Greeting the Virgin Mary: The Dancerly Attitudes of the *Bati* in *Salubong*

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At dawn, on Easter Sunday, devotees from parts of the Philippines join the procession of the *salubong*, a reenactment of the first meeting of Jesus Christ and his sorrowful mother, the Mater Dolorosa (Dolorosa), after His death on the cross. Easter Sunday completes the tripartite mystery of the central Catholic dogma: Christ has returned; He has resurrected from the dead. This is the main motivation to rejoice, hence the resumption of the *Alleluia* at the Eucharistic celebration or Holy Mass. What follows is the most dramatic aspect of the Easter celebration: the removal of the Dolorosa's black veil by an angel as she/he wings above a make-shift *kubol,* an elevated box hanging at the center of the *galilea* constructed outdoors where the performance of the *salubong* takes place. The *galilea* is a four-corner structure made of bamboo that forms an apex with an opening in the middle. It is usually decorated with fresh flowers and green bamboo leaves.

Filipino Catholics perform the *salubong* on the last day of the Holy Week and the first Sunday of the Easter Season or at the cusp of the Lenten and Easter seasons. The Dolorosa or Virgin Mary is central to this performance, in contrast to other cultural performances during Holy Week in which the figure of the suffering Christ is at the foreground. During the procession on Good Friday, the crowd accompanying the *karosa* (float) of the Dolorosa is the largest, and in some towns, the most spectacular. In Angeles City in Central Luzon, for example, Dolorosa devotees form lines up to a kilometer long. In Gasan, Marinduque, in the Southern Tagalog region, trailing behind the *karosa* are women in black *sutana*, their heads covered with popua leaves. In other Southern Tagalog towns, young women sing each time

the Dolorosa stops at an appointed home. During the same Good Friday procession, the image of the *soledad* depicts the loneliness of the Virgin Mary after her son is buried (Barrios, 2017). There is also the staging of the *sinakulo* or the dramatization of the life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. In this traditional form of theatre, the sorrow of the Virgin Mary is introduced, which is why in the performance of the *salubong*, the removal of the black veil is a joyous occasion. In Philippine culture, the black veil symbolizes the experience of grief and sorrow resulting from the death of a very important person or a loved one.

In the Southern Tagalog towns of Boac, Marinduque and Angono, Rizal, Catholic community members have unique ways of practicing the *salubong*. In these towns, the Easter Sunday *salubong* is a performance of the *bati* (greeting), with performers waving flags for the Virgin Mary to signify the transformation of her *lumbay* (sorrow) to *galak* (joy) as angel-performers sing the *aleluya* (alleluia). In Boac, a pair of male and female dancers lead the *sayaw ng bati* (dance of greeting), while in Angono, two female dancers, the *tenyenta* and the *kapitana,* lead the performance. In the interest of dance in religion, I would like to focus on the *bati* dance as performed in the above-mentioned Southern Tagalog towns. I will explore how the devotion to the Virgin Mary influences the choreography and composition of the *bati*, in particular, its dancerly attitudes—that is, the quality of movement, the orientation of the dancer's body, gestures, sound, verbal articulations, and other performative elements. I will forward the notion that dancing bodies are situated in a particular disposition, which a dancer should possess and embody in a dance performance. Taking this into account, I will also ask: If a given dance tradition or movement practice presupposes a particular dancerly attitude, how then is dancerly attitude constructed?

Dance anthropologist Andrée Grau (2011) demonstrated that dancing bodies, space, place and the senses cannot be accepted as universal concepts since they are embedded within typically western understandings. In other words, there is a need to balance the predetermined, naturalized, and dominant Eurocentric view on dance and dancing bodies. There is also

a need to incorporate emic conceptualizations on dance practices, hence, the articulations and verbalizations of dancerly attitudes from the dancers themselves. Grau argues that all corporealities and spatialities are socially and culturally mediated. In the study of dance and dancing situations, this premise is closely linked to the idea of the "dancerly attitude" (pp. 5–6). Developed through the Husserlian tradition of contemporary philosophy, dance philosopher and phenomenologist Gediminas Karoblis (2007) defines "dancerly attitude" as the quality of movement and orientation of the dancer's body during the dance. He explains:

> A person who wants to learn to dance comes to a dance class already having a huge amount of "bodily presuppositions"—the natural bodily attitude. A dance is not created on the *tabula rasa* (the clear table)—it is created in the given natural flow of the bodily movement. The dancerly attitude covers the natural attitude. The natural attitude of the body is particularly noticeable in the movements of beginners, when they learn what is, for them, an unnatural movement of dance. (p. 333)

Two bodily attitudes are the natural and the unnatural. The natural attitude is a reference to "bodily presuppositions" which can be accumulated from the everyday habitual flow of movement. Karoblis (2007) describes the relationship of natural attitude to habitual movements as "the usual handling of the parts of the body and patterns of kinetic behavior—natural body schema" (p. 331). Examples of this include any habitual movement such as sitting, standing, walking and running. When we bid farewell or laugh, our bodies are also performing natural attitudes. On the other hand, "an event or an action that is conceived as contradictory to this flow is experienced as unnatural" (p. 332). Often, this attitude is experienced when we learn a dance which movements are unfamiliar to the body. In the Philippines, there is a common trope about having *dalawang kaliwang paa* (literally, two left feet), indicating the difficulty of the body to follow the rhythmic pattern of a dance sequence. This unnatural movement is what Karoblis identifies as dancerly attitude, which as a social and cultural medium is linked to

the actual dancing bodies that are historically situated, contextualized, and time-dependent. I will expand on this premise in subsequent parts of this study.

