

# Listening to the Overheard: Philippine Literatures *into* English<sup>ii</sup>

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Studies on World Englishes (or Englishes other than British or American) have grown tremendously since the pioneering works of Kachru and Smith in the early 1980s, *The Other Tongue*, for example. The growth has not just been in terms of volume but in shifts of perspective ranging from the “colonial celebratory” to “postcolonial performativity” (Pennycook 59). The latter places English in the “cultural politics of resistance and appropriation,” a perspective dramatically enunciated, for instance, for the literatures in Asia and the Pacific in the book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and*

*Practice of Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) and for Commonwealth literatures, in *De-scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality* (1994). Thus, by 1996, Kachru could declare in Manila that “English is an Asian Language.” But postcolonial literatures have generally referred to new literatures written in English. In the case of the Philippines, these would refer to Philippine literature in English, to what “we wrote *in* English, and freely borrowed and adopted, and then [to what] we wrought *from* English” (Abad 20). In fact, a recent issue on Philippine Englishes in the journal *World Englishes* (Vol. 23, No.1, 2004) and some articles in *Philippine English* (2009) assume this much. Philippine literatures translated *into* English have remained largely unnoticed in the field of world Englishes.

This paper focuses then on Philippine literatures *into* English or translations into English of Philippine vernacular and ethnic literatures. What makes Philippine literatures *into* English distinct is a strong overheard to which the translator and the reader/audience must listen.

The presence of these literatures and their translations cannot be ignored. The Philippines has over 171 living languages (Lewis). Eight of these languages—namely: Bikol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon/Kiniray-a, Ilokano, Kapampangan, Tagalog, Waray, Pangasinense—are considered major in terms of their number of speakers and the literatures they have produced. This is not to mention the other ethnic languages and cultures whose oratures have been quite marked.

The ongoing process of developing Filipino as a national language based not only on Tagalog but also on our other languages has been long and arduous, and since translation and the recycling of these literatures into Filipino is crucial to the process, their translations into English could be disruptive. Lumbera, National Artist for Literature in the Philippines, articulates what should be our priority:

Tapos na ang patatalo kung ano baga ang “panitikan ng Pilipinas” – malinaw nang ito ay binubuo ng mga akdang kinatha o isinulat sa alinman sa mga wika sa Pilipinas – katutubo man o dayuhang ginamit ng mga Pilipino sa paglikha ng kanilang mga tula, kwento, nobela, drama, sanaysay at iba pang likhang pampanitikan. Ang hindi pa natatapos ay ang gawaing pagsasalin. Ang tinutukoy rito ay ang paghuhulog sa mga akda sa iisang wikang komun...<sup>iii</sup>

But translations into English persist. To cite a few examples: Damiana Eugenio’s five-volume compendium on *Philippine Folklore*, Nicanor Tiongson’s five-volume series on *Philippine Theatre: History and Anthology*, published by the University of the Philippines Press, bilingual editions on Philippine literatures that have appeared regularly since the 1980s in *Ani*, the literary journal of the Cultural Center of the Philippines/Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas, some literary publications of the National Commission of Culture and the Arts, publications on Philippine folklore from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, translations of Philippine works in the Literature program of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI), publications from regional centers in Cebu, Iloilo, the Cordilleras, Bikol, Pampanga, Davao and Cagayan de Oro, among others. This is not to mention individual efforts to translate these literatures and publish. Interestingly, even the Partidong Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) or the Communist Party of the Philippines, which has been unequivocal about the need to develop a national language enriched by Filipino and foreign languages as well as the study of Philippine linguistics among the masses, does not discount translations from Filipino into English and other foreign languages. Its guidelines to translation stipulate that the “manifestos and other documents emanating from the Philippines should be translated into English and other foreign languages in order to demonstrate our contribution to the

international revolutionary movement" (cited in Atienza 215-217).

