

Philippine Underground Literature: Backgrounding Marginality, Foregrounding Identity

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The author attempts to analyze the aspects of the politics of self-representation in Philippine underground writings and how these legitimize and problematize the struggle for national liberation. Underground writings are the literature and writings of the underground national democratic movement, specifically those of the Communist Part of the Philippines (CPP), National Democratic Front (NDF), and the New People's Army (NPA). Underground writings challenge the structures that have exploited the masses such as American imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. They also provide a source of a cultural identity and a voice for the disenfranchised and disempowered. However, there could be multiplicities of reading of Philippine underground writings. The author suggests a reading that allows the voices layered within marginalities such as displaced genders, geographies, ethnicities and religions be represented in the power structure. Other configurations of the power structure must come in to play and the politics of the underground writings must be repositioned, not negated, in this configuration to bring identities to the foreground. Only when boundaries are stirred and other voices considered can there be a more productive construction of marginalized identities.

The Site of Margins and Marginality

The margins have always been the site of refusal, the site of resistance. This is one strategy for identity formation, another strategy is to work within the system as a kind of homeopathy—to use the system to paralyze itself. Both strategies act as countervailing factors to the weight of the center. Richard Ferguson writes, "as historically marginalized groups insist on their own identity, the deeper structural indivisibility of the so-called center becomes harder to sustain."¹ Marginality, thus, is in itself ineffective if it remains precisely in that location, the margins. Marginality has to be backgrounded, a certain identity foregrounded to function as a political force that the ruling system cannot choose to ignore. And through repetition and innovation, this becomes a marginality that, in some relational terms, can choose to ignore the very ruling system it opposes as it defines its own trajectory of development.

The operation of foregrounding and backgrounding is generally dubious because it creates structures that privilege and negate—in backgrounding literature and culture by groups that foreground change

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(say, groups which themselves are backgrounded compared to the foregrounded politicking of the status quo), the totalizing structuralizations prevail, although not wholly. The operation, however, becomes significant when put in the light of a continuous flux of decentering, whereby borders of the center and margins are voided and go into constant interrogation, where positions lead to other shifting of positions. There is no need to fear that this endless shifting is going to be perennial. The productive aspect of decentering and sliding is the opening up of an emancipatory space that reviews possibilities for locating other relational positions in the margin, a basis for the solidarity of the margins.

Within the margins, difference comes into strategic play through an acknowledgement of difference-in-identity and a tolerance for identity-in-difference. This is to say that within identity lays a difference of subject positions that can locate a more productive position in the empowerment of the margins. Difference works at three levels: between the binary center and margin, between marginal groups, and between positionalities within a marginal group. Identity-in-difference refers to the latter two levels where the potential for bonding works more significantly than those set by the homogenizing operations of binary opposition. To work in difference is not adversarial nor to work in identity is homogenizing. To work in difference and identity is to realize the play of heterogeneous possibilities and possible heterogeneity of related positionalities.

Identity is emphasized here to mean a matter of subjectivity, how socio-economic and political forces constitute the individual or collective consciousness. It refers to the ideal by which the individual or community imagines itself to uphold. Individual and collective actions then are made to work towards this ideal. Identity, however, is not to be understood in terms of universalism and humanism, or in its adjunct binary, essentialism. To locate identity politics is to account and historicize the factors and conditions that have hegemonized identity to the side of the dominant structure of power on one hand, and that have, in turn, provided potentials for resistance and emancipation of other identities by marginalized groups on the other hand. Identity is compounded by contradictions which are not only resolved but are further exposed. Contradictions become the site for the circulation of meanings.

Itself in the margins, Philippine underground writings provide a relief by which to review other positions of marginality on one hand, and,

therefore, other positions from which to interrogate the construction of knowledge on the other hand. Primarily proclaiming the issue of class as differentiation in Philippine society, underground writings, taken as cultural metaphor, mediate between the general construction of knowledge, and how marginal positions might be able to decenter this construction. A discourse of underground writings provides a view by which the play of exclusion and inclusion, appropriation and reappropriation, territorialization and deterritorialization come into the fore. Realizing the link between various positions of marginality within one's own marginality, and the interrelatedness and difference of positions of marginalities may eventually lead to a discourse of bondedness, which, in turn, may lead to a discourse of identity politics—if not, politics itself—that further enables the margins to effectively grapple with the structures of power and culture.