Furthermore, dance anthropologist Deidre Sklar (2001a), in her study *Dancing with the Virgin,* reminds us about "movement ethnography" and notes that "movement knowledge is a kind of cultural knowledge" (2001a; Sklar, 2001b). This premise considers movement as a way of knowing, which implies that the way people move—their postures, gestures, and body orientation—is a clue to understanding one's culture, hence, movement is a window to see through or glimpse "cultural knowledge". In examining the dancerly attitude of the *bati* dance, this article will accentuate the significance of movement knowledge. Attention to dance as practice facilitates the significance of qualities and the dancer's body orientations. As both a researcher and a dancer, I will also bring in my experience of the *bati* dance. The inclusion of the researcher's body in dance and performance research, particularly in performance ethnography and the anthropology of dance, has brought another modality in uncovering issues and questions directly related to the body and movement. Sklar (2000) strongly argues that "while it has been traditional practice to remove the researcher's body from the ethnographic text, "subjective" bodily engagement is tacit in the process of trying to make sense of another somatic experience. She adds that there is no other way to approach the felt dimensions of movement experience than through the researcher's own body (Sklar, 2000, p. 71).

The Figure of Mary as Choreographic Basis

In the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, four theological truths are affiliated with the figure of Mary: the Dogma of the Divine Motherhood of Mary, the Dogma of the Virginal Conception of Mary, the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and the Dogma of the Assumption.

The Divine Motherhood dogma was issued by the Council of Ephesus in 431. The dogma reinstates the primacy role of Mary as Jesus' mother

(Barcelona & Estepa, 2004). The theological doctrine emphasizes Mary as the Mater Dei (mother of God), as evidenced in the prayer of the *Hail Mary*, following the logic of Jesus as God premised upon the Trinitarian theology of the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit as one God.

Based on the synoptic gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the reading of the ancient creeds, another theological fact about Mary is her attribution as a virgin. Since the 3rd century A.D., the faithful have believed that the conception of Jesus was through the power of the Holy Spirit, and Mary's birth was in accordance with human law (Barcelona & Estepa, 2004).

Based on Pope Pius IX's papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (The Ineffable God), the Catholic Church also proclaims Mary to be immune from all stains of original sin. Issued on 8 December 1854, the edict is also known in the Catholic faith as the Immaculate Conception. The Catholic community commemorates the proclamation annually by celebrating Mary's chastity and purity.

Finally, in *Munificentissimus Deus* (the Most Bountiful God), Pope Pius XII writes, "by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (*Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950). In layman's terms, this is the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, as commemorated in the Glorious Mysteries of the prayer of the Holy Rosary, and celebrated every August 15. Furthermore, Mary's divination is described in the *Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary,* which includes the numerous titles given her and as accepted worldwide by Catholics. Approved by Pope Sixtus V in 1587, the litany is recited and chanted especially during the praying of the Holy Rosary.

In December 2014, The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in New York staged the exhibition *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea* with the aim to explore the concept of womanhood represented by

the Virgin Mary, as well as the social and sacred functions her image has served through time. Curated by Msgr. Timothy Verdon, the exhibition presented images of Mary as a daughter, cousin, and wife; and from another perspective, a mother, a bereaved parent, the protagonist of an epic narrative, a link between heaven and earth, and an active participant in the lives of those who revere her. Overall, visitors were given a glimpse of Mary, simultaneously conceived as divine, as human, and more importantly, as an idea or concept managed by figuration and depending on the needs and desires of a particular community.

One such figuration was the Black Virgin, known throughout Europe as the Black Madonna. Known as the Virgin of Montserrat, the patroness of Catalonia as declared by Pope Leo XIII in 1844, it is the oldest figuration, estimated to have its origin in the Middle Ages. Another popular figure on display was the mid-13th century *Canteen* that featured "at its center an image of the enthroned Madonna and Child, surrounded by scenes from the life of Christ. Aside from Jesus, Mary is depicted most often, appearing three times on the front" (Treanor, n.d.). According to the NMWA head curator Virginia Treanor, "in early Christianity Mary is often portrayed as a queen or an empress sometimes seated upon a throne" (Treanor, n.d.). These representations echo the Dogma of the Divine Motherhood of Mary that emphasizes Mary's role as the Mother of God.

The Philippines has an impressive number of Marian divine representations that follow the above-mentioned dogmas. Most had been introduced by Spain during its colonization of the country but later localized by the native population. The Jesuit missionary Joseph A. Mulry identified these images, the oldest of which is the Nuestra Señora de la Costa, brought to the island of Cebu in 1521 and currently housed in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Cebu. The early Cebuanos apparently accepted this image with enthusiasm. And then from Cebu, Marian devotion spread across the archipelago, and the attributes of a mother, neighbor, and queen whose primary role in the socio-political life of the locals was to mediate between the heavens and the earth were passed on to Mary.

In the figuration of Mary, de la Cruz (2015) remarks:

> Pedro Chirino, a seventeenth-century Jesuit chronicler, presents us with an image of conversion in which native infidels are like statues molded from a formless mass into Christians. The meaning of "image" here is doubled, tripled even, as we draw from this passage various connotations of the term. In one sense, "image" (in the original Castilian, *imagen*) refers to the sculpture or bust, physical objects of perception. In another sense, "image" connotes resemblance, which makes possible "a suitable comparison" (*comparazión muy propria*) between infidels and material images, and by extension in this context, the creation of subjects in the likeness of God. And finally, there is the image that emerges from the text in the reader's encounter with it, a biased representation of conversion and the colonial past. (p. 25)

Chirino's use of sculpture to compare the experience of transformation from "infidels" to Christians supports Mulry's theory that the Virgin Mary entered the sensibility of Filipinos as early as the advent of print technology. The Filipinos were only able to access, read, and learn to pray the *Hail Mary, Salve Regina,* among other prayers, through Fray Juan de la Plasencia's *Doctrina Christiana* (1593), the first known printed book in the Philippines.