It may be that this drive to contribute to world literature and politics is the rationale for continued translations into English. In the current world-economic order, English is our window to the world. Yet, how much really of Philippine culture is depicted in Philippine literature in/from English? De Ungria, in speaking of the role of publishers in the Philippines in creating new knowledge and a critical culture, laments that "Books published in the regions are generally available only in these places and have a very limited circulation"(1). Our vernacular and ethnic literatures will be lost to the world forever. Interestingly, two Cebuano writers in English, Resil Mojares and Timothy Montes note that the biggest-selling Asian writers are those who write in their own language like the Japanese novelists writing in Nippongo and the Indonesians, such as Mochtar Lobis and Pramoedya Ananta Toer, writing in Bahasa ("In Conversation" 198). It should be noted as well that one of the limits of postcolonial theory on which the field of the new Englishes grounds itself, is its failure to "engage with literatures produced in the indigenous languages" ("Editor's Column" 636).

But how distinct is the language of Philippine literatures *into* English? How have translators shaped it, appropriated it, and staked ownership of it? One approach would be to look at translations in terms of the discrete linguistic levels of lexicon, syntax, and discourse. For instance, in a study of Philippine English lexicon, Bautista points to various methods of forming words: expansions of meaning, e.g. the use of brand names as standing for the whole such as Frigidaire and Xerox; preservation of "items which have been lost or [become] infrequent in other varieties of English such as "wherein" and "by and by"; coinage or the invention of a word or phrase or neologisms such as "masteral," "holdupper," "TNT," and

“DH”; new words such as *trapo*, *promdi*, green jokes; and outright borrowings from other languages such as *Japayuki*, *despedida*, and *siomai* (49-72). Bautista explains that her findings result from frequency studies in a selected corpus from newspapers, broadcasts and conversations of educated Filipinos (although she actually includes samples from Philippine literature in English). On the bases of frequency and acceptability among users, decisions shall be made on their inclusion in a dictionary project on Asian English.

Some methods of translation are similar to these linguistic processes although the translator’s choices are singular in that they do not depend on the criteria of frequency and acceptability but on negotiations between the source and target texts. In the process, translations teeter between conformity and creativity, between fidelity and innovation and the tilt of the balance depends on external factors such as the ideology of the translator, the purpose of the translation, and the intended audience. To illustrate this process, let me cite from Philippine literatures *into* English.

The first work comes from Merlinda Bobis, a poet from Bikol. Bobis has published three works of translation: the bilingual edition of *Kantada ng Babaing Mandirigma: Daragang Magayon/Cantata of the Warrior Woman: Daragang Magayon, An Epic for Performance* (1993, 1997); the bilingual edition of a collection of poems, *Flight of Four Winds/Ang Lipad ay Awit sa Apat na Hangin* (1990); and the trilingual edition of poetry entitled, *Pag-uli, Pag-uwi, Homecoming* (2004). *Kantada/Cantada* is the most known, largely because she has performed it in over 20 productions in the Philippines and abroad, including Australia, France, and China. It would be a fine case study of an inter-semiotic translation, which is the “interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal systems” (Jakobson 145). But the focus here will be her trilingual collection of poetry.

In *Pag-uli*, Bobis returns to what she calls as her “old loves”: poetry and the languages Bikol and Pilipino. The poetry spans a period of 20 years, and, according to her, some of these were originally written in Bikol and others in “just English.” These “contest-romance” each other in this trilingual collection of 19 poems. The poems are arranged in the order of language: Bikol, Pilipino (she does not use “Filipino”), and English. She does not indicate, however, in which language the poem is written and into which language she first translates. In a sense, then, she neither writes nor translates but *transwrites* since the two processes merge.

The collection displays varied themes that concern the woman *transwriter* and the range of her feelings. Her return home triggers poignant memories of home as when she laments in “Homecoming, For Mama Ola” that

the sea clings  
to the roof of my mouth,  
but the tide of my heart  
can not swell

or writes in “I Know” of how her father reminds her that his fingers

fed and sent you to school.  
and we all nod, ‘yes, father, yes,  
then quickly leave  
racing towards our dreams.

