WOR(L)DS AT WAR
A Dialogic Analysis of *Jolography* by Paolo Manalo

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The Cultural Jolog in *Jolography*

In 2002, *Jolography* by Paolo Manalo was awarded the first prize in the Palanca Awards for Poetry in the English division. It was a unanimous decision among judges and critics, Ramil Gulle, Ricky de Ungria, and Tony Jocson, who all called it "groundbreaking" (Gulle). The collection generated a similar sentiment among literary circles. Among the members of these literary circles are Juaniyo Arcellana and Lily Rose Tope. Lily Rose Tope, a literary scholar and critic, describes Manalo's poems as shocking and incomprehensible because the English does not make sense. However, if the reader can realize that the language is not exactly English, then one can appreciate Manalo's dexterous play on words and incredible intrusion of street language into poetic construction (Tope 275). Tope has written on how other Filipino writers have attempted to localize English by incorporating un-translated words and code-switching. Yet in so far as Philippine Literatures in English negotiate language, Manalo ups the ante not only by using an English spoken by a social group, i.e., the young but poor Pinoy, but also by using English as if it was another language (274). But in a review of *Jolography*, Juaniyo Arcellana, Filipino poet, essayist, and fictionist, notes that Manalo's detractors criticize the work for its extensive use of endnotes, references, and asides and describe the work as if a term paper was written on the run

since poetry should not rely on these footnotes. However, Arcellana makes the rejoinder that Manalo's detractors forget that the joy of reading literature is the novelty of it. For him, Manalo's subtle subversions of style challenge the reader's preconceived notion of poetry and additionally, promise the delight of discovering new and stray insights at every turn of the page (Arcellana 1-4).

The integrated term *jolog* in the title contributed largely to the growing interest in the work. During the early 2000s, the meaning of the term was highly controversial and frequently debated on the internet; even Manalo's essay, "Being the True, the Good, the Beautiful and Definitive meaning of Jologs", was attacked on public forums for his articulation of the *jolog* person. In the essay, Manalo traced the etymology of the *jolog* from associations with Jolina Magdangal, to Pinoy "hiffhaffers", to a cheap disco, the poor man's food, and finally, as a discriminatory term reserved for the "masses" (Manalo 77-9). The *jolog* was most commonly understood as someone from the lower class to lower middle class, trying to imitate the cultural lifestyle of those from the upper class, yet only ending up with a pastiche taste.

A number of events helped build the political constitution of the *jolog*, and consequently, the popularity of Manalo's work. The prevalent and discriminatory characterization of the term was first contested in 2002, in the coming-of-age film "Jologs", directed by Gilbert Perez. Perez' goal was to erase the negative connotation of the term by bringing out the message of how life can be seen in different ways, depending on the point of view that is taken. However, even as the film went on to be nominated for best screenplay at the Gawad Urian Awards (IMDb- Gawad Urian Awards for 2003), the film only proved to be a futile attempt at controlling the meaning of words since one of the

main actors was booed and pelted with water bottles at the NU107 Rock Awards when he referred to himself and the audience both as *jologs* (Gonzales).

In the same year, President Arroyo established policies in education to strengthen the use of English in schools so students would be prepared to compete globally in the fast-emerging industries of Information and Communications Technology. Ironically however, years after these structural reforms, reports stated that 96% of Filipinos who applied as call center agents were rejected because they spoke Filipino English, and not International English. Along with this came the continuous decline of quality education in the consecutive years, so what had been envisioned as global competency resulted in students being neither fluent in one language nor the other (Martin 193-4).

This struggle with English was further reflected in a 2006 GMA TV show called "Jologs' Guide", which zeroed in on the "jologs' difficulty with, and 'terror' of, English". In relation to this, viewers characterized the *jolog* as *trying hard*, yet *trying hard* is not used here as an action word but an adjective, describing one who always tries but can never get there. Consequently, the *jolog* is perceived as awfully out of place, but even so, is still occupying a certain space (Asuncion).

The space that the *jolog* creates is permeated by a language of mistakes, where the Filipino English tongue is found to be slipping between Bs and Vs, Fs and Ps, and long Es in exchange for the English short Is; yet to say that this is a space of mistakes presumes a standard of correctness. Looking further into the political constitutions of the *jolog*, it can be gleaned that the *jolog* is always constituted as a site of struggle, and similarly in *Jolography*, a site of struggle between what wants to take control, and what keeps displacing this control.

Instead of a space of mistakes, the space in *Jolography* is a zone of hybrid registers, of territory and influence belonging to different speeches. "Englishing" is a struggle between the register of the correct English and varieties of English, i.e., code-switching of the misheard, overheard, and the tampered, which permeates several poems in *Jolography*.

However, the work does not only preoccupy itself with the uttering of broken English, but the breaking of English as well so history, contexts, and meanings are misplaced and re-signified consciously or unconsciously. Additionally, considering *Jolography* lends itself to the study of geography, the collection then becomes more than just a challenge to the sociolinguistic rules of the English language. As a study of interactions among several diverse elements in a landed space, the collection transforms into a space where "proper" and deviant ideologies wrestle with each other with the help of parody, irony, and hybridization. Given that mistakes in language contain functionally political underpinnings, the critic's task is to undress the language of *Jolography* in order to elucidate the purpose behind its deliberately hidden possibilities of meaning.

