

PEOPLE WE TRUST
(A NOVEL)

AND

***THE ENEMY WITHIN:
FICTIONALISING THE MARCOS REGIME***
(A CRITICAL STUDY)

BY

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ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis comprises two projects. The first is a novel, *People We Trust*, and the second is a critical study of two representative novels belonging to a genre that the critic Gerald T. Burns has called “Martial Law Literature”, or literature that creatively engages with the Marcos dictatorship.

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I begin my critical study by discussing the tradition of resistance literature in the Philippines, tracing this back to Jose Rizal’s Spanish-language novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. I then discuss how the Filipino historical novel developed out of this tradition of resistance writing, and how most, if not all, Filipino novels depict moments in Philippine history in which Filipinos have risen against those who threatened their sovereignty as a people. After the Philippine nation gained its independence, Filipino novelists utilised the genre to take charge of the nation’s narrative, and to continuously engage with the question of national identity. The Martial Law novel occupies a particularly interesting place within this tradition, in that it grapples with the nation’s inability to liberate itself from a legacy of oppression left behind by its colonial rulers as shown in its selection of a repressive, totalitarian ruler from within the national community.

My discussion draws on two novels: Ninotchka Rosca’s *State of War*, and Gina Apostol’s *Gun Dealer’s Daughter*. They belong to opposite ends of an era in which Martial Law writing grew and developed: *State of War* having been published in 1988, two years after the Marcoses fled the Philippines, and *Gun Dealer’s*

Daughter having been published in 2012. Taken together, they chart what Gerald T. Burns, in his essay “Philippine Martial Law Fiction: Phases in the Early Evolution of the Genre”, calls an “evolution” in Martial Law fiction and its increasing ambivalence towards social commitment and nationalism. Both novels explore the fissures associated with the emergence of the oppressor from within. My analyses correspond with my own novel’s examination of how certain individuals, or societies, are more than willing to relinquish their individual freedoms in favour of what Erich Fromm would call an “escape from freedom”.

The critical component of my thesis engages with postcolonial theory in addition to studies on Martial Law writing, the Philippine historical novel, and Philippine postcoloniality.

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This thesis is dedicated to my father, the poet Francis “Butch” Macansantos, who passed away on 27 July, 2017. Without him, this thesis (and my literary career) would not have been possible.

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Part II: Critical Component

THE ENEMY WITHIN:
FICTIONALISING THE MARCOS REGIME

INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL COMPONENT

The novel form, in the Philippines, developed not just within history, or simply out of a need to interpret history, but out of a desire to take a stand for freedom from within historical circumstances that denied it. In the Philippine historical novel, history does not serve as a mere backdrop for domestic drama. Instead, it lies at the forefront of narrative. According to Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo, “Most contemporary Philippine novels are historical novels. In these, history does not merely provide the setting, but enters into the motivation of the characters, propels the plot...I would even claim that the real protagonist here is the nation itself, and the real conflict its desperate struggle for survival” (334).

Similarly, in his essay, “Third World Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism,” Fredric Jameson argues that third world texts, despite having developed “out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel” (69), do not emulate the “radical split”, depicted in western realist and modernist novels, between “the private and the public, between the poetic and the political” (69). Thus, third-world literature, which includes Philippine historical novels, exemplifies a “symbiosis between private and public” that takes place, specifically, within postcolonial cultures (Gonzalez 9). Jameson continues, “Third world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*” (69).

In the Philippines, the birth of the historical novel coincided with the emergence of the idea of nationhood. The tradition of the socially engaged historical novel was pioneered by Jose Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891). Rizal’s novels analysed the history of Spanish colonialism in the colony,

which necessitated an imagining of a community that found solidarity in experiences of abuse under the colonial regime. Historical writing in the Philippines, as Caroline Hau asserts, is not only “a matter of representation, of how to write and construct the country’s past; history is also a matter of action, of making that history and constructing the country’s future” (*Necessary Fictions*, 8). Jose Rizal’s novels, which were published in Europe, were read and distributed throughout the Philippine Islands. Although distribution was relatively limited, gossip about the novels as well as rumours about their author travelled quickly across the archipelago. Bienvenido Lumbera explains: “[A]lthough the language in which they were written (Spanish) put them outside the reach of most Filipinos, the mediation of educated natives involved in the Propaganda Movement or sympathetic to the aims of the movement made it possible for Rizal’s message to reach his countrymen. In this way did the books become instruments for agitating an already restive populace” (121). Aside from inspiring the Propaganda Movement formed by upper and middle-class Filipinos which, as Lumbera puts it, was “anti-colonial but reformist²”, many of the ideas in Rizal’s novels were used by leaders of the mostly working-class Katipunan Revolutionary Movement, notably Andres Bonifacio, to form the ideological basis of the separatist movement against Spain (which has its official beginnings in 1892, the year in which the Katipunan was founded). Prior to the Philippine Revolution against Spain, isolated rebellions throughout the colony had occurred. Many of them were largely unsuccessful, motivated by personal grievances against local members of the Catholic clergy and colonial government, and were not organized around any collective desire to systematically eliminate colonial oppression throughout the islands. As observed by Lumbera: “Previous challenges to colonial authority had been violent and some had even lasted for years, but these had been mostly local revolts that could be put down by using natives from other localities to fight the rebels” (118). One can argue that without Rizal’s novels, resistance against colonial oppression in the Philippines would not have achieved the same level of nationwide organization. Lumbera points out that Rizal’s novels “asserted the right of a colonised

² As Lumbera writes, “What later came to be called the Propaganda Movement (1872-1896) was the concerted campaign waged mainly through the press to win for Filipinas its rightful status as a province of Spain. Achieving that status, it was presumed, would win for the colony fair and efficient administration and for its inhabitants liberties that citizens of Spain ought to enjoy” (118). What the Propagandists saw as a solution to the colony’s ills was not complete independence from Spain, but rather a massive reform of the colonial government to ensure that Filipinos received equal and just treatment under colonial rule.

people to be treated with justice and dignity, and showed the consequences for both the colonised and the coloniser when that right is withheld” (121).

According to Caroline Hau, both novels were written on the assumption “that literature has the capacity to intervene in history, to help construct it. For Rizal, literature operates as a force of its own in history, but it is *also* history” (88). Like his character Elias in *Noli Me Tangere* (who sacrifices his life to the idea of collective liberation), Jose Rizal’s willingness to risk death in order to construct a history of the colony that would expose the widespread abuses of the Catholic clergy, as well as the State, can be read as an affirmation of the idea of nationalism. Rizal’s willingness to risk death in order to expose, in his novels, colonial abuses in the Philippines, shows that it is possible for writers in such contexts to see the nation, which they imagined through novelistic interpretations of its history, as a cause greater than themselves, to which they were willing to sacrifice their lives. As Hau puts it, “We might say that literature’s ability to bear witness to the possibility of self-sacrifice provides one important position from which the national community is ‘knowable’ as a community in and through death” (88).

To claim the right to nationhood is to reject the identity of the “ruled colonial subject”, and to claim an identity that is self-determining and freed from outside control. This is articulated through revolution and the exclusion of the so-called foreigner “that is necessary to the constitution of a Filipino national community” (Hau 133). Since the Filipino national identity was founded upon the desire to break away from oppression, the “foreigner” is a character who supports the continued subjugation of the Filipino people. The Filipino nation is “imagined” in opposition to the identities of its colonisers, who are seen as “foreign” to the Filipino community. To quote Caroline Hau: “Nationalist fixation on the proper place of the foreign is a response to the history of colonialism, a response paradoxically indebted to the very ‘heritage’ of colonialism it seeks to criticise and supersede. This colonialism—and the social relations it created among individuals and groups of people—had been established on the basis of forcible integration of historically contested territories, on the creation of a political space organised around distinctions between inside and outside, coloniser and colonised, the native and alien, and on outright control of the population movements within the physical space of the colony” (134).

Novels about the Marcos dictatorship are unique, in that they are forced to interrogate the processes of exclusion that are necessary in creating a national identity for a nation founded on the basis of colonialism. In the Filipino imagination, Marcos occupies the liminal space between “native” and “foreign”—he was one of us, and yet he also subjugated us. I am interested in the fissures that appear within the Filipino nation when the “oppressor”, who is typically imagined as a foreigner, emerges from the oppressed community.

In many ways, the Marcos dictatorship revealed just how this “knowable community” that had found solidarity in fighting against oppression could also produce its own oppressor. The Marcos dictatorship is a particularly contentious era in Philippine history because Marcos was not a foreign coloniser; rather, Marcos was a Filipino, and was aided by members of his own society in oppressing his own people. However, one must not that his ascension to power was also made possible by a system of institutionalised oppression left behind by colonial rule. Indeed, the methods of oppression utilised by foreign colonisers to dominate the native Filipino population remained embedded in Philippine society long after the end of colonialism, and Marcos employed many of these same methods to subjugate his own people. His regime was in many ways an emulation of colonial rule, the irony being that Marcos emerged from a formerly colonised community, and betrayed his own community by making them go through the same kind of political repression that they experienced together under colonial rule. We see this pattern replicated in former colonies, such as Indonesia with Suharto, Cambodia with Pol Pot, Burma with the military junta, not to mention the many former colonies of Western powers in Africa that came under home grown authoritarian regimes shortly after achieving independence from their colonial rulers. Thus the historical novel, for many Filipino fiction writers, may serve as an entry point or mode of interrogation into the cracks revealed in the imagined Filipino nation by the Marcos dictatorship. Indeed, resistance literature against the Marcos dictatorship illuminates other postcolonial resistance literatures that deal with the dilemma of confronting native oppression.

Although there exists a robust tradition of Martial Law resistance writing in the vernacular³, I have chosen to limit my study to novels written in English since I am a writer in English, writing a novel about the Marcos dictatorship in English.

³ See Joseph A. Galdon’s *Salimbibig: Philippine Vernacular Literature* (Quezon City, Philippines: Council for Living Traditions, 1980).

From the many English novels that are relevant to my study, such as Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, Jose Dalisay's *Killing Time in A Warm Place*, Ninotchka Rosca's *Twice Blessed*, Antonio Enriquez's *Subanons*, and Mia Alvar's *In The Country*, I chose to focus on Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War* (1988), and Gina Apostol's *Gun Dealer's Daughter* (2012). These two novels bookend the era in which the Martial Law novel grew and developed: *State of War* was published two years after the fall of the Marcos Regime, and *Gun Dealer's daughter* was published eighteen years later. Gerald T. Burns divides what he calls "The Martial Law Novel Genre" into two phases: the first phase, produced during the dictatorship and its immediate aftermath, which was more "engaged, partisan, and 'apocalyptic' in vision and tone", and the second—produced a good couple of years after the dictatorship had ended—which is characterized by novels that "seem more detached, are more likely to move beyond partisan orthodoxies in their judgment of actors and events, and adopt an overall stance toward their subject that might be characterized as 'ironic'" (76-77). Together, these novels are indicative of how attitudes towards the idea of Filipino nationhood, and resistance, changed over time.

To write about the dictatorship is to portray the nation as a conflicted character that must confront its own demons in order to achieve true liberation. Although the nation itself is not a literal character in the novels I have chosen to examine, it achieves embodiment in fictional characters who feel divided between their loyalties to family, and to country. *State of War's* Anna and *Gun Dealer's Daughter's* Sol are often conflicted in themselves, torn between silence and resistance. These characters are compelled to resist the dictatorship when events in their lives make them realise that they cannot fully step away from the political life of their country. Rosca's Anna realises that her silence cannot buy her safety when she is kidnapped and interrogated on her husband's political activities; Apostol's Sol realises that her family's fortunes are built upon her parents' willingness to supply arms to the dictatorship's violent counterinsurgency efforts. Both realise that the political cannot be divorced from the personal, and that the crises that divide the nation result in personal crises that can only be resolved with their unequivocal opposition to the nation's oppressors, who happen to be their fellow countrymen. Both learn that to heal from the traumas brought upon them by the state's violence, they must be willing to acknowledge the complicity of their closest friends and kin with the state. In other words, the nation, as

a protagonist of its own narrative of resistance, must be willing to turn against itself in order to survive.

That Marcos continues to be both condemned and celebrated within Philippine society shows that the dictatorship, despite having technically ended thirty years ago, is not yet a closed chapter in Philippine history. In a society where factual proof of atrocities committed by the dictatorship continue to be contested, and where whitewashings of factual, historical truth continue to hold sway over a believing public, historical fiction offers interpretations of history through artistic renderings of this contested past that, according to Hayden White, “transcend the truth-reality distinction” by being “‘faithful’ as well as being ‘true’ to the range of feelings induced by the experience of an extraordinary *historical* condition of subjection and humiliation” (*Rethinking History*, 149). In addition to being ethically responsible for representing historical truth, historical fiction also serves as a vehicle of emotional truth by allowing us, through imaginative thinking, to enter the private lives of individuals whose sufferings would remain unexposed and unexamined if we depended on facts alone to understand historical truth. In other words, “the relevant question for the historical novel...is thus not whether something is ‘literally true-to-actuality’, but whether it is ‘true-to-its meaning’” (Dalley 20).

Through an analysis of the two representative Martial Law novels I have chosen for this study, I would like to examine how the Martial Law Novel, as a genre of historical writing in the Philippines, confronts the “nativeness” of the nation’s oppressor, as well as the nation’s constructions of its identity as complicated by the nativeness of its own enemies.

Thus, the question that this thesis endeavours to answer, through close readings of *State of War* and *Gun Dealer’s Daughter*, is exactly how the Martial Law Genre constructs national identity, post-colonisation. In particular, this thesis will look at the manner in which these texts construct and represent concepts of “native”, the “foreign”, the “oppressed” and the “oppressor”.

Critical Background

Hamish Dalley's *The Postcolonial Historical Novel* brings the development of the historical novel within postcolonial settings into focus. Dalley writes, "the postcolonial world is characterized as a space in which history can never be taken for granted, and is subject always to conflict over past events and their meaning for present generations" (4). Historical novels, in postcolonial societies, are not typically meant to be read as mere retellings of the past, but as meaningful interpretations of the past that reclaim the telling of the community's history from its oppressors. Dalley argues that the historical novel as a genre occupies a significant space in a postcolonial nation's political discourse, which is why "it is coherent for writers to claim that their fictional narratives be read as ethically engaged interpretations of the actual past – and as such, a meaningful source of knowledge about history" (5). According to Dalley: "the historical imagination might be transformed by postcoloniality, and by the need to accommodate the contested nature of such representations. Postcolonialism is thus, to a large extent, a discourse of and about the writing of history in multiple forms" (4). The experiences of colonial and authoritarian violence within the Filipino nation have resulted in a state of confusion regarding the nation's past, in which versions of its history are contested by opposing political groups. Its writers, thus, have taken on the task of re-examining its history and offering interpretations that are mediated through fictional representations of the past.

My analysis of the two representative novels I have chosen to study draws on Dalley's discussion of characterization as a means of exemplification in the postcolonial historical novel. Dalley argues that the contested nature of postcolonial pasts "prompts novelists to frame their work vis-à-vis norms of plausibility, verifiability, and the dialogue with archives and alternative accounts" (9). Thus, although the postcolonial historical novel is not to be read as a straightforward representation of the "truth" in the literal sense of the term, one may understand it as a representation of truth in the allegorical sense. This echoes what Jameson wrote about third-world texts being "[N]ecessarily...allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*" (69). Dalley describes the process of characterization as a continuing dialectic between "typification", or the

representation of an entire national community through an imagined, fictional character, and “singularity”, which defies the “generalizing impulse” of typification by allowing a fictional character to rise above the normative conceptions of their (national) community to claim their unique individuality. He argues that characterization in the postcolonial novel cannot be classified under one or the other category mentioned above, because while it is necessary to affirm “the irreducibility of the unique human subject” through singularity (16), it is also equally necessary in the postcolonial historical novel to locate the singular character within the forces of history from which the character emerges. Typification and singularity complement each other to produce exemplifying characters that both represent colonised communities, and assert the uniqueness and basic humanity of those who belong to these communities.

Bienvenido Lumbera’s study of Philippine postcolonial literature, *Revaluation*, has informed my own discussion of the Martial Law novel’s place within what Lumbera calls “the Nationalist Literary Tradition”. As Lumbera observes:

It was the achievement of Rizal in his two richly detailed realistic novels about contemporary conditions in the Philippines of his time that firmly set the direction for the development of a nationalist tradition in Philippine Literature. *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891), both in Spanish and addressed primarily to audiences in Spain, asserted the right of a colonised people to be treated with justice and dignity, and showed the consequences for both the colonised and the coloniser when that right is withheld (121).

The Philippine Revolution against Spain, along with the Filipino-American War that followed the Treaty of Paris in 1898 in which the Philippines was sold to the United States, turned a developing genre of resistance writing into one that was not just “anti-colonial but reformist” in tone, like Rizal’s novels, but was “anti-colonial and revolutionary”. According to Lumbera, “a few years after the U.S. took over from Spain the role of colonial master, the young Filipino writer could look back to the recent past and find a pathway to the recent future as heir to a tradition that would link his art to the struggle of the nation for liberation from foreign rule” (126). Although these nationalist tendencies in Philippine Literature waned as America established its presence in the Philippines, the nationalist literary tradition would make its way back into Philippine Literature whenever the nation fell on hard times, or whenever foreign

colonisers, like the Japanese, or home-grown oppressors, like Ferdinand Marcos, threatened to invalidate the people's right to be treated fairly and with dignity.

According to Lumbera, the nationalist literary tradition, from which "committed" writers drew inspiration, is characterised by the use of political allegory, as seen in the works of the 19th-century poet Francisco Baltazar and the seditious playwrights at the beginning of the American occupation; the invocation of the memory of Rizal "in its employment of literature to present an analysis of contemporary Philippine society"; and the conscious attempt "to mobilize readers for revolutionary change", as exemplified by the poetry of Bonifacio and the essays of Jacinto (137).

Caroline Hau's already-cited *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980*, published in 2000, offers an in-depth analysis of the development of the novel form within the nationalist literary tradition. Not only does she discuss the development of the Philippine historical novel, but she also offers insight into how the history of the Filipino nation is intertwined with its literature. Like Lumbera, Hau argues that literature and nationalism have a long-standing affinity in the Philippines, where literature has been deeply involved in social change from the moment that the idea of nationhood was conceived in the novels of Jose Rizal. The question of social transformation in the Philippines, according to Hau, "is usually conceived in terms of a specific ordering of the relationship between *truth* and *action*", in which one's capacity to transform one's society is "informed by her knowledge of her country's "true" history, condition, and course of development" (8). Nationalism is predicated upon a historical consciousness, which acknowledges the origins as well as the future of an imagined and knowable community, and "is premised on powerful norms of freedom, self-determination, and development." Literature has a pedagogical role in the development of this nationalist consciousness, and aside from inciting Filipinos to rebel against foreign powers, it has been deployed historically in schools and universities to inculcate in Filipino students a sense of loyalty to the nation-state.

As Hau puts it, "literature plays an important mediating role in the development of nationalist consciousness because it is deeply implicated in the social processes that create the conditions for knowledge and action; more importantly, it organises the relationship between knowledge and action" (19). Both Rosca and Apostol highlight the role of education in "raising" a protagonist's political

consciousness. Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* featured Ibarra's political education, which allowed him to understand his individual sufferings within the larger context of colonial oppression. Both Rosca's Anna, an orphan, and Apostol's Sol, a foreigner in her own country, come to imagine themselves as part of the national community upon reading about and understanding their nation's history. Both suffer personal traumas resulting from the state's efforts to terrorize its people, and both are able to make sense of their trauma through their understanding of the collective traumas endured by their ancestors within the imagined community. Education allows them to see themselves within a social network to which his personal destiny is intertwined, and to find solidarity with strangers with whom freedom is a shared goal.

Hau also discusses the connections forged between the private self and the politics of one's community in the Philippine historical novel, suggesting that one cannot separate the two in Philippine life, and that the historical novel reasserts this connection in its constructions of nationhood through fictional representations of history. "Nationness", Hau asserts, "is a material determinant that is neither external nor secondary to the experience, thought, and actions of the individual; it is the motor even of their basic impulses, the medium through which these individuals think and feel their own lives, as well as the lives of people around them" (201). The protagonists of *State of War* and *Gun Dealer's Daughter* become politically active after events connected to "national" life interfere with their personal existence. They learn that their private spaces cannot be restored to their "natural order" if they themselves do not become involved in changing the public spaces to which they belong, thus confirming what Jameson observed about the inextricability of the political from the personal in third world novels (69). In Chapter 1 I will examine how, in Anna's case, the nation's suffering becomes her own suffering when she is tortured and raped by Colonel Amor's men. To find justice for her own physical and spiritual subjugation, and for the murder of her husband, she must find ways to resist the terrorism and violence inflicted by the dictatorship upon the nation. In Chapter 2 I will examine how, in Sol's case, the comforts she enjoys as a child of the dictatorship's arms suppliers come at a steep price: the suffering of her countrymen, with whom she has come to identify. She can only continue to enjoy the luxuries that her parents shower upon her by becoming complicit in the murder of innocent peasants, who serve as collateral damage in the dictatorship's counterinsurgency

efforts. Whatever choice she makes is a political act: with her silence comes complicity, a fate she can only defy by rejecting her parents' tacit support of the military regime.

Gerald T. Burns's short 1994 essay, "Philippine Martial Law Fiction: Phases in the Early Evolution of the Genre", brings into focus the place of the Martial Law Novel within the nationalist literary tradition. He establishes the connection between Martial Law Fiction and the nationalist literary tradition by asserting, "the best Martial Law fiction goes beyond the event itself to mediate on the larger contours of Philippine history and on the vexed question of a Filipino national identity" (76). His essay was published eight years after the Marcos dictatorship ended, and observes the genre's development, comparing Martial Law fiction that was written in the aftermath of the regime's downfall with Martial Law fiction that was written years after democracy was restored. Burns speaks of an "evolution" in Martial Law fiction in which there is an increasing ambivalence towards social commitment and nationalism as the genre moves farther away in time from Martial Law.

