

# **Feminist Consciousness: Motifs From Philippine Postcolonial Literature Written In English By Filipina Women**

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## **Abstract**

This paper will examine text written in English by Filipina writers for motifs that delineate feminist consciousness in Philippine literature in order to broaden definition and perception of feminism to re-empower and re-establish the Filipina woman. Awareness of feminist movements had awakened Filipina writers to the realization that, for centuries, the mainstream consciousness has kept the Filipina woman at a disadvantage; that exploitation, subordination, discrimination, and oppression have conditioned the Filipina to be docile, passive, subservient, and self-sacrificing; that the forms of oppression, themselves, had become archetypes for Filipina writers. Such continuous and pervasive strategies of oppression have led to the dehumanization, marginalization, and alienation of Filipina

women in Philippine society. This paper seeks to examine that consciousness through the textual analysis of certain works of literature written between 1928 to 1993 to trace motifs that delineate a re-emerging feminist consciousness in Philippine literature. Moreover, reading and writing strategies enabled by the vision of third world feminists and writers such as Hagedorn can also decipher ways in which Filipina writers have used, and are using, language and literature to expose popular hypocrisies, patriarchal standards, and the many forms of oppression upon the Filipina woman. As such, Hagedorn's work can be seen as evolving from an emerging tradition of Filipina writers who are contesting the repeated pattern of patriarchy manifest in gendered power relations wherein the Filipino (male) is perceived as superior and the Filipina (female) subservient, docile, and dutiful; in short, Filipina writers write to empower the Filipina. In order to understand and overcome the depths of alienation and marginalization caused by colonization, both the Filipina and the Filipino have to go through a process of *decolonization*. I posit that Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* articulates this process. The Filipina must develop the ability to question her reality as constructed by colonial narratives. Filipina writers in English reflect a tradition of oral literature; specifically, that of the *babaylan*, a distinct figure of power in pre-Spanish Philippines when women occupied equal status with men in Philippine culture. These writers hope to re-awaken the women's *babaylan spirit*. *Women may once again be the purveyors of re-created tales and their dormant voices may be heard chanting positive songs.* Recognition and acceptance of the orality of the Philippine culture shall lead to healing the self, healing the culture, and eventually unearth buried cultural memories.

### **Feminist Consciousness: Motifs from Philippine Postcolonial Literature**

A re-emerging consciousness ensued during the US colonization of the Philippines when education for Filipinas was encouraged. As a result, by the 1900s, awareness of the feminist movements awakened Filipina writers to the realization that, for centuries, the mainstream consciousness kept the Filipina at a disadvantage; that exploitation, subordination, discrimination, and oppression conditioned the Filipina to be docile, passive, subservient, and self-sacrificing; and that the forms of oppression, themselves, had become archetypes for Filipina writers.

This paper seeks to examine that consciousness in texts written in English by Filipina writers through the textual analysis of seven works of literature written between 1928 to 1993 to trace motifs that delineate a re-emerging feminist consciousness in Philippine literature. And while this reading will, by necessity, reveal the damage wrought upon the Filipina psyche by these oppressive archetypes, it ultimately serves to broaden perceptions of feminism by exposing what is indigenous to Philippine culture and re-empower the Filipina woman.<sup>1</sup> The primary focus of my analysis is *Dogeaters*, by Jessica Hagedorn, whom I situate in a tradition of written text. However, as I argue here, Filipina *writers* in English reflect a tradition of oral literature; specifically, that of a *babaylan*, a distinct figure of power in pre-Spanish Philippines when women occupied equal status with men in Philippine culture.

Without a doubt, the effects of the oppression on the colonized and post-colonized Filipina women are firmly documented in the texts and occur in many forms: violence in the form of shouldering multiple burdens such as traditional household chores, child rearing, regular and odd jobs, family matters- all the while being minimized, being grossly overworked and underpaid has resulted in low self-esteem, perpetual fatigue, and self-sacrifice; media pornography, sexist

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<sup>1</sup> The author's use of the term "Filipina serves to differentiate and separate the female from the male inhabitant of the Philippines so as to instill gender consciousness and clarification since there is no gender specificity in the language. The absence of gender specific pronouns may be a good thing were it not for gender specific abuses and oppressions. Until full equality is achieved, the term "Filipina" is a specifier and an identifier of any female citizen of the Philippine Islands. "She, he, hers, his" are absent in the languages of the tao of the Philippines.

advertising, mail-order brides, double standards, and prostitution, treating her as a commodity has resulted in her feeling sexually exploited and discriminated, objectified, passive, and inferior. Such continuous and pervasive strategies of oppression have led to the dehumanization, marginalization, and alienation of Filipina women in Philippine society. Nevertheless, reading and writing strategies enabled by the vision of “third world” feminists and writers such as Hagedorn can also decipher ways in which Filipina women writers have used, and are using, language and literature to expose popular hypocrisies, patriarchal standards, and the many forms of oppression against the Filipina woman. As such, Hagedorn’s work can be seen as evolving from an emerging tradition of Filipina writers who are contesting the repeated patterns of patriarchy and hierarchy manifest in gendered power relations wherein the Filipino male is perceived as superior and the Filipina female subservient, second-class, docile, and dutiful; in short, Filipina writers write to empower the Filipina.

### **Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Philippines**

To appreciate the Filipina women’s present predicament, let us delve briefly into Philippine history to establish a grounding and trace the evolution of the feminist movement. Popular belief before the onset of gene sequencing has the Philippines connected to the Asian mainland as evidenced by the similarity of the flora and fauna of Borneo and Palawan and fossils of elephants found in Luzon. Curiously, the Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian ancestry are hardly mentioned in Philippine historical accounts.

The earliest inhabitants called the Ati or Aeta or Negrito were thought to have crossed this land bridge.<sup>2</sup> Chinese traders have had contact with local inhabitants from about A.D. 1000.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> In Luis G. Dato’s *The Land of Mai, A Philippine Epic*. vol 1, Iriga City Edition, Dato contests this claim:  
... latest diggings have unearthed to light  
The so-called Dawn Men ages older than  
Aetas, and like them, migrating from  
The Asian mainland moving overland

Indonesian empires of Sri-Vishaya and Madjapahit brought cultural influence from South Asia such as Sanskrit-based writing system.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent waves of migration from Indonesia and Malaysia came by

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When the land bridges to the continent  
Still joined the now sea-sundered isles of Mai  
With herds of rhinoceros, elephants  
They crossed the bridges, also other herds  
Of migratory mammals, huge and now  
Extinct, as are apparently these first  
Dawn men to see the light of earth in Mai.  
Thick-haired, of massive build, and primitive,  
They used scant clothing, and like animals  
Lived in the caves, used weapons, implements,  
Of crude, unpolished stone, and disappeared  
With passage of the ages, their remains  
Found in Rizal, Batangas, Bulacan-  
A race distinct from Aeta or Malay,  
Without descendants, ages since extinct,  
Come some two hundred fifty thousand years  
Ago, first humans in the land of Mai,  
Of whom we little know, wish more to know,  
Albeit their blood runs not within our veins (8).

<sup>3</sup> During the 14th century, Dato claims that while still a part of the Madjapahit empire:

...Mai also for some time  
In 14th century, was vassal of  
China and tribute to her emperors paid,  
Albeit mild, the Emperor Hung-Wu,  
An embassy dispatched with gifts of silk  
And porcelain vases to the Mai chieftains.  
And China sent officials; her patrols  
Prowled the Mai seas...  
And in Sulu today, the tomb still stands  
Of Pun Tao Kong, an envoy of the Mings.

In 1521, the Mings withdrew  
... As Spain and Portugal were opening  
The stage for trade and conquest of the world.  
...When she withdrew her suzerainty over Mai  
From history's dawn, in Sung and Yuan days  
Mai she had known in intercourse of trade (14-15).

<sup>4</sup> The electronic Encyclopedia Britannica.com 2000 cites Srivijaya and Majapahit as Indonesian Empires. Luis Dato traces the two empires to India in his historical epic, *The Land of Mai*:

First of the kingdoms to extend empire  
O'er Mai or at least, a part of it-

sea, spread and nestled in coves and bays, at river mouths and river valleys, and some settled in the mountains all over the islands. They spoke different languages and owed allegiance only to local leaders.<sup>5</sup> Those that settled along the coast engaged in barter trade with sea-faring merchants from

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Pallava in East India, sometime in  
8th century, A.D., ere it in turn  
Was by Chalukyas and the Cholas crushed,  
Simhavishnu, its greatest conqueror-king.  
The Cholas, Cherans, and Pandayans joined,  
Their masters, the Pallavans, to destroy  
In the 9th century's remaining years.  
And from the ruins, kingdoms, two empires,  
The Sri-Vishaya and Madjapahit,  
Arose, to make Mai part of the empire,  
Sometime in the mid-14th century,  
With centers in Visayas and Sulu  
From Sri-Vishaya is Visayas called,  
A name the islands bear down to our times.  
...The Sri-Vishayan empire was Malay,  
It's culture Hindu, its religion that  
By Buddha founded, the Enlightened one.

...Close at its heels, came Madjapahit next,  
To last two centuries...  
And parts of Mai it ruled- Manila and  
Lanao, the Sulu Archipelago.  
...Madjapahit was Malay likewise,  
Its culture also Hindu but its creed  
Was Brahmanism, which no converts made  
Likewise in Mai, correct us if we're wrong (14).

In attempting to reconstruct the ancient past, Otley Beyer suggests that... an empire of the magnitude of Sri-Vishaya... have had contact with the Philippines. In *A History of the Orient* (Steiger, Beyer, and Benitez. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1926) he states:

It seems evident from a study of various facts that the Visayas in Borneo and those in the Philippines are not only common in origin, but are also closely allied to the peoples of South-central Sumatra... a direct survival of the spread of colonies from the pre Buddhist Sri-Vishayan state into western Borneo and from there into the central Philippines (123).

One evidence to support this is in the *Tarsilaks* (genealogical records of Sulu) which cites Raja Baginda's emigration to Sulu from Marangkabaw "a rich region in Central Sumatra, from which many Malayan dynasties seem to have come." In Naleel Saleeby's *The History of Sulu*, Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1963, p.45.

<sup>5</sup> The Philippines, made up of 7,107 islands, has several languages and dialects. The number of individual languages listed for Philippines is 187. Of these, 183 are living and 4 are extinct. Of the living languages, 175 are indigenous and 8 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 41 are institutional, 72 are developing, 45 are vigorous, 14 are in trouble, and 11 are dying. (<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PH>) There are some 120 to 175 languages and

neighboring Asian and Middle Eastern countries and the Dutch East Indies companies. Towards the end of the 14th century, merchants, not conquering warriors, introduced Islam to the southern part of the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> Fernao de Magalhaes, popularly known as Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer sailing under the Spanish flag, set foot on Philippine soil in 1521. Invariably, the civilization that greeted the Spaniards was one of multiple traditions. Local inhabitants that welcomed Magellan and his men had a fully developed written and oral culture. In an extract from Luis G. Dato's (1975) *The Land of Mai: A Philippine Epic*, reputed to be the first epic written, not translated, in English that tells about the history of the Philippines, Malay immigrants that came in waves to the Philippine Islands before the Spaniards, brought with them: “ *An alphabet they used, with characters / Not all unlike the Chinese, with thirteen / distinctive consonants, and vowels three...*” (11).<sup>7</sup>

The early Spanish chroniclers refute the written culture but do acknowledge the myths in the epics and songs of the Philippine oral tradition. Miguel de Loarca notes in one of his accounts written at Arevalo, Panay Island, in June of 1582:

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dialects in the [Philippines](#), depending on the method of classification.<sup>[5]</sup> Four others are no longer spoken.<sup>[clarification needed][citation needed]</sup> Almost all are [Malayo-Polynesian languages](#), whereas one, [Chavacano](#), is a [Creole](#) derived from a [Romance language](#). Two are official (English and Filipino), while (as of 2017) nineteen are official [auxiliary languages](#).<sup>[4][6]</sup> Including second-language speakers, there are more speakers of Filipino than English in the Philippines.<sup>[7]</sup>

The [Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino](#) enumerated 135 Philippine languages present in the country through its Atlas Filipinas map published in 2014. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_the\\_Philippines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_Philippines) 2017)

Due to the geographical makeup of the archipelago, those early settlers who brought with them different languages and settled in different islands not easily accessible to other inhabitants, were able to preserve the languages unique to their particular group. In most cases, the languages they brought fused with the indigenous languages and further evolved into unique distillations of dialects.

<sup>6</sup> Majul, Cesar Adib, 1962. “Theories on the Introduction and Expansion of Islam in Malaysia,” Second Biennial Conference Proceedings, International Associations of Histories of Asia, pp. 339-397.

<sup>7</sup> Mai is the Chinese name for the Philippines before the Spaniards came. According to Jaime Malanyaon *The Land of Mai* is a history of the Philippines rendered in poetic form, from the earliest times to the birth of the New Society of then President Ferdinand Marcos. See foreword of Dato, Luis G. 1975. *The Land of Mai: A Philippine Epic* vol. 1. Iriga city Edition.

*...The inhabitants of the mountains cannot live without the fish, the salt, and other articles of food, and the jars and dishes, of other districts; nor, on the other hand, can those of the coast live without the rice and the cotton of the mountaineers. In like manner they have two different beliefs concerning the beginning of the world; and since these natives are not acquainted with the art of writing, they preserve their ancient lore through songs, which they sing in a very pleasing manner - commonly while plying their oars, as they are island dwellers.*

*Also, during their revelries, the singers who have good voices recite the exploits of olden times; thus they always possess a knowledge of past events. The people of the coast, who are called the Yligueynes, believe that heaven and earth had no beginning and there were two gods, one called Captan and the other Maguayan. The Iguines believed that the god Maguayan carried the souls of his disciples, in his boat, to another life (121).<sup>8</sup>*

Problems arise, however, when Eurocentric terminology is employed to define concepts, ideas, and materials foreign to western culture. Because of the orality inherent in Philippine culture and the literary world's tacit acceptance of dominant western terminology for classification, the term "epic" is problematic because the Philippine "epic" differs from the western structure and features. Within any one Philippine indigenous community, various criteria are used in identifying the different kinds of songs and chants performed by subject matter, by the melodic length, by the kinds of instruments used, by the style of vocalization, and by the occasion during which the performance is done. Webster's Third new International Dictionary (1976) gives several definition of "epic," the oral chants native to the Philippines

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<sup>8</sup> From *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas*," in Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, vol5.p121, in Arsenio Manuel, 1962, *A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics*. Quezon City, University of the Philippines. This is the revised version of his original paper presented during the Third Conference on Oriental-Western Literary and Cultural Relations at Indiana University, Bloomington, June 20-23, 1962.

do not quite fit the mold.<sup>9</sup> In spite of the limitation of definition, E. Arsenio Manuel identified nineteen epics.<sup>10</sup> Manuel limits folk epic or ethno-epic to: (1) a narrative of sustained length, (2) based on oral tradition, (3) revolving around supernatural events or heroic deeds, (4) in the form of verse, (5) which is either chanted or sung, (6) with a certain seriousness of purpose, for they embody or validate the beliefs, customs, ideals, or life-values of the people.” Manuel discounts numerous other folk stories claiming to be epics as ballads, songs, metrical romances or prose narratives because they do not pass the criteria he has set forth for ethno-epics.<sup>11</sup> The question of classification aside, for these purposes it

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<sup>9</sup> The dictionary defines “epic” as 1: a long narrative poem recounting the deeds of a legendary or historical hero: **a**: a long narrative poem (as in Homer’s *Iliad*) recounting heroic deeds set against a background of war and the supernatural, having a serious theme developed in a coherent and unified manner, written in a dignified style, and marked by certain formal characteristics (as a beginning in medias res, the invocation to the muse, and the use of similes) - called also classical epic **b**: a long narrative poem (as in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*) having the structure, conventions and tone of the classical epic but dealing with later or different subject matter - also called literary epic **c**: a long narrative poem (as in *Beowulf*) expressing the early ideals, characteristics, and traditions of a people or a nation- also called folk epic.

