

The Promise of the Future:
Nation and Utopia in Philippine Future Fiction

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Introduction

Spectres of Future

I.

In the waning years of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines, Dr. Jose Rizal published a political forecast for the country entitled “Filipinas dentro de cien años” or “Philippines: A century hence.” Released in four installments, the article ran from September 1889 to January 1890 in *La Solidaridad*, a Madrid-based fortnightly journal of the nineteenth-century Filipino *ilustrados* of the Propaganda Movement.¹ The article served as a supplement to Rizal’s two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, which not only portrayed the country’s experience of suffering and abuse under nearly four centuries of Spanish colonization but also incited the flames of the 1896 Philippine independence movement against Spain.² Rizal would then be exalted as the national hero as his novels became the foundational texts of Philippine nationalism and nationhood.³

History validated Rizal’s foresight in the said article on two counts: the impending Philippine revolution if Mother Spain refuses to grant civil rights and legislative representation to the colony⁴ (which unfolded barely five years after the article’s publication); and the country’s handing over to the then-rising American global power at the turn of the twentieth century (after analyzing prospects with other European colonial powers and with the emerging powers in the East).⁵

However, more than the accuracy of his predictions, what is more interesting in Rizal’s “A Century Hence” is how it articulated the political value of imagining a future

¹ Austin Craig, ‘Introduction,’ in Jose Rizal, *The Philippines: A Century Hence*, Noli Me Tangere Quarter-Centennial Series, ed. and intro. by Austin Craig (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1912), pp.9-15 (p. 9)

² *ibid.*

³ Caroline Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), p. 39.

⁴ Jose Rizal, *The Philippines: A Century Hence*, *ibid.* p. 78.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 107.

for a nation; a nation that was yet to be borne from its historical experience of agony and bondage.

Rizal was aware that despite difficulties, the Filipinos can rise up and revolt against the Empire to claim their sovereignty if Spain refuses to give *indios* certain political reforms, something which during those times were deemed impossible, or even Utopian:

There will not be lacking critics to accuse us of Utopianism: but what is Utopia? Utopia was a country imagined by Thomas More, wherein existed universal suffrage, religious toleration, almost complete abolition of the death penalty, and so on... Yet civilization has left the country of Utopia far behind, the human will and conscience have worked greater miracles, have abolished slavery and the death penalty for adultery — things impossible for even Utopia itself!⁶

With these words, Rizal invoked the spirit of Utopia in a different light. His use of Utopia did not simply come from More's impossible and idealized society. It instead names the possibility of a nation that is bound to emerge from the struggles against colonialism. If the Western world had already surpassed what seemed to be impossible in Thomas More's liberal universalist vision (with his Utopia eventually transformed as an old artifact of that long-gone, romanticized society), Rizal's Utopia was a concrete political imagination of the nation in the future. It foretold a future wrought from anti-colonial and nationalist struggles, as well as the prospects of independence of a country at the threshold of what has already been accomplished in the West in the 19th century – Enlightenment and Modernity. What endures in Rizal's "A Century Hence", from old colonial times to our present globalized age, is not only its predictive content but its injunction to imagine the nation and its insistence of imagining its future. Rizal's legacy attests to the profound challenges of envisioning a nation-in-the-making and its continuing relevance as a political project for a Third World country like the Philippines.

II.

⁶ *ibid*, p.84.

More than a century hence, after the long march of struggles against colonial regimes and foreign occupations well into the continuing plight of nation-formation in the face of the new global Empire, the future is again summoned with a new name and with a new form. In 2000, Philippine future fiction was introduced by the Don Carlos Memorial Awards for Literature, the country's longest-running and most celebrated literary awards, among its categories where Filipino writers can submit and win, thereby legitimizing the genre in Philippine letters. What seemed at first as a simple adaptation of the Western genre of future fiction or even science fiction into the local scene of writing proved to have a much more curious motivation and implies a much more difficult undertaking than what it appears to be.

Perhaps it is only fitting to reflect on what the year 2000 has meant for the “future” and particularly for the country. Before the turn of 21st century, while highly industrialized Western countries trembled in panic from the possible massive industry breakdown because of a small time programming error (what was coined then as “the Y2K bug”), third world countries, whose life and industry did not depend so much from the digitalization and automation back then (and maybe until now), were infected with excitement and anticipation with the coming of the new millenium. In the Philippines, this was markedly seen in how the state drummed up its developmental projects anchored on the future such as *Philippines 2000* during the late '90s. Of course, the prophesied doom did not happen at the stroke of the clock, so did the promised progress of the country. But this highlights how the world responds differently with the coming of the future.

This is perhaps also evident in differentiating Philippine future fiction against its counterpart in the West. While the turn of the 21st century promised to offer new frontiers for Western science fiction as it enters into the “brave new world of information,”

radically changing the craft of storytelling from “old mimetic dispensation” to an “extension of experience,”⁷ future fiction in the Philippines, which practically did not exist before its introduction in 2000, remains to be a “speculative enterprise” stamped with expectation of “progress and modernity.”⁸ What seems a facile millennial marker has provided a kind of anticipation in the cultural and literary imagination for a country deprived of Western modernist project of technological and scientific advancement.

It is equally important then to understand what Philippine future fiction meant for the country and for its writers. In the 2000 contest rules and forms, the Palanca Awards loosely defined Philippine future fiction as short stories presenting “scenario of the future Filipino and the country.”⁹ With these, the entries must carry in themselves “a looking beyond into the future of the country to transcend the boundaries of the present.”¹⁰ It is important to note how among all the categories in the Palanca Awards (poetry, fiction, novel, literary essay, children’s story, stage plays and screenplays), future fiction is the only genre that bears this thematic demand.¹¹ It requires Filipino writers to think of the future bound in national time and space. This dimension of boundedness to the national question makes imagining the future a particularly daunting task. What the institution seems to be asking, without meaning to probably, is for writers to predict the country’s future just like what Rizal did more than century ago. Except this time, they should write them in the form of fiction. Thus, Philippine future fiction of the Palanca Awards which ran until 2006, is not only a foreign bequest but also, to some extent, a logical

⁷ George Slusser, ‘Introduction: Fiction as Information’ in *Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of the Narrative* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 1-16 (p.1)

⁸ Alwin Aguirre, “The ST to History: The discourse of future in Palanca award-winning pieces from 2000 to 2005.” *Dahuyan: Journal of Filipino Language*. Vol. 15 (2009), 114-138 (p.115)

⁹ Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, ‘Rules of the Contest, 2000,’ www.likhaan_online.tripod.com/08242001archivesite/board6-1.html [Accessed 15 April, 2011]

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Perhaps, this was done in order to separate it from the much more established genre of short story that was originally the only genre in competition when the literary awards was first established in 1950s. ‘History of Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature,’ Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards (official website) <http://www.palancaawards.com.ph/history.php> [Accessed 14 May 2011]

continuation of the political project of the future that started more than a century ago.

The category's removal in 2007 in the competitions may not necessarily mean that it no longer has literary merits. On the contrary, future fiction has since become a part of the local canon, with its comparable visibility in various literary publications and its formal inclusion as genre-specific writing in literary programs in the academe.¹² The Philippine future fiction is a testament that the future of the nation remains to be something that needs to be imagined and worked upon.

Spectres of Nation and Utopia

These two narratives are spectral expressions of the “unfinishability” of the nation¹³ that form “the haunting of a Filipino writer.”¹⁴ Spectral expressions that are in themselves haunted by the ghosts of its past (colonial history) and its perennial appearances in the present (imperial order). Only by confronting these presences can we imagine something beyond the present and confer unto the nation the promise of a future. In this sense, Philippine future fiction reveals not only how these specters limit the representation of the nation, but also the possibilities of a future that could emerge out of this very limitation.

In this study, I examined 18 Palanca prize-winning Philippine future fiction in English from 2000-2006 to understand how Filipino writers attempt to envision, anticipate and project several versions of future for the country. I analyzed these representations as to 1.) how they actively redefine notions of nation and represent the struggles towards its political possibilities and boundaries; and 2.) how these depictions

¹² Emil Flores, ‘Future Visions and Past Anxieties: Science Fictions in the Philippines from the 1990s Onwards,’ (unpublished paper delivered at the 8th International Conference on Philippine Studies, Philippine Social Science Center, 23 – 25 July 2008), pp.1-27 (p.8)

¹³ Caroline Hau, *On the Subject of the Nation: Filipino Writings from the Margins, 1981-2004*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004), p.145

¹⁴ Resil Mojares, ‘The Haunting of the Filipino Writer,’ in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), pp.297-314 (p. 298)

of the nation's future opens up into radical political prospects of social transformation.

The first chapter discusses the historic turns that produce the nation and the problems of its representation in the Philippines. This chapter deals with the many issues that compound the imagination of the nation; how its colonial history and experience of the present imperial economy has generated the manifold dilemmas of binding the nation, its people, their language and their conditions through Philippine national literature, particularly in the case of Philippine future fiction in English. The stories are then analyzed using Fredric Jameson's notions of national allegory, in the second chapter, and utopian impulse, in the third.

In his essay "Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism," Fredric Jameson declares, "all third world literature are necessarily... allegorical... and they are to be read as *national allegories*."¹⁵ Their "experience of colonialism and imperialism" as third world countries¹⁶ shapes their imagination of a nation by linking "the libidinal and the political" in the process of national allegory.¹⁷ Their literature therefore are aesthetically bound by national allegory which entails that "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society."¹⁸

While this sweeping claim received a lot of criticism from both quarters of postcolonial and Marxist critics, this study finds this critical category relevant in the study of future fiction in the Philippines. The second chapter looks into the debates over this much-maligned notion and affirmatively returns to it by discussing its relevance and analytic potential in the context of the Philippines. This chapter deploys a reading of

¹⁵ Fredric Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,' in *Social Text*, 15 (1988), p. 69 (p.65-88).

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.67.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.69.

¹⁸ *ibid*.

Philippine future fiction as national allegories by examining how these stories represent the nation and the entailing struggles towards its realization among Filipino writers.

The question of the future for the country however does not end within the boundaries of nation and its struggles. In Neil Lazarus' 'qualified defense' of Jameson's national allegory, he says that while nation is "unforgoable as a site of liberation struggle," the project of nation-making and nationalism "is not necessarily a terminus."¹⁹ And since the future opens up the possibility of imagining prospects beyond the limits of the present, and even beyond the limits of the nation, the third chapter will discuss how these representations of future allegorize the political desire towards progressive social projects through Jameson's "utopian impulse."

Utopia is the conceptual passage from "coming to grips to how things" to "how things might be."²⁰ The utopian impulse, for Jameson, are "covert expressions and practices" that represent, articulate or invest upon (whether directly or indirectly, affirmatively or negatively) the political desire towards Utopia;

an allegorical process which various forms of Utopian figures seep onto the daily life of things and people and afford an incremental, and often unconscious, bonus of pleasure unrelated to their functional value or official satisfactions.²¹

The utopian impulse can thus be understood as a desire that reveals the 'political unconscious' of creating and opening an alternative world far from the limits of our present imagination. This, at the last instance, could lead us into the political project of Utopia through "a cognitive procedure [that determines] what it is about our present world that must be changed to release us from its many known and unknown

¹⁹ Neil Lazarus, 'Fredric Jameson on 'Third-World literature': A Qualified Defence,' in *Fredric Jameson: A critical reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Sean Homer (Basingstroke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 42-61 (p.57)

²⁰ Ian Buchanan, *Fredric Jameson: Live Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 113.

²¹ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the future: The desire called utopia and other science fictions*. (London and New York: Verso, 2005) p.5.

unfreedoms.”²²

The third chapter explores Jameson’s utopian impulse to understand how Philippine future fiction lays out concrete aesthetic perception of the future and how this imagination of utopian/dystopian futures disclose the possibility of extending the nationalist struggle into more radical and more encompassing projects of social change.

Ultimately, this study attempts to reclaim and reassert the political relevance of the nation in the third world country, to open it up towards more liberating prospects. By bridging the discourse of national allegory to utopian impulse in the reading of Philippine future fiction, this study seeks to account for ways how these narratives articulate the persistent need of Filipino writers to come to terms with *what is to come* against *what they hope to come* as wagers in claiming their own time and space for the future.

²²

Buchanan, p.118.

Chapter I

The National Situation: The “Nation” and the Problem of Representation

Few countries give the observer a deeper feeling of historical vertigo than the Philippines. Seen from Asia, the armed uprising against Spanish rule of 1896, which triumphed temporarily with the establishment of an independent republic in 1898, makes it the visionary forerunner of all the other anticolonial movements in the region. Seen from Latin America, it is with Cuba, the last of the Spanish imperial possessions to have thrown off the yoke, seventy-five years after the rest. Profoundly marked, after three and a half centuries of Spanish rule, by Counter-Reformation Catholicism, it was the only colony in the Empire where the Spanish language never became widely understood. But it was also the only colony in Asia to have had a university in the nineteenth century. In the 1890s barely 3 percent of the population knew “Castilian,” but it was Spanish-readers and -writers who managed to turn movements of resistance to colonial rule from hopeless peasant uprisings into a revolution. Today, thanks to American imperialism, and the Philippines’ new self-identification as “Asian,” almost no one other than a few scholars understands the language in which the revolutionary heroes communicated among themselves and with the outside world – to say nothing of the written archive of pre-twentieth century Philippine history. A virtual lobotomy has been performed.²³

Thus begins Benedict Anderson’s account of the complex and contradictory ways how the Philippine colonial history compounded the problem of imagining a nation. What seems to be particularly unsettling from this description is how it punctuates the feeling of observation with both an affliction and a procedure as it portrayed the process of thinking about the nation, in the exemplary case of the Philippine colonial history, as both vertigo and lobotomy. These images of dizzying “overflow” and “emptied-out” states are the same feelings shared by those who claim this country home, and these conditions of lack and excess are what they also experience each time they invoke its name. If a nation, as Anderson points out elsewhere, is an “imagined community,”²⁴ it is possibly in this nauseating site of nostalgia and forgetting where Filipinos have to construct the extent

²³ Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asian and the world* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), p.226.

²⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p.7.

and limits of *las islas Filipinas*.

The virtual lobotomy within the operations of colonization, what Franz Fanon claims as the “emptying the native’s brain of all form and content,” can be seen in how both colonial masters have succeeded, in varying degrees, in “holding the people in its grip” by displacing and distorting their cultural ideas, values and practices.²⁵ The historical vertigo, on the other hand, highlights how the very enterprise of these colonial regimes opened the colony to cultural ideas, values and habits of modernity that allowed the natives to imagine themselves as part of a modern global community, pretty much the same ideas and values that conferred to them ways of claiming their way out of the colonizer’s grip. These incommensurable experiences are the lasting consequences of colonialism and imperialism which constitute the crisis of representing the nation. The task of imagining the nation and predicting its fate is as much the accounting of this “historical vertigo” and “virtual lobotomy” that Anderson describes as they are attempts to come to terms with such predicaments.

Placed and Named

The colonial predicament begins with the name and the act of naming. The Spanish conquests, in their discovery of the archipelago in the sixteenth century expedition, has not only designated but also gathered and unified the loose cluster of islands in the Pacific separately ruled by pre-colonial kingdoms and communities under one name – *las islas Filipinas* after Felipe II.

The geographic stretch and limits of this *Filipinas* would, however, shift throughout the Spanish rule. What has started as the first colonial settlement in the island

²⁵ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean-Paul Sarte, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p.210.

of Cebu in 1565 distended to include the whole archipelago as part's of colonial territory in the first two centuries of Spanish administration. Even though some of the upland regions in the north and mostly the Muslim-populated islands of the South has “stood on the periphery of the colonial control.”²⁶ “The staggering might-have-beens of Philippine geography”²⁷ existed inside Spanish cartography yet outside their power until the end of their regime in 1898. It was only during American colonization that this Spanish geography would be effectively integrated inside colonial hegemony through military domination. Nonetheless, the outlines of the imagined territory the Spanish conquest have created and the American officials have maintained and managed have produced a circumscribed space for national imagination. The colonial enterprise of designation and cartography has not only demarcated the boundaries of the only Spanish territory in Asia and the first colonial experiment of America but provided a geographical space wherein such nation can be imagined and articulated as a bounded place available for self-constitution and self-determination:

It was this colonial geography, instigated by the hallucinations and contingencies of voyages and conquest that came to be taken as naturally fated and organically whole by the leaders of the Philippine Revolution and all the other nationalists who came in their wake.²⁸

Filipino as a name was not immediately produced and assumed by its people after the naming and consolidation of their place. While the cartographic imaginary of the Philippines has been created and established early on, it took almost the whole period of Spanish colonization before any Filipinos would recognize, identify themselves and profess allegiance to the name. It was only in the last two decades of the nineteenth century that the revolutionary *indios* have claimed and appropriated the word *Filipino*,

²⁶ Vicente Rafael, *White Love and other events in Filipino History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 6.

