motif. A spectrum of theories and positions are articulated: ranging from Bakhtin and Dostoevsky's 'polyphony' or 'dialogic' philosophy of language to Ngũgĩ's refusal to write in the colonising (English) language. Each are contrasted in dialogue with Rizalian history, scholarship and empiricism—thoughts surrounding his life (i.e., reading and writing, novels) and legacy (i.e., plurilingualism).

According to the political scientist, author, editor and historian, Benedict Anderson, there was as yet no 'commercially debased international language' in the late nineteenth century.⁴¹ And 'Filipinos wrote to Austrians in German, to Japanese in English, to each other in French, or Spanish, or Tagalog, with liberal interventions from...Latin'.⁴² Filipinos adapted to 'this Babelish world...[and] the language of the political enemy [i.e., Spanish] was also their private language, though understood by less than 5 percent of the Philippine population...[and as well], Tagalog, the native language used in Manila...was not understood by most Filipinos'.⁴³ Moreover, 'the local languages with the largest numbers of speakers—Ilocano in the north, Tagalog in the middle, and Cebuano in the south—were all relatively small minority languages, and only just starting to burst into print'.⁴⁴ Yet, there is a sense of a vanishing polyglot world because of colonisation. Today, English's dominance as a global language, with its beginnings in the start of the nineteenth century, emerged in concert with Britain, then post-Civil War America's colonial expansion around the world, overthrowing Europe's world-hegemony.⁴⁵ For instance, 'Britain's use of education, specifically, the teaching of English

⁴¹ Anderson Benedict. (2013). *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. London: Verso. 5.

⁴² Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 5.

⁴³ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 5.

⁴⁴ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 24.

⁴⁵ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54.

literature, was an instrument of colonial domination to assert power over its subjects in India' (and Australia).⁴⁶ Moreover, in the Philippines, English is an official language. The pre-Hispanic script, an alphasyllabary, belonging to the family of Brahmic scripts, prior to and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries before being supplanted by the Latin alphabet during the period of Spanish colonisation, is only until recently being re-ignited.⁴⁷ These ideas of (linguistic) domination through colonial strategies resonates with Ngũgĩ's observation that 'colonisation, its ultimate aim being economic and wealth extraction, relied on the use of the sword in one hand (i.e., military might and political statecraft), and with the Bible in the other, (i.e., through the use of cultural and educational [i.e., linguistic] means)'.⁴⁸

Yet, the central problem in the formation of the national literature, may be understood in the Philippine context, where there are more than one hundred languages and dialects used in over seven thousand islands that make up the country. Tagalog was chosen as the national language for several reasons as outlined later in this thesis, for which Vicente Rafael wrote that Tagalog had been 'projected as the potential language for cultural authenticity with which to articulate a precolonial past with a decolonised future... [It] ha[d] been regarded as one site for translating the colonial order into a national one'.⁴⁹ And Tagalog as a national language was envisioned as different from 'pure' Tagalog; it was a hybrid language, infused with words from Spanish, English, and all the other Philippine vernaculars.⁵⁰ In this light, Rizal's polyglot consciousness was exemplary in influencing the Philippine nationalist insurrection (and Revolution) of 1896—the first in Asia.⁵¹ Aside from Enlightenment

⁴⁶ Lee Fiona. (2020, September 1). Personal Communication.

⁴⁷ Agence France-Presse. (2019, August 1). 'Why Philippine Millennials are Reviving Baybayin, An Ancient Written Script'. *South China Morning Post*. <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3020851/baybayin-ancient-philippine-written-script-making-comeback>.

⁴⁸ Lee Fiona. (2020, September 1). Personal Communication.

⁴⁹ Rafael Vicente. (2000). 'Taglish, or the Phantom Power of the Lingua Franca'. *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History (American Encounters / Global Interactions)*. Gilbert M. Joseph and Emily S. Rosenberg (Eds.). Duke University Press. 162-189, 254-258. Quotation on 169.

⁵⁰ Jurilla Patricia May B. (2005). "'Florante at Laura" and the History of the Filipino Book'. *Book History*. Vol. 8. 173-174.

⁵¹ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 2, 23.

thinkers, Rizal was influenced by ‘key figures of the French, Dutch and Spanish literary avant-gardes to write...[likely] the first incendiary [de]colonial novel written by a colonial subject outside Europe’.⁵² Rizal read and wrote in many languages, but had written his novels and articles in *La Solidaridad* in the colonising (Spanish) language. Rizal may have written in the colonising language for political reasons (i.e., to strike at the heart of the metropole—to speak through Spain, to the fronts and centres of modernity), but was accepted by Filipinos, I believe, because he ‘proved their equality with the Spaniards’.⁵³ His writings in Spanish dialectically intervened the colony’s (i.e., the Philippines’s) relations with ‘Mother Spain’, necessarily in the coloniser’s terms, and as well in a dialogue which mediated and gave validity not only to the colonising language, but also Rizal’s own and other languages which had influenced his thinking.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s ‘polyphony’ or ‘dialogism’, which is underpinned by ‘heteroglossia’, according to the Russian philosopher, literary critic and scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin, is utilised as a basis to exemplify the idea of Rizal’s plurality, as his writings represented many voices and consciousnesses in equally valid ways. This may lead to empathy for the Other, which is further explored through Derrida’s ‘Deconstruction of Language’ and his critiques on Emmanuel Levinas, as well as his notions on hospitality, particularly in languaging. Bringing these ideas to light, and positioning their stance on languaging, are Glissant’s engagement with plurilingualism who asserted his Caribbean (i.e., Antillanité), rather than African (i.e., Nègre) identity through creolisation, and as well, Ngũgĩ’s refusal to write in the colonising (English) language, choosing instead to practise pluralism through his Indigenous languages, Gikūyu and/or Kiswahili writings.

⁵² Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 6.

⁵³ Constantino Renato. ‘Veneration Without Understanding’. 12.

First, by delving into Bakhtin and Dostoevsky's 'polyphony' or 'dialogism', one may realise the impact with which Rizal created a *time and place for consciousness* by the peopling of his novels; to balance the ideas of his characters (i.e., enlightened heroes), in a world that is in multiplicity while at the same time creating 'deep, horizontal comradeship', of an imagined community.⁵⁴ Fyodor Dostoyevsky (11 November, 1821 – 9 February, 1881) was a Russian novelist whose works explore the human condition of nineteenth century Russia. Notable works include *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) and his existentialist novella, *Notes from Underground* (1864). Mikhail Bakhtin (16 November, 1896 – 7 March, 1975) read Dostoyevsky's work, who in the nineteenth century created a novelistic genre—the polyphonic novel, to impart different voices, unmerged and equally valid, whose narrative weight worked alongside the author's own. 'Polyphony' or 'dialogism', conceptualised by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1929; translated 1984 by Caryl Emerson), is underpinned by the fundamental concept of 'heteroglossia', which Bakhtin mainly addresses in the 'Discourse in the Novel' essay in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (1934-41; translated 1981 by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist), and is further explained in Chapter Two of this thesis. Nevertheless, Bakhtin says, 'the author's relationship to the various phenomena of literature and culture has a *dialogical character* (italics added), which is analogous to the interrelationships between chronotopes [i.e., time-space represented in language and discourse] with the literary work'.⁵⁵ Bakhtin thinks the 'novel as a whole [as] a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice... [is] defined by a diversity of social

⁵⁴ Anderson Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. 7.

⁵⁵ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press. 256.

speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organised'.⁵⁶

Rizal had achieved this artistic quality in his novels, and his polyphony was mediated by its multiplicity of voices and languages interacting with, and often ideologically competing with one another. Moreover, Rizal's polyphony tended to vary the shift in its focus in the overarching narrative, where often entire chapters were dedicated to individuals who were fighting against oppression; where they had been silenced, or lacked a voice. While some of Rizal's characters spoke against Hispanicisation of the Philippines, others were in favour, which presented dialogically opposing camps, encompassed by the author's own complex resistance and enigmatic light. A pluralistic paradigm results with which to impart narratives, containing many different voices, unmerged, and not subordinated to the voice of the author. Tension exists not only between individuals, groups and perspectives, but also of languages, which are always socially and ideologically charged. Bakhtin says that 'consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia'.⁵⁷ Rizal gave his readers insights into languages as well as his characters, however major or minor their part in the plot, thus recentring voices in the margins of Euro-centric histories and fictions. Yet, the dialectic between 'centripetal [i.e., homogenising, hierarchising] forces' and tendencies of language and culture through exploitation of 'centrifugal [i.e., decrowning, decentring, dispersing] forces', for Bakhtin, 'intersect in the *utterance* (italics added); the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualised embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well, it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity...[which] to

⁵⁶ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 261-262.

⁵⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 295.

no less degree [permits] its inclusion in any normative-centralising system of unitary language'.⁵⁸ For Bakhtin, 'Linguistics, stylistics and the philosophy of language' is constituted by 'centralising tendencies for European verbal-ideological life—[seeking]... *unity* in diversity', which often ignores social dimensions, cut off from broader historical movements and immersion in broad ideological struggles.⁵⁹ Despite this, Bakhtin insists that language is dialogic in nature.⁶⁰ Rizal's expression of hetero- as well as polyglot consciousness dealt with life and behaviour (e.g., oppression) of discourse in a 'contradictory and multi-langued world'.⁶¹ His plurilingual writings are thus sites for opposing ideals and shared understanding, which through translation allows for transcultural competence, valuable in multilingual and multicultural societies.

While Bakhtin regarded poetic language as 'grounded in the actual condition and demands of poetic style' with its 'monologic steadfastness' and its 'unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance'...he nevertheless agreed that heteroglossia could 'be introduced into purely poetic genres'.⁶² As can be read from the utterance in the collections of poetry; its intention, languages and meanings, no 'single-personed hegemony' is assumed, but rather, re-enforce the idea of existing for an Other—particularly in *The Edge of Seas*, where only the protagonist and his 'image repertoire' are written into the narrative. Links exist between 'intentional levels of language and their connection with specific contexts', such that dialogised heteroglossia enters within the subjective ([but also] objective) realm, to reimagine Rizal's life and legacy from a 'distance', instill empathy for the Other, and the Othered, and

⁵⁸ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 272, 274.

⁵⁹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 259, 272, 274, 425.

⁶⁰ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 273.

⁶¹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 274-275.

⁶² Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 261-286-288, 296.

may be harnessed to enlighten its readers to *think freely through the heart*.⁶³ This thesis and collections of poetry explores these relations, and the role reading and writing has towards attaining enlightenment and empathy.

In a world where people with different languages inhibit each other, the importance of reading and writing are crucial for pluralism, leading to empathy with the Other. Empathy for the Other may be explored by way of a critical examination of Jacques Derrida's 'Deconstruction of Language'. Jacques Derrida (15 July, 1930 – 9 October, 2004) was an Algerian-born French philosopher who was the founder of 'deconstruction', which was a concept first outlined in *Of Grammatology* (1967; translated 1997 by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), and is defined and further explained in Chapter Two of this thesis. The work of Derrida, and his critiques of Emmanuel Levinas, particularly in the 'Violence and Metaphysics' essay in *Writing and Difference* (1967; translated 1978 by Alan Bass) rehearses the masses in the habits of pluralistic thought and feeling, persuading us to acknowledge that more than one viewpoint than ours existed.⁶⁴ Emmanuel Levinas (12 January, 1906 – 25 December, 1995) was a French philosopher of Lithuanian-Jewish ancestry, whose works focused on the relationship between ethics, metaphysics and ontology—of which *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961; translated 1991 by Alphonso Lingis) is key. While Levinas in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* adopts an approach that does not reduce the Other to the Same, Derrida had written that Levinas has 'given up the right to speak about the Other... by rejecting the Same, [and] gives up phenomenal presence as the presupposition of sense and language'.⁶⁵ Moreover, Derrida in *Voice and Phenomenon* (1967; translated 2011 by Leonard

⁶³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 261-297, 299.

⁶⁴ Baring Edward. (2018). 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. Morgan Michael L. (Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press 7.

⁶⁵ According to Derrida, 'A metaphysics that Levinas seeks to raise up from its subordinate position and whose concept he seeks to restore in opposition to the entire tradition derived from Aristotle. This thought calls upon the ethical relationship—a nonviolent relationship to the infinite as infinitely other, to the Other—as the only

Lawlor), ‘generalises the sense of the non-presence of others to all experience, even to one’s own and proper interior experience of oneself’.⁶⁶ A Rizalian difference may thus be construed, one that recognises the Otherness of the (colonised) people Rizal was writing for, as well as Rizal’s presence and certain absence through his writings, which live on after his passing.

Rizal’s difference does not necessarily mean he was different. Rather he was made as an example to assert the human condition of his people. Whether momentary and evanescent, verbal or pre-linguistically experiential, the expressive meaning of Rizal’s life and legacy may be reiterable, identifiable and recallable over time to have the same root. Harold Augenbraum, Rizal’s translator, claims it is simple: Rizal desired his country’s ‘good health’, and he sought ‘better stewardship’ for us.⁶⁷ He did ‘what the ancients did with their infirmed—they placed them on the steps of their temples so that each in his own way could invoke a divinity that might offer a cure’.⁶⁸ However, Augenbraum’s perception of Rizal is but one of infinite ways his life and legacy has descended into history and disclosed in subjectivity. Moreover, Rizal was implicated by the people—coloniser and colonised. He wrote his novels in the colonising (Spanish) language for the people to the colonisers, through balancing his passion for changing the other (operating objectivity with and without parenthesis). He thus reduced monological ideologies of the coloniser; implicating them with the colonised. In doing so however, he had been made to be an enigma, whose truthless truth remains transcendental, indeterminate and importantly, not only his own (i.e., shared).

one capable of opening the space of transcendence and to liberating metaphysics. And does so without supporting ethics and metaphysics by anything other than themselves, and without making them flow into other streams at their source’. See Derrida Jacques. (1978). ‘Violence and Metaphysics’. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. Great Britain: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 102, 129.

⁶⁶ Derrida Jacques. (2011). *Voice and Phenomenon*. Translated by Leonard Lawlor. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. xxiii.

⁶⁷ Rizal José. (2006). ‘Epigraph: To My Country’. *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin.

⁶⁸ Rizal José. ‘Epigraph: To My Country’. *Noli Me Tangere*.

Rizal resort[ed] to language of the Same[—coloniser], to understand the Other[—colonised].⁶⁹ Derrida's writings on hospitality, which is theoretically underpinned in *Of Hospitality* (1997; translated 2000 by Rachel Bowlby) and *Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas* (1997; translated 1999 by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas), are thus vital in understanding the ethical and political ramifications of languaging, which in a multi-lingual world pays credence to transcultural relations. Rizal wrote his novels in the colonising language, Spanish, to reveal the truth for not only his (colonised) people but also the (Spanish) coloniser, enlightening them to change structures within institutions (e.g., language and educational reforms) which had become too rigid and dogmatic. It must be remembered that revelations of truth affect us as *Homo sapiens*, and should appeal to the terms of our hearts and our humanity. This leads to an interesting paradox: **our differences must recognise that we are the same**. Thus, as Derrida says: 'the Same is not a totality closed in upon itself', one may be enlightened towards a path towards empathy.⁷⁰ Derrida's stance refused Levinas's all-or-nothing approach to metaphor, where any contamination of the Other with the Same was interpreted as its total subsumption.⁷¹ Derrida claims instead that we must accept that alterity reveals itself in language, while recognising the insufficiency of all discourse to grasp 'the Other fully'.⁷² Derrida concludes that 'the Other was impossible to grasp without resorting to the language of the Same, the necessity to explain the Other in

⁶⁹ Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 140. See also Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 6.

⁷⁰ Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 122, 140. See also Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 7.

⁷¹ Arendt writes: 'Human distinctness is not the same as otherness...Otherness, it is true, is an important aspect of plurality, the reason why all our definitions are distinctions, why we are unable to say what anything is without distinguishing it from something else...But only man can express this distinction and distinguish himself, and only he can communicate himself and not merely something—thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear...In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, become uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings'. See Arendt Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 176.

⁷² Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 6-7.

terms we understand'.⁷³ In light of this, Rizal's writings, through the languaging of his novels in Spanish, as well as his polyglot consciousness, necessarily enlightened the colonisers of the Other and Othered in the terms they could understand, and are thus purposeful in bringing truth to a community with no truths, the point of which is to keep the wound of colonisation open, and let the unforeseeable and unanticipatable come.⁷⁴

Transcultural decolonisation is further explored by the (decolonial) thinker: Édouard Glissant in his key work *Poetics of Relation* (1990; translated 1997 by Betsy Wing), which is a continuation of the ideas from his earlier monograph *Poetic Intention* (1969; translated 2010 by Nathanaël). Édouard Glissant (21 September, 1928 – 3 February, 2011) was a Martinican and French poet, thinker, writer, philosopher and literary critic from Martinique, in the eastern Caribbean Sea. Glissant re-aligns the cultural imagination, and critiques Western discourse with its monopolising and monological intents, thereby inverting the West's self-centred (and serving) epistemologies in justifying their unconscionable practices against the rest of the world. He displaces and subverts hierarchies imposed by the coloniser via engagement with pluralism [i.e., plurilingualism] and creolisation. Glissant asserts his Caribbean (i.e., Antillanité), rather than African (i.e., Nègre) identity.⁷⁵ Antillanité, according to Glissant, is 'a method and not a state of being', and should be contrasted with his idea of what *creolité* (creoleness) is about.⁷⁶ Antillanité, 'is grounded concretely in affirmation of a place, [i.e., the Antilles], and would link cultures across language barriers'.⁷⁷ Hence, Glissant deems one's culture as 'relational'—'dense, opaque, rock-hard' and able to mutually affect, and be affected.⁷⁸ *Poetics of Relation* is 'based more on associative principles', and language

⁷³ Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 6. See also Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 140.

⁷⁴ Caputo John D. (1996). 'A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community'. *Research in Phenomenology*. 34. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24658683>.

⁷⁵ Glissant Édouard. (1997). *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). Translation and Introduction by Betsy Wing. The University of Michigan Press. xxi.

⁷⁶ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xxi.

⁷⁷ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xxi.

⁷⁸ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xiii-xx.

is its own transformative ecology.⁷⁹ Thus, Glissant does not reject the languages he knows—he ‘writes in a French different from the so-called standard French of the Métropole’, one made ‘supple by Creole’, and incorporates aspects of its formation.⁸⁰ Glissant’s quest for cultural self-definition (of the Antillean people) thereby imagines both past and future (for them) by interrogating his languages, linking cultures across language barriers, and urging ‘particularisms’ (as opposed to generalisations) as a mode of asserting difference.⁸¹ Glissant asserts, ‘We do not escape the Other’...[we] define [ourselves] in [our] relativities but [we] conceive [one] as *absolute*’.⁸² Glissant’s idea of the world, ‘world-as-solitude, or – as-identity’, is enlarged by the evidence of the known ‘particular’ and thereby enclosing the ‘All as a pure extension of that particular’.⁸³ Through Glissant’s idea of the world, a poem, in its intention, should never deny the way of the world.

Such appeals are critically examined by the (decolonial) thinker: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o ‘Politics of Language’. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (born 5 January, 1938) is a Kenyan author and academic, considered to be one of east Africa’s leading novelists. Notable works, which advocate pluralism and linguistic decolonisation, include: *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986) and *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993). Ngũgĩ’s stance (since 1977 when he published *Petals of Blood*) to farewell English language as a vehicle for writing of plays, novels and short stories, and subsequently (since 1986 when he published *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*) in any of his writings, may be contrasted in light of the politics and languaging in Rizal’s writings, and the collections of poetry, primarily because languaging is the main vehicle that holds ‘the soul prisoner’, and the mode which we

⁷⁹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xii.

⁸⁰ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xvi-xvii.

⁸¹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xii, xvii.

⁸² Glissant Édouard. (1969). *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). Translated by Nathanël with Anne Malena. New York: Nightboat Books. 13.

⁸³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 15.

communicate, relate and interact.⁸⁴ Ngũgĩ's position or refusal to write in the colonising (English) language and his conscious and pronounced preference of indigenous languages in his writing is an important post to maintain and preserve his languages and heritage, as well as to negate subjugation of the Kenyan's unique thought and feeling. Ngũgĩ notions that language's dual-function for communicating and as a carrier of culture exemplifies a polity with which people, if not nations, could practise an ongoing resistance to preserve and maintain Indigenous (or mother tongue) languages. Hence, Ngũgĩ's stance bears consideration of the Other's language and culture, and its inter-generational effects and affects.

Chapter Three concludes this thesis, and embodies a *Movement with Consciousness* by exemplifying Rizalian motifs in the collections of poetry—motifs that decolonise transculturally. Chapter Three moves: from the *Mental Revolution* in Chapter Two towards a *Consciousness Through the Heart*—to delink rather than expel from the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality, and to interrogate the imperial administration of our states and territories.⁸⁵ In this thesis and collections of poetry, movement with consciousness is grounded on the (re-)education of languages, from a monolingual culture (in Australia) to one that is plurilingual. Decolonising transculturally through language education requires more than ever the ethical and political capacity to engage with actors and institutions on their own terms, and the willingness to enter the slow and difficult process of linguistic and cultural transformation and translation.

Languages contribute to the diversity in society, and a post-structural approach for an empathic world may well be for language plurality via plurilingual literatures. Plurilingualism

⁸⁴ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey Ltd. xiv, 9.

⁸⁵ According to Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano redefined decolonisation in terms of decoloniality when he affirmed: 'It is necessary to extricate oneself from the linkages between rationality/modernity and *coloniality*, first of all, and definitely from all power which is not constituted by free decisions made by free people'. See Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 52-53.

may facilitate an opening; conversations that move thought less constrained by the predictability of homo-hegemonies engendered by monolingual ideologies. There is my sense of duty to expose cosmopolitical dimensions that connect us locally to the rest of the world by ‘looking within’ from a position of ‘exteriority’, along with the perspectives of my ancestors and my origins; to reify, to redefine our communities by dislodging the sense of entitlement held by dominant groups and languages. This thesis and collections of poetry extends the resistance to our monolingual literary canon by *decolonising transculturally* via writings in English and Tagalog; thus, salvaging elements that have been forgotten in multiculturalism’s contemporary denigration—most notably the element of plurilingualism.

The leitmotifs of Rizal (a decolonised Filipino) may be inscribed through plurilingual poetry to create consciousness through the heart, which make the central tropes that animate the collections: (a) *Litany*, (b) *Requiem* (c) *The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation*—allegiance to Country, and representations and reconciliation of interior heart and mind.⁸⁶ The diversity of positions in the poetry collections not merely makes representations of historical, transcultural and linguistic tropes, but a haunting albeit beautifully energised exploration of identity and spirit, by way of political portrayal of the Other, personal reconciliation of the mind through the heart and Rizal’s life and legacy.

Barbara Christian suggests that we might look to creative works as themselves engaging in the work of theorising.⁸⁷ The central theses are enlightenment and empathy, inspired by the life and legacy of Rizal and premised on the acts of reading and writing. As the National Artist for Literature of the Philippines, Gemino H. Abad, articulates: ‘If one’s country is how one imagines her, it follows that in our literature, our sense of country is essentially a poetic sense, for it is work of imagination in and through language upon our own

⁸⁶ Allegiance does not necessarily mean acceptance. It bears the weight of being dialectical, needless to say, critical, of that unity.

⁸⁷ Christian Barbara. (1988). ‘The Race for Theory’. *Feminist Studies*. 14(1). 68.

ground... In that light, a poet's sense for language—whatever language[s] [she/he/they] has/[have] mastered—may be [her/his/their] most intimate sense of [her/his/their] country's landscape and [her/his/their] people's lived lives... To transcend: that is to say, beneath all that we read in our literature, in whatever language[s], is a sense of our country...' ⁸⁸

Language, then, defines our 'common history and culture, ever unfolding' and defines 'an aspiration for wholeness or meaningfulness as a community for all our differences'. ⁸⁹

I unfold myself in poetry. The cultures it creates may be linguistic, but preserves the notion of storytelling, for it is in this art I may be an ally to God(s). I hope this thesis and collections of poetry can help draw attention to Australians and regions of the world where people remain oppressed and where colonialist subjugation are radically undermining ways of being, thinking and relating.

⁸⁸ Abad Gemino H. (2015). 'On the Poet's Craft or Sullen Art'. *Journal of English and Comparative Literature*. Special Edition. 131.

⁸⁹ Abad Gemino H. 'On the Poet's Craft or Sullen Art'. 132.

Chapter Two: José Rizal's Life & Legacy as Motif

Rizal's life and legacy serves as motif to engage with building an '*awareness of coloniality of being*'—with a transcultural consciousness that encompassed diverse manifestations of a pluriversal horizon, seeking to decolonise by affirming the role of language(s) towards enlightenment and empathy for the Other, but also geopolitical legitimacy.⁹⁰ As stated in Chapter One: Introduction to this thesis, Rizal as an *Ilustrado* was writing *for*, not necessarily *of* the *Indios*. Rizal's contribution was in the name of Filipino as a race, the recognition of people, and the re-imagining of the *Indio* into Filipino; an orientation which manifested itself in his novels. His upbringing and (foreign) education were profound influences. His motives patriotically undergirded the pre-existing conditions for revolt towards liberty, thus inspiring a collective consciousness, which prompted the development for the Philippine Revolution in 1896 from colonial Spain.

The following section delves into Rizal's history in order to introduce his life and legacy, as well as to provide context surrounding his thinking to decolonise by re-enforcing pluralism, and makes meaningful connections behind his transcultural relations where languages (e.g., plurilingualism) may be seen as its catalyst.

Section A: Rizal's Life & Legacy – History, Scholarship and Empiricism

i. Rizal's Life & Legacy

According to one of Rizal's first biographers, first Chair of the Department of History of the University of Philippines and American historian, Austin Craig, Rizal was 'the martyr-hero of the Philippines'.⁹¹ Given Rizal lived a relatively short life, up to the age of thirty-five (19 June, 1861 – 30 December, 1896), he must have felt the enormous weight of his country's

⁹⁰ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 109.

⁹¹ Craig Austin. (1909). *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. Manila: Philippine Education Publishing Co. 5.

consciousness upon his neck. Rizal's life and legacy showcases his achievements and influential 'function'. Though contentious, his image as the Tagalog Christ, the Asian Mazzini, the Filipino Martí, or as the tragically indecisive Hamlet, intensified reverence for him as a liberator.⁹² Nonetheless, Rizal was a son, (a husband), a brother, an uncle, a friend, a revolutionary-reformer, as well as being a scholar, essayist, poet, novelist, playwright, composer, ophthalmologist, journalist and polyglot.⁹³

Rizal, a shortened form of the Spanish word meaning 'second crop', was the youngest son of Francisco Rizal Mercado and Teodora Alonso y Quintos.⁹⁴ Rizal 'was born in Kalamba, on the southwest shore of the picturesque laguna of Bay, in Luzon'.⁹⁵ José was the seventh of eleven children born of the marriage of Francisco and Teodora. Their names were Saturnina (1850), Paciano (1851), Narcisa (1852), Olimpia (1855), Lucia (1857), Maria (1859), *José* (1861), Concepcion (1862), Josefa (1865), Trinidad (1868) and Soledad (1870).⁹⁶ Rizal was baptised as José Protasio Rizal, bearing his father's full surname, with records showing his parents as Francisco Rizal Mercado and Teodora Realonda (another spelling of 'Rialonda').⁹⁷ Rizal married Josephine Bracken, 'perhaps, only on the night before his execution and had no children'.⁹⁸

⁹² Giuseppe Mazzini was an Italian politician and activist known for influencing the revolutionary movement that brought about independence and unification of Italy. José Julián Martí Pérez was a Cuban national hero whose death was a cry for independence and liberation of his country from Spain. For Teodoro Agoncillo, a twentieth-century Filipino historian known for promoting a distinctly national view, Rizal was as if a tragically indecisive Hamlet who could not bring himself to commit the violence against Spain that the Filipino nation demanded. See Thomas Megan C. (2012). *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press. 1-22.

⁹³ Craig Austin. *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. 5, 35-36.

⁹⁴ Francisco Engracio Mercado y Alexandra (whose wife is Teodora Alonso y Quintos) changed his name in 1850 to Francisco Rizal Mercado, by authority of the Claveria decree of the preceding year which sought to remedy the confusion resulting from many unrelated Filipinos having the same surnames and a still greater number having no last names at all. José Rizal was baptised as José Protasio Rizal, bearing his father's full surname, with records showing his parents as Francisco Rizal Mercado and Teodora Realonda (another spelling of 'Rialonda'). See Craig Austin. *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. 5-7.

⁹⁵ Craig Austin. *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. 5.

⁹⁶ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 7.

⁹⁷ Craig Austin. *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. 5-7.

⁹⁸ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 27.

José Rizal's paternal ascendant was Domingo Lam-co, a Chinese who lived in Amoy, China and arrived in the Philippines in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Rizal's parents were leaseholders of a *hacienda* and an accompanying rice farm by the Dominicans. Rizal was an adept historian and in addition to his acquaintance with Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Sanskrit and Arabic, he could use Spanish, French, German and English almost equally well, and read easily in Dutch, Swedish, Portuguese and Italian. He could act and did as interpreter in Japanese, could make himself understood in Canton, Amoy and Mandarin Chinese, in Catalan Spanish, and he studied Malay and the Polynesian languages, besides translating the poetry of Schiller into his native Tagalog and knowing a good deal of Bisayan and some Ilocano.⁹⁹

On 26 June, 1872, when Rizal was eleven, he was 'enrolled at the Ateneo Municipal, the Jesuit school established only two years before he was born. To limit any fallout from Paciano's association with Jose Burgos [the Filipino priest executed for alleged involvement in the Cavite mutiny], he [was] enrolled as José Rizal, without the second family name. [Rizal] graduate[d] [Ateneo Municipal] with the highest honours in 1877'.¹⁰⁰ In 1878, 'Rizal enrol[led] at the venerable Dominican University of Santo Tomas, the only school of higher learning in the Philippine colony, founded in 1611'.¹⁰¹ On 3 May, 1882, 'Rizal sail[ed] for Spain, with neither his parents' knowledge nor permission. He [was] to continue his studies in medicine, and to meet a higher purpose. In a letter to his parents, he wrote: "I too have a mission to fill, as for example: alleviating the sufferings of my fellow-men"'.¹⁰² This was the first time Rizal had been abroad. On 20 August, 1882, Rizal published his first 'piece — "El Amor Patrio", written soon after he arrived in Spain — [which] appear[ed] in the new bilingual newspaper in Manila, *Diariong Tagalog*. A Tagalog translation [was] prepared by

⁹⁹ Craig Austin. *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. 5, 35-36.

¹⁰⁰ Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 32.

¹⁰¹ Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 32.

¹⁰² Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 32.

Marcelo del Pilar.¹⁰³ On 21 June, 1884, ‘Rizal receive[d] his licentiate in medicine from the Universidad Central de Madrid. His licentiate in philosophy and letters [was] awarded the following year’.¹⁰⁴

Rizal is known for his writings, particularly his novels, *The Noli* (published 21 February, 1887 in Berlin, Germany) and *The Fili* (published September, 1891 in Ghent, Belgium), as well as his articles on the Filipino colony in Spain in *La Solidaridad* (first published on 15 February, 1889 till 1895). Other works included his annotation (from 2 June, 1888 and officially published in October, 1890) of the Spaniard, Dr. Antonio de Morga’s, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1609) and his letters, particularly to his friend, Austrian scholar Ferdinand Blumentritt, and his ‘Message to the Young Women of Malolos’.

Although ‘the material logic of decolonisation – in its most literal translation, the overcoming or undoing of colonial domination - has been in operation since at least the fifth century BCE’, and decolonial projects can be traced back to the sixteenth through to the eighteenth centuries, the ‘function’ Rizal played in decolonising the Philippines from Spain; accelerating the maturation of the struggle for liberation came about when he realised, during his initiation into Masonry, that it was the ‘liberty of the people and not independence of the government that made freedom’.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the importance Rizal placed on education for the masses to ensure they would not be at the mercy of few leaders. With his first novel, *The Noli*, he revealed the uniqueness of Filipino thought and feeling by contrasting it with ideological features of Spain as a colonising force. Rizal wrote back to enlighten others the hypocrisy of the Western ‘civilising’ mission of Spain, and thus revealed to the world the corruptness of the friar order and the putridness of the Philippine administration.

¹⁰³ Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 32-33.

¹⁰⁴ Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 33.

¹⁰⁵ Araluen Evelyn. (2017, Winter). ‘Resisting the Institution’. *Overland*. Issue 227. <https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-227/feature-evelyn-araluen/>. See also Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 2. In 1885, while continuing his studies as an eye specialist in Madrid, Rizal went for a short visit to Paris, where it is believed that he was initiated into Masonry; a body which had been responsible for the French Revolution. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 53. See also Craig Austin. *The Story of José Rizal: The Greatest Man of The Brown Race*. 21.

The Fili, however, is ‘a treatise on anarchical nationalism’.¹⁰⁶ *The Noli* is thus a work of the heart, whereas *The Fili*, a work of the head.¹⁰⁷

The birth of the imagined community of ‘the nation’, seen first to flower in eighteenth century Europe, arose via means of two forms of imagining: the novel and the newspaper.¹⁰⁸ As Lisandro E. Claudio writes, ‘the early history of nationalism [was] inevitably tied up with liberalism’.¹⁰⁹ Rizal’s writings and struggle for liberation (a worthy cause), fit within the pre-existing conditions unleashed by social developments and revolt at the time, which resulted in the birth of Philippine nationalism.¹¹⁰ Yet, the transformation, by means of Rizal’s novels and articles, in effect, not only educated his readers, but situated his protagonists in a society representing a world that Rizal described as the ‘free world of science’, a ‘world that recognised no political boundaries or authority, but only the authority of reason and evidence’.¹¹¹ His novels and articles undermined the divisions that were associated with nationalist thought, and the general idea of nations as the natural units dividing the world. Thus, his writings exposed Philippines (the colony) on colonised terms and created a consciousness that revalued those terms. His legacy may be useful in critiquing coloniality not necessarily from a nationalist view (one that seeks to decolonise), rather, with a view that seeks to inspire the people to *think freely* through the heart. Rizal’s life and legacy are not

¹⁰⁶ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 178.

¹⁰⁷ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 177.

¹⁰⁸ Anderson Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Claudio Lisandro E. (2019). *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. Switzerland: Springer Nature. 2. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01316-5>.

¹¹⁰ ‘As an Enlightenment thinker, Rizal’s main preoccupation was social progress, and he equated this progress with liberalism. These principles were basic rights like ‘freedom of the press, freedom of thought, freedom of religion’—rights-based liberalism at its simplest. Today, we could say that Rizal’s liberalism placed a premium on defending civil liberties. See Claudio Lisandro E. *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. 25. Note: Philippine nationalism was actualised within state borders after the United States of America relinquished sovereignty and granted independence by the 1946 Treaty of Manila.

¹¹¹ Rizal José. (1890, April 15). ‘On the New Orthography of the Tagalog Language (A Letter to My Fellow-Countrymen)’. *La Solidaridad*. Translated by Guadalupe Forés-Ganzon. 2(29). Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 250-263. Quotation on 263. Note: *La Solidaridad* was published first in Barcelona and then in Madrid. The entire run (1889–95) has been reprinted, with English translation by Guadalupe Forés-Ganzon and Luis Mañeru. See also Thomas Megan C. *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism*. 4.

only (re-)remembered and (re-)imaged in the collections of poetry, but are also critiqued, bearing in mind theories from the decolonial thinkers written about in this thesis, in order to inspire others to think freely through the heart.

Rizal's nationalism did not necessarily take sovereignty to lie at the level of 'the nation'. Ironically, if not paradoxically, Rizal articulated the thought of self-sovereignty (or for a better word, self-determination). It is ironic because throughout his life, particularly during his trial and execution, his actions were driven by his first-hand knowledge and interactions with the people (i.e., the colonised) and colonialists. As John Nery explains, one of his pseudonyms was *Laong Laan*, a name often translated as 'Ever Prepared' but perhaps better rendered as 'Preordained'.¹¹² Rizal was aware that 'unlike, for example, Malaya, Burma, India, Ceylon, Cambodia and Vietnam, no precolonial written records in his country had survived European conquest'.¹¹³ His will was his love for the people, and he wrote to inspire their consciousness—to *think freely through the heart*. All that he was, his essence, and his plight for self-determination, fell into the hands of state/colonialists, with his execution at Luneta by a firing squad at Bagumbayan Field for rebellion and illegal association (i.e., sedition and conspiracy).¹¹⁴

According to Mignolo, 'coloniality of knowledge doesn't mean that it was colonised' since the European Renaissance, rather, 'hegemonic ways of knowing and disciplinary world-

¹¹² Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 3.

¹¹³ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 94.

¹¹⁴ Rebellion and sedition were punishable by life imprisonment and fine of 325 to 3,250 pesetas. The acts in question constitute the crimes of founding illegal associations and of promoting or inducing to the commission of rebellion, the first being a necessary means for the execution of the second. 'In accordance with what is provided for in article 89 the penalty for the more serious crime should be imposed in the maximum period, so that the crime of rebellion should be punished with the penalty of death... Therefore, in the name of His Majesty the King (Q.D.G.)... the said penalty, unless expressly commuted, shall carry with it the accessories of perpetual disqualification and subjection to the surveillance of the authority for the rest of [Rizal's] life, and he should further be condemned to pay an indemnity the sum of 20,000 pesos; all in accordance with articles 11, 53, 63, 80, 89, 19, 188, No. 2, 189, 229, No. 1, 230, and others of general application, of the Penal Code in force in this Archipelago'. The crimes were then punishable by death because on October 25, 1896, Gov. Gen. Ramón Blanco issued a decree imposing the death penalty by firing squad, after court martial proceedings, dispensing with all formalities upon all who assist the rebels by: sabotage, giving of information, supplying food or ammunition, or processing the desertion of Filipino soldiers. This decree affected the trial of Rizal. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 299-300, 311-319.

making’, became ‘instruments of colonisation’, which consequently colonised ‘non-European knowledge’.¹¹⁵ *Coloniality of knowledge and being*, transgressed nineteenth century scholarly tendencies to organise peoples hierarchically as well as horizontally—common to practices of ethnology, history, and linguistics. Such tendencies privileged European (White, Able, Hetero, Affluent, Patriarchal, Christian and Secular) epistemological hegemony over all the other cultures of the world, which was premised on René Descartes’s ‘I think, therefore I am’—a fixed point from which knowledge can be erected.¹¹⁶ Western genealogies of thought disregarded and devalued all other possibilities. In light of this, Rizal engaged on rebuilding what was destroyed and built with an ‘*awareness of coloniality of being*’—with a transcultural consciousness that encompassed diverse manifestations of a pluriversal horizon, seeking to decolonise by affirming his polyglot consciousness and geopolitical legitimacy.¹¹⁷

Rizal had three sojourns in Europe: from 1882 to 1887, with his second being 1888 to 1891, and thirdly, in 1896, but almost literally only for a day.¹¹⁸ Rizal’s formative years in Europe (or abroad), and influence he appropriated from Enlightenment thinkers, all led to his returning back to the Philippines. Despite the grave risk from the reactions of Spanish officials and friars after the publications of *The Noli* and *The Fili*, Rizal insisted on returning, because he knew that was where his destiny resided. His ‘field of battle’ letter explains his decision to return to the country, for good:

¹¹⁵ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 189.

¹¹⁶ Christianity preceded the civilising mission, intent to civilise the world under the model of modern European nation-states—Christian global designs that were part of the European Renaissance, mainly articulated by Francisco de Vitoria, at the University of Salamanca. Note also, the global design of the secular civilising mission was part of the European Enlightenment and of a new configuration of modernity/coloniality, articulated by Immanuel Kant, at the University of Königsberg. See Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 81, 256.

¹¹⁷ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 109.

¹¹⁸ Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 2.

‘Yaong limang buan itinira ko roon ay isang halimbawang buhay, isang librong magaling na di lalo sa *Noli Me Tangere*. Ang parang na paglalabanan ay ang Filipinas: doon tayo dapat magtatagpo.

Those five months I lived there are a living example, a book much better than *Noli Me Tangere*. The field of battle is the Philippines: that’s where we should meet’.¹¹⁹

Rizal’s plans to establish *La Liga Filipina* and a Filipino colony in Borneo showed his intention to ‘achieve the Archipelago’s progress and well-being, since it was impossible to expect these results from the Spanish nation’.¹²⁰ While these ideas tended towards separatism, Rizal ‘was convinced that the moment for the separation had not yet come’.¹²¹ *La Liga Filipina* was the means of financing the project in Borneo.¹²² But his plans were stopped by Eulogio Despujol, the then Governor General, who reconciled himself with the friars, by issuing a decree on 7 July, 1892, banishing Rizal to Dapitan. The decree had also prohibited the introduction and circulation of all the works of Rizal in(to) the Philippines.¹²³

In far-flung Dapitan, where Rizal was exiled, he met and fell in love with Josephine Bracken (whom he may have married); in the place where he was able to remove himself from political agitation, to *fulfil his aspirations for education*, by ‘building a school and even a water system’.¹²⁴ In other words, Rizal operated in the domain of the heart, not beyond the

¹¹⁹ Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 3.

¹²⁰ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 195.

¹²¹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 215.

¹²² Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 215.

¹²³ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 219-223.

¹²⁴ Claudio Lisandro E. *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. 17. According to Anderson who cites Ambeth Ocampo, ‘The Jesuit father Vicente Balaguer claimed that he married Rizal and Josephine an hour or so before the former was executed, but no marriage certificate has been found, and it is by no means certain that Josephine ever visited Rizal in his death cell’. See Ocampo Ambeth (2000) as cited in Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 132.

body but beyond history (of colonisation), out of rationality and thus balancing pre-supposed truth with and without parenthesis, which came about through his writings and civic works.

However, on 30 July, 1896, the then Governor-General Ramón Blanco gave permission to Rizal to travel to Cuba as a doctor in the Spanish army; an opportunity he never got to experience. Rizal's will to depart once again from his country shows his plight to be set free from his exile in Dapitan. For instance, at the end of 1894, Rizal applied (again) 'to be permitted to establish a Filipino colony in the bay of [Sandakan (i.e., today the east Malaysian federal state of Sabah)] with the idea of bringing his family there, and he acquired for that purpose a piece of land with a river that reminded him of Calamba'.¹²⁵ His application was not resolved, so he addressed another letter to the then Governor General Blanco soliciting his transfer to Spain, saying 'In the Peninsula, if not in the Philippines, I can at least find health, if not wealth'.¹²⁶ Blanco granted Rizal 'leave to found an agricultural colony in the bosom of [Sandakan], overlooking his transfer to the Peninsula... [But], at the end of 1895, Rizal again wrote to His Excellency asking for his liberty or the review of his case, and if this were not possible, for his enrolment in the army of Cuba'.¹²⁷ Thus, he tried many means to leave Dapitan. It is noteworthy, that earlier, Rizal had felt pressure from the colonial government and religious orders in the Philippines, and in a letter to his lifelong friend, Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal said he had in the past been 'forced to leave [his] country'.¹²⁸

The fact remains, however, Rizal fought battles in and out of his country that were beyond the free sphere of science. His 'Message to the Young Women of Malolos (Filipino: *Sa mga Kababayang Dalaga sa Malolos*)', written in Tagalog and at the request of Marcelo

¹²⁵ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 256-257.

¹²⁶ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 258.

¹²⁷ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 258.

¹²⁸ Hofileña Josefina D. (2011, November 22). *José Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt: A Chronology of Friendship*. Ateneo de Manila University. <http://www.ateneo.edu/soas/history/news/jose-rizal-and-ferdinand-blumentritt-chronology-friendship>. See also Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 34.

H. del Pilar, a native of Bulacan...appeal[ed] to the Governor General for education in Castilian ‘after the powerful parish priest had disapproved their permission to study [the language] under Filipino teachers to be paid by them’.¹²⁹ In Rizal’s time, it had been estimated that ‘only about 3 percent of the population of the archipelago had any command of [Spanish]... (with the partial exception of ex-Jesuit Paraguay)’, and the ‘friars persistently opposed the spread of the [colonising] language’, keeping the locus of power within themselves.¹³⁰ Thus Rizal advocated bi-linguaging, even though it meant propelling the language of the coloniser, Rizal wrote: ‘The gift of reason with which we are endowed must be brightened and utilised...May you realise your desire to learn and may you not gather in the garden of knowledge of unripe fruit but select what you pick, think about it, taste it before swallowing it, for on the face of the earth all are mixed and it is not unusual for the enemy to sow weeds together with the good seeds in the middle of the field’.¹³¹ Rizal, del Pilar and the Women of Malolos thought to destroy the foundations of the Orders’ dominance in their country.¹³² The Filipino, unlike the Cubans and Puerto Ricans, were thus faced with a difficult choice: to reject Spanish or spread it.¹³³

Yet, it is important to note, as the *Katipuneros* rose up in arms to begin the Philippine Revolution in August, 1896, Rizal had already left Dapitan for Spain (on 6 August), in the hopes to serve as a military doctor in Cuba.¹³⁴ On 27 September after leaving Port Said to enter the Mediterranean, the captain of the boat holding Rizal received an order to arrest and

¹²⁹ Rizal notes, ‘friars are opposed to teaching of Spanish so they may remain perpetual intermediaries’. See Rizal José. (1976). *Political and Historical Writings (Popular Edition)*. Manila: National Historical Institute. vii, 23.

¹³⁰ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 87.

¹³¹ Rizal José. *Political and Historical Writings (Popular Edition)*. 12-18.

¹³² Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 99.

¹³³ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 88.

¹³⁴ Anderson notes, ‘Shortly after the outbreak of Bonifacio’s insurrection, Blanco had appointed as head of a powerful commission of inquiry...Colonel Francisco Olivé...[who, with] Madrid behind him, insisted that Rizal be immediately interrogated and put on trial, and Blanco, paralysed by the new Madrid policy, the hatred of Spaniards in Manila, and his own imminent recall, felt helpless. On 2 December, 1896, the severely Catholic General Camilo Polavieja arrived in the colonial capital...and ten days later took over power and charge of policy from Blanco’. See Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 160.

confine him to his cabin.¹³⁵ On 3 October, Rizal arrived in Barcelona and from the ship was transferred to the Castle of Montjuich... Rizal was re-embarked on 6 October for the Philippines... And reached Manila on 3 November, and was immediately imprisoned in Fort Santiago for trial then execution.¹³⁶

The Spanish thought was to ‘keep Rizal inside the Philippines’, but ‘out of harms way’; and to ‘treat him in such a manner that he will not become a martyr’.¹³⁷ Rizal didn’t want to be implicated if the *Katipuneros* rose while he was still in Manila, but it is unlikely he understood Andrés Bonifacio’s (i.e., *Katipunan*’s founder) practicalities—with Spanish troops tied down to Martí’s initiation of the independence war in Cuba, Madrid could not have sent an ‘overwhelming force to the Philippines’.¹³⁸ Blumentritt’s indicators for successful liberation struggle now appeared on the rebel horizon, and as such with the *Katipunan* leadership growing awareness, the colonialists were determined to ‘strike hard at the symbolic leader of the Philippine movement for independence’.¹³⁹

The question posed by Don Luis Taviel de Andrade, First Lieutenant of the Artillery, who was Rizal’s defense during his trial, remains to be said: ‘Would any tribunal, without more indicia of culpability than those antecedents, have determined to condemn Rizal to death before the 19th of August, before the present events [of the Philippine Revolution] took place?’¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ The *Katipunan*’s existence was revealed to the Spanish authorities in August 1896. ‘The first skirmishes took place in Caloocan, where the insurgents gathered, but suddenly, on August 29, the *Katipuneros* coming from Marikina and Santolan attacked the Spaniards’. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 261. See also Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 37-38.

¹³⁶ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 263-264. See also Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 37-38.

¹³⁷ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 139.

¹³⁸ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 156.

¹³⁹ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 156, 160.

¹⁴⁰ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 309.

Rizal, however, was ‘notified of [his] death sentence against him at seven o’clock on the morning of 29 December, to be executed at the same hour on the following day’.¹⁴¹ And his last will and testament to the Filipinos, comprised of two letters deposited in the hands of his friend Doctor Maquez, of Macao, which resonates his conscience, that ‘[he] has always loved [his] poor country, and [he is] sure [he] shall love her to the last moment... Whatever [his] fate may [have] be[en], [he] shall die blessing her and longing for the dawn of her redemption’.¹⁴²

Rafael Palma chronicles that the example set by Rizal inspired the Filipino people to launch into combat with ‘few arms and resources to shake off oppression of the Spanish yoke’.¹⁴³ Rizal had declared that the opportunity was not yet ripe, that ‘no unity existed between the various elements of society in the Philippines’, nor did they have arms required for a resistance movement, and that they should wait.¹⁴⁴ Yet, the people’s struggle to resist the invasion, meant they were conscious of their rights, not allowing ‘themselves to be despoiled thereof with impunity’.¹⁴⁵ Palma notes, ‘Subjected to a new yoke, the people remained serene and confident, availing themselves only of peaceful and lawful means to reclaim their liberty’.¹⁴⁶

ii. History, Scholarship and Empiricism

Anderson, in *The Age of Globalisation: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*, contextualises the young Rizal’s political experience in light of the turbulent ‘intersecting

¹⁴¹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 324. Anderson notes, On 19 December 1896, ‘Polavieja ordered that Rizal be put on trial for sedition and treason before a military court’, which ‘opened on the 26th, and after summary proceedings lasting one day, the military judges recommended that the accused be executed. Polavieja approved the recommendation on the 28th’. See Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 163.

¹⁴² Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 351.

¹⁴³ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 352.

¹⁴⁴ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 153.

¹⁴⁵ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 352.

¹⁴⁶ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 352.

“worlds”, culminating into *The Noli* and *The Fili*. The inter-state world system of Rizal’s era, between 1860-90, dominated by Otto von Bismarck’s efforts to make Prussia ‘the master of continental Europe’, and to create the German Empire, put an end to ‘monarchism in France, destroyed the temporal power of the Papacy, and launched his country as a late-comer imperialist in Africa, Asia and Oceania’.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, ‘post Tokugawa Japan and post-Civil War America were preparing themselves to overthrow...Europe’s world-hegemony’.¹⁴⁸ The global Left became populace, with the Paris Commune sending ‘reverberations all over the planet’.¹⁴⁹ The French government’s suppression of the *communards*, and the death of Karl Marx, paved the way for ‘international anarchism, which up to the end of the century was the main vehicle of global opposition to industrial capital, autocracy, latifundism and imperialism’.¹⁵⁰ Alfred Nobel’s invention of the first-ever weapon of mass destruction in 1866, and its patent the next year, led to bomb outrages, particularly in Spain and France.¹⁵¹ Finally, the ‘decaying, residual Spanish empire into which Rizal was born’, was fraught with civil war, ethno-regional competition, class conflicts and ideological struggles.¹⁵² Decolonial movements, led by Cuba, steadily increased, right to the far-flung colonies from the Caribbean through northern Africa to the rim of the Pacific.¹⁵³ International anarchism, Anderson claims, had spread most successfully in ‘still heavily peasant, Catholic post-Commune France, Restoration Spain and post-unification Italy, Cuba—and even Gilded Age immigrant-worker America—while prospering much less than mainstream Marxism in largely Protestant, industrial, semi-democratic northern Europe’.¹⁵⁴ Three insurrections (or liberation wars) broke out in Cuba against Spain (1868-1878; 1879-1880; 1895-1898), and

¹⁴⁷ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54.

¹⁴⁹ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54.

¹⁵⁰ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54.

¹⁵¹ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54, 112-119.

¹⁵² Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54.

¹⁵³ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 54-55.

¹⁵⁴ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 72.

from there drifted across the Indian Ocean to Manila.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, East Asia, which was ‘dominated for half a century by the British, was becoming highly unstable’ as powers emerged from Japan, the United States and Germany.¹⁵⁶ The Boer War in southern Africa was about to begin.¹⁵⁷ As well, ‘nationalist struggles in central and eastern Europe undermined the dominant multiethnic land empires controlled by Istanbul, Vienna, St Petersburg and even Berlin’.¹⁵⁸ Socialism, generally, ‘was also on the national and international move’.¹⁵⁹ *Filibuster* mentality, not surprisingly, made full political sense, suffice to say, Rizal and the Philippines had been (personally) affected.¹⁶⁰

Renato Constantino problematises Rizal’s legacy by noting its limitations within the context of the twenty-first century. Constantino speculates that Rizal, had he lived in these times, would have experienced myopia given the ‘more sophisticated myths...and the subtle techniques of present-day colonialists’.¹⁶¹ Regardless, Rizal was influenced by the writings of people and events that had been transpiring abroad, which he sought to articulate to raise the consciousness—to build a resistance for his nation. The ‘Cuban war for independence was only one part of a rising world turbulence’, in the midst of nationalist struggles in the rest of the Atlantic (e.g., Puerto Rico), southern Africa, central-to-eastern Europe and the Philippines.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 59.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 167.

¹⁵⁷ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 167.

¹⁵⁸ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 167.

¹⁵⁹ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 167.

¹⁶⁰ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 64. Anderson located the origin of the word ‘Filibuster’—‘created around 1850 by the creoles of New Orleans, who used it to describe the variegated mercenaries and idealists who joined the Venezuelan Narciso López in that city for four successive attempted invasions (1848-1850) of Cuba, to throw off the Spanish yoke and insure the island’s annexation by the United States’. Fernando Tarrida del Mármol uses the term interchangeably: ‘If the wretched person whom they mean to destroy lives in Cuba, he is called a filibuster; if he lives in the Peninsula, an anarchist; if in the Philippines, a freemason’. See Fernando Tarrida del Mármol (1897, February 1) as cited in Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 59.

¹⁶¹ Constantino Renato. ‘Veneration Without Understanding’. 16-17.

¹⁶² Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 167.

