

Hermeneutics for Our Time: From Where Do We Speak?

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Just as the debates on the mode of production obtaining in the country necessitate a redefinition of world capitalism *vis-a-vis* colonial territories; just as the polemics within the Party on modes of struggle in urban and rural terrains have triggered a dialectical exchange between insiders and outsiders, so would the schisms in literary interpellation provoke advocacies of intervention and praxis among cultural practitioners whose text—actually a domain not confined simply to the literary, but in the words of Spivak, echoing Derrida—is a "structure. . .not identified simply with the production of prose and verse. . .(but that which) operates and fractures knowing (epistemology), being (ontology), doing (practice), history, politics, economics, institutions as such." It is a "structure whose 'origin' and 'end' are necessarily provisional and absent."

Writing is therefore an interpellation of a world signified by its base-superstructure relations, perceived through sign systems — for which reason, the creation of meaning is the assignation of the so-called subject-position of this particular object, man, or reader himself, who must now posit the world at the same time that he is posited by it. Through language, of course, among other significations, we produce this subject-position in dialogic relationship with the Other, inasmuch as utterance, according to Volosinov (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*), does not reside within—an essentialist axiomatic in local hermeneutics, where for instance poetry is supposed to con-

cern itself with the search for the original signifier that in itself is the signified, a theological notion no less—but rather from without a historico-materialist view that acknowledges consciousness as determined by social being, establishes meaning in relation to the Other.

It is on this note that we must view the current problematiques—so-called formalist (transcendentalist) versus progressivist (scientific) divergence — in our literary schools. The very grammatology of meaning, as it were, is dictated by the politico-social interventions (that is, the ideological matrices that circumscribe our notion of speech/act, and relatedly, text) which determine the particular closure we use when we frame our literary production. In more audacious and political terms, it is the acknowledgment of "two opposing aesthetics: the aesthetic of oppression and exploitation and of acquiescence with imperialism; and that of human struggle for total liberation." (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as quoted by Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*)

The current trend in hermeneutics—in the same manner that ongoing debates in political economy center on the method, specifics and stages of capital accumulation as well as the inhering socialist mechanisms in monopoly capitalism—no more than reflects the reading strategies of patristic exegesis and operationalist interpretation. (Todorov, *Symbol and Interpretation*) In the former "certain texts selected (the sacred ones) proclaim Christian truth; in the Marxist perspective, all texts bear witness to Marxist truth. . ."; in the later as it has been practiced on myths by Claude Levi-Strauss or Marcel Detienne, on poetry by Roman Jakobson and Nicolas Ruet. . .it is no longer the

result that is given in advance, but rather the forms of the operation to which one has the right to subject the text being analyzed."

This is simply symptomatic then of the play of forces in the academe and outside of it, whereby in the first, First World structuralist exegesis is subscribed to by bourgeoisified theologico-formalists; in the second, the emerging counterhegemonic or revolutionary production becomes the domain of party-directed cultural worker whose functionalist praxiology is subsumed in the mass-critiqued imperatives of politico-military warfare. Indeed there is a crisis, not in the literary production itself—writers, after all, will continue to write, regardless of prescriptive propositions—but in the area of response, reading or interpellation itself, which more or less sets the canon for our time.

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In the context of the history of literary production in the Philippines, we could thus argue: if the subject is "always-already" inside ideology (Kaya Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*), and if ideology in Althusserian sense refers to "complex economic 'facts' which obtain at any given moment of history—to the 'relations of production and to class relations,'" and if breaking the mirror of the symbolic order (a Lacanian derivative) means "becoming aware of its operations," then could it be presumed that the subject could see through the text of his/her history the grammar, the naturalizing syntax or ordering of the interventionist presence of American imperialist culture—this by virtue of our extrapolation of politico-economic elements and cultural reading/insertion—whose polyphonic discourses proffer themselves a pluralist literary direction?

Should we also say that a counterhegemonic or resisting incursion must necessarily acknowledge this unsettling truth—this Western-oriented paradigm—that the problems of structuralist *vis-a-vis* historico-materialist positions are reducible to the political ramifications of LIC cultural offensive, Washington-mandated textual subversion of revolutionary texts? Could semiology reveal the zones of combat?