²⁷ Nick Joaquin, *Culture and History: Occasional Notes on the Process of Philippine Becoming* (Manila: Solar Publishing, 1988), p.95.

²⁸ Rafael, p.6.

from what was originally used to refer to the *creoles* or the pure-blooded Spaniards born in the colony to an inclusive identity of “those who would claim fatal attachment to the *patria* regardless of their juridically-defined identity.”²⁹ Thus, *Filipino* elided the colonial ethnoracial classification and in the fading years of Spanish rule became an articulating self-consciousness which pervaded nationalist evocations from the anticolonial resistance in the last years of nineteenth century all the way to the next century of revolutionary struggles against new imperial regimes.³⁰

Filipino became a forceful code that was deployed during the first successful independence movement in Asia in 1896 and in the establishment of the first, albeit short-lived, republic in the continent in 1898. This identity has stirred the Filipino-American war in 1899-1902, relinquished by counterrevolutionary collaborations and American intervention, suspended for fifty years during American “benevolent assimilation,” roused uprisings during the brief five years of Japanese occupation, and finally made official after World War II through the Treaty of Paris in 1946.

This recourse to the origin and history of the name of both the place and its people provides us with an insight of how colonialism produced a very tenuous coupling between Philippines and Filipinos. “It is this ambivalent fit between the name of the nation and the name of the people that has long haunted nationalism, whether official or popular.”³¹ The shifting territorial boundaries and the various deployments of the Filipino identity only prove that nation and nationality are not as self-evident as the discourses of nationalism and nation-formation that have emerged from them over the years of post-Independence Philippines. Moreover, the shifting meanings of these names, produced from the country’s discontinuous colonial struggles, manifest in various practices and

²⁹ Rafael, p.6-7.

³⁰ Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asian and the world*, p.257.

³¹ Rafael, p.7.

tendencies that not only defy synthesis but also became more pronounced and convoluted in the face of imperial order. The effects of this untenable configuration of the nation and its people can be profoundly observed in how these colonial projects elicited problems in the cultural politics of language in the country.

Turns of Phrase

The legacy of Spanish and American colonialisms in the Philippines produced a markedly different linguistic politics compared to other third world countries that have suffered in the hands of the same colonists. Unlike Latin Americans, the Filipinos have never really assimilated the Spanish language. Instead, it was the English from the Americans that have remained to this day the dominant language of the ruling class in the country, virtually erasing the memory of the language in which notions and ideas of the nation, nationality and nationalism were first put in words, printed and conveyed among the pre-twentieth century nationalist Filipinos. Moreover, this linguistic phenomenon has radically translated the discourses of the nation towards nation-building in the time of modernity of the then-rising global order.

As what Anderson notes, despite three and a half centuries of domestication and evangelization from Spanish rule, the Castilian language has never really flourished among the natives, except for very few *indios* who have gained access to universities at home and abroad. Instead of imposing their language, the Spanish officials and their colonial technologies preferred bringing in Catholicism in their language and translating their religious documents, devotional literatures and grammar books into the varied languages and dialects of the archipelago. What resulted from this colonial enterprise was a complex process of translation, not only in the course of Christian conversion among the natives, but also in the Spanish missionaries' practice of translation, putting Castilian

and Latin as the language of the God in the order of linguistic hierarchy where the many languages of the natives became mere derivatives; thereby effectively preserving yet also consolidating the linguistic diversity of the country.³²

The American colonial project was bent on the expansion and fortification of what the Spanish *conquistadores* have established, particularly the system of public education and public administration. However, instead of resorting to translation, the American colonial officials imposed English as the main language for education, commerce and governance. The staggering success of this endeavor can be seen in how the English language has spread tremendously among the natives in just a few years of American colonization:

Toward the end of the Spanish period, after 333 years of colonial rule, the estimate of the number of those who spoke Spanish in the Philippines is only 2.46 percent of an adult population of 4,653,263, based on De la Cavada 1870 Census Report... However, at the tail-end of the American period (1898-1935), after only thirty-seven years, the 1939 Census reported a total of 4, 264,549 out of the total population of 16,000,303 or 26.6 percent who claimed the ability to speak English.³³

The varying colonial politics in the Philippines has effected a national linguistic situation wherein English has remained at present hegemonic in the domain of public discourses and politics, subsuming the many local languages fighting to survive from threats posed by both state consolidation and imperial mandate of globalization. There exist up to this day more than a hundred regional dialects in the country, ten of which are considered main languages. This diversity has underscored the complex socioeconomic and political divisions among its people.

In lieu of the crucial role language plays in the post-Independence nation-building

³² We can see a more detailed discussion on the nuances of the Spanish colonial politics of conversion and translation in Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian conversion in Tagalog society under early Spanish rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993)

³³ Andrew Gonzales, *Language and nationalism: The Philippine experience thus far* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1980), p.26.

projects in the Philippines, the state institutionalized *Tagalog* (spoken by only a third of the whole population, primarily from the north of the country where its cultural and political center resides) as the national language of the Philippines in 1937. It was later on called *Filipino* to dissociate the language from the ethnic group which uses it. Filipino, while still largely Tagalog-based, now supposedly encompasses the host of diverse vernaculars throughout the archipelago, standing in place as national lingua franca wherein the lexis of the regions may permeate and eventually be incorporated. However, it must be noted how *Tagalog* only became *Filipino* by virtue of being historically connected with most of the nineteenth century nationalists who in later years would also occupy the privileged space in the nexus of political and economic activity well into the era of post-Independence Philippines.³⁴ The historical disjunction between the term Filipino used as the name for the people and the name for an unsettled national language in the face of the linguistic disputes compounds the crisis of signifying a unified and stable nation. This is particularly manifest in the question: what constitutes the nation and how and in what language should it be articulated?

Combined yet Uneven

The colonial legacy of incongruous weaving of the names of the nation, its people and its language represent the manifold dilemmas that reveal the limits and excesses of the seemingly self-evident designations the Philippines, the Filipinos and the Filipino language offer for the national imagination. Despite their discrepant conceptions, these contradictions were sutured and deployed in the rhetoric of modernity and development within the nation-building projects of the postcolonial Philippines.

³⁴ Caroline Hau connects this to how the foundationalist texts of nationalism, particularly the works of Jose Rizal transforms from *novela tagala* in *Noli Me Tangere* to *novela Filipina* in *El Filibusterismo*. See Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (Quezon City, Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), p.287,n.2.

The country is among the many third world countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa where the terms of modernity merged around the nation-building efforts during the great decolonization era from 1940s to 1970s. For these newly independent countries, the task of building a strong nation includes implementation of Western-designed programs of modernity, social change and development, which Benedict Anderson describes as ascription to Western “modular” forms of nation-building.³⁵ Although anticolonial movements, as Partha Chatterjee argues, have harnessed creative ways of imagining a nation outside Western models,³⁶ these were recuperated and refashioned into the rhetoric and practice of nation-building by the elite-led state of these “potential nations” under the aegis of new imperial order.³⁷ And these national agendas of modernization and development set the conditions and informed the ways into how postcolonial countries such as the Philippines could be conferred entry into and recognition from the “modern world system.”³⁸

The Philippines, as its colonial experience attests, has a long and complex history of nation-formation. Its founding of republic in the wake of anticolonial war against Spain and its peculiar training under United States’ benevolent assimilation made it one of the earliest testing grounds for nation-state formation in the region. The American government’s efforts of state-building in the country during the early twentieth century have served as the blueprint not only of nation-formation but also of the conceptual and

³⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.3.

³⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Jersey and West Sussex: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.5

³⁷ As counterpoint, it is important to note how this nationalist anticolonial imagination has continue to animate resistance movements against the nation-state, i.e., how communist movements in the country have appropriated the legacy of anticolonial struggle in the waging of “national democratic revolution.” See Edel Garcellano, ‘Reading the Revolution, Reading the Masses,’ in *Knife’s Edge: Selected Essays* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001), p.37-50 (p.41)

³⁸ Hau, ‘Rethinking History and ‘Nation-Building’ in the Philippines,’ in *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*, ed. Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), pp.39-68 (p.42)

actual practice of politics well into the post-Independence Philippines.³⁹ The country's praxis of "self-governmentality" inherited from American tutelage not only structured the present-day programs of the nation-state but also consolidated and legitimized the ruling elites and their dominant political practice. This legacy has effectively ensured the Philippine state's lasting neocolonial ties with the US far into the present American-dominated global economy.

The Philippine state's attempts of constructing a nation not only involved securing a sovereign and homogenous political space but also inscribing and binding the political and cultural communities inside it. However, given the prevailing ethnolinguistic and religious diversity and the widespread socioeconomic divisions among its people, the process of linking these communities under the name of the nation is far from complete, and in fact, may never be achieved. Combined yet uneven, the process of synthesizing and suturing the historical contradictions the name of the nation, its people and its language bear in the act of the state's nation-building produces violent and unsettling results, exacerbating the already fragmented sphere of sociopolitical life in the Philippines with real and "represented" forms of crises.

Crisis and Response

There is nothing new in the conceptual linking of "crisis" and the third world in the process of modern nation-state building. As such, anticolonial nations are seen and articulated as being "born of crisis, defined by crisis, and perpetuating and perpetuated by crisis."⁴⁰ Interpreting these crises, however, vary according to which political community or authority the interpretation comes from. For anticolonial national imagination, crises

³⁹ Hau, p.43.

⁴⁰ Neferti Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), p.26.

are both historical legacies of colonialism and the external pressures of global economy. National crisis can thus be described as the national situation of being “locked in a life-and-death struggle with first-world imperialism”⁴¹: stifled by Western powers, brainwashed by colonial experience, alienated and divided from itself, all at the expense of its people.

However, the discourse of crisis can also serve an entirely different end. From the perspective of the global political arena, crises have come to represent internal failures of nation-building projects in the third world. These crises, in the terms of the global politics of neoliberalism, have not only discredited the “goodness of the nation”⁴² but have also hopelessly prejudiced the struggles committed in its name. Given the current political reflections in the wake of secessionist wars following the Soviet collapse and other letdowns of decolonizing period in Asia, Africa and Latin America, “national crises” have been either accused of the violent prejudices of “bad nationalism” or predicated on the internal inabilities of these nations to resolve their own issues.⁴³ In short, national crisis has become of late a sorry excuse to bring the blame back to the third world nation-state and its people, and not to colonialism and imperialism.⁴⁴ This rationale is not without its damaging effects: “by repeatedly focusing anxiety on the fragility of the nation, its ostensible vulnerability to every kind of exigency,” national crisis operates to justify the reinforced and calibrated intrusions from the state and Western imperial powers to fashion rhetorics and programs of salvaging the nation and its people from and against itself.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Fredric Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,’ in *Social Text*, 15 (1988) 65-88 (p.68)

⁴² To use the term of Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asian and the world*. (London and New York: Verso, 1998) p.368.

⁴³ Patherjee, p.3.

⁴⁴ Garcellano, p.37.

⁴⁵ Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, ‘State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality and

In a double-bind, crisis could thus be taken as the problem or the solution, depending on whose perspective and in what manner this notion is deployed. In the case of the Philippines, poverty and underdevelopment are manifest crises of the present; where the political and economic compromises of the state to developed countries, particularly to the US, from military occupation and intervention, lopsided international relations down to the fashioning of dominant antirevolutionary cultural politics in the country can all be deemed either imperialist dilemmas or developmental solutions.⁴⁶

In the same light, the ongoing civil war between the state and the Communist Party of the Philippines and the steady and increasing outflow of people living and working abroad demonstrate the most pervasive expressions of the people's response to the crises of their destitute social lives. These two tendencies, as Caroline Hau points out, are not only "visible manifestations of the Philippines' insertion into global capitalism and the new, American-dominated, 'neoliberal' world order" but are also characteristic responses to national crises: "stay and struggle against the system or leave and seek opportunities elsewhere."⁴⁷ Taken as either the problem or the solution by the state or the people, revolution and migration are "movements" that both demonstrate the critical symptoms of a nation-in-emergency or the radical impulses to alter these deplorable social conditions:

These responses provide occasions to reflect on the implications of global and local developments for the Philippine nation-state, for the concepts of nationhood, sovereignty, and citizenship, and ideas of belonging, patriotic love, affect, sacrifice, and political engagement that buttress them.⁴⁸

And as such, they constantly animate the ways in which national situations are thought of and narrated in public discourse by providing the "thematic content" in which

Race in Singapore,' in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker et.al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.343-364 (p.343)

⁴⁶ Epifanio San Juan Jr., *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (Basingstroke and London: MacMillan Press, 1998), p.26.

⁴⁷ Hau, *On the Subject of the Nation: Filipino Writings from the Margins, 1981-2004*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004), p.3.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

crisis and its alternatives are formally represented and expressed as either conflict or resolution in Philippine media, history and literature. These social movements then do not only compel us to rethink and challenge how nation is imagined but also, and more importantly, confer unto that nation the possibility of a future, and the chance of envisioning and narrating it outside the limits of its present situation.

The representation of crisis brings into the fore the many crises of representation in the discourse of national situation, constantly challenging the already tenuous grounds on which the idea and politics of the nation rest. These reflections on the names of nation, its people, its language and its situation disclose the vexed colonial history and fraught relations of space, identity, language and conditions produced by the Empire in the national imaginary. The incommensurability of coupling these names makes imagining a nation all the more problematic, much more the task of narrating it.

Imagined and Narrated

Nations are not only imagined but are also narrated and anchored towards particular ends. The rise of “print-capitalism” seen predominantly in novel and newspaper, as Anderson points out, has become an inaugural moment for the emergence of an idea of a “nation:” a bounded and limited space marked by temporal modernity (of “empty homogenous time”) where people are inscribed and constituted within a political community.⁴⁹ Anderson is quick to qualify that the category of *imagination* purveys the discursivity of “creation” and “production,” rather than “falsity” and “fabrication”⁵⁰ implied in Ernest Gellner’s idea of “nationalism invent[ing] nations where they don’t exist.”⁵¹ Homi Bhabha, on the other hand, furthers that nation gains its symbolic force not only from the

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.25.

⁵⁰ Anderson, p.6.

⁵¹ Ernest Gellner, *Thoughts and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p.169.

mediating function of imagination; but also through its narration. It is in the myths of origins as foundational ideas for identity that the nation “com[es] into being” as a formidable historical idea.⁵² The “impossible unity” of these ambivalent narratives that are produced and sutured in its name “haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it.”⁵³ Reynaldo Ileto calls this narrative process as “moorings” to emphasize how the episodic stories of the country are sutured and deployed to inform and direct specific political actions, stressing how the narration affects the subjects on which these stories are directed to.⁵⁴

What seems to be the common thread among these assumptions is how they seal the link between literature and the nation in both conceptual and practical terms. Anderson’s influential and oft-quoted intervention in *Imagined Communities*, as Imre Szeman intuits, has effectively sewn the problematic link of nation and literature by stressing the nation’s discursive traits and putting forward the novel not only as a paradigmatic representation of the nation but the very *techne* and technology for such imagined representation.⁵⁵ This immediate linking has relieved the troubles of understanding the discursivity of nation-formation vis-a-vis the romantic theory of origins or cultural mediation.⁵⁶ Timothy Brennan underscores the characteristic narrativity of “novelistic nation,” by claiming that the novel and the nation have a much more direct correspondence besides *happening* at the same time: as “a composite but clearly bordered work of art,” the novel “objectif[ies] the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, by mimicking

⁵² Homi Bhabha, ‘Introduction: Narrating the Nation,’ in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp.1-7 (p.1)

⁵³ *ibid*, p.2-3.

⁵⁴ Reynaldo Ileto, “Knowledge and Pacification: The Philippine-American War.” *Knowing American’s Colony: A Hundred Years from the Philippine War* (Hawaii: Center for Philippine Studies-University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1999), pp.20-41 (p.32)

⁵⁵ Imre Szeman, *Zones of Instability: Literature, postcolonialism and the nation* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), p.42.

⁵⁶ *ibid*.

the structure of the nation.”⁵⁷ The novel becomes the nation’s “regulatory fiction,” operating as the “national longing for form” by setting the formal elements of the nation, and effectively binding its heterogeneity in standardizing language and raising literacy among its subjects.⁵⁸

Still, what needs to be stressed in the discursive characteristics of this relationship is how both the nation and the novel are mutually productive to each other. They both generate ideas and practices that instruct and infuse the way nations are imagined and subsequently narrated in literary texts. Literature not only provides the *techne* and the form of the nation, but also creates either its normative or subversive habits. Since the act of narration is moored towards a political practice, national literature is technological as it produces subjects and agents of these practices. For Hau, literature provides the “ethical technology” in molding the national self, anchored towards normative values that espouse certain political practices towards nation-formation.⁵⁹ Neferti Tadiar, on the other hand, sees literature as a “technological intervention” which “does not only represent and thematize subjects” but also “creates new social subjects with transformative historical agency.”⁶⁰ Such contradictory technological deployments make the marriage of nation and literature fraught with dangers and, at the same time, filled with possibilities.

