

Which Tongue To Speak With? Philippine Poetry and the Nature of Language

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What the eye is to the lover—that particular, ordinary eye he or she is born with—language—whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue—is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, futures dreamed.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

When attempting to examine and imagine the intertwined relationship between language, literature, and community—a relationship that has been a major concern for theorists of many varieties—the Philippines provides an illuminating case because it is one of the few countries in the world where books are published in both an indigenous and a colonial language at comparable rates.¹ This paper examines the work of one poet, Cirilo F. Bautista, because not only is he one of the leading figures in contemporary Philippine poetry, but he has established his reputation by writing in both his native and borrowed language. And yet it is precisely these oppositions of nativeness and foreignness that I wish to question along both linguistic and cultural lines. This paper focuses on two of Bautista's works, *Boneyard Breaking* and *Sugat ng Salita (Wounds of Words)*, collections of lyric poems written at around the same time that demonstrate many similarities in form, theme, and content while containing important differences that I believe productively illustrate how language affects literary production and perceptions of community. Through an exploration of Bautista's poetry, I wish to demonstrate that a native language has the ability to imagine a community outside its own boundaries at both a thematic and a linguistic level, thereby questioning the opposition between native and foreign, as well as the metaphoric that places native language in close proximity to a biological function. For Bautista, it is precisely the combination of an appeal to the commonality of biological observation and strategic use of language that allows him to transcend the boundaries of a native/foreign dichotomy. At the same time, I wish to argue that he

¹ While I have not found statistics that show precisely how many books are published in English and Filipino each year in the Philippines, one indication of the parity between the languages is the fact that the Palanca Awards, the most prestigious literary award in the Philippines, gives out all its prizes in English and Filipino.

accomplishes this transcendence in more nuanced ways through his use of Tagalog, and must thus also speculate on the conditions under which these nuances can become translatable to an English-speaking readership.

I describe Bautista's poems as written in Tagalog even as I also point out his frequent use of English words in his poetry. This may seem incongruous to those who are familiar with the Philippine government's designation of Filipino as its official language, distinct from Tagalog as the indigenous language from which it originated (Nolledo xvii). One of the major features that distinguishes Filipino from Tagalog in principle is the former's incorporation of grammatical and lexical forms from various languages, including English, Spanish, as well as languages other than Tagalog that are indigenous to the Philippines. Yet Isagani R. Cruz's astute analysis of Philippine language, "Filipino Sa Contemporaryong Literatura" ("Filipino in Contemporary Literature") argues that the use of English within a Tagalog text is insufficient as a means of describing a text as written in Filipino. Bautista's poems in *Sugat ng Salita* make occasional use of English words but do not depart from established Tagalog grammar or spelling, which is why I describe them as written in Tagalog. Given my interest in how language influences perceptions of community, I only wish to call a text Filipino if it uses grammatical and lexical features distinct from Tagalog. To do otherwise runs the risk of describing Bautista's language as representative of the Philippines as a whole, when there are many regions in the Philippines where the common vernacular is not Tagalog but other indigenous languages. I argue that Bautista questions the entwining of language and the body not through English or an official Filipino language, but through the linguistic features of an indigenous Tagalog and the use of English words within poems written in Tagalog.

My analysis therefore probes certain aspects of the model that Benedict Anderson outlines in his *Imagined Communities*, in which he argues that nationalism is born out of imagination and that print technology is one of the primary fuels for such imagination. It is fitting that when Anderson writes of language to a patriot as being equivalent to a lover's eye, he is referring to the constitution of Philippine revolutionary Makario Sakay's short-lived Republika ng Katagalugan (Republic of Katagalugan), where "Katagalugan" literally translates to "community of Tagalogs." That is, instead of geographic location or race, the primary way in which Sakay chose to constitute his rebel republic against American incursion is through Tagalog language. Such a formulation, when thought of in a literary context, thus serves as a basis for thinking about a poet's imagined community.

Anderson's analogy acquires even greater valence when we consider his use of the figures of the lover on the one hand and the patriot on the other, to correspond to the eye and language respectively. Such an analogy constitutes many possible meanings, but one that I wish to initially advance is the poet as someone in between a lover and a patriot, one who feels for another and one who feels for a nation. The other part of

Anderson's analogy, the eye and language, seems to me less straightforward, though its implications are clear. By comparing language to the eye, and by specifying that language is a "mother-tongue," Anderson emphasizes the feature of language that comes closest to nature, its aspect that feels to its owner as an integral part, what is inseparable from oneself. However, I would argue that the isolation of this feature of the eye-language relationship ignores other relevant and contrary implications that arise out of thinking of a mother-tongue as having a relationship to the biological eye. While the eye may be equivalent to his mother-tongue for the patriot, lover, or poet, observing through the eye does not entail the same cultural specificity as observing through language, such that a group of subjects with different mother tongues can have more similar perceptions through vision.² Moreover, language also partially escapes Anderson's metaphor in that it is subject to forms of borrowing and incorporation not available to the physical eye, so that the barrier between the natural and borrowed for language can more easily break down, whereas it is more imaginatively difficult and biologically impossible for us to see with a different set of eyes. These points of divergence from the eye-language analogy form the basis for my analysis of Bautista's poetry.

