

BEDEVILING QUIJANO DE MANILA'S *DISCOURSES OF THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE* AND THE OPENNESS OF HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

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Abstract

Using a Marxist framework, this paper looks at Nick Joaquin's conduct of history writing and uses this analysis to comment on the general practice of writing on history. The paper first assesses the extent by which a strand of dialectical thought operates in *Discourses*. Second, typical assertions of history as "narrativized" discourse are put into test. The ideas of Linda Hutcheon and Edel Garcellano are utilized to bring in the larger sociality where textual discourses take place, thereby shunning the supposed primacy of texts and positing the dynamic ties between history writing and society. Third, the relationship between oral and written discourses and how these types of sources figured in the book are examined. Following this, the potentials of oral sources for alternative practices of history writing and interpretation—more dispersed, refusing the singularity of the "official"—are hailed. Toward the end, a call for reflexivity is reaffirmed. This is done to counter both the pretentiously grand claims of History and the flirtations with liberal tendencies of history writing that opens itself to multiple sources. What is espoused is history writing that is open precisely because of its awareness of its location in the complexity of the societal whole.

Keywords

dialectical materialism, history writing, linguistic turn, Marxism, reflexivity

About the Author

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In 1983, Quijano de Manila, pen name of National Artist Nick Joaquin came up with *Discourses of the Devil's Advocate*, a collection of writings on history. Likely unknown to many, the author of literary classics *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* and *Summer Solstice* also extensively wrote journalism and history essays. Arguably tied to this versatility are Quijano's views on the relationship among these genres. In "Corregidor—and After," he spoke in relation to Teodoro Agoncillo's "Fateful Years": "[it] will be read not as history but as journalism, which may be just as well, since the reader's enjoyment may lead him to realize that 'history,' that 'the past' has enduring pertinence and immediacy, and can be as absorbing as today's front page" (33).

Other propositions that refuse to postulate categories as mutually exclusive, seeing them as intertwined instead can be seen in the same essay: "The historian's task would therefore be to distinguish between illusion and reality. But this, too, is dangerous, illusion and reality being so wedded in this world that to tear away appearance may bruise the truth" (31). This recurring emphasis on connectedness is also discernible in the entire collection. Specifically, Quijano's use of the three Thomases in "Technology: The Philippine Revolution" is instructive in forming an understanding of the many relationships between history, its events, and its agents. It is the logic that informs these relationships and the way they are contextualized that merit interrogation next.

The first Thomas, St. Thomas Aquinas, "lived in an age that enjoyed a unity of faith and action" (183). As cued by Marshall McLuhan, Aquinas was a "pre-Gutenberg man, born before the printing press divided and subdivided knowledge into specialized fields" (183). In this period, the oral and the vocal reigned over the written: as Quijano remarked, "you did not get wise poring over manuscripts; you become wise through disputation... through dialogue" (184).

Quijano proceeds to the second Thomas, Thomas More, while also forwarding in historical time. With the invention of the printing press, More witnessed the decline of the vocal dialogue and the rise of the printed materials, the age of linear learning. During his times, "the unity of faith and action had collapsed." He also staunchly opposed "the divorce between what we now call the Two Cultures—the divorce between the world of the humanities and the world of the practical sciences" (184).

A linear logic marks the move from the first to the second Thomas—an advance in historical time. There is an equally marked digression however in invoking the third Thomas, Thomas Didymus. Didymus was brought up in reference not to the second but the first Thomas, not More but Aquinas. Quijano: "If Aquinas provides the answers, or the methods for reaching the answers, Doubting Thomas provides

the questions" (185). Disruption is at work not just in relation to the linear picture of history—from the pre-Gutenberg period to the invention of the printing press—but by the doubt which Didymus embodies. Yet this disruptive force is not without productive potential. In discussing Didymus, Quijano cites the value of "challenge-and-response" in the realization of truth.

At this point, I wish to bring in parts of Vincenz Serrano's conclusion in "Wedded in Association': Heteroglossic Form and Fragmentary Historiography in Nick Joaquin's *Almanac for Manileños*" (2012). He locates "non-linear emplotment in [the] historical writing" of Nick Joaquin and posits that "by privileging aesthetics of interruption, Joaquin's *Almanac* critiques developmentalist notions of linear historical writing" (91). Initially spurning that break in the linear/historical route as Quijano shifted the discussion to Didymus, I eventually saw the quite obvious merit of linking Aquinas who mostly has answers and Didymus who mostly has questions. This linking also prepares the eventual figuration of Thomas More as the unifier of the two: "O great St. Thomas More, unite in us, as you so boldly united in yourself, both Aquinas and Didymus, both faith and doubt, both the answer and the question" (200).