As Filipino Catholics engaged in venerating the Virgin Mary, they also constructed and expressed narratives through various forms and approaches. De la Cruz notes, "Mary presided over communities in various incarnations and iconographies, terrestrially rooted, each possessing its own discrete title, powers, and legends" (p. 25). This partly refers to the titles given her that are based on places where she was found, brought to, or even where she is said to have shown herself as an apparition. For example, the image of Our Lady of Manaoag is enshrined at the hilltop site of the town of Manaoag, Pangasinan where a middle-aged farmer had been witness to an apparition. Similarly, an image of the Black Madonna, Our Lady of Antipolo, is enshrined in the Antipolo Cathedral in Antipolo City, Rizal.

The earliest historical account of the Nuestra Señora de Guía is described in *Novena O Pagsisiam sa Nuestra Señora De Guia* (1897). This *Novena* is one of early nineteenth-century prayer books similar to the *Doctrina Christiana*, which helped further the devotion to as well as the imaging of the Virgin Mary in the Philippines. It is believed that in 1571, a soldier of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the first Spanish governor of the Philippines, witnessed a ritual of veneration of an image on a *pandan* (fragrant screwpine) plant along the shores of Ermita, Manila. This event would indicate the existence of a pre-Hispanic image: dark-skinned, with Chinese features, sporting long dark hair, and dressed in a *manto* and a stylized *tapis*. In 1971, Pope Paul VI bestowed a gold crown, scepter, and jewelry on the Nuestra Señora de Guía. De la Cruz (2015) posits that this icon recalls the *babaylan or catalonan,* or women of power and influence in pre-colonial communities. This could explain why the Virgin Mary was easily accepted and warmly received by the locals (Santos, 1994; Furusawa, 2011-2012). Incidentally, the Nuestra Señora de Guía is also called the patroness of overseas Filipino workers. Her shrine is located near the United States Embassy in Manila, and Filipino devotees who intend to work abroad pray to her for aid in securing a visa.

While many images worldwide are based on Western imaginings, Yuri Furusawa (2011/2012) lists localized renderings of the icon: the Virgin of Balintawak (1924), the Brown Madonna (1938), the Virgin of Baranggay (1954), and Our Lady of the Philippines, to name a few. Furusawa asserts that the iconography of the localized images of Mary in the Philippines "are expressions of a people's yearning for freedom and salvation through spontaneous expressions of identity and cultural values" (p. 96). The Philippine Independent Church, a Christian sect, for example, attributes the image of the Virgin in *balintawak* dress[1] to the Philippine revolution against Spain. The sect cites a dream in which the Virgin of Balintawak appeared with a Katipunero child shouting "Freedom! Freedom!". The Virgin's appearance reechoes the tearing of community certificates in Balintawak, historically known as the Cry of Pugad Lawin, an act of the Katipuneros' defiance against Spain.

Another example involves an Ati (a local) localizing the image of Our Lady of the Philippines as commissioned by Fr. Filomeno Cinco. This image was brought by American priests to Guimaras island, now a province independent of Iloilo. Cinco instructed the Ati craftsman to use local materials such as wood and coconut shell and to visualize "what a Filipina mother should be". What resulted was a depiction of an *Ati* lady. Cinco shares his idea on Filipinizing the Mother Mary: "Mary is for all. She belongs to all of us. She is the mother of us all. It is important especially in this age of globalization that the people can identify with the images of Mary" (cited in Furusawa, p. 94, 2011-2012).

In 1621, the Jesuits brought the first image of the Immaculate Conception to the island province of Marinduque. Known as Ina ng Biglang Awa (Our Lady of Perpetual Help), the Immaculate Conception is the provincial patroness of the island and serves as *tanglaw* (light) to all who visit or leave the island. This attribute is connected to a local legend that tells of a woman who helped the islanders repel attacks by Moros who threatened the spread of Catholicism in the country (Eugenio, 2005, p. 90-93). The locals believed that the Ina's apparition and intervention had saved them. To remind Marinduqueños of this act, a huge statue in her likeness was erected strategically at the highest point of the island's primary port. (See Figure 1)

Motherhood/Mothering is a strong theme for Catholic devotees. Even the nation's national hero, Jose Rizal, wrote a poem dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In the poem "To the Virgin Mary," she is described as placid, sweet, radiant, and a giver of comfort and relief especially in times of difficulty (Rizal, 1964). Bemz Benedicto, Managing Director of the *Make Your Nanay Proud* project outlines how Filipinos regard mothers, including *ilaw* (light) and *tanglaw* or *gabay* (guide) While traditionally the father is expected to make critical decisions for the family and to support its financial needs, the mother oversees the rearing of children. As the Filipino lullaby *Sa Ugoy ng Duyan* (Swaying of the Hammock) expresses, "*Nais kong maulit ang awit ni Inang mahal; Awit ng pag-ibig habang ako'y nasa duyan; Sa piling ni Nanay,*

Figure 1: Ina ng Biglang Awa in Balanacan Port, Marinduque (Wikipedia commons)

langit ay buhay" (I wish my beloved mother's song repeated; a song of love since still in the cradle; in my mother's embrace, life is heaven). It is always assumed that mothers are selfless, compassionate, and forgiving.

The above-mentioned virtues resemble Catholic teachings and values which frame the Virgin Mary's image. Nonetheless, Furusawa concludes that regardless of the icon's origin and style—Western or Filipinized, the image in a local dress or not—devotees regard Mary as their Mother. The Ati's version of Our Lady of the Philippines captures the "maternal love" (p. 96) and the realities of motherhood in Philippine society. This maternal love guides the affective attitude of the *bati* movement in the *salubong*.