National literature, as a legacy of this coupling, emerges as the formal expression of nation, gathering inside it the various incongruities of its name, the people, their language and their situation. Moreover, the technology of national literature does not only define the limits and excesses of the names in their assemblage, but also directs and radically transforms the subjects it addresses.

⁵⁷ Timothy Brennan, ‘The national longing for form,’ *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi Bhabha. (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp.44-70 (p.49)

⁵⁸ Brennan, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Hau, *Necessary Fictions*, p.26.

⁶⁰ Tadiar, *Things Fall Away*, p.16.

Writing the Nation

As what have been painstakingly discussed earlier, the ambivalent fittings of these names are not without their risks. The perils of binding the many incommensurable ideas under one name return in the crucial questions of what it includes and transforms as the same against what it excludes, violently displaces, and renders utterly Other and wordless.⁶¹ In imagining and narrating the nation, “whose dreams, thoughts, aspirations, actions, experiences and feelings become the foundations of this political community? Whose dreams, thoughts, aspirations, actions, experiences and feelings are left out.”⁶² In this sense, writing the nation confronts what Bhabha claims as the impossible unity of *the language of those who write it and the lives of those who live it*.

Bienvenido Lumbera, one of the country’s foremost commentators on national and nationalist literature, defines Philippine literature according to the attendant categories of “national” and “literary.” The “national” in Philippine literature addresses the history, the socioeconomic, cultural and political life of the Filipinos and the Philippine society while the “literary” attends to the institutionally-accepted aesthetic standards which distills among the many works those that will be included in the local literary canon.⁶³ Given the heterogeneity of the Filipinos or the numerous ways in which they find themselves bound within a community in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and religion, the category of “national” is fated to produce excesses outside the borders of this demarcated space and its exclusionary identity, as national literature can only represent

⁶¹ J. Neil Garcia, *Postcolonialism and Filipino Poetics: Essays and Critiques* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2004), p.73.

⁶² Roderick Galam, *The Promise of the Nation: Gender, History and Nationalism in Contemporary Ilokano Literature* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), p.14.

⁶³ Bienvenido Lumbera, ‘The ‘National’ and the ‘Literary’ in National Literature,’ in *Writing the Nation* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2000), pp.162-165 (p.163)

the kind of histories, socioeconomic, cultural and political lives of the nation and its people that can be accommodated within this binding place. Thus the “national” in Philippine literature, in incorporating the ambivalences of nation, its people and their conditions, is bound to produce the limits and excesses of this imagination, where narratives of those lives and those conditions that are rendered Other continually escape the national narration. One need only to look at the major categories of Philippine literature – Filipino literature in English, literature in Filipino and regional literatures – and the debates surrounding them to arrive at the many problems of conceptualizing a national body of writing in the country.

Philippine writings in English and (Tagalog-based) Filipino stand in the canon of Philippine letters as the country’s main literary languages, both historically produced from colonial exigencies that formed their literary history and tradition. English has gained linguistic dominance over the vernaculars because of the country’s colonial history and the enduring importance of English in the present-day global order. What started from the mimicry phase during the early decades of American formalization of literary pedagogy in the country, Philippine literature in English has claimed its own national tradition by consolidating the practice of writing and teaching of literature in English before the end of American occupation.⁶⁴ Filipino, on the other hand, claimed its place in the canon when it was institutionalized as the national language of the country, effectively becoming the rallying language of official and popular nationalism during the time of post-Independence Philippines.⁶⁵ Amid the noise of nationalist pronouncements, Tagalog-as-Filipino stands side by side with English in forming the local canon of the country. Formally displaced are the many writings from the regions, which function in the

⁶⁴ Lucila Hosillos, *Originality as Vengeance in Philippine Literature* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), p.99.

⁶⁵ Lumbera, ‘Regional Literature and National Literature: Divergent and Connected,’ in *Writing the Nation*, pp.151-156 (p.154)

fringes of national literary body as regional literatures.⁶⁶ It is in this uneven linguistic and literary relationship of English, Filipino and the many local vernaculars that Philippine literature functions as a national narration, revealing the limits of the “national proper” in representing which lives and in what language can this imagined community be expressed in literature.

Crucial to this formation of Philippine literary canon are literary institutions that proceed to disseminate pedagogy and aesthetics within the Philippine urban-based universities. Post-war and post-independence literary canon in the Philippines is consolidated by the literary institutions within the Philippine academia, from creative writing centers to university publications, down to national literary awards. One of the foremost literary institutions that gather writers from all over the country is the annual Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards (or what is popularly known in the country as *Palanca Awards*). Established in 1950s, the Palanca Awards remains to be the most prestigious literary competition in the country, covering all possible literary genres in three language divisions (English, Filipino and Regional Languages), canonizing budding writers and their works and directing particular aesthetic practices and trends, with the help of its dissemination within literary pedagogy from universities and literary centers.

The closed network of literary institutions in the academe, award-giving bodies and publishing houses concentrated in the urban center of the country further maps the very limited space of the practice of writing the nation, where the few who actually narrates the nation do so in institutionally-sanctioned style and language that effectively subsume the diversity of lingua franca and the heterogeneity of conditions within the

⁶⁶ _____ . ‘Harnessing Regional Literature for National Literature,’ in *Writing the Nation*, pp.151-156 (p.154)

space of the nation. These literary institutions furthermore demonstrate the political and ideological underpinnings of this limited space where the discourse and practice of literary aesthetics are established and circulated. Thus, the dominant languages and literary styles purported by Philippine national literature let slip the impossible unity of the language of those who write the nation and the lives of those who live it.

One can observe the historical significance of the concept of nation, and contradictions that arise in its representation through the dominant language and literary aesthetics, in the genre of Philippine fiction in English. The colonial experience with the English language is a crucial touchstone in establishing not only the post-War Philippine literary canon, but also and most especially the literary tradition of the Philippine short story. The short story is a colonial legacy, arriving at the country as a literary import from American education, which the Filipino writers have, through time, assimilated as their own. So much so that Lucila Hosillos considers that the “greatest remarkable achievement of Filipino writers in English throughout history is its *Filipinization* of the Western short story as a genre.”⁶⁷ She further comments that while fictionists in Filipino provide a parallel development to their counterparts in English, “the Filipino short story in English is way ahead of literature in the vernacular in so far as artistic values are concerned” because “writers of fiction in English are making conscious effort to reach a truly artistic expression, stimulated as they are by the body of world literatures in English.”⁶⁸ While there may arise several debates on Hosillos’ arguments, what is particularly striking about her assertion is how it underscores the wide-ranging influence and effects of English as a colonial legacy, not only in terms of its dominance as a language of education and industry in the Philippines, but also in its formation of the

⁶⁷ Hosillos, p.92.

⁶⁸ Hosillos, p.110.

literary canon, particularly that of the Filipino fiction in English.

It must be noted that among all the genres in Philippine literary canon, it was the fiction, in the form of novels and short stories, that saliently carries not only the weight of narrating the nation but also the complicit problems of translating this nation in another language.⁶⁹ For example, the foundational texts of national imagination of the country, Jose Rizal's novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, were originally written in Castilian. That nobody, save for a few Spanish-speaking middle class Filipinos, was able to read it in the original shows how these novels only gain their enduring political significance through various acts of translation.⁷⁰ For short fiction, while there exists a different literary tradition of this genre in the vernacular, the Filipino short story in English as a literary form is itself a curious offshoot of translation. The history of Philippine short story in English shows not only the domestication of form, as what Hosillos describes, but also the indigenization of this language to fit into the demands of the national narrative. The Filipino short story in English, as with all writings that were marked by the literary phenomenon of *creolization*, reflects the formal dilemma that contradicts its specifically national content.

This historical grounding is important in understanding how fiction, particularly short stories in English in the Philippines, becomes a problematic yet crucial technology of national narration, issuing in its name the problem of binding the heterogeneity of the nation and its people and the act of translating in their "own" the language of diverse national situations. The contradictions inherent in Filipino short stories in English reveal problems that persist to challenge the imagination of nation at present, even possibly, of

⁶⁹ Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo, 'Fabulists and Chroniclers,' (unpublished paper delivered at part of Likhaan UP-ICW Panayam Series, University of the Philippines – Diliman, 29 June 2008) <http://www.upd.edu.ph/~icw/Documents/Pantoja-Hidalgo-Fabulists-And-Chroniclers.pdf> [Accessed 13 May, 2011], pp.1-25 (p.2)

⁷⁰ Anderson, *Spectres of Comparisons*, p.232.

its future.

Future in Demand

To imagine and narrate the nation is already a daunting task, much more to imagine and narrate its future. This is precisely what the Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards sets out for writers to do in their inclusion of Philippine future fiction in its competition in 2000. Before this year, this literary genre, or its nearest form as science fiction, did not formally exist in the country's literary tradition. Like the short story, Philippine future fiction, or what would become later on as Philippine speculative fiction, owes its emergence from the West.

The earliest short story collection that can be deemed futuristic in form is Jose Ma. Espino's *Orbit 21* published in 1960s. However, despite its early efforts to tap into this new genre, these stories cannot be categorized as Philippine future fiction because they are deemed highly "imitative of American science fiction tropes" and are "focused on issues far removed from Philippine reality."⁷¹ It was only later in 1980s onwards that writers would begin to situate futuristic narratives in national setting such as Gregorio Brillantes' "Apollo Centennial," and in the 1990s, Eric Gamalinda's "The Tabernacle of the Ring" and Jessica Zafra's "Ten Thousand Easters in the Vatican."⁷² However, these very few samplings of futuristic stories would be found published inside the respective authors' general fiction books without claiming the name of the genre.

It was the advent of cyberspace and the science fiction fandom that would open the space of Philippine future fiction for the local young writers.⁷³ Because of the

⁷¹ Emil Flores, "Future Visions and Past Anxieties: Science Fictions in the Philippines from the 1990s Onwards (unpublished paper delivered at the 8th International Conference on Philippine Studies, Philippine Social Science Center, 23 – 25 July 2008), pp.1-27 (p.9)

⁷² *ibid*, p.9-10.

⁷³ *ibid*, p.10.

growing popularity of science fiction in the internet among the Filipino youth and with the renewed idiom of progress and modernity at the millennial turn, the Palanca awards introduced Philippine future fiction in 2000 as one of the categories in its competition in two main languages, English and Filipino. This literary institution defines the Philippine future fiction as short stories that involve “a looking beyond into the future of the country to transcend the boundaries of the present.”⁷⁴ From this genre definition alone, we can already note how it tries to engage writers into dealing with difficult problems of national imagination in its specific demand to speculate the future bound in national time and space. This is to say that the category compels writers to think about the future, just like science fiction, but to base their portrayal of future on Philippine realities. Such demands articulate very telling implications as to how the contemporary Filipino writers construct notions of nation and its future. Also, the strategy of using the genre of future fiction, instead of science fiction, already connotes a kind of negotiation with the genre against Philippine conditions: avoiding the well-established Western sci-fi to fit the third world realities of the country while, at the same time, forcing its writers to look forward in the interest of development and progress of the country.

Suffice it to say, the genre which spans from 2000 to 2006 has produced not only 18 winning pieces in Palanca but also consolidated several Filipino writers interested in the genre.

This study focuses only on Philippine future fictions in English for two reasons. First, while the Tagalog-based Filipino works are equally fraught with representational problems such as the “national” language, the English futuristic stories carry the distinct politics of domesticating both the language and the genre towards national imagination.

⁷⁴ Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature. ‘Rules of the Contest, 2000,’ Likhaan_online. tripod.com/08242001archivesite/board6-1.html. [Accessed 15 April, 2011].

Second, while the Tagalog-based Filipino writers have crafted a different tradition of future fiction,⁷⁵ the writers in English have remained active and visible through several publications and websites.

Despite the Palanca Awards' removal of the literary genre in the competition in 2007, there is a strong continuity of "futuristic" writings among Filipino fictionists in English up to the present. This can be seen in the growing interests of young writers in the country, most of which have been winning authors of this literary category, who set out to publish, anthologize and redefine a new literary category for Philippines, something they also imported and developed from Western fiction – the speculative fiction. The future of future fiction in the country then became "speculative fiction," as several published anthologies between 2005 up to the present cropped out, with a number of its selections being included in international anthologies of science fiction.⁷⁶ Some of these writers also maintain websites that are not only means for online publication but also establish intraregional links among other writers in English in Southeast Asia, specifically Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.⁷⁷ These various productions attest to the emergent and dynamic character of the genre among young writers in English in the country, as it continually generate a sustained inquiry on the problem of future in the national literary imagination among Filipino fictionists.

What Philippine future fiction starkly implores with its demand for future is an

⁷⁵ Philippine future fiction, or speculative fiction, in Filipino would only emerge much later, and in few installments, compared to their counterparts writing in English. See Mario Miclat, *Pinoy Odyssey 2049* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2005) and *Kathang-Isip: Mga Kuwentong Fantastiko*, ed. Rolando Tolentino and Rommel Rodriguez (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011).

⁷⁶ There are already six volumes of *Philippine Speculation Fiction* from 2005-2010, published by Kestrel Inc., edited by Dean Alfar, Nikki Alfar and Kate Osias. Psicom, a publishing house known to cater to genre-specific popular fiction like ghost stories and chick literature, release *Pinoy Amazing Stories*, edited by Carljoe Javier, in 2006. There are also two virtual anthologies: *Best of Philippine Speculative Fiction 2009* [<http://boingboing.net/2010/05/24/best-philippine-spec.html>] and *Philippine Speculative Fiction Sampler* [<http://philippinespeculativefiction.com/index.html>], both edited by Charles Tan.

⁷⁷ Some websites include: <http://specfic.philsites.net>, <http://www.rocketkapre.com>, and <http://redstonesciencefiction.com>

imagination that inadvertently combines the ambivalences of the nation, the people, the language and their conditions. The fraught relations and the problematic turns by which these terms were pooled together, through the act of narration, reveal the many predicaments of representing the nation and its future.

With this, we turn to an examination of these texts' portrayal of the nation and its future and how these futuristic short stories articulate the varied ways in which the nation, its people and their struggles are inscribed within the boundaries of national imagination, producing the limits and excesses that not only challenge the allegories of the nation, but ultimately, opens them towards a more radically Utopian social formations.

Chapter II

Anticipating the Nation: National Allegories in Philippine Future Fiction

The name of the nation, as Fredric Jameson observes, “returns again and again like a gong.”⁷⁸ Sounds aptly so since it signals a kind of return that not only draws attention but also warns of looming trouble, from the ambivalences the name attempts to gather to the historical lessons that echo each time it is summoned. As Partha Chatterjee notes, the concept of nation, along with the equally difficult ideas of nationalism, have gained increasing notoriety on the agenda of world affairs because of the complexity of problems that seemed to have emerged in its name. From its progressive underpinnings as platform for anticolonial struggles in the 50s, nationalism has come to disrepute because of secessionism and other failures of decolonizing projects among post-Independence nation-states.⁷⁹ And merely a decade into this century, nationalism have assumed various and often contradictory gestures and outcomes: from military aggression post-9/11, slew of protectionist trade policies following the ongoing global financial meltdown, to the series of anti-dictatorial uprising in the Middle East.

The dangers and potentialities roused by nationalism, whether in its good or bad variety, continue to haunt people across the globe, affirming what Benedict Anderson says that despite the late global capitalism’s triumphalist creed on the dissolution of nation-states in the borderless world, “the end of the era of nationalism so long prophesied is not remotely in sight.”⁸⁰ If there’s anything, these confounding issues have only made nation-ness “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our

⁷⁸ Fredric Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,’ in *Social Text*, 15 (1988) 65-88 (p.65)

⁷⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Jersey and West Sussex: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.3.

⁸⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006) p.3.

time.”⁸¹ Like the sound a gong creates, the signs of our times resonate the need to appraise the worth of nation against the “hopeless prejudice” that persists to trouble its name. Amid the noise of all the pronouncements and the indignations its name summons, we are invoked, time and again, to affirm what Anderson claims as “the goodness of the nation.”⁸²

Fredric Jameson has made such an attempt when he formulated “national allegory” to evaluate the significance of nation and its representation in third world writings. Yet just like the fate that have struck the names that he invokes, Jameson’s critical intervention has been met with the level of disdain and dismissal so brutal that very few people have actually reflected on what he actually says or even considered what he really tries to do with this critical category. National allegory, as Ian Buchanan clarifies, deals with “the problem of nation, and not nationalism.”⁸³ As such, it should be understood as an approach to the “formal” problems of representing the “national situation” in literature, not just an analysis of their seemingly self-evident “nationalist” content. In this light, what Jameson actually proposes, as Imre Szeman suggests, is a materialist conceptualization of the relationship between “allegory as a mode of interpretation and nation as a specific kind of sociological problematic” in the context of third world literary productions.⁸⁴

This chapter affirmatively returns to Jameson’s widely dismissed category by sifting through the debates it generated and reinstating its political value in the reading of

⁸¹ Anderson, *ibid.*

⁸² Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asian and the world* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), p.368.