Constantino's essay 'Veneration Without Understanding', outlines 'Rizal's refusal to align himself with the revolutionary forces', as he 'vehemently condemn[ed] the mass movement of its leaders', which placed 'Filipinos in a dilemma'.¹⁶³ Rizal emphasised gradualism, unarmed uprising and the primacy of education in taking his stand.¹⁶⁴ Yet, the revolutionaries, known as *Katipunan*, founded by Andrés Bonifacio et al and led by Emilio Aguinaldo, proclaimed the independence of the Philippines from Spain in June 1898, one and a half years after the execution of Rizal.¹⁶⁵ Yet, after the failure of the movement in the 1896-98 Philippine Revolution, the revolutionaries culminated with the inauguration of the Republican government on 23 January, 1899, at Barasoain Church in Malolos, Bulacan, of which Aguinaldo became president.¹⁶⁶ The Philippines, however, was ceded by Spain to the Americans with the signing of The Treaty of Paris on 10 December, 1898, and its ratification

¹⁶³ Constantino Renato. 'Veneration Without Understanding'. 3. John Nery notes 'Constantino's main proof for this repudiation is the famous Manifesto of 15 December 1896, which Rizal prepared as part of his legal defence. It is a controversial, still-disconcerting read, because as foremost Rizal biographer Leon Ma. Guerrero has noted, apropos of the Manifesto, "There can be no argument that he was against Bonifacio's Revolution." But again, the nationalist historian offers us a false choice: Either Rizal was for the revolution, which broke out while Rizal was in Manila *en route* to Cuba; or his words "were treasonous in the light of the Filipinos' struggle against Spain." See Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 244..

¹⁶⁴ Nery notes Rizal's biographer, Leon Ma. Guerrero's alternative scenario, which he says played out during Rizal's trial, highlighting Rizal's stance with *Katipunan* and colonialists; seemingly more likely (based on a contrapuntal reading) given Rizal's writings, his revolutionary spirit, the politics of the Spanish colonisers, and the armed intent of the *Katipunan* revolutionaries: 'The Judge Advocate General, Nicolas de la Peña, refused to publish the Manifesto, which would surely have been read by the revolutionaries, because Rizal "limits himself to condemning the present rebellious movement as premature and because he considers its success impossible at this time, but suggesting between the lines that the independence dreamed of can be achieved ... For Rizal it is a question of opportunity, not of principles or objectives. His manifesto can be condensed into these words:

'Faced with the proofs of defeat, lay down your arms, my countrymen; I shall lead you to the Promised Land on a later day'" (italics added). See Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 245.

¹⁶⁵ *Katipunan*, in full, *Kataastaasang Kagalanggalang na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (the Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Sons of the People). Bonifacio was often called 'The Father of the Philippine Revolution'. See Reyno Maria Cielito. (2012, September 5). *Why Bonifacio was called the Father of the Revolution?*. National Historical Commission of the Philippines. <https://nhcp.gov.ph/why-bonifacio-was-called-the-father-of-the-revolution/>.

¹⁶⁶ National Historical Commission of the Philippines. (2012, September 7). *The First Philippine Republic*. <https://nhcp.gov.ph/the-first-philippine-republic/>. Anderson cites Blumentritt, who 'went on to say that no revolution of this kind has any chance of success unless: (1) part of the enemy's army and navy mutiny; (2) the Motherland is at war with another nation; (3) money and weapons have been prepared well beforehand; (4) a foreign power officially or secretly supports the insurrection. He added, "Not one of these conditions [was] met in the Philippines [then]"'. See Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 125.

on 6 February, 1899.¹⁶⁷ The Treaty of Paris, in effect, ‘formally ended one colonial regime and began another: the Spanish sold the Philippines to the Americans for twenty million dollars’.¹⁶⁸ For three years afterwards, the revolutionary government waged war on the colonialists—the Filipino-American War broke out. Commonly known as the First Philippine Republic, distinguished as democratic and pluralistic, formally established with the proclamation of the Malolos Constitution, but endured till the capture of Aguinaldo by the American forces on 23 March 1901.¹⁶⁹ When Aguinaldo ‘took the oath of allegiance to the [Americans] nine days later, the First Philippine Republic came to an end’.¹⁷⁰ The Americans ‘installed its administration in Manila and set in motion its colonial policy of “benevolent assimilation”, an important feature of which was the “civilisation” of the natives through education’.¹⁷¹ Yet, ‘other generals fought on for another year, and armed popular resistance was not finally stamped out till the end of the decade’.¹⁷²

In Chapter One: Introduction to this thesis, I stated that political means between the colonisers and the colonised have retained Rizal’s legacy in history. While Rizal was executed at the hands of the Spaniards, the Americans used him as a tool for imperial gains. As Constantino explains, Rizal was already a revered figure, more so with his martyrdom, and his pre-eminence as a hero, fuelled by American sponsorship because his politics aligned with their imperial policies for unarmed resistance from the Spaniards and reform by public education, which appealed to the public conscience. Constantino regarded Rizal to have fulfilled his function, as an *Ilustrado*, to voice the aspirations of his people, equating class

¹⁶⁷ The Treaty of Paris concluded the Spanish-American War. However, the treaty was vehemently opposed in the U.S. Senate because it was said to be ‘inaugurating a policy of “imperialism” in the Philippines’. See Eds. of Encyclopaedia (2021, December 3). *Treaty of Paris*. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Paris-1898>. See also National Historical Commission of the Philippines. *The First Philippine Republic*.

¹⁶⁸ Jurilla Patricia May B. “‘Florante at Laura’ and the History of the Filipino Book’. 139.

¹⁶⁹ National Historical Commission of the Philippines. *The First Philippine Republic*.

¹⁷⁰ National Historical Commission of the Philippines. *The First Philippine Republic*.

¹⁷¹ Jurilla Patricia May B. “‘Florante at Laura’ and the History of the Filipino Book’. 139.

¹⁷² Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 206.

interest with people's welfare. While there are claims that Rizal was a Spaniard first before becoming a Filipino, I believe that Rizal was accepted by people because he 'proved their equality with the Spaniards' by initiating their collective consciousness.¹⁷³ Indeed, 'By 1896 the Filipino people had reached an astounding level of political know-how, mentioned by the American Government when it decided to occupy the Archipelago. This was the result of propaganda disseminated in works such as Rizal's writings [*The Noli*], [*The Fili*], and his series of articles published in *La Solidaridad*. It was also the direct outcome of democratic journalism and legislative changes'.¹⁷⁴

Constantino however, highlights the limitations of Rizal's legacy, going as far as to negate him on the grounds that 'a true hero is one with the masses: he does not exist above them', noting that 'people can be heroes given the proper motivation and articulation of their dreams'.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, Rizal's deeds prompt questioning: how are dreams articulated? How can we balance truth objectively in parenthesis and without parenthesis? What is a hero? What is a decolonised hero? Do our deeds possess any real value? Are (great^*) grandparents recognised for imparting their wisdom? What means does a mother have sustaining life by breastfeeding his/her/their newborn child? A father punishing his/her/their child in the hope they learn from their mistakes? A lover remaining loyal to his/her/their heart? A brother and a sister's comfort in dire times? These are all heroic acts, despite little public reverence, attention or reward given by society for them. And these acts look within, nourish, and veer toward the common good. As Constantino explains, Rizal's status as the *First* Filipino, will be negated by the 'true Filipino by whom [she/he/they] will be remembered as the great catalyser in the metamorphosis of the de-colonised *indio*' (italics added).¹⁷⁶ Constantino

¹⁷³ Constantino Renato. 'Veneration Without Understanding'. 12.

¹⁷⁴ Cano Glòria. (2011). 'La Solidaridad and Journalism in the Philippines at the Time of Rizal' (Spanish: 'La Solidaridad y el periodismo en Filipinas en tiempos de Rizal'). Entre España y Filipinas: José Rizal, Escritor. Maria Dolores Elizalde Perez-Gruoso (Eds.). Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de España. 186-187.

¹⁷⁵ Constantino Renato. 'Veneration Without Understanding'. 17.

¹⁷⁶ Constantino Renato. 'Veneration Without Understanding'. 17.

critiques Rizal's place in the Filipino pantheon of heroes by delineating the notion of being a *First Filipino*, and contrasting it to that of a *true* one. A 'contrapuntal' reading (i.e., the coloniser given the same regard as the colonised) of Constantino's essay then sets-in motion a decolonial approach to viewing Rizal's legacy.¹⁷⁷

A more tempered view of Rizal, is that of Apolinario Mabini, who was Aguinaldo's chief political adviser, and integrated Rizal's novels, the articles in *La Solidaridad*, and the founding of the *La Liga Filipina* into his narrative of the revolution. Mabini states that 'The Philippine political revolution [was] of recent origin, to be found, so to speak, as late as the opening of the Suez Canal in November, 1869...that previous uprisings...were no better than mere riots'.¹⁷⁸ However, Mabini says, 'the Spanish conquest's ostensible purpose was the propagation of the Catholic faith...enabl[ing] them to share the benefits of civilisation and eternal life...By teaching the natives their own religion and customs the *conquistadores* could rule their bodies and souls, taming them the better to exploit them...contrary to the native manner and way of life'.¹⁷⁹ In short, the Spanish government, working alongside with the friar, intellectually and physically isolated the Filipinos, subjecting them to influences as deemed convenient.¹⁸⁰

Rizal's 'principal instrument of the heart and of the head [was] the pen'.¹⁸¹ He demonstrated in books and writings, through historical and scientific criterion that the 'friars [were] not what they pretend[ed] to be, nor [were] they ministers of Christ, neither a shelter

¹⁷⁷ Said Edward W. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage. 51, 66.

¹⁷⁸ Mabini notes that 'Even the insurrection which broke out in the Cavite Arsenal in 1872 had this character. Father Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora, who were made to appear as instigators of this movement and as such were executed on the 17th February that year, were only asking for restitution of the parishes which the friars had seized from the Philippine secular clergy, and for the recognition of the preferential right, which canon law recognised in the latter, to the administration of the archipelago's parishes'. See Mabini Apolinario. (1969). *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). Translated by Leon Ma. Guerrero. Manila: Republic of the Philippines. National Historical Commission. 17.

¹⁷⁹ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 18-20.

¹⁸⁰ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 18-20.

¹⁸¹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 105.

to the people nor a support to the government'.¹⁸² Rizal, for instance, wrote annotations on Antonio De Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* from 2 June, 1888 and officially published in October, 1890. This was in order to parallel between the ancient and modern natives, that 'the action of the Spaniards upon the Filipinos was not annihilatory, [but] that the loss of the liberty and human dignity was too great a price to pay for an incompetent government and an intolerant religion'.¹⁸³ He therefore rectified what had been falsified and calumniated, the evidence of which were taken mostly from Spanish authors themselves.

The fortnightly *La Solidaridad* gave a more 'detailed account of the political condition and sufferings of the Filipinos...far from being satisfied with their fate, longed and hoped for from the Spanish government those changes and reforms which would gradually allow them the progressive enjoyment of the benefits of civilisation; that the few Filipinos then living in Spain were compelled to give public expression to the desires of their countrymen'.¹⁸⁴ The periodical was the original instigator for Filipino nationalism, thus its birthplace in urban Spain rather than in the Philippines.¹⁸⁵ The periodical asked, among other things, that the '(insular)' Governor General be 'limited and fixed by law', individual liberties be given to Filipinos, expulsion of friars or their parishes entrusted to the secular clergy, that, public offices be filled by competitive examinations, with the exception of posts for Governor General and department heads (reserved for Spaniards).¹⁸⁶ As was to be expected, the friars published another periodical to oppose these claims; citing the native's 'ignorance and inborn laziness'.¹⁸⁷

Of the revolution and Rizal's execution, Mabini notes that 'Rizal's banishment to Dapitan eliminated all possibility of his active participation in the movement, [yet], he was

¹⁸² Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 119.

¹⁸³ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 129.

¹⁸⁴ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 30.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 64.

¹⁸⁶ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 30-31.

¹⁸⁷ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 30-31.

found guilty of having been its chief instigator because, had it not been for the articles he had published in *La Solidaridad* and for his novels, the people would never have taken to politics... Rizal had not started the resistance, yet he was condemned to death: were he not innocent, he would not be a martyr... If the abuses were not exposed, they would never be remedied... [Hence], the rebels preferred to die fighting even though armed only with bolos'.¹⁸⁸ Palma notes, Rizal's cause was already prejudged in the minds of Spaniards; no documents or proofs were required—'[he] was at the head of the Filipinos, and as the insurgents were Filipinos, Rizal was necessarily the head of the insurrection, the soul of the rebellion'.¹⁸⁹ Thus, Rizal's fate was intimately and inextricably linked to the revolution.¹⁹⁰ Rizal peopled his writings. His writings possessed *affects* that awoke them from the cradle of their mind. It was the people that raised Rizal. His writings captured people's hearts, which seeped into Filipino consciousness. In other words, it was the heart of the people that awoke their minds.

¹⁸⁸ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 44-45.

¹⁸⁹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 285.

¹⁹⁰ Palma's *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal* also offers an insightful account of Rizal's life, particularly the chronology of events the transpired when he left his exile in Dapitan, his inquisitorial summary investigation and his case, which includes arguments of the prosecution and of the defense, as well as his sentencing, a critical examination of his alleged retraction and last farewell.

Section B: Mental Revolution – Rizal's Novels & Theoretical Locations

*Thinking thought usually amounts to withdrawing into a dimensionless place in which the idea of thought alone persists. But thought in reality spaces itself out into the world. It informs the imaginary of peoples, their varied poetics, which it then transforms, meaning, in them its risk becomes realised.*¹⁹¹

~ Édouard Glissant, 1997, *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*), 1.

*For Indigenous nations to live, colonial mentalities must [co-exist].*¹⁹²

~ Alfred Taiaiake, 2017, 'For Indigenous Nations to Live, Colonial Mentalities Must Die', *Policy Options Politiques*.

A sanity check of our present condition necessarily alarms us of the faulty knowledge of our past. There is the general sense that we have yet to have a proper (and right) understanding of our colonial history because the normative colonial West still occupies the front and centre, and Indigenous as well as diasporic writers write from the margins. Unravelling the past and developing a contrapuntal understanding of our shared history is vital because they are interwoven, each affecting and inhibiting one another. In the past, colonial systems, with repressive racist ideologies and private appropriation of wealth in few hands, led to collision, shifting present inscriptions for futures and balances of power. Histories of people killed, attacked, exploited, in chains, imprisoned, lands stolen/confiscated, or in the sear of another language, had been denied justice, meaning that these faults were relegated to a distant

¹⁹¹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 1.

¹⁹² My approach prefers co-existing rather than death, thus it is pertinent to say 'co-exist' rather than 'die' when referring to colonial mentalities. This requires, primarily, giving space, and time, to show all things side by side and simultaneous. See Taiaiake Alfred. (2017, October 13). 'For Indigenous Nations of Live, Colonial Mentalities Must Die'. *Policy Options Politiques*. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/fr/magazines/october-2017/for-indigenous-nations-to-live-colonial-mentalities-must-die/>.

(fading) memory, or erased from hegemonic narratives, albeit present and continuing trauma inflicted to those affected, when and after the colonisers had settled in.

Rizal's criticisms of the evils of colonialism are decreed through his novels; the novel, a written form that is said to have originated in the West, for exportation into the non-Western world.¹⁹³ Regardless, what is crucial to note is not the racial, national and class origins of the novel, but the derivation of meaning through interpretation from its development and use. Perhaps the revolution can be won, or one can attain liberation through educating and harnessing the mind through the heart. Rizal inspired generations with his writings, which necessitates the act of reading. Reading is an ethical act because it requires no concessions on others, only of oneself. It is non-violent and broadens the imagination; a most diligent virtue. In a place of solitude, reading and writing, and thus contemplation, are so much more cerebral activities than speaking. They often fulfil an even more considered and fuller comprehension of the world, and nurture thought to power the mind.

The pre-conceptions of 'Time', was/is a colonising strategy propelled by the West to build an imaginary of the modern/colonial world, which gave rise to modernity; and engrained 'revolution' in a linear concept of history, which are contrary and contradictory to the regular relations in the natural/social world.¹⁹⁴ 'Time' as a fundamental concept in building the imaginary of the modern/colonial world had become 'an instrument for both controlling knowledge and advancing a vision of society based on progress and development'.¹⁹⁵ It emphasised the Philippines as anti-intellectual, anti-progressive, and not in any way catching up on developments espoused in the Age of Enlightenment. The rhetoric of modernity disavowed the 'traditions' of civilisations that were colonised.¹⁹⁶ Western

¹⁹³ Mazzoni Guido. (2017). *Theory of the Novel*. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/10.4159/9780674974029>. 66-67.

¹⁹⁴ C.f. Augustinian subjective view of time, as 'nothing' in reality but exists only in the human mind's apprehension of reality. See also Constantino Renato. 'Veneration Without Understanding'. 8.

¹⁹⁵ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 161.

¹⁹⁶ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 160.

conceptions of time (e.g., linear; time as money), classified cultural differences according to proximity to modern (i.e., present) and tradition (i.e., past), and reinforced coloniality of power in building the modern/colonial world, i.e., it established its own ‘tradition’ (inventing modernity) based on progress and competition—‘it hid the logic of coloniality, [which] the discourse on colonial and imperial differences display[ed]’, by emphasising time as the central category of the human experience.¹⁹⁷

Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in *The Dreaming and Other Essays*, points out that ‘no words in any Aboriginal language’ exist ‘for the concept of abstract time’—time, in an Indigenous way, ‘exists in the past and the present and the future’ all at once, ‘in the eternal now’—‘they are everywhen’.¹⁹⁸ In this way, the present reinforces tradition of the past, and incorporates future (spaces).

George E. Tinker in *Spirit and Resistance* writes, ‘Whether in its capitalist or socialist guise...history and temporality reign supreme in euro-western episteme’, but illustrates, that on the other hand, ‘(American) Indian spirituality, values, social and political structure, and even ethics are rooted not in some temporal notion of history, but in spirituality’, i.e., thinking spatially.¹⁹⁹ Thinking spatially, imperialists shifted modes of *being*, developing economic and political dependence of their subjects in its ‘culture of apemanship and parrotry, [and] enforced on a restive population through police boots, barbed wire, a gowned clergy and judiciary; their ideas spread[ing] by a corpus of state intellectuals, the academic and journalistic laureates of the neo-colonial establishment’.²⁰⁰ When imperialists established their dominance, with the efficiency imposed by their pre-conceptions of time, they limited possible worlds in their homo-hegemonies, engendered by monolingual ideologies.

¹⁹⁷ Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 160.

¹⁹⁸ Stanner W.E.H. (2011) as cited in Coleman Claire G. (2021). *Lies Damned Lies*. Gadigal Country: Ultimo Press. 228.

¹⁹⁹ Tinker George E. (2004). *Spirit and Resistance*. Augsburg Fortress Publishing. 106-107.

²⁰⁰ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 2.

The Noli and *The Fili* are Rizal's revelation of life of the Tagalogs under the Spanish conquest—a way of life that had been coined as backward, which did not conceive the colonisers on equal terms with its colonised. The following then, are juxtapositions from Rizal's life (i.e., reading and writing, novels) and legacy (i.e., plurilingualism) with theories by (decolonial) thinkers that have written the potential for a decolonised future to be determined by our past—a past which has faded, been buried and/or erased, to develop a truthful understanding of the *spirit* of our humanity. A humanity where love is the main cause after all, one which places the multiplicities of the heart as the forerunner for a mental revolution. These juxtapositions lead us to an understanding, which re-iterates Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's view of language as the main vehicle that 'power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. [That] the bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. [That] language was the means of spiritual subjugation'.²⁰¹

i. Mikhail Bakhtin and Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'polyphony' or 'dialogism'

Franco Moretti claims the veneration of the novel as the 'emblematic genre of capitalist-modernity', that 'over time that it ceased to represent variety and polycentrism', which in the nineteenth century, 'bec[a]me increasingly expressive of the process of centralisation of the bourgeoisie nation-state', instead of 'promoting locality and difference'.²⁰² The novel, then, as a genre of the modern epic, was dominated by the author's ideology; an uninterrupted speech, which reinforced monologism, marked by a single tone, failing to respect the autonomy of the Other's voice.

With Dostoevsky however, who in the nineteenth century created a novelistic genre—the polyphonic novel, we now have a way that not only fundamentally gave independence to

²⁰¹ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 9.

²⁰² Tihanov Galin. (2001). 'Bakhtin, Joyce, and Carnival: Towards the Synthesis of Epic and Novel in "Rabelais"'. *Paragraph*. 24(1). 69-70.

the structure of the work (i.e., alongside the author's word) but with it also gave full and equally valid voices of its other characters, thus necessitating a pluralistic paradigm with which to impart narratives.²⁰³

'Polyphony' or 'dialogism', in literary criticism, means 'a multiplicity of independent and often antithetic narrative voices, none of which is given predominance; the use of this narrative technique', thus 'all utterances (and hence all communication) acquire meaning only in the context of a dialogue to which they contribute and in which the presence and contributions of other voices (or other discourses, languages, etc.) are inescapably implied, with the result that meaning and expression cannot be reduced to a single system or subjected to a single authority; the embodiment of this principle in a form of expression'.²⁰⁴ The text is thus an interaction between the author, its characters and the reader, where the author's role no longer monopolises interpretations and meanings—truth(s) is/are construed from multiple perspectives, and respect is given to a multiplicity of voices.²⁰⁵ Polyphony extended beyond the limits of novel but 'innovated' basic aspects of old artistic form and poetics. Polyphony was conducive not to the creation of a singular national consciousness, nor a singular national language via streamlining, but rather *a time and place for consciousness*, to balance ideas in a world that is in multiplicity, while at the same time creating 'deep, horizontal comradeship', of an imagined community.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Mikhail Bakhtin notes that Dostoevsky was first and foremost an artist and not a philosopher or a publicist. See Bakhtin Mikhail. (1984). 'From the Author'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and Translated by Caryl Emerson. University of Minnesota Press. 7. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt22727z1>. See also Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 7.

²⁰⁴ Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, August). *Polyphony*. OED Online. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/view/Entry/147305>.

Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, August). *Dialogism*. OED Online. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/view/Entry/51907>.

²⁰⁵ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 263.

²⁰⁶ Anderson Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. 7.

In *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin credits Dostoyevsky's 'polyphonic world[s] [as essentially] destroying the established forms of the fundamental *monologic* (homophonic) European novel'.²⁰⁷ The result comprising 'Dostoyevsky's material are distributed among several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses...presented not within a single field of vision but within several fields of vision, each full and of equal worth'.²⁰⁸ Bakhtin says, 'Dostoyevsky's novel is *dialogic* (italics added)...by the [co-existence and] interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other...making the viewer also a participant'.²⁰⁹ Bakhtin adds, '*The polyphonic novel is a dialogic through and through*...that is, they are juxtaposed contrapuntally...permeating all human speech [i.e., language(s)] and all relationships and manifestations of human life'.²¹⁰ Bakhtin regards 'authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters...and...the differing individual voices', as 'compositional unities', which with 'heteroglossia', permits a plurality of inter-related voices, 'more or less dialogised'.²¹¹ Texts, therefore, do not exist in themselves, but only in their relations, i.e., spatial and temporal context. They are unique and always in dialogue, not only with other texts, but people and also with everything in the world. Each text has a particular historical and social context, and one can see its exteriority from within the writer's perspective as well as others. Texts are an artistic system, a 'hybrid formation', whose

²⁰⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 8.

²⁰⁸ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 16.

²⁰⁹ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 18.

²¹⁰ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 40.

²¹¹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 261-263.

language is a system of languages (or speech types), and includes a multiplicity of social voices that are interrelated and dialogised.²¹²

In light of this, it can be said that Rizal's novels exhibit the properties that make them polyphonic or dialogical, despite it being unclear whether Rizal read Dostoevsky.²¹³ Rizal peopled his novels, with over two dozen characters in each—e.g., 'high colonial officials, village gamblers, dissident intellectuals, gravediggers, friars, police informers, social climbers, child acolytes, actresses, small-town caciques, bandits, reformers, carpenters, teenage girls and revolutionaries'.²¹⁴ Yet, Rizal enlightened us through the solitary act of writing, which on the face of it, may have polarised his worlds and his thinking. It was only through his writing that he was able to impart his truth (objectively) with and without parenthesis because of the effects and affects reading and writing produces.²¹⁵ The written word *depicts* (or rather re-creates) the *self-developing* idea, inseparable from personality.²¹⁶ Rizal's writings were existential projects, akin to projecting the heterogeneity of his consciousness through language and the characters he created in his novels. Caryl Emerson, Bakhtin's editor, insists, language is 'not a product or detachable attribute of a person; it is an energy negotiating between a person's inner consciousness and the outer world. How we talk, or write, is a trace not only of how we think but how we interact'.²¹⁷

Rizal's novels appropriate and re-deploy philosophies from several author-thinkers who had influenced him—Descartes, John Locke, Baruch Spinoza, Jeremy Bentham, Denis

²¹² Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 261-262-263, 268.

²¹³ Castroverde Aaron C. (2013). *José Rizal and the Spanish Novel* [Doctoral Thesis, Duke University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. 6. Dostoevsky does not appear in Ocampo's catalogue of Rizal's personal library. See Ocampo Esteban de. (1960). *Rizal as a Bibliophile*. Manila. UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines.

²¹⁴ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 165.

²¹⁵ While it may be claimed the act of reading completely subjects an individual because it requires stillness and dedicated attention, it is nonetheless key to note that Rizal's art of writing was illuminating, opening up many possible worlds in the imagination.

²¹⁶ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Editor's Preface' by Caryl Emerson. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. xxxviii.

²¹⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Editor's Preface' by Caryl Emerson. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. xxxiv.

Diderot, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Stendhal, Adam Smith, and especially Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. Rizal also borrowed from ‘key figures of the French, Dutch and Spanish literary avant-gardes’, like Voltaire and Zola from France, Eduard Douwes Dekker from the Netherlands, and Miguel de Cervantes from Spain.²¹⁸

Ideas (and resistance) from the Enlightenment—the illusion of man, the advancement of individual liberty, social progress, empathy, resistance to colonisation, scientific knowledge, language, constitutional government, comparative religions, cost of religion, happiness and home, terrorism, and security (and presence of the Civil Guard), are held for critical thinking, tending to undermine the authority of monarchy, state and the Church, and to question the orthodoxy of fixed ideas.

Of particular importance to this thesis and collections of poetry are Rizal’s resistance to colonisation by Spain, which are revealed in light of the characters he had created and languages he had written in. In *The Fili*, for instance, Simoun’s voice is troubled, sinister, as he questions the merits of Hispanicisation of the Philippines: ‘Go ahead, ask for equal rights and the Hispanisation of your customs and see what you’ll get: the death of your nationality, the annihilation of your homeland, and the consecration of tyranny. What will your future hold? A people without distinction, a nation without liberty’.²¹⁹ Simoun goes further, ‘You want to add another language to the forty-odd we already speak here so we can understand one another even less?... Spanish will never be the official language of this country. The people will never speak it, because their thoughts and feelings don’t exist in that language.

Every people has its own, just as it has a way of feeling’.²²⁰ Suffice to say, Simoun’s voice contrasts and is in dialogue with Rizal’s narratorial light (i.e., the languaging of his

²¹⁸ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 6, 29.

²¹⁹ Rizal José. ‘Simoun’. *El Filibusterismo*. 53.

²²⁰ Rizal José. ‘Simoun’. *El Filibusterismo*. 53.

novels in Spanish), in such that he is positioned against Hispanicisation, as he deems it may ‘Kill off ...originality’, and ‘Subordinate... thoughts to the minds of others and instead of being free’...in effect, turning ourselves ‘into slaves’.²²¹

The goal for *The Noli* was to expose the colony’s social cancer.²²² *The Fili*, however, is ‘a hate story’, which according to Leon Ma. Guerrero, took characters directly from real life, hence it is less ‘fictional’.²²³ Such ideas, which are Rizal’s central concern, lead to a confluence of worlds requiring ideological reasoning and collision to balance the struggle of predominance in worldviews. Such subjective statements are indicative of Rizal’s multi-leveledness and multi-voicedness in his polyphonic novels. Rizal illuminates his characters with such representations, and thus organises them by the ideas that possess them.

Rizal preferred his heroes as those who would be occupied primarily with the task of becoming conscious. Notable is the idea that every interaction by and large, shapes consciousness, such that characters in Rizal’s novels, whether major or minor in part, transform from the polyphonic dimensions of its construction. Rizal’s quest for self-sovereignty (or self-determination) parallels the independence he transposed on his characters, such that it demolished the monologic plane of the novel, because characters became fully-valid and autonomous bearers for his word. Yet, Rizal’s skill lies not in the characters’ depiction, but in his ability to portray their personality as another without melding it into his own voice, while at the same time constructing it in lyrical, evocative narratorial style. Representations of the inner person was fundamental to Rizal, and he does this by evoking the heart of his characters, leading the audience to question their intent and

²²¹ Rizal José. ‘Simoun’. *El Filibusterismo*. 53. Anderson notes, that while Rizal was in Europe, he ‘never wrote publicly in these vitriolically nativist terms—which would have appalled the comrades around *La Solidaridad*’. See Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 112.

²²² Claudio Lisandro E. *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. 53

²²³ Rizal José. ‘Introduction’ by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. xiv.

definitions. Thus, characters make sense at their level of consciousness—at their will; ‘the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event’.²²⁴

Like Dostoevsky, Rizal created not ‘voiceless slaves...but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him’.²²⁵ Rizal recentred voices in the margins of Euro-centric histories and fictions. Rizal may have written while ‘maintaining an almost imperceptible distance’, but ‘merges his own voice with the common view’ among the educated, *Ilustrado* (reading) class, contextualised in with the lives of peasantry, with ‘their own utopian and messianic traditions embedded in folk-Catholicism’, of whom are given (a) voice(s) throughout his novels.²²⁶ A plurality of consciousness results, with its multitude of characters and fates, with rights reserved for their destinies, each in their own world, melded together in a unified narrative. Thus, a plurality of voices—heroes ‘not only objects of Rizal’s discourse, but subjects of their own will’.²²⁷ For instance, the voice of Crisóstomo Ibarra, known to be Rizal’s reflection, depicted the idea of exile, an experience he shared with Rizal after returning from Europe fired by reformist zeal—for a Philippines freed from the shackles of Spain. Rizal has written Ibarra’s voice to express his ideas of colonialism and the nature of power in the Philippines; a voice that is as memorable as that of Pilosopong Tasio, who represented last hope; the most noble of Filipinos—inspired by his real-life brother, Paciano.²²⁸ Yet, while Ibarra and Tasio’s voice had their own conscience, their quest was parallel—to realise the abuse of the friars and oppression done by the colonialists. Characters, such as Basilio,

²²⁴ Bakhtin Mikhail. ‘Dostoevsky’s Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature’. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. 21

²²⁵ Bakhtin Mikhail. ‘Dostoevsky’s Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature’. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. 6-7.

²²⁶ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 302. See also Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 118.

²²⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail. ‘Dostoevsky’s Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature’. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. 6-7.

²²⁸ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. (2019). José Rizal to Fernando Blumentritt, 23 June 1888 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence: 50 Selected Letters Between Rizal and Blumentritt*. Manila: National Historical Institute. 68. <https://joserizallifeandworks.wordpress.com/2019/04/03/rizal-blumentritt-correspondence/>.

Crispin and their mother Sisa, whose (peasant) family (i.e., Crispin) is accused for theft by the Civil Guard, but never actually stole from the manor house, represents Rizal's language of truth for the Othered. The reader also learns to discern, contrast and validate the motives of the suspect friars—Padre Dámaso, Padre Salví, from that of Don Rafael Ibarra, Ibarra's father and Ibarra himself.²²⁹ As we tend to generalise the cruelties, malevolence and hypocrisy of the friars during the Spanish colonisation, Rizal teaches us the importance of distinguishing the passive role the past illuminates on consciousness to pre-impose realities. Hence, Rizal expounded the importance of observing these 'characters' with a principled righteousness and scepticism; negating the attitudes of prevailing generalisations to instil a resistance, for empathy to the Others' cause, whatever they may be. Multiple voices are therefore given validity, and with it an autonomy to portray their personality, carry out their intent, and transpose their will alongside others'—hence, resulting in plurality due to the polyphony's plane.

Through the 'consciousness, embodied in the living voice of the characters, the logical relation becomes part of the unity of a represented event'.²³⁰ The idea is given peculiarity because characters are enmeshed in a narrative that at times seem chaotic, which heightens the tension but is intended to raise the consciousness of the audience towards an epiphany, and thus enlightenment through empathy. Noteworthy is my proposition that Rizal's novels are character driven, rather than by plot. Such tendencies pre-suppose characters as subjective, open to interpretation and unfixed elements in Rizal's design. Rizal's polyphony presumes plurality of equally-valid consciousness of characters, each with their own world. Plot plays a secondary role; fundamental events nor the core revelations do

²²⁹ Padre Dámaso is the predecessor of Padre Salví. A Franciscan Spanish priest, whose reflection was the rampant covert fathering of illegitimate children by friars. Padre Salví is the curate who secretly harboured lust for María Clara, represented the seemingly kind but in fact wicked Spanish friars. Don Rafael Ibarra epitomised the rich and at the same time virtuous and generous Filipinos during the Spanish era.

²³⁰ Bakhtin Mikhail. 'Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and its Treatment in Critical Literature'. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 9-10.

not as often occur at the level of the plot. The process of ‘coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own horizon within someone else’s horizon’ are the key realisations in reading and writing.²³¹ In the collections of poetry, poems can be read at the level of the voice(s) within the poem, where the poet, or the narratorial ‘I’ is grounded in subjectivity, intention and an ‘overcoming of [Rizal’s and the poet’s] otherness’, thus reinforcing its polyphonic or dialogical nature.²³² There is thus a sense of ‘liberation of cultural-semantic and emotional intentions from the hegemony of a single and unitary language’, while simultaneously creating a discourse on ‘loss of feeling for language as myth’, as ‘an absolute form of thought’ through the heart.²³³

In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, Bakhtin insists that all signifying practises (i.e., use of language and symbols) have an ultimately dialogical aim, and as comprised of ‘heteroglossia’.²³⁴ Bakhtin thus extends his analysis through the concept of heteroglossia, which refers to ‘other-languageness’, which in other words means the stratification of language ‘not only into linguistic dialects...but also...into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups...which widen[s] and deepen[s] as long as language is alive and developing’.²³⁵ Bakhtin adds, ‘Heteroglossia...is *another’s speech in another’s language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way’.²³⁶ This heteroglossia is a ‘*double-voiced discourse*’, and these voices ‘are dialogically interrelated...always internally dialogised’.²³⁷ The ‘centrifugal [i.e., decrowning, decentring, dispersing] as well as the centripetal [i.e., homogenising, hierarchising] forces’ of language intersect in ‘the utterance’, which means that ‘language’ is actually stratified into several

²³¹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 365.

²³² Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 365.

²³³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 367.

²³⁴ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 271, 273.

²³⁵ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 271-272.

²³⁶ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 324.

²³⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 324.

‘other languages’, which are in dialogue with one another, i.e., ‘the primordial dialogism of discourse’.²³⁸ According to Bakhtin, ‘no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way...[or] between the word and the speaking subject...It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents...dialogically agitated and tension-filled...weav[ing] in and out of complex interrelationships...leav[ing] a trace in all its semantic layers....complicat[ing] its expression and influence...by a dialogic interaction within the object between various aspects of its socio-verbal intelligibility’.²³⁹ An utterance, by nature is thus dialogic, unable to be spoken monologically nor isolated from all social, historical and ideological contexts. Because of dialogism, literary works can be said not to exist in themselves, but only in their interrelations, i.e., ‘between chronotopes [i.e., time-space represented in language and discourse]’.²⁴⁰

Despite this, while ‘real ideologically saturated “language consciousness”, one that participates in actual heteroglossia and multi-languageness, [i.e., language as a world view], remains outside this field of vision... [Rizal’s] expression of hetero- as well as polyglot consciousness...cast[s] linguistic and stylistic thought’, necessary for ‘deal[ing] with the life and behaviour of discourse in a contradictory and multi-languaged world’.²⁴¹ Bakhtin says, language is dialogic in nature; ‘a struggle among socio-linguistic points of view’.²⁴² Language is a ‘socio-ideological semantic “state of affairs”’—‘there are no “neutral” words and forms’; every verbal act, Bakhtin explains, ‘can infect’ language with its own ‘intentions and accents’ creating the ground for human subjectivity’.²⁴³ Moreover, Bakhtin sees the notion

²³⁸ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 272, 275.

²³⁹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 276-277.

²⁴⁰ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 256.

²⁴¹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 274-275.

²⁴² Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 273.

²⁴³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 291, 293.

of language founded on Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of language: on the polarity between the general and particular, between *langue* (the system of language) and *parole* (the individual speech act).²⁴⁴ Language, therefore, 'populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others', and presupposing a 'unity of language' is the site for opposing ideals and shared understanding.

Rizal's writings (e.g., his novels) are sites not of neutrality, but transparency of socio-linguistic mediation, an 'authorial individuality in language', exposing dialogical engagement with ancient and then-modern histories (e.g., Egyptian, Greek, Roman) and heteroglossia (e.g., popular sayings) with not only the colonising language (i.e., Spanish), but other (European) languages (e.g., Italian, German, Greek, Latin, Hebrew). Anderson comments, 'Almost one-fifth of the sixty-four chapters in *The Noli* begin with epigraphs...taken from poets, dramatists, philosophers, the Bible, and the vast and enigmatic world of popular sayings'.²⁴⁵ *The Noli* has 'no characters who are not either colonisers or colonised'.²⁴⁶ *The Fili* is 'littered with casual references to Egypt, Poland, Peru, Germany, Russia, Cuba, Persia, the Carolines, Ceylon, the Moluccas, Libya, France, China and Japan, as well as Arabs and Portuguese, Canton and Constantinople'.²⁴⁷ The novels are thus exemplars of colonial relations, in a global socio-historical setting. Rizal's use of 'Tagalog words and phrases, especially the flora and fauna of the Philippines, which had no Castilian equivalent', such as '*baliti*' (Philippine banyan tree) and '*carabao*' (water buffalo), is an expression of Filipino language to the colonisers.²⁴⁸ This is also the case in the English translations of Rizal's

²⁴⁴ Mambrol Nasrullah. (2018, January 24). *Key Theories of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Literary Theory and Criticism. <https://literariness.org/2018/01/24/key-theories-of-mikhail-bakhtin/>.

²⁴⁵ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 51.

²⁴⁶ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 53.

²⁴⁷ Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 53.

²⁴⁸ Rizal José. 'Memories'; 'The Village'; 'A Note on the Translation' by Harold Augenbraum. *Noli Me Tangere*. 52, 63, 435.

novels, where Tagalog words were left unchanged from the original manuscript.²⁴⁹ Moreover, pre-colonial Tagalog words are utilised, such as ‘*barangay*’ (small boat in the pre-Hispanic Philippines), whose usage was transformed over time into ‘village’.²⁵⁰ Ancient folklore and mysticism are utilised, for instance, ‘*tikbálang*’, a mythical, humanoid creature with the head and feet of an animal and the body of a man, which can be traced back 4,000 years ago, with roots in Hinduism, and ancient Filipino beliefs in animism.²⁵¹ Citing further examples, in the ‘Laughing and Weeping’ chapter in *The Fili*, for instance, Rizal plays on words of a sentence of the Latin mass: ‘*Glória in excélsis Deo et in terra pax homínibus bonae voluntáti* (“Glory to God on high and peace on earth to men of goodwill”)’ , as read in Father Irene’s celebratory banquet scene ‘near the Chinese landscapes and hanging scrolls, this odd verse’: ‘Glory to Custodio for his smarts and *pansit* on earth to boys of good will’.²⁵² Rizal, in this scene, parodies the goodwill of men, juxtaposing the Latin words of mass with *pansit* (or noodles), which is symbolic of long-life in Filipino culture; a dish introduced into the Philippines by the Chinese. Rizal utilises as the object of his representation a banquet with Chinese landscapes and hanging scrolls, revealing rather satiric dimensions of his authorial intent and voice.²⁵³

In *The Noli*, Rizal polemicised the idea of ‘civilisation’, saying ‘the less advanced the civilisation, the more deep-seated the customs seems to be’.²⁵⁴ He referred to ‘Dahomey’, a west African civilisation (now Benin), whose people ‘please[d] their dead...[by] sacrific[ing]

²⁴⁹ Anderson notes, the first translation of *The Noli* into a non-Spanish language was published in 1899, known as the Ramón Sempau and Henri Lucas (or Lucas-Sempau) translation. In this translation, references to Filipino folk tales and legends, and anything remotely erotic, and the vitriolic attacks on the Orders, were, for reasons not clear, toned down—in effect turning the novel into a ‘flatly *sociologique* description of “a” colonial society’. See Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 229-230.

²⁵⁰ Rizal José. ‘Cabesang Tales’; ‘A Note on the Translation’ by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. 27, 333.

²⁵¹ Rizal José. ‘Wealth and Poverty’; ‘A Note on the Translation’ by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. 69, 334.

²⁵² Rizal José. ‘Laughter and Weeping’; ‘A Note on the Translation’ by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. 220, 337.

²⁵³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 312.

²⁵⁴ Rizal José. ‘All Saints’. *Noli Me Tangere*. 70.

their enemies on their tombs’—differentiating their beliefs that ‘the dead [don’t] actually rest, and certainly not in peace’.²⁵⁵ This is in dialogue with further references to Christianity and the Passion narrative of Christ, with the Latin words atop the cross on which Jesus was crucified: ‘*Iesvs Nazarenvs Rex Ivdæorvm* (“Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”)', depicted in the gravediggers scene where ‘there is a jumbled pile of skulls and bones’ and ‘an uncaring gravedigger’.²⁵⁶ The dialectic intonation of ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’, and at the same time, in the context of authorial speech in the gravediggers scene, construct ‘two accents ([Rizal’s] ironic transmission [of a rejected King—Jesus], and a mimicking of the irritation of the [two gravediggers having to dig for the coffin]’.²⁵⁷ This thus represents debates of various time periods, bringing into perspective a fuller understanding of places, people and languages. In effect, through Rizal’s *utterances* (i.e., narration, character’s speech and languaging), the Filipino’s socio-historical consciousness and experience, uniqueness and presence is felt and their relations contextualised—a dialogised heteroglossia; all the phenomena connected with it.²⁵⁸

Dialogised heteroglossia, while serving as a factor of Rizal’s style, thus orchestrate ‘authorial truth[s] of their own; the author’s linguistic consciousness...[and] is thereby relativised’ in light of the reader’s consciousness, the author’s characters (and voices), and the world at large.²⁵⁹ The ‘relativising of linguistic consciousness’ participates in the ‘other languageness’ (multi and varied) of ‘evolving languages’, semantic wanderings and

²⁵⁵ Rizal José. ‘All Saints’; ‘A Note on the Translation’ by Harold Augenbraum. *Noli Me Tangere*. 70, 436.

²⁵⁶ Rizal José. ‘All Saints’; ‘A Note on the Translation’ by Harold Augenbraum. *Noli Me Tangere*. 70, 71, 436. The Passion narrative of Jesus Christ refer to the accounts given in the canonical gospels, of his suffering, death and resurrection. See Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, John 19:19-20. Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. 1485, 1526, 1584, 1631. Reynaldo Ito’s 1979 work *Pasyon and Revolution*, reconstructs the categories of the perception of ‘the masses’ by using religious performance of Christ’s martyrdom, the *pasyon*, as *pabasa* (i.e., *pasyon* readings). See Ito Reynaldo Clemeña. (1979). *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*. Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

²⁵⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 318.

²⁵⁸ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 273.

²⁵⁹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 316.

‘expressive intentions’, such that the ‘trajectory of consciousness...speak indirectly, conditionally, in a refracted way...[for] an authentic double-voiced...discourse’.²⁶⁰

Dialogised transmission are thus both ideologically meaningful and artistically represented in the speaker and their discourse as ‘the image of a language’.²⁶¹ These interrelations, hybridisation, and pure dialogues, are important modes in ‘the historical life and evolution of all languages’—expressions of ‘a stylised but also a stylising language and art-intention’.²⁶² As a result, dialogised heteroglossia leads to an enlightenment and empathy, through ‘disassociation between language and intentions, language and thought, language and expression’.²⁶³

Rizal’s novels are dialectic. They are constructed through absorption of many consciousness, in part or as a whole, as a means of representing various camps in a pluralistic world. Consequently, the audience is made a participant, prone to experience meaning within representations. By this pluriversality, Rizal’s position as an author is located beyond the monologic, with its totalising effects and uninterrupted speech.

Rizal’s artistic intention may be interpreted in its totality by his ability to transcend monologues. He does this by transforming the polyphony of co-existing consciousness into a unified narrative of a novel. Moretti notes: ‘Like Rizal’s voice (oscillating between Catholic melodrama and Enlightenment sarcasm)...the foreign [colonising] presence “interferes” with the very *utterance* of [his] novel[s]’. The one-and-unequal literary system is not just an external network here, it doesn’t remain *outside* the text: it’s embedded well into its form’.²⁶⁴ Thus, the novel as a unified narrative forms the basis of his politics, which complemented

²⁶⁰ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 326.

²⁶¹ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 355.

²⁶² Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 358, 361-262.

²⁶³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 369.

²⁶⁴ Moretti Franco. (2013). ‘Conjectures on World Literature’. *Distant Reading*. New York and London: Verso. 36.

and aligned with his life and legacy. While Rizal's novels lead to a plurality of voices, races, religious beliefs and cultures within the same society, the act of reading them reinforces polyphony's pluralising effects and affects allowing multiple worlds to exist 'in reality' *within* one's consciousness.²⁶⁵ These worlds pay credence from privileged to marginalised voices; all meditative, formulaic and imperfect. An openness to interpretation of meaning situates Rizal's novels near his personal concerns, which are recognised as intimately and inextricably linked to broader, global political issues.

In terms of languaging, polyphony or dialogism's relation with plurilingualism is that the latter allows for transcultural competence via translation, which is valuable in multilingual and multicultural societies. Plurilingualism (and translation) alleviates the pitfalls in a scenario (e.g., the Biblical Tower of Babel) where everyone speaks a different language.²⁶⁶ In this scenario, communion of language may be very difficult, and may necessitate a translator. Languaging and translation functions as a mode for understanding. The speaker may only be understood when the listener speaks the same language, or a translator is present, unless body/sign language is utilised. Moreover, one is required to factor in the number of people speaking, which when many (i.e., polyphonous), has the effect of limiting coherency, particularly when people are speaking at the same time (i.e., noisy). Further, as Bakhtin notes, what matters also is '*Who* speaks and under *what* conditions', which determines actual meaning.²⁶⁷ Should one be responsible—how endless is that

²⁶⁵ Arendt notes: 'Acting and speaking are still outward manifestations of human life', contrary to manifestations which 'needs neither to be seen nor heard nor used nor consumed in order to be real: the activity of *thought*' (italics added). See Arendt Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 95.

²⁶⁶ Further to the parable of 'The City and The Tower' (of Babel): Before the Tower of Babel was built, all people spoke one common language, but erected the tower to reach the heavens, in order to make a name for themselves, and prevent populations from being scattered across earth. God in his infinite wisdom knew that the Tower of Babel would lead people away from Him. *Babel* is derived from the root meaning 'to confuse'. God observed what a powerful force the people's unity of purpose created; hence, God 'confused' their language, causing them to speak many different languages so they might not understand each other; thereby thwarting their plans, and forcing people to scatter all across the face of the earth. See Genesis 11:1-11:9. Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. 22.

²⁶⁷ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 401.

responsibility? In writing, the writer may be understood with translations, unless the writing is in a language the reader understands. Yet, in a dialogised context, meaning and interpretation may be limitless, bearing in mind the transcultural (or translinguistic) significance of languaging in a multi-langued world. Plurilingualism and translation, while allowing expression and understanding of possible contexts of languages and cultures, also heightens possible meanings and interpretations, such that socio-historical consciousness and experience may be contrasted in light of each other. Moreover, with heteroglossia, the dominant (or one's own) perspective is *defamiliarised*—rupturing the relationships to language, showing the gap between words and their meanings.²⁶⁸ Plurilingualism makes possible a pluriversal world and may be mediated by translations.²⁶⁹ An empathic world, where many languages and cultures exist, is founded on language plurality. Plurilingualism goes beyond the homo-hegemonies engendered by monolingual ideologies. Looking within transcultural perspectives redefines our communities by dislodging the sense of entitlement held by dominant groups and languages.

Rizal's novels are polyphonous or dialogic, which through plurilingualism (and translation) allows transcultural integration and the formation of a multicultural society where meaning and truth(s) come to the fore; interpretations are tried and tested. Bakhtin re-iterates, 'there *is* no single language; there are rather languages, linked up with each other in a purely *stylistic* unity'.²⁷⁰ Communities may be born in pluriversality, such that deep, horizontal comradeship opens ways of relating to the Other and the Othered.

²⁶⁸ Robinson Andrew. (2011, July 29). 'In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia'. *Ceasefire*. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>.

²⁶⁹ According to the parable of 'The City and The Tower' (of Babel): communion of language was denied to the people by God. This, I think, was God's intention to humble His people. See Genesis 11:1-11:9. Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. 22.

²⁷⁰ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 415.

ii. Jacques Derrida's 'Deconstruction of Language'

Derrida had many definitions for deconstruction. Most famously, the idea is encapsulated in the phrase 'There is nothing outside of the text', which was a concept first outlined by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*, wherein he explored the interplay between language and the construction of meaning.²⁷¹ Derrida refers to '*différance*', where the origin does not exist independently of its institution, but exists only 'through its functioning within a classification and therefore within a system of differences'.²⁷² *Différance* forms the basis of deconstruction, referring to meaning which cannot be regarded as fixed or static, but is constantly evolving.²⁷³

Derrida, in his 1971 interview 'Positions' and book of the same name, defined deconstruction into two phases: (1) reversal of hierarchies; (2) marking the relations, the difference or hiatus that made the hierarchical opposition possible in the first place.²⁷⁴ Deconstruction, Catherine Turner writes, 'arises from the constant process of negotiation between competing concepts'.²⁷⁵ Deconstruction requires the 'interrogation of competing interpretations that combine to produce meaning', rather than 'pursuing truth of a natural origin'.²⁷⁶ The act of writing, for instance, 'captures the constant competition between differing possible interpretations of meaning'.²⁷⁷ Turner goes on to say, 'The effect of the translation of thought into language is therefore to inscribe *différance* into the structure of meaning'.²⁷⁸ Simultaneously, the desired meaning as intended by the author, and interpretations not intended by the author (i.e., the idea of exteriority of meaning) are combined—defined equally in the structure by 'what is included and what is not'.²⁷⁹ While, at any point in time, one meaning will

²⁷¹ Derrida Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. lxii, 158.

²⁷² Derrida Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. xv, xxix-lxxx, 23, 109.

²⁷³ Turner Catherine. (2016, May 27). 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'. *Critical Legal Thinking*. <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/05/27/jacques-derrida-deconstruction/>.

²⁷⁴ Derrida Jacques. *Voice and Phenomenon*. xii. See also Derrida Jacques. (1981). *Positions*. Translated and Annotated by Alan Bass. The Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 41.

²⁷⁵ Turner Catherine. 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'.

²⁷⁶ Turner Catherine. 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'.

²⁷⁷ Turner Catherine. 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'.

²⁷⁸ Turner Catherine. 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'.

²⁷⁹ Turner Catherine. 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'.

be dominant over another; excluding the other.²⁸⁰ The ‘idea of exclusion suggests the absence of any presence of that which is excluded, in fact that which is instituted depends for its existence on what has been excluded’.²⁸¹ Thus, how we understand the meaning is determined by the interplay between what is included and what is not.²⁸² So, while there is hierarchy, where one interpretation is dominant over the other, the excluded competing interpretations are the ‘*trace* [italics added] within the dominant meaning’, which ‘overturn[s] the hierarchy’.²⁸³ One way of thinking about concepts is therefore overturned, and exposed to give way to another way; re-establishing how meaning is interpreted.²⁸⁴

A political definition of deconstruction was refined in Derrida’s essay ‘Force of Law’, where he conceded that it is ‘possible as an experience of the impossible’, and hence indeterminate.²⁸⁵ Deconstruction requires first and foremost ‘the relentless pursuit of the impossible—ongoing questioning that keeps our minds open that there may be alternative views and understandings of ideas’, not with their application. Hence, it is simply a way of ‘reading, writing, thinking and acting rather than seeking and endpoint or a solid conclusion—the ongoing questioning is the end in itself’.²⁸⁶ In seeking justice, it is about ‘negotiating the impossible and the undecidable and, in so doing, remaining open to its possibility’.²⁸⁷ Deconstruction ‘does not exist to take apart one structure to replace it with another, but exists simply to reveal the inner logic of that structure so as better to understand it’.²⁸⁸ Hence, it is not primarily concerned with ‘advocacy or activism, nor is it nihilistic or anarchic’, and instead ‘consists of dismantling not institutions themselves, but rather ‘structures within institutions

²⁸⁰ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸¹ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸² Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸³ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸⁴ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸⁵ Derrida Jacques. (2002). ‘Force of Law’. *Acts of Religion*. Translated by Mary Quaintance. Anidjar Gil (Ed.). New York: Routledge. 228-298, 243. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203724309>. See also Turner Catherine.

‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸⁶ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸⁷ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

²⁸⁸ Turner Catherine. ‘Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction’.

that have become too rigid, or are dogmatic or which work as an obstacle to future research'.²⁸⁹

In Rizal's dialogic and dialectical works, deconstruction plays credence to marginalised voices, re-centring them to expose and prevent dominant forms to reassert themselves; thereby criticising existing colonial structures.