If literature is a vehicle for cultural self-representation, "Philippine cultural identity" can give more than an idea of the many "Philippines" fragmentarily represented in Philippine literatures² that lie in the minds of communities of people. Because the Philippines has never imagined itself as a nation except through totalitarian means and views (as in Marcos' New Society with one of the mottos, "isang bansa, isang diwa" (one country, one consciousness), there are as many Philippines as there are as many communities that imagine the Philippines. The more successful imagination of a homogeneous Philippine nation were during the heights of great nationalist consciousness—during the 1896 Revolution, the February 1986 Uprising, and 2001 EDSA 2. On the one hand, the present neocolonial relation of the Philippines and the United States, or of other industrialized nations has erected meta-mythology of the nation, the margins have provided a counter-claim to this imagination.

The margins, however, need to be demassified into historicized, contextualized and specific communities. And within each community, various sectors are likely to imagine—by foregrounding and backgrounding images and narratives of nationhood—different versions of the Philippines. To imagine nationhood is to imagine several communities imagining nations. This is not to say that we (the Philippines) is not yet a nation, it has already been historically and juridically marked as one, which posits another site for repositioning if not collapsing boundaries. It is to say that our concept of the Philippines—its identities—remain in a flux of singular and multiple inter- and intra- local, regional, national and global political,

economic and cultural imperatives. This further is compounded by a matrix of race and ethnicity, class and lifestyle, gender and sexual preference, generation and age, physically and mentally challenged, weight and height among other categorizations and contingencies.

Resituating Philippine Underground Writings

Inversely, the dynamics of imagination of a "Philippines" in the landscape of underground writings can give an idea of a Philippine cultural identity. Underground writings as source of a cultural identity provides a functional intersection in the flux of positionalities that explore a play of meanings. It allows for the "investigating [of] those aspects of the circulation of meanings which might function as a de-stabilizing force in society and act as an agent of change."³ Since recentering a subject and a culture implies bringing them from the margins to the center, the discourse of Philippine underground writings is placed at the intersection of critique and complicity with the structures it attempts to overturn when necessary, and assimilate when it becomes vital.⁴ This paper analyzes some aspects of the politics of self-representation in Philippine underground writings, proposing a paradigm shift from the oftentimes marginal portrayal of underground writings—clearing areas by which one may ask how one speaks for oneself and for others, how one constructs "structures of feeling,"⁵ how identity is represented in the foregrounding of underground writings, how underground writings legitimize and problematize the struggle for *national* liberation.

Philippine underground writings are the literature and writings of the underground national democratic movement; specifically, they are the writings produced in the struggle for national liberation by the mass base and organizations of the Communist Party of the Philippines, National Democratic Front and the New People's Army. I stress writings because most underground literature that are produced are oral; and because of conditions of revolution and counter-revolution that make documentation of the oral improbable, writings have become the more convenient resource for academics. In practical terms, however, underground writings are generally characterized by its relation to the state, that which is subversive and in its subversiveness, at its minimum, is liable for arrest and detention via Marcos' notorious PDA (Presidential Detention and Arrest order) or Aquino's Supreme Court-validated "warrantless arrest." This scope, however, has a flaw: when the military conducts raids on

suspected safehouses or arrests suspected communists, for example, every text found in possession are considered "subversive"—from accounting books to scribbles in cigarette foils, from Constantino's history books to Amado Guerrero's *Philippine Society and Revolution*.

Underground writing therefore provides a relational discourse with above-ground writing. Not merely reacting to above-ground writing, underground writing challenges the very structures that make above-ground writing dominant. It provides an opposition to above-ground writings, both in terms of ideology and mode of production. The very concept of literature as we know it—being elitist, element of leisure, bourgeoisie perspective, western-oriented forms, for example—are disputed by underground writings. However, underground writing is also made possible by above-ground writing and structures. The liberal academe has allowed the publication, dissemination, research and teaching of underground writing. Legal mass actions have also used underground themes and writings in their programs.

What therefore characterize underground writings? Underground writer and critic Kris Montanez writes, "The new mass art and literature in the Philippines today are part and parcel of the national democratic revolution being waged by the Filipino people against US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. As a cultural weapon, they aim at advancing the armed struggle and agrarian revolution in the countryside, the urban strike movement, and the national united front founded on the basic alliance of the worker and peasant classes, the most numerous segment of the population and the most oppressed in a semicolonial and semifeudal society such as the Philippines."⁶ Montanez clearly defines Philippine underground writings as axiomatic to the struggle for national liberation.