Does the arrival of Thomas More in this guise, bearing the possibility of unity, signify the resolution of all conflicts, the peaceful coexistence of two contradictory poles in one? By doing a close reading of the essays in *Discourses*, I will examine how the relationships between the historical events and their various actors are depicted in the rest of the "discourses" found in the book, ranging from the subsequent arrivals of Magellan and Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in the country, the Fall of Bataan, the "Liberation" from the Japanese, and press censorship among others. I will posit that in harmony with its times, the book, which was published in 1983, subscribes to a position that is already suspicious of metanarratives like History and designates the agency of historical actors instead of viewing them as mere recipients and witnesses of History's events and unfolding. Yet this positing of a more two-way relationship needs further interrogation. Put differently, this paper seeks to apply on *Discourses* what Didymus exhorted: "ask questions that, for some reason, have not been asked before" (185). Quijano claimed to play the role of the devil's advocate here; that is precisely the role I seek this paper to play in relation to this book. For this purpose, materialist dialectics and the concepts of contradiction and overdetermination in particular will be mobilized.

Focus will also be given on the potentials of tapping the oral aspects of history as a few instantiations can be found in *Discourses*. In hindsight, this portion can fill in the gaps left in the analogy of the three Thomases when it comes to the changing importance of the oral and printed aspects of knowledge and its formation. I would argue that, aside from being aligned with the aforementioned divesting of History's

status as metanarrative, paying attention to the oral dimensions of history and history-making can also reveal the dispersed characters and their diverse ways of acting upon and confronting history. This has special resonance to Philippine history where the interrelated processes of the invention of the printing press, industrialization, and colonization have put the former colony mostly in the losing end. Bringing in this larger context to situate there the promises of the oral as found in Quijano's *Discourses* is only a prelude to the paper's ultimate gambit: accentuating the need for reflexivity and underlining the sociality of all endeavors and entities, history writing and history writers included.

Going back to Serrano's essay, aside from the non-linear emplotment, there are three other ideas it located in *Almanac*: heteroglossia, correspondence, and fragmentary historiography. Notably, the last two notions were derived from Walter Benjamin, the same scholar who in "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" suggested viewing history no longer as a "one-way street" but as an "object of conquest" (16). Interesting how the one-way street was replaced not with a two-way one but with a reference to battle, to contestation. In a two-way road, the imagery of order, a kind of situation where give-and-take and knowing one's place will prevail; collisions will be exceptional. In the next section, I aim to show how this imagery of the two-way is manifested in many of the essays: history and journalism looking like each other, illusion and reality being indistinguishable, Humabon and Lapu-Lapu equally taking part in the history of the Philippines.

THE PRESENT IS THE PAST; THE ILLUSION IS REAL: HISTORY AS BATTLEGROUND

A dynamic outlook can be discerned in many pronouncements in *Discourses*. History is viewed as the site of varied and potentially clashing social phenomena and actors. This view underlines the agency of historical actors who also have a hand in the construction of history. It is precisely this agency which negates the notion of an "uncorrupted" or monolithic history.

In "Apologia Pro Tribu Sua," Quijano lambasts the nativist approach predicated on an "uncorrupted past." Belaboring an approach in understanding and practicing culture, theatrical practice in particular, Quijano promotes dynamism and adapting to changing conditions. This is in contrast to the nostalgic pining for the past, especially if one's view of the past is informed by the "Dorian gray illusion: the illusion that innocence can be frozen or that a personality can be kept from showing the effects on it of time, space, nature, society, the outside world" (3). Quijano hazarded that this past is preferred over what follows it because of the

slavery and colonization which marred the latter. In other words, the conditions of the former—precolonial, uncorrupted—are much better than the latter. At this, Quijano intervened to ascribe agency to historical actors: “But perhaps one should dare a question here.... what a society does with freedom? The Christian Filipino, while supposedly a slave, first under Spain and then under America, produced the epic of Balagtas, the novels of Rizal, the art of Luna and Amorsolo, the theatre of Aurelio Tolentino, the music of Abelardo, the poetry of Jose Garcia Villa” (5).

The same ascription can be observed in “What Price Our Writing in English” where he said that “[t]he difference between our prewar fiction and our postwar fiction is that, in the former, the English language is imposing its style on the Filipino writer and shaping him; while in our postwar fiction it is the Filipino writer who is imposing his style on the language and shaping it” (73). This is reminiscent of Gemino Abad’s well-known declaration that in her more mature phase, the Filipino writer did not write but rather wrought from English.

What these observations about our fiction writing, the practice of theater and art in general point to is the dialectical relationship between events and actors, between conditions and actions. Conditions—colonial, oppressive—enable the launching of actions which are not completely governed or determined by the former. Courses of actions, while emanating from certain conditions, can go or speak beyond it. Terry Eagleton’s remark on the issue of freedom is instructive: “Human freedom is not a question of being bereft of determinants but of making them one’s own, turning them into ground of one’s self-constitution” (*The Event of Literature* 140). In a similar yet qualified vein, Alvaro Vieira Pinto described limit-situations, corresponding to Eagleton’s determinants, not as “the frontier which separates being from nothingness, but the frontier which separates being from being more” (qtd. in Freire 89). Blending the two, one can speak of modes of self-constitution that take on its determinants to be more, to create better or more valued social situations.