Foregrounding the Choice of Bakhtin as a Framework

This view of language as a conflict of ideologies is proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin views language first and foremost as a social phenomenon indicative of the social life of discourse found in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities, social groups, generations, and epochs (Bakhtin 259). Language thus reflects a notion of reality as unfolding. Given this, language, both spoken and literary, is stratified among several sociolects (age, gender, sex, class et al)

and speech registers (language of lawyers, politicians, doctors) serving the sociopolitical purposes of the day (263). In Manalo's poems, languages are stratified across the discourses of *jolog*, *coño*, academic, religious, nationalistic, and proper English. This concept of differentiated speech is a state of language which Bakhtin coins as "heteroglossia". Heteroglossia represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between schools, circles, and so forth, all given in a bodily form (291).

The bodily form that Bakhtin speaks of is language. Language as used both in daily existence and in its entry into literary forms is therefore never neutral, given that heteroglossia characterizes language as specific points of view that complement and contradict each other as they become interrelated in one another's utterance (293). These utterances are deployed as specific points of view because they are informed by a particular set of conditions (social, historical, physiological) that render the meaning of an utterance differently if placed under different conditions (263); such is the case in Manalo's collection which privileges context in its poems.

Often the humor that is derived from the poems relies on a knowledge of setting and sociocultural practices in Philippine society. The setting ranges from the conditions of the country's economy, to its status as an English speaking nation**,** its history of academic practices, and attempts at attaining a true Filipino identity. Most transliterations and puns are underpinned by cultural practices, expressions, and concepts that presume not only a bilingual reader, but a reader who is familiar with these contexts in order to make sense of the poems. These events characterize the socio-ideological positions of social classes,

another context which cannot be ignored because of the large role it plays in the language. The voices of narrators and characters deploy utterances that betray not only their own class, but the class that their very language and discourse is shaped and oriented towards, even if the voice of this class remains passive or even absent in the text. This is why though conventional analysis usually does away with details such as the conditions of its characters, a study of contexts is called for in this collection because of the way it can affect the meaning of the utterance's linguistic features (Holquist 70). This active interrelation of languages where languages are aware of and are formed according to another's language/discourse is another Bakhtinian concept, dialogism, which one cannot help mention when discussing heteroglossia since both consist in each other (Vice 20). The untangling of dialogized heteroglossia in texts will later prove to be helpful in uncovering hidden polemics in Manalo's poetry.

It is, however, important to acknowledge first that when Bakhtin discussed these fundamental concepts on language, he was doing so to the merit of the novel, the genre he distinguishes to have the ability to allow the same diversity of speech in daily life that enacts social dialogue among a multiplicity of voices (Bakhtin 263). Poetry, on the other hand, was discussed by Bakhtin to have failed to enact this fundamental dialogicity of language into its genre. Bakhtin suggests that the prerequisite of poetic style is based on the "unity of the language system and uniqueness of the poet's individuality as reflected in his language and speech" (264). No matter how many contradictions and conflicts are developed within it, the world of poetry is always orchestrated by the unitary and indisputable discourse of the poet (286). Thus, in contrast to the novel, which makes use of an authentic stratification of language, poetry is always

monologically sealed off. However, Bakhtin's assumptions about poetry were informed by a classical and neoclassical concept of poetry, "a time when poetry was accomplishing the task of cultural, national, and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world on the higher official socioideological levels" (273), making poetry an ally of power as it promulgated desired social and moral norms (Eskin 381). Bakhtin's disclaimer on poetry was also directed against certain symbolists, futurists, and Russian formalists who insisted that poetry's duty was to mediate "between the world of divine essences and human beings" by divorcing themselves from the diversity of speech and languages in lieu of "poetic language", the "language of the gods" (Bakhtin 287-288). Therefore underlying Bakhtin's critique of poetry's monologism is a matter of not essence or genre, but of functionalization and intention (Eskin 382).

Since Bakhtin's time, other styles and techniques of poetry have emerged. Even the lyric is being contested as containing characteristics of the novel (Aviram & Hartnett, 2008). Poetry thus can be just as dialogical as the novel, which means that the tools that Bakhtin uses to approach the novel may be applied in such a way that can give us new insight into poems. *The project thus aims to expose the language of Jolography as an embattled struggle of voices, authoritative and decentralizing forces, striving to gain signification over the word as conflict gives birth to new social discourses, and in the process, reveal Manalo's accommodation of language as a social phenomenon indicative of life on the streets into the literary language of poetry.*

The Word as Dialogic

As mentioned previously, Manalo's collection may be understood as a study of conflict or a space where collisions occur. The source of conflict primarily arises from the collisions of words, and this is not simply attributable to the doubleness of words in poems which perform, as Bakhtin calls, in the narrow poetic sense, i.e., images as tropes (Bakhtin 278); rather the plurality of words from which conflict arises is created by the dialogic nature of the word. This dialogic nature of words may be understood as a dynamic interaction of the worlds of words.

In the collection, this dynamic interaction may be characterized as the constant struggle of words for meaning-making. The word is continuously saturated by varying values, meanings, usages, and connotations across the permutations of time, place, people, and events which give birth to the word through social discourse. It is through this living discourse that these words collide with other alien words found within the object that are conceived differently, depending on their interaction with various aspects of socio-verbal intelligibility such as social class, profession, age, et al. Therefore, since the word forms its concepts in a dialogical way, continuously being superimposed by several concrete worldviews, it cannot be avoided that in a given utterance, the word may find itself in a tension-filled interface of competing cultural contexts. Such is the project proposed by Manalo, in which he allows two or more concepts to brush against each other, to push and pull upon the meanings of words.

In the collection, the word is made susceptible to Bakhtin's concept of the word as dialogic, in which two or more worldviews collide with each other either ending in assimilation or contestation. The word as dialogic in these poems may be

considered as such in so far as the following: first, the word as construed dialogically by specific verbal-ideological speakers, here seen as English against Englishing; second, as dialogic in terms of the word being formed and shaped in response or in orientation to the specific world of its audience; and third, the word as dialogic in terms of its potential reflexivity to multiple contexts, here seen as historical re-renderings. As Bakhtin has said, the "living utterance, having taken meaning at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of the utterance" (276).

