LITERATURE ENGINEERING IN WEST VISAYAS

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Abstract
Language engineering involves the willful, studied—or even legislated—empowering of language to hasten its development. Literature, whose medium is language, can likewise be engineered. Certainly, an indicator of tremendous talent in the creation of contemporary literature and in nation building, the emergent writers of the region have sharpened their sense of locus just as they have succeeded in asserting their place in the nationhood of Philippine literature. Through generous funding and support, new writers have been developed and older writers invigorated. Thus, new writings have manifested themselves.

For years, West Visayan writing had been only in Hiligaynon, the lingua franca, and in Spanish and English. The last decade has seen the emergence of writing in Kinaray-a (centered in Antique), Aklanon (in Aklan), and in Visayan-based Filipino. This paper will deal only with poetry in these three languages. Writing in Visayan-laced (rather than Visayan-based) Filipino is probably the ultimate attempt of a West Visayan to make his work truly national. Visayan-laced Filipino is basically Tagalog in structure but incorporated in the text are Visayan words. This type of writing has been well published in national magazines and anthologies and has even won national awards. This paper concludes with readings of representative poems in Kinaray-a, Aklanon, and Filipino.

Keywords
language engineering, Philippine literature, regional writing, West Visayan poetry

About the Author
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OVERVIEW
A recent phenomenon in the development of Philippine literature is the emergence of new writing in West Visayas. This is threefold: written literature in Kinaray-a, Aklanon, and a brand of Filipino laced with Visayan words.
The Locus

West Visayas is politically labeled as Region 6. It is composed of the provinces of Iloilo, Antique, Capiz, and Aklan—all on the island of Panay; the new island province of Guimaras which used to be a sub-province of Iloilo; and Negros Occidental, the bigger western half of the island of Negros.

The lingua franca of the region is Hiligaynon which is spoken in Iloilo City, in the coastal towns from Iloilo City to the northeast, in all of Guimaras, in Bacolod City, and most of the towns and other cities of Negros Occidental. A variant of Hiligaynon is spoken in most of Roxas City in Capiz while the northern part of Negros Occidental speaks mostly in Cebuano. Hiligaynon is also spoken in most of South Cotabato where the majority of settlers come from West Visayas.

Unknown to many, there are more speakers of Kinaray-a than of Hiligaynon. Kinaray-a—in its many variants—is spoken in all of Antique, all the southern coastal towns of Iloilo from Oton to San Joaquin bordering Antique, all of Iloilo’s central towns, and all the towns and hinterlands of Capiz. A good number of people in Romblon, Cuyo Islands, and Palawan speak variants of Kinaray-a.

Aklanon—likewise in its various versions—is spoken in all the province of Aklan. Sadly, people in linguistics lump all these languages together as Hiligaynon. Worse, Kinaray-a and Aklanon are labeled as dialects as if they were not capable of expressing the best in the minds and hearts of their users.

The Mother Language

The mother language of West Visayas is Kinaray-a, also called Karay-a, Kaday-a, Hiraya, or Hiniraya. It must have been the language of the ten Bornean datus believed to be the ancestors of the West Visayans as recorded in the Maragtas and the Panay epics. These ten noblemen allegedly got the island of Aninipay (the ancient name of Panay) from the Ati chief Marikudo in exchange for a headgear of gold and a necklace that touched the ground.

Hiligaynon developed through the Chinese of Molo, Iloilo’s Chinatown. The development of this child language is an early example of how colonial mentality works and how economic and cultural power can shape the language of power. The natives spoke Kinaray-a but instead of forcing the Chinese who controlled business and commerce to master the language of the place, it was the natives who accommodated to the linguistic deficiencies of the foreigners. Thus the r in wara (none or zero), daraga (young woman), harigi (post), uring (charcoal), parigos (to take a bath), etc. became wala, dalaga, haligi, uling,
paligos, etc. Tubig (water) became tubi, which is really baby talk. The origin of Molo, the home of the famous pancit Molo, always makes the hearer smile when retold. When the Muslims from the Sulu Sea sailed upriver, the Chinese of old Parian shouted “Molo! Molo!” The name stuck the way Ilong-Ilong evolved from Irong-Irong. In time, the Spaniard’s own linguistic deficiency came up with Iloilo and the town of Ogtong became Oton, the way the big island up north became Luzon from the ethnic Lusong.

