

Finding Genoa, Finding Myself
Notes on Reading, Language, Travelling,
and Mobility
(Pag-aapuhap sa Genoa, Pag-aapuhap ng Sarili
Mga Tala sa Pagbabasa, sa Wika, sa Paglalakbay
at Paglalayag)

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“To remember” is not a passive or active form, while “recollection” presumably the active search for particular memories is in fact passive—not even medial—in form. “Recollection” or “reminiscence” is the passive form of the verb “to remind.” Accordingly, “recollection or reminisce is a being reminded, it involves one thing putting us in mind of another.”

— Melody Niwott

ABSTRACT

In this work, the author recounts her personal experience as an exchange scholar in Genoa, Italy, under the Erasmus Mundi Mobility programme. Told in two languages, English and Filipino, the author articulates what could be a typical mode of worlding an Asian scholar might have, if given the chance to see the sights in Europe. Realizing her linguistic preparation for Italian is insufficient, she begins to acknowledge her alterity as an English-speaking persona. She also realizes the complexity of lived time with strangers in a foreign land. Finding a translated text by Elsa Morante in a public library becomes a breather for the persona in the essay. The translated work, “History,” becomes an ironic commentary of how parallel existences can happen, experiencing hunger and loneliness similar to the fictional characters who lived in Mussolini’s time. Embedded in the narrative are brief recollections of mundane scenes in public spaces and transport, while the persona is coping with cultural gaps.

Reading, and writing about the process of reading, becomes an act of salvation as well. Finding other people of color (economic or political exiles), the author recognizes the porosity as well as the impermeability of Italian as a language, when she realizes that comprehension of the language does not necessarily translate as power.

Keywords: Creative nonfiction, translation and migration, travel accounts

It is said that travel widens one's horizons, increases one's self awareness, and deepens one's understanding of history, both personal and national, or in my case, international relations. I came to Genoa, Italy, as a scholar of Translation Studies, quite confident in my abilities in the language (Italian) as I was deluded to be. And why not? Learning a new language seemed to be easy. It was all a matter of investing one's energies and focusing on words, words, words. It was another story when I arrived there.

I used to think of translation as a simple, everyday task. In reassessing my stay in Italy in the spring of 2012, I realize now how simple minded this statement was. If I am a subject formed by generations of translated texts, being a by-product of an educational system that consumed texts from the colonial and postcolonial imaginary, I can also say that I am part of an intellectual transmission belt of disseminating not only translated texts but also ideologies and imagined communities. If it is so, translation is far from being a simple, everyday task. And yet, strangely, for the longest time, I thought it was.

As a teacher of Philippine Literature, one's alterity as an English speaker vacillates in its visibility and invisibility. Filipino is the medium of instruction, but to be honest, much of the critical preparation that a competent professor must have is channeled not through Filipino alone, but in English as well. Since English is widely accepted as the language of the educated, I use it most especially when I move around in circles outside of the academe, in which, sadly, one's external appearance and language used is a "credible" measure of one's worth. I mask it when I move around in territories wherein that language widens the economic gap, or the fact that education is a privilege enjoyed by a few, and using English can alienate the speaker from her audience. This liminality of tongues has its own effacement and belligerence: I can speak, write, or think in English if I have to, when I have to.

A course such as Filipino 50 (Survey on Philippine Literature) is a usual subject included in my academic load. It features works produced in the oral as well as in

the written traditions, works that were spawned during the precolonial period, during the colonization of Spain, the American period, the Commonwealth era, the Post-War years, until the Contemporary period. Works in the regional languages are studied, but they are scrutinized in their translated versions. Encountering texts in their half-life or mutated forms is also an everyday occurrence in teaching Philippine literature, for much is lost not only in the process of translation, but also in the framing of how these “found precolonial texts” are much heftier in number, and in scope, prior to print culture. Categorized as such (oral-written, historical periods inclusive) the student inevitably links the study of literature with history as well, for it can incite her to reflect about the nature and dynamic of collective memory, and collected narratives. As a professor of Philippine Literature, I believe I am part of the symbolic analyst workforce. We are responsible, after all, in teaching courses that encompass national identity, strengthening the people’s sense of history by exposing and touring their minds in the highest aesthetic engagement words can have: that is, through literature.

Since we are a nation fomented by traumatic experiences with its many invasions and periods of colonial regimes, it is inevitable that our attitude to the language of the colonizer would shift each time the balance of power changes. There is a whole generation of Filipino intellectuals for example, who wrote in Spanish, in the mid 1800s until the turn of the century. Spanish then was the language of the ruling class and upward mobility. On the one hand, it was a language that had racial, and racist, leanings, but on the other hand, it was also the language that was the vessel of many nationalist writings. The religious orders who were also the conduits of education made sure that even the *criollo* (creole) who speaks Spanish is not a guarantee for his or her integration into power. Accounts of the Filipino heroes who lived during these times in their memoirs, correspondences, and other literary output could attest to this discrimination. Ordinary *indios* could learn the language, but at the cost of enslaving themselves to the friar, or the benevolent *principalia* who were willing to hire his or her services as *muchachos*, maids, etc. Education was a privilege and not a right in those days. When the Americans came into power, largely with the help of other *ilustrados* who abandoned ship with Madre Espanya, and the failed (albeit unfinished) revolution of the Katipunan, they cleverly included the reform of the educational system in their colonialist agenda. Unlike Spanish which was a language that had its gatekeepers, English was a language that the public school of the American period came hand in hand with. And so it wasn’t a surprise when a whole generation of writers writing in English bloomed—fictionists like Paz Marquez Benitez and Franz Arcellana, poets like Rafael de la Costa and Angela Manalang Gloria, essayists like Salvador P. Lopez, Kerima Polotan Tuvera,

and Nick Joaquin. The canon of literature they became familiar with was Anglo-American. Predictably, this historical development bred a mentality hereafter branded as one of the major obstacles toward our own sovereignty as a people: colonial mentality.

Were the Americans far better colonial masters than the Spaniards? Of course not. History can speak of the many atrocities the Yankee has brought: massacres, tortures, “pacification campaigns,” not to mention its present neocolonial influence in or national politics and culture. But then I may be getting ahead of myself: my point is—learning a language includes historical battles, struggles. Acquiring a second language masks another history that is subsumed, suppressed and silenced.

It is interesting that one’s ability in English became the usable, albeit too convenient part of my learning at the Erasmus Mobility program. My first meeting with Prof. Laura Salmon, in her Translation Studies class, has emphasized that translation is not that easy, and it isn’t a given skill for anybody who is literate, and can speak, write, or read in another language other than one’s mother tongue. Prof. Laura Salmon is a full professor of Russian Language and Literature and her expertise includes Russian-Jewish literature, translation theory, onomastics, Russian linguistics, and humor studies. Aside from publishing a book on translation theory and the novel, some of the Russian authors she translated are: Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Dovlatov. In 2009 she won the Monselice Prize for Literary Translation and the Tolstoy Prize for Translation in September 2013 for her translation of *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky. Salmon proceeded to discuss her translation process of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, and she demonstrated how translators have the potential to allow the author to speak more clearly.

As an observer in her translation class, I noted the liveliness of her students as they presented their specific issues about their current translation projects. This sharing of ideas between teacher and student was a hands-on learning philosophy. Prof. Salmon stressed the critical thinking that comes not just with the word choice, but the entire conceptual frame that involves the author, the text, the reader, and the intended audience. One student engaged her professor in a healthy argument. “Translating between Italian to French and vice versa is not *prestabilito* (predetermined), it takes a thorough understanding of the nation’s culture, history, and everyday life,” Prof. Salmon said. “One is marked by language, in the same way one marks language. A simple greeting like ‘Ciao!’ when used inappropriately by a person ignorant of the distinction between Tu and Lei can pave a misunderstanding.”

Similar to the intense listening training of conductors and performers, a translator must pay attention to everything that is in the text and beyond the text. She must also be aware of what the author is actually saying behind, or underneath the forage of description. Word choices from the translator can illuminate, or obscure, other facets of the narrative discourse from the original text. In chapter 8, part six of the novel *Anna Karenina*, second lead characters Levin and Kitty are spending their summer in the country, and while Tolstoy evokes the physical appearance and clothes of these men and women, a whole discourse on class, upbringing, ethnic identities, and even the attitude of the author towards these categories are revealed. Valenska Veslovsky comes across as a nouveau rich young upstart, having the confidence to lead the pack, with his “big new boots that came halfway through his thick thighs, in a green blouse girdled by a new cartridge belt smelling of leather” and “a Scotch cap with trailing ribbons.” An outfit that flags his alien position in the countryside; whereas the Old World aristocrat Stiva Oblonsky is wearing “rawhide shoes, with rough leggings, torn trousers, and a short coat.” He may not be as fashionably dressed as Veslovsky, but his gun, his game bag, and his cartridge belt hail his long experience in hunting as leisure. Prof. Salmon stressed that even the word “shoes” cannot encapsulate Oblonsky’s footwear, for in the original Russian, Tolstoy employs *porshni* and *podvertki*—words culled from “colloquial peasant vocabulary.” If the translator is serious with her task, she would be mindful in her simulation of the author’s precision. *Porshni* is “the simplest kind of leather shoes, commonly made from a single rectangular piece of oiled leather, with the corners connected in pairs, and a leather thong threaded on the top edge,” while *podvertki* are “cloths worn around the foot and lower leg.” Both items are specific to the Russian culture and milieu, embodied in their paintings of peasants and aristocrats, or soldiers and social outcasts.

