

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

(En)Countering Martial Law: Rhythmanalysis, Urban Experience in Metro Manila, and Ilokano Literature (1980–1984)

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Philippine Studies vol. 58 no. 4 (2010): 481–522

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(En)Countering Martial Law Rhythmanalysis, Urban Experience in Metro Manila, and Ilokano Literature (1980–1984)

Like many Ilokano writers, poet-fictionist Herman Garcia Tabin has never made his position on the Marcos dictatorship known. His works, which were written in the early 1980s and bound with the conditions produced by the regime, do not explicitly denounce Marcos's regime. However, they may be read as critiquing the social reality engendered by the dictatorship. Through a rhythmanalysis that implicates the constitutive role of the state and capital, this article examines depictions of life experiences of Metro Manila's impoverished people in Tabin's works. Tracing and following Tabin's moves and movements provide clues to that which he has neither publicly avowed nor disavowed.

KEYWORDS: MARCOS DICTATORSHIP • ILOKANO LITERATURE • RHYTHMANALYSIS • METRO MANILA • URBAN EXPERIENCE • NEOLIBERALISM • MEMORY

When the ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos died on 28 September 1989 in exile in Hawaii, there was an outpouring of grief from among a number of Ilokano writers. Such grief was expressed as eulogies written as poems and published in the Ilokano weekly magazine *Bannawag*.¹ Some of these poems were written by those whom Ilokano writers themselves consider to be pillars of Ilokano literature. Such explicit expression of their sadness for the passing away of someone who for them was a truly great person and leader, and their public mourning of what they called the end of an era, attested to the esteem in which many Ilokano writers held Marcos. While in power, Marcos enjoyed their admiration, if not loyalty. Even in exile he enjoyed the goodwill of those writers based in Hawaii. Arguably Marcos's being an Ilokano himself helped to foster this abiding and enduring respect and admiration for him.²

Whereas it is easy enough to find Ilokano writers who openly supported and even extolled him, and who have even defended him after his excesses were exposed, it is very difficult to find one who self-identifies as anti-Marcos or anti-martial law. It is even more difficult to find one who has denounced Marcos or someone who has renounced him in a work written in Ilokano. It is equally difficult to find an Ilokano writer even vaguely critical of him during his years in power as president (1965–1972) and dictator (1972–1986). What abound in Ilokano literature are works that depict social injustice, oppression, insurgency, poverty, and the like, which not unexpectedly are never attributed or linked to Marcos, to his military rule, or to the policies his regime pursued. This is not to say that Marcos is to blame for all that Filipinos suffered, but to ask of the writers to consider the central role that Marcos played in creating many of the conditions for what many went through and for where the country is now.

I wish in this essay to examine the attempt of Ilokano poet-fictionist Herman Garcia Tabin³ to write about and, even more crucially, against the Marcos dictatorship in the context of this dominant pro-Marcos current in Ilokano literature, and to interrogate how he has articulated his anti-Marcos position, that is, although he claims his works to be his way of resisting the dictatorship, he has kept quiet about his personal position on the regime. To do this, I will take a somewhat tortuous route. I will first examine Tabin's depictions of life experiences of impoverished people existing at the margins of urban Metro Manila. If, as Tabin claims, he meant his works to speak

on his behalf, how precisely did they accomplish this? Having clarified this point, I will then, in the concluding section, briefly comment on the implications of the tension between what he claims his works to say and what he himself has crucially left unsaid for writing against Marcos in Ilokano literature.

The texts, written between 1980 and 1984, are read, to borrow from Neferti Tadiar (2009), for the “historical experience” they record and to which they help give shape.⁴ They deal with the experiences of the most marginalized Filipinos in urban Metro Manila during Marcos's rule. Tabin offers what is to my knowledge the only examination in Ilokano literature of urban experience during the martial law regime.⁵ Unlike most Ilokano writers who write about Ilokanos and their experiences either in Ilokano or non-Ilokano place-settings, Tabin, particularly since 1976,⁶ has dwelt on the experiences and situations of impoverished people in Metro Manila, people who are not identified specifically and necessarily as Ilokanos. By attending to what Tabin focuses on, and by following him as well as those people whose lives he records, we document a “phenomenological memory” of martial law, that is, a body's remembering of the period, a bodily experiencing of that particular historical time, what Mieke Bal (2009) has called “sentient engagement.” By tracing and following his moves, his movements, we might just be able to reveal how his works have (en)countered the authoritarian regime.

Through a rhythmanalysis of the poor's experiences of life and living in Metro Manila depicted in the literary pieces concerned, I hope to demonstrate how these texts were bound up with the authoritarian regime, that is, with the conditions it produced, and how the regime, through its economic and development policies, dictated the rhythm of people's lives. This rhythmanalysis therefore implicates the constitutive role of the state and of capital. The essay is divided into three sections. The first develops a theoretical-conceptual argument linking state, capital, and the rhythmanalytical project. The second argues for the usefulness of literary texts for a rhythmanalysis of urban life. This section extends the methodology of rhythmanalysis as originally developed by Henri Lefebvre. The third section comprises the rhythmanalysis of Tabin's literary texts.

State, Capital, Rhythmanalysis

Henri Lefebvre (2004, 68–69) wrote that “[p]olitical power knows how to utilise and manipulate time, dates, timetables. It combines the unfurling

of those that it employs (individuals, groups, entire societies), and rhythms them.” He explains that, officially, this is called “mobilisation” for the “authorities have to know the polyrhythmia of the social body that they set in motion. It is the extreme case, revealing simultaneously official and empirical-political and military rhythmanalysis” (ibid., 69). Benjamin Fraser (2008, 351) has argued that for Lefebvre rhythmanalysis is “aware of the rhythms that have been instilled in time by capitalist production.” This awareness of how political power and capital have penetrated and rhythmized everyday life makes rhythmanalysis especially useful and critical for investigating and explicating everyday life and experience. As Fraser (ibid., 352) succinctly puts it:

A moving, living reality requires a mode of knowledge that is also mobile, capable of moving with it yet not becoming assimilated into it. It is this form of knowledge that, for Lefebvre, can approach the lives of those modern people who “not only move alongside the monster [that is capital] but are inside it; they live off it”. This mobile knowledge would make it possible to discern the qualitative difference between the rhythms imposed on life and the rhythms of life itself.

These two rhythms, the former, linear—rhythms imposed on life, and the latter, cyclical—the rhythms of life itself, coexist. Linear rhythms, on the one hand, are those “centred around human activity and the consecutive quality of social relations such as the rhythms of work and travel to work or school” (Cronin 2006, 624), what Ben Highmore (2004, 322) calls linear rhythms of “rationalized modernization.” Cyclical rhythms, on the other hand, encompass those of nature (Highmore 2004, 322): days, nights, seasons, waves, and tides (Cronin 2006, 624). Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Regulier (2004, 73) characterize the linear as “the times of brutal repetitions,” as “tiring, exhausting and tedious.” The cyclical, in contrast, “has the appearance of an event, an advent,” possessing “the freshness of a discovery and an invention” (ibid.; cf. Simpson 2008). Hence, Lefebvre and Regulier (ibid.) argue that “[t]he everyday is simultaneously the site of, the theatre for, and what is at stake in a conflict between great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat.”

Central to how these rhythms are experienced and analyzed is the body. As Lefebvre (2004, 67) wrote, “[a]t no point have the analysis of rhythms and

the rhythmanalytical project lost sight of the body. . . . The theory of rhythms is founded on the experience and knowledge of the body . . .” (cf. Lefebvre 1991, 205–7). As Stuart Elden (2004, xii) argues, “Lefebvre believes that the rhythmanalyst does not simply analyse the body as a subject, but uses the body as the first point of analysis, the tool for subsequent investigations.”

Eduardo Mendieta (2008), in his critical survey of Lefebvre’s work, situates rhythmanalysis within Lefebvre’s writings on cities, space, and his critique of everyday life, which he says are intricately entwined. He argues that Lefebvre’s examination of the quotidian is implicated in the production of space as well as in the rhythm or “temporality in space and place” (ibid., 149). He argues for the interconnectedness of these three central concerns within Lefebvre’s work, an interconnectedness that Mendieta claims “entail[s] and demand[s]” rhythmanalysis (ibid.). Tracing these connections, Mendieta elaborates that Lefebvre “demonstrate[d] that the extraction, production and accumulation of capital is enabled by the production of social space” (ibid.). In turn, the production of space “is the condition of possibility of the spatial fix that is indispensable for the stabilization of the capitalist system of capital accumulation” (ibid.). Mendieta explains that “lived, imagined and represented space” were linked by Lefebvre with “different social practices within the city” (ibid.). It is within the intersections of these spaces and social practices that Mendieta (ibid., 150) appreciates Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life, specifically how the quotidian, our everyday existence, was being commodified. He writes:

Thus, as space is produced through our spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation, so is reification produced and reproduced as we produce and consume commodities. The critique of everyday life is the critique of alienation at the most evident, that is to say, phenomenological level, namely, at the level of the *perceived, imagined and lived*.