Simply by writing in two languages Bautista already complicates the relationship of language to the natural, the assumption that one is born with a language like one is born with an eye, and that by implication a foreign language that one isn't born with comes to have a fundamentally different relationship to one's "natural" language. For Bautista, I would argue that while Tagalog is certainly the language that is closest to the eye in a biological imaginary, English comes to signify a different kind of nature, one that lives outside of one's immediate proximity but also one that can certainly be used to imagine other kinds of community. In Bautista's case, I would argue that he uses English to define both his identity as a poet among poets, as well as to imply his role as a citizen of the world.

For instance, one of the key elements of *Boneyard Breaking* is its consistent reference to a world unbounded by geography that the voice in Bautista's poems participates in, which acquires specificity at a thematic level in multiple poems that reference Western figures ranging from William Shakespeare to Elvis Presley. The voice in Bautista's poems certainly sees himself as belonging to that unbounded world, such as in the poem "Presley, Chaplin, Crosby" which mourns all of their deaths in 1977. Bautista writes:

² This is not to say that I believe in a biological eye that is immune to cultural forces; certainly Lacanian psychoanalysis and a particular focus on the gaze would reveal specific cultural biases that emanate from the eye. However, I believe that visual signifiers are more interpretationally flexible than textual signifiers, such that a picture of something can be more flexibly interpreted than a word for that thing.

And O how we sang, how we laughed, how we danced!
 The world became our cabaret!
 The world pronounced a single speech
 the loneliest heart to reach!
 So that through the shadow of their sun
 they struck our sorrows, one by one,
 till beauty shone, enchanted, entranced,
 to drive by joy the darkness away! (25-26)

Whether accurately or not, this poem conceives of a generalized world that is able to interpret the talents of three American artists performing in an American context, thereby erasing locality and allowing him to become part of an entire world that sings their praises. Such a position implies a transparency of language that doesn't always hold for Bautista, for reasons that I ultimately relate to the poet's relationship to the eye and language. For I believe that the reason why Bautista can conceive of figures such as Presley, Chaplin, and Crosby in this way is a result of their talents being perceptible at least partly outside of language, and yet it is also their relationship to the English language that would make it difficult for Bautista to represent them in Tagalog. For instance, despite the fact that most of the lines above are so culturally general as to be translatable to Tagalog, "cabaret" is a specifically Western concept, as are Bautista's descriptions for the three artists at the beginning of the poem: "The hips that sang, the silence that jested / the words that brought down snow" (25). There are no words for "jest," "snow," or "hip" in Tagalog. The approximate words, "biro," "yelo," and "balakang" would be much more readily translatable as "joke," "ice," and "pelvis." I am not arguing here that Bautista could not have written this poem in Tagalog, only that the concepts it contains are sufficiently outside the realm of everyday experience in the Philippines that it would be much more challenging.

However, Bautista's relationship to English is not always without conflict, and it is in the realm of the purely literary—where language resides—that he finds tensions between his unbounded identification and his specific national identity as a Filipino. In a poem entitled, "Written in Stratford-Upon-Avon," Bautista's poetic voice laments that "I dislocate my ancestry in obeisance to yours" (118) in reference to Shakespeare, expressing a dislocation that he is simultaneously enacting through his use of English. He closes the poem by naming the battle between his affinities:

For this serenade
 thousands eat porridge on the run
 in my country, fleeing from the turmoil
 of nationhood. There time is the thief
 where subreption stains the bank vaults

 and cathedral choirs. You do not make me
 forget them, no, the mouths in want of rice
 and voice in need of grammar, the fire
 and pestilence and decline that wear
 democracy's clothes, though you beguile me

with castellated paradoxes and seachests
 filled with sunsets. Oh, I must die again
 to deny your magic, I have no gesture to break
 the fact that we must feed on your flesh
 for salvation, I walk your streets

with strings pulling my bones, my sadness
 floundering in the festival of your death. (118)

What is striking to me here is the constant shift between language and the body, the idea that mouths who want of rice also have voices in need of grammar, that castellated paradoxes are paired with sunsets, that a poem which begins with the power of words, about a man celebrated for those words, must end with the image of Bautista's foreign poetic voice feeling that he along with others must feed on that man's flesh for salvation. It is here that Bautista expresses the English language as a foreign necessity, equated with bodily need even though it is adopted. It is thus that Bautista breaks down the distinction at a thematic level between the natural and the foreign, arguing for the difficult necessity of a borrowed language for him to have the ability to express the very ideas that oppress him.

