Exploring Southeast Asian Studies beyond Anglo-America:

Reflections on the Idea of Positionality in Filipino Thought

Preciosa Regina de Joya*

[*Abstract*]

As a response to Peter Jackson's call for a Southeast Asian Area Studies beyond Anglo-America, this paper argues that the achievement of this salient objective hinges on an understanding of the idea of positionality and what it entails. Drawing from reflections from Filipino scholars, positionality can be understood not merely as one's determination through geographic location or self-knowledge of one's condition within the politics of knowledge production; rather, it is the power and opportunity to claim a place from which one understands reality in one's own terms, and the capacity to effect influence within her intellectual domain. In redefining positionality as such, one realizes that crucial to establishing Southeast Asian Area studies beyond Anglo-America is acknowledging the importance of the vernacular in the production and circulation of knowledge, as well as the constant danger of English as the global lingua franca, established in the guise of an advocacy that resolves unevenness by providing equal opportunity for all intellectuals to gain "global prominence." This paper argues that, instead of trying to eradicate unevenness, one can acknowledge it as the condition of being located in a place and as a privileged

* Department of Philosopy, Ateneo de Manila University; pdejoya@ateneo.edu.

position to think and create beyond the shadow of Anglo-American theory.

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Ⅰ. Introduction

Over the past decades, scholars have repeatedly broached the problem of legitimacy of Southeast Asian Studies. Critics have time and again underlined its complicity to an imperialist agenda, as a colonial construct and an object of research sanctioned by war (Emmerson 1984a, Anderson 1984, McVey 1995, Miyoshi and Harootunian eds 2002, Heryanto 2007). To get beyond this stigma, scholars have sought to reconceptualize "Southeast Asia" as an ever-changing "contingent device" (Sutherland 2005) that has generated not one but many Southeast Asian Studies arising from varying ecologies beyond Anglo-America (Kratoska, Raben, and Nordholt eds 2005; Goh Beng-Lan 2011; Park and King eds 2013; Winichakul 2016). Others have urged to reconfigure the field beyond a preoccupation with nation building and orient its research towards issues on mobility and globalization (Chou and Houben eds 2006; Mielke and Hornridge eds 2017). And yet, despite these numerous efforts, an anxiety persists, creating an incessant demand to justify the practical and theoretical relevance of area studies.

One of the most recent attempts to provide such an apology is an essay written by Australian National University (ANU) Emeritus Professor, Peter Jackson, entitled "Southeast Asian Area Studies Beyond Anglo-America: Geopolitical Transitions, the Neoliberal Academy and Spatialised Regimes of Knowledge" (2018). This essay presents an extensive rebuttal against the arguments raised by critical theorists Harry Harootunian and Naoki Sakai. For Harootunian, the problem with area studies is not so much its disreputable past as what has become of it in its afterlife. Thoroughly corrupted by a "capacious desire" to serve the imperial and global expansion of unbound capitalism, area studies has consistently "produced no

paradigmatic or conceptual breakthrough" (Harootounian 2012: 9), and has therefore remained bereft of any value as a form of critique. Naoki Sakai substantiates this claim, attributing this failing to a "hostility to theory" prevalent among scholars of area studies, who "refus[e] to reflect on the conditions of their discipline" (2012: 90). For Jackson, however, such views are not only "less relevant" to the forms of area studies that have emerged outside and beyond the geographical space of British and American academia, but more significantly, run the risk of overlooking the significant changes in knowledge production, especially in cases where area studies provide "a form of resistance to historical projects of hegemony" (Jackson 2018). Underlying this oversight is a prejudice, a kind of Euro-amerocentrism, that reduces intellectual centers situated in the peripheries to passive recipients of Western thought, and refuses to acknowledge their agency and capacity to produce critical theory. Furthermore, Jackson argues that such claims have simply failed to factor in "the significant numbers of scholars (e.g., Dirlik, Houben, Spivak) who have reimagined area studies as drawing on non-Western discourses, epistemologies, societies and cultural formations to critique Euro-Amerocentrism and develop more comprehensive theories of global phenomena" (2018).