And if we speak in general terms, can we not claim that this is the framework underlying Quijano de Manila’s “celebration” of the colonial encounter and its attendant disdain for those who espouse that “the true Filipinos are those tribes that did not allow their culture to be corrupted by the West” (2)? But we must be wary, as Quijano himself stated, he was not simply being “an apologist for English” (74), or put in the context of our pre-colonial past, an apologist for the colonial encounter. He was just suggesting the active ways by which Filipinos of the past confronted their respective conditions.

This prizing of connections and overlaps is also present in “Humabon and Lapu-Lapu: The Filipino as Twins” where he discussed the different manners by which

the two figures faced the advent of colonizers and more generally, how this colonial period has been/is being incorporated in our ongoing history. Quijano: "Show us that the patriot is in the Tribe as well as in the Nation; is in the yes as in the no; is in the rejecting as well as in the accepting; is in the union as well as in the scorning of union" (95). This last part—the union as well as in the scorning of the union—seems to have affinities with the idea of negation central to dialectical thought. The ensuing question however is this: to what kind of dialectics is this negation closer? First, there is Hegelian dialectics which speaks of self-causing and self-perfection. Then there is the Marxist brand which can also be tagged as dialectical materialism. Part six of *For Marx* is principally devoted to distinguishing the two. Althusser argued that the dialectic of Hegel is "completely dependent on the radical presupposition of a simple original unity which develops within itself by virtue of its negativity" (197). On the contrary, Marxist dialectics mentions the "ever-pre-giveness of a structured, complex unity" (199) in the place of the "original simple unity," Hegel's "root origin" (198). The two can be further differentiated by looking at the role of negation or contradiction in the formation and orientation of the systems. Whereas contradiction works in the Hegelian dialectic only to prod the restoration of the unity of the Idea, contradiction in dialectical materialism is qualified as reflecting in itself "its conditions of existence... its situation in the structure in dominance of the complex whole" (217). This reflection, while marking the uneven and overdetermined characteristics of the material and social conditions of existence, is also marked by "unevenness" and "overdetermination" (217). Ultimately, this is only a symptom of the diversity and complexity of social actions, social relations and their history.

Following this, one can more strongly make sense of Humabon and Lapu-Lapu and their respective acts in determinate conditions if one locates them in the complex workings of society, where history is part. With these in mind, we can look more closely at the differences in Humabon and Lapu-Lapu's reactions to the Spanish colonizers: "Lapu-Lapu is important as the first in a long line of heroes to resist the culture of the West; and our colonial history must be read as one long resistance movement.... Our resistance to Western culture is part of our history, of course, but only one part. The other half is our acceptance of that culture, the way we adapted it to our own uses, the way we modified it and were modified by it" (Quijano 88). Here, we have echoes of the two-way relationship again, reminiscent of the Eagleton reference above. These differing reactions took place more or less simultaneously and instead of hailing one as the better reaction to the advent of colonizers, Quijano just noted these occurrences and tell us how both of these reactions contributed in spelling the turn-of-events.

And yet despite this commendation, one can still note the lack of probing of the more nuanced interplay of these different reactions and how they come to transform

the set of conditions they confronted. Sweeping assertions entail interrogation: "And therefore our true history is this double activity of Lapu-Lapu and Humabon, not the activity of Lapu-Lapu alone, since ours is not purely a history of resistance, nor the activity of Humabon alone, since ours is not purely a history of acceptance either, but the joint effort of Lapu-Lapu and Humabon" (Quijano 94). Joint effort? Did they not quarrel with, complement or challenge each other? Did they impact the social conditions equally? This nitpicking was lacking in Quijano: the dialectical seems to have ended in the positing of the two when it is more complex than that.

It does not suffice to claim in sweeping terms that the Filipinos did not passively accept but instead actively engaged the new conditions brought about by colonization or that they responded to or engaged these new conditions in different manners. How these different elements—acceptance of, negotiation with, resistance to the colonizers—relate with one another must be seen in more nuanced terms so that what is illumined is not just their contradictions with one another but their contradictions within themselves. Elaborations of the notion of contradiction after Marx also painstakingly avoid framing their discussions in a dualistic way. Althusser spoke of "a vast accumulation of contradictions" being "radically heterogeneous—of different origins, different sense, different levels and points of application" (100) while Mao identified in his *Four Philosophical Essays* the five various planes of contradictions. Situating their discussion in different yet interlinked spheres—from the more abstract-philosophical to the more concrete historical—the idea of contradiction ceases to suggest a battle between two solid and internally stable entities.

Following this, the framework I discern in *Discourses* can welcome greater complexity. Historical conditions and the individual or collective reactions to and actions upon them must also be seen in terms of their fractures. Recall the aforementioned cultural works of Balagtas, Villa, and Amorsolo among others. The nuances and differences among these cultural productions—Villa's poetry, Luna's paintings, Amorsolo's sculptures—also deserve scrutiny, if only to verify the uneven ways by which they interacted with their historical conditions. Focusing on one figure will not be less productive for definitely, one can detect variations in the ways the early poetry of Villa for instance interact with its social conditions compared to his later poetry.