It is therefore telling that there is only one poem in Bautista's Tagalog collection that explicitly discusses a non-Filipino. This poem is "Alay Kay Picasso" ("Offering for Picasso"), which I render in both its original and in my attempt at a literal English translation:

Ang tulang ito
 ay para kay Picasso
 na walang buhok at mukhang keso.
 Pinirapiraso
 niya and katawan ng tao
 at makabagong sining ay sumilang sa mundo.

Bilog na dilaw
 naging araw
 sulpot and bahaghari sa bitukang litaw,
 bisikletang ligaw
 nang pukpukin at hinugis hikaw
 nagpausbong sa mundong tila sanlibong sitaw:

Ngayong wala na
 si Picasso, anong makina
 ang mag-aayos sa 'ting panaginip? Anong gayuma
 ang magbabakuna
 laban sa dugo ng digma at pagkaulila
 upang and gusing mundo'y muling gumanda? (43)

This poem
 is for Picasso
 who didn't have hair and looked like cheese.
 He divided up
 the bodies of people
 and a new form of art was born in the world.

A circle of yellow
 became the sun
 a rainbow sprouted in an intestine exposed,
 a lost bicycle
 when pounded and earrings thrown
 let grow in the world to a thousand green beans:

Now that he's gone
 Picasso, what machine
 would keep order in our dreams? What charm
 would vaccinate
 against the blood of war and abandonment
 so that the tattered world would again be beautiful?

The first thing to note about this poem is that the line endings within each stanza are rhymed, the strictures of which produce fragmented meanings that have a relationship to its subject's paintings. Among the poems in *Sugat ng Salita*, this is certainly the one that most departs from literal

reality. I am particularly struck by “vaccinate / against the blood of war and abandonment,” a novel metaphor that I have never encountered, by a poet whose work in Tagalog is typically characterized by directness and simplicity. But also strikingly, Bautista chooses to render the poem in Tagalog, for reasons that again speak to the distinction I raised earlier in this paper, the one between the eye and language. Even though Picasso is a Western figure like Shakespeare, the viscosity of his medium allows for interpretation that doesn’t have to be specified by language at the level of observation. Thus, Bautista can use his eye to interpret Picasso’s paintings according to his own set of metaphors, which allows for an interpretation that is grounded in the specifics of the Tagalog language. For instance, not only does Bautista use imagery that is widely familiar to Filipinos such as the bicycle and sun, he also makes extremely specific cultural references that are almost certainly outside of Picasso’s own semiotic consciousness. While I translate “bituka” as “intestine” and “sitaw” as “green beans,” and they can function in translation as such, both of these words in Tagalog signify extremely common foods and are thus in much more frequent use in Tagalog than in English, and are a vital part of a Filipino imaginary. Thus, Picasso’s viscosity, his relationship to the eye, not only allows Bautista’s poem to be readable for a Tagalog-speaking audience without linguistic and cultural translation, but it also allows Bautista to make linguistically and culturally specific references in relationship to Picasso. This causes Picasso’s sensibility to be so enmeshed in Bautista’s poem at a linguistic and cultural level that it becomes impossible to disassemble the parts of the poem that are “foreign” and the parts that are “native,” allowing Bautista to break down this dichotomy.

It is here that I begin to call attention to a feature of Bautista’s Tagalog poems that do not appear in English, which is the way that he uses linguistic features to highlight a fluid relationship to community, one that bears a close relationship to the conditions that Édouard Glissant describes in his *Poetics of Relation*, when he writes: “[T]he great Western languages were supposedly vehicular languages, which often took the place of an actual metropolis. Relation, in contrast, is spoken multilingually. Going beyond the impositions of economic forces and cultural pressures, relation rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent” (19). That this multilingualism occurs for Bautista in Tagalog but not in English brings up the questions of what linguistic and cultural conditions cause this split between his two languages, whether this split can be remedied, what means can be used as remedies, and whether there are problems that entail an attempt to bring innovative features of Tagalog into an English-speaking consciousness.