In this paper, I wish to explore further some of the arguments raised in this on-going and long-standing debate, and present reflections taken from my own knowledge and experience as a student at the Southeast Asian Studies Program at the National University of Singapore (NUS, 2008-2013), and currently as a practitioner of this cross-disciplinary field in a Philosophy department in Manila. While Jackson obviously provides a formidable defense of Southeast Asian Studies against its critics, I would like to lay out a few points that not only corroborate his arguments but also critically engage his ideas. Drawing on my own study of the ideas of selected Filipino scholars, I hope to examine closely his notion of Southeast Asian studies beyond Anglo-America, and clarify how and why it is crucial as a particular form of positionality. As we shall see, Filipino historians, Reynaldo Ileto and Zeus Salazar, as well as Filipino philosopher, Roque Ferriols, S.J., understand positionality not merely in terms of the intellectual's condition and thrownness into the nets

of power; rather, it is the unique position, given one's particular historical and spatial experiences, to bear witness to reality in her own terms. But while Ferriols argues for a positionality that constantly dwells in an ambiguity that tries to bear witness to the contours of a complex reality, Salazar defines it in very clear, unequivocal terms, as the intellectual's task to contextualize, translate, and appropriate in order to transform all material into narratives that are useful and relevant to Filipinos.

Ⅱ. The Narrative of the "Golden Age"

What makes knowledge production a highly contested terrain is that it grants the power to tell one's story. However, it cannot be denied that the story one tells is often, to some degree, already fashioned, since part of being initiated into any field of study is to be "indoctrinated" into a particular narrative. Thus, one of the first things that Southeast Asianists learn is that "Southeast Asia" is merely an artificial construct, a name coined for "geographic convenience," reflective of the perceptions not even of its own inhabitants but of Europeans who found it advantageous to identify "these" lands as located "South" of China and "East" of India (Emmerson 1984a: 7). Furthermore, one is constantly reminded that it was not scholarship but warfare that gave recognition and legitimacy to the region as an important object of research. During the Second World War, and especially during the Cold War, Southeast Asian Studies was conceived as a matter of foreign policy, providing information and guidance to "Western decision-makers" (Emmerson 1984a: 9). And yet, no matter how many skeletons are brought out of the closet, some of the most important events in the history of Southeast Asian studies are moments of a radical, redemptive turn.

In stark contrast to Harootunian's depiction of area studies' "misshapen mission" (Harootunian 2012: 10), Ruth McVey tells us about colonial scholars who, because of their knowledge, sympathy and idealistic commitment, became "too relevant," or "too involved in the questions of the day," deviating from the objectives that their

imperial sponsors had set (1998: 39).[1] In their commitment to study the vernaculars intensively and uphold the value of analyses "from within," they began to recruit Southeast Asian scholars into their Southeast Asian Studies programs. It was the same empathy, which grew from a profound knowledge of the language and culture of non-Western people, that would equally instigate the political and intellectual radicalization of post-war scholars. In fact, Immanuel Wallerstein regards this as one of the unintended effects of Cold War Area Studies, which would eventually lay the groundwork for the emergence of new forms of research that "undermine[d] the plausibility of traditional ethnography and Oriental studies," as well as "force[d] the 'Western' disciplines to take into account a larger range of data" and challenge their hallowed boundaries (1997: 228). However, what truly ushered a time of radical engagement was when Southeast Asianists vocally opposed the Vietnam war, effectively posing one of the fiercest objection to American foreign policy. Harry Benda and George Kahin, both pioneers in Southeast Asian studies, would already express deep concern during the early stages of American involvement in Vietnam (Nordholt 2004:42), and scholars like Benedict Anderson, Daniel Lev, and John Smail, would later conduct teach-ins and organize antiwar rallies in the 1960s, at the height of the Vietnam war. Known as the "golden age" of Southeast Asian studies, these Cornell scholars, according to Laurie Sears,