Later, over *focaccetta* and *zucca de fruta*, Prof. Salmon shared some of her opinions about the reading culture of the Italians. (I have, on that occasion, told her my difficulty of acquiring an English translation of any of Elsa Morante’s opus.) Shocked and almost indignant, then shifting to good natured humor, she said, “Of course you can’t find a Morante translation here in Italy! Hahaha.” Of course! But I couldn’t explain to her then that I was coming from another perspective. I tried to explain the complexity of relations between English, Filipino, and the other Philippine languages. At home, I said, the television broadcast of CNN, or BBC, or even the local news, ANC, use English. Imported drama series from the US, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, or South America, have subtitles in English. In libraries or bookstores, books are written in English, and only a section, labeled *Filipiniana*, is allotted to books written by Filipino authors, on the subject of anything Philippine. A major

part of the rubric that we claim to be “national literature” is written in English. Interestingly, although the national literature written in Filipino has densely symbolic value (it is, after all, “national”) and has been associated with protest and nationalist literature (against the Marcos dictatorship, for example) it cannot seem to validate itself in the terrain of world literature, it remains, sadly, invisible, unless incarnated in translations, or denigrated, seen as the channel for low art. It remains understood only within its geographical boundaries, its flow of energy flowing into the filter of canon. Yes, Filipino as a language remains marginal, in spite of the diaspora of Filipino families and Filipinos in the labor force in the global arena. Perhaps it is precisely because its speakers remain, on the majority, with limited agency: reacting, instead of acting, on their individual, as well as collective limitations. Street vendors, society matrons, adolescent girls giddy about their school crushes, call center agents—I could go on with the spectra—they are all familiar with English. And what about Filipino? Oh yes, they do know that language. But whenever they refer to its existence, it invokes an entirely different political, as well as cultural, identity. President Benigno S. Aquino Jr., for example, prides himself in his articulations in the so called “language of the masses”: “*Kayo ang aking boss*” / “*You are my boss*” / “*Tu sei il mio capo.*” That does not guarantee, however, that he truly understands, or he truly is concerned about their welfare, or he represents the Filipino Everyman, if we assume that the word “masses” exists in the first place, or if we consider the downward movement of his popularity among his constituents, now that his honeymoon with the media is over. English, like Filipino, has its own complex set of markedness, both languages are capable as vessels of emancipatory ideas, and yet both can be used as currency for oppression, deceit, and abuse of power on a national scale.

Prof. Salmon laments the onslaught of television, of the American way, channelled through media, which the younger generation don’t seem to be critical of. Vigorously I nod and quip that the same thing is happening in my country, as elsewhere. “It has robbed the younger generation of the pleasures of reading,” she said, fighting the din of young people eating, laughing, playing cards inside the bar. She compares the reading habits of the Italians with the Russians, whom, she says, read a lot, in spite of glasnost and perestroika. Much later, I verified this observation through my own research. Borodkin and Chugnov’s findings on the reading habits of Russian workers in early twentieth century was illuminating because the researchers used qualitative sources such as library catalogs, *zemstvo* publications¹, and other archival material. Aside from its commentary on print culture, Borodkin and Chugunov elucidate Salmon’s claim that the reading culture of the Russians is indeed very much rooted in the politicization of workers, and this mark is distinct, and very strong, as compared to other cultures of the world.

Since the Industrial Revolution, each year signified a progression for the reading culture of workers, until their reading habits were enhanced, and has become part of their everyday life. The zemstvos, or Russian local self-governing institutions, played a large part in developing this culture. It initiated the setting up of public libraries, elementary schools, and other institutions. “The local intelligentsia and the zemstvos undertook various sociological research projects and surveys in order to study the reading culture and social composition of public users in many Russian provinces” (Borodkin and Chugunov 143). Libraries began to appear in Russian factories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Books were borrowed individually, but there were group readings and discussions done by the workers amongst themselves. Most of them wanted to read the Russian classics, historical novels, and travel accounts, but they also voraciously consumed other kinds of reading material in the sciences and industrial arts. They also consumed the more incendiary works present in periodicals and pamphlets of a political nature. And although “political literature that had been prohibited by the government could not find its way into any factory library indeed the reading of such pamphlets and books carried the risk of instant dismissal” (Borodkin and Chugunov 150), the consumption of such articles were provided by the younger members of the intelligentsia, who were in their teens and early twenties.

I am reminded of how Andres Bonifacio managed to educate himself through extensive reading, as a factory worker in Fressell and Company in the 1880s, or how Emilio Jacinto facilitated the intellectual culture of the Katipunan by initiating discussions on “kalayaan.” The Russian intelligentsia and its workforce in the factories worked together, each twin listening and adapting to the other’s needs, both on equal footing when it comes to reforms.

The intelligentsia organized lectures for workers at various industrial establishments, while establishing a People’s Middle school for workers—which had a positive effect in fostering apprenticeships. These were orchestrated moves, so that education can “raise the qualitative and quantitative productivity of workers’ labor, lessen drunkenness, reduce the number of accidents they suffer, lessen the damage caused to machines (lessening expenditures on repairs), tools and engines, reduce the deplorable level of theft of factory property, and improve to a significant extent the relationship between factory owners and workers” (Borodkin and Chugunov 144). I cannot help but compare this kind of reading culture with the representations of the Filipino workforce today, how distantiated some members of the modern Filipino intelligentsia are to the production of a literate workforce. Prof. Salmon laments the fact that her critical work is written in a language—

Russian—that is not read by most Italians. Another subtitle was running inside my brain, something along the lines of “*Hindi ba’t ganyan ang kalagayan ng karamihan ng mga nagsusulat ngayon sa wikang Filipino?*” Her sigh and my sudden silence after her remark affirmed my intuitive reading that we shared a common thread at that moment.



Figure 1. Pigeon sitting on a traffic light. Photo by Luna Sicat Cleto.

Sweltering heat in the summer, enough to make you think you are the proverbial frog inside the boiling kettle of climate change, but you have to concentrate on listening through your student’s oral report. The luckier ones who were assigned to rooms that had air-conditioning would tell you that a puddle has formed in the middle of the room, dripping from the freon inside a faulty aircon unit. Hallways and rooms full of students, their laughter and chatter re-echoing endlessly, their noise similar to the sound of bees trapped in jars. Some are well-dressed and are affluent to drive their own cars, but most are facing the grim reality of rising tuition fees. As you ascend the flight of stairs, your breathing becomes ragged by the time you reach the fourth floor. A voice calling your name, her face and gait similar to yours, that sad, dignified air that most academics have when they see one another in

flights of stairs of old, and not so new buildings that have structural damages symbolic of the state's paltry attention to public education. As you direct your gaze on the opposite end, you notice the empty rooms—some of your colleagues are playing hooky again, and you sigh. There's a reproduction of Carlos Botong Francisco's mural, featuring the Cry of Pugadlawin: a visual trajectory of the revolution of 1896 and the Katipunan. Bonifacio's eyes are particularly intense, sometimes their inner rage seem to be reflecting your own. Rainy or sunny weather, many professors like yourself would probably experience these moments of self-doubt concerning one's career in the humanities. Elsewhere in the world, you realize that the teaching profession in humanities also suffers from budget cuts, rising economic costs in housing and basic needs, educated people suffering from state apathy.

These images have trailed me, even as far as that university hall in Genoa along Corso Dugalli, where I was sitting in, on that very same day after Prof. Salmon's lecture. It was a large class, perhaps 50 or 60 students, and Prof. Massimo Bacigalupo seemed at ease when he strode down the aisle. Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* and T. S. Eliot's poetry were the assigned readings. Anderson's book was on the desk of my seatmate, and the young woman generously allowed me to use it. The book was new and its pages were crisp, devoid of earmarks or pencilled comments. Its owner was more attuned to her boyfriend's chatter, as most of them were. I was transported back in time when I was a college student. How indifferent I was to my professor's ideas. Life, as it were, seemed to be happening elsewhere, and not within the confines of the classroom. My disinterest was not only because I was young, but it also stemmed from questioning the bias that my professors had about the cultural text that was before us. Here is the same text that I studied in college, but its effect is no longer singular, the grotesque in Anderson's work could probably have my likeness, being locked in this cultural anguish. I was not aware at that time that Prof. Bacigalupo's interest in Anglo-American literature was connected to his father's friendship with the poet Ezra Pound, who was a frequent visitor in their house at Rapallo. Bacigalupo's personal/domestic space was once the cultural hub of artists like Gerard Hauptmann, Isaiah Berlin, and Eva Hesse. Later, I found out that he was not just an academic, he was also a translator and filmmaker, the driving force in that university when it came to organizing poetry lectures, performances, competitions, and publications.

Prof. Bacigalupo's eyes caught mine. Nervous that my boredom was evident, I decided to participate in the discussion, because the lecture's critical framework is familiar—formalist, with some psychoanalytical touches. At that moment, I did not have to

speak in Italian. Soon, I swam in the language that enabled me to find my bearings but at some point I sensed that I may be disrupting the class. But Prof. Bacigalupo did not seem to mind. He welcomed my input, even if it did not quite conform with his reading.

In hindsight, Prof. Bacigalupo's class gave me a glimpse of the state of education in Italy. These Italian youths have slayed the idea of the primacy of attendance for example, or staying in class until the professor's lecture is over. I was quite alarmed when I noticed some students leaving while the professor was still in the midst of his lecture. This is unheard of back home, wherein such behavior could spark debates about the respect of the student toward the faculty. Prof. Bacigalupo explained that it is not out of disrespect, but more of understanding the commuter status that some students may have, catching outbound trains and so on. How pragmatic the professor's attitude was, I thought. Later, it became a challenge to think about the untold history as to why this classroom dynamic has evolved—could it have sprung out of a robust history of student movements, wherein the rights of the youth to define his own education are focused on? I will never know.

Next in line for the observation was Prof. John Douthwaite's class. The lineup of my classes was clearly methodical—a translation class in the morning, and then a course in comparative literature in the afternoon, and a day later, a serving of Stylistics. A native of Great Britain, Prof. John Douthwaite could easily pass for a casting of Henry VIII with his build and demeanor. He oriented me about the class: they are in their third year, they're a bright bunch, and he wanted me to facilitate a writing lesson for his students. Most of them, he says, have experienced travel. They have had some exposure to other cultures in western Europe. Literary theories and concepts were embedded in their lessons. In hindsight, I asked myself why Prof. Douthwaite emphasized these points about his students. Surely this is not just part of one's psychic preparation. Is he saying that from where I come from travel is not common, exposure to European culture is not a given, and literary concepts and theories may not be embedded in the lessons? Perhaps.

