

Orality and Oral Traditions as Expression of Power in the Selected Hiligaynon Short Stories, 1998-2015

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on orality and oral traditions that continue to find expression in contemporary texts like the Hiligaynon short stories as expression of power and are thus responses to contemporary socio-historical realities. The definitions of voice and orality are based on Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* (1982), Trinna Frever's *The Woman Writer and the Spoken Word: Gender, Print, Orality, and Selected Turn-of-the-Century American Women's Literature* (1998), and Salwa Karoui-Elounelli's "Unsounded Vocality: The Trope of Voice and the Paradigm of Orality in American Postmodern Fiction" (2010). How orality and oral traditions serve as expressions of power in written texts is based on Mikhail Bakhtin's emphasis on the "dialogic" in the *Discourse in the Novel* (1934-35), bell hooks' concept of "yearning" (1990), Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Benedict Anderson's proposition on the politics of language and culture in *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (1990). An analysis of the seven selected Hiligaynon short stories reveals that various elements of orality like musical and rhythmic progression, unsounded or non-verbal vocality, mixed voices, and choral voices, as well as oral traditions like folk and novelty songs and *loa* or *luwa*, the *binalaybay* (poem), and *ulawhay* (love song) are expression of power in contending with various forms of dominance.

INTRODUCTION

After the EDSA Revolution in 1986, the Cultural Center of the Philippines was reorganized and restructured and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts was institutionalized. Both developments have propelled the national and regional literature and arts. It was also in 1986 when Leoncio Deriada returned to Iloilo after four decades of migration to Mindanao. Deriada's return to his homeland, according to John Iremil Teodoro (2014), is the return of the *babaylan* whose power lies greatly in honing the new breed of West Visayan writers and encouraging them to write and publish not just in English, Filipino, and Hiligaynon but also in Kinaray-a and Akeanon (p. xxi). Through series of workshops and publications, Deriada has been greatly instrumental in giving a renewed vigor to literary productions in the region. Being both a writer and a literature professor at U.P. Visayas, he was able to mentor the now established writers in Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, and Akeanon.

Deriada's return to Iloilo is one of the three major factors identified by Teodoro as having contributed to the new vigor in the writing of short stories in Hiligaynon. The other two include the acceptance of

Hiligaynon entries in creative writing workshops like the Iligan National Writers' Workshop, Iyas National Writers' Workshop, and San Agustin Writers' Workshop and the inclusion of the Hiligaynon Short Story category in the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature (Ibid.). Winning the Palanca, according to John Barrios (2014), serves as a writers' *batak dungan* (xiii) (literally, a *babaylan* ritual for lifting or strengthening the spirit).

The centennial of Philippine independence in 1998 with its prevailing atmosphere of nationalist pride, had occasioned a "looking back to history" and massive retrieval of facts and stories about the "other" ("othered" by their being local, unheard of, and marginal) heroes of the past who, unlike the national heroes inscribed in Philippine history books, remained unsung. These unsung heroes are not just the freedom fighters but also the bearers of traditional culture like epic chanters, traditional artists, writers, and *babaylans*, who have held on to their craft and weathered the threats of colonization and globalization. They may have been forgotten, have lost significance, or were even questioned by

the agencies of health, education, and technology, yet, they have remained valuable to some people in the rural and underprivileged communities including the indigenous peoples (IPs).

Dr. Alicia Magos, an anthropologist and retired professor of UP Visayas who has done pioneering works on the *maaram* (babaylanism) in Antique (Enriquez, 1992, p.: ix) and the Panay Bukidnon culture, has significantly contributed in the preservation and promotion of Panayanon culture. Apart from her researches on the enduring *maaram* tradition in Panay, she has also recorded and published the Panay *sugidanon* (epics) through the help of his key informant and epic chanter, Federico Caballero. Upon Dr. Magos' recommendation, then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo conferred on him the Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan (GAMABA) Award (national living treasure) for epic chanting in 2001. To this day, Federico Caballero is the only living treasure from the West Visayan region. It is significant to note that it is in the realm of oral tradition (epic chanting) that Panay has etched a mark in the country's cultural landscape.

It is no surprise why orality and the oral traditions would seep deeply even in the written Panayanon narratives as in the case of contemporary Hiligaynon short stories. Earlier, however, this did not sit well with some writers and critics who stress the legacy of Philippine literature in English in the development of Philippine written literature, as in the case of Nick Joaquin. In his essay, "The Filipino as English Fictionist" which was published in the Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society in 1978, Joaquin argues that it was the Philippine literature in English which sustained the continuity of our writing tradition which was interrupted by the American take-over after the Philippine independence from Spain (p. 119). He harks back to the pre-World War II period when "it took only 30 years of American culture to produce a Villa,"¹ when Filipino writers in English were considered as "culture heroes" for being the "champions of a culture that was making us free, modern, democratic, scientific, nationalistic and progressive" (118). He maintains that it was primarily the Filipinos' pre-existing knowledge of the Roman alphabet, the printing presses, and the almost 400 years of historical process and development behind them that Villa and the rest of Filipino writers in English can claim legacy of continuing the Philippine tradition of writing. He emphasizes writing because he strongly believes that the Philippine original culture was an oral culture and the introduction of

the use of paper, the printing press, and the book had reshaped the original culture and transformed it into a more and more visual, literate culture. But on the vernacular literature, Joaquin argues that strictly speaking, until the 1970s, what we had was still largely an oral culture, even the fiction and verse that were in written form. He claims that throughout the American period, our fiction in the vernacular was still a form of story-telling in the oral tradition and as such, was *lowly*, equated with *Liwayway* and *Lola Basiang*, while the Filipino writers in English "had already gone beyond Rizal" (p. 121). He also claims that while Filipino writers in English like Jose Garcia Villa, N.V.M. Gonzales, Arturo Rotor, and Francisco Arcellana were read for the sheer delight of reading them, there were no equivalent names in our vernacular literature, not because there were no great writers in the vernacular, but that there are no writers at all, only "story-tellers and bards-minstrels and troubadours-using print and page instead of guitars and the human voice" (p. 122). It is important to note that during the Spanish Period, the print media was not circulated in the same way that it was later during the American Period because publication revolved mainly around religious matter or for the most part, dominated by the clergy. To some extent, Joaquin was right in referring to vernacular writers as storytellers and bards. Yet, it was not a question of whether the Filipinos did or could not write. Rather, it was because they were preoccupied with something different during the Spanish Period.

Furthermore, Joaquin refers to vernacular writers as writing stories that are happening either at the present or once upon a time, in other words, anachronistic; whereas the Philippine writers in English are readily identifiable with their respective time and place such as the Laguna of Paz Marquez Benitez, the Mindoro of N.V.M. Gonzales, and the Ilocandia of Manuel Arguilla. Yet, literary critics and scholars like Resil Mojares, Rosario Cruz-Lucero, Corazon Villareal, and Ma. Cecilia Locsin-Nava assert otherwise. Their assertions which are expounded in the latter section, "Orality and Oral Tradition in Contemporary Narrative Tradition," point to the boundless possibilities which oral traditions can enrich the written narrative traditions like fiction. Based on their contentions, this paper thus argues that orality and the oral traditions like the folk songs, novelty songs, *binalaybay*, *luwa*, and *ulawhay* in the selected contemporary Hiligaynon short stories are not indications of lowliness, weakness, or anachronism. They continue to find expression in contemporary written narratives like the short stories

¹According to Nick Joaquin (1978) this attitude was based upon the claim that "it took over 300 years of Spanish culture to produce a Rizal but only 30 years of American culture to produce a Villa" (p. 118).

as expressions of power and are essential proofs that these stories are actual responses to contemporary socio-historical realities.