Although our social being is mediated through the commodity form, Mendieta (ibid.) argues that, nevertheless, our social existence occurs in social space and time, that it emerges from, and is shaped and constituted by, our very own practices that admittedly are themselves shaped by relations of power and becoming. Mendieta emphasizes the importance of social space and time to our existence because, although they are “never given in the

abstract,” they “manifest in particular times and space” (ibid.) and these are what rhythmanalysis is about. Rhythmanalysis, because it takes the coexistence and codetermination of time and space as central elements shaping everyday lives (Edensor and Holloway 2008), alerts us to the antagonisms that animate and characterize urban experiences.

My discussion of rhythmanalysis is deliberately political in orientation as I attempt to build an argument for a rhythmanalysis that foregrounds the tensions in urban everyday life, tensions that to a large extent originate in the interplay of political power and capital in the shaping of everyday lives. Rhythmanalysis, as argued by Mendieta (2008), makes this interplay central to urban experience without however making it the overdetermining factor constituting and shaping everyday life. In this context, agency remains part of people’s lives and living in cities (cf. Amin and Thrift 2002). Mendieta (2008, 151) writes that human bodies, although like commodities which are “embedded in rhythms of production and consumption” and which are the resonances of social rhythms, are however “caught up in the grip of other rhythms: biological and natural, that are not always at the beck and call of the market and the designs of capitalism” (cf. Highmore 2004). These rhythms that escape the grip of political power rhythmanalysis can powerfully reveal.

Crucially, Mendieta (2008, 151) points out that Lefebvre’s conceptualization of rhythmanalysis “remained embedded in his European context.” Consequently he failed to “attend to the different dialectics of the rural and urban in the non-West” (ibid.). Moreover, Mendieta (ibid.) argues that, for rhythmanalysis to become applicable to Third World contexts, the global rise of neoliberalism must be accounted for inasmuch as “it has had a more profound effect on the urban question than the cold world may have had.” He argues that rhythmanalysis must be informed by critiques of neoliberalism and neoimperialism developed by such authors as David Harvey and Mike Davis: “The accelerated urbanization of the developing world is the product of the brutal impoverishment of the global rural populations, which has them exiled from depleted and dessicated lands, turning them refugees of over-bloated slums and favelas” (ibid.; cf. Wolch and De Verteuil 2001).

Although Mendieta incorporates these critical and epistemological insights into a rhythmanalytical project appropriate for Third World societies and realities, he does not make explicit the role played by the state in the production of these realities as he trains his critical lens only on capitalism: “The rhythms

of consumerist and financial capitalism have accelerated the urbanization of world cities in such a way that now most Third World societies are as, if not more, urbanized than the West . . .” (Mendieta 2008, 151). Hence, for rhythmanalysis the role of the state has to be factored in in the development projects of many Third World nations, projects that carry the imprimatur of international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Authoritarianism and the Opening Up of the Philippine Economy

Although the Philippines has been integrated to the global economy since the middle of the nineteenth century (Doronila 1992; McCoy 1982; cf. Aguilar 1998), it became more fully incorporated into the world economy during the Marcos authoritarian regime (Bello et al. 1982; Kelly 2000; Tyner 2009; cf. Broad 1988). The imposition of martial law was decisive in the redirection of the Philippine strategy for economic and industrial development as it “provided the political framework” that was necessary for the establishment and consolidation of an export-oriented industrial policy (Bello et al. 1982, 139; cf. Kelly 2000). The shift to export-oriented industrialization (EOI) departed from the import-substitution industrialization (ISI) pursued by the country in the preceding decades. Whereas ISI focused industrial production on a limited domestic market, EOI targeted a supposedly limitless global market (Bello et al. 1982, 127).

However, EOI was predicated on the liberalization of the Philippine economy, which would minimize governmental interference in the market and further open up the economy (Hawes 1992, 152). As Walden Bello and colleagues (1982, 163) note, although liberalization, which sought to destroy barriers to the entry into the country of foreign goods and break down nationalist controls on foreign investment, was already underway in the early 1960s, the martial law period was distinguished not only by “more aggressive attempts to destroy protectionist barriers, but also that the export-oriented industrialization policy was bound up with the liberalization program” (cf. Bowie and Unger 1997).⁷ The previous policy of import-substitution industrialization may have become prey to the ruling oligarchy (Rivera 1994) but it produced “a whole new generation of entrepreneurs, thus diluting foreign control of the economy” (Hawes 1992, 151) and led to an increased national control of the economy (ibid.).

From an economic perspective Emmanuel de Dios and Paul Hutchcroft (2003, 49) have argued, however, that even under martial law the Philippines did not pursue a coherent development strategy. They note, for example, that alongside export promotion was the continued protection the government gave to some ISI firms (cf. Kang 2002; Kelly 2000; McKay 2006). They attribute the failure to comprehensively push for export-oriented industrialization to the “ready availability of external funds,” which made it “more expedient to simply adopt the strategy of ‘debt-driven growth’” (De Dios and Hutchcroft 2003, 49).⁸ Indeed, under the Marcos regime foreign borrowing was a major component of the country’s development strategy (Boyce 1990; Broad 1988). Economic growth in the early years of martial law was in fact spurred and sustained by international loans (Hutchison 1997; Hutchcroft 1998; Krinks 2002). The dependence of the Philippine economy on the continued flow of loans from international institutions, namely the World Bank and IMF, meant that the country became much more vulnerable to IMF-WB economic policy prescriptions, particularly from the end of the 1970s when these lenders made further loans conditional to macro-economic structural adjustments (Bello et al. 1982; Bello et al. 1994; Boyce 1990; Broad 1988; Doronila 1992; Kelly 2000).⁹

That this debt-driven economy was unviable was demonstrated by the 1983 balance-of-payments crisis when it was precisely the inability of the country to service its debt, which had ballooned from US\$355 million in 1962 to US\$2.7 billion in 1972 to US\$24.3 billion in 1983 (and US\$28.3 billion in 1986), that induced the crisis that began in 1981 (Boyce 1990; Krinks 2002; Montes 1992). Marcos left a national economy in tatters: “real GNP per person was less than in 1975, unemployment was high and six million families had incomes below the poverty line. . . . Servicing the foreign debt of \$26 billion took two-thirds of export earnings, or 24 per cent of the national budget (rising to 44 per cent by 1989), so that public resources were inadequate to prime the economy” (Krinks 2002, 56). The huge amounts of money being appropriated for debt servicing made the Philippines a “major exporter of capital” (Ofreneo 1991, 28). Some US\$6.1 billion were paid to creditors just for interest alone from 1986 to 1988 (ibid.). Also, capital flight from 1976 to 1986, imputing interest earnings, totalled more than US\$17 billion in 1986 values (Boyce 1990; Boyce and Zarsky 1992).

This capital flight has been linked to the expiration in 1974 of preferential treatment (Laurel-Langley Agreement). Rigoberto Tiglao (1995, 128)

has noted that, in order to offset partly the flight of American capital with the end of the said agreement, Marcos opened up the country in the 1970s to overseas capital, mainly Japanese. However, because of the early 1980s financial crisis culminating in the country defaulting on its foreign debt in 1983, the Philippines was effectively shut off from foreign investment beginning in 1981 (ibid.). More Japanese capital poured into the country from 1985 onward with the signing of the Plaza Accord, which raised the value of the yen relative to the dollar and other major hard currencies resulting in increased production costs in Japan (Bello et al. 2009, 19). In the early and mid-1990s, Japanese firms dominated export-oriented investment in the country, contributing almost 60 percent of investment in economic zones (Kelly 2000, 54).¹⁰ However, compared with Japanese investment in other Southeast Asian countries, Japanese foreign-direct investment (FDI) in the Philippines was miniscule. From 1985 to 1990, US\$748 million poured into the Philippines. In contrast, Malaysia got US\$2.2 billion; Indonesia, US\$3.1 billion; and Thailand, US\$3.7 billion. These investments played a crucial role in the economic development of Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia during the period 1980–1993 (Bello et al. 2009) when the Philippines posted a pathetic GDP average percentage growth rate of 1.7 percent. In contrast, in the same period, Malaysia posted a growth rate of 5.2 percent; Indonesia, 6.8 percent; Thailand, 8.2 percent (Bello et al. 2009; cf. Rimmer 1997).