Prof. Douthwaite discussed an excerpt from *The Inheritors* by William Golding. He posited that the novel's style is different from Golding's previous work *The Lord of the Flies*, "it may be simple and sensuous, but the point of view is the Neanderthal mind." This choice of consciousness implies a state of denial on the part of the author: that narrative voice can only perceive, but cannot understand, nor articulate in words these stimuli, because Golding's characters live through their senses and their anthropomorphic view of nature and the inanimate. Therefore the novel is not

only an artistic challenge in worlding, it is also an imaginative challenge for both the author and the reader; as its consciousness is clear of thought and judgment pertaining to hatred, suspicion, or fear. Golding, Douthwaite says, subverts the idea that it is the meek who shall inherit the earth. The inheritors are killers of the meek.

“Consider this sentence,” Prof. Douthwaite said, directing the attention of his students to a large television monitor that flashed the relevant passage. “Their ears as if endowed with separate life sorted the tangle of tiny sounds and accepted them, the sound of breathing, the sound of wet clay flaking and ashes falling in.” He paused and observed his students’ reaction. Some have furrowed their brows in thought, others stared at their shoes or their companion’s earlobes. “Does anyone here notice anything about the quality of life of these Neanderthals?” In silence, I wanted to say, perhaps this is how the Aetas once lived, as they gathered around the fire and exchanged stories, before they became dispossessed. Of course I could not share that thought, because I am unsure if they could relate to the “history” of a *straniera* like me. “The river sleeps or is awake, the trees have ears, the island is a huge thigh, shin and foot, logs go away, everything is alive ... the fire eats and dances ...” In silence, I also wanted to say that sometimes, even my own senses assume a life of their own.

“The question is, how did Golding hear this ‘original’ language and translate it in English?” Again, they furrowed their brows, stared at their shoes or their companion’s earlobes. In hindsight, these silences in these observed classes may have urged me to reflect about my own stance as a “tourist” in the curricula. How do I translate my “original” thoughts while looking back on my employment background, my personal history, my perceived sense of being a Filipina in an alien country? Like the Neanderthals in the story I struggle with words to meet the demands of necessity and change.

In the last leg of this grand tour of the Humanities, I was able to share some of the lessons that I teach as a professor of creative writing. Prof. Anne McDormind invited me to facilitate a writing session in her Journalism class. She, like me, is not an Italian. She is Canadian, and her late husband was Genoese who spent many years in her home country. Prof. McDormind told me that she used to be a journalist, hence, she was very familiar with the elements of good news writing: brevity, clarity, relevance, and so on. On that day, her class discussed “Parts of the Umbrella” in order to write a short piece on the process of using one.

Some of the class giggled and rolled their eyes. Reading their body language one could say that they were wondering what the heck was that all about. Undaunted, Prof. McDormind stressed the importance of brainstorming, finding verbs with a crunch (relevance), and being specific and concrete about the steps in a process. The class proceeded with the exercise. In my head I was wondering at the synchronicity of it all. How I, like a *stranieri*, had found an umbrella in this same class, with Prof. McDormind's generosity of time, and trust, in teaching them about the rudiments of creative writing in one lesson only and then *Ciao! Arrivederci! Grazie!* How fortunate that they could not read minds, as do I, for in that moment, I was frantically seeking within my brain and my heart as to why I thought of Writing About Home as an exercise, using Photography as a method.

Later, over a glass of Coca Cola and some cigarettes, Anne and I shared some shoptalk about how difficult and rewarding it is to teach creative writing. She said part of her struggle with her teaching is there isn't enough writing at all that is being asked from the student. Graded recitations and exams. The reliance on memorization as a tool to learn. The tradition in Italy of the professor doing the lecture, the students listening in. Maybe you can try going out for a walk, I said, with your students? I remembered a pleasant stroll down the promenade with my mentor Prof. Elisa Bricco and another colleague from Erasmus. Prof. Bricco mentioned how a walk is one of the best methods to travel, and to know the world, and I couldn't agree more. A walk is also the best activity to think, and to write.



Figure 2. Train with passengers boarding by Uliano Lucas
"The past is another country." (L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*)

Hanggang ngayon, nakapagtata kang hindi ko maibalangkas ang aking naging karanasan sa bayang iyon sa iisang wika. Waring naging lansangan rin ang aking kamalayan, na sinusumpong rin ng trapiko mga wika, at ng mga salita. May opisyal na bersiyon ang sanaysay na ito, ipinasa bilang huling kahilingan para maiproseso ang saysay ng aking pagtungo bilang iskolar sa *exchange program* ng Erasmus Mundi mobility programme. Ang kasalukuyang teksto’y hindi ang opisyal na bersiyon—at tutukuyin ko ito bilang pinipi at pinatahimik na bersiyon, ngunit ngayo’y lumalantad. Alam ng sinumang nakauunawa na sa paglalakbay, may dalawa naman talagang espasyong pinangyayarihan—ang pisikal na heograpiya at ang interyor na lupain. Alam rin ng sinumang nakauunawa sa pagsasalin na may orihinal na teksto at may salin—na kailanma’y hindi maghuhugpong, bagaman galing sa teknikalidad, sa iisang punla.

Gaya ng mga karanasang nagmamarka sa kamalayan, ang maikling biyaheng iyon ang masasabi kong nagpamalay sa aking pagkatao. Sabihin na nating hindi ang Italya ang aking higit na nakilala, kundi ang aking sarili. Sabihin na rin nating ang pagbabalik-tanaw na ito ay pagtatangkang magsaayos, magpangalan, magbansag, at magkahon ng isang karanasang alam kong hindi na mauulit.

Limang buwan akong nag-aral ng wikang Italyano. Maulan ang mga Sabado ng hapong iyon, mula Hulyo-Septiyembre 2011, nang matapos ko ang Italian I. Bitin ang mga leksiyon at nagkasundo kami ng klase na bunuin ang ikalawang yugto, ang Italian II, na naganap noong Enero-Marso 2012. Tatlo na lang mula sa lima ang nagtiyagang pumasok.

Napakaideal ng pag-aaral ng wikang iyon. Apat na oras na intensibo, kompleto sa mga pinatutugtog na *voice cues*, *exercise books*, at *drills* sa pakikipag-usap. Nanood kami ng *Cinema Paradiso*, *Suspiro*, nakinig ng mga Italian *pop songs*, nagpalitan ng mga *pdf* ng mga *language manual*. Pinasulat ng mga *recipe* ng paboritong putahe, sa Italyano. Tila kay dali. Basta alam mo lang ang mga *conjugazione* ng mga *-are*, *-ire*, *-ere* na *verb*. Basta’t alam mo ang mga verbong iregular. Basta’t may hinuha ka ng mga *taboo* sa kanilang kultura. Basta’t may bokabularyo kang masasandigan para sa pang-araw-araw na ritwal. Basta’t alam mo ang paglakad ng iyong *permesso di soggiorno*. Basta’t kompleto ka sa papeles ng paglalakbay. Basta’t may tiwala ka sa sarili. Itong huling sangkap ang magsisilbing mantra sa pagdating ko roon, bilang isang isdang nawala sa tubig na pinaglalanguyan, dahil higit ko raw na mamamando ang wikang banyaga kapag nasubukan ko nang lumangoy sa tubig ng wikang iyon, kasama ng iba pang mga nagsasalita talaga ng wikang ito.

Hindi lang wika ang natutuhan ko sa maikling panahong iyon, nakasalamuha ko rin pati ang mga kuwento ng mga taong ibig mag-aral ng wika. May kaniya-kaniya kaming

mga dahilan kung bakit kami nag-aaral. May nars na naghahandang lumipad patungong Milan para samahan ang nanay niyang *domestic worker*, at kahit muli niyang bubunuin ang eksameng naipasa na niya sa Pilipinas sa wikang Italyano, ayos lang ang “aksaya” na panahon para maging *accredited nurse* at makapiling muli ang magulang. May dalagang may *huomo* na Italyano, nagsasanay na maging *caregiver* habang nagsisilbing *over-all* alalay ng isang taga-showbiz na alalay rin naman ng isang star, at nangangarap siya ng *citizenship* kapag pinakasalan na siya. May *chef* na sasama na sa *pilgrimage* ng Lourdes at wala nang intensiyong magbalik pa sa Pilipinas. Magiging “tnt” na raw siya, hindi na bale kung maubos ang *life savings* sa biyahe, o maging tagahugas ng plato o alila ng isang matandang may-kaya.

Tapatang tinitingnan ang pag-aaral ng Italyano bilang pasaporte ng mas maginhawang buhay. May model employee akong kaglase, na magsasanay sa pag-aaral ng *public works*, at tutuklasin ang sistema ng *waste management* sa Milan. May CEO na kahit wala pang trenta’y singko’y, *bored* na sa buhay, at ibig mag-aral ng Italyano dahil ito raw ang pinakamagandang wika sa buong mundo. Madalas siyang manlibre sa aming lahat ng pizza, at habang nginunguya namin ang bitbit niya’y tinititigan niya kami. Tila takot siyang makahagilap kahit munti mang bakas ng inip sa mga kuwento niya tungkol sa kaniyang mga pusa at pagiging *insomniac*. Lahat kami—ang *caregiver*, ang nars, ang *chef*, ang model employee, at ang CEO, ay hindi na nagkita matapos ang klase. Nagkaniya-kaniyang sagwan na kami.