One can never return to the same home again. Still, the longing for local culture persists and a sense that they are irreplaceable, or even superior to the language and culture of her “domicile.” Marilyn Monroe pales in comparison with the banana heart:

my petticoated flirt:  
three layers of heartskin unfurled  
in the air, a la Monroe flashing  
not pale legs  
but tiny yellow fingers  
strung into a filigree of topazes. ("Banana Heart")

The poet/translator plays in some poems as in:

to the fluttering of your lids  
an angel is drying her wings?  
to the slow shutting of your lips  
the clouds are kissing?  
to the beating of your breast  
the saints are playing hide-and-seek?  
to the rubbing of your thighs  
god is brushing his teeth?  
(ay, there's that giggle of heaven in the flesh  
mundane, fun, even tender). ("Listen—")

But she turns serious in a number of poems. In the following lines, for instance, she is pointedly ironic:

the blind are showing movies  
in the plaza so the deaf are gathering  
in the plaza  
so the mute can debate  
in the plaza  
the fate  
of one beloved nation. ("Politics")

She cannot quite mask her rage in these lines:

after you bomb my town  
I'll take you fishing  
or kite-flying or both

no, it won't hurt anymore  
as strand by strand, we pluck  
the hairs of all our women  
to weave the needed string –  
oh isn't this a lovely thing?  
now hurl it upwards, mister  
and fish that missing  
arm-kite of my mother  
leg-kite of my father  
head-kite of my sister. ("Covenant")

There is beauty in the pathos of the following lines which describe an Agta<sup>iv</sup>girl:

the moon rounds,  
my breast rounds.  
tomorrow night, I shall scrub myself clean,  
for there is a dance – but as always--  
I am not invited.  
so I shall hold my own dance in this spring,  
invite only those without eyes, the hidden ones,  
those who love the night, the dew, the black  
those who will feel me held tightly,  
dancing with the dark. ("Black Girl of the Spring")

She celebrates her ethnicity in the collection but there are experiences that cannot be captured because of what she terms as the "poverty of English," and so she devises ways to express these in a linguistically heterogeneous English. It is evident in the English version that she coins English words from distinctly Filipino objects and concepts to express feelings, such as "three layers of *heartskin* unfurled in the air" for the skin of the banana heart; and as in "ay, the *limonsito berries* are heady sweet tonight/*crimsoning* the banks." There are traces of the Spanish heritage, as in *Mama Ola* and in *limonsito*. Compound words such as *arm-kite*, *leg-kite*, and *head-kite* are formed to suggest



bodies exploding in the air from bombings. Where there are “untranslatables,” she keeps the native words and leaves these unitalicized, as “ay,” in the line above or, in the line “swapped the apple with the *tambis*” (italics supplied). But there are also syntactic peculiarities: the noun “crimson” is turned into a verb form and the adjective “round” is used as a verb for evocative effects. Images of the pastoral and the cosmopolitan are juxtaposed as the speaker who returns home is reminded that her father’s fingers “fed and sent her to school”; she also notes the banana heart to be

my petticoated flirt:  
three layers of heartskin unfurled  
in the air, a la Monroe flashing  
not pale...

She segues from the ironic to the direct, as in the excerpted lines from “Politics.” An acute sense of word placement and a sense of timing in line breaks heighten the feelings of solitude of the Agta girl and the rage and despair of the witness to the bombing.

It is evident that the linguistic interventions that Bobis introduces into English to cross cultural differences draws from local and vernacular sources. The reader/listener overhears these sources (here, distinguished from the physicality of source text) as s/he reads the translation. It is in reference to this overheard that one understands or appreciates what the translator traverses from source to text.