<sup>10</sup> See Manuel, Arsenio G. 1962. *A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics*. Quezon City, University of the Philippines for more in depth discussion of Philippine folk epics.

<sup>11</sup> Some folk stories were not called “epics” because the early inhabitants had no particular names for narratives qualifying as “epics”. One such example is “*Si Labao Dungon*”. According to Eugenio Ealdama (1938): “The most popular songs are the ballads, reciting the deeds of mythical personages in great combats or describing their courtship and marriage. In such songs the tune is monotonous, with long pauses after each stanza. The pauses are filled in with a humming through the nose, with lips closed. The succeeding stanzas are sung. The most popular ballad is entitled *Si Labao Dungon*”(138).

Ealdama only had beads of a very long narrative epic now known as *Hinilawod*. *Hinilawod* is actually two related, yet distinct, epics- *Hinilawod 1* and *Hinilawod 2*. *Hinilawod 1* tells the story of Labao Dungon, which took five hours to chant for recording purposes and contained 3,822 lines, was chanted by Ulang Udig, an old male shaman from the barrio of Misi, Lambunao. *Hinilawod 1*, according to Manuel, “upon closer examination, has irregular lines and has a number of fragmented cantos which appear to have missing episodes, sometimes rendering the story incoherent or the incidents inconsistent; at other times, some characters seem to play double roles, not warranted by the story. The *Hinilawod 2* narrates the adventure of *Humadapnen*, the Sulod culture hero, in its entirety took twenty-five hours of chanting to record and has 53,000 lines. This was also recorded by J. Landa Jocano chanted by one Sulod woman *babaylan* from the highlands of Panay.” The Sulod (literally meaning “inside”) people live in the mountains of Panay Island and thrive on “slash and burn” economy. Ealdama called these indigenous inhabitants the “Montes” people. The occasions for chanting the myths demonstrate how the outward manifestation of the epic singing are inherent to the Philippine Islands dwellers’ values and beliefs. Jocano observes:

...It must be noted that the *Hinilawod* is a living epic employed ritually in the ceremonial life of the Sulod. It embodies their world view, tells of their origin, contains their ceremonial prayers, provides a mythical charter for their religious, political, and social norms; defines their kinship structure; expresses their feelings, and vouchsafes their empirical judgments.

is essential to establish the importance of myth among the indigenous people of the Philippines because their lives as cultures and as individuals are shaped in significant measure by the stories they tell.

Of relevance here is that *women* were the purveyors of these stories. As such the Filipina woman enjoyed an egalitarian status vis-a-vis the males and played a vital role in the community in pre-Spanish Philippines. At that time, the *babaylan* or priestess or female shaman, was part of a socio-economic community governed by key leaders (Salazar 1989). The political system of pre-Spanish Philippines had the *datu* as the political and economic leader, the *panday* or the blacksmith, the *bayani* or the hero who protected (from all disasters both natural and manmade), and the *babaylan*, a female shaman, who specialized in culture, religion, medicine, and all knowledge about nature (Villariba 1996).<sup>12</sup> The four-square political system was the practice prior to colonization.

The *babaylan* were the keepers of law and wisdom in addition to being spiritual leaders, counsels, and healers of the community. The *babaylan* were the mediators between the divine and the human. The *datu* worked closely with the *babaylan* in determining the right time to clear the land for planting and harvest. *Babaylan* were women mostly of menopausal age because of the inordinately lengthy process of mastering the religious, cultural, and medicinal aspects of their ethno-linguistic groups, as a result, virginity was not a requisite to become a *babaylan* (Salazar 1989). The *babaylan* were the ones who kept the values and beliefs alive in the ways of the people: from the planting season to the harvest, from the rituals of birth to the burial wake, these women gave voice and practice to the ancient truths of the human condition through their prayers, spells, lullabies, stories, poetry, art, and drama. As Mircea Eliade puts it in *Myth and Reality* (1963), "myth is an extremely complex cultural reality... the definition that seems least inadequate because most embracing is this: Myth narrates a

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<sup>12</sup> Depending on the region they come from, the priestesses or female shaman are called *pintadas*, *babaylanes*, *binukot*, etc. In a few cases, the *babaylan* is a priest, often an effeminate man who has to wear the female *babaylan*'s costume (Fernandez 1996, 33).

sacred history... myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural beings, a reality came into existence... myths describe the various and dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the “supernatural”) into the world... and makes it what it is today” (5-6).

The *babaylan* were charged with the mythic memory in the continuum of community life and the accumulated history of each distinct indigenous culture. They chanted the epics of their communities that served as (oral) historical records of the past, noting and detailing the cultural, political, and social changes experienced by the tribes. Most notably, these stories upheld the primary importance of women’s roles in pre-colonial Philippines; stories that presumed power to Filipina women, thereby assuming equal status to the Filipina woman.<sup>13</sup> As a Filipina woman/female, and against possible charges of romanticizing the myth, I shall portray the roles assigned to Filipinas during colonial and postcolonial periods from 1521 to today in order to argue and to trace the ancient myths of the *babaylan* as both an emerging figure in texts by Filipina women writers in English and a re-emerging figure in Filipina cultural consciousness.

From 1521 to 1946, the Philippines was continuously under a foreign colonial rule with changing colonial masters. Ferdinand Magellan landed in the Philippines in 1521 and claimed the Philippines for Spain. The Philippines remained a Spanish colony until The Treaty of Paris following the Spanish-American War. Spain ceded the Philippines to the USA in 1899 for the sum of twenty million dollars. The US became the new colonial masters until Dec 8, 1941, when the Japanese invaded the Philippines because of the military presence of the US in the islands. The Japanese then became the

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<sup>13</sup> In the literary epic *Barter in Panay* written by Ricaredo Demetillo in 1961, Queen Maniwantiwan whose husband was Datu Marikudo, the chief ruler of central Philippines, consented to barter the lowlands of Panay Island to the Indonesians for a golden hat, a golden tub, and further said: “I shall approve the barter if she (Pinangpangan, wife of one of the datos) give the necklace that she wears around her neck” (93).

In spite of the set-up outlined in the epic, it is popularly believed that the legendary first lawgiver was a woman named Lubluban whose rules and regulations concerning rituals, inheritance, and property were observed for generations (Fernandez, 996) Fr. Francis Lambrecht, who studied the *Hudhud* epic of the Ifugaos of northern Philippines further supports the latter claim. “*Hudhud* are sung under three circumstances... Women sing *Hudhud* epics; men, as a rule, cannot sing them and many among them do not even understand them well.”

next colonial masters. The Japanese took over until MacArthur's returning forces liberated Manila. The war ended in February 1945 but it was not until 4th July 1946 that the Philippines achieved full independence from all invaders.

In the context of conquest, the Spaniards introduced Catholicism with the result that in the year 2000, the population of 81, 159,644 was 83% Roman Catholic.<sup>14</sup> Because the *babayan* were the

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<sup>14</sup> Already expected to be submissive, docile, and silent sufferers, Filipina women are treated as subordinate to the Filipino male. Mainstream religious stereotyping ensues from the process of socialization. The secular population of the Philippines as published in World Almanac 2000 is 83% Roman Catholic, 9% Protestant, 5% Muslim, 2% Buddhist and others. At the same time, even a cursory review of current tenets demonstrate ways in which the Catholic religion has helped instill in women the consciousness of being subordinate. Simultaneous construction of womanhood through notions of the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene create a curious pattern of morality that developed in the Philippines during colonial rule. In discussing the issue of morality, M Jaqui Alexander (1991) writes, "Morality has become a euphemism for sex. To be moral is to be asexual, (hetero)sexual, or sexual in ways that presumably carry the weight of the "natural". The Christian creation story assumes that (1) woman is made from man- therefore, she is a derivative being; (2) woman is made for man - therefore, she is a subservient being; and (3) woman is guilty for the sin of Adam- therefore, she is a dangerous temptress who has to be controlled (Mananzan 1998). However, in precolonial oral literature where there are many Philippine legends on the origin of the world, one tells of a thirsty bird that pecked at the first bamboo and "When its bill struck the bamboo... whence stepped anon, to its great wonderment strange figures two- the first man who politely bowed to the first woman". Another version from the Igorots of the mountain province tells of how the god Lumawig created people by cutting many reeds, dividing them in pairs and "Behold! The reeds turned human- female, male and married each other (Dato 972).

In Philippine culture the institutionalizing of the Catholic religion has become a means to rationalize the continued subservience of women in the interpretation of the Scriptures, in the writings of the Fathers and doctors of the Church, in its hierarchical structure, in its patriarchal practices, and in the systematic re-creation of indigenous myths and legends. The Spanish missionaries proceeded to take and re-make ancient stories that they could, deleted the parts that they considered as atheistic notions, and infused them with Catholic doctrines, characters, virtues and values. In the Ilokano epic of *Lam-ang*, for example, Lam-ang, the hero, decides to go to Kalanutian to court Inez Kannoyan. On his way, he refuses Saridandan's (a woman of easy virtue) wily attempts to detain him. Lam-ang and Inez Kannoyan are married in church. After the wedding ceremony, festivities and dancing follow. When the guests are gone, the town chief informs Lam-ang that it is his turn to catch fish. Lam-ang has a premonition that a big fish will eat him, and the staircase will dance when this tragedy happens. Lam-ang goes to sea, is eaten by a big fish, and the staircase dances. The epic echoes biblical stories: the swallowing of Lam-ang by the big fish is similar to the swallowing of Jonah by the big fish; the dancing staircase is reminiscent of the cock crowing to signal a tragedy when Peter denies knowing Jesus; Mary Magdalene, the temptress, parallels Saridandan's attempt to detain Lam-ang from his noble quest, from the 'right' path; moreover, the name Inez: (1) "Inez is an American spelling of the Spanish and Portuguese name Inés/Inês, the forms of the given name "Agnes". The name is pronounced as /i: ˈnɛz/, /aɪ ˈnɛz/, or /aɪ ˈnɛθ/. Agnes is a woman's given name, which derives from the Greek word hagnē, meaning "pure" or "holy". The Latinized form of the Greek name is Hagnes, the feminine form of Hagnos, meaning "chaste" or "sacred" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inez>).

(2) Greek Meaning: The name Inez is a Greek name. In Greek the meaning of the name Inez is: Poor, pure, or

spiritual leaders, the Spanish missionaries thus primarily targeted these women for conversion. Those *babaylan* who were converted were relegated to marginal roles in churches. They took charge of processions and preparations for altar rituals or they were “given the honor” of serving the priests as assistants or maids. Other *babaylan* and indigenous groups who rejected the colonial Catholic religion were forced to flee to the mountains and remote islands because all “heretics” faced Auto-da-fé, the burning of heretics by the Spanish Inquisition. An auto-da-fé or auto-de-fé (from Portuguese auto da fé, meaning "act of faith") was the ritual of public penance of condemned heretics and apostates that took place when the Spanish Inquisition, Portuguese Inquisition or the Mexican Inquisition had decided their punishment, followed by the execution by the civil authorities of the sentences imposed. The most extreme punishment imposed on those convicted was execution by burning. In popular usage, the term auto-da-fé, the act of public penance, came to mean the burning at the stake (Wikipedia 2017).

The indigenous groups who fled, at present called “tribes,” “cultural communities,” or “indigenous peoples,” have managed to remain autonomous. They are living examples of the indomitability of the spirit.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the religiosity, or the religious consciousness of indigenous Filipinas/os made it possible to embrace Catholicism easily. The animistic, polytheistic consciousness, with its belief in multiple gods and indigenous symbols, is still expressed today in the belief in *anting-anting* (amulets to ward off evil spirits), superstitions, miraculous healings, ghosts and spirits, and enchanted places and beings- all of which exist side by side with Catholic rituals and

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chaste. St. Agnes was a 3rd century Christian martyr whose January 21st feast day is described in Keats' poem 'The Eve of St Agnes' ([www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/inez](http://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/inez)).

<sup>15</sup> IP: Indigenous People of the Philippine Islands.

Luzon: Agta Cayagan, Agta Casiguran, Aeta/Ati, Pakkak Gadang, Pugot, N. Apayao, Negritos, Apayao Isnag, Gaddang, Ibanag, Ilongot, Itneg (Tingian), Malaweg, Paranan, Bontok, Ifugao, Igorot, Isnag, Itneg, Kalinga Kankanay, Tinggian (= Itneg)

Visayas: Batak, Palawan, Tagbanwa, Taut’ batu, Ata du sud, A. du nord, Magahat Bukidnon, Alangan, Buhid, Hanunòò, Tadyawan, Taubuid (= Batangan), Iraya, Ratagnon, Loktanon

Mindanao: Mangwanga, Tasaday (Manobo Cotabato), Mamanwa, Manobo Ata, Ata Manobo, Bagobo, Blaan Blit (Manobo Cotabato group), Bukidnon, Ilanon Manobo, Ilianen, Magindanao, Mandaya Cataelano, Mandaya Sangab, Manobo-Cotabato, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Subanon, Tuboy Salog, Tagabawa Tboli, Tigwa, Tiruray, Ubo Manobo. (Source: [www.cbcpworld.com](http://www.cbcpworld.com)).

sacraments (Strobel 1996). Seemingly, eventually, Catholicism in the Philippines means prayer to god and the saints for endurance and release from guilt, assumptions particularly destructive to the role of the *babaylan* in the Philippine culture. As a result, the tao suffered and wept in the almost four hundred years of Spanish colonial rule. They cried at the enforcement of forced labor and they wept as they were seduced and raped by the same people who taught them that purity, modesty, and virginity were values they should uphold and treasure. They sobbed over blood spilled in revolts against colonial rule. They whimpered over the futility and failure of their efforts, because when they finally succeeded in getting out from under the Spanish rule, the USA took over as the new colonizer.

In the Spanish-American war of 1898, Spain lost its dominance over the Philippine Islands and victory made the United States a colonial power. The Filipina women shed copious tears for hundreds of thousands of lives lost, both Filipinos/as and American lives, too, in vain attempts at resistance against the new colonizers.<sup>16</sup> The women trembled once again in fear of being raped, ravaged, and abused when Japanese invaders landed on Philippine soil because it was a US colony. In every war fought on Philippine soil, conquering armies raped and plundered. The degradation of women and children was the ultimate symbol of the conqueror's triumph and the chasm of shame for the conquered. Women continued to suffer; rape, incest, wife battery, prostitution, social oppression, sexist socialization, patriarchal societies, diminished identities, colonial mentalities, discrimination against class, gender, and ethnicities were commonly practiced. But the Filipinas learned to stop crying in despair. Instead, they started writing to inform and instill feminist consciousness in both men and women. Filipina writers wrote to empower the people, especially the Filipina, to protest, to extricate herself from the morass of oppression, and to release the spirit of the tao that is in each and every

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<sup>16</sup> The Philippine-American War (originally referred to as The Philippine Insurrection) began on Feb 4, 1899. The citizens of the Philippines fought chiefly in guerilla units throughout the islands for the next three years. More than 200,000 Philippine civilians died in the war from privation, disease, and brutality. Finally, in 1902, Philippine survivors, with some exceptions, accepted an offer of amnesty in order to put an end to the nation's suffering (*Encyclopedia Americana* 1997).

Philippine woman, man, and child. This was not a simple task since the path to emancipation was littered with cultural, religious, social, psychological, emotional, and ethnic obstacles.