Mula sa *termini* ng Milan ay isa pang sakay ng tren para makarating sa Genoa. Sa unang biyahe ko sa tren, naaalala ko ang dyip, bus, at MRT na aking nakasanayang sakyang. Awtomatiko kong naalala ang nasambit ni Valerio Nofuente, na may kakaibang ritwal ang mga pasahero sa loob ng dyip: maaaring magkakaharap sa pagkakaupo ngunit hindi nagtititigan. Tila awtomatikong pumasok ako sa astang parang kailangan kong magmukhang *busy*. Naglabas ako ng libro. Nang hindi mawawaan ang mga salita, nagbukas ng laptop. Kunwari, may *email* na binubuo. Itinabi matapos mandiri sa sariling pagkukunwari. Lumingon sa kanan, nadeskubre na mas magandang titigan ang hagnos ng mga tanawin: ang mga bahay, ang mga gusali, ang mga taniman, ang mga *vineyard*. Namamayani ang kulay ng pasô, ang kulay ng mga pamantingin na napupulot sa daan, kakulay nito ang mga bubungang yari sa tisa. May lungti rin ang mga lumot sa mga pader, sa mga *portico*, sa mga pandak ngunit simetrikal na nakahanay na mga olibo. Nagrehistro rin sa akin ang abuhing mga tulay, balkonahe, abandonadong mga traktora, *waterwheel*, at sasakyan. Matagal na namahay sa aking diwa ang ibang serye ng mga *postcard* mula sa aking bayan: ang nayon na may mga malalawak na bukirin, ang mga kúbong may pader na sawali, ang panaka-nakang pagsulpot ng mabikas na kalabaw, ang tinis ng tawa ng mga batang tumatalon pa sa

mga sapa. Ang nayon ay binihisan na, wika nga ni Brigido Batungbakal. Nalatagan na ng mga kalsada, nagkaroon na ng mga *mall*, tumubo na ang mga barong-barong, nagka-*halitosis* na ang mga sapa't ilog. Doon sa Italya, sa kapisasong teritoryo na nakasalamuha ko, wala akong katiyakan kung ang natutunghayan kong mga tanawin ay tatatak rin sa akin kagaya ng mga tanawing nasasagap ko sa bayang sinilangan. Ang alam ko lang, noong mga sandaling nakaupo na ako sa tren na tumulak mula Venizia patungong Milan, na namamangha na ako.

Namamangha sa arkitektura ng mga bahay na tila mas pino ang mga disenyo, balanse ang itsura maging sa kalumaan, namamangha sa kulay ng langit na parang kahel na lamog, at sa pinong-pinong pagpatak ng ulan na nagpapaalala ng lamig ng temperatura ng spring. Tila ako lang ang nakapapansin kung gaano iyon kaespesyal. Nangingiti ang katapat kong lalaki, at nang makapag-usap kami'y sasabihin niyang masaya siya na nagagandahan ako sa aking nakikita ngunit papayuhan niya ako. Maraming salamat sa payo mo, *signor*. Pero sa mga sandaling iyon, hibang pa ako sa pagnamnam ng kagandahan ng mga tanawin. Inakala kong ang mga tanawing iyon ay balidasyon ng biyaya. At dahil dito, naging kulay rosas ang aking pagtingin.



“We seem to have no other way of describing “lived time” save in the form of a narrative.” – Jerome Bruner.

“The sea does not care,” announced the lead sentence from a text about the seemingly endless wave of migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean, only to be drowned, or, if they do survive, turned away at Europe’s ports. During my stay in Genoa, I could already see the evidence of these waves. The migrants are mostly from the African continent: Sudanese, Eritreans, Senegalese, Nigerians; while some are from the Middle East: Syrians, Moroccans. Hundreds have drowned in boats that are overflowing, or have capsized. The Italian navy has rescued many of these migrants. They are housed, fed, but they cannot work. Even if they do find ways to earn a living, it could only be transitory and cheap. The onslaught of migrants has been a pressing issue that Italy and most of Europe is confronting on a daily basis. But in recent months, the thorny issue of accommodating the migrants that come in droves from the wartorn areas of Syria, Tunisia, Nigeria, Eritrea, among others has achieved terrifying proportions.

An American blogger has described Genoa as a place that is hostile to running. “Why else run against this stubborn cement? There is no other place in Genoa to run

through. The rest of the city is slanted and hilly. The crushed bricks trap the foot, contort the knee, and injure the ankle. The pathway along the sea is the only solution” (Wozny 3). And so these migrants have turned to the sea. You can see them selling their fake designer handbags and eyewear; some are even energetic enough to break dance, in a sad imitation of Afro-American rappers cruising the streets of Harlem. Some of them have decided to stop running altogether, and have assumed the identity of shadows, lurking in sidewalks and piazzas, selling umbrellas and useless car decors. There’s a line from a song entitled “*Via del Campo*” (Fabrizio D’Andre), culled from the name of a street that has a “reputation.” It sums the way of survival for some of these young migrant adults, male or female: *ama a ridi se amor risponde / piangi forte se non ti sente / dai diamanti non nasce niente / dal letame nascono i flor* / (laugh and love if love does not answer / cry aloud if it does not hear you / nothing grows out of precious diamonds / out of dung, the flowers do grow). These lives are sucked in prostitution and the drug trade. Various body types and ages prowl through the *la cattiva strada* (the bad street) of many cities in Europe. This is the ongoing narrative of migrants that I have seen.

Ulliano Lucas is a renowned photojournalist whose work was exhibited at Palazzo Ducale at the time of my visit. His photos encapsulate the plight of migrants, but the time frame of the photographs are not even—some were taken in the 1970s, some were taken after the Second World War, while others were taken in the 1980s and 1990s. The skin color of these migrants vary: some of them look Chinese, others are definitely from the Arab states, and a smattering of these photos featured blacks. One photo has captured the squalor of the Southern Italians, a father’s naked loins exposed, while a black, hairy looking pig awaits his company in a makeshift bed. Still another has captured the frenetic quality of squishing one’s luggage in an already cramped train carriage, somehow channelling the horrors of the Holocaust, but not quite. Another shot has a shirtless young man looking out the bus window, the reflection of a white man in a smart three piece suit superimposed on his torso. “*E già, poi noi via di nuovo per il quartiere, a cercare altre tranches de vie, e lei li, con quei figli con le sue angosce, forse piu forti di prima perche ha dovuto parlare e facile risalta e li sulla gellatina della pelicola.*” Fishing out some familiar words from a text that it took a while to comprehend, I can understand why Signor Lucas equated the experience of viewing these pictures similar to the gelatinous nature of a film reel, as to how experience, like blood drawn quick, takes a while to coagulate, and perhaps, even heal, as a wound. Migrants do settle in quarters, sometimes in the outskirts, sometimes in the urban pockets, mostly living in squalor.

Lucas's photographs echo a familiar theme from home. The migrants that came to our country were mixed, and in waves: some were Chinese, a race that is replete with collected narratives of displacement, discrimination, kidnappings, and massacres. Once upon a time they were relegated to only one part of the city of Manila: the *parian* of Binondo. They thrived and survived these efforts to quell their number, perhaps because of their distinct business ethics, one Chinese helps the other, and so on. Today, the Chinese population in the Philippines is no longer the alienated minority. Many of them have become powerful taipans, proprietors of shopping malls, golf parks, amusement centers, real estate, shipping, airlines. To date, most Filipino-Chinese or Tsinoyos have integrated themselves well into the fabric of society, and a number of them are wielding their power in politics and civil society. Another familiar theme of migrants in my country concerns local migrations: during the Spanish colonial era, the *indios* moved from one pueblo to the other, mostly to escape conscription in forced labor camps, the *polos y servicios*, hunger and famine, and some exoduses were instigated by political exile. In contemporary times, especially with the onslaught of transforming farmlands and ancestral lands into prime real estate or roads, plus the unforeseen effects of natural disasters, the poorer inhabitants from the regions have to settle in the city where economic growth is foreseen. If Philippine literature is a forest, it would be dense with the flora of the local migration narratives, such as those penned by Edgardo M. Reyes like *Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag*; or the fiction of Ricardo Lee, Fanny Garcia, Rogelio Sikat; and the haunting songs by the group Patatag, or Joey Ayala.



Figure 3. Man in Crucifix. Photo by Uliano Lucas.

April 23, 2012

Here in Genoa, I've discovered a Filipino quarter located in Via Lomellini. One Sunday morning as I was taking a stroll, I recognized a fellow Filipina. Her name is Amy, and she comes from Isabela, the biggest province in the Cagayan Valley, a region from Northern Philippines. Amy's face was a mirage. Prior to our meeting, my homesickness was almost unbearable, symptomatic of the immobility experienced by the traveller without any money. Amy trusted me at once, and told me there is a congregation of Filipinos meeting at the corner, on the second floor of the building. True enough, they were there: *manongs* and *manangs*, *kuyas* and *ates*, most of them domestic workers, some are employed in odd jobs as delivery boys, waiters, nannies. All of them may be garbed for spring, but their skin is definitely brown, their accents are definitely Filipino, and I felt that I have somehow, reached home. It was their place of worship, the Jesus Is Lord movement. Their religion is a countersign, albeit a twin of, the dominant Roman Catholic tradition. Here there are no icons of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nor of Jesus Christ. All they have is their faith, their songs, their unwavering belief in their redemption. Like the Biblical story of the miraculous multiplication of loaves, wine, and fish to feed the crowd, these Filipinos shared their simple feast of familiar home dishes with a stranger like me: *sinigang*, *bulalo*, chop suey. They told me that any nationality is welcome in that hall, any race, any color, any occupation. Truly a utopian space in this city. Now that I've seen the pictures taken by Ulliano Lucas, I can see a common ground: Lucas's art may have been taken in Italy's myriad streets, but it echoes similar images from my Philippine soil. Working class males tired from work walk universally: shoulders haunched, eyes on the walk, burden on the back, those tired looking soles/souls. Even the women who wash their clothes have a similar expression as they hang their garments out in the sun.



Figure 4. Family of three, with laundry. Photo by Ulliano Lucas.