As Hiligaynon developed to be the language of the elite lorded over by the Chinese and Spanish mestizos, Kinaray-a lost fast its position and dignity as the mother language. It became associated with the soiled workingman of the farms and the highlands, of the vulgar and the uneducated, of the muchacha and the sakada. Instead, the corrupted child language became the correct, respectable lingua franca in Molo, Jaro, Mandurriao, La Paz and Villa Arevalo in Iloilo City and in Bacolod, Silay, Bago, La Carlotta, La Castellana, and most of Negros Occidental.

The Other Child Language

Meanwhile, in the northeastern corner of the Panay triangle, Aklanon also developed from Kinaray-a without the Chinese acculturation. The most peculiar aspect of the language of Boracay and the Ati-Atihan is its exotic l sound. The so-called normal l in Aklan, ulo (head), balay (house), dalaga (young woman), etc. is sounded with the tip of the tongue touching the upper teeth. The Aklanon l, however, is sounded with the tip of the tongue touching the lower teeth. Somewhat inadequately represented in its orthography, the Aklanon version is Akean, ueo, baey, daega, etc. On the other hand, there are words that have the normal l. The problem is only Aklanos know them. The Hiligaynon bala (the Tagalog and Cebuano ba) is baea, but bullet is bala, not bae. The province is Akean all right, but the provincial capital is Kalibo, not Kaeibo. There are towns like Balete, not Baeete, Malay not Maeay, and Malinao, not Maenao.

The folk explanation for this peculiarity is that Datu Bangkaya, the Bornean who appropriated for his territory the present province of Aklan, had a speech defect. He had a short tongue and he lisped. So that their chief would not feel abnormal in his speech, the followers of Datu Bangkaya imitated his mangling of the l sound.

The Hiligaynon Hegemony

Pre-Spanish West Visayan literature was in Kinaray-a, but when written literature was brought by the Spaniards, only Hiligaynon texts got to be printed. When at the close
of the 19th century Bicolano Mariano Perfecto established Imprenta La Panayana, the first printing press in the region, Hiligaynon hegemony was likewise established. Only works in Hiligaynon and in Spanish—and later in English—were considered worthy of publication. Another printing press, Rosendo Mejica’s Makinaugalingon, likewise championed Hiligaynon journalism and literature. *Hiligaynon* magazine of the Manila-based Liwayway Publishing became the canon of writers even if, after the Pacific War, Iloilo-based *Yuhum* and *Kasanag* enjoyed great popularity. Literary competitions, both written and oral, were in Hiligaynon. The *pagdayaw* (the speech or poem praising the fiesta queen) was in Hiligaynon even in Kinaray-a areas. The language of the Mass and other Church ceremonies, after Latin had been abandoned, was Hiligaynon all over the region.

It is ironic that the biggest names in Hiligaynon literature come from Kinaray-a areas: Delfin Gumban (Pavia), Flavio Zaragoza Cano (Cabatuan), Ramon L. Muzones (Calinog), Conrado J. Norada (Miag-ao), Augurio Paguntalan (Antique), Jose E. Yap (Dao, Capiz) and Santiago Alv. Mulato (Maasin). Among the writers of the first magnitude, only the following are native Hiligaynon speakers: Angel Magahum (Molo), Serapion Torre (Mandurriao), Magdalena Jalandoni (Jaro), and Miguela Montelibano (Negros Occidental).

**THE ENGINEERING**

The Cory Revolution of 1986 is a milestone in the literary history of West Visayas and the country. Three new writings have emerged in the region and pleasantly surprised literary and academic circles and especially the writers themselves. These are writings in Kinaray-a, Aklanon, and Visayan-influenced Filipino.

At this point, it is pertinent to shift the point of view of this paper. For this reader, as a cultural worker, has been there since the first day of the three-fold birth of the region’s new literature. He is, in fact, the engineer.

It all started with the new management of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and the establishment of the Presidential Commission for Culture and the Arts (PCCA) which later gave way to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

After ten years at Silliman University where I finished my doctoral studies in English and Literature with specialization in creative writing, I transferred to the University of the Philippines (UP) in the Visayas in Iloilo in 1985. In 1986, the Marcos dictatorship was toppled and the country saw the dawn of many changes.

I was named by the Cultural Center of the Philippines as literature coordinator for
West Visayas. The new management encouraged the establishment of local art councils, subsidized conferences, workshops, and publication and awarded writing grants and venue grants at the National Arts Center in Mt. Makiling.