> had been nurtured by their own mentor George Kahin, whose work on both Indonesia and Vietnam has been a model for a kind of committed yet rigorous area studies scholarship. These men—along with Ruth McVey—set the example for a liberal belief in the power of area studies—the rigorous learning of local languages and an

[1] Carlos Bonura and Laurie Sears substantiate McVey's claim by citing Dutch scholars like T. Pigeaud who, having spent "considerable time in the Indies" (2007: 14) and having done extensive research, objected to Dutch scholarship that purposely emphasized Hindu elements in Javanese textual traditions and undermined four centuries of Islamic influence, as part of a political strategy "to minimize the threat of Islam" against colonial aggression (Sears 1996: 89). Other colonial scholars like J.C. Van Leur and Oliver Wolters, whose ideas on "local initiative" and "localization" respectively, have equally paved the way to the recognition of Southeast Asia as a region culturally and linguistically different from India and China, which deserved a study and exploration of its own "indigenous" framework (Acharya 2012: 85-86)

> alliances if not actually politics itself. This model of area studies challenged the older more conservative Orientalist paradigm of the colonial scholars (SSRC 1999: 7, quoted in Ileto 2002: 1-2).

With Cornell graduate Professor Reynaldo Ileto teaching the module SE5151 which I was required to take as a doctoral student at NUS, I was immediately acquainted with the narrative of Southeast Asian Studies' "golden age." Entitled "Approaches to Southeast Asian Studies," the module SE5151, judging from its name, or so I thought, was meant to provide an extensive exploration of methodologies. To my surprise, however, Prof. Ileto designed the course not as a survey of theoretical frameworks but as a kind of initiation, which later would clearly have a profound effect on my own scholarship. For him, it was paramount for the neophyte not so much to learn the latest trend in theory as to know the history of the field of study to which she would soon belong, as well as the scholars who significantly shaped its narrative, And so, in class, we read and analyzed the texts written by pioneering scholars like DGE Hall, Oliver Wolters, Anderson and others, while discussing their biographical accounts.

Ⅲ. Positionality

It was, however, Ileto's autobiographical essay (2002), one of the readings that was assigned for that module, which helped me understand, long before I had encountered "positionality" as a slick neologism/jargon, what it meant to situate oneself in the politics and history of knowledge production, and more importantly, what was at stake. In the *Encyclopedia of Geography* published in 2010, positionality is defined as the notion that personal values and one's location in time and space, including aspects of one's identity such as gender, race, class, all reflect and shape one's knowledge. This implies an acknowledgement that research is never value-free, and because of this, one cannot ignore the politics involved in knowledge production. Jackson reiterates this point in his essay, identifying positionality as "one's intellectual locatedness in the nets of power that pattern forms of discourse" (2018). Against the claims

of scholars of globalization asserting the idea of a single society and culture, Jackson argues that such belief, along with the notion of a society without borders, is nothing but a myth. Geographic locatedness is inescapable and still undeniably crucial in the formation of hierarchical structures that enforce inequalities of power, specifically in determining whether or not, and which voices are heard. This, according to him, is the reason why despite the growing presence of Asian intellectuals in academia, only a few are really able to achieve global prominence, particularly those whose intellectual works have "the imprimatur of having been produced… at one or other of the elite intellectual fashion houses of Harvard, Chicago, Cornell, Columbia, Oxford, Cambridge, and so on" (2018).

Sakai, however, takes the idea of positionality further, rendering it an explicitly active role. More than being thrown into a specific context, it is a "special position" which one consciously takes when one looks, from "off-stage" so to speak, at the configuration of one's multiple personas, and how they are performed and caught in power relations. As such, positionality is inseparable from "*theoria* and *contemplatio*," and thus, taking such position is inevitably "marked by a certain theoretical investment" (Sakai 2012: 72). It is this reflection of one's position, as mentioned above, that Sakai finds profoundly lacking among scholars of area studies, and the reason to which he attributes their "hostility to theory," that is, an inability or unwillingness to reflect on the conditions and narratives of one's own discipline.