Gelacio Guillermo is more specific; timeliness (created for a particular mass action for a pressing national or local issue); oral (given new usage and meaning to conform with the present needs of the masses and the revolution); concrete (based on the masses' experiences in their mass work over a long period of time); simple (literature that is easily understood yet with a firm rootedness of an understanding of characters, events, conditions, processes and problems of those transpiring and prevailing in the lives of people and society); educational (instrument for political education in ways that highlight key points and also to prevent

boredom among audience of the working masses); shaping new system of values (e.g. discipline, women, sacrifice and death, relationships, etc.); comprehensive (describes, analyzes, summarizes the experiences, situations, problems as experienced by the writer); and testimonial (a revolutionary's narration of his/her experiences in the struggle).⁷ What Guillermo succeeds in doing is to reaffirm the role of underground writings to the revolutionary practice, as writing and the carrying out of a revolution are integrated entities or one subsumed to the bigger, more pivotal task of revolutionary work.

To understand underground writings is to understand the underground movement, for it is said that only in the politics of the underground movement can one know of the politics of underground writings. The politics become the beckoning space by which to know underground writings. And where does this politics emanate? It is from the politics of the status quo that have so characterized the social in Philippine society. That this politics, in turn, triggered a counter-politics that led to the eventual reconstitution and redefinition of the CPP, is it not the politics of reversal made to work which proved timely and may prove limited in a shifting of positionalities?

This is not to state that only those in the underground movement can understand underground writings. This may be generated from the process of creative production of underground writings. Since the main audience of the underground writings are those in the underground and above-ground people's movements, there seems to be an apparent lack of criticism from the outside. This organicity of underground writings makes it prone to criticism of parochiality and even self-righteousness. However, this is only a myopic view of criticism in general to further marginalize underground writings. From my end, the self-sustaining production of underground writings provides the basic grid to analyze this literature. Only when this is mapped out can productive rereadings of underground writings be realized.

The term "underground" is a political term. It seeks to overthrow the above-ground structures through a systematic consciousness-raising, organizing and mobilization of the masses. It's solidarity with the above-ground movement is through people and non-governmental organizations. Thus, lumpenic or syndicated "underground" organizations do not quite fit the definition. Nor do organizations that choose to become above-

ground, like the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), remain part of the underground movement. Thus, underground writing is part of the consciousness-raising, organizing and mobilization of the masses. It is part of a people's program carried out by organizations under the National Democratic Front. Writings produced has undergone a consultative process. This characteristic differentiates the underground writings from other writings produced by earlier socialist organizations or present organizations espousing to splinter the CPP. Earlier socialist organizations have failed to reach the larger masses at the present times. Other splinter groups of the CPP have produced little writings or have no agenda for literature and culture in their present programs. What literature is produced by other "underground" organizations provides a discursive fold in the CPP's own production of underground writings.

The CPP and NPA have always been considered as subversive organizations even though founded prior to martial law, and precisely prior to martial law. For the state, the old CPP and its army the Hukbalahap, the Socialist parties and the Katipunan were considered destabilizing forces; as such, any purveyor of destabilization or potential to destabilize is negated as underground. The declaration of martial law formalized the "underground," by marking what used to be contingent the formal relationship between the state and the underground movement. And when martial law was declared in 1972, most legal or above-ground national democratic organizations, forced by conditions, went underground, marked themselves as "underground." This is what I mean by 'formalized the underground: to use the term "underground" as the substantiating element of the people's movement. This is something undone during the formation of the Katipunan or the struggle against the American occupation—"underground" or "andergrawnd" was not an overt declaration of resistance. To this day, the 13 organizations that comprise the National Democratic Front, the united front arm of the revolutionary movement, have remained underground. It was only during the respite of the post-EDSA Uprising that led to the short-lived peace talks with the Aquino administration that made above-ground personalities of underground personalities—the above-ground allotting a space for the underground, the underground acceding at first then rejecting in the immediate period such contained space. Thereafter, the only moments the underground movement became above-ground were, on one hand, in media's attempts to mark the erasure of the underground left by focusing on the rifts within, such as expose of the "deworming" of

infiltrators in Southern Luzon and Mindanao, and the publicity campaign in the above-ground by sections of the CPP, and on the other hand, in the sympathetic media's attempt to prove the continuing presence of the underground movement, such as commentaries and rephrasing of positions from underground groups over specific issues.