### **The Re-Emerging Tradition of Filipina Women Writers**

The writings of **Angela Manalang Gloria**, born in 1907, expose the social, economic, and sexual ignominy of Filipina women. The foregrounding of such impulses can be seen in Gloria's book of poetry called *Poems*, published in 1940. Gloria graduated summa cum laude with a degree in English from the University of the Philippines, a university established by Americans in 1901. Stella Pagsanghan noted in her essay "Angela Manalang Gloria: The Writer and Her Milieu" (1991), "that all her life, Manalang Gloria exhibited early signs of a defiant stubbornness... a powerful sense of self, a lean, iron spirit that would conquer illness, death of a husband, the devastation of war." Gloria, a first generation Filipina writer writing poetry in English, encountered publication problems. In 1933 two of her poems appeared in *Philippine Prose and Poetry*, a textbook that used local contributions in literature for three decades. When *Poems*, written in 1940, was being prepared for reissue as a student edition in 1950, Gloria recounts that she was told to remove a lot of unacceptable words. In "Pier 7", "whores" had to be changed to "bores". The poem about hatred and "For Men Must War", "Soledad", "Heloise to Abelard", "Querida", and "Revolt From Hymen" were totally censored by The Bureau of Education due to the "vulgarity" of language or subject matter (Manlapaz and Pagsanghan 1989).

Gloria's iron spirit is manifested in the poem, "Revolt From Hymen" (1940), wherein Gloria engages in open revolt against the male-constructed myth of woman. The poem's last two lines "... To be alone at last, broken the seal that marks the flesh no better than a whore's" protests the purely sexual role that Filipino men have popularly assigned to Filipinas. In Philippine culture, the woman is

generally expected to be a sexual siren in bed to keep her husband or partner interested in her.

Another Filipina writer corroborates this belief, Maria Kalaw Katigbak, a Filipina poet, novelist, senator, teacher, and civic leader whose father was a nationally prominent journalist and whose mother was a well-known Ilongga suffragette, Pura Villanueva Kalaw. "Tracing a Hidden Tapestry: Women and Literature in the Philippines" (1989), Pineda-Ofreno quotes Kalaw-Katigbak as saying:

"Because there is no divorce (in the Philippines) when a woman gets married... the burden of adjustment is... hers. She cannot expect her husband to adjust, because of human nature... After three to five years, (the) husband is already flirting with the secretary, because she... knows how to flirt. I used to teach marriage courses at the University of Santo Tomas, and one advice I would give is that a wife should be a good prostitute. Otherwise, her husband will look for one. I tell... my daughters... when you are in front of people, the only bright one is your husband. Don't you know that? When I was a senator, who was more of a senator? My husband! Remember that. You can quarrel, but in front of others, he is always right - even when wrong (41-42).

Kalaw-Katigbak disapproved of her mother 's speeches on property and voting rights for Filipina women while extolling her father's prowess as a connoisseur of women" (42). In the Philippine community, the inscribed cultural role pressures a dutiful wife to act like a mistress in bed to keep her husband from getting one. Woman is stereotyped as a temptress or a prostitute- depersonalized and objectified.

*O to be free at last, to sleep at last,  
As infants sleep within the womb of rest!*

*To stir and stirring find no blackness vast  
With passion weighed down upon the breast*

*To turn the face this way and that and feel  
No kisses festering on it like sores*

*To be alone at last, broken the seal  
That marks the flesh no better than a whore's! (Poems 1940)*

Gloria's poem demands women's freedom from being objectified. Objectification distorts her true nature and negates her true value as a woman. The poem celebrates that moment of freedom, that re-creation, when woman is able to re-create her own myth, infuse it with her own identity. She breathes relief upon ridding herself of the vast weight of negative stereotyping and expectations when she becomes free of man's debauched passion. In some cases, the experience is reversed. It is the women who collude, objectify, and diminish the men.

One of the basic tenets of the feminist position is the debunking of the degree to which patriarchal orientation has altered Philippine society. The absolute rule, the power of the male patriarch places women squarely in subordinate roles in the cultural domain that includes family, society, religion, education, politics, and the economy. Conditioned by this prevailing ideology, and supported by tenets that reinforce notions that "wives should be submissive to their husbands as though to the Lord; because the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church... wives should fear their husbands" (Ephesians 5:22-23-33) Filipinas collude, consciously and subconsciously, contribute to their own emotional, psychological, and sexual subordination and derogation in the process of their socialization. Moreover, early Philippine literature in English has been an important vehicle for constructing and reinforcing cultural female stereotypes that are unmistakably grounded on the presumed and assumed inferiority of women to man.

### **Woman as Symbolic Capital**

**Paz Latorena's** short stories underscore how female characters, in early colonial Philippine literature are commonly defined to support male protagonists. Woman is man's "other", while man is the defining and dominant "subject" in works such as "The Necklace"(1928) that depict women

only in relation to the male character, as an extension of the male image of himself, his ideals, and his aspirations. Three dominant stereotypes from “traditional” representations of women in Philippine literature: the goddess or virgin on a pedestal; the temptress or “whore”; and the earth mother or helpmate. There are variations of these stereotypical images. The virgin is she whom men idealize for her virtue of chastity. The commendable virgin waits patiently for men to notice her. She is never forward, never vulgar, and never initiates attention through flirty actions. Consequently, when no man notices her, she eventually becomes an old maid, a state that has negative connotation of physical or character defects such as ugliness or shrew-like behavior. Then she becomes the target of pity, derision, and amusement because she “missed out” on sexual experiences and is denied motherhood. Then there is the meritorious virgin, the woman of “meager value” who is “inadequate” in comparison to the superior man but is desired precisely for her insignificance so as not to threaten man’s fragile ego. Thus, there are families who keep their young daughters purposely away from society until they are of the “right age” for marriage. In the Philippines, these women are called the “*binukot*”, “the hidden, the kept, the preserved” women.

While the prevailing representation of the ideal Filipina woman portrays her as forever conscious of literally preserving her purity/virginity because it is her “precious jewel”, “sacred and fragile”, she is discouraged from straying near open windows where she could become the target of sexual desires. She is expected to be dutiful, humble, and obedient. The body is held sacrosanct in ecclesiastical teachings. For the Catholic church, the body remains “the temple of the Holy Spirit”, to be used only in the service of procreation, in “proper circumstances, i.e., in the context of marriage.”<sup>17</sup> Woman is constructed as a creature whose natural place place is in the home and whose natural self-fulfillment is achieved in childbearing, childrearing, and motherhood. Moreover, when she gets married, she is expected to be faithful, trustworthy, and trusting, willing to endure suffering and

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<sup>17</sup> *Catholic News*, May 14, 1989.

selflessly dedicate her love and life to her family, God, and society. In short, “essential nature” has been systematically translated to “a formulaic and comprehensible pattern, her aspirations and goals reduced to answering the needs of others- family, society, and God” (Mananzan 1998).

In Latorena’s short stories the literary texts become the site of social construction of female roles and functions that serve to bolster patriarchal society because a woman’s life revolves around her “man” before and after marriage. The desirable Filipina woman is the helpmate whose priority is to realize men’s dreams and aspirations. She is all-giving and all-nurturing like Natalia in **Edith Lopez Tiempo’s** “Abide Joshua”.

Natalia is the wife, sister, or daughter who suppresses her individual needs, longing, and dreams because self-sacrifice and self-denial are virtues expected of her. Another variation is the praiseworthy woman whose unwavering love and loyalty is given to one man who eventually deserts her. She spends the rest of her life lamenting the loss of the one man she desires, loves, and idolizes. This singular loyalty is perceived as a virtue. However, not all images of women are supportive of males. The dreaded shrewish woman with the devouring womb who ravages dreams and aspirations with venom and malice (against her own self as well) is portrayed by Natalia’s mother in “Abide Joshua”. She is deemed evil incarnate. In Juan Archival’s (1921) novel *Dakilang Pag-ibig* (Noble Love), a mother’s missive to her daughter who is about to be married typically echoes and extends Kalaw-Katigbak’s sentiments and typical of the times: “Pay attention to everything that he does not like you to do, so you will not do them again, especially those that pain him. Marriage for a woman means taking on a serious responsibility. It is your duty to be a hard working wife. You should keep the house in order. Make him happy so that your home will be a pleasant and enjoyable home for him.”

In Philippine culture, the “essentialist doctrine” establishes its deepest, firmest roots in motherhood. The role of wife and mother provides status and symbolic capital as epitomised by the First Lady in Hagedorn’s *Dog eaters*. As Mina Roces notes in her study of the oral narratives of Filipina

women, “symbolic capital” refers to material things and “culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status, and authority.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, women strongly identify with motherhood because of its special place in Philippine society. Likewise, through the ideology of domesticity, the mother is glorified as the “household manager of a happy home”. She takes charge of home and family. Children in Philippine culture are perceived as gifts from god. Motherhood is associated with nobility and quiet heroism and so idealized it becomes a virtue. Maternal ideology is articulated in beneficial ways and brings physical, emotional, and moral support from family, friends, and society. Filipinas look upon motherhood and mothering as desirable rewards.

In an essay on the “Ambiguities of Motherhood in the Philippines”(1996), Delia Aguilar notes that of the “cross-class samples” she gathered from various women, all their responses “fall squarely within the conventional categories of thinking about marriage, motherhood, family, and children in the Philippines.” Namely: “that marriage is the most normal (as in natural) state for women and men and that children are an essential part of that union (Torres-Tiglao 1990, 110; Illo 1990, 104; Medina 1991, 193); reproductive work is a priority over women’s other roles (Sobritchea 1990, 32; Rodrigues 1920, 22); self-sacrifice as the woman’s, not the man’s duty (Medina 1991, 133); the extension of parental obligations after children’s marriages (Illo 1990, 80), all these are commonplace assumptions in Philippine society.”<sup>19</sup> Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo notes in her article “tracing a Hidden Tapestry: Women and Literature in the Philippines” that Marra Lanot, a Filipina poet, expresses feminist notions that question Philippine values and regard interdependence as of primary importance and family-centeredness that culminates in a milieu congenial to mothering. Such values contrast sharply with western thought “where the practice of mothering in isolated nuclear middle-class households

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<sup>18</sup> See Mina Roces’ essay “Kapit sa Patalim: Victim and Agency in the Oral Narratives of Filipina Women Married to Australian Men in Central Queensland” in *Lila -Asia Pacific Women’s Studies Journal*. 7:1. 1998 where she discusses symbolic capital and habitus.

<sup>19</sup> In Delia Aguilar’s “Ambiguities of Motherhood in the Philippines” in *Lila-Asia Pacific Women’s Studies Journal*. Institute of Women’s Studies, 1996, (6), p.97-104.

invariably fosters in women paradoxical feelings of both independence and alienation” (Minturn and Lambert 1964; Comer 1974; Oakley 1980; Boulton 1983; Rich 1986; Lewis 1981; Dally 1982).

Paradox is the principal mode of Lao Tzu’s thought process, the principal mode of the tao. The People of the Philippines, Filipinas and Filipinos, are referred to as the “tao”. It is the paradox of every writer to have to transcend the logical function of language through language. The higher level of paradox, the very content of the poetry is dedicated to transcendence - of the logical function of language through language (Dale 2004). Lao Tzu’s wisdom exhorts us to communicate through silence, paradoxically, through the use of words; words are not the problem. The perversion of words to manipulate the disadvantaged; to rationalize consequent and subsequent inhumanities of these manipulated perversions. Lao Tzu’s words liberate us from inequities and injustices, to maintain our “tao-hood”, to be *tao, together as one*, one with the “Great Integrity”. In ancient times, The people knew the Great Integrity in all its subtlety and profundity (Dale 2004).

*Transcending Language*

*To pen the unwritable  
To write the unreadable*

*Go through the Gateless Gates  
Ascend the stairless stairs*

*Animate the somnolent  
Awaken the sleeping*

*Transcend language  
The writer’s paradox (Tan 2017)*

The female in literary discourse has been made to act out roles that post colonial society traditionally reserves for women- the obedient wife, the loving mother, the patient teacher, the responsible elder sister, all of whom are ordained by God and society to render service when and where needed (Reyes

1981). However, **Marra Lanot**, a Filipina poet who writes both in Tagalog and English, is one writer who vocalizes doubts about this traditional role as demonstrated in the following excerpt from her 1984 poem, "Tribeswoman".<sup>20</sup> In the early 1980s, Lanot was one writer fired up by feminist ideas taking root in the Philippines and abroad, mostly organized conferences held by and during the United Nations Decade for Women. Lanot foreshadows a definite shift in attitude.

*My body contains  
The dream of my father  
Sweat of my husband  
Hope of my children...  
But  
Could it be possible  
It is wrong  
To stand and wait  
Like this...  
Like this- a heap of ribs,  
A forsaken idol...  
Could it be possible  
It is wrong?  
Could it be possible? (Lanot 242)*

The images of women in the short stories of **Paz Latorena** reflect that male bias so deeply entrenched and internalized in Philippine society and culture and that women themselves become willing colluders and perpetrators of negative stereotype. Latorena is a first generation writer in English born in 1908 in Boac Marinduque, daughter of affluent landowners. Latorena went to a Catholic school run by Benedictine nuns, went to a Catholic college, had a short stint at the University of the Philippines, but finished her M.A. and Ph.D at the oldest Catholic University, the University of Santo Tomas, in 1934. Latorena's short stories focus on the "ideal Catholic wife" as the perfect woman, and view marriage as the "natural" destiny of women. However, there is a nagging protest undermining

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<sup>20</sup> The poem "Tribeswoman" may be found in full in *Caracoa V* (Sub Versu) November 1984, p.43 and in "Tribeswoman". Babaylan: An Anthology of Filipina and Filipina American Writers. Eds. Nick Carbo and Eileen Tabios. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2000, 242.

Latorena's portrayals of the sanctity of marriage to Filipina self-worth. Latorena has misgivings on the issues of marriage and gender roles.

In "The Necklace" (1928), the female protagonist in Latorena's short story is Nene, daughter of the rich, proud, and domineering Don Jose. Nene announces her secret marriage to the foreman of their *hacienda*. Her father becomes angry and withdraws his Christmas gift of a pearl necklace. Her mother, described as a "frail woman whom God had sent to adore her proud domineering husband and her whimsical daughter" (50), validates Reyes' statement that women are consecrated by God to serve when and where needed. To Don Jose, Nene is a total disgrace to the family and Nene has thoughtlessly disregarded her 'name, (her) duty to family and blood' (51). Nene's marriage to Manuel, a man beneath their social class, is an offense too great... unforgivable" (51) Nene and Manuel were both 'marginalized... diminished'. In the family dynamics, Nene is merely a "woman" therefore "weak" and incapable of choosing the "right" husband because she lets herself be ruled by her heart and her emotions. Manuel is socially marginalized because of his material poverty. Poverty is not prestigious. Manuel has no class, no status, therefore has no authority, no power. Manuel is deemed "inferior". Nene's aberrant behavior shall be forever remembered as a black mark against the family name. Her attitude shows her "mistake" taints the whole clan.

Nene shows her "independence" from her father, and immediately leaves to join her husband in "his little nipa hut at the outskirts of town" (50) where she readily adapts to her role as housewife, staying at home and patiently going through "... times when her hands became red with rebellion against dirty shirts, blackened pots, and dishes. There were times when her eyes turned dim and refused to guide her hands through the mazes of a torn undershirt or sock" (19). "But she was not sorry. She did not regret anything. For her husband's love made up for everything- poverty, privation, hard work" (52). In fact Nene considers her suffering inconsequential compared to Manuel's efforts. Nene's hard work and her willingness to sacrifice herself for her husband are ideal virtues that should counter the negative act

of willfulness and disobedience against her father in society's eyes. Unfortunately, it was not able to conquer class prejudice. Manuel 'was forced to look for another job, and found one that kept him in the field from sunrise to sunset, supervising and planting, taking care of coconut trees, making copra and everything. And all that for just enough to keep him and his wife alive"(52). Nene's love for Manuel enables her to bear the loss of friends and family, especially her father's love. Seemingly.