⁸³ Ian Buchanan, ‘National Allegory Today: A Return to Jameson,’ in *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalism*, ed. Caen Irr and Ian Buchanan (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp.173-188 (p. 173).

⁸⁴ Imre Szeman, ‘Who’s Afraid of National Allegory?: Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization,’ in *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalism*, ed. by Caen Irr and Ian Buchanan (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp.189-211 (p. 191)

third world literature. By particularly isolating and discussing how Jameson critically uses the argued terms “nation” and “third world,” this study attempts to recover national allegory from the muddle of diatribes against nationalism and restore its analytical potential in schematically reading the problems of “nation” embedded in “third world” texts. This chapter proceeds to apply national allegory in the analysis of Philippine future fiction, in hopes that such “siting” could release the critical promise this category bears in the face of the heated arguments on nation-ness and its knotty attachments.

In Defense of the Nation and the Third World

In 1986, Jameson published “Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism” in *Social Text*, in the spirit of calls to revise the canon of Western literature courses to include non-Western texts. In the journal’s subsequent issue, Aijaz Ahmad released his rejoinder “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and ‘National Allegory,’” claiming that Jameson’s article smacks deep with the universalizing language of the “civilizing Other.” After that, “almost overnight, ‘Jameson’ seemed to have become a dirty word” among postcolonial practitioners and scholars as they find his attempt to generalize *all* third world literary productions as *necessarily allegorical* and thus should be read as *national allegories* rather scandalous and crudely Marxist.⁸⁵ While Ahmad, who intends to condemn Jameson’s article “for not being rigorous enough in its Marxism,” has become their champion as his definitive critique animated much of the postcolonialist uproar against Jameson.⁸⁶ One cannot simply miss the irony that has

⁸⁵ Neil Lazarus, ‘Fredric Jameson on ‘Third-World literature’: A Qualified Defence,’ in *Fredric Jameson: A critical reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Sean Homer (Basingstroke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 42-61 (p.44)

⁸⁶ As Lazarus pointed out, Ahmad unwittingly spawned a host of postcolonialist/ poststructuralist attacks on Jameson, rallying behind his words with a different agenda: “[Ahmad’s] critique mutates from a Marxist critique of ‘third-worldism’ into a ‘third-worldist’ critique of Marxism.” Lazarus, p.51. Even Ahmad has been keen of this appropriation when his arguments about Jameson’s being “not rigorous

befallen both the authors because of the various creative misreadings at a time when postcolonial discourse has been gaining ground in Western academes.

This misinterpretation is not surprising given the rhetorical strategy Ahmad rehearses at the start of his essay: Jameson, which he used to admire from a distance as a comrade and fellow Marxist turns out to be his “civilizational Other.”⁸⁷ And this “feeling” was confirmed because of the “colonialist” rhetoric of Jameson’s overvalorization of nationalist ideology and his ahistorical insistence of Third World as a “description.”⁸⁸ Ahmad arrived at this insight because of how Jameson supposedly defines the nation and the third world, which for him creates a “tight fit” between third world literary production, nationalism and national allegory.⁸⁹ For him, Jameson’s reductionism of the third world described “purely in terms of an experience of externally inserted phenomena” has rendered it outside human history and the production systems of capitalism and socialism which constitute the first and the second worlds respectively.⁹⁰ In this singular experience of imperialism and colonialism, nationalist ideology would be the “only ideological formation available for Third World writers” against the global American postmodernist culture.⁹¹ Hence, “there is *nothing* else to narrate” but the “unitary experience of national oppression” in “the exclusive form of narrativity” that is

enough in its Marxism” was assimilated into “unbridled diatribes against nationalism” by “fashionable poststructuralist.” Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Literature among the Signs of Our Time,’ in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.1-42 (p.10-11)

⁸⁷ “[B]ecause I am a Marxist, I had always thought of us, Jameson and myself, as birds of the same feather, even though we never quite flocked together. But then, when I was on the fifth page of this text (specifically, on the sentence starting with ‘All third-world texts are necessarily...’ etc.) I realized that what was being theorized was, among many other things, myself. Now, I was born in India and I write poetry in Urdu, a language not commonly understood among US intellectuals. So I said to myself: ‘All?...necessarily?’ It felt odd. Matters became much more curious, however. For the further I read, the more I realized, with no little chagrin, that the man whom I had for so long, so affectionately, albeit from a physical distance, taken as a comrade was, in his own opinion, my civilizational Other. It was not a good feeling.” Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and ‘National Allegory’,’ in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp.95-122 (p.96)

⁸⁸ Lazarus, p.45.

⁸⁹ Ahmad, p.102.

⁹⁰ Ahmad, p.100.

⁹¹ Ahmad, p.101.

national allegory.⁹²

Since Jameson's essay was, in a lot of ways, overdetermined by Ahmad's influential critique, a return to Jameson's national allegory would necessarily have to consider Ahmad if only to clarify what "Jameson *actually said*" as opposed to what Ahmad "powerfully supplemented, assumed and suggested but was not *actually said*" in this article, particularly on the concept of nation and third world.⁹³

First, Jameson neither defined the third world outside human history nor considered the countries within it mere objects of those first and second worlds that direct human history and forms of social productions. As Lazarus points out, "to speak of social formations as having 'suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism' is scarcely to define them as being divorced from human history, or even the history of capitalism."⁹⁴ Second, contrary to Ahmad's suspicions, Jameson neither subscribes to the original Three Worlds theory nor deploys an "orientalizing discourse" in the "essentially descriptive" manner by which he uses this category in his essay.⁹⁵ If there is anything, both of them agree that "there is no such thing as Third World which can be constructed as an internally coherent object of theoretical knowledge"⁹⁶ because, as Buchanan asserts, Jameson himself "has effectively drained it of its original informing content" into "an empty signifier."⁹⁷ Third World, for Jameson, then "loses all geographic specificity and becomes a term designating something else like class,"⁹⁸ or an index for "a political desire" rather than "a descriptor of any place or region."⁹⁹

Regarding Ahmad's claim of Jameson's overvalorization of nationalism, it must

⁹² Ahmad, p.102.

⁹³ Lazarus, p.46.

⁹⁴ Lazarus, p.57.

⁹⁵ Ahmad, p.99.

⁹⁶ Ahmad, p.96-97.

⁹⁷ Buchanan, *ibid*, p.178.

⁹⁸ *ibid*.

⁹⁹ Lazarus, p.57.

be noted that nowhere in Jameson's text does he assert that "nationalist ideology" would be the only available ideological formation for third world writers. When Jameson summons the name of the nation at the start of his essay, he is actually referring to "the obsessive return of the national situation" among the concerns of third world intellectuals,¹⁰⁰ which does not, in any way, precludes that they are immediately nationalists of whatever type. As Buchanan argues, national allegory was misinterpreted as nationalist ideology:

Jameson does not state that Third World writers are only or can only be nationalist, [w]hat he does say is that Third World writers are obsessively concerned with the 'national situation' – nationalism would be but one part of this vastly more complex problem.¹⁰¹

And by "moving too quickly" and claiming national allegory as an expression of nationalist ideology, Ahmad has unduly pinned down and limited the scope of Jameson's essay as a piece on third world and nationalism, when in fact, it covers a much larger and more complex ground of "the problematic of national situation" where national allegory functions as "the particular solution to a more general representational problem" of the nation in third world literature.¹⁰² These points of clarification do not only unburden Jameson's national allegory with the accusation of essentializing and overemphasizing nationalism on third world literary production, for clearly it is not the point, but also confer unto it the capacity for "develop[ing] a system by which it might be possible to consider these texts within the global economic and political system that produces the third world as third world."¹⁰³

Taking aside what is not actually said, we may now turn to what Jameson actually claims about national allegory in his essay and in his earlier book *Fables of Aggression* to

¹⁰⁰ Jameson, p.65.

¹⁰¹ Buchanan, p.174.

¹⁰² Buchanan, p.175.

¹⁰³ Szeman, p.192.

examine how it applies to third world texts, particularly to Philippine future fiction.

Necessary Allegories

Imre Szeman observes that the impressions that may have arise from both of the terms “nation” and “allegory” may have been the source of so much discomfort among the critics of Jameson’s national allegory, thereby failing to consider the full extent of what he attempts to do with this critical category. For one, both the terms nation, as the political content, and allegory, as the formal element, have been widely discredited: “the nation, because of the historical experience of first- and third- world countries with virulent nationalisms of twentieth century;” and “allegory, because of the naïve mode of one-to-one mapping that it seems to imply.”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, to claim that “all third world literature are necessarily allegorical and they are to be read as national allegories” might mean one or two disparaging things for third world writings: that they are left behind form- and content-wise or that “the outmoded technologies (including the conceptual technologies such as ‘nation’ and ‘allegory’) of the first-world might still be of some use” for them, conjuring “the whole spectre of developmental theory and practice.”¹⁰⁵ Jameson is very much aware of this and a close reading of the theoretical development of national allegory would tell us that it does not in any way serve as an aesthetic statement on third-world texts but rather as a means to engage with their fundamentally different textual relations to the global order that produced them as third world. And this is precisely what national allegory demonstrates by becoming a provisional solution to a broader problem of representation, not only among third-world texts but even those first-world literary productions where nation and allegory would seem to have been obsolete and

¹⁰⁴ Szeman, 191-192.

¹⁰⁵ Szeman, p.192.

antiquated.¹⁰⁶

In his reading of Wyndham Lewis' *Tarr* in *Fables of Aggression*, he redefines the traditional notions of allegory and claims that it "ceases to be a static decipherment of one-to-one correspondence."¹⁰⁷ Instead it provides a narrative frame for the conflict to render "the ultimate conflictual 'truth' of the sheer, mobile, shifting relationality of national types and of older nation-states which are their content."¹⁰⁸ In short, what national allegory provides for Lewis' work is a structure where "the ungraspable whole" of *Tarr*'s content, or the unrepresentationality of the nation, could be contained through "narrative closure."¹⁰⁹ And this crisis of representation of nation has sprung from the crisis of modernism and imperialism: "nation can now no longer be grasped immanently" for the "significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere" and no amount of "enlargement of personal experience," "intensity of self-examination," and "scientific deduction would ever be enough" to understand "the radical otherness" of life beyond the metropolis.¹¹⁰

And since for Jameson, nation is a "vague political entity" that is "nonrepresentable," allegory becomes a formal strategy that conveys and at the same time expresses this very nonrepresentability: "Allegory is an insistence on the difficulty or even the impossibility of representation of these deeper and essentially relational realities... [it] happens when you know you cannot represent something but also cannot not do it."¹¹¹ And *Tarr*, as a modernist text, exhibits this "kind of art which reflexively

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1979), p. 90-91.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Buchanan, p.175.

¹¹⁰ Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism,' in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, introduction by Seamus Deane (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, Field Day Books, 1990), pp. 43-66 (pp.50-51)

¹¹¹ Jameson, 'Interview with Xudong Zhang,' in *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), pp.171-202 (p.195-196)

perceives this problem and lives this formal dilemma.”¹¹²

National allegory thus functions as “a formal attempt to bridge the increasing gap between the existential data of everyday life within a given nation-state and the structural tendency of monopoly capitalism to develop on a worldwide, essentially transnational scale.”¹¹³ With this, it would not be far-fetched to propose, as Buchanan suggests, that national allegory is as relevant to those subsumed in the third world as to “all creative writers and intellectuals everywhere in the world today.”¹¹⁴ But owing to the complexity of global experience, it is the third world that “deals more directly to the national situation” because of their very “different relationship between the libidinal and the political components of individual and social experiences.”¹¹⁵

National allegory then is “one attempt to theorize the radical-difference of third-world cultures” from that of the first world,¹¹⁶ something which for Jameson has to be maintained to allow third world literatures to be properly appreciated in the context of globalization. And this difference is fundamentally expressed in the way “third world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with the properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory.”¹¹⁷ Jameson derives this distinction in how first- and third-world literary productions differ with the way they perceive the divide between the personal versus the political. The radical split “between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political, between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic, and of secular political power”

¹¹² Jameson, *Fables of Aggression* p.51.

¹¹³ Jameson, p. 94.

¹¹⁴ Buchanan, *ibid*, p.185.

¹¹⁵ Szeman, *ibid*, p.193.

¹¹⁶ Jameson, ‘Interview with Anders Stephanson,’ in *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism*, pp.45-73 (p.67)

¹¹⁷ Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,’ p.69.

which is characteristic of Western texts is not yet evident among the third world literatures.¹¹⁸ Hence, the “political commitment” that is “recontained and psychologized or subjectivized”¹¹⁹ into “unconscious allegories” in the first-world situation¹²⁰ is “overt and conscious”¹²¹ in the third-world, “where the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately, invoke the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself.”¹²²

National allegory in third world literature thus points to “a radically different and objective relationship of politics to libidinal dynamics”¹²³ wherein the nation stands as “the libidinal apparatus” or “the optic a text draws into itself in order to render itself visible” or provisionally representable.¹²⁴ Moreover, in characterizing this fundamental division of first- and third-world literary production vis-à-vis the psychological-political split, Jameson stresses “a genuine, material difference that is expressed socially and culturally” through the experience of “belatedness” of modernity typical of non-Western societies,¹²⁵ a “time lag” which Johannes Fabian describes as “allochronism” or “the denial of the ‘other’ of any possible contemporaneity with the West.”¹²⁶

In light of all of these, national allegory can thus be understood on the following terms: 1.) Rather than “a program of art to the effect that [third world writers] should now begin to write allegories,”¹²⁷ it is an aesthetic dilemma, something which contains and, at the same time, conveys the inherent unrepresentability of nation and of social life in general; 2.) Rather than just a system of interpretation, national allegory names and is the

118

ibid.

119

Jameson, p.71.

120

Jameson, p.79.

121

Jameson, p.80.

122

Jameson, p.85-86.

123

Jameson, p.80.

124

Buchanan, p.183.

125

Szeman, p.194.

126

Johannaes Fabian in Szeman, p.209, n.25.

127

Jameson, ‘Interview with Anders Stephanson,’ p.68.

very name of the “symptom” of “the libidinal apparatus” that emerges from the political desire to represent the nation’s “conditions of possibility;” and 3.) Rather than discursively intensifying the backwardness of economic and cultural life and its expression in literature, it portrays the belatedness of modernity that emerged from the radical difference of those “in situations of economic and cultural subalternity”¹²⁸ or “in the backward zones of capital.”¹²⁹

With these, Jameson allows us to look not only into actually existing traditions of ‘conscious and overt’ allegorical writings of third world of their radically different national situations but also those texts that resonate the political desire to imagine the difficult yet necessary forms of collectivities that resist the global order.

In the Philippines, for example, there is a long tradition of nationalist writings that uses the literary form of allegory. National allegory became one of the major tropes of Filipino nationalist writers during the anticolonial struggles in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. “Conceived during the hiatus between the project of liberating the homeland and the defense of popular democracy” in the country,¹³⁰ the literary tradition of national allegory harks back from thematic of *Alma Filipina* (Filipino soul) among the Propaganda writers during the Spanish period to the seditious literatures against American imperialists and Japanese invaders.¹³¹ Although these kinds of writings have long been considered outmoded among contemporary Filipino writers, the political spirit of national allegory remains to haunt present-day literatures in the country.

The Filipino national allegory, according to Epifanio San Juan Jr., emerged from

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Ahmad, ‘Literature among the Signs of Our Time,’ p.11.

¹³⁰ Epifanio San Juan Jr., *Allegories of Resistance: Philippines at the threshold of Twenty-first Century* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1994), p.62.

¹³¹ Resil Mojares, ‘The Haunting of the Filipino Writer,’ in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), pp.297-314 (p. 298)

the conjuncture of “what is desired and what is exigent.”¹³² To summon the name of nation and to imagine and narrate its possibilities through fiction is clearly to revive the spirit of national allegory. We can see this renewal in Philippine future fiction, as the genre demands both the representation of nation and its destination. Thus, national allegory returns to us in its new form with the new dilemmas in the face of our new global realities. And against the grim odds of our present situations, these short stories articulate what is necessary and what is hoped for in imagining the nation and its promise.

DestiNation

Philippine future fiction demonstrates a collective anticipation of development and modernity as these short stories foretell a future rife with the modern dreams of the nation, invested on modernization and technological advancement seen in the thematic of technoscientific progress in digitalization, automatization and virtualization of everyday lives of Filipinos.¹³³ This scientific and technological progress prophesies a better country for the Philippines, as it not only guarantees economic prosperity, but also social order and peace.