The Resurrection of Kinaray-a

The first writing workshop I directed was at UP in the Visayas in 1987. It was subsidized by the CCP. Manuscripts in English and Hiligaynon were submitted. The following year, the Sumakwelan, the association of Hiligaynon writers, won a venue grant at the National Arts Center in Mt. Makiling with me as the director of the writing workshop there. It was in that workshop that Alicia Tan Gonzales, from Bacolod and a teacher at UP in the Visayas and now a major fictionist-poet-playwright in Hiligaynon, was discovered. Also with the group were two writers from Antique, Ma. Milagros C. Geremia and Alex C. de los Santos. Like any other Kinaray-a-speaking writer before them, the two never thought of writing in their home language. They both submitted mediocre English and Hiligaynon materials. Then during one of the discussions, I blurted out to the two: Why don’t you write in Kinaray-a?

And they did. After the Mt. Makiling workshops, the two swamped me with poems which were all written in Antique Kinaray-a. I found them very good, some in fact extremely good, making their efforts in English and Hiligaynon insignificant.

Geremia, from Sibalom, Antique, was a research assistant at UP Visayas’ Center for West Visayan Studies. De los Santos, a former fisheries student of UP Visayas, was a senior major in English at Saint Anthony’s College in San Jose, Antique. Soon the two formed Antique’s first ever writers’ group which they called Tabig.

De los Santos, who was editor of his college paper, asked me to hold Antique’s first creative writing workshop at Saint Anthony’s College. The participants, until that time, had never thought that their language could be used in a literary manner. In short, the tyranny of English and Hiligaynon—and Tagalog-based Filipino—was total in their conscious. I gave them a brief linguistic history of West Visayas, emphasizing the fact that Kinaray-a, their language, was the mother language and that Hiligaynon, was only the corrupted, bastard child. My politicizing would begin by my saying: “There is no such thing as a superior language. No one can give power and dignity to your language except you. Your language has dignity and power if you can do three things with it: sing your songs in it, compose your poems in it, pray in it. If you can do these in Kinaray-a, then your language is [at] the level of any language in the world.”

It worked. When the CCP published a special Ani issue for West Visayas which I
edited, a section was allotted to Kinaray-a poetry. Finally, in 1990, a Kinaray-a issue of *Ani*, which I edited again, was published by the CCP. Meanwhile, with more workshops both in Antique and Iloilo, the body of Kinaray-a writers became sizable. Aside from Geremia and De los Santos, other very competent ones came to the fore: John Iremil E. Teodoro, Jose Edison C. Tondares, Ma. Felicia Flores, Gerardo Antoy, Ma. Aurora Salvacion J. Autajay and Genevieve L. Asenjo. Geremia and De Los Santos even went on to win writing grants in Kinaray-a from the CCP. A few Hiligaynon writers also shifted to Kinaray-a like Raymundo Aujero Italia and Remegio B. Montaño.

Aklanon Liberation

Liberating itself likewise from literary oblivion was Aklanon. Just as the Antiquenos were forming Tabig, emerging Aklanon writers also formed the Aklanon Literary Circle in Kalibo. Spearheading this was Melchor F. Cichon, a librarian at UP Visayas. Ably assisting him was UP Visayas student John E. Barrios.

In my various workshops in Iloilo, Cichon had been there listening to the things I was telling Kinaray-a writers to challenge them. Cichon—and Barrios—took the challenge and soon the Aklan issue of *Ani*, which I edited with Cichon, et al., was published by the CCP and launched in Kalibo in early 1993. Cichon, who was by then writing in English and Tagalog-based Filipino, has turned out to be the leading poet in his language and has the distinction of being the first Aklanon ever to publish a book of poems in his own language. Eventually, Cichon and Barrios won writing grants in Aklanon from the CCP.

In fact, the writing workshops I had had in Kalibo were more thorough as high school writers were involved. Two poetry prodigies came from the Science Developmental High School of Aklan. They were Alexander C. de Juan and Am I. Roselo. Roselo went to UP Diliman for college and has since disappeared from the literary scene. De Juan, who, as a high school student, was published by *Philippine Graphic* (two poems in Filipino), is now a senior literature major at UP Visayas. He has just attended the National Literature Conference for Young Writers II in Tagbilaran City where he and Antique’s Genevieve L. Asenjo, who is also a literature senior at UP Visayas, were two of the better paper and poetry (their own) readers.