The concept of the overheard was used by Phyllis Bird in arguing against the principle of “dynamic equivalence” formulated by Eugene Nida in connection with the task of Bible translation. The principle aims at “complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture; it does not insist

that he understand the cultural patterns of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message" (Nida 129-130). Bird, on the other hand, asserts that the Bible translator seeks to make the modern audience "*overhear* [italics supplied] an ancient conversation, rather than to hear itself addressed correctly" (91). She goes further: "I am not certain that the translator is even obliged to make the modern reader *understand* what is overheard (Bird 91). The translation must thus be closely keyed in to the source. Paolo Manalo, a young Filipino poet in English, uses the same term to articulate his poetics. The poem is formed in the "Sabanggaan" (collision/juxtaposition/crossroads) where English is broken but not flawed or distorted. The poet, he says, "gathers the heard that one can look at"; his poem thus is not just the poem on the page but the orality/aurality of the inscriptions. Such orality/aurality he traces to two genres traditionally separate from mainstream Philippine literature in English—Tagalog poetry and comics.

What is the overheard? For Manalo, this is closely associated with rhythms and tones as they are visually laid out on the page (12). There is the creative deployment of punctuations to capture sounds which to the American poet Frank Bidart (whom he cites), is not limited to commas, periods "but line breaks, stanza breaks, capital letters—all the ways that speed and tension and emphasis can be marked" (5). In a poem, the overheard may be a device echoing the poet's individual style. But in translations into English, it could be the distinctive sound of Filipino Englishes as generated by the languages within them and with which they clash or cohere. It is hard to imagine such distinctness if one's ear were not familiar with these sounds, but the difference is recognizable in that general sense that Abad speaks of:

It must be that my ears are attuned to a different way of sounding the language. Actually, that's also my difficulty

when I'm listening to the British or when I'm listening to the Americans. The language sounds different to me and sometimes I cannot follow. But if you listen to Filipinos speaking English, I'm sure it all sounds different to you. ("Standards" 170)

The translator goes about with her/his work with an ear for this "double-voicedness," which Bakhtin noted in the dialogic clashes of language in the novel. Thus, translations into English may sometimes sound "queer or quaint" to writers in/from English.<sup>v</sup>

Philippine folklore has a powerful mix of the overheard to which translators must give ear. But sounds are usually undifferentiated in these translations; the heterogeneity observed in Bobis' translations, not as visible. Too often, folkloric pieces are compressed in summaries or other prose forms which diffuse narrative power and muffle or silence the sounds of poetry. Some translations fill in these problems by giving poetic form to the folkloric works, as in the following excerpts from a translation from Tagalog into English of the corrido *Florante at Laura* (Eugenio 200):

Pag-ibig anaki'y aking nakilala  
di dapat palakihin ang bata sa saya,  
at sa katuwaa'y kapag namihasa,  
kung lumaki'y walang hihinting  
ginhawa.

Sapagka't ang mundo'y bayan ng hinagpis  
Mamamaya'y sukat tibayan ang dibdib,  
Lumagi sa tuwa'y walang pagtitiis,  
Anong ilalaban sa dahas ng sakit?

I learned what love really means:  
a child should not be brought up in pleasure

for if he gets used to happiness,  
when he grows up, he can expect no comfort.

For the world is a vale of sorrows,  
whoever lives in it should steel his heart;  
if one remains in joy without any suffering  
how can he endure violence of grief?

The translator's purpose in this translation into English is to give the reader (mainly students and scholars accessing Philippine literature through English) specimens of the primary texts of extant corridos. A summary and an analysis of the corrido according to their sources and analogues in European literature then follow. At the time the book was published in 1987, Philippine literature was being re-valorized as a result of a convergence of nationalistic forces, thus her work was (and is) both timely and valuable. By translating the corrido, Eugenio retrieved a genre that was popular in the Philippines for over three centuries but would have gone unnoticed today in microfilm collections or specialized libraries.