“Magkano?” tuwiran kong tanong. Hindi gaanong magugol na paris ng panindang pinanonood mo, tuwiran ding sagot niya. Noo’y nagmamalas ako sa mahuhusay na kwakong galing sa Londres na nakatanghal sa eskaparate. Hindi ko man itinanong ay natitiyak kong nagugutom ang aking bagong kakilala, kaya’t dinala ko siya sa isang restoran at pinahingi ng kanyang ibig. Uminom siya ng dalawang baso ng serbesa, kumain ng para sa dalawang katao, at pagkaraa’y nasisiyahang sinabi sa akin: Nakahanda ako sa ipag-uutos mo at ikinawit ang kamay niya sa isa kong bisig. Malamig ang simoy at nag-aanyaya ang gabi, pero hindi ko siya dinala sa aking otel. Sa halip ay tumawag ako ng taksi at inihatid siya sa kanyang tinitirahan. Wala siyang kasama sa isang silong na tila lungga kundi dalawang batang paslit na kapwa natutulog nang mahimbing. Ya’y mga anak ko, anya. Inulila ng kanilang ama na namatay sa digma. Ako’y balo ng gera.” (Amado V. Hernandez 214-215)

Sa isang masikip at maliit na *panatteria*, katabi kong nagmamasid sa nakahatag na *foccacia’t pizza* ang isang lalaking itim, may trenta anyos, at kung pakikinggan ko nang mabuti ang hininga’y alam kong tulad ko rin na nanginginig na sa gutom. Umuulan noon, at kahit malayo ang itsura ng arkitektura sa pinanggalingan kong lungsod, naging kamukha ng Diliman ang Via Lomellini. “*Would you like some of that?*” sabi ko, at tumikwas ang ulo niya sa aking direksiyon, halatang nagulat sa aking alok. Nagdagsaan sila sa mga kalsada. Hindi sila nagsasalita, maliban kung sila-sila lamang. Sari-saring lungga ang kanilang pinanggagalingan. Sila-sila ang nakaaalam kung alin ang Senegalese sa Nigerian, alin ang Kenyan sa Somali. Hindi nagsasama o nakikipagkaibigan nang basta ang isang itim sa iba pang itim na hindi nila kababayan. Sila-sila ang magkakasabay na sumasakay ng bus, ng tren. Animo labada na hindi puwedeng isama ang de-kolor sa puti sa banlaw at sabon. May mga pisikal daw na palatandaan sa katawan ang mga magkababayan, wika ng binatang itim. Nigerian si Owamagbe, naging *refugee* sa Italya nang magpasyang umalis sa tinubuang bayan dahil anya, kay hirap nang mabuhay roon. Hindi naman ganoon kahirap ang buhay nila noong buháy pa ang kaniyang ama, na nadamay sa away politika. Natosta ang ama sa pinaliyab na sasakyan, kasama ng iba pa niyang mga kapartido. Di nagtagal, sinalakay ang tahanan nina Owamagbe ng mga armado. Pagnanakaw ang intensiyon—wala nang makain. Ipinakita niya ang isang malaking peklat sa kaniyang kaliwang braso—mahaba at mapintog iyon, bakás ng bagsik ng naging pakikihamok niya na kamuntik niyang ikamatay. Mag-iisang taon na raw siya sa Genoa. Nakahimpil sila sa *tenement*. Libre lahat, *pasta* nga lang ang kinakain nila araw-araw. May *allowance* silang 80 euro sa bawat buwan. Tinuturuan sila ng wikang Italyano para makatulong sa kanilang integrasyon. Hindi sila maaring magtrabaho hanggang hindi nila alam ang wika, at hanggang hindi naisasaproseso ang kanilang papeles.



Figure 5. Owamagbe, standing near Columbus Monument. Photo by Luna Sicat Cleto.

In Graziella Paratti's article, "The legal side of culture: notes on immigration, laws and literature in contemporary Italy," she states that the initial autobiographies of immigrants (from the Francophone areas of Morocco, Tunisia, and Senegal) were written in Italian, and not in their native languages. These authors also collaborated with an Italian counterpart, who often served as coauthor or editor of the text. It is interesting to note the absence of Asian voices in these autobiographies. The creation of the Martelli law is the intellectual progenitor of these narratives, and it is interesting how literary texts and legal texts are birthed alongside each other, legitimating and perhaps in a discourse with the other "twin." It is also noteworthy that the same law, although it attempts to deal with the problem of illegal immigrants also asserts a contradiction: the stranieri as an agent can declare his or her existence as a passive entity that is 'allowed' to remain, but he is "locked into a position of passivity" (Paratti 2).

Armando Gnisi contends that these migrant texts offer an “*immagini cruciali (dell’Italia) anche da un punto di vista diciamo ‘teorico’, perche ci sono comunicate (da) stranieri che non sono turisti ...*” (401), or a fresh look at some imaginative corners that may have been overlooked, not only in the immigrant experience, but in the imagination of Italy and Italians as well. Paratti notes how her own country and fellow Italians have likewise been subject to othering and stereotypes, all strongly informed by “the large corpus of travel literature written by practitioners of the Grand Tour and, in particular, by the picturesque, an aesthetic ideal that flourished in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century” (Ibid.). The Grand Tour is the traditional journey through Europe undertaken by wealthy European young men since the late 1600s. It is “an educational rite of passage aimed at introducing the young traveller to the cultural legacy of classical antiquity and the Renaissance. Italy was a crucial leg of the journey and soon became the favorite country for Grand Tourists, who have provided a plethora of travel accounts of their Italian experiences” (Marchetti 402). These narratives are of a “great theoretical significance” because their depth of field is entirely different from the accounts provided by travellers like Henry James and Goethe.

The “Grand Tour” is evident even in the major works of Filipino authors like Jose Rizal, Amado V. Hernandez, Ninotchka Rosca, and even Miguel Syjuco. This narrative trope usually announces itself in the picturesque mode that is not only “cosmopolitan in character, but incredibly lasting over time.” It is, therefore, a powerful and dominant aesthetic reference. However the immigrant narratives also serve as dialogical points that undermine its power and dominance.

Caroline Hau notes in Hernandez’s novel *Mga Ibong Mandaragit* that “Mando could have merely gone abroad to sell Simoun’s jewels and returned immediately to the Philippines. Instead, Hernandez breaks off his narration of the events in the Philippines in the middle of the novel to provide an extended description of Mando’s itinerary, complete with museum trips, sight-seeing excursions, sojourns at the Ritz hotel, a fleeting dalliance with Dolly Montero, the daughter of his employer. Mando’s long trip abroad rounds off his self development as *l’uomo universale*—in keeping with Dr. Sabio’s idea of the intellectual who is also a man of action—through his exposure to other nations, peoples, and conditions, and through his rational study of other cultures and countries. He gains a comparative perspective that allows him to chart his progress and determine the problems of his own country” (Hau 23).

If and when the Filipino immigrant in Italy will write his or her autobiography as a human being in this country, I wonder what legal texts would he or she encounter,

if he or she will remain in that same position, attempting to author one's life, attempting one's mobility? Perhaps, as I am well aware of the existence of some Filipinos who travel all over Europe, and not just Italy, using fake identities, tampering with documents, selling identities like bodies for lost souls, gambling away their future, sometimes forced to sell their house, their land, everything, just to have a chance, another incarnation, in a "kinder" place. And then they end up as domestic workers, waiters, laborers, nannies, even if they have graduated from college, or are overqualified for these odd jobs that spell underemployment. They lap it all up, because the euro is a healthier currency than the peso.

As a city, Genoa has its own share of divided memories. In 2001, the city was a site of G8 protests. These protests have spawned a series of short films that documented the violence that erupted on the streets of Genoa between July 20 and 21 of that year. Carlo Giuliani was a name that echoed that violence, as a casualty of a spectacle that bore "all the key elements of a Hollywood blockbuster: blood, smoke, fire, death" (Niwott 68). Symptomatically divisive, the documentaries that narrated the violence of these G8 protests exhibited divergent, even contradictory texts. Within the actual community of protesters, the filmic renditions portrayed such violence as state-condoned, either through direct involvement or failure to prosecute or to investigate. This was in stark contrast with the documentaries made for an international audience. Seen from outside, the G8 violence was framed within the context of globalization, inside, the violence is seen as cyclical, perennial (Niwott 71).

Although these documentaries shared the same space and the same time, these memories of the 2001 G8 are "often incompatible, but survive in parallel." This is not surprising, actually. Italian history, just like Philippine history, has been marked by divided memories ever since the nation took shape in the nineteenth century (70). This inability to create a consensus about the past is reflected in forms of public memory. Perhaps we can surmise that this inability to remember only one memory can be seen in literary texts as well. There are crevices and complexities to be found in collective memories and experiences, just as there are in individual ones.