In spite of her avowal to the contrary, Nene is not quite content with Manuel and their relationship. Nene shows signs of chafing at the bit. She dwells on the past with obvious melancholy and despair. But being a true Christian woman, she chooses to stand faithfully by her husband and resigns herself to endure the hardship and the suffering with determination. Nene is a pitiful victim of a society that considers her disobedience a flaw while condoning her father's feudalistic class discrimination of Manuel. This family structure gives the father the right to dictate his daughter's actions because she is his offspring. She is his possession and her personal wishes should never supercede his own because duty and "propriety" of conduct bind her. Ultimately, it is this unrelenting social divide that drives Manuel to steal a pearl necklace just to "see it gleam against the glory of (Nene's) neck(52)! Doing so, Latorena exposes the very high value men place on material accessories to adorn their women because women are an extension and a reflection of the men or showpieces of male ego. Women are seen as symbolic capital. On Manuel's felonious act, Nene could only cry "as she sank into a heap on the bamboo floor"(56). Nene does not condemn her father nor her husband. She accepts their actions as resulting from some misguided sense of honor, of duty. This rigid code rooted in colonial and feudal pasts compels Don Jose to disown his disobedient daughter, otherwise he loses face. Manuel has to prove to Nene that he is not only capable of providing her with a home, but provide her well materially, thus affirming his ability to provide, his power, his manhood. While sympathetic in tone and seeming to impress upon couples the importance of the sanctity and sacrament of marriage, Latorena exposes the intolerance and intolerable practices, foolish pride, and

prejudices that lead to tragic circumstances.

Subservience is the price Filipina women willingly, and sometimes even happily, pay for the attention and protection by man. Stereotypes of these Filipinas as exotic, docile, childlike, and gold digging abound. Writers contemporary to Latorena and Gloria prod the people to pay attention to the woman's struggle for recognition, for her own identity, in works that expose ways in which for centuries Filipinas have been lulled into a false sense of security by a chivalric code that claims to protect women even as it deepens their psychological, social, and economic dependence on men. Filipina authors write to inform and jolt Filipinos and Filipinas alike from their colonial stupor into post-colonial consciousness. But social and cultural bias continue to hamper the advancement of the feminist movement. The negative stereotypes are extended to these women's children who are unmarried or divorced. Some deny their Filipina/o heritage to be accepted to a peer group. They are doomed by their need for western assimilation. This rejection is common to those devalued groups who have internalized a white reference group (Atkinson et.al. 1989).

Filipina women writers like **Edith Lopez Tiempo** are more aware of their contributions to society and have acquired self-confidence and a sense of identity. Tiempo's short stories reveal the multiple binds women find themselves in. Edith Tiempo, born in 1919 in Bayombong, Philippines, graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree in Education from Siliman University in 1947, an M.A. from the University of Iowa in 1949, and a PhD from the University of Denver in 1958. *Abide Joshua and Other Stories* is a collection of short stories written by Tiempo in 1964. In "Abide Joshua," Tiempo's protagonist, Natalia, rebels against the role of responsible older sister to her brother, Silverio, yet she feels duty-bound to capitulate, albeit unwillingly. Silverio has always used the rental from the house they jointly inherited from their parents to forestall the necessity of his earning a living. She feels contemptuous of his demanding ways yet she also thinks up excuses for him and eventually acquiesces to his demands.

The painting of Natalia's parents who have both passed away remains on the wall. Even in death, Natalia's parents still manage to govern her life. And still somehow manage to keep her in a repressed state. Natalia tries to unburden herself by trying to sell the ancestral home. Silverio accuses Natalia of making life difficult for both of them. Then he shifts tactics and reminds her that he is her blood relation and therefore should be her first priority. Finally, he informs her that her selfish actions will deprive him of money that is rightfully his from the house rental. The brother and sister squabble shows how economics and gender issues are closely linked and are used as discursive support by the male establishment. By reminding Natalia of her duties to her kin, Silverio subscribes to the notion that woman occupies a subordinate social position, that she should not put her wishes above Silverio's, who is after all, her younger *male* brother. The hierarchy of power between men and women is exhibited in the the siblings' confrontations with Silverio demanding the privileged status and Natalia rebelling against the notion. Natalia's increasingly social and economic independence is a threat to the traditional hierarchy of gender and class in Philippine society.

Tiempo also deals with the recurring issues of "cultural hybridity" and female identity. As a product of mixed colonists and cultures, Silverio, a "sweet picture of geniality... with pale eyes... and rounded jaws pulled up in a high curve to his cheeks... peaked brows... wild hair..."(29) looks like a child of Spanish elegant decadence while Natalia resembles a hybrid offspring of almost four hundred years of servitude, a half a century of the doctrine of market liberalism, and aeons of meritocracy who lives life with the intensive drive to improve her lot. As a result, Natalia becomes a shrewd entrepreneur. Her three mestiza clients are fat, pampered, perfumed, superior, greedy, and gossipy by-products of the Spanish colonists who Natalia had to cater to with simpering obsequiousness, all the time inwardly cringing and rebelling at her own actions. The American colonizers taught Natalia that she is more than capable of being economically independent. Natalia is able to free herself from some of the shackles that bind her. She is given the opportunity to reinvent herself, but time does not ease

the pain of exposure to differing Spanish, Japanese, English, and American colonial masters that leave her feeling ragged and sundered.

In "Abide Joshua" Tiempo draws a negative image of the Chinese in the Philippines. Chinese are negatively stereotyped as unscrupulous businessmen, uncouth, ignorant, rude, and sly. The males are sexually aggressive, a reversal of western perception that views Asian males as asexual while Chinese women, like Filipinas, primarily only embody sexuality. Natalia wants to purchase the property adjacent to her dress shop, else, a Chinese merchant is going to move in and start "...A bakery! She would lose all her customers"(28). The Chinese merchants represent the quiet and unobtrusive Chinese immigrants who are a threat to Filipino entrepreneurs with their "silent usurpation" of local businesses. Tiempo illustrates how Filipinas/os obviously and subtly discriminate against class, gender, and ethnicity; unfortunately, an inherited colonial mentality of fear and insecurity that privileges white Europeans as superior.

"Abide Joshua " is riddled with contrasting images. Natalia has proven herself to be an independent woman who owns her own business, but this shop is looked upon with approval only because it is still a feminine endeavor. It is, after all, a dress shop. Natalia goes home and dons a loose housedress to help her relax but "...she shed the enormous duster like some incongruous disguise"(27). Her previous life of domesticity no longer gives her comfort. Natalia has evolved into a modern woman who spurns conventions with acts of defiance. Natalia remarries when her first husband dies. Not only does Natalia remarry, she marries a man, a movie mechanic, much younger than her and beneath her "class'. Natalia also remarries against the wishes of her younger brother, Silverio. Yet Egmidio, Natalia's husband, is quick to make up the difference by sporting a high hand when one night Egmidio comes home and proceeds to switch out the native Baguio paintings without consulting Natalia. Tiempo shows how Egmidio is proud of his 'blue collar' job because it brings him economic independence. Egmidio has enough self-confidence that he does not feel threatened by

Natalia's economic independence, either. In fact, Egmidio is quite adamant that Natalia should not let anyone, customer or kin, walk all over her, a typical and popular American sentiment.

Along the same lines of subtle paradoxes, the seductivity of Silverio's remorse is complex. When Silverio hurts Natalia with accusations, he is immediately and sincerely aghast at what he has said. But Natalia points out that no matter "No matter how ugly his fault, how sharply he hurt her, his contrition went just so far and it was always up to her after that"(37). Again, drawing on familial/sibling ties, Tiempo uses the memory of Trinidad, the maid, who toils and nurtures, soothes and calms the children when they are agitated. Unlike her own mother who was sternly "unembarrassed with the stick over her and Silverio"(27), Trinidad, the earth mother, is summoned by Natalia's subconscious because Trinidad personifies the caring and loving mother Natalia longs for. As the narrator notes, Natalia and Silverio are "like two old people sapped and senile before they are properly matured"(37). Nevertheless, while Natalia tries to break out of the social conventions that bind her, she ultimately gives in to the tradition, albeit rebelliously, as the older sister sacrifices her career and personal ambition to take care of her younger brother. The signs at several houses foretell her struggle when she goes back to visit her hometown. The shadows of the coconut trees on the bare ground are like bars - like grilles on the windows of the Spanish colonial houses that keep the women inside.

In Philippine society, unmarried daughters are a source of embarrassment to the family and in **Edith Tiempo's** "The Corral", written in 1964, the opening paragraph firmly situates the protagonist, Pilar, in a domestic role very properly serving her duty to family by taking care of her father's needs. But Pilar's father is not really too pleased with her because she is "not exactly young"(42) and is still unmarried. Pilar tries to assert herself by being independent, earning her own living and telling her father it is not because she is unattractive that she remains single. She resents the assumption that she should marry or that she is *destined* to marry and have her own family. As a teacher for ten years, Pilar's teaching was her streak of resistance allowing her to eschew marriage in favor of independence.

Nevertheless, Pilar feels trapped by the burden of expectations that “tradition”, family, and society impose upon her. Her father commiserates with her but admonishes her and tells her she should have left teaching long ago, gives her a direct missive to give up her struggles, save her energy, accept her destiny, and marry Mr. Perfecto, the principal; “You can take it easy now. The corral is up”(50). However, Pilar resigned her teaching job to avoid Perfecto because he repulses her. She thinks he is “ugly- fat and ugly” and “outside of school they have nothing to say to each other, nothing true, nothing even perishable”(44). Perfecto, on the other hand, believes himself to be a “normal man”. He is very much aware of Pilar’s sexuality and smugly believes that she is sexually attracted to him but has “held away”.

At the same time, Perfecto is a stereotypical figure of the traditional post colonized Filipino, a man who believes that woman is dependent upon man and can only be fulfilled when she is married and has children. He intones that Pilar does “not want to be a drudge... she has been thrashing around...”(44). Nor does he believe that Pilar is not capable of sending him away but it’s because she really does not want to. Mr Perfecto is not hopelessly in love with Pilar. He pursues Pilar because she is the right woman for him to marry; she is “not unattractive” and comes from the “same class” as Perfecto. Pilar acknowledges her sexuality, something that Spanish colonial societies refuse to tolerate. Pilar is immediately attracted to Gregorio, the woodcutter, but predictably refuses to bridge the gap between classes. In the end, Perfecto wins Pilar because of negative class and gender role stereotypes and preconceived prejudices.

Pilar tries to cry out for Gregorio, but her “cry had no voice”(51); her internal struggle against class and gender is as loud as the silent cry of the “fish thrashing around in the meshes; their mouths open and closed and dumb shouts and their eyes were indignant blobs of whites in their flat heads” (50). Indeed, Pilar’s fate is foretold when Perfecto charged her to stop”thrashing around” early in the story. Her bitter cry at the end of the story is a warning to all women, “Oh how I hate you- you who are

so right, so hatefully right, Mr. Prefecto” (52).

Tiempo's stories illustrate women realizing their marginalization and oppression. Her characters are spirited, strong women who are capable of struggling against convention. They are women capable of fighting for recognition. Tiempo shows that if they give up the struggle, emancipation may never happen. Her stories caution women to withstand the initial social censure, that the abolition of gender inequities is absolutely central if women are to be truly treated equally. Filipina women writers such as Tiempo, Gloria, Latorena reveal the multiple binds Filipinas find themselves in. Their writings are conscious acts of telling the reading public about women's struggle in a male dominated world.

Filipina feminist writers' textual accounts of sexuality have not been easy. They have taken the risks and exposed women's desires regardless of severe sanctions against explicitly speaking and/or writing about pleasure or pain through sex. **Carmen Guerrero Nakpil** personifies the irreverent post war writer in English who had resigned her teaching job at an exclusive girl's school because of a short story she had written about a "young nun's passing erotic fancy." Later as a female journalist, she fumes about the "monstrously apparent" prejudice where a "kind of schoolboy code decrees that woman is stupid until proven otherwise". Nakpil describes the quality she likes about the "young Filipina woman ... (she) has a thoroughly modern belief in the precious, unreplaceable self... a sense of sovereignty, a capacity for laughter... because she has stopped listening to the voices of authority, of organized religion, or sentimentality and convention... (she possesses) a verbal frankness that would have stunned- and often does- her grandmother... and a healthier attitude toward sex, viewing it as more like something out of the UN Charter of Human Rights."<sup>21</sup> "In the early 1980s, fired up by feminist ideas taking root both at home and abroad as a result of the United Nations Decade for women, some Filipina writers in English decided to write about women, for women, with a woman's voice, and striking an overtly female stand.

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<sup>21</sup> Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, *A Question of Identity* (Manila: Vessel Books, 1973), p.110-113.

Fanny B. Llego biting pen attests to this:<sup>22</sup>

***A Prayer: The Great Expectation***

*There's no doubt about it, I need to get hitched;  
I need someone to scratch me whenever I itch*

*Or give me a back rub whenever I want it  
(Who'll pout only a little when someone else does it):*

*Someone on whom I can vent all my frustrations  
And who is supportive in trying situations*

*Who'll extol all my virtues, forget all my faults  
And will always submit to my sexual assaults:*

*Who'll bring up my children the way they should be  
Yet still be entirely devoted to me*

*Who'll always obey me, my word being law,  
My logic perfect: My thinking without flaw:*

*My sexy cheerleader, housekeeper, accountant,  
Secretary, nursemaid, unflagging assistant:*

*Brought up and molded to think that success  
Is found in the home; nothing more, nowhere else.*

*O, Mother Goddess, I need in my life,  
A man willing to be the perfect little wife! (Llego 242)*

***Dogeaters***

**Jessica Tarahata Hagedorn**, a poet, novelist, playwright, performing artist, and musician, is a Filipina-American writer who immigrated to the US in 1961. “Deeply influenced by soul music, rock and roll, multicultures, and a group of black and hispanic writers and musicians, Hagedorn experiments with

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<sup>22</sup> See Fanny Llego’s “A Prayer of Great Expectations,” Breaktext: Caracoa 7, Ed. Philippine Literary Arts Council, 9.

form and medium to express the conflicts of immigrants straddling and spanning cultural divides.” In 1990, Hagedorn came out with *Dogeaters*, a novel that focuses on Manila Society during the Marcos regime, the Aquino assassination, the hovering threat of the communist New People’s Army, and the scandalous decadence and the brazen corruption of the ruling elite contaminating politics. *Dogeaters* underscores America’s cultural dominance on the islands in order to critique that dominance. It is a passionate critique of neo-colonialism and lay capitalism that focuses on American hegemony and the dynamics of consent and coercion. *Dogeaters* juxtaposes slum-living with the obscene wealth and power enjoyed by the elite few, the one percent. Hagedorn graphically portrays a Philippine urban subculture of seamy and hypnotic nightlife, drug use and abuse, pornography, madness, physical abuse, sex, and murder. Hagedorn admits that *Dogeaters* is “populated by edgy characters who superficially belong nowhere but actually belong everywhere.”<sup>23</sup>

*Dogeaters* is a repository of memories with multiple narrators. Streams of fragmented thoughts, narrative, and consciousness and images from a multitude of characters’ viewpoints bombard the reader, presenting an event from one perspective and picking it up from another. The story centers on the unfolding of the historical crisis of US hegemony and lingering Spanish colonialism. Hegemony is the geo-political, economic, cultural, or military predominance or control of one state or the ruling class, over others. The dominant state is known as the hegemon (Wikipedia 2017). The Philippines has been repeatedly colonized, and its culture, economy, religious, and political structures have been drastically changed in the colonial process. To combat colonialism, Filipina/os have to undergo decolonization. I posit that Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* articulates this process.