Commentators (e.g., Krinks 2002) have attributed the failure of the country to attract more Japanese capital to the lack of political stability and inadequate infrastructure, but Bello and colleagues (2009) argue that political instability was not a decisive factor. Japanese firms wanted to locate in countries where there was a domestic market for Japanese goods manufactured in those countries, something that was practically nonexistent in the Philippines given the prevalence of severe income inequalities (see also Hawes 1992, 151).

James Boyce (1993, 4) has argued that in the Philippines growth and impoverishment went hand-in-hand. He calls this phenomenon “immiserizing growth”:

Although per capita income in the Philippines rose between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s, the incomes of the country’s poor majority declined. Real wages fell sharply in both rural and urban areas, even in periods when the country was experiencing relatively rapid growth

in national income. This phenomenon is sometimes called 'immiserizing growth'. The term can be used not only to describe a situation in which the poor become poorer even as income per person grows, but also in a stronger, causal sense to mean that growth itself is a cause of impoverishment.

Authorizing Capital: Creating Metropolitan Manila

This immiserizing growth was a major contributing factor to the conditions obtaining in Metro Manila even as it aptly describes those conditions. Manuel Montes (1992, 48) has written that during the economic crisis in the early 1980s rural-to-urban migration grew, with the percentage of the labor force in urban areas growing from 30 percent to 37 percent. This growth, according to Rizalinda Tidalgo and Alejandro Herrin (cited in Montes 1992, 48) may be accounted for by deteriorating conditions in rural areas due to the worsening economic and peace and order situation. Also, the decline in industrial employment during the crisis caused the underground or "black" economy, particularly in child labor and prostitution, to grow (Ofreneo 1991, 29–31).

To be sure, rural-to-urban migration particularly to Manila has occurred much earlier than the 1980s. Manila and other smaller urban centers have attracted migrants for the better educational, livelihood, employment, and other economic opportunities they offer (Balisacan 1994; Cariño and Corpuz 2008; Rebullida et al. 1999). Rural-to-urban migration has been clearly linked to the economic imbalance between urban and rural areas. In turn, the problem of squatting has been traced to the migration of poor rural people to urban areas (Rebullida et al. 1999). Ricardo Abad (1991, 263–64) has noted that the creation of squatter communities in Metro Manila was the result of two major processes: "the increasing concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few families and institutions" and "the uneven development of the Philippine economy, which leads to the concentration of resources in urban areas, especially Manila, and the underdevelopment of the agricultural sector."

In 1980, when the National Housing Authority undertook what is considered as the last accurate count of squatters in Metro Manila, the number ranged from 1.6 to 1.65 million (Berner 1997; Murphy 1993) distributed in 415 colonies (Berner 1997). This represents 26 percent of the total population; if nonsquatters were included, Erhard Berner (1997, 21) has claimed

that slum dwellers account for one-third of Metro Manila's population. In 1993, 591 squatter colonies were identified (Bautista 1998). Estimates of the squatter population in Metro Manila after 1980 are projections from the 1980 figure. Denis Murphy (1993) says that these estimates range from 3 to 4.5 million and it is possible for the urban poor and urban squatter population to be much greater than 4.5 million.¹¹ Estimates for 2002 put the urban poor population as comprising 55 percent of the total poor population of the country, and the number of households living in informal settlements at 1.4 million (Webster, Corpuz, and Pablo 2002, cited in Antolihao 2004). If each household had six members, the figure translates to a population of 8.4 million. This does not include those who are classified as "permanent homeless," families who "live in push carts, on the sidewalks, along seawalls, under bridges, flyovers, and the light rail transit tracks" (Yasay 1994, cited in Bautista 1998, 27). The Housing and Development Coordinating Council estimated in 1992 that around 77,000 people resident in urban areas were homeless (Cariño 1997, cited in Bautista 1998).

Metro Manila became "both the symptom and instrument of authoritarian development" (Tadiar 2009, 148). The creation of the Metropolitan Manila Commission (MMC) in 1975 was linked to the problem of squatting (Berner 1997, 10). The MMC was created as a two-pronged strategy, providing the commission with the administrative power to deal with the squatter problem and laying out a more comprehensive housing policy. Aside from the centralization of power in the hands of the Metro Manila governor (who was Imelda Marcos), the avowed objective of this streamlined administrative body was the transformation of the Philippine capital from a dying city into the "City of Man" (ibid., 29). Indeed, as governor of Metro Manila and Minister of Human Settlements, Imelda Marcos commissioned a study of urban planning strategies funded by the World Bank which, not surprisingly, "recommended major infrastructural investments to create a capital city in the image of the Western cities that the Marcoses were so keen to imitate and impress" (Drakakis-Smith 2000, 27). However, its pilot project to regenerate the national capital—a pioneering experiment in slum upgrading called the Dagat-Dagatan Tondo Foreshore Project involving 430 hectares of reclaimed land with a US\$263-million funding from the World Bank—was a failure. And so were Imelda Marcos's other housing projects, particularly Urban BLISS (Bagong Lipunan Improvement of Sites and Services) that were so expensive that "only the upper 10 per cent of Metro Manila

could afford them” (Rüland 1989, 13 quoted in Berner 1997, 29); in the end, those who benefited from the Urban BLISS were military and higher government officials, a group that has been described as part of the “regime’s vassals” (Berner 1997). With only 2,500 units built and many more squatter houses demolished to make room for their construction, the BLISS program made no positive impact on Metro Manila’s housing problems (*ibid.*). By the end of the 1980s, some 96,000 units were required for the housing needs of Metro Manila’s urban poor. By the end of the 1990s, the figure was 700,000 (Rebullida et al. 1999). Equally dismally, the National Housing Authority (NHA), created in 1975 to serve the housing needs of the poorest 30 percent of the population, managed to build only 4,054 units from 1975 to 1985 in the entire country (Berner 1997, 29).¹²

The Marcoses concentrated “development” programs in the capital, development that primarily consisted of building projects that cosmetically projected the means and attainment of development, progress, and modernization. For example, to host an International Monetary Fund conference, the government built the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) at a cost of US\$150 million. Also, it spent some US\$360 million to build fourteen new hotels. In contrast, it allocated US\$17 million in 1976 for low-cost housing (*ibid.*, 28).

Repression, cooptation (Pinches 1985), and large-scale demolitions (Berner 1997; Murphy 1993) became the favored methods of dealing with squatters. Demolitions were part of the beautification campaign waged by Imelda Marcos, the first lady, Metro Manila governor, and Minister of Human Settlements. This campaign was in turn wedded to the First Couple’s desire to attract more foreign capital and obtain international recognition (and hence legitimacy) for the authoritarian regime (see, e.g., Schirmer and Shalom 1987, 182). David Drakakis-Smith (2000, 28) has argued that the tourism program of the Marcoses was directly linked to the destruction of squatters’ houses. The regime had wanted to make poverty less visible, and their success in bringing in development more visible, at least, to foreign tourists. It was during the Marcos regime that mendicancy and vagrancy were declared illegal (Toohey 1998). In 1976 some 160,000 squatters lost their homes as a result of the regime’s beautification program, and that some “were resettled in sites up to 30 kilometers away from the city, with no shelter, water, or sewage facilities” (Drakakis-Smith 2000; cf. Davis 2006). Tourism, however, was linked to the growth in the prostitution industry. Although

it did not create prostitution in Metro Manila, Neumann (1987 [1984], 182) has argued that the “government’s reliance on the travel trade as a quick fix for foreign exchange troubles and a shaky economy created the climate for an explosion in flesh-peddling . . .”

The Marcos regime treated squatters as eyesores, if not as trash. In the years 1974, 1975, and 1976, for example, large-scale demolitions of squatter houses occurred in order to clear the city of such garbage for international events the Marcos government hosted: Miss Universe (1974), the visit of then U.S. Pres. Gerald Ford (1975), and the IMF-WB conference (1976). Although treated as such, the urban poor have played a vital part in the Philippine capital’s economy:

it is within the ranks of the urban poor that the rich find much of their labor: their maids, their drivers, the workers who build their houses and their business premises, their factory employees and the purveyors of their commodities. Even when they do not make direct use of the labor of the urban poor they depend in numerous ways on city services which could not exist without such labor. (Pinches 1985, 153)

From this truncated account of the imbrications of state power, capital, and development, we can begin to grasp how people’s everyday lives in Manila were powerfully shaped not just by international capital, as discussed by Mendieta (2008), but also by how the state transacted with it. Allegedly, the goal of attracting capital was to spur development; however, it led to the unwanted (although not necessarily unexpected) result of more evidence of poverty, suffering, and the exacerbation of inequality¹³ for which the Marcoses adopted what Tadiar (2004, 84) has called strategies of containing capital’s contradictory and antagonistic elements (fig. 1):

During martial law and under the centralized power of the metropolitan government, these strategies entailed military control, direct domination and bodily repression and territorial confinement—such as erecting walls to hide slums, relocating squatters, and imprisoning and torturing members of urban resistance movements (including squatter organizations).