Binigyan ako ng pakpak para makarating sa mga lugar na pinapangarap lamang na puntahan ng iba. Maglalakbay ako hindi para kumayod ng pera, kundi upang maranasan ang lawak ng mundo. Ako, na mula sa bayang tinaguriang *developing country*, o sa mga mas marahas na bersiyon, ikaw, na kayumangging dayo, na mula sa *third world*. Ang kulay ng aking balát, na kawangis marahil ng pasô, ang nagtulak sa aking pagkatiwalaan ang mga katulad ko rin na kayumanggi, manilaw-nilaw, o itim. Ngunit doon pala ako nagkakamali. Sa pagbaba ko ng estasyon ng Milan, may lalaking sumalubong. May bitbit na *cart*. Para raw sa aking bagahe. Maaari ko raw iarkila. Panay ang kuwento, katono ng mga Bumbay na ipinaninindak sa mga paslit para matulog sa tanghaling tapat. Nakapakete na ang kaniyang mga sagot para sa isang bagong saltang tulad ko. *Caffe? Restroom? Telephone? Hostel?* Nag-i-Ingles siya. Nasagap niya sa radar na tila mas komportable ako sa wikang iyon. Mababait daw siya sa mga katulad ko. Kahit hindi ko sinabi kung saan ako nanggaling, nalaman niyang ako ay Filipina. Bahala na raw akong magbayad. Whether it's ten, twenty, or thirty euros, it's up to you. Ang halaga'y katumbas ng pag-aarkila ko ng cart, ng isang *espresso*, at ang pagkukuwento niya ng buhay. Tubong Bangladesh siya, ikapitong taon na sa Italya. May-asawa, buntis ang kabiyak, at may panganay na sanggol. Ito ang trabahong ikinabubuhay ng kaniyang pamilya. Diyan lang siya nakatira sa tabi-tabi. (Sa tren, may nadaanan kaming mga abandonadong gusali na puno ng *graffiti* at may mga nakahilata roon na tila natutulog.) Ibinigay ko sa kaniya ang 30 euro nang wala nang isipan. Sa Pilipinas, ugali kong maglaan ng pasobrang bayad, halimbawa, sa mga magalang na drayber ng taxi bilang pabuya sa ingat sa paghahatid sa akin. Kapag alam kong hirap magpa-xerox ng babasahin ang mga estudyante, nagkukusa akong magpamudmod ng kopya. Tatal, ikamamatay ko ba ang pamimigay? Matikas akong nagtanong sa mga pasahero. Isang babaeng Croatian ang nagsabing alam niya ang tinutukoy kong hostel, at dahil isa rin siyang Erasmus scholar sa parehas na unibersidad na magiging destinasyon ko, nagkusa siyang ihatid ako sa aking tutuluyan. Nakarating ako nang maluwalhati sa Ostello Genoa, na halos kanugnog na ng bundok, at higit na malamig dahil sa elebasyon. Mula roon, nagkikislapan ang mga ilaw ng lungsod na parang may natutunghayan akong banig na selestiyal. Hindi naman malayo ang *pictures* ng hostel sa totoo. Maayos ang mga tulugan, ang banyo, malinis ang kainan, at makakasama mo ang apat o limang tao na kapuwa mga babae. (Noong huli ko lang na nalaman na sa mga hostel rin na kagaya nito bini-*billet* o linalagak ang mga *immigrant* na mula sa Afrika, Asya, o Mediteranean.) Mabilis akong nakipagkaibigan sa mga turista ring katulad ko. Lima sa amin ang dayo: may *radiologist* na taga-Argentina, may *engineering graduate* na taga-Canada, may *incoming sophomore* na taga-Portugal, may *NGO worker* na mula sa Switzerland, at ang isa, ang mula sa Thailand, ang kasama ko sa *staff exchange* sa *scholarship*. Iisa ang Italyana sa silid, ang pinakatahimik, na mula sa Napoli. Guro siya sa elementarya, nagbabakasyon siya sa Genoa habang naghahanda sa papasok na semestre.

Magiliw ang kemistri ng mga magkakasama sa silid. Ang Canadian, halimbawa, ay nangumpisal na ito na ang “huling biyahe” niya bilang dalaga, dahil pinag-iisipan pa niya nang mabuti kung pakakasalan na rin niya ang nobyo na naghihintay. Bihasa na siyang manlalakbay. Bakás ito sa kung paano siya manamit—ang *jacket* niyang *olive drab*, ang bota niyang pang-*hiking*. Episyente ang pagkakaayos ng *knapsack* niyang bibilhin lamang ng mga patron ng *outdoors*. Makintab at mamula-mula ang kutis niya, makislap ang buhok niyang kakulay ng bituka ng *cassette tape*, at masigla siya kung kumilos. Lagi siyang nakangiti, lagi siyang may anekdota, at kung may pagkain o inumin siya, lagi niya itong inaalok para sa lahat. Dahil sa kaniya, naging mas bukás rin ang kilos ng iba pang nasa silid. Ang tila mahiyaing Argentinian ay malakas palang tumungga ng alak, at dahil sa mas bihasa siya sa Espanyol kaysa sa Italyano, nagkasundo sila kaagad ng Portuges. Nauunawaan ko ang kanilang palitang biro sa Espanyol, tila awtomatikong lumapag sa alaala ang mga leksiyon sa wikang iyon na inakala kong nakalimutan ko na. Ang Swiss naman ay kasinggiliw ng Canadian, at nakagaan ko ng loob dahil sabik rin siya sa kausap sa wikang Ingles, at napuri niya ang abilidad ko dito. Kung saan-saan na rin siya nakapaglakbay sa Asya, kung kaya’t madali kaming nagkaunawaan sa pag-uusap tungkol sa epekto ng tiwaling administrasyon at ang kanser ng lipunang taglay ng mga bansang nakaranas ng kolonyalismo.

Dalawang araw lang kaming nahimpil sa hostel na iyon. Kasama ang bago kong kaibigang Thai, si R., naidaos rin kaagad ang paghahanap ng matutuluyang *flat*. Pinuntahan namin ang isang paupahang silid na malapit sa Piazza Brignole, na estasyon ng tren at bus. Maliit ang espasyo, na kahit kompleto naman sa gamit ay tila napakamahal sa halagang 400 euro. Nagsabi kaming pag-iisipan muna namin. Umilap ang aming mga mata na kanina’y deretso kung tumingin sa kausap. Nang makalayo na ang Italianang kausap namin na sakay ng kaniyang Vespa, nagkatinginan kami ni R. “*It will be crazy if we agree to that. It is too expensive*,” wika niya. Nagkatawanan kami sa singkronisidad ng aming naiisip.

Malikli kung kumilos si R., hindi ito ang una niyang pagdalaw sa Genoa. Parang biyaheng Cubao lang ang Europa sa kaniya. Hindi kagaya ko na bagong salta, si R. ay nakarating na sa London, sa Paris, sa Alemanya. Malimit siyang ipadala sa *abroad* dahil itinuturing siyang eksperto sa matematika at *computer science*. Lantad ang pagiging lista niya sa pagtanda ng lugar at nabegasyon. Naalala niyang kumuha ng mapa mula sa hostel, pati ng mga *bus schedule*. Natutuhan kong memoryahin ang mga numero ng bus, ang pagtanda sa mga *stop*. Dahil sa kaniya, mabilis naming natunton ang unibersidad na nag-isponsor sa aming paglalakbay doon. Tila naaliw rin ang staff sa aming maagap na pagdating. Tila nakakasanayan ko na ang pagsas-

wipe ng *biglietto* sa may likuran ng drayber. Ang masusing pakikinig sa rekording ng bus na nagsasabi kung nasaan ka na—*prossima fermata*. Ang pagdidisiplina sa sarili na huwag makipaggitgitan, sundan kung saan sila umaakyat papasók, at bumaba sa eksaktong pinto kung saan dapat bumaba. Maiingay ang mga kabataang magkakasabay na namamasyal, hayag kung magpakita ng lambingan o karinyo brutal. Madadaldal ang matatandang tila matagal nang di nagkikita yun pala’y magkalapitbahay lang. Nangingiti ako sa sarili sa tuwing nauulinigan ko ang kanilang napagkukuwentuhan. Baradong lababo. Perwisyong kabag. Kalasingan. Utang ng kung sino. Bagaman hindi ako nakakasali, o nakikisali. Wala akong kumpiyansang makipagratratan ng Italyano dahil *delayed broadcast* ang pagkakaunawa ko. May sumakay na matandang lalaki na nakapagpaalala sa akin ng biyenan kong pumanaw na, na isang beterano ng digmaan. Nagkusa akong tumayo para makaupo siya. Aba’y sa halip na matuwa sa aking ginawa ay tinitigan pa ako ng masama, sabay sulyap sa iba pang katabi niyang matatanda. Bandang huli, nalaman ko, at paulit-ulit kong masasaksihan, na sinisikap ng matatanda sa Genoa na ipakitang kaya pa nila ang kanilang katawan. Ang pag-aalok ng pansamantalang ginhawa sa pag-upo ay binabása nila bilang pang-iinsulto sa kanilang dignidad.

Hudyat ba ang kasungitang iyon ng matanda para sa mga darating pang mga tagpo na tila mali ang tekstong aking nababasa, tila baligtad ang mga letra, tila nakatuwad ang dapat na nakatindig, tila may sumisigaw sa likod ng mga pag-ayon, at hindi pala palatandaan ng pagtanggap ang mga ngiti kundi ng pang-uuyam? Senyal kaya ng masisirang pagkakaibigan ang pagkakabutas ng karton ng gatas na naiwan ko sa mesa at sa pag-uwi ko’y matutuklasan kong naglalawa na sa sahig?

Binubuo ang Genoa ng mga malalawak na kalsadang *cobblestoned* na tinatawag na *carugga*, at sinasaputan ng maliliit na eskinitang mala-laberinto. Malapit mismo sa unibersidad ang nakuha naming flat, sa Via Sant’Agnese. Ito’y matayog, makakapal ang pader, may mga bintanang malalaki na may pilik-matang berde. Karaniwan doon ang *trompe’oleil*, ang sadyang pagpinta ng bintana, para magmukhang may totoong bintana, o ang inaakala mong *bas relief* ay pintado lang na adorno. May lungting gate na de-susi, at may kaniya-kaniyang *buzzer* ang bawat palapag.