Internal nuances, incoherence, or unevenness are all present in what can be called historical conditions. Zizek's understanding of Lukacs's view on historical relations is significant: "The crux of Lukacs's argumentation is to reject the reduction of the act to its 'historical circumstances': there are no neutral 'objective conditions,' or, in Hegelese, all presuppositions are already minimally posited" ("Afterword"). The first part of the statement squares with what I have been detailing above: the

actions of individuals have the capacity to go beyond the circumstances where they originate and so in a way enabled them; these actions can point out, if not construct new circumstances. Meanwhile, what is belied in the second part is the notion of seemingly solid or monolithic “objective conditions.” Tempted to tinker with Zizek’s “there are no neutral ‘objective conditions,’” I posit that there are no *objective* objective conditions. The redundancy aims to fulfill not awkward overemphasis but nullification. Historical circumstances are neither objective nor internally solid. They are always imbued with, challenged, and changed by human perception and actions. In other words, it is precisely because they touch and are touched by human agents that historical circumstances advance and change, crumble and become holed. I argue that the positing of these agonizing and exciting complexities is barely at work in the underlying framework of *Discourses*.

I have these in mind as I reconsider Quijano’s analogy of the three Thomases and what I perceived at first to be a curious move when he stopped at the mention of “collapse” and “divorce” in discussing Thomas More and the period he represents. The collapse of “the unity of faith and action” and “the divorce between the world of the humanities and the world of the practical sciences” (184) engendered by the Gutenberg press and the rise of print technology coincide with Quijano’s jump in the analogy which effectively prevented a deeper understanding of the causes and impacts of the former. As abovementioned, he went on talking about Didymus not in relation to More but to Aquinas, the first not the second Thomas. Initially, I dismissed this digression from mere chronology and the implicit refusal to expound on the relationship between the first and the second. It is only much later that I saw the move as going against a linear view of history to pave way for an elucidation of a general way to approach it—Didymus’s doubts complements Aquinas’s solid responses.

The next two sections will focus on the relationship between the oral and print dimensions and the potentials of the former in adjusting the way one looks at and understands history. Apart from a reappraisal of one’s view of history, the two sections also aim to make explicit the role of the viewer, her position, interests, and orientations towards the history she is sizing up and grasping. Again, the advance and mutation of history is not just a product of events unfolding and clashing but also of actors and groups maintaining different viewpoints and interests.

A PROLOGUE ON THE ORAL

There are intriguing propositions regarding the roles and values of tapping into the oral and written aspects of history. On the one hand, there is Linda

Hutcheon's statement about "history writing as narrativization" and "the archive as the textualized remains of history" (8). Elsewhere in the same essay, Hutcheon mentions Dominick LaCapra "who argue that 'the past arrives in the form of texts and textualized remainders – memories, reports, published writings, archives, monuments and so forth'" (11). Meanwhile, Tanner's assertion that "there is no writable 'truth' about history and experience, only a series of versions" (10) suggests the multiple ways by which we account history. This is in keeping with the post-structuralist framework that informs the alternative historiography Hutcheon proposes.

In Hutcheon's, LaCapra's and Tanner's phrasing above, one can argue for the privilege given to the written—the archive, the texts and... the versions? The word "versions" makes a slight room for the oral, the spoken. We speak of versions in relation to stories (histories too, signifying the link between the two) and stories can be written as well as spoken. We arrive at the gap that Quijano left us with. Before I fully dwell on this, a prologue on the texture of some of the versions told—and the manner of this particular version-teller—in *Discourses* is needed.

In the book, Quijano appears to be acting like the purveyor of data which are then used to back up and build his interpretations. In essays like "What Really Happened in Bataan," "Corregidor and After," and "They Called it 'Liberation,'" he seems to be fashioning himself as an insider, someone who is privy to what "really" happened in these events. This could be connected to what he said about the intertwinement between history and journalism; in these essays, the style is mostly journalistic. The copiousness of details is a key index of the journalistic trait. But the sources of these details one must probe.

The essays teem with date-specific and supposedly first-hand accounts but it is only in "Corregidor and After" and "They Called it 'Liberation'" that sources for some or most of the information were explicitly named: Teodoro Agoncillo's "The Fateful Years" and "a Baguio resident's book-length account, still unpublished, of his war ordeal" (53) respectively. More than an academic nitpicking (as in, Where's your citation; worse, the sources are not properly cited!), asking to clarify the sources of the information has both a literal and a more symbolic value: the readers must have an idea where the sources came from and what do these selections tell about the writer's own process and position.