Right now, the more prominent Aklanon writers aside from Cichon, Barrios and De Juan, are Monalisa T. Tabernilla, Joeffrey L. Ricafuente, Topsie Ruanni F. Tupas, Arwena Tanlayo and Pett Candido. Veteran Aklanon writers in English Roman A. de la Cruz and Dominador I. Ilio, curiously, have branched out and written a few poems in Aklanon.
Visayan-Laced Filipino

More deliberate is my involvement in this radical, more calculated engineering of a brand of Filipino which I believe is the intention of the Philippine Constitution. The Constitutional mandate is clear. The national language is not Tagalog but the natural fusion of words and concepts from the different languages of the country as well as loan words from Spanish, English, Chinese, Arabic and other foreign languages. Let alone, this fusion will take centuries. The development of language can be hastened if there is planning and judicious implementation.

I have always been a nationalist. I believe that the country needs a national language and the sooner we junk English as the language of instruction in our school system, the better it is for our people. I resent, however, the manner Tagalog is being forced on us as the national language contrary to the Constitutional provision. I have always believed that the national language will be something like the lingua franca of Davao City where I grew up. It is a natural combination of words from different languages, mostly Tagalog and Visayan and a sprinkling of Iluko and other northern languages, Chabacano, and the ethnic languages of Mindanao.

At this point, I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not anti-Tagalog. What I oppose is its being made the national language at the expense of the other no less important Philippine languages. I respect Tagalog very much. I speak it and write in it professionally, even winning three CCP and two Palanca awards and in the process defeating many Manilans in their own game.

It was I who proposed to the Cultural Center of the Philippines to create a category for Tagalog in the writing grants. I found it extremely anomalous and high-handed for the CCP to have a grant in Iluko, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, English and Filipino but none in Tagalog. That meant Tagalog was Filipino—which was not true and in fact fraudulent. Some months later, the artistic director of the CCP convened a meeting of prominent writers, critics, scholars, linguists, and academicians. I was tasked to defend my proposal in a somewhat high-strung discussion. I was grateful I got support from Dr. Isagani R. Cruz of De la Salle University (who was not there) and Dr. Florentino Hornedo of the Ateneo de Manila University. The rest were loudly antagonistic or simply indifferent. Nevertheless, I got what I wanted.

And so, the CCP separated the Tagalog grant from the Filipino grant. The first winner of the writing grant in Filipino poetry, in Filipino that was not pure Tagalog, was John Iremil E. Teodoro of San Jose, Antique and a product of my workshops. Teodoro followed this with the first prize in the Gawad Amado Hernandez the very next year.
It was also I who proposed to kill off the CCP writing grant in English and who angered a good number of writers in English. My argument was: why spend people’s money, little as it was, to support writing in a foreign language? English had support from the universities and patrons like the Palancas and magazines like the *Free Press* and *Graphic*. Instead of helping writers in English, the CCP should support writing in the marginalized Philippine languages. I was ecstatic when the CCP opened the competition for the writing grant in Aklanon.

In 1990, I was named the coordinator of UP Visayas’ Sentro ng Wikang Filipino just as the university was preparing the transition period of its eventual shift to Filipino as its language of instruction. As UP Visayas includes UP Iloilo, UP Cebu and UP Tacloban, I found my new assignment perfect for making my idea of Filipino noticed further and farther than the Ilonggo belt.

I also happened to be the poetry editor of *Home Life*, a family magazine published by the Society of St. Paul and based in Makati. My experiment had been given more room.

In a few years, a group of writers has come up with a type of writing in Filipino that may look and sound *chabacano* but to me is the true national language of the future. And I am serious in making it more popular and acceptable because in itself it is respectable and can express the best in us.

Practitioners of my idea of Filipino aside from John Iremil E. Teodoro are his fellow Antiquenños Alex C. de los Santos, Ma. Milagros C. Geremia, Jose Edison C. Tondares and Genevieve L. Asenjo. From Aklan are Melchor F. Cichon, John E. Barrios and Alexander C. de Juan. From Iloilo, notable ones are Peter Solis Nery, Joenar D. Pueblo, John Carlo H. Tiampong, John Hingco, Joseph D. Espino, Vicente Handa and Mark Anthony Grejaldo.