Decolonization is a process of “reconnecting with the past in order to understand the present and be able to envision the future”(Root, 1997). Decolonization is not a familiar term in the Filipina/o community. Paulo Freire discusses the need for the colonized to develop critical consciousness

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<sup>23</sup> In “Jessica Hagedorn: An Interview with a Filipina Novelist” by Joyce Jenkins in *The Asian Pacific American Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts*, George Leonard, Ed. Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.

whereby they come to understand the process of dehumanization that made their colonization possible (Freire 1970, 1985). In the Philippine context, to decolonize is to be able to pinpoint internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, anger, betrayal, and anxiety as a result of colonization: to decolonize is also to understand how the loss/adulteration of language affects Filipina/o identity.

Decolonization catalogs oppression and the oppressive structures. To learn self-hatred when colonized people believe that they are inferior in comparison to their colonizers may be one of the worst violence wrought upon the human psyche. The Filipino writer NVM Gonzales (1992,55) describes decolonization as a “confrontation of the many bankruptcies... spewed out of the *lahar*.. the *volcanic ash* of colonization” Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* contributes to the understanding of colonialism and decolonization.

Decolonization strengthens the cultural connection to the Philippine indigenous culture. Hagedorn’s conscious articulation of decolonization stirs up feelings of anger, betrayal, and confusion at the same time that it empowers, inspires, and encourages. E. San Juan, Jr. criticizes Hagedorn’s narrative style and its celebration of cross cultural contact and hybrid identities.<sup>24</sup> According to San Juan, Jr, transnational hybrid identities such as the exiled Filipinas/os or the American-born Filipina/o must be articulated as a problem, a vexing allegory of international policies and America’s global hegemony, rather than a dual heritage which can be remembered with pride “ writers found themselves privileged... as the fountainhead of answers to questions of Asian American person/collective identity”, while critics were eschewed for using theory and for being ensconced in elite institutions (San Juan 104-5). He moans the missed opportunity to scrutinize problems or racial representation in preference for “ a theater of naive and pathetic self-congratulation... swallowed up in ... ghetto marginality and ethnic vainglory. Liberalism and identity politics have conquered again. “ San Juan Jr.(105). Although San Juan, Jr admits that *Dogeaters* is the first novel he has read that “seeks to render in an unique post

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<sup>24</sup> (San Juan 1992, p.109).

modernist idiom a century of US-Philippine encounters..." "the novel can be conceived as a swift montage of phantasmagoric images, flotsam of banalities, jetsam of cliches, fragments of quotes and confessions, shifting kaleidoscopic voices, trivia, libidinal tremors and orgasms, hallucinations, flashed on film/tv screens".<sup>25</sup>

Hagedorn's work not only pulsates with paranoia, but it also throbs with wit and humor when she explores things of otherness, the idea of multi-level revolutions, terrorism, dominant foreign culture versus minority indigenous culture, the idea of home and homesickness. Another subject of *Dogeaters* is the elusive problematic identity of the tao as a people and a nation. People are caught in a world of binary oppositions; Filipina/American, home/exile, real/fantasy, polytheism/monotheism, East/West/North/South, native/foreigner, colonized/colonizer.

The authenticity of Hagedorn's narrative stems from the validity of her voice, that of an expatriate, an exile's voice, that is both marginal and central, divided in her loyalties, but committed to her struggle with competing identities. As Salman Rushdie puts it in his 1982 essay "you have imaginary homelands" the narrative will also spring from the consciousness of an "at once plural and partial" identity; the feeling that sometimes "we straddle two cultures: at other times we fall between two stools"(Rushdie 15).<sup>26</sup> Rushdie's essay applies to the discourse of writers like Hagedorn in the between-hyphen world situation;

*It may be that writers in my position, exiles or immigrants or expatriates, are haunted  
By some sense of loss, some urge to be claimed, to look back, even at the risk  
Of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the*

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<sup>25</sup> See E. San Juan Jr.'s essay "Mapping the Boundaries: The Filipino Writer in the USA" in *The Filipino Writer in the USA. The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 19, 1991, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> In Rocio Davis' "Ninotchka Rosca's State of War and Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters: Revisioning the Philippines*" in *Ideas of Home: Literature of Asian Migration*. Ed. Geoffrey Kain. East Lansing: Univ of Michigan Press, 1997.

*Knowledge-which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that are physical alienation...  
Almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that  
was lost:  
That we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities, or villages, but invisible ones  
imaginary homelands... of the mind(10).*

Hagedorn believes that Filipinas/os should “maintain (their) diversity and integrity”.<sup>27</sup>

**Ninotchka Rosca**, a radical Filipina writer born in 1946 and maturing in a turbulent period of social and political agitation of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, writes in an essay entitled “Myth, Identity, and the Colonial Experience,” that she believes the attempt to resolve the conflict between the orientation of the bedrock culture and the fragmenting effect of colonialism is a dominant theme in Philippine writing, and in particular, in the writing by Filipinas/os outside the Philippines (Rosca 240). Philippine writers have a well developed sense of the national self and of the contradictions that make it problematic to even have a self in this context at all.

*This is then what one finds in Filipino fiction; a self that shares in all of the  
contradictoriness of the national self. It is difficult for a Filipino writer to conceive of  
judging events solely from a personal individual point of view... what he or she attempts  
to do, consistently throughout the years, is to locate himself or herself within the  
collective self and to look at the world with the eyes of his or her people and his or her  
history... By representing the self in fiction the writer assumes part of the responsibility  
for defining it even as he or she reflects it as he or she defines it, so it becomes more his  
or her definition... We do not have objective manifestations of the self that have been  
evolving since prehistory. Our materials are perishable; language and  
memory-uncertain, imperfect. But they fit well the volatile nature of this our self, where*

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<sup>27</sup> In Karin Aguilar's-San Juan, Ed. *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*. Boston: South End Press, 1994, p. 178.

*they can change as fast as we can, as we flicker through myths and identities, unravel the impact of colonialism on ourselves, and go through our metamorphosis. Memory, most of all, anchors us, for, though it is fragile, it is also the longest umbilical cord (242).*

*Dogeaters* is abundant with symbolism. Hagedorn exposes the technique and detrimental effects of cultural cannibalism. Colonization encourages cultural cannibalism and negative morphic resonance. Morphic Resonance is a process whereby self-organising systems inherit a memory from previous similar systems (Sheldrake 1998). The term is directly associated with Pedro, the indigenous Igorot native from Abra, the “bundok” or Mountain province. His employer, Andre Alacran, a westernized “genuine Manila Queen,” owner of Coco Rico Disco, “shouts improvised curses at the Igorot janitor; *tamad* (lazy Pedro,) Pedrong Headhunter, Pedro the Pagan Dogeater with the Prick of a Monkey and the Brain of a Flea. then he throws in the usual *Gago* (stupid) , *tanga* (brainless), *walanghiya* (shameless), *ulol* (idiot); *stupid, stupid, shameless, stupid, and variations of stupid like dumbfoodidiot*” (33).

La Sultana is the converted *babaylan* or female shaman who lives in “her rusting Mercedes-Benz sedan, permanently parked on a side street near Paco Cemetery. She is regarded as a fortune teller, a faith healer, and a soothsayer; others denounce the fat old widow as a crackpot... She’s given up her worldly goods and devotes her life to the Virgin Mary... her followers visit daily for detailed reports on her nightly talks with the Virgin Mary... La Sultana has never been seen leaving her sacred Mercedes-Benz: She claims to lack the need to urinate or defecate, thanks to a miracle performed during her sleep by the Virgin Mary” (103). Locating the *babaylan* near the cemetery reflects Hagedorn’s concern with the *babaylan*’s approaching demise (*akin to the death of womanity*). It underscores and foretells the mythic identities supplanted by colonial and religious doctrines.

In terms of the post Spanish period, the first native ritual recorded and reported to the western

world was documented by Pigafetta (1525) in his *Primo Viaggio Intorno Al Mondo* and witnessed by Magellan and his men. This indigenous drama was community drama at its onset. According to Fernandez (1996), there was no division between the performers and the audience since everyone in the audience got involved in the performance at some point. In fact, in precolonial Philippines, rituals were vital points in community life as sources of power, potency, and magic that helped control the forces of nature and it was the *babaylan* who acted as the intermediary with the gods;

*... then two very old women come, each has a bamboo trumpet in her hand.*

*When they have stepped upon the cloth they make obeisance to the sun. Then they wrap the cloths about themselves. One of them puts a kerchief in the other's hands, and dancing and blowing upon her trumpet, She thereby calls out to the sun. The other takes one of the standards and dances and blows on her trumpet. They dance and call out thus for a little space saying many things between themselves to the sun. She with the kerchief takes the other standard, and lets the kerchief drop, and both blowing on their trumpets for a long time, dance about the bound hog. She with the horns always speaks covertly to the sun and the other answers her. A cup of wine is presented to her of the horns and she is dancing and repeating certain words, while the other answers her, and making pretense four or five times of drinking the wine, sprinkles it upon the hearth of the hog. Then she immediately begins to dance again. A lance is given to the same woman. She, shaking it and repeating certain words while both of them continue to dance and making motions four or five times of thrusting the lance though the heart of the hog, with a sudden quick stroke thrust it through from one side to the other. The wound is quickly stopped with grass. The one who has killed the hog taking in her mouth a lighted torch, which has been lighted throughout the ceremony, extinguishes it. The other one, dipping the end of her trumpet in the blood of the hog, goes around*

*marking with blood with her finger first the foreheads of their husbands, and then the others... Then they divest themselves and go to eat the contents of those dishes, and they invite only women to eat with them, (Pigafetta 1536,42-43).*

In *Dog eaters*, Hagedorn takes on the role of the *babaylan*, producing a work that re-infuses contemporary Philippine culture with its indigenous past. The people of the Philippines remain residually oral even while the year 2001 World Almanac reports a 95% literacy rate. In oral cultures memory becomes the repository of a people's knowledge and wisdom. *Dog eaters* celebrates this orality. Although grieving the loss of the native language as a result of Spanish and American Colonization, in the same token, because of colonization, the tao embrace Spanish and English as part of the Philippine language, incorporate them into their own dialect, and turn language into something distinctly native as in Taglish- Tagalog-Spanish-English. The "peculiar urban distillation" of the three languages spoken by Hagedorn's characters turns language into a symbolic mode of alienation that partially accounts for the wedge among various classes, generations, and experiences. Still, *Dog eaters* celebrates the emerged hybrid language. The rhythmic pulse sends hypnotic images of the intense urban jungle that is Manila to the reader. The language of *Dog eaters* seeps out of the cacophonous alleyways of Metro Manila with that "singular adulteration of Spanish elitism and seedy elegance, American flash and decadence."

A country rich in oral history, language is of utmost importance to the Philippine Islanders. Han Suyin defines "Asians, Africans, and other non-English, non-American writers using the English Language to express their own ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. This is... achieved... by using to the full their own cultural diversity... the Swiss poet Ramiz... states that one is all the more international for being thoroughly "local", grounded in one's own language traditions, capable of conveying the essential traits of one's own culture and making them accessible, familiar... the stronger

the writer's roots in his or her own cultural ethnicity, the more original, and enriching, his contributions to literature and to real life as well, for real life is also and always literature."<sup>28</sup> Hagedorn herself is consumed by music and her goal is to capture "the music of the language... the English, the "Taglish" that had evolved in (her) country and in America... (Hagedorn) always thought that a lot of novels that had to do with the Philippines were too stiff: they were too proper and they didn't capture the rhythm of how people talked, and to me what they do to the English language is wonderful... that fascinates me".

<sup>29</sup> As a result, Hagedorn peppers her works with the Tagalog (or Pilipino), English, and Spanish languages minus explanation or apology. Her work has been described as combining "narrative drive with a lyric sensibility".<sup>30</sup>

The issue of identity is a major theme in the novel, as is the notion or concept of fantasizing. Combining the two, Hagedorn demonstrates ways in which Hollywood is a powerful colonial tool. By focusing on the seductiveness of American film in *Dogeaters*, Hagedorn challenges her readers to sympathize with the molding and active existence of the pervasive influence of the colonial mentality because it is this mentality that compels the characters to reconstruct their identity in order to gain social acceptance, respect, approval, and adulation. Media advertising, radio, music, and movies, especially movies, seduce minds and hearts and easily sway people with their glitter and glamour. The First Lady vocalizes public sentiment when she says, "What would life be like without the movies? Unendurable, *di ba?* We Filipinos, we know how to endure, and we embrace the movies. With movies, everything is okay *lang*. It is one of our few earthly rewards..." (224). During the Martial Law in the Philippines, the First Lady, Imelda Marcos, ordered the facade of Manila slums rejuvenated with fresh coats of whitewash, windows and doorways lined with pots and plastic flowers, tree branches cut and

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<sup>28</sup> This extract is from Han Suyin's foreword to the stories, *Mirror to the Sun* by Aamer Hussein, a South Asian diaspora writer in Britain cited by Feroza Jussawalla in "South Asian Diaspora Writers in Britain: "Home" versus "Hybridity" in *Ideas of Home* (1997) Ed. Geoffrey Kain, Michigan State University Press.

<sup>29</sup> See Jenkins, Joyce. Loc cit.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Joyce Jenkins in "Jessica Hagedorn: An Interview With a Filipina Novelist" loc cit. 498.

planted along the streets from the airport to the hotels and the Philippine Cultural Center that wilted after a couple days and were subsequently discarded. Workers labored day and night constructing several buildings for the cultural center. Towards the end, one of the structures collapsed killing scores of construction workers. A special mass was held in Rizal Park and the survivors continued building. The complex was finished three hours before the scheduled international film festival opened.

Hollywood is an active influential agent in shaping the Filipinos' cultural attitude when it comes to their notions of beauty. Rio and Pucha's tastes are dictated by western standards of beauty. The billion dollar cosmetic industry tells every woman that she is blemished, imperfect, lacking in beauty, class, and sophistry. Rio's mother Dolores is directly compared to Rita Hayworth, beautiful, composed, sophisticated, and has westernized features. Pucha always attracts attention because she is a mestiza with "a nose so pointy and straight" (4). She is blond, fair-skinned, and with an overdeveloped 36B breasts. Beauty pageants are of tremendous importance. Daisy Avila, the winner of young Miss Philippines, attracted the attention of the whole nation (106). The image of beauty queen is usually linked to female power and a woman's power is only related to her role as a support system in the dynamics of kinship politics, a dominant feature of post Spanish Philippine political culture (Roces 1996, 52). Both men and women are rewarded by compliance; while the men achieve power generally through public office, the power that women achieve fall within the established parameters for their gender within this gendering of the image of power, women are expected to exude beauty and morals, a beauty contest winner is a particular advantage for any woman or man associated with her running for political office (Roces 52). Dogeaters illustrates this with the Young Miss Philippines Pageant where; "... the other contestants included Baby Ledesma, a niece of the famous general, Baby Katigbak, Baby Abad, the congressman's youngest daughter, and the disappointed runner-up, Severo Alacran's stunning niece, Girlie" (101). The First Lady herself is a former "Rose of Tacloban" winner.