Orality and Oral Traditions in Literature

As verbal utterance, orality is interconnected with voice but it is used differently. Orality in literature is defined by Walter Ong (1982) as secondary² orality which belongs to the “present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print” (11). The concept of secondary orality implies the codependency of orality and literacy which could very well manifest in written texts. Ong argues that orality and literacy need each other: “reading a text oralizes it” (p. 172).

Frever proposes a number of forms of orality that recur in written texts. First is the author’s using the content of the oral medium as content within the written fiction the way “tales within oral traditions may be told and retold, being reshaped by each teller, the written work then becomes part of this chain of tellers, as it reshapes the oral tale into print form for a reading audience” (p. 21). Second is the use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and noise or sound effects wherein the writer uses aurality as well as orality to achieve a desired effect within the text (p. 22). The third is the use of particular cultural or regional languages within fiction. By drawing on syntax, and style of local languages, writers hover between the written form and the oral form (p. 22). The fourth is depiction of the actual storytelling process which includes descriptions of how characters tell stories, including mannerisms and tone of voice which gives a sense of dialectic interaction, or in a Bakhtinian sense, dialogics showing the process by which texts are created in the act of creating yet another text (p. 23).

Orality is related to voice which is the “sensibility through which we hear the narrative, even when we are reading silently” (Abbott, 2008, p. 243). It refers to narrative voice which may be that of the author, narrator, or character (Ross, 1979, pp. 300-301). Recent studies on voice, however, closely interconnect it with the concept of orality. Karoui-Elounelli (2010), for instance, considers the concept of narrative or authorial voice as tending to give an “illusory fixity” (p. 112). In her analysis of Silko’s *Ceremony*, she presents “the tropes of resonance and musical rhythm which inform the presentation of the characters’ speeches, introduce into the

narrative an iconography of the speaking voice as either a ritualistic performance of storytelling or a missed one.” She quotes the character’s cursing of the rain - “he damned the rain until the words were a chant” which to her, “creates an aesthetic vision of rhythmical speech and intonation that is animated by the tribal tradition of narrative performance” (pp. 121-122). Karoui-Elounelli’s emphasis of resonance and rhythm in the speaking voice equates it with orality and thus blurs the line between voice and orality. The same interconnectedness exists between orality and the written text. Walter Ong argues that writing can never dispense with orality since the spoken word prevails in all pieces of writing. Thus, voice, orality, oral traditions, and the written text are undeniably interconnected.

Orality and Oral Tradition in Contemporary Narrative Tradition

Dr. Resil Mojares in his book, *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Filipino Novel until 1940* (1983), has gone as far back as the folk narrative tradition, especially the epics, in tracing the development of the novel. In this book, he sets the boundless possibilities of integrating oral traditional literature in its succeeding literary productions. He maintains also that “oral, traditional literature is impressive for its fluidity and stability” where such fluidity “lies in its multiformity, its tendency to manifest itself in varying forms (folktale, epic, proverb, ballad and others), its capacity to evolve many combinations..., and its openness to continuing recreation” (p. 21).

Cruz-Lucero (2007) upholds the firm grounding on oral tradition as a means of bridging the gap between Philippine indigenous cosmogony (now called “folklore” or even “superstition”) and the modern narrative traditions like the stories selected for this study. In her article, “Gods, Monsters, Heroes, and Tricksters in Adelina Gurrea’s *Cuentos de Juana*,” she argues how the Malay population of pre-Christian Negros and Panay had a highly complex and elaborate belief system, revolving around the concept of *dungan* or our “spiritual double and protector,” someone in the spirit world who was born at exactly the same moment that we were born. She cites Magos’ contention that *dungan* was the root of “origin myths, explanations of illness, the antagonism of spirits to humans, the contests of *dungan*, the tribal datu’s leadership, and the *babaylan* priest’s centrality” (Magos, p. 50 in Cruz-Lucero, 2007, p. 113). As to the central role of

²In contrast to secondary orality, primary orality according to Walter Ong belongs to a culture that is totally untouched by any knowledge of printing and print. That is why, considering the highly literate and technologically advanced culture that we have now, Ong argues that primary orality in the strict sense hardly exists (p. 11).

dungan in the attribution of power to the *babaylan*, Cruz-Lucero cites Filomeno Aguilar who claims that “a person with unsurpassed *dungan* exhibits acute intelligence, vast knowledge, indomitable willpower, and self-confidence; generates wealth and an awesome reputation; exudes capacities to rule, dominate others, and subdue enemies” (Aguilar, p. 27 in Cruz-Lucero, p. 113). Labaw Donggon, the name of the hero of the epic of Panay, literally means “unsurpassed power” (Magos, p. 50 in Cruz-Lucero, p. 113).

In another article, “The Music of Pestle on Mortar” Cruz-Lucero refers creative writers to our “traditional roots.... the narratives of our people’s historical experience, albeit told in the language of mythology” for them to be “speakers for our people’s daily lives, mediated by a historical consciousness, and rooted in our indigenous concepts or our cosmos and its laws” and that they should take this consideration as “basic tenet of creative writing” whether they are “reviving folk forms or writing in the modernist, realist vein, or engaging in postmodernist, multimedia experimentation” (2007, p. 7). Literary critic Corazon Villareal in her article, “Demons, Saviours, and Narrativity in a Vernacular Literature” (2010) focuses on how the spirit-lore undergoes creative transformation both in theme and narrative method in the *sugilanon* and inquires into the persistence of demons, *dungan* and other spirits even in contemporary writers with postmodern sensibilities. By presenting folk spirituality as rooted to the cosmogony of Panay, and the prevalence of folk spirituality in the Hiligaynon narrative tradition, her analysis of the short stories of Alicia Tan Gonzales, Isabel Sebulen, Vicente Groyon, and Rosario-Cruz Lucero, reveals that folk spirituality intersects with gender. According to her, while the male *babaylans* at a certain point led the rebellions against the Spaniards, and the Panayanon epics recount the exploits of male epic heroes, the women *babaylan*, healer, and epic chanter have stayed in the cultural memory. Ma Cecilia Locsin Nava (2001) also contends that the Hiligaynon novel is “as deeply rooted in poetry as much as it is in prose” (p. 36) and illustrates this in the way Ramon Muzones would switch from prose to the poetic *siday* and also in Magdalena Jalandoni’s way of “contriving to make her characters speak in the poetic accents of the *binalaybay* during moments of heightened emotion” (ibid.). Based on the above contentions, the prevalence of oral traditions in written narratives like the Hiligaynon short story is not in any way an indication of weakness or anachronism. It is rather a firmly grounded literary tradition that has withstood western conventions, and is itself, an assertion of the

power of precolonial oral traditions to find relevance in contemporary expressions of power as shown by the selected short stories in this article.

Orality and Oral Traditions as Articulations of Power in Literature

It was Mikhail Bakhtin who developed the dynamic and dialogic view of language in literary texts, especially in the novel. His emphasis as a critique was not so much on the way texts reflect society or class interests but rather on how language disrupts authority and liberate alternative voices (Selden and Widdowson, 1993, p. 39). In “Discourse in the Novel,” he stresses the concept of “heteroglossia” as the basic condition governing the production of meaning in all discourse (Ibid.). He maintains that an utterance, though a single voice, constantly (and to some extent unconsciously) produces a plenitude of meanings and is potentially the site of a struggle (p. 127). He contends that there is no such thing as general language spoken by a general voice and is not charged with particular overtones. To him, when a language *means*, it is usually somebody talking to someone else, even when that someone else is one’s self (Holquist, 1981, p. xxi).