Derrida's work questioned (and at times resolved) a whole set of conflicts which were felt to be insoluble to ordinary life—between the Same and the Other, presence and absence, identity and difference, et al. Accordingly, these phenomena are interrelated between these poles, and these relations prompt a questioning of social power. Derrida's writing, in utilising absolute principles, recognises alterity as difference, which when applied to Rizal, translates to bring him not only to the realm of God(s), but also to the people; towards the Other. While 'the Other' may be defined as 'That which is the counterpart or converse of something specified or implied; that which is not the self or subject; that which lies outside or is excluded from the group with which one identifies oneself; (in Lacanian thought) the unconscious, the symbolic order', 'It is...toward a pluralism which does not [necessarily] fuse into unity that [Derrida guides us] to make our way'.²⁹⁰

The Rizalian difference is 'not a community without light...[but] a light before neutral light, before the truth which arrives as a third party, the truth "which we look toward together"...[Its] phenomenon is a certain nonphenomenon, [i.e.,] its presence [is] a certain absence. Not pure and simple absence...but a *certain* absence'.²⁹¹ It communicates the richness of contemplative activity and impresses upon people a reverence for moral choice and righteousness. Moreover, though indirectly, it gives pride in one's language(s), and thus the nexus of our world.

²⁸⁹ Turner Catherine. 'Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction'.

²⁹⁰ Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, September). *Other*. OED Online. Oxford University Press.<https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/view/Entry/133219>. See also Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 110.

²⁹¹ Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 112-113.

John Caputo highlights the essence of deconstruction, which is to bring truth to a community with no truths. If for Saint Augustine, God is Truth, for Derrida, ‘the truth is living *sans vérité*, severed from God’s Truth and Truth’s God...[a] Truth-less truth of His existence’.²⁹² Caputo marks the passion of deconstruction as ‘deeply political’; for Derrida it is a ‘radically pluralistic polity that resists the terror of an organic, ethnic, spiritual, communitarian unity, of the natural, native bonds of the nation – (*natus, natio*) state...’²⁹³ That it belongs to the structure of Derrida’s thoughts to say that the Other is always out, ‘structurally out’, and thus the ‘community needs to be pried open’.²⁹⁴

Caputo brings us to the very idea of deconstruction, which is to jumble ‘the workings of strong nation states with rigorous immigration policies...the politics, and the metaphysics of native land and native tongue... my-ownness, to remain as vigilant as possible about the community of fusion’.²⁹⁵ Inherently, the idea is to ‘disarm the bomb of identity that nation-states build to defend themselves against the stranger’, all of whom are wholly other.²⁹⁶ Hence, the point is to keep the wound of colonisation open; keeping the future open, and letting the unforeseeable and unanticipatable come—to dream impossibilities.²⁹⁷

Rizal, having lived a full life, albeit short, contested dogmas of his country’s colonisers, sacrificing all to truth where there was none. Rizal explains in *The Noli*, ‘since many of our

²⁹² Caputo John D. ‘A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’. 26. 34. According to Christian Tornau, ‘From ancient thought Augustine inherited the notion that philosophy is “love of wisdom” (*Confessiones* 3.8; *De civitate dei* 8.1), i.e., an attempt to pursue happiness—or, as late-antique thinkers, both pagan and Christian, liked to put it, salvation—by seeking insight into the true nature of things and living accordingly. This kind of philosophy he emphatically endorses, especially in his early work (Cf., e.g., *Contra Academicos* 1.1). He is convinced that the true philosopher is a lover of God because true wisdom is, in the last resort, identical with God, a point on which he feels in agreement with both Paul (1 Corinthians 1:24) and Plato (C.f. *De civitate dei* 8.8). This is why he thinks that Christianity is “the true philosophy” (*Contra Iulianum* 4.72; the view is common among ancient, especially Greek, Christian thinkers) and that true philosophy and true (cultic) religion are identical (*De vera religione* 8)’. See Tornau Christian (2019, September 25). *Saint Augustine*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>.

²⁹³ Caputo John D. ‘A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’. 29.

²⁹⁴ Caputo John D. ‘A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’. 28-29.

²⁹⁵ Caputo John D. ‘A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’. 29.

²⁹⁶ Caputo John D. ‘A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’. 29.

²⁹⁷ Caputo John D. ‘A Community Without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’. 34.

characters are still alive... a true epilogue is impossible'.²⁹⁸ Nonetheless, he concedes, 'for everyone's benefit, we would gladly kill off all our characters...but that's not possible...let them live!'.²⁹⁹ A deconstructive reading of Rizal therefore lends itself to reveal the inner logic of colonial structures so as to better understand them. This has led not necessarily to dismantling colonial conquest—Rizal was not a separatist—but enlightens people to change homo-hegemonies and dominant imperialist ideologies engendered by monologics. To this end, it is a means to pluriversality, and thus prolongs a multitude of ways of being. The irony: Rizal's efforts to write against colonialism, which sealed his fate (or execution) in the hands of the colonialists.

Rizal's novels deconstruct; they are literary realities through a historical understanding of the then Filipino zeitgeist, uncircumspect of its readers but lived in the heart of its writer. The 'novel' was Rizal's way to disarm, to live *sans vérité*; severed from God's Truth and Truth's God, to expose the Truth-less truth to a community where there was none.³⁰⁰ He did this by revealing the cut/wound in political sites of Filipino-Spanish communities. Notable in *The Noli* is the scene where Ibarra almost killed Padre Dámaso by a table knife had María Clara (our 'third') not intervened. The intent to kill may have plagued Rizal's consciousness because of his first-hand experience dealing with such ill will. This, however, did not bode well for him in the hands of colonialists whose intent severed him from life itself. Moreover, *Katipuneros* et al raised their hands to fight the insurrection Rizal himself wrote against. History is not without a sense of irony, for in voicing the conditions of the people, and including his own experiences in his writings, Rizal was exiled, trialled, sentenced then executed by the reigning power that was the sovereign.

²⁹⁸ Rizal José. 'Epilogue'. *Noli Me Tangere*. 418.

²⁹⁹ Rizal José. 'Epilogue'. *Noli Me Tangere*. 418.

³⁰⁰ Rizal's God 'is much greater, much better: *Plus Supra* (Far Above)!' than the God of the Catholics and the friars. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 244.

Rizal's novels have emphasised 'readerly participation in order to challenge the notion of his voice as unified and singular'.³⁰¹ Wenceslao Retana, a Spanish Filipinologist and Rizal's critic then later admirer, notes that the first novel is a work of 'emotion' (*sentida*), 'a picture of the entire country, rich in colour and fantasy, blended with the dreams of a sensitive poet' (*una pintura de todo el país, rica en color y en fantasía, matizada con los ensueños de un poeta delicado*).³⁰² Meanwhile, the sequel is a work of 'thought' (*pensada*), 'a series of philosophical/political treaties in the form of fiction' (*una serie de tratados filosófico-políticos con trabazón novelesca*), where 'every speech' (*cada discurso*) becomes 'a nationalist dissertation' (*una disertación nacionalista*).³⁰³ In light of this, Rizal's novels, Palma claims, are not a continuation from each other: 'The Ibarra of [*The Noli*] does not think the same as the Simoun of [*The Fili*]... Ibarra confides, waits, loves. Simoun becomes undeceived, is skeptical and hates. Ibarra asks for reforms, appeals to the sense of justice and to the goodness of the government; Simoun does not ask, he brutalises, corrupts, incites to violence, destroys, commits suicide... [Simoun] is [thus] Rizal who has lost his hope'.³⁰⁴

Rizal's presence is not negated nor rejected, rather it is contested, hence his defensiveness, complex (i.e., dialectical) reasoning, and anticipations of death. By writing himself into his novels, he faced the highest penalty – his life. Rizal is in his writings, and his way of being present while absent, as they live on beyond his death. Thus, in the context of decolonial futurity, opens up subjectivity towards a pluriversality which allows a wide variety of readings and interpretations. Rizal provokes self-reflection of the reader to consciously place meaning into context. His writings are provisionally related, accessible, imparts

³⁰¹ Legaspi Harold. (2020). 'Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*'. University of Sydney. 9.

³⁰² Retana Wenceslao. (1907). *Vida y Escritos Del Dr. José Rizal*. Translated by Javier Gómez de la Serna and Miguel de Unamun. Madrid: V. Suárez. 201; See also Claudio Lisandro E. *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. 57.

³⁰³ Retana Wenceslao. *Vida y Escritos Del Dr. José Rizal*. 201. See also Claudio Lisandro E. *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. 57.

³⁰⁴ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 176-177.

wisdom, and as Garry Sherbert highlights, promotes ‘learned wit’.³⁰⁵ Moreover, as deconstruction informs us, there is no singular ‘truth’, but rather *truthless truths* – Rizal’s writing has multiple meanings derived from opposing forces, rather than any singular one.³⁰⁶ In its various modes, it recreates the motifs of the (colonised) Filipino, the coloniser, and extends paradoxes of life – including representations of love and God(s), which remain a spiritual conundrum.

All the questions posed in ‘Violence and Metaphysics’ are questions of language.³⁰⁷ For Derrida, language is the same, the ‘violence of light... for every answer can be made only in language, and language is opened by the question [whereas] philosophy (in general) can only open itself to the question, within it and by it. It can only *let itself be questioned*’.³⁰⁸ Levinas himself ‘recognises that there is no thought before language and outside of it—except by *formally* and *thematically* posing the question of the relations between belonging and the opening, the question of closure... in an inscribed description, in an inscription of the relations between the philosophical and the nonphilosophical’.³⁰⁹

In Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, a phenomenological method is utilised to describe how subjectivity arises from the idea of infinity, and how the infinite is

³⁰⁵ Musgrave David. (1997). *Figurations of the Grotesque in Menippean Satire* [Doctoral Thesis, University of Sydney]. Australia. 15.

³⁰⁶ It is interesting to note that Cartesians’ uncertainty with science because they believed God is omnipotent and that His will is entirely free; from this it follows that God could, if He so wished, make any apparent truth a falsehood and vice versa. The human intellect, by contrast is finite, which contrasts with an idea of an infinite God (incomprehensible to the human mind), and because of this, Descartes thinks God must exist to cause us to have that idea. Arendt writes about Cartesian doubt, that it ‘did not simply doubt that human understanding may not be open to every truth or that human vision may not be able to see everything, but that intelligibility to human understanding does not at all constitute a demonstration of truth, just as visibility did not at all constitute proof of reality. This doubt doubts that such a thing as truth exists at all, and discovers thereby that the traditional concept of truth, whether based on sense perception or on reason or on belief in divine revelation, had rested on the twofold assumption that what truly is will appear of its own accord and that human capabilities are adequate to [conceive] it’. See Arendt Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 275-276.

³⁰⁷ Derrida Jacques. ‘Violence and Metaphysics’. *Writing and Difference*. 136, 164.

³⁰⁸ Derrida Jacques. ‘Violence and Metaphysics’. *Writing and Difference*. 136, 164.

³⁰⁹ Derrida Jacques. ‘Violence and Metaphysics’. *Writing and Difference*. 138.

a product of the relationship of self to another. The primacy of the Other is interrogated, so as to ask the entity unconditional, and based on the epiphany of face—Others and self (i.e., Same) is self (i.e., Same) responsible for Others.³¹⁰ According to Levinas, ontology enacts a relationship with another being that reduces to the Same.³¹¹ And accordingly, ‘exteriority’ is how the individual transcends finite into the infinite.³¹² The Same as separate from the Other disallows fusion to infinity (i.e., where the infinite is a form of transcendence in relation to the Other) because they are completely separated.³¹³ Levinas does not reduce the Other to the Same, but considers the separation between self (i.e., Same) and the Other as inherent in the relationship with Being—i.e., ontology. ‘Exteriority is Being’ in which the self cannot be merged into a (totality), i.e., whole.³¹⁴ The idea of the infinite in self, saves one from solipsism and opens oneself to ‘exteriority’, to truthless truths and transcendental inter-subjectivity.³¹⁵ Thus, the Other is (absolutely) other than oneself—is infinitely transcendent reality. In Indigenous (Filipino) context, the recognition of a shared identity, an inner self, shared with others is defined in the core value of *kapwa*—a notion of a ‘shared self’, which extends the ‘I’ to include ‘the Other’; the unity of *one-of-us-and-the-other*.³¹⁶ As Derrida says, ‘If to understand Being is to be able to let be...then the understanding of Being always concerns

³¹⁰ Lawlor Leonard. (2021, August 27). *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/>.

³¹¹ Levinas says, ‘the identity of the individual does not consist in being like to itself, and in letting itself be identified *from the outside* by the finger that points to it; it consists in being the *same*—in being oneself, in identifying oneself from within’. See Levinas Emmanuel. (1991). *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (4th Edition). Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Kluwer Academic Publishers. Netherlands. 289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-9342-6>.

³¹² Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (4th Edition). 290-291.

³¹³ According to Levinas: ‘Like a shunt every social relation leads back to the presentation of the other to the same without the intermediary of any image or sign, solely by the expression of the face’. Also, ‘Corporeity is the mode of existence of a being whose presence is postponed at the very moment of his presence. Such a distension in the tension of the instance can only come from an infinite dimension which separates me from the other, both present and still to come, a dimension opened by the face of the Other’. See Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (4th Edition). 213, 225.

³¹⁴ Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (4th Edition). 290-291.

³¹⁵ Levinas posits: ‘being as [alterity] is to apperceive infinity as the Desire for infinity, and thus to understand that the production of infinity calls for separation, the product of the absolute arbitrariness of the I or of the origin’. See Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (4th Edition). 290-292.

³¹⁶ de Guia Katrin. (2013). Indigenous Values for Sustainable Nation Building. *Prajñā Vihāra*. 14(1-2). 180. <http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/indigenous-values-sustainable-nation-building/docview/2384100748/se-2>.

alterity...one can have to let be only that which one is not. If Being is always to be let be, and if to think is to let Being be, then Being is indeed the other of thought. But since it is what it is only by the letting-be of thought, and since the latter is thought only by virtue of the presence of the Being which it lets be, then *thought and Being, thought and the other, are the same* [italics added]; which...does not mean identical, or one, or equal'.³¹⁷ The self (or the Same) is therefore the Other. *Kapwa*, accordingly, implies ethical and political aspects which obliges a person to treat another as fellow human being with respect. Such a position is inconsistent with exploitative human interactions, and denies the Derridean notions of hospitality (to be articulated later in this thesis), which is threatened by Western influences of individualism—thinking oneself (*ako*) as separate from *kapwa*; denying the status of *kapwa* to the Other. Derrida goes on to say that Levinas has 'given up the right to speak about the other...by rejecting the same, [and] gives up phenomenal presence as the presupposition of sense and language'.³¹⁸ Levinas's discourse of alterity therefore, for Derrida, is necessarily "caught" by the same'.³¹⁹

Derrida's *différance*, which derives from the Edmund Husserlian concept of *intentionality*, consists in an intending *to*; it is defined by the dative relation.³²⁰ This connection of *différance* back to Husserlian intentionality is why the Husserlian concept of noema [or meaning of intentionality...is] 'is at its root'.³²¹ Leonard Lawlor says, noema 'is at once *in* consciousness *without* it belonging to consciousness; it is at once inside and outside consciousness, immanent and transcendent, mundane and extra-mundane. It is at once related

³¹⁷ Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 176. See also Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 7.

³¹⁸ Derrida sums up the entirety of Levinas's thought: 'the other is the other only if his alterity is absolutely irreducible, that is, infinitely irreducible; and the infinitely Other can only be Infinity'. See Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 129.

³¹⁹ Lawlor Leonard. (2002). *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press. 228.

³²⁰ Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 215.

³²¹ Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 230-231.

to acts of consciousness and iterable beyond them; it is in the passage between these poles'.³²² This implies transcendental intersubjectivity [i.e., existing between conscious minds; shared by more than one conscious mind].³²³ In line with Derridean thinking, 'because consciousness is a consciousness *to*,' Husserl shows that '*I understand the other even though I cannot live his or her [or their] life* [italics added].³²⁴ This is the Derridean concept of *différance* in Husserlian terms'.³²⁵ Empathy, therefore, is possible. Derrida showed that Husserl acknowledged the 'other as *other*, in its irreducible alterity'.³²⁶ Hence, 'Husserl's analogical representation respected rather than eclipsed otherness'.³²⁷

While the stable written form had shown itself to be inadequate to the demands of the Other it signified, this ethical demand was underwritten by writing. As Derrida wrote, 'there is no ethics without the presence of the other but also, and consequently, without absence, dissimulation, detour, writing'.³²⁸ And according to Edward Baring, 'As absence and dissimulation... writing challenged Levinas's claims about the priority of ethics. The Other still called us to responsibility. But because it was dissimulated, we were able to refuse this responsibility, to deny or disavow the Other. Indeed, for Derrida, this possibility was a 'necessary condition of an ethical decision; we had to be free to choose otherwise'.³²⁹ Through transcendence and empathy (i.e., the priority of the experience of the Other), meaning is offered

³²² Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 231.

³²³ Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 231.

³²⁴ David Carr says Husserl explains the objectivity of the world 'not as my *private* synthetic formation but as other than mine alone [*mirfremde*], as an *intersubjective* world, actually there for everything, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone...[that is]...[one] must lay bare the form of experience through which consciousness intends not merely an object within the world, as in the case of a perceived object, but **another subject** (bold added) with its own stream of experience and its own objects...[in short]...I am confronted with an object which is a subject'. By presenting intersubjectivity, Husserl 'gives the impression that he is setting out to demonstrate...the "independent existence" or other "I's"...[that is]...an objection of solipsism'. See Carr David. (1973). 'The "Fifth Meditation" and Husserl's Cartesianism'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 34(1). 15-17, 22, 27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2106777>.

³²⁵ Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 231.

³²⁶ Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 142, 153.

³²⁷ Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 7.

³²⁸ Derrida Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. 139-140.

³²⁹ Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 11.

to the experience of the Other, whether in presence or in absence, which could also offer an absolute alternative to history itself.

Rizal's difference, thus, may align with Derrida's principles, recognising that (1) philosophy was dependent upon the infinite, which transcended totality and (2) the immanence of the infinite. The Rizalian difference recognises Rizal's certain absence; even when he was abroad, and as he is no longer (physically) with us, he is/was present through his writings. Moreover, he claimed his people's Otherness by implicating them with the colonisers and vice-versa. In effect, Rizal gave a voice to the thoughts and feelings of his people (the colonised) to the colonisers, in their own language. Rizal's sense of Being, his life and legacy also re-invigorate us to question the faults in our shared colonial history, of our *kapwa* or shared identity.

Rizal, whose paternal descendants came from China (i.e., an ancestry of migrants, similar to myself) in the seventeenth century, describes himself as a 'compatriot', but was exiled in Dapitan by the Spanish authorities.³³⁰ Yet, it was during his exile which were among the fruitful periods in Rizal's life—he served the people and society through civic works, medical practice, land development and promotion of education. Inwardly an *Ilustrado*, but outwardly an *indio*, he was also a(n) (foreign) observer that no longer practised Catholicism but remained very much a cultural one.

Many aspects of Rizal's history, and essentially his life and legacy became contentious. Lisandro notes, for example: 'whether or not [Rizal] retracted his anti-Catholic writings before death, whether or not he supported the revolution—these questions remain central to how historians and citizens of the Philippines view their nation'.³³¹ One could question the validity

³³⁰ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. (1961). José Rizal to Fernando Blumentritt, 19 April 1887 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence (Popular Edition)*. Vol. II, Part Two. Manila: José Rizal National Centennial Commission. 71-74.

³³¹ Palma's critical examination of Rizal's alleged retraction makes a point that 'In short, Rizal's conversation was a pious fraud to make the people believe that the extraordinary man broke down and succumbed before the

of these claims, and it is noteworthy to ask, to whom do these claims belong, if none other than Rizal. But since he is *physically no longer among us*, how does one truly know?³³² Accordingly, the ‘Rizalian ambiguity has grown to such an extent that has created an Ur-Rizal theory, known in the Philippines as “the enigma syndrome”, i.e., the man cannot be known; he is a *santo*’.³³³

Moreover, Rizal’s thinking appeals to Derrida’s thinking, such that he resorted to ‘language of the Same to understand the Other’ by writing his novels in the colonising language, Spanish. Doing so, subjected the coloniser to the truth(s) of his people, while enlightening us to think plurally about languaging, in effect changing structures within institutions which had become too rigid and dogmatic. For instance, Rizal advocated for reforms: ‘They must be good reforms so that the Philippines may march through a peaceful and progressive road and occupy the place she deserves without shocks or violence’.³³⁴ In effect, Rizal tried to let the ‘force of the waves’ guide not only his people but also the colonisers, by writing to the metropole in their own language and appealing for people to avoid violence, rather than ‘remain[ing] stationary’—to let their feelings and interiority guide their actions.³³⁵

Writing, for Rizal, was such that he imparted his consciousness to reach the readers’ mind’s eye; the readers’ heart’s ear. Thus, Rizal gave himself; his inner-most thoughts, feelings. Moreover, through his letters, and his *Ilustrado* thought from writings in the

Church which he had fought. The Archbishop was interested in his conversion for political motives, and the Jesuits lent themselves as his instrument. The example of Rizal would have great resonance in the whole country and it was necessary to bolster the dropping prestige of religion with his abjuration. What if Rizal was a man of valour and convictions and his conversion would be unbelievable? So much the better. The interest of religion was above him. His aureole of glory had to be done away with, if necessary. What did it matter? He was only an indio’. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 343. See also Claudio Lisandro E. *José Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality*. vii

³³² The facial expression of Rizal and some of the details of the execution narrated in his biography were seen by Palma. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 345-352.

³³³ Rizal José. ‘Introduction’ by Harold Augenbraum. *Noli Me Tangere*. xxiii.

³³⁴ Rizal José. *Political and Historical Writings (Popular Edition)*. 62.

³³⁵ Rizal José. *Political and Historical Writings (Popular Edition)*. 62.

newspaper *La Solidaridad*, the statutes of movement he drafted for *La Liga Filipina*; he faced the everyday reality of community and solidarity by recognition of a commonality, choosing to look for collective rather than individual benefits—for *kapwa* or shared self. For instance, in his letters to his ‘Parents and Brothers’, Rizal had said he lived in ‘poor, damp, dark and badly ventilated [rooms abroad]...dirty and [situated in] old street[s]’.³³⁶ Rizal was ‘poor in money’, and borrowed from people to survive, ‘living economically [on] forty [to fifty] *duros*’ a month’.³³⁷ There have been ‘times when [he] spent the day without eating for not having a real and [he] kept quiet: [he] suffered the cold and the rain and [he] did not take the streetcar for not having anything to pay, when [his] feet were swollen and painful’.³³⁸ Thus, while Rizal was fortunate enough to have been able to study abroad, his lifestyle was such that he had lived ‘economically’; was poor, and had little means. He experienced life and empathised with the common people—he was Othered, caught in the Same (plight of his people).

Rizal’s writings, particularly his novels give a re-presentation of Filipino mentality; transcendental lives that intends alterity as a necessary possibility. While the revolution had yet to occur, the insurrection of Simoun in *The Fili* for instance, shows the energy and resolution, and an intention to act, even though he was a ‘friend to the authorities and of the friars’, he ‘excite[d] in the former the greed to exploit the poor people, and in the latter, lack of charity, arrogance and other vices, to end by extinguishing in the multitudes their remaining faith and veneration’.³³⁹ Rizal’s misfortunes while writing his novel, ‘not only for the

³³⁶ According José P. Apostol (editor), ‘Rizal had only one brother and several sisters. The word *Brothers* used here is the English word for the Spanish word *Hermanos*, which in that language, refers collectively to brothers and sisters’. See Rizal José. (1959). José Rizal to his Parents and Brothers, 23 June 1882 [Letter]. *One Hundred Letters of José Rizal to his Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*. José P. Apostol (Ed.). Manila: Philippine National Historical Society. 32, 40.

³³⁷ Rizal José. José Rizal to his Parents and Brothers, 10 October 1882 [Letter]. *One Hundred Letters of José Rizal to his Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*. 47. See also Rizal José. José Rizal to his Parents and Brothers, 30 December 1882 [Letter]. *One Hundred Letters of José Rizal to his Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*. 53, 237.

³³⁸ Rizal José. José Rizal to his Parents and Brothers, August or September 1885 [Letter]. *One Hundred Letters of José Rizal to his Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*. 236.

³³⁹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 176.

complaints of wholesale ejectment which had been decided in favour of the administrators of the *hacienda* of Calamba but also for the banishments and administrative or extrajudicial proceedings against his brothers-in-law and relatives', allow us to 'recognise that he had reasons to feel separatist'.³⁴⁰ Palma thus claims Rizal's work 'is separatist not because the ideas of Simoun were so, but because the ideas entertained by Simoun's creator were'.³⁴¹ Rizal's non-presence in his home country while writing his novels, were thus fulfilled by a consciousness *to*, an intending of a sense which necessarily ends in some sort of fulfillment for his people, which in some sort of presence, returned to him. As Caputo has highlighted, the essence of deconstruction is to bring truth to a community with no truths, and Rizal's writings, his life and legacy had done that.

Rizal may have been one man, however, perhaps he lives in us all. The paradox is such that Rizal lifted the veil of the country's ills, sacrificing all to truth, yet in doing so, his essence, even his own pride had been made an enigma. However, his intentions, known from his life and writings, 'recognise that education and peaceful progress towards the lofty goals of freedom are preferable to strife, death and bloodshed...He issued a clear and certain warning, documented by history, that liberty would prevail in the end against tyranny'.³⁴² Yet, Rizal's sense of Being is not an absolute nor pure substance. Rather, it exists in the plenitude of its essence, descending into history and disclosed in transcendental inter-subjectivity. Rizal's legacy has an immanent transcendence (i.e., it has the ability to rise up to the infinite in the human mind), which constantly overflows as movements between inadequate finite forms (i.e., life) as expressed in our history. This history, far from being determinable, reflects the Same in relation to the Other, and thus provides itself with its own resistance.

³⁴⁰ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 175.

³⁴¹ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 175.

³⁴² Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 372.

The theoretical writings of Derrida on hospitality are underpinned and relates particularly to his work in *Of Hospitality*, where Anne Dufourmantelle invited him to respond; as well, in *Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas*; and beyond and through him, to his readings of Levinas. ‘Hospitality’ defined, is ‘The act or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill’.³⁴³ Dufourmantelle’s contribution to *Of Hospitality* returns repeatedly to Derrida’s own ‘poetic hospitality’, and as Derrida remarks: ‘Hospitality—this is a name or an example of deconstruction...deconstruction is hospitality to the other, to the other than oneself, the other than “its other”, to an other who is beyond any “its other”’.³⁴⁴ Hospitality, in theory and practise thus relates to crossing boundaries, including between self and other, coloniser and colonised, stranger and guest, private and public, personal and political, emotional and rational, et al—each overlapping territory without any one exactly mapping another.³⁴⁵ Hospitality is premised by the notion of *kapwa*—an expression of humanness—the Self in the Other or shared-self. As Derrida points out, ‘all culture is originarily colonial’, and ‘institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some “politics” of language’.³⁴⁶

Derrida borrows Levinas’s maxim that ‘the essence of language is friendship and hospitality’, which relates to the latter’s claim that the relation to the exterior is integral to self-consciousness.³⁴⁷ As Derrida wrote in his discussion on hospitality, our absolute openness to the Other, a hospitality without condition, was required to give conditional laws of hospitality

³⁴³ Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, September). *Hospitality*. OED Online. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/view/Entry/88730>.

³⁴⁴ Derrida Jacques. (2002). ‘Hospitality’. *Acts of Religion*. 364. See also Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. (2000). *Of Hospitality*. Translated by Rachel Bowlby. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2.

³⁴⁵ Still Judith. (2010). *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. Edinburgh University Press. 4.

³⁴⁶ Still Judith. *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. 4.

³⁴⁷ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 98. See also Still Judith. *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. 12. See also Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (4th Edition). 305.

meaning.³⁴⁸ And yet, he claims, this absolute hospitality, ‘wouldn’t be effectively unconditional, the law, if it didn’t *have to become* effective, concrete, determined, if that were not its being as having-to-be’.³⁴⁹ Lawlor interprets Derrida’s idea of ‘messianism without the messiah’ as dangerous because ‘letting all the others in is impossible’.³⁵⁰ Thus, Derrida stresses unconditional hospitality to be dangerous. Moreover, the idea that simple openness to the Other was questioned, and in an ethical sense privy ‘that in welcoming the Other we also necessarily excluded and perhaps even sacrificed other Others’.³⁵¹ However, for Derrida, ‘always already, there has been violence, inequality, or injustice between a finite form and its infinite iterability. Therefore, we should give justice. The infinitely iterable form *should* delimit any finite form and it *should* be limited to a finite form. In other words, the infinitely other must and should be emancipated from any totality and must and should be welcomed into my home. We must be hospitable to the other...’³⁵² The paradox of hospitality ‘irreconcilably opposes *the* law, in its universal singularity, to a plurality...a structured multiplicity, determined by a process of division and differentiation...’³⁵³ Levinas’s suggestion that the ethical ‘face-to-face’ or the welcoming of the other, i.e., hospitality, requires a ‘mediating *third*’ party—other Others—for

³⁴⁸ Unconditional hospitality is ‘open[ning] up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner [i.e., other] (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names’. See Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 25.

³⁴⁹ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 79.

³⁵⁰ Lawlor Leonard. *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

³⁵¹ See Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 151-155, where Derrida discusses how in Genesis (19:1-14) Lot sacrificed his two daughters (both virgins) for the two men of Sodom whom he had welcomed into his home. Derrida claims, ‘From this moment, Lot seems to put the laws of hospitality above all, in particular the ethical obligations that link him to his relatives and family, first of all his daughters’. Derrida questions: ‘Are we heirs to this tradition of hospitality? Up to what point? Where should we place the invariant, if it is one, across this logic and these narratives?’ See also Baring Edward. ‘Levinas and Derrida’. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 12.

³⁵² Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 215.

³⁵³ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 79.

justice and pluralism in society to be possible.³⁵⁴ According to Derrida, the third would ‘protect against the vertigo of ethical violence itself’.³⁵⁵

Hospitality may cement bonds between those who are broadly culturally similar, but may also be used where the host becomes enemy; met with hostility, rather than as equals, to ward off the danger of violence (and desire) between those who are different.³⁵⁶ Derrida’s notion of ‘Deconstruction of Language’ thereby interrogates relations between self and other, coloniser and colonised, as can be seen from his broad definition:

‘In the broad sense, the language in which the foreigner is addressed or in which he is heard, if he is, is the ensemble of culture, it is the values, the norms, the meanings that inhabit the language . . . A passing remark: without speaking the same national language, someone can be less “foreign” to me if he shares a culture with me, for instance, a way of life linked to a degree of wealth, etc., than some fellow citizen or compatriot who belongs to what used to be called (but this language shouldn’t be abandoned too quickly, even if it does demand critical vigilance) another “social class”. As Levinas says from another point of view, *language is hospitality* [italics added]. Nevertheless, we have come to wonder whether absolute, hyperbolic, unconditional hospitality doesn’t consist in suspending language, a particular determinate language, and even the address to the other’.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Derrida Jacques. (1999). *Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas*. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 33, 66. According to Levinas, ‘The face to face is a final and irreducible relation...[which] makes possible the pluralism of society’. See Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (4th Edition)*. 291. See also Still Judith. *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. 14.

³⁵⁵ Derrida defines the third as ‘other than the neighbour, but also another neighbour, and also a neighbour of the other, and not simply his fellow’. See Derrida Jacques. *Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas*. 29-33.

³⁵⁶ Still Judith. *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. 18.

³⁵⁷ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 133, 135. See also Still Judith. *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. 19.

Forcing the other to be able to read or speak my language even as they ask for asylum is hardly hospitable.³⁵⁸ Derrida calls the mother tongue, ‘as [ones] ultimate homeland, and even [ones] last resting place’.³⁵⁹ The mother tongue is ‘the first and last condition of belonging...’³⁶⁰ Rizal’s languaging of his novels in the colonising language, Spanish, and his polyglot consciousness are therefore critical to the question of hospitality and how it relates to ethics and polity. Rizal’s writings spoke to both coloniser and colonised in the former’s terms (i.e., language), plurilingually. And while it may be argued that his writings often turned into hostility (towards the coloniser), the language with which this was done is bound within ethical and political means, such that it did not impose a translation to the Spaniards, which Derrida says, ‘is the first act of violence’—i.e., ‘requiring a foreigner to understand us, to speak our language’.³⁶¹ Moreover, Rizal’s authorial intention of exposing truth-less truths in fiction can be understood when placing meaning and interpretations into context.

I propose therefore that Rizal’s main ideology of writing his novels was because of his commitment to hospitality (between coloniser and colonised), and as well, as a social activity; one that guides us to *kapwa* or shared self, to value and have regard for solitude—a necessarily peaceful existence. Rizal’s regard for writing, as both social and solitary, may be interrogated by the fact that copies of *The Noli* as well as its sequel *The Fili*, were smuggled into the Philippines and surreptitiously circulated.³⁶² Moreover, Rizal sent copies of both works to his milieu of foreign acquaintances, friends and family, at times inciting requests for explanations

³⁵⁸ Still Judith. *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*. 19.

³⁵⁹ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 89.

³⁶⁰ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 89.

³⁶¹ Derrida Jacques, Dufourmantelle Anne. *Of Hospitality*. 15.

³⁶² Jurilla Patricia May B. “Florante at Laura” and the History of the Filipino Book’. 138. Note: Anderson writes, however, that *The Fili*, unlike *The Noli*, was intended only for audiences in the Philippines. Rizal had sent a few copies to personal friends in Spain and elsewhere, but the rest of the entire edition was shipped to his trusted old friend, José Basa in Hong Kong, where Rizal intended to settle till Captain-General of the Philippines, Valeriano Weyler’s (known as the ‘Butcher of Cuba’) term was over. See Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 103, 123.

of words unknown to the other party.³⁶³ ‘If we think of literature as itself occasioning a social interaction and itself produced through social relations, then the two-way dynamic of how the world shapes literature and how literature shapes the world makes more sense’.³⁶⁴ In other words, the transformative potential of Rizal’s novels is centred in the social dimensions of literature.

However, in light of these ideas, Rizal’s commitment to social activities (and thus hospitality) may be considered in contrast with the pursuit of his writings, which necessitates being solitary. It is clear that Rizal may have determined hospitality was conditional, evidenced by his narration of the residents of Manila attending Captain Tiago’s dinner party, which opens *The Noli*. Rizal referred to the residents upon hearing about Captain Tiago’s dinner party, ‘as parasites, spongers, and freeloaders that God, in his infinite goodness, has so lovingly multiplied in Manila’.³⁶⁵ Contrasting this with Indigenous (Filipino) notion of *kapwa* and duties of hospitality (a door always open and a table prepared to receive guests), as well as the author’s solitary act of writing (i.e., where there is usually little to no hospitality nor imposition; where one separates oneself (albeit violently) from society or community), and one may consider upon the implications of necessarily excluding and perhaps even sacrificing ‘other Others’.³⁶⁶ Yet, no hospitality, in ‘reaching *only* its proper destination...will exclude more, many more, and that “many more”, at the limit, amounts to all’.³⁶⁷ In ‘this *complete* exclusion or this extermination of *the most*,’ as evidenced in the time and space devoted to the pages Rizal had written, which necessitated being

³⁶³ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. Fernando Blumentritt to José Rizal, 27 March 1887 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence (Popular Edition)*. 63-64.

³⁶⁴ Legaspi Harold. ‘Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*’. 3.

³⁶⁵ Rizal José. (2006). ‘A Gathering’. *Noli Me Tangere*. 5.

³⁶⁶ Rizal’s house in Calamba where he spent his youth, served as lodging for the authorities of the province and other high functionaries who found themselves obliged to rest there from their travels. See Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 2.

³⁶⁷ Lawlor Leonard. *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

solitary and thus contemplative; may have brought him back to his people.³⁶⁸ Lawlor notes, ‘There is no limit to this violence—[being excluded from all]—that makes this violence the worst violence. The worst is a relation that makes of more than one simply one, that makes, out of a division, an indivisible sovereignty’.³⁶⁹ But, as Derrida claims, ‘our responsibility to the Other is always and necessarily contaminated by our responsibility to other Others: “the third does not wait; its illeity calls from as early as the epiphany of the face in the face to face... a violence in the pure and immediate ethics of the face to face”’.³⁷⁰ The purpose of deconstruction is to ‘move us towards, not the worst violence, not the most violence, but the *least violence*’ (italics added).³⁷¹ Thus, Rizal’s nuanced preference towards solitude (i.e., writing; contemplation) over plurality (i.e., community; gathering), taken to the limits (i.e., to the n^{th} degree), may lead us towards the least violence; and may result in the difference between experiencing the condition for (exterior) peace or war, respectively.

Rizal in his aversion to violence in the revolution showcased his responsibility to the third. Rizal, by the solitary acts of reading and writing, ensured peaceful resistance by advocating reforms through non-violent means. Rizal led by example, advocating least violence through the solitary acts of reading and writing, and by asking the insurgents of the revolution to rise gradually, unarmed. His actions, writings, were principled on foundations of democratic plight, such that the people had a voice in the exercise of power.³⁷² Rizal exposed the colonisers, which were the sovereign at the time, to share their power, and rid themselves of their abuses and contradictions, to free the oppressed, making room for a plurality by (often)

³⁶⁸ Lawlor Leonard. *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

³⁶⁹ According to Lawlor, Derrida calls ‘the worst’ (*le pire*) around ‘an ambiguous phrase “d’un”, which could be translated in English as “more than one”, “more of one”, or “no more one”’. See Lawlor Leonard. *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

³⁷⁰ Baring Edward. ‘Levinas and Derrida’. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 13.

³⁷¹ Lawlor Leonard. *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

³⁷² The first fully national election in the Philippines for a fully elected legislative body was in 1907 for the Philippine Assembly, the elected half of the bicameral Philippines Legislature during the American colonial period. It would not be until 1935 when the Philippine Commonwealth was inaugurated under a democratic constitution patterned after the United States bicameral system.

solitary means, rather than a universalising conscience of colonial mentality. Rizal's life was thus an example of a plight for a clearer conscience and consciousness; a life lived in dialogue between his people and the colonisers, which had the tendency to bear truth of the ills propagated by the sovereign, thus guarding against the authority they possessed.

Over time, the retaliations by the Spanish authority over Rizal's voice tended towards the ongoing imperial hegemony. That the use of power requiring urgency proved to be correct in the case of Rizal, who was executed shortly after his writings. This notion went against Rizal's plight for gradualism; exercising his power through writing, and trying to organise peaceful resistance through political associations. Mabini says, 'When [Rizal] realised that these disorderly and ill-coordinated efforts yielded little, [he] thought of organising...*La Liga Filipina*, which was inaugurated a few days before his rustication to Dapitan in Mindanao'.³⁷³ Yet, 'the society was dissolved a few days after its inauguration because of the banishment of its founder [Rizal], and that, when it was reorganised later on the initiative of Don Domingo Franco, Andrés Bonifacio, and others...[it] did not have a better fate...only to be dissolved [again] after a few months of life.'³⁷⁴ The work of conciliation and compromise brought no results, and as dissolution of the society occurred, Bonifacio reorganised the society under the name of *Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (Association of the Sons of the People) with independence as its objective.³⁷⁵

Mabini says 'The *Katipunan* grew very rapidly because the insolent and provocative way in which the friars carried out their campaign [against reforms] had exasperated the masses'.³⁷⁶ But political associations were not permitted in the archipelago and the middle class had not been able to move freely, so *Katipunan* spread all over the province of Manila and began to branch out into Cavite and Bulacan, only to be discovered by the authorities, and thus

³⁷³ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 40.

³⁷⁴ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 40-42.

³⁷⁵ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 40-42.

³⁷⁶ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 42.

ordering the arrest of all the prominent Filipinos in every province; a cruel and horrible fate, which included torture.³⁷⁷ This was the first stage of the revolution, and ‘many died as a result; many executed under sentence of courts-martial; many others, shot without any trial at all’.³⁷⁸ This tendency for imperial hegemony defines what Derrida calls ‘the worst’, a tendency toward the complete appropriation or extermination of all the others.³⁷⁹ Rizal says, ‘Uprisings and revolutions have always taken place in countries under tyrannical governments, under those where the mind and the human heart are compelled to keep silent’.³⁸⁰

While one cannot deny that every experience takes place in the present, Rizal’s acts of reading and writing necessarily sheds light by bringing to the fore a peaceful way to impart ideas. In *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida gives a precise definition of what he means by “metaphysics of presence”: ‘metaphysics has decided that the **meaning of being is presence** [bold added], presence both in the sense of an object before and in the sense of a subject in self-proximity’.³⁸¹ Rizal through writing had produced books which are always available for readers and therefore a variety readings. These books function to instill a presence through absence, and as a reminder of those thoughts that were present in the past; a reminder of our history. Derrida notions, a book ‘seems to be derived from the presence of thought; writing seems to be a mere supplement. As a supplement, writing is taken back into the terrain of metaphysics’.³⁸² Rizalian thinking through the (peaceful) acts of reading and writing are therefore means and an example to lessen the violence of the Philippine Revolution. While ‘Levinas wanted to end all violence, all forcing of the Other into the categories of the self,

³⁷⁷ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 42-44.

³⁷⁸ Mabini Apolinario. *The Philippine Revolution* (Spanish: *La Revolucion Filipina*). 44.

³⁷⁹ Lawlor Leonard. *Jacques Derrida*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

³⁸⁰ Rizal José. *Political and Historical Writings* (Popular Edition). 157.

³⁸¹ According to Derrida, the metaphysics of presence ‘is a closed system, determining the concept of sign (and more generally language) as derivative, as a modification of presence and having no other purpose than representing presence. Starting with presence and ending with presence, metaphysics forms a circular enclosure’. See Derrida Jacques. *Voice and Phenomenon*. xi, xii, xiv, xv, xvi, xxv.

³⁸² Derrida Jacques. *Voice and Phenomenon*. xxiv.

Derrida [claims] that this was not possible.³⁸³ Absolute peace was an unreachable goal, and so the search for the unadulterated other could only lead to failure or more violence’, as had been the case in Rizal’s novels.³⁸⁴ But, we see that Rizal’s aversion to violence, through the solitary acts of reading and writing, showcased his responsibility to other Other’s, even though in *The Fili*, characters like Simoun had been written to brutalise, corrupt, incite violence, destroy and commit suicide. The living present, through Rizal’s notions of reading and writing, are peaceful means to attain liberation—his writings are ‘the voice that keeps silent’.³⁸⁵

Derrida’s work on deconstruction sheds light on Rizal (re-)creating himself in his novels as ‘both the real-life actor in the drama of Philippine nationalism, and a fictional actor in the drama [through Ibarra, his stand-in]; real and imaginary heroes of an inevitable insurrection’.³⁸⁶ Moreover, it may seemingly allow us to separate Rizal from his works. It was Roland Barthes who insisted in ‘The Death of the Author’; that the ‘author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a “subject”, not a “person.”’³⁸⁷ And, he famously concluded: ‘the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. The writer can only imitate a gesture that is

³⁸³ Derrida says, ‘In effect, *either* there is only the same, which can no longer even appear and be said, nor even exercise violence (pure infinity and finitude); *or* indeed there is the same *and* the other, and then the other cannot be the other—of the same—except by being the same (as itself: ego), and the same cannot be the same (as itself: ego) except by being the other’s other: alter ego. That I am also essentially the other’s other, and that I know I am, is the evidence of a strange symmetry whose trace appears nowhere in Levinas’s descriptions. Without this evidence, I could not desire (or) respect the other in ethical dissymmetry’. See Derrida Jacques. ‘Violence and Metaphysics’. *Writing and Difference*. 160.

³⁸⁴ According to Levinas, ‘Only beings capable of war can rise to peace’. See Levinas Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (4th Edition)*. 222. See also Baring Edward. ‘Levinas and Derrida’. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 6-7.

³⁸⁵ Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 230.

³⁸⁶ Rizal José. ‘Introduction’ by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. xvi.

³⁸⁷ Barthes Roland. (2001). ‘The Death of the Author’. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1,467. See also Legaspi Harold. ‘Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*’. 6.

always anterior, never original' (bold added).³⁸⁸ Hence, 'A text's origin is language itself, and is disconnected from the author who writes it'.³⁸⁹

Yet, Rizal's life and legacy, his Being, his openness to the transcendental and indeterminate reveals its true significance in light of his people. The Filipinos, to this day, consider him to be a hero of humanity, and duly pay homage. Palma notes: 'With purely humane means—with thoughts and words—Rizal practically realised in his country the miracle of converting his people to a new political and social gospel. Among the millions of his compatriots, it was he who saw clearly a malignant cancer where all saw a normal condition; through the surface apparently sound he saw the bottom of the anomalous situation'.³⁹⁰ While Rizal's intentions were misconstrued by the colonisers, it nevertheless provided an interface upon the world unto which his people could think. And since Rizal's writing only takes on life when it is realised by the reader (i.e., read), the reality of his novels, his words, and the individual disposition of the reader brings forth his legacy into existence.³⁹¹ The irony of history being that the *Katipuneros* incited a revolution against the Spaniards with arms. And the Filipinos delved from the hands of one coloniser (the Spaniards) to another (the Americans), only to realise self-sovereignty half a century after Rizal's death.

Thus, Rizal's writing, his life and legacy **cannot**, in light of these ideas, be set free from the author, but they can transcend. While his novels were written in the colonising language (i.e., Spanish), the fact that he wrote and spoke many other languages (primarily Filipino and Spanish), must not reduce nor eclipse the traces of him in his work. Moreover, the fact that Rizal's execution was linked to his writings also meant that his life and legacy are connected

³⁸⁸ Barthes Roland. (1968). 'The Death of the Author'. *Image, Music, Text*. Farrar, Straus. New York. 142, 145-47. And C.f. Barthes Roland. (2009). 'From Speech to Writing'. *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*. Translated by Linda Coverdale. Northwestern University Press. 3-7, as cited in Legaspi Harold. 'Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*'. 6.

³⁸⁹ Legaspi Harold. 'Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*'. 6.

³⁹⁰ Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 353.

³⁹¹ Iser Wolfgang. (1972). 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach'. *New Literary History*. 3(2). 279. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468316>.

to them. This however leads to a more liberated reading and interpretation of his works, but the fact that Rizal gave his life for his writings prevents one from severing his works (and thus his legacy) from himself, albeit they are no longer just his own. Palma says, 'It was just that he suffer[ed] in order that others might be saved; it was just that he die[d] in order that others might live'.³⁹²

³⁹² Palma Rafael. *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*. 363.

iii. Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*

*The thing recused in every generalisation of an absolute, even and especially some absolute secreted within this imaginary construct of Relation; that is, the possibility for each one at every moment to be both solidary and solitary there.*³⁹³

~ Édouard Glissant, 1997, *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*), 131.

The continuities heralded by decolonising discourses of thinkers such as Édouard Glissant and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, differs in perspective from thinkers such as Bakhtin and Dostoevsky, and as well Derrida, also Rizal, whose experiences of cultural fragmentation led to resistance by the colonial encounter. Resistance by Glissant, and including Rizal, tended to displace and subvert the hierarchies imposed by the coloniser upon the colonised. Their solutions were decolonial praxes, translated to plurality and diversity that continually contested inherent liminality and marginalisations. Glissant's *Poetics of Relations*, carries on Derrida's notions of 'Deconstruction of Language', in that he displaces and subverts hierarchies imposed by the coloniser via engagement with pluralism (i.e., plurilingualism) and creolisation. The resistance is elaborated upon a politics of difference, which is in light of the Derridean notions of alterity revealing itself in language, wherein the Other was impossible to grasp without resorting to language of the Same. The resistance is also inscribed in the regional resonances of the post-colonial; appearing along geographic, cultural and linguistic paradigms that practise pluralism through Glissant's creolisation. In light of this, Glissant's creolisation may be contrasted with Rizal's polyglot consciousness—his writings and novels, which while engaged in an act of resistance via literature against the colonisers, were written in the colonising language for reasons outlined earlier in this thesis. Yet, it is clear: Glissant

³⁹³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 131.

and Rizal, through their writings, went against the process of colonisation, which itself led to the subjection, alterity and dislocation on the part of many subjects.

Adlai Murdoch has said that the cultural and political positionality of the colonised is integrally tied to their historical relationship to the metropole.³⁹⁴ Historically, political control and cultural marginalisation, ‘functioning through catachresis and erasure’, created a ‘pattern of domination and containment where the hierarchies of language and culture bec[a]me instruments of an inimical authoritarianism’.³⁹⁵ Yet, there have been writings which present Rizal’s novels as ‘dead-ends’ of colonialism. One example is Aaron Castroverde’s thesis which posits the birth of Rizal’s novels as the death of the Spanish empire.³⁹⁶ It must be said, there is a logic in acknowledging the fact that colonisers, in entering the land of the colonised (whether welcomed or otherwise), occupy space. This leads to a paradoxical situation where ‘the colonised subject becomes the site of opposing and imaginary identifications’.³⁹⁷ The subject ‘works through the desire for recognition by aligning [themselves] with the values and practices of the coloniser, while simultaneously attempting to articulate a cultural identity reflective of the antinomies of historical experience’.³⁹⁸ Yet, Glissant’s intent, through his *Poetics of Relations*, realises language and ‘Relation in concrete terms’, whereby cultural self-definition is asserted—‘language is made of rocks and words’ such that ‘in Relation every subject is an object and every object a subject’.³⁹⁹ This leads to ‘composite cultures’, whose composition is ‘built in the margins...into the world by necessity, oppression, anguish, greed, or an appetite for adventure...’⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁴ Murdoch Adlai H. (1994). ‘(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin’. *Research in African Literatures*. 25(2). 81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4618265>.

³⁹⁵ Murdoch Adlai H. ‘(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin’. 81-82.

³⁹⁶ Castroverde Aaron C. *José Rizal and the Spanish Novel* [Doctoral Thesis, Duke University]. 1.

³⁹⁷ Murdoch Adlai H. ‘(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin’. 82.

³⁹⁸ Murdoch Adlai H. ‘(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin’. 82.

³⁹⁹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xx.

⁴⁰⁰ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 91.

Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* views thought and/or language in terms of the Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's, 'rhizome', a concept first developed in their book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980; translated 1987 by Brian Massumi; 2013 Bloomsbury reprint). The essence of something (e.g., thought and/or language) is thus 'no longer to be found in its roots, but in its limbs or branches, which were in relation'.⁴⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari define rhizome within 'nomad thought', which 'does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority'.⁴⁰² Rhizome's characteristically, 'unlike trees or their roots...connect any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature'.⁴⁰³ Rhizomes are not 'reducible to the One nor the multiple' and has 'neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and... overflows'.⁴⁰⁴ Rhizomes are an 'acentred, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system without a General and without an organising memory of central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states'.⁴⁰⁵ They operate 'by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots'.⁴⁰⁶ Hence, rhizomes 'grows between, among other things', and arrives at a 'magic formula' – 'PLURALISM = MONISM – via all the dualisms that are the enemy', which is the 'problem of writing'.⁴⁰⁷ There are no linguistic universals nor language within itself, nor are there mother tongues, but rather language is 'an essentially heterogenous reality', and only 'a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity'.⁴⁰⁸ Language is thus a 'throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialised

⁴⁰¹ Dimas Héctor M. S. (2013). 'Literature and Literacy Education in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings from the Perspectives of Gloria Anzaldúa's "Borderlands" and Édouard Glissant's "Poetics of Relation"'. *Journal of Educational Thought*. 46(3). 212.

⁴⁰² Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. (2013). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic. x.

⁴⁰³ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 21.

⁴⁰⁴ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 22.

⁴⁰⁵ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 22.

⁴⁰⁶ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 22.

⁴⁰⁷ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 19, 21.

⁴⁰⁸ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 6..

languages'; it is 'never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence'.⁴⁰⁹ Rhizomes are therefore chaotic, characterised by their multiplicities, which in contrast with Derrida's deconstruction are defined by the outside.⁴¹⁰

In terms of Relation, thought (and/or language) constructs interdependent unities to piece together the interactive totality—*la totalité -monde*, *les échos-monde*, and, *le chaos-monde*—guises of the world as totality, echoes and chaos, all at once; a relation limited in reality by its dependence.⁴¹¹ Glissant thus 'projects language as it *should* be', he writes in a 'French different from the so-called standard French of the Métropole: one made supple by Creole', and incorporates aspects of its formation by being cognisant of the history of his Antillean people, 'ready to imagine for them both past and future'.⁴¹² His Creole compromise—resulting from both the 'uprooting of African languages and the deviance of French provincial idioms'—construct a marginality that is 'deviant in relation to any supposed classicism'.⁴¹³ Through interrogation of languages, Glissant grounds concretely an affirmation of place (i.e., the Antilles), links culture across language barriers, and enables them to mutually affect and be affected. Languages 'combine, vary, clash', they scintillate, are invented (e.g., neologisms), dominate, accord, become silent and irrepressibly explode, which may improve the quality of expression.⁴¹⁴

It is worth asking: may it be possible that a middle-ground lives in Rizal's legacy; a ground that exhibits rhizomic qualities espoused by Glissant via Deleuze & Guattari? Glissant notions that this 'universal energy' must be 'safeguarded from assimilations, from fashions passively accepted as the norm, and from standardised customs'.⁴¹⁵ In Rizal life,

⁴⁰⁹ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 6-7.

⁴¹⁰ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 8.

⁴¹¹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 92-93, 216-217.

⁴¹² Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xvi-xvii.

⁴¹³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 97.

⁴¹⁴ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 101.