Contrary to Sakai's sweeping generalization, Ileto's autobiographical essay presents precisely a critical reflection of the conditions and narratives that have shaped Southeast Asian Studies, and the role that his mentors expected him to assume. While the essay may not aspire to explicate any kind of theory, it is clearly a rendering of *contemplatio* in action. He recounts how he began his studies in 1967, at the height of that "golden age," and how he was drawn to Cornell, which was then known as the Mecca of Southeast Asian Studies. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had just been established and Southeast Asian Studies seemed to him, at that time, "the wave of the future." He tells us the story of how his mentor, Wolters, previously director of Psychological Warfare in

the Malayan Civil Service in the 1950s, had carried out his "initiation rite." By impressing on him the heap of books and archival papers he had to read and the many languages he had to learn, Wolters made sure that through that brutal shock of the first encounter, Ileto, the neophyte, "would gain a proper awe and respect" for the field of study he was entering (Ileto 2002: 5). Also in the essay is Ileto's account of how that "golden age" equally witnessed "a challenge" in historiography, with Smail's idea of autonomous history being offered as a "third way," an antidote to colonial and nationalist history. The aim of autonomous history was to get beyond the colonial framework and the nationalist or anticolonial preoccupation of scholarship, and reorient it to the study of the social structure and history of the region. It was in this context of an intellectual war between autonomous and nationalist historiography that Ileto found himself caught, and through the injunction of his mentors forbidding him from writing like the Filipino nationalist historian Teodoro Agoncillo, it became clear to him that his admittance to Cornell was a kind of recruitment, and that he had been, so to speak, drafted to war. Ileto writes,

> In retrospect, my being admitted at Cornell had an agenda behind it. Taufik Abdullah (who had commenced his PhD in 1965), Charnvit Kasetsiri, and myself were Wolters' first three PhD students from different parts of Southeast Asia. I'm pretty certain that the hope was that we would return to Southeast Asia to sow the seeds of autonomous history there and hopefully neutralize the evils of nationalist historiography (2002: 7).

It is clear from Ileto's autobiographical essay, therefore, that positionality, as a reflection of one's situatedness is, more accurately, an understanding of how and where one is located in the history and politics of knowledge production, and how through scholarships, fellowships, and teaching positions, one is appropriated to a particular agenda. One could, of course, argue that there were real, altruistic reasons when, at one point, scholars were calling for a reorientation of Southeast Asian Studies as a form of self-knowledge for the people in the region (Wolters 1994), or advancing an indigenization that not only recognized the distinct and unduplicable contributions of Southeast Asians, given their life experiences and proficiency in

their own language (Anderson 1984: 50) but more importantly, gave to the people living in the region the power for self-representation (Emmerson 1984b: 57). But Ileto's account does give us reason to pause, perhaps even towards a reappraisal of the critique posed by East Asianists Harootunian and Sakai.

Ⅳ. The Rhetoric of Underdevelopment

In condemning Area Studies and its afterlife to a "misshapen mission" that only serves an imperialist and capitalist agenda, Haroutunian, in effect, denies it of any history of, or possibility for radical intervention. But in light of McVey's account, such claim obviously commits a kind of reductionism that straitjackets the complicated, heterogenous, and multiple lives of area studies into one, homogeneous, linear trajectory capable only of fulfilling an instrumentalist purpose. Despite this oversight, Haroutunian's criticism could still prove useful, particularly in revealing the devious logic that underlies the formation/ transformation of Area Studies after the Cold War.

"Captured" by identity/cultural/ethnic studies, and the "vocation of postcolonial discourse," Area Studies, according to Harootunian, has witnessed over the past decades a transmutation that valorizes difference and Otherness (2012: 9). It ushers the "return of the native," who appears no longer merely as an informant/ "vanishing mediator" employed as cheap labor, as in the early practices of Area Studies. Instead, through the authority of her knowledge, "steeped in cultural authenticity and lived experience," she earns her right to equal status and finally occupies a place in knowledge production (Harootunian 2012: 11). But this, according to Harootunian, is merely an inversion of the developmental narrative that was employed by America's neocolonial, modernization scheme during the Cold War; for while in the old practice, the Other "lacked fullness and completion into a modern self," and thus required development in order to "catch up" with the West, the newer practice, based on a theory of ethics and right, "authorized a complete, full Other to press its claim for equivalence" (2012: 11).