The image of the Virgin Mary as the Dolorosa epitomizes maternal love, thus it is treated with extra benevolence. Popularly known as The Sorrowful Mother or Our Lady of Sorrows, her image is teary eyed, black (blue or purple) veiled, with an exposed bleeding heart pierced by seven

long knives or daggers. These daggers symbolize the seven sorrows *(dolors)* or events in her life: the prophecy of Simeon (St. Luke 2:34, 35), the flight to Egypt (St. Matthew 2:13, 14), the loss of the Child Jesus in the temple (St. Luke 2: 43-45), the meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the taking down of the Body of Jesus from the Cross, and the burial of Jesus.

The Dolorosa has an important role during Holy Week. Hers is the main and last image presented during the Good Friday Procession. The fifth sorrow shows the suffering Christ and His mother meeting along the road to Calvary, a dramatic encounter almost synonymous to the penitential procession of the Way of the Cross. In Mogpog, Marinduque, this sad reunion is called *Pagtatagpo sa Amargura* (Meeting at Amargura). The place Amargura is associated with *pait* (bitterness), *hapis* (sorrow or grief), as opposed to Galilea that refers to a place of *tuwa* and *galak* (delight, joy). The meeting of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ would happen again at the Galilea, in the *salubong* during Easter Sunday. Before the sun rises on *Linggo ng Pagkabuhay* (Easter Sunday), the devotees convene in their respective parish churches to join two processions in celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Led by a parish priest, devotees carry or follow the *carrozas* (carriages, statues) of the Risen Christ and His grieving mother after which is a dramtatic reenactment of a mother and son reunion or the *salubong*.

The Bati in the Heart of the Philippines

In Boac, Marinduque,[2] local devotees serve as *nobisyo* and *nobisya* during the Lenten Season (see Figure 2). The *nobisyo/nobisya* (novice) is a male and female individual who devote himself/herself to church activities. They offer prayers to the Virgin Mary for forty days, commencing on Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter Sunday. Considered an expression of *panata* (vow), becoming a *nobisya/nobisyo* indicates a willingness to have a *panibagong buhay* (new life), particularly for those who seek forgiveness of their sins. The Catholic Church requires them to be *masunurin* (obedient),

Figure 2: *Nobisya* wearing white veil (Sidney Snoeck)

tapat (honest), *magalang* (courteous), and *marunong makisama* (adaptable, sociable), virtues they wish to emulate in the Virgin Mary.[3]

According to Senen Livelo, former Mayor of Mogpog, the tradition of *nobisya/nobisyo* is practiced there and nowhere else in the Philippines. As a beginner, a *nobisya/nobisyo* becomes a member of the *Hermanidad* (a group of male and female novices). Livelo recalls that as *nobisyo* in St. Isidore Parish, Mogpog town: "[A]ng belo ng Mahal na Birhen ay itim, lahat ay itim, tanda ng pagmamahal niyang ipagluksa 'yung kanyang anak" (...the veil of the Beloved Virgin is black, all too are black, a reminder of grief for her beloved Son) (S. Livelo, in-person interview, March 28, 2018). The *nobisyas* wear a veil for forty days. This helps them acquire a spiritual attitude in their devotion. This symbol is also called *inuwak,* from the color of *uwak* or crow. Commencing on Ash Wednesday, they wear black or the *inuwak* and join in prayers and church services from four in the morning until eight in the evening. No noise is allowed, no glance or looking back when praying,

cleaning, and housekeeping in the church premises. The novice experience is monastic; in other words, one needs attention and concentration in rendering services for the church.

The veil that novices wear has three buttons. The first button is to be opened on Holy Monday, the second on Holy Tuesday, and the third on Holy Wednesday, after Mass. The opening of the buttons is meant to signify success in their service as a novice. On Holy Thursday, the veil is replaced with a white towel, and afterwards with a *wagwag* or black lace. "*Wagwag* na" is an expression similar to "tapos na" (it is finished) and when announced means their service as a novice is ended. After this initiation, a *nobisya/o* can assume the role of *hermana/o.*

The role of *hermana/o* is crucial in assisting and planning the church activities of each parish in Marinduque especially during the Lenten season. In the town of Mogpog, a novice can be a *segunda maestra/o labandera/o* (second laundry teacher), or *segunda maestro/o custodera/o* (second housekeeping teacher). They can be promoted to *mayor/a,* then *primera maestro/o, asistente,* and finally to *hermana/o.* "Kasi pag maupo kang *hermana/o,* ay sampung taon. Gahintay ka ng sampung taon simula pag-nobisya/o mo. Kung nagnobisya ka ng seventy years old, eighty ka na mag-hermana," (You could be a *hermana/o* after ten years. You will wait ten years from when you began as a *nobisya/o.* If you began at 70 years old, then you'll be an *hermana/no* at 80) (S. Livelo, in-person interview, March 28, 2018). Thus, a congregation can also function as a kind of spiritual school to anyone, male or female, interested in serving the church, in teaching Catholic values, as exemplified by the Virgin Mary.

During Easter Sunday, and in the *salubong* performance, the *nobisya/o* is in charge of the *andas* (wagon) on which the Dolorosa stands. There are two processions: one in which female Catholic devotees led by the female *bati* dancer follow the Dolorosa; and two, one in which the male devotees, the twelve apostles, and the male *bati* dancer follow the risen Christ. From the church, at four in the morning, the procession splits in two and each taking a separate route but which eventually converge at the *galilea* located

near the *hermana/o*'s residence. The parish priest leads the procession. At the center of the *galilea* is an open space. The two groups wait on opposite sides. On one side, the risen Christ is accompanied by St. Peter, St. Jude, and other male saints. On the opposite side is the black-veiled Dolorosa, accompanied by St. Magdalene, St. Marta, and other female saints. At the *galilea*, devotees witness the *bati* dance, the dancers' dance of greeting that starts the *salubong*. Traditionally, there is only one pair dancing the *bati*, a female and a male dancer. The male dancer wears the traditional barong Tagalog while the female dancer wears a pink dress, a hat on her head. Both carry blue and pink flags to indicate the joyous nature of the dancers' movements.