Another Bakhtinian proposition that has direct connotation of orality is the concept of “carnival.” Bakhtin maintains that carnivalism as a popular and liberating social phenomenon has a formative influence on literature wherein the festivities associated to it have the potential to subvert, loosen, and mock everything that is authoritative and serious. In a carnival, there is subversion of hierarchies. For instance, fools become wise and kings become beggars. There is also mingling of opposites like fact and fantasy, heaven and hell, and sacred and profane (Selden and Widdowson, 1993, p. 40).

Another concept that interconnects orality with power is what bell hooks refers to as “yearning.” In *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990) she maintains that yearning is a feeling or psychological state that many of us share. She draws out the concept of yearning from the post-modernist deconstruction of the master narratives of those who have been “silenced” and are thus longing for critical voice (p. 27). The silenced are those who have been marginalized such as the oppressed, exploited, colonized people hooks does not consider the concept of marginality as a sign of despair but sees it as a position and a site of both repression and resistance (pp. 150-151). She is an advocate of a politics that is grounded in the experience of marginality and subalternity and her experiential position contributes to the formation of

counterhegemonic knowledge that has the potential for questioning and subverting the master narratives of class, "race," and gender (Stoddart, 2007, p. 218).

The discourse on voice, orality, and power fits within Bhabha's proposition on the dialogic and indeterminate nature of nationalities, ethnicities, and identities which are often characterized by hybridity (Leitch, 2001, p. 2377). In "The Commitment to Theory," Homi Bhabha maintains that the effectivity of the language of critique lies not so much in keeping the terms of the master and the slave forever separate but on how it transcends the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation. He refers to this space as a place of hybridity where a new political object that is "neither the one nor the other" is constructed (p. 25).

A non-western conception of power and the notions of direct and symbolic speech are illustrated by Benedict Anderson in his book *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (1990). Benedict Anderson's discussion of the Javanese concept of power is facilitated by a schematic contrast with the modern European (western) concept. To Anderson, the western concept of power is an abstraction deduced from observed patterns of social interaction. It is derived from heterogeneous sources like wealth, social status, formal office, organization, weapons, etc. It has no inherent limit and thus may keep on increasing through time as conditioned by the accelerating development of modern technology. Finally, it is morally ambiguous, enhanced by its being derived from heterogeneous sources (pp. 21-22). The Javanese concept of power, on the other hand, is something that is concrete, an existential reality. Though intangible and mysterious, it is the divine energy animating the universe and is concretely manifested in every aspect of the natural world such as the stones, trees, clouds, and fire (p. 22). It comes from a homogeneous source: of the same type and only one source, in the hands of one individual or group. The quantum of power in the universe is constant and does not raise a question of legitimacy (pp. 22-23). Thus, the most obvious sign of power in Javanese culture is one's capacity to concentrate and focus on inner power, absorb power from the outside, and concentrate within one's self apparently antagonistic opposites (p. 28). It is important to mention here a comparative conception of power between the western and Javanese thought because the Hiligaynon short stories come from a culture that is similar to that of the Javanese and at one point, a non-western concept of power may emerge in the stories' project.

In the same book, Anderson introduces the

concepts of direct and symbolic speech. To him, direct speech constitutes the overwhelming bulk of political communication in any society: gossip, rumors, discussions, arguments, interrogations, intrigues. However, this is usually congealed into indirect speech ("rumors circulated in Indonesia that...") and in the process, transmuted into illustration and symbolic representation (p. 153).

The Selected Hiligaynon Stories

As to the selection of short stories, it is worth mentioning that there are a total of 16 books of Hiligaynon short stories that have been published by 2015. Five of these are anthologies: 1) Juanito Marcella's *Bahandi* (1970), 2) Rosario Cruz-Lucero's *Sugilanon: Mga Piling Maikling Kuwewntong Hiligaynon* (1991), Corazon Villareal's *Translating the Sugilanon: Reframing the Sign* (1994), 4) Carmen De los Santos, et al.'s *Selebrasyon at Lamentasyon: Antolohiya ng mga Maikling Kuwento sa Panay* (1998), and 5) John Iremil Teodoro's *Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan* (2014). The 11 others are collections of works of individual writers: 1) Ma. Luisa Defante-Gibraltar's *Ang Babaye sa Lunok* (2003), 2) Genevieve Asenjo's *Komposo ni Dandansoy* (2007), 3) Quin Baterna's *Balangaw sa Tingadlaw: Tinipon nga mga Malip-ot nga Sugilanon* (2008), 4) Alicia Tan-Gonzales' *Sa Taguankan sang Duta* (2009), 5) John Iremil Teodoro's *Ang Anghel sang Capiz* (2009), 6) J.V.D. Perez's *Ang mga Anak sang Montogawe kag Iban Pa* (2010), 7) Felino Garcia's *Sa Pagtunod sang Adlaw* (2011), 8) Felino Garcia's second collection, *Idolo* (2012), 9) Norman Darap's *Pagpauli sa Tamarora* (2015), 10) Jesus Insilada's *Waling-waling kag Iban pa nga Sugilanon* (2015), and 11) Mary Rose Adelle Pacificar's *Gisi nga Kasanag kag Iban pa nga Sugilanon* (2015). Aside from these 14 books of short stories in Hiligaynon, there is one anthology of Kinaray-a poems and short stories, John Iremil Teodoro's *Pagdakep kang Ilahas* (2015) and another one of Akeanon stories, John Barrios' *Engkantawo kag Iban pa nga Sugilanon* (2008).

Most of these 16 books have the potential for inquiry into orality and power but this paper focuses only on the seven Hiligaynon short stories. These short stories were chosen on the basis of their manifestation of orality as expression of power. These include: 1.) "Daba-daba sa Sidlangan" by Alicia Tan-Gonzales 2.) "Turagsoy" by Genevieve Asenjo 3.) "tagauma@manila" also by Genevieve Asenjo, 4) "Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan" by Leoncio Deriada, 5.) "Panubok sa Pula nga Pulos" by Jesus Insilada, and 6.) "Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos" by Peter Nery, and 7.) "Ulubrahon" by Norma Darap.

Orality and Oral Traditions in the Selected Hiligaynon Short Stories

Orality in the selected short stories takes the form of musical and rhythmic progression, unsounded and/or non-verbal vocality (silence, smile, laughter), mixed voices, and choral voices which are interspersed with oral traditions like folksongs, novelty songs, *komposo*, and *binalaybay*. How they serve as responses to socio-historical realities of dominance and inequality is shown by the succeeding discussions.

Musical and Rhythmic Forms

Musical and rhythmic form in the selected short stories are analyzed based on bell hooks's concept of "yearning." Here, the integration of the musicality of songs and the rhythm of utterance and folk art like *panubok* (embroidery) in the stories is highlighted as means of articulating the yearning for social integration and equal access to resources. The use of melodic and rhythmical oral forms like the folksongs, *komposo*, and *binalaybay* (poetry) prove to be an effective technique in foregrounding a people's search for freedom. Iletto (1979), for instance, was able to re-interpret the *pasyon* as an utterance replete with images (voices) leading to liberation. He has observed that in the performance of the *pasyon*, on top of the dominant Spanish melodic influence in *pasyon* singing, is the surfacing of the *tagulaylay*, the pre-Spanish mode of singing (p. 20). Similarly, the preponderance of folksongs and other oral forms in the selected Hiligaynon short stories is not just for the sheer attainment of musicality or rhythm in the narrative. More importantly, the integration of musical and rhythmical oral forms serve as heightened expressions of what bell hooks refers to as "yearnings," particularly of freedom and equality.