It cannot be denied that the so-called post-modernist (read also, the operationalist) mode has its deconstructive playfulness as it countermands statism and dogmatism (because of the utopian current common to both, Christian and Marxist totalizing world views tend to be inscribed as identical) but it is equally asserted that the specificity of local situation (not necessarily unique, but it tends to refract overwhelming Occidentalia; after all, it is observed (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*) that Euro-centric annotation of Marxism is an effect of proletarian debacle on the continent, a contrapuntal note for the Third World where Marxism is clearing a bigger space for optimistic praxiology) merely actualizes the dialectics of producing the site of practice/knowledge itself, its own real, efficacious truth, and interrogating, universalizing modalities. And it is this universalizing scheme that gives rise to the claim, according to activists, that operationalist/structuralist theorizings depoliticize more than politicize the subject. Along this line Michael Ryan, in his *Marxism and Deconstruction*, would score "the centralist, authoritarian facets of Leninism" as a negative structure which necessitates decon-

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struction, although Terry Eagleton (*Freire Jacques: The Politics of Deconstruction, Against the Grain*) would dismiss it as "may be stirring stuff in the University of Virginia, but it has something of a hollow ring in the jungles of Vietnam or Guatemala. For discipline, power, unity and authority are the utterly indispensable characteristics of any revolutionary movement with the faintest hope of success, as anyone who has taken the briefest of glances at the power structures of imperialism may understand and to interpret these characteristics as domination, centralization and elitism is to lapse directly into the discourse of anarchism and liberal pluralism. . . ." In fact, Domingo de Guzman has opined personally to the author that San Juan's *Subversion of Desire: Prolegomena to Nick Joaquin* espouses this liberal-pluralist line. In a homologous manner, Spivak would address European feminists ("French Feminism in an International Frame") that "in order to learn enough about

Third World women and to develop a different readership, the immense heterogeneity of the field must be appreciated, and the First World feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman."

In view of the mechanism of monopoly capitalism and the intensifying class struggle, it should be submitted, in a manner as categorical and decisive as a strike to force feudal/industrial oligarchs to their knees, Marxist discourse no less must need to intervene in Philippine hermeneutics although such intervention, necessarily and paradoxically deconstructive, is not without its own set of players—and the task not without its attendant, paradigmatic perils.

On theoretic grounds, for instance, the finalist interpreters (Christian/Marxist: the conflation here is vulnerably provisional, because of the principal antagonistic contradictions between metaphysico-idealist and historico-materialist theorizing) are contested by the operationalists (philologist/structuralist), according to Todorov, "who claim that the former neglect the nature of operations they are undertaking and are content to set forth principles that they believe to be illustrated by all the texts analyzed" (local cadres are allegedly guilty of this). On the other hand, the operationalist charge that finalists "practice operational interpretation, be it philology or structural analysis, under the impetus of their own claim to be scientific, forget the presence of an ideology (which, through it may often have little impact, nevertheless does exist) and concentrate their attention on methodological requirements." (Rockefeller/Fulbright grantees have allegedly been reduced to this.)

Todorov's solution, however, offers cold comfort, averring that "It is my historical destiny, if I dare say so, which obliges me to remain in a double exteriority, as if the outside had ceased to imply an 'inside'." A local pedagogue would, on the other hand, erroneously substitute materialist categories for metaphysical axioms, as she would advocate "the development of a Filipino literary theory based on a 'suspension of partisan politics' (as against the Western 'suspension of disbeliefs') and the 'political distance' (as against 'aesthetic distance')." The contradistinction in terms actually a contradistinction in philosophical perspective, inasmuch as Feuerbach's terminology is no longer kin to Marx's appropriation.)

It is therefore in consonance with Marxism's dynamic reflexiveness that Epifanio San Juan Jr., for his part, (in his book *Crisis in the Philippines: The Making of a Revolution*, he is claimed by his publisher as a "leading Marxist theoretician in the Philippine liberation movement) would brand the literary "exchange bet-

ween Santos and del Pueblo (*Philippine Progressive Review*). . . as evidence of the primitive stage of Marxist theorizing in our society, the lack or absence of a dialectical habit/will in both problematizing and discursive strategy, and the easy resort to formulas, hackneyed citations, and rhetorical moralizing." Gross as it may seem, San Juan, who has lived probably the last twenty years of his life in American exile, whose critiques have introduced the brown natives to the formulaic complexity of Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, Jameson, *et al*, transforming the Filipino orientalia as a text enmeshed in the global network of knowledge, probably knows whereof he speaks.