As mentioned earlier, I have been part of the *salubong* tradition since 1996. I have taken the role of an angel and progressed to choreographing the *bati* dance. The following description of the *bati* is based on my 2011 choreography. Two pairs of female and male dancers wave flags as they initially greet each other and then dance for the Virgin Mary.[4] Accompanied by pre-recorded music in three-fourths beat, this particular *bati* consisted of such movement motifs as *step-step-step point*; *waltz: 1, 2, 3*; *step, brush-raise, step, step, step*; and *step, raise, step, step*. Core movement motifs are arm gestures of flag waving and walking variations as described below. These motifs are performed repetitively.

Motif	Timing/Counting (Foot)	Arm movement
a	step-step-step, point (pap-pap-pap, pah)	This movement motif opens the dance while they wave the flag from right to left and vice-versa.
b	waltz: 1, 2, 3 (pap, pap, pah)	Dancers execute waltz first to the right while the flag rests on their right arm (for females) or shoulder (for males).
c	step, brush-raise, step, step, step (pap-pah, pah, pah, pah)	Either the flag is waved or it rests on their shoulder / arm
d	step, raise, step, step (pap-pah, pah, pah)	As they raise their feet, the flag is raised as well

After the *bati,* the Virgin Mary and her Son go to the center, after which the parish priest gives a brief blessing.

While the angels sing, the *nobisyas/os* move and dance in front of the lead angel who showers the Virgin Mary with flowers. The lead angel, with two fingers, unveils the Virgin. As the angel is pulled up, so is the black veil lifted and replaced by a white one. This act symbolizes the shift in the Virgin's emotion from sorrow *(pighati)* to joy *(galak).* The devotees clap in celebration.

Bati Dance in the Art Capital of the Southern Tagalog Region

Angono is one of the municipalities of Rizal province. It is located 30 kilometers east of Manila and is considered part of the expanding region or sub-urban area connected to Metro Manila. A first class municipality, Angono has a booming economy and industry, thus its enactment of the *salubong* differs from that of Marinduque. In Angono, as in Marinduque, two processions end at the Galilea. The icon of the Resurrected Christ, accompanied by the parish priest, the *kapitana* (Denise Angelique de Mesa, at the time of field work) and the *tenyenta* (Shalen Tiamson Lising) follow behind the first procession that starts from the church (see Figures 3 and 4). The *Mahal na Birhen ng Pagbati at Pagkabuhay* (Beloved Virgin Mary of Greeting and Resurrection) (see Figure 5) with Maria Jacobe, Maria Salome, Maria Magdalena, and San Juan Evangelista follow behind the second procession which comes from *Poblacion Itaas* (the Upper Town).

The *salubong* performance[5] in Angono starts with the *bati*, the way of "Santinakpan" to greet the resurrection of "Dakilang Mananakop" (Tiamson-Rubin, 1992). The elaborately-gowned *tenyenta* executes the *bali*, a bending movement motif, a flag resting on her right arm, her left arm on her waist. Her torso (i.e., trunk, waist) bends sideways, to both the left and right. As she bends left-ward, she makes a half turn, counter-clockwise. As she bends toward the right, she makes a half turn, clock-wise. Again, the core movement motif *bali* (bend) is danced in *bati* repetitively in a soft and graceful manner. With her dance over, the *tenyenta* sits down, passing on the attention to the *kapitana* who recites the *dicho,* a local poetry of praise dedicated to the Virgin Mary. She delivers this through a seemingly melodic

Figure 3: 2018 *Kapitana* Denise Angelique de Mesa dancing the *bati* (Kapitana At Tenyenta ng Angono Rizal Facebook Page)

Figure 4: 2018 *Tenyenta* Shalen Tiamson Lising dancing the *bati* (Kapitana At Tenyenta ng Angono Rizal Facebook Page)

Figure 5: Mahal na Birhen ng Pagbati at Pagkabuhay (Rico Blanco)

pattern similar to the *loa* (poetic joust) tradition. The *kapitana* introduces the celebration in the constructed Galilea where Mother and Son meet. She acknowledges this mysterious moment when she herself meets the Virgin Mary. She then recites the following lines from the *dicho*:

Hayan nga si Hesus sa krus nabayubay
Sa maling paratang ng mga kaaway
Walang paniwalang templo'y igiba man
Muling mababuo sa ikatlong araw.
Natupad nga ito kaya't *nabuksan na*
Ang pinto ng langit dating nakasara
Maningning na anghel nanaog pagdaka
Nang upang aliwin may hapis na Ina. (Tandang Juancho and Tandang Mariano Medina cited in Tiamson-Rubin, 1992)

When the *kapitana* utters the word "nabuksan na," (it is revealed) the spectacle unfolds as the hanging teardrop-shaped flower opens. A unique feature of the Galilea is this structure similar in shape to a banana heart or blossom (see Figure 6). The angel reveals himself to the *Birhen sa Bati* and to all the devotees present. The devotees express their joy through *whoas, wows*, *woes,* and claps. Through a song from an angel, the sorrowful Mary is reminded that her Son has risen.

The angel is accompanied by a music band under the baton of one of the following masters: Lucio D. San Pedro, Lt. Col. Juan Petiza or Nonoy Diestro (when they were still alive), Manuel S.P. Bautista, and Lt. Col. Fulgencio Gragera. The angel sings *Regina Coeli* as the banana heart is lowered, and then showers the Dolorosa with glittering confetti.