In "What Really Happened in Bataan," an alternative is offered right at the onset: "Bataan may be said to have fallen, not on April 9, 1942, but on December 8, 1941," when the back-up expected from America, "a convoy and three troopships already bound for Manila bearing arms and planes (were) ordered to turn back" (11). That started the essay's lively and almost blow-by-blow narration of the grim and

despondent turn of events culminating in the surrender and the Fall of Bataan. In its narration, Roosevelt's hand in redirecting the back-up troops originally intended for the Philippines to Britain, how Manuel Quezon and Douglas McArthur kept on nagging Roosevelt about the (non-existent) back-up they were expecting, and intimate conversations among those responsible on the ground—a certain Major Gen. Edward King whose men could have helped the USAFFE troops annihilated by the Japs somewhere in Mount Samat and the ensuing deliberation as to whether King should send out his men or not—were presented. The essay proceeded to tell how King eventually decided to disobey Wainwright and Roosevelt by not attacking: “his punishment might be a court-martial but he would not immolate the USAFFE's 76,000 remaining soldiers” (25). Then a further twist, one that is presented again as if by an insider, a message from Roosevelt to Wainwright:

I am modifying my orders to you. My purpose is to leave to your best judgment any decision affecting the future of the Bataan garrison. I feel it proper and necessary that you should be assured of complete freedom of action and of my full confidence in the wisdom of whatever decision you may be forced to make. (25)

How it bitterly looked to Quijano at the time of his writing and to us at present: “Roosevelt thus revoked his order of no surrender on the very day of surrender, when there was no more need to revoke it” (25).

The outcome of this “intimate” portrait of that historical juncture can be said to depart from the impersonal if not totalizing accounts of history. The same applies to “Corregidor and After” and “They Called it ‘Liberation,’” where there is a dominance of a singular source—both are written, although one is unpublished.

One can read this concentration on a singular source instead of covering and bringing in as much documents and references as possible as tied to the alternative practice of history writing. Depth is privileged over surface; an intimate portrait over a broad sketch.

What are the implications then of this alternative practice to the construction of historical truths? What happens when personal, intimate truths rather than monumental ones occupy the foreground? One must still be wary and aware of the limits and repercussions of relying on few, if not a singular source in writing about history. The tendency to flirt with the autocracy of the One must be guarded against, as venues for historical interpretation might be limited only to written sources, sources from the archives.

This brings us to the potentials of other types of sources—notably oral ones. Are they discarded because of their being ephemeral, if not unreliable? Must they not

be welcomed precisely because of that characteristic and the possibility of infusing a sense of immediacy and groundedness to historical writing? Whereas written sources are culled from archival research, oral ones are obtained elsewhere, mainly by interactions with common people, planned or unplanned; obtained through more diurnal encounters. The next section will look at this potential and assess the extent of its presence in Quijano's *Discourses*.

THE ROLE OF THE ORAL IN RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY

To begin, a point that needs to be recast, lest we fall into the trap of limiting bifurcations: it is not only oral sources that can proffer a sense of immediacy, a sense of groundedness to historical writing. A very good proof of this is *Discourses* itself. Written sources used in some of the essays contributed in painting historical events less with a panoramic view than with quasi-close-ups.

In the thick of the many enumerations in "What Really Happened in Bataan?" there was a lone reference to a Tribune headline – a literal journalistic insertion to this piece on history: "Headline the Tribune: 'Positive Aid to P.I. Pledged by Roosevelt'" (17). Again, the "freshness" of this headline rubs itself off the historical piece. In "The Press Discovers the Cinema," the Free Press was quoted to support the essay's criticism of the way the press has been supportive of film censorship: "To unloose the forces of repression on any medium of expression is to unloose those old forces in the long run on all the other media of expression, and ultimately on freedom of expression itself" (84).

But not all written sources function like this. Others seem to be in the mold of academic practice. In "A Theory on the Sinulog," Joseph Campbell's *The Masks of God* and unidentified writings of Pigafetta were cited. Here, the presentation of the written sources is made in a somewhat objective or distanced manner, made merely to buttress the claims that scholar is making. ("In his *The Masks of God*, Joseph Campbell explains the use of violence in these rites" and "That such practices were also part of our culture is attested to by Pigafetta, who observed that our forefathers had their penises pierced from one side to the other" [145]).

What image of the scholar-historian do we see here? What I see is the typecast researcher/scholar, the historian-as-archivist, pouring over scholarly treatises while developing her own work. In "The Humility of the Archives," Lisandro Claudio cites Mojares to remind us "that the word 'archive' derives from the same word as 'archon' – the ruler who watched over Greek city states. Archives watch over our political and cultural life reminding us of past lessons." In its reference to written materials

such as those of Campbell and Pigafetta, Quijano assumes the role of the dutiful archivist, and in clumsy metonymy, can be likened to the archive, composed of “dusty paper” (Claudio) which are not exactly inaccessible but not part and parcel of people’s daily affairs either. Watching over social situations they are writing about, archivists are not only literally atop but figuratively less engaged. The relationship of the scholar-historian to these archival sources is mostly impersonal; affinities are based and forged mainly on the usefulness of their claims. Moreover, archival sources have practical limitations. “They Call it ‘Liberation,’” cites the unpublished manuscript’s exposition of how its author Francisco J “saw the next squadron of American bombers unload their cargo of destruction on the section from the market to city hall”. This resulted to “the city hall records—of births, deaths, marriages, real estate, etc.” to be “destroyed beyond repair” (55). When the atrocities have subsided and efforts to reorganize were placed, the destroyed documents made it hard to catalogue various information about the city’s population. Written materials are more enduring in that their initial states and contents are easily preserved. Yet they are also ironically more prone to unforeseen and accidental destruction which renders them irrecoverable and thus useless. On the other hand, while oral sources are more easily modified or manipulated, it can be done or interpreted in creative or critical ways.