In gendered power politics, not only are women relegated as support, but they are also

expected to personify perfection. Perfection is measured by physical beauty. This reduces Daisy to woman-as-beautiful-object, wholly defined by her physical body. Daisy Avila, the Senator's daughter, wins the beauty contest and promptly alienates both society and the First Lady then; "... she accuses the First Lady of furthering the cause of female delusions in the Philippines" (109) and publicly denounces beauty contests as "... a farce, a giant step backwards for all women" (109). Daisy's moxie and vehement public denouncement and subsequent radical alignment with the political activist group in protestation against oppression brings to mind the story of the courageous and indomitable spirit of the Kalinga-Apayao women who dramatically resisted corporate encroachment cloaked as a "progressive" government project.<sup>31</sup>

Daisy weeps uncontrollably for months. She dreads sleep. "She is terrified with the weeping which begins while she dreams" (105). Sleep is open to interpretation. Sleep may signify acquiescence to the prevailing political and social status quo, unawareness or indifference to her state of entrapment, and the inability or apathy to propel change. Sleep is the harbinger of dreams, and dreams, according to Freud, are suppressed desires. Dreams sprout utopic Arcadian seeds counter to reality. Discontent, disenchantment, and dissatisfaction due to the disparity between dream and reality could blossom into reactionary, liberative action. In Daisy's case, she joins the activist movement

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<sup>31</sup> Mananzan (1998) recounts that these women's resistance has now become a legend:

The Chico River Dam projet was envisioned by the government in collaboration with a multinational Company. Building this dam would have meant submerging towns, along with hundreds of years of Cultural religious traditions of this mountain people... The (indigenous) women put back into the trucks the construction equipment as soon as the workers put them down. At a certain point, the Workers did succeed in putting up a wall. But the very next day, they saw their... work razed to the Ground by the women. In their growing frustration, the company called in the military. The armed troops were met by hundreds of women, who at a signal took off their blouses and confronted the Military bare-breasted. The troops dispersed in consternation and confusion. Threats of arrest did not daunt the women... Before they were arrested, they... brought their household, children, animals, pots And pans, and all camping equipment in the army barracks grounds. There they cooked, fed their children, let their animals roam around, and threw their waste until the army themselves begged them to vacate the camp and go back to their homes. The Chico River Dam was never built.

whose headquarters are located in the dense mountains of Luzon. She weeps for the torture and rape she will undergo in the hands of the corrupt military under General Ledesma. She weeps for the murder of her father, whose outspoken voice is the only hope of the opposition. She weeps because there is so much corruption wielded by the powerful few. Severo Alacran is at the pinnacle of this cadre of brutal exploiters. She weeps for Baby Alacran, Severo's daughter, because the corruption manifests itself upon her physical form. Baby's skin erupts into terrible scabs and rashes that cover her entire body and she develops a sweating ailment in which she soaks uncontrollably in both heat and cold. In gender politics where women are symbolic capital, Baby's father, Severo Alacran and her husband, Oswaldo "Pepe" Carreon's turpitude are exposed publicly through "the tiny, itchy, watery blisters"(156) on Baby's skin. Baby also weeps and mourns. She mourns her accidental birth to a depraved family. Baby "invents a cleansing ritual for herself. She makes it up as she goes along, this movie starring herself, this movie that goes on and on, this movie that is the only sure way she knows to put herself to sleep" (158). Confronting and acknowledging the negative aspects of colonialism and postcolonialism as visibly manifested by conspicuous scabs, pus, and rashes on Baby's skin, leading to realization and acceptance of the Filipina's present predicament summon tears from Daisy and Baby Alacran; Tears of release, release from subjugation, cleansing tears.

The need to belong and to be recognized forces Joey, the gay half-Black American/half Filipino who knows very little about his paternity to fight against anonymity by proposing his own last name. When Neil, Joey's American lover, returns to the United States, he sends Joey a postcard from the Sands Hotel and Joey says, "that's where I got my last name... 'The Sands', a casino in Las Vegas (72). Naming himself after a monolith of American decadence and entertainment signals that plastic Joey is lost in artificial American celluloid space. Rio Gonzaga's grandfather, an American named Whitman Logan, is named after a famous American poet. Rio keeps referring to her "Rita Hayworth" mother. Romeo's real name is Orlando. Freddie Gonzaga thinks he is a Spaniard. Gloria Talbot's

casual arrogance “seems inherently American, modern, and enviable” (4). Isabel Alacran, a nightclub hostess, a beauty queen, and a movie starlet, after marrying a rich man, “takes a lot of airplanes, perfects her English... she develops a Spanish accent and learns to roll her Rs. She concentrates on being thin, sophisticated, icy. Her role models include Dietrich, Vicomtesse Jacqueline de Ribes, Nefertitti, and Grace Kelly. She is an asset to her husband at any social function. She is manicured and oiled, massaged and exercised, pampered like some high-strung, inbred animal. She has reconstructed her life and past, to suit her taste” (20).

For example, the term *mestizo* and *mestiza* used to mean a mixture of the indigenous people and the Spaniard; today the meaning has been extended to encompass mixtures between Filipinos/as and any other ethnic heritage. The term carries notions of superiority and inferiority in both the Philippines and abroad. Unlike white cultures, physical appearance cannot be the definitive definer nor identifier of the *tao*. Centuries of voyages, invasions, colonization, and multicultural contacts with traders, invaders, pirates, missionaries, and travelers, ensure the the *tao* across the archipelago are guaranteed a fusion of multiple ethnic influences and physical features. In the novel, Rio’s uncle Cristobal, a Filipino who lives in Spain, claims he is a direct descendant of Christopher Columbus and “hires a genealogist to work on (the) family tree. He squanders a fortune on this endeavor (238). Rio recalls that her paternal great grandmother is a Chinese from Macau. “ That Uncle Cristobal burned the only photograph of her so there was no remaining evidence” (239). Rio does not know her family history because her family only chooses to tell her the bits and pieces that they want to remember and deny those that might bring ignominy to the family. Rio then admits to being ashamed at having to invent her own history.

Unfortunately, the people of the Philippine Islands, use measures that guide an ethnic hierarchy with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom. Because culture and ethnicity are largely reduced to “race” (Omi & Winant 1994), subsequently, ethnic solidarity has been “racially” defined (Root 1992). Webster’s

Dictionary defines racism as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. The narrow definition of racism is discrimination based on skin color or race. Racial stereotyping is psychologically and spiritually devastating to the victims. Tao experiences exist in the penumbra of actionable racial affronts. Racial insults are usually trivialized. "Oh, you're Filipino? Man, I love your women. I was stationed at... and proceeds to tell the story of how he went and picked up women at the naval bases along this city and that bay. These slurs continue to perpetuate because the tao do not identify with other people of color. They do not ascribe racist motivation to the discrimination directed at them. Some may think they are excluded from racist slurs because they have been given the "model minority" tag while African-Americans feel that they alone endure "real" racism. The tao who do exhibit upset reactions are dismissed as hypersensitive and amusing. Tao consciousness describes and produces a sense of self, rooted in the common experience of being brown in a world defined by whiteness. Is cultural insensitivity a racial slur? Cultural and sexist oppression against Filipina-Americans are based on color, accent/intonation, clothes, food, beauty, and values. Accent discrimination is directly linked to American jingoism. It carries anti-immigrant undertones. Accent and intonation are symbols of otherness but are not regarded as racial slurs.

The ultra-feminization of Asian women is another stereotype that seeps into the Filipina psyche. Filipina women are unable to resolve the crisis of expatriation and uprooting, of alienation and national marginalization. They have to learn to explain and justify their culture and practices while also expected to be familiar with and understand mainstream American culture. Psychological and social alienation because of marginalization as a person of color occur in a society where race matters. Lola Narisa succinctly protests, "It's only skin. It can't hurt anyone"(240). But in a world where the children are constructed as inferior or superior because they look like one parent or the other, ethnicity and race are confused. The children grapple with the differences, striving to make

meaning out of their unusual bicultural and multi-ethnic social positions.

Joey Sands is a gay bastard son of a Black serviceman and a Filipina prostitute. Joey, too, is a prostitute, and a thief, a junkie, a liar, a hustler, and a pimp. As one of the first person narrators, Joey exhibits traits attached to traditional notions of feminine and masculine and is both tyrant and victim. Joey struggles to give meaning to his life by fantasizing that "Soon. I'll have it all worked out soon. Leave town. I'll get lucky... Some foreign woman will sponsor me and take me to the States. Maybe she'll marry me. I'll get my green card. Wouldn't that be something? I love it when everything falls into place, don't you? Soon. Everything will change, soon" (40). International marriages still occur. Largely through military contact and the mail-order-bride business. The passage reflects a cultural reality. Thousands of women leave the Philippines in search of better economic opportunities. The bridal export business has changed cross-cultural marriages into a suspect catalog business. The Philippines is the largest supplier of international brides via this industry in the past decade as Maria Root notes in her 1992 study of Filipina women. Even the talented Lolita Luna, the movie star, "is convinced the General will help fix her papers and pay for her passage out of Manila to a foreign country, someplace where she can start all over again... she's always broke" (171). The feeling of displacement, the crisis of identity and exile account for the cultural inferiority that lead to the creation of mythic genealogies and reinterpretation of personal history.

In *Dogeaters*, listening to the radio is reminiscent of listening to the epic stories of precolonial babaylans. And, like the babaylan, Lola Narcisa is the indigenous woman who heeds the chants and passes on the stories, the collective historical memory of the tribe. Lola Narcisa's wisdom consists of cultural practices, folk sayings, proverbs, stories, myth, folklore, songs, dances, and humor. Indigenous symbols are still expressed in the belief in *anting-anting* (amulets to ward off evil spirits) superstition, miraculous healing ghosts, spirits, and enchanted places and beings- all

of which exist side by side with Catholic rituals and sacraments (Strobel 1996). Lola Narcisa encourages Rio to listen and learn the stories, even though the stories are immersed in Catholic doctrine. However, because Lola Narcisa is minimized and trivialized as a native and “treated with a certain deference”(9) because of her age, Lola Narcisa unfortunately is not considered a legitimate source of knowledge. Always, the community gather around to listen to the *babaylan* just as Rio does, “curled up under the crocheted bedspread on her *lola*’s bed’(13). Usually after a feast, the indigenous community gather around, imbibing of the local *tuba* (wine made from coconut sap), and wait for a *babaylan* to sit on an *uway*(rattan) hammock to start chanting their stories while Lola Narcisa rocks in her chair. Aida, Pacita, Fely, and the chauffeur, Macario, sit or stand in various corners of the room, straining to listen (13). Lola Narcisa’s basic health care needs are met by “the fashionable Dr. Ernesto Katigbak” (9), and she is even called “Mama” by Freddie, Rio’s father. But the brown-skinned, gray-eyed grandmother” (9) is not asked to sit at the dinner table and when visitors come, she “becomes invisible, some tiny woman who happens to be visiting” (9), while her claim that her American husband is the first white man stricken with *bangungut*, a mysterious malady that usually claim male victims who die overnight in their sleep is dismissed by Dr. Leary, the American doctor, as a figment of the overwrought Filipina/o imagination (14).

Philippine religiosity is based on a very ancient faith that utilizes western symbols and rituals but whose meanings are truly indigenous.<sup>32</sup> Lola Narcisa’s room displays “a framed painting on velvet of

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<sup>32</sup> The indigenous religious consciousness of Filipinas/os made it possible to embrace Catholicism. This consciousness is more animistic, polytheistic, and at home in the spirit world with its multiple gods. Historically, colonial rulers usurped the consciousness of the colonized with attempts to remake the identity of the colonized in the active suppression of indigenous systems of behavior and beliefs. Because the *babaylan* were the spiritual leaders, the Spanish missionaries primarily targeted these women for conversion. Calculated conversion of ritual epics ensued. Landa Jocano notes in her research on Philippine epics that “The *Epic of Hinilawod* is a ritual epic... Before clearing their fields and before harvesting their crops, the Sulod offer sacrifices to the environmental spirits and perform such rites as may “bribe” the spirits into giving them a good harvest or protection against the evil *diwata* (spirits) whose dwellings were destroyed during the cutting of trees for planting

the Madonna and Child... The Madonna is depicted as a native woman wearing the traditional *patadyong*, the Infant Jesus has the brown skin of my Lola Narcisa and straight black hair” (10). Nestor Norales, the lead actor of “a famous radio serial, *Love Letters*,” promises to marry Barbara Villanueva, the lead actress, in real life but keeps postponing the wedding date. Barbara waits patiently- the quietly understanding, enduring Blessed Virgin- unbeknownst to her, Nestor likes young men. The Christian motif is reinforced when the announcer signs off intoning that this is the “Blessed Year of the Family Rosary” and adds that “The family that prays together, stays together (15). In an episode of *Love Letters*, Dalisay, a young servant girl, gets pregnant by Mario, the owner’s son. She sings an “ominous invocation against witches: “Asin, suca/get-teng/ bawang, lasona...” “Salt, vinegar/scissors, ginger/garlic, onion...” An invocation against death, to protect her unborn child” (13).

Variations on subjects of hunger and greed abound in Hagedorn’s novel. For example the homosexual German film director, Rainer, in Manila for the week of the International Film Festival, wants to know if the young boys doing the “Shower Dance” naked on stage are hungry or greedy. Joey Sands, his lover for the duration of his stay, replies, “The boys are hungry, so they perform. Audience pays to sit there, greedy to watch(142). What Hagedorn seems to be portraying is a sort of cultural cannibalism by careless accident or by deliberate design, and in varying degrees.<sup>33</sup>

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(Jocano, 1960). Animistic and polytheistic worship were converted to Catholic worship. In an excerpt from the Ilocano epic, *Lam-ang*, Leopoldo Yabes translates the invocation:

O God, the Holy Ghost, illumine, Lord,  
My thoughts so I can relate faithfully  
The account of the life of a man.

In the old, old days  
There was a couple who had  
Just been united in holy wedlock.  
As the days rolled by,  
The wife conceived the child  
Which was the fruit of the sacrament they had received.

<sup>33</sup> In Rocio Davis’ article, “Revisioning the Philippines” in *Ideas of Home: Literature of Asian Migration*,

Everyone is hungry. La Sultana, the babaylan, hungers for recognition and validation; Lola Narcisa is also hungry for ethnic recognition and acknowledgment of indigenous values and culture; Pedro is hungry for respect as a human being, as an indigenous person; Cora Camacho is hungry for gossip and stories to propel her into fame and notoriety; Joey is hungry for deliverance from oppression and poverty; Romeo is hungry for Hollywood fame; Senator Avila is hungry for government reform; Pucha hungers for class and social distinction; Trinidad Gamboa hungers for marriage. General Ledesma is hungry for power; Rio for her identity; Freddie Gonzaga for a place he can call home. All are hungry for love.

Food plays a central part in *Dog eaters*. In every chapter of the book, food is discussed because it captures the Philippine culture. Senator Avila says, "Food is the center of our ritual celebrations, our baptisms, weddings, funerals. You can't describe a real Pinoy (slang for Filipino) without listing what's most important to him- food, music, dancing, and love- most probably in that order"(154). In *Dog eaters*, General Ledesma politely offers his victims "cigarettes and coffee, even chilled bottles of tracheal. "I am sorry we're out of straws- you'll have to drink straight from the bottle," he apologizes, with a look of genuine concern on his face"(110). When Daisy Avila, the beauty queen and the lover of the political dissident, Santos Tirador, is picked up and taken prisoner at Camp Meditation, General Ledesma offers her a cigarette and Pepe Carreon asks if she would like "A glass of water or coffee? Have you had any dinner?" Before watching her get raped by several military officials. All throughout the interrogation, rape, and torture, the general calls her "Hija" meaning daughter (212-215). The tao takes great pride in being hospitable and one reason the culture is so easily exploited is because they are so naively welcoming and offering food is part of the cultural hospitality that is deeply ingrained in each individual.

Traditional Philippine culture prescribes different behavioral modes for men and women.