This is also the dominant mode by which underground writings are to be experienced and understood. Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought—that underscores national liberation—is the dominant ideology of Philippine underground writings. The imperative drive for Philippine underground writings remains rooted in the underground triple dialectical politics: imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism. The emergent in Philippine underground writings remains in a movement. There is a politicized utopian vision in the literary images of red skies, clenched fists, barrels of guns: the promise of a national democratic future as dealt in socialism by most middle and upper-class writers and in communalism by most working class writers. How does one explain the "difference" of the utopian promise? Raymond Williams has emphasized that the epochal modes of production continue to evolve in the present uneven development of societies.

Locating and projecting a society that has yet to come, that has been represented in the western media as doomed to failure, that has been articulated in western cultural theory as another grand epistemological and apocalyptic narrative, is a complex issue. One struggles with and for a promise; one lives and explores two models—a violently naturalized situation of the present, and an egalitarian society of the future achieved through revolutionary means. Violence marks the real and the utopic. Everyday life, after all, is marred in violence, culminating in class violence for the promise of an end to violence. Dying and death become metaphors for revolutionary use of violence—mainly to transform grief into revolutionary courage and militant unity. As one is diminished by a comrade's death, as in Servando Magbanua's "Poem Written Beside a Peasant Comrade's Grave on the First Anniversary of His Death,"⁶ one needs this operation as a coping mechanism to survive and continue with the struggle. More importantly, writing is used to mediate this grief for revolutionary transformation. The writer-revolutionary grapples with new experiences using the language of discourse and the discourse of language.

Such is the fate of the subject engaged in underground work—expected to always be politically astute, as one simultaneously lives and traverses “two worlds,” a double effort in construction and deconstruction: the present oppressive order which the revolutionary wishes to overturn, and the future equitable order which the revolutionary wishes to construct. Through an emphasis in revolutionary ethics of work and discipline, the revolutionary is simultaneously positioned in the tasks of toppling the “semi-feudal and semi-colonial” Philippines, and building a national democratic society in its place. In underground writings, the subject is a hybrid identity not only capable of simultaneously living in these “two worlds.” More so, the hybrid identity is capable of struggling against the present imperatives through an ability for multiple subject positions. In the “Guerilla is Like a Poet” by Jose Ma. Sison,⁹ a revolutionary must assume two potentialities (guerilla and poet), work within two terrains (the forest/mountains and the sympathetic legal apparatuses like the academe), to be ambiguous and precise, to bear witness to the people’s epic and the people’s war.

In the underground movement, however, to be marked or to mark oneself as “underground” is to assume a dual personality. One works from the underground and above-ground positions—to be competent in two levels of struggle, strategy and tactics. On the one hand, this dual positionality, however, is not emplaced as a requirement to those on the above-ground other than for counter-insurgency operations. On the other hand, such duality for the underground movement, however, can also prove inexhaustible because of the available limited resources for an unlimited enterprise of revolutionary work.

There ensues a consequential bogging down of the operation of the underground and above-ground opposition, and consequently, of underground writings so fitted in the politics of this operation. The failure stems from the privileging status given to time—its temporality and historicization that mark a static homogenization, ironically, of time. The agents by which these have been privileged are, in turn, reciprocally marked by the privileging of class as differentiation, and revolution as an equivalence to this differentiation. The underground/above-ground dichotomy is historical, centripetally engulfed in narrativizing its own worldview. In breaking from the narrative of the status quo, the underground movement has created a counter-narrative, assigning new roles to the disempowered and disenfranchised majority, and creating self-conscious

subjects united in sharing and sacrifice. The counter-narrative proved capable of demystifying the workings of the narrative of the center for the time the center chose to tell this version of its narrative. But the center too moves in a flux, the so-called center always maneuvering to be somewhere else.