The corrido, however, has a powerful overheard to which translators must be sensitive. It refers to "verse narratives on chivalric-heroic, religious, and legendary themes" drawn mostly from the medieval metrical romances of France, Britain, Spain, and classical Greece and Rome. It is, in the words of Eugenio, "the segment of Philippine literature most heavily influenced by foreign popular literatures" (ix). The European corridos began as ballads sung by *juglares* to the accompaniment of a guitar, usually in fandango style (Velasquez). They were brought by Spanish soldiers from Mexico through the Acapulco-Manila trade route and were translated from Spanish (possibly the Mexican variety) into Tagalog and the major languages of the Philippines. Filipinos chanted the corrido the way that the epics are, and even in the corrido texts surviving today, anorality is overheard. This comes from certain features such as invocations, apologies, and

direct address “which assume a speaking voice” (Mojares 65-66); also, from other characteristics noted peculiar to oral literatures such as a repetitive structure, redundancy, frequent use of epithets and clichés for characterization, agonistic tone, and participation of both speaker and listener.<sup>vi</sup>

But these multilingual voices tend to be subsumed in academic English. There is a need to break free from such homogeneity by incorporating the multi-cultural voices and aural features of the corrido into the translation. In the corrido’s “after life” (which is what Walter Benjamin uses to refer to translations, and therefore, there can never be just one translation), there is an overheard struggling to be heard.

Thus, the translator of the corrido (as well as other folk poetry from indigenous languages) into English must weigh a number of factors. Since the sound patterns of English differ from those of Filipino languages (*Almario*, *Taludtod*), the translator must have some understanding of these to capture the symmetry and sound in the original. How, for example, can the aphoristic quality in the lines quoted above from *Florante at Laura* be reflected in the rhythm and rhyme of the translation into English? Since the corrido draws from medieval and European sources, the translation into English could utilize some archaisms echoing these. Improvisations can come likewise from devices employed by those who work in the fields of performance studies and ethnomusicology.<sup>vii</sup> Performance may be transposed into print through graphic representations of the kinesthetic features of folklore such as pause, intonation, speed, clustering of lines; ways to represent the non-semantic residue of song texts removed from musical setting may also be devised.

It must not be perceived, however, that the overheard refers only to the aural and the oral. The term is a metonymic expression of the underlying culture(s) of the vernaculars and the folk that must be heard or that must surface in the

translation. It is what Hall refers to as the “silent language” which lies behind the word. In the excerpt above from Bobis, the overheard consists of sounds, images, tone, and point of view from her locale in Bikol. In the reference to Phyllis Bird’s article on Bible translation, the context of the overheard is the unequal relations of gender in the Bible. Bird insists that the sexism of the Bible must be laid bare for this is the sign of its historical and cultural limitations (cited in Simon 131.) The lines translated from *Florante at Laura* echo a secular didacticism usually demonstrated by the salawikain (proverbs) from folk and vernacular poetry and a Christian worldview that recognizes the purifying effects of suffering. In the excerpt below where lines from the short story “Anabella” by Magdalena Jalandoni, are translated from Hiligaynon into English, redundancy merges with the floridness of style characteristic of the corrido and the early sugilanon.<sup>viii</sup>

Bella, the bamboo stairs of this house are to me like pieces of ivory rimmed with gold and silver and studded with precious stones. This sala is Mt. Olympus filled with brightness and bliss for herein dwell a thousand graces which I worship now and will go on to worship until I die. (quoted in Villareal 86)

In the following conversation lifted from my translation into English of Leovigildo Gonzaga’s sugilanon entitled “Pagpanumbalik” (Remembrances), the unidiomatic syntax and expressions convey the overheard:

“You’ve dropped by?” Tiya Biana asked when they stood facing each other in the balcony and Luisa *raised her mother’s hand to her forehead.*

“Inso, that’s enough *already,*” he heard his wife call.

“The rice is *ladled out* now.” (quoted in Villareal 312, italics supplied)

The gesture referred to in the first line is specific to Philippine culture and no English term can convey this as visually as the phrase above. Keeping the word “already” sounds awkward but in Hiligaynon as well as in other vernacular languages, it is common to use particles like *anay*, *gid*, *lang*, *gali*, a linguistic practice that the translator wished to be reflected in the use of “already.” In English, it is customary to use the statement “The table is ready.” However, among the Hiligaynons, as well as for most Filipinos, the staple food is rice, so the term *sukad* or “to ladle out rice” becomes a generic term for any kind of meal prepared on the table.