Jolography also finds its dialogic nature in the doubleness of the spoken and written word, replicating the sounds of daily life. This is especially found in the first cluster of poems, in which the English of the Filipino presents itself as a language that needs to be heard by the reader in order to tease out the symphonic performance of language, tone, and meaning from what is initially considered, a cacophonous sound (Doherty 2). Onomatopoeia here is not deployed so much as it is understood in the English language, that is, as an imitation of sound; rather, it is onomatopoeia as how the Greeks understand it, as the making or creating of names, the etymology of which is a variant stem of the word *poein* meaning poet. The deployment of sound here is not the naming of a sound, but the naming of other meanings; it is therefore a deliberate sound that demands to be acknowledged.

Potential dialogisms: Englishings as dialogic

In English against Englishing, the English word is dialogized by the specific verbal-ideological speech and consciousness of the jolog and the coño whose Englishing of the word is found in "Echolalia", "Peksman", "Mrs. Tsismis", "Coñotations", and "Jolography". In "Echolalia", "An epol is still an apple as long as it's read/ that way:/ speech not centered on the reaten/ Word" (8). Although apple and *epol* both refer to the same object, it is not the same word depending on who is listening. The word is further dialogized beyond the object as it falls upon the ears of a certain listener. As Bakhtin says, "The orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after, all that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, values systems for providing expressive accents, and social languages come to interact with one another" (282). The stylistic profile of *epol* was oriented towards a listener who could understand its linguistic difference from apple, and assign the difference to the subjectivities it belongs to, i.e., the epol is the apple of the illiterate, the apple, to the educated. Since "apple" recalls the history of the apple as the first word of the alphabet that children learn, apple becomes an academic tool that surfaces as speech proper, thus being awarded the merit of correctness and standardization. In this light, the *epol*-speaking persona is positioned to challenge the assumptions of correctness associated with the pronunciation of the apple. In another manner of representing the apple, the word is translated into Russian, *yabloka*. It remains the same representation until its homonym in Filipino, *Diablo ka* is used. Here apple is

reconstituted as the fruit or root of all evil as in the narrative of Adam and Eve.

> And then biting the fruit pit:
> The bale borrowing lost meaning.
> The kwan.
> The ano. (9)

However, instead of the apple providing knowledge to the one who eats it, the apple is made to induce the opposite: an idiocy presented here as speechlessness. It is in this manner in which the apple is made to be deployed in a certain politics in the rest of the poem, having been established here that the word is constituted by differing verbal-ideological consciousness that carry different value judgments. The English in "Peksman" is not entirely English either, it also becomes an Englishing by virtue of the speaker's "failed" transliterated Filipino lines that attempt to make its way into English.

> Peksman, *ay* knew you (well, I knew you too)
> Too well. For you I've crossed
> The breaking point (the number
> You dialed); for you I thought
> I died **(**maraming namamatay sa akala)
>
> This is where it hit me—the (bullet
> Today will giant you) come back
> Making a comeback as though killing (11)

The speaker makes use of the English translation of *Peksman, mamatay man ako*, a variant of "Cross my heart and hope to die", literally uttering it as "For you I've crossed the breaking point, for you I thought I died". The measurement of being true to one's words as a metaphor is relativized as the

speaker turns the metaphor into a literal event, so that it can neither be read merely as an event of dying nor lightly as metaphor for being true to one's word, but so that the event can resound as a disturbing image as it is folded back into the metaphor of keeping one's word to the point of dying. And because the word exists in an elastic environment of other alien words about the same object and the same theme, a similar linguistic form, *"maraming namamatay sa akala"* is able to dialogue with it as an apt rejoinder that thoughts, words, are understood differently since assumptions come with an individual's baggage of historicities. Similarly, *"balang araw paghihiganti kita"* in the context of *peksman* is made to create an ironic struggle with its Englishing, resulting not in avenging the speaker, but avenging the speaker by killing him.

In the poem "Jolography", the speaker takes on the language of a *kanto* boy who showers the poem with many misses in the context of his failure to speak in proper English; yet like the speakers in "Echolalia", the speaker in "Peksman" here is capable of rendering the word as dialogic as well, thereby opening newer possibilities of meaning. However, what sets this poem apart is that the mistakes here are aggressively and intentionally crass to the point that the poem becomes parodic and satirical. This becomes so because the poem presents a representation of the poetic form, the ode as it borrows its distinctive feature of apostrophization.

> O, how dead you child are, whose spoiled Sportedness is being fashion showed
>
> Beautifuling as we speak—in Cubao"
> There is that same look: Your Crossing Ibabaw,

> Your Nepa Cute, Wednesdays Baclaran, "Please pass. Kindly ride on,"
>
> Tonight will be us tomorrowed— [our future is finished] Lovers of the Happy Meal and its H
>
> Who dream of the importedness of sex as long as it's Pirated and under a hundred, who can smell
>
> A Pasig Raver in a dance club. O, the toilet
> Won't flush but we are moved, doing the gerby. (5)

Here the space is made dialogic, i.e., Crossing Ibabaw, Nepa Cute, and Pasig Raver. While "Your Crossing Ibabaw" is a poor translation of the overpass in Cubao, here it also points to a woman crossing, specifically, zeroing in on the crossing breasts of a woman. In the next line, the speaker makes an attempt to praise the woman for her beauty, for being "Nepa Cute", however, this cuteness brushes against the origin of the word, Nepa-Q Mart, Cubao's reputedly filthy supermarket. When the speaker describes to us his escapade at the dance club, he borrows the word raver, used to describe people in the 90s who liked to dance to rave music, and ties it together with the mispronunciation of the Pasig River, then alluding to the acrid stench of the *jolog* dancer who finds himself in the dance club. This reference is further worsened as another allusion comes into play, Pasig Raver, a song by Andrew E in 2001 which speaks about this undeniable stench of the jolog dancer in a dance club, metaphorically as the lower-class individual's pathetic attempts to fit in the dance club with the upper class elite ravers. Instead of using serious and high-level language to express love, respect, or praise for an individual, "Jolography" releases the smells of its subject onto the reader with a crass and broken language.

