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**Mood of Metaphor: Tropicality and Time in the Philippine Poetic**

A Dissertation Presented

by

**Jayson Pilapil Jacobo**

to

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**Jayson Pilapil Jacobo**

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the  
Doctor of Philosophy degree, hereby recommend  
acceptance of this dissertation.

Ira Livingston, Dissertation Co-Advisor, Professor,  
Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies and English

Patrice Nganang, Dissertation Co-Advisor, Associate Professor,  
Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies

Celia Marshik, Chair of Defense, Associate Professor,  
English and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies

Milind Wakankar, Assistant Professor,  
English and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies

Sanjay Krishnan, External Reader, Associate Professor,  
English, Boston University

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School.

Lawrence Martin  
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

**Mood of Metaphor: Tropicality and Time in the Philippine Poetic**

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When the trope is exhilarated and enervated by a milieu, which in this case is tropical, the category of mood must be apprehended as a theoretical opportunity where a phenomenology of the time that it takes for the imagination to work through the limits of the earth could be delineated. What is at the heart of this undertaking is to draw the history and theory of metaphor in the Philippines nearer to its original point of reference—nativity, where time is posited as self-generative in its commencement, but also potentially moving towards the modern, in spite of this anterior existence.

The Introduction nominates the figure of *homo tropicus*, who shall hold the theory of the trope between the traumaturgy of ecstasy and the thaumaturgy of agony.

Chapter One derives from the tropicality of grammatical mood a vernacular tropology that dwells on metaphor as both predicament and possibility, arising from a thought-edifice and moving into ideative choreography.

Chapter Two examines the folk verse/song as a form of gift-exchange between the worldly subject and the earthly domicile.

Chapter Three looks at the metaphor of metamorphosis in the metrical romances *Ibong Adarna* and *Bernardo Carpio* in order to look at how imperial forms breed certain alterities to be represented as otherworldly in order for colonial language and anti-colonial eloquence to be fantasized as possible and historic.

Chapter Four is an analysis of the offspring of modernism and tropicality that could be born and raised, by inhabiting the aesthetic temperaments of the tropical modernist poet Virginia R. Moreno.

The Conclusion contends what the dissertation offers as promising in terms of contemporary tropography and postcolonial poetics.

For

D.M. Reyes, poet, and Patrick D. Flores, critic

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## Introduction

### *Homo Tropicus*

#### The Premise

How does the trope depart from its origins, in order to become truly tropic? This dissertation contemplates metaphor as a device that takes its leave from the earth only to aspire, after the composure of distance, to return to its solace. To elaborate on the cognizing affection that entitles the said transit to announce its figural itinerary, I wish to expand the field that has been rigorously covered by reflections on the tenor and the vehicle, the referent and the sign, or the context and the code<sup>1</sup>, by nominating the figure who traverses between valediction and homecoming, disavowal and reconciliation, interment and nativity, as a reluctant and yet indefatigable conduit of the intensities enforced and attenuated across the passage. This figure shall be summoned as *homo tropicus*.

Such figure of aspiration was conceived in my consciousness upon reading Peter Hulme's essay on the "polytropic man":

The notion of 'polytropic' man exists as an attempt to find an emblem for the center of gravity of those questions of mobility. The word 'polytropic' comes from the epithet

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<sup>1</sup> See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), 89-114; Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, translated by Wade Baskin, edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 960-977; Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1987), 62-94.

applied to Odysseus in the first line of the *Odyssey*. Usually translated as something like the ‘man of many ways,’ it contains at least three interconnected meanings: one is simply ‘much travelled’; another is something like ‘cunningly intelligent’ or even ‘slippery and deceitful’... and a third is ‘much given to troping, to the use of tropes.’<sup>2</sup>

And yet, “polytropic man” is not *homo tropicus*; the former never returns to the earth, which he violates each time he tropes out of it. Throughout the essay, Hulme exposes John Smith, the colonist, as one of many tropological agents who “trope out of anxiety,” choosing to contribute that wily talent to “massive efforts of discursive projection and psychotic disavowal.”<sup>3</sup> This narrative finds in Pocahontas *homo tropicus* discoursing with “polytropic man” and failing to elicit from the latter a return to the earth by remembering an oath he had made on that earth:

For Pocahontas, there is only one world: the words spoken at Werowocómoco are just as valid at Brentford. For Smith, there has to be *two* worlds: the world of civility—of Sion Park where the conversation may have taken place, of legal and governmental institution, of contracts and guarantees, where words are embedded in solid and stable discursive practices; and an alien and hostile world where words, like actions, are improvised in a savage void, having no resonance beyond their immediate effect. For the Algonkin, words were spoken to be remembered. Colonialist discourse has no memory—which is

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Hulme, “Polytropic Man: Tropes of Sexuality and Mobility in Early Colonial Discourse,” in *Europe and Its Others*, Vol. 2, Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1984, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985), 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

only another way of saying [it] has no narrative—until it provokes the occurrence that it will never forget. So Smith, at Brentford, in 1616, can make no sense of Pocahontas’s pellucid words. ‘Civility’- European civility – can only guarantee the stability of its own foundations by denying the substantiability of other worlds and other words.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation refuses to forget the premise of the tropic gesture. In instances where that memory is missing, the prose shall labor to remember, that the name of such zone of departure is where the yearning arrives—the tropics.

Hence I begin the utterance of a desire to seek out what remains from the interval between the earth and the trope—what could be that creature of stasis that might as well be a worldling, an autochthone, a subject. The stillness becomes possible because of homotropy, a human talent to figure the world out in turns of phrase which propel the desiring for a species that ever dreams to be closer to its object of reference—the earth. As the homotrope allows imagines a futurity through a métissage between the world on the wane and the world unfolding in that opportunity of the poetic, my invocation premises on a certain time, that of patience. While *homo tropicus* may be a declension of the posture (*erectus*), mobility (*habilis*), and cognition (*sapiens*) of a certain humanity, she arrives as an apprehension of particular dispositions and attitudes, which I derive between killing (*necans*) and the sacred (*sacer*), making (*faber*) and play (*ludens*).

Walter Burkert describes a point in the killing when *homo necans* tropes back into the earth:

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<sup>4</sup> Hulme, “Polytropic Man,” 25.

[T]he quarry became a quasi-human adversary, experienced as human and treated accordingly. Hunting concentrated on the great mammals, which conspicuously resembled men in their body structure and movements, their eyes and their ‘faces,’ their breath and voices, in fleeing and in fear, in attacking and in rage. Most of all, this similarity with man was to be recognized in killing and slaughtering; the flesh was like flesh, bones like bones, phallus like phallus, and heart like heart. One could, perhaps, most clearly grasp the animal’s resemblance to man when it died. Thus, the quarry became a sacrificial victim.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, there is nothing more traumatic than that moment when the earthling that is killed is suddenly recognized by the earthling that kills to be a kindred body. However belated the vision, resemblance filiates the human to the animal; the latter compensates by way of a ritual, to offer the former back to the earth, in search of the divine, which is seen to be the one who has sanctioned the resemblance. Indeed, severance, the millennial gesture of *homo tropicus*, is a most violent act. And yet, whether or not comparison enshrines the victim into a sacral site, the homotrope must somehow intuit a repentance.

The earthly exception that grounds Giorgio Agamben’s thesis on bare life dwells on the difference that needs to be marked out in the eradication of the verisimilar entitlement to life:

The life caught in the sovereign ban is the life that is originally sacred—that is, that may be killed but not sacrificed—and, in this sense, the production of bare life is the originary

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, translated by Peter Bing (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press, 1983), 20.

act of sovereignty. The sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both life's subjection to power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment.<sup>6</sup>

It is *homo tropicus* who conceives of *homo sacer* in order to protect the earth from *homo necans* divining another death, and this time unto that animal with whom he shares a similarity that could not be vanquished by figures of homotropic lamentation. And yet the procedure that enshrines this anthropophany bears a striking resemblance to the killer's quarry. *Homo tropicus* strives to return but is always already distantiating from the source, because of the tropic preponderance. This is what remains to be forlorn in that desire to become originary.

Claudio Alphonso Alvares names the man who makes and the anterior figure to all his labors to create:

The earth...comes before *homo faber*: the natural environment existed before he did. If he molds it with the unique flexibility of his hands, it in turn moulds him as such. ...As man starts from the Tropics, the path of empire is mostly north and south; and today it may laugh at all formulae and turn backward to the east. But everywhere the culture of the soil precedes and conditions the culture of the mind.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 83.

<sup>7</sup> Claudio Alphonso Alvares, *Homo Faber: Technology and Culture in India, China and the West 1500-1972* (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, New Delhi, and Bangalore: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1979), 28.

While it is disturbing to read in Alvares's prose a perfunctory attitude toward the hemispheric delinations that imperialism has drawn to insist on the globe as a fidelity to the earth, the recognition of the terrain as the ground of human genesis is a notable contribution to naming that emergence, *homo tropicus*.

Johan Huizinga describes that figure's movements in terms of a game:

What poetic language does with images is to play with them. It disposes them in style, it instills mystery into them so that every image contains the answer to the enigma....

...When the poet says 'speech-thorn' for tongue, 'floor of the hall of the winds' for earth, 'tree-wolf' for 'wind,' etc., he is setting his hearers poetic riddles which are tacitly solved....<sup>8</sup>

As *homo ludens*, the homotrope dances *terre-à-terre*<sup>9</sup>; what his departures cover are a delicate proximity to the landscape that allows the traversal to widen its range. This leaves the ground of the play fertile with the incantation that summons an "earnest"<sup>10</sup> homecoming.

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<sup>8</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1944), 134.

<sup>9</sup> According to Gail Grant, this ballet step translates into "ground to ground" to instruct the dance that in the "execution of a step, the feet barely leave the ground." *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet*, s.v., "terre-à-terre."

<sup>10</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 44.

From the ritual that sanctions death to the edict that prohibits such sacrilege and from the work that differentiates the worker from the world to the effort that circumvents the separation in order to look at the movement in jest, *homo tropicus* figures as that one topos where “polytropic man” excises the tempus of his machinery; and yet that which remains to mourn or to rejoice at the passing of the tropic is *homo tropicus*, who insists that while all maneuvers of the trope may leave, those which matter are only the ones which yearn to reprise that moment of turning, as an act of penitence and forgiveness.

Let us traverse the finale of this premise by looking at a scene of arrival where *homo tropicus* may figure as a candidate to the arrivant, as the arrivee is the tropics itself. The returnee is Crisostomo Ibarra, protagonist of the originary Filipino novel *Noli Me Tangere*:

El jardín botánico ahuyentó sus risueños recuerdos: *el demonio de las comparaciones* le puso delante los jardines botánicos de Europa, en los países donde se necesita mucha voluntad y mucho oro para que brote una hoja y abra su cáliz una flor...<sup>11</sup> (my emphasis)

The sight of the Botanical garden drove away his gay reminiscences: *the devil of comparisons* placed him before the botanical gardens of Europe, in the

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<sup>11</sup> José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) (Manila: Comisión Centenario de José Rizal, 1961), 43.

countries where much effort are needed to make a leaf bloom of a bud open....<sup>12</sup>  
(my emphasis)

Ang *Jardin Botanico* ay nakapawi sa kaniyang magagandang pag-aalaala;  
*ang tukso ng paghahawig-hawig* ay naglantad sa kaniyang mata, sa mga sandaling  
iyon, ng mga jardin botanico sa Europa, doon sa mga lupaing kailangan ang  
malaking pagsisikhay at maraming salapi upang mapasipot ang isang dahon, at  
mapamukadkad ang isang bulaklak....<sup>13</sup> (my emphasis)

The Botanical Gardens put his wistful remembrances to a halt; *the temptation of resemblance* intimated to his eyes the botanical gardens of Europe, those domains where a leaf emerges and a flower blooms only after the exertion of industry and because of a lot of money.

While some other analogy rests on an angelic epiphany that *the* time will be coming, that there shall be a coincidence between prophecy and presence, this comparison unfolds in a temptation scene. The garden at hand reminds the native of another one that he has visited elsewhere; instead of recognizing similarity however, the subject sees difference. The immediate space presents a disjuncture to the returnee not so much because the garden fails to summon the memory of a previous promenade but because the latter invokes the phantasm of that passage.

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<sup>12</sup> José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887), translated by Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin, edited by Raul L. Locsin (Makati City: Bookmark, 1996), 67.

<sup>13</sup> José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887), tinagalog ni Patricio Mariano (Maynila : Pambansang Komisyon ng Ikasandaang Taon ni Jose Rizal, 1961), 67.

This reminiscence castigates the return; one awakes to the insight that one has indeed missed the other site by an already distant time, in spite of a certain degree of recency. The comparison is diabolical because of this taunt to succumb to a vision that is really at best a disappearance, deny the substance that is there, and declare its urgency as already gone. The temptee's impending offense is the repetition of nostalgia, but a reprise done perversely, since the yearning is now for an alien shore within the vicinity of one's indigenal zone. If this is the case, then this scene of arrival is an erasure of its own performance. Its fulfillment can only be another departure.

Benedict Anderson translates "el demonio del comparaciones" as "the spectre of comparisons" to describe Ibarra's ability to "matter-of-factly experience" the gardens and see them "simultaneously close up and from afar."<sup>14</sup> The optical talent that this reading allows Ibarra to possess is admirable, but misses the melancholia that the returnee encounters after discovering that many worlds are possible, only to forget that exists only the singular earth. Why can't the returnee engage the unfolding scene with a vision that respects the terms of spectacularity? What prevents him from reconciling with the home that he has left? The trope is the demonio/devil/tukso/temptation/spectre that coalesces "polytropic man" and *homo tropicus* but eternally divides them, turning the arrivant into his own departee.

And yet, Paul Ricoeur persuades us to remain within vision:

Does [Aristotle] not say that a vivid metaphor is one that 'sets something before the eyes'? As it happens, this property is mentioned in the same context as proportional metaphor, without the author indicating any link whatsoever between these two traits. Is

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<sup>14</sup> See *The Spectre of Comparison: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004), 2.

not the presentation of one thought in terms of another, in one way or another, to make visible, to show the first in the light of the more vivid appearance of the second? Going further, is it not the property of figure as such to convey visibility, to make discourse appear?<sup>15</sup>

The discourse in this dissertation yearns to make metaphor “vivid” in terms of its mood so that the cloud that the tropic phantom rides could at least condense into the fluid prose of critique.

In this Introduction, I have nominated the figure that shall hold the theory of the trope between the traumaturgy of ecstasy and the thaumaturgy of agony.

Chapter One derives a vernacular tropology from an idea of metaphor as both predicament and possibility, arising from a thought-edifice and moving into ideative choreography.

Chapter Two examines the folk verse/song as a form of gift-exchange between the worldly subject and the earthly domicile.

Chapter Three looks at the metaphor of metamorphosis in the metrical romances *Ibong Adarna* and *Bernardo Carpio* in order to read how imperial forms breed certain alterities to be represented as otherworldly so that colonial language and anti-colonial eloquence may be fantasized as possible and historic.

Chapter Four analyzes the offspring of tropicality and modernism that that could be born and raised by inhabiting the aesthetic temperaments of the poet Virginia R. Moreno.

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 193.

For the Conclusion, I shall summarize what the dissertation holds as promising in terms of contemporary tropography.

## Chapter One

### Tropology of Patience Predicament and Possibility

#### I

#### Tropics, the Temporal

To imagine what becomes of metaphor in the tropics is to accept the task of taking into account the ethical relation between the trope and the tropics, an urgency that Western tropology has been unable to articulate in spite of its affectations toward the tropics. In order to apprehend what may be at stake when the trope involves itself with that worldly locus, the tropics, the literary critical prose of this project takes into consideration the poetic rendition of the predicament of time, as it is generated as contingent to the configuration of the tropics after its production as a space; more than the exoticism of the landscape, what remains to be elaborated as auratic in the tropical environment is the temporal difference in its climate.

Tropical time in this project is seen as a possibility to turn away from the brilliance of Aristotle's sun in order to turn towards the sun that teaches the autochthone what may also be luminescent in the slow burning of one's skin. With the trope at the pace of the tropics, one can dream of offering an alternate genealogy of metaphor in poetry—where the optimal potency of the trope can be staged—as well as a contrapuntal historicizing of the theory of metaphor itself—where the labors of the trope is essayed into tropography.

What is at the heart of this undertaking is to draw the history and theory of metaphor nearer to its original point of reference—nativity, when time is posited as self-generative in its commencement, but also potentially moving towards the modern, in spite of this anterior existence. This dissertation contemplates the phenomenon of time in the tropics as it has been configured as its own species of history and eschatology in the poetic impulse of Filipinos who have imagined their temporal dispositions as subjects of the worlds of the folk, the colonial, and the modern.

If the trope is a turn<sup>16</sup>, and if the tropics is one moment when this turning is acutely directed, can one alter the pace of the turn in order to account for what is retarded in the rush of metaphorical change? How do poets emerging from this turning point, particularly the Philippine tropics, account for the metamorphosis, when they could be at the cusp of what is derived from tropological learning and what is defended as tropical facticity? What is the poetics of the anticipation, the unfolding, the memory of this opportunity, and of such a timing? What are the embodiments, postures, choreographies, vocaleses of the waiting? If both tropology and tropicality may coincide but only at an opportune time—the poetic—what constitutes the possibility for such a patience?

The particular interest in the poetic is the apprehension of an epistemological pace that keeps up with the predilection with time in order to dialectically come to terms with the tropical as a temperament, a mood that necessitates a coming to terms with a waiting, with patience.

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<sup>16</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “trope.”

## II

### Mores of Never

One may commence this anticipation with the thought of the impossible:

Pagputi ng uwak,  
pag-itim ng tagak.

When the raven turns white,  
when the heron turns black.

Impossible, because nature is most certain of the hues it has assigned on its creatures. A particular bird's plumage will always be of a color that befits its species: black for the raven, white for the heron. Any alteration would be a scene of violence. Change cannot be. And never should any happen in this scheme of creation.

At the same time, the *salawikain*, the Tagalog incarnation of the aphorism or proverb<sup>17</sup>—in its initial statement of chromatic facticity—intimates a premise that challenges the persistence of “It *cannot* be.” The poem opens up a discourse of permanence and immutability by allowing another event of its own exponential order, to be imagined: “It *could* be.”

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<sup>17</sup> For standard accounts of the aphorism/proverb in the Philippines, see Bienvenido L. Lumbea, *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898: Tradition and Influences in its Development* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1986), 1-21; Virgilio S. Almario, *Taludtod at Talinghaga: Mga Sangkap ng Katutubong Pagtula* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1991); and Damiana Eugenio, ed., *The Proverbs*, Philippine Folk Literature Series, Vol. VI (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2002). A most instructive essay on the aphorism itself is Gary Saul Morson's “The Aphorism: Fragments from the Breakdown of Reason,” in *New Literary History* 34, no. 3 (2003): 209-429.

Such episteme of possibility prospers because of the turn that the trope allows: from black to white, from white to black, *from raven to heron, from heron to raven*. The trope turns because it allows the mind to imagine a passage from one ontological order to another. If one is to return to the Greeks' reference to the turning of trope, one must remember that such turn had been imagined as one akin to a turn of the sun that allowed time to move through the dial, which was thought to coincide with the time that the earth turns on itself.<sup>18</sup> The trope in the proverb may turn according to this logic, but its procedures escape the pace altogether, for the colors do not get mixed up in a day, and the birds cannot turn their feathers overnight. How much this turning allows as far as the imagination is concerned is what interests this study. What should be observed is less the metaphorical power that is at work behind the metamorphosis than the temporality of metaphor that by turns retrogresses and expedites the procedures of the trope.

One subject of that sun and its turns is Aristotle, who defines the master trope of metaphor as

...the application [to something] of a name belonging to something else, either (a) from the genus to the species, or (b) from the species to the genus, or (c), from a species to [another] species, or (d) according to analogy.”<sup>19</sup>

Based on this definition, the nominal appropriations which occur in the aphorism is interspeciatonal (c) and analogical (d). The metaphor works under the rules of reference and

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<sup>18</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s. v., “tropics.”

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, translated by Richard Janko, edited by Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 109.

transference. Naming the imagined change in the color of the raven already refers to the heron and the intensity of this alteration is repeated in the transport<sup>20</sup> of this premise when the case for the raven's transformation is stated. This concept of the change that metaphor imposes on its objects is of course found in *Poetics*, but another work, *Physics*, gives us an opportunity to reflect on the nature of that alteration further:

...change is the actuality of that which exists potentially, in so far as it is potentially this actuality. ...the actuality of a thing's capacity for alteration, in so far as it is a capacity for alteration is alteration; the actuality of a thing's capacity for increase, and for the opposite decrease, is increase and decrease ... the actuality of a thing's capacity for being created and destroyed is creation and destruction; the actuality of the capacity for movement is movement. ...the actuality of something constructable, in so far as it deserves just this description, is when it is being constructed, and this is what the process of construction is.<sup>21</sup>

By speciation, a raven is black, and a heron is white. *The actuality of a thing's capacity for alteration is alteration.* Within the actualities of nature, a reversal is not possible. No raven has turned white. For a change in the form would entail a change in the substance. A black heron would be a speciational mutation. *These are the mores of never.*<sup>22</sup> And yet, metaphor insists on

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<sup>20</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., "metaphor."

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 57.

<sup>22</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven," In *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 943-946.

the errancies of potentiality in its nomination that a time might come when the changes, merely imagined as they are, could be actual. This is how the birds become ominous. Under the spell of metaphor, the creatures are named and allowed to be nameless, thus free from tropology, because of the actual potentiality/potential actuality of their alteration.

It should be most instructive to look at the place where we have imagined these birds as by turns unchanging and alterable in another work of the philosopher of metaphor and change, *Meteorologica*:

There are two inhabitable sections of the earth: one near our upper, or northern pole, the other near the other or southern pole; and their shape is like that of a tambourine. If you draw lines from the centre of the earth they cut out a drum-shaped figure. The lines form two cones; the base of the one is the tropic, of the other the ever visible circle, their vertex is at the centre of the earth. These sections alone are habitable. Beyond the tropics no one can live: for there the shade would not fall to the north, whereas the earth is known to be uninhabitable before the sun is in the zenith or the shade is thrown to the south: and the regions below the Bear are uninhabitable because of the cold.<sup>23</sup>

Above we find the division of the globe into three climatic areas according to their relative distance to the equator: the frigid zone, the torrid zone, and the temperate zone, which lies between the two. The tropics is the term both for the lines that border the area of the torrid zone

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<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, in *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 3, translated by E.W. Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), 36-37.

and the area itself.<sup>24</sup> If we see Aristotle's taxonomies as a way of organizing the world into a coherent set of knowledge for the world Hellenic and beyond, the key category in the schema is habitation—where one can settle and build one's civilized communities. It is clear to Aristotle that the hostile tropics cannot offer any residence for humanity; the only liveable areas are the temperate ones, where Greece is. The Hellenic world and the rest of Western civilization did heed Aristotle's call, but not for long, as the age of empire necessitated the expansion of national territories beyond temperate Europe towards the rest of the world, including of course the tropics. In order for the colonial enterprise to thrive, expeditions were launched to temper Asia, Oceania, the Americas, and Africa.

If the torridity of the said locus is attributed to the "sun" being in the "zenith," one traversing it can only internalize, a certain sadness:

The inky sky over the Doldrums and the oppressive atmosphere are more than just an obvious sign of the nearness of the equator. They epitomize the moral climate in which two worlds have come face to face. This cheerless sea between them, and the calmness of the weather whose only purpose seems to be to allow evil forces to gather fresh strength, are the last mystical barrier between two regions so diametrically opposite to each other through their different conditions that the first people to become aware of the fact could not believe that they were both equally human.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., "tropics."

<sup>25</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, translated by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (New York: Atheneum 1974), 74.

For Claude Lévi-Strauss, the equator presents itself as a paradoxical imaginary: it reconciles as much as it demarcates. If the zenith that is measured at that point had shown the cosmopolite that the autochthone could cohere with a turn of the sun in a turn of phrase, then the tropics should remain melancholic; one crossing might not really get over this sense of global justice. Ravens remain black and herons stay true to white in those parts, but they could be *turned as turning* their feathers into something else if the tropic turn could be, with solar pace, found at that zenith. It is no surprise then that Lévi-Strauss would find joy in that moment of where the sun descends into its nadir:

...the last glimmerings of daylight which, as they struck the cloudy points at a very oblique angle, made them stand out in relief as if they were solid rocks – such as those that, at other times, are sculpted with light and shade – as if the sun could no longer use its shining engraving tools on porphyry and granite....<sup>26</sup>

As a temperament that unfolds in time, the tropics turns the prose of the anthropologist into panic and thrill. One asks: what procedures allow the changes in the inflection? Which coordinates are covered so that the terms of transpositions can be tracked? How does the trope contend with these involvements? And how does the tropics weather such annotations of its climature?

This dissertation would like to contend that when the trope is exhilarated and enervated by an actual milieu, which in this case is the tropical, in a potential sense, the category of mood

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<sup>26</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 67.

must be apprehended as a theoretical opportunity where a phenomenology of the time that it takes for the imagination to work through the limits of the earth could be delineated.

### III

#### Earth, World, Metaphor

For Martin Heidegger, the earth is a matter of descent, it is where “everything that arises is brought back...and sheltered”.<sup>27</sup> This downward motion suggests not only the gravitational force that holds the earthling to be a creature of the ground but also that understanding that she is to be found there—as a *home/body*. That is where she is kept and protected. On the other hand, the world is that which is opened up by a disclosure from the said concealment. This emergence, this “‘setting up’ no longer means merely putting in place”<sup>28</sup>. It is in this sense that Heidegger’s example of the temple is not just an erection but an ascent as it aspires to “consecrate”<sup>29</sup> presence.

The figure that makes possible this raising is raised as well in the ritual as she passes from being a riddle of creation into a name that answers for creation itself. This shift is indeed paradigmatic, not merely a semantic change from the earthling into a worlding. It necessitates a turning away from the point of origination and an acceptance of originality itself. Heidegger names this encounter *strife*. Conflict arises between the earth and the world, and neither sphere

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<sup>27</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Off the Beaten Track*, translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Kaynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

wins the contest. A wound insists on being marked out after the deference, before the defiance. An indigenal moment may be collective in the process of national nomination, but at the moment of birth, the native is alone. To be *born and raised* from the womb of the earth is also to be taught one's difference from it: as life, as indignation, as insistence. Nativity is the wounding.

The trope is an emanation of the desire of the figure to maintain one's union with earth that one is departing from at the moment of the passage, while insisting on the separation that the movement initiates, in order for a world to be: at first, imagined, and at last, inhabited. To open up a world of immutable earth is the tension that is preserved in the aphorism. Color is the limit that refuses the mutation and yet it is also the threshold to be crossed so that the proscription can prescribe a possibility that may still be limited but already expansive in its own transgressive terms.

The earth may welcome the poise of the perch, but a world shall insist on the frenzy of flight, when the birds are finally allowed to cohabit in metaphor. How does the trope depart from its origins in order to become truly tropic? The inaugural moment is the refusal of the refusal—*it cannot be*—and the affirmation of an affirmation—*it could be*.

#### IV

##### Terms of the Tropic

This dissertation sets the language of its discourse by laying out some working definition of some of the terms which pursue the problematic cusp between tropicity and tropology:

A *trope* is that linguistic implement which seeks to refer to an object as possibly akin to another object in the earth. This preliminary comparison and fundamental argument for

resemblance is seen in this project as constitutive of a discourse on difference. This trope is understood primarily from its Western proposition, but is syncopated by autochthonous practices of figuration, like the *talinghaga* of the Tagalogs, which instantiates a natural intimacy of the poem with the tropical event.<sup>30</sup> And this is where the study departs from previous post-colonial engagements with tropology, where the trope is engaged by means of naming and describing the imperial poetic the colonizing subject institutes to construct tropical space and the subversive literariness that the post-colonial tropical subject learns from the dynamic.<sup>31</sup> This encounter between the trope and the *talinghaga* is not seen as a moment of tropicalization where the latter lends the former its purported intuition or, but as a chance for a dialectical relation between divergent orders of the poetic imagination.

The *tropics* is that worldly zone that the trope seeks to delineate, but which also suggests procedures of thinking through the habits of reference precisely because of its ambivalent relation with tropological alteration. Whether what emerges from the comparison is a distantiation from the trope or an affinity to its movement, an attitude that emerges here is that of *tropicality*, whose compartments as a semiotic trace we shall seek to mark out.

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<sup>30</sup> See Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 1-21.

<sup>31</sup> Instructive examples are David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science, 1800-1856* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006); Allan Punzalan Isaac, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); José Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire: Interventions from Queer Latino America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999); Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College, University of New England, 1997); Alan West, *Tropics of History: Cuba Imagined* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin and Garvey, 1997); and the exhilarating work of Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

A significant consideration when looking at the tropics in the dissertation is the sign of the *Philippine*, whose markings as a geopolitical reality encloses and at the same time opens up the tropics as a particular global location.

The *temperate* is that sphere where the tropics is seen as other to the climatic norm of seasonal constancy as well as mutability. Whenever allowed by the text, the gestures of the trope towards the tropics shall be read as acts of *temperation*, from modest attempts towards a figurative balance between the earth and its tropes to temperamental maneuvers premised on disciplinary violence.

The *poem* is that ritual of verballity where the earth is projected to be unfolding but at the same time arrested in order to crystallize a particular moment of insight or sentiment, as in the lyric. In this project, the poem is where the trope and the tropics collide but also coincide in a temporal opportunity.

*Patience* is the poetic virtue that is awaited in this history of Philippine poetry from its autochthonous initiations to its modernist darings. The species of waiting that is hoped to be born and raised from this literary critical enterprise is one that occurs in the poem itself, in moments where the tropics has always already eluded a textual elaboration but remains as an externity that may grant the poetic architecture an arrival or an occupancy, in the form of an alternate account of metaphor's anticipation of what could be the sublime, what could be beauty.

## Mood's Tropicality

Mood is a grammatical category of the attitudinal relation the speaker has to the reality of one's statement.<sup>32</sup> Its efficacy is related to the temporality that the verb suggests. Three moods are considered to be primary: the indicative, the imperative, and the subjunctive.

The mood is indicative when the statement is referring to actuality. For example:

Itim ang uwak,  
puti ang tagak.<sup>33</sup>

Black is the raven,  
white is the heron.

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<sup>32</sup> A most reliable reference is of course F. R. Palmer's *Mood and Modality*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For the stylistical inflections on mood, see Michael Toolan's *Language in Literature: An Introduction to Stylistics* (London: Arnold, 1998) and Paul Simpson, *Language through Literature: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). And for Tagalog modality, see Lope K. Santos, *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1940), 237-241. Also, Paul Schachter and Fe T. Otones, *Tagalog Reference Grammar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 402-409.

<sup>33</sup> The Tagalog verb counterpart for the English "to be," "ay," is omitted here because the normative form of the Tagalog sentence is its reverse, where the verb is usually absent to follow a "panagurî-simunò" (predicate-subject) structure. Notwithstanding this grammatical order, the sentence with the equivalent of the English "to be" reads: "Ang uwak ay itim,/ang tagak ay puti (The raven is black/the heron is white)." For a more detailed explication of the Tagalog sentence structure, see Schachter and Otones, *Tagalog Reference Grammar*, 59-70.