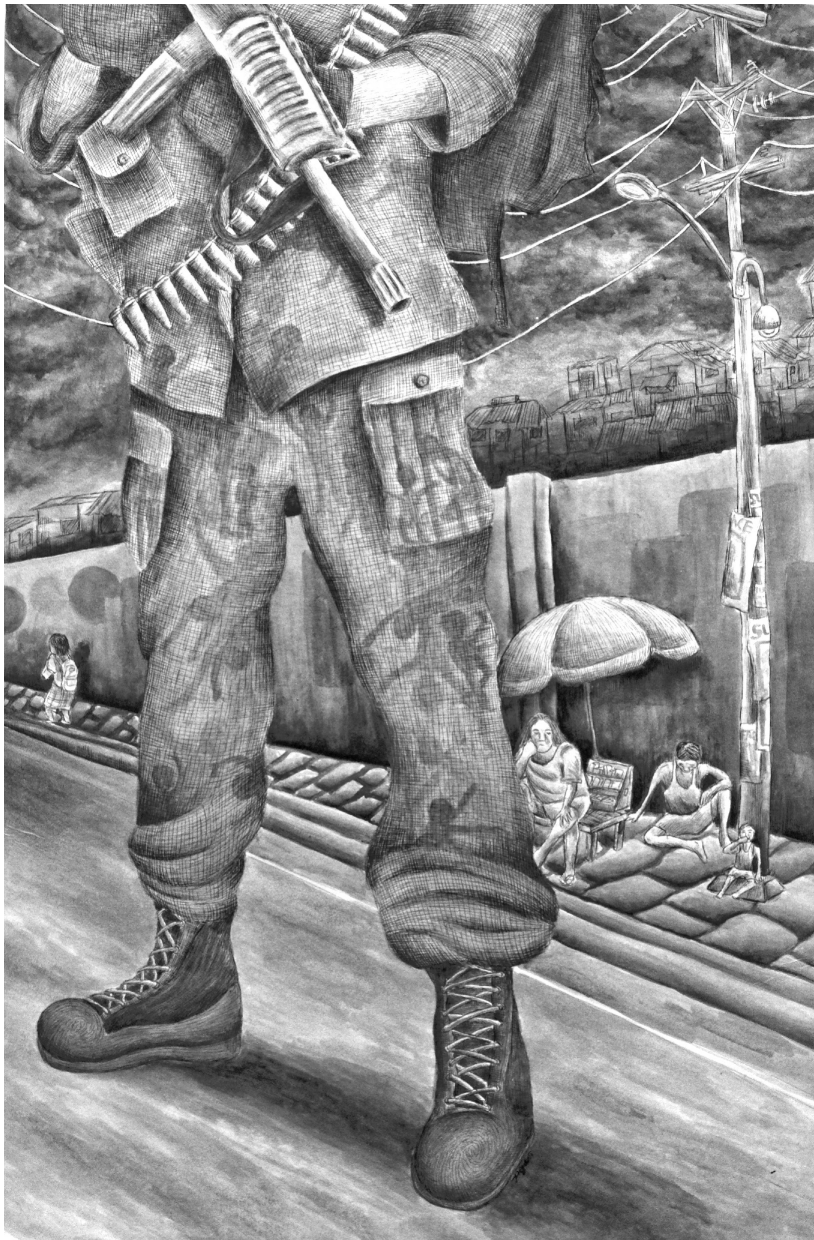


Fig. 1. *Methods of Containment* (colored inks on board, 18" x 30") by Piya Constantino. Photo used by permission of the artist.

Rhythmanalysis and Literature

Ben Highmore (2005, 10) argues that Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis is "dedicated to the analytic description of the urban present" and that Lefebvre "doesn't consider the possibility of writing historically about the rhythmicity of the city." In contrast, for Highmore, "the articulation of rhythmicity through historical materials (even recent ones) is of central concern" (ibid.). Also, Highmore gives the articulation of rhythms in literary texts a centrality not given by Lefebvre. Lefebvre intended rhythmanalysis to be a highly ambitious project, concerned as he was with everything "from particles to galaxies" and calling upon all the senses to be used. Highmore's use of texts limits the range of sensory materials that he can bring into account because, unlike Lefebvre, he makes "observations (observations that take the form of written and visual text) rather than putting [his] head out of a Paris window and smelling and hearing the hubbub below" (ibid., 12).

My use of literary texts is due in part to the "confidence" that scholars can now have concerning the methodological and epistemological soundness of treating literary texts as sources of social or empirical reality.¹⁴ As Tadiar (2009, 17–18) has argued:

literary works are figurations of possibilities of life that authors exercise in their imaginations of historical experience; in this way, they are also theoretical perspectives on both dominant and residual cultural logics of social life. . . . literary works are thus treated as both ethnographic material (ethnography of social imagination as much as of actually lived life) and theoretical resource for writing an alternative history of the present. . . .

My other reason for using literary texts is that the urban experience I am rhythmanalyzing obtains in a repressive regime of military rule where all forms of covert resistance were met with the state's systematic cooptation of broadcast and print media (see, e.g., Guillermo 1986; Youngblood 1981) or with the brutal force of the military. This, however, did not necessarily make resistance completely impossible. Covert resistance to the Marcos military regime became "undergrounded" and expressions of resistance and dissent particularly by artists and writers were censored, not given any public space precisely because they were threats to Marcos's authoritarian rule.¹⁵ Expressions of resistance, and resistance itself, had to utilize tactics¹⁶

of circumvention, as well as alternative ways, that is, media, of reporting on the martial law regime.¹⁷ This was because, as Alice Guillermo (1986, 67–68, *italics added*) has written:

[t]hroughout the duration of the regime, the State manipulation of the print and broadcast media was not an occasional effort but a total and systematic operation, in fact, to break their spirit of freedom and to make them an adjunct of State power. . . . it is amazing, indeed shocking, how the dictatorial [*sic*] regime applied its full force to destroy the once proud Philippine Press and media in order to perpetrate the widespread exploitation and plunder of the country's resources.

. . . repression and censorship became institutionalized. The manipulation of the news became the order of the day. The Malacañang press boys fed the news sifted and deodorized to the different crony newspapers. "Developmental journalism" was the euphemism for a manipulated press in which writers were joined [*sic*] or *coerced to show the bright, touristy side and conceal the harsh reality of Philippine conditions*. Nothing was spared from censorship: columns and articles by staff writers and contributors were submitted for censorship; even photographs, especially those for magazine covers had to be approved by the watchdogs of the State.

These literary texts therefore bear the traces of a kind of rhythm or dynamic of power that determined the circulation and dissemination of what was expressible or articulable. Hence they can be rhythmalyzed on two levels: for what they were able to represent (what they thematize) and for the internal dynamic that constituted what they were able to talk about (how they thematize). My analysis of these texts therefore will be informed by an engagement with the political context that they sought to negotiate and counter.

As was earlier pointed out, during their conjugal dictatorship, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos embarked on a massive economic and physical "modernization" of Manila. Their reconstruction/rebuilding of its geographical (land was reclaimed from the sea), physical, and spatial features was accompanied by a rewriting of the nation's history, a rewriting that would make it coincide with their development trajectories that they, in turn, meshed with



Fig. 2. Herman Garcia Tabin in a target shooting practice with a group of ADB employees, July 2006.

the personal history they fabricated (Ileto 1998; Rafael 2000; Tiongson et al. 1986). Their architectural and building program aimed to redraw Manila as the city of the good, the true, and the beautiful (Alcazaren 2003; Lico 2003; cf. Caoili 1999) in order to attract foreign capital and tourism. Their development-cum-modernization project had no tolerance for those who would say otherwise (the poor, the squatters, and others), thus their attempt to rid Manila of its unwanted and unsightly elements—those that pointed to the sham that was Marcos development. This, as Tadiar (2004) has written, through the forcible and violent removal of what the conjugal dictatorship¹⁸ considered Manila's refuse.