Compare how Quijano presented one oral reference in “The Santo Nino in Philippine History” to the Campbell and Pigafetta references:

We Manileños are brought up on a nursery jingle that goes like this: *Santo Nino sa Pandacan/Puto seco sa tindahan/Kung ayaw mong magpautang/Uubusin ka ng langam!*
(119)

Here, the use of the first person pronoun explicitly identifies one’s self, and tells something about his location and names a particular personal experience which relates to what is being tackled. The presence of the oral reference—the nursery jingle—provides a welcome digression from the “formal” (albeit intimate and not sweeping in that focus was given on specific sources) tone of much of the writing. The digression is fulfilled on account of two points. First, the nursery jingle as genre has this air of being grounded, of being part of people’s daily affairs. Quijano’s identification of himself as a Manileño which is prefaced in the plural (“We Manileños”) suggests the collectivity of the experience. The second point is related to this: There is digression because Quijano referred to himself no longer as the scholar-historian but as a participant in the very nursery jingle he was referencing. The historian not just dwells on libraries and investigates archives; the scholar-historian-writer experiences the world, participates in the very society whose history he is writing about.

Another notable semblance of the oral can be found in “They Called it ‘Liberation’”—rumors (albeit a lone case): “From the guerilla grapevine flashed the warning that the second raid would take place between nine and ten in the morning of January 8” (54). Rumors also very well represent the quality of the oral as fleshier, more grounded and more diurnal. With rumors, one can affirm more solidly that the oral points towards dispersion; the oral leads to the recognition of multiple and diverse sources, and thus reinforces the kind of historical construction that is not monopolized by institutional voices that often also correspond to voices of power.

Again, the way Quijano phrased it in his essay smacks of the image of the collective: the guerilla grapevine. The source is less an individual author(ity) but a group of people operating via a network. In addition, this collective working is situated in the thick of the very historical episode being talked about: the guerilla grapevine in the context of the bloody and effortful elimination of the Japanese colonizers.

The resulting image of historical events is one that is lived, peopled by multiple concrete and humanized actors; not the typical image of “titanic” events being played out by key personalities. History is an arena for all, a continuing arena where everyone is part—from its day-to-day living and interpretation to its ongoing reconstruction.

One can see how alternative imaginings and practices of history are associated with oral sources. Through the employment of these sources, history is shown to be emanating from dispersed voices; it betokens the participation of the common people in unfolding and making history. This is also tied to the site of history: correlated to the act of giving-voices to the common people is the act of locating history in (their) daily affairs and loci. Both alternatives deviate from the tendencies of dominant practice of history: one that privileges “official’ accounts”, often with a deluded and politically motivated aspiration to objectivity and accuracy, a delusion that is usually accompanied by one’s blindness or reticence about one’s position in the act of writing and accounting.

The potential of rumors is also tackled in Vicente Rafael’s “Anticipating Nationhood: Identification, Collaboration and Rumor in Filipino Responses to Japan.” Here, Rafael said that “[r]umors point to the possible unfolding of history and circulation of power elsewhere, at a tangent to the present trajectory of events” (117). Later on, he spoke of rumors being “ineluctably public,” having divorc[ed] understanding from ownership.” What is notable for the ongoing discussion is the insistent presence of the notion of tangentiality, (elsewhere he will describe rumors as “assum[ing] a public space of discourse tangential to the ideological mandate of the New Regime” (121) and the denial of ownership associated with rumors. In lieu

of being attributed to individuals, one can say that rumors are gathered from and enlivened by networks of people and the lives and ways of communities. Rumors cannot also be simply dismissed as “false,” as contrary to the verified “facts”; Rafael’s use of the term “tangentiality” refuses this black-and-white valuation. Mar Simon Anthony Dela Cruz also notes this productive ambivalence in describing “tsismis”: “bali-balitang walang sapat na katibayan ngunit hindi masasabing lubos na walang katotohanan” (13). The lack of verifiability cannot be automatically equated to the lack of veracity. This casts doubt on the idea that the truth consists solely of verifiable or absolutely objective facts. Truth pertains less to factuality that can be perfectly achieved using a strict, if not singular method than a value-laden idea that is continually being constructed and contested. Drawing from Dela Cruz’s use of the word “katibayan” can underline linguistic nuances and useful ambivalences. On the one hand, “katibayan” touches on the idea of verifiability; an analysis mainly based on the Filipino language however will point to other notions like “strength” or “duration” which are conveyed in the root word “tibay.” Other values associated with “truth” aside from verifiability (of facts) are thus introduced.

Once used as source in describing historical events, rumors and oral materials in general call for the adoption of a different attitude towards history. It becomes less a matter of “what really happened,” with its connotation of singularity and verifiability but, borrowing from Tanner, “a series of versions” (10) likely competing to be the strongest version. One is thus forced to be more critical and evaluative as if left in limbo, in the thin line between what is verifiable and the “hindi lubos na... walang katotohanan.”