The verb “ay/to be” operates on the simple tense as the facticity of the colors of the birds concerned only require the statement as such. What the utterance is asking from the speaker is to affirm the order in the time of the present. Syllogistically, the negative is also indicated:

Hindi puti ang uwak,  
hindi itim ang tagak.

The raven is not white,  
the heron is not black.

To turn the said statement into the imperative, it would sound like this:

Paitimin ang uwak,  
paputiin ang tagak.

Turn the raven into black,  
turn the heron into white.

The sentence in this mood is tautological as the command reverts to the indication of the colors of the birds in nature. The potentiality of the sentence does not amount to any enforceable situation. The time does not gesture into a position of change. The real command then is a prohibition:

Huwag paputiin ang uwak,  
huwag paitimin ang tagak.

Do not turn the raven into white,  
do not turn the heron into black.

This is where the nature of the statement as sentence becomes a judgment, in a legal sense. And here, the law that is enforced is that of the natural order.

One then turns the premise into something like this in order for the regulatory pitch to be heard:

Paputiin ang uwak,  
paitimin ang tagak.

Turn the raven into white,  
turn the heron into black.

While the actuality of the sentence remains negligible, the verb does attain potency in the name of poetic potentiality. To make sense of the voice of the command, one must listen to it as a divine sanction. In order for the human to be heard in this scheme, one may opt to turn to the subjunctive:

Kung pumuti ang uwak,  
iitim ang tagak.

If the raven turns white,  
the heron shall turn black.

The subjunctive then transports us to a condition where the potentiality turns into actuality. And that condition is a condition of possibility. Here the statement departs from its judicial space and occupies the Tagalog sentence, that of the *pangungusap*, an “instrument that converses.” Of course the sentences which we have subjected to the moods of indication, imperation, and subjunction have been variations on the premise of possibility that has always been conditional and subjunctive:

Pagputi ng uwak,  
pag-itim ng tagak.

When the raven turns white,  
when the heron turns black.

The difference though between the sentential/conversational subjunctivity and the aphoristic subjunctivity is that the condition of general temporal possibility (*kung/if*) in the former is turned into something more particular and perhaps historical (*pag/when*) in the latter. Furthermore, the construction of the sentence in the former is causal, and while this is also the case in the latter, it

is complicated by the parallelism that calls for a reading of the subjunction as a two-part premise/two-part outcome: a coterminous hypothesis.

Mood in Tagalog is usually associated with the word “lagáy,” connotes a certain placement, state, condition, as in when one speaks of the “lagáy ng panahón,” (the weather situation). One may also refer to a person’s mood as “timplá,” from the Spanish *templar*; while it commonly refers to the way the ingredients in a dish are mixed so that a certain taste is achieved, “timplá” has entered Tagalog idiom to describe someone’s balancing of the humors, in other words, it is used to indicate if someone has got the desirable temper.<sup>34</sup> Grammatically, mood is the “panagáno”<sup>35</sup> (which connotes an instrument of nomination) or the “kahinggílan” (which connotes an object of topicality) of the verb, the “pandiwà,” which might be translated as “instrument of the idea.” Here I must quote Lope K. Santos, poet-polymath who drafted the *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa*, the grammar from which the national language Filipino still bases its linguistic regulatory practices:

Ang salitáng pinaka-káluluwa ng isang pangungusap, samakatwíd bagá’y ang nagbibigáy-diwà sa isáng parirala o sa isáng lipon ng mga salita upang magkadiwa, mabuhay, kumilos, gumanáp o pangyarihan ng anó mang bagay, ay tinatawag na *pandiwà*. Sa pagpapahayag ng isáng kaisipáng ganáp o mala-ganáp, ang *pandiwà* ay sangkáp na sadyáng kailangan. Kung ang pangungusap ay itutulad sa isang punungkahoy

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<sup>34</sup> *Unibersidad ng Pilipinas (UP) Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, s.v., “timplá.”

<sup>35</sup> *Unibersidad ng Pilipinas (UP) P Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, s. v., “panagáno.”

na may ugát, punò, sangá, dahon, atbp, ang pandiwà ay siyáng pinakadagtâ; at kung sa katawáng-tao namá'y pinakadugô.<sup>36</sup>

The soul of a sentence which gives idea to a phrase so that it may ideate, live, move, be complete, or become the space where things may happen, is called the verb. In expressing a thought that is complete or almost complete, the verb is most necessary. If the sentence may be compared to that of a tree that has root, bark, branch, etc., the verb is the sap; and if we are to use the human body as an analogy, it is blood.

The verb then is the part of speech that drives the idea, allowing the senses of sententiality and the conditions for conversational possibility. In this context, mood is an idea instrumentalized through utterance, which in our sentences above could be summarized as:

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<sup>36</sup> Santos, *Balarila*, 235.

Pangungusap/Sentence	Kahinggilan/Mood
<p>Itim ang uwak, puti ang tagak.</p> <p>Black is the raven, white is the heron.</p>	factitious indicativity
<p>Hindi puti ang uwak, hindi itim ang tagak.</p> <p>The raven is not white, The heron is not black.</p>	negative factitious indicativity
<p>Paitimin ang uwak, paputiin ang tagak.</p> <p>Turn the raven into black, turn the heron into white.</p>	tautological imperativity
<p>Paputiin ang uwak, paitimin ang tagak.</p> <p>Turn the raven into white, turn the heron into black.</p>	metamorphic imperativity
<p>Huwag paputiin ang uwak, huwag paitimin ang tagak.</p> <p>Do not turn the raven into white, do not turn the heron into black.</p>	cautionary imperativity
<p>Kung pumuti ang uwak, iitim ang tagak.</p> <p>If the raven turns white, the heron shall turn black.</p>	causal subjunctivity
<p>Pagputi ng uwak, pagputi ng tagak.</p> <p>When the raven turns white, When the heron turns black.</p>	coterminous subjunctivity

The semantic markers (*kung/pag*) which make possible the difference between the subjunction in the sentence and the aphorism, and which therefore make possible the nuances of ideation and the minutiae of ideational relations are categorized as *pangatnig*, or conjunctions.

Again, Santos:

333. Mga pagkukurong pasumalá, mga isipang may pasubali at mga pangungusap na pasakali o di ganáp at nangángailangan ng tulong ng kapwà pangungusap upáng mabuô at magkaganáp na kapararakan, itó ang mga náipapahayag sa pamamagitan ng mga pangatníg na panubali.

Ang mga panubaling lalong gamitín ay itong mga sumusunód:

KUNG—kákain akó *kung* kákain ka rin

—*kung* kanilá’y kanilá, *kung* atin ay atin

—*kung* ibig mong igalang ka ng ibá, mátuto ka munang gumalang sa iyóng sarili

PAG —*pag* umalís ka, aalis akó

—*pag* akó na lamang ang nagsásalita sa iyó, hindí mo pinakikingán

—*pag* hindí kitá isinumbóng, ikáw ang bahalà

Bagamán ang dalawáng katagáng magkasunód na ito ay halos magsingkataturán at magsingtungkulin, dátapwá’t may kaunting ipinagkakáiba tungkól sa hinihinging anyô ng pandiwà ng isa’t isá. Ang *kung* ay nagdiriwà ng panahóng kasalukuyan o ng kaugalian, at ang *pag* ay ng panahóng hinaharáp o gagawin pa lamang. Dahil dito’y may mga pangungusap na dí nilá pagkáisahan ng kahulugán

at ng pananalitâ, kahit na gumamit ng pandiwà sa físá lamang panagano o panahón. Halimbawà:

*kung* siyá'y *kumain* ay pahigâ

*pag* siyá'y *kumain* ay nápapahigâ

*kung* umalís ka, *umalís* din akó

*pag* umalís ka, *aalís* din akó.<sup>37</sup>

Discourses which beg to differ, thoughts which express a condition and sentences which express chance or possibility or are incomplete in thought which need the assistance of another sentence in order to become whole and meaningful, are expressed in terms of conditional conjunctions.

The conditionals which are commonly used are the following:

KUNG (IF)—I shall eat if you shall also eat.

—If it is theirs, it is theirs, if it is ours it is ours.

—If you want to be respected by others, learn to respect yourself foremost.

PAG (WHEN)—When you leave, I shall leave.

—When I'm the only one talking to you, you don't listen.

—If I don't report you, you're on your own.

Even though the two words are almost identical in meaning and function, they differ according to the verb. “Kung (if)” ideates a time in the present or a

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<sup>37</sup> Santos, *Balarila*, 429.

habit, while “pag (when)” refers to a time in the future or something that is yet to be done. Because of this there are sentences which are not the same in meaning and in speech, even if a single verb is in the same degree or tense.

If he eats, he lies down.

When she eats, she tends to lie down.

If you left, I also left.

When you leave, I shall also leave.

The conditions of the conjunction make them subjunctive. And the shift from “kung (if)” to “pag (when)” clearly demarcates the proximity of the chance of occurrence and the probability of the happenstance: between the present and the future, between actuality and immanence. This brings us to the complexity of temporality that the coterminous subjunctivity of premise and outcome in our aphorism demonstrates.

Pagputi ng uwak,

pag-itim ng tagak.

When the raven turns white,

when the heron turns black.

What is the sense of the announcement then? Is it wishful? Or is it prophetic? How does metaphor become the mood? What does metaphoricity do to the sententiality or to the

conversationality, to the facticity or to the proscription? When is metaphor always already subjunctive? If so, what are the conditions for its performative utterance?

## VI

### *The Talinghagà*

Lope K. Santos defines the *talinghagà* as:

...En su sentido estricto, puede traducirse en ‘ministerio’ tratándose de ideas, y ‘metáfora’ tratándose de palabras y expresiones.<sup>38</sup>

...Sa kaniyang estriktong katuturan, maaari itong mangahulugan ng ‘misteryo,’ kung ang tinutukoy nito’y mga idea o kaisipan, at ‘metapora’ naman, kung tumutukoy sa mga kataga at pangungusap.<sup>39</sup>

...In its strict sense, it be translated as ‘mystery,’ if it refers to ideator thoughts, and ‘metaphor,’ if it refers to words and expressions.

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<sup>38</sup> Lope K. Santos, “Peculiaridades de la poesía tagala,” in *Poetikang Tagalog: Mga Unang Pagsusuri sa Sining ng Pagtulang Tagalog*, translated into Tagalog by Trinidad O. Regala, edited by Virgilio S. Almario (Quezon City: Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, Sistemang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas, 1996), 148.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

Metaphor is a dimension of the *talinghagà*. And yet it seems it is through metaphor that this ideational groove performs its procedures:

Es como una manifestación indirecta o expresión figurada de algún pensamiento, sentir, deseo, objeto, hecho u otra cosa cualquiera que se quiere exteriorizar con palabras o describir con frases medidas y rimadas convenientemente.<sup>40</sup>

Ang *talinghagà* ay isang di-tuwirang pagpapahayag ng isang kaisipan, damdamin, pagnanais, bagay o pangyayari, sa pamamagitan ng mga kataga o paglalarawan ng mga pangungusap na nilapatan ng sukat at tugma.<sup>41</sup>

The *talinghagà* is an indirect demonstration or a figurative expression of a thought, sentiment, desire, thing, act or anything else, by way of words, or sentences whose descriptions are appropriately crafted in meter and rhyme.

Here the distinction between the two distinctions of the *talinghagà* vanish, because it becomes the form that encases the substance.

Cual el cuarto elemento, *kariktan*, que luego explicaremos en su propia lugar, forma el *talinghagà* el alma verdadera de la poesía tagala. Cristaliza el grado de inspiración que la infunde. Reflaza y describe la capacidad mental, la calidad de

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<sup>40</sup> Santos, "Peculiaridades," 148.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 149.

pensamientos, la delicadeza de sentimientos, la faundidad de fantasia, la riqueza en el lenguaje, en una palabra, la cultura integral del poeta.<sup>42</sup>

Ang *talinghagà*, sampu ng *kariktan*, ang siyang tunay na kaluluwa ng tulang Tagalog. Pinatitingkad nito ang kulay ng tulâ. Ipinakikita nito ang kakayahan ng isip, ang iba't ibang uri ng kaisipan, ang pagiging maselan ng mga damdamin, ang kasaganaan ng wika, sa isang salita, ang buong katauhan o kalinangan ng makata.<sup>43</sup>

Along with the fourth element<sup>44</sup> of the poem, *kariktan*, the *talinghagà* is the true soul of Tagalog poetry. It crystallizes the dimensions of inspiration at work. It reveals the breadth of the mind, the character of ideas, the subtlety of sentiments, the ground of reverie, the plenitude of language, in a word, the integral culture of the poet.

As embodiment of the abstract, the tropic gesture of the *talinghagà* lies in elaborative ornamentation. It is no accident then that it is tied with the idea of *kariktan*, the beautiful. The décor is imagined in terms of a ligature, as in the “tali” (tie) in the *talinghagà*, a concept that Michael M. Coroza turns into a poem in “Mariang Kalabása”:

Mutya siyang nabubuhay sa ating

Alamat, isinisiwalat ang agimat sa pagsilo

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<sup>42</sup> Santos, “Peculiaridades,” 148.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>44</sup> The first two are *tugmâ* (rhyme) and *súkat* (meter). *Ibid.*, 60-148.

At pagbihag sa mga daluyong; “Sa pampang  
Ng mga panimdim, maglubid ng buhangin.”<sup>45</sup>

Muse is she who thrives in our  
Legends, spreading the talisman to ensnare  
And rule over the waves: “On the shores  
Of woes, make ropes out of sand.”

This *talinghagà* on the *talinghagà* engages an idiom on the futility of ideation, “maglubid ng buhangin,” by summoning a forlorn muse in the name of Mariang Kalabása, who exhorts the poet to insist on what seems impossible but ultimately closest to the beatific, to “make ropes out of sand,” to prove that the décor is that which can hold the world together even as it slips fast through one’s hands.

The *talinghagà* is metaphor in the sense that it is the tropic centrifuge of Tagalog aesthetic. In describing the *talinghagà* as the soul of poiesis, Santos evokes the *pandiwà* as the soul of the sentence. And yet the soulfulness of metaphor is not the same as that of the verb, as the *talinghagà* transforms the *diwà*, the idea, into a figure other than itself. How might one learn the moods of metaphor though from the moods of the verb?

El *talinghagà* puede ser *mababaw* (somero) y *malalim* (profundo). El primero consiste en pensamientos y figuras poéticas que se hallan al alcance inmediato del oyente

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<sup>45</sup> Michael M. Coroza, *Mga Lagot na Liwanag* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 2002), 40.

o del lector; el segundo consiste en pensamientos y figuras poéticas que, por lo elevados que son, requieren cierta madurez de juicio y más finura de atención para comprenderlos.<sup>46</sup>

Ang *talinghagà* ay maaaring maging *mababaw* o *malalim*. Ang una ay binubuo ng mga kaisipan at matulaing bagay na madaling maunawaan ng nakikinig o ng mambabasa; ang pangalawa ay binubuo ng malalim na kaisipan o mga bagay-bagay, na nangangailangan ng katinuan ng pag-iisip at maselang pagpansin, upang maunawaan ang kahulugan.<sup>47</sup>

The *talinghagà* can be *mababaw* (shallow) or *malalim* (deep). The former consists of ideas and poetic forms which are accessed with facility by the listener or the reader; the latter consists of elevated ideas or poetic which require discriminating maturity and sophisticated sensibility in order to be understood.

No mood of metaphor is evoked here yet. What emerges is an edifice, by way of an intimation of depth. *Lalim* is described by Albert E. Alejo, S. J. as: “Ang lalim ay yaong pagkahulog ng pagdanas mula sa ibabaw pababa, patungo sa nakatago, liblib, hindi makita o matanaw sa pagyuko.”<sup>48</sup> (“Lalim” is the descent of experience from the top going down, to the direction of the hidden, the inaccessible, that which cannot be seen or viewed from mere bending). An

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<sup>46</sup> Santos, “Peculiaridades,” 148.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>48</sup> Albert E. Alejo, S. J., *Tao pô! Tulóy! Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loób ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990), 71.

understanding of the *talinghagà* shall run deep if it shall draw from this vernacular phenomenology a reflection on how deep the trope can descend and further, how one's thought can fathom this deep trope. Once such worlding of a depth that metaphor in the Tagalog poetic instigates is described, one can proceed to looking at the thoughtful elevations it needs to construct in order to entrench an imaginary. It is here where Hayden White may instruct us:

...troping is both a movement from one notion of the way things are to another notion, and a connection between things so that they can be expressed in a language that takes account of the possibility of their being expressed otherwise. Discourse is the genre in which the effort to earn this right of expression, with full credit to the possibility of their being expressed otherwise, is preeminent. And troping is the soul of discourse....<sup>49</sup>

This opening into such an abyss should be most opportune as we consider Tagalog interiority as perhaps an entry point to describing the coordinates of poetic modality in the tropics. We shall look at the language that allows the fathoming of the said depth by way of the master tropes which configure what could be the soul of Tagalog discourse.

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<sup>49</sup> Hayden White, "Introduction: Tropology, Discourse, and the Modes of Human Consciousness," *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 2.

## VII

### Locus of Inception, Gestus of Inflection

How can one describe the Tagalog world through the words which traverse its time and reside in its space? How do these utterances provide us with a sense of indigenous “worldliness”? Although Edward W. Said provides definitions of the term as “the idea of being in the secular world, as opposed to being ‘otherworldly,’ and ... because of the suggestion conveyed by the French word *mondanite*, worldliness as the quality of a practiced, slightly jaded *savoir faire*, worldly wise and street smart,”<sup>50</sup> I use it to refer to a situated, site-specific awareness of an ecology of zones and rhythms and the bodies which register their movement within this biome in order to stake a claim to the earth, through the circulation of a language that is mundane, that is, located in the natural frontiers and tempos of that that singular experience. This definition can exceed as much as it captures the ruminations which the modern *bricoleur* attempts to enunciate in order to practice *flânerie* as well as the less marked aspects of his/her pedestrian manners (minutiae which determine the contrapuntal itineraries of the Saidian exilic subject).

One must be acquainted with the word for the interior—*loób*. This interior may be that of a house, *loób ng bahay*, or a community, *Loóban*. *Loób* may also refer to the self’s intricate psychological chambers. *Kaloóban* is a variation, but because of the agglutination interestingly transliterates as the “virtue of interiority.” *Kaloób-loóban*, in its repetition of the rootword, depicts a labyrinthine self, implying an innermost quarter, a core space for a private thought or

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<sup>50</sup> Edward W. Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 15, no. 2 (1989): 212.

an intimate feeling. The architectural trope extends to the language of corporeality. *Lamang-loób* refers to one's "inner flesh."

Albert E. Alejo extends the *loób* as *talinghagà*:

Sa alingawngaw ng salitang loob ang larawang gumuguhit kaagad sa ating isip ay isang uri ng espasyo na may bahaging nakakulong at may bahaging nakalabas. Maaaring unang ginamit n gating ninuno ang ganitong kategorya sa kanilang pangangalakal. "Loob" ang binigkas nila upang pangalanan ang loob ng palayok na kanilang hinuhubog, habang ang hinlalaki nila ay nasa bahaging labas ng nabubuong sisidlang putik at ang ibang daliri naman ay katapat ng pumipisil mula sa loob. At dahan-dahan, nabubuo nang sabay ang loob at labas ng palayok.<sup>51</sup>

The word "loób" instantaneously echoes an image of a kind of space that has a one part concealed and another exposed. Our forebears might have first used the said category in their exchanges. They uttered "loób" in order to name the interior of a piece of earth that their hands were molding into a jar, while the thumb was in the exposed part and the other fingers were in front of that which was pressing from the inside. And slowly, the inside and the outside of the jar were formed at the same time.

A container is conjured, and yet it is not only containment that is created in the expansion of metaphor. What is generated is a procedure that delineates an act of making: a poetics. It is in the

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<sup>51</sup> Alejo, *Tao pô! Tulóy!*, 69.

trope of *loób* where the architecture of interiority resides and where its infinitesimal possibility towards the *labás*, where further phases of autogenesis, can originate.

In order to comprehend that turn, Patrick D. Flores proposes that we look at *palabás*:

It speaks of an outward thrust from an interior, and so is both inclination and intimation (*saloóbin*). There is a deliberate agency at work in a gesture of performance or the process of making something appear and making it appear in a particular way (*papalabásin* or *pinapalabás*). . . it is theater and it involves acting, diversion, pedagogy. It is (dis)guise and it is manifestation. It is a matter of conjuring, tricking the eye, catching the feeling, concealing the device of drama. And because it is tactical, it is also corruptive: semblance is always elusive.<sup>52</sup>

If *loób* conjures the locus of inception, *palabás* demonstrates the gestus of inflection. What we have now is the vector of the *diwa* and the range of the *talinghaga*,<sup>53</sup> both as “ministerio” that pertains to the thought and as “metafora” that refers to the methods of that cognition. And yet one should not confine oneself to treating the *loób* as intentionality and *palabás* as activity, for both grooves refer to the gradations of the *tropos*; they constitute the instructive coordinates where a concept of origination and dissemination may meld as they are as well clearly delineated as much as the artifice of the structure and the movement are very well present.

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<sup>52</sup> Patrick D. Flores, “Palabás,” *Ctrl+P: Journal of Contemporary Art* 11 (2008), [http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP\\_Issue11.pdf](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP_Issue11.pdf), (Accessed March 10, 2011), 8.

<sup>53</sup> James J. Fox sees the relation between the locus and the gestus that is focalized by directionality this way: “In such a notion [of path], genealogy and journey merge.” See “Introduction,” In *Origins, Ancestry, Alliance: Explorations in Austronesian Ethnography*, edited by James J. Fox and Clifford Sather (Canberra: Australian National University, 1996), 10.

The interior and the outside are not separate, their words interact in a rewarding dialectic. *Panlabás na anyo* (literally “outer form”) speaks of the façade that does not necessarily determine the *loób* of the embodied. What one performs may only be a “farce,” a *palabás*. It is hard to tell whether one has a “weak heart,” *mahina ang loób*, “has courage,” *may lakas ng loób*, or has already “surrendered,” *nawalan ng loób*. One can conceal one’s “grudge,” *sama ng loób*, against someone whom one considers having “ill will” or “bad faith,” *masamang loób*.

*Saloóbin* is the idea, the *diwà*. In a conversation, one prods the silent listener to say something by asking “Ano ang nasa loób mo?” (What is there inside your mind?) or “May niloloób ka ba?” (Do you have something in mind?) *Saloóbin* is the *loób* that desires to exposure, longing to intimate the *diwà* and be intimate as such to the world.

If there is *palabás* then there is *paloób*, a direction inward. A sedimentation of sentiment, thought, idea. A learning from instruction. This act is a re-turn. An arrival: *pagbabalik-loób*. A reconciliation. This return to idiom is a gesture that reconciles the *labás* with the *loób*. If idiom is where the habits of idea are rehearsed, legitimated, revised, and circulated, then it is also where the modality that traverses both the trope and the tropics could be found to be laying out its emplotment.

What is the architecture and choreography of metaphor then in the whitening of the raven and in the blackening of the heron? What is the *saloóbin* and what is the *palabás*? Let us return to our sentences, but this time let us look at tropic possibilities in terms of the metamorphic passage from the locus of inception to the gestus of inflection:

Pangungusap/sentence	Saloóbin/Thought-edifice	Palabás/Ideative Choreography
Itim ang uwak, puti ang tagak.  Black is the raven, white is the heron.	affirmative	stationary, nontropic (nonmetaphor)
Hindi puti ang uwak, hindi itim ang tagak.  The raven is not white, The heron is not black.	negative	stationary, resistive, contra-tropic (nonmetaphor)
Paitimin ang uwak, paputiin ang tagak.  Turn the raven into black, turn the heron into white.	prescriptive (tautology)	instructional gestic, nontropic (nonmetaphor)
Paputiin ang uwak, paitimin ang tagak.  Turn the raven into white, turn the heron into black.	prescriptive (alterative)	instructional gestic, sub-tropic (extrapolative, affirmative, initiative reverie, semi-metaphor)
Huwag paputiin ang uwak, huwag paitiin ang tagak.  Do not turn the raven into white, do not turn the heron into black.	proscriptive (inalterative)	cautionary gestic, sub-tropic (referential affirmative, negative reverie, anti-metaphor)
Kung pumuti ang uwak, iitim ang tagak.  If the raven turns white, the heron shall turn black.	contingential	resonant tropic (co-metaphor)
Pagputi ng uwak, Pag-itim ng tagak.  When the raven turns white, When the heron turns black.	contrapuntal	percussive tropic (bi-metaphor)

With the interaction between *saloóbin*, the thought-edifice, and *palabás*, the ideative choreography, one is able to distinguish between utterance which remains as a posture of singularity and which transforms by way of a gesture of alterity. To distinguish between the figure and the trope then is to track the modal attitude of the imaginary. In this case, indicative sententiality represents an uncompromising distance from metaphor, while subjunctive sententiality seeks to converse with that alternative possibility as it enables the trope to alter the tilt of its expressive stance. Hence, a gesture originates. The imperative is crucial in adhering to indication when the imperial order is the preservation of the status quo, in the affirmative or the negative form, but the commandment may also open up to subjunction when its tonality sanctions the creation of an ontological status away from the always already indicated.

At this point, it will be most instructive to single out the contrapuntal ontology that the aphorism proposes as a means to reflect on the stakes of indication and imperation to insist on the factitious and deny the magic of tropic movement. To allow the gestures of the subjunctive is to allow the metaphor of the *puting uwak/itim na tagak* (white raven/black heron) its operations of sublimity.

## VIII

### Metaphor and the Sublime

One must begin by fleshing out what Immanuel Kant means when he says that the sublime can be “found in a formless object.”<sup>54</sup> At the outset, the object itself can be perceived as sublime, and what makes this object appear to be above the subject is its lack of a figure, in being outside, or, in not becoming configured by a certain structure that can be palpably measured. The white raven and the black heron are anomalous creatures. Their chromatic difference is what makes them formless. Black seems to have found its form in the raven, and the heron seems to lend white its shape. Is a white raven still a raven? Or has it become a heron in the eradication of its blackness? Is a black heron still of its species? Or has it become a new raven-form?

The subject, in the face of formlessness, white raven and black heron, feels that he is defined by his bodily limits, and the encounter only emphasizes his placements as diminutive, frail, contained.

One must acknowledge a notion of form that defines an outside and an inside to delineate the dimensions which define the possibility of a figure (the criteria which make a figure *figure*) and differentiate this proposal from an understanding of form as stricture, as possessing surface, contour, sinew, and core, because this exterior is necessitated to form an enclosure. While the figure in the latter one is portayed to be more interactive with whatever is other to its form, it is also facile to manipulate a phenomenological moment of the body against the outside as a

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<sup>54</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Analytic of the Sublime,” translated by Werner Pluhar, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 520.

premise to overstate the underside of corporeality—that the protected corpus, in its visceral encasement, is always already separate from nature. This detachment can be seen as worse than the alienation of pure form, only because the purity exists in mere demonstration, not dissimulation, which is the birth place of sublime incontinence.

We return to our notion of *loób* and *labás* then, not just to configure the spaces of the *loób* as the interior and the *labás* as façade but to name form not only as *anyô* (countenance) but to distinguish it from *yari* (constitution) or *húbog* (mold). *Yari* connotes material and *húbog* a cast. In our metaphor-in-question, and the existences that it catachrestically proposes, the question of figure revolves question of appearance as a principle of existence in the white raven/black heron. It is white that disfigures the raven and black that deforms the heron; the contagion of these colors makes them of unknown constitution, and out of the mold.

The body before this thought begins to feel helpless as the surface that assures a safe delineation between him and nature is no longer there. The black that assures him of his distance from the raven is absent and has been replaced by a color that may signify an eradication of the separation. And thus the chances of contagion become more potent. Kant posits that the moment one detects the formlessness, one also abstracts from it the idea of “unboundedness,”<sup>55</sup> the freedom from a certain figure, and subsequently, from figuration itself. The raven is only safe as long as it is black. When these assurances from nature disappear, it is indeed most despairing. The white raven is more monstrous than the black because of this unboundedness. It is even free, pace Soyinka, from ravenitude. While the figures are now unbounded by their accustomed form, and free from the figuration as stricture, it is figuration itself as ideational opportunity, that

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<sup>55</sup> Kant, “Analytic of the Sublime,” 520.

enables the magnitude of creature and the diminution of a human subject who receives the imaginal proposition.

Now the second premise for form reveals its true contention. It is thus that one departs from attributing sublimity to the external “because the object prompts us to present it [as such], while we add to this unboundedness, the thought of its totality.”<sup>56</sup> What one perceives then is dimension/size/extent/acreage itself, as introduced by a magnitude reminded by the object.

The subject is the contentual being though in Kant. Form and formlessness, their ideas, are his contents. The object is now the one being controlled and contained. The modality is a stance from which the subject speaks after all. The sublime is a resultant that points to an irreciprocal arithmetic that purports to explain the revolutionary dynamic of the Kantian sublime: in order for the sublime to be internalized, the object turns into a subtrahend from which sublimity is deducted; afterwhich the *sublimed* subject conjures an addend of the object’s conceptual totality. Yet while the idea of unboundedness is derived from the diminution of the *sublime* object’s refusal of measure, its resurgence as an appendage becomes present not to resuscitate the object but to enlarge the subject by a final attribution of the immensity that belittled him initially. The sublime sum is only possible because of the remainder, the *difference* that is the sublimated object. Insofar as they are merely extrapolated, the white raven and the black heron are imaginal implements to this sublime subjectivity.

Now surpassed, the object becomes a mere threshold to the sublime, which is clarified as an “emotion,” rather serious than playful “in the mind’s activity.”<sup>57</sup> One only mistakes the object for the sentiment before the scene of catharsis. One’s expectation of the sublime as “elevated,”

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<sup>56</sup> Kant, “Analytic of the Sublime,” 520.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

at a height way above the plane that the eye can ordinarily align itself with, ushers one into a place where one can aspire to reach and ascend into sublimity as well—that locus where the perceiving subject can be assigned a penultimate equivalence and a final superiority against that which is seen as “raised.”<sup>58</sup> As *talinghagà*, metaphor heightens the specular promontory if the *lalim* of its inception is deep enough to allow the mind to recognize the passage from a most confident solstice.

Notwithstanding that the sublime is already contained by one’s cognitive faculties, and it is just activated by the object, the arousal of this feeling in the mind should still prove to be replete with difficulty, because of the bewilderment. Whenever one feels that the formless object is “contrapurposive” for one’s “power of judgment, incommensurate with [one’s] power of exhibition, and as it were, violent to [one’s] imagination,”<sup>59</sup> one indeed can be potentially decimated amid the lack of materiality, vis-à-vis the overwhelming amorphousness.

To my mind, the coordinates of unsettlement mentioned above comprise the density of the sublime emotion when Kant describes it as “serious,” in the sense that one encounters “an indeterminate concept of reason”<sup>60</sup> in it, an ur-irrationality, a radical uncategorizability that mostly excludes the self and is therefore a revelatory initiation and even an ominous inclusion into what is usually evaded and ignored—*the other*, and everything else that it represents as an object of avoidance, as an escapee.

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<sup>58</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s. v., “sublime.”