⁴¹⁵ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 30.

novels and articles, new sayings, songs, and proverbs in Filipino consciousness were born, despite some of them being written in the colonising language. Thus, ‘virtue lies in the middle ground’.⁴¹⁶ These exist as a counterpoint, to which each point can be connected to other points. Yet, in Edward Said’s terms, such differences/counterpoints from the coloniser/colonised ‘support and to an extent reflect each other’, and as Bill Ashcroft suggests, are ones where ‘identity, both as a distancing from the centre and as a means of self-assertion come into being’.⁴¹⁷ Thus, to distance from centre while asserting oneself is a means to attain this counterpoint/difference which may lead to a resistance from the colonial encounter. Whether the coloniser/colonised chooses to delink (from rationality/modernity and coloniality), should be the option of those who were in a condition to marginalise.⁴¹⁸ Doing so, posits Aníbal Quijano, will ultimately free up decisions that make for (free-er) people.⁴¹⁹

Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* advocates intercultural exchanges, which through creolisation, relate complexities of the Caribbean to the wider world. Glissant, with Betsy Wing’s translation, imagines the understanding of every culture to be limitless, without approaching it, ‘an infinite interaction of cultures’.⁴²⁰ Rizal’s poetics while dialectical, may be scrutinised to stimulate ‘meeting points, crossings, middle-spaces, interstices, or collisions’.⁴²¹ Thus exemplifying ‘Glissant’s idea of opacity, and equally understanding the reciprocal linguistic and material effects of intercultural crossings’.⁴²² Glissant described

⁴¹⁶ Rizal José. *Political and Historical Writings (Popular Edition)*. 5.

⁴¹⁷ Said expressly uses the terms ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’. Said Edward W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon. 5. See also Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth, Tiffin Helen. (2002). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (2nd Edition)*. New York and London: Routledge. 165.

⁴¹⁸ Quijano Aníbal (1995) as cited in Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 52-53.

⁴¹⁹ Quijano Aníbal (1995) as cited in Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 52-53.

⁴²⁰ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 172.

⁴²¹ Moore Dashiell. (2017, November 1). ‘A Poetics of Politics’. *Cordite Poetry Review*.

<http://cordite.org.au/essays/a-poetics-of-a-politics/>.

⁴²² Moore Dashiell. ‘A Poetics of Politics’. According to Glissant, ‘opacity is fundamental to unveiling...the other’s resistance is fundamental to his knowledge; that only in opacity (the particular) does the other find himself to be knowable...and that opacity, submitted to unveiling, presumes slowness, accumulation, duration’. See Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L’Intention Poétique*). 168.

‘*métissage*, which from the French Canadian word “Metis” (itself meaning “mixed” in Old French) means a site of writing and surviving in the “interval between different cultures and languages”’.⁴²³ Glissant posits *metissage* through creolisation, which ‘diffracts’, and carries with it the adventure of plurilingualism and into the explosion of cultures.⁴²⁴ For Rizal, not only would his writings engage in a plurilingual or pluriversal balance, but also enlighten a consciousness of similarities and dissonances between cultures, deflecting narratives to recentre the edges of opaque (marginalised) lives, and thereby contribute to a pluralistic, global literature that disrupts standardised, Eurocentric conceptions of thinking and language.⁴²⁵

Glissant strikes at the heart of the western pre-occupation of the universalising by asserting his Caribbean (i.e., Antillanité), rather than African (i.e., Nègre) identity in the face of encroachments of the same. Glissant’s work, from the beginning has been concerned with ‘exploring the possibilities of a language that would be fully Antillean’.⁴²⁶ Wing says that creolisation, then, writes ‘Antilles into history’, such that it would ‘escape the passivity associated with an imposed language (French)’ and provide the means to relate to the world as an equivalent equal.⁴²⁷ Glissant repeatedly destabilises ‘standard’ French to decategorize understandings, defend his languages, preserve opacities and establish new relations. The transformations are symbolic, passing on the ‘particularity of Antillean experience’, pushing the limitations of French for a ‘full, vibrant participation’, to escape becoming dust (or extinct), to be among the world cultures now and in future.⁴²⁸ Thus, Glissant does not withdraw from the knowledge of and the claim to black virtues and traditions, nor the Indian

⁴²³ Moore Dashiell. ‘A Poetics of Politics’.

⁴²⁴ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 34.

⁴²⁵ Moore Dashiell. ‘A Poetics of Politics’.

⁴²⁶ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xi.

⁴²⁷ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xi-xii.

⁴²⁸ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xii-xiv.

and European, which had made its way to him; rendering culture as rediscovery, dynamic and ever evolving.⁴²⁹

Négritude or 'Blackness', developed by (mainly) francophone intellectuals in Paris the 1930s of the African diaspora, such as Aimé Césaire (a Martiniquan poet) who coined the term, and Léopold Senghor (the first President of Senegal from 1960 to 1980), may be defined as 'The fact or quality of being of black African origin; specifically the affirmation or consciousness of the value of black culture, especially of a collective African heritage and identity; the cultural and political movement based on this.'⁴³⁰ Négritude looks inwards by disavowing colonialism and the cultivation of 'Black consciousness'. This may be contrasted with Glissant's dialectical (i.e., both inwards and outwards) multiplicity of relations: both Caribbean and Meso-American as a whole. Glissant valorises the regional role in his articulation of the poetic act. Such conceptions suspend 'between the world of culture and the objects it seeks to embrace,' [thus] ultimately generative of the contestatory cohesion of his antillanité'.⁴³¹ Thus, 'particularisms' (as opposed from generalising universals) as a mode of asserting difference.⁴³² Glissant draws not from indivision, but *essence*—a deepened relation of the Same to the Other; 'integral and integrated (but not assimilated to the Other) in totality... Where there is no need to renounce being oneself (being black)...'⁴³³ Hence,

⁴²⁹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 128.

⁴³⁰ Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, October). *Négritude*. OED Online. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/view/Entry/125897>.

⁴³¹ Murdoch Adlai H. '(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin'. 85.

⁴³² Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 13-14. In Édouard Glissant's interview with Lise Gauvin, he states that 'It's not a question of speaking languages...rather the actual way in which one speaks one's own language, speaking it in a closed or open way; speaking it in ignorance of the presence of other languages or in the prescient awareness that the other languages exist and that they influence us even without our realising it. It is not a question of science, of the knowledge of languages, it is a question of the *imagination of languages* [italics added]. It is not a question of the juxtaposition of languages, but of connecting them with each other'. See Coombes Sam. (2018). *Édouard Glissant a Poetics of Resistance*. Bloomsbury Academic. 83.

⁴³³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 135.

‘everywhere where blacks are oppressed, there is Négritude’.⁴³⁴ And this ceases each time one acts.⁴³⁵

Rizal’s novels also assert such particularisms of the cultures he sought to embrace. Of primary importance was the role ascribed to language, and its creative inflection by the complexities of culture: Rizal, for instance, utilised ‘Tagalog words and phrases, especially the flora and fauna of the Philippines, which had no Castilian equivalent’.⁴³⁶ Even in the English translations of Rizal’s novels, Tagalog words were left unchanged from the original manuscript, and translations, definitions, explanations, or Linnean binomial nomenclature were provided where necessary. Thus, a pluralising of the poetics through languaging. As Murdoch explains, it is the issue of relation which is paramount in the dynamic discontinuities of poetic expression: ‘Each language: furrow, bundle of relations atop (and within) the diverse languages and their obstacles. The poetics no longer requires the adequacy of language, but the precise fire of language. In other words: I speak to you in your language, and it is in my language that I understand you’.⁴³⁷ The utilisation of Creole by Glissant or Tagalog by Rizal pluralises in its capacity as a ‘sort of metalanguage’—defining the *difference* intrinsic to their decolonial condition.⁴³⁸

For Glissant, a hybrid ideology is produced as creative resistance. This ideology is one grounded on regional affiliations vis-à-vis cultural creolisation and subjective pluralism of the colonial encounter.⁴³⁹ Such encounters are evident in Rizal’s novels. Rizal piqued the cornerstone of Filipino identity through the dramatic exposition of his characters. However, as Rizal illustrated, such pride fundamentally failed to grasp the concrete realities of the colonial system and friar order. As explained earlier, identities simmered in Rizal’s novels to

⁴³⁴ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L’Intention Poétique*). 135.

⁴³⁵ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L’Intention Poétique*). 135.

⁴³⁶ Rizal José. ‘A Note on the Translation’ by Harold Augenbraum. *Noli Me Tangere*.

⁴³⁷ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L’Intention Poétique*). 46.

⁴³⁸ Murdoch Adlai H. ‘(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin’. 85.

⁴³⁹ Murdoch Adlai H. ‘(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin’. 86.

reveal the cut/wound in political sites of Filipino-Spanish communities. Hence, the destruction of Rizal's heroes, their closest friends and associates by the end of the novels, disappearing into the 'hole of colonialism': Ibarra an outlaw, María Clara entombed in a convent, Elias an uncertain rebel, Tasio (the old philosopher) and Sisa (the mad mother) dead, Tandang Selo dead, Simoun (the mysterious jeweller) dead, and Basilio's fate unknown.⁴⁴⁰

Murdoch highlights that Glissant's work harnesses the energy for particularisms (e.g., draws on regional principles of difference and diversity) to 'define a people by metamorphosing colonialism's disjunctive temporalities into a discursive resistance grounded in conjunction and confluence'.⁴⁴¹ Glissant inverts canonical comprehensions of colonialism and culture to reinscribe the culturally and discursively marginalised.⁴⁴² Glissant demands an 'awareness and recuperation of the plurality...[the] discontinuity, and the dispersal in the historical trajectory of regional development which together make up the unique quality of the Caribbean heritage'.⁴⁴³ As Murdoch says, 'It is the diversity of this cultural subjectivity, then, the subjection and struggle of its self-definition, which produces the creolisation which is the crux of regional difference'.⁴⁴⁴ Rizal, the representative bicultural colonial subject, influenced by European writers of the Enlightenment, who like Glissant's had privileged educational preparations, sought to bridge the 'profound lethargy' of his people through the subversive resistance of storytelling: one passionate with love, another explosive with hate.⁴⁴⁵ The conjunctions in plot and confluence of characters meld his art/aesthetics in service of

⁴⁴⁰ Rizal José. 'Introduction' by Harold Augenbraum. *Noli Me Tangere*. xix.

⁴⁴¹ Murdoch Adlai H. '(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin'. 86.

⁴⁴² Murdoch Adlai H. '(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin'. 86.

⁴⁴³ Murdoch Adlai H. '(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin'. 86.

⁴⁴⁴ Murdoch Adlai H. '(Dis)Placing Marginality: Cultural Identity and Creole Resistance in Glissant and Maximin'. 87.

⁴⁴⁵ Betsy Wing says, 'Glissant received the best of French colonial education at the Lycée Schoelcher, where Aimé Césaire was the "prof" of modern languages. Like other children in the colonies dependent on France, he too had to learn about "nos ancêtres les gaulois"... read the same "classics" of Western literature... And, like other intellectually promising youths in the 1940s, prepared to become "more French than the French", his own odyssey, his errantry, took him from Martinique to pursue education to its farthest reaches—the level of the *doctorat d'état*—in Paris'. See Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). xvi.

politics. Inconsistencies are revealed of subjects in his melodrama, to outline discontinuities in much of Filipino polity: for example, Ibarra's memories of the friars, who control the Church, and the victims of false charges and witnesses. The existence of a plurality of cultures produces a metaphor for difference. Rizal, with the downfall of his many heroes inscribes an awakening, reflective of autonomy necessary for decolonial identities. This generates a consciousness of Rizalian thinking, nuanced in subversive possibilities of presence. Glissant asserts: 'Whereas the Western nation is first of all an "opposite", for colonised people's identity will be primarily "opposed to"—that is, a limitation from the beginning'.⁴⁴⁶ Glissant notions, 'Decolonisation will have done its real work when it goes beyond this limit'.⁴⁴⁷

Glissant believes: 'All languages have to be defended... Whether it is vehicular or not, a language that does not risk the disturbances arising from contact among cultures, and not ardently involved in the reflections generated by an equal relation with other languages, seems... doomed to real impoverishment'.⁴⁴⁸ We can agree that 'the extinction of any language at all impoverishes everyone... for this would be an instant setback for the processes of bringing-into-relation'.⁴⁴⁹ In this light, the (sometimes) plurilingual collections of poetry defends my mother tongue, causing a liberation of the imagination. As Glissant says, '[This is the shiver of a beginning, confronted with extreme possibility. It is possible to build the Tower [of Babel]—*in every language*'.⁴⁵⁰ Relation, not lived or experienced, may be felt in reality through empathy; relayed through language. For what is language but a cry; not only the cry, 'but *absence* beating in the cry'.⁴⁵¹ This absence, this silence, which begins with a *lack* first, then 'the will to slough the cry into speech'.⁴⁵² The felt knowledge, not

⁴⁴⁶ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 17.

⁴⁴⁷ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 17.

⁴⁴⁸ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 112.

⁴⁴⁹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 95.

⁴⁵⁰ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 109.

⁴⁵¹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 37.

⁴⁵² Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 38.

necessarily the ‘being of the Other that is imposed’, but a ‘relation to the known Other’, with expressed possibilities through languages, is but the ‘modality of [one’s] relation to [them]: and inversely’.⁴⁵³ Hence, Rizal’s destruction of heroes in his novels are his attempts to illuminate people of lived-relations; their ‘convincing fragility’.⁴⁵⁴ Rizal’s acceptance of ‘this relativised world’, his overcoming the ‘selfish fear of sinking into it, to transmute reflective solitude into shared inflection’ was a way of accomplishing his legacy; his poetics.⁴⁵⁵ While this (cultural) relativism may lead to a formation of hierarchies among civilisations, it may erupt into the possibility for new ideas to be born: ‘ideas of otherness, of difference, of minority rights, of the rights of peoples’, such that ‘all cultures are equal within Relation’.⁴⁵⁶ Rizal, therefore, in light of Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation*, liberates consciousness through assertion of the unique Filipino thought and feeling. Rizal’s plurilingualism, linked cultures across language barriers to (re-)imagine both past and future for both colonialists and colonised alike. Rizal’s languaging, premised on a (rhizomic) middle-ground, expressed his polyglot consciousness and remains a transformative ecology for political resistance, bearing into consequence the truth-less truth of his people.

Glissant insists that the poet is the ‘emotion-carrier of the human’, one ‘capable of maintaining the “effervescent contact of the mind with reality”’.⁴⁵⁷ Poetry has cemented between ‘I-other, sensitivity-knowledge, nature-history, solitude-participation’—Relations of human to human, and human to the world.⁴⁵⁸ The poetic language in the collections of poetry, particularly in the adversarial tone in the second part of *The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation*, openly recognises that ‘unity is not uniformity’; that the ‘Total is not the Same’.⁴⁵⁹ It is thus

⁴⁵³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 17-18, 44.

⁴⁵⁴ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 19.

⁴⁵⁵ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 24.

⁴⁵⁶ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 135-136, 163.

⁴⁵⁷ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 68.

⁴⁵⁸ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 53.

⁴⁵⁹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 53.

inscribed in difference, which legitimises (and rather) provokes the impossibility of ‘the One’ (i.e., solitude), and opens onto all possible relations, while inciting poetic absolutes.⁴⁶⁰ The collections of poetry births literature, out of the ‘exigency and the vital necessity of a literary conduct (intention, direction)’; to assert a (plurilingual) sense of a transcultural identity which exists in a (mostly) monolingual nation.⁴⁶¹ It is an enactment for a reimagined common conscience and consciousness, wilful of Rizal and myself as both an object and as a subject—a recognition of the agony of the heart, our lost past/futures as resurfaced *depths*.⁴⁶² It is a means to find one’s person (e.g., myself, Rizal), to find the imminence of peoples (Filipinos, Australians)—a dramatic act, not without difficulty.⁴⁶³ Yet, the collections of poetry deepen significance of thinking through the heart, which in turn carry others ‘who haven’t had a voice and for whom we could not be their voice: in that we are but a part of their voices’ to the community of nation(s).⁴⁶⁴ This is further highlighted in Chapter Three: Conclusion - Movement with Consciousness.

⁴⁶⁰ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 54.

⁴⁶¹ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 172.

⁴⁶² Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 173.

⁴⁶³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 176.

⁴⁶⁴ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 183.

iv. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 'Politics of Language'

For the comprador-ruling regimes, their real enemy is an awakened peasantry and working class. A writer who tries to communicate the message of a revolutionary unity and hope in the languages of the people becomes a subversive character. ⁴⁶⁵

~ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, 30.

More direct to the plight for linguistic decolonisation is Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who since 1977 (when he published *Petals of Blood*) farewelled (the colonising) English language as a vehicle for writing of plays, novels and short stories, and subsequently, since 1986, when he published *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, refused English in any of his writings.⁴⁶⁶ Ngũgĩ, from then on, has used his indigenous languages of Gikũyu and/or Kiswahili all the way.⁴⁶⁷

Ngũgĩ's severance from writing in English is a destruction of the very means of negation of his ancestry, culture and language. In a sense, his stance marks an important reasoning, a signpost, to assert what would be lost (i.e., his writings in the colonising language). But the gem behind the reasoning heralds its meaning: an affirmation of his people as well as the realisation of the value of Gikũyu and Kiswahili languages. It is not only Ngũgĩ who marks this stance, but also Glissant, and Rizal (especially in the latter days of his life).

Ngũgĩ notions that language's dual-function for communicating and as a carrier of culture exemplifies a polity with which people, if not nations, could practise an ongoing resistance to preserve and maintain Indigenous (or mother tongue) languages. Hence, Ngũgĩ's

⁴⁶⁵ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 30.

⁴⁶⁶ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. xiv.

⁴⁶⁷ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. xiv.

stance bears consideration of the Other's language and culture, and its inter-generational effects and affects. However, Ngũgĩ's refusal to write in the colonising (English) language contrasts with Rizal who had used the coloniser's (Spanish) language in writing his novels and articles. Harold Augenbraum, Rizal's translator, had stated that Rizal used Spanish, the language of oppression, but also Filipino higher education (i.e., Rizal's literary language), because it was the only one wherein the books could have a political impact.⁴⁶⁸ Quite possibly, Rizal's use of the colonising language may have allowed him to gain some distance from and control over the very emotional description of his own intimate past experiences and thus he was able to acquire a more critical insight into his exploration into his country's ills. Rizal, in writing his novels and articles in the colonising language engaged in a middle ground, which is to say that he validated his writings with a political order. Yet, his politics necessarily meant that he was dominated by it, for he was, after publication of his works, exiled to Dapitan—his national nobility had been questioned, which 'stained the pages of history of the Philippines'.⁴⁶⁹ Thus, Rizal's dialectics of national thought overcame colonial logics, for in languaging his novels in Spanish, he reached bases of authority in colonial discourse which initially destabilised, and opposed the foundations of their own presence. It is in such a context that Ngũgĩ has resisted, 'It is when people are involved in the active work of destroying an inhibitive social structure and building a new one that they begin to see themselves. They are born again'.⁴⁷⁰

Rizal's re-birth occurred in Dapitan, while in exile. In Dapitan, Rizal wrote in different languages in order not to forget them. It also gave him a new language: Bisaya; 'taught [him] how to steer a vessel and to manage a canoe; made [him] better acquainted with

⁴⁶⁸ Rizal José. 'Introduction' by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. xiii.

⁴⁶⁹ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. Fernando Blumentritt to José Rizal, 16 July 1892 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence: 50 Selected Letters Between Rizal and Blumentritt*. 185.

⁴⁷⁰ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. (1972). *Homecoming*. New York: Lawrence Hill. 11.

[his] country...'⁴⁷¹ Rizal saw patients in his Dapitan medical practise, many of whom were poor and some were unable to pay.⁴⁷² He enlarged his *Studies on the Tagalog Language* but unfortunately could not finish it because he lacked reference books; he had no library in Dapitan.⁴⁷³ Yet, he was instructive, now knowing '*Bisayanismo*', among other languages, offering translations, notes and corrections to Blumentritt et al for books they were writing.⁴⁷⁴ Rizal also went beyond writing to fulfil civic duties that would enhance the community of peoples in his locale: building a water system and a school.

According to Ambeth Ocampo, Rizal's attempt at his third novel, *Makamisa*, was in (Lagueño) Tagalog.⁴⁷⁵ Literature, for Rizal, in the words of Octavio Paz, '[was] not so much the sum of individual works as the system of relations between them'.⁴⁷⁶ Rizal was interested in the need to widen literacy and public education; in making visible a community of Filipino writers and intellectuals. In 1891, Rizal began writing *Makamisa*, which coincided with his plans to return to the Philippines, leading up to his 'field of battle' letter written in October.⁴⁷⁷ At the time, the Propaganda Movement was beginning to shift away from addressing Spain and Europe towards speaking to Filipinos. Moreover, Rizal was also embarking on translating *The Noli* in Tagalog, with his brother Paciano.⁴⁷⁸ In a letter to Blumentritt, Rizal had said he wished to 'sacrifice politics for the sake of art; if I write in Spanish, then the poor Tagalogs, to whom the work is dedicated, will not understand it, even though it is they who most need

⁴⁷¹ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. José Rizal to Fernando Blumentritt, 31 July 1894 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence: 50 Selected Letters Between Rizal and Blumentritt*. 195.

⁴⁷² Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. José Rizal to Fernando Blumentritt, 31 July 1894 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence: 50 Selected Letters Between Rizal and Blumentritt*. 195.

⁴⁷³ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. José Rizal to Fernando Blumentritt, 15 January 1895 [Letter]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence: 50 Selected Letters Between Rizal and Blumentritt*. 199.

⁴⁷⁴ Rizal José, Blumentritt Fernando. José Rizal to Fernando Blumentritt, 31 July 1894, 15 January 1895, 20 November 1895, 5 April 1896 [Letters]. *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence: 50 Selected Letters Between Rizal and Blumentritt*. 195, 199, 204, 207.

⁴⁷⁵ Rizal José. 'Notes'. *El Filibusterismo*. 329.

⁴⁷⁶ Mojares Resil B. (2011, May 30). 'The Enigma of José Rizal's Third Novel'. *Philstar*. <https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/arts-and-culture/2011/05/30/690710/enigma-jose-rizals-third-novel>.

⁴⁷⁷ Nery John. (2011, June 28). 'The 10 Most Important Letters Rizal Wrote'. *Inquirer*. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/7014/the-10-most-important-letters-rizal-wrote>.

⁴⁷⁸ Mojares Resil B. 'The Enigma of José Rizal's Third Novel'.

to do so... [Yet, his] thoughts cannot be freely expressed without the need to introduce neologisms'.⁴⁷⁹ In Rizalian terms, the place and language for his battles became his home country, in his mother tongue.

Rizal had shifted the language of his unfinished novel from Tagalog to Spanish, before abandoning it. It was thus a bi-lingual and hybrid text.⁴⁸⁰ The issue in languaging would persist long after Rizal, with the central problem in the formation of the national literature. In the Philippines, there are more than one hundred languages and dialects used in over seven thousand islands that make up the country. Yet, there are several reasons why Tagalog was chosen as the national language: 'Tagalog was the most prominent language of Luzon, the largest island group; more important, it was the language of Manila, the capital city. It was widely understood throughout the archipelago since it was used by Spanish missionaries as early as the sixteenth century in translations of prayers and doctrines for their proselytising. It was also the language of the *Kataastaasang Kagalanggalang na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (the Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Sons of the People), the secret society founded in Manila that led the revolution against Spain'.⁴⁸¹ Vicente Rafael wrote that Tagalog had been 'projected as the potential language for cultural authenticity with which to articulate a precolonial past with a decolonised future... [It] ha[d] been regarded as one site for translating the colonial order into a national one'.⁴⁸² And Tagalog as a national language was envisioned as different from 'pure' Tagalog; it was a hybrid language, infused with words from Spanish, English, and all the other Philippine vernaculars.⁴⁸³ There have been objections from non-Tagalog-speaking legislators which led

⁴⁷⁹ Rizal José (1892, January 31) as cited in Anderson Benedict. *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*. 127.

⁴⁸⁰ Mojares Resil B. 'The Enigma of José Rizal's Third Novel'.

⁴⁸¹ Jurilla Patricia May B. "'Florante at Laura" and the History of the Filipino Book'. 173.

⁴⁸² Rafael Vicente. 'Taglish, or the Phantom Power of the Lingua Franca'. 162-189. 254-258. Quotation on 169.

⁴⁸³ Jurilla Patricia May B. "'Florante at Laura" and the History of the Filipino Book'. 173-174.

to reforms on national language policy in: 1959, 1973 and 1986.⁴⁸⁴ However, Filipino continues to be based on Tagalog, with greater infusions of English and Spanish, rather than as national linguists proposed as early as 1915, a fusion of Philippine vernaculars. This evidences the colonial nature and lasting influence of official nationalism.⁴⁸⁵

Ngũgĩ asserts that language has a dual character, as both a means of communication (in speech, writing and relations) and a carrier of culture (i.e., the evolution of knowledge, moral, ethics, values, experiences and thus identity, history and spirit)—as an ongoing reciprocal, inter-generational cycle.⁴⁸⁶ Ngũgĩ reasons that the ‘domination of people’s language by the language of colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised’.⁴⁸⁷ He gives an example of African children whom had learnt in school a foreign ‘colonising’ language (i.e., by written means), which divorces the child’s upbringing to their relationship with the language spoken at home. The disassociations from the natural and social environments lead to ‘colonial alienation’.⁴⁸⁸ Effectively, the child sees ‘oneself from outside oneself as if one was another self’.⁴⁸⁹ Moreover, the ‘impressionable mind’ of the child is made to contrast the tradition of the best ‘imported literature’ (William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Honoré de Balzac, Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Bertolt Brecht, Mikhail Sholokhov, Charles Dickens), with their own native language, a language with low(er) status, humiliation, non-intelligibility, and barbarism, which results in ‘disastrous’ effects for the child’s self-awareness/self-perception.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, the ‘location of this great mirror of imagination [is seen to be] necessarily Europe and its history and culture

⁴⁸⁴ In 1959, the national language was renamed ‘Pilipino’. The national language was changed again to ‘Filipino’ by the 1973 Constitution enacted under the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand E. Marcos. The national language was retained and revised in the Constitution of 1986 enacted during the democracy restored under Corazon C. Aquino. See Jurilla Patricia May B. “Florante at Laura” and the History of the Filipino Book’. 174.

⁴⁸⁵ Jurilla Patricia May B. “Florante at Laura” and the History of the Filipino Book’. 174-175.

⁴⁸⁶ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 13.

⁴⁸⁷ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 16.

⁴⁸⁸ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 17.

⁴⁸⁹ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 18.

⁴⁹⁰ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 18.

and the rest of the universe [is] from that centre'.⁴⁹¹ For Ngũgĩ, invalidating the use of colonial languages to re-claim his Indigenous languages and mother tongues recentres the 'mirror of imagination', negating Afro-European literary tradition in the era of imperialism; a bid to reduce colonial alienation and liberate African cultures from foreign control.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹¹ Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 18.

⁴⁹² Thiong'o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 18, 26-30.

Chapter Three: Conclusion – Movement with Consciousness

*Decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonisation, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content.*⁴⁹³

~ Frantz Fanon, 1963, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 36.

*Thought is related to feeling and transforms its mute and inarticulate despondency, as exchange transforms the naked greed of desire and usage transforms the desperate longing of needs—until they all are fit to enter the world and to be transformed into things, to become reified.*⁴⁹⁴

~ Hannah Arendt, 1998, *The Human Condition*, 168.

A man who loves not his tongue is worse

Than nauseous fish or beasts;

He then must love it as he should

*Like a mother who loves best.*⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Fanon Frantz. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth* (French: *Les Damnés de la Terre*). London: Penguin. 36.

⁴⁹⁴ According to Arendt: 'In the case of art works, reification is more than mere transformation; it is transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature which wills that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames. Works of art are thought things, but this does not prevent their being things...Poetry, whose material is language, is perhaps the most human and least worldly of the arts, the one in which the end product remains closest to the thought that inspired it'. See Arendt Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 168-169.

⁴⁹⁵ Dr Isidro Escare Abeto explains, 'this poem was written by Rizal in his native tongue, Tagalog, at the age of eight [in 1869]. Its original title was "Sa Aking Mga Kabata", meaning "To My Fellow Children". The present title, however is considered appropriate and dignified for this poem. On this, his first poetic effusion, the child-

~ José Rizal, 1976, 'Our Mother Tongue', *Rizal's Complete Poetical Works: Versified English Translation from the Original Spanish and Tagalog Poems with Rizal's Pictorial Album. 2.*

The front and centre should be a place which radiates light; a place that is pluriversal, allowing multiple worlds to co-exist; a place borne from days, shrouding darkness; a place that does not 'stop [...] the heartbeat of one [and does not] deprive the other of light'.⁴⁹⁶ Now then is an opportune time to ask: where is/are our front(s) and centre(s) and can it still hold when the fabric is stretched to the limits of its resistance? It is evident that within the centre (or centres) there exists an internal process of marginalisation. Indigenous Australian writer, Bruce Pascoe (born 1947), asks: 'will our words be enough to battle the tea-cosy nature of Australian comfort?'⁴⁹⁷ There is a sweeping culture in Australia that is borne from a 'perpetual routine of looking and knowing while simultaneously twisting around to feign ignorance'.⁴⁹⁸ So much that 'Australians have become habituated to disregarding what the evidence shows, that the wealth and health we enjoy are the spoils of undeclared colonial welfare'.⁴⁹⁹ To address these concerns, I will delve into each of the collections of poetry, and provide insights of these (plurilingual) works, with Rizal's life and legacy as motif. I will then critically examine moving beyond our monolingualism towards plurilingualism to decolonise transculturally and declare positions from prime examples of contemporary Australian poets/writers who enlighten us.

poet already speaks of love of native tongue and of liberty. He regards one who does not love his native language as "worse than nauseous fish or beast". See Rizal José. (1976). 'Our Mother Tongue'. *Rizal's Complete Poetical Works: Versified English Translation from the Original Spanish and Tagalog Poems with Rizal's Pictorial Album*. Translated by Dr Isidro Escare Abeto. National Bookstore, Inc. 2.

⁴⁹⁶ Rizal José. 'The First Cloud'. *Noli Me Tangere*. 240.

⁴⁹⁷ Pascoe Bruce. (2020, May 28). 'Bleat Beneath a Blanket'. *Sydney Review of Books*.
<https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essay/pascoe-bleat-beneath-a-blanket/>.

⁴⁹⁸ Gibson Ross. (2020, March 16). 'Burn, Lucky Country, burn!' *Sydney Review of Books*.
<https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essay/burn-lucky-country-burn/>.

⁴⁹⁹ Gibson Ross. 'Burn, Lucky Country, burn!'.

Section A: Consciousness Through the Heart

Each of the poetry collections are concerned with the long history of disruption, resistance and revolution via Rizal's life and legacy as motif for enlightening our consciousness through the heart. Thus, these collections reconcile the mind with the heart. Rizal's life and legacy bridged the distance between the political and the personal, the public and the private, inasmuch as his patriotic sentiments had affected his individual ontology. Rizal's translator, Dr Isidro Escare Abeto explains, 'If these patriotic sentiments were removed from his verses, his [writing] would lack its rich elements...Rizal was most intense and inspired at moments when he was in deep meditation about his country and people. So that it can be said that his [writing] generally were inspired by his patriotism and love of country'.⁵⁰⁰ Rizal's writings showed his patriotism, yet deep insights from his experience of life, love, oppression and resilience were expressed in his writings, making the personal into the political, enlightening us into the sentiments of the heart and mind; soul and spirit.

Some poems are deliberately written in my mother tongue, Tagalog, where its meaning can only be shed with the implicit understanding of the language. Often, translations have been given in the notes, but at times, no translations occur—the intention of which is for the non-native speaker to seek out the meanings of the language of my birth nation. The poems are therefore engaged in the politics of the boundaries of language, not necessarily as a tool for propaganda, but as a plight towards empathy, and romanticisation of the True Filipino/Australian to refract the light of the Incipient Other. The fact remains however, that for many reasons, the majority of the poems are written in English, the core of which is that Tagalog has been dying in my sensibilities, as I, and people of my creed (i.e., migrants), look towards a new dawn. Research from sociologist and migration scholar, Dr Kristine Aquino,

⁵⁰⁰ Rizal José. *Rizal's Complete Poetical Works: Versified English Translation from the Original Spanish and Tagalog Poems with Rizal's Pictorial Album*. xvi.

suggests that in Australia, ‘many ethnic languages will not survive beyond the third generation’.⁵⁰¹ Hence, migrants like myself (and their children), could be hypervigilant of this kind of cultural erasure, as a means to negotiate ways to ‘communicate in an Anglophone society’.⁵⁰²

It should be acknowledged that while Australia remains my home, my journey as a poet/writer, and the unfolding of my poems, shuttles among many spaces around the world, even as they are grounded in a Pinoy heart. The collections refigure Australia as a ‘multifaceted continent whose unique and divergent cultures makes up a complex ecosystem rather than the western construct of states border, regions and capital cities. They are marked by its searching, frank assessments of self, [time] and place, and the contradictions of reflecting on change within the luxuries of capitalism’ and neoliberal influence.⁵⁰³

The first collection of poetry, *Litany*, reveals our truthless truths, and imaginatively traces Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippine history, poeticising Rizal’s life, exile, trial and execution, the Philippine Revolutions and beyond. *Litany* is dedicated ‘Para sa bayan / For my country’. *Litany* has three parts: (I) Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippines; (II) Rizal’s Revolution; and (III) People Power; each part comprising thirteen poems.

Litany delves into decolonial transcultural and Rizalian politics, between the colonisers and the colonised and is a plurilingual work (in Tagalog and English), utilising Dostoyevsky’s dialogism, underpinned by heteroglossia, such that many (poetic) voices and consciousness are represented in ‘other-languageness’ and in equally valid ways. The racial

⁵⁰¹ Aquino Kristine, Guinto Grace, Santos Fides Mae, Arcilla Miriam Ella. (2023). *The Calamansi Story: Filipino Migrants in Australia*. Melbourne: The Entrée.Pinays. 21.

⁵⁰² Aquino Kristine, Guinto Grace, Santos Fides Mae, Arcilla Miriam Ella. *The Calamansi Story: Filipino Migrants in Australia*. 21.

⁵⁰³ Mascara Literary Review. (2021, July 13). *Mascara Bundanon Writer’s Residency Shortlist*. <http://mascarareview.com/2021-mascara-bundanon-writers-residency-shortlist/>.

consciousness of the poet is defined by Tagalog mixed with (mainly) English, which (mostly) includes translations and thus engages with Glissant's assertion of self-identity through creolisation, and not rejecting the languages known. The languaging is thus ideologically charged, and as Bakhtin says, 'consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language...orient[ing] [one]self amidst heteroglossia*'.⁵⁰⁴ Yet, in the Anglophone sphere of intercultural and interlingual normalcy, the bi-languaging of the poems is reflective of the dialogical character of the collection, with languages interacting—its multiplicities, and the changing frontiers of language.

Scholars and the linguist Robert Blust theorised that Austronesians arrived through the "Out-of-Taiwan model", where *Homo sapiens* from mainland Asia crossed Taiwan, and later the Philippines, until furthering to other islands south of the Philippines. The Austronesians, of which Tagalog is a Central Philippine language within the Austronesian language family; and Latin (Tagalog/Filipino alphabet) and Baybayin are the writing systems, are believed to have '(1) cultivated rice and millet; (2) lived in substantial timber houses raised on piles; (3) had domesticated pigs, dogs, and perhaps water buffalos and chickens; (4) practiced true weaving on a simple back loom; (5) used the bow and arrow; and (6) were familiar with some metals, including at least tin. By the time this community reached the northern Philippines around 5,500 Before Present (or 3,550 Before Christ), linguistic evidence shows clearly that they possessed in addition the outrigger canoe, pottery, and a number of important root and tree crops including the yam, taro, banana, sago, breadfruit, coconut and sugarcane, the last of which they had brought with them from Taiwan'.⁵⁰⁵ This depicts a brief history of human migration to the Philippines, till the Spaniards arrived.

⁵⁰⁴ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 295.

⁵⁰⁵ Blust Robert. (1995). The Prehistory of the Austronesian-Speaking Peoples: A View from Language. *Journal of World Prehistory*. 9(4). 457-464, 495-496, 501-504. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25801085>.

In 1521, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan, sailing for Spain arrived in the Philippines, and claimed the islands after King Phillip II. The expedition was purposed to find a western route to the Moluccas (Spice Islands, now Indonesia) and trade for spices. It is known that Magellan set about converting the locals to Christianity, but died in a skirmish on the island of Mactan.⁵⁰⁶ After him, more Spanish expeditions followed, which began Spain's colonisation of the Philippines for the next three centuries, till the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898.⁵⁰⁷

Some of the societies scattered in the Philippine Islands remained isolated but many evolved into states that developed substantial trade and contacts with the peoples of Eastern and Southern Asia, including those from India, China, Japan and other Austronesian islands (The Malay archipelago).⁵⁰⁸

The first centenary saw the rise of the harbour principalities and their growth into maritime states composed of autonomous *barangays* independent of, or allied with larger nations which were either Malay thalassocracies, led by Datus or Indianised kingdoms governed by Rajas.⁵⁰⁹ As Bienvenido Lumbera writes, 'The new colony was subjected to external and internal wars. The war effort proved too exhausting for the new colony. The natives were conscripted to work in the forests felling timber and in the shipyards building ships. Hard labour and injustice combined to decimate the population either by making the

⁵⁰⁶ Domingues Francisco C. (2022, May 21). *Ferdinand Magellan*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ferdinand-Magellan>.

⁵⁰⁷ Cullinane Michael. (2022, June 3). *Philippines*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Philippines>.

⁵⁰⁸ Rafael Vicente. (1988). *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*. Cornell University Press. 136-166. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501737572>. See also Alatas Syed Hussein. (1977). *Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese From the 16th to the 20th century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited. 1-35, 98-111.

⁵⁰⁹ The head of a *barangay* or village was the *datu* (i.e., chief). Only men could occupy this position. A Raja is a king or a prince. See Rafael Vicente. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*. 136-166.

natives flee to the mountains or bringing about their death’.⁵¹⁰ This is expressed in the first part of *Litany*, particularly in the poems ‘Historia de las Islas de Mindanao’ and ‘Death as Consolation’.

The history and development of language and scripts are utilised in *Litany*. The poem, ‘Apoy’ (fire), is written in Baybayin, which is the pre-Hispanic Philippine script, an alphasyllabary, belonging to the family of Brahmic scripts, prior to and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries before being supplanted by the Latin alphabet during the period of Spanish colonisation. José Rizal was inspired to model a new Tagalog orthography after the Baybayin system in 1884. In the same year, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera consolidated a comprehensive table of Philippine scripts.⁵¹¹

In *Litany*, the poem ‘Ave Maria in Tongues’ deconstructs scripts/language by expressing the (Christian) prayer in several different ways. In effect, language becomes a re-arrangement of letters and words (i.e., anagrams), where the meaning is opaque, known only by God(s), because one can reason that She/He/They comprehends them as She/He/They are omniscient, and all-knowing.⁵¹² This essentially destroys the established forms of the

⁵¹⁰ Lumbera Bienvenido. (1968). ‘Tagalog Poetry during the Seventeenth Century’. *Philippine Studies*. 16(1). 100.

⁵¹¹ Guillermo Ramon G, Myfel Joseph D Paluga. (2011). ‘Barang King Banga: A Visayan Language Reading of the Calatagan Pot Inscription (CPI)’. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore)*. 42(1). 125.

⁵¹² The Christian *Bible*, as well as the *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches us that God is all-knowing and omniscient, and has perfect knowledge of all things. This knowledge is absolute and unacquired and perfect. In the Christian *Bible*, this can be read in *Hannah’s prayer* in 1 Samuel 2:3: ‘Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed’; also Psalm 147:5 says God’s knowledge is infinite: ‘Great is our LORD and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit’. See Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. 373-374, 931. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Vāsudeva, or the Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa ‘is the prime entity in everything. In this body there are powers of speaking, of seeing, of hearing, of mental activities...And because Vāsudeva is all-pervading and everything is Vāsudeva, the devotee surrenders in full knowledge’. See Prabhupāda A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. (1986). *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is (2nd Edition)*. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. 348. In the *Mahabharata*, Vol. 8, Canto 48, ‘Bhishma says, ‘O Krishna, O foremost of Beings, be you pleased with these words that I utter, in brief and in detail, from my desire to hymn your praises. You are pure and purity’s self. You transcend all. You are what people say to be THAT. You are the Supreme Lord...You are without beginning and without end. You are the highest of the high and Brahman...You are the highest of the high and know no deterioration...All the worlds and all created things live in you and enter you when the dissolution comes. Like gems strung together on a thread, all things that have attributes reside in you, the Supreme Lord. Having the universe for your work and for your limbs, this universe consisting of mind and matter resides in your eternal and all-pervading soul

fundamental *monologic* (homophonic) utterance and distributes meaning among multiple worlds—divine or not—and multiple autonomous consciousnesses, presented within multiple fields of vision, each full and of equal worth. The ultimate aim is dialogic, whereby signifying practises (i.e., use of language and symbols) is comprised of ‘heteroglossia’ or ‘other-languageness’, across Christian and non-Christian social groups.⁵¹³ ‘Ave Maria in Tongues’ then, is ‘*another’s speech in another’s language*, serving to express [poetic] intentions but in a refracted way’.⁵¹⁴

In ‘Utterance’, the poet ‘lower[s] [his] gaze / to your flaws / realising [he] possessed them... You bear the mark / of a redemptive man / whose mistakes were my own’.⁵¹⁵ Thus, the poet admits he is flawed, just as his Other (as well as Rizal); that we learn from mistakes, with which people try to redeem themselves. Thus, the plight towards enlightenment and empathy.

The second part of *Litany* focuses on Rizal’s life, exile, trial and execution. At the heart of these poems, reside the necessities of the dark, brooding filibustero like Simoun, ‘whose final purpose in life was to infiltrate the colonial authorities and spread the fire of revolution among his people’.⁵¹⁶ Peter Jaynul V. Uckung of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines had written about the problems after Rizal: that he was gone too soon. Uckung notes, ‘[Rizal] never had the chance to see the social cancer he so aptly described in his two novels...mutate into something more virulent, oppressive, controlling way of life. By being dead, he could do nothing against the reincarnated social cancer, which continued to wreak havoc on the lives of the people, whose freedom he had tried to redeem with his blood’.⁵¹⁷

like a multitude of flowers strung together by a strong thread’. See Pillay S.B., Manjulika Dubey, Menon Ramesh (Eds.). (2009). *The Complete Mahabharata*. Vol. 8, Santi Parva, Part 1, Rajadharmanusasana Parva. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 4,750.

⁵¹³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 271, 273.

⁵¹⁴ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 324.

⁵¹⁵ Legaspi Harold. (2022, January). ‘Utterance’. *The Philippine Community Herald*. Vol. 28, No 1. 24.

⁵¹⁶ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. (2012, September 19). ‘The Problems After Rizal’. National Historical Commission of the Philippines. <https://nhcp.gov.ph/the-problems-after-rizal/>.

⁵¹⁷ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. ‘The Problems After Rizal’.

Indeed, the problems, over 127 years after Rizal's death, are not yet over—they have just been transformed into 'something barely recognisable, and therefore, generally acceptable'.⁵¹⁸ Hence, 'we must be critical of our history...[we] must be like Rizal'.⁵¹⁹

In 'Rizal's Statue', it is expressed that 'each day [Rizal] wakes, he gives himself away... [to] reveal the neglect of the Spaniards'.⁵²⁰ Rizal is 'forced to sit beside extremes', and 'Whir in the weight of betrayal'.⁵²¹ The poem utilises animism to provoke thought from actions of the people; actions to which Rizal may have been bound—'As a pig, he leaves everyone behind / As a locust, he forgets everything / As a lion, he shies behind animals, hides among grass'.⁵²² Thus, while these actions (of the people) show weakness, of which Rizal had been disciplining himself to counter, they nonetheless define the foibles of human nature, which 'drags [on] mud, terrorises upon a bitter seed'.⁵²³ Rizal is 'told to forget his own story', he possesses a 'heavy hand which rations pesos'.⁵²⁴ Rizal's trial, sentencing and execution meant that 'he, his legless spirit, ha[d] lost the battle'.⁵²⁵ Yet, while the battle was not won, his mantra, his spirit remains with us: 'It's what he lives for / And would die for / A war to his inner child'—the inner child being the unenlightened human striving towards enlightenment.⁵²⁶

The second part of *Litany* also reveals what is at stake in losing *love*, as expressed in the elegy to Maria Clara in 'Dinner Party'—wherein Maria Clara gives herself an ultimatum upon losing her chance for a future with Ibarra: 'The convent or death'.⁵²⁷ This idea is intended to reveal what is at stake: *all is lost once love is lost*. Moreover, it asks the reader to question the peopling in Rizal's novel's (i.e., polyphony), which is in stark contrast to the

⁵¹⁸ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

⁵¹⁹ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

⁵²⁰ Legaspi Harold. (2021). 'Rizal's Statue'. *Australian Poetry Journal*. Edited by Michelle Cahill, Lucy Dougan. Vol. 9. 87-88.

⁵²¹ Legaspi Harold. 'Rizal's Statue'. 87-88.

⁵²² Legaspi Harold. 'Rizal's Statue'. 87-88.

⁵²³ Legaspi Harold. 'Rizal's Statue'. 87-88.

⁵²⁴ Legaspi Harold. 'Rizal's Statue'. 87-88.

⁵²⁵ Legaspi Harold. 'Rizal's Statue'. 87-88.

⁵²⁶ Legaspi Harold. 'Rizal's Statue'. 87-88.

⁵²⁷ Rizal José. 'Father Dámaso Explains Himself'. *Noli Me Tangere*. 408.

third collection *The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation*—spare peopling; non-polyphonic. It forces the reader to ask: would Maria-Clara have given herself the same ultimatum if she was not confined by social conventions in securing her future? What did it mean to Maria Clara to have lost the chance to be with the one she loved? Had she been given the choice to salvage her relationship with Ibarra after his outburst at the dinner party? It is clear in *The Noli* that Maria Clara sought peace but did not have a choice. Having lost the blessings of her family for a future with Ibarra, she entombed herself to a convent, which in a sense was a form of death.

In ‘Carabao’, humans are likened to the water buffalo—the Filipino symbol for strength, abundance, stability, freedom, gentleness, gratitude, prosperity and helpfulness. The poem reflects upon the life of the carabao: ‘A Carabao wants nothing but works’.⁵²⁸ Yet, ‘To be reincarnated / as a carabao is to face the worst fate...It dies severed from rest, dazed & forgotten, / and men eat its carcass, shaking it violently before their mouths’.⁵²⁹ ‘Carabao’ is thus symbolic of a life of labour while not wanting, provoking the reader to question the inner logic of its symbolism. It is no coincidence then that the head of the carabao is considered the symbol of death in Tibetan culture.

The theme of death, and Rizal’s heart from his execution are re-imagined in the poems ‘In a Name’ and ‘The Executioners Bullet’. In these poems, Derrida’s ‘metaphysics of presence’, where meaning of being is presence; a presence that is never purely present because it involves both the retained past present (i.e., continuous) and anticipated future—amounts to Rizal’s mere idealisation. This idealisation is inspired by Ibarra’s final words in *The Noli*, ‘I die without seeing the dawn brighten over my native land. You who have it to see, welcome it—and forget not those who have fallen during the night!’⁵³⁰ Thus, the

⁵²⁸ Legaspi Harold. (2022, August). ‘Carabao’. *The Philippine Community Herald*. Vol. 28, No 8. 24.

⁵²⁹ Legaspi Harold. ‘Carabao’. 24.

⁵³⁰ Rizal José. ‘Christmas Eve’. *Noli Me Tangere*. 416.

idealisation is made possible by language, and in the poem ‘In a Name’, this language is ‘at once *in* consciousness and *without it* belonging to consciousness...it is in the passage between these poles’, just as Rizal ‘Keep[s] the space / Between God & the Executioners’, i.e., between life and death.⁵³¹ Thus, it is defined by the Derridean ‘trace’. The poem ‘The Executioners Bullet’ implies transcendental intersubjectivity, and re-inscribes Rizal’s fate as a double bind—of possibility and impossibility—an opening up to the possibility of his absence (or non-presence) through execution, and impossibility of presence after his execution, through his writings and legacy. The poem is written in the voice of Rizal, opening up to his Other—Doña Teodora (his mother), and Don Francisco (his father), asking them to ‘Remember us, but not [him] / as a fallen trunk of our tree’. That ‘someone will strike at the hearts / of these men who refuse to meet [him] in the eye. Someone will decree / [his] honour, the shots will alarm the quizzical / neighbours of the smoke from burning guns’. Written in the voice of Rizal, the poem concedes, ‘I am a mere man, and my ghost will fixate on these thresholds. / Chance favours only the prepared mind’. Thus, the poem invokes the centre of Derrida’s thought, that consciousness is a consciousness *to*, the intending of a sense necessarily *ends* in (as well as necessarily *opens up*) some sort of fulfillment, in some sort of presence’ and absence; the sense returns to Rizal; the martyr.⁵³²

The plight of (linguistic) transcultural decolonisation is central to the final part of *Litany*, for in these last set of poems, the legacy of Rizal is adapted in a modern context and given fresh vigour. Uckung notes: ‘A modern day Rizal would have no problems finding his Capitan Tiago pandering around business corporation owners and bowing to their wishes in exchange for monetary considerations, in every nook and cranny of the government service’.⁵³³ Rizal blamed the ‘economic imperative of colonialism’ that ‘brought about the

⁵³¹ Lawlor Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. 231.

⁵³² Carr David. ‘The “Fifth Meditation” and Husserl’s Cartesianism’. 15-17, 22, 27.

⁵³³ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. ‘The Problems After Rizal’.

social decay of the Philippines'.⁵³⁴ Moreover, the 'English language of the elite is named correct usage', making other English vernaculars 'inferior outlaw language'.⁵³⁵ The nuances and sensibilities of the elite are pegged as a kind of 'status symbol', such that the 'old colonial rationale' showing the 'superiority of the coloniser... linguistically disenfranchised many Filipinos'.⁵³⁶ Hence, the poems in the final part of *Litany*, stimulate new ways to experience cultures and language. In the poem 'Love Is a Rebellious Bird' for instance, a dynamic palimpsest of cultures and languages are written in: 'Where a Rondalla plays a familiar song— / *L'amour est un oiseau rebelle*, with bandurria, laud, guitar, / Double bass and drums accompanying the Habanera'.⁵³⁷ These musical instruments, to the aria from Georges Bizet's 1875 opera *Carmen*, are intermixed with national cultural attire, 'a Maria Clara gown' and 'a Barong Tagalog', to 'Romantic gestures / of a couple dancing the Cariñosa'.⁵³⁸ The mingling of cultures and languages, whose origins are from different parts of the world (from Europe to Asia), threads the poem's meaning towards an experience of a kind of diversity and plurality, which had existed before our time, but is re-imagined in a modern context. 'Love is a Rebellious Bird' is thus dialogic in character, but is analogous to the interrelationships between chronotopes within the poem.

Rizal's approach to social change was to 'exercise influence with established institutions rather than fighting institutions from the outside'.⁵³⁹ This did not work out. Uckung notes: during the American regime, 'people shifted in strategy, perhaps remembering the futility of the propaganda movement, and used legislation and court litigation to secure constitutional rights'.⁵⁴⁰ It was later on where direct action techniques, such as mass civil

⁵³⁴ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

⁵³⁵ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

⁵³⁶ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

⁵³⁷ Legaspi Harold. (2022, July), 'Love is a Rebellious Bird'. *The Philippine Community Herald*. Vol. 28, No 7. 24.

⁵³⁸ Legaspi Harold. 'Love is a Rebellious Bird'. 24.

⁵³⁹ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

⁵⁴⁰ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. 'The Problems After Rizal'.

disobedience, created ‘social dislocation’ and brought ‘attention and remedial action’ from the government.⁵⁴¹ Mass civil disobedience to cause shifts in power then, is written in the poem ‘Yellow Revolution’, where ‘four days of / Demonstrations—a sustained campaign / Of civil resistance. Epifanio de los Santos Avenue / Saw crowds two million strong’ to rapture ‘Two decades of [President] Marcos and his control’. This indicates the power of protest against dictatorship, as the ‘streets were dizzy with tears, chants, and songs’, ‘when people rioted / Against the galloping gap between the rich and the poor’, ‘to reframe an unjust Constitution’. The truth emerges: ‘The Filipino is worth our lives’, and Rizal’s legacy is evoked: to ‘lay down arms for our true plight / To quell hunger through peaceful means / Para itaas ang isang bahay na buhay’ (i.e., To raise a living house). Yet, as we have seen, ‘*There’s still hunger. And there’s no vacancy / Binenta ba ang Republika ng Pilipinas? Ano ba ang kulay ng pera na walang pinagmulan? / Pumunta ba ang pera sa mga trabaho na lupa? Sa mga hinaharap ng mga bata?*’ The government then, seen today and in Rizal’s time, ‘was the one abetting the problems, profiting from them, in the expense of the people’.⁵⁴²

While the final part of *Litany* is adapted in the modern context, the Mayan and Aztec people’s idea of time as cyclical, and the conception of time not being linear—as in India, for example—are established in the closing poems.⁵⁴³ Time perceived in this way allows us to (re-)imagine Rizal’s life and legacy (quest, martyrdom) through the suffering of his intended Other throughout the ages—his (possible) wife-then-widow, Josephine Bracken. In ‘Sampaguita’, the poet ‘watch[es] her through the ages, in moonless nights, reciting curses...Some nights, [the poet] dream[s] she lets [them] part her hair, apply / Bracelets, necklaces, and jewels of immaculate / White. But other nights, all [they] can hear is her

⁵⁴¹ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. ‘The Problems After Rizal’.

⁵⁴² Uckung Peter Jaynul V. ‘The Problems After Rizal’.

⁵⁴³ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 47.

wailing'. The poem re-inscribes a severed love-presence (by way of Rizal's execution), and thereby notions unending suffering; a human condition that reminds us that we are alive; a condition which began since the dawn of human existence; borne from lack of understanding.⁵⁴⁴ In the poem 'Ruins', 'the odd feeling of impermanence' is evoked, 'when [the poets] stomping ground / Fills with coffins'...'Nature remains / Mystical, like when children fall ill. Yet, when [the poet] listen[s] / [they] summon the sacrifice that feels the certainty of seasons'. Death is thus emphasised as recurring, and certain; time as our limit, an absence from physical presence upon God(s)/our world.