This fantasy of modernity “becomes an aesthetic solution to a general representational problem” as it serves as the pervasive theme that animates and marks the sense of future for the country in these narratives. In other words, what makes these short stories futuristic is their sense of modernity, which is also what sets them apart from the general mode of writing in the country. It is as if the future holds the promise of a societal advancement that can only be gained through scientific and technological breakthroughs, something that, in present, are out of grasp for its people.

¹³² San Juan Jr., p.62.

¹³³ Alwin Aguirre, ‘From ST to History: The discourse of future in Palanca award-winning pieces from 2000 to 2005,’ in *Daluyan: Journal of Filipino Language*. Vol. 15 (2009) 114-138 (p.115)

In “Past Forward,” for example, Maria Fres-Felix depicts Philippines as “so antiseptically clean, it was disturbing.”¹³⁴ The protagonist, who woke up after a hundred years of sleep, marvels at the tremendous development of the whole country, from the President’s state of the nation address (“Inflation was nonexistent as 1%. GNP growth was gargantuan at 15%. Unemployment a mere 2%”) and as observed in the sterile lives of Filipinos (“no sign of the staple protest from militant organizations” and “everybody seemed to be well-fed and pleased. No, make that overfed and euphoric. Uniformly so. Progress must do that to people...”).

Catherine Torres’ “Niche,” Baryon Tensor Posadas’ “Mall” and Pia Roxas’ “Last Bus Ride,” on the other hand, portrays this progress through infrastructural modernization. In “Niche,” the Philippines becomes frontrunner of healthcare industry as it establishes a Medical Park in the future: “hundreds of buildings, scrubbed and gleaming... that huddle of twelve state-of-the-art hospitals consolidated the countries’ bid to be the healthcare hub of East Asia.”¹³⁵ In the story “Mall,” the country’s capital city, Metro Manila, literally fulfils its consumerist fantasy by becoming a huge shopping mall: “All sorts of shops for all sorts of needs for all sorts of people, one lives, walks and breathes inside the Mall as if one is mapping the needs and desires of the city.”¹³⁶ In “Last Bus Ride,” the transportation system would not only become organized but also modernized beyond wildest dreams. The then-craggy MRT (Metro Railway Transit) of Manila would become technologically advance (operated on superconductivity with “dark mag.field cabin walls” which “zaps in and out” everytime passengers comes on board or

¹³⁴ Adel Gabot, ‘The Field,’ in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2000), pp.1-18 (p.4)

¹³⁵ Catherine Rose Galang Torres, ‘Niche’ in *Future Fiction, English: Second Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2004), pp.1-24 (p.10)

¹³⁶ Baryon Tensor Posadas, ‘Mall’ in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2002), pp.1-23 (p.7)

alight the train) and standardized throughout the city, removing all other “ancient” transportation technologies like city buses and jeepneys.¹³⁷

The future of the Philippines is guaranteed not only on the promise of modernity and development as a country, but also of its enhanced capacity for tourism, something that most stories offer as the viable global industry for the country. Timothy Montes’ “Turtle Season,” for example, depicted what used to be a war-torn South of the country as a thriving “a paradise island;” thanks to the peacekeepers who have destroyed all artifacts of the past: histories, novels, fictions and myths, which in the past has served to impart contending beliefs and create decades of conflicts.¹³⁸ This same portrayal can also be observed in Karen Manalastas’ “Treasure Islands,” as the whole country becomes an ultimate tourist destination not only for its beach resorts and natural resources, but also for its exotic sex services.¹³⁹ Moreover, the country’s tourist industry will invent novel ways of packaging and marketing its raw materials and people like “vermin hunting” in Irene Sarmiento’s “They Don’t Bite.” In this story, the Philippines will become the “the biggest and most advanced tourist site in the world” for vermin hunting, a recreational sports that involves poaching and killing vermin, the “uncivilized” and “barbaric” people enclosed like animals in the heart of the country’s former capital, Manila.¹⁴⁰

While infrastructural development, peace and order, and economic prosperity seem to be the markers of success of modernity and development in these visions of the

¹³⁷ Pia Roxas, ‘Last Bus Ride’ in *Future Fiction, English: Second Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2005), pp.1-19 (p.7)

¹³⁸ Timothy Montes, ‘Turtle Season’ in *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2001), pp.1-15 (p.8)

¹³⁹ Karen Manalastas, ‘Treasure Islands’ in *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2005), pp. 1-23 (p.17)

¹⁴⁰ Irene Carolina A. Sarmiento, ‘They Don’t Bite,’ in *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2004), pp. 1-21 (p.4)

future, most of these narratives still depend on describing a sense of futurity through scientific and technological advancements through digitalization, virtual reality and cloning. From highly-sophisticated digital gadgets, networks of hi-tech establishments and automated services to advanced virtual technologies which can respond even to the oldest and most obscure desires of the past, the future in these short stories guarantees a life of convenience and satisfaction for Filipinos in the future.

Pearlsha Abubakar's "Espiritu Santos" exhibits the technology of tiny holographic cellphones: "worn as pendants around necks or wrists which projects a virtual monitor and keyboard on any surface;"¹⁴¹ while the schools in Arturo Ilano's "Monumental Race" uses "the new TouchBoard, a ten-foot wide wall-mounted display device that was a product of the University's modernization program."¹⁴² Adel Gabot's "The Field," on the other hand, imagines a technology for going back in time. Instead of time travel, one can see the past from a real-time, three-dimensional virtual projection of any historical event as sensor balls travel through any moment in the past according to particular time-space coordinates, which would then simultaneously relay and record the images to the future.¹⁴³

Technological innovations will not only satisfy the sense of going back in time but also gratify nostalgic desires as seen in Corinna Nuqui's "Suman," where Filipino scientists becomes synaesthetes or "flavor mappers" in the future, inventing products like "flavor packets" described as "comfort rations" to fulfil the wistful longings of people for

¹⁴¹ Pearlsha Abubakar, 'Espiritu Santos,' in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2005), pp.1-19 (p.6)

¹⁴² Arturo Ilano, 'A Monumental Race,' in *Future Fiction: Third Prize, English, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2006), pp.1-13 (p.8)

¹⁴³ Adel Gabot, 'The Field,' in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2000) pp.1-19 (p.4)

taste of exotic spices or smell of local delicacies that in time will become obsolete.¹⁴⁴

Virtual reality is also a sign of the country's future advancement. In Raissa Rivera's story, most of the well-off Filipinos would opt to live in "Virtual Center:" "rooms filled with people's bodies strapped on chairs like "life support machines in the hospital," where rich people are "programmed to sleep at a certain time of the night, and to wake up and experience their virtual lives at nine in the morning everyday."¹⁴⁵ The lure of this technology relies on its power to offer second lives where people can control and create their realities, as explained by a girl trapped in her little virtual world in Luis Katigbak's "Subterranea:"

There is something wonderful about this separation from reality, these people hunched in front of their virtual playgrounds. They know exactly the rules, they know how to win and they know exactly who's to blame when they lose.¹⁴⁶

Virtual simulation is also featured in Lakambini Sitoy's "Secret Notes on a Dead Star," showing a virtual technology where one can programme a "21st century experience", i.e. of crowds in a concert, of protests in the streets, of drinking sprees in bars, practically any of the old lived experience of the past; through "stimulator suits and helmets clamped firmly over one's eyes," one can feel all of these impossible yesteryears' realities in the future.¹⁴⁷

These futuristic narratives also foretell that more than realities, beings can also be recreated through cloning. What is still a morally questionable scientific breakthrough in

¹⁴⁴ Corinna Esperanza A. Nuqui, 'Suman' in *Future Fiction, English: Second Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2006), pp.1-8 (p.2)

¹⁴⁵ Raissa Claire U. Rivera, 'Virtual Center,' in *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2002) pp.1-24 (p.5)

¹⁴⁶ Luis Joaquin Katigbak, 'Subterranea,' in *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2000) pp.1-10 (p.3)

¹⁴⁷ Lakambini A. Sitoy, 'Secret Notes on the Dead Stars,' in *Future Fiction, English: Second Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2000), pp.1-15 (p.5)

this century will be the norm in the future. David Hontiveros' "Kaming mga Seroks" portrays the Philippines as a massive global factory and exporter of clones, which are modelled from the "third world laborer genes of Filipinos," tasked and programmed to execute hard, mechanical labor, or as changelings, and in most of the Filipina clones, as sex workers,¹⁴⁸ just like Dean Alfar's protagonist "Hollow Girl," which is "the best clone the country, or even the whole world, can offer," with a mind of a computer which stores massive amount of data, and the beauty of a woman that could stir up the men's desires.¹⁴⁹

Finally, what Yvette Tan's "Sidhi" dramatizes as the prophecy of the second coming of the Messiah in a form of a freak faith healer,¹⁵⁰ was literally enacted through a radical cloning project in Antonio Hidalgo's "The Second Coming." In the said story, a massive multinational company and their eminent biotechnologists cloned Jesus Christ, a venture which does not only include biologically reconstructing God but also literally retelling the Biblical narrative: the cloned genes implanted on a virgin Maria living in Manila who raised the baby secretly until the age of 30, until which he was publicly introduced to the world to recreate the history of salvation.¹⁵¹

What the premises of these future narratives depict almost unanimously is the themes of progress and development that can be achieved through the promise of modernity. From a technologically-deprived and largely economically-disparate present

¹⁴⁸ David Peter Jose Hontiveros, 'Kaming mga Seroks,' in *Future Fiction, English: Second Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2002), pp.1-12 (p.2)

¹⁴⁹ Dean Francis Alfar, 'Hollow Girl: A Romance,' in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2004), pp.1-11 (p.2)

¹⁵⁰ Yvette Natali Uy Tan, 'Sidhi' *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2003), pp.1-20 (p.15)

¹⁵¹ Antonio A. Hidalgo, 'The Second Coming,' in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2001), pp.1-14 (p.2)

condition, in time, following the developmental logic of global capitalism, the future of the Philippines could be a redemptive one, a form of “coming” marked with an anticipation for economic and technological glories of modernity that other more industrialized countries have been experiencing and enjoying for some time now.

But the fantasy of modernity that these short stories demonstrate professes a troubling desire with disquieting implications. For one, it reveals that the only way of formally representing the future of the nation in these short stories is by representing them according to the vision of modernity. But the global fantasy of supposed seamless onward march towards development proves to be untrue because modernity has already happened, or is already happening always in advance in other parts of the globe. These narratives’ inherent fantasy of “reaching it” will always be belated, even in the future. No matter how optimistic these future fictions’ premises are, the time of the future for the Philippines essentially exhibits anachronism, a lagging behind which haunts all representation of the future in the space of economic and cultural subalternity.

Caught up with the desire to catch up, the allegories of the nation’s fantasy of modernity encapsulates the very idiom of third world crisis and its representation as both problem and solution of the national situation. National allegory reveals this crisis of representation: “having once been part of the solution to a dilemma then become[s] part of the new problem,”¹⁵² as these stories eventually disclose the unsettling repercussions of modernity’s visions on the nation and its fate.

Fantasizing the Modern, Mimicking Modernity

The fantasy of the modernity that pervades in these short stories allegorizes not only the inherent desire of these third world texts to cope with the seemingly advanced and still

¹⁵² Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,’ p.78.

advancing first world, but also reveal the fundamental anachronistic relations between them. Homi Bhabha refers to this incongruous time relationship as “time lag,” a temporal break that defers and challenges the homogeneity and “sententiousness” of modernity.¹⁵³ Time lag signifies an indeterminate temporality where “what might have been” and “what could have been” overlaps in the narrative representation of third world subjects.¹⁵⁴ Johannes Fabian, on the other hand, describes this time lag in anthropology as “allochronism:” a material difference and a rhetorical device that makes use of “time distancing” to “deny coevalness”.¹⁵⁵ This allochronism stresses

the denial to the ‘other’ of simultaneity with the West, which means that the other may be seen as primitive, underdeveloped or uncivilized, and therefore in need of intervention by the West to make it modern, developed and civilized.¹⁵⁶

Szeman elaborates on this form of belatedness to discuss how in literature this allochronic time relationship informs the radical difference of third world writings to those of the first world. He describes this sense of “belatedness” of the third world as “having arrived too late on the historical scene, at the end of Western modernity that had completely mapped out the global landscape in advance.”¹⁵⁷ And against this belatedness, the global world order sustains the illusion of isochronicity: “a concerted attempt to conjure away the contradictions created by an intensified neoliberal capitalism that has in fact deepened the divide between the North and South, the West and the rest.”¹⁵⁸ This allochronism produces various fantasies of modernity as embodied by the city as an imagined national space of most of the narratives of Philippine future fiction. The imposed and illusive global isochronicity have created a third-world desire to cope with

¹⁵³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.184.

¹⁵⁴ Bhabha, p.191.

¹⁵⁵ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Objects* (New York: Columbia University, 1983), p.32.

¹⁵⁶ Imre Szeman, ‘Belated or Isochronic?: Canadian Writing, Time and Globalization,’ *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 71 (2000) (CBCA Reference) 186-194 (p.190)

¹⁵⁷ Szeman, p.188.

¹⁵⁸ Szeman, p.190.

the world's delusion of contemporaneity, manifest in the artificiality of notions of nation-state development through social mobility, architecture and technologies in Philippine metropolis.

The belated desire for modernity is what “Last Bus Ride” explicitly dramatizes by juxtaposing the two modes of urban transport: the craggy and by-then extinct city bus versus the highly-sophisticated Metro Railway Transit (MRT) train system operating on the city's flyover. What is revealed in these snatches of narratives is the materialization of contradictory national fantasies of modernity mapped within the urban space through flyovers and trains. Flyovers realize the transnational fantasy of the cityscape, connecting channels of consumption and raising people out of urban immersion, away from the grim nightmares of its third world conditions. However, as Neferti Tadiar notes, while flyovers seem to enact the fantasy of the capital's “free-flow” in third-world traffic, they also “recreate the uneven development and restructures the new division of labor in which First World-Third World or core-periphery relations are being reproduced within rather than among nations.”¹⁵⁹

And the MRT, an actual train system which operates on city's flyovers since 1999, has further concretized this illusion of urban mobility, as “the city down below is rendered invisible” with the rest of the country's dismal realities vanishing with the vertigo and speed of Metro Manila's developmental primacy.¹⁶⁰ This fantasy of modernity has rendered two forms of invisibility in the story. As the story attests, traveling on these high-tech future trains not only estranges the people inside it (“The lights of the other train blink on then off, illuminating its passengers briefly. Some are

¹⁵⁹ Neferti Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004) p.85.

¹⁶⁰ Baryon Tensor Posadas, ‘Standing on the Yellow Line’ *Literatura*, 7 (2001) http://www.oocities.org/phil_literatura/07_intro.html [Accessed 12 Jan. 2011].

looking in each other's direction... Allan imagines they are having a conversation”¹⁶¹) but also the whole of Manila outside (“Without the train’s air control, you could smell the overt ripeness of the city, its near-decay.”¹⁶²) And in the future, those who are “left behind” and cannot cope with the speed of urban development would vanish, as the story literally portrays with the last city bus fatally diving headlong into the river.

“Mall” depicts another form of national urban fantasy. One in which Metro Manila became a huge mall, an absurd concretization of a real-life local business magnate’s – Henry Sy – dreams of installing his shopping malls on every 30- to 45-minute driving distance throughout the whole city.¹⁶³ At present, the proliferation of these giant malls has consolidated the consumerist fantasy embodied in the country’s “mall culture” as these establishments

represent the multinational enforcement and reception in the national space: the construction of an ideal transnational space housing everything within one roof; the franchisement of middle class entertainment and culture; the problematics involved in the more complicated task of organizing labor and people; the dream materialized of ‘First Worldization’ in a Third World.¹⁶⁴

In the future, according to the story, the city will not only be filled with these shopping malls, but will become itself a Mall, wherein the people, like the story’s protagonist, would find themselves increasingly lost as they become increasingly assimilated inside its space:

Then there was the sound of densely packed crowd moving through the winding corridors... The ambient sounds of the mall – random fragments of conversations, public address announcements, store music layered atop one another – drowned my own voice.¹⁶⁵

“Virtual Center,” on the other hand, offers a radically different form of “fantasy

¹⁶¹ Pia Roxas, ‘Last Bus Ride,’ p.13.

¹⁶² Roxas, p.7.

¹⁶³ Roland Tolentino, ‘City of Malls,’ *Bulatlat*, April 21, 2009. <http://rolandotolentino.wordpress.com/2009/04/21/syudad-ng-malls-kulturang-popular-kultura-column-bulatlatcom/> [Accessed 13 July 2010]

¹⁶⁴ Tolentino, *National/Transnational: Subject Formation and Media in and on the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), p.100.