Figure 6: Rosario Miranda Sison (Sison Family, Angono)

Finally, the angel unveils the Virgin Mary, after which the *kapitana* dances the *bati*.

Dancing to *gavotte* music, the *kapitana* executes the *bali* movement motif repeatedly. Even if the *tenyenta* and *kapitana* have the same choreographic movement, the tempo of the music is livelier in the *kapitana's bati*. It is also important to note that as the *kapitana* dances, so does the Virgin Mary and her Son. The *kapitana* kneels to end the *bati* dance, her arms spread sideways, in her right hand, the *bandera* (flag).

Corporealities and Spatialities: *Bati* as Dancerly Movement

This section explains how the *bati* movement becomes a dancerly attitude which is linked as social and cultural medium with the actual dancing bodies (i.e. corporeality) that are historically situated, contextualized, and time-dependent (i.e., spatiality). Corporeality refers to dancing in relation to the bodies choreographing and enacting the movement. Spatiality refers to dancing in relation to the place, space, and even the time and duration of a dance.

I explore the dimensions of bodily attitude, spatial attitude, physical attitude, and affective attitude in relation to the *bati* dances narrated earlier. These four dimensions of dancerly attitude are interwoven and should be understood in a holistic way. Bodily attitude is the quality of body movement danced in a given time and space. Its manner of moving is affected by a given context and situation, such as the *salubong* event, the veneration to the Virgin or the presence of Dolorosa, and the Lenten season. I relate this religious context to Resil Mojares' "Catechisms of the Body" (2002), which specifies and captures the mediation of the past narrative on Catholic religious practice with the present dancing of the *bati*. Mojares looks at the representations of the body in books of conduct at the time of Spanish colonization. He focuses on how Filipino bodies, especially those of women and children, were culturally fabricated via the literary texts published in the nineteenth century. These books of conduct became the basis of how Spain's colonial subjects saw and understood their bodies.

The successful enactment of a dance is enhanced by physical or material requirements, such as the regalia, flags, costumes (since the event is special), accompanying music, the performance site, and other properties. Finally, the motivation or intention of the dance can be felt through its affective attitude, which conditions the entire performance.

That performance becomes specific through the association of the *salubong* event with the *nobisya/o,* church servants, such as in Boac, Marinduque. The practice of having a couple dancing the *bati* is reminiscent of the *nobisya/nobisyo* tradition described earlier. It recalls the rigid division between men and women. As described earlier, the *nobisyos,* apostles, the statues of male saints, and the male *bati* dancer follow behind the icon of the resurrected Christ, while the *nobisyas,* the statues of female saints, and the female *bati* dancer are behind the sorrowful Mary in the Easter Sunday procession.

The *nobisya/nobisyo* are like the "*cofradias, seminaries, and beaterios*" of the Spanish colonial period. These are "voluntary associations of lay men and women for the practice of piety and works of charity", which Mojares describes as sodalities "designed to foster a consciousness of Christian community [while they] also worked as instruments for surveillance" (p. 179). *Nobisyas* are similar to the *beatas* ("blessed women"), *terciarias* (tertiaries), or *mantelatas* ("veiled women") (p.180). They go through a novitiate and take simple vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Their manner of dressing is regulated and includes headdresses like *inuwak* and *wagwag*, and simple, modest, long dresses or skirts.

Because of its religious premise, the *bati*'s dance movement is not natural movement or the movement of the everyday. To recall Karoblis, dancerly movement is distinguished from the natural or ordinary, and in contrast, the *bati* can be understood as "new" in the bodily flow of its dancers. Since the *bati*'s movements are unnatural and unfamiliar, it is a necessity for dancers to undergo performance processes—from the pre-*salubong* event or the rehearsal process, various previews, the post-*salubong*

(in the case of the *kapitana* and the *tenyenta*), and more importantly, the main dance event.

The unfamiliarity of the movement is addressed through a series of dance learning situations. Dance teachers, choreographers, or any person in charge of creating a dance's structure contribute to dancerly attitude, particularly to the dimensions of the bodily and the affective attitudes. It is their understanding of and sensitivity to body stances, rhythm, gestures, speech patterns (in the case of the *kapitana* and *tenyenta*), expected emotions, and the aura, that draw out the affective intention of the dance, which is, to celebrate Christ's resurrection and, consequently, the Virgin Mary's sorrow transformed into joy.

To exemplify the *bati* as a dancerly movement, I coin the term "dancerly attitudes of conduct" to refer to bodily or kinesthetic learnings of the *bati.* In Boac, Marinduque, Illuminada Nepomuceno, a retired public school music teacher, supervised directly the learning of the *bati* movement. She taught me the *sayaw ng bati* even before I came in as an angel. Female and male dancers practised with her even as they sought advice from their elders, most significantly from the parish priest. Nepomuceno or "Lola Lumen" was known to be a very strict teacher, influenced as she was by Catholic teachings and her dedication in serving the Church. She passed away in 2017.

Two *bati* dancers, Miriam Miciano and Ian Miciano, share their experiences with Lola Lumen while they learned and danced in [sic] the *salubong* dance event. Miriam Miciano reminisces: "In [sic] my point of view, it is the traditional Maria Clara, the conservative, then modest [or ladylike], especially with the male (eyes should have un-direct gaze) partner, sometimes on the floor but still smiling or sometimes to the audience, then controlled actions (smaller and poised). It should be graceful but still controlled. [Maria Clara is the] epitome of Mama Mary[6] because her image of being soft-spoken and humble." (M. Miciano, e-mail interview, March 18, 2015)

I reiterate the description "epitome of Mama Mary" (Virgin Mary) as a particular narrative to help explain my concept of "dancerly attitudes of conduct". Body orientation and movement qualities merge or conflate with residue of the Spanish colonial project of *urbanidad*, discipline, and containment. Interestingly, Miciano's account is similar to one of the rules of conduct mentioned in *Urbana at Feliza,* a book of conduct written by Modesto de Castro in 1864: "Walking in a studied manner is not appropriate, nor is provocatively swaying the hips nor coyly glancing at a young man proper, because a woman will be faulted for breach of decorum" (Reyes, 1999, pp. 3-29).