Requiem is the second collection of poetry and like *Litany* is dedicated 'Para sa bayan / For my country'. The book opens with 'Requiem I', a poem a quatrain in length, which sets the tone for the rest of the collection:

'We become rational animals
once we would no longer
sacrifice for the love of our
country or art'.⁵⁴⁵

The poem 'Ur-Rizal Theory: The Enigma Syndrome' follows, where the poet '[sits] by the grass...wrapped in a blanket / near Ilog Pasig...The day he / vanished / out of the basin...[where] they went searching / till dusk...Only to find / his book / where he had / written

⁵⁴⁴ According to Thich Nhat Nanh, 'In Buddhism, we speak of salvation by understanding. We see that it is the lack of understanding that creates suffering. Understanding is the power that can liberate us. It is the key that can unlock the door to the prison of suffering'. See Hanh Thich Nhat. *Living Buddha, Living Christ: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 84.

⁵⁴⁵ The original version of 'Requiem I' the word 'die' preceded 'sacrifice'. Sacrifice better represents my tone, which resists death, taking lessons learnt about Rizal's execution and legacy. Though it should be noted, while sacrifice resists death, death may be the ultimate form of sacrifice.

/ his final plea, titled: / *Knights of Rizal*'. It is from this vanishing point the book's intent is revealed—a reimagining of the Rizal's writing, particularly his novels—the dialectical hero—quest for peace through love and indifference. In the poem, the poet's death is imagined as a suicide, whereupon he left his book titled after the sole order of knighthood in the Philippines.⁵⁴⁶ The suicide contrasts with the execution of Rizal, which is an expression as much as a revelation of the collection's mood: melancholy.

'Letters Caged' upholds the art of letter-writing, which resonates with Rizal's letters to his family and friends. Further exposition occurs in the poem, and sets the main themes of the book: wavering faith, passion, fidelity, familial bonds, opening up to absolute otherness, poverty, suicide, nationhood and indolence, are all explored: 'Approach me / Turn insult into art / Fuse letters caged in iron will'. In the poems, the reader is poised to question the meaning of love, and its opposite—indifference.

Naturally, one questions one's faith. In 'Little Prayer', the presence/existence of God(s) is / are affirmed: 'God is watching'. Yet, in 'Feeling Pinoy', the poet asks: 'Is it possible I'm praying / to the wrong God(s)?' Then the poet admits, 'I / truly believe yet know not / how to worship. His Divinity / piques my interest. And I see / Him in all places,' yet knowing '[He'll] be judged / in [his] name by the hunter / that is Him'. While the poet prays [a personal relationship with God(s)], he is perplexed by the idea of worship [a communal relationship with God(s)], yet is interested in His Divinity.

The poem 'On a Cliff', is ultimately about a man's plight for an awakening. It begins 'On a cliff...[where] They light a campfire...[and] everything is still' then focuses on the relationship between Them and Their mother, which began before birth, 'The cord is torn between them, a rift in / love, the night They were conceived'. The poem continues, 'They

⁵⁴⁶ The Order of the Knights of Rizal is the sole order of knighthood in the Philippines and was created to honour and uphold the ideals of Philippine national hero José Rizal.

speak not of a man', Their father, 'but of a shadow / of the past'; how They learn to 'shred the lies, live with consequence'. It is a poem about finding peace among the inner turmoil; how 'They [can] stand still', while 'fearing Their freedom'; how 'freedom' requires 'resistance' and 'an iron will'; how responsibility bears consequence.

In 'Otherness is a (Brown) Mother', femininity as a spiritual counterforce centres the filial bond between (brown) mothers and their offspring.⁵⁴⁷ Glissant's notion, that 'the mythical community precedes any thought of the individual, whose foremost dimension is as a link in the chain of filiation', and is conjured here.⁵⁴⁸ Whereupon 'On a cliff / she offered the / wind, dancing suns / She shielded my face / from the rain / and when I was ill / she rubbed Vicks / on my chest. / She fed me milk, / she clothed my body / and steered the voice / of my conscience. / She never went away, / never led me astray...It was she all along / who spoke / in our sleep. / Who woke / us from our crib. / It was she who / dared us / to take care'. Ultimately, then, the poem is an homage to (brown) mothers, who were here before we were born.

There are poems which are about fidelity: 'Wala', 'Feather Nest', 'Shakespeare Vows', 'Bones' and 'The Poet'. The difficulty of upholding marital vows, the ills and passions of marriage and 'couples weeping'—these are all explored. 'Argu[ing]: *I do. I do*'. It is a 'Tough life, tough love', where 'The lilies have drooped', and 'pleasures carry infinite / division'. 'Lessons did not begin on Sundays / they began in bed', 'Lest we dare to call upon thee'. Hence, the power of prayer.

Poems in *Requiem* are resistant to dominant discourses and power dynamics within colonialism and its relationship with Filipino and Australia's literary identity. Thus, the poems are interested in the collective as much as the personal, speaking to movements and

⁵⁴⁷ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 60.

⁵⁴⁸ Glissant Édouard. *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). 47.

ways of being that strive to enlighten us of the risks associated with capitalistic self-interest. In the erasure poem of the Constitution of Australia, 'Constitution', 'Her Majesty's pleasure in ten thousand laws / makes every part of the day original...Boundaries / for the purposes of the settlement / shall be drawn by the most Excellent Kingdom...First peoples are not recognised / under this Constitution...Her Majesty is governing class, / whose destination... To maintain classes / to execute power, will, rights / for consumption / a manufactured State / a good'.⁵⁴⁹ Hence, the poem imparts the idea that people resign their power to thousands of laws which perpetuate consumption (i.e., neoliberalism or market-oriented realms), while sacrificing rights to maintain classes of an '[un]Original State'. In 'Office-Max', the core values of capitalism are questioned, as people try and 'soar... on an elevator to the gods'. In 'Upon His Return', an elegy for the ancient times, to the present era, 'The life of a single man compares to / a goal in pursuit', to possess 'jewellery, / three or four houses'; where 'We get used to the idea of death'.⁵⁵⁰ Death as a metaphor for the annihilation of homelands and the 'consecration of tyranny'.⁵⁵¹ The intent of the poem must be raised: which is for us all to judge ourselves of our guilt/contribution to perpetuating greed and colonial mentalities. Citing Derrida's necessity to explain the Other in a language / terms they understand, the poem shows the result of greed in a world with finite resources.⁵⁵² As well, the reader should question adherence to monological ideologies, as the poet's dialectically weaves themes of

⁵⁴⁹ Legaspi Harold. (2019). Long Poetry: 'Constitution'. University of Sydney. 9.

⁵⁵⁰ Legaspi Harold. (2020). 'Upon His Return'. *Australian Poetry Journal*. Edited by Eunice Andrada, David McCooey, Ellen van Neerven, Felicity Plunkett. Vol. 10, No. 1. 84.

⁵⁵¹ Legaspi Harold. 'Upon His Return'. 84. According to Rizal: 'Indios' are the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. Rizal has written for the country's *indios* who believed 'the legend that their king, chained and imprisoned in the cave of San Mateo, will one day come to free them from oppression. Every hundred years he breaks one of his chains. He already has his hands and his left foot free. Only his right foot remains. This is the king who causes earthquakes and tremors when he struggles and shakes. He is so strong that when you shake his hand, you come away without a bone, which he pulverizes on contact. See Rizal José. 'A Coachman's Christmas Eve'. *El Filibusterismo*. 37.

⁵⁵² Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 6. See also Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 140.

Otherness through utterances (e.g., material possession—'jewellery', 'death'—'annihilation of homelands').

In 'Miss Star-Spangled Denim', the cost of religion and faith are weighed. The fact that racism is conditioned then perpetuated, is a firmly held view by the poet: 'The child knows not the colour / that came first. The impending death of language and culture is declared: 'On her feet, swift as limbs, / telling her friends how / she arrived here in a language / she doesn't understand. / Glittering in star-spangled / denim'. Hence, a striking commentary on Americanisation and colonial conquest of Filipino and Australian culture, which begins at childhood in these societies.⁵⁵³

In the erasure poem of Rizal's novel of the same name, 'El Filibusterismo', 'physical pain' is compared with 'moral pain'. It provokes one to question how much blood has to 'spill' to 'drown tyrants', and re-iterates the condition of people as slaves to the system: 'Choked & all worked up: you're the ideal man for / Philippines'. In 'Facing Asia', 'Five billion take a stand, with pitied / Voices & insurmountable kinship', but the poet sees the human condition, and thus our 'fate' as 'faith'. Glissant's idea of the 'world-as-solitude', is vital here. Writing and reading as acts which provoke thought and contemplation, may bring one, and indeed humanity-at-large towards a hopeful (decolonial) futurity; a path which never denies the way of the poet's world.⁵⁵⁴

The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation is the third and final collection of poetry, also dedicated 'Para sa bayan / For my country'. It is divided in two parts: *The Edge of Seas*, then *Lost*

⁵⁵³ USA as the superpower which propels modernity itself, where capitalism is the most fateful power of modern life, which inscribes a code of values by which people live not only in the West, but in the twenty-first century globally.

⁵⁵⁴ Glissant Édouard. *Poetic Intention* (French: *L'Intention Poétique*). 15.

Generation. The poems in the *Edge of Seas*, which are the heart of the collection, are intended to reconcile with the chapters in *Lost Generation*; the mind of the collection.

The Edge of Seas is a re-imagination of one the poet's sojourns to Taiwan, a journey which evokes Rizal's own sojourns to Europe, and is intended to gather feelings.⁵⁵⁵ The poems encompass a 'reluctant poet-hero' as a young flaneur at the centre of natural causes negotiating 'non-events' of his 'eventful day', in a bid to re-unite with his imagined love to find common ground. While the poet and his imagined love are re-united in *The Edge of Seas*, it has been written such that the reader should interrogate the poet's psyche as well as the imagined love's true existence.⁵⁵⁶ In other words, the reliability of the poet's thoughts, feelings and validity of the (non-)events experienced, should be questioned. Thus, *The Edge of Seas* intends to question the heart.

Lost Generation, the second part of the collection, is intended to provoke the logic of language and resonate with history that refers to both the personal and the collective. The poems in *Lost Generation* are written in chapters defined and ranked by 'high-school cliques'. These cliques reinscribe colonial mentality, and is thus a critique on social formation—of distinct groups which have formed in an institution (i.e., high school), with each 'clique' (or chapter) titled as such that it points to characteristics of these groups. As

⁵⁵⁵ Nery notes: Rizal had three sojourns to Europe: first from 1882 to 1887, second from 1888 to 1891, third, Rizal returned to Europe in 1896, but almost literally only for a day. See Nery John. *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. 2. Unlike Rizal who was greatly influenced by Europe, the poet's site of influence was Asia, and in particular Taiwan. Yet, similar to Rizal who kept going back to his site of influence, the poet had three sojourns to Taiwan: first in 2010, then again in 2013-14, and finally in 2015. The last sojourn to Taiwan was mixed with a writing residency he attended in Beijing for four months.

There is contention regarding the political status of Taiwan. Officially known as the Republic Of China (ROC), Taiwan has been excluded as a member of the United Nations and no longer represents China, after the UN members voted in 1971 to recognise the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) instead. ROC continues to claim to be a legitimate representative of China and its territory, but this has been downplayed since its democratisation in the nineties. ROC is claimed by the PRC, and the PRC means to use force (if necessary, as per their Constitution) to claim it. PRC refuses diplomatic relations with countries that recognise the ROC. A metaphorical relation between PRC with ROC may be akin to an overbearing father to a child. But Taiwan's leaders say it is clearly much more than a province, arguing that it is a sovereign state. Thus, the question to ask is when does a child become independent from their parents, if at all?

⁵⁵⁶ The poet's psyche, as well, state of being, is liminal, bordering upon unawareness and consciousness between subject and object, which Jacques Lacan has described as the 'imaginary' phase.

noted earlier by Uckung, ‘the social cancer [has]...mutate[d] into something more virulent, oppressive, controlling way of life... which continue to wreak havoc on the lives of the people, whose freedom [Rizal] had tried to redeem with his blood’.⁵⁵⁷ Each of the ‘cliques’ (or chapters) in *Lost Generation* is a representation of the unconscious becoming conscious. By writing *Lost Generation* this way, it makes cognisant the means that groups inherently breed factions within society, which as stated earlier, has political ramifications around the ‘inside/outside’ dialectic: that if there is a central position, there must also be one in the margins.

The chapters in *Lost Generation* are ‘encapsulated’ by two untitled poems (i.e., one at the beginning of the collection, the other at the end) written in Tagalog, the poet’s mother tongue, with translations. *Lost Generation* begins with the first untitled poem, ‘[Walang Pamagat]’, which speaks of the poet’s love for Filipino language, and poetry which softens the heart—poems do not shout nor climb, but dissolves in the heart of people. Then, the poem leaps in thought by returning to the poet’s imagined love from *The Edge of Seas*: ‘Ang aking sinta...’, or ‘To my beloved: You were lost... unable to gain anything from life, not even if luck is reversed’. Consequently, the poet offers his plea: ‘We do not. We are not alone’. A reconciliation of the heart occurs—indeed, the *being* that reconciles is the poet’s imagined love through poetry; as well as the world around them, with the knowledge they are not alone. This reconciliation brings the truth to bear: ‘We do not’, i.e., the poet and his imagined love must *not do*, which is a refiguration of the speech act in marriage, ‘I do’.⁵⁵⁸ The emphasis on ‘We’ as opposed to ‘I’, makes transparent the idea that the poet and his imagined love are pluriversally constituted. The poet reinforces, ‘We are not alone’. Moreover, the collective (i.e., the high-school cliques in *Lost Generation*) exists as a function

⁵⁵⁷ Uckung Peter Jaynul V. ‘The Problems After Rizal’.

⁵⁵⁸ Speech acts defined is a performance of an action through speech.

of the personal, (i.e., the poet's imagined love in *The Edge of Seas*). 'Do not' is also emphasised in the refiguration—with 'no' contained within the written act; a powerful word, a word of resistance.

Understanding and empathy for the poet's Other, therefore, rests upon their union, which is achieved in the poems, through the act of writing, i.e., being solitary. The 'soul' of the poems addresses the differences between the poet and his imagined love, recognising they are the Same. And while the (colonial) English is the only language the poet and his imagined love communicate in, Derrida's notions that 'the Same is not a totality closed in upon itself' enables us to realise that it is through their experiences together and apart, through English, where they may gain empathy and enlightenment being as One.⁵⁵⁹ This resonates with Rizal's life and polyglot consciousness, wherein he stood apart from his birth nation for years, and utilised the rhizomic 'middle ground' by writing for his people in the colonising (Spanish) language.

At the end of *Lost Generation*, closing with the second and final '[Walang Pamagat]' poem, the poet writes 'I love the Filipino language. I think of the end of the world / When rice has no taste / When [poetry ceases] / When Filipino language has died in [his] sensibility'. Thus, the death of the poet's mother tongue is 'The edge of the seas. The end of the world'.

In *Lost Generation*, one chapter, the 'Spocks', is a blank page (i.e., there is nothing written, it is silent); a strategic positioning that believes that silence is a form of speech. All chapters, with the exception of 'Loners', have been written with hostility. Adolescents are nothing if not desiring machines. In 'Athletes', the poet declares 'we are not fixed entities... We embrace success with absolutely no definition for its peopling'. The poet also says,

⁵⁵⁹ Derrida Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics'. *Writing and Difference*. 122, 140. See also Baring Edward. 'Levinas and Derrida'. *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*. 7.

‘Cities are ill. Within it is garbage. Within it are scars... It means I am sweeping. It means I am exploited. It means / I am expended. I could shovel up on walls, sweep, then sweep them up to / places where bodies are primed. The rafters hold no sway’. In the penultimate poem, ‘Cool Kids’, the requirement for ‘hypervigilant attention and scrutiny’ is thus ever present.⁵⁶⁰ The poet critiques himself: ‘Literally, I am tangled. In fact, this material is a yarn of internalised violence. A small heap, a soup. Spaghetti-brained and demolishing. It is perpetual each minute. A ritual brooding saved for one’.⁵⁶¹ Thus, the act of writing is his way of internalising violence; solitude in itself is acknowledged as violent. But the poet writes to protect his consciousness—a mode of self-actualisation, or perhaps even salvation.

The Edge of Seas, the first part of the collection, is not plurilingual, and re-imagines as well as contrasts with Rizal’s old artistic form and poetics, to bring to light a consciousness premised on the poet’s psyche (which exists in multiplicity).⁵⁶² It is written in English not only to emphasise the dominance of Australia’s monolingual culture, but also to alleviate the (violent) imposition of a (Filipino) translations to its (likely) non-Tagalog speaking readers; however, its effects and affects reside within a plurilingual presence. This notion is considerate of Derridean hospitality, aligns with Rizal’s polyglot consciousness and languaging of his main writings. The spare peopling in *The Edge of Seas* may be contrasted with the high-school cliques (or the imagined communities) in *Lost Generation* as well as with Rizal’s peopling in his novels. The contrast is stark but is intended to convey the social materiality (or lack thereof) of the solitary writerly life. The spare peopling in *The Edge of Seas* vs *Lost Generation* is also intended to interrogate and re-think Rizal’s own polyphonic or dialogic works, such that there are no minor characters. This idea persists to heighten the

⁵⁶⁰ Legaspi Harold. (2022). ‘Cool Kids’. *Southerly*. Edited by Melissa Hardie, Kate Lilley. Vol. 79, No. 3. 5.

⁵⁶¹ Legaspi Harold. ‘Cool Kids’. 131. <https://southerlylitmag.com.au/harold-legaspi-cool-kids/>.

⁵⁶² In *The Edge of Seas*, the lovers live in a microcosm in a foreign land, Taiwan, and have been colonised by English, a language which is not their mother tongue. In Taiwan, Traditional Chinese (Mandarin) is spoken, yet the lovers do not speak this language fluently.

tension and closeness between the characters, and bring to the fore each other's importance in fulfilling their quest.

The Edge of Seas could be characterised as Menippean satire not in a sense that it is an attack on mental attitudes per se, rather than the way its mixture of poetry and prose that illuminate possibilities & makes new connections, representative of a true poet. It is essentially concerned, like the poet's other works, with the broader memory of a culture and the ways that a human being can inhabit it. The 'tenor' of the poet's 'thoughts' are underpinned by feelings of isolation in a foreign land, but consciously 'turns' toward adaptation, to survive with little means, relying on his image repertoire, and the possibility of winding up an eternal bachelor. The poet's prose-poetry evoke feelings, and move through peaks and troughs of moods; his yearning at its core, as he seemingly reconciles his heart with his mind. *The Edge of Seas* provides picturesque reflections of the quotidian, extended in (sometimes) sonnet-form, to find 'they/them', his imagined love, in a nostalgic manner: 'Life is such...such that the desire anticipates some sort of healing and trauma—working together to empower him against the distance that pervades their union'.

A modernist approach has been taken in *Lost Generation* by way of an experimentation to produce writing in a trance-state, encouraged by waking fantasies and visual 'hallucinations'. *Lost Generation* is thus a self-conscious practice of individuation, whereby the soul overcomes spiritual alienation, leading to a rupture between traditional notions of writing: *fragmented structure, absence of an obvious central, unifying narrative, and experimentation with form and expression.*⁵⁶³ *Lost Generation* evokes Freudian

⁵⁶³ According to Sonu Shamdasani, 'Two possibilities arose: one could attempt to regressively restore persona and return to the prior state, but it was impossible to get rid of the unconscious. Alternatively, one could accept the condition of godlikeness. However, there was a third way: the hermeneutic treatment of creative fantasies. This resulted in a synthesis of the individual with the collective psyche, which revealed the individual lifeline. This was the process of individuation'. See Jung Carl G. (2009). *The Red Book – Liber Novus: A Reader's Edition*. Sonu Shamdasani (Ed.). Translated by Mark Kyburz, John Peck and Sonu Shamdasani. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 50-51.

subjective states, involving the unconscious mind full of primal impulses. Combined with Carl Jung's idea of the collective unconscious who suggested that it was essential to differentiate between oneself from their anima, and to achieve integration with it.⁵⁶⁴ Sonu Shamdasani states, 'after one had achieved the integration with their anima, one was confronted with another figure, namely the "mana personality"'. Jung posits that when the anima lost her "mana" or power, the man who assimilated it, must have acquired this, and so becomes a "mana personality", a being of superior will and wisdom'.⁵⁶⁵ The poet admits that the unconscious mind governs behaviour to a greater degree than people suspect. Thus, the poet intended, to not only integrate with his 'anima' but also make the unconscious conscious.

In a matriarchal society like the Philippines, it is important to critique Rizal's boundaries on authority, being reason and evidence. Thinking freely necessitates not completely rejecting ideas which do not fit reason, but also questioning evidence, in order to view from a wider lens, i.e., not a "free sphere of science", but a "free sphere". As Hélène Cixous writes: 'Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason...one with the phallogocentric tradition...that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-

⁵⁶⁴ Jung 'differentiated between two layers of the unconscious. The first, the personal unconscious, consisted in elements acquired during one's lifetime, together with elements that could equally well be conscious. The second was the impersonal unconscious or collective psyche. While consciousness and the personal unconscious were developed and acquired in the course of one's lifetime, the collective psyche was inherited'. See Jung Carl G. *The Red Book – Liber Novus: A Reader's Edition*. 50.

Anima (in Jungian psychology) is 'the true inner self that is in communication with the unconscious (as opposed to the *persona* or outer self' and 'an archetype present in a man or woman from which the female aspects of the personality are derived'. It is contrasted with 'animus'. See Eds. of Oxford English Dictionary. (2022, June). *Anima*. OED Online. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7734>.

⁵⁶⁵ According to Sonu Shamdasani, 'Jung wrote of the difficult task to differentiate the personal and collective psyche. One of the factors one came up against was the *persona*—one's "mask" or "role". This represented the segment of the collective psyche that one mistakenly regarded as individual. When one analysed this, the personality dissolved into the collective psyche, which resulted in the release of a stream of fantasies: "All the treasures of the mythological thinking and feeling are unlocked". The difference between this state and insanity lay in the fact that it was *intentional*' (italics added). See Jung Carl G., *The Red Book – Liber Novus: A Reader's Edition*. 50, 83.

congratulatory phallocentrism'.⁵⁶⁶ Moreover, Cixous says 'poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious'. Thus, 'only the poets—not [necessarily] the novelists', can go to 'place[s] where the repressed manage to survive'.⁵⁶⁷ Poetry then, evolves these repressions into beings, meaning ultimately that they survive.

Lost Generation may also be thought of as 'verbal Cubism', wherein phrasal units, sentences, paragraphs, chapters (i.e., the objects) may be broken up, analysed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, it may be from a multitude of viewpoints to present the piece in a greater context. 'Each word is an event'.⁵⁶⁸ The object and context (or figures) planes 'interpenetrate one another to create the ambiguous shallow space characteristic of cubism'.⁵⁶⁹ The language is therefore dialogic, amidst heteroglossia. This creates tension between individuals, groups and perspectives, but also languages (or *utterances*).

The poet acknowledges that at first, 'a blurred vision' may be necessary to later realise epiphanies. Hence, an experimentation with grammar was required to familiarise a reader with the role of rhythm and sound in an object's 'moment of consciousness'. This notion, offered by the Russian Formalist movement early in the twentieth century is that of *defamiliarisation*.⁵⁷⁰ The disconnect between the familiarity of the objects and the manner in which they are described results in the 'depamiliarisation ng pamilyar habang sabay-sabay pamilyar na pamilyar sa hindi pamilyar na'.⁵⁷¹ *Lost Generation* does this by displacement of connecting words from their usual context and their subsequent synthesis. The "'phonetic and lexical structure" as well as the "characteristic distribution of words...the characteristic

⁵⁶⁶ Cixous Hélène. (1976). 'The Laugh of the Medusa'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 1(4). 879. <https://doi.org/10.1086/493306>.

⁵⁶⁷ Cixous Hélène. 'The Laugh of the Medusa'. 879-880.

⁵⁶⁸ Perelman Bob. (2013, October 2). 'On Whether Close Reading Strategies Work for Gertrude Stein: A Gertrude Stein Primer'. *ModPoPlus* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68woE9OsOwY>.

⁵⁶⁹ Fineart.Name (2019). *Cubism*. <https://fineart.name/?article&47>.

⁵⁷⁰ Shklovsky Victor. (1992). 'Art as Technique'. *Critical Theory Since Plato (Rev. Edition)*. Hazard Adams & H. Adams (Eds.). Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers. 750.

⁵⁷¹ Translates from Tagalog: defamiliarisation of the familiar while simultaneously familiarising the unfamiliar.

thought structures compounded from words” are defamiliarised, which lead to new perspectives.⁵⁷² The usual understanding of words’ meanings and contexts are thus ‘interrupted’, challenging the reader to question what the words actually mean. Poetry is then “difficult, roughened, impeded language”; it is “attenuated, tortuous speech”; obviously it is “formed” speech. Even rhythm is seen according to this notion, and the result is a reversal of our usual notions of poetic technique’.⁵⁷³ *Lost Generation* interrupts or displaces these words into new contexts, resulting in the redefinition of ‘reality’.

⁵⁷² Shklovsky Victor. ‘Art as Technique’. 750.

⁵⁷³ Shklovsky Victor. ‘Art as Technique’. 750.

Section B: Decolonising Transculturally – Beyond Monolingualism

*‘A language’, as Noam Chomsky observed, ‘is not just words. It’s a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is’.*⁵⁷⁴

~ Mark Polizzotti, 2021, *‘The Silences Between: On the Perils and Pitfalls of Translation’*.

*For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other...To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp a morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation.*⁵⁷⁵

~ Frantz Fanon, 2008, *Black Skin, White Masks (New Edition)*, 8.

My exegesis for the Masters of Creative Writing at the University of Sydney concerned my first book of poetry, *Letters in Language* (2021), which was inspired by Lyn Hejinian’s *My Life*.⁵⁷⁶ The exegesis was centred around my understanding of language, and the role language played in redefining the self (or voice), which was largely formed by the work the Language poets, who were ‘resistant to closure, [and] infuse[d] meaning throughout the poem rather than knotting it into lyrical and dramatic epiphanies...Words are...the material of which it is shaped...reject[ing] the idea of poetry as an oral form; it is written’.⁵⁷⁷ It struck me, after having published *Letters in Language*, that I had been influenced by thinkers and theorists directly from the United States of America (and England), which brought with it colonial (or

⁵⁷⁴ Polizzotti Mark. (2021, July 6). ‘The Silences Between: On the Perils and Pitfalls of Translation’. *The MIT Press Reader*. <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-silences-between-on-the-perils-and-pitfalls-of-translation/>.

⁵⁷⁵ Fanon Frantz. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks (New Edition)*. Translated by Charles Lam Markham. London: Pluto Press. 8.

⁵⁷⁶ See Hejinian Lyn. (1980). *My Life*. Green Integer Books. No. 39.

⁵⁷⁷ Hoover Paul (Ed.). (2013). ‘Introduction’. *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology (2nd Edition)*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. xlv.

hegemonic) tendencies. Moreover, after having read and contrasted other plurilingual pocket books by its publisher, *Flying Islands Poetry Community*, I realised that *Letters in Language*, as an epic poem read as an elegy to the Philippines, of my first language, for only four out of the thirty-nine chapters in the book were written in Tagalog, the rest of it in English.⁵⁷⁸ It is pertinent to say, English had engulfed my *being*, and Tagalog had been dying in my sensibilities. Thus, for these reasons, it can be claimed that *Letters in Language* is not necessarily decolonising. However, I think the melding of English as well as Tagalog ‘imparts a subjective, relational, pluralist, reflexive, inclusive and disjunctive posturing’, such that it offered a distinct position that my ‘identity as a poet and my poetry is hyphenated, i.e., multiple and simultaneous—not solely relying on the presence and singularity of voice, and not totally rejecting subjectivity of the “I”; that an expression of self has value...’⁵⁷⁹ Thus, ‘For reasons of self-scrutiny, I write in English [and] Filipino poetry to reflect [upon] my [Western] upbringing’.⁵⁸⁰

In the same vein as above, the collections of poetry I had written, are mostly in English, with Tagalog and (some) of its translations intended to bridge the gap for understanding, and allow monolingual speakers to question the impact of the migration process upon the generations. By exemplifying and not abandoning my mother tongue—the language in which I was raised—I strive towards empathy for the peoples of the place where I now live (Australia), and the land where I was born (Philippines), today and in future.

Rizal epitomised transcultural collaboration. In a way, he was a linguistic purveyor, writing and translating in multiple languages. He struggled with his third novel, *Makamisa*,

⁵⁷⁸ Christopher (Kit) Kelen, the President and Public Officer of *Flying Islands*, is known to be a Marxist. Mignolo describes Marxism as an outgrowth of Western civilisation, belonging to the same history of languages and memories as Christians, liberals and neo-liberals. See Mignolo Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. 51.

⁵⁷⁹ Legaspi Harold. ‘Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*’. 3.

⁵⁸⁰ Legaspi Harold. ‘Exegesis: The Interface Between Self and Worlds-Presence, Perceptions & Relationships for *Letters in Language*’. 3, 13.

drafts of which were started in Tagalog, then started anew in Spanish, eventually leaving behind two versions unfinished.⁵⁸¹ Rizal's wrote *The Noli* and *The Fili* in Spanish, but understood later on that it was in Filipino where he could destabilise what was already there, à la his 'field of battle' letter. Yet, in a way, Constantino was correct to say that Rizal's legacy is limited, for in writing in the language of the coloniser, Spanish, he perpetuated colonial mentality. Knowing this humbles my sense of being and makes me question the contribution of my writings. However, I've learnt to accept my limits.

We must undergo a process of decolonisation to become a true Filipino/Australian. Rizal's legacy is a poetic reflection of a life which inhibited many worlds, and is thus a lesson to us and future generations towards the ongoing path for pluriversality. Decolonising transculturally through plurilingualism requires a similar strength and resilience to destabilise the dominance of English in the Philippines and Australia. The plight for pluriversality can only be won when colonial mentalities evolve to allow people the inherent right to determine, define and govern themselves. This could be done, for example, by advancing the plight of First Nations people in relinquishing stolen land, and/or indigenous languaging, co-resistance movements that enlivens Indigenous sovereignty.⁵⁸² For writers of the diaspora, this may involve resisting to write in the colonising language, or emphasising the colonising language in the backdrop of indigenous languages; choosing to write in their mother tongue(s), to bring upon many possible worlds, to propel plurilingual literature that go beyond our monolingualism. In Australia, the dominance of English marginalises literatures produced in other languages. Moreover, the study of all these literatures and relations between them are

⁵⁸¹ *Makamisa*, in other words, is a term that advocates for the plight of the people; the masses. See Schumacher John N. (1997). *The Propaganda Movement: 1880–1895: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, the Making of a Revolution*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 321. See also Rizal José. 'Introduction: Note 4' by Harold Augenbraum. *El Filibusterismo*. 329.

⁵⁸² Tuck Eve, Yang, Wayne K. (2012). 'Decolonization is Not a Metaphor'. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*. 1(1). 19. See also Simpson Leanne B. (2016). 'Indigenous Resurgence and Co-resistance'. *Critical Ethnic Studies*. 2(2). 27. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/jcritethnstud.2.2.0019>.

increasingly mediated and implicitly determined by English.⁵⁸³ Yet, the resistance afforded by examples of writers who had resisted the colonising language (Rizal, Glissant, Ngũgĩ, Marjorie Bil Bil, Eva Johnson, Lionel Fogarty), in sum, reconfigure our sense of *place* in making our national heritage.

Language is a zone of vibration, and its relevance permeates the constitution of our being. It gives us power to speak and be heard, and, to signify meaning and carry our culture. As explained previously, Ngũgĩ asserted that language has a dual character, and the materiality of language thus impacts in facilitating communication and producing social relations. The example given of African children learning a foreign ‘colonising’ language, divorces the child’s upbringing to their relationship with the language spoken at home, thus the child sees ‘oneself from outside oneself as if one was *another self*’ (italics added).⁵⁸⁴ Moreover, the contrast they experience being exposed to ‘imported literatures’ of colonising tradition between their mother tongue(s), deemed of a low(er) status, marks the superiority of a language/culture over another, resulting in disastrous effects for the child’s self-awareness/self-perception.⁵⁸⁵

Wenche Ommundsen cites Rey Chow’s book, *Not Like a Native Speaker* (2014), wherein she posits that ‘speaking and writing in a language not one’s own is constructed in terms of lack’, because it is ‘corrupted from the origination point’, i.e., fails to sound like a native speaker because of the (foreign) accent—‘a symptom of discontinuity, an incomplete assimilation, a botched attempt’.⁵⁸⁶ Why is it then that Australia continues to sustain its monolingual ideologies (e.g., monolingual literary canon), which negates a sense of *being* to

⁵⁸³ Lee Fiona. (2020, October 13). Personal Communication.

⁵⁸⁴ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 18.

⁵⁸⁵ Thiong’o Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 18.

⁵⁸⁶ Chow Rey (2014) as cited in Ommundsen Wenche. (2018, July 24). ‘Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation’. *Sydney Review of Books*. <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essay/multilingual-writing-monolingual-nation/>.

a significant proportion of its people? What is the role of language in sustaining our true identities?

Ommundsen's 2018 essay, 'Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation', considers the implications of English's dominance in the shaping of the Australian literary canon.⁵⁸⁷ By and large, despite efforts of many to transform our monolingualism to a plurilingual paradigm, the wealth of writing produced in Languages Other Than English has been overlooked by the mainstream, and in some instances, literary scholarship. Knowledge of literary works in Languages Other Than English is minimal, and translations of them remain rare.⁵⁸⁸ Diasporic writers are forced to write in English in order to reach a wider audience, despite their connection to their mother tongue(s), placing them in a position of disadvantage, economically and culturally. This places Australians 'out of step with developments in the rest of the world', where plurilingualism is on the rise.⁵⁸⁹

Yasmin Yildiz posits that the rise of the modern nation-state in Europe, the origins of which shape the international system of nation-states we have today, led to the emergence of the monolingual paradigm, the belief that 'individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one "true" language only, their "mother tongue", and through this possession be organically linked to an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation'.⁵⁹⁰ The rise of the monolingual paradigm did not necessarily lead to a decrease in plurilingualism; rather, as Yildiz, as cited in Ommundsen, claims, it is that plurilingualism came to be understood through the 'knot' of the monolingual paradigm (i.e., a 'condensed *narrative* about origin and identity') so that a person who is fluent in many languages is still deemed to possess only one true mother tongue while having many other tongues. The mother tongue is

⁵⁸⁷ Lee Fiona. (2020, October 13). Personal Communication.

⁵⁸⁸ Ommundsen Wenche. 'Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation'.

⁵⁸⁹ Ommundsen Wenche. 'Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation'.

⁵⁹⁰ Yildiz Yasemin. (2011). *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. New York: Fordham University Press. 4.

connoted to be a historical artifact, obscuring the ‘possibility that languages other than the first can take on an emotional meaning’.⁵⁹¹ Yildiz provides examples of ‘alternative “affective connotations”’: the “mother tongue” might be associated with exclusion, alienation and trauma rather than belonging, and might thus stand as an obstacle to healing, whereas new languages can open up new intellectual and affective pathways’ and livelihoods.⁵⁹²

One must therefore question themselves, and perhaps think before they speak; be cognisant of the imposition of their native tongue, particularly when dealing transculturally. Surely, the dominance of English creates a graft, a colonising imperative, to negate the Others’ *being*. Those who happen to speak English as their native tongue may be thought of as ‘one variant in an infinite series, in which there can be any degree and any number of fits or misfits between the speaker and the prosthesis’.⁵⁹³

There are advantages that lie with not the coloniser, but with the colonised in transgressing monolingualism—a ‘truth of the mediated and divisive character’ affirmed by linguistic plurality.⁵⁹⁴ Ommundsen cites Brian Castro, in his 1996 essay, ‘Writing Asia’, wherein he laments the absence, in Australia, of polyglot writers like James Joyce and Samuel Beckett:

‘But the benefits of being able to speak another language are manifold. Language marks the spot where the self loses its prison bars – where the border crossing takes place, traversing the spaces of others. When one speaks or translates Chinese, one metaphorically becomes Chinese; when one speaks Japanese one “turns” Japanese. Each language speaks the world in its own way. The polyglot is a freer person, a person capable of living in words and worlds other than the narrow and the confined one of unimagined reality. When we translate from one language to another we not

⁵⁹¹ Yildiz Yasmin (2011) as cited in Ommundsen Wenche. ‘Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation’.

⁵⁹² Yildiz Yasmin (2011) as cited in Ommundsen Wenche. ‘Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation’.

⁵⁹³ Ommundsen Wenche. ‘Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation’.

⁵⁹⁴ Ommundsen Wenche. ‘Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation’.

only reinvent ourselves but we free up the sclerotic restrictions of our own language. We feel free to transgress, to metamorphose, to experience the uncanny, where we are receiving what Wilson Harris has called the quantum immediacy of another culture. Other cultures and languages reinforce and enrich us by powerfully affecting and destabilising our familial tongue. We gain by losing ourselves'.⁵⁹⁵

The polyglot is thus freer; losing themselves in language. Language owns one's sense of being, it occupies their space and they become. Being a polyglot is an avenue to construing information in English in varying ways, i.e., re-interpret and think through the aspect of information in a different order, structure, priority or narrative. This ability allows for a reimagining of how information is received and interpreted, it instils further thought and introspection, which is a vital tool for survival, dare I say, success, in one's private and public life.

Reading, writing or speaking in another Language Other Than English may also register as a counterpoint for resistance to colonising mentalities, dominant and hegemonic views, particularly if there are others in the act, adopting a similar position (i.e., reading, writing or speaking in another language) or there is an existing community where English is not the first language. The introduction of a Language Other Than English in aspects of life flattens the power dynamics, where the knower of that language becomes the expert. This may entail plurilingual ways of *being* with others: e.g., having bi-lingual assignments at university, using bi-lingual instructions at work, reading translations of texts. Plurilingual readers, writers and speakers may shift between languages more readily, thereby privileging knowledge of Languages Other Than English over other forms of knowledge.

⁵⁹⁵ Castro Brian (1996) as cited in Ommundsen Wenche. 'Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation'.

From a cultural viewpoint, plurilingualism allows readers, writers and speakers to effect and affect mediation between other communities, other languages, other people. A range of techniques may be utilised in mediation, which may be enlightened with tacit knowledge one is given in the formative years embedded in the culture. Languages Other Than English should be the main pre-occupation, and knowledge of linguistic rules and grammar are valued as much as adaptive languaging aspects, e.g., word play, neologisms, et al. Moreover, plurilingualism has the capacity to evolve English itself, or to feature multiple Englishes, underscoring the fact that English is a language that is not one. Perhaps it could lead to the creation of new language/languaging, or ways of reading, writing, speaking or being.

Important is the authenticity that people experience when reading, writing or speaking in their mother tongue. Owing to a plurilingual nation, one may afford seeing works in their own language. Not only will this allow people to delve into cultures and languages that is their own, but also gives them the opportunity to experience a multitude of others. It gives points of view to which they may not be necessarily accustomed. Moreover, plurilingualism has the tendency to relinquish racial hierarchy; it liberates through inclusion, and gives a voice to the marginalised Other.

Most importantly, plurilingualism has the capability to heal. It activates memory or thoughts which brings oneself closer to their origins, their heritage and their ancestry. In a way, it empowers a sense of being with a past wherein they may belong, and prevents discarding insights which heighten their sense of awareness of self. For diasporic writers, it rescues their 'sense of linguistic and cultural belonging in multicultural Australia', it reduces loss of culture, and builds upon a growing body of works that 'stimulate further research into

literature of other linguistic communities'.⁵⁹⁶ Moreover, it provides a nexus for further translations, which enhances the literary community.

As a marginalised diasporic/migrant writer, born overseas but educated in Australia, I have faced similar struggles as my counterparts to be seen and heard through my writing. One could have filled my bedroom walls with notes of rejection from publishers for my works, which I had spent countless hours writing. Of course, there are Indigenous and migrant writers lucky enough to be accepted by the mainstream. However, this acceptance, is not without toil and, dare I say, some sense of submission, often from the institutions they are fighting against.

According to Sneja Gunew, if we go back to the 1970s and 1980s, diasporic/migrant writing was occasionally used to designate those writers born overseas; it was overtaken by related expressions such as ethnic or multicultural writing.⁵⁹⁷ Thinking about colonial difference in the Australian context began around 1979, which was a period when Australian culture itself was being institutionalised.⁵⁹⁸ During the 1970s multiculturalism was consolidated as government policy.⁵⁹⁹ The dominant emphases were on questions of social justice, such as access and equity, and a welfare model of lack or disadvantage, referred to as a 'deficit model'.⁶⁰⁰ In other words, Australians were asked to think in terms of a migrant/ethnic 'problem', which often led to the construction of migrants or ethnics as the

⁵⁹⁶ Ommundsen Wenche. 'Multilingual Writing in a Monolingual Nation'.

⁵⁹⁷ Gunew Sneja. (2017). *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. London, UK; New York, NY, USA: Anthem Press. 114. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kft8bw>

⁵⁹⁸ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115.

⁵⁹⁹ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115. See also Jupp James. (2007). *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration (2nd Edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁰⁰ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115. See also Gunew Sneja, Rizvi Fazal. (1994). *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

problem.⁶⁰¹ Rather than assuming that these newcomers would contribute to the national heritage through their different cultures and languages, it was often presented as a question of what had to be sliced off the national funding cake in order to lend credibility to the image of Australia as a democratically equitable nation.⁶⁰² Gunew says, 'In the 1970s "Australian literature" was itself a relatively recent category within literary studies', and as yet hadn't developed a 'strong scholarly and historical tradition'.⁶⁰³ Teachers and researchers with a cultural diversity plight, found that the 'nation's literary tradition', was in 'no way representative of the diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural composition of the Australian population'.⁶⁰⁴ Where were the indigenous and non-Anglo migrant writers? And where were their stories? Writings of their experiences and cultures?⁶⁰⁵ While silencing and erasure had been evidenced; colonial-structural barriers posing as problematic to attaining social justice, there are writings which have surfaced that showcased the storytelling of indigenous-people and migrants that have made all the difference.

Four pioneering anthologies of diasporic writing resulted: *Telling Ways: Australian Women's Experimental Writing* by Anna Couani and Sneja Gunew (1988); *Displacements (2): Multicultural Storytellers* by Gunew (1982, 1987); *Beyond the Echo: Multicultural Women's Writing* by Gunew and Jan Mahyuddin (1988). Diasporic/migrant Australian writing were also 'invigorated with journals such as *Outrider* (defunct since 2011) and publications such as *Otherland*, the Australian-Chinese-language literary journal edited by Ouyang Yu (a.k.a. 欧阳昱), which begun in 1994. In 2007, the launch of *Mascara Literary*

⁶⁰¹ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115.

⁶⁰² Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115.

⁶⁰³ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115.

⁶⁰⁴ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115. See also Ommundsen Wenche. (2007). 'Multicultural Writing in Australia'. *A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900*. Nicholas Birns and Rebecca McNeer (Eds.). New York: Camden House. 75–76.

⁶⁰⁵ Gunew Sneja. *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators*. 115. See also Ommundsen Wenche. 'Multicultural Writing in Australia'. *A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900*. 75–76.

Review marked a platform for subaltern writers to get their work published, with a focus on cultural cohesion and participation'.⁶⁰⁶

On the Indigenous front, the ground-breaking work of Paddy Roe (of the Nyigina nation) edited by Stephen Muecke, *Gularabulu* (1983), and Roe, Muecke and visual artist Krim Benterak, *Reading the Country* (1984), illustrated new ways to produce Aboriginal writing that neither elided the traditionally oral nature of Aboriginal poetic narrative nor employed the imperialist ethnographic practices of works such as T. G. H. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia* (1971), in which the power-relationship between author-academic and 'native informant' was inherently asymmetrical.⁶⁰⁷ As Philip Morrissey writes, 'In revising the protocols and ethics of settler-Aboriginal collaboration, *Gularabulu* highlighted the need for reciprocity and exchange: as such the texts is a paradigm of social and linguistic convergence'.⁶⁰⁸ Such convergence is linguistic in its drawing together of Aboriginal English and so-called 'Standard English' and social in its performative and collaborative process, in which no subjectivity or ontology is privileged as normative.⁶⁰⁹

Notably, Muecke views Roe's works from the point of view of a poetics of language: 'When language is read as poetic, it is the form of language itself, as well as its underlying content, which is important. Just as it would be unjustifiable to rewrite a poet's work into "correct" English (in other words to take away the poet's "licence"), so it would be unjustifiable to rewrite the words of Paddy Roe's stories'.⁶¹⁰ Such language is difficult to quote briefly. The opening of 'Lardi', a true story (*trustori*), gives a sense of its repetitive,

⁶⁰⁶ Legaspi Harold. (2018). 'Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia'. University of Sydney. 2.

⁶⁰⁷ McCooey David. (2017). 'Postcolonial Poetry of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*. Ramazani Jahan (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 73.

⁶⁰⁸ Morrissey Philip. (2000). 'Aboriginal Writing'. *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*. Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (Eds.) South Melbourne: Oxford University Press. 318. See also McCooey David. 'Postcolonial Poetry of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'. 73-74.

⁶⁰⁹ See McCooey David. 'Postcolonial Poetry of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'. 74.

⁶¹⁰ Roe Paddy. (1983). 'Introduction to Paddy Roe' by Stephen Muecke (Ed.). *Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press. v-vi. See also McCooey David. 'Postcolonial Poetry of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'. 74.

indirect style: 'Yeah-- / I can tell story, that whatname (Rasping) you know ---- / that two-- / man?---- / you know that--- / *Lardi Lardi*----- / that man --- / they used to camp in Anna Plains, station you know-- / he had tow, mate belongta him too- / in the outcamp----- / and these two boy used to go all time days 'n' days you / know- / eevery day they trouble these, brolga- / brolga---- / the bird want to come for drink (Stops rasping)-- / but (Laughs) they humbug all the time you know-- / they go there (Tap tap)- / they had shotgun too-- / you know from boss—'.⁶¹¹

Roe's works paved the way for collections such as *Story About Feeling* (1989) by Bill Neidjie, the last Gaagudju speaker, and the multilingual anthologies of Aboriginal song poems edited by Martin Duwell and R. M. W. Dizon *The Honey-Ant Men's Love Song* (1990) and *Little Eva at Moonlight Creek* (1994).⁶¹² These works, along with Roe's, illustrate the extraordinary variety and adaptability of Indigenous cultures, and the importance of oral, non-traditional Indigenous literature, highlighting the interpenetration of Indigeneity and modernity.⁶¹³

For instance, in the opening story of *Story About Feeling*, 'Laying Down', Neidjie, through poetry's power for expression in Aboriginal English, reverberates the central role of the heart, to 'feel on your feeling':

*'This story e can listen careful
and how you want to feel on your feeling.
this story e coming through your body
e go right down foot and head*

⁶¹¹ According to Stephen Muecke, 'Paddy Roe distinguishes between three types of story: *trustori* (true stories), *bugaregara* (stories from the dreaming) and *devil stori* (stories about devils, spirits, etc.). *Trustori* and *devil stori* are only produced as spoken narrative, while the *bugaregara* (the "law") may also refer to traditional songs, ceremonies and rituals of which there is a great variety'. See Roe Paddy. 'Introduction to Paddy Roe' by Stephen Muecke (Ed.) and 'Lardi'. *Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley*. vii, 59.

⁶¹² McCooey David. 'Postcolonial Poetry of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'. 74.

⁶¹³ McCooey David. 'Postcolonial Poetry of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'. 74.

fingernail and blood...through the heart
and e can feel it because e'll come right through'.⁶¹⁴

In the closing story of the book, 'We Like White-Man All Right', Neidjie exposes his plight in storytelling: that we are all humans, with the same 'blood', 'bone'—we are the 'same':

‘This Law, country, people...
 no-matter who you people,
 red, yellow, black and white...
 but the blood is same.
 country, you in other place
 but exactly blood, bone...e same'.⁶¹⁵

Pidgin has become the lingua franca among most Aboriginal tribes, which has resulted in a 'decline of intellectual insights'—there are 'less words available' and has 'none of the linguistic subtlety of indigenous languages', and so is a 'poor vehicle for expressing the old myths with which earlier generations were so familiar'.⁶¹⁶ Old myths are therefore being lost, simply because there are fewer Aboriginal people around who are fluent in their ancient languages.⁶¹⁷

Neidjie poignantly expressed the dilemma:

‘My people all dead.
 We only got few left ... that's all
 not many.
 We getting too old.
 Young people ...

⁶¹⁴ Neidjie Bill. (2002). *Story About Feeling*. Magabala Books. 1.

⁶¹⁵ Neidjie Bill. *Story About Feeling*. 168.

⁶¹⁶ Cowan James. *Aborigine Dreaming*. 69.

⁶¹⁷ Cowan James. *Aborigine Dreaming*. 69.

I don't know if they can hold on to this story.

But now you know this story, and you'll be coming to earth.

You'll be part of the earth when you die.

You responsible now.

You got to go with this earth.

Might be you can hang on ...

Hang onto this story ... to this earth'.⁶¹⁸

A 1998 survey conducted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council found that across all genres, Indigenous writers were using twenty-seven traditional languages, in addition to Aboriginal Englishes, Kriol and Standard English.⁶¹⁹ A number of Northern Territory poets in Kevin Gilbert's anthology, *Inside Black Australia*, offered poems in their traditional languages, followed by English translations.⁶²⁰ In her book, *It Just Lies There From the Beginning* (1995), Marjorie Bil Bil, a Marri Ammu woman from Belyuen near Darwin, recorded many of her poems and stories in her traditional languages (she speaks five) and then translated them into English for publication.⁶²¹ Eva Johnson, also from the Northern Territory but taken from her mother when she was three, uses a range of different kinds of English, including Aboriginal English, in 'A Letter to My Mother':⁶²²

I not see you long time now, I not see you long time now

White fulla bin take me from you, I don't know why

⁶¹⁸ Cowan James. *Aborigine Dreaming*. 70.

⁶¹⁹ Webby Elizabeth (Ed). (2000). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. Cambridge University Press. 33.

⁶²⁰ Webby Elizabeth (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. 33.

⁶²¹ Webby Elizabeth (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. 33. See also Bil Bil Marjorie. (1995). *It Just Lies There From the Beginning: Aboriginal Poems and Stories from the Top End*. Alice Springs: IAD Press.

⁶²² Webby Elizabeth (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. 33.

Give me to Missionary to be God's child (italics added).⁶²³

Lionel Fogarty, a Murri poet, is perhaps one of the most radical Indigenous poets writing today, refers to the English language as 'a medium / that is not (his)'.⁶²⁴ Oodgeroo Noonuccal's (i.e., Kath Walker's) response to this predicament was to appropriate the imposed language; Fogarty's strategy is to abrogate it.⁶²⁵ Mudrooroo writes:

We need his voice, we need his words;

We need to read, break-dance into our cultures,

Treasures in the warg of the earth;

In the love-womb of our earth.

Aye, you listen in awe to Lionel's magic

Words, poems, songs, singing of our deeds,

His deeds, our seedlings, growing from the earth

mother.

Moorditj yida, kuta; moorditj yida, kuta (italics added).⁶²⁶

Fogarty 'wants them to feel the spirit that is in (him) and in the people of (his) community'.⁶²⁷ He says, 'all poetry he writes is in order to get the message'.⁶²⁸ He even uses 'English against English', and often deconstructs the way English syntax is used, i.e., 'ungrammatical, because it doesn't have any meaning in their spirit'.⁶²⁹ Moreover, breaking

⁶²³ Webby Elizabeth (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. 33. See also Johnson Eva. (1988). 'A Letter to My Mother'. Kevin Gilbert (Ed.). *Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry*. Penguin. 24-5.

⁶²⁴ Webby Elizabeth (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. 33. See Fogarty Lionel. (1995). 'Tired of Writing'. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. Hyland House. Melbourne. 109.

⁶²⁵ Webby Elizabeth (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. 33.

⁶²⁶ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. viii.

⁶²⁷ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. ix.

⁶²⁸ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. ix.

⁶²⁹ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. ix.

the conventions of English syntax is his way of emphasising the significance of cultural symbols that ‘belong to (his) people’, thus placing ‘Aboriginal designs of art inside the lettering to bring a broader understanding of the meanings of the text’.⁶³⁰ Fogarty ‘believes in the pride and heritage of an indigenous, ancestral past and future where the technicalities of written words can be broken down’.⁶³¹ Words are ‘beyond any acceptable meaning’; which is Fogarty’s way to ‘express (his) dreaming’.⁶³² Language then, as Bakhtin says, is a ‘socio-ideological semantic “state of affairs”’ such that ‘there are no “neutral” words and forms’; every verbal act ‘can infect’ language with its own ‘intentions and accents’ creating the ground for human subjectivity.⁶³³ Language, therefore, populated with the intentions (of the writer and reader) is the site for opposing ideals and shared understanding.

Mudrooroo calls Fogarty ‘a guerrilla poet’, a word-warrior whose strategies shift for each occasion. For instance, writing about deaths in custody in ‘Consideration of Black Deaths (story)’, Fogarty writes, ‘you didn’t know my tribe / my people’s land needs / you didn’t feel for us yet / you moved on me with a untrue law and rule / Yes my correctional man’.⁶³⁴ Fogarty thinks ‘The royal commission will come and go’, but questions ‘why is there still deaths of my people’.⁶³⁵ He admits, ‘yes we do kill one another / yes we do undo our race’, but thinks ‘(white people) have left (his) people in a unchangeable way’.⁶³⁶ Fogarty writes, ‘I am like the wind too, we change’.⁶³⁷ Fogarty ‘bleed[s] the Murra Murra Gulandanilli heart’; he is a ‘Murra Murra dancer’, who sees that ‘the light [we] see is where [we’re] from’.⁶³⁸ His ‘world is [his] nation / The earth is [his] mother’.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁰ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. ix.