¹⁶⁵ Baryon Tensor Posadas, ‘Mall,’ p.7

production”¹⁶⁶ where commodity fetishism reaches its ultimate technological form as virtual reality: instead of buying products and availing services provided by the transnational space of malls to gratify one’s fantasies, the story shows a formidable complex where desired lives can be programmed, simulated and virtually experienced. Virtual center is thus described in the story as a sort of mall of fantasies, where “very rich people who had given up on ordinary living” go to to lead their virtual lives:

They were strapped with masks, wires, electrodes, IVs and feeding tubes... The masks on their faces were supposed to project images they watched, images corresponding to the type of life they wanted to lead. Electronic impulses gave them appropriate sensations. Even their tongues had electrodes on them to stimulate taste.¹⁶⁷

However, just like the unevenness of social life that the fantasies of urban mobility and consumerism reproduce through sophisticated trains and shopping malls complex, the access to virtual lives are limited only to those who can afford it. In the story, Delia, trapped as a caretaker of the moneyed class who are leading virtual lives, is subjected into this new form of labor division intensified by the virtual productions of social life in the future, as described by his rebel brother, Nick: “Because of them, we’ve lost our freedom to choose how we’ll make a living. Our entire lives center around taking care of the rich so their money will take care of us.”¹⁶⁸

More than anything, the fantasy of modernity can be most easily identified with urban architecture, particularly by massive skyscrapers serving as markers of progress and economic success. As expressed by the protagonist of “Monumental Race,” the tall buildings embodies a concrete desire of arriving at a particular destination in the itinerary of global development, “they tell you that you’ve reached a new place already, [without

¹⁶⁶ Neferti Tadiar describes “fantasy production” as “the imaginary of a regime of accumulation and representation of universal value, under the sway of which capitalist nations organize themselves individually and collectively in the ‘system’ of the Free World. See Neferti Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order*, p.6.

¹⁶⁷ Rivera, p.5.

¹⁶⁸ Rivera, p.13.

them] the people will just keep driving on and on, not knowing that they've already reached something pretty significant.”¹⁶⁹ This obsession towards marking through huge architectural symbols is described by Gerald Lico as the edifice complex:

a syndrome which plagues an individual, nation, or corporate institution with an obsession and compulsion to build edifices as a hallmark of greatness, as a signifier of national prosperity, as a conveyor of an individual's status, or as a projection of a corporate image.¹⁷⁰

This national dream complex functions as “a way of compensating for a lack of something else;”¹⁷¹ in this case, the nation-state mounts tall buildings to artificially recompense for their belated modernity. And just like all forms of psychological compensation, after the instant gratification that these skyscrapers offer, we will come to confront a deeper sense of lack, as shown in the story when the character, looking at the cityscape below, realizes “there really wasn't anything to see.”¹⁷² This is the same thing the protagonist of “Past Forward” takes in, as she come to recognize that the superficiality of much-touted development that the nation-state announces with the President's speech; everything is a “trompe l'oeil,” staged just like the make-believe sceneries and dioramas that abound the city.¹⁷³

The nation-state's fashioning of the artifice of this fantasy is embodied perfectly in the country's tourism industry. As Neferti Tadiar notes, the production of global fantasy upon the nation's modernity-deprived conditions is evident in how international trade policies are deeply tied with the country's tourism: “Free Trade Zone and tourist belts were essential components of the government's ‘incentive packages’ to attract capital” as both “relied on predominantly female and feminized labour force and raw

¹⁶⁹ Ilano, p.13.

¹⁷⁰ Gerald Lico. *Edifice complex: power, myth, and Marcos state architecture*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003) p. 51

¹⁷¹ Lico, p.141.

¹⁷² Ilano. p.13.

¹⁷³ Fres-Felix, p.9.

material.”¹⁷⁴ Thus, the superficiality of “beautification” projects and infrastructural development of the national edifice complex only supports and maintains the industry of fantasy and its lure to the world.

This is evident in the stories “Niche,” “Treasure Island,” and “They Don’t Bite” as they depict how the future modernization of tourism in the country presents “calibrated prostitution” of the nation’s highly-emaciated resources: its people and its land. As what the protagonist reveal in “Niche,” the nation-state depends on the exploitation of its natural resources for the sake of the tourism economy: “The government you speak of may have grand plans for the Philippines, but it is willing to destroy all that I love to fulfil them.” “Treasure Islands,” on the other hand, portrays a more severe and systematized ways of exploiting women through sexual tourism as the Philippines is declared “a Utopian summer colony” with its “panoply of beaches for tourists, and exotic sex services for the bored and strong of immune system.”¹⁷⁵

And finally, “They Don’t Bite” exposes the unsettling possibilities of modernity’s “final solution” of phasing out poverty through developmental tourism: segregating the poor, letting them rot on their own, representing them as savage animals or “vermin” and killing them for fun. The story exhibits Metro Manila as “a blackhole of a megalopolis doughnut” where the underclass are trapped as preys for the sports hunting tourists.¹⁷⁶ In the end, the young boy, baptized by his parents for his first kill, confronts the other, the barbaric “vermin” they so happily hounded down with his whole family in this “civilized” sports, and realizes that it is nothing but the image of his Self staring back at him, as his first kill turns out to be a boy with the same name as his.¹⁷⁷ This event dramatizes the moment when the fantasy of modernity, after producing the other as a problematic double

¹⁷⁴ Tadiar, p.52.

¹⁷⁵ Manalastas, p.17.

¹⁷⁶ Sarmiento, p.9.

¹⁷⁷ Sarmiento, p.20.

borne from allochronism, falls apart with the shock of recognizing that the copy is the same.

The problem of the other-as-a-copy is connected, as Szeman notes, to the problem of allochronism: “the copy is deficient not merely or even primarily because it reproduces all of the features of the original but also *because it comes after it in time.*”¹⁷⁸ And the isochronic fantasy of the modern world appropriates the other as wanting copies, in the process Bhabha calls as “the menace of mimicry:” representing repetition and doubling through “metonymy of presence” as the subject becomes a copy that is “almost the same but not quite.”¹⁷⁹ What more embodies this logic of mimicry than the production of clones as the menace of doubling, both demonstrated in the stories “Kaming Mga Seroks” and “Hollow Girl”?

“Seroks” is the bastardized vernacular for a mechanical copy,¹⁸⁰ and this has become the technical name for the country’s clones in the future. After obliterating poverty by “letting the poor die ill, homeless and starving, the country was reduced to its apex of fortunates.” Filling the void left by the massive population of the destitute, or the labor force of the Third World, are the clones: “In all honestly we’re what keeps this country going. We wash their clothes, cook their food, clean their toilets, collect their garbage.”¹⁸¹ And like inauthentic copies that they truly are, their fate duplicate the deplorable conditions of the working class they replaced, as clones become warm body exports in the global market, either as laborers, sex workers, mail-order brides, changelings, or even the defective ones or the ‘chop-chops’ for their working organs and

¹⁷⁸ Szeman, “Belated or Isochronic?,” p.190. [*italics mine*]

¹⁷⁹ Homi Bhabha, ‘Of Mimicry and Man,’ *October the First Decade, 1976-1986*, ed. by Donald Crimp, et.al., (Cambridge: MIT Press) pp 317-325 (p.318)

¹⁸⁰ The name comes from the well-known photocopying machine brand “Xerox,” which is a popular word referring to a copy and the act of copying in the Philippines.

¹⁸¹ Hontiveros, p.4.

body parts.¹⁸² This literal fragmentation of the body according to division of labor is replicated on clones as seen in “Hollow Girl,” where the cloned protagonist is summoned and identified in the workplace according to the functionality of her particular parts: “Your fingers are needed.”¹⁸³ Cloning is thus a thematic technology that replicates the habits of identifying the other and ascribing their roles within the logic of modernity’s fantasy.

If we look at the idiom of modernity as the pervading logic of these allegories, what these stories demonstrate are not only the complicated effects of allochronism in third world representation, but also how these texts allegorize the desires that these allochronism produce through the themes of either compensation (for the fact of belatedness) or repetition and reproduction. Such themes attest to particular “habits” of the nation as third world, a “cultural pattern” formed by “the legacy of subalternity”¹⁸⁴ or the experience of colonialism and imperialism that emerge again and again as the crisis of representation; another set of problems that challenges the narrative solution that the fantasy of modernity framed for the future. And it is in these manifestations of habits where the problematique of nation resurges and reasserts itself back into the dilemma of imagined future through the “allegorical spirit” that is “profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream” where the remaindered forms of the nation’s social lives and collectivities resurfaces and intervenes in the narratives’ “homogeneous representation of the symbol” of modernity.¹⁸⁵

Archiving the Nation

Buchanan declares that “the more tenuous the nation has become politically, the more

¹⁸² Hontiveros, p.6.

¹⁸³ Alfar, p.6

¹⁸⁴ Szeman, ‘Who’s Afraid of National Allegory?’, p.195.

¹⁸⁵ Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,’ p.73.

determinedly it returns culturally.”¹⁸⁶ And it is this kind of cultural return of the nation in third world writings, as Szeman furthers, that national allegory attempts to mediate within the psychological and political realms: “the concept of national allegory points to the ways in which the psychological points to the political and the trauma of subalternity finds itself ‘projected outwards’ (allegorically) into the ‘cultural’.”¹⁸⁷

Nation returns and reinscribes itself as symptoms of “the legacy of subalternity,” the oftentimes “baleful and crippling” habits that cannot be simply resolved through the “transformation of political and economic institutions alone” nor “an exclusive attention to the subjective (psychological).”¹⁸⁸ National allegory uncovers how deeply embedded these habits are: “residing in the unconscious and inscribed somatically in a whole range of bodily dispositions and social institutions.”¹⁸⁹

The resurgence of such habits as manifestation of the nation reasserting itself back into the future is dramatized in the stories “Espiritu Santos,” “The Field” and “Turtle Season.” “Espiritu Santos” literally depicts the nation as the ‘haunting’ of old forms of social collectivities as ghosts materialize and abound the city because of the disturbance caused by modernity. This story shows how the glitches of modern technology have allowed ghosts to literally surface in the country: “the huge volume of traffic caused by cellular phones [which] emits electromagnetic waves altered the alpha frequency in [people’s] brain and have enabled [them] to see and hear ghosts.”¹⁹⁰ Because of these, “ghosts had become an indispensable part of Philippine society” as they are integrated back into the nation; refiguring and reiterating old forms of social life through spectral labour: “security guards on graveyard shifts, traffic policemen, specialized sex workers,

186 Buchanan, p.186.

187 Szeman, p.195.

188 *ibid.*

189 *ibid.*

190 Abubakar, p.9.

circus freaks, live show entertainers, and all-around tourist guides in remote places.”¹⁹¹

“The Field,” on the other hand, portrays the haunting of the history through the errors of temporal technology or “tempo-tech,” a sort of time projection and recording of any events in the past.¹⁹² In this story, the main character chooses to relive the by-then “obscure event from his biological parent’s history”¹⁹³ – the execution of the country’s national hero, Jose Rizal, the so-called “foundational event of nationalism and nation-imagining.”¹⁹⁴ And although he has grown distant and out-of-touch from this event, the time machine’s malfunctioning has Rizal materializing before them moments before dying, which created a sort of connection for the main character “as if history spoke to him in a language he could not understand.”¹⁹⁵

In “Turtle Season,” the nation returns ferociously like terrible ghosts from the past, unsettling the peace and order of not only the islands but also the “inner peace” of Capt. Raul Daza, the frontier commander of the paradise island. From the “fictions of nations” considered as contraband porn like “Hosea Ryzal” (presumably a historical movie of the long-forgotten national hero) to the repressed desires of protagonist (as he faces the end of his marriage because of sexual impotency), the story exhibits how history reemerges like “the return of the repressed” in the unconscious, leaving him helpless as the harmony of his island and the fate of his marriage collapse right before his eyes: “The montage began to play again, the pornography from the past merging with the figures on

¹⁹¹ Abubakar, p.11-12.

¹⁹² Gabot, p.4.

¹⁹³ Gabot, p.6.

¹⁹⁴ Resil Mojares, ‘Time, Memory and the Birth of the Nation,’ in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), pp.270-296 (p. 270).

¹⁹⁵ Gabot, p.16.

the bed, the violins and the horses and the crazy woman and the bolo and a hero falling to his death.”¹⁹⁶

The nation and its fictions, once stifled by modernity, now manifest as forms of repressed desires that disclose the various yearning to relive old forms of collectivities and experiences that are fast becoming extinct or rendered completely obsolete in the future as seen in “Subterranea,” “Secret Notes...” and “Suman.” As the space of the future increasingly transforms into the little virtual worlds of “Subterranea” (“any space that is cut off, that lacked sufficient light or air, that felt like a dark world unto itself”), the desire of experiencing what is left authentic in this world becomes even more pronounced. What used to be a trivial walk in the neighborhood where one can experience the social life in a third world urban space (scenes that can never be simulated by technology like the “fishball vendor, an old lady, some dogs”¹⁹⁷), now becomes an experience of a genuine social connection which the character in the story earnestly craves for.

This same longing to connect and experience a sense of collectivity is revealed in “Secret Notes” where the character, tired of the simulated realities of concerts, moshpits and political rallies offered by “stimulator suits and helmets,” sneaks out of the walls of the city to claim “few moments of guilty freedom:” “away from weekly parties with pasty people and their practiced smiles” or any of the sanctioned social rituals inside the sanitized life of the Inner City into the dirt-poor outside world that no virtual programmes can simulate, where “there are so many children... women watching from doorways... where men and boys walk, because there is a sense of accomplishment in simple motion.”¹⁹⁸

This kind of yearning is what modern technology in the story “Suman” aims to

¹⁹⁶ Montes, p.14.

¹⁹⁷ Katigbak, p.4.

¹⁹⁸ Sitoy, p.12.

effectively quell by simulating sensations through “comfort rations.” In a world where “most people lived via layers of avatars in hyperspace in reclusive and scattered places,” flavor packets become an important industry, conjuring “a sense of connectedness” by “creating an atmosphere that brought the mind back to the past without allowing the past to become all too clear or too oppressive a reality.”¹⁹⁹ In this story, Alice, a flavor mapper who fabricates “tastes that were vanished from current folkways,” and Silmah, a synaesthete tasked on recreating scent stories by “tying up sensations with memory, attaching flavor to color, sound to texture,” attempt to recreate *suman*, a native rice delicacy enjoyed by Filipinos “before greenhousing killed the outdoor crop industry.”²⁰⁰ The story, however, reveals the failure of simulacra, as some sensations can never be recreated without restoring to the old forms of human subjectivities in its full-bodiedness, as Alice declares in resignation in the end: “It’s no use, we’ll need a pound of flesh for this, without shedding a drop of blood.”²⁰¹

The intensity of the desire for such collectivity and its influence on the social lives manifest most evidently among the stories through the thematic of religion. Running against modernity’s reason, religion embodies the most powerful idiom of the cultural return of collectivity in most third world realities. Religion gathers people into social formations and mobilizes them into action in the future, as seen in the stories “Second Coming” and “Sidhi.”

“Sidhi” depicts the power of fanaticism even in a supposedly modern society, as hordes of bodies follow the faith healer, Noah, through the dirty fringes of the city where freaks and outcasts abound. The power of faith in this story is described as a form of addiction, “something that assaults all senses, forcing one to feel the sensation so raw and

¹⁹⁹ Nuqui, pp.3-4.

²⁰⁰ Nuqui, p.6.

²⁰¹ Nuqui, p.8

so pure,” seen in how hundreds of followers “grasp hands, pressed their bodies together and fall into Noah’s thrall.”²⁰² The mass hysteria that the faith healer commands allegorizes the habits of subalternity manifest in the addictive and crippling influence of folk religion in the country.

While religion almost always marks a regressive form of agency and representation of social life, according to Raul Pertierra,

in societies such as the Philippines, where the structures of power and authority involve the close articulations of spheres of technical control, moral imperatives and interior experiences, religion serves as the ideal vehicle both for the conception and the practice of political action.²⁰³

In this light, we can see the transformative capacities of religion as shown in how the cloned Jesus in “Second Coming” was able to mobilize people all over the world: “Word of the encounter spread like wildfire. In a few months, spontaneous movements in the millions sprung up all over the world, composed chiefly of young people to follow Jesus Christ.”²⁰⁴

The story not only portrays the absurdity of the literalization of faith’s technology but also its subversive power, as the cloned Messiah attempts to destroy all organized religions and recreate a moral revolution even with nebulous alternatives. Although the cloned Jesus ultimately fails as he recedes back into obscurity, in the end, his disappearance does not signify the failure of future’s redemption but a different promise of coming marked by his last words before leaving: “your salvation lies in your hands alone.” This “heretical promise,” as Neferti Tadiar calls it, exceeds the habits of subjugation and the developmental “miracles” of modernity and sets off the power of faith back into the possibilities of the collective, one that can “coordinate people’s inner

²⁰² Tan, p.15.