In "Turagsoy," lines from folksongs are interspersed in the narrative and this creates both musicality and rhythmic progression and at the same time, a "singing out loud" of the yearnings cited above. When Inday Lupog, for instance sings "Igso-on sa Tabuk Nasyon" and "Si Kantilay Bata ni Venancio," the narrative voice also seems rhythmical and at the

same time, aloud with expression of yearning:

nangin daguob sang aga nga ina indi lamang ang pagkanta ni Inday Lupog kundi pati ang iya paghalakhak. Subong mga liso sang sinigwelas ini nga naglagapok sa sinas nga atup, subong mga paklang sang lubi nga nagaragaak sa pagkatakatak sa lupa. Nayugit nga nabuyaw gid si Inday Lupog sa mga hitabo sa aga nga ina nga ang kasubo kag kaluoy nga nabatyagan para sa kaugalingon, subong nagkadto para sa iya mga kasimaryo.

(that morning, it was not only Inday Lupog's singing that sounds like thunder but also her loud laughter. It was like the sounds of *sinigwelas* seeds falling on a GI sheet roof, of coconut leaf-stalk falling on the ground. She feels mockery and derision for what happened that morning so that the sadness and pity that she feels for herself is now for the people in the village.)³

What happened that morning was the media coverage of what the people in the community refer to as *maranhig*⁴ or a dead person rising from the coffin and doing some pranks on those in vigil. Limited access to social services due to geographical location, partisan politics, and poverty, render them helpless and adhere to their belief in the *hiwit*, *pinalakad*, *aswang*, *tamawo sa lunok*, *amaranhig*, and *malain nga ginhawa*⁵ for a variety of physical ailments. Inday Lupog (*lupog* means lame) herself was not spared from polio because of the inaccessibility of the polio vaccine in a remote community like theirs:

Polyo kuno ang iya sakit, indi kay bangud sang tamawo sa lunok! Wala nakalab-ut ang libre nga bakuna sang gobyerno sa ila baryo kag kon ngaa sa kadamuon, sia iya ang naduktan.

(It was polio that struck her and not the *tamawo* in a balete tree! The free immunization offered by the government did not reach their barrio and why, of all people would she be the one to have it.)

When Inday Lupog is with child by Boy Eks, an

³ Translation mine as well as of the rest of directly quoted lines from the short stories analyzed in this paper.

⁴ A dead person who gets up from its coffin and plays pranks with those in the wake like repeating what others are saying or asking for a food or drink or cigarette. Also known as *amaranhig*. *amaranhig* also figures in M. L. Gibraltar's story, "Ang Bangkay nga Nagapanukat" in *Ang Babaye sa Lunok kag Iban pa nga Sugilanon nga Indi Mapatihon apang Matuod*. Iloilo City: University of San Agustin, 2003. Please see also Dimzon, E. "Collection, Authentication, Classification, and Documentation of the West Visayan Myths and Legends. UPV In-house Research, Office of

the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension, 2010, pp. 213-217.

⁵Based on folk beliefs, can be an *aswang* (witch) or any malevolent spirit that causes sickness and even death.

⁶A sickness that is caused by putting something like a piece of stone or wood inside a person's body. This is usually employed to harm, even kill one's enemy as is usually done by a *manughiwit*, a sorcerer, using an ugly doll. *Hiwit* is the equivalent of the Tagalog word "*kulam*."

itinerant herbal medicine agent, the village people attribute her vomiting to a *malain nga ginhawa*, which might be the same entity that caused Ontoy Pakit's death and becoming a *maranhig*. According to the local manughilot (bonesetter), there is something inside her stomach and it is caused by *hiwit*⁶.

Hiwit. Amo ini ang bag-ong tinaga nga nagpautaw-utaw sa bilog nga baryo. Kon ang maranhig iya gindalaganan sang mga kasimaryo, ining hiwit luyag lagson ni Inday Lupog agud dili na makaguwa sa ila mga bibig. Ginsikway-patay nia sa iya paminsaron ining tinaga nga daw sa gutom nga kinaon sang iya mga mata ang kada pahina sang Almanake, sang Hiligaynon, sang iya nutbook. Gusto nia matulon ini tanan kag masaylo sa nagatubo nga kabuhi sa iya taguangkan..... Indi bala matuod nga manamit ang iyot kag malakalamay ang mga sugilanon nga ginahuptan sang suba, banglid kag kawayanan sang ila baryo? Ngaa ginatagago ini sang kamal-aman sa makasiligni nga hiwit?

(*Hiwit*. This is the new word that sails around the whole barrio. When people run away from *maranhig*, Inday Lupog wants to run after this *hiwit* to keep it from their lips. She keeps the word out of her mind, and her eyes, as in hunger, devoured every page of Almanake, of Hiligaynon (magazine), of her notebook. She wants to swallow them all and transmit them to the new life that grows in her womb...Isn't it that sex is delightful and the stories [sex escapades] that are kept by the river, hill, and bamboo groove are sweet? Why do the elders hide them on the pretext of the hideous *hiwit*?

Thus runs Inday Lupog's yearning to liberate herself and the baby in her womb from the backwardness and superstition that she sees around her. Yet, "lamed" by her circumstances (lack of opportunities, inaccessibility of government programs, poverty), the only means by which she can break free is through her voice. Inday Lupog's singing of chosen lines from folk and novelty songs like *Turagsoy*, *Igso-on sa Tabuk Nayon*, and *Tamilok*, are no different from the way a hubog or balong (drunk) person would do either to mock or sing their angst away. Genevieve Asenjo's interspersing of jolly songs and *luwa* is a pastiche of realities of marginalization and alienation in a rural community, a singing out loud of yearnings for integration and equality.

In "Panubok sa Pula nga Pulos," the rhythmical movement of Den-ay Ayon's hand while doing the *panubok* (embroidery) is complemented by the *ulawhay* (love song) of Uya Ariring her aunt, and the *binalaybay* (poem) of Lampong Mogad, her

lover as expressions of protest against the myriad of dominance and impositions from their family, community, and the outside (lowland) forces. The rhythmical integration of *binalaybay* and *ulawhay* and the imagery of *panubok* designs that are deeply grounded on the natural environment foreground the richness of the Panay Bukidnon cultural heritage but it is threatened by external forces such as military encroachment, mining, and quarrying. This is the backdrop of the struggle that anchors Den-ay Ayon, Lampong Mogad, and Uya Ariring to their oral lore and other arts that serve as channels in contending with their own experience of domination.

To channel her resistance and derision of her father and stepmother, Den-ay Ayon spends her time to *panubok* at the Balay Patawili (School for Living Tradition) and the designs of the flora and fauna that she uses in her embroidery are replete with symbolism that would later on lead her to assert her love. In a moment with Uya Ariring, who is herself a respectable artist of the various facets of Panay Bukidnon culture, Den-ay Ayon embroiders a *bariri* (amor seco) which to her symbolizes reminiscence. Uya Ariring replies in melodic and rhythmical lines: "Husto ikaw Anak. *Bariri* ang handurawan. Nagapanuslok agud talupangdon. Kada puknit, hugnat sang sugilanon." (*Bariri* is reminiscence. It pierces to be noticed. Each pinch a piece of story.)

Uya Ariring's lines are no different from the melodic and rhythmical *binalaybay* which proves Mojares's and Cruz-Lucero's contention that modern vernacular literature utilizes precolonial forms. These lines can be better represented and read as *binalaybay* if written in verse (versification mine):

*Bariri ang handurawan
Nagapanuslok agud talupangdon
Kada puknit, hugnat sang sugilanon.*

*Bariri is reminiscence
It pierces to be noticed
Each pinch a piece of story.*

Just then, Uya Ariring recounts the tragic story of her love and ends it with an *ulawhay* (love song) for her lover named Tapado, a hunter and maker of mortar and pestle, who died at the hands of the Japanese while protecting their village: Ay, Aying/ Nga kanugon lang kuno hay Tapado/ Hirak tay kapareho/ Uyaw pagpakaptay hal-o (Ay Aying/ What a waste Tapado/ What a loss for both of us/ You can no longer hold a pestle).