But before I tackle these issues that Bautista raises in his Tagalog poems, I first wish to describe the absence of these features in his English poetry, and consider some of the reasons for this absence. One of the most immediate and striking features of *Boneyard Breaking* is the absence of Tagalog words in its poems, an absence that does not correspond to the frequent use of English words in Bautista’s Tagalog poetry. This feature

of Bautista's English poetry makes his poem "Caveat Emptor" even more telling:

Listen more to the form of my poem than to its subject
more to the rhythm than to the form
more to the sound between words than to the rhythm
more to the silence between words than to the words
more to the nothing between the silence than the silence

Beware of my poem. (76)

Applying "Caveat Emptor" to Bautista's English production in *Boneyard Breaking* reveals an attention to details of language that are not situated in place, and thus imagines a world that is outside the geographic and national boundaries of the Philippines. And yet at the same time, there is the sense in this poem that if one pays attention not only to the silence between the words but to the nothing between the silence, what that nothing consists of is what Bautista's poetry in English does not encompass. It seems to me that what gets left out are the particularities of Filipino experience at the level of language, which necessarily affects a perception of community and culture. Instead, I would argue that the community which Bautista's English poetry imagines is an English-speaking community that not only has little basis in his own experience, but one that does not come from his own time. This demonstrates what Arjun Appadurai has called "nostalgia without memory" in referring to the Filipino tendency to mimic songs from the American past, but in Bautista represents itself as a tendency to mimic past poetic tendencies in English. Western poetic discourse has historically given preference to both direct perception of images and novel use of language, whereas the Philippine literary establishment has historically praised works in English that mimic these features. However, the use of English itself to describe experiences in a Filipino context produces a degree of indirectness that runs counter to Western preference, and it is precisely the mimicry of English works that marks literature in English by Filipinos as potentially derivative.

The most obvious manifestation of this mimicry in Bautista's English poetry is his use of outdated usage to signify allegiance to English poetic tradition, at the level of both word and of metaphor. For instance, Bautista habitually uses "amongst" instead of "among" and "whelm" instead of "overwhelm," giving his poems an air of outdatedness for a Western reader, but which can easily be interpreted as erudition for a Filipino audience looking to classic Anglo-American poetry as a standard. But even more strikingly, Bautista uses obscure English words and metaphors in poems set in a Filipino context, such that it is unlikely not only for Filipino readers of such poems to be familiar with the words, but also for the subjects of those poems themselves to have knowledge of them. For instance, in a poem called "Two Women" Bautista describes the relationship between Imelda Marcos and Corazon Aquino: "One could write / a treatise about their separate grief's— / this one's riches

sequestered with barbed wire, / that one's power eaten by contumely" (127). Not only is the concept of a treatise itself particularly foreign to a Filipino audience, but the use of "contumely" also signals an aspiration towards erudition in an imagined English-speaking literary context, which is alienated from Filipino linguistic and cultural experience. Such a discrepancy is even more striking in Bautista's use of metaphors that have no relationship to Filipino life, such as the line "The essence of our day / is but to them a foolscap on the crown" (71), to describe an unnamed "them" who "disturb our world." There are any number of ways to interpret the "them" and "us" in this poem—critics/poets, Westerners/Filipinos, rich/poor—and yet in none of these interpretations is the metaphor of a foolscap to a crown immediately available, which implies not only an England that has relatively little effect on Philippine colonization, but also an England from more than a century ago. Lost in all of these signs of linguistic and literary community is the sense that Bautista's English poems are grounded in place and direct observation of lived experience in English.

This is not the case with Bautista's poems in Tagalog, which is strikingly demonstrated by the fact that there are two poems in *Boneyard Breaking* and *Sugat ng Salita* that are clearly versions of the same poem. Yet because Bautista marks them as neither original nor translation, a reader comes to perceive each of them as isolated creations, without reference to the other versions. Placing one of these poems, "Being Blue in Switzerland" or "Kalungkutan sa Switzerland" in its English and Tagalog versions side by side reveals some of the features of Bautista's Tagalog poetry that are missing from the English:

Naglalakad ako sa pampang ng Lake Lucerne
 Ang sinag ng araw ay kumikinang sa tubig
 at ang mga kalapati ay kumakain sa lilim ng puno
 Malamig and hangin, kaya't ibinutones ko
 ang aking jacket at hinigpitan ko ang muffler
 sa aking leeg. May hamog pa sa pula at dilaw
 na tulip; mga magkasintahan ay nagyayakapan
 sa may daungan, samantalang ang bapor buhat
 sa Gotthard ay dumating na. Dalawang sisne
 at isang gansa ay lumulutang
 sa tabi ng daungan, doon sa ilalim ng langit.

I walk along the shore of Lake Lucerne
 The sunlight glimmers on the water
 and pigeons eat crumbs under the trees.
 The wind is cold, so I button my black jacket
 and tighten my woolen mufflers.
 Dew still clings to the red and yellow tulips.
 Lovers embrace on the wooden piers while slowly
 the boat from Gotthard sails into port.
 Two swans and a duck float near
 the piers, seeking the bread a man has thrown
 into the water, there under the blue sky.