Interestingly, works considered part of Philippine literature in/from English do have an overheard akin to that of Philippine literatures into English, as found, for instance, in the works of Nick Joaquin, N.V.M Gonzalez, and F. Sionil Jose. Younger writers, however, such as Manalo in *Jolography* and Isabela Banzon are more daring in their linguistic experiments, their works sound translated, and to use Bakhtin’s term—“polyphonic.” In the following excerpt from Banzon’s “Lola Coqueta,” Tagalog and Spanish are overheard in hybrid English:

Long ago, Cecilia,  
the halls of Balanga  
swelled like the moon outside  
my window. Ay, sus,  
the frog in the dry grass  
of my throat kept pleading  
to be freed and it was  
hard not to turn away, just,  
and ignore the hot  
Saturday dust from your  
Lolo’s mahogany  
cane tapping to the croak  
of my sweet kundiman.

In *Feast and Famine*, Rosario Cruz-Lucero's stories in English give a sense of a culture (Hiligaynon) being translated, even if they are written in English; there is a remarkably strong overheard or, to quote from the introduction by Mojares, "the signs of a culture of irrepressible fecundity." In "Doreen's Story," for instance, one of the stories in the collection, such fecundity is seen in the influences of a rich narrative tradition, (thus the references to the *tamawo*, the *binukot*, the *kapre*, the Bukay Ati, *ikog sang pagi*, the *dungan*, etc.). But it is derived likewise from encounters with various cultures with which crossings have to be traversed through translation, direct or implied, formal or informal. Words in Spanish abound—*convento*, *soldados*, *merienda*, *zarzuela*, the name *Anabella*—as well as evidences of the religio-economic culture the Spaniards imposed. There are references to the French, for instance, to Señor de Gironiere, the French adventurer who had come to the Philippines for the skin of its alligators, and French expressions like *coup de vieux* and *faux pas*. Our history tells us that the Dutch invasion was short-lived, but Dutch missionaries come later; in the story, they come in the person of Fr. Van Amstel, the parish priest in Silay, supposed to be the paramour of Don Isidro's wife. No doubt these references demonstrate the range of the author's reading repertoire, but more importantly, they show the multilingual (the translingual in this globalized world, as Garcia would go further) density of the work that must be translated for the target reader in a monolingual medium.

Moreover, some familiar tales in the Filipino mythical matrix in which the central characters are heroes, are re-interpreted and adapted to shift the focus from male to female characters. To quote from "Doreen's Story":

From her [Estrella], Anabella heard the story of the princess whose ring fell into the pond and her many adventures as she pursued the crocodile that had



swallowed it; of the princess' betel nut chew that turned into a *maya* so that it could fly out into the battlefield and revive her badly wounded brother; of the *datu* who had been imprisoned in a cave and rescued by the woman warrior who had transformed herself into a man so that he would not think that she wanted to marry him.

The story of Anabella, transgressor of conventional feminine values, is made to unfold within the frame and the process of translation.

It is this strong overheard in Philippine literatures translated into English that has been called "queer and quaint," or at other times, unidiomatic; in linguistic parlance, it is what may be considered an "interference" or, perhaps a manifestation of "interlanguage."<sup>ix</sup> This is not necessarily a sign of inadequacy in translation. Foucault, writing on Pierre Klossowski's translation of the *Aeneid*, speaks of two types of translation:

In one, something (meaning, aesthetic value) must remain identical, and it is given passage into another language; these translations are good when they go 'from like to same'... And then there are translations that hurl one language against another... taking the original text as a projectile and treating the translating language like a target. Their task is not to lead a meaning back to itself or anywhere else; but to use the translated language to derail the translating language. (cited in Berman 285)

Foucault's metaphors are especially appropriate for translations from Philippine literature into English for the passage is not one "from like to same" or the search for linguistic equivalences. Listening to the overheard is actually a re-working of meaning through a re-working of language. The use of the word "de-rail" suggests that such re-working need not be fluent. In fact, fluency may be an indication of

submission to dominant powers. Venuti demonstrates how in the translations of literature from Britain, America, and Europe, from the seventeenth century to the present, “fluent, domesticating” translation was canonized to promote bourgeois moral and literary values, and a notable resistance through a “foreignizing” method was diffused (98).