Subversion is time-bound. What is subversive today may not be subversive in some future periods. In Philippine underground writings, the "revolutionariness" is overt: the revolution being waged becomes the very context of the underground text. For in underground writings, it is in the character of a revolution that any definition of cultural identity can be conceptualized. As underground writings have attempted to conjure a history of national struggle by linking the 1896 Revolution to the present revolution the movement has continued to wage, so has it also instilled this transformative struggle and redemption as the cornerstone of its "national consciousness." The problematics remain and has to be settled, if not again decentered. For layers of silenced voices still remain. Philippine underground writings have spoken for most but not for all.

It is in the spatial plane that underground writings can continue to retain and innovate its own subversion. The space calls into a fold the voices within—voices that the center has yet to hear from and hence to subjugate in its dominance—and thus, counter-interests and counter-claims from within that are articulated by these voices. If the counter-narrative of the underground movement has endeavored to fully realize a promise, it is not to say that the potential and need for *intra-change* within the underground movement have, thus, remained backgrounded, if not altogether negated. Where lies the hope of foregrounding? It is in the space that creates other narratives—narratives of otherness and bondedness—conducting and allowing voices to speak and to be heard—even though these voices are uncertain of what they have to say—for otherwise, these voices will never be able to speak at all. It is in this space that allows other spaces for the othered other's narratives to unfold.

Multiplicity of Readings in Philippine Underground Writings

The spatial plane provides a flowing over and erasure of boundaries by admixing otherness without creating otherizations. It is in this innovative plane that one can refigure structures of feeling, structures by which to textualize and contextualize experience in the flux of historical

struggle, revolutionary practice and the simultaneity of living in "two worlds" on one hand, and in the allocation of new spaces for the re-reading the text, for the hearing of other voices within one's marginality, for the positioning of otherness with other configurations, on the other hand. This refiguring of the structures of feeling necessitates three interrelated shiftings of position: a reading position of writing, a transsubjectivity of marginality, and an intertextuality of identity.

Underground writing has narrativized the mode of reading itself—that it is to be taken as auxiliary to the bigger context of the underground movement, and its revolutionary production and reading of underground writings under the guidance of the underground movement. One may still read this formulation as rigid, for possibly negating the contradictions within specific works that raise the point how may underground writings subvert the underground movement. There is danger to this kind of recourse because a work is inevitably positioned for the body of underground writings; therefore, a work is made to speak for the epistemology of underground writings. This has already been the fascination of most projects done in graduate work in the liberal arts and literature departments. There is, thus, a need to reposition one's mode of reading the writing by exploring the aspect of transsubjectivity of marginality and the intertextuality of identity. On the one hand, the former emphasizes a reading of underground writings that allows the voices layered within one's own marginality to speak and to be heard—how might the voices of other displaced genders, geographies, ethnicities and religions be represented within the "power structures" of underground writings. Exclusion is also part of the text, absence also reinscribes the text; as such how might the displaced others in underground literature be reinscribed as a way of reading, and as a way of discerning other marginal identities. Underground writings already remain in the margins; to negate the polyphony of voices within underground writings is to reproduce the oppressive hierarchization that has positioned underground writings in the margins.

Intertextuality of identity, on the other hand, emphasizes a reading of underground writings that allows the other configurations of the power structure to come into play—how might there be a richer contextual play with the consideration of the counterculture ascribed to the bourgeois; of the folk, Islamic, popular, academic, and indigenous in Philippine culture; of the oral in the imagining of nationhood. The politics of

underground writings representing the narrative of the underground movement is not to be negated but repositioned in this configuration. Only when other configurations are placed into play can there be a more productive construction of identity that represents the conditions and engagements from which identity is socially and historically related, and identities inter-related.

With these shifts taken into account, a new problematic arises in underground writings that direct to the *writing* itself. Taken historically, this mode of writing may have been of timely function. Thus, the continuity of conditions remain, *writing* has considerably diminished to meaningfully represent other pressing issues of a changing time. It is a mode of writing that has been affixed to the problematic notion of the "underground." This writing has worked through the operation of the binary opposition; and within its own marginality, it can reproduce the operation that constructs new marginalities. In this mode of writing, the metaphor of the paper comes into play here. Paper, for middle and upper-class, is empowerment—to use print to appropriate the world. Paper, for most working class people, is a source of disempowerment—paper has been used to grab lands from the farmers, to serve as notice of termination for the workers. Women have also been traumatized by the paper—to legally bind the marriage contract, to pronounce and contest the findings of rape, to be regarded as invisible in laws passed. This mode of writing has used the written word against the other.