Urban Refuse in the Metropolis

It is this refuse that the poet-fictionist Herman Garcia Tabin (fig. 2) in fact rescues from being thrown away, never to be seen and heard from again. In his *10 a daniw-rikna* (10 poems-feelings) he records sights, sounds, scents, and sensations that assault the sensibilities. They present a grim and depressing but unrelentingly viciously "real" documentation of the lives of those deliberately forgotten and cast off by the state. The poet calls his ten pieces

“poems-feelings” (poems of feelings/sensations) but they are to be taken as feelings borne out of experience. This is nothing but the urban experience of grinding poverty and neglect, one that is experienced both as cyclical and linear rhythms. The socially/politically imposed rhythm of state- and development-induced poverty bleeds into and meshes with the biological/natural, as in the following:

iti ikakalay-at ti bigat
kumaribuso dagiti lugan
iti kalsada ti biag
nakitak ti dulpet
bayyat a lasag
nga umab-ab-ab
iti nangisit a kanal
ubbog-anges iti ciudad
dagiti paragpagan a kararua

with the arrival of day
vehicles jostle
on life's streets
I see a dirty
emaciated body
drinking
from a black sewage canal
spring-of-life in the city
of skin-and-bone souls

nguy-a iti igid ti kalsada
last breath by the side of the street
(Tabin 1980d)

The image moves the speaker to wonder, that is, for his thoughts to wander, to flit from one reflection to another:

daytoy kadi
ti anniniwan
ti nguy-a

ti lubong?
iti agdama—
agkalkallautang
a kinaballa?
wenno biktima
ti di magaw-at
a pateg ti anges?

is this the shadow
of the last breath
of the world?
of the present—
a prevailing madness?
or a victim
of the unaffordable
cost of breath?

nguy-a iti igid ti kalsada
(ibid.)

The natural and cyclical movement and rhythm of life ceases for our victim because he or she could no longer afford to breathe, that is, to live; he or she no longer has the means to do so. Consequently, he or she could not join in the slow movement of life and vehicles—signs of living in a capital-driven city where life's movement is rhythmized by a system that breeds inequality, where people who are left behind, those who are reduced to drinking from sewage and drainage canals—the passageways of urban waste—become a naturalized fact of life, a part of urban reality we see and witness with each arrival and passing of day. The poem's speaker may choose to momentarily block this sight but this reality does not leave him because this scene of almost lifelessness is paralleled by the slow movement of vehicles, including the one he is on. The movement, the rhythm is slow, almost like a burial procession:

kinidemak ti lubong
ket riniknak
ti panagtuloy

a panagudaod
dagiti lugan. . .

I close my eyes to the world
and feel
the vehicles
continue
crawling. . .

nguy-a iti igid ti kalsada
(ibid.)

The slow flow of vehicles—one imagines here bumper-to-bumper traffic—comments not only on the inadequate physical/road infrastructure but also brings up the issue of what is clogging up these roads. Bringing up this question actually leads us to expose the vast amounts of money that finance this traffic problem. Jim Morrell (1987 [1979], 258) lamented:

The snarled traffic burns up an estimated \$200 million a year in imported gasoline. The traffic is not an annoyance, it is a major burden. In one survey private cars, owned by the middle class, accounted for 64 to 70 percent of the total traffic and buses only 4.5 percent, although the buses carried as many passengers as cars. The government has no plans to limit the cars. The cost of this misallocation of resources can be conservatively estimated at \$3.25 billion over the last decade, some \$2.25 billion for the cars and \$1 billion for the gasoline they burned.

The word “nguy-a” in the poem is the last breath before death. This is a “last breathing” that happens every day; it is one that defines the everyday life of those living by the street sides.

This daily witnessing of living-dying that occurs in a city built to showcase “the true, the good, and the beautiful” takes a movement, a rhythm of movement bracketed by stopping (to look) and passing/moving on as in the poem *sika a sidadalutaytay iti bangketa* (you who lie prostrate on the sidewalk) (Tabin 1980e):

napasardengak a nangmulengleng kenka
a sidadalutaytay iti bangketa

ti underpass—
nadungrit
agkikilet a buok
gaybang a suot
inap-apan ti sangkapiraso a diario. . .

I stopped to look at you
who lie prostrate on the sidewalk
of the underpass—
dirty
greasy hair
long beard
unwashed clothes
newspaper for a mat and blanket

Unlike in the previous poem *nguy-a iti igid ti kalsada* (last breath by the side of the street) where the speaker feels the burden of life—he witnesses a living emblem of “last breath”—and feels with the victim, the speaker in the poem just quoted above shows none of this fellow feeling and fellow traveling. His gaze is redirected toward himself (fig. 3) and sees only how different they are:

kinitak ti bagik—
nakakor bata
de-liston a pantalon
nasilap a sapatos
kanayon nga uk-ukopan
ti opisina a de-alpombra ken de-air con. . .

I looked at myself
wearing a tie
permanent-crease trouser
shiny shoes
always sheltered
in a carpeted and air conditioned office

sika a sidadalutaytay iti bangketa
you who lie prostrate on the pavement
(ibid.)



Fig. 3. The writer at his office in the Asian Development Bank. Tabin wrote many of his poems and stories about the experiences of Metro Manila's poor people during his time at the Japanese-led ADB, 1979–2006.

Although the speaker calls this person sibling, “kabsat,” he makes it clear that they are not related, that their life’s preoccupations are worlds apart:

ah, ngem kabsat
sika ti sika
ket siak ti siak—
....
labasanka pay ngarud, kabsat. . .
ta diak pay nasarakan
ti kinasiasinok. . .

ah, but sibling
you are you
I am me—
....
I have to pass you by, sibling. . .
for I haven't found
who I am. . .

sika a sidadalutaytay iti bangketa
(ibid.)

Where one is arguably already oblivious to the world, reduced to a *taong grasa* (filthy scum), a fitting metaphor for the consequences of the neoliberal policies pursued by Marcos, the other can afford the luxury to be existential, that is, to be concerned about an individual identity he has as yet to find. The speaker’s act of stopping (to look) does not induce him to a reflex, that is, to a reflexivity that would enable him to ask how they might be related, or implicated in each other; in other words, how their difference may foster social relations. Instead, his passing by is a parting, a distancing physically, spatially, socially, rhythmically. There is no sharing of social experience or suffering, and there is no demonstration of solidarity, only a preoccupation for individuality. The speaker refuses the life insights that the sidewalk dweller so powerfully conjures up. Although the speaker looks at him, this looking leads him to himself, to his existential longing. His stopping, a momentary pause in his daily trip to a comfortable place of work-life, does not cause him to see what the other lacks. His refusal to bear witness inadvertently makes

him part of the state's neglect of what it treats as metropolitan urban waste. He does not refuse (in the sense of resist) the logic of the state that refuses (in the sense of making "waste") these people. This logic that refuses them is also a logic that allows and actually breeds inequality and exploitation, and one that leaves the urban poor to make a living out of urban refuse.

In the poem entitled *bote, diario* (bottle, daily/newspaper) (Tabin 1980a), our witness speaks about an urban dweller who makes a living buying bottles and dailies to be resold for recycling. With a pushcart that he or she pushes along streets while shouting "boteeee!!! diarioooo!!!," he or she goes around the city in search of the disposables of other people:

sukainam
ti sangkatakiag
a nguy-a
ti biag
iti ciudad
ti basura
dagiti addaan

search
for an arm-sized
breath-life
here in the city
from the waste
of those who have

This searching is an act of gathering life, of a slice of it—a breath—from the refuse of the rich. The recycling of the rich's waste indicates an urban rhythm, a rhythm of economic relations and living in which those who have not are reduced to "daily" finding something that can still be rescued; the throwaways of the rich (for in a city or country where many people cannot even eat three times a day, who has the money to afford to buy, and the time to read, dailies every day?) are the life-source of the state's throwaways. By going around shouting the goods that would earn our urban dwellers their life for the day with a pushcart that would be their dwelling and bed for the night, it is as though they go around the city shouting indictments at the Marcoses whose rule has condemned them to this kind of life.

At a time when making fun of the dictator or his wife could cost people their freedom, if not their lives, the poet pokes irony at both of them. In the poem *dagiti lugan ti biag* (life's vehicles), he writes about a Metro Manila aide who is told to get off the bus she has boarded because she was not going to be given a free ride even if she did not occupy a seat (Tabin 1980b). The joke is that she works for the First Lady under whose beautification scheme she is paid to clean the streets of Manila. Yet she still could not afford the cheapest fare.