In Chapter 1, I will look at how Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War* is more politically committed and partisan in tone. It portrays violent revolution as a painful, though necessary step in ridding the nation of its internal enemies. Published two years after the peaceful People Power Revolution of 1986 overthrew the Marcoses from power and restored democracy in the Philippines, it is more optimistic in its endorsement of armed revolution. The detonation of a bomb beneath the festival's stage may maim and kill many innocent people, but nonetheless allows Anna to peacefully escape to the countryside, where she gives birth to her child with Adrian Banyaga, a child "born innocent, without fate", who is the personification of reconciliation and healing within the nation-state. The novel suggests that only violence can reduce the dictatorship's power and create spaces for peace and healing within the imagined national community. In Chapter 2, I will look at how *Gun Dealer's Daughter* is more cautious in its endorsement of revolution, exploring the ways in which those who often lead it, like the oligarchic children who execute an attack against a powerful American colonel, are not as selfless in their motivations as they initially appear to be. While *State of War* is more heavy-handed in its use of allegory to create a clear-cut endorsement of revolution, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* is more realistic in its depiction of the personal failings of those involved in the plotting of a revolution, and ambiguous in its attitudes towards resistance movements. Even

Sol's mother, Queenie Kierulf, throws her support behind the People Power Revolution of 1986 and endorses the new government that replaces the Marcos dictatorship, showing how it is possible for the nation's home grown oppressors to explicitly endorse revolution in order to maintain the status quo. The nation's enemies, as *Gun Dealer's Daughter* shows us, know how to adapt to the changing times, and are thus more difficult to root out.

All these critics I have cited have discussed how the act of telling a nation's history is vital in the construction of national identity. Dalley, in particular, writes about how historical novel writing occupies a vital place in postcolonial societies, where competing political factions (usually the oppressor and the oppressed) offer competing versions of history. Those in power, as shown in the two novels I have chosen to discuss, are often the ones who are allowed to tell their version of the nation's history, and therefore, impose their version of national identity upon the populace. Those who occupy this privileged position are usually the nation's oppressors, who attempt to silence the memories of the oppressed and redefine their identities through their versions of history. Historical novels in postcolonial societies, thus, offer representations of history that may be fictional in their reconstructions of the past, yet truthful in their interpretations of history. Hau also discusses how historical novels in the Philippines participate in the act of re/writing the nation's history, thus making the act of historical novel writing political in nature. Both novels I have selected for this study examine the ways in which history is imagined and told in postcolonial societies, showing how the oppressed discover new modes of truth-telling that transcend the "truth-reality distinction" favoured by western, colonial modes of thought. These novels also examine the act itself of writing history, and how its involvement in the nation's politics makes it a fraught vehicle for truth-telling, even as it remains an effective means of political action.

In Chapter 1, I will look at how *State of War*, as suggested by Marie Rose Arong and David Hempel, examines alternative modes of remembering the past, such as dreaming, that can reclaim forgotten and silenced memories, and undermine the authoritarian state's efforts to disempower the oppressed by erasing and reconstructing collective memories. In Chapter 2, I will examine how *Gun Dealer's Daughter* deconstructs the act of remembering. As Sol's efforts to present a favourable version of herself through her confessions suggest, the act of writing history involves redactions and fabrications that are often deemed essential in

constructing a coherent narrative of self. Lying plays a central role in the novel, both on the part of the oppressor, and on the part of the oppressed. Oligarchs and dictators constantly construct fabricated versions of themselves and of their histories through storytelling and portraiture. At the same time, the act of reimagining is also presented as a means for the oppressed to undermine accepted versions of history that silence and disempower them. The scenes in which Sol, the novel's narrator, confronts Colonel Grier, who insists on telling his version of her nation's history that belittles Filipino revolutionaries, are where the novel shows how the oppressed find ways of imaginatively altering official versions of history. Through dreaming and imagining, the oppressed can reconstruct, and therefore reclaim, the coloniser's versions of their histories, and therefore, of their identities.

The most obvious theme connecting my own novel, and the novels I have chosen to discuss in this critical component, is that of historical erasure, and how oppressed peoples find empowerment in the resuscitation of collective memory. These two novels, as well as the novel I wrote, devote their attention to the writing (and remembering) of history, and how historical truth can potentially disrupt the (oppressive) status quo. Faithfulness to "emotional truth" is a question confronted by these three novels, particularly in the ways in which historical revisionism stems from a desire to erase the "emotional truth" of lived experience.

Chapter I

Historical Amnesia, Colonial Trauma, and Self-Immolation in Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War*

I. Introduction

Published in the United States in 1988, just two years after the restoration of democracy in the Philippines, Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War* confronts the political implications of state-sanctioned violence during the Marcos years by contextualising it within the nation's colonial legacy. The novel examines the many ways in which historical amnesia has prevented the Filipino nation from understanding its present, and how the traumas of the past remain unresolved. This chapter will look at how Rosca diagnoses the nation's inability to recover from the traumas it received from its colonial rulers in terms of its refusal to remove itself from the patterns of oppression engendered by colonialism.

The novel also dramatizes how official versions of the nation's history are utilized, both by foreign colonizers and native oppressors, to control and subjugate the colonised (and formerly colonised), and how the historical erasures and fabrications created by these official historical narratives prevent the nation's citizens from building a coherent narrative of resistance. This chapter will look at how the numerous ways in which the novel examines how historical amnesia has prevented the Filipino nation from understanding its present, resulting in a vicious cycle in which the nation repeats its own trauma through self-harm.

The novel also suggests that as much as official versions of history dominate the waking lives of the nation's citizens, the lived histories of their ancestors nonetheless assert their presence within their subconscious. This chapter will also examine how historical memory, which reappears in this novel in the form of myths and dreams, is utilized by the nation's citizenry to subvert the official narratives of history. Myths and dreams give voice to silenced memories, becoming forms of alternative history that become part of the nation's language and make resistance, and healing, a possibility. As Dalley asserts, "Postcolonialism is...a discourse of and about the writing of history in multiple forms" (4), and in this chapter I will look at

how *State of War* engages with the multiple forms of telling, and remembering, history.

This chapter will also draw upon Dalley's discussions of characterisation in the postcolonial historical novel to shed light upon the novel's exemplifications, through typification and singularity, of the Filipino nation. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the nation becomes a character fighting for its own survival in Philippine historical novels. In *State of War*, like other postcolonial historical novels that are allegorical in their interpretations of the nation's past, the nation finds embodiment in characters who both typify aspects of the national community, while asserting their singularity as characters and adding complexity to our understanding of Filipino nationhood. In *State of War*, characters embody the nation's struggle for survival, as well as its capacity for self-sabotage; and through typification and singularity, these characters shed light upon the complex and often intertwined processes of defying, resisting, and enabling oppression within the Filipino nation-state.

This chapter will also draw upon Hau's discussions of the Filipino nation as it is "imagined" in opposition to "the outsider", in order to examine Rosca's depictions of native betrayal upon the nation-state, and its implications for Filipino nationhood. Native betrayal is one of the repeated events in *State of War* in which the nation's enemies make themselves known to the novel's protagonists, giving these protagonists more reason to identify with the communities to which they belong, and who were equally betrayed by these native traitors. Rosca depicts an evolving sense of nationhood by charting the growth of these communities with which these protagonists identify (from the nuclear family, to the local community, to the oppressed nation-state), showing how one's personal betrayal of a friend or family member evolves into a betrayal of the nation-state, as its members find solidarity in their shared experience of oppression.

Lastly, this chapter will draw upon Hau's discussions of the development of nationalist consciousness through a deepened understanding of one's history in Filipino historical novels, and the necessary relationship between historical knowledge and action in facilitating the nation's ownership of its own history. The problem of historical amnesia is examined throughout the novel, and this chapter will explore how the act of forgetting results in the nation's paralysis, since it is this erasure of historical knowledge that prevents the nation from taking meaningful political action against its own oppressors.

II. Anna, Eliza, Adrian: allegorical embodiments of national identity

The novel opens with these three friends traveling to the island of K— to participate in the largest and oldest Festival in the Philippines. These characters are all embodiments of the nation, typifying different aspects of the nation's identity. Anna Villaverde is the widow of a political dissident who has herself become involved in the Communist resistance after her arrest and torture by the military; Eliza Hansen, her university roommate, is the mistress of a high-ranking military official, a powerful woman whom politicians and businessmen approach when seeking an audience with the Commander; and Adrian Banyaga is the spoiled scion of a wealthy real-estate mogul, whose name, "Banyaga", means "foreigner" in Tagalog, implying the foreignness of the Filipino elite within the imagined Filipino community. As Marie Rose Arong and David Hempel write, "[T]he three protagonists form a Trinitarian unity, each of them personifying a different aspect of Philippine culture and history, while the three together are emblematic of the heterogeneous totality that lies behind the signifier 'Philippines'" (56).

Eliza represents the mestizo upper class that makes compromises with the nation state in order to maintain its privilege. Adrian, whose last name—as noted above—is *Banyaga*, is out of touch with his own people as a result of his own class privilege, the irony of which isn't lost on Colonel Amor, his interrogator and the head of the secret police: "Your name—*Banyaga*—it means foreigner. Yet, it is a native name; I have a Spanish one. But look at us. Irony, isn't it" (86). The novel loops from the narrative's present time back to the faraway past, retracing the lineages of the novel's three major characters, Anna, Adrian, and Eliza, and establishing the parallels between their lives and the lives of their ancestors. Anna is of humble origins (while belonging, as it turns out, to an illustrious family that fell from grace after the Second World War), and could as well represent the Filipino middle class that is initially reluctant to become politically involved, only joining the Communist resistance after the regime has interrogated and tortured her for information regarding her husband's involvement in the resistance. It is Anna who comes to occupy a pivotal role in the novel, being the primary link between her own family's forgotten past (with their own attendant memories of trauma, both physical and spiritual) and the violence inflicted by the novel's present-day dictatorship upon its citizens (which impinges upon her private space as she is interrogated by Colonel Amor and raped by his men). As a

student and teacher of history, Anna also possesses a knowledge as well as a spiritual connection to the nation's history, pulling Adrian and Eliza into her orbit as their initial encounters with her prove to be, as Adrian describes them, "transcendental" (343, 344). Adrian's first physical encounter with Anna is compared to a spiritual encounter with history, in which history is made flesh:

[H]is hands automatically taking her hot, dry hands while his mind, for some strange reason, instantly dredged up from his storehouse of memories his grandfather's tale of Magellan crossing a nameless sea in a still young world. He had seen, as he looked into her eyes, the sea; depths beyond depths, and the tiny ships and white sails of grace moving along the rim of time. Almost without knowing it, without being aware that he was doing so, he kissed her fingertips one by one, as he told himself that this was what it meant, that to love was to regain the capacity to remember a world without names, to recall by virtue of the whorl above the beloved's knucklebones and the blue of the veins beneath the skin the unbearable fragility of mornings in this country, to find October odors trapped in the skinfolds between her toes along with the scent of talcum powder and soap and human sweat (32).

As Arong and Hempel write: "Falling in love with Anna, he realizes that he is able to remember not only the stories his grandfather told him about the pre-colonial times but even those memories only a person who was alive in the past could remember" (63). It is an encounter that is both wordless and complete, showing us that what happens between Anna and Adrian is not only a passing on of knowledge, but perhaps Adrian's awakening (with Anna's help) to his own knowledge of his nation's history that has lain dormant within him (and to which he has been largely indifferent due to his class privilege) until his encounter with Anna. This immediate transference of, or rather awakening to, historical knowledge through this physical encounter presupposes the idea that even those who are indifferent to the nation's past are heirs to its physical memories, which, in Adrian's case, manifests itself as a moment of spiritual transcendence resulting from a sexual encounter.

Like Adrian, Eliza also falls in love with Anna when they meet at their university dormitory, and remains loyal to her friend for years afterwards: "I am able to love only one person. Always and constantly, from the day we discovered we were to share a room at the college dormitory" (43). According to Arong and Hempel: "The novel equates falling in love with imagining their past: Anna embodies this past and

becomes the vessel of the nation's forgotten memories. When Adrian and Eliza love Anna they are, in effect, also imagining the past" (63). Eliza recognises that there is something special about her friend, being baffled, at first, by Anna's quiet stoicism after speaking with unemotional clarity about her father's life and death: "It took a long while before I understood... You would think she was indifferent. She'd stand there like a statue, her face a mask—but behind that, her mind was raging, pacing, tearing through one thought or another, calculating desperately" (46). Anna's silent stoicism fascinates Eliza, as well as Manolo, Anna's husband, who calls Anna "My quiet Anna" (65). Adrian uses the term "transcendental" on several occasions to describe Anna, as well as to explain why he would fall in love with a seemingly plain-looking, silent woman. One could take the term "transcendental", in this case, to mean "inexpressible", which Adrian recognizes in Anna's silence.

Arong and Hempel argue that "Anna, as the quiet woman, signifies silenced, forgotten memory. Ironically, Anna's silence draws both Eliza and Adrian to her" (64). As an allegorical character, Anna embodies and typifies the nation's historical memory, whose silence serves as a defense mechanism against colonial and authoritarian violence. She refuses to give her secrets away to Colonel Amor, who will inevitably twist and reshape her memories in an effort to gain control over her, and over the nation whose historical memories are also hers (since she is an embodiment of the national character). She also typifies the Filipino people, who have inherited memories of trauma from their forebears and possess these memories in their bodies; without a conscious knowledge of these memories, they instead pass on these memories unconsciously, in the form of dreams. Anna passes on the memories that she possesses within her physical body when she makes love with Adrian, who receives the gift of Anna's unconscious knowledge in the form of dreams. Eliza's experience with Anna is similar: through their silent friendship, Eliza realises that Anna is in possession of a special kind of knowledge, and that her friend, as a bearer of historical memory, must be protected.

Upon finding out the details of Anna's suffering in the hands of Colonel Amor, Eliza, who has previously collaborated with the regime to secure her own survival (after being disinherited by her mother), embarks upon a plot to assassinate Colonel Amor during the festival. Learning about what happened to Anna brings home to her the brutality of the regime, and her own collaboration with the regime, especially after Colonel Amor articulates her complicity in Anna's torture: "Miss

Hansen, you live in a world of wealth and order. We maintain that world, understand. Our ways may not be known to you but believe me, they are both scientific and necessary” (55). The fact that such state-sanctioned violence has been directed at Anna motivates Eliza to finally take action against the dictatorship and atone for her complicity.

III. The Festival: Embodiment of the Nation as Character

The festival (probably modelled after the famous Ati-Atihan festival in Aklan, perhaps the oldest festival in the Philippines) serves to gather disparate characters from all over the Philippine islands within a single space, presenting for the novel’s readers a microcosm of Philippine society. The festival becomes an all-accepting space in which foreign tourists dance with locals, where men don women’s clothing without being mocked or ostracised, where the rich rub shoulders with the poor, and where Communist rebels move in and out of the crowd, incognito, while the state constantly reinforces its presence amidst such chaos by posting soldiers at every street corner. The nation’s body politic becomes unified within a single space, and the festival comes to embody the nation’s character that is heterogeneous in its composition, while also possessing a single, unified identity.

The festival also performs for its participants the functions of what Bakhtin labels the “carnavalesque”, which provides “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it mark[s] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (qtd. from Arong and Hempel 10). Such dissolution of social and class boundaries is in itself a form of subversion, defying the nation-state’s wish for control by dissolving all forms of social categorization. While peasant farmers transform themselves into ancient warriors through costume, re-enacting for onlookers what seems to be an ancient story of triumphant rebellion against foreign invaders, guerillas such as Anna, Rafael (a member of the guerrilla movement whom Anna meets at the festival itself), and Guevarra (the leader of the guerrillas) pass themselves off as tourists and ordinary participants during the festival, smuggling in a bomb that will detonate beneath a stage during the festival’s closing ceremonies. As Myra Mendible points out, “[A]t this site of radical possibilities, the symbolic dissolution of boundaries hints at the prospect of revolution” (“The Politics and Poetics of Philippine Festival”, 31). Eliza continues to play her role as state

collaborator, dining with powerful officials and expressing her willingness to pull strings on behalf of the Banyaga family, even as she is looking for an opportune moment to assassinate Colonel Amor.

The festival embodies the state's inability to control its people, despite its best efforts: the state, according to the novel's narrator, cannot "rule, regulate, manage, and control seven thousand one hundred shrapnels of boisterous rebellion" (339). While the festival has gathered all the important dignitaries of the nation-state on a stage for the festival's closing ceremonies, it has also brought them closer to the people whom the authoritarian regime seeks to control, who exhibit outward approval of the regime's demands for control while harboring anti-government rebels who sneak in the bomb that detonates beneath the festival stage.

It is the festival's subversion of social norms that allows its participants to gain access to an idea of the nation's past that eludes state control (*Literature as Activism*, 358). Although posters of the Commander and his wife are scattered throughout the island of K—, these images slip in and out of the narrative, leaving faint impressions at best, suggesting that the state's propaganda has somehow lost its hold upon the festival's participants. Gossip, conversation, and spectacle, on the other hand, play huge roles in carrying forth to the novel's main characters an alternative version of history that the state seeks to suppress. In their re-enactments of rebellion, for instance, the peasants costumed as ancient warriors are staging an allegory of resistance against the state, representing characters from the nation's distant past that could stand in for the state's repressive rulers and those who oppose them. The festival serves as a commemoration of an event in the distant past that no one quite remembers, and their return to the island of K— to take part in this festival may as well represent a collective return to the nation's origins:

The Philippines, with its seven thousand one hundred islands, held an uncountable number of festivals throughout the year...But such was the power of the ceremonies at K—, on the windward side of the island, that whenever festivals were mentioned, K—sprang readily to the mind. Perhaps because the Festival here was a singular evocation of victory in a country of too many defeats. Or perhaps because the first celebration went beyond the memory of the grandfather of the grandfather of the oldest grandfather at K—, which made it no one's and yet everyone's personal history. Perhaps—. No matter.

(13)

Although these three characters have a vague idea of the festival's origins, it is the idea of a common past that binds them, as well as all the participants, together in a single act of celebration. The festival's past, or rather the idea of its past, legitimises the festival as well as the community it forms—it seems, at times, that the participants in this festival all sense a connection to a single source. Their purpose in coming to the island of K— is to simultaneously lose themselves in the festival's crowd while reclaiming their lost selves, to which they gain access by surrendering their individuality to an interlinking, communal self (Nguyen 8). Though they are incapable of representing the Filipino identity as characters in themselves, their participation in these communal rites allows them to engage in the complex totality of Filipino identity. It is also through their meetings with certain characters in the festival that they gain access to the nation's complex history, as well as the roles they play in its history and the ways in which they are related to one another. Their participation in the festival thus allows them to subsume their identities within the nation's greater self as embodied by the festival.

IV. Dreams: Visions of Reality

As we find out later in the book, Anna and Eliza are cousins, while Anna's and Adrian's family lines can be traced to two native women who were raped by the same Capuchin monk on separate occasions. Coming to this festival, and confronting emissaries of the state such as Colonel Amor who seek to gain control over their knowledge of the past, awaken in them a sense of their shared past which return to them in the form of dreams. The shape-shifting, guerrilla-like nature of their dreams, whether presenting themselves in the form of hallucinations (for Adrian), shared dreaming (for Eliza and Anna), fables (which slip in and out of festival participants' conversations), or spectacle (in the case of the staged re-enactments in the festival streets), allow these dreams to elude attempts by the nation-state to control their telling. According to Arong and Hempel: "Dreaming as opposed to remembering points to a renegotiation of Philippine national history...Despite the nation's past, present, and even future state(s) of war, and despite its forgotten memories, the nation constantly reimagines itself and its history. This sort of dreaming undermines the solid ideological foundation of the nation state, because it challenges the ideological master discourse of History" (64).

We could compare, for instance, Anna's transmission of historical knowledge to Adrian (or rather, her awakening of historical knowledge within Adrian), through the act of lovemaking which awakens Adrian's subconscious, to Colonel Amor's attempt to forcibly extract from Adrian the knowledge that Anna has passed on to him by injecting in Adrian a truth serum. What Colonel Amor seeks from Adrian is a knowledge of the resistance movement that Anna may have shared with him, which Colonel Amor found himself unable to extract from Anna in his "Romance Room" in which his men repeatedly subjected Anna to torture and rape. While Adrian is able to access Anna's knowledge despite her silence, by learning to commune, peacefully, with her silence, Colonel Amor sees Anna's silence as a barrier to the truth that he must crack, and which he finds himself unable to breach, despite subjecting her to physical and spiritual rape—as Anna herself attests in the book, "It was exquisite rape, the colonel admitted...unlike his men, he preferred to fuck the soul" (67).

V. Colonel Amor

In his office, which serves as an anteroom to the notorious "Romance Room", Colonel Amor shows Anna pictures of what appear to be Manolo's desecrated body, hoping for her to divulge her husband's secrets to him. Instead, what he confronts is her silence, which he hopes to break by sending her back to the Romance Room. Anna's silence during his interrogations becomes a site of resistance. In Colonel Amor's desire to physically and mentally gain control over her secrets (and over the complex narrative of history, which she possesses in her body), her silence symbolizes a refusal of the nation to surrender its identity to state control. As Viet Thanh Nguyen observes: "Amor, as the personification of the state's security apparatus, would certainly like to control production of the soul, but has to settle for abusing it" (qtd. from de Manuel, 108).

It is Anna's silence during these interrogations that makes Adrian, upon reading the official report of her interrogation, fall in love with her even more: "In the report's darkness, he searched for light, desperately, refusing to acknowledge his rising pity. A man could love only what he respected, not pitied. He should not have been told. Searched for and found it—the light!—in the report's last entry: *subject did not break; returned to Camp C--*. Truly, she was transcendental" (344). Adrian has no desire to control Anna's knowledge, and instead is overwhelmed by the

transcendental nature of Anna's silence that allows him to gain access to her unspoken transmission of their nation's history. It is Colonel Amor's desire to control Anna's knowledge, on the other hand, which makes him incapable of engaging with the strange power of Anna's silence.

Amor is the embodiment of authoritarian violence, an oppressor of his own community who personifies the nation's capacity for self-harm while typifying the character of the native oppressor who delights in causing suffering among his fellowmen. The colonel's last name, Amor, or his nickname, the Loved One, is an ironic play upon his role as interrogator and henchman of the dictatorship. As Mendible points out, "Amor's love affair, the text demonstrates, is with power; his arsenal is information—knowledge which makes him 'a true scholar of the human psyche'" (33). His attempt to extract knowledge through torture and control is a parody of Adrian's easy awakening to Anna's knowledge (that takes place through a silent and loving communication). As Adrian's grandfather, Old Andy, would put it, "To own things did not necessarily mean one belonged; that possession was no guarantee of control" (133).