<sup>59</sup> Kant, “Analytic of the Sublime,” 520.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

One wonders then about the subject who imagines the white raven/black heron as an ontological possibility under the sign of the subjunctive. If impossibility is the sublime signification, then what is gained by the gesture towards that utterly other event?

Pagputi ng uwak,

Pag-itim ng tagak.

When the raven turns white,

when the heron turns black.

If one is to read sublime subjunctivity into the aphorism, then the thought-edifice is built on the assurance that in the thinking of impossibility by way of these instances of dis-figure, then the human mind then proves to contain the very terror of the occurrence. The mind is rooted in reality and thus it uses the impossible aviary to affirm the order of rationality as it had already been demonstrated by natural forms. At the same time, the instance of speaking the impossible under the oath of facticity is a moment of frisson towards the defiance of limit: that the utterance of such event always already expresses the surrender to the sublime as object itself. This is what the mood does to the metaphor: the activation of that threshold where a possible impossibility and an impossible possibility contentiously cohabit. To demonstrate the aporia that is inherent in this contrapuntal resonances of the aphorism, let us listen to its extensions in song and through the cinematic image.

## IX

### Time, the Tropical

George Canseco's song "Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-itim ng Tagak" extends the aphorism and demonstrates its lyric propensities:

Pagputi ng uwak,  
pag-itim ng tagak,  
hanggang doon lang tatagal  
ang aking pagmamahal.

Kapag ang araw  
ay sinlamig na ng bangkay,  
bawat bituing nagniningning  
ay di na rin nagtagal.<sup>61</sup>

When the raven turns white,  
when the heron turns black,  
only then will this love last.

When the sun is as cold  
as a corpse,

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<sup>61</sup> George Canseco, "Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-itim ng Tagak," in *Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-itim ng Tagak*, directed by Celso Ad. Castillo (Manila: VS Film Co., Inc. 1978).

every shining star  
shall have faded.

The aphorism is appended with a lyric that tells of the time that marks out the impossibility as a certainty. What begins as a subjunctive premise in the aphorism is predicated as a subjective promise in subsequent extensions of the lyric. Contradiction is pursued by an engagement of its interlocutions. It is here that we are revealed the purpose of the impossibility—to affirm that the limit actually gestures toward the infinite. The time might not come for the chromatic change of the said birds of plumage, but such nonexistent advent is utilized by the song to essay the time that is already unfolding. Patience is at work. The double hypotheses merge to become one condition for the predication of time.

Kulang ang panahon,  
ang kailanman ay kulang din,  
upang hanggang doon  
ay ibigin ka't sambahin.<sup>62</sup>

Time will not suffice,  
nor will eternity,  
for me to love and adore you  
when that time comes.

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<sup>62</sup> Canseco, "Pagputi, Pag-itim."

Such premise now enables the lyric to comment on the notion of eternity: that even its timelessness is a limit when it comes to the love that is in question. Because an impossible premise such as the chromatic exchange happens in a time out of time, then time itself could be metadiscursively dealt with. What happens now because of the trope being retarded is a choreography that must operate within the mood:

Mahalin mo ako,  
pag-ibig ko'y sa'yo.  
Panahon ay di tiyak,  
puputi rin ang uwak.<sup>63</sup>

Love me,  
my passion is yours.  
Time is uncertain,  
the raven shall also turn white.

Such an engagement with time brings us back to the aphorism itself. As the persona entreats the beloved in the context of love out of joint with time, time itself, its certainty, is questioned. When the persona says that the change shall happen even without the assurance of time, what occurs is not really an exasperation of the premise, but an exponential affirmation of the premise itself. Because of the impossible possibility of the love that the persona upholds, the bipolar

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<sup>63</sup> Canseco, "Pagputi, Pag-itim."

distinctions have always already been deconstructed. And so we return to the perpetual hypotheses.

The song provides for the musical theme that a Celso Ad. Castillo's film of the same title.<sup>64</sup>

The film insists on a love whose impossibility is premised on the historical delineations of class and their struggles in the Tagalog region during the 1950s. Dido is the scion of a family whose estate had been usurped by the aunts of Julie. And yet what has drawn the peasant and the cacique apart shall be persuaded to an encounter in the romantic predilection to subvert limit. The closure of the film does affirm the impossibility, when the two lovers copulate at the advent of a cross-fire between the military and the Hukbalahap, the insurrectionary group where Dido is now a member.

What I am interested to do though is to demonstrate how the song orchestrates a moment in the film in order for the impossibility to be transformed otherwise because of milieu. This is a tropological moment at the pace of the tropics.

Julie returns from Manila after enrolling at the Conservatory of Music of the University of the Philippines, but car breaks down in the middle of a rough road. Cosme, the driver, leaves Julie in the middle of the dusty road, to get fuel somewhere.

Dido emerges from the dust. Julie notices him. A few nights before, she rejects him in a barn dance through the aphorism. *Pagputi ng uwak, pag-itim ng tagak*. At that moment in the crossroads, the words of the song prefigure an opportunity to refuse the refusal.

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<sup>64</sup> *Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-itim ng Tagak*, directed by Celso Ad. Castillo (Manila: VS Film Co., Inc. 1978).

When the aphorism is sung, and the phrase “pagputi ng uwak” is enunciated, the frame shows us birds, white ones, flying into the horizon. In cinema, the crow does become white with this troping. While the earth cannot allow the chance, the image announces it as an event of possibility.

From here, we see the impossible couple in their aviary of the tropics, where they traipse along the fields, under the canopy of trees bearing coconuts and mangoes. They cross cascading rivers too, with the chirping of the summer birds timing their passage.

Cosme comes back and Dido and Julie return to the road, but because of the dust from the bicycles and trucks, Cosme does not see them and leaves. This prods Dido to bring Julie to town riding the pony in spite of the dust. And they emerge happily from it when the song ends.

Mood in this sequence is physicalized by the dust that organically grows out of the tropics but hovers as well as textual opportunity where the world could allow a subjunctivity. Mood may be amorphous, as dust, but this temporariness is the temporality that the aphorism and the song need in order to pursue the discourse of possibility. The particles of soil suspended in the air of afternoon take us to a mood where time turns for a purpose—to enable a sympathy between trope and image, so that the sublime birds could transcend the bars of their “tropic cage.”<sup>65</sup>

To anticipate such flight, one needs to cultivate the patience. Here Derrida should be instructive:

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<sup>65</sup> Virginia R. Moreno, “Air,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Science Education Center, 1975), 7.

As long as the waiting can only be directed toward some other and toward some *arrivant*, one can and must wait for something else, hence expect some other—as when one is said to expect *that* something will arrive.<sup>66</sup>

The arrivant makes time figural, imagined as shape, in an *other* shape, just like the chromatics involved in the aphorism. And the coterminous pace of that temporality—that doubling of the premise and the outcome—is not so much a denial of the possibility or an anxiety toward impossibility as an affirmation of the palimpsestic grammatology of the waiting as counterpoint. The repetition intensifies the deferral as well as the protention of the time. The temporality attains a time signature, a tempo that postpones at the same time that it pursues the complex binarism between actuality and potentiality, facticity and phantasm, black and white, raven and heron.

The film imagines this arrivant when at the opening Julie asks in a voice-over:

Kailan ba susupling  
ang pag-ibig na wagas  
Pagputi ba ng uwak,  
pag-itim ba ng tagak?<sup>67</sup>

When shall a love eternal

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<sup>66</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Aporias, Aporias: Dying—Awaiting (One Another at) the “Limits of Truth,”* translated by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 62.

<sup>67</sup> *Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-itim ng Tagak*, directed by Celso Ad. Castillo (1976).

bear an offspring?

Is it when the raven turns white,

and the heron turns black?

The question of the offspring (supling) opens up the interval between the polarities involved in the subjunctive by introducing the arrivant as a “third”<sup>68</sup> term whose time becomes the subject of the anticipation, that which shall redeem the infinite patience. The offspring makes the “event ‘arrive’.”<sup>69</sup> That the nativity of this love is marked as both initiative and finality—when the raven turns white and the heron turns black—instructs us that there is indeed a counterpoint at stake and at work. To wait then is the only “hospitality toward the event.”<sup>70</sup>

Until such time of the offspring arrives, one shall keep on asking:

Ang pusong sawi ba

ay wala nang lunas?

Kailan maglalaho

ang mga siphayo?

Pag-asang inasam

kabuntot ng hapis.

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<sup>68</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by Ian Cunnison, with an Introduction by E. E. Evans-Pritchard (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), 1.

<sup>69</sup> Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 33.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

Bangkay na kahapon  
mistulang kawangis.

Laging nagdurugo  
ang pusong sugatan.

Pagkat bawat pintig,  
ikaw pa rin ang mahal.<sup>71</sup>

Is there no salve  
for a wounded heart?

When shall  
all the pain fade?

Hope has a sibling,  
Despair.  
It resembles a corpse,  
the Past.

This wounded  
heart bleeds.  
Each throb  
calls out your name.

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<sup>71</sup> Canseco, "Pagputi, Pag-itim."

To hope for an offspring, one is also mourning the affliction of the heart, its vulnerability. And in imagining the futurity of the arrivant, the departee, configured as time, is as well conjured as cadaverous. It is the offspring that shall rescue temporality with its counter-tempo:

As *disarmed* as a newly born child, it no more commands than is commanded by the memory of some originary event where the archaic is bound with the final extremity, with the finality par excellence of the telos or of the eskhaton. It even exceeds the order of any determinable promise.<sup>72</sup> (my emphasis)

Julie asks what is the offspring of eternal love? And the last human figure that is pictured in the film while the theme is sung again is her son with Dido, crying while the armatures of resistance are being fired. The question has been answered when the querent fades into the past, and is intimated to be doomed as corpse of historical circumstance. And yet the answer *answers*. The offspring accounts for the wreckage and the survival. He only arrives when the world is in war; his innocence is his weaponry as well as his victimage.

Now, why anticipate the offspring through aphorism? Again, Derrida;

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<sup>72</sup> Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 34.

2. As its name indicates, aphorism separates, it marks dissociation (apo), terminates, delimits, arrests (orizo). It brings to an end by separating, it separates in order to end [finir]—and to define [definer].<sup>73</sup>

An aphorism is uttered in order to stake a claim, or impose a truth, in order to end a doxa that pertains to an order that must be rebutted, or terminated, in order to initiate, to usher in a comprehension. A pause in the everyday life, its intervention is deemed to be necessary in internalizing a moral habit. The utterance imparts a division, but it also attempts to prevent the severance. Julie utters the aphorism to affirm that the love that Dido desires from her “cannot be,” then revises it in order to declare that it “could be,” and extends its lines to mark out the hope that the reality could still be altered. These recitals separate her from Dido, from herself, and from existence. A time against time, the aphorism is a “contretemps.”<sup>74</sup>

Derrida discusses the aphorism in the context of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*:

Aphoristically, one must say that Romeo and Juliet will have lived, and lived on [auront survécu], through aphorism. *Romeo and Juliet* owes everything to aphorism. Romeo and Juliet *are* aphorisms, in the first place in their names, which they are not.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Aphorism Countertime,” in *Psyche: Interventions of the Other*, Volume II, translated by Nicholas Royle, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 127.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 128.

Reading the tragedy of the lovers as indicating an “impossible synchronization,”<sup>76</sup> Derrida considers the play as possessing a *contretemps* through its aphoristic performatives. The language of the romantic exchange affirms as much as it defers the impossibility of the encounter:

11. Aphorism: that which hands over rendezvous to chance. But desire does not lay itself open to aphorism by chance. There is no time for desire without aphorism. Desire has no place without aphorism. What Romeo and Juliet experience is the exemplary anachrony, the essential impossibility of any absolute synchronization. But *at the same time*, they live—as do we—this disorder of the series. Disjunction, dislocation, separation of places, deployment, or spacing of a story because of aphorism—would there be any theater without that? The survival of a theatrical work implies that, theatrically, it is saying something about theater itself, about its essential possibility.<sup>77</sup>

What is the love story of Julie and Dido but Romeo and Juliet’s in the tropics? And what place does the utterance of the aphorism in its various repetitions as making possible the space of cinema? And the time of the poetic in this sequence, even as that poem and the poem in the cinema speak of impossibility?

Derrida illustrates the primacy of the aphoristic to separate and dissociate in the example of the rose and what it signifies:

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<sup>76</sup> Derrida, “Aphorism Countertime,” 129.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

Aphorism: separation in language and, in it, the name that closes the horizon. Aphorism is at once necessary and impossible. Romeo is radically separate from his name...A rose remains what it is without its name: Romeo is no longer what he is without his name. But, for a while, Juliet makes out as if Romeo would lose nothing in losing his name: like the rose. But like a rose, she says to him in short, and without genealogy, “without why.” (Supposing that the rose, all the roses of thought, of literature, of mysticism, this ‘formidable anthology,’ absent from every bouquet...)<sup>78</sup>

Like Juliet, Julie as well asks Dido to renounce, but not his name, but her denial of his name, when she does not live up to their love at a confrontation between their families. Juliet’s demand becomes a plea at the end, when she asks for Dido to descend from the mountains to see her and their son. Juliet questions the procedures of reference which confine an earthly beauty to a name and disengages its nature away from the habit of assignation by alluding to Romeo’s attachment to his patrimony. In performing this, Julie atones her investment in the violences of language. Possibility may happen, but the Tagalog aphorism incarnates itself in human intimacies as nature is the one made to reflect anthropogenic dissension, if not, finally, consent. Julie’s contretemps may be against the Dido’s historical decision, but it does adhere to a return to earth that denies the cohabitation of difference. In her various attempts to lend nuance to the life aphoristic, Julie then prefigures that the nature might surrender to the alteration. She signifies a figure that is born and raised from the aphorism but finds within it a possibility to extend it. This is a tropological instance of human wanting to trope against trope. And tropicity seems to set the mood for the

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<sup>78</sup> Derrida, “Aphorism Countertime,” p. 137.

recognition of both limit and possibility. This is *homo tropicus*, the conduit of this time in her world, the tropics.

## Chapter Two

### Gesture's Abode

#### Earthen Tempos of the Folk in Verse and Song

##### I

##### Thresholds

The history of Tagalog Poetry (and perhaps Philippine Poetry in Filipino) almost always begins with this riddle:

Bongbong cong liuanag,  
cong gab-i ay dagat.

A bamboo tube by day,  
by night a sea.<sup>79</sup>

This study repeats the same gesture if only to emphasize what is inherent in the anteriority: the trope of the interior and the thought-edifice that it conjures.

The answer to the riddle is a sleeping mat, which is rolled up and kept in a corner of the house by day, and is rolled out and occupies a great deal of the house for the rest of the night. What is compelling here is not just the magical configuration of the object as it changes its

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<sup>79</sup> See Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 3.

material state from solid to liquid as the day progresses, but also the way in which the common object is made to showcase reduced and expanded spatialities with the passage of time. When not in use, the sleeping mat is like a bamboo tube, which has a hollow space within it, a *loób*. When the object serves its purpose, its interiority is lost, the mat turns into matre so that it can become the main content of the house. In the riddle, the *loób* is not a permanent spatial structure or fragment. It is a quality, a virtue, a feature of spatiality that is the very characteristic which ontologizes its moveable loci. Here the *loób* is less an effect of enclosures than a premise for openings. It is premised on possibility, not on limit. The metaphor here is both the structure and its passage, its figure and its movement. And again, because of the possibilities that the mood of the trope allows, one sees how fluid transformation translates into variant forms.

The locus of this premise is that site, the *balai* or *balay*:

Its Austronesian ancestry is manifested in its archetypal tropical architecture: an elevated living floor, buoyant rectangular volume, raised pile foundation, and voluminous thatched roof. The house lifts its inhabitants to expose them to the breeze, away from the moist earth with its insects and reptiles. Its large roof provides maximum shade for the elevated living platform and the high ridge permits warm air in the interior to rise above the inhabitants then vent to the roof's upturned ends. The roof's high and steep profile provides the highest protection against heavy monsoon downpours.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>8080</sup> Gerard Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino: A History of Architecture and Urbanism in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008), 16.

From Gerard Lico's description, one can glean that as dwelling, the *balai* by turns integrates its structure into nature's vicinity and separates it from its proximity, especially if it means a catastrophe. The *balai* is within nature but is also outside it as an interior. Its *loób* and *labás* are by turns seamless and delineated, primarily because of the tropical winds which bless and punish in spite of the edifice.

An earlier description of the *balai* also attests to this: "The *balai* is generally a multipurpose, single-room dwelling, light and airy, as if floating, in appearance."<sup>81</sup> The appearance, the *palabás*, is "light and airy" but the interior, the *loób*, also allows for this circulation. It is this composure that allows the riddle to imagine a space that enfolds the passage of time, of weather, through the rolling and the unrolling of the mat. If the *balai* is very much a part of the nature from which it delineates itself from, then it just makes sense that an idea of totality begin from this anterior riddle.

A folk song illustrates the extensivities that the *balai* could accommodate:

Bahay-kubo, kahit munti,  
ang halaman doon ay lumalati:  
singkamas at talong, sigarilyas at mani.  
Sitaw, batao, patani.

Kundol, patola, upo't kalabása,  
at saka mayroon pang labanos, mustasa.

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<sup>81</sup> Ma. Corazon A. Hila, "The Ethnic Balai: Living in Harmony with Nature," in *Balai Vernacular: Images of the Filipino's Private Space* (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas (Cultural Center of the Philippines)/Museo ng Kalinangang Pilipino, 1992), 14.

sibuyas, kamatis, bawang, at luya,  
sa paligid-ligid ay puno ng linga.<sup>82</sup>

Only a hut, and so very small,  
But the garden is full of all kinds of plants:  
Turnips and eggplants, winged beans and peanuts,  
String beans, *batao*<sup>83</sup>, lima beans.

Gourds and *patola*<sup>84</sup>, white squash and yellow squash.  
Besides these, there are also radish and *mustasa*<sup>85</sup>.  
Onions, tomatoes, garlic, and ginger.  
And all around are sesame plants.

The *bahay kubo*, a lowland inflection of the *balai* vernacular, advances on the opportunities that the structure that opens up time and space in the riddle above by encompassing the vegetable garden that surrounds it. The totality of edible verdure that encloses the structure opens the latter up the way the mat in the riddle extends the purported limits of *balai* space. Thus, the emphasis on the diminution (*kahit munti*) that is canceled out.

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<sup>82</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, ed., “Bahay Kubo,” in *The Folk Songs*, Philippine Folk Literature Series, Vol. VII, with a foreword by José M. Maceda (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1996), 96.

<sup>83</sup> *Dolipshos lablab* (Linn.) Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> *Luffa acutangula* (Linn.) Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *Prassica juneea* (Linn.) Azora. Ibid.

While Damiana Eugenio's translation considers the garden as an extended space, the first two lines might also be translated as:

Nipa hut, even if small,

The plants there are various.

The narration refers to a "there" (doon), a distantiated space that nonetheless envelops the garden itself and enfolds it in the interior. The garden is not outside the *bahay kubo*. It is inside, because the delineations are seamless, in the first place:

Depending on the ecology of the vicinity, the *bahay kubo* may be constructed from various kinds of botanical materials, such as wood, rattan, cane, bamboo, anahaw, nipa, bark, or cogon. Nipa (*Nipa fruticans*) is the widely used material; thus the *bahay kubo* is also referred to as the nipa hut. Bamboo (*Schizostachyum lumampao*) is also used as a major material because of its availability and flexibility.

...Hardwood, particularly molave (*Votex geniculata*), is the favored material for the post, but bamboo is more prevalent....Structural segments are tied together with strips of rattan (*Calamus*). Onto the bamboo skeleton, shingles of nipa... or cogon (*Imperata cylindrica*) are bound in dense rows. Other materials alternatively used for roof shingles are anahaw palm (*Livistona rotundifolia*) and sugar palm (*Arenga pinnata*).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino*, 48.

Isn't the catalogue of the morphological make-up of the *bahay kubo* a repetition of the verdure that surrounds and at the same time is included into the structure? It makes sense that the garden is very much a part of the *loób* because the structure itself is a botanical specimen transformed into an architectural edifice. The lyric citation and the architectural prose both exhibit the transposition of a prose of delineation and its concomitant erasure into a poetics of integration because the locus of the cultural is nature itself.

Alejo uses the architecture of the *bahay kubo* to devise a phenomenology of the *loób*:

...Ang loób ay hindi lamang ang pinagsama-samang lawak at lalim ng mga dingding, sahig, at kisame ng isang silid kundi ang mismong laman nito na nag-iipun-  
ipon sa gitna at gumagalaw mula sa gitna patungo sa gilid at palabás sa harap. Ang loób  
din ay ang palibot na nabubuo ng tunog na natutunugan ng isang kumakatok at hindi  
nanghihimasok. Ang loób din ay yaong napakikiramdaman maging sa katahimikan ng  
loób na nauunawaan lamang sa sariling pakikipag-kapwa-kaloóban ng umuunawa.<sup>87</sup>

... The *loób* is not only the combination of the *lawak* (breadth) and *lalim* (depth) of the walls, floors, and eaves of a room but the *laman* (content) which are gathered in the center and that which moves from the center unto the corner and out into the front. *Loób* is also the surroundings that is composed of the sounds which are heard by the one who is knocking and not invading. The *loób* is that which is felt even in its silence which is understood when someone understands and shares that *loób*.

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<sup>87</sup> Alejo, *Tao pô! Tulóy!*, 79.

The *loób* is that which is shared as structure and song and as event and silence. It is *saloóbin* and *niloloób*, that which is contained, and whose vector indicates an outward directionality, a *palabás* into the outside, the *labás*. *Loób* is always an experience of interiority. And through its dimensions, it is shared as it is disseminated, in the form of a gift.

## II

### *Kaloób*: The Gift of Interiority

The Tagalog *loób* calls into mind the Maori *hau*, as explicated by Marcel Mauss in his discussion of the gift in the *taonga*:

The *taonga* and all strictly personal possessions have a *hau*, a spiritual power. You give me *taonga*, I give it to another, the latter gives me *taonga* back, since he is forced to do so by the *hau* of my gift; and I am obliged to do so by the *hau* of my gift; and I am obliged to give this back to you since I must return to you what is in fact the product of the *hau* of your *taonga*.<sup>88</sup>

The sociality that is instantiated by the *hau* is a serial one. Within this circuit, a most vital presence is the third person. He/she cancels out the possibility of the exchange beginning and just ending with the giver of the gift and its recipient. A closed circuit is refused by the whole exchange, in order to initiate a circularity that infinitely opens. The intervention of the third person makes possible a concentricity of relations, so that there rises the perpetual possibility of

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<sup>88</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 9.

the gift returning to its source, its birthing always rehearsed and repeated, and the indigenal moment of giving constituted as an indelible trace.

The gift can only command widening of kinships and mobility of identifications, because of its situational doublings, its bivalent movements. Here it is most opportune to quote Mauss at length and evoke the transitivity of the terms of gift-giving:

The gift received is in fact owned, but the ownership is of a particular kind. One might say that it includes many legal principles which we moderns have isolated from one another. It is at the same time property and possession, a pledge and a loan, and object sold and an object bought, a deposit, a mandate, a trust....<sup>89</sup>

In the face of these terms, one might as well trust that the other can only have a pure intention, that her “inner self is a spring,” in Tagalog, *bukal ang kaloóban*. With this clarity of conscience, one can easily acknowledge one’s *utang na loób*, an “inner debt,” or an “interior to be ransomed,” so that one endlessly offers a *kaloób*, a “gift” that approximates the amount of the debt. Vicente Rafael explains:

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<sup>89</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 22.

*Loób* is at the root of one of the words for “to give,” *ipagcaloób*, and a gift itself is *caloób*, literally part of the inside of something. Thus inside is juxtaposed rather than dialectically opposed to outside.<sup>90</sup>

With the juxtaposition of the spaces of the inside and the outside through the gift, one detects a simultaneity, and thus a syncopated union of these distinctions. This is where the gift becomes an instance, an event—a temporality, in Derrida:

The gift is not a gift, the gift only gives to the extent it *gives time*. The difference between a gift and every other operation of pure and simple exchange is that the gift gives times. There were there is gift, there is time.<sup>91</sup>

As a link between the giver and the recipient, and the time that mediates the scenes of giving and receipt, the gift persuades the participants to move in a timely rhythm. As co-occupants of the interior, the giver and the recipient will *in time* be counter-parts of the social totality they comprise. The significance of the prefix *ca/ka-* must be emphasized here, as it gives the word it appends itself to a notion of equivalent participation. Thus, a friend, is *kaibigan* (*ibig* = “to like”). Inversely, the opponent can only be a worthy one to share in the enmity, *kalaban* (*laban* =

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<sup>90</sup> Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 125.

<sup>91</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 41.

“to fight”). The prefix is derived from the word *kapwa*, which could be translated as an other who is a neighbor, intimate, or fellow.

The time of the *kaloób* obliges the receiver to fill up that part of the presenter that had been emptied in the giving. Because one is indebted to the giving party, one aspires to return the favor, after saying “Paano ko magagantihan ang utang na loób na ito?”<sup>92</sup> (How can I repay this inner debt [caused by your gift]?) Rafael explains the debt that is borne by the gift:

In being attached to the word for debt, *utang*, *loób* figures as both the site and the object of exchange. ... *Utang na loób* from this perspective is not only a debt of gratitude but also a debt of, from, and for the inside, as indicated by the particle *na*. The *loób* that is staked in a debt transaction is therefore an inside that is also an interior surface, a container as well as that which is contained, but only to the extent that it is already oriented toward an external process of exchange.<sup>93</sup>

As *palabás*, this “external process,” prods the debtor to as much as possible repay the debtee, if not in full, in increments. For not trying to, one would be called *walang utang na loób*, “without a sense of indebtedness.” This discourse on debt dictates a code of honor, so that the *walang utang na loób* is one who is *walang dangal*, “without honor,” *walang isang salita*, “without a word of honor,” or *walanghiya*, “without shame.”<sup>94</sup> The *walanghiya* is one who is all exterior,

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<sup>92</sup> *Gantí* also means “to avenge,” hence the contemporaneity between gift and counter-gift.

<sup>93</sup> Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, 125.

*pulos palabás*, because “thick-faced,” *makapal ang mukha*. One who has a sense of decency is nonetheless humble enough to say that one “cannot show one’s face” to one’s debtor, *walang mukhang ihaharap*, simply because one still has the *utang* that remains to be paid.

At the outset, one may miss the seriality of the *loób*, because the *kaloób* and the *utang na loób* seem to be contained by the dyadic mutuality between the debtor and the debtee. Now let us turn Derrida into the third:

But is not the gift, if there is any, also that which interrupts economy? That which, in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange? That which opens the circle so as to defy reciprocity or symmetry, the common measure, and so as to turn aside the return in view of the no-return? If there is gift, the *given* of the gift (*that which* one gives, *that which* is given, the gift as given thing or as act of donation) must not come back to the giving (let us not already say to the subject, to the donor).<sup>95</sup>

When the *kaloób* departs from the modality of equanimity and occupies a desire to supply a “symbolic equivalent,”<sup>96</sup> then it configures a time of the debt. The gift is annulled and reduced to an ordinary procedure of exchange. And time, previously unmarked, is now measured as a significant object of exchange.

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<sup>94</sup> For a discussion of the dialectic between *utang na loób* and *hiya*, see Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, 121-135.

<sup>95</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

“Precolonial” Tagalog society purportedly based its social structure on the *utang*. When one is not able to repay one’s debt, one becomes an *alipin*, a slave:

The most common cause of slavery was the desire for gain and the practice to which they were so addicted that even in cases of extreme need a father did not lend to a son, a son to his father, a brother to a brother, save on condition that repayment would be double the loan. And if the debt was not paid in the time agreed upon, the debtor was reduced to slavery until he paid it. This was a common occurrence, because the interest on the loan increased in proportion to the delay of settlement until it exceeded in value all that the debtor owned, whereupon his person became forfeit and the poor fellow became a slave, along with all his children and descendants.<sup>97</sup>

Like the *kaloób*, the *utang* is a transaction that is predicated on time. There is a date that is agreed upon when the amount borrowed is to be fully paid. The debtor’s inability to pay causes the deferral, the delay of one’s release from the terms of the agreement. The more one does not fulfill one’s obligation, the more is one tied with the time of the debtee. This debt is however a quantifiable one; the slave can still imagine a state of freedom from the bond of enslavement. Lifetimes may be counted, but the accounting will end.

Derrida recounts an inquiry from a colleague when he read his lecture on the gift in Chicago:

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<sup>97</sup> Francisco Colin, *Labor Evangelica*, Pablo Pastells, ed., 3 vols., (Barcelona: Henrich, 1900-1902, originally published in 1663), I, 16, excerpted in Horacio de la Costa, *Readings in Philippine History* (Makati City: Bookmark, 1965), 5.

W. J. T. Mitchell elaborated the question of the slave in a very interesting manner and linked it to narrative.... What happens when the “Given is a person,” the slave who “has nothing to give”? Slavery is that which gives back or gives... but also deprives of narrative.<sup>98</sup>

What narrative then gives time, and offers a gift?

Rafael cites the debt a child owes to the mother as the prototype of this debt or an anterior of the gift:

One has an *utang na loób* to one’s mother (and never the reverse) by virtue of having received from her the unexpected gift of life. It is expected that one will never be able to repay this debt in full, but instead will make partial payments in the form of respect (*paggalang*).<sup>99</sup>

The mother carries the child “for nine months,” *sa loób ng siyam na buwan*. While this time of waiting may be timed, the child’s indebtedness to his/her mother is timeless. One can never imagine a date that severs one from the obligation, not even death. The mother and the child, as counter-parts of the *kaloób* that is life, share in the circularity of this contract. It is the mother’s containment of the child as an inner life and the child’s partaking of maternal temporality that entitles our giver and obliges our recipient to this eternal double-bind. Again, Derrida:

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<sup>98</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 49.

<sup>99</sup> Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, 128.

For there to be a gift, *it is necessary [il faut]* that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt....It is thus necessary, at the limit, that he not recognize the gift as gift. If he recognizes it as gift, if the gift *appears to him as such*, if the present is present to him *as present*, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift.<sup>100</sup>

A folk song from the Bicolanos more or less intimates us to understanding such intimacy:

Si Nanay, si Tatay di ko babayaan  
Balakid na buot an sakuyang utang.  
Si pagdara sako nin siyam na bulan  
Gatas kong sinuso 'di ko mabayadan.

I will never neglect my mother and my father  
I owe them so much.  
She carried me for nine months  
Milk that I sucked from her, I cannot repay.<sup>101</sup>

There is at once a recognition of the debt and the acceptance of the impossibility of repaying it. And yet it is in this instance when the gift as an unrecognizable event unfolds. The self, who

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<sup>100</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 13.

<sup>101</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, ed., "Si Nanay, Si Tatay" in *The Folk Songs*, Philippine Folk Literature Series, Vol. VII, with a foreword by José M. Maceda (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1996), 433.

sings of a “pure heart,” *balakid na boot*, forgets that one, the offspring, is the gift unfolding itself as time. The self is the gift-event that annuls the exchange.

And yet we say ‘forgetting’ and not nothing. Even though it must leave nothing behind it, even though it must efface everything, including the traces of repression, this forgetting, this *forgetting of the gift* cannot be a simple non-experience, simple non-appearance, a self-effacement that is carried off with what it effaces.<sup>102</sup>

This asynchronic speech can only be intoned in subjunctivity:

Ay Nanay, ay Tatay,  
kon ako maghali, hihidawon mo’ko sa gabos mong aki.  
Makakua ka man nin makakasangli,  
dai maka-arog sa sakong ugali.