This does not mean however, in light of the ode, that the crass subject is being elevated; rather, it is the ode's process of the elevation of its subject which is clearly undermined in the poem. The dialogic nature of the word as deployed here is not only able to personify space but conversely create a spatialization of the individual. In a word, the person becomes actively implicated in a space as in the Crossing Ibabaw in Cubao, but also space becomes implicated in the individual, as in the Pasig Raver. "Jolography" satirizes the process of elevation to talk about a subject in order to give way to the mapping of the subject and the subject's subjectification of space. This harks back to its allusion on its title which is the spatial study of man and land's relationship, which compared to the ode, is a more dialogic approach to the characterization of an individual.

The speech genre of the illiterate speaker is not the only one which is capable of producing newer ways of meaning. Its counterpart, the coño in Coñotations, is also able to produce the word as dialogic through its partial translation of words via code-switching.

> 5. Dude, man, pare, at the next stop we'll make buwelta. So they can see we know how to look where we came from.
> 6. It's hirap kaya to find a connection. Who ba's pwede to be our guide?
> 7. Dude, man, can you make this areglo naman?
> 8. Make it pabalot kaya in the mall. So they can't guess what you're thinking. That's what I call a package deal. (71)

In the first line, *buwelta*, which means to go back or to return, accompanies the Tagalog proverb *"Ang hindi bumalik sa pinanggalingan […]"*; however, in coñospeak, "make buwelta", does not here mean to make a return because the noun is not

used as a noun in coñospeak when attached to "make" but is instead used as a verb. Hence, to make *buwelta* is actually *binuweltahan* which means *ginantihan* or take vengeance, thus rendering the Tagalog proverb in a satirical light. In this manner, connection is not merely a relationship or even a circle of friends, but becomes, in the "Filipino" context of vengeance, a politically charged constitution of finding someone to help do the dirty job for you. Following this line of thought, the rest of the statements becomes framed in a double-voiced manner. *Areglo* here does not only mean fix, but to "make this *areglo"* or *aregluhin*, as is used most commonly in illegal activities in government and politics, means to use bribery to avoid problems. While the following line seems to play on *areglo* as a homonym for a *regalo* or gift, it now serves as a mocking rejoinder to the hidden intentions of the previous line while also confusing the reader as to what the speakers from five to eight are really talking about.

Like "Coñotations", "Mrs. Tsismis" demonstrates the capacity of a broken language to not only create but mask certain discourses that wish to remain invisible to the public eye. On the surface, "Mrs. Tsismis" comes off as a narrative on how *tsismis* or gossip takes place.

> As in a wrist slit's punctual
> As in a ghost throat's voiceover
>
> As if the kwento were an accident—
> And tried to say *thrill kill* without the looks.
>
> Saying *laidback*, but then *besides*—
> "Here is my bodybag chic."
>
> And picks up the tab, being too forward
> Making patol that one who got away.

By tomorrow a new hobby for rodents.
Where the squeal's a palm packed squeeze.

In your ear, making out with a jolog.
While the tooth's impacted a flavor.

As in a chainsmoke gone astray
As in a facelift gone awry (7)

The first and last two couplets try to allude to the nature of gossip as facts which have already been transformed, and which belong to no certain voice. The rest of the poem is set-up to make it seem like an ordinary meeting between two gossipers in a restaurant.

However, the poem is internally dialogized by two languages in which both are made to mutually illuminate each other. Bakhtin calls this as stylization, the artistic representation of another's language (Bakhtin 362). Present in the poem is the linguistic consciousness that represents, which is the author, and the one that is represented, the *coño-tsismis language*, which is stylized. Under the influence of the linguistic consciousness of the author, *the coño-tsismis* language is able to acquire a new significance, in which as we have mentioned earlier, the capacity to mask discourses that wish to remain invisible. Looking at the poem more closely, rather than the poem solely being about the nature of *tsismis,* it also plays with the story of a murder. The wrist slit's punctuality betrays a fast motion acted upon the wrist, a slit wrist, the ghost throat's voiceover, hushed voices. The second couplet of the poem pauses at the word accident, the killing, as indicated by the deliberately made one-word, "laidback", in which the image of a person lying supine comes to mind. The *tsismis* language, "besides", deviates our attention

from the body bag meant for the dead as it is conflated with the word "chic". The murder sequence renders the next couplet as a payoff for the done deed with "making patol" masking it as a date at a restaurant. But as in every murder, there are people or rodents who know and wish to "rat out" on those involved. The person who squeals is met with a palm packed squeeze, that is, another deal. Key to understanding this is the phrase "making out" which here only pretends to be understood in the romantic sense; however, if we remember the idea of *coño* language as dialogic in the way Coñotations deployed it, "making out" here would mean, to do away with the jolog who was going to attempt to rat the murder case out. Consequently, the second line follows the logic of Englishing. "The tooth's *impacted* a flavor" would then mean, that the tooth, the words, the deal, whispered into the ear was able to produce the effect of flavor, a good or appealing taste to the listener's ear, which goes hand in hand with the description, "the tooth's impacted", which in dental terms would be defined as a tooth which so wedged in its socket that it is incapable of erupting normally. This implies that there is something wrong in the movement of the tooth, here, in conjunction with the previous meaning, it would then mean something illegal. In the end, it seems like the body is burned to hide the evidence: the lighting of cigarettes is transferred to the lighting of the body, and is now chained in smoke, the facelift, together with the coño "awry" as "*aray*", as a literal removal of the face from the burning. The language of the *tsismis* is therefore not only stylized to mask the murder, but as mutually illuminating languages, the linguistic consciousness is also influenced by the language of *tsismis*, consequently and effectively making the claim that gossip can kill.