But to recapitulate, these are versions whose relationship with one another are neither governed by nor exist only in the linguistic level, the level of signification. These “versions” have social and historical stemming and thus mobilized and are mobilized by the complexities of society and history.

HISTORY AS TEXT AND THE FLESHLINESS OF SOCIETY

At this point, I wish to go back to emphasizing the historical lens in talking about history writing, an opening of a more reflexive discussion, if not a meta-discussion.

What Quijano is doing in *Discourses*—writing about history—presents itself as a curious case. How can one make sense of this act in the larger scheme provided by historical events played in the societal whole? If one is writing about history then, one should interrogate and pay attention to how the writer and the constructed

text see or position themselves in relation to history at large. As an added layer, I am now treating it as yet another textualized rendition of the past, or more aptly, a work that is already part of the archives, an attempt in the past to narrativize the past. And yet I am saying that not to ascribe to this work a certain quality of deadness, of barrenness or passivity. Doing that will only give credence to what can be claimed as the writer's task to "enliven" the (dead) texts by reinterpreting them. The texts are still alive; their composition and the frames they provided are still intact. Their being active lies in their powers to determine the forms that present-day writers can engage.

But the determined forms that are provided by the texts being analyzed are not alone in framing and informing the analysis. This is precisely because what Quijano said about our culture is also applicable to our history, and to history in general: history is ever-alive, ever-changing, ever-practiced, ever-constructed so it entails ever-continuing interpretation and analysis. One can analyze the texts with reference to current events as well. In "Apologia Pro Tribu Sua," he wrote the following:

A columnist recently remarked that the Filipinos of yesteryear hardly looked like Filipinos to him. Correct! And the Filipinos of the 19th century probably felt the same way about the Filipinos of the 18th century. And the Filipinos of the 21st century may feel the same way about us. (6)

Hence, on the one hand, there is the notion of continuity but there is also change, a mutation, a development. This does not breach logic; instead, it only affirms the working of dialectics: History is one long continuum marked by changes, eruption, ruptures. As a literary breath, Connolly reminds us in *Saints and Scholars*, Terry Eagleton's lone novel, "If total break is an illusion, so is pure continuity" (113).

How are the events told in *Discourses* relate to the present? Some are more obvious than the others. Its discussion of Claro Recto's nationalism in "Man Alive" can still strike us as relevant today. Quijano spoke of Recto campaigning for "national industrialization" (136) and does this not remain as a persistent call by some collectives in our society? "A Theory on the Sinulog" and the other "certain orgiastic stomping dances that are a familiar feature of Philippine folk religion" (141) will always be pertinent as long as these rituals are being practiced. The issues in "What Price Our Writing in English," "The Press Discovers Cinema," and "Censorship: The Unkindest Cut" also tackle practices that are still done today, albeit differently and in obviously different circumstances.

In speaking of continuity and at the same time of changes, we need not betray ourselves and resort to the convenience of generalities. One must dissect the

different ways by which both continuity and change occur and are upheld. Here, I would like to show how unevenness operates in relation to the links between the history of oral and written technologies and their effects on the changing valuations on history's oral and written aspects.

I will take off from the last section's discussions on the potentials of the more oral components—nursery jingles, rumors—in allowing a more plural, varied and actively contested view and practice of history. In particular, this resonates in how approaches to Philippine history can be reconfigured. While the post-structural influence in much of the Western academia has caused the resuscitation and reinvigoration of scholarly and critical attention to the textual—from Derrida's critique of logocentrism, the postmodern debunking of language's mimetic functions and related to it, literary works that reflexively call attention to their formal/linguistic constructedness to name just a few—the opposite case is arguably more called-for and productive in the Philippine context. The rich oral tradition of precolonial Philippines attests to the overlaps and complicity between colonization and the introduction of print. This is not to say though that colonial interests and print have always worked perfectly side by side, without exceptions and lapses. That departs from dialectical thinking. Familiar is how Bonifacio and other resisters like Rizal utilized the newly introduced print technology to suit their goals. In postcolonial Philippines, when social institutions such as the academy have found less repressive conditions, accommodating and exploring alternative ways of doing things are enabled. As I hoped to show above, history writing can benefit more by embracing the possibilities residing in its oral components.

This will not just contribute to altering the mode of the game, a rupture that will break the dominance of history's archival mode. Welcoming the alternatives posed by the oral can also foster connections as this new method or framework can lead one to find links that otherwise would be left unnoticed if one solely relies on the archives. Looking into the oral can help one to locate affinities between nursery jingles in Manila and the Sto. Niño or between an oncoming raid and the enemy's strength. Generally, it can make writings about history and the writers themselves more grounded, more connected to the fleshly and the immediate, aware of their actual positions, if not literally positioned in the things and personalities they are writing about. This brings me to the importance of reflexivity—being conscious of, let alone being explicit on where one is coming from, where one is located as the process takes place. This applies both to the writer and her texts and the interpreters of these texts.