By way of allowing more space to be territorialized, another mode of writing must be explored. In this regard, music as cultural idiom and metaphor may give us a trace of a new writing mode that encompasses the interrelated shifts of position. This allows a space to access other voices erased in the *writing* of the underground. Music approximates an orality, a non-linearity, a polyphony of sound and voices, which have a potential for altering the pattern that has become the *writing* of the underground. It traces a subalternity that explores disorientation as a functional model of a writing as against the perceived rigor that has so ruled the *writing* of the underground.

I have chosen songs that deal with the land issue; this time, whether produced in the network of the underground movement or those sympathetic to the cause for social change. I hope this effort can provide several insights on how an image central in some songs are reworked

towards an innovation of the politics of land, on one hand, and the imagination of land, on the other hand. Underground writings, as discussed in the earlier sections of the essay, refer to literature produced by both the overtly underground and covertly above-ground people's organizations affiliated with the National Democratic Front. It remains in dialog with above-ground structures, primarily to challenge those structures that have exploited the masses, and the above-ground structures that seek to uphold and protect the masses.

Included in one of two cassette tapes produced by the underground movement, *Tano* uses the *tagulaylay* (lamentation) to narrate the plight of a farmer bearing that name. Through a series of ill events that begins with the problem of having to purchase medicine for a sick child to the storm that destroyed his harvest, Tano is dispossessed of his land by the hacendero. When nothing else is made available to him, he joins the Red fighters. The song's tempo builds into a march, convincing the audience to join in the armed struggle. *Tano* is advocatory in its call to action. By naming Tano as the generic farmer oppressed in a litany of conditions, the peasant audience may more than sympathize with the case. With his decision to join the Red fighters, Tano's family is made absent from the decision-making process and its consequence—a bitter choice to join the revolution over helping fend for the family's needs. As the dispossession of the land is the cause of injustice, the promise of its recovery becomes the rationale for joining the NPA. Thus, *Tano* foregrounds the marginalized identity of the peasant figure in the struggle for justice. It backgrounds the landlord identity and politics, possibility of defeat, and conflict of domestic interest. In doing so, the identity politics of the peasant figure is revealed, making the politics for sustainable change also possible. The identity politics is foregrounded in conjunction with the politics of change of the underground movement.

Halina, Halina by Jess Santiago eulogizes three representatives of the oppressed majority, one of which is Pedro Pilapil, a farmer, shot dead when he tried to fight the dispossession of his farm. The call to action in each of the cases is symbolic: to gather in their behalf and offer a space in the audience's hearts. Because the protest singer is an above-ground personality, the song does not have an outright call to arms in the way *Tano* has resolved a similar injustice. *Tano* used to be sang in selected mass actions but has now become standard repertoire in most progressive concerts. The land retains the symbolic function to Santiago's above-

ground audience, as site for emplacing a germinal seed or sustaining an already committed practice for a more radical and collective action. By depicting the land issue in simultaneous pessimism and optimism, the song provides an intertextual referencing to the plight and struggles of the peasant figure with the experiences of the other identities of the urban poor and female factory worker, also included in the song. The song reterritorializes the politics of daily experience under the hands of the ruling class from this very class. It names the relatedness of exploitation and struggle in the intra-experiences of the three displaced figures. It subsequently deterritorializes the claws of ruling class power for the possibility of solidarity among the oppressed class.

Sag-od/Lupao by the group Buklod recalls of the two massacres that even today has yet to be resolved by bringing the perpetrators to justice. The song provides a rich layer of textual strategies. "Alaala'y may balabal ng hinagpis" (memory is layered by grief), as Susan Fernandez-Magno articulates poet Fidel Rillo's positioning of Marela, a child then and the only survivor of the Sag-od massacre. Marela's "voice" is prominently positioned, crucial in weaving the Lupao experience to an intertextual lamentation that draws our attention to the continuing and aggravating perpetuation of other human rights violations. Land is a geoscape for memory, and in our context, always a site for the layering of grief and strength. Because land has this central imagery of territorialization and deterritorialization (conquest and reconquest), it provides the space for geopolitical interaction and conflict. In this geoscape, land is deterritorialized from the clutches of the landed class' power and reterritorialized for reconquest. As conflict intensifies, so too is the infliction of violence on the landless class. Thus, systemic violence (massacres) become the recurring practice of silencing the disenfranchised voices' dissent. The song territorializes this paradigmatic geoscape, calling for a remembrance of things past and becoming as subversion to the amnesia of violence of the ruling class.