Malungkot ako sa pampang ng Lake Lucerne.
 Taas-ulong lumalakad ako at sumisipol pa. (67)

I feel lonely by the shore of Lake Lucerne.
 I hold my head high and whistle a tune. (94)

Looking at the two poems, it is impossible to tell if one has been translated from the other. There is a line in the English poem "seeking the bread a man has thrown into the water," that is not in the Tagalog poem, and there is a blank line in the Tagalog poem that is not in the English poem. There is a distinct possibility that they were conceived and composed in both languages in a similar space of time.

The more absorbing issue for me is the way that the English poem consistently introduces more complex phrasing that is not in the Tagalog poem, while at the same time flattening linguistic distinctions that allow the Tagalog poem to be culturally situated. For instance, several of the nouns in the Tagalog are unmodified, yet come with adjectives in the English. “Jacket” becomes “black jacket,” “muffler,” “woolen mufflers,” and “daungan” becomes “wooden piers,” as though Bautista in English feels the need to render the scene more vividly than he does in Tagalog. More strikingly, whole phrases in the English version are more ornate than the ones in Tagalog. A line like “May hamog pa sa pula at dilaw / na tulip,” which literally reads “There is still dew on the red and yellow tulips,” comes out as “Dew still *clings* to the red and yellow tulips.” And “samantalang ang bapor buhat / sa Gotthard ay dumating na,” which literally reads “while a boat from Gotthard has arrived,” becomes “while *slowly* / the boat from Gotthard *sails into port*.” These additions to the English text make them more “poetic,” and yet they also render less distinctly the simple loneliness expressed in the Tagalog version. I also feel that the complex phrasing comes specifically from English usage, since both “dew clings” and “sails into port” are standard English phrasings that do not have equivalents in Tagalog.

Even more importantly, the Tagalog version also allows for simpler constructions because much of its complexity lies in the distinctive registers of language that Bautista uses, which get flattened out in the English version. For a reader who does not know Tagalog, the most apparent sign of this complexity is the fact that Bautista renders some words in English in the Tagalog version, such as “jacket,” “muffler,” and “tulip,” words that have no straightforward Tagalog translation. The English words heighten the sense of alienation of the poetic voice, as the language echoes the unfamiliarity of his surroundings, especially the unfamiliar items of clothing that he has to wear in a climate unfamiliar to him.

The phrase that most clearly illustrates the dimensions of Tagalog that are not apparent in the English version is “mga magkasintahan ay nagyayakapan,” which Bautista renders as “lovers embrace,” but is heightened by the use of affixes to the noun “sinta” (lover) and verb “yakap” (embrace). Affixes play an important role in heightening or modifying the meanings of words in Tagalog, and Bautista uses them in this phrase to great effect. A more literal rendering of “lovers embrace” in Tagalog would be, “mga sinta ay nagyayakap,” where the prefix “nagya-” moves the root “yakap” into the present tense. However, there are other ways to bring “yakap” into the present. “Yinayakap,” for instance, emphasizes the act of embracing while “yumayakap” emphasizes the moment of embrace itself and “iniyayakap” emphasizes the person or entity performing the embrace. “Nagyayakap,” on the other hand, emphasizes the embrace between two people and the suffix “-an” emphasizes the behavior of a group, so that “nagyayakapan” specifically describes an act of an entire group embracing in couples, as opposed to

other kinds of embrace. Similarly, the prefix “ka-” in “kasintahan” gives the root “sinta,” lover or darling, the valence of a lasting bond, as the suffix “-han” indicates a community of people. This is the same structure that appears in the *Republika ng Katagalugan* that Makario Sakay formed, where the prefix “ka-” and the suffix “-an” modify Tagalog to indicate a lasting bond between Tagalogs within the context of a community. But rather than the patriot who forms a community through language, it is the lover in Bautista’s poem who observes a community of lovers embracing, and feels his alienation from that community. Thus, “lovers embrace,” without its implications of lasting bond and community, cannot even begin to approach the implications of “mga kasintahan ay nagyayakapan.”