As an allegorical character, Colonel Amor also asserts his singularity by revealing his own class insecurities to Eliza and Adrian. Like Old Andy Banyaga, who attempts to buy himself into upper-class respectability after the WWII by acquiring as much land as possible, Colonel Amor ultimately feels like an outsider within the Filipino upper class, despite working on their behalf to protect their interests by controlling and intimidating the Filipino people. When interrogating Adrian during the festival, Colonel Amor articulates his plebeian insecurities:

"I gather you don't like gentlemen," Adrian said.

"Not much," the colonel admitted. "I have to serve them constantly and yet I can never be one. Nevertheless, your father did ask me to keep an eye on you since you're so young and so—ah, rich. Wouldn't do to have you fall into the wrong hands. All that money. What do you think of this room, by the way? I had it furnished for you. I didn't want you to think I was a barbarian. I also felt it would make you more comfortable—to be in familiar surroundings." (85)

When Eliza meets Colonel Amor to negotiate Anna's release from detention, she notices how his class insecurity manifests itself in the smallest details, like his choice of cologne: "As soon as she opened the door, a familiar scent had reached her. Brut men's cologne, she had told herself, smirking. Oh, she knew him well enough,

immediately and thoroughly. Imported cologne. A frailty of those enamored with power and yet not quite so powerful” (53). Later during their meeting, he tells Eliza: “You have a lovely laugh... Very classy. I wish I could have that much class.”

Though he gains power over the people by colluding with the dictatorship and the Filipino upper class, his collusion does not buy him any respectability with the elite whose interests he protects. In fact, members of the upper class, such as Adrian and Eliza, often prefer to dissociate themselves from Colonel Amor, even when his role is to preserve and defend the privileges they enjoy by employing violence to preserve the social status quo. As a character possessing singularity in his motivations, Colonel Amor unleashes his insecurities in the form of violence, as when he induces delirium in Adrian, and reveals to Eliza exactly how he has tortured and abused her dearest friend. His insecurities ultimately stem from a sense of powerlessness, and since he cannot completely take out his frustrations upon his upper-class masters, or upon the Commander and his wife, he can only inflict his violence upon the powerless, like Anna.

VI. “The Book of Acts”

The first section of the novel, entitled “The Book of Acts”, sets the festival’s stage, and ends with Adrian’s disjointed and fragmented recollections of his grandfather’s stories about the past during a drug-induced delirium. While Adrian is in the midst of his hallucinations, Anna and Eliza find each other amidst the festivities and rest beneath a tree at the edge of the town plaza. Here, Anna recalls finding an emerald-and-diamond earring in her childhood room, and talks about how its mere touch gave her the feeling of a story that it seemed to embody: “I was just wondering where it came from, what it was doing there among the relics in my aunt’s house. We never had money, were never rich—and yet there it was. I knew it was real the minute I saw it—half of a pair, the other one missing. And when I took it, not telling anyone, hiding it in the toe end of my shoe—why did I do that?—I had the strangest feeling. A touch, a memory of a story, not even a story, just the breath of one.” Upon Eliza’s prodding, she laments the impossibility of shoring up the story of the earring: “They monkeyed around the with the language, Eliza, while we were growing up. Monkeyed

around with names. Of people, of places. With dates. And now, I can't remember. No one remembers. And even this'—she waved a hand toward the Festival—'even this will be forgotten. They will hide it under another name. No one will remember'" (149). Indeed, as we find out later in the book, the nation's foreign colonisers have succeeded in manipulating and erasing the memories of Eliza and Anna's past, changing the names of streets and towns, changing the language they spoke even, thus succeeding in controlling (and erasing) the community's memories of itself. Thus members of the community like Anna, Eliza, and Adrian find themselves lost and unmoored, not knowing who they truly are, and seeking their true identities by engaging in festivals that become meaningless over time due to their increasing detachment from their origins in history.

However, what Anna and Eliza cannot access through memory, they gain access to through the act of dreaming. Eliza takes Anna's hand, and this moment of physical contact transports them to what turns out to be their shared past, as narrated in "The Book of Numbers". Arong and Hempel call this section a "collective flashback", in which "it dreams the past of the trinity in order to tell an alternative story about the nation's own past" (64). We are first shown, in "The Book of Numbers", how foreign colonisers employed violence in order to exert control over the islands, and how this violence spilled into the private lives of Anna's, Eliza's, and Adrian's ancestors. The section opens with Adrian and Anna meeting and falling in love, and describes how their meeting, for Anna at least, awakens in her the sense that history, somehow, has come full circle within the confines of Anna's apartment room: "In that clarity that came from the first touch of health, seeing past, present, and future laid out within the small boundaries of her lodgings" (154). Anna has just been rescued from her interrogators by Eliza, and Adrian, who is ministering to her fever, has been living a comfortable but aimless life, not having the backbone, or the self-awareness, to assert his will with relatives who make important life choices on his behalf. Their coming together presupposes a moment of healing and completion, both for themselves and for the national community that they both embody and typify, even as they assert their singularities as individuals who find each other and fall in love. What they both experience is described by a Rosca as a "shock of awareness", which, unknown to both of them, "was merely an echo, a duplication of a morning shrouded by antiquity, when a middle-aged friar, condemned by his melancholia to

service in the heathen lands of the Far East, rose at dawn from an insomnia made worse by the sultry heat...and gone out of the monastery for a walk by the river” (154). This Capuchin monk, who turns out to be Anna and Adrian’s common ancestor, then spots a young native girl bathing in the river, and proceeds to rape her (the girl, as it turns out, is Adrian’s great-grandmother). Although the personal, private narrative of Anna and Adrian’s family lines comes full circle with their lovemaking, this narrative in which they unconsciously position themselves begins with an act of violence, which marks the beginning of their shared histories. The juxtaposition of these two moments illustrates how a loving meeting between two people can easily be reminiscent of the violence of their families’ pasts. An observation that Anna reiterates when reflecting upon her nation’s history is that “Everything in this country happens in the morning...Because it is a country of beginnings” (328), and while Adrian and Anna’s meeting can be symbolic of a new beginning, it also signals the repetition of a cycle that began with violence. It also suggests that the historical atrocity that binds their two families can be easily subverted, even reversed, through this act of love that completes the cycle.

Anna and Adrian are unaware of the violence that began this cycle, or even of the cycle itself: it is an omniscient, all-knowing narrator who is able to see the connections between these two events. Although their lovemaking is nothing like what the Capuchin monk inflicted upon their two great-grandmothers (the monk will also go on to rape Anna’s great-grandmother, Maya, as he had raped Adrian’s great-grandmother), their coupling is a kinder reflection of this act of violence, hinting that their coming together actually links them to a violent past. Sex, which enables their loving communion, can also be wielded as a tool of violence. As we see in Anna’s “musical chair rapes” under Colonel Amor’s watch prior to her meeting with Adrian, sexual violence is very much a part of the nation’s present, a repetition of the sexual subjugation of women that was used as a tool for conquest during Spanish colonial times. The nation’s history, in this case, must not be mistaken with the nation’s “past”, since the nation has never truly left its history behind.

VII. Violation and resistance

Again, as so frequently in the novel, colonial subjugation is made manifest through acts of sexual violation, making colonialism a physical trauma whose memories are

preserved within the body. The friar's victim does not resist, having been indoctrinated, like many Filipino subjects of Spanish colonial rule, with the idea that the emissaries of the colonial state are entitled to her body as much as they are entitled to the bounties of the conquered land: "The girl, who was fourteen years old, knew enough not to resist the priest, having grown up surrounded by the gossip of elders and taken to heart the admonition that the tenderest of thighs, whether of chicken or of women, belonged to the friars" (155). She typifies the colonised subject at this moment of violation, yielding to the priest's whims and surrendering her will in order to survive. However, even as she submits to this act of physical subjugation, she silently asserts her individual subjectivity just as she is being dehumanised: "She yielded her virginity on a bed of pebbles and curled arms and legs tightly about the pain of the unholy entrance, bit her lower lip, and thought of how much all this silliness should cost the stupid priest". She may yield her body in order to survive this ordeal, thus typifying Filipinos of her time who chose to surrender to their colonisers, but one must note that she also asserts her singularity as a character by choosing not yield her mind to his whims.

It is an act of self-preservation which, while being the only form of resistance that she can offer to this priest, also employs patterns of amnesia in its processing of trauma. To survive the rape, she must put her physical subjugation, and its attendant pain, at the back of her mind. To preserve her spirit, she must dissociate herself from this physical experience of dehumanisation.

This is not the only native girl whom the same monk first rapes and then employs on a regular basis to satisfy his sexual needs. Fifteen years later, in the monastery kitchen, he encounters Anna's great-grandmother, Maya, who comes to be his favorite mistress and bears him seven sons. She is a married woman when they meet, and her relationship with the monk makes her an outcast in her community. However, she fights back against the ostracism by using her alliance with the church as a source of power within the community. Those who chase after her as she drives her *caleche* around the town of Malolos call her "witch, whore, saint, patroness, insane" (156) while also handing her rolled petitions to bring to the saints, the statues of which she prods with whip lashes until her requests are granted. Her efforts to harness the church's power to raise herself in the eyes of her community becomes increasingly absurd as she bedecks herself in the monastery's jewels and fashions herself as a version of the Virgin Mary. As Shu Ching-Chen writes, "As a matriarch,

Maya serves the community by becoming the surrogate Virgin Mary for the people. Therefore her role as the matriarch of the family is complex and conflicting. Maya's assuming the guise of the Virgin Mary is a display of the colonial violence upon her body... The power she acquires by dressing and performing like the Virgin Mary is therefore a sign of her fall from her ancestors' indigenous culture" (16). It is the erasure of the community's memories of their ancestors' indigenous culture that makes the community shun Maya, even as they grudgingly acknowledge her power. In pre-colonial times she may have served as a *babaylan*, or female shaman, due to her ability to minister to the community's spiritual needs, but due to patriarchal systems of subjugation that are employed to diminish the status of women within colonial society, she is shunned and slut-shamed. Dolores de Manuel argues: "The dimension of male dominance becomes a central issue in the experience of colonialism, as the friars' usurpation of power and supplanting the priestesses is responsible for cutting off the nation from its roots in the bountiful, motherly earth" (105). The community's shaming of Maya is part of a process of mental colonialisation in which the community's symbols and systems of meaning are replaced with those of the coloniser, leading the colonised to accept their diminished place within the social hierarchy of colonial society. In allowing themselves to forget their pre-colonial past, the colonised allow themselves to be shamed by their foreign rulers. Historical erasure, then, becomes the ultimate act of violation.

Maya could be seen either as a victim of the colonial system, or as a cunning manipulator of its systems of power (Chen 13). She elevates her status within the colonised community by manipulating the Capuchin monk who has come to depend on her, employing his power within the community for her own benefit. Like Adrian Banyaga's great-grandmother who returns to the sacristy after her rape to serve the Capuchin monk in exchange for financial support, Maya, who is raped in the sacristy's kitchen by the same monk years later, makes the most out of his patronage by appropriating the symbolic power of the Catholic Church to regain her people's respect, and by reaping a certain amount of financial security for herself and her sons. The monk comes to depend on her, allowing her to exert a certain amount of power over him: "She lived with him openly, supervising the servants in the monastery, taking care of his mass vestments, fixing herbal potions to ease his dyspepsia, holding his hand as he lay in bed assaulted by heat or rain or other unspeakable climactic tribulations this land brought him" (156).

Nearly a century later, Eliza, the cousin of Maya's great-granddaughter Anna, (a descendant of her son's business partner, Hans Zangroniz, who has an affair with Mayang, her son's wife) employs the same methods to secure a position of power within the dictatorship, latching onto a powerful military official who repays her sexual favors with a house, financial security, and access to the dictatorship's business dealings, allowing her to turn herself into a conduit for businessmen seeking favors with the Commander. Although one may think of Maya and Eliza as subversive in their exploitation of the patriarchy, one must also note that the patriarchal systems of power that Maya sought to exploit are still in place a century later, by the time Eliza comes into her own as a woman who instinctively understands the system and learns how to play it. They may assert their singularities as characters by defying their victimhood in the hands of the patriarchy as they gain mastery over its rules and manipulate them for their own benefit, thus transcending their typification as colonised subjects and subjugated women. However, this may also lend to their further typification of the "femme fatale" archetype who adapts to her disempowerment in the hands of the patriarchy by employing her "feminine wiles" to gain favours from powerful men. One must also note that Maya's and Eliza's manipulation of the system also contributes to its preservation. Eliza confronts this reality when Colonel Amor forces her to witness Anna's rape through a one-way window into the Romance Room. Decades after colonisation has come to its "official" end in the Philippines, its mechanisms remain.

Later, when the Capuchin monk dies comically, after falling through the belfry's trapdoor upon spotting his son with Maya masturbating on a hill (158), Maya and Carlos Lucas, the only one of her sons with the Capuchin monk who has not sailed away from the Philippines (and who inadvertently caused his father's death) are evicted from the monastery, but they do not leave without taking with them a pirate's chest full of gold from the monastery and an emerald necklace Maya has stolen from the Capuchin order's statue of the Virgin Mary. They move to Manila, where they buy themselves a house in the booming district of Binondo and re-establish themselves as a respectable family (taking on the last name "Villaverde") in a neighborhood that has no knowledge of their past. Maya quickly learns Spanish, drawing upon herself the kind of respect that cows a pair of Capuchin monks who, years later, confront her at her mansion when the success of her son's gin distillery threatens to shutter their own brewery business. When they bribe her with an offer of

burial in the church's cathedral to "save her soul", she is finally able to reject the church's offer of power and protection by saying: "We're honorable people, Father...It wouldn't matter where we're buried. The site would neither add to nor subtract from our honor" (170). As de Manuel argues, "Her sense of her own worth as a native is strengthened by her perception of the hollowness of the colonisers' pretensions; she rejects the idea that supposedly lowly native bodies might be revalorised in death by burial in the cathedral, center of colonial control" (108). By rejecting the church's efforts to shame her into submission, she is finally able to reject the patriarchy's shaming of her body and assert her independence from the church. She also asserts her singularity, showing us that she is not merely a colonised subject, but an individual who is capable of rejecting the will of the church, and of the coloniser.

But the power and independence she has gained as a result of her son's success in business is unlikely to last, as she learns upon seeing her son's business partner, a German impostor named Hans, conferring with the same Capuchin monks. She ventures outside her Binondo mansion for the first time in ten years, realising that she has not kept up with the changes that have taken place outside her house. When seeing that the landmarks of her youth have been erased, and that place names have been replaced since the coming of Americans, she begins to feel her own memories fading: "It was a kind of sin, certainly, to forget—but it was not easy to remember, especially when names changed, languages changed. A century-old name held that century; when replaced, a hundred years were wiped out at one stroke. Amnesia set it; reality itself, being metamorphic, was affected. 'Soon we will forget everything,' she told the maid, 'and if we forget, how are we to proceed?'" (186). With the monastery gone, and the only trace left by her beloved Capuchin monk a slab of black marble to mark his grave, she feels helpless, as though in history's erasure from the landscape, she herself has been erased. Almost a century later, Anna expresses a similar discomfort with how people "monkey around" with language: "Mess up language, mess up memory. People forget. Even what they are" (143). Davis notes how the novel emphasizes "the importance of the knowledge of a historical past in order to progress in time" (66), and Anna observes how the adulteration of language has resulted in the nation's loss of direction: "So it began—the islands' confusion over language and memory, so that in this Festival of commemoration there remained no more than this mangled song" (337).

VIII. Language and Memory

The Americans chose the path of “benevolent assimilation” by making the use of their language widespread and establishing schools throughout the archipelago. The English language served as a tool of indoctrination for the American colonial government, reshaping the values of Filipinos to reflect the values of their colonisers and thus silencing dissidence. Language, when employed by the coloniser, is employed as a tool of erasure, in which the identities of the colonised are changed during the process of renaming, and their ties to their past, which were once preserved by their language, are severed once their former language is erased and replaced with another. Even Colonel Amor understands how his power rests in controlling the nation’s language, and how severing the ties between language and memory results in the disempowerment of those who speak the language, who lose control over its meaning: “Language had to be changed; names had to be changed; places had to be re-baptized; all moral and ethical signposts eradicated. Call the sun, the moon; the moon, the sun and no one would be able to find his way out of confusion’s labyrinth without guidance. He, Colonel Urbano Amor, shall guide the way. He would be the truth, the way, the life” (349). This change in language severs the community from the historical knowledge that their old language once possessed for them, rendering them incapable, as Hau would put it, of transforming historical “truth” into any meaningful action that can steer the nation away from the vicious cycle of oppression.

However, even as Maya’s memories of the past begin to slip away as Spanish is slowly replaced by English in the streets, her personal history is nonetheless stored in her subconscious, which comes back to her in full force the night when she is supposed to hand down her wisdom to Mayang, her maid’s daughter and Carlos Lucas’s future wife. In an age-old ritual in which a girl receives knowledge about how to be a good wife from her future mother-in-law, Maya and Mayang lie in the same bed for the duration of a single night. After feeling Mayang’s body, “testing flesh and bones”, Maya proceeds to tell Mayang all about Carlos Lucas’s likes and dislikes before realizing “this wasn’t the lesson at all, not at all” (190). Then, in a strange gesture unforeseen by Maya (which, as she remembers in retrospect, was also performed between her and her mother when she herself was a bride-to-be), Mayang presses herself against Maya, “opening a channel to the past” through physical contact

in a scene reminiscent of Anna's silent transmission of history through her physical contact with Adrian:

[T]he girl loomed over her, stooped, and pressed her body against the length of Maya's body, her hands on Maya's hands, palm to palm, pinning them to the pillow. The weight, the glint in the girl's eyes only two inches away from her own threw her into confusion and, before she could stop herself, she was back within the monastery, deep in the cellar, where among casks of Benedictine wine she and her monk had celebrated their alliance...Her memories vomited her shame—both public and private; the shame that had driven her to lash saints and horses with equal cruelty and that which had driven her to embrace the priest's corruption until she found herself unable to live without her contempt. She felt the pain of all her childbirths, equal to the pain of watching her six sons walk away from the monastery...on their way to unspeakable voyages so they could escape the recurrent sermons of their own father who, insidiously, condemned his own brood by repeating over and over again that the sins of fathers were visited upon their descendants (191).

Not only does this act of physical communion with her son's bride-to-be unleash a torrent of memories, it also allows her to gain cognizance of her own exploitation and subjugation in the hands of her beloved monk, and to acknowledge her own shame borne out of her exploitation which she has kept hidden from herself throughout her life. If, during waking hours, she has constructed a narrative for herself that erased the priest's violation of her body, framing her own compliance and subservience as love, her silent transmission of memories to Mayang allows her to gain access to her subconscious, and to her buried memories of shame. Here we see how a complete understanding of one's history gives its owner the power to understand her motivations and anxieties, and how its gaps and fragmentations are symptoms of an inability to come to terms with one's trauma. When Maya is able to confront the traumas she has suffered in the past, she becomes capable of understanding her own shame, which allows her to forgive herself and commence the process of healing. The novel implies that the inability to confront one's past in its entirety results in a refusal to heal from one's trauma, which results in its repetition. In Maya's case, she directs her hurt not upon her monk but upon herself, illustrating how the inability to fully confront one's oppression results in feelings of shame and

self-loathing, instead of the informed desire to transform one's oppression into meaningful action.

And while Mayang betrays an understanding of the knowledge transmitted to her by her mother-in-law by predicting the hour of her mother-in-law's death after this act of shared dreaming, it seems as though she is unable to harness her newly acquired unconscious knowledge within her conscious life. Her marriage with Carlos Lucas, Maya's son, is after all a marriage of convenience, meant to preserve the family bloodline (though she is unrelated to the Villaverdes, Maya notes that Mayang looks just like her when she was Mayang's age) and to produce heirs. Mayang's name, a variation of Maya's, suggests that while Mayang is the new Maya, an heir to the history and traditions that Maya embodies, she is also a variation of Maya's character as she asserts her individuality, and therefore her singularity, as a character. Carlos Lucas's gin brewery is booming and without an heir, the family would be unable to keep for themselves their newly acquired wealth and status. Neglected as a wife by Carlos Lucas and feeling lonely in the Villaverde household, Mayang embarks on an affair with Hans Zangroniz, a German alchemist and quack who has come to the Philippines upon learning that Europeans are treated like deities in the Philippines (another consequence of colonial rule) and that his forged degrees would be accepted without question. Carlos Lucas employs him with the assumption that he will brew a beer that will outshine that of the Capuchin monks, his arch-enemies in business. As Hans pretends to work in his laboratory, fearing that Carlos Lucas will expose his quackery, he meets Mayang, and like Carlos Lucas's father, a European exile who once felt his own loneliness bearing down on him in a strange and foreign land, he finds solace (and perhaps a semblance of acceptance and belonging) in the female colonised body.

IX. The Imagined Community

The Villaverde family is unaware that Hans is making a deal with the Capuchin monks to steal Carlos Lucas's ideas, and he persuades Mayang to hand Carlos Lucas's notebooks to him. In a gesture that privileges her own desires over the welfare of her family, she steals the notebooks from Maya's pirate chest and hands them over to Hans. As she leaves the Villaverde mansion with Carlos Lucas's

notebooks, she has a vision of the house vanishing, a presentiment, perhaps, of how her betrayal will lead to the Villaverde family's downfall and their erasure from the community's memories: "Standing at the trolley stop, she had the disquieting conviction that the house was vanishing, had vanished even as she waited there, and when she returned it would be to a strange neighbourhood where no one would know or even remember her" (211). By betraying the Villaverdes she is also betraying herself, since she is also ensuring her own self-erasure with the destruction of the clan.