Dapat Bawin is a version of a Latin American protest song, popularized by the choral group, Patatag. The song, like *Tano*, calls for a revolutionary action, i.e., an agrarian revolution. Land is marked as something that should be collectively owned, but is not. The song's addressee is interrogated, "*Kinakabahan ka ba sa awitin kong ito? Ikaw ba'y panginoong maylupa o may-ari ng Pilipinas?*" (Are you getting frightened with my song? Are you a landlord, do you own the Philippines?)

The song accounts for the contradiction of classes, and the need for collective action. Land is an inherent right of the majority, its repossession is thus immanent. Revolutionary agrarian revolution is espoused in the song *Dapat Bawain*. This literally ascribes the reterritorialization aspect of protest songs. Contested land, in which the landed class amasses power, is reterritorialized by the landless class. The landless class defies the very power land denotes for the landed class and the very powerlessness it connotes for its class. In foregrounding this revolutionary practice, the potential for change becomes possible within the constricting limits of exploitation due to land. What is impossible in the past, in artistic textual and actual practice becomes materializable.

Balitaw's *Aritmitic* is a kitsch recycling of rock and roll, with a strong Visayan accent, and simulated live-concert performance. It rundowns images of low intensify conflict (LIC), U.S. "surrogate war" in the Philippines, that has mapped out the counter-insurgency operations in the countryside. Land takes on three dimensions—the simulated concert plaza as site for the popular *baile*, Negros as the "laboratory of LIC," and the U.S. as source of LIC. This inmixing of land refers to a geoscape in which various levels of spatial use and power are also intertwined. Through a simple addition or processing, the connections are made. The song provides an analysis of geopolitical relations among communities in Negros and U.S. imperialism. With this foregrounded, the parodic technique creates a double-reading of the situation—on the one hand, rock and roll is used to lay bare the narrative of power in Negros, on the other hand, it also lays bare the performative aspect of power and struggle against it. Simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization is undertaken to conflate temporal humor with the experiences of pain of reality.

Similarly, Lokal Brown's *Pay U* positions the Philippines in the global transnationalism, one which is inequitable to the country. In this reggae, it is not only the natural resources that are being transnationalized, but women and children are also globalized. The deprivation and use of the land for export provides the national context in the unequal global division of labor. The primary produce of the land—including its people—is exported to generate unequal income for the nation. Sung in reggae music, the affinity for other imperialized lands is also made possible. The song underscores a kind of musical solidarity in the present imperialized experiences of former colonized nations. This reterritorialization makes

possible the solidarity of marginalized national formations under and against the wing of imperialism.

Jocelynang Baliwag draws the search for national identity in historic times. A popular Katipunan kundiman, the land is feminized, becoming the fragrant aroma of flowers evoking the inspiration for struggle. Land becomes an issue for lingering conscientization—from the struggles of the past to what has been transformed in the present. Similarly, the female body becomes the landscape by which to discern Susan Fernandez Magno's *Kung Ibig Mo Akong Makilala* based from Ruth Elynia Mabanglo's poem. The body is inscribed as naked and sensual, nurturing and ecstatic. The body is an inscription of the feminine into the national, similar to the operations of *Jocelynang Baliwag*. *Salidumay Salun-At*, like *Kung Ibig Mo akong Makilala*, is a reclaiming of territory. Produced by the Cordillera People's Democratic Front, the song is part of introducing and acculturating the concept and practice of provisional revolutionary governments in white areas. It is a song used by a communist health group to instill attitudes of hygiene and sanitation—the need for constructing toilets; advocating the usage of herbal medicines; points like putting pigs in pens, moderation in cigarette smoking and beer drinking. Land becomes a coherent landscape, as the revolutionary struggle has reached a point where it positions its mass base to oversee the development of their own communities.

Music provides a complex configuration to discern identity. Remaining overtly political these songs, however, are interwoven in a play of the counterculture (reggae, rock and roll) and the vernacular (*Pay U, Aritmitik*), among others. The vernacular prevails not merely as motif but as a displacement of English and Tagalog centrisms as languages marked for the discourse of protest. Solidarity is thought globally: affinity with Latin America's New Song movement, or LIC as modern Third World infliction of the U.S. The discernment of land as identity is intertextual, taking into consideration the different operations of imagination in each song and within each song. Other voices—children, women, regions—are highlighted and positioned as crucial towards the circulation of meanings.