*Home Life* poets outside West Visayas have taken the cue and the result is indeed interesting. Prize-winner and Baguio-based Jimmy M. Agpalo, Jr. incorporates lluko and Cordillera words into his text. Two-time prizewinner Noel P. Tuazon of Bohol incorporates Cebuano words. *Home Life* and Palanca winner German V. Gervacio, who is from Pasig but is now based in Iligan, does the same.

**THE LITERARY WORKS**

Let us now come to the documents to show the product of this literary engineering. This paper, however, limits itself to poetry.
Kinaray-a

Ang Baboy
Ni John Iremil E. Teodoro

Sugot takun nga mangin baboy
Kon ang tangkal ko mga butkun mo.
Basta damogan mo lang ako
Kang imo nga yuhum gak haruk
Aga, hapon.
Dali man lang ako patambukon.
Ang pangako mo man lang
Nga indi ako pagpabay-an
Amo ang bitamina nga akun
Ginatomar.
Kag kon gabii
Ang mga hapuhap mo man lang
Sa akun likod kag dughan
Ang makapahuraguk kanakun.

The Pig
Translation by Leoncio P. Deriada

I am willing to be a pig
Provided my pen is your arms.
As long as you feed me
With your smile and kiss
Morning, afternoon.
It is easy to make me fat.
Your promise
Not to abandon me
Is the vitamins
I take.
And during nighttime
It's your touch
On my back and breast
That can make me snore.
Sulat  
*Ni Alex C. de los Santos*

Nay,
Nabay-an ko ang imo sulat pagdawu
kang kartero
tuman gali ka bug-at bisan sampanid lamang
ang malauing nga tinta tama ka siri
seguro nagtagos sa papel
kag naghigku sa lamesa mo sa kusina
pero sa ubus kang papel
naglibad ang iban nga mga tinaga
daw mga isla kon turukon
gipangita ko kon diin ang Antique
Nay, indi ko run mabasa ang sulat mo
raku pa nga mga isla ang nagturuhaw
napunu run ang pahina
kon ano man ang sugid mo parte kay Tatay
kag akun mga libayun
kaluy-an sanda kang Dios
Nay, indi run ako pagsulati
Indi rin natun papaayawan ang kartero
Kinii ang paggamit kang tinta
Agud indi mamantsahan ang lamesa
mo sa kusina
Kag ang mga isla
indigo gusto nga makita ruman

nagapalangga,
ang imo anak.

Letter  
*Translation by Leoncio P. Deriada*

Mother,
I dropped your letter when the postman
handed it
it was very heavy even if it was only a
page
the charcoal-black ink was too
concentrated
maybe it seeped through the paper
and stained your kitchen table
but at the bottom of the paper
the other words changed color
like islands when beheld
I looked which part was Antique
Mother, I could not read your letter
anymore
many more islands appeared
the page was filled
whatever you said about Father
and my younger brothers and sisters
may God have pity on them
Mother, don’t write to me anymore
let us not overwork the postman
some more
save on ink
so that your kitchen table will not stain
and the islands
I don’t want to see them again.

lovingly,
your child.
**Lupa Kag Baybay sa Pinggan**

*Ni Ma. Milagros C. Geremia*

Maarado
mamanggas
mang-abono
manghilamon
mangani
malinas
mapahangin
manglay-ang
mapagaling
manahup
matig-ang
para gid lang
pinggan ni Nonoy
masudlan

piro kan-on pa lang d’ya
wara pa maabay gani
kon paano ang pagsaruk
kang baybay agud mahimu
ang asin nga darapli
kag sa pinggan ni Nonoy
liwan magkitaay
ang lupa kag baybay.

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**Earth and Sea in a Plate**

*Translation by the author*

To plow
sow the seeds
fertilize
weed
harvest
thresh
winnow
spread dry
mill
remove the chaff
cook the rice
all these
just to fill
Nonoy’s plate

But this is only rice
yet unmentioned
is how to scoop
the sea
to make
salt to go with the rice
and in Nonoy’s plate
again will meet
the earth and sea.
To Esmeralda,  
Child of My Dreams  
Translation by the author

Today my words  
Are flowers of squash opening  
Silently to the breast  
Of the morning light  
And in this moment when  
Dreams still curl  
In the tendrils of dawn  
I first saw you.  
So this is eternity  
To cradle you in my arms  
And watch you while you sleep.  
Listen, child, to the footsteps  
Of the carabao in my chest  
So when you grow up  
You may unravel the power  
Of our oneness with the earth.  
I give you only that.  
That and those lovely seeds  
Of light in your eyes—  
Sparkles of tears I hid  
And will keep on hiding.  
When I am old, you will remind me  
Of mornings when the grassblades  
Bend with shimmers carried  
From enchanted nights.  
Tonight, by your mother’s side  
I will dream again of the falling  
Of rain upon the earth broken.