⁶³¹ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. ix.

⁶³² Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. ix.

⁶³³ Bakhtin Mikhail M., Holquist Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. 291, 293.

⁶³⁴ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. 18.

⁶³⁵ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. 19.

⁶³⁶ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. 20.

⁶³⁷ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. 20.

⁶³⁸ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. 5-6.

⁶³⁹ Fogarty Lionel. *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*. 7.

As the Uluru Statement From the Heart had its sixth anniversary in 2023, it is notable to highlight an astonishing book published in 2019, *The Yield*, by Wiradjuri writer (based in France), Tara June Winch. *The Yield* is Winch's second novel and won the Miles Franklin Literary Award 2020; the Prime Minister's Literary Award 2020; the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, the People's Choice Award and the Book of the Year Award at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards 2020; and the Voss Literary Prize 2020, among other accolades. Winch has written a storytelling dictionary, melding an imported language (English) and Indigenous (Wiradjuri) language. In Australia (*Ngurambang*), which at the time of colonisation in the late eighteenth century was 'home to 700-800 language varieties, distributed across the continent...which can be grouped into more than 250 distinct languages, some of which include a number of dialects'; where Indigenous societies 'were frequently highly multilingual, with an individual often speaking up to 4-6 languages of the surrounding area', linguistic diversity historically was, in fact, valued. Colonisation has led to a 'devastating toll on traditional Indigenous languages of Australia... of which only 15-18 are now being learned by children as their first language'.⁶⁴⁰

Winch's *The Yield*, reminds us that 'the past is not dead'; awakening the legacy of writers like Rizal, and re-iterates the notion that 'No-one ever dies'. In *The Yield*, the late Albert Gondiwindi's dictionary along with the Reverend Ferdinand Greenleaf's (a Lutheran Missionary) list, recognises Wiradjuri language as 'a resurrected language, brought back from extinction'. Furthermore, *The Yield* reminds us how language is connected to the land, hearkening First Nation's Voice(s), and therefore prompts us to ask: *dhaganhu ngurambang* (where is your country?)—which as Winch writes, means 'something deeper' than place, but rather extends to blood—'Who is your family? Who are you related to? Are we related?'⁶⁴¹

⁶⁴⁰ Koch Harold, Nordlinger Rachel. (Eds.). (2014). *The Languages and Linguistics of Australia: A Comprehensive Guide*. De Gruyter, Inc. 3-4.

⁶⁴¹ Winch Tara June. (2019). *The Yield*. Penguin. 33-34, 35, 70, 307.

Again, moving towards migrant (diasporic) writers, prime examples who transgress monolingualism are Ouyang Yu and Merlinda Bobis. Yu rejects assimilation, to break taboos, whereas Bobis destabilises the primacy of English in her poems.

As I had written previously, ‘Yu rehearses a doubleness and exile in part related to Australia but also to his motherland, China (where he frequently returns)’.⁶⁴² Furthermore, as Kim Cheng Boey writes, ‘The comparative bifocal vision that sees one place in terms of another is a reflex among migrants’.⁶⁴³ And, Yu moves between ‘liminal spaces’—between China (his place of origin) and Australia (the adopted home)—to display ‘alienation of displacement’ experienced as a migrant writer, while defining himself in a ‘dominantly Anglo-Celtic literary environment’.⁶⁴⁴ Yu resists pressure to assimilate, which creates binaries of old homeland and adopted home, past and present, self and other, and thus contrasts with the Asian-American poetics where assimilation had led to migrant diaspora’s becoming an acceptable part of multicultural curriculum – ‘a conduit for neglected stories that some had asserted it is the job of minority literature to tell’.⁶⁴⁵ There is a conflicted sense of belonging, but Yu ‘insists on difference, on being contrapuntal, suspicious of any essentialist and monolithic view of culture, be it Chinese or Australian’.⁶⁴⁶

The Double Man

‘my name is

a crystallisation of two cultures

my surname is china

⁶⁴² Legaspi Harold. ‘Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia’. 7.

⁶⁴³ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.). (2013). *Contemporary Asian-Australian Poets*. Glebe: Puncher & Wattmann. 20.

⁶⁴⁴ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.) (2013) as cited in Legaspi Harold. ‘Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia’. 7.

⁶⁴⁵ Yu Timothy. (2009, January 12). ‘Inventing a Culture: Asian-American Poetry in the 1970s’. Stanford University Press. <http://arcade.stanford.edu/content/inventing-culture-asian-american-poetry-1970s>. See also Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.) (2013) as cited in Legaspi Harold. ‘Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia’. 7.

⁶⁴⁶ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.) (2013) as cited in Legaspi Harold. ‘Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia’. 7.

my given name australia
 if I translate that direct into English
 my surname becomes Australia
 my given name china
 i do not know what motherland means
 i possess two countries
 or else
 i possess neither'.⁶⁴⁷

Kim Boey writes: 'a key word in understanding his work is "translation"; shuttling between two countries, he is constantly translating across linguistic and cultural borders, and becomes in the process a translated person, a hybridised diasporic subjectivity neither wholly Chinese nor Australian'.⁶⁴⁸ Therefore, Yu's resistance and self-affirmation aligns with Glissant's engagement with pluralism by asserting his doubleness. Yu's literature engages in an act of resistance against colonial mentalities, orienting himself through translations as well as exclusive writings in either Chinese or English. This political resistance invokes Ngũgĩ's contribution of refusal, by practising pluralism through (almost) exclusively Chinese writings, as can be seen in his other works: for instance, his book, *Flag of Permanent Defeat*.⁶⁴⁹ Yet, Yu's polyglot consciousness goes beyond monolingual Chinese, by also writing in English, thereby creating tension between individuals, groups and perspectives, and also of languages, which are socially and ideologically charged, amidst heteroglossia.

Yu's position should be contrasted with Merlinda Bobis's, particularly in her poem, 'This is where it begins', which 'enacts the process of translation, threading her ancestral

⁶⁴⁷ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.). *Contemporary Asian-Australian Poets*. 186.

⁶⁴⁸ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.). *Contemporary Asian-Australian Poets*. 21.

⁶⁴⁹ See Yu Ouyang. (2019). *Flag of Permanent Defeat*. Waratah: Puncher & Wattmann.

languages (Tagalog, Spanish and indigenous Bikol) rhythmically'.⁶⁵⁰ As I had written, 'Her poem maps the roots and routes of migration, then aligns her family history with the continuing story in English':⁶⁵¹

This is where it begins

'Once upon a time in Bikol, Pilipino, English—we tell it over and over again.

Digde ini nagpopoon. Anum na taon ako, siguro lima.

Si Lola nag-iistorya manongod sa parahabon nin kasag

Na nagtatago sa irarom kan kama.

Dito ito nagsisimula. Anim na taon ako, siguro lima.

Si Lola nagkukuwento tungkol sa magnanakaw ng alimango

Na nagtatago sa ilalim ng kama.

This is where it begins. I am six years old, perhaps five.

Grandmother is storytelling about the crab-stealer

hiding under the bed. Each story-word crackles

under the ghost's teeth, infernal under my skin. I shiver'.⁶⁵²

Bobis's home is an imaginary landscape which does not suffer disconnection from the past, but carries with it memories of a homeland alive in dramatic lyrical debates of colonialism.⁶⁵³ For better or worse, home is not merely an empirical space, as she negotiates

⁶⁵⁰ Legaspi Harold. 'Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia'. 8.

⁶⁵¹ Legaspi Harold. 'Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia'. 8.

⁶⁵² Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.). *Contemporary Asian-Australian Poets*. 57.

⁶⁵³ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.) (2013) as cited in Legaspi Harold. 'Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia'. 8.

through languages the impulse of migration, in terms of a movement from rural to urban spaces, and between East and West.⁶⁵⁴

As Christine Yunn-Yu Sun says, ‘What is clear from diversity of positions is not merely a representation of linguistic, historical and cultural tropes, but a beautifully energised exploration of Australia’s identity or soul. Examining ways “Australia” is imagined, as connected yet separated spaces by coloniser, colonised, indigenous or diasporic writers, it will be important to see how and where these writers position themselves as “beautiful, complex and whole”’.⁶⁵⁵

Rizal’s life and legacy imparts truthless truths for all—colonisers and colonised—derived within his heart, mind, spirit and soul, allowing us to re-think and contemplate upon ways to inhibit each other; to co-exist. While his work was never finished, his trials, suffering and lessons will carry wisdom that he himself had learnt from his creator(s), education, experiences, family, friends, acquaintances and the worlds-in-between. This thesis and collections of poetry (re-)remembers, (re-)iterates and (re-)imagines history, scholarship and empiricism, as well, theories from (decolonial) thinkers including Rizal, to articulate (new) ways to contemplate language through plurilingual literatures. I have faith that this thesis and poetry collections will raise questions and enlighten through empathy about the ways a previously absent heritage in Australia and the rest of the world becomes present.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ Aitken Adam, Boey Kim C, Cahill Michelle (Eds.) (2013) as cited in Legaspi Harold. ‘Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia’. 8.

⁶⁵⁵ Sun Christine Y Y. (2018, April 27). ‘All In That Space: On Asian-Australian Writers’. *Sydney Review of Books*. <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/a-chinese-affair-australia-day-the-permanent-resident/>. See also Legaspi Harold. ‘Trajectory and Uniqueness of Asian Poetry in America and Australia’. 9-10.

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Poetry Collections*Litany**Requiem**The Edge of Seas vs Lost Generation*

Litany

Harold Legaspi

Para sa bayan / For my country

I die without seeing the dawn brighten over my native land.

You who have it to see, welcome it—
and forget not those who have fallen during the night!

~ **José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, 416.**

Ang hindi magmahal sa sariling wika, daig pa
Ang hayop at malansang isda.

A man who loves not his tongue is worse
Than nauseous fish or beasts.

~ **José Rizal, ‘Our Mother Tongue’, *Rizal’s Complete Poetical Works: Versified English Translation from the Original Spanish and Tagalog Poems with Rizal’s Pictorial Album*. 2.**

He who proves a great deal, proves nothing.

~ **José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, 240.**

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| I: Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippines | |
| Kabayo | 13 |
| Sinturon | 14 |
| Ave Maria in Tongues | 15 |
| Pray | 17 |
| Historia de las Islas de Mindanao | 18 |
| ‘Noble & Brave’ Nation of the Dapitans | 19 |
| Apoy | 20 |
| Half-awake | 21 |
| Gutom Pa | 23 |
| Myth of the Lazy Native | 25 |
| Death as Consolation | 27 |
| Bayan ng Taal | 29 |
| Utterance | 30 |
| II: Rizal’s Revolution | |
| Vigilance | 31 |
| Rizal’s Statue | 33 |
| Carabao | 35 |
| Dinner Party | 36 |
| School | 38 |
| False Flag | 40 |
| Exile | 41 |
| Jail | 42 |
| Trial | 44 |
| In a Name | 46 |
| The Lost Jeweller | 47 |
| The Executioner’s Bullet | 49 |
| Insurrection | 51 |
| III: People Power | |
| Tutubi | 52 |
| DEDE | 53 |
| Love Is a Rebellious Bird | 54 |
| Nights | 55 |
| Black Protest | 56 |
| Tayong Dalawa | 58 |
| Yellow Revolution | 61 |
| Every Day | 63 |
| Refuse | 64 |
| Ibenta | 65 |
| Truth is Red | 66 |
| Sampaguita | 67 |
| Ruins | 68 |
| Notes | 69 |

Introduction

Litany reveals our truthless truths, and imaginatively traces Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippine history, poeticising Rizal's life, exile, trial and execution, the Philippine Revolutions and beyond. *Litany* has three parts: (I) Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippines; (II) Rizal's Revolution; and (III) People Power; each part comprising thirteen poems.

I: Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippines

Scholars and the linguist Robert Blust theorised that Austronesians arrived through the 'Out-of-Taiwan model', where *Homo sapiens* from mainland Asia crossed Taiwan, and later the Philippines, until furthering to other islands south of the Philippines. The Austronesians (of which Tagalog is a Central Philippine language within the Austronesian language family; and Latin [Tagalog/Filipino alphabet] and Baybayin are the writing systems) are believed to have (1) cultivated rice and millet; (2) lived in substantial timber houses raised on piles; (3) had domesticated pigs, dogs, and perhaps water buffalos and chickens; (4) practiced true weaving on a simple back loom; (5) used the bow and arrow; and (6) were familiar with some metals, including at least tin. By the time this community reached the northern Philippines around 5,500 Before Present (or 3,550 Before Christ), linguistic evidence shows clearly that they possessed in addition the outrigger canoe, pottery, and a number of important root and tree crops including the yam, taro, banana, sago, breadfruit, coconut and sugarcane, the last of which they had brought with them from Taiwan. This depicts a brief history of human migration to the Philippines, till the Spaniards arrived.

In 1521, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan, sailing for Spain arrived in the Philippines, and claimed the islands after King Phillip II. The expedition was purposed to find a western route to the Moluccas (Spice Islands, now Indonesia) and trade for spices. It is known

that Magellan set about converting the locals to Christianity, but died in a skirmish on the island of Mactan. After him, more Spanish expeditions followed, which began Spain's colonisation of the Philippines for the next three centuries, till the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898.

Some of the societies scattered in the Philippine Islands remained isolated but many evolved into states that developed substantial trade and contacts with the peoples of Eastern and Southern Asia, including those from India, China, Japan and other Austronesian islands (The Malay archipelago).

The first century saw the rise of the harbour principalities and their growth into maritime states composed of autonomous *barangays* independent of, or allied with larger nations which were either Malay thalassocracies, led by Datus or Indianised kingdoms governed by Rajahs. The new colony was subjected to external and internal wars. The war effort proved too exhausting for the new colony. The natives were conscripted to work in the forests felling timber and in the shipyards building ships. Hard labour and injustice combined to decimate the population either by making the natives flee to the mountains or bringing about their death.

II: Rizal's Revolution

José Protasio Rizal was born in Calamba, situated fifty kilometres south of Manila, in Luzon on 19 June 1861 and lived till 30 December 1896; executed by firing squad for rebellion and illegal association (i.e., sedition and conspiracy) by the Spanish colonial government, before the Philippine Revolution. Rizal, a shortened form of the Spanish word meaning 'second crop', was the youngest son of Francisco Rizal Mercado and Teodora Realonda. His parents were leaseholders of a *hacienda* and an accompanying rice farm by the Dominicans. Rizal was a

martyr, a national hero in part because of his writing, and advocacy of political independence of the Philippines under Spanish rule.

Rizal's epigraph in *Noli Me Tangere* said he aimed to lift a little the veil which covered his country's ills, sacrificing all to truth, even pride itself.

In 1872, the Filipino priests Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora (known to later generations as the martyrs Gom-Bur-Za) were executed, for alleged involvement in the Cavite Mutiny. Five years later, Rizal graduated at the Ateneo Municipal de Manila, a Jesuit school—the third-oldest university in the Philippines, with the highest honours. To limit any fallout from his elder brother Paciano's association with Burgos, José Protasio Rizal was enrolled as José Rizal, without the second family name.

On 3 May 1882, Rizal sailed for Spain, with neither his parents' knowledge nor permission, to continue his studies in medicine, and to meet a higher purpose. In a letter to his parent's, he wrote: 'I too have a mission to fill, as for example: alleviating the sufferings of my fellow-men'. All in all, Rizal took three sojourns to Europe, first from 1882 to 1887, with his second, which ran from 1888 to 1891, and his third in 1896, but literally only for one day. Rizal's formative experiences in Europe were shadowed by a sense of destiny. One of his pseudonyms was *Laong Laan*, a name often translated as 'Ever Prepared'; better rendered as 'Preordained'. One gets the sense that he had to will himself into becoming Rizal.

In Berlin, Germany 1887, Rizal published his first novel, *Noli Me Tangere* ('*The Noli*'), which was smuggled back to the Philippines, for which he was condemned by the friars. Rizal arrived in Manila on 5 August, 1887, beginning a medical practice, with a reputation as 'the German doctor'. However, under pressure from Spanish colonial authorities and the religious orders, Rizal left the Philippines for Hong Kong in 3 February, 1888. By 2 June, 1888, he was in London where he spent much of the year copying by hand Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* and then annotating this seventeenth century chronicle of the Philippine Islands to prove that the Filipinos possessed a high level of civilisation even before the Spaniards arrived.

In Ghent, Belgium 1891, he published his second novel *El Filibusterismo* ('*The Fili*'), afterwhich he departed for Hong Kong again, where he practiced medicine while living with his family in self-imposed exile from November 1891 to June 1892. Though Rizal was happy in Hong Kong, politics drew him back to the Philippines. Rizal realised that 'the battlefield' was in the Philippines.

'Yaong limang buan itinira ko roon ay isang halimbawang buhay, isang librong magaling na di lalo sa *Noli Me Tangere*. Ang parang na paglalabanan ay ang Filipinas: doon tayo dapat magtatagpo.

Those five months I lived there are a living example, a book much better than *Noli Me Tangere*. The field of battle is the Philippines: that's where we should meet'.

While in Hong Kong, Rizal wrote propaganda for English newspapers for distribution in the Philippines, including translations of his articles and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. He struggled to write his third novel (*Makamisa*) in Tagalog, (unlike *The Noli* and *The Fili*, which were written in Spanish), and thought of creating a colony for the refugees of Calamba province in British Borneo—an idea that received endorsement from the British authorities. Most importantly, Rizal began to draft the statutes of a movement he would call La Liga Filipina—a peaceful mutual aid organisation that sought to unite the archipelago in the cause of reform. There is evidence that Rizal saw the Liga as a vehicle for an independence movement, with one member testifying that the organization had been set up to raise money for an armed insurrection.

While these ideas tended towards separatism, Rizal 'was convinced that the moment for the separation had not yet come'. La Liga Filipina was the means of financing the project in Borneo. But his plans were stopped by Eulogio Despujol, the then Governor General, who

reconciled himself with the friars, by issuing a decree on 7 July, 1892, banishing Rizal to Dapitan. The decree had also prohibited the introduction and circulation of all the works of Rizal in the Philippines.

In the far-flung Dapitan in the southern island Mindanao, Rizal spent the next four years in exile. There, he stayed away from political agitation, working instead on local projects such as building a school and even a water system. It was in Dapitan where he met and fell in love with Josephine Bracken, a resident of Hong Kong who had accompanied her adoptive father to see Rizal for treatment.

In August 1896, the Spanish authorities discovered the existence of the Katipunan—a Philippine revolutionary society founded by anti-Spanish colonialist Filipinos in Manila. Its founder, Andrés Bonifacio had called for a national uprising, and at nine in the evening on August 29, the Katipuneros launched a failed attack on a Spanish fort in the outskirts of Manila. It was the beginning of the Philippine revolution. At this time, Rizal was in a cruiser in the province of Cavite, awaiting departure to serve as a military doctor in Cuba. A day after departing from Port Said on September 28, the captain informed Rizal that he would be arrested in Barcelona upon orders of the Governor General. He was imprisoned briefly in Montjuich and then sent back to Manila. Rizal's underwent trial in Manila—his connections and relationship with the revolution would allow the Spanish colonial government to convict him for the crimes of 'founding illegal associations and of promoting and inciting to the crime of rebellion', leading to his execution by firing squad on 30 December 1896. The time of death: 7 o'clock in the morning.

III: People Power

Peter Jaynul V. Uckung of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines had written about the problems after Rizal: that he was gone too soon. Renato Constantino adds to this issue in his essay, 'Veneration Without Understanding', by proposing that Rizal would have experienced myopia given the 'more sophisticated myths...and the subtle techniques of present-day colonialists'. Uckung notes, '[Rizal] never had the chance to see the social cancer he so aptly described in his two novels...mutate into something more virulent, oppressive, controlling way of life. By being dead, he could do nothing against the reincarnated social cancer, which continued to wreak havoc on the lives of the people, whose freedom he had tried to redeem with his blood'. Indeed, the problems, over 127 years after Rizal's death, are not yet over—they have just been transformed into 'something barely recognisable, and therefore, generally acceptable'. Hence, 'we must be critical of our history'; we 'must be like Rizal'.

The problems faced by the market; the collapse of banks, and the government guaranteeing their livelihood upon failure, is riddled with an unsustainable, or untenable ways of being. These problems are exacerbated with moral and ethical issues experienced with the advent of technology. The knowledge learnt from sustaining the system of our modern livelihoods are purposed with limited ways of knowing, and disregard wisdom from older, sustainable ways of *being*. Today, 'education mostly serves as the transmission of knowledge instrumental for an existing society: a society dominated by the will of business corporations and foreign powers who openly declare themselves democratic while ruling that workers' rights were literally against the law'. Uckung notes: 'A modern day Rizal would have no problems finding his Capitan Tiago pandering around business corporation owners and bowing to their wishes in exchange for monetary considerations, in every nook and cranny of the government service'. Rizal 'blamed the economic imperative of colonialism that brought about the social decay of the Philippines'. Moreover, the 'English language of the elite is named

correct usage', making other English vernaculars 'inferior outlaw language'. The nuances and sensibilities of the elite are pegged as a kind of 'status symbol', such that the 'old colonial rationale' showing the 'superiority of the coloniser... linguistically disenfranchised many Filipinos'.

Rizal's approach to social change was to 'exercise influence with established institutions rather than fighting institutions from the outside'. This did not work out. Uckung notes: during the American regime, 'people shifted in strategy, perhaps remembering the futility of the propaganda movement, and used legislation and court litigation to secure constitutional rights'. It was later on where direct action techniques, such as mass civil disobedience, created 'social dislocation' and brought 'attention and remedial action' from the government. Often, in present day as well as in Rizal's time, the government 'was the one abetting the problems, profiting from them, in the expense of the people'.

Change is required in people's hearts to effect, and affect an enlightened philosophy and sense of being. At times, this necessitates the dark, brooding filibustero like Simoun, 'whose final purpose in life was to infiltrate the colonial authorities and spread the fire of revolution among his people'. Rizal, and others like him, are therefore a menace to authorities whose purpose is to subjugate and profit from an impoverished people. 'They have to stop Rizal when he's already dead'. Yet, how does one stop a hero, and a memory like Rizal?

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I: Pre-Colonisation and Spanish-Philippines

Kabayo

Ride us, mother of grace.

Deal us out to strangers.

We cannot afford our home.

We do not have a name.

Sinturon

Life began at first strike/breath

A father torn, lessons of love

Hunger begets peace

Sinturon thwacks buttocks – a prism child of ex-embrace

Magulo ang bahay

Nagdidilig ng puesto sa kuwarto, sa bayan

Still chaos, an inner tumult of hearts

Spirit of *Sinturon*

A father with no space for

Movement

Sa mata ang lahat

Dumudugo ang puso

Wala na sa loob

Ang pagilid nangangamoy ng pawis

Amoy ng mga aso, amoy ng mga sariwang isda

Walang na ang tunog ng gitara

Wala kame ng libro

Ave Maria in Tongues

| | | | | | |
|------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| Abe | Guingoong | Maria | matoua | ca | na |
| Ave | Señora | Maria | alegra | tu | ya |
| Hail | Lady | Mary | be joyful | thou | now |
| <i>Bea</i> | <i>Gongoguin</i> | <i>Marai</i> | <i>atmoau</i> | <i>ac</i> | <i>an</i> |

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| Napopono | Ca | nang | gracia |
| Llena | Tu | de | gracia |
| Full | Thou | of | grace |
| <i>Ponoponan</i> | <i>Ac</i> | <i>gnan</i> | <i>aicagr</i> |

| | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ang | Pañinoong | Dios Na | saiyo |
| El | Señor | Dios Està | contigo |
| The | Lord | God Is | with thee |

| | | | |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Ang</i> | <i>Gañpinongo</i> | <i>Sido An</i> | <i>Ai o sy</i> |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Bucor | Cang | pinagpala sa | babaying | lahat |
| Singular | Tu | Bendita entre | mugeres | todas |
| especially, | Thou | Blessed among | women | all |
| <i>Cobur</i> | <i>Cang</i> | <i>pinagpala sa</i> | <i>gibabayn</i> | <i>lahat</i> |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Pinagpala | naman | Ang | yyong | Anac | si Jesus |
| Bendito | tambien | El | Tu | Hijo | Jesus |
| blessed | Also | He | Thy | Son | Jesus |
| <i>Pinagpala</i> | <i>manan</i> | <i>ang</i> | <i>yongy</i> | <i>Anac</i> | <i>Si Sujes</i> |

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Santa | Mariang | Yna | nang | Dios |
| Santa | Maria | Madre | de | Dios |
| Holy | Mary, | Mother | of | God, |
| <i>Antas</i> | <i>Aimagrn</i> | <i>Any</i> | <i>nang</i> | <i>Si do</i> |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Ypanalangin | mo | coming | macasalanan | n̄gayon |
| Seamos intercedidos | de ti | nosotros | pecadores | agora |
| May we be interceded for | by thee | We | sinner | now |
| <i>Ananginplya</i> | <i>om</i> | <i>macing</i> | <i>salananamac</i> | <i>n̄gayon</i> |

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| At cum | mamatay | camí, | Amen Jesus. |
| Y cuando | muramos | nosotros. | [Amen Jesus]. |
| And when | shall die | we. | Amen Jesus. |
| <i>Ta cum</i> | <i>tamamaya</i> | <i>aimc</i> | <i>Suja Esmen</i> |

Pray

Walking past villagers incanting psalms around bodies

I smell the scent of the ocean mists, see dappled light as the sun sets

I peek into baskets carrying slits of mango cheeks,

just a streak of yellow, and its bones devoured delicately

against the humidity and naked children underneath

straw-huts. A slow fire burns decaying logwood

used for building ships, casting smoke and light

along the mouth of the harbour. I fear the nightfall

that darkens the foothills and the first sight of

nocturnal flying lemurs. I'll sell

the last of the pile of cloth to my neighbour,

and chat to her while drinking buko chopped

from a coconut tree on the crystal beach. I'll cook tinapa for one

and eat with my hands. I'll dip it in vinegar to sour the palate,

mix with kamatis and sibuyas to juicen

the chew. Night has fallen, blanketing

the sky, the grass, mirroring shades of grey.

I pray.

A new day awaits,

new ornaments for the hut, enough rice to feed my nation.

Historia de las Islas de Mindanao

Four nations live in Mindanao

Caragas, Mindanaos, Lutaos and Subanos

Caraga is the smallest yet most fruitful of deeds

On land they are the first nation of the islands

With depredations still fresh in their memory

Mindanao includes the kingdoms of Buhayen

Once one nation

Swayed by the impious worship of Mahomet

Slaves subject to kings—petty rulers

Under one political government too great for courage

Lutaya is to Lutaos meaning: to swim and float over water

No other house than the ship

Casting nets to fish for livelihood

From Samboangan to the river of Mindanao

Kings peopling their slavery by private vengeance

Subano are settlers along the rivers

One house located a legua's distance from another

They know one another

They look out for the *Other*

A will to seek a high tree, to sleep securely

‘Noble & Brave’ Nation of the Dapitans

A galleon passes at high tide

shadowing a flying lizard stretching its broad, cape-like wings,

gliding towards soil, where it digs *a braza deep*, to lay four eggs

then return to one

of the three trees

it claims as its property.

A tree frog croaks.

Its webbed feet so large that it grips leaves and trees

as it climbs to face the sun

and submits itself as a slave like

the Boholians to the Dapitans

to bring peace to war.

The handsome fungus beetle mates with a flying beetle

among coconuts, coffee and cacao.

Terrenate, the most warlike and powerful king known

lost due respect for the house of the Dapitan princes—

Dailisan and Pagbuaya—

by making advances to a concubine.

susong papaitan *sea shells*

buhangin *sand*

tubig *water*

Apoy

sinulat sa apoy ng

dalawang beses para

makuha ng

dalawang beses

nakita nila

dalawang beses

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Half-awake

I cannot sleep, lying on the kama, past the bedtime hour

a thorn kept underneath my pillow

where my crown ought to be

the moths drawn to my lamp, burning gas, lights the corner

near my bedpan.

The ink spilt by my quill

bears news of a family feud,

avalanches of silence from Mother

over the disappearance of her husband.

News he has left her to be with a bruha.

They come at us

like so many insects picketing, banging, wailing

against the too literal door

as the tails of their dogs

wag discriminately.

Snitching gossip in the garden,

clutching at leaves and twigs,

spoken of after mass.

Foes and friends cue the poison of words,

butchering truth, a torrent of stories, loose in their gaps.

A blur, a pricking song, ripens to stuff their mouths with hearsay.

Aren't they sore from muddied waters?

Our skin is brown, ambiguous and we are blind,

locks in the chaos
of a grand bed of nails.

Gutom Pa

Lumamon ng adobo—pork and chicken slowly cooked in vinegar, oil, crushed garlic, bay leaf, black peppercorns and soy sauce.

Kumain ng crispy pata—portions of pork legs, knuckles, served with chilli and calamansi, dipped in vinegar and soy sauce.

Gusto ng lasa ng sariwang lumpia—freshly rolled with meat filling.

Inubos ng mechado—larded beef cooked, sliced, served with tomato.

Don't these dishes wait? *Where's Lola?* She eyes the morcon, a beef roulade—thin sheets of cooked eggs and marinated beef layered one on top of the other, tied around carrots, celery, cheese, pork fat and sausage, then cooked in seasoned tomato sauce. *Where's Lola? Where is she?*

Tinikman ng paksiw na isda—simmered in vinegar broth, seasoned with patis and vegetables. Also, pinakbet—with okra, eggplant and bitter gourd.

Lamunin ng sisig—sizzled chopped bits of pig's head and liver, milkfish, seasoned with calamansi and chilli peppers, topped with an egg.

Gutom pa. *Lola* dishes pan-de-sal. *Tita*, buko roll.

Mga lalake kumain pa ng banana cue. Mga babae, biko and puto.

We want to thank Christ for the blessings of this fiesta.

We want to thank Christ for the offerings that we chew.

We shall eat with our hands and hearts.

We shall eat till the last melt has dried in our stomachs.

Kumain na.

Gutom pa.

Myth of the Lazy Native

Laziness makes them appear
Less ingenious, that if in walking
They find a thorn run into their foot,
They will not stoop to put it out of the way,
That another may not tread on it.

The scent of the Spanish dollar attracts
With such vehemence
That if it were possible, they would
Descend into hell in order to produce
New articles for sale, for possession of
The coveted silver and longed-for-reales-of-eight.

Filipinos are idle, easy-going
And unambitious
No other city than in Manila are morals
More corrupt
Filipinos are to blame for creating a climate
Of loose morals—men and women bathing together,
Flirting on the street.

No. Do not revolt!
Rid your passion for cock-fighting

Be cautious imitating to a wearisome degree

Liberate

Offer freedom of trade, improve infrastructure

Do not relapse into slumber

Lest the eccentric raft regain

The current of the river Pasig.

Death as Consolation

Effect, not the *cause*

Of disorder and backwardness

Severe work is not a good thing

In the burning heat of the tropics.

Never walking, but riding

Many servants

To remove their shoes

And to fan them!

Encomenderos sold Filipinos into slavery

Filipinos were hanged

Filipinos fled to the mountains

Leaving wives and children behind.

Women crushed to death by heavy burdens,

Who slept in fields and gave birth,

Who nursed children there and died bitten

By poisonous insects.

Dispirited Pinas! Kneel to calamities

Unknowing if your seed will sprout

As if your farms be your graves

Your crops to feed your executioner.

Stop work in the mines

Abandon industry

We will point you to heaven as a sole hope

Prepare you for death as consolation.

Bayan ng Taal

We trek to Taal
Wearing barongs made from piña
Despite your anxiety, how the nerves
Spark tremours
Like magma hardening,
Myrrh mixed with wine.
I tell myself it doesn't matter if it's just
You and I. Such lovely lies.
A volcano erupts
So we sought refuge in Caysasay.
A campfire brings warmth,
Melts brittle-hearts.
You paint your palms with muslo, roast tawilis by Taal Lake.
& under the blanket sky, shooting stars flare
& with it a secret wish.
I teach you how
It takes time for the sun's light
To reach Earth & how the twinkling stars
You see could be dead red giants, breathless
Nebulae. & you toss & turn under the sky, peer
At me with jewelled lips & tell me you'll never
See the stars the same way again.

Utterance

When you spoke

I remembered

just what love meant

I lowered my gaze

to your flaws

realising I possessed them.

You bear the mark

of a redemptive man

whose mistakes were my own.

Elicits a quietening of sorts.

Rebellion without chore

to flock to

safety in numbers.

II: Rizal's Revolution

Vigilance

Not animal, nor God
his gender, transcendent.
A name that evokes land, sea and air.
They call him José.
Limbs solid like the trunk of a tree,
an empty stomach; a sensual rhythm;
protruding veins, in brown and purple;
white teeth, black locks, and worn threads.
Some see a kinship upon gazing at his face—
an image of Nanolay, benevolent and kind.
Others see their own reflection,
a soothing familiarity, and breathtakingly beautiful.
His heart is easy to peel.
And his hands heave the dying breed.
He is sweat, he is *tomorrow*.
Behind him, the royal hue of the sun's sorrow.
His skin is brown, and glistens on the horizon.
His pride his own enemy,
which scrapes the barrel of a gun.
A fishbone is lodged in his throat.
He dares to dream to catch his affliction.

He lives in his hut
where he remains cautious.

He is the *Indio* King.

He is the *Ilustrado*:
a child of our vigilance.

Rizal's Statue

A single pursuit vapourised his spirit.
 It spoke to him in riddles, closed his doors.
 Many had feasted on his flesh, rubbed their chests with his oil.
 His mouth remains fearful—sewn, in protest from God.
 It pulls him to corners, where shadows stray with fires.
 Each day he wakes, he gives himself away.
 He is weary like an old dog fetching a bone, disenchanted by flowers.
 He yields to wild orders, a careless salute.
 He's told to forget his own story.
 A buttery crown; the heavy hand which rations pesos.
 Crouching walls reveal trespassed borders.
 They will reveal the neglect of the Spaniards
 They will despise the equality he deserves
 They will control the seasons, in perfect symmetry.

**

The highest seat of glory peels with rust.
 A measure of indolence and strict Catholic traditions.
 He is forced to sit beside extremes.
 A fistful of charred wood, the most dishonourable Head.
 His protest in vein, lulled by favours.
 He kneels uncertain, silent as whips, soaking up the song.
 Heaves tarnished gifts, all unnatural trimmings.
 The blossoming: fed *bigas*, *itlog*, *asin*, *tubig*.

Whirs in the weight of betrayal—the Inquisition, the wars.

Bones do not sleep—they are well played.

Answering to mouthfuls, an incandescent disgrace.

As a pig, he leaves everyone behind

As a locust, he forgets everything

As a lion, he shies behind animals, hides among grass.

**

He looks almost like a man now, offering skulls in his Kingdom.

His body tells the truth, it drags mud, terrorises upon a bitter seed.

Fires mock his line of inquiry.

The signal is clear: eternal slavery, a violent fate.

But will he see the people's hearts flutter?

A mountain asleep in peace, preserved by the earth.

Oh, to undo all that is, all he has become.

The blameless caress, secrets in song.

For he, his legless spirit, has lost the battle.

Succulent breasts dried up like his eyes.

He has fused with the homecoming glass.

It's what he lives for

And would die for

A war to his inner child.

Carabao

The distinguishing feature between men and animals
is the cult status that surrounds those who are
no longer with us. A carabao wants nothing but works, ploughing
through any terrain: dirt, mud, blades of grass, gravel

fixed in a frame with a man on its back. To be reincarnated
as a carabao is to face the worst fate. Men take its reins,
impose new rules, turn the fields upside-down. Once more
they slip from its back while the vegetation grows liberally.

Thickets and bush tangle to get in its way. The murky soil
laughs in disgust, as the carabao lowers itself from one plot
to the next. It dies severed from rest, dazed & forgotten,
and men eat its carcass, shaking it violently before their mouths.

Dinner Party

I powder my face in front of a mirror,
smell the perfume on my neck, the scent of sampaguitas.
Chopin in the background, played by a Gramophone, a tailspin of symphony.
Eases the mood, as I reflect upon what to say to Ibarra when we meet. It has been too long.
Last week, news surged like a jolt of electricity, among the parasites,
spongers, and freeloaders that God, in his infinite goodness,
has so lovingly multiplied in Manila.

Andeng and Victoria are with Iday, preparing
preparing. My father practices his speech, to be said among
the guests. Butterflies heave in my stomach, my skin turns paler than usual.
I ponder upon Ibarra's face. I remember the scent of his skin, his muscular frame, his gentle
lips. If it were upto me, I'd avoid the brouhaha. All I want is to be near him.
Spare me from the idle chatter, the collar-buttons and cravats.
All I want is to hear his voice, be soothed by it.

Look at Ibarra speaking to the crowd. There's a
passion that underlies his reasoning. His heart beats calmly, his hand
is sure. He loves his father, Don Rafael, loves his memory. He hears silence. A fight
ensues between the priest and Ibarra, wreaking havoc among guests. The priest of a God of peace,
whose mouth is full of sanctity and religion, has a heart of misery. He slanders Don Rafael,
a good Christian, who never oppressed the handicapped or afflicted the
unfortunate. He opened doors. Ibarra avenges his memory, one
desecrated in a tomb, persecuted at his resting place.

Now, my future is irresolute. It had been cherished for
years with Ibarra, whose illusions, born in infancy, nurtured in childhood,
gave form to the fibre of my being. I think about it now, I think about it. I think about
erasing it from my mind, my heart, with just one word, like stopping my heartbeat and depriving
the other of light. What shall be my fate? I know that I love only once, and without love
I will never belong to anyone. The convent or death! The convent or death!
The convent or death! The convent or death!

School

The builders cling to bricks
Like machines of great perfection
They toil the dirt, mixing sand, water and cement
From sunrise till noon
Breaking for *yosi* and betel nut—
Little luxuries from blisters and callouses
Borne from planks of wood

The foreman back-chats each builder
Gets on their ear, their back, as if riding an ox
He points to the rubble and litter, causing order
Among the belching, burping and raucous chatter
The stench of sweat permeates, oozing from pores
Word in town is Ibarra's philanthropy
To birth a school for the nation

A school is the basis of society
It is a book which stitches
Our reason, illuminates fecund desires
Tells us who we are
Little-by-little, the children
Flock under the shade of the roof
Leaning towards light upon the pages of a book

Intelligence is a double-edged sword

It hears silence

Dreams a future not condemned

It is wistful like empty time

It quells the monsoon of the mind

The medicine of hearts

Like a face gazing at the sun

False Flag

History is stored in a vase where it can bloom

& pruned to spearhead motives.

We obsess over the past, skeletons in the closet

That have no voice, but reveal truth eventually.

I explain this to my master, a real ruler of Country hung up on

Skin colour. We existed before invasion, only we

Did not count our blessings the same way they did.

This skin bleeds red, entwined in family

History. It has lived in tropical sunders

Thousands and thousands of years.

Stories plague our memory, of violent

Assault—fails to assuage our song lines

& makes anxious reflections of our eyes.

We watch from a couch our stories retold,

& there is vacancy. We become family, finally

Our identities which do not include me.

Exile

This murmur, we all share
It is a cloud, or rain or peaceful smoke.
We bow to the boats that harboured us
Safe passage, to conquered lands never forgotten.

Our cry is a cry of poetry,
Lest we forget to survive.
We are men of modest origins,
Children of a state that broke our freedoms.

There is mercy here. We are tamed
From tortures from a distance, tamed from
A full load of knowledge.
We escape like a bird leaving its nest.

It is easy to clean our past with our dreams,
Yet there is nomadism, skepticism and anarchy
Our root is opaque, and reasons a poetics of
Relation, aims to ground our exile—a relationship

With the Other.

Jail

Are we considered honourable
Now that we've been to jail?
I have wasted so many days behind
Prison bars, & Others

Will waste away too much—
Else, we reek of death and carnage,
The absence of affection
When we sleep at night.

There are too many hearts in prison,
Clipped wings, unheard songs,
Half-the days are asleep. There are
Brothers & there are brothers,

A penance each crack of dawn
Jilted lovers and confinement.
Our souls howl lost music
Misunderstandings of territory

Burnt bridges from hunger.
Our home is a cage & I tell myself
There is a word for it

A salvation that invokes a flame.

Trial

The opportunity to escape is ever present; I am
Unchained, and no Spaniard has laid a hand on me.
I refuse freedom that shackles to tarnish my name.
I must stand trial not to win but for peaceful resistance—

This manifesto lays my *raison d'être*—‘certain Filipinos’ shall weigh
Into their conscience a change neither abrupt nor chaotic.
We want liberty, we continue wanting redemption,
But engage in flaring emotions with disregard for consequences—

Patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts, but
The tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.
Katipuneros must rise as one, never premature.
Yet, the day of the trial I hear of unrest within its factions—

We strike a warrior pose: Oh, Hail, Fatherland!
Judge de la Peña’s thundering sentence might mark me
As a traitor. Verdicts aim to cripple my heirs. Sometimes,
I think only blood might cleanse the charred justice we all seek—

Sometimes, the ripeness of defeat
Refuses to hush itself from the gates of tranquility.
Freedom awaits not in death without clear conscience.

There is something inside it. Look in my heart.

In a Name

Threats rebound

A hungry man

Fasting for days, months

Till the emotional become physical

Charred tears

Sometimes awaiting trial

The last meal grows cold

Neighbouring cells itch

The Jesuits cleansed his palate

A sweet mango *affect*

Does not stop

Imagining bite-size decimation

The piquancy of bullets

Lying in Luneta Park

Defeated homes

Stuck in letters

Leaky doors

A house restrained

No pardon awaits

Keeping the space

Between God & the Executioners

The Lost Jeweller

The downtrodden: riddled with unrest & injustices.

Every day is poverty and misery, beautifying revolt for the masses.

In some past, you were Ibarra, who took away

Benedictions for spitting on graves.

Here in my mother's tomb, we front with our dreams

To destroy corruption by encouraging vices & greed.

We huddle to shield our chests from whispers

Of a dark summoning, a flagrant violation

Of natural laws that derides power

From Spain.

We convince our youth to accept subjugation of

Filipino's unique thought and feeling.

All I see are tasks beyond peace. How foolish.

How contemptuous are we to remain uncommitted?

You remind me of the injustice

My mother and my brother suffered.

They were yellow to the bone. Always on the edge

Of fire and theft. Their memory severed

From idiots that never paid. History is a flood—

A fatal necessity that sparks ill intuition.

Maybe the past will come to the fore, & it isn't

Always pleasant for the living. Pull out the deaths,

Butcher confessions, & the Kingdom will cleave

To offer you more money. Till we are unequal. Till full explosion!

The Executioner's Bullet

Dear Doña Teodora, sometimes I like to imagine
 we are back in our rice farm, while you read to me
 verses during Yuletide celebrations. You were my first teacher—
 Mi Primera Inspiracion, to help compatriots
 improve oneself. We learnt to draw, write poems, sculpt and paint in our bahay na bato—
 we worked with our hands, became self-reliant, and aided
 those with less—the townsfolk, who often
 denied themselves for the sake of others.

Did you not teach me obedience? Did you not teach me not to get too
 close to the flame?

How can I laugh and cheer when the Executioner's bullet will
 form into my soul, knowing his parents outlived it. Remember us, but not me
 as a fallen trunk of our tree. Someone will strike at the hearts
 of these men who refuse to meet me in the eye. Someone will decree
 my honour, the shots will alarm the quizzical
 neighbours of the smoke from burning guns.

Dear Don Francisco, we attack dogmas, beliefs and practices
 Of the Church, yet I find prison to be purgatory, and
 heaven awaits, not with open arms, but with a bullet to test our faith,
 rid my conscience, pull me through a ring. I want to say farewell to my immediate siblings,
 Saturnina, Paciano, Narcisa, Olympia, Lucia, Maria,
 Concepcion, Josefa, Trinidad and Soledad,
 but know that they'll dance the tune of thunder, with consequence. I am beholden
 from patriotic speeches in the seventh hour. Mi último adios to all.

Know that I waited. I gave way for meaning, despite my incoherent
shining moments. It has been judged that my life is not my own, and precisely
harms the cause.

Yet, my name is the same as yours. Let us know it. Make it ours again.

A country may be unwinnable. It wants our bodies, and erases
resistance. It loves death as much as life, lest we teach it otherwise.

I am a mere man, and my ghost will fixate on these thresholds.

Chance favours only the prepared mind.

Insurrection

There's a moonlight over the fields at dawn, a yellow hue
As bodies twist in the waking hour. Down the port, a sailor
Unties the ropes to his galleon, tempting trade between borders.
I see children by the pond carrying sticks and pan de sal. Soon
They will bathe in cold water, emerge bright as angels, eyes

On the eastern sky. A gathering in Caloocan could strike the
City gates. Bonifacio attacked Manila with arms, rather than offerings of
Alms, rice and sugar. What could my exiled light spring now
That blood has spilt onto gravel and garden beds? Victories in
Cavite show up the factions, the schisms among Katipunan.

I turn in my bed at night and there is dust to settle. I hear
The cries of people slaughtering people, praying for justice
Against greed, corruption and domination. Perhaps it cannot be said.
Perhaps we need to smell the delicate scent of our blood split
So we can believe in our mad plans.

The moon is red with the idea of our divinity: observable
From afar, a small sphere like beads of a rosary. People will say
I have left, perhaps sometime tomorrow, taken a journey south.
Yet, the nation weeps, among the sweep of airs that go beyond breezes.
Be a God, Lord to all the people, and emit the pungent smell of hate.

III: People Power

Tutubi

I, you, we

am, are, is

I vs the Other

post-I

a phalanx of stars

written beyond THE BOARD

cheek by jowl

intimacies

Mendicancy

or

pork-barrelling

post-constitutions

spatial writs

crouching towards land

to be

tutubi

DEDE

| | |
|-------|--|
| VOC | Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie |
| YWM | You What Mate |
| SD | Self-Determination |
| LG | Language Group |
| YSL | Yolŋu Sign Language |
| PHPE | Principales, Hidalgos, Pecheros and Esclavos |
| NIP | Non-Indigenous Persons |
| WOC | Women Of Colour |
| POC | People Of Colour |
| BIPOC | Black, Indigenous, and People Of Colour |
| COC | Communities of Colour |
| COC | Citizens of Colour |
| BME | Black and Minority Ethnic |
| BLM | Black Lives Matter |
| FIFO | First Indigenous For Office |
| IM | Invisible Migrant |
| RACE | Reasoning And Carving Empathy |
| AND | Asks Not-but-Does |
| LANG | Living A Nuanced Grief |
| UAGE | Under Arms of Given Exclusion |
| NESB | Non-English-Speaking-Background |
| EALD | English-as-Additional Language or Dialect |
| ESL | English-as-Second Language |
| LOTE | Languages Other Than English |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |

Love Is a Rebellious Bird

I walk well into the night, strolling to pass soil, rocks
And minerals. Men dusting off their coats, women fanning their faces
Among the markets and bazaars. Children stray to the town square
Where a Rondalla plays a familiar song—
L'amour est un oiseau rebelle, with bandurria, laud, guitar,
Double bass and drums accompanying the Habanera.

The friars keep an eye out for any wet song,
They stay level with the circling of crowds
Near the base of the fountain, inhaling the heady perfume
Of grandmothers and mothers: scents of cedarwood, sandalwood
And vetiver, earthy fragrances like oakmoss and amber. Romantic gestures
of a couple dancing the Cariñosa—a Maria Clara gown, with butterfly sleeves

Fanned by the wind, a Barong Tagalog on a bolero playing hide and seek.
I watch the old maids close the windows of their house, bending and
Sweating from the humid air. The moon reflects the light,
Illuminating the streets. My teeth cling to turon, evoking feelings of
Love, deceit, misery and desire among flavours on my tongue.
I take my chances on a hill, hearkening faint tunes on the edge of history.

Nights

Night upon night

I lie alone

Fully clothed

Running my fingers

Through my hair,

Speaking in tongues.

Black Protest

We all have our histories.

A young black poet

Fresh off the pages, said to me once:

‘Be aggressive... Be very, very aggressive’.

I wondered if his politics

Was his redemption.

As if this was his way to be heard in everyday life

As if his poetry carried the wisdom of God—

To light humanity’s trodden path.

As if he had the answers

A polemic for every day of the week.

To the question:

How dare you.

To God:

I believe.

How do we carry on with false promise?

How do we repair the trauma we inherited?

The young black poet will grow wiser

Inhale his own voice

Sink to the murk of life.

And I, I will lodge myself like

A fishbone in his throat.

Tayong Dalawa

The numbers. Scary.

Many, stabbed by thorns

Where was I?

Among the seas, the crowds, the haunts?

My airs unkept

None could handle

The tears I wept

I'm the town crier

With my megaphone

And hexagrams from *I Ching* divination.

Sasama ako

 Sa paginoman mo

 Para makakuha ko

Ang pag ibig mo.

I skipped

Getting a cat

For the sake

Of your bastard dreams.

Now you have nothing left to say

Or do

Except linger in it

Resist the urge

And search for me.

Kailangan ko ikaw

Ikaw, ang magalam kung saan

Ay pagmamahal ko

Kung saan

Pag-aari ng aking puso

Now I recite

To my Other. You.

Who thought you knew

How you felt

Thinking things through

On your patch of grass

Magkunwari lang tayo

Sa bahay

Sa ating pugad, mag tatago

Maglaro lang tayo

Na sinaksak ko kita

Important thing

Is we are two again

Tayong dalawa

Not many

Not more

No more

More...

More...

Less is more

Many, a lesson

In life

Sa buhay.

Yellow Revolution

What they suffered leading upto to four days of
 Demonstrations—a sustained campaign
 Of civil resistance. Epifanio de los Santos Avenue
 Saw crowds two million strong singing ‘Tie a Yellow Ribbon
 Round the Ole Oak Tree’, mourning Ninoy’s assassination after exile.

Two decades of Marcos and his control brought civilians,
 Political and military groups, religious orders, archbishops,
 Against absolutes. The streets were dizzy with tears, chants, and songs
 We remember the First Quarter Storm, when people rioted
 Against the galloping gap between the rich and the poor.

Proclamations of Martial Law tried to quell the civil right
 To disobey. Accusations, false arrests against opposition,
 Conventions to reframe an unjust Constitution only rouse people’s strength.
 The guilty were not immune from the official laws of illegitimate reasoning,
 The firing squads and insurrections suppressed people’s will, people’s might.

The Filipino is worth our lives. We will lay down arms for our true plight.
 To quell hunger through peaceful means. Para itaas ang isang bahay na buhay.
 We hail a leader who brings agrarian reform, improved infrastructure and
 good government. Corazon was a symbol for a moral centre, but Mrs. Marcos raised
 the golden acres. We must ask: did the peaceful revolution lead us into fair succession?

There's still hunger. And there's no vacancy.

Binenta ba ang Republika ng Pilipinas? Ano ba ang kulay ng pera na walang pinagmulan?

Pumunta ba ang pera sa mga trabaho na lupa? Sa mga hinaharap ng mga bata?

We are weary and desire not your excess spoils.

We live in the past erased of clear conscience and go toward an uncertain future.

Let the Yellow turn to Blue. Lest we reflect upon who have suffered, who died for *the cause*.

Let the Yellow turn Red. Good conscience beside our ears, knowing right from wrong.

Let the Yellow turn to White. Let peace be the bedrock of our will for change.

Let the Yellow turn Clear. Dismantle the machinery of dictatorship.

Let the Yellow turn Clear. Restore the free press, a new constitution, then elections.

Every Day

Whenever I go to Bulacan I'd haggle with the farmers
 Sa tindahan, at the children selling chewing gum
 Like a pimple in their faces. Whenever I go hungry,
 I'd walk up the streets to the
 Grotto Of our Lady of Lourdes and steal
 fruit offerings. I'd smell the citrus from baskets
 and empty tin tins at market stalls.

Every day I'd say a prayer to the Virgin of Antipolo
 And every day I'd forget about the conflicts in Manila,
 The squabbling in the Republic. I'd snap a bike from
 The settler buildings and wait for leftovers from their
 Merienda. I'd stare towards the foothills and watch
 The sunlight bestow life among the trees. I am the one
 Flaming the entrance to the night.

Here, there is nothing that keeps the doors to my home shut.
 I am like a turtle, walking along clumps of earth in yesterdays
 Simmering rain. The skies are filled with empty, empty clouds. And
 Sometimes, I lie with dogs, among the shyness of flowers,
 The cunning rodents. I am like a flea spreading plagues, a bitch
 That ignores my beliefs. When I close my eyes, I
 See the sprint of my sadness – because there is no hiding place.

.

Hindi ako lumalaki.

Refuse

I'm tight in my inner cell. I'm dried dilis.
With demands on my back, which they
Mean to break. I was studious towards having a
Home, now the dream flies in the wake of
Wildflowers. I remember that there is no time, no time at
All that can measure a heartbreak. Call it an ugly truth,
That people refuse to touch, lest shake your hand,
As they suffocate through the dim-lit afternoons,
Hunched in office cubicles. I am now a sloucher,
Betrayed, and I stooge about cities and foothills.
I slacken while they tickle my gut, and I flinch whenever
They weigh me in. Each time they plant a new one
I remember the formers dust-covered face,
How he loafed idly past the witching hour.
I study the bullets of their gun, enough to feel the heavy
Pangs each dawn. I tell them nothing. And it does not matter.
I feel no delight, and I strain each eye. I'm tight in my inner cell.