Music provides a disorientation in the circulation of meanings, that, in turn, provides other ways of seeing, writing, and reading. Another admixture of oral and written literatures is the emergence of testimonial

literature. Testimonial literature displaces notions of genres, form, narrative, and literariness. It evades meanings including the canon's dismissal of it as non-literature. It is written orality, non-linear in the story telling of the self and the environment. Yet it is not remiss on its point, i.e., it is a product of the revolutionary experience (political, cultural, economic, social production), as in *Sa Tungki sa Ilong ng Kaaway* or testimonials of survivors of human rights violations.

When I was covering the forced evacuation of civilians in the southern part of Negros in the late 1980s, I asked an internal refugee what she feared more—the NPA or the military—trying to force my partisanship into her plight. I was caught up in my rational binary opposition, not knowing that she had other more pressing issues in her mind. She simply answered, “bullets” and continued to narrate snatches of her displacement—the weakening of a body so used to work, having nothing to do all day but wait for relief goods that do not come regularly, and having to be packed in a room with 12 other families. Her answer—her narrative—has displaced my own sense of seeing my self and the environment, of hearing a voice that speaks a story, a story that speaks of an individual life and of the community's, caught up in the displacing state operations of military, economic and political imperatives. Literature, as exemplified by underground writings, should be this intervention of a similar kind—it has a way of stirring boundaries, collapsing binary opposition and categories, decentering our notion of writing and our notion of reading that writing. It becomes a simultaneous act of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, of foregrounding and backgrounding, and of oppression and struggle. ☉

Songs analyzed from the following cassette recordings:

- “Anitnik” by Baitaw, *Baitaw sa Atong Penehon Musika/Baitaw*, 1989;
- “Dapat Bawin” by Patatag, *Nagbabagang Lupa*, n.d.
- “Halina” by Jess Santiago, *Halina*. Jess M. Santiago, 1991.
- “Jocelynang Baitaw” and “Kung’big Mo Akong Makilala” by Susan Fernandez- Magno, *Habi at Hinig*. Dodjie Fernandez/Upeng Galang Fernandez, n.d.
- “Pay U” by Lokal Brown, . . . sa *ikalawang yugto*. BMG Records, 1991.
- “Sag-od/Lupao” by Buklod, *Bukod at Bohay*. Farmers Assistance Board, 1988.
- “Salidumany Salun-At”, *Baligfi*. Pamcansang Seksyon sa Musika ng Artista at Manunulat ng Sambayanan (ARMAS)/Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF), n.d.
- “Tano”, *Mga Kanta ng Rebolusyong Pilipino*, Ikalawang Bolyum, ARMAS, n.d.

Endnotes

- 1 Richard Ferguson, "Introduction: Indivisible Center" in Ferguson, Russell, et. al., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) p. 10.
- 2 I take this from Gayatri Spivak's working of Indian cultural identity via Indo-Anglian and Indian literatures from her essay, "Femenism and Decolonization" (142) published in *Differences* (Vol. 3, No. 3).
- 3 John Fiske, "Interview with John Fiske" by Joe Galbo in *Border/Lines*, Winter 1990/1991, p. 4.
- 4 I draw from Francisco Cabanillas' discussion (in *Victor Hernandez Cruz: From Twilight to Marginality*, manuscript, 1) of ethnic discourse as an interplay between complicity and critique which he in turn draws from Linda Hutcheon's *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989).
- 5 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- 6 Kris Montanez, *The New Mass Art and Literature* (Manila: Kalikasan Press, 1981), p. 9.
- 7 Gelacio Guillermo, *Panitikan ng Pambansang Demokrasya* (Manila: Kalikasan Press, 1990) pp. 17-20.
- 8 Servando Magbanua, "Poem Written Beside a Peasant Comrade's Grave on the First Anniversary of His Death," in *Sa Tagumpay ng Rebolusyon* (STR), No place of publication and publisher, 1989.
- 9 Jose Maria Sison, "Guerilla is Like a Poet," in *Prison and Beyond: Selected Poems, 1958-83* (Quezon City: Free Jose Maria Sison Movement, 1984).

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