It is noteworthy that the protagonists in the stories

above are women whose experience of domination is aggravated by physical and family circumstances. Inday Lupog is constrained by her physical disability and the early death of her father who used to carry her along wherever she would want to go. Den-ay Ayon is coerced by her father and stepmother who should have been the ones to protect her but were ironically the ones who push her into the hands of Master Sergeant Tusi. However, both Inday Lupog and Den-ay Ayon, being innately intelligent women, are able to derive power from within through contemplation. They are both able to express their yearning for freedom through the rhythmical and musical power of their creative expressions: singing for Inday Lupog, and *panubok* (embroidery) for Den-ay Ayon.

Non-verbal Vocality: Laughter, Smile, Silence

A special kind of power emanates from unsounded/non-verbal vocality like a smile, or laughter, or silence. This is the kind of power that is akin to Anderson's concept of non-western power. It is usually intangible and mysterious, a divine energy that animates the world and is concretely manifested in every aspect of the natural world. It is derived from absorbing power from outside and concentrating on one's power from within. For the most part, this is achieved through the power of contemplation in silence.

In "Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan," Milagros Paguntalan, usually responds with a mere laughter or a smile to Mal-am Edes' prodding for her to return to Igkasla and be a *babaylan*:

Nakakadlaw sya sang magsiling si Mal-am Edes nga magbalik na sya. Madugay na nga panahon nga wala sang babaylan sa Igkasla. Sya, sya ang ginahulat sang mga tawo sa kadugayon nga ini.....

Wala makahulag si Milagros Paguntalan. Madamu sing nahambal si Mal-am Edes kag daw akig pa. Madamu sing nangin buang sa Kabisayaan Nakatundan tungod kay indi nila buot mangin babaylan.

"Mabaskog ang dungan mo," siling ni Mal-am Edes. "Ina isa ka kaugalian sang busalian."

Wala nagsabat si Milagros. May ginahuna-huna sya.

(She laughed when Mal-am Edes asked her to come back. It has been a long time that there is no babaylan in Igkasla. It is she whom they have been waiting for in such a long time...

"You have a powerful *dungan*," said Mal-am Edes. "That is one attribute of a babaylan."

Milagros **did not answer**. She is thinking of something.)

Milagros' moments of silence, however, prefigure the manifestation of her *surundon* (calling) to be a *babaylan*. These moments are necessary for her to look inwardly and later on discover an unexplainable strength and sensitivity to the ailing part of a person's body. These moments may correspond to Milagros' contemplation and absorption of the different manifestations of mysterious powers that she sees around: how local *arbularios* would heal the sick by utilizing certain herbs, how faith healers would perform bloodless surgery, and how people with extrasensory perception and telekinesis would perform their craft. Being an academic person, Milagros attempts to find scientific explanation for these people's power and she ends up attributing such power to extra-sensory energy.

Apart from moments of silence, Milagros also experiences moments of dreams where her *babaylan* ancestors Estrella Bangotbanwa and Bartolo Pagunsan implore her to go back to Igkasla. Upon waking up, Milagros hears again the voice of Mal-am Edes prodding her to go back to Igkasla. Another moment of silence causes her to contemplate as to whether her dream could possibly be what Mal-am Edes means by a "calling." It was during an earlier moment of contemplation about what happened in Baguio where she realizes that her fingers seem to have a will of their own and she wonders:

Nahipotismo ayhan niya ang iya kaugalingon kag wala sing hungod nga natum-ok sang iya hugot nga panghuna-huna ang buton sang tinago nga kaalam sa pagbulong?

(Did she hypnotize herself and her deep concentration has unintentionally pushed the button of the secret knowledge of healing?)

Milagros' moments of silence, contemplation, and absorption of power correspond to what Benedict Anderson refers to as the capacity to concentrate and focus on inner power, absorb power from the outside, and concentrate within one's self apparently antagonistic opposites (p. 28). Her silence, and contemplation leads her to finally decide to take a leave of absence from the university and respond to the "calling" to return to Igkasla that has been waiting for the most needed *babaylan*.

While Milagros realizes her power as a *babaylan* through moments of silence, contemplation, and absorption of the surrounding practice of supernatural power, Den-ay Ayon in "Panubok sa Pula nga Pulos" employs silence as a weapon for resistance. Den-

ay Ayon's resistance is directed at her father and stepmother who forbid her love for Lampong Mogad because they have already promised her to the lowlander detachment commander, Master Sergeant Tusi. When she receives a scolding for secretly meeting her lover, she keeps silent and contains her resistance:

Pagpakigbatu ang tawag niya sa paghipos kag paglikaw sa amay kag manding. Ginhulid niya ang kalain sang buot kagab-i matapos sya paarakan sang daw armas-luthang nga baba sang manding nga gin-ugyoanan sang iya amay..... Hinganiban niya ang kalinong. Kadampig niya ang pagpanubok. Naanad sya nga nagahipos lamang bisan nagaribok ang iya balatyagon sa pagtuman sang mga bagay nga lapas sa iya buot.

(Resistance is what she means by her silence and avoidance of her father and stepmother. She slept with a heavy heart last night after the gun-like pattering of her stepmother's scolding which is reinforced by her father... Silence is her weapon. Embroidery is her ally. She is used to keeping quiet even if her heart vehemently protests her doing things against her will.

In silence, she thinks about Kabladan Hill where her mother is buried that is soon to be razed to the ground to make way for an access road to a quarry site at the foot of Mount Baloy. The proposed dam and mining operation that would compromise both their ancestral domain and the newly installed revival of their culture that is strongly connected to their natural environment. These only worsen her contempt for her uncle and father who are supposed to be leaders of their tribe and should thus protect them from these encroachments. She silently despises the way her stepmother would scold her about her shortened hair and scarred legs as though she does not own her body: *subong bala nga ang tanan nga bahin sang iya lawas, indi sya ang nagapanag-iya* (as though she does not own all the parts of her body). She resists being commodified by her body, by the dowry price it would earn for her father and stepmother. All her anger and dislike are contained in her thoughts but waits only for the best time to find a voice which are ignited by the two people precious to her: her aunt Uya Ariring and her lover Lampong Mogad. Uya Ariring advises her to fight for her love: *"Ara sa pagpakigbatu ang matuod nga kasayuran sang gugma"* (It is in fighting for love that one finds its true meaning) and Lampong Mogad would say, *"gamhanan ang mga tinaga: makahingyu,*

makapugong, makapilas, makabulong" (words are powerful: they can plead, deter, hurt, heal).

Finally, she finds the "voice" for her freedom. She is about to be raped by Master Sergeant Tusi upon the suggestion of her father, stepmother, and uncle, when she suddenly thinks of a ploy to rid herself of him. She *tells* and convinces him that she has already offered herself to somebody and Tusi, without giving it a thought, leaves her at once. While it is ironic that her silence as power (*pagpakigbatu ang paghipos*), is challenged by her voice in the actual act of telling Tusi in order to trick him, it is not her physical "voice" per se that undermines him. It is the "silenced" or repressed precolonial earthiness that pins down the Christian concept of virginity⁷.