Ibenta

Selling opinions worth a mint

Since before the birth of Coca-Cola

Neighbours scramble for dirt

On you

Puts up fencing

To stop administrative leakage

Enter the joke

That is smug behind closed doors

Truth is Red

When I realised the truth
That I knew nothing but red
I forgot about my dreams

I paid a cheque to supermarkets
And to my disappointment
They only accepted cash and credit

Now we live in the bottom half
Of the trough
The top half's taken—it has peaked

Sampaguita

When I wrap the perfumed flower around her hair,
I dream a hopeful embrace, smelling the sweet caramel scent
Of her sallow skin. I watch her through the ages, in moonless nights, reciting
Curses round the churchyards, gentlemen swarming, straining
For a sight of her flare her nostrils. She is a lady in laces, who bled
On the long pews. Paid a surgeon's fee for attempting to slit her

Wrists. I think of her hair, as the early dawn comes,
Her fizzy fingers, the vermillion stick she applies to her lips.
Down in the valley, she nestles in abandoned houses
Eliciting childish smiles among dogs gathering, searching
Through scraps. Some nights, I dream she lets me part her hair, apply
Bracelets, necklaces, and jewels of immaculate

White. But other nights, all I can hear is her wailing through muddied
Waters, then secret whispers of longing like a sore that is split.
The days devour her bloody spirits. And her airs are lost to the wind.
She feels her ghost at the threshold, when she tempts God to reach her
Temple. My heart aches and I turn prayer wheels under the sun and moon.
I dart my eyes to see her in reverse, traversing the blackness in her wake.

Ruins

During the cold days, I brush my hands through the flowers in the field
Wearing sandals that shouldn't make a noise. I like to imagine
I feel calm among the lilacs, jasmines, plum blossoms, marguerites
And forget-me-nots. I toast pan-de-sal over a small flame, gather wild
Spices and soak fish in brine. A pandemonium of parrots mimic my
Words, perhaps they are spreading their wings, perhaps their
Eyes are changing colour—black to brown, orange to white.
It's the odd feeling of impermanence, when my stomping ground
Fills with coffins. I see boulders rolling down cliffs, and no-one
Is strong enough to place it back mountain peaks. Perhaps
There is nothing as common as our fascination with strength, like
The wind spreading the seeds of wildflowers. Nature remains
Mystical, like when children fall ill. Yet, when I listen,
I summon the sacrifice that feels the certainty of seasons.

Notes

Sinturon

‘Sinturon’ (Belt).

‘Magulo ang bahay’ (The house is chaos).

‘Nagdidilig ng puesto sa kuwarto, sa bayan’ (Watering a spot in the room, the country).

‘Sa mata ang lahat’ (All are in the eye).

‘Dumudugo ang puso’ (The heart bleeds).

‘Wala na sa loob’ (There is nothing inside).

‘Ang pagilid nangangamoy ng pawis’ (The sides wreak of sweat).

‘Amoy ng mga aso, amoy ng mga sariwang isda’ (It smells like dog, it smells like fresh fish).

‘Walang na ang tunog ng gitara’ (There is no sound of the guitar).

‘Wala kame ng libro’ (We have no book).

Ave Maria in Tongues

The Tagalog, Spanish and English language for ‘Ave Maria in Tongues’ was obtained from: Colin Francisco, Combés Francisco, Agustin Gasper de San. (1690-91). ‘Of the Nature, Languages, and Letters of the Filipinos’. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. Edited by Emma H. Blair, James A. Robertson. Vol. 40. Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company. 54-55.

According to Francisco Colin: ‘The first word, “Aba” is a mysterious one in the Tagalog, and has the force of a salutation, as has “Ave” in Latin; and the same is true of “Bucor” which means “diversity”, “distinction”, and “singularity”. The article is [seen in] “si Jesus”. Its abundance lies in the fact that it has many synonyms and turns of thought. Consequently, the above prayer, over and above being elegant, could also be expressed in several other ways just

as elegant, and the same sense and meaning would be kept. Its polish and courtesy consist in not saying “Ave Maria” as does the Latin—for that would be a lack of courtesy and a barbarism in the Tagalog—but by the interposition of that polite word “Guinoo”. The Visayan [version] does not contain that word, as being a less polished language. However, I am not trying to cast a slur on the latter for that reason, for each language has a beauty and elegance for its natives which does not strike the foreigner’.

See Colin Francisco, Combés Francisco, Agustin Gasper de San. (1690-91). ‘Of the Nature, Languages, and Letters of the Filipinos’. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. Edited by Emma H. Blair, James A. Robertson. Vol. 40. Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company. 48-60.

By 1582 the Manila Ecclesiastical Junta elevated the practice of translation to the level of official policy. In 1603 the king issued a decree requiring every missionary in the Philippines to have the ‘necessary competency, and know the language of the *indios* whom he should instruct’. ‘Nothing can be done in the ministry’, a Franciscan wrote in the seventeenth century, ‘if the religious do not learn the language of the natives’.

See Rafael Vicente. (1988). *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*. Cornell University Press. 19.

<https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501737572>.

Historia de las Islas de Mindanao

See Colin Francisco, Combés Francisco, Agustin Gasper de San. (1690-91). ‘The Natives of the Southern Islands’. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. Edited by Emma H. Blair, James A. Robertson. Vol. 40. Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company. 99-182.

‘Noble & Brave’ Nation of the Dapitans

In Dapitan, Rizal was fascinated by creatures ranging from remora eels to wild boars. He found some creatures that no one had ever identified before. Four fauna species he collected was named after him: the *Draco rizali* (flying lizard), the *Rachophorus rizali* (a tree frog), and two beetle species, the *Spathomeles rizali* (a.k.a. the ‘handsome fungus beetle’) and the *Apogonia rizali* (a flying beetle).

Shells were featured in Rizal’s 1886 illustrated children’s story, ‘The Turtle and the Monkey’, which he drew while staying with Juan Luna in Paris. It was a comic-strip fable where the wise but earth-bound turtle planted sharp snail shells into a banana trunk as a form of booby trap for the greedy monkey. Those shells would be identified as *susong papaitan* from his native Luzon, similar to one species of shell from Dapitan that Rizal sent to Dr. Meyer, a scientist he had met in Europe through his close friend, the Austrian Philippinist Ferdinand Blumentritt.

Apoy

‘Apoy’ (Fire).

‘Dalawang beses’: is Tagalog for ‘two times’, alluding to the doubly colonised Philippines, becoming a colony of Spain (1521-1898), the United States (1898-1940), but also occupation by England (1762-1764) and Japan (1941-1945).

‘Kita’ in Tagalog has a double meaning—to see and/or to earn/reap.

Baybayin is the pre-Hispanic Philippine script, an alphasyllabary, belonging to the family of Brahmic scripts, prior to and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries before being supplanted by the Latin alphabet during the period of Spanish colonisation.

José Rizal was inspired to model a new Tagalog orthography after the Baybayin system in 1884. In the same year, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera consolidated a comprehensive table of Philippine scripts. In 1887, Don Pedro Paterno made the most comprehensive collection of Baybayin scripts in the Philippines and Indonesia; he went further to compare the syllabaries with Arabic/Hebrew.

Half-awake

‘Kama’ (Bed).

‘Bruha’ (Witch).

Gutom Pa

‘Kumain na’ (Has eaten).

‘Gusto ng lasa’ (Likes the taste).

‘Gutom pa’ (Still hungry).

Myth of the Lazy Native

Alatas notes G.F.G Careri, who in *A Voyage to the Philippines* wrote about the Filipinos after their visit to the Philippines in 1696, and suggested they resembled the Malays in their shallowness of judgement. Of the Bisayans, Careri said that they had grown lazy since the Spaniards ruled over them. To quote him, 'It is their laziness, that makes them appear less ingenious; and they are so entirely addicted to it, that if in walking they find a thorn run into their foot, they will not stoop to put it out of the way, that another may not tread on it'.

Alatas also notes the friar, Sebastian Manrique, visiting Manila during his travel to the Philippines (1629-1634) wrote in *The Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique, in Careri*, of the Chinese in Manila as a group whose life's blood is the Spanish dollar. The scent of the Spanish dollar would attract the Chinese 'with such vehemence that if it were possible they would descend into hell in order to produce new articles for sale, so as to get possession of the coveted silver and longed-for-reales-of-eight'.

Alatas notes from his reading of the French scholar, G.J.H.J.B. Le Gentil de la Galaisiere's book, *A Voyage to the Indian Seas*, from his visit to the Philippines in the second half of the eighteenth century, suggested that the Filipinos were idle, easy-going and unambitious. He was also one of the early observers who blamed inhabitants of the Tropics for the vices of their colonial masters of which he gave many instances. He mentioned the ups and down of private fortunes leading to the impoverishment of many Spanish families. He also noted that the Spanish ladies in Manila were in the habit of receiving calls even when their husbands were absent, so much so that while in Manila he felt as much at ease as in France. Of the Tagalogs he thought that they were not inventive, very indolent... the great mediocrity, who

would not stop dancing and fiddling until they spent their last centavo. He found it difficult to show a city where morals were more corrupt than they were in Manila. The Filipinos were to blame for creating the climate of loose morals. Their men and women went bathing together, they flirted on the street. No wonder it was not rare for celibate priests to have children.

When the Spaniards introduced the siesta, the afternoon nap between 12p.m. and 3p.m., he suspected that the guards at the city gates took to the siesta, as the gates were closed during this time for fear of a surprise attack.

Alatas notes on the German scholar Fedor Jagor's book *The Former Philippines thru Foreign Eyes*, writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, echoed very much the earlier views on the Filipinos—he found them addicted to idleness and dissipation. In Manila, he noted their passion for cock-fighting, and thought native Filipinos to be imitative to a wearisome degree. Incentive was lacking in their labour. Along the river Pasig, somebody might be seen asleep on a heap of coconuts. 'If the nuts run ashore, the sleeper rouses himself, pushes off with a long bamboo, and contentedly relapses into slumber, as his eccentric raft regains the current of the river'.

See Alatas Syed Hussein. (1977). *Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese From the 16th to the 20th century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited. 52-59.

Death as Consolation

C.f. Rizal José. (1890, July 15–September 15). 'On Indolence of the Filipinos'. *La Solidaridad*. Translated by Guadalupe Forés-Ganzon. 2(35)–2(39). Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 464–469, 490–499, 526–533, 560–579, 600–607.

C.f. Alatas Syed Hussein. (1977). *Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese From the 16th to the 20th century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited.

Rizal's Statue

‘Bigas’ (Rice).

‘Itlog’ (Egg).

‘Asin’ (Salt).

‘Tubig’ (Water).

Carabao

‘The distinguishing feature between men and animals / is the cult status that surrounds those / who are no long with us’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 70.

Dinner Party

‘News surged like a jolt of electricity among the parasites, spongers, and freeloaders that God, in his infinite goodness, has so lovingly multiplied in Manila’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 5.

‘Priest of a God of peace, whose mouth is full of sanctity and religion, has a heart of misery’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 230.

‘Now, my future is irresolute. It had been cherished for / years with Ibarra, whose illusions, born in infancy, nurtured in childhood, / gave form to the fibre of my being’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 240.

‘But I know that I love only once, and without love, I will never belong to anyone’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 398

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‘The convent or death!’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 408.

School

‘A school is the basis of society’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 214.

Exile

‘This murmur, we all share / It is a cloud, or rain or peaceful smoke. / We bow to the boats that harboured us / Safe passage, to conquered lands never forgotten’ from Édouard Glissant. (1997). *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). Translated by Betsy Wing. The University of Michigan Press. 9.

‘Our cry is a cry of poetry’ from Édouard Glissant. (1997). *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). Translated by Betsy Wing. The University of Michigan Press. 9.

‘Nomadism, skepticism and anarchy’ from Édouard Glissant. (1997). *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). Translated by Betsy Wing. The University of Michigan Press. 11.

Jail

‘In the Philippines you are not considered to be honourable unless you have been to jail’ from José Rizal. (2006). *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 25.

Trial

On 15 December 1896, Rizal wrote his controversial manifesto addressed to ‘certain Filipinos’ appealing to them to stop the insurrection. The judge advocate-general, however, refused to allow publication because ‘far from promoting peace, [it] is likely to stimulate for the future the spirit of rebellion’.

The Marangál na Dalit ng Katagalugan (English title: Noble Hymn of the Tagalog Nation) was the historic national anthem of the Tagalog Republic and is considered the first national anthem of the Philippines. It was later titled Salve Patria (‘Hail, Fatherland’). Julio Nakpil composed the anthem in November 1896 during the Philippine Revolution.

See Nery John. (2011). *Revolutionary Spirit: José Rizal in Southeast Asia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore Studies. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814345064>. 38.

The Lost Jeweller

Basilio is about to leave his mother's tomb when he encounters Simoun, who at first he thought to be Ibarra. Basilio recognises his face as the man who helped him bury his mother thirteen years ago. To protect himself, Simoun contemplates killing Basilio, but decides instead to try to recruit Basilio to his cause—to destroy society's system of corruption by encouraging the vices and greed of the governing powers with his wealth. Simoun derides the youth's desire for Hispanism and the teaching of Spanish, seeing it as a means for the loss of nationality and the subjugation of the Filipino's unique thought and feeling. Simoun asks for Basilio's help to convince the youth to abandon their calls for Hispanisation. Basilio thinks the task is beyond his abilities. Simoun attempts a different approach by reminding Basilio of the injustice his mother and brother suffered. Basilio remains uncommitted.

See José Rizal. (2011). 'Simoun'. *El Filibusterismo*. Translation, Introduction and Notes by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 49-60.

The Executioner's Bullet

'Bahay na bato' (House of stone).

Rizal in Ateneo wrote 'Mi Primera Inspiracion' (My First Inspiration) dedicated to his mother on her birthday. It is believed to have been written in the year 1874, upon the release from prison of his mother.

Mi último adiós (My Last Farewell) is a poem believed to be written by José Rizal before his execution by firing squad on December 30, 1896. The piece was one of the last notes he wrote before his death.

See Rizal José. (1976). *Rizal's Complete Poetical Works: Versified English Translation from the Original Spanish and Tagalog Poems with Rizal's Pictorial Album*. Translated by Dr Isidro Escare Abeto. National Bookstore, Inc. 143-145, 157, 357.

Insurrection

The Spanish authorities discovered Katipunan in August 1896, led by Andrés Bonifacio. A mass gathering in Caloocan allowed Katipunan leaders to organise themselves into a revolutionary government, and openly declared a nationwide armed revolution. An attack, prompted by Bonifacio, in Manila failed, however the surrounding provinces began to revolt, with victories held in Cavite, apart from the other two centres of the revolution: Bulacan and Morong

Tutubi

‘Tutubi’ (Dragonfly).

DEDE

‘Dede’ (Pacifier).

In the first half of the seventeenth century, Spanish settlements in the Philippine archipelago came under repeated attack from the forces of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), the greatest ‘transnational’ corporation of the era. For their survival, the pious Catholic settlers owed a great debt to the arch-heretical Protector, who kept Amsterdam’s back to the wall for much of his rule. Had VOC been successful, Manila, rather than Batavia

[Jakarta], might have become the centre of the 'Dutch' imperium in Southeast Asia. The VOC was liquidated, in bankruptcy, in 1799.

In 1762, London seized Manila from Spain, and held it for almost two years. It is entertaining to note that Madrid only got it back in exchange, for, of all places, Florida, and the other 'Spanish' possessions east of the Mississippi. Had the negotiations proceeded differently, the archipelago could have been politically linked with Malaya and Singapore during the nineteenth century.

See Anderson Benedict. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso. 166, 180.

'*Principales, Hidalgos, Pecheros and Esclavos*' translates from Spanish as Princes, Noblemen, Commoners and Slaves.

Love Is a Rebellious Bird

French: *L'amour est un oiseau rebelle*, is an aria from Georges Bizet's 1875 opéra comique *Carmen*. According to Dean Winton, the score of the aria was adapted from the habanera *El Arreglito ou la Promesse de mariage*, by the Spanish-American composer Sebastián Yradier, first published in 1863, which Georges Bizet thought to be a folk song. See Winton Dean. (1948). *Bizet*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 195-196.

The Rondalla is an ensemble of stringed instruments played with the plectrum or pick and generally known as plectrum instruments. It originated in Medieval Spain, and was later taken to Spanish America and the Philippines.

The Cariñosa (meaning ‘loving’ or ‘affectionate one’) is the national dance and is part of the María Clara suite of Philippine folk dances. It is notable for use of the fan and handkerchief in amplifying romantic gestures expressed by the couple performing the traditional courtship dance.

Tayong Dalawa (Us both)

‘Sasama ako’ (I will go).

‘Sa paginoman mo’ (To your drinks).

‘Para makakuha ko’ (I try to get).

‘Ang pag ibig mo’ (Your love).

‘Kailangan ko ikaw’ (I need you).

‘Ikaw, ang magalam kung saan’ (You, who knows where).

‘Ay pagmamahal ko’ (My love is at).

‘Kung saan’ (Where).

‘Pag-aari ng aking puso’ (Possession of my heart).

‘Magkunwari lang tayo’ (Let’s just pretend).

‘Sa bahay’ (At home).

‘Sa ating pugad, mag tatago’ (In our nest, we hide).

‘Maglaro lang tayo’ (Let’s just play).

‘Na sinaksak ko kita’ (That I stabbed you).

‘Tayong dalawa’ (Us both).

‘Sa buhay’ (In life).

Yellow Revolution

‘Para itaas ang isang bahay na buhay’ (To raise a house that is alive)

‘Binenta ba ang Republika ng Pilipinas? Ano ba ang kulay ng pera na walang pinagmulan?’

(Did they sell the Republic of Philippines? What colour is money without an origin?)

Pumunta ba ang pera sa mga trabaho na lupa? Sa mga hinaharap ng mga bata? (Did the money go towards the toils of the land? To the future of the children?)

Every Day

‘Sa tindahan’ (The store).

‘Merienda’ (Snack).

‘Hindi ako lumalaki’ (I am not to grow).

Refuse

Dilis are small fish caught in large schools.

Ibenta

‘Ibenta’ (To sell).

Requiem

Harold Legaspi

Para sa bayan / For my country

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Requiem I | 3 |
| Ur-Rizal Theory: The Enigma Syndrome | 4 |
| Letters Caged | 6 |
| Sabong in Taytay | 7 |
| Little Prayer | 9 |
| Melancholia | 10 |
| Gifts for the Dead | 11 |
| Feeling Pinoy | 15 |
| On A Cliff | 17 |
| Purgatory | 19 |
| No-one Listened | 22 |
| Office-Max | 24 |
| Face: The Sun, His Father | 25 |
| Otherness is a (Brown) Mother | 27 |
| Undo Air, the Stars | 29 |
| Boboy's Bullet | 30 |
| Requiem II | 33 |
| Wala | 34 |
| Voice | 36 |
| Feather Nest | 37 |
| Salute the We Who Have None | 39 |
| Ill Advised | 40 |
| Underneath | 42 |
| Shakespeare Vows | 43 |
| Last Meal With a Knife | 44 |
| Upon His Return | 45 |
| Fishing | 47 |
| Open Sesame | 48 |
| El Filibusterismo | 49 |
| Weeping | 50 |
| Bones | 51 |
| Miss Star-Spangled Denim | 53 |
| Lucky Nose | 55 |
| A Chapel Kiss | 58 |
| Facing Asia | 59 |
| The Poet | 61 |
| Throat | 63 |
| Freedom | 64 |
| Radiant Barbed-Wires | 65 |
| Not So Australia Fair | 67 |
| Constitution | 70 |
| The Indolence of the Filipino | 73 |
| San Agustin's Letter on the Filipinos – 1725 | 75 |
| Notes | 78 |

Requiem I

We become rational animals
once we would no longer
sacrifice for the love of our
country or art.

Ur-Rizal Theory: The Enigma Syndrome

He sat by the grass
on a stool,
wrapped in a blanket
near Ilog Pasig.

Always there at
sunrise
with a book about
psychology
or unrequited love.

‘Til he swam
past the tidal
estuary.

The day he
vanished
out the basin.

His family
notified
the *pulis*
who went searching
till dusk.

Only to find

his book

where he had

written

his final plea, titled:

Knights of Rizal.

Letters Caged

What's in his consciousness?

His name.

A pledge of love on the

edge.

Little acts of

kindness.

Each day, multiplies like

ants ants ants.

One feels unworthy, a

sweet boy's trauma, yet

Noli me Tangere: Touch[es] me not.

Envelopes him.

Conceits of *pag-ibig*, in antiquity.

Proof of bliss peels rust,

yet none know so well

intimacies besieged by voice.

That outward vow, tastes of salt.

Wilting sampaguitas, borne

from thy sack.

Approach me.

Turn insult into art.

Fuse letters caged in iron will.

Sabong in Taytay

Kristo's outstretched hands
called wagers
from memory.
Loot for luck.

Slashers clamped to draw blood.
Right-feet sharp,
steely & divine.
Double-edged.

Gallus gallus, pretty as
Miss Universe
strut with raised feathers:
crimson & black.

The clamour dies.
A perfect bloodline
of currencies flying over heads.
A battle royale in the circular pit.

Soltada! Presto! Logro! Pago!

Sentensyador's verdict as cruel.

A bird's eye as traitors.

Two cocks fighting: striving

for Christ and the palm of glory.

Little Prayer

I tally my prayers,
count the ones answered.

Every day I pray for it:
the switch of seasons,
the ending blade,
the final rest.

O, the days! Such a disappointment.

Nerves crack open,
revolt against skin.

I lose all breath,
which is to say, I die by voice.

Expect the unexpected.

Humans love, with
too much hate.

Somewhere, I swear,

God is watching.

Melancholia

Melancholia seeps in the marrow of my bone.

Does it come in peace?

Is it sleepy?

The forgotten letters you received.

Does it sit over a pint of San Miguel
and criticise?

Does it keep you afloat
when you face a barrage of assault?

Does it bleed red?

Does it light a candle in the night
with a God whom we fear?

Does it lie naked beside you
when you sleep alone?

Does it whisper your secrets
you never told a soul?

Does it dance meekly
and depart with joy?

Gifts for the Dead

I: Shopping for a religion

Shopping for a
religion;
for a God
with enormous brown
eyes
and a body of
the skies, the sea, the land.
Draws young evangelists,
to marble staircases.

Strong lilies,
crystal discs which
turn to ash in the sun.
I see graffiti
on the wall; the writing,
a red carpet to
the holy land, eternal life,
thus, I pray but sin
upon my liligrave
of eyes and tresses.

Golden-brown coins

strewn
on my lips,
who swear by it,
the *stuff*
of champions, of mahogany
panelling, in playgrounds and
street-corners.

An emerald dome opens up,
bouquets of lilac satin,
and a lone soul
doomed
to walk eternity
surrounded with
red ribbons and blood.

II: Dying / Death

Maria-Clara
left pesos underneath
my pillow,
which I spent
on gifts for the dead.
I burned the gifts:
an effigy
'til 3am, the
witching hour, a

Sunday before church.

The devil is educating
me to become
his apprentice.

Not a shepherd who
swears against The Bible.

Please understand that
I mean no offense to Jesus,
who died for my sins.
He was bound for Havana.

III: Penrith as purgatory

Silver and bronze statues,
amid federation green plants.

A meadow,
foaming with radiance.

Backlighting,
heaves the sun's splendour.

The currents of Nepean River.

And when in purgatory,
which is Penrith
head further West, swirling
towards the pillars of the mountains.

Toward the timbers, towards the woods,
whose canopies are filled with
whirlpools of life.

Feeling Pinoy

It starts with a
prayer. Begging God
for forgiveness and grace.
If I am feeling Pinoy
I'd gather rosary beads
or go to confession.
This happens when I
regret with remorse.
Is it possible I'm praying
to the wrong God? I
truly believe yet know not
how to worship. His Divinity
piques my interest. And I see
Him in all places. Watching,
guiding, reprimanding my sins.
I consume the daily bread,
sip wine murky as blood,
sing hymns I know in Tagalog.
In faded love, I grip
His lessons, return to Him for
solace. My numbness devours
my mood. I lose all rhythm.
Slash my tin heart.

Memories discarded. Sins
to repent. It is enough to
awaken with panic. I might
mimic the sign of the cross
repeatedly. Face the spirit of
the devil in the dark. Share His
loneliness. Ask him to shepherd me to
face God. I believe I need
a sword. Just as Jesus
carried. I know I must not
walk the trodden path. This
time, nothing will be left
inside. And I'll be judged
in my name by the hunter
that is Him.

On a Cliff

for Romeo

On a cliff They light a campfire, kneeling, Their fingers upon rocks, wood & everything is still:

This poem starts with Their mother, who has one wish
beyond existing, beyond sanctum, beyond
fate. The cord is torn between them, a rift in
love, the night They were conceived.

On a cliff They chop firewood, the axe splintering Their skin:

In this poem, Their mother left Hussein's Iraq,
trauma inculcated like a bullet in the skull & a body that
deceives her, as it deceives Them. They know precisely the
harm it has caused. They speak not of a man
but of a shadow of the past.

On a cliff They light fire with kindling; twigs from the bush:

The poem continues & nobody is home. Their hopes
are wounded, disowned, ravaged by war from the 'burbs.
There is a fire inside them, visible from their eyes. It lives
& loves love. It sparks resistance, an iron will, mechanisations
of a horse. It does not want. It does not need & justifies through obedience.

On a cliff They are denied the twinkling stars but accept Their fate:

The poem ends because the boy turns into a man. They are no
longer absent from her. He shreds the lies, lives with consequence.
Winter turns to Spring, the birds begin to sing.
They get up, fuel the fire, peer at the horizon.
The landscape mimics the contours of Their life.
They stand still fearing Their freedom.

Purgatory

i.

a boy wet from the sun

climbing trees to pluck leaves

birds whispering prayers, shedding feathers

soothing voices

an abandoned house on a hill

empty, empty, memories

i gaze at them untouched, remorseful

withheld, withering

broken flowers, dried leaves

age of the dead near

this tin heart, hunger pangs

a crinkled sleeve and torn air.

ii.

this morning, i awoke & couldn't

speak

my mouth was sewn in protest
by a God plotting for justice

i mumbled novenas: a dear father here
an amen there

my body full of secrets
wrapped in quilts made by *Lola*

i must have been whole once
and i conceived it like a dream
to throw myself off a cliff
just jump.

iii.
to leave my heart behind
a gloriously illegitimate thing
i strike it with fire cinders, ash, dust

maybe i can't burn more wood
and i have nowhere to go
threats betray my innocence
i only live in the past
an impaled ghost lies in my room
i pity it with regret

& i love it both at once
it's stuck in a game called afterlife
a purgatory for all its sins.

No-one Listened

I've lived for over forty years

And

Let me tell you that I could say

Anything

Anything at all

And it wouldn't matter

To anyone

Because no-one is listening

And I could spell the letters of my words

Aywnay and it wuodln't mtater

Bcuaese no-one is ltsesning

Bcuaese I'm a weritr

Of muinslcie poprroton

The twon cerir

Wtih my mgphaenoe

Siyang athnynig

To aynnoe

Athnynig at all

A slmal pelborm for the Pserdinets

Yuor Pmrie Mnisirtes

Yuor Rylaos

Yuor Trump's

Yuor Duterte's.

Tehy Ceird

Schkeod

Wehn tehy fnuod out

For the vrey frist tmie

Taht we hetad

As mcuh as tehm

Wtih our mgphaenoe

The twon creirs

Who siad tehy did us wnrog

Who siad tehy ndeeded us

Atfer all

To ltisen

Bcuaese whituot us

Tehy atmuoned to nhitong

Nhitong, no-one

No-one at all

And it wuodln't mtater

Taht tihs was wtetrin

Bcuaese no-one ltisenied

No-one at all.

Office-Max

does your wallet burn?

unclench your arms, rise or fall,

halogen lights shine upon cell blocks segregated

by partitions, grey & cocky

rise higher or fall further, be CEO of impotent limited

trust is the main game, critical eyes

value a chic aesthetic

you are mortgage backed,

a tycoon that soared on an elevator to the gods

chesterfield couches droop like margin calls

surprise, surprise

it's now or never

Face: The Sun, His Father

This is the whisper of insecurity.

It trembles my core, it is black and foggy.

The screaming resists temptation.

Crucify my feet, my hands, a thorn on my crown.

A golden heart skips irregularly in this place.

My Renaissance blood, mingling with his broken home.

I truly entrust my faith unto God.

I adore breathing him in. His face, a window.

Clear as paradise waters & hauntingly real.

His inner child mocks like the wind pretending;

gusty, with the calmness of loneliness.

He lives another day.

Runs away from crowded rooms. Taps vigorously on mantelpieces,

‘til his bed is made five times before noon.

Of course, in paradise there is no comparison.

He bends his will with every eye shift.

The Sun is his Father. He is not kind, nor passive.

He carries a sword just as Jesus did, and led men to war.

How I long to be loved in return—

to be dressed up in luxury, radiant and yellow,

cheeks & shoulders round not square.

He caught my fall. Lights are bleeding:

red and cosmic, riotous as his thunderous face.

Our cocoon wreaks of sex and saints,

permeating delicate sensibilities, a trauma from abuse.

Our eyes shed wood. Chests out fuelled by machismo.

The Sun flares through us, bold and wild.

And His purpose is love and hate.

Otherness is a (Brown) Mother

- (i) My first memory
 of her:
 treading water
 in River Pasig.
 How she weaved
 water between
 her fingers
 and sung me
 a song of embrace.
 How easy her lungs
 carried her voice,
 how the water
 swept her body
 along the edge.
- (ii) On a cliff
 she offered the
 wind, dancing suns.
 She shielded my face
 from the rain,
 and when I was ill
 she rubbed Vicks
 on my chest.
 She fed me milk,
 she clothed my body
 and steered the voice
 of my conscience.
 She never went away,
 never led me astray.
- (iii) She conspired
 with my in-laws

before our birth
to create indestructible
love.

How deep it
felt to breathe
the same breath
as Them.

How mother stitched
our union to carry
the weight of our
worries.

How fused we *be*.

- (iv) Nature abounds
like natural light.
Water is clear,
blood, transparent ruby.
We soaked up nutrients
from dreams.
It was she all along
who spoke
in our sleep.
Who woke
us from our crib.
It was she who
dared us
to take care.

Undo Air, the Stars

She is a star above clouds / air of silken breath

She lies on the forest floor / pencilling shadows and light / igniting earth and
water with chemistry and eclectic mania

She severs humans from their bedrock / robbing them of humanity

She appears in dreams / awakening the unconscious / deciphering languages
that map all we know and not yet realise

She is the olive which fell from the tree / stricken with grief / brooding on its edges

She is peace interrupted / the mimicry of tongues / colonised bodies
fuelled by hunger and desire

She extracts the greed from elements / holds each heart to her chest

She plants seeds in our mouths / and reminds us
of our blood's river

She asks:

Do unto which..?

Go to where..?

Undo what..?

Boboy's Bullet

It was never
really
intended

and maybe now
they're square—
but Boboy just got

hitched. Rice thrown in the chapel,
a church kiss. Now, Agnes was
expecting. Poor sod's gonna turn in

alone. Gigi swore she didn't know,
nor did Kuya Jojo, before the thud.
They'd wondered the streets

looking for hours, till they heard
Jose's gun splatter Boboy's brains.
Word was it was jealousy.

Jose abandoned the Corolla and
did a runner. Folks down Endeavour
called it in.

Boboy had had a few
because Agnes kept him caged
like the chooks she fed

in the yard. Pedro was the last man
with him. They'd been downing

San Miguel and sisig.

Some door banging, then a brawl.
Pedro stood in the middle
but Boboy shoved till he broke loose.

Kuya Jojo on his way
with Gigi but the wind
was hurt.

Jose cocked his gun,
and Boboy bolted.
A bullet to the brain,

the harps of angels.
All agreed to have him buried
in Pinegrove.

A white funeral
to commemorate a life
of purpose.

Before Pedro's speech
Agnes cranked the aircon.
Said she'd faint if

the old crew showed their
faces. Gigi barely blinked
when they lowered the casket.

Kuya Jojo's instinct was to get
them through the day.
So he hogged plates of food

making sure they were fed.

Boboy looked gaunt in a
white suit,

his lips lifeless,
the youngest of four.

Never to see daylight
again.

Requiem II

They say that love is
eternal.

Either that
or nothing is.

Wala

This life

I have lived before.

It comes in waves,

traces sunburnt leaves.

Wala na ako rito!

I'm not here anymore!

A house on fire, charred regrets,

begets grim vows, solitary unions.

Scrapes dirt under fingernails

the garden's pink serrated edge.

Clutches the longing

to be seen sexually.

And now you devour

patient hearts.

Even in the quiver

of winter's nestle.

Apply salt liberally,

wrap *sampaguitas*.

Turn the crotch
to familiar linen, betray urges

in vicious quarrels.

Loosen the sprint of the knife.

Rescind master disguises,
to quell promises with high stakes.

Consequences do upon each other
for we seek heart-shaped truths, bespoke rhythms.

The trodden path
reveals the wild thorns of thunder.

The Other has no purpose,
all remembrance.

It seeks to hold on.

Voice***for Mactulina***

She stays
when she's away.

Cloistered in a room
worshipping the fabric of zeal.

Each night she resembles a harp
plucked holy, stitched in rhythm.

The harshness of light
behind her eyes.

Breathes a net of despair.

Trappings fold her neatly
where no dogs bark.

Then, brotherly love paves a way
in deeds of the spirit.

Bulaklak, strong-strong tenderness
sparks a voice of stillness.

Feather Nest*for Julie-Anne*

Feathers falling. She plucks leaves from
severed branches, withered and dry.
Rust forms on a tin can drenched by the moon.
She sprinkles it with leaves and thorns,
mixes it with aloe till it heals.

It is autumn, the fine point of a filleting knife
loosens the gum, wedged in his teeth.
Tomorrow, she'll gather luminescent
shells etched with her initials.
Spinifex pass her by, and she remembers
how she loved his laughter.

Across the bridge
leads to the edge of his serial light.
She breathes circular, lugs the weight of
being misunderstood. The sighs of suffering
nurse familial urgency, maternal traffic.

Entrusts her planet to blood.
Makes peace with frustration.
She cuts the darkness vividly.

Disarms her missile heart.

She remembers he is ticklish.

The warmth of meaning

demolishes inner walls.

Then, evening descends: feathers

lying with the stars, blooms a kiss.

More than the cause of him.

Salute the We Who Have None*for Rainbow*

whatever you do, do NOT inhale napalm.

your name emits a horizon that bring colours

to mountains. no point flicking through menus,

machines shackle cribs.

i know your longing for a child,

your rare suspense for life.

you cherish the see-saw that raises

you closer to the sun. project your whiskettes

to ferris wheels, looping infinitely.

wisdom spins from life, a thin darkening film.

& suddenly you become prone to altruism,

wrapping sampaguitas with gifts.

the elderly, who never miss your mark

swear by it.

so, swerve with the children, 'til your soles

are worn. constellations meet in icy space.

keep the nests lit, gentle &

found.

Ill Advised

Ill advised
to swerve from
writing about love.

All other expression
fails to comprehend
its virtue.

I do not think you
understand yet
what this means.

Yet, only you
can stitch
my fabric with blood.

We do not make sense
so I question us
humbly.

Maybe understanding
is our future,
a path from our past.

You confuse by day
but reveal all we've become
at night.

Underneath

A photo,
old like the seas
with odd disguises.

His hard drive
corrupt, forces
a well-done steak.

I'm that sniper
whose aim
marks excess.

The news reports
dismay, hacksawing
hope.

Whiz past the hour
to eternal void.
All beneath feeling.

Shakespeare Vows

My magnetism
attracts shadows
while I cook.

TV fails
to cause
controversy.

I hope to
arrive late
to the party.

Argue:
I do. I do.
& bloodshot eyes.

They're not in the mood.
They're armed with machetes.

Last Meal With a Knife

rice, glutenous rice

my final meal, frozen

led to an indeterminate

sum of memories

remembered by those

who sat opposite

the table, the electric

chair

when states do not matter

the I's don't forgive

for slicing up tuna.

Upon His Return

What will your future hold?

A people without distinction,

a nation without liberty.

~ *El Filibusterismo*, José Rizal (1861-1896), translation, introduction
and notes by Harold Augenbraum

I.

An indio king vanishes

He causes earthquakes

with the shake of his hand.

Pulverizes bone on contact.

In possession of jewellery

three or four houses

a secret that could ruin us.

II.

The life of a single man compares to

a goal in pursuit.

His death at the hand of bandits.

The cries of a nation torn.

A mother driven out of her mind

A younger brother murdered

Go ahead, ask for equal rights.

We get used to the idea of death:

homelands annihilated, consecration of tyranny.

Fishing

He leaves post-it notes on fridges, marks tinned tuna &
moves dead chandeliers onto sheds, picks at scabs
of ex-lovers, while wiping utensils foraged from a sack.
Feeds the homeless on his days off, pushes prams of single
mothers, wearing slacks—loose and cotton—no less.
Makes the mistake of swatting flies in the kitchen.
Along the garage, a four-wheel drive stinks of smoke,
the dashboard busy with ants around a bile of honey.
Chinese whispers spin rumours of a dark man who
mimics dead heroes, and his assailant is hidden
in Mcleodganj, near Dharamshala. Finds himself
awoken with sweat each night since *The Dreams*
recurred. The children bear gifts from the heart;
origami loomed with spiderwebs, wished upon prayers
& blessings. A vase perched neatly in a cave falls,
failing to crack. Now the sun engulfs the moon.
That sinking feeling known as fishing.

Open Sesame

Note: I saved two bucks,
forgoing sesame seeds at the counter.
He who worries about the price,
of gas, mung beans & rice,
fumbles when cards are no use, a pang
of urgency to keep on giving.
Sunken hearts window-shopping,
the night that power was cut.
Eats salt with rice & eggs,
crushed garlic for longevity.
Till the day of eviction, when
Department of Housing refused
to call pest-control.

El Filibusterismo

An erasure poem from José Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, translation, introduction and notes by Harold Augenbraum.

Fili's cultivate their own
 & ask: what is physical pain compared
 to moral pain? Infuse new life to anaemic
 people. Spill enough blood to drown
 tyrants. Patriotism: a crime in oppressive
 countries. Robberies baptised with a pretty
 face. Love for justice, liberty & dignity seeks
 vengeance. Keep others suffering what has
 been suffered. Choked & all worked up:
 you're the ideal man for Philippines.
 Consider yourself lucky. The inept
 will perish & only the strong will survive.
 Manila held a book, a crucifix, the martyr's palm.
 Inspectors fulfil instruction by impeding them!
 Keep asking. Should we limit knowledge?
 Should we be prisoners just to afford a home?
 A government holds no auction.
Corruptissima in republica plurimae leges
 He who proves a great deal, proves nothing.
 Into your hands I commend my spirit.

Weeping

Make no mistake:

It happened to me

It happened to *us*.

Live too much, and it

will burn

your conscience.

They were secrets

I kept, & they were

my own. Debris morphed

the ruins on my face.

They formed curious nests,

traditionally laissez-faire.

‘Til the coaxing.

‘Til the kill.

Should have reconsidered

our own advances.

Woven into a sack

of hostile borders.

Beaming from the church.

Daring to be spoken.

Youthful irreverence

from our Fathers.

Bones

He grew hour-by-hour
but missed her music.
So, he tried ketchup—
loosened his grip.
Newlyweds fizzed.

Fifty's for whitegoods,
silks on her thigh,
hollow sockets, a crib
that snuffs the air, expecting
Eve in Eden.

A rib made of clay
& bicarbonate soda.
Measures love for
chaste dreaming.
Her tidbits mute,
drums phalanges.

Turns towards her some more.
Holds it, holds her.
Still, no luck. Goes to
the cupboards under the sink,

affirms their union:

tough life, tough love.

The lilies have drooped. Lest

they remember how

to open. Petals kill.

Outdated fineries.

Soaked in *red* detergent.

He goes to the side

roaring the palm that set harder

than brick.

Knowing she'll be gutted

by the namesake of bones.

Miss Star-Spangled Denim*for Miyuki*

A holy man has come to talk
about the free will of a child,
who longs for her father,
who sucks the teat of her mother,
before the baptism,
before the purge,
that hint of blest austerity
suggests dedication
to cleanliness available only
to the righteous.

The fear of a spectre
rising, averts damnation
on the Day of Judgement,
risks offending denominations
not their own.

The holy man sings hymns
from inventories of
verse whose principles
remain noxious.

A vanishing point,
seductive as cults
seized by efficiency & profit.

The child knows not the colour
that came first; remains hovering
uncleaved to the bosom,
awoken by fiestas & toys &
charms on TV. She flinches at
the holy man's official assurance.

Goes forth, galloping.

Mabuhay is life.

Looking back.

Looking kindly.

On her feet, swift as limbs,
telling her friends how
she arrived here in a language
she doesn't understand.

Glittering in star-spangled
denim.

Lucky Nose*for Stephanie*

After sermons,
I most likely rely
on *Lola*.

This is for you.

Leave a space for her ghost
posing in photos;
portraits
with/of her.

Her bones are softer.
Franciscans strike
her coloniality,
& choke on *leche flan*.

Lola is tender
the Pinoy way
in her billowy housedress,
dunking biscuits in tea.

Stoic.

Folds hearts

& harmonies under
pillows.

Wades through intuition.

Miraculous wholes.

Peels rust
behind kitchen cupboards.

Principled but principal.

Deals with absolute
moralities & storms,
married to Him.

Calls a face
by name, daydreams
lullabys in her
accent.

Nose is lucky.

Birthing anthems
abundant as
kindness.

A new body.

An old hand.

Humble airs.

God fearing.

The sum of us.

A Chapel Kiss

I desire the
spectacle
of love, marriage,
and all it affords.

Two lovers,
a chapel kiss,
rice thrown
in celebration.

Facing Asia

Our bodies contoured like a contemplative kiss
Stands apart a little less-bolder than Washington.
A liftoff from the West to Intramuros' elegant fan,
Yields pleated skirts worn by women of
Rizal. A chorus of rice terraces recalls our cradle.
Donning a new suit, tailored during monsoons in
June. Lotus-leaf like soldiers, waterproof in
Red and white, resurrects demons of war.
When elephants walked inside Angkor Wat,
They walked on the tips of their toes.

Oh, the colours, an incendiary char!
No curfews to stretch constellations of life:
The reincarnation of birds & bees.
Thriving in deepest love, lusting under skin.
Fast-forward to an era when we become split & cabled
In front of the TV: mute conundrums of the rope.
It is a reckoning like the day we are born.
'Til our breaths freeze absurdly.

We pause for fresher inventions:
A Renaissance of the maternal Mercedes
To nest inside glasshouses.

The costume of nations, vigorous cultures, colours

Stinking polished. Might kneel for the dollar.

Might not. Plebs do better than

Poets. Wearing pyjamas all day,

A poet's path to dismantle the ego.

False perceptions honours misfortunes,

Drives change, blooms remembrance.

Five billion take a stand, with pitied

Voices & insurmountable kinship.

Sees our fate plainly as faith.

The Poet

The poet wrote the divine as human,
dared thy Lord to speak.

A soul proud beyond priestly robes
saw a complete Messiah:

His tremendous sperm
legitimising Marcos' martial law
for unabashed personal ambition.

There is silence - where it's broken.

All that surgery
for a six-pack.

Under the cracked sun,
laired and furnished
in prayers & theft,
well past deadlocked skies.

How many vaults & vows must
you mask for machines! We who have
loved and lost, hidden in utility
with all our busy hoping; never severed
from the womb. The impure invisible war
smears charred branches, lights a homecoming,
a sacred longing.

The time it takes to make salt.

A man like a man, with enough spirit
'til the deathbed. To be caged in Tupperware,
trapped by the sound of couples weeping.

O Rebellion! We bid a new dawn.

The sun is surreal & pleasures carry infinite
division.

Let us exchange a man for your will, then.

Approach us only without judgement.

Lessons did not begin on Sundays,
they began in bed.

Somewhere, sometime, the muscular terror
believes. But mostly, the mysterious plague us.

Lest we dare to call upon thee.

Throat

The compass orbits the heart,
steering heirs borne from necessity.

It treads upon doom. Climbs ravenous walls.

Even oceans grow weary like the age of
time. Today, the agony of mothers
brings heroes into confusion. They appear
wayward but intact.

Question: Why do they?

Answer: They finely, firmly love.

The news heralds a new vaccine, and
self-imposed selfies.

Everybody's clock triumphs
broken victories.

Inequality as just,
our identities in eulogies.

We remember, don't we?

The last excuse:
the status of our throats.

Freedom

Perhaps freedom is the innocence

to have our dreams intact.

Rights over privilege,

a fate borne from choices.

What right do I have if I choose

to pull

a gun

in a crowded room?

Peace depends on many.

Rulers are not despotic.

And if you really must know,

hostilities began without my knowledge.

Yet it is I, the heir apparent,

the military commander who is

bound,

deserving of punishment.

Radiant Barbed-Wires

I return voluntarily armed only
with a clear conscience.

My faith ill fortified by
Habeas Corpus.

A country bedevilled by rebellion,
threatens to explode to bloody revolt.

Dear AustPinas:

Define your terms.

Must we destroy in order to build?

What means more wealth without
the rightful share of labour?

Why defend freedom when carrying arms?

What is truth when attacked by lies?

Dead words battle tea-cosy comforts.

Fathom ills we have seen.

Contemplate no victors, only victims.

Land in her arms,

quench the thirst for water.

Our story rages with skulls

& umbilical cords.

Even older ghosts

petrified by history

howl dead Earth!

This they have died for:

radiant barbed-wires.

Calmness erodes splinters,

straps generous healing.

Unlocks a rare ear.

Not so Australia Fair

Why do you speak with that accent.

What boat did you arrive in.

Where in Manila did you say you were from.

What made your skin so dark.

Have you ever been to Europe.

Did you have to squat to use the toilets

back home. What was it that brought you here.

Who is Kylie Minogue. Was Australia

born on a ballot box or a battlefield.

Can you say the word 'please'. Did you follow

Trump. How many people did Duterte

kill. Why is your last name Spanish.

How did you afford your house

when you can't even pay your fees.

Did you take only what you needed.

Did you have your life narrowed down.

Do you bow to Jesus Christ.

Have you visited the Americas.

Have you ever been arrested by the cops.

Do brown lives matter.

Is it true your great, great, grandfathers family

was at war with your great, great grandmothers.

Is your husband a chauvinist.

Do your brothers exude machismo.

Point to China from here.

What does *Riders in the Chariot* mean to you.

Who was Wolverine.

Has your dog got a leash.

Do you have 'Red Alerts' where you are from.

Why are there pigs on the streets of Double Bay.

Do you know Australian slang. Whack
another on the barbie.

Do you whip your back.

Why are your brows tattooed.

What do you mean you can't eat meat.

Did you shake John Howard's hand.

Why won't they recognise Aboriginal people
in the Constitution. Whose land do you walk on now.

You were once an engineer. Why do you
now deliver pizza.

Have you been mistaken for an Indonesian.

What about a Malaysian. Indian. Korean. Thai.

Do your kids watch Playschool.

Have you seen *BMX Bandits* with Nicole Kidman.

Do you watch *Home and Away*.

Do you go to the beach or do you go bush.

Explain what 'witchetty grub' means.

Have you ever eaten it.

Have you ever listened to Dr G. Yunupingu,
otherwise known as Yothu Yindi.

Did you take your mother with you when you arrived.

What about your father.

Will I catch what you have.

Are the barbarians at the gate.

Do you go back to Manila every year.

Do you go back at all.

Constitution

The people under Her Majesty

—shall be lawful

—shall be uniform

—shall be altered

—shall form an allegiance to the House:

a House of force, of moneys,

Will—bound to all or Nothing

with the advice and consent of the Spiritual present authority

extended to Her Majesty's heirs and successors.

Qualification

shall mean

divided free will,

one-self

to exercise powers and functions

of no other Act

than the established authority.

This Act

Her Majesty's pleasure in ten thousand laws

makes every part of the day original.

Boundaries

for the purposes of the settlement

shall be drawn by the most Excellent Kingdom.

~~We~~ are entitled

as ~~we~~ think fit

to power Almighty, to privileges.

First peoples are not recognised

under this Constitution,

their interest in land.

values,

their territory

altered in war.

Our Kingdom

may in like manner dissolve

the power of the first peoples,

a division of order.

And in their absence

fill vacant places,

notwithstanding failure to proceed to business

for Acts

which Constitute

the [un]Original State.

Her Majesty is governing class,

whose destination

is the Commonwealth.

To maintain classes,

to execute power, will, rights

for consumption:

a manufactured State

a good.

The people are

humbly relying on the blessing of Her Majesty

to appeal to Her powers

to breach limits

to be entitled

and privileged

to be free

to bear

Her Crown.

The Indolence of the Filipino

One must pray to God to give good humour
lest we sink in our graves frowning.

A house disturbed & disordered
arrest aspirations for Castilian.

Unsevered from our carabao,
deprived self-esteem.

Accepting the yoke of suffering,
levelled with beasts.

A cord stretched too tightly
demands Divine action.

Like the first Augustinians whose accounts
Gaspar de San Augustin copies.

More gallant & mannered than inhabitants
of Moluccas, who live off their husbandry.

The delectable civilisation,
paralysed the happiness of the heart.

For we live in dignity

as rational creatures:

attend mass, believe what we're told,

pay dues, work & suffer in silence.

We aspire to nothing, not even understand

Spanish

& remain unsevered from our carabao.

San Agustín's Letter on the Filipinos – 1725

(i)

Subjoined to the letter written by father Fray Gaspar de San Agustín is the following, the origin of which I cannot account for, but which indicates the wide circulation that the letter must have had.

Questions of Father Pedro Murillo [Velarde] of the Society of Jesus

What is the Indian? *Reply*—The lowest degree of rational animal. *Question*—How many and what are his peculiarities? *Reply*—Twenty-one, as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Pride | Without honor. |
| Friend | Without loyalty. |
| A drunkard | Without satiety. |
| Compassionate | Without mercy. |
| Reserved | Without secrecy. |
| Long-suffering | Without patience. |
| Cowardly | Without fear. |
| Bold | Without resolution. |
| Obedient | Without submissiveness. |
| One who practices austerities | Without suffering. |
| Bashful | Without sense of honor. |
| Virtuous | Without mortification. |
| Clever | Without capacity. |
| Civilized | Without politeness. |
| Astute | Without sagacity. |
| Merciful | Without pity. |
| Modest | Without shame. |
| Revengeful | Without valor. |
| Poor | Without corresponding [mode of life]. |
| Rich | Without economy. |
| Lazy | Without negligence. |

Laus Deo.

*Résumé of the entire letter by the said
Father Murillo*

(ii)

Some considerations concerning the matter in Father Gaspar de San Agustín's letter

Father Pedro Murillo says, 'there is no [redacted] rule by which to construe the Indians; [redacted] each [redacted] needs a new syntax, all [redacted] anomalous. With the Indians the argument does not conclude [redacted], since no one is like to himself; for, in [redacted] a day, he [redacted] colors [redacted] a chameleon, takes more shapes than a [redacted] and has more [redacted] than a Euripus. He who has most to do with them, knows them [redacted] In short, they are [redacted] contrarities, and the best logician [redacted] reconcile(s) them. They are an [redacted] and [redacted], in which no species [redacted] and no points of exactness distinguished'.

But since in this letter, [redacted]
[redacted] let us see [redacted] [redacted] of the good that the Indians possess... They are most clever in any handiwork. [redacted]
[redacted] They are most beautiful writers; [redacted] tailors and barbers [redacted]
[redacted] They are excellent embroiderers, painters, goldsmiths, and engravers, [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] as is seen clearly in the many good engravings that they make daily. They are good sculptors, gilders, and carpenters. They make the water craft of these islands, the galleys, pataches, and ships of [redacted] They act as sailors, [redacted] and divers; for there is scarce [redacted] who cannot swim excellently. They are [redacted] pilots of these seas. They are very expert in making [redacted] delicate and exquisite [redacted] They make hats, *petates* or rugs, and mats, from [redacted] [redacted] and [redacted], which are very beautiful, and embroidered with various kinds of [redacted] and

They are remarkable mechanics and showmen, and they make complicated mechanisms which, go through motions with propriety and accuracy. There are jewellers. They make

I have seen them in Manila. They have great ability in music. There is no village however small, for the services of the Church.

They have excellent voices—sopranos, contraltos, tenors, and basses. Almost all of them can The most remarkable thing is

by mere seeing (we) learn them almost without any teaching; On this account it is said that the Indians have their understanding in

.

Notes

Ur-Rizal Theory: The Enigma Syndrome

Harold Augenbraum, Rizal's critic and translator mentions: 'The "use" of José Rizal is a never-ending pastime, from the international, multichapter or organisation Knights of Rizal to leftist university professors in search of tenure. The new Rizalian ambiguity has grown to such an extent that it has created an Ur-Rizal theory, known in the Philippines as "the enigma syndrome," i.e., the man cannot be known; he is a *santo*'.

See José Rizal. (2006). 'Introduction'. *Noli Me Tangere*. Translation and Introduction by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. xxiii.

Piso para sa Pasig (Filipino: *A peso for Pasig*) was a campaign introduced in the nineties to oversee the rehabilitation efforts for the river.

'*Pulis*' (Police).

Sabong in Taytay

Cockfighting (Filipino: *sabong*) is a popular sport in the Philippines; illegal ones, called *tupada* or *tigbakay*, occur in secluded cockpits or backyards. Gaffs (or slashers) are attached to the fowl's legs. The game fowl are likely to be nearest to the Indian red jungle fowl (*Gallus gallus*), from which all domestic chickens are believed to be descended.

'*Soltada*' (setting the cocks to fight, then the fight itself), '*Presto*', (apuesta, bet),

'*Logro*' (winnings), '*Pago*' (payment).

Wala

‘*Wala*’ (None).

‘*Wala na ako rito!*’ (I am not here anymore!)

Upon His Return

Indios are the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. Rizal had written of the country’s *indios* who believed ‘the legend that their king, chained and imprisoned in the cave of San Mateo, will one day come to free them from oppression. Every hundred years he breaks one of his chains. He already has his hands and his left foot free. Only his right foot remains. This is the king who causes earthquakes and tremors when he struggles and shakes. He is so strong that when you shake his hand, you come away without a bone, which he pulverizes on contact. Without knowing why, the *indios* call this king Bernardo, perhaps confusing him with Bernardo del Carpio’.