Ngayong inaalala ko ang silid—ang disenyo ng sahig ng *tiles* na tila Byzantine, ang tekstura ng pinto nitong alam mong siglo na ang karanasan, tila pinipihit kong muli ang seradura ng pintuang iyon, sabay na bumubuka ang kamalayan sa pagbuka rin ng mga mata sa kahoy na iyon. Pagpasok mo sa loob, may *anteroom* na may salamin. *Tastefully furnished* ang interyor. May *lamp* na mapangahas ang pagkakurba, may mesang bilog, isang tumba-tumba. Binati kami ng malawak na espasyo, at dalawang

dambuhalang aparador. Taglay ng bahay na iyon ang mataas na kisame ng mga sinaunang bulwagan. Nag-aantanda ang bawat muwebles ng sariling personalidad, ng sariling kasaysayan. Ilang *batch* na rin ng mga bumibisitang propesor ang humimpil dito. Hayun at nag-iwan na rin sila ng ilang kagamitan mula sa libro, modyul ng wika, *ashtray*, plantsa, tuwalya, kawali, siyansi. Tila nasiyahan rin si R. sa flat. Gusto niya ang presyo, gusto niya ang lapit. Katabi ng apartamento ang Mescite, *bar* na dinarayo para sa alak na hango pa sa mga lumang bariles. Tuwing gabi, buháy na buháy iyon. Mabuti, sabi ko, para may makausap rin kaming mga *local*. “*Oh, and it’s so near Carre Four. And there’s a fruit stand. Look!*”

Ang itinurong bar ay hindi lang pala kumpulan ng mga kabataan, tagpuan rin ito ng mga maiingay na pagdedebatang naghalo na ang pag-iirrog at libog, ng mga maiinit na usap-usapan sa ekonomiya at politika. Mapapansin ko na lang, sa tuwing mapapadaan ako sa tapat noon, mahahawi ang kulumpon ng mga tao na para bang Red Sea. Nakatitig sila sa akin, sa naglalakad na straniera, o dayo. Bahagyang magiging elektrikal ang hangin sa aking pakiwari. Namamawis ang aking palad, humihigpit ang hawak ko sa aking *handbag*, lumiliksi ang aking paglalakad. Matatalim ang titig, pero bumibitiw rin, humuhupa makaraan ng ilang segundo, at magpapatuloy sila sa mga naudlot nilang pag-iirrog at libog, sa mga usapan ng humihinang euro at kabulastugan ni Berlusconi.

“L’informazione non puo essere neutral. Dev’essere di parte. Deve essere la tua parte personale in un discorso a cui devono rispondere gli altri. Se vogliono.” – notes on the exhibition of Ulliano Lucas.

“Ako’y nasa Roma! Ang lahat ng niyayapakan ko’y pawang abo ng mga bayani; dito’y nalalanghap ko ang hangin ding nalanghap ng mga bayaning Romano; pinagpupugayan ko nang buong pitagan ang bawat estatwa at tila baga ako – abang naninirahan sa isang pulong maliit – ay nasa isang simbahan.” Jose Rizal, Roma, ika-27 ng Hunyo 1887



May 1, 2012. Piazza Ferrari. Enjoying my cup of cappuccino, looking out at the crowd. Suddenly, I could hear the familiar sound of people marching. *La Comunista*, the banners said. Here, in this part of the world, déjà vu flits back and forth, back and forth, like a seasonal moth. Back home, probably six or seven hours later, people will march to Mendiola, a familiar square known as a space for protest. Perhaps there will be the usual round of speeches from the various sectors: the farmers and

the fisher-folk, the women and the workers, the youth, the desaparecidos, civil society. The usual demands for higher wages, giving back the land to the poor (a nail on the cross of the current president who happens to be the scion of a rich hacendero family), a protest against the rape of nature by the capitalists, a protest against the shooting of informal settlers who refuse to leave prime land, a protest against rising oil prices and the greed of oil cartels, down with the imperialists, etc., etc. It will probably be a protest rally that is similar to a picnic: crowds do not just flourish on eloquence of political rage alone, they'll probably consume food too, and you'll see the citrus colored drinks and coconut thirst quenchers, squid balls and fish balls, frying in the midst of the summer heat. I haven't taken part in those rallies, not for a long time since my collegiate years when I felt to the fore the weight of my responsibility as an *iskolar ng bayan*/scholar of the nation/*studente delle nacion*. Watching the march in Piazza Ferrari, I took some pictures of that crowd, especially as it passed by the statue of Garibaldi, a central figure of the Risorgimento. In my bones I knew, history was ticking. It is not written yet, as the eye who can witness and the hand that can write it are never acting simultaneously, somehow, the eye shall be always be ahead of the hand.

Met Anne McDormind for lunch. Along Via Settembre XX, past the clothing stores and bookshops, there was a sight that I knew I would remember: one, two, three people, kneeling, in the center of the sidewalk, people in their grubbiest best, with a sign that reads: *Ho fame*. "Bastos ang kahirapan" a familiar line from a poem in Filipino by Benilda Santos, flashed past. "Poverty is rude." It strips the person of all shame, hunger being the primal force to reckon with. I asked Prof. McDormind if these are common, and she said, their numbers are increasing. Sometimes you can't tell the real ones, from the scam artists. "You came here at a tough time." She was telling me that a decade ago, Italy wasn't like this, and her tone assumed the personality of a concerned caregiver, talking about her beloved patient who suddenly fell ill.

She loves Italy. In her flat, she says the sirocco breeze can be sweet, especially before summer. There's a radio in the kitchen, an antique model that her husband bought from a neighbor. Only one channel can be listened to, but she doesn't throw it away, as if it is a memento, as if it is a physical presence left by a loved one. I think identities are similar to antiques or mementoes. We simply cannot throw them away, as they are a part of us. But like their analogues, these identities have been rendered almost useless by time.

Lived time here in Italy is different from home. Before I came here, I've imagined this place—Venice in particular—as a site of mossy and damp walls, a dream like

vision with its romantic trips on the gondola, passing the Bridge of Sighs. In Henry James's *Wings of the Dove*, a wealthy American heiress discovers how superficial some friendships are, how great is the influence and promise of money, both inherited and acquired in marriage, and how hypocritical is the idea of romantic love found in the Grand Tour: the whole idea that a trip to Europe undertaken by the wealthy tourist can introduce him or her to a cultural legacy of classical antiquity and Renaissance. Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* was even bleaker: an old man literally walks into his own death, mesmerized by the charm of a Tadzio that he can't have. And who could ever forget the whole *Godfather* series by Francis Ford Coppola, from Mario Puzo's novel. That film replicates itself in memory, inducing blood-curdling and very vulnerable stereotypes of the Mafia. These books, these films, have all replicated and reverberated in my memory, sometimes, as I walk through the streets of Genoa I wonder if one had imagined it all, made it all up, because from what I can see, a different picture emerges.



Sa mga panahong hiráp akong makatulog, nagbabasa ako o nagtatala sa aking *journal*. Naging kanlungan ko ang mga gawaing iyon lalo na nang tumigil ang mabuting samahan namin ng aking *flatmate*. Namamalayan ko na lang ang pagsapit ng mga madaling-araw, dahil naririnig ko na ang impit na tunog ng *dough machine* sa *panetteria*, na maya-maya'y magiging padabóg nang paghampas ng masang binubuno sa mesa. Lagi ring may dumaraang ambulansiya sa mga oras na iyon, kasabay ng panimulang paggapang ng koryente sa mga kable ng mga bus. Ang pinanggagalingan pala ng koryente para sa Genoa'y nasa isang *nuclear reactor* sa Ventimiglia, na may ilang kilometro rin ang layo. Bahagya akong kinabahan sa senaryo ng lindol. Pero wala naman sa *ring of fire* ang bayang ito, di tulad ng Pilipinas.

Sa paulit-ulit na paggising sa flat na iyon, ang tunog ng motor ay mahahalinhan ng mga katok. May mga yabag ng akyat-baba sa hagdanan, parang may naghahabulan, at pamaya-maya, ang "blag!" ng pintuang mabibigat. Masa pa ba iyon na mula sa arina o masa na ilegal na migrante na humihingi ng saklolo? Hindi ko na alam. Ilang araw na paulit-ulit kong naririnig ang mga katok, tumatapat sa mga panahong ako'y pinagsakluban ng lungkot. Humupa lang iyon nang may iilang araw na lang ang natitira sa aking pananahan sa lugar na iyon.



I found a copy of Elsa Morante’s work in, of all places, a community library in the outskirts of Genoa, the Biblioteca Gallino. Upon reading its first few pages, it immediately grabbed my attention. Morante streamlined history with a capital H, culled from history books and newspapers, and divided the plot into the war years and beyond. In her book, a schoolteacher named Ida Mancuso meets Gunther (surname unknown), a Nazi soldier in Rome. It is a fateful meeting, as Mancuso shall be raped by this Aryan youth in search of the solace of home in an unfamiliar land. The rape is described after an interlude that situates Ida’s subject position as a schoolteacher, as an epileptic that is ashamed of her illness, as a half-Jew who must keep her origins a secret, and as a woman who has never really plumbed her sexuality, much less has she befriended her own body. Gunther’s appearance, although brief, supplies insights on a certain type of masculinity that thrived with the totalitarian notion of Hitler’s war: tough and cruel, yet childlike in its innermost recesses. This interlude will birth one of the most charming characters I have ever read in fiction: Useppe.

The reality of war—how the Jews were persecuted, the degradation of life in the air raid shelters among Rome’s ruins, how the youth of that generation were corrupted by partisan politics and ideologies—these are all heavy themes and topics, but somehow Morante manages to make the telling more lucid, more startling, because it is told mostly from the viewpoint of the beasts and the children, two entities that have no voice, in war or in peace.



Dahil dayo ako’t tila isdang sumisinghap sa wikang hindi lubos na magamit para sa proyekto ng pagsasalin, inaliw ko ang sarili sa pakikinig ng wika ng aking paligid. Minsan, sinubukan kong irekord ang aktuwal na kumbersasyon ng mga Italyanong pasahero sa tren. Nang pinakinggan kong muli ang rekording, para akong nakikinig ng aktibidad ng mga paranormal. Nasasagap ko ang mga piraso ng pag-uusap, na kumbaga sa pangingisda’y nakabibingwit rin ng paisa-isa. Pero hindi ko mawawaan ang kabuuan. At naalala ko, noong mga panahong pinakikinggan ko ang mga tagaroon sa kanilang pananalita, na hindi pala nagsasalita ang lahat. Totoo nga ang tinuran ni Gayatri Spivak.



Figure 6. Two black men crossing the street. Photo by Uliano Lucas.