Manalo's poems are able to break out of Bakhtin's understanding of poetry as unable to allude to any other alien

language since words in the collection begin to presume alien utterances beyond its boundaries. Words here are not deployed as "images as tropes" but rather, "images as a polyphony," i.e., the co-habitation of independent but interconnected voices. In conjunction, the musical sense of its polyphony here is not simply a sound that announces its presence by its deviance, but it is a sound that purposely collides with the written word to pronounce its intentions. This sound often actively challenges and conflicts with the written word, thus not only creating tensions of meaning but the birth of new significances within the utterance. Given this, the poem is able to show an inter-illumination of worlds by words, which is not simply the coming the knowledge of worlds by relativizing meaning but the politically and polemically intended collision of words and their ideological baggage. Here, the word dialogically enters a battle-filled/field of value judgments and accents, "weaving in and out of complex interrelationships, merging with some, recoiling from others", all in all "shaping discourse, complicating expression, and influencing its entire stylistic profile (276).

Potential Dialogisms: The Word Rewriting itself through History

In "Colorum", and "Little Cancer Cells", the word exists in cohabitation with an environment that re-renders the meaning of the word across the poem across historical and ideological differences. In "Colorum", two different worldviews on a similar object collide and assimilate into each other. The point of view in the poem belongs to the persona of an anonymous person who is realizing the weight of the truths implicated in his condition, that he is about to be shot in the circumstance of betrayal

(Bagumbayan. Aritao. Maragondon in the poem referring to Andres Bonifacio allegedly shot by Emilio Aguinaldo's men in Maragondon, Jose Rizal and thirteen other martyrs who were shot, convicted of betrayal to the ruling colonial power, but also betrayed by their fellow men along with their hopes and visions of a reformed civil society). In this sense, this business of betrayal and murder is considered colorum, which in the Philippines takes to mean as an illegally existing business. However, in the endnotes, colorum is said to have been derived from "per omnia saecula saeculorum", a prayer usually uttered in the Roman Catholic mass, which follows "May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands, to the praise and glory of his name for the good […]" as "forever and ever" or "through all the ages". In the perspective of the religious utterance, the persona, responding as the sacrifice, would conclude that the history of killings and betrayal in the name of an assumed higher good would continue in all ages, forever and ever. Before the perspective of the religious utterance can color the poem in the finality of a haunting light, another worldview of the term colorum comes to render this differently. As has been mentioned in passing, the word colorum originated from a religious organization, the *Cofradia de San Jose*, who mispronounced saeculorum as colorum, and was founded by Apolonario de la Cruz in 1843 because Spanish authorities closed its doors to Filipino priesthood. They were considered an illegal group by the Spaniards, becoming the symbol for peasant proletariat uprisings in provinces, i.e., "The Colorum uprisings" (Guerrero 65). Colorum here then is not merely an illegal business, but a form of political dissent. Going back to the poem, the tone of the persona's voice becomes dignified in its defeat, hereby rerending "forever and ever" as an utterance of a courageous spirit facing his death with an everlasting defiance against its offender.

"Little Cancer Cells" like "Colorum" brushes against the history of the Philippines, here specifically, that of Rizal in the Philippines. Following the word as dialogic, all three are able to rewrite history, but "Little Cancer Cells" stands out as the only poem that involves the use of foreign languages, focusing on a different kind of dialogism that occurs amid different national languages within the same culture (Bakhtin 275), that is, Filipino. Within the poem, several lines of German and Spanish are interspersed with the main English narrative. While some foreign lines are translated in the endnotes, Manalo leaves some untranslated, positing that the alien words should be able to bear their own weight in the text (Manalo 89). As readers who are not allowed to participate in the purview of these languages, we, as outsiders, will consequently treat these languages as social typifactions of a certain local color (Bakhtin 289), but only to the extent to which it is set against a certain background. In the poem, German & Spanish are set against the background of anti-nationalism that criticizes Rizal's valorization by the Philippines as a symbol for the true Filipino, where only one speaker appears to be speaking throughout the fragments, but nevertheless seems to allow the voice of Rizal to speak in quotation. It is this speaker who borrows the language of the Germans and the Spanish to flesh out his/her position on Rizal's heroism. For the sake of condensing the argument, only the function of Spanish will be discussed here. The Spanish words are mostly taken from quotations from the *Noli Me Tangere*. In the first instance, the endnotes reveal only as much that the Spanish words are used in Rizal's dedication to the "Motherland", the author perhaps intentionally rendering this in Spanish for the purpose of ironizing the dedication: Rizal's well-wishes and desires for the country is obscured, made unknowable by the use of Spanish.

As the author frames the next set of untranslated words in the light of people treating Rizal as a god, the Spanish here, as Rizal's words, become treated as equally divine, as that which man cannot know because of its Divine status, and which only Rizal, the God, can understand.