But then again his point is not without precedence. After all, it has become almost a sort of an orthodoxy for western academics to berate Marxist praxiologists for their alleged instrumentalism, reductionism and pragmatism — and San Juan, having mastered the language of technocratic exegesis, could be likewise charged with the same offense. Those who have been overwhelmed by his bibliographic entries must be warned in this regard that, with respect to some chosen heuristic canons, Lacan's triangulations of the Imaginary and Symbolic, for instance, have their conceptual rigour and limits, too. Thus Sebastiano Timpanaro (*Freudian Slip*), an Italian Marxist, would declare that "Lacan tends to conceive this preponderance or supremacy of the signifier as an essential characteristic of every language (not just that of the unconscious) on the basis of a forced interpretation of the Saussurian concept of the 'sign', which is consistent with the whole anti-objectivist tendency of current semiology, for which the perfect sign is one which signifies nothing. . ." (p. 222). And on a more caustic note that denies a system of

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interpretation that is the lynchpin of structuralist reading, Timpanaro would imperiously shrug: "I must confess that I am incurably committed to the view that in Lacan's writings charlatanry largely prevails over any ideas of a comprehensible, even if debatable, nature: behind the smokescreen, it seems to me, there is nothing of substance; and it is difficult to think of a pioneer in the encounter between psychoanalysis and linguistics who has more frequently demonstrated such an erroneous and confused knowledge of the latter, whether structural or not." (p. 58)

Similarly, it should be noted that the "celebrated body without organs" by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*) has occasioned Gayatri Spivak to read it "as anything but a last-ditch metaphysical longing," almost akin to the formulation of Fredric Jameson that Desire, as propounded by the two, becomes a floating, unpredicated body. As for Kristeva, a Caucasian who cannot read an ideogram but pontifies on Chinese women, she is dismissed as simply ignorant.

We could also deduce that the commented "absence of dialectical habit/will" is primarily levelled against underground cadres who daily confront the conflux of ideological givens in his particular area of action, and who must propose to change residual/regressive ideas within the ambit of what is feasible, possible, positive, tactical and a qualified theoretic knowledge prefigured—and figuring within the material activity of it—geometrically circular because causative but nonetheless cognizant of

its deductive "methodology". This is again the case of a subject-position where equivalences must effect a shift in the correspondence between the subject and the object, lest it end up like a frog in a well, croaking at the circle of sky no wider than the well's top.

The divagate, the theory of knowledge stems from a practice, according to Gelacio Guillermo, San Juan's *bete noire*, "that draws from a wealth of ideas, experiences, skills, sentiments, and aspirations of the broad masses of the people, synthesize and raise them to the level of the typical (that is, the direction towards which the revolutionary forces are advancing) and bring them back to the masses to serve them in their practical life, and through practice raise the level of their experiences to a higher level, and so forth." We therefore ask: if this methodology however reduces Marxism to a primitivistic, infantile level of theorizing, what then is the advanced aspect/face of it? What must therefore pass for a comparatively more discursive interpretation of "intervention by collective will," or absence of dialectical habit/will? Is the indigenous Asian mind so crude, linear and deterministic that what it purports to be revolutionary and dialectical, praxiological and party-led—that is, a mode of culture actualizing the aspirations of the working class—are the very negation of its professed ideals, method, direction, rigour, critique?"