Domestic violence is pervasive in Philippine communities. Communities have tolerated and overlooked domestic violence because of the unquestionable acceptance of patriarchy, of male control and privilege. In *Dogeaters*, Hagedorn draws a parallel of the military as a family unit when General Ledesma looks upon Daisy as a daughter. In a scene that enacts the artist Clarita's paintings depicting males as demonic and sexually aggressive demons with giant penises hovering over sleeping women, the General calls her "*Hija*" and not only gives the signal for several military officers to rape her, but watches the heinous act... the General leans and tells her that "after his men are through, "We can finally be alone"(216) confident that he, the privileged head of the military, as the powerful patriarch, is untouchable and can commit criminal acts with impunity. The need to protect the family's honor keep the women mute which is why Cora Camacho never got wind of Daisy Avila's unreported rape because of the stigma, the shame, and the blame that is attached to the victims of domestic violence.

Daisy, like other Filipina rape victims, suffers in silence but Daisy, unlike others, decides to actively participate in the revolutionary movement thinking she might be instrumental in toppling the present political set-up in order to put a stop to the corruption and abuse. Domestic violence is the imposition of total control over a family member, by systematic intimidation, isolation, and manipulation through emotional, psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse with the threat of physical and /or sexual abuse. It is the willful control, use, and abuse, of a family member. When violence happens behind closed doors, few intervene. Double standards of morality as practiced by General Ledesma, Clarita's father, Freddie, and Severo Alacran; lack of laws on domestic violence as evidenced by Pucha and Boomboom's... "terrible marriage... Boomboom is insanely jealous and locks Pucha in the bedroom before... he sits around all day drinking and gambling. Because he is an Alacran, he never has to work. He accuses Pucha of countless betrayals, he beats her frequently"(243); and a traditional reluctance to air private matters are some of the

reasons why domestic violence continues to oppress, repress, depress and sunder families.

In the Philippines, where the family functions as the locus of identity, there is an outspoken but accepted tradition that family problems should be discussed and resolved within the family. Outside the Philippines, Filipina women are isolated because of linguistic and cultural barriers.

For example, in domestic violence, to complicate the abuse, there is usually a time of repentance and remorse right after the abuse, when the abuser promises not to do it again. The abused hopes that this time things will really change. Unfortunately, the round of abuse begins again and the whole cycle of violence is repeated and remains vicious. Emotional and psychological abuse may precede physical abuse. Within each ethnic group, male control and domestic violence take on culturally specific expressions, and although the victim often blames herself for the violence perpetrated against her, Daisy is aware that it is the patriarchal power, ego, and corruption inherent in the political, economic, social and family systems that are to blame for the degradation and violence she experiences.

Food and eating are used to hide horrific deeds in *Dogeaters*. Immediately after witnessing the cold blooded murder of Senator Avila, Joey smells the pungent odors of cooking from open windows and the *ihaw-ihaw* stalls in the marketplace, Joey salivated. Garlic, vinegar, chocolate meat. Pig entrails stewing in black blood”(192). Then “Joey suddenly thought of food. Something in brown, tangy sauce poured over hot, steaming rice. Some kind of spicy meat, maybe chicken or goat. He thought of how the rice would fill his burning stomach, easing the pangs of hunger he was beginning to feel again”(195). Where there is food, people gather. Joey, after witnessing a harrowing, traumatic event, wants to be nurtured, to be able to find solace. His inability to realize this is symbolized by the inaccessibility of the food that he craves (192).

Hagedorn intentionally ends *Dogeaters* with a dramatic deconstruction of the Lord's Prayer into an incendiary incantation. “Deconstruction,” as Jacques Derrida says in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*

(1997), “is made of not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break”(6).<sup>34</sup> Hagedorn exhorts Filipina women to break with the colonized past, retain certain beliefs, remember the tao identity, and initiate something new.

Filipina women and men are urged to continue to strive for an egalitarian society. *Dogeaters* final page is entitled “*Kundiman*”. *Kundiman* is music in ballad form, played by small orchestras called *rondallas* using banjo-like instruments called *bandurias*. Usually melancholy music, in *Dogeaters*, *Kundiman* is used as an incantation of rage and yearning, of frustration, admonition, exorcism, and healing. Hagedorn’s impassioned cry reminds Filipina women of the enviable power they enjoyed prior to colonization, lists the events that have led to the Filipinas’ present predicament, wails with unleashed hurt but now, more than ever, hopeful, although that hope is tintured with that peculiar blend of optimistic realism. The *Kundiman* implores not the father but:

*Our Mother, who art in Heaven Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Thy will not be done. Hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom never came. You who have been defiled, belittled, diminished... Dammit, mother dear. There are serpents in your garden. Licking your ears with forked tongues, poisoning your already damaged heart. I am suffocated by my impotent rage, my eyes are blinded by cataracts blue as your miraculous robes... I would curse you but I choose to love you instead... Our mother who art, what have those bastards done now? Your eyes are veiled and clouded by tears, veiled but never blinded... so the daughters say, so the sons will seek out miracles, so the men will not live to see the light... Stigmata of mercy... stigmata of beautiful suffering and insane endurance, Dolores Dolorosa... Ave Maria, mother of revenge. The Lord was never with you. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed are the fruits of thy womb... Now and forever (250-251).*

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<sup>34</sup> See *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida*. Fordham University Press, 1997.

## Conclusion

The Philippines, as a colonized nation, is known for its vigorous histories of resistance and Filipina women have always been actively involved in all revolutionary movements. The colonizers have come and gone but the Philippines still struggles against the contemporary relationships of structural dominance between “first” and “third” world people. While the term “third world” is much contested, it nevertheless foregrounds a history of colonization and contemporary relationships of hegemony between “first world” countries and those nations colonized, neo colonized, or decolonized. This paper follows the definition as argued by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who, in the introduction of *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991), claims the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and SouthEast Asia, China, South Africa, and Oceania as constituting the parameters of the non-European third world (50). This geographically includes the Philippines in the “third world nation” and thus, women from the Philippines, as third world women. For example, as Mohanty points out, scholars often locate “third world women” in terms of their respective country’s underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism, and overpopulation. Consequently, not only are third world women “normed” by western hierarchy they are also reified in time, space, and history by definitions that neither mirror or monitor the dynamics of colonialism, imperialism, racism, ethnicity, class, sexism, and monopoly capital inherent in the struggle these women experience on a daily basis. While the re-introduction of feminism and the organization of the feminist movement in the Philippines have enable the women to give voice and bring attention to their problems, it is nevertheless necessary to include and acknowledge cultural differences when using feminism as an analytical tool.

Women from different parts of the world still disagree, question, and contradict the term *feminism* itself. Because of women's varied cultural, social, economic, and political issues it is not surprising that there is dissent about terminology and their subsequent meanings. A common theme of feminist philosophy is that "feminism" itself cannot be simply defined. Feminism is not a single movement. There is no single feminist way of defining women who have divergent histories, cultures, social and geographical locations, and struggles. Moreover, just as it is difficult to speak of a singular entity called "western feminism" it is likewise difficult to generalize about "third world feminism" (Mohanty 1991,4). Nellie Wong claims that "Socialist feminism is our bridge to freedom." By feminism, Wong means the political analysis and political practice to free all women. "Socialist feminism is a radical, all encompassing solution to the problems of race, sex, sexuality, and class struggle... It is the belief that unless every woman, every lesbian and gay man, every worker and every child is free, none of us is free" (Wong, 1991, 290-1). Kumari Jayawardera defines feminism both as "embracing movements for equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the systems" (Jayawardera 1986, 2). Hurtado asserts that the Chicana feminists have struggled to incorporate diverse issues without losing the central focus on gender in all their battles (Hurtado 1998). Aida Hurtado also cites Wendy Brown's (1992) theory that the Chicana Feminists' firm commitment to the liberation of the Latino communities as a whole is much more common among third world feminists than is the western view of female freedom based on individual rights that has highly influenced white feminists in the United States. In all cases, however, the common link among political feminist struggles of some political third world women is against the long-term institutionalization of racist policies imposed by Euro-American hegemonies during centuries of forced occupation of colonial and postcolonial states. Mohanty opines that in spite of the differences, there is commonality among third world women's struggles and suggests an 'imagined community' of third world oppositional struggles woven

together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are both pervasive and systemic:

*'Imagined,' not because it is not 'real' but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries, and 'community' because in spite of internal hierarchies within third world contexts, it nevertheless suggests a significant deep commitment to what Benedict Anderson, in referring to the idea of the nation, calls 'horizontal comradeship.' The idea of imagined community is useful because it leads us away from the essentialist notions of third world feminist struggles, suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance... As such, women of all colors, including white women, can align themselves with this imagined community... However our relation to and centrality in particular struggles depend on our different, often conflictual, locations and histories. On the other hand, white, western, middle-class liberal feminism and the feminist politics of women of color in the USA presents a contrast between the former's singular focus on gender as a basis for equal rights, and the latter's focus on gender in relation to race and /or class as part of a broader liberation struggle (4-5).*

Mohanty concludes that third world women's writings on feminism focus on (1) the idea of the simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism; (2) the critical role of a hegemonic state in circumscribing (women's) daily lives and survival struggles; (3) the significance of memory and writing in the creation of oppositional agency; and (4) the differences, conflicts, and contradictions internal to third world women's organizations and communities (10). In "Definition and the Question of 'Woman'," Victoria Barker suggests that definition is a pivot around which the meanings

of our discourses revolve; definitions provide points of convergence among our various discourses.<sup>35</sup> However, among third world women, it is criticized as an almost singularly anti-sexist struggle. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, Mohanty's frame of "forms of domination both pervasive and systemic" reveals a critical matrix for access to cultural meaning. Feminism needs to address all discrimination, subordination, exploitation, and oppression of women regardless of culture, color, class, ethnicity, nationality. Since feminism lacks the boundaries that would serve as a means for the exclusion of people, principles, and practice that definition traditionally demands, this allows for its diversity and fluidity. The plurality of such "meaning" signifies that feminism serves as a site for expanding perception and definition of meaning and at the same time it serves to demonstrate the inexhaustible differences between definition and perception.

## **Postscript**

Postcolonial Filipina writers in English are actively defining their own experiences by concerning themselves with motifs that make up recurring patterns such as: concern with women's problems that revolve around love, sex, marriage, the family, and work; the centering of female protagonists as the narrative and thematic focus; stress on the women's urban, high educational and professional status; liberation of sexual taboos; insistence upon women's economic autonomy. To deconstruct a particular ideology, it is necessary to invoke those very ideologies and conventions one hopes to subvert.<sup>36</sup> In order to understand and overcome the depths of alienation and marginalization caused by colonization, the Filipina has to go through the process of decolonization. She has to develop the ability to question

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<sup>35</sup> See Victoria Barker, 1997. "Definition and the Question of 'Woman'." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 12(2): pp206-214. Spring 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Beth A. Boehm. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Fall 1995, v.37 no.1, p35.

her reality as constructed by colonial narratives. She has to be critical and conscious of the consequences of silence, marginality, and invisibility. She has to understand the need to recover her precolonial cultural history and memory. Finally, she has to tell and re-write her story.

As Asians and Asian Americans, Asian in America, American of Asian descent, AmerAsian, Eurasian, Polynesian, Micronesian, Melanesian, Filipinas at home and abroad, grapple with the conflicting messages and oppressions because they are situated in differing degrees, in Asian and Euro-American milieus. They suffer cultural discrimination and cultural schizophrenia from the mixed and often contradictory signals about priorities, values, duty, and meaning that family, community, and nation convey. Filipinas encounter sexist Asian traditions and ethnic bias in white western culture; anti-racist non-feminist female heroes/racist feminist heroes; strong and proud American women telling them to make waves/ Strong and proud Filipina women telling them not to make waves. For Filipinas, one response to these conflicting signals is to constantly reinvent and recreate themselves and their priorities without losing their inherent individual authenticity. Identifying the nature of the oppressions and then initiating corrective rectifying responses to these oppressions become necessary. Transformation through education of the system at its roots is called for. Through language, media, literature and the Humanities, consciousness raising for social change is the focus and the locus of contemporary Filipina writers. Literature and The Humanities are important because they help liberate women by raising women's issues and provide new alternative literary expressions, forms, perspectives, and interpretations. For the non-literary readers, comic books and magazines, slogans and aphorisms using the feminist framework aid the process and the progress of positive alternative myth making; for non-readers, audio books, radio broadcast, creative workshops, poetry, dance, music, theatrical and dramatic productions appeal to the inherently oral Filipina/o as alternatives for the promulgation of feminist consciousness.

Cognizant of the negative nuances of the word feminism, particularly its anti-male stance,

the early Filipina feminist took pains to define their organizing principle as a third world women's movement. They look upon the women's movement as a constitutive dimension of the transformation of society, as a holistic effort to humanize society. Transformation of society as a whole is not possible if half of society is oppressed, thus feminists consider the gender issue an essential element in the liberation of society as a whole. Women in the revolutionary movement against the dictatorship of former President Ferdinand Marcos discussed how feminism fitted into the nationalistic democratic revolutionary framework. Against charges that feminism was dividing the ranks of the united masses and that feminism was secondary to the class struggle, Nationalist Democratic feminists from KALAYAAN or the Katipunan ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan (League of Filipina Women for Freedom) called for the autonomy of the women's movement.

Although KALAYAAN's call for autonomy was unsuccessful, the women involved separately pursued autonomy within their own organizations. The establishment of several autonomous women's movement resulted; in turn, that gave birth to crises centers, women's studies, a nationwide awareness of women's plight, feminist research groups, lesbian organizations, publications, resource centers, training programs, and radio and media broadcasts. The influx of feminist ideas has enabled Filipina women to challenge the prevailing notion that abuses suffered in intimate relationships are private and should be ignored.

In 1988, WICCA (Writers Involved in Creating Cultural Alternatives) was formed. Recognizing that in reality, the writing and publishing world of Philippine literature are still male-dominated, WICCA affirms the responsibility of both female and male writers to hasten literary and social transformation toward the development of an egalitarian society. WICCA's aim is to make All writers aware of humanizing cultural alternatives achievable through their concerted creative efforts. Women's creative powers should be channeled toward the continued struggle and search for solutions or alternatives to end oppression against all disadvantaged individuals due to the

the primary -Gender, Age, Mental/physical Ability, Ethnicity, SexualOrientation issues and the secondary issues such as class, education, occupation, and who do you know- political beliefs, colonial, and postcolonial relations.<sup>37</sup> GAMES is an acronym for Gender, Age, Mental/physical ability, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation. I disagree with GAMERS who add race to the mix because I believe in one human race of heroes.

Continued inaccessibility to the resources and means of literary production is a deterrent.<sup>38</sup> The ratio of Filipina women writers to male writers in anthologies and school texts is pathetically low.<sup>39</sup> Another factor is the continued isolation of Filipina women writers. Within the semi-feudal/patriarchal matrix wherein the traditional roles of women as wife, mother, sister, or daughter- silence and the conditions of isolation are still evident today. Unquestioned social mores and habits effectively maintain their isolation. The topic of sexuality is still taboo in the Philippines while other developing nations have considerable freedom writing about it. Social taboos are raised against women who dare break out of the isolation to educate others. Still, Filipina writers speak out to educate and inform against violence upon women and children. Although there are overlapping commonalities, Filipina women and women from other countries cannot be expected

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<sup>37</sup> See Connie Jan Maraan, “ Cultural Alternatives for Literary Women in the Philippines: Shattering the Myth” in *Lila-Asia Pacific Women’s Studies Journal. Institute of Women’s Studies.* (3), 1994, p.1-10.