²⁰³ Raul Pertierra, *Philippine Localities and Global Perspectives: Essays on Society and Culture* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), p.118.

²⁰⁴ Antonio Hidalgo, p.10.

loci of will, feeling, and action in a socially significant and disruptive way.”²⁰⁵ And what the cloned Jesus’ desertion allegorizes for the nation is a promise of Messianicity that hasn’t arrived yet, or in Jameson’s words: the “passion for change and social regeneration which has not yet found its agents.”²⁰⁶ The agent in question will no longer be the figure of the Messiah, as the heretical words tell us, but the transformative social collectivity that will open up the promise of nation’s future towards new fronts of struggles and new forms of realization.

The reading of national allegory in Philippine future fiction intones the faith on the nation, both as the symptom of the present or the movement towards the future. National allegory reveals how the return of the nation, and the dystopic representation of “the literally abyssal future of life after [its] end,” reflects a disabling form of “addiction of the present” as “a genuine failure of imagination.”²⁰⁷ In the case of these short stories, the conditions set forth by the space of the nation in the stories of this genre frame and limit the imagination of its future. Which is to say that no matter how hard one tries to imagine the future, one ends up writing more about the present, since only through its ills that one can properly represent the nation. Thus, “nation” itself becomes the very name for this kind of failure of imagination.

Yet the limit that nation sets, and the failures that such representations produce, is what precisely confers unto it the promise of the future. Nation names “the conditions of possibility” as it identifies “other modes of social life” and articulates “demands of a collective life to come.”²⁰⁸ In this sense, the limits of the name and its allegories in Philippine future fiction shape the conditions of possibilities or prospects of the coming

²⁰⁵ Tadiar, p.235.

²⁰⁶ Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism,’ p.81.

²⁰⁷ Buchanan, p.186.

²⁰⁸ Szeman, p.205.

of a “great collective project,”²⁰⁹ something that can radically transform the nation into something else, and can promise “goodness” beyond what we can imagine at present.

²⁰⁹

ibid.

Chapter III

Utopia and Its Discontents: Utopian Impulse in Philippine Future Fiction

Between *community* and *imagination*, Dipesh Chakrabarty says that it is the category of *imagination* that remains largely unexplored or taken as self-evident in Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation. This led him to launch his critique of nationalism by "breathing heterogeneity into the word *imagination*."²¹⁰ To extend this claim, there is a third term binding these two categories that needs to be discussed as well and that is the word *limited*. While nation as a *limited community* has been exhausted in a number of writings, not much were written to probe the idea of the nation emerging out of a *limited imagination*. A way to explore this is by grappling with not only the nation's limited imagination of the present but also of the future.

Limitedness is a category that qualifies both the nation as a political community and the discourse of its constructedness. For Iletto, confronting the *limits* of this imagination could provide a mapping where the farthest reach of this representational space can be probed and the efficacy of nation's conceptual parameters can be tested.²¹¹ Hau furthers that the limits of representation, whether in history or in literature, produce the *excess* or the remaindered elements that inform yet also exceed attempts of binding the irreducible identities and incommensurable realities that constitute the name of the nation.²¹² It is for these reasons that the framework of nation's *limitedness* is particularly instructive in understanding the ways in which the constraints of imagining the nation

²¹⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.249.

²¹¹ Reynaldo Iletto in Caroline Hau, 'Rethinking History and 'Nation-Building' in the Philippines,' in *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*, ed. Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), pp.39-68 (p.59)

²¹² Caroline Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (Quezon City, Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), p.6.

uncover not only what exceeds the site of its representation, but also what can take shape beyond its borders. It is in the discourse of limitedness that nation stands in intimate relations to Utopia, as it sets the condition of possibilities where its idiom as a failure for national imagination transforms into something else, something that we can receive as a promise from the deep-set desire that Jameson invokes as Utopia.

This chapter deals with Jameson's notion of utopian impulse as a possible extension of national allegory in dealing with third world texts, particularly Philippine future fiction. Instead of just reading the short stories as immediate expressions of Utopian visions for a nation, this study deals with the failure to represent a properly Utopian content as an opening to a symptom of desire that Jameson considers as utopian impulse. In this light, we can read these narratives according to how they summon this wish to confer unto nation a future, where the limit of "the chronotope of nation" in third world texts "mutates into the chronotope of a threshold site" revealing "a Utopian, and not an ethnocentric, intention."²¹³

The Faith in Failures

The name 'Utopia,' just like the nation, is charged in advance by failures and limitations. That there seems to be something deeply reprehensible in the mere act of invoking it seems to have sprung from either its name's fall from grace throughout its history (with the collapse of socialist programs it seems to resemble) or its putatively naïve and nostalgic connotation (as in the Edenic ideal of social transformation). Yet just as the destiny that marks the nation's legacy, it is precisely in this failure where Utopia draws its political energy from.

²¹³ Epifanio San Juan Jr., *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (Basingstroke and London: MacMillan Press, 1998), pp.215, 217.

Jameson's reworking of the idea of Utopia begins by recognizing that "it is the failure of imagination that is important, and not its achievement, since in any case all representations fail and it is always impossible to imagine."²¹⁴ It is in this kind of failure where Utopia finds its relevance rather than being merely a nostalgic representation of a perfect society. Jameson furthers that

Utopia's deepest subject, and the source of all that is most vibrantly political about it, is precisely our inability to conceive it, our incapacity to produce it as a vision, our failure to project the Other of what is, a failure that, as with fireworks dissolving back into the night sky, must once again leave us alone with *this* history.²¹⁵

The political drive of Utopia's failure then, one that sprung from our inability to measure up against its bright lights, does not transport us immediately into the future but rather brings us back into our present to confront its deplorable realities. This is what it means to succeed by failing, according to Ian Buchanan, since "by the force of its failure we are returned all the more intensely to the real"²¹⁶ where we can begin "to diagnose the existential health of the present."²¹⁷ Yet it is also the "present" work of this failure that eventually leads us into the future. By starting to confront the Real, Utopia "enables us to conceptualize for the first time the place such a name must one day fill."²¹⁸ In this way, the desire that utopia brings into surface are somewhat akin to wish-fulfillment and construction. These forms of desire, like Utopia, are also destined and framed by the logic of failure: "Wishes cannot always be successfully fantasized: such is the operation of the

²¹⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p.209.

²¹⁵ Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse (1977),' *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986 Vol. 2 Syntax of History* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.75-101 (p.101)

²¹⁶ Ian Buchanan, 'Metacommentary on Utopia, or Jameson's Dialectic of Hope,' in *Utopian Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (1998) <http://lexilogia.gr/forum/showthread.php?6076-Metacommentary-on-Utopia-or-Jameson-s-dialectic-of-hope> [Accessed 28 April 2011] p.3.

²¹⁷ *ibid*, p.1.

²¹⁸ Phillip Wegner, 'Horizons, Figures, and Machines: The Dialectic of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson,' in *Utopian Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (1998). http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7051/is_1998_Spring/ai_n287239_74/?tag=content;col1 [Accessed 28 April 2011] p.4.

constraints of narrative as well as of the Real. Constructions cannot always be built: such are the constraints of raw materials and the historical situation.”²¹⁹ It is therefore the inevitable bind with failure that shapes and sustains the power of Utopia, and not its success in its realized versions.

What further distinguishes Jameson’s work against the traditional ideas of Utopia is his claim that “all contemporary works of art” carry in themselves, in “often distorted and repressed unconscious forms,” the “underlying impulse” of how “our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones it ought rather to be lived.”²²⁰ This led him to differentiate the classic notion of Utopia as a text and as an impulse. While there exist self-conscious renditions of Utopia and their systemic translations as utopian texts that “includes revolutionary political practice” and “written exercises in the literary genre,”²²¹ he is more concerned with the desire that runs deep in all forms of expressions, from the daily life to the realm of high aesthetic experience, as he finds this utopian impulse from the most artless blockbuster films to the critically acclaimed modernist art forms.

And this impulse is configured into and transmitted throughout these texts, as in the case of nation, through allegory. Since the “Utopian moment is impossible to imagine, except as the unimaginable,” the allegory provides a structure for this impulse, “which always points to something other, which can never reveal itself directly but must always speak in figures, which always calls out structurally for completion and exegesis.”²²² The utopian desire underpinning all Utopian inscriptions then involves “an allegorical process

²¹⁹ Jameson, ‘The Politics of Utopia,’ in *New Left Review*, 25 (January/February, 2004) 34-54 (p.41)

²²⁰ Jameson, ‘Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture (1979),’ in *Signatures of the Visible* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) pp.9-34 (p.34)

²²¹ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), p.3.

²²² Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.142.

in which various Utopian figures seep into the daily life of things and people and afford an incremental, and often unconscious, bonus of pleasure unrelated to their functional value or official satisfactions.”²²³ In this light, we can then read Utopia as “a determinate type of *praxis*, rather than a mode of representation,” something which directs us less to the “construction and perfection of someone's ‘idea’ of a ‘perfect society’” than to the problematic of “concrete mental operations performed on the determinate type [of] material [from our] contemporary society” and the ideology that orders their representations.²²⁴

While utopian texts involve a particular type of *praxis*, they are not immediately political or “not in themselves politics.”²²⁵ If there is anything, it “emerges at the moment of the suspension of the political”²²⁶ because instead of providing a blueprint or an itinerary of what must be done, Utopia speaks of what we have failed to do or even think of in our present situations. Utopia can only be political once understood as an impulse that “takes the form of a stubborn negation of all that is” in the Real to “keep alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one.”²²⁷ And only in the desire’s obstinate negation of our present that Utopia can emerge as a political work for the future, one in which its impulse “incites us to imagine what a radically different social formation of the future might be like.”²²⁸

²²³ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p.5.

²²⁴ Jameson, ‘Of Islands and Trenches,’ p.81.

²²⁵ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.159.

²²⁶ Jameson, ‘The Politics of Utopia,’ p.43.

²²⁷ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p.111.

²²⁸ Jameson, ‘Interview with Leonard Green, Jonathan Culler and Richard Klein,’ in *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism*. ed. by Ian Buchanan. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), pp.11-43 (p.24)

The Future of Our Discontent

For Jameson, Utopia is most powerful and “most authentic when we cannot imagine it.”²²⁹ This is a kind of failure that sprung from our incapacity to imagine the future because of our ideological entrapment with the present, something that Buchanan also ascribes to the problematic of nation as “an addiction to the present.”²³⁰ In the failure to represent future other than the present, Utopia works against this addiction by making us aware of it and by stressing the afflicting habits of dependence with the present. Jameson asserts that

the deepest vocation of utopian text is to bring home, in local and determinate ways, and with a fullness of concrete detail, our constitutional inability to imagine utopia itself, and this not owing to any individual failure of imagination but as a result of the systemic, cultural, and ideological closure of which we are all in one way or another prisoners.²³¹

As Phillip Wegner adds, Utopia makes us conscious not of “the future that is coming to be,” but rather “the horizons or outer limits of what can be thought and imagined in our present.”²³²

The horizon of present is what precisely shapes the landscape of the future in Philippine future fiction as these stories reveal a future that is not just the same as the present, but rather an intensified version of all the things that make up our social discontent and dissatisfaction. It is as if the representation of future can only be possible within the confines of the present conditions, the present that can only be modified, reduced or repeated ad infinitum into the future.

In the fantasy of modernity that most of these stories demonstrate, the future is

²²⁹ Jameson, ‘Politics of Utopia,’ p.46.

²³⁰ Buchanan, ‘National Allegory Today: A Return to Jameson,’ in *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalism*. edited by Caen Irr and Ian Buchanan. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp.173-188 (p. 186).

²³¹ Jameson, ‘Progress Versus Utopia; or Can We Imagine the Future?,’ in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*. ed. by Brian Wallis. (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), pp.239-252 (p.247)

²³² Wegner, p.2.

marked merely as a modification of the present as seen in the artificiality of progress report in “Past Forward,” the superficiality of marking urban development through architectural façades in “A Monumental Race,” uprooted forms of social mobility in “Last Bus Ride,” or sophisticated forms of technologies in “Espiritu Santos.” While at the outset, these modified versions of future illustrate a sense of “improvement” in terms of mapping the social landscape through signatures of progress in state-of-the-art technological advancement, sophisticated flyovers or massive skyscrapers, they end up becoming a calibrated form of the contemporary crises, where progress intensifies and reproduces oppressive social relations and uneven socioeconomic division among the people.

In this kind of failure of imagination, the extreme logic of modification would have to be the artificial Utopia created in a tourist destination: where the utopian figures of “beauty, wholeness, energy, perfection”²³³ convenes in the exteriority of a space that is preserved against the rather imperfect world outside of it, as we shown in the description of the country’s future tourism industry in “Niche,” “Treasure Islands” and “Turtle Season.” Yet just as any forms or spaces of getaways, these little “paradise islands” emerge precisely against the many dystopic places and realities that both surround and sustain them. In the stories these are shown through environmental exhaustion in “Niche,” commoditization of bodies in “Treasure Islands,” and state violence and military intervention in “Turtle Season.”

Another form of the extension of the present that these future fiction exhibits is through “sheer reduction” or spatial “miniaturization,”²³⁴ something which manifests markedly as the future cityscapes are portrayed as “apartheid” divisions in “Secret Notes

²³³ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p.6.
²³⁴ *ibid*, p.307.

of the Dead Stars” and “They Don’t Bite.” In these stories, the country is segregated into those who are civilized versus those who are savages: the Inner and Outer Wall in the “Secret Notes” and the cordoned off capital in “They Don’t Bite” where the poor are trapped as vermin for sports hunting. Such dystopic spatial reductions in the future expose the “complex of cruelties and deprivations carefully administered” in the present, where the “terror of modernity” wears the mask of the utopian fantasy of the civilized and modernized Man.²³⁵

These forms of miniaturization also map the addictions of the present far into the future. “Mall” shows how the whole city allowed itself to be engorged by its own consumerist hunger when it becomes a massive hypermall. And since the Mall already mapped all the desires and needs of the people, there is practically no need to get out of it to see the world beyond its structures. The same form of reduction happens with the deployment of virtual technology in the stories “Virtual Center” and “Subterranea.” In a world where the fantasy of the present can be fully lived out and where any space can be conquered and reduced into one’s own little virtual world (“a crack in the wall, if you stay still and stare at it long enough, if you can somehow imagine yourself, feel yourself inside it, squeeze your mind into that space”²³⁶), the future’s virtual reality functions to prolong and intensify our ill-dependencies with the present.

Finally, the afflictions of the present are revealed in these stories through repetition. The portrayal of future among all of the abovementioned short stories shows how the present are reproduced into the future either through calibration or spatial miniaturization. These forms of representations perform and reiterate our failure to

²³⁵ Tom Moylan, ‘Jameson and Utopia,’ in *Utopian Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (1998) http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7051/is_1998_Spring/ai_n2872_3969/?tag=content;coll [Accessed 28 April 2011] p.2.

²³⁶ Luis Joaquin Katigbak. “Subterranea” *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2000), pp.1-10 (p.1)

imagine the future beyond our present, and it is starkly allegorized through cloning as a technology of reproduction. The clones of “Kaming Mga Seroks” and “Hollow Girl” demonstrate how this technology of copying duplicates not only the inferior doubling that identifies the other, but also the system that subjugates them into the oppressive conditions of the present labor economy. In the end, even the cloning of the Messiah and the recreation of His redemptive labor in the story “Second Coming” will not suffice, as the stories ultimately reveal that replicating the present will not lead us into our future redemption.

The stories’ overdependence with the present at the expense of future shows the two intractable hurdles that block the Utopian figuration, which Buchanan designates as the fear of simulacra and the fear of projection:

The first is a fear of the simulacra: ‘if you know already what your longed-for exercise in a not-yet-existent freedom looks like, then the suspicion arises that it may not really express freedom after all but only repetition.’ The second is a fear of projection: the worry, in other words, that the open future one dreams of is--unbeknownst to you or anyone else--always already contaminated by your ‘own deformed and repressed social habits.’²³⁷

And since Utopia does not directly summon freedom but rather neutralizes “what blocks it,”²³⁸ these forms of fears become the very idiom that allow the utopian impulse to emerge “by absorbing all such aspects of unfreedom into itself, and confronting the very forces of unfreedom directly.”²³⁹

The short stories’ failure to imagine Utopia reveals their “political function on the formal level” by disclosing our anxieties and predicaments with the present and bringing us up “short against the atrophy of the utopian imagination and of the political vision in

²³⁷ Buchanan, ‘Metacommentary on Utopia,’ p.3.

²³⁸ Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.57.