O Mother, Oh Father  
If I leave you, you will miss me among your children.  
You might find one to take my place  
But it will not be me anymore.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Eugenio, ed., “Si Nanay, si Tatay,” in *The Folk Songs*, 433.

A departure is conjured in the subjunctive (kon), and yet, again the auspicious recognition that the gift is irreparable and indispensable promises a return, and insists that it shall remain as originary: “Even if the gift were never anything but a simulacrum, one must still render an account of the possibility of this simulacrum and of the desire that impels toward this simulacrum....”<sup>104</sup>

Ay Nanay, ay Tatay  
Kong ako maraot, pugutan ni payo ibuntog sa laod  
Kong makahiling ka nag-aanud-anod  
Ay Nanay, ay Tatay sa puda man tolos.

Oh Mother, Oh Father  
If I am bad, you can cut my head  
And throw it in the sea.  
If you see it floating on the waves  
Oh Mother, oh Father, please take it immediately<sup>105</sup>

Humility is accorded to the giver of the gift; this source is seen as one who may dispense life as its converse, death.<sup>106</sup> As the third, the offspring’s time is a counter-part that affirms the time of

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<sup>104</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 31.

<sup>105</sup> Eugenio, ed., “Si Nanay, si Tatay,” in *The Folk Songs*, 433.

<sup>106</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, translated by David Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

ancestry which the mother and the father partake in, but it is also the counter-point where the exchange becomes a time that by turns knows and forgets its own unfolding. It is in the supplication of this third's utterance that the secret is assured to preserve a quiet seriality.

### III

#### Corpus of the Gift

The *loób* figures in the human body:

Obos-obos biyaya,  
bucas nama, y, tunganga.

Eating up all that you have [today],  
And tomorrow you will be looking on with your mouth open.<sup>107</sup>

The body is portrayed as gluttonous, always consuming the available largesse of food to fill up one's spacious stomach. With all the food ingested into the biological interior, the body somehow does not properly function. The value that the text imparts is a necessary emptiness that must be preserved in every possible space. Furthermore, one also needs to reserve all else for future containment. Something must always be stored outside as a possible content, so that the inside can be possibly replenished. The *loób* must conserve its spatiality so that it can function as

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<sup>107</sup> Bienvenido L. Lumbea, "The Folk Tradition of Tagalog Poetry," in *Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature*, edited by Antonio G. Manuud (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1967), 341.

such. When the loób is full, then it is no longer a premise for openings. In consumption, it becomes fully enclosed. Yet this positive hollowness is only possible if there remains a counter-part content that is inexhaustibly procurable, because it is always already outside, an external supply, a promise that something will always be contained yet will also remain beyond all manner of containing. Such is the point where the food becomes nourishment that cancels out any residue of mere animal hunger in the recipient.

A folk song extends the body as needing another:

Leron, Leron, sinta,

buko ng papaya.

Dala-dala'y buslo,

sisidlan ng sinta.

Pagdating sa dulo'y

nabali ang sanga.

Kapos kapalaran,

humanap ng iba.

My dear little Leron

climbed a tree.

A basket in his hand

to fill with love for me.

The topmost branch he reached,

it broke beneath his weight.

Alas, poor little boy!

Look for another now.<sup>108</sup>

The fruit becomes the object in the erotic exchange between Leron and his paramour. In this first part, the latter indicates the narrative of the wooing and shifts into an imperative modality when that attempt fails. What is this failure though? An attempt to take advantage of a fruit that is not yet ripe? Or a fruit that is spoiled at the time of picking? Hence, the invitation to pick another tree with the more desirable fruit is suggested.

The second part has the male voice narrating:

Gumising ka, Neneng,

tayo'y manampalok.

Dalhin mo ang buslo't

sisidlan ng hinog.

Pagdating sa dulo'y

Lalambalambayog.

Kumapit ka, Neneng,

baka ka mahulog.

Wake up, wake up, Neneng,

let's go pick tamarinds.

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<sup>108</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, ed., "Leron, Leron Sinta," *The Folk Songs, Philippine Folk Literature Series*, Vol. VII, with a foreword by José M. Maceda (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 97-98).

A basket big we'll take  
to put the ripe ones in.  
When we get to the top,  
the branch sways to and fro.  
Hold tight, hold tight, Neneng,  
or to the ground we'll go.<sup>109</sup>

Here the climb is now between the wooer and Neneng. The same basket is present, the *loób* of the erotic relation to be filled with another fruit, the tamarind.<sup>110</sup> Thus, this part points to a modality of subjunctivity tempered with the caution of the previous fall.

The invitation continues with an attempt to impress by way of hyperbole:

Ako'y ibigin mo't  
lalaking matapang.  
Ang baril ko'y pito,  
ang sundang ko'y siyam.

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<sup>109</sup> Eugenio, ed., "Leron, Leron Sinta," in *The Folk Songs*, 97-98.

<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, this fruit is made to refer to a spouse in a short poem:

Umulan man sa bondoc, hovag sa dacong laot, aba si casampaloc, nanao nang di co loob valang baonang comot.	If rain should fall, let it pour over the mountain, and not on the ocean, alas, casampaloc left without me knowing, without a blanket to keep him dry.
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See Danilo Francisco Reyes and Florentino Hornedo, *Ginto at Bulaklak* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1997), 32.

Ang lalakaran ko'y  
parte ng dinulang.  
Isang pinggang hauot  
ang aking kalaban.

Love me, oh love me most,  
for I'm such a brave man!  
I have seven big guns,  
and nine sharp pointed swords.  
That big dish full of rice  
the platter of dried fish,  
just watch me eat it all,  
though it's enough for six.<sup>111</sup>

The virility of the offer is made clear by the repetition of phallic implements and the emphasis of appetite that could ingest even the largesse of food available. This brings us back to the proverb which warns of the excesses of desire and the necessity of emptiness. The metaphor inhabits the modalities of possibility but is wary of the dangers of surrendering to a desirous fulfillment.

If the trees look they are ready to be climbed in the previous song, this Waray song warns otherwise:

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<sup>111</sup> Eugenio, ed., "Leron, Leron Sinta," in *The Folk Songs*, 97-98.

Lubi lubi lubi, lubi lingkuranay  
Ayaw gud pagsak-i kay hibubu-ayay  
Ayaw gud pagsak-i, lubi-lubi.

Kon naruruyag ka kuma-on hin silot,  
didto la nga didto la kan Nanay didto la  
kan Tatay didto la pakigsabot.

Little coconut, stubby little coconut,  
do not climb on it, it's much too short,  
do not climb on it, little coconut.

If you want to eat fresh, young coconut,  
go see Mother,  
go see Father and ask them.<sup>112</sup>

One warns the desirer that the daring to climb the tree shall only have futility as its fruit. The repetition of *lubi* attests to the tree's still diminutive state.<sup>113</sup> And the desirer is young as well and thus can only ask for the fruit through an elder.

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<sup>112</sup> Stephen Q. Lagarde, *Koro Leyteño: Choral Arrangements of Selected Traditional Songs of Leyte* (Quezon City: APO Production Unit, Inc., 2004), 50.

<sup>113</sup> I attribute this observation to Patrick D. Flores.

Agidaw-gidaw an bukaw  
naglupad-lupad ha igbaw  
Agidaw-gidaw an gitgit

Naglupad-lupad ha langit.

Oh no, the owl  
flying up there  
Oh no, the crow

Flying way up in the sky.<sup>114</sup>

The sense of limit, punctuated by that interjection of regret “agidaw,” becomes more poignant when birds are described as flying past the tree and into the sky, leaving the desirer of the fruit on the ground to wait for:

Enero, Pebrero,  
Marso, Abril, Mayo,  
Hunyo, Hulyo, Agosto,  
Setyembre, Oktubre,  
Nobyembre, Disyembre,  
Lubi-lubi.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Stephen Q. Lagarde, *Koro Leyteño*, 50.

January, February,  
March, April, May,  
June, July, August,  
September, October,  
November, December,  
Lubi-lubi.

The passage of calendrical time shall be witness to a time when the tree shall grow and the desirer of the fruit shall be more entitled to claiming the nourishment that shall fill one's belly.

A folk song of the same title comes from the neighboring region of Leyte, Bicol:

Enero, Febrero, Marzo, Abril, Mayo  
Junio, Julio, Agosto  
Septiembre, Octubre  
Noviembre, Diciembre, Lubi-lubi.

Con waray sin abanico  
Patay na inin lawas co  
Lawas co, ay, ay, madedesmayo

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<sup>115</sup> Mabuhay Singers, "Lubi-lubi," *Lubi-lubi and other Waray Folk Songs*, CD (Manila: Villar Records, 1996). Accessed thru: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRC-so6hg-s> (March 13, 2011).

San balhas na demasiado.<sup>116</sup>

January, February, March, April, May,

June, July, August

September, October

November, December, Lubi-lubi.

If it weren't for my fan,

I would've perished.

Oh dear, my life, ay, ay, I would've fainted

from too much humidity.

Here the tropics foregrounds itself as an exasperating milieu, primarily because of the humidity that surrounds one even when the *balai* is highly ventilated. The enclosure of the *loób* is no respite because the tropics becomes all exterior in this climate, also depicted in calendrical fashion. The persona equates the exasperation with a swoon. And yet, the plant that is unreachable in the prior song accesses the much need wind when it becomes an object to soothe one's discomfort. In the tropics, there exists the salve against the earth's afflictions on bodies which inhabit it.

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<sup>116</sup> Francisca Reyes Aquino, "Lubi-lubi," in *Philippine Folk Dances*, Vol. 1, Revised Edition (Manila: Kayumanggi Press, 1970), 71.

## IV

### Dexterity, or, Habitus

The *tanága* extends the magnitude of the aphorism and the riddle<sup>117</sup> not only in terms of an additional couplet but through a meta-poetic that provides us with the range as well as the limits of representing the representationality that is *kaloóban*:

Ang tubig ma'y malalim  
malilirip kung libdin  
itong budhing magaling  
maliwag paghanapin.

Though the stream be deep,  
it can be fathomed by one who tries;  
it is a man's good heart  
that is difficult to discern.<sup>118</sup>

The imagery inhabits a body of water. The said space, while subterranean, is navigable, the poem says; its location can be tracked and located by someone who possesses a bodily knowledge of the aquatic interior. Then the poem refers to the self via its oceanic content, the *budhing*

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<sup>117</sup> See Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 1-21 and Almario, *Taludtod at Talinghaga*, 145-236.

<sup>118</sup> Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 14.

*magaling* (noble character), only to certify its elusiveness. Of Sanskrit origin, The Tagalog “budhî” may refer to an interiority that deliberates.<sup>119</sup> Thus, someone who has a “maitim na budhi” is evil because one’s interiority is muddled, and thus the consciencial faculty is absent.

What is most instructive here is the figuration of the *loób* in terms of the dimension of depth (*lalim*), which only confirms that its geometric possibility is measured and covered in an intense interior that is dialectically positioned in time—one can only know the delicate chambers of another heart after a long traversal whose duration tests the willing explorer’s patience and eventually name one a kindred errant spirit who is constantly being asked to confront the immensity of the open.

Alejo defines *lalim* as “...yaong pagkahulog ng pagdanas mula sa ibabaw pababa, patungo sa nakatago, liblib, hindi makita o matanaw sa pagyuko”<sup>120</sup> (that which is the descent of experience from the top to the bottom, unto the hidden, the inaccessible, what cannot be seen or viewed even when one has peaked or bowed down) and compares it to *lawak*:

Kung ang ginagamit nating galaw sa *lawak* ay “tanaw,” sa *lalim* naman ay “tarok.” Ang *lawak* ay ginagalugad tulad ng paglulunday sa laot; ang *lalim* naman ay sinisisid tulad ng paghango ng perlas sa silong ng dagat. Samantalang ang *lawak* ay sinusukat sa bilang ng metro-kuwadrado o herktarya, ang *lalim* naman ay sa kung ilang dipa o metro mula sa ibabaw ng tubig sa ganito-ganoong oras o kaya naman ay batay sa marka ng tubig na itinakdang “pantay-dagat.” At sa isang banda, maaaring ang makipot na bukal ay malalim, at maaari rin naming ang malawak na dagat ay mababaw.

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<sup>119</sup> *Unibersidad ng Pilipinas (UP) Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, s.v., “budhî.”

<sup>120</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 71.

Ang pinakamahirap maabot na bahagi ng dagat ay ang “kailaliman” o “pusod” ng dagat. Doon ay may isang uri ng kadiliman, loób na loób kaya nga nakapangangamba. Sa lawak, maaari tayong maligaw; sa lalim, maaari tayong malunod.<sup>121</sup>

If the gesture for *lawak* (breadth) is *tanaw* (view), then for *lalim* (depth) it is *tarok* (fathom). One searches *through* lawak, like anchorage at sea; one immerses into *lalim*, the way one seeks a pearl. While *lawak* is measured by the number of square meters or hectares, *lalim* is measured through armstretches or meters from the surface of the water in this particular hour or through the watermark that had been assigned as “level-with-the-sea.” On the one hand, a narrow spring could be deep, while a wide sea could be shallow.

The most difficult part of the sea to reach is its “kailaliman,” the outer depths, or its, “pusod,” the navel. There lies a kind of darkness, “loób na loób” an intense interior because deeply inside, thus it is terrifying. In *lawak*, we could be lost; with *lalim*, we could drown.

Alejo’s phenomenological description provides us with both the coordinates of the locus of inception, the *loób*, because of this interplay between *lawak* and *lalim*. The act of “tanaw” and “tarok” are important concepts then in specifying the speciation of the trope that is the *talinghaga* describe as Lope K. Santos as could be “mababaw” or “malalim.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 71.

<sup>122</sup> Santos, “Peculiaridades,” 148.

In the poem, the limit of the deep waters could be fathomed. Swimming, a certain hydrographic skill can attest to that; according to Marcel Mauss, swimming is one technique of the body which also illustrates a notion of dexterity of corporeal habitus.<sup>123</sup> The condition of the limit is therefore salved by the condition of a bodily comportment that must be able to negotiate with an earthly depth. However, the poem also contends that no certain amount of technique of “tanaw” or “tarok” could find a “budhing magaling.” It is the search for the latter that leads most to the getting lost and the drowning.

“Tanaw” and “tarok” may be gestic acts, but they do not necessarily emanate from the trope. They are choreographic movements executed by *homo tropicus* in search of the thought-edifice. This image reverts to a notion of the trope as unmoving, as merely iconic. And yet, metapoetically, this is what is given us by the phenomenology: the trope’s movement is in its emplacement.

The task then is to derive from Pierre Bourdieu’s habitus the dexterity of a gestic locus/local gestus:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” in *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88.

We have found this structured/structuring structure in the *loób*. What we are trying to find now is the procedures of transposability that the trope follows in order to enable the structure to reproduce itself and other grooves. This interpretation of Bourdieu, and by extension Mauss, is indeed an interiorizing of the external and extensive concept of the habitus as a theory of action, but extending it to the *lalim* (depth) of the trope and to the dispositions of *homo tropicus* is hoped to yield a critical elaboration of the anthropomorphic propensity in the anthropological enterprise. This interiorizing therefore is a fundamental gesture in elaborating the *loób* and the *habitus* as possibly transposable. It is in the *palabás* of the trope as *talinghagà* that we seek to have the externity and the extensity of the discourse played out.

The invisibility of the gift that is *budhing magaling* is not a limit: “For finally, if the gift is another name of the impossible, we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it.”<sup>125</sup> The gift exists and even if it is close to impossible, the poem names it, humbly, as that which is transcendent:

Ang sugat ay kung tinanggap  
di daramdamin ang antak  
ang aayaw at di mayag  
galos lamang magnanaknak.

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<sup>124</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, *Habitus*, Practices,” in *The Logic of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 53.

<sup>125</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 29.

When one submits to a wound,  
he does not feel the pain;  
to one who resists it,  
a mere scratch becomes a sore.<sup>126</sup>

In the poem, the wound (*sugat*) is a gift upon the condition (*cun*) that it will be received (*tinanggap*). Suffering (*dusa*) here is not one to be avoided, but welcomed, so that one will be able to weather other kinds of pain (*sakit*). To receive the gift of suffering is to strengthen one's inner self, to fortify the fortress of the *kaloóban*. The negation (*aayaw*) and the refusal (*di mayag*) of the gift only cause the body to malfunction and err in matters of surviving. In the poem, pain is a rupture that must be internalized and accepted as a total experience. To transcend the hurt, it needs to be *contained*. Once one realizes this, the sufferer self-heals. The traumaturgic is the threshold to the thaumaturgic. One needs to know that the body is capable of activating built-in mechanisms of passive resistance. It is here that suffering, following Patrick Flores, becomes sufferance: "The term sufferance is favored than suffering as it stresses the politics of overcoming a problematic site of pain in the same way that grievance reworks grief."<sup>127</sup> This activation of a dexterity is the point where we locate the trope that desires to move from pain and emulate its acts of healing.

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<sup>126</sup> Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Patrick D. Flores, "Makulay na Daigdig: Nora Aunor and the Aesthetic of Sufferance," Dissertation (Quezon City: College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines, 2000), 7.

## Gracefulness of the Grace

Let us read two folk songs in order for us to look at a ground where compromise is named in lieu of the transcendent. The first is from the Kapampangans:

Atin cu pung singsing

Metung yang timpucan

Amana que iti.

Qng indung ibatan.

Sangcan queng sininup

Qng metung a caban

Mewala ya iti

Ecu camalayan.<sup>128</sup>

A ring I once had

Had a crown of gems

To me was handed down

From the mother source

I feigned to keep

Deep in my trunk

It had gotten lost

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<sup>128</sup> Rosalina I. Castro, ed., "Atin cu pung singsing," in *Literature of the Pampangos* (Manila: University of the East Press, 1981), 15.

I did not even know.<sup>129</sup>

The gift is named and yet it is lost at the moment of the lyric. The recipient is regretful as the gift could no longer return to her mother. Instructive is the way the gift is lost because of the *palabás* of a secret. And such appearance eventuates into its paradoxical wish, into disappearance.

Ing sucal ning lub cu

Susucdul qng banua

Picurus cong gamat

Babo ning lamesa

Ninu mang manaquit

Qng singsing cung mana

Calulung pusu cu

Manginu ya quea.<sup>130</sup>

Now the refuse of ache inside me

Heaps up to the highest night

Finds my arms crossed

Here, on this desk, in a vow,

Who finds ever

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<sup>129</sup> The translation “A ring I once had” is a gift to this dissertation from the fictionist G. F. Dizon.

<sup>130</sup> Castro, ed., “Atin cu pung singsing,” in *Literature of the Pampangos*, 15.

My ring, my heirloom

My stricken heart

Will keep as lord.<sup>131</sup>

This loss leaves the interior (lub) into disarray (nasucal), but the sufferance extends to the outside, into the darkest height. Because the gift is summoned to reappear as a ring that enters the woman into a discourse of the debt and its attendant bondages, the gesture reverts to the impossibility of the gift itself. There is no gift, after all. And yet, it is also here that an annulment of the annulment of the gift may be performed. What emerges from a vectorial demonstration of the sublime interior—it can only be contained within the expanse of nature—is that which exceeds even after the loss, love.

Speaking of love as gift, Derrida turns to Lacan: “She can no longer take her time. She has none left, and yet she gives it. Lacan says of love: It gives what it does not have....”<sup>132</sup> The woman shall have all the love she could give, even if the ring is found by a third, the lover, who may never emerge. *It is man’s heart that is difficult to discern.* And yet this condition is joyous. If the supplement for the gift is lost in infinity, then the gift is eternally preserved. The woman only loves, then. She gives. And the transcendent reemerges.

What if the ground of the world is a life at the limit? Does one still witness the structuring structure at work to finally choreograph the sufferance when the site is worn out and decrepit?

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<sup>131</sup> G. F. Dizon, trans., “A ring I once had.”

<sup>132</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 2.

Doon po sa aming maralitang bayan,  
Nagpatay ng hayop, “Nik-nik” ang pangalan;  
Ang taba po nito ay ipinatunao,  
Lumabas na langis, siyam na tapayan.  
Ang balat po nito’y ipinakorte,  
Ipinagawa kong silya’t taburete;  
Ang uupo dito’y Kapitang pasado’t  
Kapitang lalaking bagong kahalili.<sup>133</sup>

There in our poor town  
An animal named “Nik-nik” was slaughtered;  
We melted its fat  
from which wine jars of oil were collected.  
Its skin was made  
into a chair and a stool  
where the old Chairman  
as well as the new one would be sitting down.

Here the *bahay kubo* is no longer a sustainable milieu. Its *loób* does not contain the wealth of the *labás*. A certain animal has to be slaughtered, not for the divine, but for the human inheritors of secular governance. This destitutes *homo tropicus*, in body and in spirit; and yet she must survive:

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<sup>133</sup> Reyes and Hornedo, ed., *Ginto at Bulaklak*, 84.

Doon po sa aming bayan ng Malabon  
May nakita akong nagsaing ng apoy;  
palayok ay papel gayundin ang tutong  
tubig na malamig ang iginatong.<sup>134</sup>

There in our town Malabon,  
I saw someone cook fire;  
the earthen pot was paper as well as the burnt rice,  
what served as wood was cold water.

If the referent is destitution, then the signification that this dispossession impoverishes are the very reserves of language itself when the borders between the signifiers which are usually attached to the order of representation are invaded by the act of artifice, choreographing an alternate reality whose magic might be pathetic but whose melancholy becomes persuasive in the respect before the gift even when its materiality has vanished. It is here when the eventuality of the gift surprises us with “fortune”<sup>135</sup>:

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<sup>134</sup> Reyes and Hornedo, ed., *Ginto at Bulaklak*, 84.

<sup>135</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 129.

Doon po sa aming bayan ng San Roque  
May nagkatuwaang apat na pulube;  
Nagsayaw ang pilay, kumanta ang pipi  
Nanood ang bulag, nakinig ang bingi.<sup>136</sup>

There in our town San Roque  
Four beggars played a joke;  
The cripple danced, the mute sang  
The blind watched, the deaf listened.

“Tuwa” is “joy” and this event of a joke thus alludes to the miraculous, the “divine comedy.” Here, *talinghagà*, as “ministerio” surfaces because the wound had already been internalized. As such, the body of the disabled beggar, could instruct, *talinghagà*, as “metáfora,” as to the possibilities of not asking for the reference, the exchange into “counterfeit money”:

According to a structure analogous to that of the pharmakos, of incorporation without assimilation, the expulsion of the beggar keeps the outside within and assures an identity by exclusion, the exception made (fors) for an interior closure or cleft.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Reyes and Hornedo, ed., *Ginto at Bulaklak*, 84.

<sup>137</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 135.

## Chapter Three

### The Trans-figure

#### A Morphology of Change through the Metrical Romances *Ibong Adarna* and *Bernardo Carpio*

##### I

##### Metaphor of Metamorphosis

The essay that aspires to enunciate the tropology of alteration could be pursued in the critique of the figuration of metamorphosis. In this pursuit, one looks at the attitudes of metaphor when the object of its passage is change itself. Conversely, one must also attend to the traversals of the coordinates of change when the *figure* becomes *trans-figure*; it is in the instance of the travel that we would make us come closer to movement of metaphor as a method of crossing over.<sup>138</sup> How much movement could be explored to execute this *pas de deux*? And when does the alterative motion instruct us on allegory and its torsions? In this chapter, when we look at the metaphor of metamorphosis, we are also investigating the metamorphosis of metaphor, through the rhetorical modality that makes possible the alterations.

Our texts in question *Ibong Adarna* (Adarna Bird) and *Bernardo Carpio* complicate the question of metamorphosis as they are metrical romances culled from Iberian sources and yet circulated as Tagalog texts during the height of Spanish colonialism and up to this day. The question of the tropical space as elided in the scenography and yet performed rhetorically returns

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<sup>138</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “metaphor.”

us to the problem of mood, in this case, metamorphic mood, as a referential “axis”<sup>139</sup> in the understanding of the temporal magic that metaphor performs to transport the textual performance into colonial allegory.

The notion of metamorphosis in Tagalog can be extracted from a lexicon that has entered both idiomatic and poetic expression. “Pagbabágong-anyô” means a change in form; “pagbabágong-hugis” is a shift in shape. The subjective term in these words is “pagbabágo,” change, and “bágo,” new. Related terms are “paghuhunyangò,” which refers to the adaptational procedures a chameleon does against a threatening environment; and “pagbabalát kayô,” (literally the wearing of a false skin) which elevates the chameleonic tendency into “pagpapanggáp,” imposture. In all this, the emphasis on the form as surface, instructs us on an aspect of *palabás*, of performance or artifice as an exterior and yet extensive technique. One of course must refer to the *loób*, the interior, as whether integral to this superficiality and to change as merely artificial and therefore incomplete with interior impenetrability.

Again, Flores, on *palabás*:

...a valiant hope against reification and the temptation of mimicry, yet within the vicinity of these irresistibilities, too, as *palabás* enunciates at once the melodrama of sentiment and the radicality of disclosure, illusions and inventions, the passage into the moment of revelation, of shedding inhibition.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> See Gaston Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, translated by Kenneth Haltman (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 2002), 246.

<sup>140</sup> Flores, “Palabás,” 8.

But how can the performance be irresistible when there is melodrama but no sentiment, disclosure but without radicality? The question of metamorphosis as merely appearance questions the efficacy of metaphor as a procedure. All the same, what if *palabás* is the final act of change that emanates from the interior? Or a primary scene in the alteration of the *loób*? This is where we return to the vectorial nature of the trope, which may allow an object to emerge from the gesture—one that plays out difference even when resemblance preserves its face in the iteration.

And Alejo, on the *loób*:

Subalit ang loób din ay galaw mula sa loób, at tila pagtubo, pagbukadkad, pag-alsang tulad ng masa ng tinapay, pagdipa, pag-aalay, pagpapahayag ng sarili....<sup>141</sup>

But the *loób* is a movement from the inside, and is like a growth, a flowering, a rise like the dough of bread, a prostration, an offering, an expression, a statement of the self....

What happens to this interior when it moves? When it gestures “*palabás*,” outward? How can we describe its springing forward into the world? The drive of this extroversion should definitely be a force in the transfiguration. And so it is a task to track such ecstasy in order for us to perhaps reflect on the originary premise of that thing that changes and of the act of change itself.

What does a shift in shape mean for metaphor especially as the tropological agent is a figure that alters in form? With the trans-figure, a *locus-gestus* could be detected to be acquitting

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<sup>141</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 79.

itself between interiority and performance while belonging to both topoi/tempi of metaphor. A genesis is seized to be cracking into the world from what Alejo would call that “diminutive midpoint. (munting gitna)”<sup>142</sup> Could this figure be the expressions of the countenance that would welcome the surprise of the gift—metamorphosis? And yet, if metamorphosis unfolds as gift, its dissemination is enclosed within a circle, a figure that according to Rodolphe Gasché is

extracted from the incessant motion...which has been successfully fixed...not only as the consequence of the motion of supplementation but already, in a much fundamental manner, what will condition the supplementation itself.<sup>143</sup>

Metaphoric change is that which enables that thought of earthlings partaking in emergence—from each other's embrace, and into a world of causality and consequence; their co-mutation is the premise for the immodesty of inter-speciational relation, a demonstration of what Flores calls the “shedding of inhibition,”<sup>144</sup> where the carapace of unsubstitutability is flattened into a diaphane of osmotic ex-change. Within this symbolic economy, the trans-figure could be that which Derrida refers to as an “effraction in the circle”<sup>145</sup> that untangles the ligatures of emplacement and the elliptical supplementations which rehearse the circuits of genitivity: “There would be a gift only at the instant when the paradoxical instant... tears time

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<sup>142</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 79.

<sup>143</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, “Heliocentric Exchange,” translated by Morris Parslow, in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 106.

<sup>144</sup> Flores, “Palabás,” 8.

<sup>145</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 9.

apart.... the ‘present’ of the gift, is no longer thinkable as a now, that is, as a present bound up in the temporal synthesis.”<sup>146</sup>

## II

### Romance in the Tropics

Circulated as publications or recited before an audience, the metrical romance was the most popular literary form during most of the Spanish colonial period and was still being patronized by Filipinos during the early years of American rule. There are two kinds, according to the prosody: the *corrido* employed an octosyllabic quatrain while the *awit*, or “song,” used the *plosa*, a dodecasyllabic verse.<sup>147</sup> These long narrative poems were mostly adapted from European sources and displayed staple leitmotifs of the genre like the monarchical setting; the various emplotments that such a milieu breeds: conquest, heroism, courtly love, marriage; a world between contested by supernatural and the human; and the moral order threatened by evil and yet claimed by the good in the end. While the said features largely identify the origins of the form as temperate and teach us methods of reading that may be tempered by the metrics of chivalric romance, the vernacular that renders the milieu provides us an argument for a mood

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<sup>146</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 9.

<sup>147</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, “Metrical Romance,” in *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Vol. IX: Philippine Literature*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), 204.

that preserves the “sentiment” and yet alters the “disclosure,”<sup>148</sup> even when tropicality is almost always absent from the topos of the adventure or the affair.

Although more popularly known as *Ibong Adarna* (Adarna Bird), the complete title of the *corrido* is *Salita at Buhay na Pinagdaanan nang Tatlong Prinsipe na Anak nang Haring Fernando at nang Reina Valeriana sa Kahariang Berbania* (Word and Life Experienced by the Three Princes Who Are Sons of King Fernando and Queen Valeriana of the Kingdom of Berbania).<sup>149</sup> Francisco Benitez approximates the composition of the *corrido* “around 1860,”<sup>150</sup> but the extant copy, which we are using for this analysis is dated 1900. Benitez reads the *pinagdaanan* in the title as intimating a notion of “passing through” as “the string of events, choices, actions and encounters that make up [the lives of the three princes] as well as their relationships within a social field, a social map with a specific genealogy and a locality.”<sup>151</sup> This view had already been raised in the 1920s by Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, who thinks that the word *corrido* is derived from the Spanish *occurrido*, which signifies a “happening.”<sup>152</sup> And yet, Benitez is more attuned to the nuance of the occurrence being contingent to the experience of one who enacts the event only through one’s participation in the passing through the tempus and the locus of the event. This is vastly different from a notion of the event merely unfolding and

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<sup>148</sup> Flores, “Palabás,” 8.

<sup>149</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, “Ibong Adarna,” in *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Vol. IX: Philippine Literature*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), 347.

<sup>150</sup> Francisco Benitez, “Ang mga Pinagdaanang Buhay ng *Ibong Adarna*: Narrativity and Ideology in the *Adarna*’s *Corrido* and Filmic Versions,” in *Kritika Kultura* 10, no. 1 (2008) <http://150.ateneo.edu/kritikakultura/images/pdf/kk10/adarna.pdf> (accessed April 3, 2011), 16.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Eugenio, “Metrical Romance,” 204.

presents an understanding of romance as a mode that is not merely entered but where one participates. Such a critical standpoint enables us to understand the tropicity of romance as a matter of what Benitez calls a *conjointure*: “This oscillation between being the narratee, listening to a narrative given to us by the bard, and being the narrator ourselves provides differing subject positions in the actual unfolding of narration.”<sup>153</sup> This eventuality vibrates between the *loób*, the inside, and the *labás*, the outside, with the narratee being narrated the temperate through the tropical vernacular of the narrator and the tropics conjoining itself with the temperate at that moment of *palabás*—that happening, the *corrido*.