The framing of the Spanish language as divine is criticized in the next instance Spanish is used. The narrator warns the reader beforehand that translation had always been [sic]/sick. Given this, we shall find that while Rizal is made to speak by being quoted, the quotations are shot through with the intentions of not only the speaker whose hostility towards Rizal resonates throughout the poem, but also the author whose consciousness on the issue is made present by way of the poem's constructed interpolation of voices.

They take everything personally.

Based on real life…

-my life

On the facts…on the fact that I was a doctor.

That I could heal the sick

Even if I was sick. (The rain in Spain, falls gently…)

I was entitled---

To die before the end of the year,

Before the end of the century—

…sin ver la aurora brillar

Sobre mi patria…! (49)

An aside follows, "Even if I was sick", acting as an extension for this sickness, lying outside the utterance. The aside borrows the line from the song "The Rain in Spain", a song that was used to break Eliza Doolittle's Cockney accent speech pattern in the movie *My Fair Lady*, where her [eye] would be permanently changed to the standard pronunciation [eɪ] after she is able to finally get it. The speaker interpolating seems to attribute this removal from or correction of one's natural speech as a sickness, and juxtaposing it alongside "Rizal's" narration, the speaker implicitly alludes to Rizal's keen leaning towards the foreign language, that especially of Spanish and German. In this manner, the question may be asked on where the discourse of nationalism lies alongside the use of foreign languages. By the end of the stanza, Rizal speaks in Spanish, "I was entitled to die before the end of the year, before the end of the century, without seeing dawn's light shining upon my country". Rizal speaks to us in English until the last line, which ironizes his own utterance. By obscuring the translation of the Spanish words, the author plays with reality, that is, the reader's incomprehension in order to further his own intentions. If the last phrase in Spanish may be understood in lieu of the reader, i.e., light on one's country in the form of clarity and understanding on the part of the reader, Rizal is made by the author to doom his own wish as the reader cannot be enlightened to see what he means when he speaks. This only yet further proves that the light has still not shone on his country, the way he would have wanted. In the next section, Rizal is made to state his controversial retraction in another language yet again, "Señores, Yo no escribir en Español/ Pretendo yo, istiro tu".

While Rizal's original alleged retraction was made for his anti-Catholic ideas, this section states a fake retraction for the medium in which he wrote "I don't write in Spanish. I'm pretending only, I'm pulling your leg". Prior to the experience of reading the line with the knowledge of the endnotes, one may have easily assumed that the words in Spanish would have had a semblance of not only truth (comparable to how it was framed as divine earlier) but sensibility and nobility as well because we ascribe it to Rizal. Manalo plays again with the reader's incomprehension of the language, in the process, exposing the reader's unquestioned assumptions of language, here now using irony as a mode of critique: the ideological baggage that comes with the Spanish language, i.e., Spanish as the language of the divine ilustrado (and thus always noble) is undermined, together with it, the capacity of Rizal to represent the Filipino nationalism. In the rest of the poem, the phrase "para la generacion que ha de venir" is scattered whenever a precaution is given out as in:

> And his overcoat—
>
> his U B E R CO A T
>
> It devoured children and anyone
>
> Who touched it.
>
> Such is the fate of one
> who would die so young
>
> …para la generacion que ha de venir (51)

Here the author warns those who become too mesmerized in the overcoat of Rizal, that is, the Rizal that we have portrayed him to be, the untouchably flawless *ilustrado*, yet the warning, in its alien language dooms itself, never reaching its intended audience, "for the generations to come". In the poem, Spanish is objectified as an alien language, doomed to fail in the discourse of nationalism despite its speaker's better intentions. However, while the speaker's intentions in using the Spanish language is to present the criticism that Rizal's valorization as a Filipino when he could not even be understood by many despite his good intentions, the speaker could not present this idea by just using a single, "pure" language. To present the kind of nationalism that the author believed it should, i.e., one that stems from people's immediate understanding, the author needed the aid of languages alien to it in order to present his critique in the most effective way possible. Therefore, despite the fact that "Little Cancer Cells" clearly undermines education's popular worldview of the singular Filipino narrative, that as Rizalesque, to the extent that these languages are parodied, still, no language is privileged/reserved to represent the discourse of nationalism.

Potential Dialogisms: Authoring the Text with Class

Emphasizing that the difference between Saussure and Bakhtin's theory of language is its being a social phenomenon, it would be pertinent to look into the social production of the text, focusing especially on how Manalo's class becomes a significant mediation in the representation of the lower classes as *jolog*. Given that the dialogic word is a space for competing worldviews, especially that between authoritative discourses

and deviant decentralizing forces, the dynamic struggle of these forces over the word's signification can express competing social interests. Therefore, dialogism becomes an arena for class struggle, here as how a class responds to, dialogues, with, and undermines another class, between the author and the certain language he is representing, i.e., the *jolog*. Manalo's middle-class position in society allows him a certain perspective in which he is able to look at two objects at the same time: that of being in the position to access information on the lifestyle of the lower class and being in the position of privilege, the educated person, who can study and objectify the *jolog*. Although there have been no studies certifying that the term was coined by someone from the middle class, the idea is not far off to conceive since the middle class is in the right liminal position to be able to create such a figure. The lower class would not call themselves such a derogatory term, and the upper-class would be in a much farther position from accessing the cultural practices of the lower class. Therefore it may be posited that the idea of *jolog* being broadly conceived here as one who is in struggle with the other, may actually be an identity given by the middle class individual. It becomes important then to look into how the author invades the speech of the *jolog* in order to uncover how his position has affected the representation of the *jolog*.