Therefore, it seems that while Bautista is lauded in the Philippines for both his Tagalog and English output, he may not be as attractive to Western critics because his English poems are not particularly exemplary according to Western standards. In fact, his Tagalog poems are much more interesting according to those standards, but they are also indecipherable to a vast majority of Western readers. This is a trend that I see in Filipino literature more generally, which has not garnered significant Western attention in the same way that Indian literature in English has, for instance. There are many historical and cultural reasons that can account for this disparity, chief among them being the Philippines’ ambivalent relationship to the United States and neocolonial rule. As a result, English is still a vehicular language for Filipinos, used in official government and educational settings, but is displaced by Tagalog and other vernacular dialects in a more intimate sphere. It is therefore not surprising that the use of English to describe Filipino experience often reads as flat and forced, because a vast majority of Filipinos in the Philippines do not live their immediate experience in English, and must therefore undergo a process of interpretation to render that experience into literature. That process of interpretation is itself fraught, because it entails a dialogue not with Anglo-American experience, but with the traces of Anglo-American literature available to a Filipino reader/writer who has been historically conditioned to undergo mimicry in order to prove one’s literary worth.

Such an analysis brings to light the problem of translation, for this is what I ultimately argue that Bautista and Filipino writers generally do when rendering their experience into English. And even as I propose ways to cope with the problems of translation and interpretation in Bautista, I find myself needing to engage in a long-deferred discussion of my own subject position as both translator and interpreter, and the community that I myself am imagining in writing this paper. Gayatri Spivak nudges me towards this self-reflexivity, as she has continually criticized Western critics for disavowing their institutional privilege in attempting to speak for subaltern subjects, most famously in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” where she writes: “One responsibility of the critic might be to read and write so that the impossibility of such interested individualistic refusals of the institutional privileges of power bestowed on the subject is taken seriously” (280). Such a formulation leads me to examine the privileges

that underpin this paper, and I deliberately write privileges in the plural, for it occurs to me that I am speaking just as much to the privileged position of Western intellectual as to the privileged position of subaltern within an American setting, in a manner that Spivak—in her consistent critical position as sympathetic to, yet apart from, the subaltern—tends to overlook.³

My Western intellectual privilege is easy enough to demonstrate with regards to the erudition that this paper participates in, its blithe use of contemporary critical language, and the way I position myself as knowledgeable of Western critical discourse in ways that Bautista is not. One of the implications of my critical language in alluding to Bautista's unnecessary embellishment of his poems in English is that I do not suffer from the same naiveté in my own critical language, a privilege that I have been able to acquire through my years of American university training.

At the same time, I find myself able and willing to occupy the position not just of native Tagalog speaker but one who is familiar with vernacular uses and registers of language from both a cultural and linguistic perspective. While my current position of Western intellectual privilege places me outside the physical space of the subaltern, it certainly does not take much to put me in the imaginative space that I once occupied in actuality, a space in which I used the same Tagalog language and engaged in many of the same physical and mental actions that Bautista describes in his poems. Thus, when Spivak writes: "In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual systematically *"unlearns"* female privilege" (295, her emphasis), I find myself wondering whether there is room in her critical system for the simultaneous and fluid maintenance of both subaltern and intellectual positions (understanding of course that by "female" she refers to the discursive position of mainstream Western feminism). Having already occupied a position of subalternity, I do not feel any desire or need to unlearn my American intellectual privilege in order to speak to the subaltern, that is, to and of myself. Rather, I identify with my subaltern position through memory and imagination while maintaining my Western intellectual privilege, in order to speak to both subaltern and intellectual positions.

I do not wish to posit that this process of imagining is equivalent to experience. I only wish to question Spivak's assumption that such a position is somehow untenable or at least unimaginable, as I judge from her focus on the position of "native informant" in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and elsewhere as an elite indigenous member who fails to

³ I am tempted here to substitute "the other" for "subaltern," inasmuch as "subaltern" is a historically and culturally specific term that I hesitate to co-opt, especially because it is easy to argue that Bautista himself writes from a position of elite privilege. And yet I believe that the specific arguments I make for Bautista's language use, and the lack of access to Western critical vantages that they imply, allow me to feel more comfortable in using this more specific term.

represent the heterogeneous positions that she speaks about. In *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak describes the action of going to countries in the global South and experiencing life there, “with no institutional backup and no precise description” as “open-plan fieldwork” (36), which sounds suspiciously like the professionalization of actions that I have performed all my life. When I go back to Talacsan, the village in the Philippine province of Bulacan where I grew up, which would have been at the center of Sakay’s *Republika ng Katagalugan* and to this day only has one road, I do not call it “open-plan fieldwork.” I call it going home.

The ultimate point of this digression is not to argue that Spivak is fundamentally mistaken in constructing a system that does not account for the subaltern critic in an Anglo-American intellectual system. I only wish to point out that as she advises us to keep our generalizing tendencies under check, I find myself among the unaccounted for in her own generalizing scheme. Moreover, I believe that my position has specific effects and implications, already implied in my previous analysis, but becoming more pointed as I attempt to render one of Bautista’s Tagalog poems into English while maintaining some of the complexities that make it so pleasurable in Tagalog.