<sup>38</sup> The author’s personal experience in collecting research material for this paper attests to this. Majority of the resources on early Philippine literature are in the Philippines, housed in deep, dark, dusty, cavernous university and government archives. Some are jealously guarded by clerks or librarians who only allow themselves to make copies of texts or else copies are made under their eagle-eyed supervision. Entry and access are rigorously guarded unless one has current connections to the university and can prove it, as in a student or faculty I.D. Other research materials are simply misfiled or stacked in dusty shelves with a multitude of other works under the category “Early Philippine Literature.” And then others are supposedly nonexistent! For example, the literary sentinels claimed Latorena’s stories were not in the university library they were supposed to be. It took multiple searches and numerous trans-Pacific phone calls before they were found. Dogged insistence that certain stories did exist using other researchers’ citations as proof and contact with Latorena’s relatives and their corroboration finally convinced the text wardens of the fact that the library indeed had a copy of said stories.

<sup>39</sup> From 1910-1962, Doveglion Book of Philippine Poetry in English edited by Jose Garcia Villa and published by Alberto Florentino, showed the ratio was three female poets to nineteen male poets. In the 1965-1974 Anthology of Poems edited by Manuel Torres, there were five female poets to thirty-five male poets.

to share similar gender experiences. Filipina Americans and other Asian ethnic minorities should advocate for multilingual and multicultural human services to serve the needs of Asian Americans. Filipina writers break the silence.

Myths are stories through which a group realizes personal and collective social, religious, economic, political, and cultural validation and renewal- from the earliest inhabitants of the Philippine Islands to the “edgy characters” that populate Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*. The People of Central Panay regard themselves as a distinct group belonging to the Sulod tribe and claim collective ownership of their stories in the *Hinilawod* epic. Hagedorn’s characters, on the other hand, beg to belong. They are constantly searching for the identity they have lost or rejected. These characters feel compelled to recreate their own myths in order to attain self realization so they may become members of a group. By re-inscribing the value of ancient Philippine myth to those members in the making, the sense of shared identity is actualized. These stories, Eliade quotes B. Malinowski,

*“... are to the natives a statement of a primeval, greater, and more relevant reality, by which the present life, fates and activities of mankind are determined, the knowledge of which supplies [wo]man with the motive for ritual and moral actions, as well as with indications as to how to perform them”(20).*

These stories tell them who they are, where they come from, where they belong, with whom they belong, and that they belong. Otherwise, if they are not apprised of their stories, they forget and become lost souls like Rio, constantly traveling, “at home only in airports” (*Dogeaters* 247). With the re-inscription of myth into her life, Rio, meaning river, might find “home”. Water is life. Water cleanses. Water re-births. Rio may blossom in a social group where she could finally hear and tell her story. Her stories may be recorded. Ironically, the moment these stories are textualized, they stop at that point and the mythos truncated. But so long as women like Rio live and tell

and retell their stories, myths live and positive alternative mythmaking becomes a real possibility. It may re-awaken the Filipina women's *babaylan* spirit. Women may once again be the purveyors of recreated tales and their dormant voices may be heard chanting positive songs. Recognition and acceptance of the orality of the Philippine culture may lead to healing the self, healing the culture, and eventually regain that long lost cultural history and memory of... the tao.

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## Appendix A

### Timeline of the Philippine Women's Feminist Movement from 1807-1998.

1807 A woman speaks out against a Spanish friar of Batac who tried to rally the Filipino people against the “rebels” during the Ilocos Revolt. In an excerpt from *Apuntes Interesantes Sobre Las Islas Filipinas por un Espanol de Larga Experiencia en el Pais y Amante del Progreso*, Madrid. 1870, p.59, the friar states, “Last Sunday, I preached again to the people, exhorting them to their obligation and vassalage to the To the sovereign so that those who have remained faithful until then should maintain their sentiment Without prevarication. While I was thus preaching, a woman had the nerve also to preach, saying that They should not believe me, that everything I said were lies and that in the name of God and the Gospel, that we do nothing but deceive them so that we Spaniards could fleece them, Well, we (friars) Are also Spaniards like all the others.”

The young women of Malolos, Bulacan lead a protest movement against the Spaniards demanding Higher education for women and protesting that it is dishonorable for a Filipino of either sex to follow the guidance of the priests.

1877 Because of her heroism, Agueda Kahabagan of Paete, the “Laguna Joan of Arc”, an esteemed Warrior in the battlefronts Laguna, is commissioned by Gen. Miguel Malvar as a general. Teresa Magbanua, the “oan of Arc’ of the Visayas, is the first ilongga to fight for Philippine Independence. (Cruz, Romeo V. “The Filipina at the Time of Fil-American Revolution’ in *Essays on Women*. P 52+ Contemporary women’s Issues database.)

1889 In an article written by Graciano Lopez-Jaena published in *La Soledad* (Feb 15, 1889), the Young Women of Malolos petitions the parish priest and the Captain Governor Valeriano Weyler

for the establishment of an evening school for women.

1892 Women (wives, daughters, sisters) become members of the Katipunan, a nationalist group that arose from the establishment of the progressive Lodge Nilad, a masonry movement of 1892. Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero, one of the foremost figures in the Propaganda Movement, a movement formed by the sons of the wealthy who were sent to Europe to study, brings back to the Philippines nationalism, reform, and a liberal atmosphere. Rizal wrote two political novels. *Noli Me Tangere* (1886: *The Social Cancer*) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891: *The Reign of Greed*). He is exiled and finally executed (at what is now Rizal Park) by the Spaniards in 1896. In reaction to Rizal's arrest, activists, mostly made up of peasants, form the Katipunan ("Katastaasang Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan" (KKK), led by Andres Bonifacio. Emilio Jacinto draws up a code of conduct for the Katipuneros called the "Cartilla." Jacinto rouses the Katipuneros to acknowledge women's equality because all people are equal beyond color and ethnicity, wealth, and class. An extract from the English translation by Gregorio Nieva states:

Whether our skin be black or white, we are  
All born equal: superiority in knowledge,  
Wealth and beauty are to be understood, but  
Not superiority by nature.

Thou must not look upon woman as a mere  
Plaything, but as a faithful companion who  
Will share with thee the penalties of life; her  
(physical) weakness will increase thy  
Interest in her and she will remind thee of

The mother who bore thee and reared thee.

What thou dost not desire done unto thy  
Wife, children, brothers, and sisters, thou  
Dost not do unto the wife, children, brothers  
And sisters of thy neighbor.

Man is not worth more because he is king,  
Because his nose is aquiline, and his color  
White, not because he is a priest... but he is worth  
Most who is a man of proven and real value,  
Who does good, keeps his words, is worthy  
And honest; he who does not oppress nor  
Consent to being oppressed... though he be  
Born in the wilderness and knows no tongue  
But his own. (Articles 4, 11, 12, 13).

1893 Eighteen year old Rosario Villaruel is the first Filipina to join the Lodge Adopcion, a woman Exclusive group established by the Lodge Walana in Binondo. Prior to the revolution, the women Actively recruit members from the masses, have charge of important documents, act as decoys to Lure Spanish authorities away from meeting places.

Benita Rodriguez sews the official flag of the Katipunan.

- 1896 The Philippine Revolution against Spain erupted. Women, including non-members of the Katipunan, fight side by side with the men in trenches and are killed. Romeo Cruz (1991) notes that Apolinario Mabini Devotes two sections on women (Articles 1, section 16 and 17) in his Political Program of the Philippine Republic.” ... Women have the right of suffrage, the right to be elected into public office, to enroll and study in any college and university and to practice their profession.”
- 1898 On June 12, 1898, Philippine Independence is granted and the Malolos Constitution enacted with Emilio Aguinaldo as president. Marcella Agoncillo, her daughter, Lorenza and Delfina Herbosa, Sew the official flag of the Philippine government.
- 1899 During the Filipino-American War, women enlisted in the army and fight beside the men, building Trenches and operating machine guns. Hilaria Aguinaldo, whose husband General Aguinaldo is Considered the brains behind the nationalist movement, establishes the Women’s Red Cross Movement.
- Nazaria Lagos of Iloilo sews the flag of the Republic to mark the first anniversary of Independence.
- 1905 The first women’s volunteer organization, the Asociacion Feminismo Filipina, is founded by Concepcion Felix-Rodriguez to seek prison reforms, labor reforms for working women and Educational reforms for women.
- 1906 The association of Ilongga Feminists raising the issue of women’s suffrage is founded by Pura Villanueva Kalaw.
- 1921 The National Federation of Women’s Club, organized in 1921, spearheaded the suffragette movement.

- 1935 Women are granted the right to vote and own property.
- 1939 The League of Women Voters is organized to educate the general public on political issues and to Encourage the people to vote.
- 1946 Women's Civic Assembly is organized. The theme is "Filipino Women for Nation Building".
- 1951 A National Political Party of Women is founded but did not last long.
- 1970 The combination of worsening poverty, economic, and political injustice, and American Imperialism resulted in an unprecedented social awareness and encouraged political activism. A women's organization MAKIBAKA- Malayang Kilusan ng Makabagong Kababaihan (Free Organization of Modern Women) is formed.
- 1972 Martial Law is declared.
- 1981 Siliman University at Negros Oriental in central Philippines establishes a Women's Studies Center. The program lasted five years. Seven students finished the course. Lack of interest and inadequately trained faculty contributed to its demise.
- 1982 Center for Women's Resources (CWR) is established as a resource center for Filipina women. It provides training, research, publications, and library services to women, particularly to grassroots Women.

- 1983 The women participants of The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) composed of theologians from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the ethnic communities of the United States- organize the Women's Commission.
- 1984 GABRIELA, the acronym for General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Liberty, and Action is formed. This is a federation of various women's organizations that banded Together to work out the commonalities of a Tird World Women's movement.
- 1985 First Introductory course in Women's Studies is offered at St. Scholastica's College, a school for women founded in 1906 by German Benedictine Sisters.
- 1987 A group of women educators from schools that are offering courses on Women's Studies Organized themselves formally into a Women's Studies Consortium. The representative schools Are St. Scholastica's College, Mirriam college, Philippine Women's University, University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila, and dela Salle University. Their aim is to discuss current trends in Women's Studies, to develop syllabi for different Women's Studies courses, to develop Resource speakers on various women-related topics, and to mobilize each other's constituencies Toward a concerted effort on various women's issues.
- 1988 An autonomous institute attached to St. Scholastica is formed. The Institute of Women's Studies is a non-stock, non-profit organization whose main purpose is to provide an alternative Education outside the formal educational set-up, using more creative methodology and providing Outreach programs.

- 1989 Siliman University revives the Women's Studies program with the help of the Women's Studies Consortium.
- 1992 The Women's Studies Consortium evolves into the Women's Association of the Philippines and Now includes not only institutional but also individual membership.
- 1998 Thus far, only St. Scholastica's College has succeeded in making Women's Studies a part of the Curriculum as a required subject. The university of the Philippines is the only university offering a Graduate degree in Women's studies.

## **Appendix B**

### **Poems by Emily L. Tan**

Selected Poems from *Urban Poetry: Word to the bored planet of the self absorbed* (Tan 2000)

#### ***A Tanka for Maslow***

*Food clothing shelter  
Safety love recognition  
Realization*

*Hierarchy of needs? Nay.  
Essential happiness potion*

#### ***The Tao***

*A tao is one who  
Seriously thinks love conquers life's blessings  
The tao believes  
That honest living is stress releasing  
Somehow they're convinced  
The secret to life is in you, in me  
It has been noted  
They find the funny, giggle blissfully  
This blissful feeling  
The heaven on earth experience they avow  
This tranquil bliss*

*Is none other than the tao! Just that,, the tao!  
The tao I know  
Is any person alive on this earth  
That's me That's you  
We live to love directly after birth.*

***Traditions***

*Ancestral felicity  
Skewed historicity  
Dissonant duplicity  
Challenge serenity*

*Constructive evolution  
Strategic deconstruction  
Change integration  
Ritual harmony*

***Acculturation***

*feet  
timorous  
in  
urban  
clogs  
trip  
trudge  
traipse  
tricky  
ethnic  
trap  
trail  
track  
tread  
with  
temerity  
gaiety  
gall  
capital  
protocol  
to  
the  
tao  
circle*

***EthniCity too***

*global  
diffusion  
through  
migration  
conquest  
persecution  
enable  
ethnic  
genetic  
fusion  
infusion  
confusion  
fearful  
consternation  
spiteful  
insinuation  
one  
begs  
to  
opine  
Confine  
gender  
race  
to  
the  
human  
race  
of  
heroes  
for  
peace  
pretty  
please*

### **Tao Island Song**

In the land of the pacific  
Where Mai sun heats Mai sea  
Behind protective coral isles  
There tropical breezes smile  
Beside graceful gumamela  
The pretty kalachuchi  
And sweet smelling sampagita  
Bloom fragrant blossoms all day.

Off the shores of Iloilo  
Beneath stunning Milky Way  
Tiny fishing lanterns flicker  
Under Mai moon's mystery  
Magic swirls upon the ocean  
Skims along the graceful shore  
Myriad fireflies of the evening  
Mystical jewels of yore

Along the Visayan beaches  
Where rests Mai little canoe

Beside the graceful waterfall  
Where velvety orchids grow  
In sturdy mangrove forest  
Hear bamboo talk insist  
Tiny mouse deer Pilandok  
Live verdant earthly bliss

On the shores of the Pacific  
By the sea washed coral reefs  
Nimble red crabs scamper sideways  
Watch each to and fro of waves  
Coconuts crowd verdant shore  
Starfish stake the ocean floor  
Where nature is in harmony  
There the tao wish to be

### **Tao Island song: Reality check**

On the shores of the pacific  
Where Mai life is idyllic  
Little things don't really matter  
Like...shark infested water!  
Explore tropical rainforests  
Visit subterranean caves  
Climb phenomenal volcanoes  
Swim around the coral reefs  
Simply shoo pesky malaria

Smelly bat and deadly snake

In the plains of Iloilo  
Rice paddies are prolific  
Planting rice is a lot of fun  
Bent from morn 'til setting sun  
Cannot stand and cannot sit  
Cannot rest until sunset  
Rheumatism comes about  
Scoliosis and then gout  
Water slosh on Mai bare feet  
Startled catfish beat retreat Oy!

On the beaches of Mindanao  
Where rests Mai wooden canoe  
Beneath enormous rubber tree  
Beside talkative bamboo  
Sacred trees lay on the grass  
Ma-i tricksters come en masse  
Rare orchids delicately sway  
As tourists sneak them away

In the land of the pacific  
By the sea washed coral reef  
Kiao hushes ruffled feather  
Mai Monkeys jungle fever  
Tragic fingers rudely explode  
Tranquil mystic interlude  
Where nature is in disarray  
There the tao wish to be

**Learning Log: by emilyltan, 2000**

**Bakhtin ventures  
Mutual illumination between cultures**

**Jung cautions against one-sidedness  
For balance and wholeness**

**Aristotle allows for logic and reason  
Syllogism a sequential progression**

**Tao talk means no insult given, none taken**

**Identity negotiations need straight talking**

**Aronson's reward-cost theory posts  
Maximum rewards at minimum costs**

**Voltaire views private grief verily  
More cruel than public misery**

**Luft and Ingham share human essence  
Johari windows a quintessence**

**Swann Jr. says for self-concept preservation  
Feedback is fixed to favor self-cognition**

**Kelman comes up with the theory of conversion  
Compliance, identification, internalization**

**Derrida's deconstruction dares advance  
Retention, unlearning, evolution, differance**

**Effective communication, Brown lists  
Initiate, share thoughts/feelings, persist**

**Bidol-Padva and Yates's invective  
Be mindful of another's perspective**

**Stam and Shohat assay pluralism  
Cultural plural multi culturalism**

**Last account activity: 0 minutes ago**  
**Details**