As Ian Miciano, a male *bati* dancer expressed, "[A]dvice from the late grandmother Luming [Lumen] Nepomuceno who taught me the dance was to fix form and footwork ... the footwork is brisk, but the rest of the body should be graceful. The hands, the waving of the flag, should be a bit faster but refined.... [The movement] represents a sacred feminine figure, so it should really be refined and graceful. [We are supposed to be] meeting with her Son so [the movement] should be joyful and lively (that is why it has to be brisk) but the grace should be there too because the dancers embody the holy personages" (I. Miciano, e-mail interview, March 18, 2015). In other words, the Virgin Mary's virtues, as illustrated in her placidity and sweetness, and the *nobisya's* virtues of *masunurin* (obedience), *tapat* (honesty), and *magalang* (courteousness) inform the dancers' ways, attitudes, and disposition during the dance event. These particular manners of conduct were converted or translated into bodily attitudes in dancing the *bati*.

Like the couple dancing the *bati* in Marinduque, the *tenyenta* and *kapitana* mirror and symbolize the attributes of the Virgin Mary—*babaeng matimtiman* (decorous woman), *maganda* (beautiful), *matapat* (honest), *marunong* (wise), and *malinis* (clean), as described in the *dicho*. Martha Vitor-de Borja (popularly known as *Tiya Marta*) (M. Vitor-de Borja, in-person interview, March 12, 2016), who has taught the *bati* for more than 60 years, notes that the idea of this dancing was initiated by Tandang Apang, and with

Tandang Juan Petiza providing the music. The *tenyenta* and *kapitana* were assigned the role based on attitude: "ngunit pili lamang ang nakakapasok sa pintuan ng debosyon at ito'y ang mga babaeng taglay ang birtud ni Birheng Maria—dalisay sa pagiging mabuti, masunurin, at handang maglingkod" (only a selected few can be part of this devotion, only women who embody the virtues of the Virgin Mary—unconditional goodness, obedience, and ready service) (Zarate, 2012, p. 101). In other words, to take on *tenyenta* and *kapitana* roles can be regarded as dedication and service to the Virgin Mary. As Jovita Zarate reiterates, "ang katawan ay kadluan at daluyan ng simbolismo ng diskursong Katoliko, sa partikular sa debosyon sa Birheng Maria. Itinalaga ang koryograpiya upang taglayin nito ang representasyon ng babaeng mayumi, marikit, banayad ang kalooban, kung paano sa tulang dicho ang babaeng nagdurusa't ngunit sa kalaunan ay mapagtatagumpayan ang pighati at mararating ang luwalhating pangako ng Diyos" (the body is a vessel of symbols related to the Catholic discourse, in particular the devotion to the Virgin Mary. The choreography considers the representation of a woman as tender, graceful, has a gentle will, it captures attributes from the *dicho* which describes a woman who suffers but later on conquers difficulties and would be able to find God's glory) (Zarate, 2012, p. 167).

The physical or material requirements of the *bati* dance in Angono and Boac vary. The town of Boac in Marinduque exemplifies a more traditional and conventional attitude to practicing the Salubong and enacting the *bati* dance. Unlike Boac town, because of its proximity to Metro Manila, Angono's practice of the *bati* converges the local with the metropolis. Angono's sensibility and attributes of "modern" are evident in the components of the dance, including the dressing engagements, the live band, and the spectacular *galilea*, the highlight of which is its birdlike flight-mechanism. Accordingly, in Angono, the *bati* as dancerly movement, also possessing the same nature of the *salubong* event, is a "spin-off" of Catholic literature or Scripture, as Doreen Fernandez (1996) explains,[7] highlighting the local people's profuse devotional expression. Thus, the *bati* in Angono expanded the quality of dancerly attitude of conduct to the point of "creative

refashioning" or which, according to sociologist Manuel Victor Sapitula (2014), "enables religious beliefs and practices to respond to the exigencies of modernity" (p. 415). Responding to the demands of contemporary ways of thinking and living, Angono's creative refashioning can be seen in the *bati*'s rehearsals and dressing engagements.

Angono's *salubong* tradition is unique in its inclusion of multiple rehearsal engagements before the main event. I wish to highlight a specific attitude in their *bati* dance of the *tenyenta* and *kapitana*. At present, the *tenyenta* and the *kapitana* can wear different sets of gowns for the following dancing engagements: *Harap sa Banda* (Facing the Band, for Palm Sunday); *Unang Panaog* (First Descent, Holy Monday); *Ikalawang Panaog* (Second Descent, Holy Tuesday); *Salubong* (The Meeting/Greeting, for Easter Sunday, the main event at 4 a.m.); *Bunutan* (Sortition, for Easter Sunday, 8 p.m., after the last Mass). The *tenyenta* and *kapitana* should exhibit their mastery of the *bati* dance during these occasions. In attendance in these dancing engagements are the former *tenyenta* and *kapitana,* representatives of the church, band members and their maestro, and the devotees. Live band members are included in the six rehearsals.