To be sure, one need not be a cadre (on the other hand, why not?) to achieve legitimacy as a speaker of truth (an essentialist perspective admittedly), or mouth the narrow nationalist

line "that only a native can know the scene." An outsider too can have the privilege of access to truth precisely because of the so-called vantage of distance, of reflection, of exile—a path taken by Mailer whom San Juan does not fancy, anyway—which allows the tying, so to speak, of loose ends, the focusing of the configuration of truth. But herein lies the rub: as in feminism, translation—e.g., floating quotations and decontextualized sources—might prove untenable "as...deliberate application of the doctrines of French High Feminism to a different situation of political specificity might misfire." (Spivak) A case in point is the celebrated policy differences with the Party by a female ex-cadre, who allegedly "seeks to make primary" the woman's question at this stage of strategic defensive maneuvers against state forces, a position that, according to some quarters, derives itself from post-modern feminist prioritizing and practice in the West. Of course, the woman question is part of the NDF

ed power-relations or lines of force which cry out for intervention of collective will." (And we interject: Exactly, how did he intend this collective will to impose itself? Is it a homogeneous, organized one? A populist drive? A conjuncture of contradictory forces? What are its specificities?) He continues: "They betray the symptoms of an insidious militarist deviation, a 'mountain stronghold' mentality that privileges the purely military tactics (a tally of rifles gathered, enemy bodies killed, etc.) over

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agenda, but the move to elevate it to the level of fundamental contradiction within the problematique of the current struggle is taken as virtually falling short of the "correct and efficacious" analysis of the situation itself.

Viewed from the outside, the wall could thus only show chimera of ideas-objects, shorn of the positive details that will define something else, the material reality. This may appear as a virtual analogue of positivist myth of Plato's cave, but the implication restricts itself to what Mateo Cruzado, KM vice-chairman, has to say regarding the charge that student activists have failed to develop into mature revolutionaries: "the problem with former militants," he notes, "who are now in the comforts of the academe is their failure to recognize the internal dynamics of the revolutionary movement." (*Manila Standard*)

Let us therefore mind San Juan Jr. A reading of his reading of the post-February revolt (a mode of viewing the world is a mode of reading as well) would show that he pontifically reduced the revolutionary sector's involvement—in fact, failure to involve itself—in the 1986 coup as "a pathetic failure to understand the rapid changes that have occurred, the alter-

the political thrust and objective of the all-encompassing struggle. Ultimately the failure lies in the strong mechanical determinism and evolutionist fatalism which has in varying degrees pervaded the movement in its thirteen years of clandestine, underground resistance during Marcos's repressive rule. This mode of resistance enforced by force of circumstance, centralist and commandist procedures" (see previous notations on Leninist centralism, etc.) "manifested above all in bureaucratic styles of work, dogmatism and sectarianism."

One's notion, or even allegory, of truth, is grounded on the concreteness, or the extrapolated concreteness of it. (Moreover, truth, or the promotion of it, is always in accord with our personal, and class, interest—which is by way of inferring that power privileges the legitimization of truth, the power of class, which subsumes the individual, itself.) And in the integration of minute details that frame the particular discourse, the subject re-orders the sequence and materiality of received data/events according to ideologized activity of sifting, selecting, centralizing and marginalizing what would make up this facticity of truth—for which reason, one invokes Macherey: presence is merely an inertia of centralized truth but circumscribed by the periphery of absence.

Is San Juan privy then to all the facts that have eluded even insiders themselves of the movement? Are the sources of his inferences, and consequently, delineations valid representatives of this mode of interpellation? What are the closures of his sources that he had steered clear of, enabling him thus to unify or totalize his position that in "1983 and 1984," the move-

ment "has forfeited opportunities for the rapid development of the national-popular bloc... caused in part by a formalistic clinging to the model of "encircling the city by the countryside..." (his possible allusion to the Nicaraguan model is clear here, inasmuch as orthodox Marxism has allegedly been recast by the United Front organizing of the Sandinista (*Fire in the Americas*) valorizing in effect the political over the military—implying of course that liberative methodology in the Philippines, which surprisingly is held in awe by Latin militants as more developed and organized, is non-dialectical, and mechanical, and ergo subject to collective defeat) "and its dismissal of the petty bourgeoisie as hopeless vacillating elements (the reflex pronouncement of a fatalist economism) we have not so far been compelled to engage a terrain which the orthodox classics had not mapped nor charted thoroughly, except in the speculative theorizing of Gramsci" (which is exactly saying that Gramsci is either a canon for interrogating convention, or it is an imperative to produce an open-ended discourse that would interrogate

the alleged formalism of the current crop of underground ideologues or Filipino organic intellectuals. Indeed, all this obviously makes for his forewarning on the danger of mechanically reading the politico-economic geography of, say Bicol or Cagayan as the equivalence, the speculum of Yanan or Kiang-si).