Here we see how Mayang's disengagement from her community, and from its history, allows her to place her individual emotions (her love for Hans) over the survival of her community, and to privilege the desires of a foreigner who has sponged off her family's wealth over her family. Although her ties to the Villaverde family are tenuous (her marriage to Carlos Lucas, after all, is an arranged one), her lover's betrayal brings to light the sharp division between Hans and herself. While Hans feels guilt for using her, he proceeds to betray her by treating her like a stranger after receiving the notebooks, making her commute back to the Villaverde house on her own despite her weak condition (by this time, she is about to give birth to his child). Although Mayang's loyalties are at first with Hans, this nonetheless does not prevent Hans from betraying her, which only shows that despite their love (which, as the novel shows, is genuine), they do not belong to the same communities and thus have separate loyalties. Hans is not her family; the Villaverdes are.

This moment of treachery, like other betrayals that take place later in the novel, makes the oppressed community, once deemed amorphous and indefinable, to be known and tangible to those who belong to it. When Jake, Luis Carlos's friend, repeatedly betrays the guerilla group to which they belong, Mayang and Luis Carlos know what they are fighting for, and whom their enemies are; when Manolo reveals his betrayal of the rebel movement to Anna, Anna takes this as a personal betrayal as well, which deepens her sense of kinship with the rebels, and with her countrymen, whom Manolo has betrayed.

Their divisions further become palpable to Mayang when Hans, after receiving the notebooks, shoves her onto a trolley that will take her back to the Villaverde house: "As the trolley began to move, she and Hans looked at each other. Somewhere within her, someone was closing doors, shuttering windows, drawing curtains. A smile of regret crossed Hans's face; her own face, she knew, mirrored it" (213). Later,

when she meets Hans again in the Villaverde household, his silence over what has just happened a few hours before further deepens her realization that they belong to separate worlds: “She couldn’t look at Hans, couldn’t watch him be friendly, normal, gracious, while the secret of how he had turned her out, turned her away in her moment of distress, gnawed within her” (213) Mayang truly begins to feel the effects of Hans’s betrayal when Carlos Lucas’s brewery is shuttered by the American colonial government (which has been bribed by the Capuchins to allege that Carlos Lucas’s gin poses health risks) and their savings are slowly depleted.

Like Maya before her, Mayang cleverly finds ways of supporting her children’s education (even prying out the emeralds from Maya’s necklace to sell separately), and is increasingly able to adapt to the times. However, it is Luis Carlos, her illegitimate son with Hans, who takes up the challenge of supporting their family after discovering his own gift for music and composition, playing songs that tell the story of his city in nightclubs. The words for his songs come to him instinctively, as though he is possessed by an otherworldly spirit. Despite having scant knowledge of his community’s history, he carries its narrative within his subconscious, and composes songs that tell the story of Mayang’s marriage to Carlos Lucas (much to his mother’s chagrin), of his city, and of the boats of his neighbourhood *estero* floating to the sky as the Americans pave over the life-giving creeks and canals of Manila in the name of progress. Unknowingly, he has imbibed the jokes, rumours, and stories of his family and neighbourhood, and gains access to the history of his family and community through the dream-like process of creation. His songs are played and sung throughout Manila, and provide solace for Manilenos as the city is ransacked by the Japanese and carpet-bombed by the Americans during its “liberation”. When the city is reduced to ashes and all traces of its history are wiped out before their eyes, the city’s inhabitants continue to sing Luis Carlos’s songs as a way to remember their city which Americans deemed expendable in their war against the Japanese.

In official accounts of history, it is claimed that the Americans liberated the Philippines from the Japanese, but with their history wiped out, as Rosca points out, “Though he (Luis Carlos) and everyone on the seven thousand one hundred islands rebuilt with ferocity, would never have that same grace again, never again the grace that only came with antiquity” (307). One could argue, as Hau would put it, that this moment of historical discontinuity in the novel prevents Filipinos from taking any meaningful action that would allow them to gain mastery over their future. Without a

thorough understanding of themselves, they are unable to transform their society, now “liberated” from foreign rule, for the better, and are thus condemned to repeat their own mistakes.

X. Philippine History: A Cycle of Forgetting

As Anna repeats throughout her childhood, “Everything in this country happens in the morning...Because it is a country of beginnings” (328). The numerous historical discontinuities that take place throughout the novel result in a historical amnesia that forces Filipinos into a perpetual state of beginning, in which they end up mirroring the lives of their ancestors (and repeating their mistakes) due to their inability to learn from a forgotten past. Much earlier in the novel, Eliza gains insight into this when she realizes that like the men and women she meets at this festival, she is caught in a loop, unable to find an end to a story that demands completion. Like Anna, who seeks from this festival “an end to a story” which can only happen if she can finally find the body of Manolo and give it a proper burial, the rest of the nation, which has come together in this festival, seeks a sense of resolution from the traumas that it has suffered from. Without resolution, the nation is forced into a cycle in which it is brought back to the beginnings of its history, in the futile hope that by reliving history, it will correct its past traumas. But as long as justice is never served, and the desecrated bodies of the murdered are never given a proper burial, the nation will forever repeat this cycle instead of moving forward in time. Eliza realizes that she, too, is trapped in a cycle of never-ending beginnings, from which she, like the nation itself, cannot move forward from: “Eliza’s heart contracted with foreboding. *She saw herself caught like her friend, dancing in circles without beginning, without end.* As she danced, the drums intoned: *four hundred years of action without achievement; of movement without distance*” (146-147, italics mine). Much has happened throughout their nation’s history, as shown by the complicated histories of Anna’s and Eliza’s ancestors, and yet even their ancestors have been caught within the same cycle, finding themselves at the mercy of foreign and native oppressors whose subjugation they can never quite escape.

The old mansion in Binondo is razed to the ground during the liberation of Manila. Luis Carlos, Anna’s father, loses his gift for composition after participating in

the American-led battle against the peasant insurgency in the 1950s, and becomes a traveling musician on cruise ships to support what remains of the Villaverde clan. Clarissa, Anna's aunt, moves the family, including Anna, to the suburbs, practically forgetting about the existence of her niece who secludes herself in the family garage and studies the old relics of the Villaverde clan. Although Anna has not benefited from the same ritual of historical transmission that takes place between Maya and Mayang, she displays a silent, almost dispassionate interest in her family's history, reciting passages from books by rote. Her cousin, who has grown envious of her family's sudden interest in Anna's autodidactic recitations of history, locks her in a cupboard. When Anna is discovered by her aunt and uncle, she can no longer recite their family's history—all she can say is "Everything in this country happens in the morning", hinting perhaps that her own recent trauma has silenced her knowledge of her past, condemning her (as well as the Villaverde family) to a perpetual state of beginnings.

Nonetheless, Anna's interest in history continues into adulthood, and while majoring in History at the state university, she meets Manolo Montreal, her future husband, who becomes active in the resistance against the dictatorship. Although her fascination with history surpasses that of her ancestors (by this time, their lived histories have been subsumed by an official narrative found in books that Anna studies as a scholar of history), she prefers at first to live a life that is divorced from her nation's chaotic history, and disapproves of her husband's involvement in politics:

To herself she said they were still young that his current fancy with politics will pass, that the keel of their marriage would right itself again for a smooth, unremarked passage through the rituals of life—weddings, baptisms, fiestas, and funerals. It was a story she had woven for herself, this simple narrative—one which could not be found in her history books with their tales of epic battles and complex colonialisations, of galleons and cannons...She had elected to ignore the warnings printed in each page of her books, trusting instead in Manolo's invulnerability (62).

Chen observes that "since public violence is part of the fundamental making of the private sphere, the effects of violence on individual characters are both coercive and productive" (9), and for Anna the violence that she witnesses on the streets coerces her, at first, to divorce her private life from her nation's politics. One could say that the state coerces her into inaction, as it has coerced many of its citizens into

accepting the status quo. However, the history she has read in books has warned her that it would be impossible for her to prevent the encroachment of her nation's violent history upon the present time to which she belongs, since the circular nature of Philippine history results in the traumas and wars of the past being repeated in one's present life (Yu 106). Anna is also warned by her family's history that, during her childhood, she has gleaned from the pictures and artifacts of her ancestors, that "the present of history is saturated with crises produced in the intersection of the public into private" (Chen 7). This becomes all the more apparent to her when Manolo is captured by government forces, and when she herself is captured and subjected to unbearable physical humiliations despite having no previous involvement in the making of her nation's history.

The violence exerted by the nation-state through Colonel Amor to subdue its citizens awakens Anna to its inescapable reality by manifesting itself as a physical violation of her body. As Chen observes, "For Colonel Amor, power is tangible and affective, and the body is the site on which power can make itself felt" (29). Her torture awakens her to her ancestral memory of physical trauma, and this new awareness of the nation-state's violence provides the impetus for her to take meaningful action to change the course of her nation's history. At the festival, she has been dispatched by the rebel movement to liquidate an important personage nicknamed "the jackal", which she assumes to be Amor. However, when she arrives at their designated meeting place, she realizes that her enemy isn't the familiar Amor, but her husband Manolo, who turns out to be still alive (the photographs Amor showed to Anna of Manolo's corpse, it turns out, were not real). Manolo reveals to her that he broke during Amor's interrogations, and that not only did he give away the rebel's secrets to Amor, but also taught Amor the very methods of interrogation that were used against Anna and Adrian. Anna, then, is faced with a choice: she could spare the life of her husband, who was, after all, tortured into confession, echoing Mayang's decision to respect her relationship with Hans and therefore become complicit in his betrayal of her family, or she could choose to ignore her marriage to Manolo and perform the rebellion's wishes by killing him. However, Anna has already internalized within her body her nation's traumatic history, and there is no sense in her privileging the personal over the political—at this point, the political *is* personal. In a fit of rage, she winds up driving a knife through his throat, killing him.

XI. The healing and rebirth of the nation-state

One sees, in this particular dilemma that Anna faces, how Rosca articulates her vision of nationhood, and what it means to belong to the Filipino nation. As Arong and Hempel are quick to point out: “Just consider that the words ‘Philippines,’ ‘Filipino,’ and ‘Filipina’ are xenonyms: they are signifiers that have been imposed on peoples and their land by a foreign entity...Inventing the Philippines for the Spanish empire meant creating new subjects, but it resulted in the creation of new subjectivities—of new subject positions—and thus of new spaces for resistance. Finally, the creation of the signifier ‘the Philippines’ invited the creation of a new history: Philippine history.” (54) The novel tracks the long and painful process of the Filipino nation coming into its own, and we can see, in Anna’s decision to murder her husband, a culmination in the development of the Filipino nation’s recognition of its identity as a “space for resistance” against oppression. In this final, pivotal scene, it is shown to us that the nation’s boundaries cannot easily be drawn between the so-called “insider” or native and the “foreign coloniser”. To ensure her own survival, and the survival of the resistance movement that seeks to topple the Commander (who is another home grown enemy, being an oppressor of his own people), Anna must murder her own kin.

The rebel movement’s leader, Guevarra, apparently faced the same dilemma in the past, after his wife and son gave away the rebellion’s secrets while being tortured by Amor (his wife was raped by Amor’s soldiers, while his son was forced to watch). Heartlessly, Guevarra decides to order the execution of his wife and son, therefore privileging his commitment to the revolution over his loyalty to his own family. Anna, like Mayang before her, is in a sense disloyal to her family by murdering Manolo, but her loyalties transcend the family loyalties of Mayang, since her loyalties are no longer just to her kin, but to the nation-state that is her new family. As Chen notes, “Guevarra’s need to articulate his betrayal of his family, and Anna’s need to listen to Guevarra’s story, testify to the formation of a new zone of intimacy” (32). In claiming its right to selfhood in its efforts to liberate itself from Western colonialism, the Philippines has set itself against all its oppressors and threats to its freedom, and we see in Anna’s and Guevarra’s actions how allegiance to the Filipino nation-state is not determined by blood or kinship ties, but to one’s commitment to the nation’s liberation. These acts of parricide imply that those who participate or aid in the

nation's subjugation, whether foreign-born or native, have no place within the Filipino family.

And yet the Filipino nation is unable to rid itself of its own enemies, as it is shown to us by the outcome of the rebellion's attack upon the festival's closing ceremonies. In the rebellion's efforts to liquidate the dictatorship's leaders and bring the dictatorship to an end, it has also been indiscriminate in its targets. Guevarra is aware that the detonation of his bomb will result in "collateral damage" (a term coined, interestingly enough, by the American military to justify its harming of innocent civilians during its overseas campaigns) but insists upon the necessity of such a bloodbath, therefore implying that it is only through bloody revolution (in which innocent civilians will be inevitably harmed) that the Filipino nation can rid itself of its enemies and achieve true liberation. Adrian is crippled as a result of the bomb that detonates beneath the festival stage, while Eliza is captured by soldiers and is murdered.

It is implied that the dictatorship persists despite the detonation of Guevarra's bomb, as is shown by Colonel Amor's survival and installation as Chancellor of "the Academy of Man" (378) where he develops a reputation for being a scholar of "great erudition". But Anna survives, and carries with her a newfound awareness of her role as a *babaylan*, a gift she has inherited from her female ancestors which often manifests in her dreams, and which the festival, in its evocations of history, connect her to: "She remembered: visions given to her by printed words, by sensuous chants, women's voices wailing in her sleep to the tinkling of gold anklets" (336). It is her gift for gaining access to an invisible, forgotten past, which Adrian recognizes in both her and Eliza when saying "The women were the intermediaries then. The—priestesses" (358) that she carries with her as the rebels take her to a small village in Laguna. Here, she is able to marry her scholarly interest in history with her priestess-like ability to share its emancipatory spirit with the children whose education she is entrusted with.

Like her female ancestors, she carries an unconscious, spiritual connection with the nation's history. But Anna's knowledge of history is not just an unconscious feeling of kinship with the past, but are facts learned and conclusions gleaned from books, applied to the realities of the present day. As Kathrine Ojano has observed in her essay, "Unreading the Novel", "She [Rosca] implies that the revolutionary impulse lies in the collapse between the present and the prehistory of freedom and

defiance” (192). Anna is thus able to harness her spiritual, “babaylanic” connections to the nation’s history during her waking life, translating historical *truth* into *action* by making her pupils more consciously aware of their nation’s history which would finally allow them, as the nation’s future, to move the nation forward in time. The novel ends with her awakening to the knowledge that she is heavy with Adrian’s child, and the name she gives to the unborn child speaks of her duty, both as a mother and as a *babaylan* with healing powers, to heal the divisions within the Filipino nation-state (Chen 33). She chooses the name “Ismael Villaverde Banyaga”, “Ismael” being the first name of Guevarra, representing the nation’s quest for freedom, “Villaverde” being the name Maya gives to the family line (representing the nation’s resilience), and “Banyaga”, in acknowledgement of Adrian’s paternity of the child, and also perhaps in fulfillment of the Filipino elite’s wish to find acceptance within the nation state (despite having exploited their own fellowmen for economic gain, turning them into “Banyagas” or “foreigners” in their own country). These feuding elements in Philippine society must be brought together in order to begin the process of reconciliation and healing that the nation must undergo in order to liberate itself from the cycle of self-immolation that the novel more aptly calls a “state of war”. Although the unborn child bears the histories of the names he carries, “he would be the first of the Capuchin monk’s descendants to be born innocent, without fate” (382), and it is perhaps his capacity for narrative and understanding that will liberate him from the mistakes of his ancestors—Anna knows that “her son would be a great storyteller, in the tradition of the children of priestesses” (382). As Davis argues, “The storyteller, who describes and preserves networks of racial and ancestral affiliation, protects communal memory as part of the process of identity-building. Only when one has a history, and one can recount it, Rosca suggests in the novel, can one, and one’s country, be made whole” (68).

XII. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how *State of War* validates the importance of historical memory in translating a shared experience of oppression into meaningful narrative, and therefore, into concrete political action. It is by knowing and understanding one’s past that one begins to understand one’s place in the nation’s

history. This is shown in Anna's, Eliza's, and Adrian's ownership of their place in history, which is enabled by their conscious and unconscious encounters with historical truth. While Anna's politicisation and subsequent activism is the clearest among these three characters, Eliza's and Adrian's political awakening must not be overlooked: Eliza decides that she must kill Colonel Amor upon learning of Anna's torture, while Adrian finds the strength to reject his family's plans for him to participate in the enabling of the dictatorship after receiving an inherited understanding of history through his physical contact with Anna. While disaster befalls Adrian and Eliza, Anna survives to pass on her knowledge to her child and the children she teaches. Thus the novel ends on a hopeful note, with the promise that meaningful political action against the nation's oppressors can be undertaken once the new generation gains a thorough knowledge of the nation's history of which they are part.

This novel also demonstrates how a nation forms its identity by being able to tell a clear and coherent narrative of its collective history. It is the shared experience of oppression that has formed this narrative for postcolonial nations such as the Philippines, and which has allowed it to resist foreign oppression while claiming an identity that is coherent and discernible to itself, and to its former colonisers. The novel also shows how new colonisers, and native oppressors, seek to undermine the nation's newfound sense of identity through historical erasure, forcing the colonised and oppressed to forget their histories and therefore, lose their hard-won sense of self that has enabled them to resist oppression. It is in Rosca's view that Filipinos must regain their sense of history, and combat the psychological forces behind historical amnesia, if they are to resist dehumanisation in the hands of foreign and native oppressors.

This novel also confronts the unique problem of native oppression, tracing its roots to the nation's legacy of colonialism. The colonial experience, as the novel shows, has resulted in the entrenchment of the master-slave relationship in Philippine society, such that the departure of old colonial masters has resulted in a collective yearning for their replacement. Native oppressors, such as the Commander and Colonel Amor, have employed historical erasure, as well as sexual and bodily violence, to inflict trauma upon their citizenry and terrorize them into submission. Amnesia becomes a tool that the oppressed employ to cope with their trauma, which further prevents them from contextualising their trauma within a larger narrative of

historical oppression. All this results in their disempowerment, and in a never-ending cycle of oppression in which the nation's inability to translate historical truth into meaningful and coherent action results in repeated self-harm.

Despite the efforts of foreign and native oppressors to silence dissent through the erasure of historical markers and written narratives, the novel suggests the possibility of historical memory's resilience through dreams and oral history. Anna and her ancestors also possess memories that are stored within their bodies, which they are capable of sharing with others through acts of love, such as childbirth and sexual congress. Ojano suggests that these flashes of memory experienced by Anna and other women in the novel "bring about the concrescence of the forgotten and mythical. More importantly, they open up potential junctures for collective thought and action" (185). These modes of remembering and transferring knowledge are subversive in their resistance of authoritarian control, and can also be traced to a precolonial, "babaylanic" tradition of enlightenment that eludes western and colonial traditions of knowing. The novel thus suggests that to resist oppression, Filipinos must also return to precolonial traditions of knowing and seeing, perhaps even rediscovering ancient babaylanic traditions that privileged the life-giving knowledge of the female shaman (which colonialism sought to silence, by violating and humiliating these female shamans).

Finally, *State of War* can be read as historical allegory, in which the nation is embodied and represented by characters who both typify the national community while asserting their singularities as individual characters belonging to the nation. Their typification of the nation allows them to be read as representations of the nation, or as aspects of the nation's character, while their singularity allows them to individually interact with the forces that shape the nation's political life. Using typification and singularity, Rosca creates an interpretation of Philippine history and nationhood that is readily attributable to its historical referent through typification, while being broadened and enriched through singular expressions of behaviour. Rosca's characters are not static in their typifications of the nation's character; indeed, in numerous instances cited throughout this chapter, their individual actions create new and unprecedented possibilities for resistance and healing. Through singularity, thus, these characters depict a nation in flux, whose future is shaped by how its members respond to the conditions that create oppression. The ways in which the Filipino nation will move into the future, then, is very much determined by personal,

individual choice, as shown by the personal choices of all the major characters in the novel which inevitably shape the life of the nation.

State of War was published in the United States in 1988, two years after the Marcos dictatorship came to an end, and one may observe the novel's optimism in its envisioning of the nation's future as it recovered from the traumas left behind by dictatorship. Democracy had just been restored, and Corazon Aquino, after freeing the leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army from prison, had just pledged renewed peace talks.⁴ The newfound spirit of optimism resulting from the success of the People Power Revolution of 1986 in toppling Marcos had not yet given way to disillusionment, and the proposed peace talks between the government and the CPP-NPA gave Filipinos reason to hope for a more lasting peace. The CPP-NPA had not yet been publicly brought to task for its mass purging of suspected "deep penetration agents" within its own ranks⁵, and the novel itself, while acknowledging that this happened, seems to lend the purges its tacit approval. As a critic, I found this particularly disturbing, especially since the novel takes a more forgiving stance towards characters who are morally imperfect, and who compromise themselves by cooperating with oppressors at times in order to survive. We see this particularly in the characterisations of Maya, Mayang, and Luis Carlos: they all betray their communities at certain points in their lives by collaborating with foreign oppressors (Luis Carlos, in particular, assists an American soldier nicknamed Mad Colonel Ed in hunting down communist insurgents after the Second World War), and the novel makes it clear that it is the difficult situations they faced (like having to survive colonial-era Philippines, being trapped in a loveless marriage, or having to make ends meet after the aftermath of a war) that made it difficult for them to tell the difference between right and wrong. The novel humanises these characters in spite of their betrayals, suggesting that they should be forgiven in light of their difficult circumstances, and that it is oftentimes by making mistakes that the oppressed gain a clearer understanding of our own oppression.

⁴ For further reference, see "TIMELINE: The peace talks between the government and the CPP-NPA-NDF, 1986 – present" <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/specialreports/634324/timeline-the-peace-talks-between-the-government-and-the-cpp-npa-ndf-1986-present/story/>

⁵ For further reference, see *To Suffer Thy Comrades*, a memoir about the purges within the New People's Army written by Robert Francis Garcia, an ex-NPA cadre (Manila: Anvil, 2001)

However, the ending of the novel deviates from this forgiving and humanising attitude, taking a more uncompromising stance towards betrayal. The novel takes a more unforgiving route at the very end, suggesting that we must cut off those who are not necessarily oppressors of the people, but who simply broke during their interrogation or chose the easier path of self-preservation. As a critic, this disturbed me, since the novel's ending didn't ring true to its overall message of humanising the oppressed. I was equally disturbed by the fact that all the critical writings I read about the *State of War* overlooked this problematic ending, and as far as I know, I am the only critic to make this observation about *State of War*'s morally ambiguous ending.