Such is the painful irony of this poem that, although it may be read as partly aimed at satirizing the First Couple's employment program, it sharply points to how difficult it has become for the impoverished to have any access (or means of access) to what are supposed to be public (that is, affordable) services. The Metro aide (as they were then popularly called) is forced to walk home after a whole day of working under the burning sun, a walking that is not leisure but rather a punishment. Her inability to afford the fare is the result of government and IMF policies. In 1979, for example, in order for the Marcos regime to get a grant amounting to US\$179 million, among the conditions the IMF imposed was "an incomes policy that would hold the line on wages. At the same time it pressed the government to raise the regulated prices for rice, canned milk, sugar, and bus and jeepney rides—all daily items of necessity" (Morrell 1987[1979], 260).

Anges: Breath and Life from and in the Streets

In a number of Tabin's poems, we encounter recurring images of life: struggles in order to live, struggling to live, and others. He uses the Ilokano word "anges," which encompasses breath, breathing, exhaling, and life itself. To be dead would be "awananen iti biag" (literally, lifeless, biag also meaning life) but also "nagsatan iti anges" (literally, breathing ended, stopped, or cut). In these poems where "anges" and the struggle for it become dominant concerns, we find and encounter poor people working very hard in order to live as well as traffic policemen whose mission it seems to be is to cut off their breath, to extinguish life. This they do by expropriating these people's labors of and for life for their own use. In short, they live off on these struggling people. Like the *aswang* (witch)-traffic policeman in the poem *no agbisin dagiti aswang* (Tabin 1982b), they take away from people who have less, people who have nothing other than the desire to extend their life.

ngem no kasdiay a maangutan—
masaripatpatanda ti bakes
agsigsigam inna mauldotan

but when they smell—
catch a glimpse of the predator
looking for someone to victimize

(Tabin 1982a)

The above lines from the poem *dagiti mangarkarawa iti anges iti igid ti kalsada* (Tabin 1982a) conjure up images of beasts hunting for prey. But unlike our jeepney driver who is unable to avoid or ward off the aswang-traffic policeman, sidewalk vendors run away from them to escape extortion or to protect their wares from being sequestered or destroyed. They therefore evade their grasp, the arrest of their life-sustaining activity. They engage in illegal activities, they whose only desire is to make a living, to find something to ensure that they have a few more breaths to exhale and therefore prolong their lives however precariously.

That their living, or their prolonging of their lives, is done in and sourced from the streets, demonstrates how vital the streets are to the urban poor. They may exist on the margins of streets—sidewalks—but it is where people are. They are not themselves on the streets, or on vehicles, but their existence is defined and shaped by their activities on sidewalks where people pass them by. The streets are a place and means of movement, of mobility. For them it is a place of economic activity, a place of life-sustaining activity. The streets shape the rhythm of their lives, of their being able to breathe. Their life-making acts are punctuated by the appearance of threats embodied by police officers. The precariousness of their position is indexed paradoxically by their “mobility.” This mobility is not something enabled by any wealth of resources (such as, for example, privileged mobility like travel or tourism, which the regime had desperately wanted to attract) but rather dictated by their insecurity. They can only sell small stuff, those that can be gathered quickly and can be carried or spirited away easily when police officers are spotted.

But where these sidewalk vendors are constantly under threat, hence their almost ambulant-ness, Tabin offers a stark contrast where the police officers are not there when and where they should be. In the poem *nguy-a-papel-anges*, he

bounds up even more inextricably the life or anges of an emaciated woman with the newspaper she sells for a living (Tabin 1982b):

binigat-minalem nga idayday
ti baket a kuttongi
ti panilpo nguy-a-papel-anges
iti abaga ti kalsada
iti arubayan ti pagadalan.

every morning-afternoon
the skinny old woman displays
her extender of nguy-a-paper-breath
on the street sidewalk
close to the school.

It is not only that selling newspapers is her source of living but rather that it is what keeps nguy-a (the last breath) away from anges (life). However, because it is that which exists between nguy-a and anges, the newspaper (papel) or the selling of it links the two together. A sense of urgency animates the woman’s search for that which will prolong her life (“panilpo”), an urgency that leads to her death:

iti panagdardarasna
a mangiballasiw iti damdamag
nga inna ilatag—
nagikkis ti pilid
ti insiwet a nalabaga a Toyota.

in hurrying
to display the newspapers
on the street sidewalk across—
the wheels of a speeding red Toyota
screeched.

(Tabin 1982b)

She is abandoned to die, to suffer the fate of those who have nothing, those who are nothing because made immaterial and nothing: “kastoy kadi

lattan / ti panagkismay / dagiti awanan!” (are those who have nothing just going to expire like this!).

Like our sidewalk vendors selling peanuts, clothes, and apples, this emaciated elderly woman sells what for her are her life—the source of her life. The extinguishing of life according to Tabin has become so common because life has become so cheap (“nalaka unayen ti biag”) whereas the means to live, to breath(e)—to life, to anges—have become prohibitive. They have simply gone beyond the reach of those abandoned to fend for their own selves. For those who cannot afford life, who do not have the means to prolong life, the only thing left for them is to die. Or, rather, they are left to die. This Tabin (1980c) shows in his other poem *iti Phil. Gen. Hospital: naglaka gayam ti biag!* (at the Phil. Gen. Hospital: life is very cheap!). Like the Metro aide who is told to get off the bus because she simply did not have the money for the fare, the dead body of a man is wheeled out on a stretcher. He had only received the kind of medical care that he who had no money “deserved,” that is, for him to be taken to a government hospital, which happens to be the country’s biggest. That the man did not receive the medical attention he desperately required from a hospital to which Imelda Marcos poured money in the mid-1980s¹⁹ highlights the metaphorical use in which the PGH is deployed. Rather than an indictment of the hospital, it is an indictment of the lack of government provision for an effective and affordable, if not free, public health service. For Tabin, the passing away of life, that which is induced by abuse and neglect, has become bound up with the natural, cyclical rhythm of life. They have become part of the occurrences that the passing day brings:

ah, gagangayen
daytoy a ladawan
nga ilabas
dagiti malem. . .

ah, this is now
an ordinary sight
that comes along
with each passing day

iti Phil. Gen. Hospital: naglaka gayam ti biag!
(Tabin 1980c)

The government’s neglect of hospitals and of its people has direct consequences on their life. It is a life that inescapably is rhythmized by a government whose policies are meant more to satisfy the demands of international lending institutions than to meet the basic needs of its people. Indeed, the hemorrhaging of the nation in order to service its debt had fatal consequences on the lives of Filipinos. The widespread poverty had caused Japanese firms to avoid the country when massive Japanese capital swirled around Southeast Asia in the wake of the 1985 Plaza Accord (see discussion of Japanese capital above). Tabin’s poem involving an elderly woman hit by a red Toyota car might be said to presciently provide a poetic rendering not only of how Japanese capital increasingly became important in the Philippines²⁰ but also of how it largely sped away from the Philippines, capital that was vitally crucial in the economic development of Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

The tangential way by which suffering, neglect, and harassment are linked to the Marcos regime or to its policies may be seen further in two of Tabin’s short stories. “Dung-aw iti Agmatuon,”²¹ although about a farmer from Ilocos, nevertheless deals with his experience of falling victim to illegal or unlicensed recruiters of overseas contract workers (Tabin [1982] 1998). He flies to Saudi Arabia only to be sent back, his dream of giving his children a better life and future shattered, and his life more mired in poverty for he had sold every possession he had to raise the money for this Middle East job. Two policies of the Marcos government are implicated in his story. The first is the export of labor that was institutionalized in 1974, and the second is the government’s relinquishing in 1978 of the recruitment of contract workers to the private sector. This story alludes to a flight, to a movement of physical bodies and labor across state borders, which Marcos turned into a foreign-reserve and national-income generation scheme. It is also a flight and movement deeply bound up with immobile capital, hence it is contract labor and laborers that are mobilized by the state and international capital. This is a movement that was regulated and actively promoted by the state.²²

The second story, “Ti Ngayed iti Salinong ti Nakatiwangwang a Langit” (Comfort under the Shade of a Barren Sky),²³ talks about the plight of a migrant woman from Mactan who has gone mad because of the tragedies she suffered in Metro Manila (Tabin [1984] 1998). Narrated in the form of a life story (or life history) interview conducted by a writer who has made it his mission to record and thus tell her story, “Ti Ngayed” almost is a composite of stories of Filipino women migrating from impoverished rural backgrounds. There is her story of her escape from a life of servitude to and sexual

abuse by a rich businessman in their town, her journey to Manila which at first she found liberating, her work as an unpaid and sexually exploited servant in a family, then to her work as a prostitute. She bears two children; her husband abandons her; they live in squatter areas, are evicted, and forced to take shelter and live in the streets. Her two children are beaten up by the police, the older one—her daughter—taken away. She receives a letter from her posted from Japan. Her son, who gets involved in child prostitution with male foreign tourists, is hit by a car and dies unattended in a hospital. She loses her sanity and is constantly forced to move by the construction projects of the Marcoses.