²³⁹ Buchanan, p.3.

our own society.”²⁴⁰ It is in the stories’ discontent and apprehension with our realities that Utopia, in its negative figuration, transforms into an account and a critique of the “political complacency and conformity”²⁴¹ of the present. But this critique is not yet readily available to us unless we access it through the process of “neutralization.” In the virtue and necessity of double negation, the Utopian ideal is restored by negating everything about Utopia that has already been repudiated and renounced, something that runs along the slogan of what Jameson calls as “anti-anti-Utopianism.”²⁴²

The Goodness of Negation

The necessity of negation sprung from the outward impossibility “to make radical changes to our present except by cancelling it altogether and starting over.”²⁴³ This process is referred to by Jameson as “neutralization,” which entails a “point-by-point negation or cancelling of the historical and ideological context from which the particular utopia” emerges as an idea.²⁴⁴ For Jameson, this cancellation requires a repudiation of “the place of the Real” that are identified in the utopian text “by the obsessive references to the actuality,”²⁴⁵ or in “the perpetual happening of the present,”²⁴⁶ that seems to be a part of its narrative conventions.

In this way, we can then understand Utopia “as a process, as *energeia*, enunciation, productivity,” something that “implicitly or explicitly repudiate that more traditional and conventional view of Utopia as sheer representation, as the ‘realized’

²⁴⁰ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p.308.

²⁴¹ Moylan, p.2.

²⁴² Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p.xvi.

²⁴³ Buchanan, p.6.

²⁴⁴ Wegner, p.4.

²⁴⁵ Jameson, “Of Islands and Trenches,’ p.81.

²⁴⁶ Buchanan, p.5.

vision of this or that ideal society or social ideal.”²⁴⁷ Neutralization then becomes the “first step, clearing the stage for productive operation of utopian figuration.”²⁴⁸ The negative movement of utopian text is then transformed into its positive moment once the present is neutralized, and the desire emerges as a Utopian dynamic. This phase of utopian impulse becomes transformative as it moves to “the new onset of the Utopian process as a kind of desiring to desire, a learning to desire, the invention of the desire called Utopia in the first place, along with new rules for the fantasizing or daydreaming of such a thing – a set of narrative protocols with no precedent in our previous literary institutions.”²⁴⁹

Buchanan sketches out three possible forms of utopian visions that might emerge from this kind of desiring to desire: “1.) a relic of the past, an Arcadia or Eden from which we have been expelled, 2.) the perfection of fate, heaven, nirvana, etc., or 3.) the promise of a better world.” We can see these three forms of utopia inscribed in some of the short stories, particularly in “Suman,” “The Field,” “Sidhi,” “Second Coming” and “Hollow Girl.”

The stories of scientists concocting the wistful scent of the past in “Suman” and the boy who attempts to reconnect with a long-gone history in “The Field” both reveal an experience of desire for Utopia which “lament[s] the passing of the past” and “long[s] for its return (return of the same).”²⁵⁰ The characters in both stories express this longing for social collectives from which they were either virtually uprooted from or social lives which they never had in the first place. These attempts to restore old systems of human bonds that are formed symbolically through a shared past or the experience of rootedness show the traditional desire for a static, “weirdly lifeless and inert past-Utopia”: “It exists,

²⁴⁷ Jameson, p.80.

²⁴⁸ Wegner, p.4.

²⁴⁹ Jameson, *Seeds of Time*, *ibid*, p.90.

²⁵⁰ Buchanan, p.5.

but we cannot access it, but at least we can bask in the warm glow of its memory.”²⁵¹

The stories of religious fanaticism in “Sidhi” and the absurd literalization of biblical salvation in “Second Coming” manifest the second desire for Utopia, one in which “[w]e also long for our heavenly future, and suffer in its name, and call that experience faith (the elimination of difference).”²⁵² These “already realized Utopias of religious fabrications” revel in forms of collectivities where people are passively inscribed into the prescriptions of redemptory programs: “We stand before this Utopia, trembling like as not, and apprehend it via our sense of our own inadequacy. This Utopia is not of our own devising and our actions are only ever turned toward atonement.”²⁵³

The story of a clone named “Hollow Girl,” unlike the abovementioned narratives, embodies a transformative form of utopian impulse. In her attempt to connect with another fellow clone, the story’s main character, who is literally heartless and cold throughout the story, was able to will her body to grow an organic heart inside the hollow cave of her chest:

Hollow Girl closed her eyes for a moment before joining him, and when she felt his arms around her it felt like she was coming across an unfamiliar word for the first time... She hushed Gabriel-Four, and with a smile on her face, started listening to the beating of their hearts.²⁵⁴

This moment dramatizes what desiring to desire, in purely Utopian terms, means “an imperative to grow new organs, and expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions.”²⁵⁵ The utopian moment in the story demonstrates how this desire for human connection becomes transformative, allowing dreams of collectivity to be transcoded along the process of

²⁵¹ Buchanan, p.6.

²⁵² Buchanan, p.5.

²⁵³ Buchanan, p.6.

²⁵⁴ Dean Francis Alfar. ‘Hollow Girl: A Romance,’ in *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive* (Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards, 2004), pp.1-11 (p.11)

²⁵⁵ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p.39.

living, learning and developing this utopian impulse. This constitutes what Wegner calls as the “pedagogical force” of Utopian idea that is unleashed in the very moment of engagement with its impulse, a kind of desire that “re-educates the desires of its audience, enabling them to grow the ‘new organs’ necessary also to ‘live’ and later ‘perceive’ a newly emerging social and cultural reality.”²⁵⁶

This pedagogical force is what makes the desiring to desire Utopia a form of promise: “the still to be realised promise of the promise is the stuff of dreamers and revolutionaries and is experienced as motive (the desire for and the instituting of difference).”²⁵⁷ The Utopia seen as promise involves an active form of agency, where the promise rewrites and recodes our imagination of the future by intervening with our present: “It infuses the real with a higher goal, or to put it another way, gives existence a purpose beyond simply existing, namely to continue to improve the conditions of one’s existence.”²⁵⁸ Utopia as a promise ultimately allows us to begin this enabling “thought experiment or form of social dreaming”²⁵⁹ where we can exceed the fatal and anticipatory bind with the present by waging on this promise and risking the power of promising unto our futures.

The Promise of Something Else

The Utopian impulse for Buchanan is a “promising-machine,” one in which the productive powers of the imagination reside not in the words of the promise but in the act of promising. This allows us to reflect on Utopia’s constitutional failure in lieu of its

²⁵⁶ Wegner, p.7.

²⁵⁷ Buchanan, p.5.

²⁵⁸ Buchanan, p.6.

²⁵⁹ Peter Fitting, “The Concept of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson,” *Utopian Studies Vol 9, No. 2* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998) http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7051/is_1998_Spring/ai_n28723970/?tag=content;col1 [Accessed 28 April 2011] p.4.

“implications [on] promising rather than musing on the promised.”²⁶⁰ Through a recourse into Derrida’s notion “future-to-come” that exceeds any horizon of expectation,²⁶¹ this can be read as a promise of a future that “bind[s] us to Utopian thought in a way that definitions of it as anticipatory fatally do not.”²⁶²

This promising-machine generates expectations that can neither be fulfilled nor predicted in advance. On the one hand, it produces hopes that can never be fulfilled, “except at the cost of extinguishing the promise itself,” which inexhaustibly impinges upon us the demand “to acquit it, to make it happen.”²⁶³ On the other hand, its “undecidability” never guarantees to deliver anything except the act of guaranteeing, it will never transmute into something reassuring except in the reassurance of the “perfect gifts” of promising.²⁶⁴ This is why the promising-machine is bound to create something *other* than anticipated. Thus, promising-machine provides an idiom for hope that, just like the promise, “is always thwarted” as the future is always something *other* than what we sought to find there, something ontologically excessive and necessarily unexpected: “a kind of *via crucis* of hope itself, an enlargement of our anticipations to include and find satisfaction in their own negations as well.”²⁶⁵

It is in this promising-machine where we can begin to grasp the stakes of utopian impulse in its “desperate attempt to imagine something else” for the future. We can see the promise of Utopia not only as it surpasses the expectation but also as it exceeds the representation of hope in the narratives. In the “Second Coming,” this promise of

²⁶⁰ Buchanan, p.6.

²⁶¹ “It is perhaps necessary to free the value of the future from the value of ‘horizon’ that traditionally has been attached to it – a horizon being, as the Greek word indicates, a limit from which I pre-comprehend the future. I wait for it, I predetermine it, and thus I annul it.” Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*. trans. by Giacomo Donis, ed by. Giacomo Donis and David Webb. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p.20.

²⁶² Buchanan, p.4.

²⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p.137.

something else, or rather someone else, is sealed in the heretic words of the cloned Jesus (“your salvation lies in your hands alone”), which discloses the arrival of someone else that do not solely rely on an individual but on a collectivity. This is the heretic promise of a collectivity-to-come that cannot be properly represented in the narrative structure of the story since the utopian impulse can only succeed through these brief yet promising moments of traces.

Utopia and nation are marked by these traces, or succinct figures of Utopia, that can be perceived only as excesses of representation. “Utopian visions emerge out of the excesses generated by nation-making,”²⁶⁶ and in this very limited space of nation-narration, the utopian impulse for representing actors and agents surfaces in the fringes of national imagination as diasporic individuals or as members of underground resistance movements. For Hau, these two movements are the country’s expression of utopian vision:

Utopias either envision a different human nature or an alternative social order. The commitment of revolution and seduction of migration build on human desire and capacity for change, on human dream of freedom from necessity and a better place.²⁶⁷

We can see these utopian figures moving in and out of the space of national representation. They are the family members abroad that the characters in the stories “Treasure Islands” and “A Monumental Race,” mention in passing, or the dispersed Filipinos across the globe for which the scientists of “Suman” cater. We can also see these figures of utopian impulse through the fleeting presence of radical characters in the stories: they are the protesters against the barbaric vermin hunting industry in “They Don’t Bite,” the environmental activists in “Niche,” the underground rebel in “Turtle Season” or the rebel brother of the Delia in “Virtual Center.”

²⁶⁶ Hau, *On the Subject of the Nation: Filipino Writings from the Margins, 1981-2004*. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004), p.12.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*

Revolution and migration can thus be seen as both promising-machines, representing figures of the country's utopian impulse for a better future as excesses of the nation's representational space. The transient nature of these figures only proves the stories' incapacity to fully integrate them within their narrative structures. They not only exist as someone else, but they also come from somewhere else, either outside its representational space (as migrants) or completely hidden from it (as members of resistance movements). Since all "collectivities are themselves *figure* for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopian or classless society,"²⁶⁸ these very attempt to imagine them, no matter how brief and momentary, attest to the utopian impulse of imagining social collectivities that promise to come in the future, borne from the resistance or stubborn negation of all that it is in the present.

²⁶⁸ Jameson, *Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981), p.291.

Conclusion

A Lick and A Promise

Kidlat Tahimik's film *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977) and Gregorio Brillantes' futuristic story "Apollo Centennial" (1980) are two different texts that both summon a kind of Utopian promise. These two texts employ the same premise – the myth of the mankind's "giant leap" to the moon, restaging it as a spectacle from a great distance – on the Philippines, itself a neocolonial satellite of America. While the two texts reside on different timelines (the film was set in the late '70s whereas the 1980 story was set in 2069, a century after the Apollo mission), they both present the same reality in their use of similar images of the nation and its people: dirt-poor heroes living in quaint and impoverished countryside.

In *Perfumed Nightmare*, we have Kidlat, a small-time driver who dreams of going to America to become an astronaut. Out of his obsession, he wrote to a US radio station to ask for the first words uttered by the first man on the moon. After receiving the reply, he excitedly opens and reads the letter in front of all the people in the village who, like him, can barely read and write. In "Apollo Centennial," on the other hand, we have Arcadio, who takes his children to visit the grand exhibit commemorating the centenary of the Apollo 11 mission. After crossing the river through a makeshift raft and passing all the military checkpoints along their bus ride, they arrived wide-eyed and amazed before the grand exhibit. In one of inscriptions, Arcadio read the first words uttered by the first man on the moon.

What makes both of these scenes particularly interesting is how the characters, Kidlat and Arcadio, mispronounce Neil Armstrong's words in almost the same, and painstakingly caricatured, manner. As they read, repeat, and contaminate the promise

sealed in the words: “*Dat’s wan smol steyp porman, one djayan leyp por mankind,*”²⁶⁹ they dramatize the violent confrontation of the native with the Empire’s “future fiction.”

What this act of mispronunciation perfectly enunciates, in other words, is the very incommensurability that structures the promise of future, an incommensurability that becomes twofold once carried over to the Other’s tongue. This is the kind of third world drama that one confronts each time he claims his own time and space by invoking the name of the nation and its future. In the native *mise-en-scène*, futuristic visions like these seem to be fatally reduced to the terms of small step that will forever be incommensurate with the giant leap. How then can one face this incommensurability without being completely arrested by it?

This is the dilemma that this study tries to deal with in the reading of Philippine future fiction. It proposes to grapple with these discrepant pronunciations by understanding not only how these texts represent the nation in its present situation, but also how such representations carry in themselves forms of desire for the future. This is why Fredric Jameson’s notion of national allegory and utopian impulse are particularly instructive for this study because they provide a way to map the problematic of both the nation and its prospects in the context of the third world without falling to the “booby-trapped and self-defeating slogan of ‘difference’.”²⁷⁰ This study attempts to offer a materialist method of analyzing postcolonial texts by tackling how both the nation, as a representation, and utopia, as a desire, generate problems peculiar to third world texts and

²⁶⁹ ‘Apollo Centennial’ was first published in Gregorio Brillantes, *Apollo Centennial: Nostalgias, Predicaments and Celebrations* (Manila: National Bookstore, 1980). These particular lines were quoted from its republication in Gregorio Brillantes, ‘Apollo Centennial,’ in *On a Clear Day in November Shortly Before the Millennium, Stories for a Quarter Century* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2000), pp. 283-293 (p.289). In *Perfumed Nightmares*, however, these very same words are uttered, in almost the same phonetic register except with how the film’s hero drawls and repeats his heavily accented reading of “mankind,” into “...manki... mankeee... mankeend;” which explicitly plays with the homonym of the word’s supposedly native pronunciation from monkey to mankind. Kidlat Tahimik, dir., *Perfumed Nightmares* (Philippines, 1977).

²⁷⁰ Fredric Jameson, ‘“Art Naif” and the Admixture of Worlds,’ in *Geopolitics of the Visible*, ed. Rolando B. Tolentino (Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila University, 2000), p.247.

contexts. If cognitive mapping clears the stage for the understanding utopian impulse,²⁷¹ this study argues and demonstrates that national allegory is the *specific* cognitive map of the third world to access this utopian desire.

National allegory offers a way of understanding how national situations are inscribed in Philippine future fiction. This critical category provides a materialist approach on dealing with these stories as products of third world texts emerging from their ‘life-and-death struggle’ against the Empire. In the difficult process of representing and binding the nation through these short stories, what national allegory reveals, more than the political significance of the nation in third world imagination, are the limits of its representation. These limits reconstruct and open up the imagination of the nation towards new forms of social collectivities, thus conferring upon the nation its chance for a future other than the failure of the present. This is why the reading of national allegory must be powerfully supplemented with something else, a kind of reading that can allow these allegories of the present to transform into allegories of the future.

Utopian impulse endows us with this strategy by taking in all of those representations of the present crises and, through the virtue of negation, converting them into enabling desire for social transformation. Utopia understood in these terms ceased to become an idealized representation more than it is an idealized desire. Like the nation, Utopia emerges from what exceeds the limits of the nation and the failures of its present. What Utopia can positively do is to neutralize these limitations and failures to reinscribe the utopian impulse back in the forms of brief flashes of pleasures and incremental satisfactions. This is why utopian impulse can only be traced by understanding how these texts render the figures of promise in their very act of promising. Utopia then becomes a

²⁷¹ See Phillip Wegner, ‘Horizons, Figures, and Machines: The Dialectic of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson,’ in *Utopian Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (1998) and Ian Buchanan, ‘Cognitive Mapping and Utopia,’ in *Fredric Jameson: Live Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006) pp.106-119.

machine for constructing a future. And only through its continuous generation of promise can a future *other* than our present, even other than what we can think of presently, be imagined.

In this promising-machine, we are left with these brief traces of utopia, figures from the future that are recuperated back into the present, but have nonetheless left several marks that contaminate the text before it closes. It could either be a line of flight, as in *Perfumed Nightmare*'s declaration: "I am not as small as you think, nothing can stop me from crossing the bridge!"; or an outline of a struggle forming in the sky, as in "Apollo's Centennial's" fadeout image: "another nuclear spaceship going to Mars or perhaps only to the moon, now a sharp-pointed sickle in the eastern sky."²⁷²

Like *a lick and a promise*, these figures of utopian impulse remind us that we may need to get back to what we think we have already done because we might not have done enough work on it. *Not just yet.*

²⁷² Brillantes, p.293.

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