See Rizal José. (2011). *El Filibusterismo*. Translation, Introduction and Notes by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 37.

El Filibusterismo

‘*Corruptissima in republica plurimae leges*’: Tacitus, Roman senator (56-119CE). *Annales*, III, 27. The more corrupt a republic, the more laws it has.

‘Into your hands I commend my spirit’: said to be Jesus’ final words.

See Rizal José. (2011). *El Filibusterismo*. Translation, Introduction and Notes by Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin. 240.

Bones

‘A rib made of clay’: references Genesis 2:22 ‘Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man’.

See Barker Kenneth, Burdick Donald, Steek John, Wessel Walter, Youngblood Ronald (Eds.). (1995). Genesis 2:22. *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. 9

Facing Asia

The colours of the Japanese flag are red and white.

Yellow Revolution was seen as change against the two decades rule of President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Yellow ribbons garlanded the demonstrations during the revolution, following the assassination of Filipino senator Benigno ‘Ninoy’ Aquino, Jr.

Many of the *Ilustrado* (such as Antonio Luna and Apolinario Mabini) were known as renegades because they did not initially favour an armed revolution of the Spanish occupation in the Philippines.

The Indolence of the Filipino

C.f. Rizal José. (1890, July 15–September 15). ‘On Indolence of the Filipinos’. *La Solidaridad*. Translated by Guadalupe Forés-Ganzon. 2(35)–2(39). Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 464–469, 490–499, 526–533, 560–579, 600–607.

‘Carabao’ (Filipino: *kalabaw*) is a domestic swamp-type water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) native to the Philippines.

San Agustin’s Letter on the Filipinos – 1725:

‘San Agustin’s Letter on the Filipinos – 1725’ was sourced from: Colin Francisco, Combés Francisco, Agustin Gaspar de San. (1690-91). ‘San Agustin’s Letter on the Filipinos’. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. Edited by Emma H. Blair, James A. Robertson. Vol. 40. Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company. 279-283.

‘Laus Deo: out of sight, one might think, out of mind’. These words are inscribed in the Washington Monument, Washington DC, United States of America.

The Edge of Seas

VS

Lost Generation

Harold Legaspi

Para sa bayan / For my country

The Edge of Seas

1

His heart sinks when they did not show. He spends New Year's Eve on his lonesome; asleep by the stroke of midnight. The food he had prepared gathers icicles as it remains in the overzealous refrigerator. On New Year's Day, he lies back on his bed daydreaming to music that say all is not lost. It is dusk. Not having eaten all day, he leaps from bed to visit Pica Pica Café for a meal. Being at the café reminds him of the time they had met, severing two degrees of separation between them. When his food arrives, he loses his appetite. Gawking at the steak, unable to eat, he fumbles for change in his pockets which he places on the table. Then he leaves the café with his stomach grumbling. It wears him to have his hunger misunderstood. And only he carries that burden.

Silence mimics death: a grim-reaper
unblinking with his nonchalant mantle,
the possibilities of afterlife are three, though
heaven is distant & hell disenchanting,
purgatory awaits, a prison of
unbridled unrequited fancy,
crueller, impaled ghosts, picking the skin of
mandarins, grotesqueries of mirrors,
& poems unwritten
to suppose an abstract delusion
of shivering heat
what was he meant to say?
was said upon his leap
where it creased the night
bursting with tombs & insomnia

Scathed from his isolation, with energy waning at the trough of his motivations, it is difficult to reach out to them, not knowing where they might be. This isolation has been exaggerated by his poor-man's Mandarin. The next few days allows only minimal interaction with the locals, to haggle for rice and eggs with the street vendor, to buy instant noodles from the corner store. He's been listening to The Carpenters, desolated being in a foreign land which takes its tourist as prisoners, a rigorous test of adaptation.

High & mighty politicians know nothing
of it, poker-faced rhetoric, justice chalked,
open yet defeated by namesake demons,
the deception of frail petals, a tribal farce,
roots decaying like the menace of sins
distorting truth spun by rebels
frothing over spilt ink
his catholic glow emit auras
bruised lighting
tonic tenses
a labour of love, undeniable campaigns
seeking off-cut meats
to plaster the sovereign to his face

3

He hopes each day would be their reunion. With all of life's possibilities, he supposes that a miracle would embrace him. His heart yearns for some confirmation of their whereabouts. He sketches cartoons in his notepad, dreaming up quizzical creatures that reminds him of the one he loves. He hangs prayer flags on doorknobs, the wall above his bed, near the dunny, the kitchen windowsill, and among other nooks and crannies. He *is* that bowerbird collecting treasures as gifts. He places these gifts for them in a carton which he keeps underneath his bed. Whether or not these acts would be welcomed is his greatest fear—a fear echoed by the possibility of winding up an eternal bachelor.

Everlasting bloom abandoned with parting seas,
tourist in troughs, solitary poetics,
a Freudian slip evokes the unfamiliar,
all alone, haunted by hunger, the grand
pact—gummed up by excursions, televised songs
melancholia of dawns, sweating with zeal,
when Plan A meets Plan Z, the buttons are unbuttoned
lipstick on dolls & bears,
friendship wares and baroque records
agonising over the missing one
how he holds his tenderness
in captivity, a wingless odyssey
& hands swathed in bandages

4

He spends an entire day in his room mulling over thoughts. He tallies his prayers in his journal of dreams, locked beside his bed. He is fraught over answers, and knows not the questions. He morbidly jokes to his stuffed bear who smiles back at him. It is settled down on the head of the bed, just staring, with its almond eyes, still as water. Perhaps, he thinks, there is an angle in his love's character, which may empathise with his plight for another chance with him. After all, if he was correct, they are in fact intertwined in soul. He resolves that his feelings are real and does define his waking life.

A bullet has been shot flying somewhere
fast, train-spotting, a serious frolic, heavy
jackets lurking underground with inanimate
dust toasting to the best of them
ransacking vestibules to catch the attention
of strangers, wading downstream to disturbed
beds, a portrait fails to resemble his
image-repertoire
a shelter indistinct, burrowing, a streak of bad
luck from a swarm of bees
the hero imperma, a fallen man
listening night after night to over-priced
rental talks upon walls soaked of
slit wrists & shards

5

He wakes at dawn with a vision kindled of them—they are together, sharing smouldering glances, stranded on a deserted island. They cook fish on an open fire, chewing young coconut meat and drinking its juice. Half-awake, half-asleep, he jots the image and lulls himself back to sleep. They are his dying love. He recalls this frequently with desire, which he does not confuse with lust. This desire, yet to be blessed with pleasures, has a life of its own. It speaks in music and in dreams, sketches and flags. He desires but does not eat. He is seldom hungry. Life is such...such that the desire anticipates some sort of healing and trauma—working together to empower him against the distance that pervades their union. There, in a supine position lying on the floor of his room he repeats eighty-nine times: *‘When your hand will touch my heart, it will make me feel alive’*.

Growing up being told these feelings are real
yet the last to know of its consequences
eyes locked in grace
then exile severs ties to his body
bound for thrills,
& derecognition
an incantation, a fallacy, begets magic begets
tangerine dreams
sometimes there is nothing beautiful
nights of bad poetry & verse
an unfamiliar history
a glut of love-notes for the sake of them
testing his own face, marvellous spirits enjambs
his presence, presents, pre-sets,
pleasures spared in lieu

6

W. H. Hudson once said: 'Life being more than all to me'. Yet, nightmares have placed him in a fragile state; leaving him barely able to step outside his room. For him, life has not been *to be*. Life is merely *nothing*. Which is to say he has *no-one*. Song after song, he listens in jest, laughing at the absurdity of his fruitless pursuits to reach for them. Hurriedly, he wades through his papers and considers the time he has left to be abroad. The impossibility of extending his visa meets him with mixed emotions. His pleas for their whereabouts have yet to emerge. There had been no other word from the one he loves, except a letter they handed him when they last parted at the airport a year ago. No return address. No number attached. The letter merely said: 'I will be waiting'. Yet, waiting does not do. It does nothing except ask favours from the writing's of dead poets.

Seas of wilting disguises
refraining from worldly ebullience
the avant-garde mistrusts spinning wheels
to meet a companion, wrestling knives-and-forks
scouring wet markets, the occasional Smith,
maxed cards & bitch ditties
concentric days in slow-motion
underneath kitchen sinks, preening
fish tanks & tea-cup despairs
the air up here is hotter
they are the first order of business
a miniature colony of selves
reserved for changes of state
& bloodied guesswork atrophies

The obscure alien takes pleasure in expressing ‘no’. They threw away the key and now he has ‘nothing’, but the worst of ‘everything’ abroad. Great night’s parable it is. He loves. And now he really truly does love. He considers changing his name for them. Names are changed for many reasons—as part of altering gender, if the name is disliked, if divorced or married, to de-anglicise, to identify, to shorten or to confine to a will. His thoughts explore the essence his name emits, and the value he places upon it. It occurs to him that his father had done all he could to protect his surname with character. He, on the other hand, will utilise the wit of a *nom de plume*.

What's in a name? clichéd tones
turning stale, not to be trusted
it was when he first wrote it
the narrative seemed so clear
he pens it to burning souls
a schooner of which evaporates like snow
the scale of industries, grand designs
the meek precludes his endgame
incumbent pride twirls his inner experience
a sickly-sweet charade of burnished egos
a genesis of sins mocks god's humour
retires each seventh day for measurements
not without butter, cream & chrysanthemum tea
not without incessant buck's parties

8

He finds his concentration drifting towards his motherland. Without their presence and acknowledgment, he feels torn. He knows of nobody in these shores and confines himself to his room most days. To liven things, he walks to the night markets, passing vendors selling paraphernalia he neither needs nor could afford. It breaks his heart—the thought they might never meet again. He decides to spend his weeks budget on gifts for family back home, pre-empting the end of his time abroad. Consequently, he carries two small cartons back to his room, filled with clothes which say: ‘I Travelled to the Centre of the Universe and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt’.

One whose footsteps echoes in the chamber
of spoilt toils, neither remembered, nor forgotten
a non-descript sweetheart, lost
in circuits & wiring, excess bandages
he commissions cartons—gifts—for the pit
like a leper taking a drag of his last cigarette
a poor man on fire, blotched rear-view mirrors
whose reflection is masked with duct-tape
launching into monologues, peeling away scars
a congregation of selves all along
murmurs & a silent voice, bedsheets slipping
euphoric beasts in their asylum
plagued riddles, a frank fate
infrequent intimacies & inaction
careens most fatal consumption

9

He stares at the wall, defeated by luck. His feelings for them have not changed, and if it has, it may well have intensified. Yet, he feels incomplete... Worse, empty! He *is* back to find them, but does not know where to search. For this lack of detail, he ought to pinch them on the ear. He believes in a fate kinder than it had been, one that will unlock a path gradually. Yet, there is no cigar. Staring at the wall may not be such an odd past time.

He keeps dredging the deep sea
marking walls with graffiti resonant
of yesterday's kiss, that everlasting night
fashioned for romantic binges on TV
he hunts like a juvenile plotting
mixes spice with chocolate
he is unsexed
brash by noon
cursing pillows & walls
but terrible at it
he is slow boiled
the dearest flower, a migrant bird
starved for the waking
ragged days are not poetic
& untruths beckon him, interwoven,
the horned ritual

He tries to find them at their usual haunts: across the street, Pica Pica Café, the corner bookshop, the Botanical Gardens. He recalls their first kiss on a stroboscopic night in the heat of the city. Back then both were confused, not knowing where their friendship would lead, following feelings of desire. Both believed in love at first sight. Together, they ate, they drank, and got to know each other's nature. Both imagined a future together, where they would be more refined and sophisticated than they actually were. Then both looked down to the floor, afraid to meet eyes, conscious of the simple and modest attire they wore.

Sharpening his teeth affected his damned
vocabulary, letters to the mother land
his offensive approach
a duet-in-cheek, pries lips
stirring in the sea
badly dressed in disagreeable weather
the ripeness of sadness
he dissolves, sniffing the effervescent air
slick as skulls & outnumbered
coincidences masked by gods, irregular
& thorned, smoothing his gallop
acceptable appetites, extinction
a moment's sigh—a comrade
being struck by his imminent demise

11

Perhaps his plight to find them enriched his soul, though it has also taken with it principles he values most: untainted love, freedom of expression. His killer instinct is no longer within his character. Yet, as a creature of the world, he believes he is still capable of things inconceivable. As he struggles to hone his energy to get out of bed, his thoughts centres on them. As a form of resistance, he tries to write a poem, but does not go beyond three lines:

Think about you so deeply
At times, I forget to breathe
for air

Memories wilt. The mind adjusts. He drowns his misery with hot water & lemon and skips dinner to glimpse at the stars outside his windowsill.

The unseen lover gets no applause
as he tumbles out of the sky
illuminating pages of his book
in absurdity
a suitor, coin-jangler,
out-of-time and hurt
he writes less than he feels
loitering between lines,
his cure for missing the rhythm
the improbable man prays through the pen
& resists susceptibility to form
his next batch of words are painful like
having teeth extracted

12

To make matters worse, a visit to the doctor reveals *bradycardia*—a slow heart rate. What could be the cause, he distractedly asks himself; and presumes it is due to a disordered heart. Now he questions why he has placed his life at stake for them. The hookah-smoking caterpillar has fallen into the abyss. When the heart is weak, the soul reflects upon a mirror. He loses himself walking in the summer rain to reach the obscurity of his room.

Buried in his inner sanctum
a devil wields his sword
violent desires come on at night
a rough assembly, lighthouses,
the walls are the best inquisitors
most fatal in fright
a riotous life, a leaf lying across the table
offensive currents
tepid water spiked with spirits
hollow sockets, vacant shelves
that unyielding feeling
scratching his name in cement
cranks his iron will—
the difference a day could make
when the sky aligns with the stars,
the waves, his heart

There are silver-serpent skies. A day under the sun reveals the rich tapestry of graffiti on walls, behind the corner shop. Some of it blasphemous, others vivid—caricatures of pussycats, dogs, and people with heads of eagles and vultures. A bridge across the road leads to a canal straight ahead. Weird angles descending to a pathway that illuminates the circuits of the stream. The scene is diminished by domes that enclose the air-up-there. He picks up pebbles, which he grips with all his might then throws. Pebbles ricochet like light on the water's surface.

His shadow is punctured by time
& he has plundered his darkness
sometimes he can no longer see his
love's face in his mind, or when he turns
off the lights at night
he is fire, he is ice
he wants an appearance fee
sometimes he walks in Taipei
without a map, headed no-where-in-particular
he squints at streetlights,
cracks a soda on the curb
sometimes he is the dumb waiter
sometimes he is not himself

Masts with trade galas advertises fetes; markets. Ropes are stretched and knotted, as he climbs up the banks of the river nearby. He can make out a pink umbrella, over a peddler selling roasted chestnuts. A ghetto blaster sings hymns from pop-divas. Popular tunes from a street concert by performers. Slam poets battling in public. Dissing to-and-fro, with political urgency. The water is murky, grey and green, reflecting the top of the sky. Revellers are wiping their tears of laughter, as they chant the hymn songs of yesterday's hits.

After a day outside, he strips naked
underneath the shower and runs the water
to soak his skin
an erasure
his restless body churns,
bath salts to exfoliate
the orifice & dusty nooks
he smells like his skin
the lovely streets, a drunk balloon
serviettes for his soup
he drifts between yin and yang
lines running between
where light recedes
then sinks again

It is late in the afternoon. He sits with his tea around Taipei 101, people-watching among the high-rises, sighing and waiting for any sign of them. Amid the shoppers carrying groceries, there are buskers belting folk rhythms, suits dropping coins. He receives an anonymous note that reveals the address of his love's abode. Is this real? He is shocked. He is thrilled! He checks the map to determine that it is only three stops away from World Trade Centre station. Now he plots rocking up. And so began his evening of charms and spoils, of excesses and mood swings, beyond reason but full of angst, a patois of Chinglish, marked with hate-speech for being left to his own devices.

He is out of touch, low-brow
partial to decapitations
common memory
silk flags daily woven,
ruby petals fixed on pages
reflects nothing more than now
ideals of loftier days
neatly folded
coming home to them
the proletariat stress over swan songs
yet the bourgeois shrink in its mirth
he is neither here nor there—he can no
longer tell where—as he gasps for breath
knowing the *address*

He treads lightly on the patch of grass outside his love's abode. He hears the sound of crickets chirping, sees the sky descending as if closing in. At the gate, there is a sign to warn him against the dogs on premises. He evades the warning and proceeds to the driveway armed with pebbles to throw on the windowsill. Outside, he waits for a silhouette to appear at the window that might reveal the frame of his love. He is patient, and bides his time thinking up words that might express his feelings. The night turns to stalemate. He neither sees nor hears his love's dominion, instead, he decides to leave and return another day.

Could've been a scene of raucous candour,
or allegories coined by reason
that only made sense to him
a serenade comprised of crazy eyestrains—
the burning within
yet he insists composing a pointluck
serendipity, dealing with guesses
of the heart
his tail between his legs
leaving before his burial,
defeated, overlapping halves
Chinese-gestures
a delivery man of stock
& tragedies

A piece of the puzzle has been solved. Yet, he does not know his approach. He looks at their picture, then closes his eyes to imagine a montage of clear translucent figures fading from the physical world, free from matter, drifting, overlapping each other's boundaries—kindred spirits. He declares his love as his master, his sovereign, and his every constitution but he is afraid. His grief intensifies as he thinks he is a coward, unable to build up the courage to knock on their door. He spends the day at Longshan Temple, with its derelict deities, elaborate stone and wood carvings, bronze pillars and incense holders. He is swept by the federation greens, browns and reds—urgent walls and murmurs from the crowd's echoes, soft prayers divvied to gods.

He lights incense at Mazu's altar
pursing his lips in prayer
a closed room
beyond summer
& he has far to go
dusty shoes,
streaks on his hair, his brown skin
the blinds are pulled
one eye crawls,
the other is sound asleep
the caress, longing,
entranced sweat & ambulatory
night-caps, the world aboveground
without an end

This is the night he watched an old film, a film which subjugated the act of love for money. Though the dialogue was foreign, he enjoyed its slapstick humour. Yet, none of the actors touched him. None of them salvaged their name for their creed. He imagines his story on TV. Indeed, this season has been extraordinary. He deals silently with the bruises to his ego, writes polemics on passion at the edge of his pit. Whatever it is that needs altering with oneself, one almost has to die for it.

He plays solitaire carefully noting
the hierarchy of a kingdom, court jesters
in black & red, straight-angled,
one-dimensional
TV static morphs, an unpeopled heart
the couch, a force to be reckoned with
lingers upon landscapes
the tempered
outside, cars brawl the city
screeching metal & rubber:
folk tales in pubs, and memories of arid dates
camphor trees lined under the moon
bloodless hearts shepherding games
they don't understand

For if it comes between them, it will truly break his heart, the pieces of which will never regain consciousness. He is perturbed by the likelihood of rejection. He questions the moon, the stars, the masculinity of silence. He is vexed, and retreats to his bed, where it is safe. He counts the days he spends alone and weighs it against the possibility of nights he could spend with his love. The days are no longer familiar and the nights are cold. His will is anchored by reason that he cannot go it alone any longer. This raises his confidence to go forth and walk the path that has laid bare.

They might not hear him clanging
the cranes
shuffling past sultry mountains
gripping cicadas in the mist
sandpapering eyes
listening to the murmurs: the
rush of water in the streams
the derelict wind
the edges of sand in an hourglass
poor citizens live urbanely
and he is poor
armed with the weight of fate
he mistrusts, for he is hurt beyond repair,
and lives only for today

What will there be beyond himself? He recalls the way they parted. It was the last time they were together, the black moon shining through the window upon their faces. They could hardly make out a smile. They were younger back then; more innocent. The backdrop of parting seas. Now he is ready to face that everlasting blue. His specialty had been days filled with near escapes, and pep talks to himself against responsibility. He quivers at the thought of owning a cat, a mortgage, some fish. His life till now had remained flightless. Now he questions the indeterminacy of love. He gathers the carton underneath his bed—precious gifts—takes the metro to his love's abode. He loiters for a while, shivering in the night chill. Stretches the tendrils upon the unlocked gate. Finally, he realises the sky has changed, and that he has changed. He feels again the ills of those formidable nights, where they seemed closer but less sure of what was to come. And since then it has plagued his memory. This is the moment where he severs all that he was. Rocks up to the front and knocks on their door.

Seizing the night, he submits for judgement
learning the butterflies in his gut
whisking him to the trembling warmth of them
seagulls at the sea, a cold legend,
suspends belief under sultry clouds
when eyes meet and part,
suddenly dazzle
distance loses itself
giving carefully to his future
no promise except
the balance of values, reluctant time
it began unnoticed
a bifocal vision
languid affection through worn eyes

They answer the door in their pyjamas. They rub their eyes clean; surprised to see him, and speechless. He stands there a while, carrying the carton then hands it to them without saying a word. They take the gift and ask him to follow them inside. It is a studio-loft, with a spiral staircase separating the lounge from the bedroom. The walls are stucco and a colour like tobacco. The window faces an old theatre off a main street. Despite her well-worn boards, the studio-loft was neat with displays of local ephemera. They lounge on the sofa, talking as if no time had passed between them. 'How did you find me?' they had asked, at which point he cues them to open up the gift. *Harold & Maude* is on the TV, and they act out its scenes, including existential duologues; and the part where Harold pretends to hang himself, with his mother walking in on him; Harold's mother certain he was faking it.

Nonplussed by their invitation to enter
an invention, a fine jade
green moss, sinister ironies
looking upon falling stars
his buried flower scent surfaces among
echoless mountain groves
a thousand statues,
nothingness
spasmodic pleasureless sleeps
for adults only
the tongue tastes
broken plates, thorned &
chilly upon sacred altars
and dusty books

He feels free zipping on the motorcycle with them, winding through indiscriminate alleyways filled with people selling *stuff*. The streets are a melting pot of exchanges—its clever designs, with cash circulating. He eyes the stalls, the smog, the dirt, fibres and feathers. Children playing hopscotch on chalked concrete, the homeless perched among stray chickens; kicked to the kerb by the vultures on the streets.

He leaves his name undrained

& remembers the boredom

excuses edged in heat

clothes piled on the floor

wordless & foaming

idle mornings, fluffed sheets

infinity limits

here is the sweetness

it lies at his pace

brimmed with nectars & hums

a grand ballroom

the stuff of champions

a thorough base,

a thorough ground

On the ground it is different. Walking along the road from Taipei Main Station, past Harmony Park, he alludes to prior exchanges between them. The sequence of neighbourhoods plays out like a montage of flickering landscapes, rapidly changing from still to still. Soon this is followed by violent shocks to the senses: the brush of sweaty bodies on the pavement, the crackling of fried food, the whirring of sewing machines, the air thick with the scent of stinky tofu & spices—cinnamon, cardamom, clove—exhaust fumes from the traffic, the smell of stagnant water rising from the gutters, piles of rotting vegetables, steaming broths Lanzhou beef noodle soup, the searing heat of hotpot.

He looks through both sides now

distinct in form

a heightened ability

to understand

the sunrise, dusk

togetherness

peace

at last

They watch the sunrise together after a night spent in each other's arms. Later on, he sees them glare outside his quaint windowsill with a soulful exhale. For the rest of the morning, they prepare raw cuisine sourced from the fish market nearby, clamping the rice and salmon with their bare hands. When the sun had reached its highest point, they enter the rooftop and lie on the ground to sunbake till dusk.

Stories of foreign habitations,
of choices derived from home
a thousand plateaus
the imprecision of midday, midnight
melting clocks & canopies
visits to the coast
white handkerchiefs,
pockets
sometimes birds sing
sometimes frictional fiction
the warmth of fixtures
whitegoods
& brown sunshine
walkers of early night

The belt of seashore between the highway and the sea is an open stretch of land, vast and spacious. Out on the wet sand a seagull buries its beak in a dried jellyfish. They explore their surroundings, wandering through grottos and canyons, testing their limits. From the peaks, the bluish-greenery of the trees across the gulf radiates a misty light within the huge black mass of mountains. The lavender sky fills the horizon, until it morphs into a bewitching blanket of twinkling stars and purple-grey. They look away from each other, and are silent for a long time. He tries to find his bearings, and they scramble through rocks and bush, deliberating a track carefully, cautious of jagged edges. The trail weaves around a cliff, full of birdlife and lush greenery. They follow the fire trail deeper into the bush, passing gigantic rocks with carvings.

His personal touch
dissects the horizon
the air is cleared for silence
they do good
the island & the northerly breeze
seesaws that raise them to the sun
old bones, a sea, implacable feet
the soft edge of paper
journeys
long eyelashes
low intensity
backlighting, mixed moods
quivering with resolute action
distant stranger's shimmer

The town centre, close to the beach, shuts down by eight p.m. The beach is empty, charging itself for another day under the sun. Along the streets are rows of houses and they catch glimpses of TV screens flickering through living room curtains. Kids flock along the narrow pathways past their curfew, carrying baskets of fish. They inhale the cool air from the Pacific, a gentle breeze, fragrant like ocean mists of musk and lime. The local shops, protruding through garage doors sell them dried food snacks for the ride home.

He suspects his father's spirit
guides them past rusty blades
the co-incidence, an accident
his grandfather sewed
talismans on the family quilt
milk-threads & sashes, glinting swords
succumbing to touch
neither hip nor fence-sitter
offerings to god
wailing bodies of wonder
natty-haired trees & streets
a view from the heavens
creatures of
invasion

The night crawls. He remains with them, huddled near the bar, tipsy from too much liquor. They edge to the dancefloor and move in sync as if mimicking each other. Now, the music softens the mood with *Songs from A Minor*. He leans his head on their shoulder, and nods as they talk; he listens, but his mind is elsewhere. He twirls them in concentric circles then holds on tight as they slow dance to 'Piano & I'.

His earliest memory is
mother in the living room
on his third birthday
she is blessed with callouses
& knows no other way
a stark vision, a vessel
one he could understand
many, many years before he was born
she anticipated the skies
held herself
as a living shadow
for the day he'd remember
to breathe, salt crystallises
in the aquamarine

At Da'an, the pair, after a bout of silence, agree to buy some lollies for the walk home after merriment at the bar. They step into a convenience store, blinded by fluorescent lighting. They wander the aisles, squinting at the items for sale. The shopkeeper fashions a New York Knicks cap and an apricot rayon singlet, khaki pants. He chants under his breath, glued to the TV. The pair fish around for sour bears then huddle at the counter looking up at the flat screen perched on a high shelf. They notice the song playing: a video clip featuring a handsome woman dancing on water (coloured coffee) with drag megastars. It was heavily stylised, with pleated skirts like fans, cameras zooming in and out, showing extreme close-ups.

He sees them, and cares for them
the one who listens to his stories
once they bathed in a river
stepped into his dreams
& hovered under the cloudless sky
he knocks
& he waits
with silken breath
the stillness of oceans
beloved
curing ills & pulling them closer
a hearty soup
from a poisoned land
the earth and its core

Exhausted, yet unable to sleep, he shifts to autopilot, hunching in front of his book in pitch darkness. He resigns himself to his situation, and re-imagines the sequence of events that led up to this moment, which manifests itself as a righteous form of self-flagellation—he could have stayed with them; he wanted to; but didn't. It is plain to see that he is stuck somewhere; stuck in a place, though not in time, where the echoes of his longing for love is caught in-between staying here and the passage back home. This serves as a reminder of his despondency. He laughs at his wry fate, unaware of the rain, which began to fall.

He regrets not
the natural law
he knows he is blessed
& the water has stopped
he has thrown in his sword
voids the avoidance
he is lament
spends the rest of his life
healing

They stare at the painting, *Judgement Day*, which invokes the carnage anybody might expect of an end-of-the-world scenario; an Armageddon piece. Naked bodies and genitalia strewn all over the canvas, women in despair stooped on clouds, suited-up banker types burned in a lake of fire with brimstone—in a somewhat divine obliteration, a literal end-of-the-world final confrontation. He imagines his trajectory, struggling to find his rhythm with them, in the chaotic, nihilistic struggle of humankind, portrayed on canvass, watching a shadow of himself fall from the watchtower in flames. Realising that he is no longer alone, he briefly imagines being able to click on one of the people on the clouds, to access their private thoughts, scrolling through their memories like a library catalogue, until it could be explored like a planet.

a condemned man walks alone
without a shadow
he creates a vacuum
flickering tongues & fear
the conductor of his own symphony
he loathes—
he becomes the morning
the dream
& enters when not expected
he sounds familiar, always
he refuses to give his light to you
he cannot feel your pain
he is unveiled & not mysterious
he is a mirror of pure judgement

They sit at a table by the sea, relieved that they had survived a quarrel. He knows it would be one of many; that each time they would change, and live beyond to revere their memories. They would attract or be repulsed by each other like electrically charged particles of a magnet. He contemplates being alone again, a lifestyle borne from isolation; a constant reasoning of a soulless existence—as opposed to the still, conscious vision of their company. He removes his necklace and ties it around their neck; and submits wholly to their presence. They Eskimo kiss, gazing into each other's eyes. They stare at the ocean, and are at peace. He breathes on the back of their neck; they could distinguish his breath from that of the wind—it was warmer, concentrated and it seeped in under their skin. The tide was coming in.

he has five fingers in each hand

a mouth that drinks water

a tongue that seers

a spirit & a body

he whispers

holds his head low

a sliver of the moon

gazes beyond the field

& arrives home

he is an unnamed monsoon

the dust of man

he is glass, sirens,

stone

a fistful of salt

Lost Generation

[Walang Pamagat]

Mahal ko ang wikang Pilipino. Iyong mga tula lumalambot sa puso.

Tula ay hindi simisigaw, hindi umaakyat, tunaw ng tunaw sa puso ng mga tao.

Ang aking sinta: Ikaw ay nawala. Hindi ka makakakuha ng kahit anong bagay mula sa buhay, kahit na na-suerte ay binabaligtad.

Hindi natin ginagawa ito. Hindi tayo nag-iisa.

Mahal ko ang wikang Pilipino.

I love the Filipino language. Poetry which softens the heart.

Poems do not shout nor climb, but dissolves in the heart of the people.

To my beloved: You were lost. You are unable to gain anything from life, not even if luck is reversed.

We do not. We are not alone.

I love the Filipino language.

Populars

If it be law, it is sanctioned, if it is rule therefore a mark, otherwise thought, a constant flame, be it feeling therefore meaning. They flock for survival, they flock for discovery—a spectacle—people flock to discriminate, they flock to resist and in the centre, there is insecurity. All the lamb's wool is shed and nobody mows concrete lawns. The green fields forged with secrecy, backed by money; fame is for faming for famous for shaming. Making-up comes later.

Such is the world. Certainly, certainty breeds security, affords a permanence, a station, an axe, tenure, insignias with stars. Curtains are drawn each day, to let in the light, the brightness of sunshine—a measure of the quality, speckled dreams, inextricable from nightmares, all of which even out to nothing. 'Til curtains are drawn again, or lowered, 'til that purple void.

The fashion of weekends morphs time, non-events mean obstruction, where there is stillness there is torrent. Yet, when one people's their solitude, one becomes a slave, or a fixture of perception, slowly moving thickness from a film of dirty meadows. To think slow, to act slower, to be forgotten. To turn emotion to reason. To profit. Much like the cow's hind make up burgers from yellow double arches. A cow does not think all that much. It is no more thoughtful because the choice they were not given. It is fed, prodded, refurbished then slaughtered. All the while, there is ambivalence, there is mood and there are moods, non-moods exist in the ether with methane and solubles. For moods switch with seasons, tempers the temporal, every time there is a peak, this is the peak. There is no exception. An ambivalent cow chews cud with the reasoning of a sage. There is silence, which surfaces on common ground, have you considered apothecary? A leader does not want to be led, but is

inferior to its superior. The obstruction hastes for champagne - liquid butter, there is no division in I. We excludes we. We excludes you. We excludes me.

Consistency wins the race, but there is no occasion more special than a breakup. Nobody, and nobody, and nobody cries peeling an onion skin. Consider it a fact, or black and white, acronyms which speed up words to reveal your body as scarred. Bosses demand, then thunder strikes. Consider it a necessity to fry pocketsful of dreams. Yet, is there no enchantment from the Other? A sentiment for splitting hairs, whispers, shards & rage. The empty feeling of numbness numbs, and reason falters wayside, oblique futures, estrangement. Having it done does the deal. And there is no fault in alienation. Sometimes glass lets water sit. Perhaps Populars mix with Loners, yet beautification breeds flocks, spits jealousy 'til pernicious tears.

On the rise, in plain-view, masks liminal spaces. In a period of re-asserting the centre, a gracious liar lends a hand. Foibles bring a certain unrest. Gossip does not unnerve the truth, rather re-focuses the centre to overtake sensible perceptions. That is not to say that lies are obtuse—they can be supportive, yet conceal, in-kind statements of reassurance and chance—a means to social success and progress. Suppose the lies become truth, suppose they do. An insult to the Face. Water on splinters. A splinter is made from wood. Wood decays in water.

Jocks

Sex is fecund.

Stasis unusual, unlike machines that do and wit athleticism. Macabre pools of concise history draw Jocks to wanderlust. It reddens fake threads, a shedding of skin. An inversion of thinking is required to spawn memories of yesteryear, when hunger seemed natural. The head is pretending to be a piece of wood, pretending, masquerading... little black splinters effaced by the moon, rampant crying, master disguises & burnt eyes.

The heat is perpetual, heat of sinking motion, heat of flagrant demise. Heat is not self-reflexive; it's likened to biblical ghosts. An overarching narrative strikes us dead, it sucks teat-by-teat. Nipples produce milk, navigating through unconscious places. Part memory, part desire, but not doing defines a stance somehow. Some other substance. Heat constructs the beast, & does not sit comfortably on polarising ecstasies.

The Jocks know the masterbatoriums. Hypnotised to kiss lips and kiss discriminately. O! To stain the sheets in an amphitheatre, to haunt legs. A sexuality of sole passion, labelled obtuse as it is articulated. Medication rooms are paradise lounges, which is good for the body, though not in excess. Sharp little bursts of juice force-feed myriad fantasies. Taut strings sound on harps. Clocks tick infinitely. Peeling flakes of dandruff.

The hand works the body who knows not its purpose. It begins discretely tending its spike and spoke. The cogs do the rest. A bent fascination to devour each other, casts the orifice purposeful. Heat warms the blood, the terrific sperms. We laugh at digestion and kiss the crown. A dream to unbutton tops made from silk, the holy black, blinding whites. Unnerves tension. Though doing so roughens memory. A wooden embrace. It is a cataclysmic affair, unbuttoning. Like thick incense potent in the air. Hats off to unhide hair. It is very entertaining, orbiting juices. A revolving planet, airs become moist, unlike a vacuum

like in space. To close the eyes and fathom fantasies. To be part-man, part-bat, to be a tiny insect crawling to taste honey. A vast expanse. A great plain, always original. It happens again and again. The moon sweats, itching to know its reflection.

Floaters

Spites wisdom, gyrates mechanically in swirling waters.

Floaters are among Jocks and Good-ats, announcing ‘not bad for a half-hour’s work’. Knives are useful, they yell for recognition. Tiny sperms, germinating in the forceful city. Unimagining comes surely as death. Chokes rhythms, to be totally free from passion. It is God-given, the Day of Judgement. We are carted with bushfires, pandemics, Zoonotic diseases and there is surgery next week. The Temple of Dogs, two white ladies are within sight. Branch out masochism and bedsheets wired by vulnerable excess. Foreboding. Strikes twelve—a little before sleep. An awakening, the garden in a mental asylum teaches decorum and poise. A New York mugger bends his oppression with the true colours of midday. *Nothing* revels in joy. Sanctum and submissive beauty and guns. Guns, which calculate its ferocity from the expanse of the Holocaust. Millions of patient mourners give vent to priests and priestesses.

It is cosmic to stop on the street, to set up camp and call it home. Ants bide their time exchanging Tupperware, drinking martinis and cajoling their clients. It is challenging to live virtuously. Think a slip of a tongue. To speak a little after sleep. We are sleepwalking. Tremendous readers do bid in the stark eyes of intelligence. A human soul knows not to exit this commercial, from the bedding of takeovers and vulnerable mergers.

Maybe this is a better number. Give me what’s mine and we’ll call it square. Most dangerous is the theft of dreams, a vision of crushing intimacy. I cannot pay by cash.

The architect thinks like the engineer like the doctor like the accountant like the nurse like the cleaner like the worker. There is strangeness in bitter fruit and crimson bodies. We summon bills and pray for our sins. We are so incomplete we live illogical extremities. No longer do we write love letters, we asphyxiated it with the culture of money, massive

technology. Mistake me not, we undergo depreciating. High-rises purify it—an inventory of scars.

Clearness of paper entrails fuse the head. If there be reticence, it does not mean procrastination, it does not mean dumbness, it does not mean no thought. It is a virtual sword, the cold shuddering. Cooks exist in multiplicity. For you, dinners each night in sheer tranquillity mean horror to others. He is learning how to be human. Scorpions circle the bed of a headless chicken. He is learning how to be human. He is learning how to be human.

Good-ats

A question dares to uncover the truth. Yet it floats in the ether, unanswered.

This is the importance of faith. We don't yet exactly know how to be human. We did degrees in the Humanities. I it. Put up shrines to idols. We tried begging on the iron floor of psychosis, dreamt apocalyptic demise. Shopped in chocolate delicatessens, mingled blood with intestines. There is solid matter. This is the matter. Sore-disembowelled feet. The spirit of the earth unbound. The real article. The daily news ignores real matters. Our feeling is opinionated. Lacks contemplation and lacks contemplation, as much as a prophet carries wisdom. We are books that contain knowledge not knowing what it contains. Perfection, in theory is imperfect, as pretence and soluble dreams. The world is a lie. Machines make parables of the mystic dead. Non-lessons of sinking elephants, whose memories forge exile. We are serious as much as we crack jokes of vacancy, of vacancy, ridicule. The height of contemplation might offend. Why is our room the slaughter? We know not what it contains. Everything is a jewel and a can of worms. As I do not yet know privacy. Just as a shadow is a silhouette. The moon silks its threads in the sun.

A race is a small piece of private goal, all strangulation, not at all telepathy, not at all mourning, all the suspicion of infidelity.

Metal monsters are tightly bound to slamming doors. A game-piece put to shame in a furnace. Monks are sublime like metal monsters. Yet, tenderness is barred from the reckoning, fails to be thoughtful.

But I know better this puzzle. It is the silence of men. The chopping block is oil, and the New World Order are totally sane in a state of catatonia. Clinically proven to do Good-at all to even everything.

Hands are composed of combustible *stuff*. God knows other gods, in His mania of settlement.

Quid pro quo in hotel resorts and backscratching. But then, a lion and a lion's mane point to hysteria. I have murdered a dollar, pressed buttons, self-destructed, everything and anything and everything. It is put to shame and polished a little like blisters. Eyes and teeth.

Bees are swarming and the mouth is watering. We play tennis to finesse the spin of the ball. I do not waste, not what, without how. It is composed of fingers on fire. A rotten meat. Sisyphus awaits the overdose of pleasures. Recurrent breaths and rotten eggs. Do we not touch soft skin to the tune of moths in the night? I am respected like a beast that farts and whines.

Normals

A generation is lost.

Normals

Lost Generations.

Normals

The Lost Generation.

Normals

Our Generation.

Grottolians

Life as the messiah of the human race.

Feels his body crossed by catastrophic manna. All recognition and sudden death.
Borne from the wings of delusion, or delirium, or godly divination. The schizoid clarity of
manly designs and ruptured beauty. He says he is fresh, fresh as a pan of eggwhites and milk.
Cooking the singularity of deceitful denotations. The very spark of existence.

The filthiest distraction is television. Not beyond realising that which we do not
realise for it is beyond the performance, and is for you alone, singularly. It fills an excuse. A
pint of sovereignty burnt asunder, calls for confusion. Hours upon hours, heck a life filled
with call it what you will.

A single cold rose, a clear rose, shows the absence of colour. Over-ripe and cheesy.
That which you buy from the street vendor with extravagant charms, bent and narrow.
Playing twice the tempo of rap music. An exotic book like the Bible to missionaries in Pinas
and China.

Beyond the boat, a refugee's life is erased. Poker cards are poker faced, and it makes
an excuse for two more necessary hands. A seething from change, crimson colours like
blood, the sudden stench. It is talking again, and it does not mean reconciliation, it does, and
it does by speaking. It does not enter thought.

It is an impenetrable prison, that which gives-in, when serenity is dismissed. O! The
day Grottolians call it quits. Everything is a sudden utterance, it is bitten and welded to the
air. A ceaseless change, a ceaseless charge, that which cannot be unsaid. It is a minotaur in a
labyrinth or a shop of apparitions. Picturesque like postcards from the sea and ceaseless
change.

An excuse is made as it is driven insane. A house infestation. Dollarmites could invest
in rational excess. An excuse is made. It is classified and shelved. It could not contend with

theory. Complexity, a sham. A journey to hell on an armchair. Television is orderly. An infinite possibility of personalities and entities. But to return to chaos. Contends with mathematical chess and no interest in talking to them.

The effort is in sleep.

Table-Wankers

Dreams of bliss.

Are outed as incompatible with the compartments of pedestrian life. Crushed cans. Intimate intricacies. Weathered walls. The barrage of family gatherings, and tailored to a place of insurmountable power. Bodies are sleep deprived. It does what it does and does what it did. The entrance is an exit—an abstract force of afterlife, a narcotic bliss. A sense of bareness and incompleteness in captivity. Odours refined to stink, a cologne, a sweaty dance. Throngs ruminating in low-light, mood-light, night-light. The bareness of nipples, dismantling the realm of personal narratives. A scope is the confine of best men, the very manner of regard.

It is discontent, vexed, and it does not give, rather calls out through curses and split tongues. It does not do the middle ground. So bad, it is sacrosanct. It ignores the paradox and translates incompletely. O! To be pussy-whipped and under the thumb. The electrified sea. Enigmatic and esoteric.

It is coherent in purpose, when two bodies rise. Its trajectory is a world full of life. God knows. Which is why She judges. Can anyone teach knowledge to God since She judges even the highest? To be in a world away from humans. Consider it irrationally. Do not sleep while dreaming. Remain in the delirious dance of the unconscious. For within myself, I have seduced myself, and only myself.

Horizons of time. We are living each slice. Time is not of essence, but presence *is*. It is a magenta orchid, a carnivorous plant. Time is cunning white lilies, totally irrational, horizons of the most awesome proof.

Cut it up and bury it or let it go. It is a ritualistic dance to bliss. I remember the folders, secret places where all divisions are creased or ceded. And the path asphyxiates fires

and sometimes a woman's laughter. The fineries boast. It is not a white room, but purple.

Unrelenting boredom is the currency of peace. To plant an olive tree in the garden. Duelling the neighbour over fencing. To smash crockery and call it square. It gnaws on the shoulder. It gets in the ear. The umbilical cord is never severed. Today's done for. It surfaces, and re-surfaces, and re-surfaces. It is a little reserved.

Thespian-Artists

Crying does the trick. It is the main game. Crying tends to forget.

It is sane and steely eyed, with natural curves, a chiselled possession. It does not liberate but rather consumes. It eats the pebbles in the heart, the fixtures on the mind. It lacks manifestos and is innately aware of this. It is a large bus, a homogenous group of difference and cadence. It seems good and does no good and knows that good is sundered. It is innately aware of this. It is self-possessed and sits on the nest of scurrying rats. It is an enormous force, engulfs by the feeling of terror. It is the law and the animal. It is dimensionless and experiences but does not empathise. It is the cosmos of concentric circles, it spirals like history, neurotically oriented, and sees from a prism of the panopticon. It profits from the illogical body, palms off psychosis & accumulates fixtures, it panders to men. It is the error. It is not static. It is sure.

It sorts data and acts out of a broken core. It is the entrance and the exit, and home. It is all places and every place. It is touched, and touches, it is a hard look. It is a prison and freedom, no matter how idyllic. It digests and digresses. It is the pacifist's war, and a tear and a tear and tears. It is torn. A Tor.

It does the exploits of tipping... It is since and being, it is the centre and all centres and every centre. It is a logical fabric and is relevant. It is aid without humility. It is a time of the continuous-present. Perhaps it has acted out of reason, and it registers keys. It does not ring the bell and enters without knocking. It has a place for tiny humours, a catharsis from pure frustration. It sees with the all-seeing eye but does not see. No gradual wooing. It is a continuous explosion. It is void. It is reptile-brained and exploits. It forgets and does not come second. It never ends here, it is finite and infinite, it climbs and raptures hideously. A monstrosity, so forth and so on. A grand magician. It is ever so potent...It is icy teeth and

inaccessible places. It plays and is decipherable until it lets time never recur. It is awake and does not lull to sleep. It is incantation and incarnation. It is a master of none and transcends all and everything. It commands the stage and is never seen. It is Friday's. It is sane and steely eyed. It *is*.

Spocks

Loners

Neither man nor woman. No beast nor God.

Begets ideals begets passion begets love begets thought begets survival. A fibrous scar. Abscess. Somewhat difficult.

Everyday is a war, it is in need of battles that keep without the strange, estranges and arrested development. The first enquiry of available life is a revelation of poetry. Culture is irrational. Somewhat difficult.

How the Loner outthinks quieter with no definition. Amid physical relief, a place or places falling. Somewhat difficult.

One is given a gender, seemingly insoluble manifolds or equations. We suggest the flesh. Pus emerges from the third leg or concave viscera, or thereabouts, withdraw it to live life on a beach, or a lifeless planet. How the mind sounds of palms and sugars begets the machines with its substance-abuses. Available life is somewhat difficult.

An end of equations, equate scaffolds of constancy. To possess will. To will it to being. And gladly achieve values, and it does mean virtues and it does not scold or scald.

Immune to classification. Incalculable. Totally destined and not bone. *Aurora Australis.*

Stoners

A flagellant flogs a man. His own person.

Emits sound, as if some awakening. Intelligence is so powerful it becomes riddled with cracks & bones and does not meet the common. Not immune to associating universal narratives.

An aura. Alter-egos.

Moon disguises.

Angels full-frontal.

Offensive disco queens.

This vision is meant to be read.

Puffing from the margins. Unclear as it permeates a liberation strategy. Obscured therefore muddled. Weeds are the Stoner's life support on the brink of absolutes.

Stoners spin as the room remains still, puffing, exhaling. Contorted life support; a collapse, in scaffolds. A thorough examination of conscience. It propels disorder and is incoherent. They can't get free. It helps to help itself.

I am the eyes of a pineapple. I am demented Rizal. Sheer impotence, indolence, wielding mysteries of weakness and fortitude. Stoners drag on spliffs and ask for a few. After all, it is madness; or is it weakness?

Transcendental states are motif, a mental hospital of Coptic priests. All-pervading and Mercury—hot like the sun. A flexible comparison is that we jest. The lunacy of souls who haven't eaten in two weeks. I know it is a chasm or a spectre. The modern mind grasps as well. Empathy is not lost and empathy is vast. It is difficult to empathise.

A major eclipse summons ferocious beings. Beings who defy all description and every description. They are restless, but can be contemplated.

Alas, intent on cooking. Talking to anyone and sleeping in comfort. Upon reflection, gets to the destination. A very intense vision. But...and but...and but... and but... will they handle the karma?

Goths

The spirit of the stars and psychedelic nights. A contemplative aura, fractals and chasms.

It is factitive and factual, then rational. Definitions are lost during discussions. Light is the thing that binds and defies explanation.

A very intense vision. A mandala of elites. *Illustrado*. Conceives ill of brutality. A paradox is nevertheless, it sings hymns, a fine jade – a malleable unconscious. And it reaches the core, having apparatuses and wiry gadgets fixed on skin. It travels to unconscious realms, a constant metamorphosis—a rhythm, a cadence. There it orbits and pirouettes then turns into vapour that fogs *green*. It sweeps every illusion from the canopy and reveres history.

The knife sinks. Entropy of the East fascinates the West. And narratives remain theirs.

Have we gotten to the core of the rational?

I doubt it.

There are similarities in places, of places, in places. The unconscious is physical as much as it is mental. It is a language in chaos. It is tired, a lugubrious mood. It is a death situation, for it situates there, devoid of instruction and simplicity.

Let us accompany the circus as a freak. There are similarities in places, in places, of places. We parade down the streets, unenigmatic and forceful. Balls of sounding glitter, a direct relationship with our omens. When failure expresses love, it is raw materials but does not mean it is naked. I doubt he's a madman. The circus is paid. Perhaps this is the secret to life. And it is longevity that we seek. Acceptance comes later.

Athletes

In primary school, at the age of eleven, he gave his speech in front of assembly to say Australian's focus too much on sport:

It covers the last faction of the news.

It accounts for two percent of our Gross Domestic Product; its value in billions.

Many of our national heroes are sportsmen and women, which is to say a competitive spirit lies in our underbelly.

Athletes

Intuitively, we are not fixed entities. We embrace success with absolutely no definition for its peopling. It is noticeable and materialising rather than seeing. This is not easy. The composition is surprising. Sickness comes later.

A face is remembered, but the body is buried. The true nature of a rational planet is a universe of class. Bubbles are beautiful. A remarkable gem: monopolising the cause or causality for the next sixty-sixty-six years. There before we possessed it, is a rational dream, which drives us to possess them. Once possessed, it is buried; a vengeful act and a source of lively debate. Except, this planet has no true nature. It is a social term that we give it, and is illogical to some, volatile and erroneous. The word *plunder* is a better term. The planet is a pit for establishing consciousness raising in the centres that falter.

Cities are ill. Within it is garbage. Within it are scars. It is an experiment for the continuous-present. It belongs to an archaic map, drawn by birthmarks and luminous ink. It

means I am sweeping. It means I am exploited. It means I am expended. I could shovel up on walls, sweep, then sweep them up to places where bodies are primed. The rafters hold no sway. *Walis tingting.*

Ruffians

Eases progress as they age. Attached to a device.

Four brothers are separated at birth, and conjoined at death.

The first is attached to a device, but broke tradition. Which is to say he is post-post-modern.

The second, naturally, attached to a device, carried the weight of his parents 'til his death.

The third, severed the device from his limbs.

The fourth, lives as a sage because he knows he's a sinner. He teaches us life is suffering.

These brothers bear the risk. Often, and most often, rocks the boat! Philosophises whether to speak first or last, but knows that the order doesn't matter. Which way is it to The Capital?

The four brothers are neo-Luddites. Stress over *being*, as they drown by breathing in too much air. There is no sharp reasoning for this. They are fish out of water. They gave away more than they earned. But their debt was the debt of conscience. The world has not taken on a single leap since the death of Jesus Christ.

Cool Kids

These are unborn and form innocence.

Constant anima, a gap between teeth. So much happens when it happens, an accelerated pace of diminishing returns, flying from the precipice. Reaches equilibrium though there is no such thing.

The obstacle is seeing. A freezing persona, where there is not. It speaks no reason. It stays in bed in the early mornings and flogs no-one, not even drugs or tariffs. A sane sensual sensation, erudite blackness. An old nemesis is enchanting. The pain of a lover. Confusion lies in the pleasures of feeling, terminally broke in the heart. Knows no torture, ethereal energy, whizzing clean and weak.

Conflicts are built for resolution, or is it meant to spook the temporality of in-betweens. Such is life. A frisson of tolerance. Dwelling with risk and unearthed. He is learning to be human. Dead things have lived. A creaking resurrection. Secrets die upon departure. More fecund is our waking. Encroaches upon understanding, without reason, *to be*, which is to say everything is everything.

Reality is confined to severe exhaustion, a loathed chemo-therapy, a decoration would undo itself, to you and to society.

I am on my way home, and I am in my house, a partial imagining of some memory.

Literally, I am tangled. In fact, this material is a yarn of internalised violence. A small heap, a soup. Spaghetti-brained and demolishing. It is perpetual each minute. A ritual of brooding saved for one.

[Walang Pamagat]

Mahal ko ang wikang Pilipino. Isip ko ng katapusan ng mundo

Nang walang lasa ng kanin

Nang walang mga tula

Nang Pilipino wika ay namatay sa aking damdam

Sa dulo ng dagat. Sa wakas ng mundo.

I love the Filipino language. I think of the end of the world

When rice has no taste

When there is no poetry

When Filipino language has died in my sensibility

The edge of seas. The end of the world.

Notes

The Edge of Seas

Roland Barthes described an ‘image repertoire’ as the language we use when we are in love. It is not the language we speak; it is a language of solitude, of mythology. It is the language addressed to ourselves and to our imaginary beloved. See Barthes Roland. (2018). *A Lovers Discourse: Fragments*. Translated by Richard Howard. Vintage.

[Walang Pamagat]

C.f. Rizal José. (1890, February 28). ‘Without a Title’. *La Solidaridad*. Translated by Guadalupe Forés-Ganzon. 2(26). Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 127-129.

Table-Wankers

‘Can anyone teach knowledge to God since She judges even the highest?’ in ‘Table-Wankers’ refers to Job 21:22 in *The New International Version Study Bible: 10th Anniversary Edition*. Edited by Kenneth Barker, Donald Burdick, John Steek, Walter Wessel, Ronald Youngblood, Zondervan Publishing House. Michigan. 748.

Goths

‘Let us accompany the circus as a freak’ in ‘Goths’ references ‘circular nomadism...by circus people in their peregrinations from village to village, all of whom are driven by some specific need to move, in which daring or aggression play no part’, from Glissant Édouard. (1997). *Poetics of Relation* (French: *Poétique de la Relation*). Translated by Betsy Wing. The University of Michigan Press. 12.