*Historia Famosa ni Bernardo Carpio sa Reinong Espana, na Anac ni D. Sancho Diaz at ni Dona Jimena* (Famous Life of Bernardo Carpio in the Kingdom of Spain, Son of D. Sancho Diaz and Doña Jimena), or *Bernardo Carpio*, is an *awit* attributed to Jose de la Cruz, aka Huseng Sisiw. The oldest Tagalog edition, printed in 1860, shall be our textual base.<sup>154</sup> While the *awit* can refer widely to any form of song, it is also a particular form of poetic piece in rhyme and meter rendered through song. Compared to the *corrido*, the form has been more extensively studied by scholars. Elena Rivera Mirano devotes a chapter to the ethnomusicology of the genre, which is also a critical ethnography of its contemporary performance, in her scintillating work *Ang Mga Tradisyonal na Musikang Pantinig sa Lumang Bauan Batangas* (The Traditional Vocal Music in Lumang Bauan, Batangas).<sup>155</sup> Reynaldo C. Iletto considers *Bernardo Carpio* in

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<sup>153</sup> Benitez, “Narrativity,” 24.

<sup>154</sup> Damiana Eugenio, “Bernardo Carpio,” in *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Vol. IX: Philippine Literature*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), 331.

<sup>155</sup> See Elena Rivera Mirano, *Ang mga Tradisyonal na Musikang Pantinig sa Lumang Bauan, Batangas* (Manila: National Commission on Culture and the Arts, 1997), 51-116.

particular as opening up the “underside”<sup>156</sup> of the Philippine Revolution of 1896. This conflation of the “ilalim” (under) and the “gilid” (side) buttresses a notion of the popular, as *enfolded* in “subaltern historiography”<sup>157</sup> and as such, what *unfolds* from the text is where a figure of history that might provide for a more cogent moment of “radicality” with its attendant “melodrama.”<sup>158</sup> We shall be needing Mirano’s ethnomusicology to piece out this critical history from Ileta, after we track the itineraries of the *trans-figure* in *Ibong Adarna* and *Bernardo Carpio*, and even beyond these performances.

### III

#### *Ibong Adarna: A Summary*

The Adarna is the bird besought in the metrical romance of the eponymous title. The narrative poem has four distinct parts: the quest for the bird; the adventures in the underworld; the journey to Reino de los Cristales; and the return to Berbania.

King Fernando falls ill dreaming of his youngest and most beloved son Don Juan being thrown into a deep well. A court doctor announces that only the song of the Adarna can heal this affliction. In order to capture this source of healing air, the bird’s seven songs must be heard as it sheds its seven sets of plumage while roosting on the Piedras Platas, a tree in Mount Tabor. Each

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<sup>156</sup> See Reynaldo C. Ileta, “Rizal and the Underside of Philippine History,” in *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 29-78.

<sup>157</sup> For a compelling introduction to the field, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” In *Selected Subaltern Studies*, edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3-34.

<sup>158</sup> Flores, “Palabás,” 8.

of King Fernando's elder two sons Don Pedro and Don Diego set out to find the bird but both fail in separate attempts, falling into sleep lulled by the songbird and turning into stone when the bird's excreta fall on each prince. The king hesitates to send Don Juan but gives him the permission when the latter threatens that he shall find the bird even without the king's blessing.

On his way to Tabor, Don Juan encounters a leprous man who asks for the latter's last loaf of bread. In exchange for the gesture, the man directs him to a hut where he might find assistance to capture the bird. In the hut, Don Juan sees the loaf of bread he had donated to the leprous man. A hermit gives him seven lemons, a blade, and a golden ribbon. Don Juan must wound himself after every song of the bird and squeeze the lemons on the wound to survive the bird, according to the hermit. This the prince does, as well as turning his brothers back from stone into men using enchanted water.

The three venture to return to Berbania but Don Pedro and Don Diego injure Don Juan in order to take credit for the capture of the bird. In Berbania, the Adarna refuses to sing. But as soon as Don Juan, healed by the hermit, arrives, the bird croons and narrates the truth of her capture. The king is healed and decides to banish his two elder sons, but withdraws his sentence upon the intervention of Don Juan.

The three brothers take turns in keeping watch on the bird. Don Pedro convinces Don Diego to free the bird one night when Don Juan dozes off while guarding the Adarna. As soon as he awakes, Don Juan flees to find the bird. The elder brothers are ordered by the King to bring back Don Juan.

Don Pedro and Don Diego find Don Juan in Armenia, where they chance upon a mysterious well. Don Juan is the bravest to fathom the deep darkness. At the bottom he finds an underworld and frees two princesses, Doña Juana and Doña Leonora, who are held captive by a

giant and a serpent. Don Juan is smitten with Doña Leonora. They climb up to leave the underworld. When the latter realizes she has left her ring, Don Juan descends to get it, but is unable to return with Don Pedro cutting the rope. Don Juan falls into the underworld, fulfilling the prophecy in Don Fernando's dream. Doña Leonora sends her wolf down to take care of Don Juan.

In Berbania, Dona Juana and Don Diego are wed, but Doña Leonora requests for seven years in solitude before she can accept Don Pedro's proposal. She locks herself up in a tower waiting for Don Juan.

On his way back to Berbania, Don Juan encounters the Adarna who tells him of a more beautiful woman in Reino de los Cristales. After travelling for many years, Don Juan reaches the kingdom with the help of an eagle. Don Juan finds Doña Maria about to bathe and steals her clothes. He professes his love to the princess. Doña Maria warns her that her father Don Salermo possesses black magic but promises to help Don Juan so that he may not turn into stone just like her other wooers. Doña Maria employs her white magic to aid Don Juan in all the impossible tasks given by Don Salermo. The two elope. Don Salermo curses his daughter when he realizes that he will not be able to catch her.

When Don Juan leaves Doña Maria at a villa outside the kingdom and Don Juan agrees to marry Doña Leonora upon seeing her, Don Salermo's curse is fulfilled: Doña Maria will not be allowed to enter her beloved's kingdom and will be forgotten by him the moment he catches the sight of a woman. Plans for the wedding of Don Juan to Doña Leonora ensue. Doña Maria arrives during the wedding and interrupts the ceremonies by staging a show where a couple of black familiars restage the adventures of Don Juan and Doña Maria inside a flask. Whenever the female hits the male, it is Don Juan who gets hurt.

Don Juan finally remembers Doña Maria and professes his love to her. Doña Leonora pleads her case, prompting Doña Maria to justify why she has to be Don Juan's wife. The archbishop decides that Don Juan will be married to the one he first loved. Upon hearing this, Dona Maria unleashes a flood. Don Juan cries for Doña Maria's forgiveness and the two are wed. They abdicate the crown of Berbania which they give to Don Pedro and Dona Leonora, who are also wed. Don Juan and Dona Maria arrive in Reino de los Cristales. Doña Maria lifts the curse that her dead father had cast upon the kingdom and people emerge to celebrate.

#### IV

#### Poison's Plumage

Here I single out the scenes of transformation in order for us to track the trajectory of the trope as it tries to figure out the metamorphic bird.

The Adarna bird first appears before Don Pedro:

Ay ano,i, nang tahimic na	53	And so in the stillness
Ang gabí ay lumalim na,		In the deep of the night
Siya nañgang pagdating na		Arrived then
Niyong ibong encantada.		The enchanted Adarna bird.

Dumapo na siyang agad	54	At once it perched
Sa cahoy na Piedras Platas,		On the Piedras Platas tree
Balahibo ay nañgulag		Moulted its feathers

Pinalitan niyang agad.		Changing them immediately.
At capagdaca,i, nagsantá	55	Suddenly sang
Itong ibong encantada,		This enchanted bird
Ang tinig ay sabihin pa		Needless to say its voice
Tantong caliga-ligaya.		Was truly delightful.
Ang príncipe ay hindi na	56	But the prince did not
Nagcarinig nang nagsantá		The singing hear
Pagtulog ay sabihin pa		Needless to say his slumber was
Himbing na ualang capara.		Deep without compare.
Ang sa ibong ugali na	57	The bird's habit
Cun matapos na nagsantá,		After singing
Ay siyang pag-tae niya		Itself to relieve
At matutulog pagdaca.		And at once to sleep.
Sa masamang capalaran	58	Unfortunately its droppings
Ang príncipe,i, natai-an,		Fell on the prince
Ay naging bató ñgang tunay		And turn to stone
Ang catauan niyang mahal.		His dear body. <sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, in *Anthology of ASEAN Literatures: Philippine Metrical Romances*, edited by Jovita Ventura Castro, Antolina T. Antonio, Patricia Melendrez-Cruz, Josefina T.

The Adarna bird is a composite of avian possibilities. It is a bird of rare plumage, each set of coloration shed at the moment of roosting. The Adarna is a creature most metamorphic; the variety of her plumage is its statement of change. Because of the chromatic alterity of the bird, the bar that separates the raven from turning into white and the heron from turning into black is crossed. A metaphor for the transport presents itself to the natural impossibility. This is the first instance of the Adarna as trans-figure. Now subjunctivity and all its protentions are fulfilled with the creature that is also a metaphor demonstrating the metamorphosis. Temporality seizes upon itself with this ontological potency.

As a Bachelardian “poetic creature,”<sup>160</sup> the Adarna recurs to trans-figure: “Sometimes the image concentrates so much ardor within, dressing itself in so many colors, it seems that the Phoenix would express its being through the very *multiplicity* of its masks.”<sup>161</sup> As an avatar of the same fire that ignites that metaphorical bird par excellence, the Phoenix, the Adarna trans-figures itself as deriving the change from a *locus-gestus* of the changed changing itself to express nature as naturing in order to have itself natured, if its imaginative extension could allow creatures to thrive in their regeneration: “nature as it is expressed awakens *natura naturans*,

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Mariano, Rosella Jean Makasiar-Puno (Quezon City: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, 1985), 174-175.

<sup>160</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire*, translated by Kenneth Haltman, edited by Suzanne Bachelard (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1988), 30.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

which in turn produces *natura naturata*, which is heard in nature that expresses itself.”<sup>162</sup> The trans-figure exists because of the magnificence of the super-nature that resides within nature.

The Adarna’s metamorphosis is intensified by its particularity as a songbird. In this second trans-figural scene, the birdsong is a lullaby, putting anyone who hears of its strains into deep slumber, perhaps to annul the encounter with the hierophanic spectacle and let it recede to the oneiric. The exteriorizing is made more palpable with this audition, but a sense of an interior rehearses itself as well as a vector that must accompany the visuality.

Bachelard shall assist us in configuring the composition of the Adarna as a tonal trope, through a cognate of the songbird, the lark: “...a *pure literary image*...the source of many metaphors...so immediate that people believe, when they write about the lark, that they are describing reality. But in literature, the reality of the lark is particularly pure and clear case of *metaphor’s realism*.”<sup>163</sup> Indeed, what is at stake in the singing of the bird is metaphoricity. Shedding plumage without the trills could have confined the Adarna not only to silence but to imagery, which is a partial locus of the trans-figure. And yet, this music affirms the pure image as also that pure sound.

Finally, beauty confounds itself with the sublime, with the song of color culminating in excreta that transforms the witness into a thing of earth. The bird’s droppings petrify its auspices. The Adarna’s sound gazes, possessing “a will to paralyse... a *Medusa Complex*.”<sup>164</sup> The act should be the last in the infinitives of the songbird as a metaphor of metamorphosis, as it

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<sup>162</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, translated by Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1988), 99.

<sup>163</sup> Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will*, 82.

<sup>164</sup> Bachelard, *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire*, 162.

*solidifies* the shifts which mark out apparition and the pitches which sound out that performance. To turn the eye and the ear of the Other into stone is to not only to abort the transport of the event into dream but to annul the experience of the spectatorial audition and obliterate all traces of the event itself, of the “occurrido,” the happening, and the “pinagdaanan,” the passing through. This third moment completes the trans-figuration of the Adarna as *pharmakon*<sup>165</sup>, whose therapeutic song that returns “ginhawa,”<sup>166</sup> that air of vitality, to one short of it, and grant an “alleviation of suffering,”<sup>167</sup> might as well be that poison that denies one of that breath, and induces one to quasi-death, thus the necessary danger in somnolence, to be finally led to that sublimating moment, from air to stone but never back to being all breath. The Adarna is a bird of paradise, blooming in feather and tone atop the Piedras Platas. And her song is a hiss of venom.

What happens to the second witness Don Diego?

Ay nang mapaghusay na	81	After preening itself
Itong ibong encantada,		This enchanted bird
Ay siya nañgang pagcanta		Then proceeded to sing
Tantong caliga-ligaya.		Most delightfully.

Sa príncipeng mapaquingan	82	The prince hearing
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<sup>165</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>166</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 171.

<sup>167</sup> For the full discussion of “ginhawa” in the context of “aliw,” (enjoyment) Jose Mario C. Francisco, S. J. “A Local Genealogy of Desire: *Aliw sa Buhay Pilipino*,” *Aliw: Selected Essays on Popular Culture*, edited by Soledad S. Reyes (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2000), p. 21.

Ang voces na sadyang inam		Such a charming voice
Capagdaca,i, nagulaylay		Immediately slumped
Sa caniyang pagcasandal.		From his leaning position.
Sino cayang di maidlip	83	Who would not fall asleep
Sa gayong tinig nang voces		At such a voice
Cun mariñgig nang may saquit		If heard by the sick
Ay gagaling siyang pilit.		Would certainly get well.
Macapitong hinto bago	84	Seven times
Ang caniyang pagcasantá,		It did sing
Pitó naman ang hichura		Seven appearances
Balahibong maquiquita.		Its feathers had.
Nang matapos ñganing lahat	85	After completing all
Yaong pítong pagcocooplás,		The seven moultings
Ay tumae nañgang agad		This truly lovely bird
Itong ibong sadyang dilág.		Relieved itself at once.
Sa casam-áng capalaran	86	Unfortunately
Si D. Diego ay natai-an		The droppings on Don Diego fell
Ay naging bató rin naman		To stone he also turned

Cay D. Pedro,i, naagapay.

Beside Don Pedro.<sup>168</sup>

This recurrence of the metamorphosis emphasizes the iterative nature of the change, but specifies that bird intones the facticity of its transformation through its voice, a trans-figure of sound. And before the curse etches its poison in stone, the therapeutic premise is mentioned to remind us that the thaumaturgy only becomes traumaturgic if the intention is to afflict. Don Diego's capture is contaminated by violence:

Sa príncipeng napagmasdan	80	The bird's loveliness
Ang sa ibong cariquitan		Made the admiring prince say:
Icao ñgayo,i, pasasaan		"Where else would you fall
Na di sa aquin nang camay.		But into my hands." <sup>169</sup>

Once uttered, the poison in the voice is supplemented and earns the fate to be petrified.

The third instance of the performance shall of course have Don Juan as witness, with the expected revisions to the spectatorial audition that a subsequent repetition of an event in romance allows:

Ay ano,i, caalam-alam	161	Attentively
Sa caniyang paghihintáy		While waiting
Ay siyang pagdating naman		Soon arrived

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 177-178.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

Niyong ibong sadyang mahal.		That truly beloved bird.
Capagdaca ay naghusay	162	All at once it preened
Balahibo sa catauan,		Its feathers on its body
Ang cantá,i, pinag-iinam		And sang beautifully
Cauili-uiling paquingan.		So pleasing to the ears.
Naghusay namang muli pa	163	Preening herself once again
Itong ibong encantada,		This enchanted bird
Umulit siyang nagcantá		Sang once more a song
Tantong caliga-ligaya.		Truly delightful,
Nang sa príncipeng mariníg	164	And when the prince heard
Yaóng matinig na voces		The fine voice
Ay doon sa pagca-tindig		From where he was standing
Tila siya,i, maiidlíp.		Likely would he fall asleep.
Quinuha na capagdaca	165	At once he took out
Ang dalá niyang navaja		The blade he brought
At caniyang hiniuá na		And slashed
Ang caliuang camay niya.		His left hand.
Saca pinigán nang dáyap	166	This handsome prince

Nitong príncipeng marilág,		Then squeezed the lemon
Cun ang ibon ay magcoplas		When the bird moulted
Ay nauualá ang antoc.		His sleepiness vanished.

Hindí co na ipagsaysay	167	I shall not describe
Pitoóng cantáng maiinam,		The seven wonderful songs
At ang aquin naming turan		But let me say something about
Sa príncipeng cahirapan.		The prince's hardships.

Pitóng canta nang mautás	168	With seven songs sung
Nitong ibong sacdal dilág,		By this beautiful bird
Pitó rin naman ang hilas		Seven slashes there would be
Cay Don Juang naging súgat.		Marking the wounds of Don Juan. <sup>170</sup>

In this apparition of the Adarna, it is revealed that the encounter that could confront the magic is the endurance offered by a wounded body. The wound, “sugat,” must be accepted, “tanggapin.” For every song that is severed (nautas) from the bird, the prince must be able to open himself up as well. For one to survive the metamorphosis of the bird, one needs to surrender oneself to mutilation. And here the gift is apparent. A body of sacrifice must present itself to the bird. And the text does present Don Juan as gift. He becomes a wound himself. “Pitó rin naman ang hilas/Cay Don Juang naging súgat” must be translated as “Seven were the cuts as well/Of Don

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<sup>170</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 187-188.

Juan who turned into a wound.” Don Juan is not only the body that accepts the wound; he becomes trauma incarnate as the being-wounded.

The witness to the spectatorial audition is now entitled to a witness himself. The Adarna testifies before Don Fernando the verity of endurance offered by Don Juan, bearer of the wound of her sight and sound:

Ay sa ualá ring magbadyá	223	Since no one dared explain
Na sa caniya		And tell him
Ang ibong na sa jaula		The bird in the cage
Ang nañgusap capagdaca.		Spoke suddenly.
Namayacpác at naghusay	224	Flapped its wings and preened itself
Naglinis na nang catauan,		Cleansed its body
Balahibo,i, pinalitao		Changed its feathers
Anaquin ay gintong tunay.		As if to real gold.
At nagcantá nang ganito,	225	And sang thus:
Abá haring don Fernando,		“O king Fernando,
Quilalalin mo ñgang totoó		Try to really know
Ang lumuluhód sa iyo.		Who is kneeling before you.
Iyán ang bunsó mong anác	226	He is your youngest son
Si don Juan ang pamagát,		His title Don Juan

Na nagdalitá nang hirap		Hardships he underwent
Sa útos mo ay tumupád.		To follow your command.
Yaong anác mong dalauá	227	Those two sons of yours
Inutusan mong nauna,		Whom you commanded first
Anoma,i, ualang nacuha		Never got anything
At sila,i, naging bató pa.		And stones they even became.” <sup>171</sup>

Here we see the vocalise turning into something lyrical, with verbal language necessary to pursue the body of narrative, to identify he who has matched the sacrifice of the songbird.

What punctuates every juncture of the confessional narrative is the Adarna’s metamorphosis. Each set of plumage exceeds the beauty of the one prior to it. The nature of the color is sometimes compared to mineral: diamond, bronze, and silver, the seventh and last, but of the same shade of Piedras Platas, the tree of stones:

Nang masabi nañga itó	243	When this as all spoken
Naghaliling panibago		It changed anew
Balahibong icapitó		To its seventh set of feathers
Na anaqui ay carbungco.		Like shining silver.
...		
Caya co di ipaquita	247	The reason why I showed not
Ang mariquíit na hichura		The beauty of my appearance

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 194-195.



of healing truth-song.”<sup>173</sup> Yet if this miraculous voice revives the monarch and returns to him “ginhawa,” the breath of life, and if the “truth-singer” ordains her legitimate captor as the true heir/air to the life of the kingdom, how can this gift-giving between the Adarna and Don Juan transport us to a reckoning of a “brute Calibanesque material reality”<sup>174</sup> when the “truth” of the “song” is that which the anaesthesia fails to erase—“the seduction of colonial or imperial glamour”?<sup>175</sup>

The “poison in the gift”<sup>176</sup> should reveal itself as an apparent performance of an ineffectuation of the colonial order with the subsequent apparitions of the Adarna. While the bird was never heard singing again because of the completion of her narrative gift to Don Juan, the bird reappears as the prince sets out to return to Berbania to follow his first love Doña Leonora:

Ano ay caguinsá-guinsá	422	When all of a sudden
Doon sa pagtulog niya		During his sleep
Siya nañgang pagdating na		Arrived there indeed
Mahal na ibong Adarna.		The dear Adarna bird.
At sa tapát ni don Juan	423	And right above Don Juan
Sa cahoy na siniluñgan		In the sheltering tree

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<sup>173</sup> Benitez, “Narrativity,” 19.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> See Gloria Goodwin Raheja, *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Namayacpác at naghusay Balahibo sa catauan.		It flapped and preened The feathers on its body.
At saca siya nagcantá Nang tantóng caaya-aya, Don Juan ay pagbañgon na Sa túlog mo’y gumising ca.	424	And then it sang So delightfully: “Don Juan, get up From your sleep awaken.”
Sa voces na mataguinting Siya,i, agád na naguising At pinaquingang magaling Ang sa ibong pagtuturing.	425	The resonant voice At once awakened him And he listened well To what the bird had to say.
Malaqui mong ala-ala Sa princesang cay Leonora May laló pa sa caniya Nang cariquitan at gandá.	426	“Your great worry is for The princess Leonora Someone excels her In loveliness and beauty.
Malayo ñga rito lamang Ang caniyang caharian, At malapit siyang tunay	427	But far from here Her kingdom is Truly close it is

Sa sisicatan nang Arao.

To where the sun rises.<sup>177</sup>

Now the Adarna song is not a lullaby but an aurorating lyric telling the prince about a maiden of Cristales. After this, we do not see or hear the bird anymore, although the woman and her siblings are described as birdkind:

Ay ano,i, caguinsá-guinsá	542	When all of a sudden
Oras ay á las cuatro na		It was four o'clock
Ay dumating capagdaca		Promptly arrived
Ang tatlong mañga princesa.		The three princesses.
Dumapó na silang agad	543	Immediately they paused
Doon sa cahoy na peras		At the pear tree there
At parehong nagsilapág		And descended they all
Ang damit nila,i, hinubad.		Their clothes they took off.
Nang cay don Juan maquita	544	When Don Juan saw
Yaong si doña María		Dona Maria
Ang cariquitan at ganda		Her loveliness and beauty
Nacasisilao sa matá.		Dazzling to the eyes.
Naghubád na capagcuan	545	At once she took off

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 218.

Damít calapating hirang	Her special dove-clothes
Lumusong sa nagtuluyan	Right away descended
Sa bañong paliguan.	Into the bathing pool. <sup>178</sup>

The tropism of the word “dapo” is avian. The princesses perch like birds. Furthermore, the apparel of the princess is also described as “damit-kalapati,” dove clothes. Doña Maria is an avatar of that shapeshifter, the Adarna, whose appearance as quasi-human expands not only the extent of her metamorphosis but the range of the trans-figure as a *locus-gestus* of metaphor’s choreographic coordinates.

This Adarnic avatar possesses magical powers which enable her to fulfill all the deadly tasks that her father had assigned to Don Juan and finally flee from Reino de los Cristal. Her final act of transformation happens during the wedding day of Don Juan and Dona Leñoira in an attempt to win back the former who has forgotten her. She attends the ritual as an empress and labors hard as magician to remind Don Juan the memory of her sacrifice. Her power works, but Doña Leonora appeals for her case: she was the first one loved by the man in contention, who becomes the symbolic equivalent to the gift of love already appearing as a non-gift, despite that genuine moment in his offering. Doña Maria then unravels the pain of her testament, in an attempt to rescue the gift from the prosaic:

Naparoon at naglacbay	980	“He set forth and travelled
Sa reino nang de los Cristal		To the kingdom de lost Cristal
Cami ay nagcaibigan		We fell in love

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 232.

Ang usap nami,i, matibay.		And firm was our troth.
Gaano ang búhay niya	981	What is his life worth
Sa utos ng nang aquing amá,		Against my father's wish?
Acó ang nahirap bagá		I suffered so
Na sumunod sa caniya.		By following him
Cun aquing pinabayaan	982	Had I abandoned
Ang principeng si don Juan		Prince Juan
Hindí na darating naman		He could not have returned
Doon siya mamamatay.		And would have died there.” <sup>179</sup>

Doña Maria's claim to the life of Don Juan is a nomination of a gift that is not actually hers but Don Juan's. She might not have been the first one to have been loved by Don Juan, but she is the one first offered the love, in the form of a wound that saved her from wounding, when Adarna was still her avatar in the metamorphosis. It was Don Juan's traumaturgy that preserved her thaumaturgy and transposed its workings to the afflicted monarch. Such blindness to her own enchantment then acquits her from recognizing that gift. It is through this misrecognition, although protracted, that the gift returns to her, and enables her to extricate herself from Berbania's monarchy and return to that realm of enchantment, where she could morph and sing but never have to perch on stone, finally.

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibong Adarna*, 283.

*Bernardo Carpio: A Summary*

*Bernardo Carpio* opens with the story of the rivalry between Don Sancho Diaz and Don Rubio, esteemed members of the King Alfonso's army, over the heart of the latter's sister, Doña Jimena. The Princess is in love with Don Sancho and they keep their relationship a secret until Don Rubio discovers Jimena giving birth to child in her tower. This gives Don Rubio an opportunity to exact vengeance on the lovers. When Don Sancho arrives to bring his son where the latter could be raised secretly, he is arrested and sent to a dungeon where his eyes are gorged out. Doña Jimena is sent to the convent by the King.

Don Rubio raises the child, Bernardo, who grows up possessing superhuman strength. When Bernardo, still a child, asks Don Rubio to help him ask the King to be a knight of the Order of Santiago, Don Rubio scoffs at the idea of someone of unknown ancestry being knighted. This hurts Bernardo, who leaves Don Rubio's household. Bernardo asks for the knighthood himself from the King, who gives it to the child.

Bernardo visits the knights of the King one day and asks that he be taught the art of fencing. He engages in a duel with Don Rubio, who is sliced into half by his former stepson. Bernardo replaces Don Rubio as general of the army.

Veromilla and the troops of Emperor Carpio await outside the kingdom and Bernardo single-handedly vanquishes them. After his victory, Bernardo asks the king about his parentage. The King denies any knowledge of it but promises Bernardo that he shall try to find out about the child's ancestry and reveal it to him upon Bernardo's return from conquering Emperor Carpio's

kingdom. He invades all nineteen castles and Carpio surrenders. From then Bernardo is called Bernardo Carpio.

When he returns to Spain, the crown has been given to France. Bernardo protests to the King. His anger escalates when the answer to his natality is still not granted. Bernardo prays to the Virgin Mary. A letter from heaven drops and reveals everything to Bernardo. Before he sets out to free his father, Bernardo decides to invade France and confronts King Ludovico, who upon seeing the futility of fighting Bernardo, drops his claims over Spain. Bernardo proceeds to the dungeon where his father Don Sancho is detained and finds out the truth of the treachery of Don Rubio and King Alfonso. Don Sancho begs not to exact vengeance on his uncle. Don Sancho dies in Bernardo's arms and brings him home to the palace. He arranges for the marriage of his mother, who is summoned from the convent, and his father, the corpse groom.

Bernardo asks for the Kings blessings as he sets out to vanquish idol-worshippers. He chances upon a church with two lions guarding it. The church is locked and so he just prays outside. A lightning strikes one lion and pulverizes it. Bernardo grabs the other lion and hurls it to the distance. An inexplicable anger grows within him. He challenges the enchanter who has caused all the strange occurrences to appear and fight him.

He sees two mountains colliding and walks toward them. Before he reaches the scene, an Angel appears and asks Bernardo why he is restless. Bernardo relates his experience with the lightning and the lions. The Angel tells him the lightning has gone through the mountain and warns Bernardo that his life might be in danger if he passes through the colliding rocks. Bernardo is not threatened and tells the Angel that he shall follow the latter through the mountains. The Angel passes through and flies to heaven. The two mountains close upon Bernardo and the hero is declared to be enchanted and hidden.

## VI

### Quiver of the Gift

Let us begin our inquiry into the Bernardo Carpio's metamorphosis by looking at his form. It is the actuality of this form that shall enable us to look at the possibilities for alteration that his figure embodies:

Madali,t, salitâ di lubhang nalaon	292	In a few words, before long
Sumapit ang edad niyong pitong taón		He was seven years of age
Sabihin ang galao na ualaang caucol		His actions without a cause
Manhic manaog parinit paroon.		Going up and down, coming to and fro.
Na lalacadlacad ualang pinupunta	293	Walking to nowhere
Ang loób at puso,i, parating balisa		His mind and heart ever restless <sup>180</sup>

At age seven, Bernardo is described as active, and yet his movements are without purpose. His body is without vector in its total lack of aim, although such hyperactivity affords him a wide coverage. And yet his interiority remains stricken with anxiety: “loób at pusoi parating balisa.” Vulnerability is the actual premise of his form. Bernardo is a dis-figure.

Sa raan capagcà nasalubong niya	293	In the road when he meets
Calabao, cabayo, cundi caya,i, vaca.		A carabao, horse or cow.

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<sup>180</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, in *Anthology of ASEAN Literatures: Philippine Metrical Romances*, edited by Jovita Ventura Castro, Antolina T. Antonio, Patricia Melendrez-Cruz, Josefina T. Mariano, Rosella Jean Makasiar-Puno (Quezon City: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information), 50.

Ang gagauin niya capag nasumpungan	294	What he does sometimes
Ang nasabing hayop agad susungaban		Is to attack the same headlong
Tatangnan at saca ipaghahampasan		Take hold and throw it around
Hindi bibitiuan hangang di mamatay.		And not let go until it does.
Capagca namatay lalacad na ito	295	He then walks on
Hindi nagtatahan ualang tinutunõ		Without stopping, nowhere to go
Banday ca na bagá sa raan ay tucsó		You are foolish to cross him
May mabubungô rin calabao cabayo.		Surely a carabao or horse will die. <sup>181</sup>

All of Bernardo's purposeless energy shall be focused when he sees an object, in this case, a beast. It is in Heracleian strength that Bernardo assumes form as *l'enfant terrible*, the figure that dis-figures. And yet, he shall have a way of explaining the violence of his form, when asked why he had done the slaughter:

Aco,i, lumalapit talagang sasacay	302	I approached to mount it
Capagdaca,i, biglang aco,i, sisicaran		When suddenly it would kick me
Gayondin pò naman yaong si calabáo		The same with the carabao
Aco,i, susuagin cayâ po pinatay.		It was going to kick me.
Si vaca naman pò caya pinatay co	303	The cow I also killed
Pinatay co siya,t, susuagin aco		Because it was about to gore me
At gayondin naman yaon pong si áso		And so with the dog
Acoi cacagatin caya pò ganito.		It was going to bite me.

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<sup>181</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 50.