In the final pages of the novel, Anna finds comfort in listening to Guevarra's pre-recorded lectures in which he justifies his decision to approve the execution of his wife and son, even as he says, "It was with pride that I cast my vote. The rules were clear" (381). Anna is able to sleep after listening to such unrepentant justifications, and then awakens refreshed and optimistic about the future, and about the child that intimates its presence within her body—it is almost as if Guevarra's executions signify a purging of the old, while Anna's pregnancy signifies rebirth and renewal. There is a certain optimism in this apocalyptic vision of change, suggesting that there is genuine liberation to be gained from making these difficult decisions that privilege country over friend and kin. Perhaps this is where Rosca, herself a member of the Communist Party during the time of the novel's writing, decided to give voice to the official party line in her work. Indeed, the ending of the novel follows the conventions of "commitment writing", in which a bright and better future awaits those who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices in building an equitable society for all.

The novel appears to contradict itself at the very end, suggesting that we must not forgive the shortcomings of those we love, despite the many instances in which the novel portrays certain characters who betray the nation as sympathetic, even forgivable. It is these personal relationships between individuals in the novel, and the sacrifices these characters make to save their friends and kin, that show us that there is something essential about the individual person, something which is inalienable, that must be upheld if the Filipino people are to overcome this cycle of oppression.

Chapter II

The Nation as Fragmented Self in Gina Apostol's *Gun Dealer's Daughter*

I. Introduction

Published in the Philippines in 2010 and in the United States in 2012, Gina Apostol's third novel, *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, brings to light the many failures of the Philippine nation to free itself from the tyranny of its native oppressors after the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986. While Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War* ends on a hopeful note, with the image of a female revolutionary bearing a child into a changed world in the aftermath of a violent attack on the state, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* is more cautious in its endorsement of revolution, interrogating how the most recent revolts against the nation's oppressors have ultimately failed to undermine existing structures of oppression.

Although *State of War* is apocalyptic in tone, in that it portrays the detonation of a bomb as a necessary, though painful step in ridding the nation of its oppressors, the novel leaves us with the hope that from armed revolution will spring a renewed sense of history (as is shown when Anna passes down her knowledge of history to her pupils) that would result in a true liberation from the vicious cycle of oppression that the nation has had to bear. *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, published twenty-two years after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, presents a more sobering view of revolution, revealing how the People Power Revolution of 1986, and resistance movements that preceded it, were unsuccessful in eliminating the nation's oppressors. As shown in the novel, the Philippine oligarchy has successfully held onto its position of power long after enabling and sustaining the Marcos regime. *Gun Dealer's Daughter* thus belongs to the second phase of Martial Law writing that Burns describes, whose overall stance may be described as "ironic".

Reading *Gun Dealer's Daughter* as a narrative of resistance that confronts the complications arising from homegrown authoritarianism, we see how Apostol deftly dramatises this confrontation by creating a narrator-protagonist, Soledad Soliman (or "Sol"), who suffers from what she describes as "a split in her soul". This evidently

results from what Caroline Hau calls a growing awareness of “the rift between her and her people” (“The Sins of The Fathers”, 10).⁶ It can be traced back to her childhood, when she becomes aware that her parents supply arms to the dictatorship’s counterinsurgency, and that their complicity with the dictatorship “dogged my every domestic good—my books, my souvenirs, my clothes, my home” (83). One could easily apply Dalley’s definition of allegorical realism to this novel, since Sol is an embodiment of the national psyche, a character whose unclear sense of identity arises from the rifts that divide the elite from the rest of the population. She typifies the national psyche in her fracturedness, while also typifying the Filipino upper-class who feel removed from their people, and are thus split in their identities. She also asserts her singularity as a child of the upper-class who feels removed from her own society, and is shortsighted in the methods she employs to heal this rift between herself and her people. She attempts to heal this rift, first by helping assassinate an American official who is leading the counterinsurgency, and then later on, by confessing her crimes to her therapist in an attempt to redeem herself for the deaths of those who were forced to take her place in being punished for her crimes.

Like *State of War*, *Gun Dealer’s Daughter* posits that an awareness of history’s continuities can lead to a healing of the national psyche and the possibility of moving forward towards an enlightened future. However, the possibility of healing and redemption for Sol are called into question throughout the book, especially as Sol’s memory repeatedly “tricks her into telling lies and half truths” (Jee Yoon Lee, 1). Is she writing this confession to atone for her sins against the Filipino people, or is she doing this merely to save face and clear her conscience? Sol’s dishonesties make her a complicated character who is difficult to classify as hero or villain. As Paul Nadal observes: “There are numerous inconsistencies, odd juxtapositions, and repeated details that serve less to illuminate than to confound our understanding of her blinkered past” (2). The act of writing history, and the role it plays in revolutionary struggle, is treated with cynicism in *Gun Dealer’s Daughter*: the novel suggests that those who write the nation’s history have a personal stake in its telling, and that those who participate in revolution are not completely selfless in their motives. In writing lies and half-truths, she is also participating in the *rewriting* of history, and we are left

⁶ As David Chau observes, “Sol, an eloquent if unreliable narrator, strikes the reader as an instrument of both individual and shared experience, her circumstances uncommon, her psychological reactions symbolising the greater communal upheaval” (1-2).

to guess whether she is giving voice to silenced history, or participating in its silencing. At the same time, her re-imaginings of history serve, at certain moments in the novel, to undermine colonial and authoritarian versions of her nation's history, thus echoing the subversive nature of dreaming and imagining one's past as shown in *State of War*. Both novels examine how history is constructed by both the oppressor and oppressed, and suggest that alternative means of constructing history, such as dreams, can be utilised by the oppressed to undermine the lies of colonisers and homegrown authoritarian rulers.

As I have already intimated, Apostol presents a bleaker picture of revolution and national reconciliation following the fall of the dictatorship than Rosca in *State of War*. Indeed—as we shall see—Apostol represents the nation's divided self, allegorically, through Sol's conflictedness as a character. The difficulties in the way of national reconciliation are shown in Sol's attempts, and failures, to heal this “split in her soul”. Her efforts to resolve these divisions within herself result in tragedy, sending her into a downward spiral that parallels the nation's own madness and instability as it comes to terms with its unhealed wounds. Even her efforts to tell the story of this tragedy are discontinuous and fractured, exposing the challenges of telling a coherent narrative of the nation that can be translated into meaningful political action. This novel asks the question of whether history can be told, and whether there is such a thing as meaningful political action if one's understanding of history is flawed at best.

II. Sol and Anna

Parallels can be drawn between Soledad in *Gun Dealer's Daughter* and Anna in *State of War*. Both are fascinated by history, both turn to violence in their desperate attempt to rid their nation of its oppressors, and both become storytellers and truth-tellers after they participate in a single, violent attack. However, there are also key differences in their characters. Anna in *State of War* continues to teach the history of the nation to young people after participating in a violent attack against the dictator and his enablers. As noted above, she bears a child whose inheritance of historical knowledge will allow him to carry the nation away from the blind mistakes of his ancestors and into a more hopeful, enlightened future:

He (Anna's child) would be nurtured as much by her milk as by the archipelago's legends—already, she was tucking Guevarra's voice among other voices in her mind—and he would be the first of the Capuchin monk's descendants to be born innocent, without fate...She knew all that instantly, with great certainty, just as she knew that her son would be a great storyteller, in the tradition of the children of priestesses (382).

Sol, on the other hand, is whisked away from her homeland by her parents after participating in an assassination plot against an American official, and is hidden away in her parents' New York mansion, where she spends the rest of her days repeating to herself her own version of Philippine history as gleaned from her experiences as a student activist in the early '80s. While Anna is allowed to share her understanding of history with a younger generation who can take charge of their nation's destiny, Sol's only audience is herself, and her banishment from her homeland renders her helpless in the face of her nation's history. Sol's family and her peers move on with their lives as Soledad relives the past repeatedly in letters that she writes to herself and her therapist in New York. It is by their successful silencing of the truth, through Sol's banishment, that Sol's parents, and other members of the oligarchic class, are able to preserve the status quo.

III. Sol's solipsism

The novel begins near the end of the story proper, where we first meet Soledad Soliman, nicknamed Sol. The heiress appears to be recovering from a series of suicide attempts in her family's New York mansion. Apostol gives us the impression that Sol slowly finds the path to recovery as she becomes capable of piecing together her fragmented memories to tell a coherent narrative of her life before her banishment to New York. "Sol for solipsism", she often jokes throughout the book, underscoring her awareness of her own self-absorption, and her obsession with telling the story of her life that is hers alone to tell, and which will perhaps redeem its own creator from her crimes: "This work I am doing right now could become a hesitant, crepitating—*talambuhay*? A reckoning. A confession. And to what was I confessing? Who was to blame" (15).

However, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* also shows how memory is often unreliable, and how each retelling of history possesses its own self-serving ends. "Memory is deception", Sol herself claims, as she falters in her recollections. "There's a pall under which intentions lie, gross as an astrologer's ball" (67). As much as she wants to tell a coherent narrative, her own desire to absolve herself of her own perceived sins through storytelling leads her to tell a version of the past that is often discontinuous and contradictory. But history belongs to the victors, or so the American Colonel Grier tells her⁷: and we are left to depend on Sol, unreliable as she is, to help us make sense of the incidents leading to the deadly attack that she was lucky, or maybe privileged, to survive.

As we learn from her recollections, Sol is the only daughter of wealthy arms merchants who profiteer off the Marcos regime's war on the Communist insurgency. Like many privileged children, she is sheltered from the sordid origins of her parents' wealth, enjoying the luxuries and comforts that her family shower upon her, like trips abroad and books she lusts for, without having to question how her parents earn the money that subsidises her lifestyle. Her parents make it a point to shield her from the sight of poverty, keeping her indoors as much as possible in their gated neighbourhood, sending her to exclusive schools, and asking their family chauffeur, *Manong*⁸ Babe, to drive her whenever she needs to cross the road. Growing up without a sibling and without many diversions to occupy her time, Sol grows up to be a curious child, and her family (including her American expatriate godfather, Gianni, her parents' main business partner) indulge her by buying books on whatever topic piques her fancy at any given moment. She becomes a "collector of useless knowledge" (36), recalling facts about Roman history, European art, and Roald Dahl without finding any use for her knowledge aside from being able to spout them during random points in conversation. Like Anna in *State of War*, she can recite chapters from history lifted from books with an almost emotionless precision that almost suggests emotional disengagement. Her mother is amused and delighted by her pedantry, and plans to send her away to an American university so that she can become a scholar of ancient antiquities. Her parents appear to be unafraid that her reading will ever lead her to ask questions about the origins of their wealth, or the part

⁷ See the conversation in pages 37-38, which will be discussed shortly.

⁸ A respectful term of address for an older man; in Iluko, a regional Philippine language, this means, "older brother"

they play in the dictatorship, since her sheltered upbringing has made her indifferent to her society, and to its history. She does not read the books of Filipino intellectuals, and her classmates at the public university are surprised to learn that she has not yet read Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* or *El Filibusterismo*, which are staples in the Filipino high school curriculum. Prior to her admission to the University of the Philippines, her parents have sent her to an expensive American School. Here, she and other children of the oligarchic class are given a colonial education that turns them into foreigners in their own country, who know more about Western culture than about the language and culture of their own nation.

It is at a dinner with her teachers at the American School, which her mother hosts at their home in order to curry favour with her daughter's teachers, that Sol has her first reckoning with the truth behind her parents' wealth. It is when she overhears a conversation between two of her teachers that she begins to feel this "split in her soul" that she struggles to heal throughout the book.

"Well, you know, it's not the child's fault," Mr. Dreiser said, almost sighing, his whisper like a bumpy skid of stones from his larynx. "It's her parents' business, not hers."

"I wonder what the kid knows. If you knew that your parents sold arms that prop up your country's military dictatorship, what would you do?"

"I'd keep eating my mint gelato," Mr. Dreiser whispered with a suppressed snort, laughing.

"Yes, it's an interesting ethical question. To have blood on your hands, without having done a single thing" (110).

"[H]ang yourself, you will regret it; do not hang yourself, you will also regret that" (111), Sol tells herself later that night, after overhearing this conversation. It is a mantra that she repeats to herself throughout the book, an attempt at expiation that is never completely actualised in life (since all her suicide attempts fail). Later in the evening, Sol's beloved Uncle Gianni confronts these two teachers over their hypocrisy in judging his own involvement, as an American expatriate, in the dictatorship: "Academics, intellectuals, Harvard men! You cannot stand expat business, repulsed by its costs. You men think you have no filth. Where do you live, for whom do you work? Grubbers like the rest of them—you do not escape history's brush. You think you don't mess with the real, the destructive world. Whereas we—we stink in it, you think. We wallow in it like pigs" (112). As easy as it is for these

teachers to judge the Solimans for their amoral dealings, it is impossible for them to divest themselves of the sins of those who also pay their salaries. This foreshadows the conundrum Sol faces in trying to atone for her parents' sins later on in the novel, since her historical education (resulting in her development of a social conscience) is made possible by her family's ability to support her intellectual pursuits. Hau describes Sol's existential guilt as a result of "having parents who derive their fortune from buying and selling arms—their fortune is criminal in every sense, as they deal in violence and death" ("Sins of the Fathers", 10). The sins of her parents, in other words, become her original sin.

With her failure to free herself from this "original sin" comes her repetition of this death wish, which, because she fails to carry it out, is doomed to forever reappear in the language Sol uses to explain her past. To cite an example, the verbs she uses when trying to remember Soli's supposed visit to her house are "erasure" and "dismemberment", which is ironic, considering that the act of remembering should be of resuscitation, of making the past whole.⁹ Her therapist tells her, "You circle around a sore, the same incidents, the same scenes, the same details. You hover around your scars...*You recall only trauma. It is a mental self-punishment*" (281, italics mine). It is as though this act of "erasure" and "dismemberment" is also meant for her, leading us to wonder whether she seeks redemption in her telling of the past, or rather, indictment and punishment. Her writings are a form of self-laceration, fulfilling a death wish that she cannot carry out in real life. The language that she and her therapist use to describe her repeated attempts to remember also resemble her failed suicide attempts:

The knives were sharp, but they had no feeling. They did not hurt, and I watched the blood ooze, a dark batik dye, and I was surprised. Hang yourself, you will regret it. I slashed it again to feel the pain. I felt none. I cut my flesh. Again and again. There was nothing. Nothing I could feel (276).

She seeks redemption through suicide, after learning that her actions have led to the deaths of Soli and *Manong* Babe. But after failing to carry this out, she seeks fulfillment of this death wish by remembering and rehashing painful memories, a process that closely resembles self-harm. It is as if she seeks redemption through self-

⁹ When trying to remember whether Soli truly visited her in her bedroom, she says, "Correct, erase, dismember. It is not true. Soli was not in my rooms with Jed that weekend of the concert by the Bay" (58).

incrimination, which, instead of giving her closure, leads her to constantly revisit “the site of trauma” within her past (14, 280) that incriminates her, without ever truly expiating her. The act of remembering the past can neither redeem her from her past sins, nor punish her with actual death, turning memory into an act of psychological self-harm which her therapist terms “anterograde amnesia” (281).

Apostol layers her allegorical representations of historical redemption in this novel, using suicide to represent redemption, and self-incrimination as a representation of Sol’s failed death wish (and the redemption that comes with it). The use of allegory, in this case, serves to shed light upon the difficulties that the nation, as represented by Sol, faces when seeking redemption through historical memory. Since Sol, trapped in her parents’ New York mansion, no longer has the ability to translate her guilt-ridden recollections of her past into concrete, political action, her attempts at expiation merely become attempts at self-harm, a futile and self-serving act. In Hau’s view, historical knowledge can only be deemed useful if it can be translated into action, since it is only then that it can restore the nation’s agency over the authorship of its own history. Thus, Sol’s guilt resulting from her inaction, or inability to take action, could as well represent the nation’s self-victimization as a result of its own stasis.

IV. Sol’s historical perspective

It is when she tentatively steps outside the walls that her parents have built around her, first by enrolling at the University of the Philippines, a hotbed for activism during the Marcos dictatorship, that she sees a real possibility to exculpate herself of her parents’ crimes. Upon setting foot on campus, she finds that she can barely speak the language that rolls off from her classmates’ tongues, and feels like an outsider: “I had grown up a stranger in my country, living in my parents’ landscaped cocoon in Makati since our return in the seventies from America, and my discovery at the university of my potent and irrefutable dislocation from it, when I could not respond to the most ordinary of moments in what should have been my native tongue, sickened me” (83). Her classmates are amused by her pedantry and impressive vocabulary, even when, as Luis H. Francia observes, she is “clueless to the realities that her poorer classmates have to endure” (2). Nonetheless, a group of student

radicals recruit her into their activist organisation, thinking that they can use her powerful connections at some point in their operations. In their company, she is forced to raise her consciousness about the history of her country, particularly the revolution against Spain and the Philippine-American War, and she begins to feel a true kinship with her homeland. From being a collector of “obscure little things, useless knowledge” (76), Soledad becomes increasingly capable of consolidating the knowledge she gathers from the books she reads into a coherent narrative of nationhood that somehow bridges the divide between herself and her country.

The more she reads books of history written by westerners about her own homeland, the more she realises how much her own people have been misrepresented in western literature, the same literature that she was raised to adore, and whose perspectives she once accepted as truth: “I discovered that our books of history were invariably in the voice of the colonist, the one who misrecognised us. We were inscrutable apes engaging in implausible insurrections against gun-wielding epic heroes who disdained our culture but wanted our land” (112). It is around this time that Soledad’s doting Uncle Gianni grants her numerous requests to obtain books on Philippine history during his trips overseas, tracking down *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* by Blair and Robertson, Antonio de Morga’s *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas* in the original Spanish, with Jose Rizal’s notes, and the letters of Rizal to Ferdinand Blumentritt. He also surprises her with books by Marx, Che Guevara, and Mao Tse-Tung. It is as though he is unafraid of exposing Soledad to books that will incriminate herself, her parents, or her class in the exploitation of their people. As Sol remembers, “[M]ine was not the kind of family that questioned what children did—my job was to be petted and indulged, as long as I followed in everything else” (121).

He also buys her a book by Antonio Gramsci, the theorist of hegemony. As Brian Collins notes when observing Uncle Gianni’s odd gifting of Antonio Gramsci’s book to his impressionable niece, “[I]t might seem paradoxical that the archfiend would risk encouraging his politically impressionable niece in the wrong direction. Then one remembers that Antonio Gramsci was the theorist of hegemony; all Gianni risks here is Sol’s learning the great sad truth of history from 1917 down to the Great Shock of our own time, namely that modern capitalism’s political institutions seem to protect it even from crises like the current one, which call its whole legitimacy into question” (5). Sol observes, “I think he thought it was funny, an intellectual diversion before I went on with my life” (121), as she recounts how her Uncle Gianni sought

out every book on the list of essential readings that her activist friends at university recommended to her. It is not as though he is unaware of Soledad's capacity to become radicalised, or to have the audacity to turn against her parents or her class. If Soledad were to fully understand Uncle Gianni's gift, she would realise that these institutions that she and her friends were seeking to undermine are perfectly capable of protecting themselves against such "smalltime" attacks. He displays breath-taking complacency when faced with his niece's radicalisation, knowing, perhaps, that the institutions to which he and Sol's parents belong are resilient in the face of revolutionary change.

When an American military official she meets at a reception calls the Philippine-American War an insurrection, instead of an invasion, she is deeply offended by his remark, taking this revision of her nation's history as a personal affront:

"That was no insurrection, Colonel," I answered. "We were fighting a war against your enemy. You said you came to help us. In the name of democracy—to free ourselves from tyrannical Spain. Instead, you invaded. In the Treaty of Paris you paid twenty million dollars to buy our islands from the already vanquished Spain. We resisted you. Your army killed six hundred thousand Filipinos from 1899 to 1902, a war worse than Vietnam. That was no insurrection, Colonel. That was our war of independence."

"Which you lost," the man grinned at me. "We won. You forget that point." And the American moved on before I could gather the wit to reply (38).

Though she is pedantic in her recitation of her knowledge (her speech almost feels like it was lifted from a book), she is also able to form a coherent narrative from the facts she has gathered from the books she has read, and feels a personal stake in her refutation of Colonel Grier's version of history. She identifies with these revolutionaries who were robbed of their hard-won independence, and when Colonel Grier disregards their victory by pointing out that they lost against the American invading army, she too feels erased and silenced: "My mother's hands on my shoulders steadied me where I was. I was trembling" (38). Although she is hurt by Colonel Grier's dismissal, she is also determined to refute him, showing us that she is no longer cowed by those who belittle her countrymen and their history of resistance against foreign invaders. She is no longer a shy, bookish child, but a young activist capable of standing up to an intimidating character. Her activism gives her a stronger

sense of self, suggesting that by identifying with her countrymen, she can finally become whole (Ponce 10).

V. Sol and Soli: The double as foil

At the university freshman dormitory where her parents reluctantly drop her off, she meets Solidaridad Soledad, a campus radical of plebeian roots who immediately introduces herself to Soledad as her *tokayo*, or namesake. They come from two very different worlds: Solidaridad (or Soli as she comes to identify herself in the book as opposed to Soledad's "Sol") comes from a more middle-class background and was educated in public schools. But it becomes apparent that they trace their lineages to the same province (Leyte, which is also, not coincidentally, Imelda Marcos's home province). Soli also reveals to Sol that she shares a hometown with Sol's mother, and is familiar with Reina Elena Kierulf's humble origins: her family sold flowers, and was able to leave their small town when she met a wealthy man. Without Soli to inform Sol of her mother's humble origins (which she would never have gleaned from the books on Philippine history that her parents purchase for her), Sol would not have known about her family's links to the peasant class: her mother has successfully reinvented herself as Queenie Kierulf, who, much like Imelda Marcos, has dressed herself up in the trappings of western culture in order to evade the truth of her humbler origins. But despite happily pointing out that she is Sol's *tokayo* and proclaiming, quite proudly, that "You are mine" (81), Soli does not express any desire to emulate Sol or take on the trappings of Sol's privileged life.