The East Coast professor forthwith lectures the local Maoists that verily they should "recognize that the complex social formation we are trying to transform" (we because of the correlative logic of international solidarity which is co-terminous to the logic of imperialism) "is not just the epiphenomenal superstructure (In the orthodox lexicon) that will automatically disappear once the economic base (private ownership of the means of production) is altered itself precisely in the dichotomy of base/superstructure, a privileging of mechanical materialism over dialectics, hence the economic obsession and the empiricist premium placed on spontaneous experience (the untheorized "practice," actually pragmatism, that some activists resort to when they denounce academic intellectuals)."

The lesson is ceremoniously clear: the local cultural politburo is reliving the errors of Bakunin and Bernstein and has not read, has probably failed to understand, the classic injunction of Engels on the determination of the last instance on the (economic) relations of production of the political and ideological levels of the superstructure... Yet, has not Mao Tse-Tung—the guiding light of Philippine liberative hermeneutics, the "mandarin" whom Althusser would credit for the theory of contradictions, their "ceaseless emergence and resolution"—himself "reject(ed) a static or mechanical materialist conception of the contradiction of base and superstructure and emphasize(d) the necessity of a truly dialectical materialist formulation? (Alice Guillermo *Ideology and Consciousness*)

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It is not however without rhyme or reason that San Juan—along with his fellow archetypes who discourse from the margin of writing, geographic and ideological—would prefer despair of Fawas Turki: "Like lovers from Palestine, agonizing over who is really in exile: / they or their homeland. / . . . Because these lines in effect universalize his personal, cosmopolitan situation and engagement and align them with the specific but abstracted articulation of, say, a native sharing similar sentiments? N.V.M. Gonzales, in his recent talk at the UP, would recapitulate this common fate, this ideological displacement as exile that transcends territorializing boundaries—again equating this alienation with those who are identically disposed *but* differently situated.

Ninotchka Rosca in New York would be similarly gripped by the alchemy of linguistic violence and anomie when, after reading Bienvenido Santos, she "suppressed the impulse to put one's fist through the window, not knowing what else to do for and with such a country, such a people. . ."

But who is afraid of Epifanio San Juan, Jr., this specific mode of discourse, this authorial engineering of western derivatives, this cosmopolitanization of peripheral eye?

Certainly not Dr. Elmer Ordoñez who in his keynote address at the founding Congress of Bugkos, the National Coordinating Council for People's Culture, would urge national artists to "retrieve cultural forms like poems, narratives, songs, riddles, proverbs, drama," among others, and have all these recorded, transcribed, translated and collated towards public dissemination." He would point out the qualitative play of base and superstructure "in areas where the people's movement has effected land reform—where relations of production have been altered appreciably"—and adduce that there has been "a corresponding change in the outlook and consciousness of the people. Instead of feudal relations, there is cooperation among those who till the land; where there was fatalism and despair among subjugated tenants, there is now a renewed sense of their humanity as liberated farmers deciding their own fate."

The good professor has, in short, embarked on a demythifying voyage blazed earlier by Frantz Fanon who remarked of a colonialism that, "by a kind of perverted logic, . . . turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it." His (Fanon) call for active intervention into history whereby the peasants and workers become 'determinants of culture' (Cabral) is affirmed no less by a Western critic sympathetic to Third World struggle, Fredric Jameson, who posits a new "pedagogical political culture," which he so defines as an "aesthetic of cognitive mapping

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. . . which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system."

The drawers of water and hewers of wood now move onto center stage, this liberated zone where new social formations and relations take root.