At yaong si baboy aco,i, quinagat din	304	The pig bit me too
Linalapit co,i, nagtacbong matulin		I was approaching it and it ran
Hinabol co siya at aqing piniguil		I gave chase and stopped it
Capagca sungab co,i, ipinalong taming.		Grabbing, I threw it immediately down. <sup>182</sup>

Violence is given, according to Bernardo, because it is a means of exchange for the threat of a counter-gift, perhaps of death. In the eyes of the endangered, the choreography of action can only commensurate in the form of defense.

At sino caya pong may acala naman	305	But who would have thought
Na mamatay sila sa gayong carahan		They would all die
Nang sila ay aquin na ipaghampasan		When I threw them gently
Sapagca,t, malambot ang tinatamaan.		And where they landed was soft

Ang pagca totoo lupa,i, malambót	306	The truth is soft was the ground
Cun sila,i, ihampás agad lumulubóg		When thrown they just sunk in
Talagang mahinà ang canilang loób		Truly weak were their wills
Saca lalaban pa aco,i, tinatacot.		Yet they would fight and scare me.

Ito pò ama co ang cadahilanan	307	This is the reason, my father,
Cayâ sila aquin na pinagpapatay.		Why I killed them
Na cun ito nama,i, aqing casalanan		If this be my fault
Baquit di magdusa ang aqing catauan.		Why does my body not suffer?

Di ano pang sucat na mauiuica mo	308	What else could you say
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<sup>182</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 51.

Sa sagót na yaon batang si Bernardo

To the answer of the child Bernardo?

Tataua na lamang itong si D. Rubio

Don Rubio could only laugh amused

At saca haharap sa maraming tauo.

And would face the people then.<sup>183</sup>

A certain miscalculation between the opposition must be noted. Animal strength is no match to the hyper-body of the monstrous child Bernardo. So he will have the alibi of an earth that is soft (malambot ang tinatamaan), and the victim possessing an unwieldy interiority (mahina ang canilang loób). And yet, while the imbalance between Bernardo's *loób* and *labás* may be perceived as an initial impression, this statement argues that the superhumanity is actually a potentiality actualized by the disfiguring figure. The final term in Bernardo's narrative of the rationale for violence, that of his body not suffering, its being spared from divine judgment, further points to the sanctity of the interior in spite of the extensive vulgarity. It is the wounding body that must be wounded by providence, if the wounding is pure offense.

These adventures in childhood shall prefigure Bernardo's exploits in adulthood (which is actually adolescence: he becomes a knight at age 12). A telling instance would be this description:

Di co pag-aanhin agád pumasoc na

474

Needless to say he entered

Ang unang castillo,i, sinalacay niya,

The first castle he attacked

Manğa paghahamoc sabihin pa бага

Needless to relate his battles

Ang camuc-ha,i, león, tigre, at víbora.

He was like a lion, tiger, viper.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 51.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

The metamorphosis that occurs here attains an ironic turn as the zootropic comparison gestures toward objects which Bernardo have considered inferior to his muscular potency. Furthermore, the tropic marker is “camucha” (of similar countenance) and not “catulad,” (like) which refers to a general form of similitude. Bernardo’s superhumanity reverts to the bestiary, his initial object of violence. This zootropic trans-figural groove that is premised on the animal face is a converse of the Adarna’s, whose metamorphosis is quasi-pyrotechnic, quasi-anthropomorphic. Yet unlike the metamorphic songbird, the monstrous child’s omnipotence falls under the monarchic order and he obeys it. King Alfonso is able to command him:

Ang ibig co sana n̄gayo,i, loóban mo	461	What I desire now is for you
At iyong parunan emperador Carpio		To venture forth to Emperor Carpio
Sapagcat traidor yaong man̄ga moro		For traitors are the Moors
Pilit na gagantí pagca,t, nan̄gatalo.		Surely they will avenge their defeat <sup>185</sup>

The will (loób) of the King is for Bernardo to (loóban) Carpio’s Kingdom. And it is this interiority to infiltrate that Bernardo must internalize. He must conserve the performance of his potency for this event.

Anopa,t, ang lahat bantay na soldados	475	What else but the soldier guards
Pauang nan̄gamatay sila,i, nan̄gatapos		All else were killed in the end
At ang icalaua,i, siyang isinunód		And the second ranks he followed through
Tinalo rin niya,t, pauang nan̄gaubos		Defeating all of them.
Saca isinunód naman ang icatló	476	Followed then the third

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<sup>185</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 70.

Pinasoc din naman itong si Bernardo		Again this Bernardo broke in
Na sa labing siyam nasabing Castillo		And in the nineteen castles
Ay ualá isa mang natirang soldado.		Not one soldier remained.
Sa talaga,t, auà nang Dios na mahal	477	In truth, by the mercy of God
Siya,i, nacaligtas sa capañaniban		Dangers he escaped
At ang catapusang caniyang dinatnán		And at the end he found
Ang calac-hang reinong ualang macabagay.		The biggest Kingdom, equal to none. <sup>186</sup>

Having metamorphosed into a chimera of the animals he had defeated, Bernardo vanquishes his opponents the way he would the beasts blocking his promenade. His change attains a high point in being not only an instrument of imperial force, but being the force of empire itself.

And yet this metamorphosis reaches a final stage in his final exploit:

Anó cayâ bagâ yaong natanao co	662	“What is that I see
Na tila simbahan cueva yatang bató		Like a church, a cave of rock
May dalauang leóng nagcaca ibayo		With two lions on both sides
Pinto nang simbahan siyang tanod itó.		Guards at the church doors.
Hindí macapasoc siyang magtuluyan	663	Unable is he to enter the church
Pagca,t, nasasara pinto nang simbahan		Because its doors are closed
Itong si Bernardo,i, dumoon na lamang		Bernardo then just bowed
Lumuhód sa pintô at siya,i, nagdasal.		Knelt at the door and prayed. <sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 71-72.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

For once, Bernardo is depicted as being unable to infiltrate. This prompts him to *interiorize*, and *outside* the edifice. This supplication shall be disturbed though:

Mana n̄ga,i, hindî pa nalalaon siya	664	Then not long after
Na sa pagdarasal pagca luhód niya		As he knelt and prayed
Cumidlát-lumintíc nang catacataca		Lightning flashed so fearsome
Tambing tinamaan iyong leóng isa.		It suddenly struck one lion.
Ano,i, capagputóc agad nang liningón	665	When it cracked, at once
Nitong si Bernardo ang nasabing león		Bernardo looked at the said lion
Sabihin pa bagá nang tamaan yaon		Needless to say as it was struck
Nagcadurogdurog nagcatapontapon.		It was shattered and was scattered.
Di naman lumagpác nang malayong lugar	666	Not far did they land
Yaong man̄ga duróg sa leong catauan		The pieces from the lion’s body
May limang puong dipá layong tinapunan		About fifty arms’ length
Ang distancia bagá lupang linagpacán.		The area they covered. <sup>188</sup>

Bernardo would be in awe of nature naturing, but this time, as destroyer, as spontaneously exacting violence. How shall Bernardo be integrated into this scene?

Gayon lamang pala uicà ni Bernardo	667	“So that is all,” said Bernardo,
Man̄ga calacasan niyan̄g catauan mo		“The strength of your body
Mapalad ca lintíc at malayò aco		Lucky the lightning was far from me
At cun dili tantong sa abàng abà mo.		Or struck would I have been.

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<sup>188</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 94.

Malaqui ang iyong manḡa capalaran	668	Great is your luck
Na acoi malayò nang ica,o,i, magdaan		That far was I when you passed
At cun dili sana,i, may quinahinatnan		Or else would I have tried myself
At quita,i, hinuli,t, aqing sinungabán.		To catch and wrestle with you. <sup>189</sup>

Bernardo is not threatened. He even addresses the lightning that has passed and subjunctively premises himself as having been able to eventuate an encounter (quinahinatnan) with the force, with nature itself.

Ñgayo,i, titicman co itong leóng isa	669	Now will I try this other lion
Yaring cagalitan nang upang magbanua		To rage at for it to behave
Lumapit na siya,t, tinangnan pagdaca		Approaching, he grabbed it fast
Sa liig hinutan inihaguis niya.		By the neck and flung it far.
Anopa,t, sa haguis niyang boong lacás	670	And as in full strength he threw it
Ay hindi masabi cun saan lumagpác		Where it fell could not be told
Na cun sa catihan bundóc caya,t dagat		Whether on land, mountain, or sea
Baquit nahaluan nang galit na hauac		Since anger there was in his grip.
Na dili maubos matura,t, maisip	671	In his mind he could not fathom
Manḡa cagalitan sa nutóc na lentic,		His fury like lightning
Tantong nag-aalab sa malaquing galit		Smouldering was his rage
Na halos magputóc ang canyang dibdib.		His breast almost bursting: <sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 94-95.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

Frustrated, Bernardo unleashes his strength onto the lion. This is the *palabás*: the beastly against the beast. Anger is again vectorially objectified. And yet no strength crossing over occurs. No conversion is immanent beyond expenditure.

Uicà ni Bernardo,i, lumabás na cayó	673	Said Bernardo: “Come out
Manḡa encantada’t tanang encantado		Enchantress and enchanters!
Ualang magsisagót sinoman sa inyó		Nary an answer from any of you
Cayoi hinihintay nḡayon ni Bernardo.		Awaiting you now is Bernardo <sup>191</sup>

Without a response from nature, with the lightning returning, Bernardo challenges enchantment, which although invisible, is recognized a *palabás*, a ruse in the name of magic.

Nang ualang lumabás lumacad pagcouan	674	As nothing came, he walked on
Na di humihintô siya,t, nagtatahan		Stopping not nor slowing down
Doon sa paglacad siya,i, nacatanao		And walking did he see
Nang dalawang bundóc na nag-uumpugan.		Two mountains colliding
Anó cayâ itó uica ni Bernardo	675	“Whatever is this?” asked Bernardo
Marami nang bundóc ang nanḡaquita co		“Many mountains have I seen
Bucód at caibá ang bundóc na itó		But unusual is this mountain
Mahanḡai lapitan nang matantô co.		Better approach it in order to know.” <sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 95

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

An apparition is granted—not nature in repose, but in tension with itself. This quake of the earth shall be a prelude to an annunciation:

Anó pa n̄ga,t, siya,i, lumacad na tambíng	676	Then did he walk in haste
Nang malapit doon nama,i, sa darating		And as he neared it, came
Ang isang lalaquing ualang cahambing		A man compared to none
Nang maquita niya siya,I, napatiguil.		Seeing whom, he stopped.
Diquit nang catauan ay caayaaya	677	His body's beauty joyful to see
Na nacasisilao cun titigan ang matá		Blinding the eyes that stare
Ang quias nang tindig ualang capara		His posture without equal
Cayâ pala, Angel na Galing sa Gloria.		No wonder: an Angel from Heaven. <sup>193</sup>

This ethereal creature, who is “incomparable” to a thing in the earth, and therefore cancels out the tropic move, matches the earthly spectacle already unfolding before Bernardo, and even promises to exceed the earth-quake.

Nang dumating doon pagdaca,i, tinanong	678	Upon arrival he was asked
Bernardo baquin ca dito nacatuloy,		“Why have you come, Bernardo?
Sinong iyong hanap quiniquita n̄gayon		Whoever you are looking for
Ang puso mo,i, tila may dalang linggatong.		Your heart appears distressed.” <sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 95-96.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

The angel sees through Bernardo's tremulous heart, which is configured as "nagdadalamhati," in agony, because bearing (dalá) the distress (linggatong) that halves (hati) its beat: the heart is wounded, even broken by this weight. This is the first of the angelic epiphanies.

When Bernardo relates to the Angel his frustration over the lightning:

Ang sagót nang Angel aco,i, inutusan	685	Answered the Angel: "I was sent
Nang Dios na Poong Macapangyarihan,		By God, the Lord Almighty,
Na lumagpac dito at cata,i, abanġan		Here to come and watch for you
Tulong pagsabihan ng ganitong bagay:		And this message to relay:

Pagca,t, malaon nang panahong totoo	686	A long time now
Ang linibot-libot guinalagalà mo,		Have you travelled and roamed
Ang uicà sa aquin iturô sa iyó		To me he said to show you
Lintic na pumutóc dito napatunġo.		The lightning came this way.

Dito rin sa bundóc na iyong naquita		Here in this same mountain that you saw
Lintic ay nagsoot at nagtagò siya,		The lightning penetrated and hid
Di mo maquiquita at maghihirap ca		You cannot find it, it will be hard
Malalim na lubhâ quinalalaguian niya.		So deep in the mountain is it. <sup>195</sup>

The lightning, explains the Angel, is contained by the thunderous mountains. Only destructive form can enfold the violence that precedes it.

Baquin di mo naman lubhang mababatid	688	Never will you surely guess
Ang lagáy nang bundóc malayo,t, malapit.		Which mountain near or far

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<sup>195</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 96-97.

Capag nanġahas cang doo,i, magpipilit		If you should dare force your way
Ay mamamatay ca capagca nasaguíp.		You will die, if caught.

Na cun aco nġayon ang siyang pumasoc	689	If I myself were to enter
Sa bundóc na yaon ay macapaloób		Inside the mountain
Ay di ma-aanó sa aua nang Dios		Nothing will happen, by God's mercy,
Ayauan sa iyo,t, di co nasasacop.		But for you, I cannot answer. <sup>196</sup>

The last epiphanic message is a speciation division between the divine and the human, with the Angel conjecturing that a different fate shall befall Bernardo in terms of the enclosure (macapaloób) because of his mortality.

Sagót ni Bernardo ó mahal na Angel	690	Bernardo replied: "Beloved Angel,
Ang panġunġusap mo caya po sa aquin,		What you have said of me,
Capanġahasan co,i, totoo na mandin		About my daring is true
Capag pinasoc mo,i, aquing papasuquin.		When you do enter, so will I!

Aco ay tingnan mo sa Angel na saysay	691	"Watch me then," said the Angel,
Aco,i, sosoot na,i, iyong pagmamasdan,		"I shall enter and carefully watch
Mauna na aco sumunód ca naman		I shall go first and then you follow
Quita ay hihinti,t, aantabayanan.		I shall pause for you and wait." <sup>197</sup>

Bernardo responds that his zeal surpasses his humanity, and with this assurance, a choreography of the entry is delineated.

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<sup>196</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 97.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<p>Nagpauna nanġa ang Angel na magandá  Cay Bernardo naming minamasdan siya,  Pagcamasid niya,i, malicmatang sadya  Capag-aalis doo,i, nagtuloy sa Gloria.</p>	<p>692</p>	<p>So it was the beauteous Angel went ahead  Bernardo watching him meanwhile  As he observed, in a wink  The Angel returned to heaven.</p>
<p>Mana,i, sa hindi na maquita,t, mamasdan  Nítong si Bernardo ang Angel na mahal,  Sumoot na siyang doo,i, nagtuluyan  At nang dí rao siya naman inaanatay.</p>	<p>693</p>	<p>When Bernardo no longer could see  And observe the beloved Angel  He entered and went on within.  So as not to be awaited.</p>
<p>Di co pag-aanhin pumasoc nang agád  Búnot ang espada sa camay ay hauac,  Capagca paloób ay carinġat-dinġat  Bundóc ay naghilom tambing na nalapat.  ...  Talagá na ito nang Poong si Jesús  Sa quinapal niya,i, paquita,t, caloób  Pagcat si Bernardo,i, may loób sa Dios  Cayâ inengcanto,t, itinagong lubós.</p>	<p>694</p>	<p>Without much ado did he hasten in  His sword unsheathed in his hand  Once inside suddenly  The mountains moved to fit as one.</p>
<p>Talagá na ito nang Poong si Jesús  Sa quinapal niya,i, paquita,t, caloób  Pagcat si Bernardo,i, may loób sa Dios  Cayâ inengcanto,t, itinagong lubós.</p>	<p>697</p>	<p>This the Lord Jesus has willed  For his creation to see and grant  Because Bernardo has trust in God  He was enchanted and hidden well.<sup>198</sup></p>

The mountain is a portal to heaven and Bernardo enters it. What is most significant here is that the mountains are described to have healed (naghilom) and therefore extends a metaphor of the earth being wounded. Bernardo is then *pharmakon*, like the Adarna, the content that completes the natural form and cancels out the earth-quake. Finally, it is the divine that is revealed as

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<sup>198</sup> *Bernardo Carpio*, 97-98.

enchanted the one who is with faith (may loób sa Dios), and who inherits this enchantment. The one human with the fortitude to withstand all other enchantments is the one concealed.

Disappearance is the finality of Bernardo's metamorphosis. As *locus-gestus* of an evangelical paradox, Bernardo trans-figures, like the brothers Pedro and Diego, into stone, but whose "radicality"<sup>199</sup> is enclosure and understatement. Why should someone who had vowed to obliterate the pagan in the name of the Christian God be hidden, and in this way? Because Bernardo is the gift that must remain a secret, he is the "last word of the gift" and the "last word of the secret."<sup>200</sup> He must be a part of *Mysterium tremendum*, so that his proximity makes the earth quake:

A secret always makes you tremble. Not simply quiver or shiver, which also happens sometimes, but tremble. A quiver of course can manifest fear, anguish, apprehension of death; as when one quivers in advance, in anticipation of what is to come.... It prepare for, rather than follows the event....water quivers before it boils....<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Flores, "Palabás," 8.

<sup>200</sup> Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p. 30.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

## VII

### La Tierra Temblorosa

Reynaldo C. Ileto points out that the *awit* had an afterlife that transformed the hidden hero Bernardo into a figure of emergent resistance:

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Tagalog peasants, at least those within the vicinity of the mountains that dominate the landscape of the Tagalog region, believed that Bernardo Carpio was their indigenous king trapped inside a mountain, struggling to free himself. Catastrophic events were interpreted as signs of his activity.<sup>202</sup>

In his novel *El Filibusterismo*, José Rizal even writes this passage:

El cochero volvió a suspirar. Los indios de los campos conservan una leyenda de que su rey, aprisionado y encadenado en la cueva de San Mateo, vendrá un día a libertarles de la oppression. Cada cien años rompe una de sus cadenzas, y ya tiene las manos y el pié izquierdo libres; solo le queda el derecho. Este rey causa los terremotos y temblores cuando forcejea ó se agita, estan furete que, para darle la mano, se le alarga un

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<sup>202</sup> Reynaldo C. Ileto, "Bernardo Carpio: Awit and Revolution," in *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 11. See also *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

hueso, que á su contacto se pulveriza. Sin poderse explicar por qué, los indios le llaman el rey Bernardo, acaso por confundirle con Bernardo del Carpio.<sup>203</sup>

The *cochero* sighed again. The *Indios* in the countryside treasure a legend that their king, imprisoned and chained in the cave of San Mateo, will one day come to deliver them from oppression. Every hundred years he breaks one of his chains and he already has his hands and his left foot loose; only the right foot remains chained. This king causes earthquakes and tremors when he breaks his chains, or when he struggles or is agitated. He is so strong that one can shake his hand only by holding out a bone, which upon contact with him is reduced to powder. For no explainable reason, the natives call him King Bernardo, perhaps confusing him with Bernardo Carpio.<sup>204</sup>

Here, Bernardo's concealment is a punishment that intensifies his heart's suffering. And the quake of the earth becomes his own doing now, to protest his being the content of the enclosure, of the very earth that he has vowed to protect. The trans-figure is not absolutely concealed in this consciousness. And this impending emanation the folk know, allowing them to sanction a patience, even in writing.

In the Tagalog region where Bernardo is believed to emerge as redeemer one day, the *awit* is a form still performed by the folk, sung and danced, in the *pandanggo*:

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<sup>203</sup> José Rizal, *El Filibusterismo: Novela Filipina*, Primer Reimpresion en Filipinas de la Edicion Principe Publicada, El Gante, Belgica, 1891 (Manila: E. Martinez and Sons, 1958), Capitulo 5, 33.

<sup>204</sup> José Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, translated by Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin, edited by Raul L. Locsin (Makati City: Bookmark, Inc. 1997), Chapter 5, 47-48.

Bukod sa paghipo ng kanang kamay sa batok, kilay, baywang at hita; at ang pagpapasa ng aso, may mga tanging galaw pang matutuklasan sa pandanguhan. Ang una ay ang “talik,” . . . maliit na kumpas at galaw ng mga daliri ng mga mang-aawit na babae. Ang “paglakdang” naman ang siyang tawag sa mga hakbang at padyak ng paa habang sumasayaw, na nakabatay sa suklat na tatluhan. Ang paglalaro sa gora— paghawak, pagduduyan at pag-ikot-ikot ditto habang sumasayaw ay isa pang tanging pangkat ng galaw. Ganoon din ang pagluhod at pag-ikot ng mga lalaki.<sup>205</sup>

Besides the right hand touching the nape, brow, waist and leg; and the passing of the glass, there are particular movements to be discovered in the *pandanguhan*. The first is the “talik,” subtle gestures and movements of the fingers and hands of the female vocalist. “Paglakdang” is the term for the stepping and dropping of the feet while dancing, which follows a  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. Playing with the hat—touching and twirling it while dancing, is another specific set of movements, as well as the kneeling and turning of the men.

It is in these movements that the song and the singer keep up with the pace of the hero’s earthquake. By turns intimate and vigorous, the dance becomes the tremor of a heart waiting, but with

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<sup>205</sup> Mirano, *Lumang Bauan*, 89. See also *Subli: Isang Sayaw sa Apat na Tinig/One Dance in Four Voices* (Manila: Museo ng Kalinangang Pilipino, Cultural Resources and Communications Services, Cultural Center of the Philippines, The National Coordinating Center for the Arts, 1989).

bodies already knowing that catastrophe, it also activates advent, and a happy ending to that patience.

Elsewhere, a figure is forced to await another Adarna: “Hindi isang kalabisan na gamitin ngayon ang sakripisyo sa lilim ng Piedras Platas bilang talinghaga sa naging kasaysayan ng makatang Pilipino sa loob ng ika-20 siglo.”<sup>206</sup> (It is not excessive to turn the sacrifice under the shade of the Piedras Platas as a metaphor for the history of the Filipino poet in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.) We can only anticipate the intensity of the tremor, if what arrives is the modern.

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<sup>206</sup> Virgilio S. Almario, *Balagtasismo Versus Modernismo: Panulaang Tagalog sa Ika-20 Siglo* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1984), 1.

## Chapter Four

### Vigor and Languor along the Tropical Modern

#### The Moods of Virginia R. Moreno

##### I

##### Radius of Reverie

Reading an author from the 17<sup>th</sup> century write about the “vigorous” and “languid” qualities of the ruby, Gaston Bachelard posits that such modifiers allow us to know the “mood-adjustments” that metaphor could install in our imagination.<sup>207</sup> He proposes “ardor” as a category for literary criticism to hone in order for “exuberant expression” to be explicated, and not just evocations which are “restrained.”<sup>208</sup> I would like to open the discussion of the late history of metaphor in the Philippine poetic by sensing in “vigor” and “languor” possibilities for interpreting the improvisational choreography of the trope as well as its decisive emplacements, as the tropical attitude and the modern temper are persuaded in a literary confluence. I read “ardor” not only as passion, but as intensity, generating a force that is both potential and actual, by turns abstract and concrete, as far the execution of the modality of a turn is concerned. It is in

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<sup>207</sup> Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will*, 240-241.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

this respect that I consider “vigor” and “languor” as not only “states of existence”<sup>209</sup> but as propensities, as habitus, where the analogical passage could be, in gestures, syncopated.

Albert E. Alejo, S.J., should be able to teach us about propensities when he explains the possibilities of the *loób* reaching out into the world through the tripartite dialectic of consciousness (malay), feeling (dama), and ability (kaya), with that fulcrum, *abot*, which could mean reach or grasp, scope or range, and chance and coincidence:

...Ang “abot” ay may kinalaman na sa pagiging kayang madatnan o makuha o mahabol ng mga bagay. Kung ito ay bunga, kaya itong mapitas; kung palaisipan, kaya itong maunawaan; kung pook, kayang puntahan; kung tanawin, kayang matanaw; kung kapit-bahay, kayang lapitan. Ang “abot” ay isa sa ating mga salitang maraming mga nabubuo pang ibang salita...ang larawang namamayani sa mga kombinasyong ito ay ang kamay o bisig na iniunat upang mahawakan ang isang bagay. Sa abot, para bagang dinadala ko ang aking katawan o ang isang bahagi nito patungo sa aking nais maratnan. Nandito ako subalit may pagka-naroon din. Kaya nga sa isang bugtong sinasabing “Dalawang bolang sinulid/abot hanggang langit.”<sup>210</sup>

“Abot” has something to do with the possibility of reaching, attaining, or catching up with a thing. If it is a fruit, it could be picked; if a mystery, it could be understood; if a neighbor, one could approach her. “Abot” is one word that could form other expressions.... the prevalent image among these combinations is the hand or the arm

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<sup>209</sup> Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will*, 240.

<sup>210</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 110.

stretched out, aiming to touch a thing. With “abot,” it seems as if I am carrying my body or a part of it to a place I want to reach. I am here but a there-ness is also present. This is why a riddle on the eyes says “Two balls of thread/reaching the heavens.”

*Abot* is aspiration. It is the stance where one dreams of expanse. It is the position that prepares one in the transport to that which is referred to, that which is pointed at, in order to have that destiny within one’s grasp, “abot-kamay,” that moment of tactility, of contact and confrontation, with the object, “at hand.” If the latter is an object of affection, *abot* is where one stages the admiration, but it is also where triumph or failure, originates, in the sensing of the prowess or the limit (sa abot ng aking makakaya, “to the best of my ability”). To love and be loved—*abot*, as radius, covers the distance between these antipodal reveries. In this sense, it is where one clings, as affectation. And yet *abot* is ultimately the site where one begins to act. It is when one claims the proximity of the possible to be an entitlement.

For Patrick D. Flores, this statuesque possibility points “across origin, within sight,” in order for the poetics of *inclination*<sup>211</sup> to take place, that is, in the context of the Philippine museum, to “disclose the collection” and “fully ventilate its estate.”<sup>212</sup> Inclination is imagined in terms of a “slope,” which further calls into mind “a disposition, a tendency, a slant against custom and axis...an outside, a latitude, a sympathy.”<sup>213</sup> To have an *abot* is not only to aspire, but to position oneself to aspire: to incline, to tilt, to bend—all the slightest movements to disrupt the

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<sup>211</sup> Patrick D. Flores, *Remarkable Collection: Art, History, and the National Museum* (Manila: National Art Gallery, National Museum of the Philippines, 2007), 85.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>213</sup> Flores, *Remarkable Collection*, 86.

statue into configuring absolute stasis even when supine. This figure of the slope is thrilling. It is where the “abot” could instantiate its course but could also be distracted: where alteration in the design could prove to change its vector, but also where the metaphor could be subjected to a mood not usually anticipated. Inclination is “pagkiling,” referring to the penchant to discriminate, to choose a certain side (panig), thus the emergence of a certain taste, a bias. A related word is “baling,” which connotes a distraction that is inevitably turned into the preferred object. The habitus of this detour is a configuration of “hilig,” the activity or affair where desire is slanted, “pahilig,” and chooses to be languorous and give up its restiveness.

Whatever cannot be augured is accounted for by the three points of approximations of the *abot*. The first is the “abot-malay”:

Ang “abot-malay” ay sumasaklaw sa kabuuan ng aspeto o temang pangkamalayan, pangkaisipan, alaala, at pagkamalikhain, pagtanaw sa kinabukasan at sa posibilidad ng hinaharap.<sup>214</sup>

The aspiration of “abot-malay” premises itself from the thought-edifice. Interiority expands through ideation and the places which are reached by its inceptive movement. Time is a fulcrum in the enlargement and the diminution of this radius. “Kawalang malay” is obliviousness, but hearkens back to a child’s innocence, “wala pang kamalay-malay.” When one says, ““di ko

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<sup>214</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 85.

namalayan ang oras,” one has lost track of time. Once one loses consciousness, “nawalan ng malay,” one blacks out as in a swoon or a seizure. The unconscious is evoked as “kubling malay.” Uncertainty may thrust forward into futurity: “Malay natin.” Or recede into apathy: “Malay ko sa iyo.” “Malay” is the seed that is planted for one to contain a world of thought. One’s *abot* adjusts one’s capacity to be inclined to the possibility of being contained and even consumed by this sublimity.

Then “abot-dama”:

Ang “abot-dama” naman ay siyang batayan ng lahat ng mga karanasang pandamdamin, kasama na ang pakikiramay, pagtatanim sa loób, pagtatampo, hiya, at maging ang kalaliman ng utang na loób.<sup>215</sup>

“Abot-dama” is the basis of all sentimental experience, which includes sympathy, resentment, hurt, shame, and even the depth of gratitude.

“Abot-dama” on the other hand is to tilt towards the intuitive, to move within the confines of the *loób*, and enlarge it from within. This is where one remains, endearing oneself and other to the secure enclosures of sentiment. “Pandama” refers to the sensorium, and “damdamin” encompasses the realm of feeling; “karamdaman” is affliction, “pagdaramdam,” a dis-ease. To err in “abot-dama,” in fellow feeling, is to become insensitive and disrespectful of the reciprocal relations one must partake, in consideration of the susceptibilities that the heart of the other

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<sup>215</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 85.

exposes or withholds. To engage with “abot-dama,” one draws from a deep reserve of tactile tentativities that one can only ascertain with one’s heartfelt tending.

And “abot-kaya”:

Ang “abot-kaya” ... ang batayan ng mga paninindigan, ng pagsasakatawan ng aking namamalayan at nadarama, sukatan ng lakas sa pagsasabuhay ng aking binabalak o niloloób, at hugutan din ng ibayong tapang sa pagpapatuloy sa mga gawaing napasimulan....<sup>216</sup>

“Abot-kaya” is ... the basis of dispositions, the embodiment of thought and sentiment, the measure of the fortitude behind the living out of my design or desire, and the source of the courage to pursue what had been initiated....

This third aspect of the *abot* guides one in terms of the opportunity that one may have contemplated according to one’s gauge of the self’s abilities and the degree by which the earth collaborates with this potential, “kakayahan.” When one says, “sisikapin ko itong tupdin sa abot ng aking makakaya,” one promises to “strive to fulfill the task with the best of one’s abilities.” Here *abot* attains an optimal reach, at once romantic and contextual, embodies “extent,” and becomes equivalent to the superlatives “sukdol,” which configures the loftiest, “ubod,” which intimates the essential, and “sakdal,” which refers to that which have been deliberated. Although this reach is also most humble in approaching the optimum as fundament.

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<sup>216</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 85.

[N]asa “abot” ang buong galaw ng loób na nagbubunyag sa sinaunang ugnayan ko sa iba, sa aking pagsisikap na mula rito sa aking ubod, sa ubod ng aking niloloób ay gisingin ang naroon nang ugnayan sa iba. ... Balangkas [ang tatlo] ng daigdig. Maaaring ituring na “lawak” ang “abot-malay,” tindi naman o “lalim” ang “abot-dama,” at lakas naman o “laman” ang “abot-kaya.” Ang lahat ng ito ay loób ng tao.<sup>217</sup>

It is in *abot* that the movement of the *loób* that reveals my primordial relation to the other, in my effort that from within my essence, the essence of my desire, I could rouse whatever pre-existing relation I have with the other .... It is the frame that holds the earth. “Abot-malay” could refer to breadth (*lawak*); “abot-dama” to intensity or depth; “abot-kaya” to strength or content. All of this is the *loób* of the human.