Ang paglikha ng mundo'y mahalagang abilidad ng kamalayan, sa larangan man ng agham o sa sining. Noong mapadpad ako sa Italya, ilang beses kong pinasalamatan ang abilidad kong ito na lumikha ng mundo. Ito sa tingin ko ang sumagip sa aking katinuan, sa hindi ko pagsuko, lalo na nang dumating ang panahong barya na lang ang laman ng aking pitaka at naalala ko, halimbawa, ang trentang euro na ipinamigay ko sa nagbitbit ng bagahe ko sa Milan central station. Nagkakairingan na kami ng aking flatmate. Habang tumatagal ang pagdating ng aming *stipend*, tila lalong nahihirapan ang staff ng unibersidad na bigyan ng katwiran ang pagkaantala. Naikasa naman raw, isa o dalawang buwan bago pa kami dumating, ang lahat-lahat ng mga dokumento. Dahil may akses si R. sa progreso ng iba pang iskolar at *beneficiary* ng programa na nasa ibang unibersidad sa Europa, nagkaroon pa ng paghahambing ng *timetable* ng *release* ng stipend at pagiging episyente sa *management* ng *funds*. Ilang maiinit na palitan ng email ang namagitan. Sinasabing ang unibersidad na iyon ay naitatag na ng angkan ng Savoia magmula pa noong *14th century*. Ang piraso ng kasaysayan nito'y naidirikit ko na sa pagiging medyibal na rin ng *pacing* ng pamamalakad-malihim at may hiwaga. Ano't naging parang *pilgrimage* sa Agoo ang bawat pagdalaw namin sa Banca Carrige para subukan kung gumagana ang mga *atm*. Laging nauwi sa aparisyon ang pag-asa. Bumabatak ang mga araw ng Abril, dumudungaw na ang Mayo. Nakapasyal na si R. sa Florence at Venice dahil mayroon siyang *mastercard* na ipinambayad sa pamasaha, pagkain, at *lodging*. Kuwento niya, wala siyang kinain

noon kundi ang *spicy pork* at *fried rice* na bång inihanda ng kapiwa niya Thai, at ilang *gelato*. Naglakad lang siya nang naglakad. Ako nama’y namasyal sa mga aklatan, inikot ang mga *biblioteca* ng Genoa sa pag-aasam na makahagilap ng edisyon sa Ingles ng mga nobela ni Elsa Morante. Si Morante’y hindi na basta nobelistang Italyana para sa akin noong mga panahong iyon. Tila siya naging *kindred spirit*. Tila rin siya kababayang nakauunawa. Agaran kong binasa, at ninamnam, ang nobela ni Morante sa Biblioteca Gallina, isang *community library* sa laylayan ng siyudad ng Genoa, malapit sa mga tinaguriang *quarters* ng mga stranieri. Hindi na ako nanananghali noon dahil wala nang pambili, binabusog ang sarili sa pagbabasa ng mga tula ni Eugenio Montale, ng mga parabula ni Erasmus, at ng prosa ni Morante.

Sa *The Grammar of Motives* ni Kenneth Burke, sinabi niyang maaari mong mahimay ang anumang naratibo sa mga sumusunod: ang *Agent*, ang *Action*, ang *Goal*, ang *Setting*, ang *Instrument*, at ang *Trouble*. Ang anumang awtobiograpikong naratibo ay problematiko dahil habang nakaatang sa Agent ang isang uri ng Kapalaran o *Destiny*, ang ako ng naratibo’y dalawa: ako ang tagapagsalaysay pero ako rin ang sentral na tauhan. Marahil, kung ikukuwento man ito ni R. sa kaniyang mga kaibigan sa Thailand habang nililingon niya ang Genoa (ang Setting), masasabi niyang napakakitid ng aking naratibo dahil hindi ko nabanggit, halimbawa, na ilang beses niya akong pinaalalahanan kung paano ang tamang pagkandado ng pinto (para idiin ang kaniyang tiyaga); o kung paano niya ipinahiram ang *cell phone* niya at laptop sa akin para makapag-Skype ako sa aking nag-aalang asawa at nangungulilang anak (para huwag malimutan ang kaniyang malasakit). Ang pamumuna niya sa aking kabagalang maglakad dahil nalilinga sa mga eskultura’t halaman ay isang anyo ng malasakit na baka máhulí kami sa aming *appointment*. Tila nauulinigan ko ang kaniyang naratibo: Hindi kabesado ng aking flatmate ang takbo ng oras sa lupaing iyon...sabay halakhak. Sa huli, mahalagang matandaan na kahit sa awtobiograpikong materyal, laging may omisyon. Sinisikap na balansehin sa anyo ng pag-iisip ng kabilang panig, ngunit nananatiling nakakiling. Hindi na nga dapat pagtakhan ang omisyon. Dapat pa nga itong hanapin. Ito ang lagusan ng kaluluwa ng isang teksto. Ang awtobiograpiya’y hindi lang basta paglikha ng mundo, ito’y nagbibigay ng palatandaan na may málay ang kamalayan, may bait, tungkol sa hindi at/o pagiging singular, o iisa ng bawat buhay.

Maaalala ko ang pagtanga ko sa kusinang iyon sa aming flat sa mga dis-oras ng gabi. May nakasalang na labada sa *washing machine*, at kasabay ng whirr-whirr ng makina’y ang paulit-ulit na tanong—Bakit ko hinayaang mangyari ito sa akin? Nakatitig ako sa mangkok ng kanin at sa tiráng pasta na ilang araw ko na ring pinagtitiyagaang ubusin. Tila inaamag na ang *omelette* kong palpak ang pagkaluto. Walang laman ang ref kundi tatlong kahel, dalawang *yoghurt*, isang *loaf* at dalawang libreng *pouch* ng

strawberry jelly na galing pa sa eroplano. Mabuti't wala akong alagaing hayop maliban sa kalam ng aking sikmura. Nang makakuwentuhan ko ang iba pang mga Filipinong iskolar doon, may kaniya-kaniya silang *horror story* ng stipend delay. 'Yung isa, bumiyahe noong Nobyembre at nakarating sa Genoa sa kasagsagan ng taglamig. Walang báon na sweater 'pagkat pabigat lang sa bagahe. Mabuti't walang snow, 'kako. Nagkataon lang daw na wala noong taóng iyon. May kaunting pera rin siyang pabaon ngunit unit-unti ring nauubos dahil tatlong buwan pa ang inabot bago niya nakuha ang allowance. Enero na noon at patunaw na ang yelo sa kabundukan. Nang mai-withdraw na niya sa bangko ang allowance, nag-grocery daw siya agad sa pinakamalapit na Carre Four at parang Pasko daw ang pakiramdam ng pamimili. 'Yung isa naman, nagpapasalamat na may kamag-anak siyang kumupkop sa kaniya. Tiyahin niya'y isang domestic worker na higit sa 10 taon nang naninirahan sa Genoa, na may negosyo nang *internet cafe at money transfer*. Kung wala ang kaanak na ito, ani ng iskolar na ito, ewan daw niya kung saan siya pupulutin sakaling mahúli siyang hindi na naman nagbayad ng biglietto sa tren, dahil ilang beses na raw niyang nasubukan na hindi magbayad ng pamasaha. Sa tuwing parating na ang inspektor, nakagagawa siya ng paraan para pumuslit sa *restroom*, o magkunwang tulog.

Di hamak na mas bata sa akin ang mga iskolar na nakausap ko. Mga *undergraduate student* lamang sila na napadpad sa bahaging iyon ng Europa dahil sa scholarship ng Erasmus sa larangan ng medisina, *social science*, at *culture studies*. Ako pa ang nangahas na umutang sa kanila ng kahit isang daang euro, para lang may maipantawid. Natatandaan ko pa ang paghihintay ko sa hagdanan sa labas ng katedral, kung saan kami magtatagpo ng kapuwa ko Filipino. Maraming mga kalapati na dumarapo kahit saan, maging sa mga baitang ng hagdanan noon. Matataba ang mga ibon, tila busog sa natutuka nilang mga tina-tinapay at prutas, mukhang maaamo dahil panay ang dapu sa iyong tabi, ngunit mailap pala.

EPILOGUE

The Russian Formalists gave the literary world a legacy to analyze any story with: the *fabula*, the *sjuzet*, and the *forma*. Theme, discourse, and genre. Fabula is timeless, mythic, the anatomy of the story that plumbs into “human jealousy, authority and obedience, thwarted ambition, and those other plights that lay claim to human universality” (Bruner 696). The fabula in my personal narrative of mobility here in Genoa is indeed fraught with these timeless and mythic human conditions. Not used to the cold weather of spring and the exactitude of train and bus routes, I was thrown into the company of a fellow Asian whom I assumed could be my friend in this foreign land, drunk perhaps with the myth of exotic Asian loyalty that runs

universal in those regions. Instead I came face to face with a coldness that was so unfamiliar because I associated it with the stereotype of narcissistic white people who, in my mind, didn't really care much about the condition of others and whose mean spiritedness was masked in beguiling smiles. (How narrow-minded, how racist of me.) The *sjuzet* took the form of patiently waiting for the arrival of the scholarship, so that we may then begin the travel. Plot sequenced by the arrival and departure of days, the thinning of our wallets, the hunger pangs in lunches we decided to skip, the decision of the other to travel alone, the other one left behind, the recognition that one must ask for help, and finally, the arrival of the stipend. The plot could have been more interesting had there been an occasion to work, perhaps, as a bagger, or as a receptionist, or a nanny, or a dogwatcher. It's honest labor, better than asking money from strangers that you have to consider as friends. Better than compromising one's honor and self-image. It is a tale that is so ordinary, one may shrug it off as a normal existence of a scholar with Asian origins who took the challenge to study and learn in Europe. And wasn't it wonderful, in spite of the bittersweet aftertaste, what epiphanies have been formed from its ordinariness, in this mundane existence of a Filipina professor who once went here in Genoa, to study, and to learn. And boy, she did.



Figure 7. Rooftop view in Florence. Photo by Luna Sicat Cleto.

ENDNOTE

- ¹ Any published material from the local government. As an institution the *zemstvo* had its roots during the “great liberal reform” under Imperial Russia, during the reign of Alexander II. As a self-governance unit, it was powerful in the sense that it had the ability to give representation to all classes of society, and it can respond to a variety of issues like taxation, education, healthcare, etc. It was also a hotbed of provincial intelligentsia and played a key role in producing prominent activists.

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