As Hau writes: "Apostol uses the doppelganger, the twin or double, to dramatise Soledad Soliman's desire to heal the split in her soul and the rift between her and her people" (10). It is Sol who wants to be just like Soli, and revels in how their school mates think of them interchangeably, mistaking one for the other because of their eponymous names: "[N]ow I had a twin with an identity that seemed better than mine" (125). One must note that Soli's full name, "Solidaridad", means "solidarity" in Spanish, and that Soli was named after "La Solidaridad", a Filipino reformist newspaper published during Spanish colonial times which was instrumental in sparking the discourse on Filipino nationalism. Soli, or Solidaridad, is bound to the Philippine Revolution, even in name, and Sol can only envy her for it. While

Solidaridad unhesitatingly finds solidarity with their people, sharing an easy camaraderie with the peasants and factory workers whose causes she unhesitatingly takes up, Soledad struggles with her new role as political activist: although she feels that she is on the side of right when she tags along with Soli and Jed to their activist meetings, her upbringing makes her incapable of feeling the same solidarity with the people for whom she and Soli are fighting.

There is a telling scene in which Soli takes Sol to the wake of five farmers and a child killed by soldiers at a march. While Soli easily establishes a rapport with the working-class mourners, who do not hesitate to open up to her about their sorrow, Sol feels a keen sense of alienation within these surroundings in this vivid passage:

I could not understand what people said—speaking in multiple, accusing tongues—the languages I overheard during childhood, and which I understood the way I understood the weather: a code beyond my need to comprehend, a sensory mist separate from me, *a knowledge of myself I have never grasped* (128, italics mine).

Because she is a foreigner to her own people, she is also a foreigner to herself. She realizes that the horror she feels upon seeing these coffins is not a product of guilt or of sorrow, but of numbness: “a numb, hollow, blanketing despair” (126). It is the horror of alienation which she seeks to ameliorate by emulating, even becoming, Soli.

Sol is even infatuated with Soli’s physical qualities, as though Soli were the physical manifestation of her desire to become one with their native earth: “[S]he had this deep sheen: the colour of rare Philippine mahogany. For some reason, she smelled of butterscotch. Her caramel gleam, a dark brown smoothness of feature, complemented her elfin irony. From the first, to me she was riveting” (49). Soli’s dark skin tone and “native” features lie in stark contrast to Queenie Kierulf’s, whose fairer skin and Caucasian features allow her to deny her patrician roots and pledge allegiance to the oligarchic class, most of whom, like Jed Morga, bear the features of their conquistador ancestors. As Queenie Kierulf’s daughter, Sol is both mentally (due to her education) and physically (due to her physical features) removed from the people whom her class rules over and exploits, and sees Soli as the solution to this rift she feels within herself.

It is here that Apostol plays with the doubling of their names. Soli, who is Sol’s reflection, is also her foil, reflecting back to Sol her unstable sense of self, as well as her own solipsistic motivations as she tries to emulate Soli. As characters that

belong to allegorical historical fiction, according to Dalley's definitions, both Sol and Soli typify the Filipino nation: while Sol represents its fracturedness, while Soli represents the possibility for its healing and completion. Soli, thus, becomes the embodiment of Sol's desire to achieve a healed self, a projection of what Sol could be as opposed to what she currently is. The novel portrays the nation's struggle for survival, as Pantoja-Hidalgo would put it, through Sol's attempts to achieve a stable sense of self through her emulation of Soli.

Although Sol is infatuated with Jed Morgia, who is dating Soli, the more she follows them around, the more she becomes infatuated with them both, as is narrated to us in this dreamlike sequence that captures the innocence and idealisations of youth:

I have a distinct, sunlit memory of passing Jed with Soli one sharp milky moon, there by the covered walk at the college. I remember that lost, malignant emptiness as I watched them, that wasteful coveting madness as I held a lunch tray (or was it a book) in my hand. Did I love him even then? I had a dim notion I would get to know him in that ramshackle place they called a university dorm: after all, were we not high school cohorts (though in the early days he never remembered my name)? Did we not share the same road signs home, a pair of historic anachronisms saluting the wrong side of the revolution: Admiral George Dewey Drive, parallel to President McKinley Road? No...It was Soli's approval I craved (53).

In Sol's eyes, Jed Morgia has won Soli's approval by becoming Soli's boyfriend, and Sol wishes to be granted the same approval that Soli has bestowed upon Jed. Jed has completed his transition from oligarch's son to revolutionary by dating Soli, and in casting aside his oligarchic background, he also rejects Sol, who still represents everything that he rejects: "For a time, the only woman he spoke to was Soli, and he barely remembered who I was" (67). Soli is a complete person, a revolutionary who feels a true sense of kinship with her people, while Sol is an alien to her own people, and has not yet resolved the rift she feels within herself as a result of this alienation. In seeking Jed's approval, Sol also seeks Soli's approval. It is by winning Jed's affections that she can truly become like Soli.

VI. Revolution as Performance

For her Uncle Gianni, it would seem that his surrogate niece is merely playing at revolution, a suspicion that Sol is able to confirm to herself when she witnesses how Jed Morga pulls out an ID when he is about to be arrested by a policeman for painting radical slogans in a public space. Cowed by Jed Morga's illustrious pedigree, the policeman salutes Jed and offers to escort them home. Later on, Sol tells Jed, "We live outside the country's rules. We do whatever we want. We can commit crimes. We can play at revolution. We could kill people, for all we knew. And then in the end we will always get away. We're cockroaches. It's we who are the problem. Don't you see?" (138) Upon which Jed responds, "Does it matter anyhow where we come from if we end up on the right side, Sol? ... We *do* have a role to play. We simply have to make a choice. We must choose to be a part." Like Sol, Jed seeks to expiate himself of the crimes his family has committed, even as he benefits from the privileges that his family has purchased for him as a result of their crimes. This is precisely why Sol questions their capacity for enacting meaningful change: "Remember that night when the police officer came and you took out your wallet and showed him your name. Remember? That's when I knew...that I could not be a part...that I was playing a game. That I was not honest. I don't mean about us. About my part in this country...I could never really join" (138). Have these bourgeois teenagers become radicalised because they want to be part of the solution, as Jed himself suggests, or are there more personal, even selfish motivations at play in their attempts to right the wrongs of their class? Apostol is clearly cynical of their motivations, taking an ironic stance towards revolution as she shows, time and again, how their desire for self-expiation result in misguided attempts at revolutionary action.

As Edwin Cardozo, an undercover activist who often plays the role of devil's advocate to Sol whenever he encounters her at her favourite haunts, points out to her:

"You joined the group as a form of soul-searching, bogged down in existential depression over some Oedipal mess... You want to find peace with your childhood, and once you do, when you return to the lap of luxury, radical action will look like a sport, an absurd, old-fashioned toy: when in fact, joining a Maoist study group, or whatever you prefer to call it, no matter how

dumb your intentions, is the only thing you've ever done that grants you relevance" (77-78).

Edwin also makes riffs on her nickname, Sol, which he says is short for "solipsism"—we see his joke repeated in various instances throughout the novel, reflecting Soledad's own self-absorption as she falls increasingly in love with the idea of revolting against her own class, which, like her attempts to refine and edit her life through her memoirs, is an attempt at expiation.

Sol is a mere *sympa* or "useful fool" within the group, someone whose upper-class background makes it difficult for her to win the trust of other radicals at the university. They nonetheless deem her "useful" because of her powerful connections. Soli takes Sol underneath her wing, as though to indulge Sol's desires for self-redemption: "To put it in Soli's terms, I was just a well-mannered bourgeois with unspoken misgivings about my own desires" (54). Their group assigns Sol trivial tasks, like collecting copper centavo coins (which can be melted down and turned into bullets). Jed, on the other hand, gravitates towards the task of painting revolutionary slogans like *Imperyalismo, ibagsak!* (or, "down with imperialism!") on vacant walls and buildings in the middle of the night in what are called "night ops". What he enjoys about the task, Sol observes, is its showy daredevilry, the thrill of being caught by policemen whom he knows will let him off the hook as soon as they know his last name. He displays a knack for showmanship whenever leading these night ops: "The night I remember, the night-op painters had arrived, and Jed went with them. *Mob*, he liked to shout, organising the kids like their boss—*let's mob!* *Mob* meant *mobilise*. He loved the jargon. I thought even the abbreviations gave him a hard-on, but he didn't mind it if people laughed" (65).

Even at the American school where Jed and Sol are schoolmates, Jed enjoys playing the role of a rebel, and seems to love the attention he receives as he puts on a show of rebelling against his own class in this passage that shows a keen understanding of character:

Jed was a millionaire who dressed like Saint Francis and acted like Saint Jerome; increasingly his temper was waspish and gloomy, as if he spent days starving himself in the desert, transcribing the words of the Lord. Everybody at the high school had adored him, his growing rage at the Philistines, and all the girls wanted to be his Mary Magdalene. When he spearheaded the food drives and the orphan visits, the boys on his soccer team went along, their

hearts not quite bleeding; the girls on my soccer team were ready to anoint his cleats with oil, plus myrrh and frankincense (53).

At the university, his relationship with Soli is fawning, his behaviour bordering on sycophancy: “In those first days he hung about her like an idiot Romeo, as if her every word were some aphorism or lambient epigram, and his rapt look created the disturbing force field that foolish lovers make” (54-55). He later recruits Sol to join him in his “night-ops”, wanting to be alone with Sol, and to sleep with her, cheating on Soli with her in the dead of night. It is within the darkness of night that he is able to cast aside the hypocrisies of daytime, including his relationship with Soli that appears, the more time he spends with Sol, to be just for show. His daytime relationship with Soli, it seems, is essentially a means to perform his own redemption before an admiring crowd.

When Sol and Jed’s evening trysts are discovered, they are denounced for “sexual opportunism”, a grave crime within the communist movement, and while Jed is forgiven, Sol is denounced and booted out of the organisation. Soli tells her, while she is comforting Sol, that Sol’s expulsion from the group is “All for the best,” and adds: “You can’t even tell us what your parents do...Do you understand? If you cannot see yourself clearly, it’s hard to see the revolution with clear eyes” (133). Sol’s unwillingness to give up her family’s secrets to the group proves to them her lack of self-examination, and Sol feels hurt, not just by the group’s rejection of her, but by Soli’s insight into her character. Although she has successfully raised her political consciousness while being part of the group, she has not fully acknowledged her family’s involvement in her nation’s ills, which prevents her from confronting her own personal involvement in her countrymen’s oppression. Like other novels belonging to the Martial Law Novel genre, *Gun Dealer’s Daughter* reveals the inextricability of the personal from the political. Sol’s unwillingness to publicly acknowledge the personal role she has played in the nation’s corruption results in her failure to arrive at a self-reckoning, which, as Soli and Ka Noli, the group’s leader, suggest to her, is necessary in coming into one’s own as a revolutionary:

“You have not written your *talambuhay*. You have not done your class analysis. You cannot express your class relation to the masses. You cannot envision society as a creature with genuine warmth or a pumping heart. We do not believe you can tell us truthfully who you are. You are a coward. A moral void lies in you, large as a copper coin—but a hole nonetheless. You do not

have the imagination to possess affection. You have a cadaverous soul. You have not yet read the *PSR*. Comrade: one day, we'll meet again. Change is possible—after all, it is what we believe. We hope one day you will be a part” (134).

But are these even their exact words? Sol says to herself, “Ka Noli, the lecturer, did not say things quite like that: I got their drift,” as she recounts the conversations the group had with her before her expulsion. The comic absurdity of these accusations as they pile atop one another intimate the possibility that these could as well be her own words, spoken to herself as she is dishonorably discharged, showing that she, too, is aware of her shortcomings as a revolutionary. The personal is political in postcolonial societies, as Jameson has suggested, and Sol’s unwillingness to acknowledge the corruption that is a part of her personal existence results in her failure to fully know herself. Thus she fails, yet again, to heal the split in her soul.

But while Soli is able to see through Sol, she does not perform the same examination of Jed’s character or his motivations of joining the group, and allows Jed to remain in the group despite his obvious charlatanism. The group also fails to gain insight into their own shortcomings, like their inability to detect the hollowness of Jed’s activism. Their decision to forgive Jed (while discharging Sol) proves to be fatal, as Jed leads a faction of their group into committing a daredevil attack that accomplishes nothing and only gives the dictatorship more reasons to round up and murder more of their members. In their quest to become perfect revolutionaries, they fail to rule out the possibility of making mistakes when choosing who to root out in their group, and who to forgive. This helps buttress the novel’s critical stance towards revolutionary movements, showing how Puritanism can blind revolutionaries to their own faults.

Other aspects of Jed’s rebellion speak of its performativity, as Apostol points out as she describes the room he comes to inhabit as he performs his “rejection” of his family and everything they stand for (while being able to pay rent for his own apartment with their money). In a scene where Sol and Jed plot Colonel Grier’s assassination after Sol’s expulsion from their student activist group, Sol observes how the jungle motif of his apartment feels like a cheap riff on Colonel Grier’s military exploits in the jungles of Vietnam:

Brown-dotted seashells, like turtles’ backs, were scattered about, embossed with faded ink—beach souvenirs on the brink of some revelation. The green

sofa had sketchy palm drawings on its arms. The curtains had coconuts. The lamp stand was a bamboo monstrosity, with watercolour bamboo shoots grimed into its sides, more like mould than paint. The lampshade, a ghastly, now-unanimous version of puke, was meant to portray bright parrots amid jungle cover, but the fabric had worn out and all you saw were vague traces of the birds' casques and the watery smudge of parrots' plumes (180).

Though Sol finds this jungle motif tacky, it is also a physical manifestation of their growing sense of adventure as they plot the assassination of a person whom they deem an enemy of their people. One also gets the impression that this attempt on the Colonel's life is their first true attempt to become authentic revolutionaries (since it would be an act of daring that would outstrip all their petty attempts at rebellion, like their evening vandalisms), and that they have finally gathered the courage to truly break free from their parents and reject the expectations of their class. In Jed's case, his commitment to the revolution is finally gaining some level of maturity, and that in setting himself free from his parents by taking an apartment of his own, he is propelling himself into the wild, on his own terms. And yet ironically, these two young people cannot bring their plans to fruition without the material wealth provided by their families: Jed cannot afford this apartment without his parents' money, and they cannot assassinate Colonel Grier without the guns that they plan to steal from the warehouse owned by Sol's parents. It is their parents' corruption, ironically, which provides them with the ammunition for their revolution, making one wonder if this revolution they are waging is "ineffectual, counterproductive, suspect" (Ponce 11). In choosing a foreigner as their target, it seems like they have almost forgotten that their parents are also enemies of their people. Yet again, Apostol takes on an ironic stance towards revolution by how these young upper-class revolutionaries cannot completely sever themselves from their parents or their class, even as they ostensibly rebel against the institutions that their parents stand for. Their motives for killing Colonel Grier are ultimately selfish (for it is to expiate themselves), which also explains why they cannot involve their flesh and blood in the carnage. In using this attack to save themselves from the corruption of their parents, they cannot help but protect their kin.

It is ironic that Soli, whose radicalism is perhaps more "authentic" than that of Jed or Sol, refuses to support this plot once she catches wind of it. "I hope it's just a rumour. It's so ridiculous, Sol. I couldn't believe the idea. It can't be sanctioned at all...It's a plain, criminal act. Sheer adventurism" (229), Soli says to Sol, when

confronting her friend at a roadside eatery about what she may know about Jed's plot to assassinate an American official. Soli has no power to prevent this attack: although she occupies a more prominent position within their radical organisation, as a citizen she does not have as much agency as Jed or Sol, who have direct connections to society's powerful and are thus more capable of staging a direct, violent attack against society's enemies than Soli. Jed and Sol also have little to risk when staging such an attack: they know that their parents will bail them out, somehow, while Soli is more cautious because she, and other lesser-connected cadres involved in their organisation, would have much more to lose if they were implicated in the crime that is about to take place. Like the farmers and factory workers that Soli is fighting for, she has no power, and nearly no agency, especially when the police identify her as Colonel Grier's assassin.

VII. Mirroring as unmasking

Soli represents the better version of Sol, typifying the better version of the nation's character (which Sol also typifies in her flaws). Soli also, as a singular character possessing individual traits, sheds light on Sol's present inadequacies as a singular character. Soli, however, is not the only double that Sol encounters as she becomes more politically aware and develops a social conscience. Near the beginning of the novel, we meet a European portrait artist named Madame Vera who is commissioned by Queenie Kierulf to paint a picture of herself with Sol. Madame Vera typifies the western expatriate who washes up on the shores of Manila: aware of the privilege that their western backgrounds give them in a neocolony such as the Philippines, they exploit the gullibility of the Filipino upper class who look to the west to bestow them with markers of class (and power). "[M]y mother had been in Madame Vera's thrall. I couldn't explain it. At first, I resented my mother's obedience to this hag of a Picasso. My mother was often prey to a procession of hacks, foreigners whom Manila attracted the way the wet season draws moths indoors" (21), Sol says, remembering, aside from Madame Vera, all the foreigners who came to their house to rearrange its Feng Shui or decorate it in the style of European villas.

Madame Vera is no artist, despite her pretensions: she does not have an eye for art (she thinks she's better than the renowned Filipino painter, Fernando

Amorsolo), but knows how to play the part for an admiring upper-class Filipino crowd who hire her to paint their portraits. Her job, after all, is not to create art, but to paint their fantasies of themselves:

That's how, in the frozen eternity of oils, I miraculously acquired prominent cheekbones and, most wondrously, a chin. And my mom gained the height of Venus de Milo rising from a cowrie shell. Madame Vera had painted us with the most awkward clairvoyance—sketching what she sensed our fantasies to be, an embarrassing wish fulfillment...Madame Vera was not so much a painter as a pander: in the *Inferno*, easily she'd be a sinner in lower hell, condemned to eternal lashings from horned demons. In Manila she had found an ideal world for her talent (21).

If Soli were to be the personification of Sol's hopes for an improved self, Madame Vera is a conjurer of these hopes, a storyteller who transforms these grandiose feelings of self that her subjects harbour into images on the canvas.

The novel alludes to the many portraits that Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos commissioned for themselves, and Apostol turns Madame Vera into a medium of the couple's shared delusions: "For the portrait of the couple, her biggest patrons, Madame Vera had added the mythic complications of tropical genesis—brown Adam and Eve rising to pink and blue clouds from split bamboo" (21). Here we see how portraiture is not only used to create a "better" version of oneself, but also to reshape reality, and in the case of the dictator and his wife, rewrite the nation's history such that they become the Filipino nation's father and mother, its Adam and Eve. History, it appears, could as well be a fabrication, a projection of what we imagine ourselves to be in our nation's story.

The illusion that Madame Vera creates in her portrait of Queenie Kierulf and Sol is further torn apart at the Soliman's annual Christmas Ball, during which the painting is unveiled. As Madame Vera, "dressed this time in a matador's costume, an affair in black and gold rickrack epaulets, swept up a dusty cape and took her bow" (162), revelers are quickly distracted by the unexpected visitation of Jed's mother, Prima de Rivera Morga, whose disheveled appearance lies in stark contrast to the polished and composed appearance of Queenie Kierulf and her child in their painting. She is the beautiful, fallen socialite who is kept hidden away in the attic by her family, forgotten by high society because she reflects back to them a version of themselves that they prefer not to see:

The curls, wide-spaced cheeks and pale brow looked anomalously like Jed's. It was a precarious resemblance, disconcerting—Jed's cheekbones and Jed's light hair in reflection, simulated in perfect glass in the mirrors about the hall. It was clear from the hollow-eyed Prima how Jed's looks were the fine result of a manic sowing of proper seed, for which foreign brides were imported for their colouring and chosen for their cheekbones...Her still-lovely face, marred by confusion, a nightmared look, questioned her fractured sight in the Versailles mirrors. Eyes like smoke and ash, green-veined hands—she gazed at the shards of her reflection and smiled, an eerie multiplication. A torso poked with scabs: punctured, cut open...She was practically naked...I tried not to stare at the purple blotches and drugged decay all over her arms (163).

Unlike Queenie, who employs costume and portraiture to cover up the ugly truth behind her fortunes (that she provides guns to a dictatorship), thus typifying her class in its deceitfulness, Prima chooses to reveal the ugliness of her private life at this gathering, thus typifying truth. She is likely abused by her husband, has become a drug addict, and literally reveals the scars of her life for all to see. The moment in which she catches her own “fractured” reflection in the Versailles mirrors and smiles at its “multiplication” is telling. There is no way of reflecting Prima's image as a unified whole: there are different ways in which she can be seen, both by guests and by a mirror's reflecting surface. This is a woman who no longer has a steady grip on the image that she projects upon the world, and who is no longer capable of manufacturing an alternate reality, unlike Queenie Kierulf (to whom Prima whispers “*Hija de puta*” after Queenie politely kisses her on the cheeks). The resulting fracturedness of her self-image is a precursor to Sol's madness, whose efforts to write a coherent version of her life story belie the fracturedness and instability of her identity.

VIII. Mirroring and repetition: what is fact, and what is fiction?

The mirrorings that take place in this novel serve a similar purpose with the repetitions and reiterations of certain scenes—they call into question our notion of narrative stability, and of absolute truth. We are not just witnessing the unfolding of a life, but the writing and rewriting of one. Sol corrects herself at times after recalling

an event in her life, confessing that she is not completely sure if the scene took place the way she remembered it, or if the event took place at all. After telling us that Jed and Soli visited her childhood room to investigate her background, for instance, she confesses that she is unsure if Soli was actually there: “I made an error in that accounting: Yes, right. Correct, erase, dismember. It is not true. Soli was not in my rooms with Jed that weekend of the concert by the Bay” (58). Sol is an unreliable narrator, and her constant redactions serve to interrupt our normal instinct to suspend disbelief as we read, and become absorbed by, her version of events. Everyone in this book, it seems, has a fictive version of the truth: we see this in Queenie Kierulf’s commissioning of Madame Vera to paint a glamourised version of herself, and we also see this in Jed’s desire to rewrite his place in Philippine history by assassinating an American official. He wants to turn himself into a hero in his own eyes, irrespective of whether he places other people in danger. Sol’s memoirs may, in fact, be another fiction, and as she recalls scenes from memory, we are unsure whether it is fiction or fact. In a scene where she visits Colonel Grier’s house on Roxas Boulevard, we are unsure whether she has behaved as daringly as she has by dipping one of his prized medallions, which his great-grandfather earned for helping stamp out “The Philippine Insurrection”, into a piping hot cup of coffee. Or was this is merely a product of wishful thinking? She recalls, “I see my figure scampering, like a cat. Or was that a calculated stammer, my swift departure from the room” (200). There is, significantly, a certain distance between herself as she recalls this scene, and herself within this scene. There is also ambiguity in the way she describes her actions—she is unsure whether she scampered away, or was more calculated in her movements. It is not a memory in which she is fully present in her body as she runs outside the building—it is as though she has created the memory for herself.