Now that “malay,” “dama,” and “kaya” are in a dialectical project to propel the turning of the tropic circumference, the choreography of interiority is indexed in terms of the inclinations *homo tropicus* can deliberate from when she attempts to acquit herself across and deep within her tendencies. She is able to coordinate her gestic integrity because of the nomination of the earth in terms of its “laman,” “lalim,” and “lawak” and the movements that she can enforce to these dimensions of the tropics: “lakas” (force), “tindi” (intensity), and lastly, that which we are supplementing to complete the triple time signature, “talas” (attunement), alluding to the sharpness of vision and clarity of insight the human mind can lend to the world. Alejo claims that the coordination of these gestures un-earth one’s primordial relation with the other. Such emergence is a return most earthly.

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<sup>217</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 85.

Ang pagbabalik-loób ay posible dahil maging ang nakaraan ay maaaring pagpasiyahan sa ngayon, sapagkat sa kaloóban ang nakaraan ay may iba pang posibilidad. Kaya nga ang lawak ng kaloóban sa punto ng panahon ay hindi basta maikukulong sa loób. Ang abot nito ay hindi maibabakuran ng karaniwang paghahandog.<sup>218</sup>

To return to the *loób* is a rebirth, which is possible because one can discern the past in the present; in the “kaloóban” there are other possibilities. The breadth of the “kaloóban,” as far as time is concerned, cannot be confined to the *loób*. Its *abot*, its reach, cannot be captured by ordinary offering.

Because the gift converses in the return that is also conversion. The gift of the radius encompasses the time of the metamorphosis. And while this emergence is anterior, it is also progressive. The *abot* reaches a point when it becomes modern. This brings us back to Patrick Flores’s “ventilation” of the *loób* through the *palabás* of patrimony gesturing towards futurity, the museum finally “shedding inhibition”<sup>219</sup>:

The Filipino term *linang* serves as an instructive metaphor in the way it conjures a field of cultivation, of pedagogy and apprenticeship in the rearing of terrains...Inculcation, indeed, implies pressure, discipline, a litany of beliefs, a repetition of creed, the

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<sup>218</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 88.

<sup>219</sup> Flores, “Palabás,” 8.

profession of faith, the inevitability of truth and its telling, a struggle for representation as well as presence.<sup>220</sup>

The *abot* must point out that the vector of the gesture does indeed have a matter of the earth as both object and instrument. It is in the nurturance of the thing that figuration *figures* as mold to be shared as much as it needs to be protected. Instruction is an offering.

The word “museum”, sounding as alien as it looks, becomes the *tipunan*, a place of convergence and assembly, and as such open to engagement and expectation, abiding by the hope for a future that is being looked after: a posterity in progress.<sup>221</sup>

Now gifted with the inclinations of consciousness, feeling, and ability, *homo tropicus* is now prepared to track the trajectory of its homotropy, in what remain in Flores’s critical choreography: *intimation, incarnation, and influx*.

First, the “malay,” *intimates* its thoughts to “share a secret” in order to have knowledge removed from its carapace and divulge it, albeit in a rite, as the answer in a riddle *inclined* to extend the *abot* “to court guesswork” and ascertain “a chance at contact,” eventuate “encounter and affinity,” and establish “prospective friendship.”<sup>222</sup> All these relations, are suggestive, “nagmumungkahi,” or propositional, “nagpapanukala.” The infinitives posit “malay” opening up to incantate an invitation that preserves its kindness as well as its cunning, as in an inflorescence

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<sup>220</sup> Flores, *Remarkable Collection*, 99.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

that paces to spray its fragrance. To be intimate in one's thoughts, one is vulnerable to defilement, and yet one initiates the disclosure with the confidence that the other can be trusted with the secret—that one has already come out even with the enticement.

Once intimate with the world, one is entitled to *incarnate*, casting sentiment into concretion, writing it in stone, as “marmoreal”<sup>223</sup> but also sedimented, in order for the “dama” to settle deep into affect and emerge, when opportune time comes, to make sense of its tactile proclivities. One comes to terms with embodiment because one emanates, fully fleshed. One extends into the world as a sensate sharer of its bounty. Part of one's being “katawan,” body, is the right to transubstantiate, “magsakatawan,” to embody, but also to enable embodiment. The body wishes to represent, in an “attempt to simulate flesh or reduce it to its fundamental fabric or primeval earth.”<sup>224</sup> To incarnate is to return then to that home, and be one with that *touching* moment, where the body is projected. This ties embodiment with the concept of birthing, of “pagluluwal,” where the embodying is a moment of ecstasy, “luwalhati,” for the mother who thrusts her offspring into the world by a momentous severance from him; her labor is the release of her “dalang hati,”<sup>225</sup> what she has *carried* in her womb for nine months as *half* of her dear life. The vector of the gesture in this incarnation is from an abode to another, from a body of the earth to the earth itself.

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<sup>223</sup> Flores, *Remarkable Collection*, 22.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>225</sup> A sorrow that is yet to be expressed is “dalamhati.” To condole with the bereaved, one says, “Ako’y nakikidalamhati sa inyo”: *I share to carry your sorrow*. This confluence of traumaturgy and thaumaturgy in *dalamhati/luwalhati* is a dimension of the dialectic between the thought-edifice of *loób* and the ideative choreography of *palabás* that I wish to expand in another opportunity, with the act/object/state of severance/delineation/disembodiment, *hati*, as genitive cusp.

And finally, that movement, *influx*: this inclination to disclose (intimate) and return to flesh and bone (incarnate), disseminates *homo tropicus*, into the modern, where modernism is “reckoned at its limit and under erasure, so that this exposition signals a shift as well, a transposition of a museological ideal and a modernist affectation.”<sup>226</sup> In this history of art, the museum ties itself firmly with that procedure of performance, *palabás*, and therefore, nominates itself as projecting an “abot-kaya”: the modern, only possible with that structuring structure, “kaloóban,” where nature (*kalikasan*) is reared (*nililinang*) as a tradition (*kaugalian*) of mind, heart, and hand.

With gesture finding its abode in this structure, the museum and its objects, converted and yet conversing, move along their tropics, in various vigors and languors: strange but not unnatural; because trans-figural—“naghuhunyango,” chameleoning, departing and yet returning to the colorations of permanence and adjustment; becoming at once but also by turns vernacular and modern.

The movement here is troped as an arrival, “dáting,” fortifying the immanence of art as one appearing. This coming is also arriving into the unknown; the transport is “dayo,” diasporic in inclination, turning the arrivant into a “dayuhan,” a foreigner. “Dayuhan,” while a subjectivity that could be possibly occupied by the “katutubo,” autochthone who has “sprung from the same soil,” is associated with the tactics of colonialism, of “panloloób,” invasion, whose gesture is “sakop,” marked by its vestigial effects: the abduction and pillage of the earth.

Sa pagsakop, pumapasok ako sa daigdig ng loób ng iba nang wala akong katumbas na pagpapatuloy sa kanila sa aking loób. O mas masama pa, ipinapaloób ko sila sa akin

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<sup>226</sup> Flores, *Remarkable Collection*, 17.

hindi bilang sila kundi bilang katulad ko at nasa ilalim ko. Hawak ko sila, hindi lamang basta abot. Isa itong uri ng karahasan.<sup>227</sup>

In invasion, I enter the earth of the interior of others without my welcoming them into my own. And worse, I enclose them into myself not as them but as abiding by my resemblance and falling under my regulation. They are not only within my reach, for I hold them. This is a kind of violence.

What is the moment of resilience in this violation? How does the trans-figure protect oneself even in the surrender to the necessary ravage, the modern? What role does the tropical perform to lay out the claims of “sufferance”<sup>228</sup>? What vigors and languors roll along the tropical modern even when the movement is always already colonial? When these energies are named, can a gift still emerge? Is the modern, after all, the retrieval?

The paradigm that this dissertation has trod should be summarized below, in order for us to disclose the prose of that which survives:

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<sup>227</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy!*, 111.

<sup>228</sup> Flores, *Makulay na Daigdig*, 7.

metaphor: tropos: talinghagà					
locus	radius (Alejo)	daigdig (earth)	mundo(world)	radius (Flores)	gestus
loób (architecture)	abot-	kaloób  (gift)	kaloób  (gift)	inclination (pagkiling)	palabás (choreography)
	malay (cognition, thought): talas (attunement), lawak (breadth)			intimation (pagmungkahi)	
	dama (sense, sentiment): tindi (intensity), lalim (depth)	topos  <i>homo</i>	topos  <i>tropicus</i>	incarnation (pagluluwal, pagsasakatawan)	
	kaya (potentiality): laman (substance), lakas (force)	tempus	tempus	influx (pagdating, pagdayo)	
			inculcation (paglinang)		
locus	radius	kaloób  (gift)	kaloób  (gift)	radius	
		daigdig (earth)	mundo (world)		
mood: habitus: kahinggilan					

## II

### The Tropical Modern

In this chapter, I wish to elaborate on the intensity of the poetic as it is put under the exhilarating duress of the *tropical modern*, where the “modern” is the premise of change, and the “tropical” the mood that influences the vector of alterities wishing to reside within that transform. The term then articulates an alteration of an alteration—change changed and changing. Appended to the word “modern,” the adjective “tropical” dramatizes what Susan Stanford Friedman calls a “relational definition” which stresses “the condition or sensibility of radical disruption and accelerating change wherever and whenever such a phenomenon appears.”<sup>229</sup> In this case, the tropics is the locus and the tempus where the effraction occurs, where modernity particulates into a form that may appear as its other, and consequently, where the tropics morphs as well into a habitus away from its phusis, where the tropics may be able to turn, by way of tropology. This speciation of the modern as tropical and of the tropical as modern instructs us to think of modernism, the movement where the said procedure could have its alterities thrive and compete for figuration, as referring to what changes the modern covers across the earth, as what Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel term as “geomodernisms, which signals a locational approach to modernism’s engagement with cultural and political discourses of global modernity.”<sup>230</sup> And yet,

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<sup>229</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, “Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*,” in *Modernism/Modernity* 8, no. 3 (2001): 503.

<sup>230</sup> Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, ed., “Introduction,” in *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.

tropicality is not only a spatial corrective to modernity, but a temporal intimation of what modernity can explore as far as notions of history, contemporaneity, and futurity are concerned.

Gerard Lico explicates on the tropical modern as a crux in the modernity of Philippine Architecture:

Tropicalism has been sentimentally embraced by architects since the late 1950s for a dual purpose: to maintain cultural differences in the era of homogenizing the International style; and to ensure that the built forms were responsive to both the meteorological and cultural givens of the tropical site.

Architecture, our premise for the thought-edifice, views the tropical modern as a choreographic opportunity to resist Modernism as a universalizing movement but at the same time engages its repertoire for the built environment by inhabiting what an unmediated Modernism may seek to efface, the earth. That Filipino architects steeped in the angles of Le Corbusier sought to incline themselves otherwise—to gesture, *in situ*, at the pace of that locus—constitutes a large part of the prose that activates the theoretical underpinning of the tropical modern as praxis.

The attachment of “tropical” to modernity may be misconstrued as a gesture towards the exotic. Victor Segalen attributes to the exotic an attitude that is “willingly tropical”; then he lists “coconut trees and torrid skies,” and notes that there is not much exoticism that can be called “arctic.”<sup>231</sup> The strange construction of the sentence, “exoticism is willingly tropical,” will be most productive if we read exoticism, under the sign of literary modernism, *pace* Conrad,

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<sup>231</sup> Victor Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*, translated and edited by Yaël Rachel Schlick, foreword by Harry Harootunian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 13.

Lawrence, Forster, as an assignation or an imposition that paradoxically surrenders while attempting to conquer its object, the tropics. In Segalen's formulation, the exotic must be freed from this locality, the tropics, in order for a certain model of "an aesthetics of diversity"<sup>232</sup> to emerge.

And yet while Segalen attempts to recuperate the exotic by placing the tropical under erasure, we are insisting that the tropical needs to be retained in order for exoticism to be clarified as a modern ethic, where it is a rarified and a rarifying mode of representation, a depiction of other cultures as having desisted and even refused to progress into modern civility and thus having fixed their identities as artifacts which only shun oblivion because recollected by the foreigner who is ecstatic over a search for what is being followed, or original, or what even precedes its template, or originary.<sup>233</sup>

This return to prior time is a subliming moment wherein pre-history is raised into a higher place than modernity, which is supposed to be an escalation into what is called progress. Yet the subliming of the exotic must necessarily yield to the subliming of the exot himself, who stages his project from a modern promontory. In other words, the nostalgia in exoticism is an alibi, an irrationale that refuses to confront the pressures of its object, which is the present emanating its segmentations as events to be historicized.

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<sup>232</sup> Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism*, 26.

<sup>233</sup> Segalen explores the core of the word exoticism by returning to the prefix "exo-," which he defines as that which refers to "everything that lies 'outside' the sum total of our current, conscious everyday events, everything that does not belong to our usual "Mental Tonality." In this sense, the tropics and the tropical are dissonances in the mind that have been previously unheard and whose sounds may not easily be recognized as melodious, more malady than music. *Ibid.*, 16.

The tropical needs to modify the modern in order for modernity and modernism to become a truly an “aesthetics of diversity.”<sup>234</sup> In order to perform this, I choose to learn from Brazil, whose modernism was primarily generated from *tropicalismo*. Caetano narrates in *Tropical Truth*:

The drums always seemed to me an aberration: a grotesque concatenation of martial percussion instruments like a circus attraction, assembled with screws and bolts so that one man could play them alone. And all this within the limitations of timbre of European martial percussion, harsh and bright, without the subtleties or the organicity of the Cuban *tumbadora* or the bongo, the Brazilian *cuíca* and *atabaque* (when I discovered the Indian, Balinese, Japanese, and many of the African instruments, this opinion was strengthened). When bossa nova arrived, I felt my needs met—and intensified. One of the things that attracted me to João Gilberto’s bossa nova was precisely the dismemberment of the percussion (to be precise, there is no drumming in his records: there is only percussion, played on a box or its edge, and later with a brush on a telephone book....<sup>235</sup>

The tropical here is demystified through its music. While percussion may have constituted itself as significant swing in the exophony of the tropical, here, Veloso disembodies that register of rhythm and critiques the performance centered on a man operating on a Western instrument as dispossessing an “aesthetic of diversity” to turn the rhythm around its own rhythmic. In

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<sup>234</sup> Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism*, 26.

<sup>235</sup> Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*, translated by Isabel de Sena, edited by Barbara Einzig (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003), 161-162.

Veloso's reading, bossa nova, that tropical genre, aspires for that disembodiment of the stifling beat of the modern by making do with the sound but without the instrument, in what may be akin to how Virginia R. Moreno puts it, as "ear without drum."<sup>236</sup> Here the modern, as syncopated by the West, is named as having a petrifying sonority, whose hardness needs to be revised by rescuing the earth from what prevents it from being worlded according to its percussivity.

Gémino H. Abad, tells the history of Philippine poetry in these terms:

...the poet discovers his own distinctive subject in a special clearing of his own thought and feeling within some given natural language, be it English or Tagalog. We say then, *from* English, because at first, Filipino poetry was *in* English....later...poetry created its own special use of English under the subtle and irremovable pressure of the Filipino scene and sensibility....But as the common use of language (English, Tagalog), or its accepted poetic idiom, is as it were cauterized of dead eyes, the poet begins to discover his own native clearing within the language where the words become no longer foreign or vernacular...but the poem's own words.<sup>237</sup>

In this introduction to a significant anthology of Filipino poetry *through* English, the trope of transport secures for literary history a much vigorous mood in order to emphasize the Filipino poet's tropic choreography that must depart from the thought-edifice of poetry in the English

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<sup>236</sup> Virginia R. Moreno, "Perfume Prayer," in *A Native Clearing: Filipino Poetry and Verse from English Since the '50s to the Present: From Edith L. Tiempo to Cirilo F. Bautista*, edited by Gémino H. Abad (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1993), 151.

<sup>237</sup> Gémino H. Abad and Edna Z. Manlapaz, ed., "Rereading Past Writ: An Introduction," in *Man of Earth: An Anthology of Filipino Poetry and Verse from English 1905 to the Mid-50s* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989), 3.

language. What inclines toward a postcolonial poetic remains an aspiration though, as Abad's *abot-kaya* remains in the architecture that his gesture is escaping from and resists the prose that should demonstrate the gestures the poet must stake in order to find shelter elsewhere. The locus does not seem to foreground itself because the topos of the theoretical claim actually remains within a notion of poesis whose earthly configurations do not really matter because the more compelling impetus is the preservation of the poem as potentially only configuring its resistance to context. The "native clearing" that Abad refers to is not so much the world that emerges from the toil of the topos as the enlargement of the radius only pretends to have a name for what it projects to be its transit.

Virgilio S. Almario has also attempted to graph the territory covered by the gesture that seems to resist the worlding of the modern through a modernism that tilt the radius of Modernism:

Ang Modernismo...ay hindi anak man lamang sa labas ng tinatawag ding Modernistang pagsulat mulang Europa at Amerika. Higit itong bunga ng katutubo't partikular na puwersang pangkasaysayan sa Pilipinas. Kung humiram man ito mulang Kanluran..., ang panghihiram ay hindi lamang sa kaisipang sungyaw ..., o panggagaya, kundi dahil sa kabuluhan ng hiniram para sa pansarili nitong pangangailangan...ang paggamit ay hindi lamang basta't panghihiram kundi pag-imbento rin ng tumpak na anyo't paraan, ng pansariling ritmo't balangkas ng wika....<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Almario, *Balagtasismo versus Modernismo*, 29.

Modernism...is not an illegitimate child of what is called Modernist writing from Europe and America. It is more of a fruit of the native and particular historical forces in the Philippines. If it borrowed from the West..., the borrowing is not out of colonial mentality..., or imitation, but because of the significance of the borrowed for its own necessities...the use is not only for the sake of borrowing but for the invention of an exacting form and procedure that lends to language its own rhythm and design....

In his literary history, Almarino follows a divergent map from Abad as the latter describes an exteriority from Anglography and the former insists on a Tagalog enclosure but whose diaphane allowed osmosis from a Euro-American intensity. Almarino's itinerary of reception and Abad's route of departure proceed from a thesis of nativity; Almarino identifies the native by virtue of the nation, Abad extols a native of the Word itself. Unwittingly, these poet-critics have found a threshold to the exotic, but loses that drive to inculcate an "aesthetics of diversity."<sup>239</sup> What is particularly fascinating though in Almarino is that his essentialist project unabashedly announces its formalism as that which propels an otherwise mechanical anti-colonial instrumentalism, a gesture that is eluded by Abad's pure poetic temperament.

How do these nominees to the neo-native, in the name of the Filipino, or the poet, become such? How does her trope depart from its origins to become truly tropic: tropologic and tropical, and in terms equivalent? How does *homo tropicus* offer the gift of the poem, that cusp that one must occupy and leave in order for the gift to serendipitously received while volitionally intended? I quote Derrida, who reminds us of this *locus-gestus*:

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<sup>239</sup> Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism*, 26.

There is no gift without the intention of giving.... However, everything stemming from the intentional meaning also threatens the gift with self-keeping, with being kept in its very expenditure. Whence the enigmatic difficulty lodged in this donating eventiveness (événementalité). There must be chance, encounter, the involuntary, even unconsciousness or disorder, and there must be intentional freedom, and these two conditions must—miraculously, graciously—agree with each other.<sup>240</sup>

When one asks to describe the modern as a locational relation, one must accept the task of residing in the earth that assures one of another world within it. And yet the abode of this gesture must also strive to turn from the abstraction of the homelinesses that the “poem” or the “nation” could give. To understand the alteration of an alteration, one must be able to understand what on earth enables the shift in the shape. One must strive to un-earth the geology of modernism.

This is why one must return to metaphor, a gesture that J. Neil Garcia, poet-critic like Abad and Almario, enunciates in a most lucid performance of ideology critique:

Clearly, a metaphor functions along the lines of mixedness or hybridity: it is nothing if not a syncretism that means to gather together into a provisional unity disparate and unrelated meanings. The difference is that while New Criticism celebrates the “comparison” that a metaphor may occasion, a postcolonial deployment of this notion will insist that a metaphor remains effective and perceptible only to the degree that the fusion of identity between its tenor and vehicle is not seamless and complete but

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<sup>240</sup> Derrida, *Given Time*, 122.

rather remains constitutively troubled by the contrastive “specter of Otherness and difference.”<sup>241</sup>

We have found that “deployment” in the mood of metaphor, in the *kahinggilan* of the *talinghagà* in its various inclinations, through the vernacular phenomenology of Albert E. Alejo, S.J. and the vernacularizing history of art of Patrick D. Flores. It is our investment to demonstrate in this chapter the gestic possibilities covered by the Filipino poet Virginia R. Moreno, in vigorous and languorous situations as she traipses along that radius to be contemporaneous with global modernism, through the tropical modern.

Before we attend to her propositions, let us return to Brazil, in Oswald de Andrade’s manifestation of the modern:

Tupy or not tupy, that is the question.

The only things that interest me are those that are not mine. The laws of men. The laws of the anthropophagites.

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The spirit refused to conceive of the idea of spirit without body.

Anthropomorphism. The need for an anthropophagical vaccine.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> J. Neil C. Garcia, *At Home in Unhomeliness: Rethinking the Universal in Philippine Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Manila: Philippine PEN, 2007), 42.

<sup>242</sup> Oswald de Andrade, “Anthropophagite Manifesto,” translated by Chris Whitehouse, in *The Oxford Book of Latin American Essays*, edited by Ilan Stavans (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 96-97.

The trope becomes a tropophagite in this account, as the gest does track its movements through an in-gest. The figure that is aspired is no longer a slope; the incarnate form is that which is incorporated. One's tropic choreography cannot be more radical than this, but there are others, elsewhere along the lines of the tropic, which may keep pace with such ardor, in de Andrade's case, appetite, for change.

### III

#### Virginia R. Moreno, Tropical Modernist

Virginia Moreno y Reyes was born in the affluent district of Gagalangin, Tondo, Manila, on April 24, 1925. She is the eldest of three siblings, José, the esteemed couturier, and Milagros, who became an entrepreneur like their parents: José a “ship-master engineer of a big boat that went to places like Zamboanga, Hong Kong, Macao, Shanghai” and Felician a “rice stock trader.”<sup>243</sup> She received instruction at St. Theresa's School, the Instituto de Mujeres, and Torres High School.<sup>244</sup> In an interview with Edna Z. Manlapaz and Marjorie Evasco, she describes how it was growing up during the war: “I was anguished witness from our *capiz* windows and deafened refugee in our air raid shelter to the grand spectacle of World War Second around us.”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Gémino H. Abad, ed., “Virginia R. Moreno,” in *A Native Clearing: Filipino Poetry and Verse from English Since the '50s to the Present: From Edith L. Tiempo to Cirilo F. Bautista* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1993), 642; Edna Z. Manlapaz and Marjorie Evasco, ed., “Poet as Lover, Batik Maker,” in *Six Women Poets: Inter/Views* (Manila: Aria Edition, 1996), 86, 107.

<sup>244</sup> Abad, “Virginia R. Moreno,” 642.

This period, Moreno claims, taught her “to share everything I had: my beaded slippers, my Sunday shoes, my dresses cut from Mother’s silk *ternos*....”<sup>246</sup>

She had first dreamed of becoming a dancer like her “sybaritic” aunt,<sup>247</sup> but it was in poetry that she found her art, while taking up her A.B. in Philosophy (1948) and M.A. in English Literature (1952) at the University of the Philippines, where she taught for decades at the Departments of English and Humanities.<sup>248</sup> While a student, she helped establish a most formidable group of writers, the Ravens<sup>249</sup>, with kindred spirits like Andres Cristobal Cruz and Hilario S. Francia, translator of *Batik Maker and Other Poems* into Tagalog, and was “high priestess,” as Gémino Abad puts it, of campus poets such as Erwin Castillo and Wilfredo Pascua Sanchez,<sup>250</sup> who translated her *Onyx Wolf* into Filipino. Moreno also served as Director of the UP Film Center in 1976 and saw the formal opening of its new infrastructure, which she labored to have funding, in 1988.<sup>251</sup>

Asked by D.M. Reyes on whether she would say she “underwent any conscious education of the senses”, Moreno retorts that she feels she has “had more varied travels, more

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<sup>245</sup> Manlapaz and Evasco, “Poet as Lover,” 86.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>247</sup> Manlapaz and Evasco, “Poet as Lover,” 92.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>249</sup> D. M. Reyes, “The Last Bohemian,” in *Pen&Ink: The Philippine Literary Journal* Book 5 (1998): 19.

<sup>250</sup> Abad, “Virginia R. Moreno,” 642.

<sup>251</sup> Reyes, “The Last Bohemian,” 27.

varied work—a more varied life.<sup>252</sup> A testament to this instruction is the life of the habitué that has pursued her for decades. In the United States, she was a Fubright scholar at the University of Kansas (1953), a Rockefeller fellow for creative writing in New York (1954), a fellow for poetry at the Breadloaf Writers Workshop in Middlebury (1954), and a resident fellow at the International Writers Program of the University of Iowa (1973).<sup>253</sup> She also spent time in Bellagio for a writing fellowship, in London to study the theater and film at the British Film Institute (1969, 1973) and in Paris to study at the Center of Drama (1972).<sup>254</sup> She visited Japan, India, France, Germany, Sweden, and the former Yugoslavia to observe the cinema in 1976.<sup>255</sup>

For her most sterling contributions to the arts in her country and abroad, she was awarded the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques by the French Republic (1978), the Gawad Pambansang Alagad ni Balagtas by the Writers Union of the Philippines (1981), and the ASEAN SEAWRITE Award by His Royal Highness, the Prince of Thailand and Queen Sirikit (1984), the Chroslias dans L'Ordre des Palmes Academiques, again by the French Republic (1991), and the Patnubay ng Sining Award by the City of Manila (1991).<sup>256</sup>

19 of her 20 poems<sup>257</sup> are collected in *Batik Maker and Other Poems* (1972), which won first prize for poetry in English at the Don Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature and includes translations in Tagalog by Hilario S. Francia and in French by E. S. Caimoy. Her plays are *Glass*

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<sup>252</sup> Reyes, "The Last Bohemian," 27.

<sup>253</sup> Manlapaz and Evasco, "Poet as Lover," 90, 107-108.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 88, 108.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>256</sup> Abad, "Virginia R. Moreno," 642-643. Manlapaz and Evasco, "Poet as Lover," 108-109.

<sup>257</sup> The last was written in 1986. See "Perfume Prayer," in Abad, *A Native Clearing*, 151.

*Altars* (1952), *Straw Patriot* (1956), *The Onyx Wolf/La Loba Negra/Itim Asu* (1969/1971), and *Indio Spoliarium* (1971).<sup>258</sup> She also wrote a novel, *The God Director* (1981).<sup>259</sup> During the 90s she wrote a column, “Carousel,” for the *Manila Chronicle*.

The Filipino artworld calls her the “doyenne of Manila’s elite literati”<sup>260</sup> or “the last Bohemian,”<sup>261</sup> but her literary works are the true testament to the resplendence of her vision, which, in D.M. Reyes’s estimation, is bedecked with

...flowers beheld for the first time in their intricacy of petal bloom and depth of color, never before seen but regarded now as garden charms of a labor both strict and maddening. The golden mean of verbal arpeggios and insight, the poetic ground where time’s lore pauses to meet the quotidian, the quotidian, the philosophical ring to the exquisite image—if one must speak of literary achievement, then it is in these areas where her banners herald a blazing triumph.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Abad, “Virginia R. Moreno,” 642-643; Manlapaz and Evasco, “Poet as Lover,” 107-109.

<sup>259</sup> Abad, “Virginia R. Moreno,” 642. Manlapaz and Evasco, “Poet as Lover,” 109.

<sup>260</sup> Manlapaz and Evasco, “Poet as Lover,” 99.

<sup>261</sup> Reyes, “The Last Bohemian,” 19.

<sup>262</sup> D. M. Reyes, “Orfeo in Macao, Eurydice in Tondo,” in *Pen&Ink: The Philippine Literary Journal* Book 5 (1998), 28.

## IV

### Terminus of Gesture

In “Batik Maker,” Virginia Moreno proposes a moment in the life of gesture where the choreographeme is singled out as a time distilled from the mobilities which inhabit it. What is portrayed then is stasis itself, enfolded, but no longer unfolding. And yet the arrest is progressive; it remains unfinished as it is still being crafted by the batik maker:

Tissue of no seam and skin

Of no scale she weaves this:

Dream of a huntsman pale

That in his antlered

Mangrove waits

Ensnared;

*And I cannot touch him.*<sup>263</sup>

The medium of the textile woven into a chromatic design is the site of the elaboration of stasis, one that extends and prolongs temporality in the premise of entrapment. This is the scene of the *batik* as writing. “Drawn in wax,” the text must drip as lyric and dry as narrative.<sup>264</sup> This scene

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<sup>263</sup> Moreno, “Batik Maker,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 2.

prompts the witness to the making of the image to introduce and at the same time distantiate oneself from the ruse through the tactile talent that is nevertheless annulled from approaching the scene. Here we hear the radius of ability, the “abot-kaya” recognizing a tension with what has been incarnated, the body of the woven text. Yet this body, “tissue of no seam and skin/of no scale,” is one that cannot be tactillated. The superficiality of the surface is too powerful in its delicacy that it seems it is substance as well, and itself. Before the figure of dis-body, one can only recede, in order to respect the brokenness, which in the word of the poet herself, describing the textile which elicited the making of the poem, is an “untouchable place that could not be bothered by mortalities.”<sup>265</sup>

Lengths of the dumb and widths

Of the deaf are his hair

Where wild orchids thumb

Or his parted throat surprise

To elegiac screaming

Only birds of

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<sup>264</sup> Lejo Schenk lucidly explains the philology behind *batik* as writing: “The Javanese word *bathik*, which became the term for this technique, appears for the first time in Javanese written sources in the early seventeenth century. It is related to the Old Javanese *thika*, which means writing, drawing and painting, The words *tulis thika* mean writings, drawings. In modern Javanese *tulis* is used for writing, drawing or painting patterns. In connection with techniques of decorating cloth, this word was mentioned in literature as early as the twelfth century, referring to *tulis warna*, ‘decorated with drawings in colour’. These textiles of the twelfth and later centuries may have been predecessors of modern batik. Batik *tulis* still means batik drawn with the wax pen in contrast with the batik *cap*, the stamped batik.” See “Introduction,” in *Batik: Drawn in Wax*, edited by Itie van Hout (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2001), 9. In Filipino, *batik* means a stain of colors; *tulis* refers to the sharpness of an object, like a knife’s.

<sup>265</sup> Manlapaz and Evasco, “Poet as Lover,” 90.

Paradise;

*And I cannot wake him.*<sup>266</sup>

This dissociating gesture transports us to a further description of the thicket that entraps the figure: a nightmare enmeshed into nature, the terror blooming as rarified avian species of the tropics, even when the senses of the tormented huntsman are already removed from himself. The statement of dissociation that follows intensifies the distance as the persona wills for the nightmare to escape its terminus. Can the dream-image of agony become the ex-stasis that enfolds the figure into a radius of absolute intimacy, of the “abot-dama?” Perhaps, because the dis-body, trans-figured in un-sense, into the perfection of silence, still sounds, and can only intone the plumage of the “pure literary image of exoticism”<sup>267</sup> arriving the furthest reach of its rarifying. Neither bird nor bloom, the “bird of paradise” is cultivated as the synaesthetic figure that collapses apparition and audition and severs these phenomenal events from their sources. The removal of these experiences from their referents is one *locus-gestus* that attests to the itineraries of the trope when the bar between signifier and signified is crossed by metaphor now freed from the travails of coincidence.