Kay Esmeralda,  
Anak Kang Akun Mga Damgo  
Ni Jose Edison C. Tondares

Kadyang adlaw ang aktin nga tinaga  
Bukad kang karabasa nga nagabuskag  
Nga may kalinung sa dughan  
Kang pagpamanagbanag bang kaagahun  
Kag sa dyang panahon kon san-o  
Ang mga damgo nagabarikutot pa  
Sa kabud kang kasanagun  
Una ko ikaw nakit-an.  
Amo gali dya ang wara’t katapusan  
Ang iduyan ikaw sa akun mga butkon  
Kag bantayan ang imong pagturog.  
Pamati, anak, ang mga yabag  
Kang karbaw sa akun dughan  
Agudto sa imong paghamtung  
Imo malubad ang gahum  
Kang ginakaisahan ta sa lupa.  
Ria lang ang mapaambit ko kanimo.  
Ria kang maruyog nga liso  
Kang kasanag sa imong mga mata–  
Idlak kang akun mga luha nga ginhuput  
Kag padayon nga ihuptan.  
Sa akun pagmal-am, pahanumdumun mo ako  
Kang mga aga kon san-o ang mga hilamon  
Nagahiay sa pagpas-an kang inggat  
Kang mga engkatado nga gabi.  
Karon, sa ingod kang imong nanay  
Damguhon ko liwan ang pagturo  
Kang uran sa gimbungkag nga lupa.
Aklanon

**Ham-At Madueom Ro Gabii, Inay**  
*Ni Melchor F. Cichon*

Inay, ham-at madueomn ro gabii?  
May buean, Toto, ugaling may galipud nga gae-um.  
Inay, ham-at madueom ro gabii?  
May bombilya ro mga poste  
Ugaling may brown-out.  
Inay, ham-at madueom ro gabii?  
Ginsindihan ko ro atong kingke  
Ugaling ginapinaeong it hangin.  
Inay, ham-at madueom ro gabii?  
Toto, matueog ka eon lang  
Ag basi hin-aga temprano pa  
Magsilak ro adlaw.  
Indi, ’Nay, a!  
Sindihan ko’t oman ro atong kingke.

**Why is the Night Dark, Mother?**  
*Translation by the author*

Mother, why is the night dark?  
There’s a moon, Toto, but the Cloud is covering it.  
Mother, why is the night dark?  
The electric posts have electric bulbs,  
But there’s a brown-out.  
Mother, why is the night dark?  
I keep on lighting our kerosene lamp,  
But the wind keeps on blowing it out.  
Mother, why is the night dark?  
Toto, it’s better that you sleep.  
The sun might rise  
Early tomorrow.  
No, Mother!  
I will light again the kerosene lamp.

**Haead Kay Arsenia**  
*Ni Arwena Tamayo*

Gindaehan ta ikaw it mga bueak  
Nga may kasiga ku adlaw  
Ag kainit ku mga hiyom-hiyom  
Agud taw-an it kasadya  
Ro imong mga mata  
Nga nagakasubo.  
Mga violeta nga nagakiay-kiay  
Sa huyop ku hangin—  
Pageaum ku mga daenanon  
Nga owa maagyi...  
Ag mga rosas—singpuea ku dugo  
Pero madali maeay.  
A, sayud ko kon paalin  
Do mapisang it sanglibong parte  
Ag do magbatyag ku hapdi  
Ku mga napirdi

**An Offering to Arsenia**  
*Translation by Joeffrey L. Ricafuente*

I bring you flowers  
With the brilliance of the sun  
And the heat of a smile  
To give happiness  
To your eyes that grieve.  
Violets that bend  
At the blow of the wind—  
The hope of the paths  
That have never been trodden...  
And the roses—as red as blood  
But easily dying.  
Ah, I know how it is  
To be broken into a thousand pieces  
And to feel the pain  
Of the defeated...
When the Passenger Would Like to Pee and Cannot Hold It Anymore

Translation by the author

If the passenger going on a long trip feels like urinating and he cannot hold it anymore he has to wait until somebody gets off and asks the driver if he can pee. If the passenger is a male the driver allows it because the driver knows that he'll pee on the wheel.