In "Daba-Daba sa Sidlangan," it is Bulawan's contemplation upon her dream the night before their tribe was attacked by the Spaniards which gives her the power to discern and decide in her husband's absence, to spare her youngest son, Isyu who has the calling to be a *babaylan* and her *babaylan* brother, Amoray, from the impending battle with the Spaniards. She asks them to flee early that morning. Bulawan's silent resolve is based on her firm belief that should their tribe perish from the hands of the Spaniards, Isyu will be the one to strike back at the enemies when he grows up, not as a fierce soldier, but as a powerful *babaylan*.

Ang iya anak, hamtong na kag buranguson. Sa iya lawas nawagkus ang pula nga panapton. Sa iya wala nga kamot, may paraspas. Sa iya tuo nagakilan ang talibong. Sa iya dughan nagakabit ang ginapangulintas nga anting-anting. Amo ini ang laragway ni Isyu sa damgu sang iya iloy kagab-i.

(Her son is now a bearded grown man. He wears a red cloth band. His left hand is holding a paraspas. On his right hand is a shining long bolo. On his chest hangs his neclaced anting-anting (talisman). This is the picture of Isyu in his mother's dream the night before.)

In this story, Bulawan's and her people's yearning for freedom finds actualization in the suicidal burning of their whole tribe to resist Spanish domination. Bulawan anticipates materialization of her yearning for the fulfillment of her dream to strike back at the colonizers though her vision for her son. Bulawan's vision, can be viewed as the resurfacing of the "silenced" voice of the precolonial oralist, the *babaylan*

⁷ According to William Henry Scott (1994), Visayan men resorted to the use of a pin known as *tugbuk* worn through their penis for greater sexual stimulation of their partners and that virgins were deflowered by slaves who were not fitted with a *tugbuk* or *sakra* (24).

whose power, aside from being a spirit medium and healer, according to Jocano (1968), was to interpret dreams and omens relative to the general welfare of the community" (p. 44).

Mixed Voices

Based on Babha's concept of hybridity as what "is new, neither the one nor the other" (Leitch, 2001, p. 2377), the analysis of mixed voices in the stories is pursued by employing Bhabha's concepts of "in-between" and "ambivalence" in two selected short stories, "Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan" and "Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos." The concepts of "in-between" and "ambivalence" are better understood by first locating the main characters in their postcolonial contexts.

In "Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan," Milagros Paguntalan does not outrightly negate nor affirm Mal-am Edes prodding her to return to Igkasla and be a *babaylan*. She just responds with either a smile or a laughter. This is a form of ambivalence that still manifests even after she has decided to go back to Igkasla and be a *babaylan*. She is like the traditional *babaylan* by the unusual or supernatural power that she got from her surondon (calling) but not quite because she is also a Western-educated *babaylan* who would wash or sanitize her hands before handling her patient and pray to the Christian God amid the other women's calling of the name of the famous *babaylan*, Estrella Bangotbanwa:

Tumindog sya kag magkadto sa hulot sang masakiton. Nahahigda ini sa katre nga kawayan kag nagapulula sa iya pag-antos.

"Hugasan ko anay ang akon mga kamot," siling ni Dr. Milagros Paguntalan.

Inupdan sya ni mal-am Edes sa kusina kag ginhabonan niya sing maayo ang iya mga kamot. Hinatagan sya sang tualya sang tigulang.

...Nagkurog naman ang mga kamot kag nagtig-a ang iya mga tudlo. Nangurus sya. Makadali nga ginpiyong niya ang iya mga mata kag hugot nga ginmitlang ang ngalan sang Diyos sang mga Kristiyano. Nagmag-an ang iya lawas nga daw sa pakpak sya sang isa ka matahum nga damgo...

Kag samtang ginatawag kag ginadayaw sang mga babaye ang ngalan ni Estrella Bangotbanwa kasubong sang pag-amba sang Pasyon, nagayuhum sya nga nagdesisyon.

(She rose and went to the room of the sick. It lies on a bamboo bed and is reddened with pain.

"I'll wash my hands first," said Dr. Milagros Paguntalan.

Mal-am Edes accompanied her to the kitchen and there she soaped her hands very well. The old woman gave her a towel.)

(...Her hands trembled again and her fingers hardened. She made the sign of the Cross. She closed her eyes for a moment and earnestly called the name of the Christian God. She felt so light as though she is on the wings of a splendid dream...

And while the other women call and praise the name of Estrella Bangotbanwa, she smiled and decided.)

Hybridity is highly manifested in Milagros' first healing ritual in Igkasla where both the pre-colonial *babaylan* and the Christian *babaylan* blend and do not in any way show the predominance of one over the other.

In "Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos" Padre Olan is faced with the same obligation with that of a traditional *babaylan*, to pray for rain. His performance of the special mass and prayer to ask for rain echoes the traditional *babaylan* rain ritual but is not quite. His reluctance shows his ambivalence and is an indication of tension between Christianity and *babaylanism*. Yet, in response to people's needs, he has to perform the prayer-ritual. Ironically, in fear to act like a *babaylan*, his final gesture at the end of the story brings back the legendary *babaylan*, Estrella Bangotbanwa who can summon rain by letting her hair loose and looking up to the sky with outstretched arms.

Choral Voices

The analysis of choral voices is based on Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia which highlights the interplay between and among a language's social dialects, class dialects, professional jargons, languages of generations, and age groups, and passing fads. Heteroglossia thus refers to a mixture of various social speech types and diverse voices interacting with one another (Bakhtin in Leitch, 2001, p. 1204). The selected short stories show a blending or mixture not just of Kinaray-a, Filipino, and English in the Hiligaynon language both in the narration and dialog but also of various voices, the Bakhtinian heteroglot voices.

In "Turagsoy," Asenjo's mother tongue which

is Kinaray-a and her current language of daily communication which is Tagalog, inevitably manifest in the way she writes in Hiligaynon. Embedded in this story are Tagalog words like “*kalsada*” (Hil.-*karsada*, Eng. - road) and “*halakhak*” (hil. *harakhak*, Eng. - boisterous laughter), “*nilagnat*” (Hil. - *ginhilanat*, Eng. - had fever) and Kinaray-a words like “*kaaslug*” (Hil. - *kasulog*, Eng. - heavy flow) and “*gapatukad*” (Hil. - *nagataklad*, Eng. - moving uphill). The same is true with Jesus Insilada whose mother tongue is Kinaray-a which also manifests in his story, “*Panubok sa Pula nga Pulos*”: “*ayam*” (Hil. - *ido*, Eng. - dog), “*sangkapuna*” (Hil. - *isa ka puna*, Eng.- one patch of land). Another Kinaray-a-speaking writer, Norman Darap has similarly integrated some Kinaray-a words in his short stories. In “*Ulubrahon*,” for instance, some Kinaray-a words also surface: “*turulan-on*” (Hil. - *utanon/ulotanon*, Eng. - vegetables), “*girok*” (Hil. - *gilok*, Eng. - fine, prickly hairs), “*nagpamaribad*” (Hil. - *nagpamalibad*, Eng. - declined), and “*sirak*” (Hil. - *silak*, Eng. - sunshine).

The heteroglot authorial voice in the selected stories is highlighted with the integration of Kinaray-a in the Hiligaynon stories which poses a challenge to the authority of Hiligaynon as the lingua franca of Western Visayas. It is worth mentioning that Leoncio Deriada’s efforts in conducting creative writing workshops for Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, and Akeanon encouraged young Panayanon writers to write in their mother tongue (Teodoro, 2014, p. xxi). Yet, some Kinaray-a speaking writers write in Hiligaynon because it is the only Panayanon language that has a category in the Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature (Short Story in Hiligaynon). Yet, as may be true of the rest of the Hiligaynon writers who are native speakers of Kinaray-a and Akeanon, their mother tongue would manifest in their writings, and in effect, pose a challenge to the predominance of Hiligaynon. Yet, on the other hand, the integration of Filipino words cited above as well as the English and English-based words like “*abrod*” (abroad), *nutbok* (notebook), “*ahente*” (agent), “*text*,” cell phone is a form of reduction of these more predominant languages into mere particularities in the writer’s use of Hiligaynon.