Whether the memory is based on a true event in her life or not, the act itself, of attempting to destroy a prized medallion with the line, “Philippine Insurrection, 1899” inscribed on it, is an attempt at gaining control of history when one has lost control over its telling. Destroying private property is a criminal act, and it is also an act of desperation: for when one has no other recourse against a colonising force that has successfully rewritten one’s laws and history, one can only resort to crime to undermine its power. At the same time, this scene takes place just as Sol is beginning to feel a real desire to translate the truth of her people’s subjugation by foreign rulers into concrete, discernible action. Even if this event did not take place

the way she remembers it, the act of authoring this memory is, in itself, a form of subversion, since it is an attempt to rewrite history and reclaim its telling from its so-called victors. It parallels the act of dreaming that, according to Arong and Hempel, takes place in *State of War* as a means to undermine the power of the authoritarian state:

I held it in my hands. It was heavy, with that curiously lush patina of rust, a green-flecked wine colour that settles on old metals, as much a part of the beauty of collection as the coin itself—the witness of time. And it was, at the same time, heavy in my hand, a barbaric weight, and my fingers trembled. I had to tighten my hold on it to look at it closely. And I felt it, a rude gush in me, a weeping rumble in my womb, at the sight of a souvenir so precious to Colonel Grier.

It had a raised, absurd palm tree, with unnatural coconuts hanging below its crown of leaves like scrota, and on the medallion's sinister half, its heraldic left, was a set of scales—‘for justice and democracy,’ said Colonel Grier—and besides the scales was a lamp, for freedom. A wreath of letters garlanded the coin: “Philippine Insurrection 1899.”

I felt my legs trembling, in that weakness that seemed to have nothing to do with the world around me but seemed allied to it nonetheless, these physical flashes before a dark, harmful swirl. I felt in me the bend of a river, a brooding, phosphorescent stream (199).

What she feels as she holds this medal which celebrates the defeat of the Philippine Revolution for independence is a loss of control, a sweeping away by the currents of history, and she can either succumb to this sensation, or regain her sense of control by doing something, anything, that undermines the conqueror's revisionism of her nation's past. She remembers dipping the medallion into a burning cup of coffee, hoping that its engravings will melt in the steaming water. Not only does this rewrite the conqueror's version of history, but it allows Sol to participate in her nation's history as it unfolds, by actively standing up to the Colonel and everything that he represents in his living room.

If Sol's memories are self-deceptions, so are the versions of Philippine History constructed by American historians and upheld by the Colonel. In attempting to construct a more favourable image of themselves, they erase the bravery of those whom they conquered, calling the Filipino revolutionaries “insurgents” as if these

men and women were not defending themselves against a hostile invasion. By imagining herself as a brave young woman who bravely melts away these engraved lies in a steaming cup of coffee, Sol undermines the victor's version of the Filipino-American War through the act of dreaming and imagining. As it is shown in *State of War*, from dreams and hallucinations emerge concrete political action that can literally undermine the oppressor's power. Dreams are also versions of history, as Arong and Hempel suggest, and can give meaning and purpose to resistance efforts. And is what Jed, Sol, and Edwin Cardozo attempt to do, by assassinating the Colonel: to translate the knowledge they have of their nation's history into discernible political action. They are not just reflecting upon their nation's history, but are participating in its making.

IX. Murder as re-authoring history

"I felt that the world suddenly became clarified; and in this incandescent room [Jed's room], I too, began to glow. My role in it all was a gradual unfolding—I had always longed to be a part. It was as if, oddly, I had finally discovered myself. I had found my voice and my value and my purpose...Plotting a murder built self-esteem," Sol recalls (203). No longer divorced from her country's history, but an active participant in its making, Sol becomes capable of feeling whole. Jed's original plan is to assassinate an American General who "is at the centre of plans for the counterinsurgency" (194), but Sol chooses for them another candidate: Colonel Grier, who is responsible for executing the General's plans, employing his experience in the Vietnam War to train the Philippine counterinsurgency.

One can understand the logic behind her choice. He is a repulsive character, a perfect typification of foreign oppression in his bullying and belittling behaviours towards Filipinos. The deference with which he is treated by Filipinos in response to his belittlement of them also lends to his typification of neo-colonialism: he is both a caricature of the American bully, and an archetype of the foreign invader. Her choice, however, is not necessarily strategic. Although she points out that the General, whose assassination, Jed believes, would send a stronger message to the regime, is actually a dying man whose time on earth is limited, her insistence on targeting the Colonel is more likely an emotional choice than a logical one. As Jed observes, "You really

don't like that Colonel," and adds, "You know it's not personal, Sol. You do know that's not the point of the exercise" (206). The irony of Jed's statement is that the mission they are about to embark upon is a personal one: they have seen how their parents continue to lend the dictatorship their enthusiastic endorsement (both by attending their lavish parties and, in Sol's parents' case, by buying the arms that are used by the dictatorship to police and intimidate its people) and they seek to exculpate themselves of their parents' crimes by attempting to correct their parents' mistakes.

Sol's decisiveness in assisting Jed and Edwin Cardozo in their plans to assassinate an American official stems from a picture shown to her, by Edwin, of the severed head of a child and a rifle aimed at her desecrated body (one can assume that the child has been raped). "That's a gun: an automatic. Your parents sold it to the government, through the auspices of Don Mariano Morga (Jed's father), friend of the Secretary, who in turn fronts for the big fish—a long chain of trade, just buying and selling, that's all. And that's the trade's trajectory: perfectly angled, toward that child," Edwin tells her, as he holds the picture in front of her (194). These young activists know that Sol will only help them if they give a human face to the counterinsurgency efforts that her parents, and Jed's father, have profited from. By showing Sol this picture, he, Edwin, and Ka Noli, their mentor, hope that Sol will feel enough guilt about her parents' involvement in this crime to shame her into action. It is at this point in the novel that the personal and the political collide: to step away from her family's business, she realises, would make her complicit in her government's crimes.

But Sol cannot bring herself to kill her own parents, and neither does it occur this group of boys that they could kill a Filipino official who is involved in the counterinsurgency. They want to kill either of the two Americans who are at the centre of the counterinsurgency plans, with the reasoning that these two men are foreigners whose involvement in the dictatorship speaks of the larger efforts of a former coloniser, America, to keep its former colony within its sphere of influence. By continuing to use the dictator and his wife as its puppets, America can stamp out all efforts coming from the proletariat and agrarian class to achieve liberation for the Filipino nation from both foreign and native oppressors. Becoming an enemy of one's own nation entails prioritising one's personal gain over the welfare of one's compatriots, and while Sol's parents collaborate with a dictatorship in terrorising its people in order to build their fortunes, the dictator and their wife collaborate with

America in its Cold War efforts to stamp out communism in order to remain in power and line their own pockets. In planning out this attack, Jed and Sol target symbols of foreign oppression rather than their own kin, the enablers of such foreign oppressors.

Their hesitation is telling: while Jed identifies the characters in a photograph taken from a newspaper's society pages as "enemies of the people", it is the images of the Americans that he encircles, as though they stand out in a crowd of Filipino "*Feudalistas, Burukrata-kapitalistas, imperialistas...*neatly gathered under one roof" (194-195). Although the others in the photo are also complicit in the dictatorship's counterinsurgency efforts, they are also Jed and Sol's countrymen who, if they are not blood relations, are at least friends or business associates of their parents. As characters who embody the nation as a conflicted character and typify the Filipino body-politic, Jed and Sol are unable to turn upon their own flesh and blood, their own countrymen, and therefore, themselves. They embody a nation that is unable to exorcise its own demons and put an end to its self-harm. As characters asserting their own singularities, they are children who cannot see the sins of their parents as equal to, or even greater than, the sins of men like Colonel Grier, and cannot see the treachery of their parents as something that would make their parents enemies, and therefore foreigners, to the nation.

The Colonel's assassination is a strange fulfilment of Sol's wish to erase the political ascendancy that the Colonel and his ancestors have gained over the colonised Philippine nation after the Filipino-American War. Perhaps her wish is to usurp the Colonel's power over her nation's history (both in how its past has been interpreted, and how its present continues to be shaped by powerful men like him) by permanently silencing him. Indeed, the truth of his actions comes out in the press after his death, since he is no longer in control of his public image. Though media outlets attempt to be fair in reporting the facts of his life, the truth inevitably emerges, suggesting that local journalists, despite the dangers they face in contradicting the regime's official narrative of the assassination, hesitate to lie about the Colonel's character.

[A] list of the Colonel's talents was alleged in the press. 'Sponsored low-intensity conflicts...an instructor at the School of the Assassins in Fort Bragg...projects sowing confusion and conflict in rebel-taken areas...CAFGU was his brainchild...proposed and trained head-hunting vigilantes...Alsa Masa, Bantay Bayan...troops that gouged the eyes of children after they were

killed...littered the countryside with Garands and carbines...dead women...dead children, their severed heads..." (249-250).

Have these journalists become brave, or are these lines merely products of Sol's wishful thinking as she skims news reports: are these articulations of a secret desire to take over the state's official narrative and reveal the truth as she knows it? As the audience of a self-confessed spinner of tales, we may never be completely sure.

And yet there are powerful expatriates, like the General, who continue to celebrate the Colonel's life, belying Sol's hope that the Colonel could be silenced with his physical death. As an emissary of a neocolonial power, the Colonel continues to exert control over the nation's memory, becoming a hero of the regime's counterinsurgency (and of the Philippine nation, whose enemies, according to the regime's propaganda, are supposedly the Communist insurgents) in statements delivered by American officials that make their way into the news: "On one hand, his general, speaking from the hospital where his mortal frame was wearing him out, his frail, plaster-of-Paris heart, said, his head shaking in grief: 'And to think he had come to help the Filipino people in their efforts to defend democracy.' The U.S. military attaché spoke in a ceremony: 'He was a brave man who served his country well.'" (249) Predictably, Filipino officials lend their voices to the condemnation of the Colonel's assassination: "The Secretary, in a rare national appearance, declared: 'The killing has brought a new dimension to the guerrilla war!'" (248)

No longer an active participant in this attack (for Jed has instructed her to stay away after she has guided him to her parents' warehouse and helped him steal high-powered arms), Sol can only bear witness to its unfolding by reading eyewitness reports in the news (and visiting the crime scene after it has taken place), although the vividness with which she describes the morning of the Colonel's assassination makes one suspect that she was present at the scene of the crime:

No one was in sight, not even the monkey and his crippled captor by the store on Third Avenue. The street was asleep. The stores were boarded up, blind. It was true that, later on, various witnesses were said to have arisen like crickets from the cracks, trilling their tall tales of license plates and other things; but early morning on that street, *we knew*, had a mint, unstamped aura to it—a blank reverie. You could walk it like a lover and feel free (240, *italics mine*).

Sol, in her singularity as a character who attempts to save her own skin by telling her side of the story, makes us believe that she was not there on that morning. She attempts to convince us, with her ability to vividly conjure events that may not have actually happened, that she is merely imagining how this event unfolding. And yet the way she convincingly recreates this event almost makes us feel that she was there, with Jed and his friends, on that morning—if not physically, at least mentally, for she fully inhabits the scene of the crime in her mind. She does not narrate this scene from a remove—she is a part of it, identifying herself with the *we* who are present to witness the innocence of this morning before the Colonel, who is in his car, is murdered. But should we believe her claims of innocence? Early on in the novel, when their plot is finally set in motion, she admits that she is unsure if Ed Cardozo and Ka Noli, Jed’s fellow conspirators, even exist: “And should I talk about Ed and Ka Noli’s gradual disappearance, how they fairly vanished as the days progressed, so that by the end Jed and I were mostly on our own, and I am left to imagine their furtive, paranoiac presence at our few encounters...*I wonder now if I have made their presence up*” (203, italics mine). The truth is made of shifting sands at this point, and even Sol is unable to trust her own memory.

X. The murder of Soli: the everlasting division of Sol’s soul

Although Sol denies that she was present at the scene of the crime, her mother tells her, as the government’s investigation into the attack deepens, that a woman was present during the Colonel’s assassination, and that this woman was, in fact, Soli, her doppelganger: “They found her at the scene of the crime, Sol...She was there. She was part of the plot. She was with Jed” (273). Despite Sol’s protestations, her mother proceeds to say, “They have picked her up in Cubao. She has papers on her, incriminating evidence. She is a ringleader of the Urban Sparrows. She has books, everything. Notebooks and money.” Sol’s mother has successfully rewritten the truth to save her daughter’s skin, finally admitting to Sol the lie they constructed in order to save her: “They need justice...They need suspects. They need Soli. She’s so obvious. So perfect. Don’t you see? Because even the police—even the police are confused. Because, in day, she whispered, as if she could barely speak it, even the police keep confusing your names” (274).

If Soli were to be the better version of Sol's self, a character who embodies and typifies the nation's (and Sol's) possibility for healing, her murder spells Sol's unraveling. Without Soli, Sol, as a singular character with her own individual motivations, is forced to confront her limitations as a child of the upper-class whose motivations, as an activist, are self-serving at best. Sol is also a character who typifies the body-politic in its fracturedness, whose desire to redeem herself by emulating and even becoming Soli also represents the nation's desire, and failure, to achieve healing. As a character who is singular in her responsibility for Soli's torture and death (for Jed would have been unsuccessful if Sol did not supply his operation with arms), it is impossible for Sol to ever become a Soli: her desire to redeem herself through an act of unnecessary daredevilry leads to the murder of an innocent woman. Meanwhile, Soli, whose characterization embodies the idea of a healed nation, comes to represent Sol's fantasies for herself. While Sol successfully avoids being captured and tortured by the government by simply locking herself away in her bedroom, Soli, at least in news reports, takes Sol's place in becoming "the Sparrow Queen" who is on the run, and who eventually dies in an ambush "in a hideout among cadres in the countryside" (275). Soli's murder results in the death of Sol's better self, thus making it impossible for her to reconcile the "split in her soul", both in her singularity as a character who as an individual feels a sense of fracturedness, and as a character who typifies the nation in its unhealed divisions.

XI. Narrative as self-incrimination

The question we begin to ask, as we read Sol's version of the events with all its inaccuracies and redactions, is not *what* happened, but *why* she must write this down, and *why* she remembers these events the way she does. Perhaps it is guilt that has made her write down this story, which she calls "a confession, a reckoning", with all its attendant confusions and self-delusions. Or maybe it is a desire to ground herself within a stable reality, which she can only do by constructing a coherent narrative of these events in the past. But coherence eludes her at every turn: she is unable to know, for sure, whether an event took place or was merely imagined. One thing she knows for sure is that the assassination could not have taken place without her participation, and that she is responsible for the deaths of Soli and her driver, *Manong Babe*, whom

the Solimans also liquidated due to his knowledge of Sol's movements at around the time that the crime took place. Whichever way she pieces together in her head the events that lead to their deaths, she still cannot deny responsibility for what happened. As Ponce observes: "[H]er disoriented and disorienting, self-consciously faulty recounting of martial law in the Philippines...is far from triumphant: more an indictment than a vindication of her youthful deeds" (10). Instead of exculpating her, this narrative incriminates her, leaving her in a constant state of denial that results in an unstable sense of self. She questions herself at every step of the narrative, betraying her own lack of self-assuredness; like the Sol we met near the beginning of the novel who has not yet been empowered by her radicalism, she is unsure of herself, and does not know who she truly is.

Or maybe the memories of her youthful daredevilry give her a renewed sense of purpose that she is incapable of possessing at the present time. Before Jed invited her to participate in his assassination plot, she was a young woman lacking in confidence and purpose who constantly questioned the authenticity of her activism. It was when her role in the revolution became solidified with her participation in the assassination plot that she found, in her singularity as a character, a sense of completion, a stable sense of self that otherwise eluded her. She also typifies the national community, which finds unity and healing through its participation in resistance. In hindsight, she realizes that this so-called act of heroism, this betrayal of her class, gave her a false sense of self-importance: "[O]ur self-importance was predictable—but depressing. We had this increasing notion of ourselves, as if this seedy, pat vengeance gave us dignity. I do not even talk of glamour, something shallow, tabloidy. No, I talk of self-respect, honour. An inflated notion of virtue infected our brains" (203). Sol clings to these youthful memories in an attempt to reclaim this sense of purpose that abandoned her after Soli's and *Manong* Babe's deaths. Lee observes that "as readers, we are left with the sense that the comforting dream of foolish youth may have triumphed over the harshness of revolution and reality" (3), but it could also be that her constant revisiting of the past signifies a sense of loss, of defeat, for it appears that she hungers for this sense of wholeness that she found during this period in her life, which eludes her constantly at the present time.

Locked away from the prying eyes of Manila's gossip elite, she becomes a collector of useless knowledge, and is incapable of turning her present life into a coherent narrative, with a single, unifying purpose. "One day I hope to pursue a

degree—but something in me fails. I have a fickle brain. Infrequent bursts of interest—in obscure, petty corners of history, in languages, in numismatics, in entomology. I have a string of names on my tongue. Pigafetta. Elagabalus. Magellan. I have many bits of knowledge, like little red ants up my sleeve. But my mind turns. I lose interest, my attention dribbles. I get headaches. Anyhow, it doesn't matter" (279). She is still fascinated with history, but is unable to synthesize these facts into a coherent narrative—since she is no longer in possession of a coherent sense of self, she is unable to form emotional connections with any of the historical narratives that she reads in books. The rift between her and her nation has become permanent with her exile, and thus the split within her runs deeper, since she can no longer be involved in the events that continue to reshape her nation's history after her departure.

XII. The triumph of the elite, and a nation divided unto itself

While Sol remains in her gilded cage in New York, her parents continue to profit from the regime's efforts to ramp up the counterinsurgency after the Colonel's death gives it a convenient excuse to do so. They eventually switch sides when the political winds change and the regime is brought to its knees. When Sally, Sol's college friend, comes to see her in New York years and years later, Sally brings her up to speed on her parents' activities, as though Sol has never been made aware of these: "How happy your parents are now: just about the cream of the crop, in the new regime under the new president. Your mother had joined the streets for justice and reconciliation after all—years and years ago. She gave a lot of money to the democracy movement, the yellow ribbon crowd" (287-288). Here, yet again, the novel takes on an ironic stance towards revolution: by aligning themselves with the resistance movement that Soli and other young activists originally led, oligarchs like the Solimans can make sure that the revolution cannot dislodge them from power. Their support of the revolution results in its disablement, preventing it from dismantling institutions of power, such as feudalism, which facilitate the continued exploitation of their own people. The revolution's triumph, now that they are at its helm, ensures a preservation of the status quo. With Sol in New York, Queenie Kierulf's secrets are completely hidden from view, and no one has to scrutinise her family driver's mysterious death, or the murder of a young girl whose name sounded similar to her daughter's, so long

as her daughter, who knows her secrets, is no longer around to disrupt the fragile peace that she has worked hard for.

Sol's parents, as well as the entire nation, have moved forward, while Sol remains trapped in the past. But has the nation truly moved forward? "Mrs. Grimes (Colonel Grier's widow) was enthusiastic, she said, about the new, wonderful order in the Philippines. Not so wonderful really, I said. It's a goddamned mess now, decades after 1986," Sally says, unaware that in Sol's mind, the year 1986, or the street protests during that year that deposed the Marcoses, have yet to take place. In Sol's mind, nothing has truly changed. But perhaps she is right: even as the Philippines has moved on from its dictatorship, many things remain the same. Her parents, and the oligarchs that surround them, remain in power. Poverty in the countryside remains. Jed, Sally, and other children of oligarchs can jet away to foreign lands, and if they have committed a crime, like in Jed's case, they can always wander off to Mexico or Texas and disappear, without facing the consequences of their actions. (As Sally reports to Sol after their first meeting, "He's alive and well in Mexico or Texas, Ed is not sure. As he puts it, somewhere out there, in a town between E and X.") While there are those who know the truth, like Sol, or her namesake Soli who has had the misfortune of gaining first-hand knowledge of the regime's violence, they will be forever silenced, erased from the nation's history. And as long as those in power refuse to acknowledge their past sins, they are forever doomed to repeat their mistakes. But perhaps this is what they want, for as long as they are never held into account, they will always remain in power.

"You have a great memory for the past, Sol," the doctor says. "But remember, it is the present tense we are working on. For years, you have fully elaborated your past in your work with me, telling your story in so many words; but I hope you have finished, I am glad you have put that story in a box after all these years. You have been working on a long-ago six-month period—a traumatic episode consisting of one hundred ninety days—and you have persisted, quite valiantly I must say, remembering what is obviously painful to recall. But you perservate. You circle around a sore, the same incidents, the same details. You hover around your scars. We have gone through this before. Your amnesia, as you know, is of the anterograde type. You recall only trauma. It is a mental self-punishment. You do not exist productively in the present" (281).

Sol is diagnosed with “anterograde amnesia”, or the inability to create new memories in the present time as a consequence of her obsession with the events that led to Soli’s and *Manong* Babe’s deaths. “Repetition is the site of trauma” (14), she is told, earlier in her therapy sessions, as if the only way by which she can heal herself is to move on from her trauma and exist productively in the present. Indeed, the language of therapy contradicts the language of history: instead of understanding our present time by making sense of our past, which is the purpose of historical memory, the language of therapy, at least in this novel, implies that we must cut ourselves loose from the past in order to liberate ourselves from its ghosts.

In *State of War*, it is suggested that Filipinos cannot move forward in time unless they make sense of the past that has mired them in their present problems. Sol’s therapist, on the other hand, suggests the opposite: that she must move away from her past trauma, so that she may no longer be defined by it. It is almost as if he is suggesting the kind of forgetting that, in *State of War*, is presented as collective amnesia, a psychological mechanism that the nation employs to deal with its trauma. Unable to face the traumas of the past, or the brokenness that colonial trauma has left in its wake, Filipinos choose, instead, to cut ties with their past. What Sol attempts to do is the opposite: to face her trauma, and make sense of it. But Sol’s awareness of history, and her involvement in it, remains static on the page, for as long as she is incapable of translating her understanding of history into meaningful action, she is forever doomed to write and revise her *talambuhay* (or personal history) in the futile hope that her repetitions will result in some form of redemption.