Because the *tenyenta* and the *kapitana* are expected to shoulder all expenses, those who choose to participate predictably belong to a particular socioeconomic class. Carmelita Sison (C. Sison, in-person interview, September 2, 2018) shares a photograph of her sister-in-law, Rosario Miranda Sison who once was a *kapitana* (see Figure 6). Sison is wearing a simple *balintawak* dress, the same dress worn for various *bati* engagementss. Ligaya Tiamson-Rubin (L. Tiamson-Rubin, e-mail interview, April 15, 2017) recalls that in 1948, when Feliciana Gragera Alcantara (or Tiya Piling) was a *tenyenta*, Lelong[8] Bentong had to sell one carabao to buy her a set of *saya* (long skirt) and shoes. Similarly, Eric Bautista, from barangay San Roque, supported his niece who needed gowns for five special occasions. He admitted that one gown may have cost him thirty to forty thousand (Philippine) pesos. During the *Bunutan* program, Denise Angelique de Mesa, Kapitana 2018, began her final message by referring to her dream

of participating in a beauty pageant. To her, dancing for the Virgin Mary was comparable to being a beauty queen. Her final words of gratitude and farewell resembled the final bow of a beauty queen before she hands the crown to the next *kapitana*.

Aside from the *tenyenta* and *kapitana*, the Virgin Mary herself changes dresses for numerous engagements for various occasions. According to Eric Bautista who dresses the *Birhen sa Bati,* these occasions include the town fiesta, the Christmas season, Holy Week, and other important events in Angono. Adonis, a famous designer in the town, is hired to create new sets of clothing for her. Photographs of the *kapitana* and *tenyenta* juxtaposed with the *Birhen sa Bati* would suggest that dressing engagement is part of their dancerly attitude (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). These multiple rehearsals and dressing engagements can be considered as another element of a dancerly attitude peculiar in Angono's practice of *salubong* exhibited in the *bati* movement. While the initial motivation is to praise the *Birhen sa Bati,* the *kapitana* and *tenyenta* also own their roles by giving the most they can give in five to six dancing engagements from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. Taking into account the local initiative and the creative devotional expressions as exemplified by Tandang Apang Gil and Tiya Martha, propagators of the *bati* tradition, I note that these dressing engagements can be an additional element of the *bati* dancerly attitude of Angono.

Conclusion

In *Figuring Catholicism,* Julius Bautista (2010) examines the Santo Niño both as tangible and metaphorical icon. "Figuring" in this sense is a "way in which an ensemble of ideas about the Santo Niño recur repeatedly in the cultural and historical portraits people paint of and for themselves" (p. 3). In doing so, he proceeds to an understanding of how ideas about the Santo Niño have acquired religious authority from the Roman Catholic Church and enjoyed enormous reception. Similarly, this article engages the general narrative of Marian devotion and the processes in which the Virgin Mary has been figured as a revered icon. This article hopes to contribute to the existing

literature on the important role of the Virgin Mary in Philippine culture and society through the analysis of dance and its performative elements. In focusing on the actual dancing as basis of analysis, I am reminded of how dance scholar Janet Adshead (1988) postulates on parameters that define the conceptual structures of movements in dance. She says, dance analysis is "a process of providing structure for the knowledge that is needed to frame interpretations and increases the possibility of becoming imaginatively and creatively involved in a work" (p. 12). This analysis includes a *minutely detailed examination* of its parts; a *synthesis* of the results of detailed observation with contextual knowledge; and, the processes of *interpreting* and *evaluating* the dance. She also emphasizes interpretation and evaluation, which include the understanding of the qualities of the dance that might be ascribed in connection to its character and treatment.

Finally, this article expounds on the various aspects of the *bati* movement and its realizations. From a phenomenological inquiry, I incorporated dance anthropology in the understanding of dancerly attitude, placing value on Grau's position on the significance of situated-ness of dance and dancing, hence also on corporealities and spatialities. It is thus important to take into account how a given religious narrative and context such as the Marian veneration composes and choreographs the *bati* and, in return, how the celebrative reason in reenacting the *salubong* motivates and shapes dancerly attitude. All of these inform the impetus of the dance event common to both Angono, Rizal and Boac, Marinduque. As historical context, the *bati* also has a dancerly attitude of conduct because of the conflation of the past narrative on Spanish colonization as seen through the *nobisya/o* congregation in Boac, Marinduque. Moreover, there are peculiar nuances in the practice in Angono, Rizal as the locals themselves respond to the dynamic and changing landscape of their town, exhibited through the physical or material necessities of the *salubong* event.

The exploration of how the *bati* in Marinduque and Rizal has raised some elaborations of the dancerly attitude and shows a potential framework for dance within the context of Marian devotion. Again, dancerly attitude

can be approached through the elicitation of intertwined attitudes—the bodily attitudes and the affective, spatial, and the physical dimensions of dance and dancing.

Notes

1. The *balintawak* dress has a shortened skirt, with puffy butterfly short sleeves, plaid textile, and low cut bodice and at times plenty of ornate embroidery.
2. The province of Marinduque is known as the "Heart of the Philippine Islands" as it is considered the geographical center of the Philippine archipelago by the Luzon Datum of 1911, the recognized mother of all Philippine geodetic surveys.
3. This information is from the Parish of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Torrijos, Marinduque.
4. Watch a video documentation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1F6zT4wuQU.
5. Watch Salubong performance in Angono at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QnMv-Ptny8; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMJURAlRszk; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1N_ZG1IL6c; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5qa08X4xL8&t=12s. The videos document Ma. Reliza Chua and Aiza Lising as *tenyenta* and *kapitana,* respectively.
6. Maria Clara is a fictional character in a novel *Noli Me Tangere* (1887). The author, Philippine national hero Jose Rizal characterized her as a soft, obedient, and quiet woman.
7. Doreen Fernandez (1996) describes the *Salubong* as "dramas that are not called for in the liturgy, but are spin-offs from it or from Scripture " (p. 169) Fernandez cites this from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (originally in Latin, 1541) which says, "He appeared to the Virgin Mary. This, although it is not said in Scripture, is included in saying that He

> appeared to so many others, because Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written: "Are you also without understanding?" (1996, p. 169)

8. "Lelong" means grandfather

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