Acknowledging the significance of reflexivity and consciously elucidating one's position in the projects being launched helps in bucking the effects—discursive, ideological—of the prison house of language. One of the many tendencies brought

along by the post-structural critiques of modernity is the positing of this prison-house, akin to linguistic determinism. Reflexivity counters such tendency in at least two ways. The first one occurs primarily in the textual act. One can be reflexive of one's textual endeavour, commenting on this very act while enacting it. This move has ideological significance in that it represents the process of writing as an invested and active process. It squares with the reshaping and the "loss of the illusion of transparency" which Hutcheon spoke of: "Narrativized history, like fiction, reshapes any materials (in this case, the past) in the light of present issues" (22) and "the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step towards intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction's challenges to the presumed transparency of the language of realist texts" (10). Acknowledging or pointing out how the act of writing is both an investment and activity can betoken the necessary incompleteness of every narrative or text. An equally significant point: every act of writing takes place in a larger plane, not just in the textual plane, the prison-house of language. This brings up the issue of sociality.

Writers and interpreters of history do not merely fiddle with and handle words; they are social beings in the flesh, also positioned in and dealing with material circumstances, conditions, institutions among others. A reflexive kind of awareness must be applied not just on the textual but on the larger sociality where it transpires: "Any simple mimesis is replaced by a problematized and complex set of interrelations at the level of discourse—that is, at the level of the way we talk about experience, literary or historical, present or past. The fact is that, in practice, intertexts unavoidably call up contexts: social, political among others" (Hutcheon 25).

In addition, the writer is socially positioned; located in a socially particular dimension that needs to be recognized. In "The Arrogance of Imaginary Power," Edel Garcellano described the act of citing an author: "[it] is not necessarily to behold individual genius... but to allude to... juridical and institutional systems that encompass, determine and articulate the universe of discourse" (45). The figure of the author or writer can be employed to talk about the larger societal frames precisely by locating the former in the latter and talking about the way the two interact. The platitude of texts being situated in contexts—bearing more upon the act of interpretation and hence the readers—need to be extended. The writer of texts must also be made present and this presence interrogated. One could be engaging with a devil's advocate, a Didymus-like doubter, and this does not prevent one to act like one herself, challenging and responding, bedeviling the devil.

IN CONCLUSION: DIDYMUS THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE RETURNS

Didymus “shows us the value of doubt in finding faith” (Quijano 185), the importance of critical questioning in constructing answers. What makes this doubt possible; and how can this affect the way one perceives and builds historical knowledge, knowledge in general?

Doubt will always be a component of knowledge-formation, of historical interpretation. Its presence only announces the everlasting openness of knowledge and understanding at large, and the way one sees history in particular. No final word can be said on these matters; no authoritative version or interpretation can close all analysis. The multiplicity of sources, the plenitude of experiences and the nonstop dialogue and development of ideas all make this possible. A vital qualification though: is this proposition akin to the liberal ideology of “as many truths as there are individual interpreters/experiencers?” No. Meaning-making and the interpretation of lives and events—the continuum that is past, present and future, the then and the here-and-now—will always be open but it does not mean that it is free-for-all, with every participant having equal foothold in the process.

These procedures of meaning-making and interpretation are social events and as such, implicate social formations which are rife with all sorts of divisions and inequalities. Following this, historical writing can also contribute to their illumination and understanding. History is not just a matter of texts ferreted out from the archives and then consolidated and interpreted; history is placed in and interacts with society which it shapes and by which it is shaped. If the archives are taken as a representative of history, it is wrong to describe it as dead; it is always on the move, enlivened not just by scholars who pore over them with their vested interests and orientations but the larger societal frames where they reside. If the archives enjoy a preference in the way one understands history, it does not mean that it totally closes other possibilities in approaching history. History can be seen not just as a large body of archives but as something made dynamic and mobile by the diverse people that live and make sense of it.

To be reflexive – to be aware of one’s location and implication in the thick of moving events, always-changing phenomena one seeks to fathom: that is the task. Slavoj Žižek has a pertinent reminder: “There is, among the multitude of opinions, a true knowledge but this knowledge is accessible only from an interested, partial position” (Žižek 169). There must always be doubt because one can neither see nor say everything; there is no Final Word. Every utterance, every discourse is coming from a partial position, a position informed by a certain interest, ideology, or intention. This position is always potentially in conversation with other positions that ideally should always aspire for productive and meaningful conversations and shared actions.

One ought to be her very first Devil's Advocate. All the better for it can only sharpen one's views and prepare them for the testing of others—other viewpoints and the changing social fabric. When one suspires for a break from being her own Devil's advocate, look elsewhere, outside one's self: other voices and viewpoints, and the very soil and earth where all discourse and interaction take place.

Now must be the time for the reflexive turn. Language is not all. Quijano de Manila's *Discourses of the Devil's Advocate* is spent as an assemblage of words. We must make it speak—these dead words—perhaps beginning on the work's position and stakes in the social fabric of its birthing and the social fabric that informs interpretation; afterwards, we can speak of our very position as we make the “dead” words speak.

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