She calls herself a “basura” (refuse) because these development projects such as flyovers keep on throwing her out of where she has made a dwelling. She is, in other words, thrown away like refuse, for she is considered a refuse. These flyovers and other constructions are ways of restructuring Metro Manila, of redirecting the flow of people, of controlling where people, especially squatters, live. These constructions provide the government with the excuse to evict them. These building projects, part of the modernization and urbanization of Metro Manila, necessarily change the place’s landscape, spatiality, and rhythm. Ultimately, they drive the urban poor farther to the margins, making more acute their experience of becoming refuse and castaways (Pieterse 2008; Tadiar 2009). To the regime, they are “disposable people” (Bales 1999).²⁴

Conclusion

What I have done is not just read for meaning or content but also attend to the rhythmic interaction of these poems, and short stories too, with the rhythms imposed by an authoritarian regime. This rhythmanalysis reveals a life whose everyday is that of a struggle both because of extreme poverty and because of what the rhythms are struggling against—the movement of Marcos-orchestrated progress, development, urbanization, modernization in which the impoverished are refused, that is, turned into “metropolitan refuse” (cf. Tadiar 2009, 143–81).

These poems make visible the existence of another reality, of other social realities coexisting and co-occupying the political and social space of Manila with the “reality” promoted and disseminated by a totalitarian imagination. These poems alert and sensitize us to the operations of coercive power—state, institutional, political—that impact on and affect not just the everyday lives of many urban dwellers but also the rhythmicity of their lives. Their everyday

lives have the sense of the burden of a lifetime (Tadiar 2009), where their everyday is a prospect they face during their entire lifetime. Here, “everyday” is not just the quotidian; it is the “lifetime,” in other words, a “chronic everyday life” (Simpson 2008). For the poor struggling to live, their daily lives cannot be seen simply as “everyday” but as struggles for life, hence their lifetimes.

The poems capture and convey the rhythms, workings, dynamic, and operations of power within Marcos’s repressive regime. They not only talk about oppression but also negotiate and navigate the imprisoning regime of Marcos. They depict people whose walking, sleeping, and living on streets, sidewalks, and underpasses, “counterrhythm” the illusory flow of development, and the national history and condition fabricated and disseminated by Marcos. As Lefebvre (1991) once said, “everyday life is the supreme court where wisdom, knowledge and power are brought to judgment” (quoted in Merrifield 2002, 79).

Tabin’s focusing on how people were rhythmized during the Marcos regime enables us to see how they were assaulted daily by the regime. The daily suffering is a regimen, a regimen of travails, neglect, and utter persecution. Their physical mobility, the spaces they occupy and move about bespeak their marginalization. Tabin’s works show what the movement for a “New Society” was really like for many people. Although the urban poor keep on moving, their mobility is not one of restlessness, but one that is instead borne out of their becoming castoffs and castaways. They are constantly displaced, forced to move in order to keep body and soul together, and forced to wander to find a temporary place to settle. Routinized violence is part of their lives, of their moving and movement in and within the city. This routine is a duration; it endures and is enduring. It is one they have to endure. This routine violence and suffering are part of the durational consequences of the authoritarian regime. Tabin’s poems and stories capture moments of this duration, and provide episodic narratives of the urban poor’s encounter with the modernization and development policies of the authoritarian regime. Paradoxically and ironically, these poor people are themselves the excess of this state logic and force (Tadiar 2009), an excess that the state is powerless to contain, one it would rather cause to disappear for they expose the abuse and neglect of the regime.

This violence is what has shaped the mobility of the urban poor, what I mentioned in the first section of this essay as referred to by Lefebvre as “mobilisation,” when people’s movement and mobility are dictated by the

actions of authorities. By focusing on how the “refused” of the regime have encountered martial law, Tabin’s works might be read to attempt to counter the regime’s total “refusing” and refusal of the lives, experiences, and narratives of Metro Manila’s urban poor. They require us to undertake a sentient engagement not only with the lived experience they represent but also, perhaps even more critically, to engage with the “historical experience” they chronicle and bring to life, the lives and livings—anges—they rescue and gather off the streets of Metro Manila.

Although this alone distinguishes Tabin from many Ilokano writers, writers in whose imagination a positive image of Marcos is nurtured, his critique of the Marcos regime lacks an explicit articulation or avowal of a personal politics, that is, of how it is braided with his artistic vision.²⁵ None of the literary texts examined explicitly links the suffering of Metro Manila’s urban poor, mendicants, and vagrants to the regime and to the policies it pursued to get rid of them. It might in fact be by precisely eschewing the personal that Tabin could somehow attend to the political, to politicize his work. In an email communication with me, Tabin (2010) admits that he feared what would happen to him and hence wrote in a way that enabled him to deal with social ills without naming the Marcoses. Recalling his time as library assistant at the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, the regime’s think-tank, he remembers how he and others were at the beck and call particularly of Imelda Marcos, as well as how they partook of the abundant food that she lavished on them whenever she visited. He says that it was with a heavy heart that he did his work but that he did not have much choice. He not only had to swallow his pride but also made compromises with the regime. To this day, he has not avowed his anti-martial law position despite the Marcoses being no longer as powerful as before and despite the fact that he is already in the United States, away from any direct and face-to-face interaction or encounter with other Ilokano writers who might accuse him of becoming a “traitor.”

The risk of death, which was very real for writers who dared stand up to Marcos, no longer exists. Tabin’s continued silence on this matter widens the gap between what he claims his works to articulate and do (protest against the dictatorship) and his personal stand on the dictatorship. This gap exposes the limits of his willingness to risk the personal for the political, a risk that if he takes would help braid the personal and the political. This no longer involves going underground or even activist work; rather, merely boldness and courage to avow his position. But precisely because Marcos is so held with

such abiding affection and respect, especially among older and other Ilokano artists and writers who by 1986 were already established figures, that he is virtually untouchable, such an act would constitute a radical break that could potentially open the way for a critical examination not only of the productive corruption of the political by the personal (Hau 2000) but also of complicity and resistance among Ilokano writers during and since the Marcos rule. Tabin’s continued silence and refusal to talk unequivocally about his Marcos position compromises the political claims he makes of his work.

Notes

This article benefited enormously from the comments of an anonymous reviewer whom I would like to thank here. Roy V. Aragon was a sounding board early in the writing of this article. I thank the editor of Philippine Studies for comments that helped polish this work. I also thank Manong Herman Garcia Tabin for his generous gift of time and the photographs included in this work. Piya Constantino gave me permission to use her painting “Methods of Containment” for which I am indeed grateful.

- 1 *Bannawag* had been published since 1934 as part of the Liwayway group of regional publications that included *Bisaya*, *Hiligaynon*, and *Liwayway*. It is now owned and published by the Manila Bulletin group of publications.
- 2 For a more extended discussion of how Marcos has been deified in Ilokano literature, see chs. 2 and 5 of my *The Promise of the Nation: Gender, History, and Nationalism in Contemporary Ilokano Literature* (Galam 2008a) and my essay “Narrating the Dictator (ship): Social Memory, Marcos, and Ilokano Literature after the 1986 Revolution” (Galam 2008b). See also Belinda Aquino’s (2000) informative and frequently entertaining examination of the politics of ethnicity among Ilokanos in Hawaii during Marcos’s exile on the island-state.
- 3 Herman Garcia Tabin worked at the Records Office of the Manila-headquartered Asian Development Bank, the Asian “World Bank,” from 1979 to 2006. Before that, he was library assistant from 1975 to 1979 at the then Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (PCAS), the policy-making center of the Marcos regime, which is now the UP Asian Center. He moved to Utah in 2007.
- 4 Tadiar (2009, 10) explains: “[b]y ‘historical experience’ I do not mean only people’s collective responses to the objective social and economic conditions in which they find themselves. I also mean the collective subjective practices they engage in that help to produce and remake those objective conditions. Experience consists of this human *activity* of mediation between self and social reality, that is to say, the cognitive, semiotic, affective, visceral, and social practices of relating to the world that individuals engage in as part of the process of producing themselves. These practices of mediation, which are socially organized, help to constitute both individual selves and the socioeconomic conditions to which they are subject. In this sense, experience does not belong to some deeply personal realm; subjective forms are products of this mediating activity as much as socioeconomic structures are products of labor.”
- 5 Although Jose A. Bragado, a former literary editor of *Bannawag*, wrote about urban squatting in his novel *Gil-ayab ti Daga* (1985–1986), he took a position that favored the capitalist landowner.