Amid the heteroglossic voices populating language in the novel, Bakhtin locates the author's voice in the organization of the novel, its structured stylistic system which expresses the socio-ideological position of the author (300). Certain aspects of language such as speech mannerisms and language characterizations are placed at different distances from the author's personal intentions where the author may exaggerate certain aspects of language strongly or weakly. Sometimes the author can expose the inadequacy of the language to its object or

merge his voice in agreement to the common view, that is, the specific language spoken by a particular social group (302). In the poem "Jolography", we seem to buy into the idea that all throughout the speaker takes the voice of a *jolog*, given the use of broken language. However, a striking shift of point of view takes place at the end of the poem.

> and the next
>
> Wave that stands out in the outdoor crowd
>
> Hanging with a bunch of yo-yos
>
> A face with an inverted cap on, wearing all
>
> Smiles the smell of foot stuck between the teeth. (6)

All the while one may have thought that it was precisely this image that was speaking in the previous stanzas, given the first-person point of view, yet here there is a zooming out to reveal a perspective that is dissociated and distanced from the *jolog* speaker, here considered as the author. Similarly in the line "Tonight will be us tomorrowed--/Lovers of the Happy meal and its H", the speech of the 'jolog' is combined with the point of view of the author. "[We], lovers of the Happy Meal and its H" cannot be a statement from an individual person as if a conscious statement to say the person is fond of putting an H in his or her children's names. It would be more conceivable to understand the statement as a description of a collective's habit or practice, the cultural practice of the lower class to put the H in Jhenalyn or Jhun in order to make the name more sophisticated. Given this, the statement can only come from an omniscient perspective, the author's, who now functions to reify the image

of the *jolog* as 'a face with an inverted cap on, wearing all smiles the smell of foot stuck between the teeth' or as 'lovers of the H'. While it seems that Manalo participates in the capacity of the middle class to call names, he is more sympathetic to the *jolog* and even the *coño* figure. He highlights the capacity of the *jolog* and the *coño* figure for creativity as shown in the doubleness of the *jolog's* broken English in "Jolography" or "Coñotations" for example. Moreover, while Manalo represents the perception of the middle class towards the *jolog*, he simultaneously seems to defend the *jolog* from the middle class's demeaning perception. In the following verses, the language appears to belong to the *jolog*, but the obvious stylistic use of the repeating *kwan* and *bale* brings it closer to the author's intentions.

Bale, all my friend's kwan

Begins and ends with bale:

It's more kwan than habit, more

Kwan, you know, bale

Bale, I can get your kwan whole-

Sale from Kwan, bale.

Bale, but if it's free, it's free:

Hindi bale, size doesn't matter

It's the toot that counts. (10)

The lower-class speaker adopting English may have been reduced to the *bale*, *kwan*, and the *ano* in "Echolalia's" discussion

of the *jolog* biting the apple, but in this section, these words are not deployed as words of inexpressibility; rather, that which is inexpressible but nevertheless understandable in dialogue. This harks back the idea of how the lower-class speaker is still able to effect produce ways of meaning despite adopting a medium of communication that they cannot fully grasp. Here both English and Filipino are dialogically intertwined. Through the English language, one can only glean the loss of expression from the appropriation of English, but the language of Filipino culture illuminates this appropriation as something that is still able to culminate in knowledge. Contextually, between speakers intimately related in dialogue, the *kwan* and the *bale* can still be understood, with the dialogue often ending with the receiver filling in the words for the person who cannot express it or agrees to what is being said already even if it has not been explicitly mentioned.

This assumes an *a priori* understanding between the two speakers despite its exclusivity from outside listeners. In this manner of representing the speech of the *jolog*, Manalo attempts to elevate the *jolog's* position.

However, what with nearly all sections of "Echolalia" appropriating the language of the other, that is, the lower-class speaker, the last section seems to be an avenue for which the lower-class speaker is given a space to comment on the positions of those who try to speak for him, as given away by the sudden more apprehensive and aggressive tone:

> Anong toot? What do You take me for,
> Granted? You think I don't know
> Anything? Now I know everything.
>
> What do You think of me,

Thinking of You? I can think
Of many things now. Before You toot

Of the moon, I invented the moon

Buggy, the yo-yo.

The speaker makes a subtle reference to the 1979 film, "WHO INVENTED THE YO-YO? WHO INVENTED THE MOON BUGGY?" by Kidlat Tahimik, a film associated with the Third Cinema movement by virtue of its parodic critiques of neocolonialism. Given this, the section's initial tone turns from just apprehensive to sardonic as the lower-class citizen resists the manner in which he is represented by those who have spoken before and for him as the speechless idiot who insisted on biting the apple instead of the *sayote*. This sentiment of resistance, however, is still a betrayal of Manalo's representation, as one who can ascribe the nature of a film to the character of the *jolog*, both worlds of which, the middle-class position is privy to:

Now you can't look down

On me. I invented the dictionary.

Look me up. I'm somewhere

Between *agnostic* and *idiot*

I'm *catholic* ("Of broad or liberal scope; Comprehensive"), *Filipino (*"The Austronesian language, not the people"), *Ano?* (10)

It seems that the *jolog* is aware that not only is it being made fun of for its speech, previously for its difficulty for

speaking in English, the *jolog* is also aware of its creative capacity to create words by its parodying of English. However, Manalo seems to expand this creative potential by suggesting that the *jolog* not only invents words by his or her speech, but likewise, is able to generate words by the *jolog's* very being, albeit, conceived by the class above him. Ironically, this capacity for meaning-making revolves around the beliefs of someone criticizing the lower-class speaker as suggested by the stylization of words in the last stanza. Even as it is the lower-class speaker who is talking, an intermixing of language systems takes place as one language borrows the style and timbre of the authoritative other, not merely that of a dictionary's, but also of someone who is in a position of privilege, one who is able to make a polemic commentary on the hybrid ambiguity of both Catholicism and being a Filipino. Yet after all this, the poem ends with "*Ano?*" which seems to be the lower-class speaker's incomprehension of the attack directed towards him, in the end ridiculing the polemic of the middle class, and simultaneously, representing the reality that he cannot understand Manalo's representation of him.