I insist on the simultaneity and fluidity of my subaltern and Western intellectual positions for certain contradictory reasons. One of them is that I find myself deeply ambivalent about the possibility of rendering the effects of Bautista’s Tagalog into English, and I view this ambivalence as derived not from one position but from the very fluidity of the position I find myself in. Aside from the degree of impossibility in the task, which necessarily entails equivalences rather than linguistic realities, there is part of me that feels possessive of the pleasure I derive from reading Bautista. It is as though my life through early adulthood spent in the Philippines, and the lives of other Filipinos who live in Tagalog, gives us the special privilege of knowing this pleasure, and makes me feel that perhaps we should keep this pleasure for ourselves. I have the sense that a rendering on my part necessarily entails a kind of capitalist literary tourism, as though I am presenting for a Western critical readership my authentic Tagalog finds. Perhaps there is no way for this paragraph not to read as empty equivocation given that the conclusion of this paper involves precisely this attempt at something more than translation. This may necessitate a neologism, extratranslation perhaps, which I would define as translation that requires the use of methods outside translation’s current conventions, methods more commonly associated with adaptation or even authorship, for the purpose of rendering literary features that cannot otherwise be expressed. I hope that my ambivalence can at least be noted, and my decision to overcome it be viewed as a matter of a scale tipping to one side rather than prevarication.

The tipping of my scale, towards believing that Tagalog works of literature should be rendered into English as much as possible, has a lot to do with love, which Giorgio Agamben calls “seeing something in its simply being thus” (106). I see in Agamben’s definition a notion of

apparency that doesn't necessarily prevent the state of linguistic opacity, but brings into being a state of decipherability that ultimately rebels against the State, inasmuch as the State, especially the Philippine State, has certainly been defined and constituted by language. Translation as a political method thus enables the translator to counter the State's attempt to maintain its territorial and cultural integrity through language. So that when Agamben describes "singularities that form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging" (80), I begin to see the extratranslation of Bautista as an act of love, that is, an act of community.

Bautista's "Kung Paano Matatamo ang Katahimikan Sa Mundo," which I render as "Oh How To Find Silence In the World," powerfully coalesces the themes of identity and alienation that are common in his poems, at both a thematic and linguistic level. Along with the original poem, this is my extratranslation:

Nakikilala sa kulay ng balat, 'ika nga,
kaya sa San Francisco'y maingat ako
habang nanaghihintay ng bus patungong Iowa.
Malakas daw ang racial prejudice, sabi nila,

Being spotted in the color of skin,
why I take care in San Francisco,
waiting for the bus to Iowa.
They say racial prejudice is strong,

kawawa ang mga Negro at mga di puti,
malapit na raw magrebolusyon dahil dito.
Ngatog na ngatog ako sa takot at gutom
dahil kalalapag ko lang buhat sa Tokyo.

Negros and not whites kawawa,
and because of this they will revolt.
I shiver and shiver from fear and hunger
because I just landed from Tokyo.

Pumasok ang isang Negro sa istasyon—
naka-African hairdo, may hawak na munting
latigo: nakatatakot tumingin, kaya
di ko siya tinignan. Kumakalansing

A Negro came into the station—
naka-African hairdo; he holds a small
whip: it's scary to look, so
I did not look at him. Kumakalansing

ang pilak na borlas ng kanyang sapatos
at sigaw niya, "Peace, brothers!" Ngumiting litaw
ang mapuputing ngipin. Tinignan ako—
siguro'y natawa siya sa kanyang natanaw—

the metal on the strings of his shoes
and he shouts, "Peace, brothers!" Smiled showing
white teeth. Looked at me—
maybe he laughed at what he saw—

isang dayuhang maliit, maitim na kung
saana lupalog nanggaling. Bumaligtad
ang aking bituka sa takot at dumukot
ako ng sigarilyo para di malantad

a tiny dayuhan, dark and from
some lupalog. Upside down
my insides went in fright and pulled
a cigarette so the redness of my face

ang pamumula ng aking mukha. Nahalata
kong pati ang mga Puting naroo'y tahimik
na tahimik, di makaimik sa harapan
ng Negrong iyon. Pagkaalis lang niya nagbalik

wouldn't show. I nahalata
that the Whites there too were quiet
so quiet, unable to speak in front
of that Negro. Only when he left returned

ang normalcy sa loob ng istasyon—nagbasang
muli ang iba, tsismisang muli ang mga miron,
tawanan, ang dyanitor ay muling nagwalis.
Maya-maya'y nagdaang muli ang Negrong iyon

the normalcy in the station—others
read again, neighbors gossiped again,
laughter, the janitor swept again.
After a while that Negro passed again