Bragado also remarks approvingly of the martial law regime. For a discussion of this novel, see Galam 2008a, ch. 4.

- 6 Tabin gives this specific year in his 13 February 2010 email to me.
- 7 Three pieces of legislation prepared the way for EOI during the martial law regime. These were the following: Republic Act (RA) 5186 (Investment Incentives Act of 1967), which established the Board of Investments and gave a broad range of tax incentives to export producers, such as tax credits on raw materials and imported capital equipment; RA 6135 (Export Incentives Act of 1970), which extended benefits provided by RA 5186 with a ten-year tax holiday on most materials and capital goods used in manufacturing and processing; and RA 5455 (Foreign Business Relations Act of 1970), which removed restrictions on the repatriation of profits (Kelly 2000, 32–33).
- 8 Hawes (1992, 153) offers the following explanation for the incoherence of the country's economic policies: "True, Marcos made play with the terminology of developmentalism, but this was largely for the benefit of the foreign interests which seemed happy to lavish support on a regime which employed its rhetoric. For him, development was a spin-off of political endeavor; and when political power and economic growth pointed in contrary directions, there was no question as to which way Marcos' policies turned."
- 9 Called structural adjustment loans (SALs), their availability was predicated on the following conditions: (a) radically reducing government spending, in order to control inflation and reduce the demand for capital inflows from abroad, a measure that in practice translated into cutting spending in health, education, and welfare; (b) cutting wages or severely constraining their rise to reduce inflation and make exports more competitive; (c) liberalizing imports to make local industry more efficient and instituting incentives for producing for export markets, which were seen both as a source of much-needed foreign exchange and as a more dynamic source of growth than the domestic market; (d) removing restrictions on foreign investment in industry and financial services to make the local production of goods and delivery of services more efficient, owing to the presence of foreign competition; (e) devaluing the local currency relative to hard currencies like the dollar in order to make exports more competitive; and (f) privatizing state enterprises and embarking on radical deregulation in order to promote allocation of resources by the market instead of by government decree (Bello et al. 1994, 27). See also Naomi Klein's (2007) magisterial account of the rise and spread of neoliberalism.
- 10 Foreign investment during the Marcos era was different from that of the Ramos era in terms of where investments came from. The Marcos era was dominated by American capital whereas during Ramos's time Southeast Asian and Japanese capital poured in. The lukewarm attitude of American investors during this period has been attributed partly to the termination of the military bases agreement in 1991 (Tiglao 1995).
- 11 Murphy (1993, 14) explains that "Metro Manila's overall annual growth rate in the 1980s was 3.3% (down from 4.9% in the 1970s and 6.1% in the 1960s). However, many observers feel the rate of growth in the squatter areas was far beyond 3.3%. They believe that hard economic times over the last ten years, the civil war in the countryside, a high national population growth rate of 2.4 or 2.6%, the failure to develop industry in the rural areas, and natural disasters, such as the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, have swollen the streams of poor people coming to the cities." Cf. Bautista 1998; Maranan and Lee 1992; Rebullida et al. 1999.
- 12 For more up-to-date figures on housing requirements nationally and by region, see Cariño and Corpuz 2008.

- 13 A study of the Philippine economy conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1974 showed that poverty and inequality pervaded Philippine life before 1972. However, these conditions worsened in the years after the imposition of martial law. See Schirmer and Shalom 1987, 175–78; Miranda 2001.
- 14 Since the "crisis of representation" and the poststructuralist questioning of hegemonic truth- and knowledge claims, and the bases upon which these claims are made and legitimized, the "second-orderness" of cultural texts has continually been questioned. James Clifford and George Marcus's edited volume, *Writing Culture* (1986), was an influential text, particularly in the American academic setting, in the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and ethnography, highlighting the rhetorical and representational conventions and practices that both rely upon. The artisanal character of both narrative and ethnographic accounts, their constructedness, points to the "fact" that what are considered to be "first-order" accounts are themselves mediated by genre/formal conventions (Atkinson 1990; Behar 1996; Behar and Gordon 1995; Bruner 2004; Gupta 2005; Willis 2000) as well as by the interpretative acts of anthropologists or ethnographers, acts that, in a manner of speaking, suggest or point to the nontransparency of the reality we seek to represent. Hence, the "violence" that needs to be done in order to make sense of it and make it "representable."
- 15 For accounts of armed resistance to the military regime, see, e.g., Boudreau 2004, especially ch. 6; Boudreau 2008; Rutten 2008; Weekley 2001. For resistance to Marcos's development projects, see, e.g., Finin 2005, ch. 9.
- 16 "Tactics" is used here following de Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics. For de Certeau "strategies have institutional positioning and are able to conceal their connections with power" whereas tactics "have no institutional location" and "constantly manipulate events to turn them into opportunities" (Skeggs 1997, 10; cf. Tonkiss 2005).
- 17 Bienvenido Lumbera, for example, described some writing during the period as "literature of circumvention" as they deployed indirect or subtle ways of critiquing the dictatorship (cited in Santiago 2001, 219). This is especially salient in Ilokano literature where the writers' ethnolinguistic affiliations undoubtedly have shaped their personal loyalty to Marcos. Furthermore, the realities of publishing—very limited space and outlet, ownership of these outlets, the editors' biases—in Ilokano literature must also be taken into account. Cf. Guillermo 2001; Maranan 2007.
- 18 Alfred McCoy (1999, 226) has written that Ferdinand Marcos, increasingly becoming incapacitated by illness, "signed a secret decree in 1975 naming his wife Imelda as successor." For an account of the power struggle within Marcos's regime, see *ibid.*, especially ch. 6.
- 19 I thank the editor for pointing this out.
- 20 I thank the anonymous reviewer for this insight.
- 21 This story was first written in 1982, when it won the second prize in the now-defunct annual Ilokano literary contest, the Governor Roque Ablan Awards for Iluko Literature (GRAAFIL). However, it was published only in September 1998 in *Bannawag*.
- 22 The overseas employment program was originally intended as a state monopoly. Two government agencies were created, namely, the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB) and the National Seaman Board (NSB), which were tasked with market development, recruitment, and the securing of the best possible terms of employment for land-based and sea-based workers, respectively (Gonzalez 1998). Due to corruption, inefficiency, and legal challenges from the private sector (Asis 1992), the government changed its policy to give the private sector greater

participation in the labor export industry. The state's policy change was also based on the realization that "conflict [with the private sector] would result in less capital accumulation for both sectors, and through a partnership, greater levels of accumulation would be possible than if either had a monopoly" (Tyner 2000, 137; cf. Gonzalez 1998; Kelly 2000). Thus in 1978, four years after the labor export program was adopted, the state reinstituted private sector participation. This state-private sector partnership resulted in a massive growth in overseas employment. From 1975 to 1982, for example, the total number of processed workers rose by 772 percent despite the fact that contract workers were being deployed to the same geographic region, the Middle East (Ball 1997; Tyner 2000; also Agunias 2008). In 1982 the state's regulatory function was strengthened with the creation of the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) to take overall responsibility for the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the country's overseas employment program (Battistella 1999). This mandate consolidated the POEA's regulatory function, which consisted mainly of regulating private recruitment agencies, and the marketing of Filipino labor(ers). The private sector retained its role of recruitment, processing, and employment of Filipino workers (Abella 2004).

23 Although this story was written in 1984 and won second prize in the GRAAFIL 1984, it was published only in October 1998 in *Bannawag*. A Filipino translation (*Ang Aliw sa Lilim ng Nakatiwangwang na Langit*) by the author himself appeared in 1988 in *Kurditan: Mga Kuwentong Iloko*, an anthology of Ilokano short stories translated into Filipino edited by Reynaldo Duque, Jose Bragado, and Linda Lingbaoan.

24 In this context, squatters are being segregated, another way of dealing with the urban poor. Segregation, according to Iris Marion Young (2000, 207), "is the product of class and income differentials combined with a variety of discriminatory actions and policies of individuals, private institutions, and government." In this regard, segregation spatially expresses inequality (Savage et al. 2003).

25 I thank the anonymous reviewer for bringing this matter to my attention.

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