On a different note, the author seems to be less keen on the representation of the *coño*, which is also a term most likely to have been created by the middle class to criticize the upper class who cannot speak in Filipino and to criticize the lower classes who use *coño* to try to sound sophisticated. It is only in Mrs. Tsismis and "Coñotations" where the *coño* is represented, the latter of which is even relegated to the "B-sides" section, that is, the side which is less important. Although Manalo raises the status of their language as something that is capable of going beyond its *kolehiyala* notions as has been discussed, the author makes no similar assertive effort to defend the *coño*, even if such a term is also derogatory of a certain class. Likewise, the *coño* in

the poems is never positioned to answer back or defend itself against a certain polemic discourse. In this manner where the derogatory discourse of the *coño* seems to have been ignored, the *coño* figure is thus only used as an accessory by Manalo to expropriate the possibilities of its language, thereby also revealing his partiality for the *jolog*.

Jolography's Open-Ended Tension

Following Bakhtin's claim that language is stratified not only into its linguistic dialects, but as always stratified into the socio-ideological, it cannot be helped to consider the position of the writer himself as a contributing factor to the collection's project, i.e., to create and conduct language in order to elucidate its many possibilities of functioning. The poet's keen sensibility to the realities and possibilities of language as deployed in the collection can only come from a middle-class position where the individual is made most privy to the worlds of words on the street and the academic life as a creative writer. Given this, it is not surprising that Manalo's rendering of the image of the *jolog* is that which escapes any finality to its vocabulary. While being an academic whose specific world is inclined towards the project of enlightenment, he is also situated as a person who knows, understands, and partakes of the dialogic reality of the everyman's language of living. In the bleeding into of these worlds' languages, what results is a poetry whose role is to show how language as conceived in everyday life provides a fertile ground for the possibilities of language in poetry.

In sum, *Jolography* is a collection that is representative of how the everyday life is accommodated by language in written literature. Its most salient features of everyday life are found in

the plurality of verbal-ideological, social languages and other speech genres, which materialized most distinctively in the tensing between English and Englishing. This conflict between official and nonstandard languages is strongly indicative of everyday life as this is the language of your *coño,* the *kanto boy,* the upper class *tsismosa*, the *can afford*, the illiterate, and the educated which all carry different modes of intonation and intentionality; in other words, these are the language of the streets.

Against the background of the history of debate between Filipino and English especially on levels of educational policymaking, these languages are found to be vulgar and considered bastardized languages by both nationalists and academics respectively. Years after the American colonial government adopted the English-only policy, English began to be seen by the nationalist movement and anti- imperialists as an ongoing American imperialist agenda, therefore attempting to dislodge English from Philippine education while promoting Filipino as the national language (Bernardo 31). Conversely, as mentioned in the introduction, English in the 2000s has been promoted more and more vigorously in order to compete in the global market. However, despite the attempts of these certain institutions to control the use of language, the people have altogether adapted the language into mixtures of cultural diffusions in ways in which new phenomena, realities, and events are thematized so that English is broken into codes different from its sources, i.e., Filipino and English, doing with English what they want to do and not from any dictation of outsiders (Sibayan and Gonzalez, 165). A pure national language can only go so far in its being institutionalized.

In a similar notion of how the prospects of language lie not in the hands of centralizing institutions but in the people, Nick

Joaquin subjects the concept of the national language to the language to the streets, to language as lived. He proposes that it is Tagalog slang which builds, extends and enriches the national language, even proposing that the nonstandard, or more crudely, the bastardized language is the national language despite their vulgarity to academics because "these are the words that Filipinos use; and these are the words that are fusing our various dialects into one" (Joaquin 4). Actual speech belongs to no one person, lifting from different languages, shaped by different cultural specificities, and thrown as if it were from one mouth to another. Such is the nature of how words such as *jolog* or *peksman* are formed. Like Bakhtin's notion of language as a social phenomenon, this kind of speech found in banality of street life brings language back to existence as it is lived in the moment (Gardiner 1).

As demonstrated in the poems in *Jolography*, language exists always a rejoinder to someone or something, brushing against histories of words such that meaning is constantly renewed and therefore unfinalizable. Much as people are beings constituted by an ongoing lived experience, language, as the primary medium through which intersubjective relations occur, becomes as well constituted by that ongoing lived experience (Gardiner 58). However, the poems in *Jolography* not only serve to describe lived experience but also serve to change it. As the word conceptualized in *Jolography* expresses a ceaseless flow of nuances and ambiguous shades of meaning constituted by everyday life, so do the possibilities of how language functions in the social world are constantly revealed. *Jolography* has shown how its language as dialogic is able to mask polemic discourses and languages, especially using humor or parody as a mode of critique, how the doubleness of the spoken and the written word sometimes acting as errors can lend itself to the creation of new

words, how the dialogic word makes it possible for language to not only sum up histories but also rewrite histories, how conversely, language is also always reauthored, and how subordinate social groups such as those who speak the bastardized language are made capable of dialogizing authoritative discourses by reinscribing them with new meanings, values, and significances. But perhaps more than this sociopolitical function of language, *Jolography* is able to bring the reader's attention to language, as something which is familiar and taken for granted, towards a view of language as not only the mystery of the possible worlds of words but as, what Gardiner says, that which actually constitutes "the connective tissue of all conceivable human thoughts" (2).

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