In tagauma@manila, Hiligaynon is the means by which Julia, Teray, and the rest of their fellow promdis (from the province) have employed to survive in the national capital. In this story, it is their choral voice in the same language that has enabled them to locate themselves in the national capital - tagauma@manila. For instance, it was Teray’s Hiligaynon sounding text message in Tagalog which Julia has noticed just when she is about to delete it, thinking that it was

missent. The indicator in this message: “GUD PM. KAMUSTA? C TERAY NI JUL. NONG GAWA MO? T.B.” is the Hiligaynon word “*ni*.” It has caught Jul’s attention and soon she remembers that she might be the Teray from their barrio who used to teach her English songs like “Green, Green Grass of Home,” “Country Road,” and “Top of the World.” In this case, it is their mother tongue that has helped them locate each other in the metropolis. It is the same language of reunion with other Ilonggos that enables Jul to realize that the cans of biscuits that were distributed to the community are actually from the sweat of security guards, sales ladies, and household helps in Manila.

Equally interesting is Asenjo’s playful and parodic use of English in a novelty song: “En evri aftirnun, tri oklak/ Ay red ur liter/ Ahay... (In every afternoon, three o’ clock, I read your letter/ Ahay...). In effect, the integration of these four other languages are made necessary in illustrating how one element of heteroglossia can challenge the authority of the more dominant languages.

One speech type that prevails in the stories which is distinctly manifested in Genevieve Asenjo’s “Turagsoy” is the innovative mixture or compounding of words that create vivid imagery and freshness of style as can be seen in the following sentences:

*Bisan pa, waay sia magkalipat sa **pagtan-aw-padayaw** sa espiho bag-o buksan ang bintana...* (Nonetheless, she does not miss looking-admiring herself in the mirror before opening the window...)

*Hamak timo iya kuno nga **nagbangon-guwa** sa lungon kag mangayo sang pandesal kag kape sa mga naga-tong-its!* (According to them, can you imagine him rising-getting out of the coffin and asking for pandesal and coffee to those who are playing tong-its!)

*Ano pa abi kundi **naglinumpat-haguyon** sila paguwa sa balay.* (What else could they do except jump-get out of the house all together.)

*May mga **nagpauli-kadto** sa Manila, amo man sa abrod.* (There were those who arrive-leave from and to Manila, as well as abroad.)

*Hala, sige man nia **kanta-sulat** ang “En evri aftirnun, tri oklak...”*(Hala, she keeps on singing-writing the song, “In every afternoon three o’clock...)

*Waay ini ginsapak sang iya iloy sanglit mabilog-bilog na nga daan si Inday Lupog kon ngaa nga magpinsar sia sang kon ano nga demonyo nga dugay na wala **pagpanungkod-guwa** sa ila*

balay ang iya dalaga? (Her mother does not mind [the changes in her body] because Inday Lupog has a rounded body and why would she entertain such “demonic” thoughts when it has been a long time since her *dalaga* has used her cane and left their house?)

*Puno na ang isa ka magamay nga karton sang mga bayo nga iya **natabas-tahi** kag sang mga pinanghatag sang kasimaryo.* (The small cardboard box is now filled with baby clothes that she had cut and sewn as well as those which were given by their *kasimaryo* [lit. barriomates].)

Asenjo’s experimentation in the use of these compound words renders the Hiligaynon language more flexible than imposing.

In the same story, a mixture of narrative voices through community gossip develops the narrative. The third person narration constantly “shifts” from one village person to another. The revelation of specific details in the story does not emanate from one narrator alone but from what is gathered from the village people who have similarly gathered the same from others (gossip/ grapevine). The use of the Hiligaynon word “*kuno*” (roughly translated into English as “according to”) attests to the transmission of story from one person to another. For instance, instead of plainly narrating Ontoy Pakit’s rising from his coffin as an *amaranbig* and how the people responded to it, Asenjo utilizes the different accounts of the village people:

*“Hamak timo iya **kuno** nga nagbangon-guwa sa lungon kag mangayo sang pandesal kag kape sa mga naga-tong-its.”*

*(**According to them**, can you imagine him rising and getting out of his coffin and asking for pandesal and coffee to those who were playing *tong-its*!).*

*Hala, dayon **kuno** dalagan sang mga may celfone didto sa bakulod sa diin mabaskog ang signal. May mga nagsaka gani kuno sa lubi.*

*(Hala! **according to them**, those who had cell phones ran to the hill where there is a strong signal. There were others who even climbed on the coconut tree).*

*Basi gani **kuno** karon sa hapon, indi gani buas, ari naman ang GMA kag ABS-CBN.*

*(**According to some**, maybe this afternoon or tomorrow, those from GMA and ABS-CBN will come.)*

The use of *kuno* approximates what Anderson

would refer to as indirect speech but in the story, it is not just a way of congealing direct speech into an indirect one. Here, indirect speech is in the form of community gossip and thus suggests the power of voice as a conglomeration of many voices. The same is also evident in the next story by Peter Nery.

In Nery’s “Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos,” the story of the miracle of the Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria in Jaro is similarly told by Padre Olan’s priest friend in a manner that reveals a long tradition of communal transmission:

*Ginasugid nga milagroso nga nagadaku ang estatwa sa Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria. Gikan **kuno** sa isa ka tapak sang nasalapuan ini sang mga mangingisda sa suba sang Iloilo sadtong 1587, nagalab-ot na subong sa masobra duha kag tunga ka tapak ang kataason sang estatwa. Kag sumugod sang koronahan ini sang Santo Papa sadtong 1981, makatadlo na **kuno** ka beses nga ginpadakuan ang iya bulawan nga korona.*

It is told that the statue of Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria is growing. **According to some**, it was only one foot high when it was found in the Iloilo Riveer in 1587 but it has now grown into more than two feet and a half high. And **according to some**, since it was crowned by the Pope in 1981, its crown has been adjusted into a bigger size for the third time.

The power of communal voice is highlighted both in “Turagsoy” and “Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos.” In “Turagsoy,” the grapevine has always been the source of information for communal effort as when the whole barangay learned of Inday Lupog’s vomiting and attribute it to a “*malain nga ginhawa*” that may have maligned Ontoy Pakit. This caused the barangay tanod to keep a vigil to watch over Inday Lupog. Although there is grapevine among a group of young people that Inday Lupog is with child and such is the cause of her vomiting, it takes some time for the elders to finally realize how Inday Lupog was taken advantage by Boy Eks, the itinerant agent of *Pito-Pito* herbal medicine. The people beat him up the very moment that he returns to the village. That same day at noon, “*nangin panyaga sang mga tagpalamati sang Bombo Radyo ang pagbakol sang bilog nga baryo sang isa ka ulitawo nga ginapatihan may malain nga ginhawa*” (the listeners of Bombo Radyo had for lunch a news item about a whole barrio’s beating of a man who is believed to have “*malain nga ginhawa*”). In this instance, the people’s yearning for justice finds expression and materialization at their own hands. Their communal voice that is grounded on traditional beliefs has spared them from guilt of the crime.