If the passenger is a female the driver just ignores her because he knows that she cannot pee on the wheel.

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Filipino

Hihintayin Ko si Santa Claus

Ni Joenar D. Pueblo

Nakabugtaw ako noon na may regalo mula sa iyo, pero nagbagting na ang ala-una’y wala pa ring laman ang medyas na pinakabit ko sa bintana.

Kanina pa ako nagbabantay sa pintuan ng aming kusina (sa dapog ka raw nagdadaan sabi nila); kanina ko pa rin tinutulok si Nanay na nakahiga sa mesa, nakatulog na sa sobrang inom ng hinebra, pero nakikita ko ang nagmamalang lua sa kanyang mga mata.

Kung hindi lang sana naipit si Tatay ng makina ng kanilang paktorya sana tatlo kami ngayon ang naghuhululat sa iyong pagdating. Pero bakit kaya kadugay sa iyo magdating, Santa Klaus?
**Oyayi sa Tag-Ulan**  
*Ni Genevieve L. Asenio*

Kapag ganitong umuulan  
bububuhos ang kahidlaw  
sa aking dughan.  
Tag-ulan kasi nang umalis ka.  
Ngayon, kahit nag-iisa na lang ako  
patuloy ko pa ring inaararo  
ang taramnanan ng pagsulat.  
Kaniakailan nga lang naisab-og ko na  
ang binhi kong kataga.  
Aabunahan ko ito ng pagsanay,  
payayabungin sa tension  
ng mga unos at salot,  
Bubunutan ng mga ligaw  
a metapora at aanihan  
ang lamigas ng kalipay.  
Hindi ko ito iwanaan  
ulit-ulitin man nilang sasabihin  
nang wala ang karangyaan  
sa pagsaka, sa pagsulat.  
Nasisiguro kong hangga’t buhay  
at totoo ang mga binalaybay  
sa ating kaluluwa, habang may  
tagtaranom sa bawat tag-ulan  
uwi ka pa rin.

**Gayuma ng Dinagyang**  
*Ni John Carlo H. Tiampong*

Baywang ko’y umiindayog  
Ulo’y kumakaway, sumasabay  
Sa agos ng mga taong pintado.  
Hiiidi ko mapigilan  
Ang kumawala sa dalan  
Ang lumundag-lundag, ang lumangoy  
Sa alon ng mahlawagang tingog  
Ng mga dram.  
Habang napupuno ang hangin  
Ng dumadaguob na tugtog  
Umiiitim ang aking balat  
Buhok ko’y kumukulot  
Nag-aanyong gubat ang palibot.  
Sa aking paningin, ako’y sumasayaw  
Sumasabay sa anaw  
Ng mga taong nakabangkaw  
Sa aking paningin, ako’y nagwawala,  
Umiindayog sa harap  
Ng isang dambuhalang apoy  
At nakagapos na usa.
Protesta
_Ni John Iremil E. Teodoro_

Ay abaw, palangga,
Ang sinapupunan ko
Ay hindi isang CR
Na kung sumasakit
Ang tiyan mo’t puson
Ay tatae at ihi
Ka na lamang.

Ay abaw, palangga,
Ang mga palad ko
Ay hindi isang bangko
Na dinideposituhan mo
Ng iyong suweldo

Sa Iyong Kaarawan
_Ni Mark Anthony A. Grejaldio_

Hangin akong dumapya
Sa pagbati sa iyo.

Pero hindi mo man lang
Binatayag ang mahinay kong
Pagdupoypo.

Kaya ngayon, hindi mo
Mabasol kung ako ay isa nang
Bagyo.

NEW LOCALITIES, RICHER NATIONHOOD

The emergence of new writing in West Visayas—writing in Kinaray-a, writing in Aklanon and writing in a Visayan-influenced Filipino—has produced three new literary localities in the region. These three, combined with the more established writing in Hiligaynon and writing in English, make the literary geography of West Visayas an extremely visible landmark in the country’s mapping out of a richer, more diverse yet more defined nationhood.
As I have said in the Introduction of *Patubas*, an anthology of West Visayan poetry (1986-1994) which I edited and was published by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (1995), “At the end, the language becomes irrelevant: the craft has transcended mere locality to render universal what is human and worthy in the poets and their milieu” (xxi).

WORKS CITED