kaakbay ang dalawang Amerikanang puti, blonde, at sa kagandaha'y walang kaparis. Napatigil ang dyanitor sa pagwawalis. Naisip ko, 'Ganito pala ang racial prejudice.' (21-22)	two white Americanas on each arm, blonde, their beauty with no equal. The janitor stopped sweeping. I thought, "So this is racial prejudice."
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The most striking feature of this poem for me is the constant shift in the speaker's position relative to the racial prejudice he is only just discovering: his alignment with the Negro in being non-white and oppressed, and yet his assumption of the white position when he encounters an actual Negro. This shifting of position becomes even more complex at the end of the poem, when the speaker espouses the view that white blondes have no equal in beauty while observing that the janitor stopped sweeping, perhaps in response to the blonde girls being with the Negro. Tellingly, the race of the janitor isn't named, nor is the specific reason for the speaker's final observation, leaving us to wonder whether the speaker is recognizing his own racial prejudice or another's. The following analysis moves back and forth between examining the unique linguistic features of the Tagalog version that reinforce this complexity, and how I attempt to render those features in my own version.

Just as in Bautista's poem about Switzerland, the most transparent registers of language to the English reader of the Tagalog poem are the English words and place names: San Francisco, Negro, Tokyo, African, normalcy, peace, racial prejudice. But unlike in his previous poem, these words define a particular relationship to racial identity as part of alienation. Ironically, the words that are most transparent to an English audience are the least transparent to a Tagalog audience, especially "normalcy" and "racial prejudice," two crucial states upon which the thematics of the poem rest. And yet these states are precisely what the speaker of the poem is discovering, and thus has no names for in Tagalog. My English version maintains Tagalog words related to concepts of alienation that are not easily translatable into English, yet it also attempts to render them partly recognizable for the reader through context, just like the English words in the Tagalog version would become recognizable for Filipino readers in the same way.

Aside from the English words in the Tagalog version themselves, the contrast between these words and the surrounding Tagalog also contributes prominently to the sense of the speaker's alienation, his position as a foreigner who nonetheless occupies the same position of fear as the Whites in the station. I attempt to render this contrast in the English version by using simple words, unlike the more "poetic" words that Bautista tends to use in his English poems, to approach the jarring use of "normalcy" and "racial prejudice" in the Tagalog poem. Additionally, this has the function of facilitating an emotional directness that is a key feature of Bautista's poems in Tagalog.

Finally, I maintain two important Tagalog grammatical constructions in my version. The first is the use of the prefix "naka-" in

“naka-African hairdo,” to signify “has an African hairdo.” Just as Bautista attempts to incorporate “African hairdo” into Tagalog in the original, I attempt to incorporate the “naka-” grammatical structure into the English in my version. Though I believe that the second construction, my rendering of “Amerikana” as “Americana,” is more important because its use and readability to both a Filipino and American readership in both languages demonstrates the mutual incursion of Spanish in the two countries at different points in time and from countries with drastically contrasting positions of power. The fact that this usage is enacted through a racial judgment grants the term irony in the Tagalog poem, which I attempt to maintain in the English version. “Americana” as construction thus reinforces the complexity and undefinability of the poem’s ending, one that posits for both the speaker and the reader a relationship to racial prejudice that is in the process of perpetual discovery.

I hope in this paper to not only have described the thematic resonances of Bautista’s poetry in relationship to community, but to have also made his innovative use of language decipherable to an English-language readership through both analysis and extratranslation. In embarking on these explorations, I also stake a critical position that not merely argues for the incorporation of subaltern positions in Western critical discourse through the unlearning of intellectual privilege, as Spivak does, but also advocates for the fluid assumption and rendering of both subaltern and intellectual positions. It is, after all, this fluidity that makes my analysis possible in the first place, and which I believe allows for a more productive rendering of communities imagined through language, which neither erases specificity nor relies on notions of fixed identity. Such productivity not only entails questioning and destabilizing the intellectual’s position of privilege, but also allowing for a notion of position that departs from the singular. While this paper focuses on these positions in relationship to subaltern and intellectual, I believe that this model can potentially apply to other positions. A clear one that overlaps with my analysis but is not explicitly discussed are the positions of critic and artist, rendered fluidly in my notion of extratranslation. Bringing this relationship into greater prominence in future work, not only as a singular relationship but perhaps in concert with other relationships, may lead to even more productive imaginations of community, to a state of *katauhan na nagyayakapan*.⁴ Having read this paper, I hope that English-language readers can find the meaning of this Tagalog phrase for themselves.

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⁴ “Tao” is the Tagalog word for person or human. Thus, “*katauhan*” means a group of connected humans, or, humanity.

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