Choral voice is portrayed in “Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos” wherein a myriad of people’s voices represented by Don Beato, the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Women’s League, and the convent cook Nang Paquit appeal to Padre Olan to spend the Feast of St. John as a special mass of prayer for rain. There has been a long drought and the people are worried about an impending famine should the rain does not come at once. As the story progresses, it is Don Beato who first talks to Padre Olan to hold a special mass and prayer for rain but the priest explains that it is beyond his power to change the liturgical calendar considering that it is also St. John the Baptist’s feast day. Next come the leaders of the Knights of Columbus but Padre Olan is steadfast in his position: “... *nagasimba kag nagapangamuyo kita agod maghatag sang pagdayaw sa Diyos, indi agod magdikta sang aton mga ginapangayo*” (we go to church and pray to praise God, not to dictate him what to grant us). Yet, Padre Olan’s heart is softened by the women leaders representing the three church organizations (Catholic Women’s League, Legion of Mary, and Apostolate of Prayer) that have always been his able partners in the dissemination of information and the implementation of church programs and activities.

Though he makes it clear that he is not a *babaylan* nor a *busalian* who can summon rain, he nevertheless assures them that on that same day he is going to see the archbishop in Iloilo City to consult him about their plea.

The archbishop’s voice as well as that of Fr. Fritz concur with that of Padre Olan’s parishioners, so the next Sunday is spent as a special mass and prayer for rain. It is more than a fiesta because even the night before the awaited day, many people from the neighboring towns and barangays come and hold camp near the church.

Daw fiesta sa palibot sang simbahan sang gab-i nga ato. Magin-ot gihapon kag mapaang ang panahon. Wala sang bisan isa ka huyop sang hangin sa nagadunglay kag luos nga mga dahon sang kahoy. Apang may pinasahi nga sahi sang kasadya ang mga tawo. Kasubong bala nga nabuhian sila sang paglaum..

(It is like a *fiesta* around the church that night. It is still hot and humid. There is not a single waft of air on the drooping and wilted leaves of trees. But there is a special kind of joy among the people. It is as though they have regained hope..)

The culmination of the people’s choral voice is heard on the day set for the prayer for rain. The priest’s singing in prayer blends with the people of

all ages and stations in life and the same union of voices prevails even after the prayer when the people gathered for some refreshment prepared by the Catholic Women’s League and Knights of Columbus:

...Mapagsik nga nagkanta ang mga tumuluo upod sa mga pamatan-on sang choir. Kag bisan si Don Beato nga indi relihiyoso, nag-upod sa pag-amba kag sa pagbantala sang pagtuo...Naglumaw-lumaw gid ang mata ni Padre Olan sang iya nakita nga ginbaton ni Don Beato ang tinanok nga saging nga gintanyag sang isa ka marismo nga tigulang. Ano nga milagro ang gindulot sang pinasahi nga adlaw sang pagpangamuyo agod mag-ulan sa tagipusuon sang mga tawo?

(...The congregation lively sang with the youth choir. And even the not religious Don Beato joined the singing and professing of faith...Padre Olan’s eyes welled with tears when he sees Don Beato receiving a piece of boiled banana from an untidy old person. What miracle was wrought by this special day of prayer for rain in the hearts of these people? As seen above, the power of choral voices consists of communal narrative and blending of varied voices that are directed towards communal goals like materializing a sense of justice (for Inday Lupog in “Turagsoy” and successfully summoning rain in “Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Various elements of orality (musical and rhythmic form, unsounded or non-verbal vocality, mixed voices, and choral voices) as well as oral traditions (folk and novelty songs and *loa* or *luwa* as well as other oral literary forms like the *binalaybay* (poem), *ulawhay* (love song) illustrate their relevance in contending with various forms of dominance.

In “Turagsoy,” songs and *luwa* are employed by Genevieve Asenjo as pastiche of the realities of backwardness and superstition, alienation, and marginalization in a rural community, as singing out loud of yearnings for equality (e.g. equal access to health programs of the government). The rhythmical and melodic *panubok* (embroidery), *binalaybay* (poem), and *ulawhay* (love song) in “Panubok sa Pula nga Pulos” are integrated into the story’s project of protest against a myriad of dominance and impositions contended by the protagonist, Denay Ayon (parents’ coercion to marry against one’s wishes, mining, quarrying, and construction of the dam which pose threats to the indigenous people’s ancestral domains).

Unsounded and non-verbal vocality are represented by moments of silence, contemplation, and absorption of power for Milagros Paguntalan of "Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan." Silence is Den-ay Ayon's weapon of resistance to detest and deride, to contain and gather enough power to get rid of Sergeant Tusi and fight for her love. Although physical voice is employed in her way of tricking Tusi, it is rather the resurfacing of the "silenced" or repressed precolonial promiscuity that truly undermined the Christian concept of virginity that liberated her from him. It is contemplation and a dreamlike-vision for her son which make Bulawan resolute in her decision to die with her people than to be under the power of the colonizers. Bulawan's vision is the resurfacing of the "silenced" voice of the precolonial oralist, the babaylan, whose primary powers include the interpretation of dreams and omens that pertain to the general welfare of the community.

Mixed Voices correspond to the "in between-ness" and "ambivalence" that prevail in the lead characters: Milagros Paguntalan of "Ang Pagbalik sang Babaylan" and Padre Olan of "Si Padre Olan kag ang Diyos." Milagros and Padre Olan both respond to the communal needs for healing in times of sickness and water in times of drought, the same roles that have been traditionally attributed to the *babaylans*. Yet, both have played their roles like the traditional babaylan but not quite. Being a respected anthropologist and a priest both Milagros and Padre Olan represent the powerful institutions of western education and Christianity in the postcolonial Philippine context. Thus, their voices are mixed with that of the traditional *babaylan* in the performance of their respective rituals in the service of their people. Their voices more than blend than negate each other. Milagros makes the sign of the cross and prays to the Christian God before doing her healing ritual and Padre Olan leads his people in praying to the Christian God to ask for rain.

Choral voices refer to the blending of Kinaray-a, Tagalog, and English into Hiligaynon constituting heteroglot voices that pose a challenge to the predominance of one language. They also refer to the various ways of employing the native tongue (Hiligaynon) among the *promdis* (tagauma@manila) or *kababayans* to locate themselves in the national capital. Choral voices also refer to the compounding of words that render the Hiligaynon language more flexible than imposing. Also, they correspond to communal voices, community gossip, and shifting narration that are directed towards communal goals like materializing a sense of justice for Inday Lupog in "Turagsoy" and successfully summoning rain in "Si

Padre Olan kag ang Diyos."

Based on the above discussion this paper affirms its argument that orality and oral traditions serve as expressions of power. The resurfacing of oral traditions in the analyzed contemporary Hiligaynon *sugilanon* or short story attests to what Mojares, Cruz-Lucero, Villareal, and Locsin-Nava assert about the rootedness of Philippine fiction to oral traditions as mentioned in the early part of this article. Also worth noting is the strong sense of interrelatedness of these oral traditions and elements of orality to the non-western concept of power. Based on western conception, power is obtained from various sources like wealth, social status, formal office, organization, and weapons. Yet, what prevails in the analyzed short stories is the non-Western concept of power usually expressed as the capacity to focus on inner power, concentrating on the self, and summoning from a distant past, the "gahum" of: the precolonial forms (*luwa, ulawhay, binalaybay, panubok*, folksongs); the inclusive nature of language (mixed and choral voices); and the icon of orality and power (*babaylan*), in contending with various forms of dominance. This can be read as the Hiligaynon writers' way of taking the challenge, of going back to their roots, their language of mythology, in contending with the bigger challenge of asserting themselves as the mouthpiece of their region's soul, and of keeping their identity and literary tradition while aiming for integration into the bigger picture of Philippine Literature.

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