Shades of the light and shapes

Of the rain on his palanquin

Stain what phantom panther

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<sup>266</sup> Moreno, “Batik Maker,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 2.

<sup>267</sup> Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will*, 247.

Sleeps in the cage of  
His skin and immobile  
Hands;

*And I cannot bury him.*<sup>268</sup>

And within the trapped is his game, a beast that fortifies the vigorous stasis of the hunter's body because of its double entrapment. Does this depiction point to an ingestion? Or an embrace? This finally distances the observer from the scene and from the textility. One encounters a dilemma in the dyeing; sometimes the allure cannot be permanent when the scenes are entrapment, its insistence, and death. *The dye does not entitle one to dying.* How can this portrayal of danger, however seductive, be free from the colors of the earth which prevent their being purified and redeemed? The textile is a cloak to be worn to mourn the hunt, the hunted, the hunter, and the hunting, all of which could be the huntsman himself, in the weaver, the poet, and the reader, who resists but wishes to disentangle from the entrapment.<sup>269</sup> In a series of mises-en-abyme, what is perpetuated is a dilemma that the modern when activated by its tropics must confront: the configuration of the deathly must not lead to the defilement of its aesthetic because *the thanatological art is memento mori*. The batik maker and the poet are one in their death-writing

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<sup>268</sup> Moreno, "Batik Maker," in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 2.

<sup>269</sup> The deathly aura of such a design is confirmed by the textile scholar Norma Respicio writing for Patrick Flores's *Danas* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2002-2003): "The elaborate bird forms featured in ikat in the Banton burial cloth (14th to 15th century) and the design compositions depicting the sari-manok perched on the tree of life in Maranao malong can all be reinterpretations of the royal splendor and fascinations invested in the Asian fowl, the peacock."

and must remain true to it by letting the batik *write* the rest of the design—death. The gesture of touch, the moment of waking, and the rite of burial, will all intimate a Penelopian unraveling of the shroud: a breaking further of the already broken. To mourn then is not only to respect the gift of death but to accept its terrifying immanence.

To touch, wake, and bury the extremities of languor with the vigor of the hand, consciousness, and the earth itself are not the affections deserved by a design whose aspiration is the immediacy of sympathy. This is where the languor is refused to take place as a passive intensity and where the vigor is restrained but nevertheless allowed to be most potent. The textile that is supposed to evoke a languorous mood in the name of the tropics becomes the metaphor for the impossibility of that supine supersensibility and the tropographic elaboration of that event when that posture is delineated without consequence and limit.

“Love The Third” crosses the border that finally sets the stasis as terminus, because the allure is the premise. The persona longs to be ensnared:

In your cool hut of earth

Lure me now, Death,

And I shall come

In the thickening heat<sup>270</sup>

The gift of death is sought out. Its allure is lured, by a speaker who intones voluptuously, an arrival into the soil that is to be the site of her rest. As invitation, this is the thanatological

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<sup>270</sup> Moreno, “Love the Third,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 9.

recitative at its finest. The locus of the tropics is here, as heat, configured as a gesture that expands into a milieu that accompanies the candidate of *Death to death*.

Under the rot-sweet tree

My lust I'll hang to fan

Till the last passerby pass<sup>271</sup>

“Lust” here is an ardor that needs to be ventilated, even an apparel that covers the invitant, now in the nude, but free from enervation, thrilled to be proximate to the abode of her gestures.

Then we can come

On a hundred legs climb

Your hollow stairs and down

Your herb root beds down<sup>272</sup>

The deshabelle and the ventilation are the precondition to the choreography of descent into the cavern and the subsoil of the deathly.

I have come

Though you feel my violet past

Trickle in clotted whispers

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<sup>271</sup> Moreno, “Love the Third,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 9.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

From what was once my eyes:<sup>273</sup>

This Orphic movement renders the thanatologue inevitably intimate with Thanatos, to whom the history of the dying is revealed. The death-writing speaks as a figure whom the gaze is no more but a site of violation. Blood is sensed as the sound of the hemorrhage.

(While concubine to Life  
And to art still concubine  
Was passionate only when flogged  
Was fertile mostly when denied)

This candidate confides: as a paramour to her former loves, her ardor was derived from deprivation. And in this last attempt to be loved, she no longer longs to be mistress to Death. She longs, like Persephone, to be his bride. The poem is an auto-epithalamion. Her song pertains to her nuptials.

Now be my lover  
The third and my only  
Matrix keeper and my last  
Death in a cool hut of earth.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Moreno, "Love the Third," in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 9.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

Death is the final lover, and in the union, he could be touched, awoken, and buried. Exhortative or even appositional, “Love the Third,” takes us to the ends of a terminal inclination. The third, indeed, completes the gift.

## V

### Misshapeness’s Shapeliness

The poem “The Cubist Lover Guillaume Apollinaire” repeats the theme of the erotics of death, but through an engagement with the aesthetics of painterly modernism, with the cubistic picture finding linguistic shape along the poetic:

His jeweled brain lighted  
Toward him his Nude descending  
On plane upon cantilevered plane  
Through the air like silvery knives here singing.<sup>275</sup>

One need not labor to emphasize Moreno’s quotation of Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending On A Staircase No. 2* as an instance of the influx of modernism to the cosmopolitan poet’s “abotmalay.” After all, such is the first task in any literary critical enterprise on the ekphrastic. And yet, this moment of identifying the source shall be rendered futile if one fails in elaborating the

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<sup>275</sup> Moreno, “The Cubist Lover Guillaume Apollinaire,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 11.

prose that enables the poetic to become identificatory with the painting. If the poet is inclined to depict cubism in prosody, then the choreographeme which enables the strokes of such an aspiration must be traced by a reading. If in “Batik Maker” the singular gesture is *stasis*, and in “Love the Third,” the master motion is *eros*, the loco-motive behind the writing of “The Cubist Lover” is a *kinesis* that is recomposed in its geometric possibilities across trans-planar coordinates of consciousness. In the breaking down of the figure, the figure extends as thought, and in that cubistic incarnate, it moves in expansive ways.

The persona sets two figures, Guillaume Apollinaire, the poet of concretion, and his beloved as painterly figure, the Nude Descending. The pas-de-deux is executed through the dialogue of mirrors; the poet’s consciousness is the site where the glorious fragmentation of the Nude is reflected: the sharpness of knives sounding in the “abot-malay” of the poet as luminescent crown of jewels.

Is it you? He cried in horror

Drawn towards her purest-colored symmetry headed

Down, bringing warmest flesh and abstract lore

In her charcoal depths and tinted swells embedded.<sup>276</sup>

The Nude is to be loved for it is a blankness where incarnation and intimation are inflected in such a way that the body is suggested by its very thoughtful fragment. Hence the composition begins to appear as a composite of the breakage. De-composed, the Nude gains vigor in being

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<sup>276</sup> Moreno, “The Cubist Lover,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 11.

dis-membered. And Apollinaire is the Cubist Lover for recognizing the fragility of this cusp as what composes the attitudes for the object to be adulated.

And she descended and descended to the pit's rim  
Leaving fractures of her self on pegs,  
Breasts in pink cubes and whitened spears for legs  
That, in oblique shudder, collapsed on him.<sup>277</sup>

And then: the accident that punctuates the descent. The collapse denudes the Nude further of its form, defining its figuration through its parts being disseminated.

Across the canvas floor they made a classic pose  
When the poet, a saltimbanque, rose  
To lift his glittering Nude in space.  
A forked fire they were in one embrace,  
Which was she and which he?  
Such anonymity alone elicits ecstasy.<sup>278</sup>

Being the one who raises the fragment as his verbiage, the poet recomposes the descent into something more articulate. This acrobatic offering introduces the persona as a subject of the

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<sup>277</sup> Moreno, "The Cubist Lover," in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 11.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

jouissance that this voyeuristic opportunity elicits: the elimination of distinction between vigorous bodies after the fracture is the blankness of languor where love could inhabit.

I would like to gesture towards a transition by quoting another rendition of the cubistic poetic, still on the same Duchamp piece, but through Moreno's colleague, Federico Licsi Espino Jr.:

Caressing fingers of sunlight make silent music  
On her mandolin hips as she goes down the stairs:  
The truest, supremest augenmusik played rubato  
For the painter's gaze and ours. Frozen on  
The canvas, her coquetry of hips seduces us  
Though she is merely form and color, not  
Flesh voyeured by an ecstatic eye. She is Eve  
Before the fall; Danae after the rain of  
Golden seed: a nudeness painted by the tufted  
Wand in a sorcery of gold: an act of magic  
Which caused an escalating stir when her  
Unclassic nakedness descended on America.<sup>279</sup>

I quote Espino as a counterpoint vigor, but not as a vigorous counterpoint to the potent attenuation that Moreno employs in order to transport the painterly into the poetic, the cubistic

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<sup>279</sup> Federico Licsi Espino Jr., "Nude Descending on a Staircase by Duchamp," Part 5 of "The Louvre of Memory," In *Counter-clockwise, Poems: 1965-1969*, preface by Ricaredo Demetillo (Quezon City: Bustamante Press), 38.

jouissance into the linguistic voluptuary of a poem that internalizes the fragment to the point that the identification becomes a practice to name the identificatory copula as that which actually renders the poet-persona as enclosed oneself in the copulation that she witnesses in the trauma of the painting and in the proximity that her subjectivity attains in relation to the modernity that the fragmented image configures. In Espino, one does not sense the viscosity of Moreno's interpretation, nor the texture that allows the canvas and its surface to coagulate as an intimation that, viscerally by way of metonymic extension, tactically incarnates. Instead, a certain rush can be read as a way of keeping up with the *frisson esthetique*. The delay that Moreno's revised kinesis defers further the deferral of figure that is the figuration in the Duchamp piece.

An account of the literary reception of painterly modernism in the Philippines has yet to be written, but Patrick Flores has already prepared that ground by writing on the "apparentliness of cubism" among the cubistic painterly oeuvre in the country as far as the transubstantiation of the movement is concerned. Because in the figure, "fracture, mainly hinted at by studied angularity and a sensuous slicing of canvas," remains only as an appearance, and not "logic of form," which reveals not so much surface but interiors, "the idyll," in a "vigorous commitment to portray the Philippines as a pastoral inheritance."<sup>280</sup> While the "idyll" appears elsewhere in Moreno, the "classic pose" strutted by the lover and the beloved that the persona detects as final depiction, attests to the "apparentliness," the *palabás* that the poet pursues in order to achieve a languorous composure, after all the breakage, and in spite of the inculcations of the global museum, that has nurtured the purity of cubism. And yet while Moreno falls prey to "apparently, cubism,," her

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<sup>280</sup> Patrick D. Flores, "Apparently, Cubism," in *Cubism In Asia: Unbounded Dialogues* (Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore: The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, The Japan Foundation, The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, Singapore Art Museum, 2005), 260.

modernism remains intact, as her procedure comes to terms with the fragment not as a failure of form but as its principle, even pointing to a significant moment in the life of gesture where it could also calibrate the movement.

## VI

### Lyrical Tenures

In these brief lyrics, Moreno strives to open up the world by engaging homotropy to work out the “idyll” in terms of the elements of the tropics. The poem cycle “Earth Fire Air Sea” instructs on what becomes of the homotrope when the gestures are also that of the figure, *homo tropicus*, emplaced in *tropicus mundi*.

It is your eyes, Geographer,  
That shape me: nun-brown rock  
Or blood-veined mangrove lairs?  
Hone me; delta of arms, navel  
Of cave and stretched skin of plain,  
In a nuder hour, your odalisque  
Clayen, whose breath is yours—  
Herbal, fruit winy, opiate or jasmine.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Moreno, “Earth,” *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 7.

To hear the earth speak that she is worlded by he who contours her landscape in the name of the globe and the map is the retrieval of the writing that such a voice geography had removed from her. And yet, with the earth, speaking, what is revealed is not so much the gaze that encloses the earth into its globular or flat configurations as the “abot-tanaw,” the visual radius of the earth itself when it is given the opportunity to delineate its anatomy in language; disclosed more significantly is her “abot-tinig”—the earth’s vocal range is heard. The earth’s announcement of her knowledge of the Geographer’s figurative ways points us to the persona’s intimation that she is privy to the violence that the latter’s procedures have wrought upon her face. We shall call this oracular incarnate *invocation*, a summoning of the voice that senses the gaze as no longer the generative point, but as a productive node in the rehearsal of paleophonic discourse. The “abot-tinig” speaks in the “abot-kaya” of *resonance*, where the tone can ascend the scales of invincibility as well as confess helplessness in its fragile intonation.

Tony Bonyhady writes in *The Colonial Earth*:

The quest for the romantic and the picturesque did not always involve a corresponding respect for nature... As well as carrying tomahawks and axes to clear their paths, many photographers—or their patrons and assistants—used them for view-making. When they were not moving bushes or branches in order to enliven their foregrounds, they were felling trees in order to enliven their foregrounds.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Tony Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 192.

The context is Australia and the artistic practices which accompanied the colonist enterprise when the continent was beginning to be settled in the eighteenth century. This colonial history of art is significant to this post-colonial tropography as the former implicates the geographic as culpable to the violations that have been made in the name of the aesthetic. The clearings which had been made in order to make nature “native” as it would appear in the canvas or in the photograph were all possible because of the vitalities that geography had projected to be possible sites where a portrait of a world could be situated.

Bonyhady continues that such enterprises would “undermine the assumption that nature is immovable,”<sup>283</sup> a point that Moreno’s poem restates; the “gaze that shapes” is a “view that moves,” that tropes earth away from itself. Moreno vocalizes the apparition that is fabricated from the earth and instructs the Geographer on the violence of palimpsests. And while the poem itself lingers on a tone that may be deceptively purely seductive and premises on the pleasurability of the Geographer’s sculpting, the modality of the utterance leads one to the defiles of the allure, into an entrapment. Again, Bonyhady:

The realisation that artists were axemen matters a great deal...if we start from the premise that celebration rests on appreciation and respect... The artist’s use of the axe and the gun breaks this nexus. This rupture is disturbing enough when the work of art includes some sign of what has gone on... The breakdown between celebration and conservation is even more disturbing where the work itself gives no hint of what has gone on and only the written record may reveal how the art was produced.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, 193.

Moreno's poem "Earth" celebrates and conserves the *locus-gestus* of the site that it depicts to be vocalizing. And as a "written record," it awakens the earth that has been ravaged in order to become the incarnation of the image that had been intimated by geography and its agents.

Another poem in the series "Fire" takes us to the scene of "what has gone on," by proposing what pyro-aesthetic could be reflected on at the moment of destruction, which is the turning of object into its element.

The faggot woman and paper doll  
and Virgen Santo teakwood all cried  
out to this passionate partner: Do not O  
come too near O but you  
are here! over me and in me O Fire!  
he sings a cruel red and his echo dark  
where dancers and dance disappear;  
on the floor are black dust of their shoes,  
and nothing.<sup>285</sup>

The passage "Do not O/come too near O but you/are here! over me and in me O Fire!" is most precious not so much that it is by turns a remonstrance and an invitation as it demonstrates that the ardor that encourages the unperturbable resistance and that empowers the irresistible

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<sup>284</sup> Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, 216.

<sup>285</sup> Moreno, "Fire," in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 7.

acquiescence are one and the same because the cataclysmic charge is singularly that resistant irresistibility. Fire is an element of thanatology because, as far as Moreno's tropics is concerned, it reduces the object that resists into negative ontology. The metaphor of the ritual dance offers the site where this vision of the end begins to unfold the equipoise of that dance's end, to entertain the disclosure of the trace of "what violence has gone on." The vocalicity of this poem may be less stirring compared to the sultry enervation of "Earth," as the element does not speak, but the element's vigor is very much felt in its silent maneuvering. This is what occurs when the tropic itinerary of an elementary image is given the radius of desire, the "abot-gana," whose desiderating semantic is that *invigoration* into being infected with the *effervescence* of sharing in the susceptibility of being defeated most particularly in rapture.

May gana dahil may buhay. May pagpapahalaga sa buhay, sa bawat sandali ng buhay.  
Kaya't kapag sinabing ganado, ang isang maaaring tinutukoy ay ang naiibang sigla o liksi  
ng katawan. Ganado dahil alam niya ang gusto at gagawin, alam ang gustong marating,  
ang bubuuin; ganado pagkat puno ng pag-asa, tigib ng pag-ibig, buhos-kaluluwa.<sup>286</sup>

There is "gana" because there is life. Life is cherished, every moment of it. This is why when someone is "ganado," what is being referred to is an exquisite cheer, the embodied's agility. "Ganado," because she knows what she wants and what has to be done, knows what needs to be achieved, to be created; "ganado" because full of hope, of love, of the flow of the spirit.

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<sup>286</sup> Rebecca T. Añonuevo, *Talinghaga ng Gana: Ang Banal sa mga Piling Tulang Tagalog ng Ika-20 Siglo* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 2003), 24.

The “liksi” in Moreno, may tread a divergent vector compared to the site that preserves the voluptuous hope of Añonuevo, but the former’s agility towards erasure is the very flame that sustains the life-spirit in that the latter, herself a poet, pertains to, in her study on the flagrant moments of illumination in Tagalog sacred poetry during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“Air” tells one all about the impalpable palpability of the element:

Salt-hot presence and leaf-cool absence  
colour of no shade  
lash of no hands  
beat without flesh  
yet I need you, I gasp desiring you  
in a fan its laughter  
and in a barless tropic cage, the garuda  
bird heart’s moving scent.<sup>287</sup>

The sensorial intimacy with the air is premised on its absolute invisibility, which is compensated in a surplus of its intense choreography, where the gesture is severed from body: “lash of no hands/beat without flesh.” What does one do with this intimation bereft of incarnation, whose radius of sensation does not reveal the immanence, just like the “tissue of no seam and skin/of no scale?” This metaphor severed from metonym teaches us about the tropic temperament that allows the poetic to remote-sense the possibilities of trans-figuration when referentialities seem

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<sup>287</sup> Moreno, “Air,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 7.

to elude customary tropological habits. One surely occupies a deepening of the “abot-dama” in this instance because the poet displays the abyssal reach of her breath, the “abot-hinga”; the *inhalation* of palpability, albeit elusive from that initial encounter of, appearance, invites the *sustenance* of “ginhawa,” that which ventilates “talinghaga.” Of course, again, Flores: “Translated as well being, the term flourishes within an ample horizon: freedom from pain, prosperity, happiness, wholeness, consolation, respite, alleviation, healing. It is intimately related to *gaan* or *alwan* or lightness and *aliwalas* or openness; in the Visayas, it is breath itself.”<sup>288</sup> Free from the trappings of traditional tropology and manneristic tropicality, then, the poem refers finally to a “barless tropic cage,” as if referring to the tracheotomic reprieve that the poem has afforded for itself to sense the flavor of the element through a most enlivened extension of its radius, the odoriferous.

Finally, water, through a body of its flow, the sea:

The swelling there and sunken blue pasture  
of Mariner and Fish; his delicate oar parts  
her white coronets of foam and fish tail  
makes her seaweed hair tremble. To him alone  
she yields her serpentine graces and conceives  
by him hyacinth children in green salt beds.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Flores, “Ginhawa,” *Danas* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2002-2003).

<sup>289</sup> Moreno, “Sea,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 7.

While “Air” concentrates the energies of the trope by way of omission, “Sea” entitles us to the possibilities of integration. What we read here is not only an encounter between anthropos and ichthys but an illustration of the radius of speciation, the “abot-supling,” that the trope can allow for the poem to instantiate as a premise for *indigenation*, in order to propose what the earth could undulate in terms of imaginal *emergences*.

These elemental encounters could be summarized in this paradigm:

Element	<i>Earth</i>	<i>Fire</i>	<i>Air</i>	<i>Sea</i>
radius	abot-tinig (vocal range)	abot-gana (desirous scope)	abot-hinga (breath support)	abot-supling (species reach)
modus	invocation	invigoration	inhalation	indigenation
status	resonance	effervescence	sustenance	emergence
gestus	alingawngaw (echo)	luwalhati (ecstasy)	ginhawa (breath)	katutubo (indigene)

The cavernous earth reverberates. Fire sustains the ecstatic. Air keeps breath and releases. And nourished in the waters is the hybrid.

## VII

### Tempus Tropicus

There is a most instructive passage in Derrida's "White Mythology" that traumatizes the discourse of the time according to the trope. Such moment is most ripe when Derrida is about to conclude his reading of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*:

Value, gold, the eye, the sun, etc., are carried along, as has been long known, in the same tropic movement...Saussure's remark reminds us that the most natural, most universal, most real, most luminous thing, the apparently most exterior referent, the sun, does not completely escape the general law of metaphoric value as soon as it intervenes (as it always does) in the process of axiological and semantic value....<sup>290</sup>

If the turn of the "trope" has been originally imagined as a turn that is inevitably tied with the turning of the sun, Derrida elaborates on the paradox of not only the term but the procedure that the word attempts to maneuver by returning to the sun as tropological object. The shadow of tropic solarility casts its umbra on the sun itself as all tropes radiate from it. And if it is the origin of the trope, it cannot turn away from all its gestic itinerary. The sun is the most intimate interior of tropology.

Hence, Saussure's passage: "The value of just any term is accordingly determined by its environment; it is impossible to fix even the value of the signifier 'sun' without considering its

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<sup>290</sup> Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," translated and edited by Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 218.

surrounding: in some languages it is not possible to say ‘sit in the *sun*.’”<sup>291</sup> This is the crux of the dissertation from which I shall turn into the prose of a conclusion. In Filipino, “to sit in the sun” shall translate into “umupo sa loób ng araw,” *to sit inside the sun*, but idiom shall neutralize the rush of the metaphor into “umupo sa ilalim ng araw,” *to sit under the sun*. Saussure reminds us that even if it is the same sun, it is never the same gestus of light that shines, because of the locus of the illumination. In the context of this study, tropology’s locale has been tropicality, which alters the time of the enjoyment of sitting in the sun from an impossible interiority (sa loób) into an acceptable inclusivity (sa ilalim).

Moreno’s cycle “Sun and Night Poems” engages the seeming noncoincidence between the two dimensions by exploring the time that intervenes when the sun is troped atop its zenith and down to its nadir through a receptacle:

Cosmic elixir of Hermit Prince: Noon,  
In the bottom of this celadon  
Fish is fish and rice turns  
Wine, subtler than salt or  
Cane, embalmer, where none dies  
The small death, sleep, except  
By his darkest will, Night.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Derrida, “White Mythology,” 218.

<sup>292</sup> Moreno, “Noon and Night,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 10.

D.M. Reyes reads: “The gazer’s heightened awareness lends this blue celadon’s breadth the awesome depths of the universe itself. Evoking the subtle wonders of still life, the poet offers us the paradox of perpetual motion, magical and precise in seven lines.”<sup>293</sup> The poem’s gift to Reyes is a sense of dimension as by turns singular and multiple, enabling him to refer to space in terms of time, coalescing the dimensions height, breadth, and depth in an epistemic moment. Seven lines empower the poet-critic to enunciate the geometry of the container as, in Norman Bryson’s words, “the idea of form as something rotary,”<sup>294</sup> as something tropic, turning to turn again. As receptacle, the container receives the form and gives trans-form to substances which it takes in, as temporal gifts: as given time and as the gift of death. Rice fulfill the trope’s aspiration, as it does turn into another matter, wine. The conversion is possible because of the reception, after the containment. To ferment, one gives in to the celadon, that figure of patience. The poem, then, takes in as much radius of *inclusion*, “abot-silid,” in so little a space, for all *substance* to be worlded, even as the worlding’s shape is earthen. Thus, we return to Alejo: “Ang pagtatalaban ng lawak at lalim ay bumubuo ng isang uring ‘sisidlan’ na maaaring maging isang silid, palayok, tahanan o isang buong daigdig.”<sup>295</sup> (The tension between breadth and depth forms a kind of container that may be a room, an earthen vessel, a home, or the whole of the earth).

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<sup>293</sup> D. M. Reyes, “Orfeo in Macao, Eurydice in Tondo,” 27.

<sup>294</sup> Norman Bryson, “Rhopography,” in *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>295</sup> Alejo, *Tao Pô! Tulóy*, 71.

Golden boat fleeing from ghostly pier,  
It is onyx o'clock.  
Burning boat thirsting towards Imperial Port,  
It is phoenix o'clock.  
And you have no time, Tetrarch,  
To be born for this instant.<sup>296</sup>

Alluded to is the termination of Rome's grandeur. The hours are mentioned, but the numbers are replaced, first by the darkest stone, next by the brightest bird, to signal the need for a new world to be born and raised from the last ore, from the ashes of an empire waning into its twilight. Again, the sun cannot escape the trope, but the trope eludes its blaze. Nature, as rare stone, and its supersession, as magical creature, are summoned in order to announce the offspring of violence that must be defeated. The poet annuls the "fourth" to let *intemporation* become the arrivant of the "abot-saglit," the radius of momentousness, that only the poem can foresee, as clairvoyance, because, as Flores augurs, "somehow rationality and sensibility must cease to be the privilege of the enlightenment."<sup>297</sup> Only Moreno, high priestess of a tropical poetic, can wax lyrical on the world on the wane, and by such gesture, remain elated at the instance of being born and raised as time's offspring, as modern.

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<sup>296</sup> Moreno, "Sunset, Sunrise," in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 10.

<sup>297</sup> Flores, "Palabás," 8.

## VIII

### Final Ardor

This coda shall explore the tessitura of the tropical modern by exploring the resonance that could be heard when the tropic passaggio is crossed by way of translation. We end where we have begun, with “Batik Maker,” in Tagalog, as it arrives unto a closure in the hands of Hilario S. Francia:

Moreno	Francia	Jacobo
Shades of the light and shapes Of the rain on his palanquin Stain what phantom panther Sleeps in the cage of His skin and immobile Hands;  <i>And I cannot bury him.</i> <sup>298</sup>	Mga lilim ng liwanag at mga hugis Ng ulan ang bumatik sa kanyang palangkin At kung anong mahiwagang pantera Ang natutulog sa kanyang Balat at di-matinag na mga kamay;  <i>At di ko siya malibing.</i> <sup>299</sup>	Silhouettes of the glare and figures of the pour write on his palanquin And what charmed catamount Reposes beneath His skin and hands Unvanquished.  <i>And I cannot bury him.</i>

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<sup>298</sup> Moreno, “Batik Maker,” in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 2.

<sup>299</sup> Virginia R. Moreno, “Mambabatik,” translated by Hilario S. Francia, in *Batik Maker and Other Poems*, 1.

Francia returns the name of the textile in the poem and the manner in which the design is intimated—*batik*. And inflected as “bumatik,” it becomes the verb that demonstrates the “stain” that Moreno has envisioned to prefigure the scene of the interment. As the third, I to return the object to the circle by translating Francia’s past tense into the simplicity of a tropograph’s initial turn: “write.” For it is what Moreno has done with the gravitas that only the lithest of gestures can intimate. Here one succumbs to the irresistible illumination, Walter Benjamin’s:

Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, with this touch rather than with the point setting the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity, a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux.<sup>300</sup>

As a final ardor, translation takes us to the most delicate radius of poetry’s aspiration. “Abot-salin” connotes the brim of the vessel from which the substance is transferred from another receptacle. It is a most catastrophic event, yes, but the thought of a spill on the verge is what propels the metaphor to transport the gesture from zone to zone, from time to time, and in this case, from language to language. That tripartite choreography—*stain, batik, write*—spins for the poem a thought-edifice that it has seemed to transcend but never left. The tropics is the home that the trope departs from, only to return, to become truly tropic.

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<sup>300</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” translated by Harry Zohn, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 80.

## Conclusion

### *Homo Tropicus*

#### A Promise

To write about the trope is to aspire for species of prose that keeps up with perhaps every turn of the trope in question. As *homo kritikos*, I have attempted to propose a tropography of Philippine poetry, with the question of tropicality as the mood that lends intensity, quietude, equanimity, tremor, and resilience to that ritual of language, the poem.

Our traversal began with the conjuration of a figure, *homo tropicus*, who departs from the earth and yearns to return to such topos even from sublime promontory. The desire grounds itself on that site where patience is cultivated, *tropicus mundi*. We have apprehended the itinerary of such travel in poetic forms born and raised in a critical history of Philippine poetry.

The first chapter labored to propose a divergent turn in the study of both tropology and tropicality by turning to the grammatical category of mood as that which can assist us in what temperaments account for the synchronicity, if not the coincidence, between the trope and the tropics. By way of the mood that dwells and departs from the aphoristic, we have opened up the discourse of the tropics by entering the vernacular of the thought-edifice, *loób*, and the ideative choreography, *palabás*, in order to lend the trope a locus by which it imagines an architecture of consciousness, and a gestus that enables a genealogy of its movements.

We engaged the said dialectic between dwelling and passage further in the second chapter, where a Derridean syncopation of the gift haunted our readings of verses and songs from

autochthonous and early colonial Tagalog folklore. This deconstructive turn advanced our understanding of mood as, by way of Bourdieu, a habitus that activates the homecoming and the patience for the tropic's earthly return.

This theoretical temperament prepared us to engage in the third chapter two metrical romances *Ibong Adarna* and *Bernardo Carpio* in such a way the colonial gift was seen as an embedded present but which remained outside the genitive circle. The trans-figures in the Adarna Bird and the hero Bernardo were intricate entanglements of place and gesture that their apparitions and disappearances in the texts point to tropic moods which actually expose the trauma of colonial generosity.

Finally, the last chapter articulated the intensities of the tropical modernist Virginia R. Moreno, with Albert E. Alejo, S.J.'s vernacular phenomenology, and Patrick D. Flores's vernacularizing history of art providing the radii of the gift which extend and limit the scope of aspiring for that proximity, the earth. The final gesture resides in the final abode of translation, where leave-taking and dwelling are in concert to finding that route to turn into the earth as receptacle of a world occurring in elements, in spite of the poetic.

The trope as a temporal opportunity is an idea that we have apprehended to be an enabling maneuver, in relation to the anticipations of *homo tropicus* to find that moment of repose on *tropicus mundi*. With tropology at the pace of the tropics, we have been presented with four senses of temporality:

- a) An anticipation of futurity that might be premised on the deferral of the possible.
- b) A synchronicity with the gifts and the counter-gifts of the earth.
- c) The rehearsal of an otherworldly rhythm but with a vernacular percussion.
- d) An exhilaration over the rush of modernity, riding its promises, only to attenuate the

latter's persuasions to finally depart from the earth.

In all these temporalities, the dexterity that *homo tropicus* as she moves along the tropic passage is a mood that is incepted and inflected by patience.

It is my hope that the labors of the thought-edifice that I have inhabited and the ideative choreography I have demonstrated in this dissertation have intimated a method that contemporary tropography may emulate in its efforts to expand the repertoire of literary criticism both as an interpretive stance and a historical gesture.

Hope is the final virtue even as it is perennially penultimate. The trope shall depart from its origins only to return, truly tropic.

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