It is a fundamental rule that any simplification proceeds from a complex set of operations—and in the aforementioned the resultant shift from the periphery to the center in the cultural landscape could only have been overdetermined by the militant intervention (actually the interpellation of social formation by labor-power which in idealist/metaphysical prescription is consciousness) and the practice of the politics of empowerment (the proletariat takes over the means of production). The tasks of cultural workers, assimilating and dispersing encountered paradigms, are never reductive (although an act itself, or an activity, moves toward denotation while the interpretation of it moves toward connotation) because theory relates to practice in qualitative, asymmetrical pattern—which is to say that "their role becomes more comprehensive; . . . (they are) involved not only in ideological struggle but also in political organization and self-defense as well. The lines of specialization are dissolved in the process and the cultural worker will require other than ideological (for instance, artistic and literary skills.) This is the reality of day-to-day work in the countryside as well as in the cities."

To introduce Lenin or Marx into a peasant's mindset is to deliver him into a praxiological network that necessitates re-arming him with cognitive skills and values to essay contradictory forces: the residual, the prescribed, the revolutionary, the linear, the circular, the open, the hermetic. He creates the structures that equally create him, living the while this contradiction, noting principal and secondary antagonisms that would conduce toward a human judgment that is scientific, humane concrete, efficacious. In the spirit of emergent discourse a cultural worker, who is set against a dis-

persed, fragmented psychic scenario, then must move toward homogenization of discourse, a mode which counter-demands capitalist illusion of heterogeneity because the syncretized native, earlier denied of totality or unity or historic personality, must need now resist this Trojan horse of bourgeois pluralism.

Corollarily, this has been the hypothesized position of "card-carrying" members. For instance a memorandum issued in 1983 by *Inspesyal na Grupo sa Kultura*, stated the task of confronting "ang mga usaping kaugnay ng pamumuno sa larangang ito ng rebolusyonaryong gawain — halimbawa'y ng paglalagat ng pambansang oryentasyon sa gawain, pagtatatag ng organo o sentro ng pamumuno, at iba pa—kailangang maunawaan ang kalagayan, katangian at antas ng pag-unlad ng gawain sa panitikan at sining. . . Nagsagawa ng pagsisiyasat para tugunan ang pangangailangang ito. Sa partikular, inaasahang makapagbubuo mula rito ng panimulang paglalarawan ng pagkilos sa larangan ng panitikan ng oryentasyon sa gawaing ito sa kanayunan, at maging sa kalunsuran, di man tuwiran; at mallinaw ang antas na naabot sa kalidad ng nilalaman at porma, at makapagtakda ng mga pamantayan sa paglikha batay sa kasalukuyang kalagayan at pangangailangan ng digmaang-bayan."

Here, it could be hypothesized that the reader is enabled through the signifying text to see, as in a mirror, his/her own image-in-situation (the always-already), or his/her objectification, for which reason the literary producer supposedly, in creating his/her subject-position, also re-creates the reader's subject-position—and in this doubling, where the producer finds his/her equivalence in the symbolic (the insertion of Lacan here is arbitrary, and for continuity of tradition), meaning is implicitly reproduced, but such doubling is within the framework of the narrative's intention of demolishing the old structures of consciousness (a peasant poetizing his experiences and objectifying them in the Other's; most beautifully, a peasant *resisting* in his economic, political and ideological locus). Rupture is the dialectical break—imbricated within the totalizing real but false ideology—that is now opened to the imperatives of class war. The text, in this sense, allows its own subversion and does not absolutely close itself: artistic representation, contrary to the possibility that one could be totally trapped in the interstices of the text (the flytrap of Foucault), enables the subject to challenge the authoritarian grip of the ideological givens. (A bourgeois casting his lot with the disinherited is a truism that debunks closure.)

But could this be sheer tautology, which premises that an image that doubles itself turns out, in the final analysis, an image that breeds its own difference? It might then be propitious

to reconsider Stanley Fish's "interpretive communities"—which Robert Scholes (*Textual Power*) contest because (Fish) "has never made clear what an interpretive community is, how its constituency might be determined, or what could be the source of its awesome power" and have it provisionally coopted in Third World hermeneutics. Because, simply put, "it is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings and are responsible for the emergence of formal features," this mode of interpretation (although denounced as "totalitarian" by Scholes) can assume a progressive dimension in liberated/red zones, where distinct or polarized political cultural forces have virtually established their territories of power and knowledge. In a state monopolized by dispersing heterogenous factions of a dominant ideology, the argument towards a contradistinctive homogeneity—so anathema to western purists whose pluralism derives from imaginary fair play and balance of forces, in short bourgeois equidistance and neutrality—becomes a positive element in exegetical exercise. After all, the terrain of language, and consequently, literature is a terrain of class war.