Her therapist continues to say: “Your story is a poison pill—do you understand? And you keep eating it up—your toxic trauma... You must try to move forward, instead of backward, in time. Your present is uncomplicated, lacking in intuition or insight. You do not relate to yourself or to others in the present. Only the past has meaning. Which is sad. You must try harder, Sol, to find peace” (282). Her therapist’s advice makes sense, since she can no longer change the past. But is the alternative to living in the past, as her therapist puts it, to live in the present time, as her parents and members of her generation have chosen to do?

We could give credit to Sol for searching for a sense of resolution somewhere in the past, impossible as this is. But closure, in the form of a full reckoning, is impossible for her, as long as she is incapable of achieving justice for her friend who died in her place. Like Sol who can never again heal the split in her soul, the nation

cannot recover from its wounds as long as its traitors, like Sol's parents, are never brought to justice. The nation remains split within itself, destroying itself from within just so that it can allow the cockroaches, its traitors, to survive and rule. As Sally says:

“It's horrible how we forget the past, just like that—we forget how war has killed the best of us. People barely remember her name (Soli), the names of those who fell to the dictatorship. The best among us have died. And it is the cockroaches who survive. I told Ed: somehow, it seems to me, we are all guilty of a failure of memory. Ed agreed” (292).

XIII. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, like *State of War*, portrays a nation divided unto itself when the its oppressors emerge from within it. The rifts that emerge within the nation-state as a result of these divisions between oppressors and oppressed are embodied by Sol, who embodies the Filipino nation divided unto itself. She typifies the national community that lacks a stable sense of self, and she also typifies the Filipino elite who are divided unto themselves because of the betrayals they have committed, and continue to commit, upon their own people. She also asserts her singularity as a young person who seeks to break free from her parents and her class to claim an identity of her own, and who finds an individual sense of purpose when she becomes politically radicalised at her university. As a character, she represents the nation's desire to heal the rifts in its soul, while articulating an individual desire to gain a clearer sense of self within the larger community. Her singularity as an individual who seeks to gain a sense of wholeness and completion from her political activism complements her typification of the nation's desire to heal itself, and these two layers of her characterisation eventually run counter to one another in the novel's climactic scenes. It is the self-interestedness of her activism that eventually negates her efforts to reconcile herself with the nation and heal its rifts. This is because her efforts lack the element of self-sacrifice that is essential in subsuming one's individual identity within the nation's collective sense of self.

Like *State of War*, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* also places the telling of history at the forefront of nation building and activism, establishing the vital connections between one's knowledge of the nation's collective experience of oppression and

concrete, political action. However, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* is less optimistic in its depiction of characters who seek to translate this knowledge of their nation's history into political action, showing how these characters are individually fallible in their self-serving motives. While seeking to re-author their nation's history, these children of the elite also seek to re-author their own personal histories, thus filtering the nation's narrative through their often self-serving narratives of self. While Rosca is optimistic that the ability to tell a coherent narrative of the nation's past will enable Filipinos to rise up against their oppressors, Apostol reveals how the complexities of historical writing complicate what is oftentimes hoped to be straightforward translation of historical "truth" into "action". There are many instances cited within this chapter in which the novel shows how depictions of "truth" are deceptive, and how the personal involvement of those who tell their nation's history can make their renderings of history suspect. While we may say that Sol gains a clearer understanding of her parents' and class' complicity with the authoritarian state by being able to tell her story (despite its numerous redactions and discontinuities), her writings serve less as a call to action than as a means of gaining personal redemption for her involvement in the sins of her class. However, her self-indictments could, in themselves, be considered forms of political action, with the potential of motivating its presumed reader towards self-reflection, and therefore, action.

Sol's re-imaginings of the past, flawed as they are, also counteract the silencing of history that her parents and class enforce by banishing her to New York. Like Anna, Sol represents silenced memory. Her memories, as one will observe, often acquire a dreamlike quality that parallel the dreamed histories in *State of War*. In *State of War*, dreams and oral history serve as alternatives to official versions of history, allowing the oppressed to tap into their unconscious, and into silenced memory, to retrieve what has been erased and silenced by foreign colonisers and native oppressors. In *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, Sol re-imagines the past in order to retrieve the life she has lost as a consequence of Soli's murder and her banishment to New York. Her memory, faulty as it is, presents an alternative to the whitewashed versions of history presented by her parents and class to the Filipino people, in which their crimes, such as Soli's murder, are obscured. Sol imagines the past as she reconstructs it, echoing the ways in which dreaming in *State of War* restores unconscious, silenced memory into the nation's consciousness. Thus, like *State of War*, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* engages with the multiple forms of telling, and remembering, history,

reinforcing Dalley's assertion that postcolonial writing accommodates the contested nature of historical representations by being "a discourse of and about the writing of history in multiple forms" (4). Although one could see her version of history as problematic due to its various redactions and fabrications, the other versions of reality presented to us, such as those told by Queenie Kierulf, Madame Vera, and Colonel Grier, are shown to be equally deceptive and fabricated. Sol may be lying, for all we know, but so were the people who once surrounded her, whose lies she dissects as she writes her confession to the world.

Like *State of War*, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* also traces the roots of native oppression to the colonial experience, showing how the native elite enthusiastically embraces the tastes and manners of the nation's former colonial masters. Western fashion, art, and literature are shown as markers of class in the novel, meant to distinguish the elite from the "masses" and therefore reinforce the elite's dominance over them. This is one of the many ways in which the elite become "banyagas", or foreigners, within their own country, and their westernisation is both a gateway to power within their society and a hindrance to their social integration. The fact that western culture possesses such prestige within postcolonial Filipino society shows how the Philippines has yet to free itself from the psychological grip of western colonialism. It is also a means by which the legacy of colonialism continues to undermine the nation's fragile sense of identity, by splitting the nation into two groups, the elite and the masses. It is by continuing to assert their power over the masses, not only by employing western markers of class but also by asserting their economic and social dominance, that the elite exacerbate this split that divides the nation's soul.

The novel also raises the question of whether the elite, who have historically led resistance efforts against colonialism, should still lead resistance efforts against totalitarian regimes. As it is shown in the novel, the elite, who have the power and social capital to provide the necessary machinery for a revolution, are also oftentimes out of touch with the people whose causes their purportedly champion (that is, whenever they choose to dabble in activism). As shown in numerous instances throughout the novel, the elite can be self-serving and myopic in their understanding of rebellion—and one begins to suspect, whenever they use their class privileges to evade the consequences of their rebellion, that they are merely playing at revolution. How can they revolt against these power structures that they criticise, when they take

advantage of these very structures to get off the hook? Later on in the novel, when Queenie Kierulf and other socialites who previously collaborated with the dictatorship lend their support behind resistance efforts against the dictatorship, one is inclined to suspect that their sudden participation in political activism when the political tides begin to turn is an act of self-preservation. As shown in the novel, the elite tend to sabotage resistance movements for their self-serving ends, whether or not they actually intend to protect their interests by derailing the goals of resistance efforts, or whether they merely see revolution as a means of breaking away from the pressures and expectations of their class.

Finally, *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, just like *State of War*, asks whether it is actually necessary to murder one's closest kin in order to rid the nation of its enemies and put an end to its self-harm. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the novel does show how these young activists are reluctant to single out their parents or other Filipino oligarchs for the attack they plan to stage, choosing, instead, to target foreigners. While they are capable of identifying their parents and elders as enemies of the people, they choose, instead, to single out the foreigners as targets for their violence. Would it have made a difference if Sol chose to target her parents, or if Jed was willing to sacrifice his father in an attack?

While I do not think that the novel endorses such acts of violence, I do believe that the decision to murder Colonel Grier, instead of one's parents, should be read as symbolic in a larger allegorical narrative of liberating the nation by slaying its oppressors. The question raised by this allegorical act of violence is whether Filipinos are willing to make some tough sacrifices in waging an authentic revolution against their enemies, who may as well be their own countrymen.

CONCLUSION TO CRITICAL COMPONENT

The Philippine historical novel belongs to the nation's ever-evolving discourse surrounding its identity, continuing to confront and question the very idea of nationhood as it is complicated by the nation-state's fraught and tumultuous history. In this study I have sought to examine the ways in which Filipino novelists wrote about a unique era in the nation's past in which the nation's oppressors emerged from within the national community, paying particular attention to how these writers confronted the idea of nationhood, and of revolution, in the context of home grown oppression.

Writers of the Martial Law Novel take part in what Bienvenido Lumbera calls the "Nationalist Literary Tradition", in which historical knowledge of resistance movements foreground literary interpretations of Filipino identity and nationhood. Both *State of War* and *Gun Dealer's Daughter* engage with nationalism and resistance, as complicated by the oppressor's membership within the formerly colonised community. Indeed, it is impossible for writers and intellectuals in the Philippines to engage with the vexed question of "national identity" without engaging with the nation's colonial and neocolonial history. Lumbera has argued that home grown authoritarianism is a result of native collusion with American colonialist and neocolonialist powers (see *Philippine Literature*, 112). Certainly, both novels portray native oppression as an offshoot of American neo-colonialism. In *State of War*, for instance, Colonel Amor's torture machine, employed in Anna's torture, is "Made in the U.S.A." (67), while in *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, the military dictatorship that Sol's parents implicitly support is made possible by America's Cold War efforts to eradicate communist insurgents in Southeast Asia. Both novels show that it is by colluding with a former colonial power that Filipinos gain power over their own fellow citizens. In Chapter 1, I look at how *State of War* incorporates numerous instances indicative of how the colonial experience has made the master-slave relationship so entrenched within Philippine society, to the extent that the departure of old colonial masters has resulted in a collective yearning for their replacement. In Chapter 2, I examine *Gun Dealer's Daughter's* depictions of members of the Filipino oligarchy, particularly their emulations of Western fashions and fads in order to

cement their position of power, practically dressing themselves up as the nation's former colonisers in order to take their place.

The shadow of empire hangs over the dictatorship in these novels (and also, in Jose Dalisay's *Killing Time in a Warm Place*, Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, Edith L. Tiempo's *The Alien Corn*, and Mia Alvar's *In The Country*). More often than not, America is held responsible for propping up a dictatorship that has pitted Filipinos against each other, tearing the nation apart. Colonialism, therefore, persists in another, seemingly more benign guise long after the colonisers have left. Lumbera argues that novels belonging to the nationalist literary tradition "mobilize readers for revolutionary change"(137), and I would argue that these novels take part in resisting foreign imperialism. These two novels belong to the nationalist literary tradition by establishing the vital connection between native oppression and the nation's legacy of colonialism. In *State of War*, Ninotchka Rosca retraces the beginnings of the nation's history to an initial act of subjugation in the form of bodily violence, and shows us how the nation has employed amnesia to cope with the trauma of dehumanisation. Liberation, for Rosca, would mean an acknowledgement of the traumas resulting from the colonial experience. In *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, Gina Apostol writes about the Filipino upper-class, and how their close ties to foreign colonisers placed them at odds with the people over whom they ruled from the moment the nation gained its independence. For both novelists, grappling with the nation's colonial legacy is essential in confronting the evils of native authoritarianism.

At the same time, these novels show how Filipinos can easily become strangers in their own country. Adrian's nonchalance in the face of his family's business dealings, Anna's initial refusal to be involved in her husband's political activities, and Sol's initial indifference to Filipino culture make them foreigners in their own land, removed from their nation's continuing struggle for liberation. Their choosing to be involved in their countrymen's struggle to resist the dictator allows them entry into the nation's community. However, even their involvement in resistance is complicated by their privilege.

These historical novels I have discussed engage not only with the past, but also the ways in which the past is remembered and interpreted. Both novels reflect upon how the nation's past has been rewritten by the coloniser, and then by the native oppressor seeking to emulate the coloniser, in their efforts to disempower the Filipino people.

In Chapter 1, I look at how *State of War* examines how colonialism achieves its ends with the act of historical erasure, which effaces any sense of identity belonging to the colonised and results in their disempowerment and subjugation. Historical amnesia becomes the means by which the formerly colonized unconsciously disempower themselves, for it is easier to forget one's past traumas than to confront them and resist those who have inflicted these traumas. Remembering the nation's history entails acknowledging, even embracing its past traumas, because it is only by recognising the roots of the nation's trauma that the nation can truly heal.

In Chapter 2, I show how, in *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, Sol encounters books written by former colonisers that misrecognise the colonised peoples they seek to represent:

I discovered that our books of history were invariably in the voice of the colonist, the one who misrecognised us. We were inscrutable apes engaging in implausible insurrections against gun-wielding epic heroes who disdained our culture but wanted our land. The simplicity and rapacity of *their* reductions were consistent, and as a counterpoint to Soli's version of the past, these books provided, as I admitted to Soli, the ballast for my tardy revolt (122).

Colonel Grier also participates in this rewriting of Philippine history, calling the Philippine-American War "an insurrection", and laughing off Sol's assertions that Filipinos were fighting for their independence by saying, "[It was a war] which you lost... We won. You forget that point" (38).

As I argued in Chapter 2, both Anna and Sol represent silenced memory, and the methods in which they return forgotten memories into the nation's consciousness serve as alternative methods of remembering, and writing, the nation's past. In Chapter 1, I discuss how dreams and oral history give voice to the silenced memories that Anna and her ancestors carry with them in their bodies and in their subconscious. Dreams and songs defy the state's efforts to erase and silence the nation's memories of oppression and resistance, being alternatives to official, written history. Dreams and songs also become part of the nation's day-to-day language, bestowing a restive populace with the historical knowledge that allows them to make sense of their oppression, and take action against the dictatorship. In Chapter 2, I discuss how Sol's faulty reconstructions of history resemble the act of dreaming in *State of War*, and how her imagined visions of the past, faulty as they appear on the page, also serve as

an alternative version of history to those officially recognised as “true”, such as the versions told by characters such as Queenie Kierulf, Madame Vera, and Colonel Grier. Sol could be lying about her role in Colonel Grier’s murder, for all we know, but her lies also put into question the narratives of history told by those around her, which are shown to be equally deceptive in their refashioning of truth and their silencing of the oppressed. Sol’s memoirs also serve as a confession, and the fact that they are presented to us in this novel shows that Sol’s confessions are meant for a wider audience. They serve to make known events in the nation’s history that those in power, like Sol’s parents, have expunged from official narratives of history. In both *Gun Dealer’s Daughter* and *State of War*, dreams and the imagination serve to shore up events and memories that have been silenced and erased by those in power, who have taken charge of telling the nation’s history in order to disempower the people over whom they rule. As Kathrine Ojano has suggested, the act of remembering in a society that insists on forgetting is in itself a political act, since it “[B]ring(s) about the concrescence of the forgotten and mythical”, therefore “open(ing) up potential junctures for collective thought and action” (185). Indeed, it is only through remembering their history that a nation’s populace becomes capable of informed, political action.

Dalley argues that historical novels written in postcolonial contexts bear the responsibility of representing historical truth on behalf of those whose stories were erased or misconstrued. Thus, historical novels, according to Dalley, are best understood as allegories, in which the reality of historical events is represented through fictional interpretations of the past. In Chapter 1, I discuss how *State of War* constructs a fictional version of the nation’s colonial past, and of the Marcos dictatorship, creating an allegory of revolution in which the line between oppressor and oppressed is firmly drawn. Anyone who betrays the revolution, including revolutionaries who were tortured into submission by the state, is immediately complicit in the state’s subjugation of its own people, and must be excised from the revolution, even from the imagined national community, if the revolution is to succeed. *State of War* is a tale of choosing sides, in which members of the imagined national community, from Maya, to Mayang, to Luis Carlos, and then to Eliza, Adrian, and Anna, are presented with two options: to be loyal to their community, or to collude with the “enemy”, who is clearly represented by flat, stock characters such as the Commander, Colonel Amor, and Manolo. When Anna finally chooses to fight

for the community's survival, even going as far as murdering her treacherous husband, she is able to achieve some form of peace for the nation, as well as for herself. In this way, the novel is more prescriptive and unwavering in its portrayal of revolution and loyalty to the nation-state. In Chapter 2, I discuss how *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, which was published more than twenty years after the People Power Revolution of 1986, looks back upon the aftermath of the revolution, and assesses its failures. Apostol presents Sol, a character conflicted with herself, in order to explore the nation's divided self, as well as the challenges, perhaps even the impossibilities, of healing the fractures that run through the Filipino national identity.

Both novels employ characterisation as a vehicle for representing the nation's struggle for survival, reaffirming what Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo writes about historical novels in the Philippines: that the protagonist of these novels is the nation itself, whose conflict is its struggle for survival. In this sense, these novels are examples of what Fredric Jameson would call third-world national allegories, in which "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (69). As Dalley argues, characterisation serves as a means of exemplification in the postcolonial historical novel, and in both chapters I have discussed how both *State of War* and *Gun Dealer's Daughter* explore nationhood through characters who both typify their national communities, and are singular in their individual behaviours as members of the national community. Through typification and singularity, these characters embody their nation, while responding to the nation's problems on a personal, individual level. Through typification, these characters become perfect representatives of the nation's identity and/or aspects of its identity, while enriching and broadening their representations of this identity through singular expressions of behaviour.

In Chapter 1, I discussed how the novel's major characters typify aspects of the nation's character, subsuming their identities within the nation's greater self through their participation in the festival (in the case of characters that belong to the novel's present time) and through their participation in nation-building. At the same time, they assert their singularities as characters in their individual responses to the nation's crises. Anna, in particular, is a perfect example of an allegorical character representing the nation's struggle for survival, both typifying the national self by embodying the nation's silenced memories, and asserting her singularity as a character who, on an individual level, is initially hesitant to participate in the nation's

resistance movement, and eventually joins forces with Guevarra after suffering in the hands of the military. Through both typification and singularity, Anna becomes the novel's vehicle for exploring the complexities of resistance, as well as the challenges of telling the nation's history when the dictatorship's military apparatus, as represented by Colonel Amor, seeks to silence her voice.

In Chapter 2, I look at how Sol is a character who embodies the nation's fracturedness. She typifies the national community, as well as the Filipino elite, who are divided unto themselves. On the level of singularity she is a child of the elite who seeks to claim an identity that is separate from that of her class, and who finds an individual sense of purpose when she becomes politically radicalised at her university. Her singular, individual responses to the sight of oppression add weight to her typification of a national community that is conflicted in its loyalties and divided unto itself. Soli, her double, is also an allegorical character who exemplifies the nation's struggle for survival through typification and singularity. She typifies what the nation, and the national struggle, could be: unlike Sol, she is at home with their people, and does not suffer from the same split that Sol feels within her soul. At the same time, as a singular character, she is also a young person who finds purpose in the revolutionary struggle. Due to her embodiment of the nation's better self, her death spells tragedy for Sol as an individual character, and for the nation whom Sol typifies.

Published twenty-four years apart, these novels are symptomatic of a shift in attitude towards resistance, and thus towards nationhood. Burns's previously cited two phases recognised a shift in attitude towards the dictatorship and its aftermath, once democracy was restored and a new status quo, one that was deemed unequal and exploitative by many, had come into place.

While Rosca's *State of War* is more apocalyptic than *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, in that it implicitly endorses violence as a solution to the nation's self-victimization, it is and by the same token optimistic in its treatment of revolution. For Rosca, only the complete destruction of the structures inherited from the former colonisers can ensure a true and everlasting peace. Only when this happens can the nation heal and rebuild, as symbolized by the conception of Anna's son, Ishmael Villaverde Banyaga. *Gun Dealer's Daughter* is more sceptical, portraying those participating in revolutions as oftentimes selfish in their motivations, and out-of-touch with the oppressed whose interests they supposedly represent. As Apostol shows, resistance movements can be

sabotaged by the elite, who have little understanding of the mechanisms that enforce inequality and oppression. Apostol shows us how the Filipino elite's alignment with the resistance enables them to prevent the resistance's dismantling of institutions that protect their own interests. For any revolution to truly succeed, the novel suggests, it must divest itself of the elite's support and realign itself with the oppressed. This is perhaps the kind of revolution that is portrayed by Rosca in *State of War*, but Apostol places the revolution in a real-world setting, showing us that the preservation of the revolution's original intentions, like the survival of its original leaders like Soli, is easier said than done.

Despite *Gun Dealer's Daughter's* scepticism toward revolution, it also explores the question of how one is to confront oppressors who belong to the national community. Like *State of War*, it raises the question of whether it is necessary to murder one's countrymen in order to save the nation from itself. This dilemma faced by the nation is represented by the dilemmas that the protagonists of both novels face when confronted by the betrayals and exploitations committed by their own kin. Although *Gun Dealer's Daughter* does not go as far as making Sol kill her parents, the novel nonetheless poses the same question that *State of War* asks: whether revolutionaries are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice of murdering their kin, prioritising their loyalties to the national community over their loyalties to the nuclear family.

This act of killing one's kin, on the other hand, could also be read as an allegorical depiction of the sacrifices that Filipinos must make to save their nation from itself. Shu-ching Chen observes how Guevarra's betrayal of his nuclear family creates a "new zone of intimacy" (32) between him and Anna, and this act of parricide that he and Anna commit, and which Sol and Jed hesitate to execute, may as well exemplify the formation of new rules of inclusion within the national community, which prioritise allegiance to the greater cause of the nation over kinship ties.

In *Necessary Fictions*, Hau writes: "[P]recisely because this 'Filipino' community takes shape through the violence of exclusion and struggle, the community *must* always be made and unmade and remade" (282). Not only *State of War* and *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, but many such novels belonging to the Martial Law Novel genre, examine the choices that individuals belonging to the imagined Filipino community must make in order to ensure the nation's survival. These are choices that prove to be difficult as the nation turns upon itself as a consequence of dictatorship,

and “revolution”, and “nationhood”, take on different meanings. Like other postcolonial nations, the Filipino nation is a work in progress, in which the past continues to be a site of contestation of debate. The Martial Law Novel provides ethically engaged representations of the nation’s past, playing a vital role in helping the nation confront its demons and gain insight into its conflicted self.

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