The play between what is overheard and what is heard suggests that translation is not a neutral process. The linguistic innovations are significant only when connected to the system of signs obscured by a dominant language and culture. Translation is located within what Bourdieu calls as the “field of power,” determined by various extra-linguistic forces. Thus, language cannot be taken in an a historical sense. Talal Asad writes that:

because the languages of Third World societies... are ‘weaker’ in relation to Western languages (and today, especially to English), they’re more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around. (157)

Communicating the overheard is, to use Venuti’s term, a *foreignizing* strategy needed in the translation of homegrown vernaculars into foreign languages with track records of dominance such as English and Spanish.<sup>x</sup> Of course, the reverse—translating a dominant foreign language into the vernaculars—also subjects the vernacular culture to the world-view of the source language.<sup>xi</sup>

Listening to the overheard does not mean, however, that the translation is fixated in the original. “Doreen’s Story,” for example, re-interprets and re-translates a hero-centered folktale to recuperate gender meanings effaced historically. When Philippine literatures are translated *into* English, repressed meanings are allowed to come forth through a linguistic hybridity drawing from the overheard.

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## Notes

<sup>ii</sup> Some parts of this essay were included in papers I read at the First Philippine Conference-Workshop on Mother-Tongue-based Multilingual Instruction in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines in February 2010, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of Applied Linguistics in Beijing, August 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> This appears uniformly in Bievenido Lumbera's foreword to all publications of the *Panitikan* (Literature ) Series of the consortium of three universities: the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University, and Ateneo de Manila University. Following is my translation: "The debate on what is Philippine Literature is over. Clearly, it consists of any work created or written in any Philippine language—indigenous or foreign—in composing a poem, story, novel, drama, essay and other literary works. What is unfinished is the task of translation which refers to the rendering of these works in a common language...."

<sup>iv</sup> Agta is one of the indigenous tribes in Luzon Philippines, said to be one of the few living by the sea.

<sup>v</sup> To quote from Francisco Sionil Jose, National Artist for Literature in the Philippines: "The problem with translating Filipinisms into English is that in many instances they will sound queer or quaint in English.... Once I said, "his laughter was like the crack of splitting bamboo. How many people would understand that?" ("Standards" 172).

<sup>vi</sup> See Chapter 3 of Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 1982.

<sup>vii</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Fine's *From Performance to Print*, 1974; William K. Powers' "Translating the Untranslatable: The Place of the Vocabule in Lakota Song"; and Dell Hymes' "Use All There is to Use" in Brian Swann's *On the Translation of Native American Cultures*, 1992.

<sup>viii</sup> The sugilanon is the term for a short narrative among the Hiligaynons in Central Philippines. In the context above, it refers to the type of short narrative resembling the Western short story as developed, for instance, by Poe and Maupassant.

<sup>ix</sup> To quote Andrew Gonzalez (31): "The special features of English, [Philippine]... one surmises that they were there from Day One when Filipinos began to learn in the second language with the substrata of the Philippine languages causing 'interference' or giving rise to a

special interlanguage... began to be recognized initially... in the peculiar accent of Filipinos speaking English, largely influenced, of course, by the first language of the speakers....”

× In Chapter IV of my book *Translating the Sugilanon: Re-framing the Sign*, the tension between the idiomatic and the literal in translating the sugilanon from Hiligaynon into English is discussed. To quote from the book: “Literalness installs the self within an adopted vehicle, signals not just the refusal to be overwhelmed by such a vehicle but the determination to shape it” (70).

xi In an analysis of the translation into Tagalog of *Barlaan and Josaphat* (1712), Almario shows how the vocabulary of Tagalog was bent by the translator to embody a Christian and European world-view. However, an earlier study by Rafael (1988) demonstrates how the ladinos, native assistants to Spanish missionaries translating from Spanish to Tagalog, undercut the colonizers’ strategy.

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