And the Left is explicit on this, as recorded: "Direktang nagsiyasat sa ilang piling larangang gerilya sa Luzon at Kabisayaan. Doo'y nag-obserba sa pagkilos ng mga Pulang Mandirigma, organisadong masa at kadre ng Partido sa gawaing pampanitikan at pansining; kinunsulta ang namumunong mga kasama tungkol sa kasaysayan ng pagkilos, paglalagom ng karanasan at programa sa gawaing ito; at nangalap ng angkop na mga dokumento, paha-yagang masa, songbuk, atbp. . .kaugnay nito ay naghanda rin ang mga kasama sa teorya at aktitud sa pamamagitan ng pag-aaral ng iba pang dokumento't artikulo, ganundin ng integrasyon nila sa mga rebolusyong pwersa sa mga sonang gerilya para masapul ang kasalukuyang kalagayan at sirkunstanya ng digmaang bayan."

Of course, the history of reconstituting the image of the peasant worker has not been without its own schematic detractors, for internal critics were also quick (*Liberation*, September 1984) to point out the early "crudities, vulgarities, mechanical and trite formulations in the early stages of development"—all of which alludes to a momentum which outsiders could mistake for stasis and/or valorization of the peasant class, at the expense of, bewails San Juan, "individuals" who also conceive of the "problem of United Front as integral part of the conquest of hegemony through the formation of the national-popular collective will in action. . .inasmuch as the struggle is now no longer defined in terms of city versus countryside. . ."

(The United Front agenda—the NDF simply knows this from the level and history of liberative, anti-imperialist practice in militarized feudal fiefs—need not be belabored here, although San Juan's interposition is well taken in the spirit that, according to Barbara Harlow, "self-critical controversies. . . sustain the movements' active agency in the historical arena of world politics and the struggle for culture which need to be theoretically elaborated and gives their full 'historical and sociological weight'. . . (moreover). . . the dynamics of debate in which cultural politics of resistance are engaged challenge both the monolithic historiographical practices of domination and the unidimensional responses of dogma to them.")

In the final analysis, a writer/producer articulates, from his own specific site/sight, his domain of power—the "regaining of (his) historical personality. . . (his) return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which (he has) been subjected." (Amílcar Cabral) And this module of discourse is determined, not by accidental mystical conjunctures and neutral/equal interest, but by class, race and gender.

It is in this connection that I quote Mary Louise Pratt ("Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," *Race, Writing and Difference*) who traced through textual analysis of travel brochures during the conquest of Africa, the colonial relations between the white man and the native that must be excised from the landscape, "homogenizing" (homogenized, that is, into the animal, and consequently, the non-existent) "them into a collective 'they,'

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which is distilled even further into an iconic 'he' (in the case of masculinist erasure of women).

Paraphrasing Pratt, the writers (referring to early colonialists-viewers) were no more than "procedures, that is of ideology in connection with the European expansionist project there." She narrates that European explorers would focus on the landscape, "harmonizing science and aesthetics," yet would "hold little interest for indigenous inhabitants. . . who were engaged in transporting him, his delicate instruments and bulky collections up the Cordillera and down the amazon."

A similar ideological/body displacement occurs in Nick Joaquin's *A Woman With Two Navels*, wherein the younger Monzon is initiated to manhood through the appropriation of a peasant daughter's body which becomes site of class/patriarchal dominance and whose subsequent savaging is muted through the eye of a fictional narrator that naturally effaces the female body and so aestheticize/anaesthetizes the privileged violence that what is revealed is not so much the perversion of the class ritual itself but the narrative voice's passive and ideological affirmation of a class norm.

Penultimately, it is the Filipino-American metaphor/metonymy that must serve as a connective between the disparate paragraphs of our personal and impersonal history, allowing the reader to unify this text, our subjugated/resisting text.

Finally, there is therefore only one question that must be immediately asked of all us: From where do we speak?

...After all, the terrain of language, and consequently literature, is a terrain of class war."