Both schemes share a desire to include those who have been formerly excluded, but, despite the demands to acknowledge and respect difference, the goal is and has always been to make the Other part of a singular temporality. While it is true that the emphasis on identity and the subaltern subject has led to a resuscitation of native theories and cultural values, and an effective critique of a fictional, unified "West" that monopolizes theory and knowledge production, this claim for equivalence presupposes the logic of the Same, i.e., the singular temporality of democracy within the context of a neoliberal global order. What this means is that, without such equality of rights, the native remains incomplete and ensnared in the "stigma of unrealized self-representation" (Harootunian 2012: 17).

Thus, for Harootunian, the "appeal to the multiplicity of subject positions" has had no value other than a "Benetton advertisement," as "no real light is thrown on any concrete situation by an insistence on recognizing the Other" (2012: 16). At best, such "professions of solidarity with Otherness" (2012: 19), and the struggle to grant it a voice, has led to the misleading assumption that the problem of unevenness only takes place in sites outside Euro-America. We forget, as Harootunian argues, that uneven development, "more than a memory of the experience of defining the third world … is a historical process that has been present everywhere" (2012: 20). But what is perhaps more menacing is how these "symbolic representations of world heterogeneity" are effectively masking the reality of homogenization (Harootunian 2012: 11). It is a homogenization that commits societies to a normative, singular temporality, while denying how capitalism, given the varying registers of time and space, has in fact "produce[d] uneven development and untimely, heterogenous temporalities" (Harootunian 2012" 27).

In academia, one finds this unevenness and its disavowal through a similar rhetoric of underdevelopment. One sees this, for example in Ileto's autobiographical account, and how he was coaxed and groomed to "sow the seeds" of autonomous history "back home," to neutralize the malicious effects of nationalist historiography. With this "civilizing" mission, Ileto sheds light on one of the

unflattering truths about being a "native" scholar abroad, revealing how being drafted into an intellectual war meant being indoctrinated into a narrative, which in this particular case, presented the nationalist historiography of scholars "back home" as antiquated and misguided, and therefore, categorically, the negative Other.

Jackson, in his essay, equally deplores the inequalities that continue to persist in academic institutions. But while Ileto sees how unevenness plays itself out through discursive statements, Jackson calls to our attention how inequality cunningly dissimulates itself in yet another way, that is, by imposing a neoliberalist metric system (2018). Through the metric system, "academic quality" is measured and quantified on the global scale, while presenting its assessment and ranking as both objective and fair. But as scholars have time and again pointed out, this metrification has merely created a growing, "collective obsession" (de Albuquerque 2010: 354) for research assessments and Impact Factor which, in turn, has only helped to establish the hegemony of the English language as the global lingua franca.

According to Brazilian scholar, Ulysses Paulino de Albuquerque, despite its pretense of objectivity, Impact Factor, which measures the visibility and citation frequency of a scientific work, is significantly influenced by language. Not only have studies shown that English native speakers are cited more than scholars from non-English speaking nations, thus putting the latter at a disadvantage (de Albuquerque 2010: 356); French-speaking Quebecoise academic Francine Descarries also asserts, in her analysis of feminist studies, that the use of English as the lingua franca of academic scholarship has particularly given English-speaking scholars control over "the form and content of articles deemed acceptable for publication" in highly ranked, indexed journals (Descarries 2014: 565). But what is perhaps the most devious effect of such control is that in this "transnationalization of knowledge," the saying "publish or perish" has come to mean more accurately, the necessity to publish in English in order to keep one's academic career afloat (Descarries 2014: 564). And thus, as Descarries insightfully points out, what is clearly "at stake in the issue of language… is the power to appropriate or to conceal, enabling the center to reinforce its

privileged position and hegemony" (Descarries 2014: 568).

What I find curious about Jackson's arguments is that, on the one hand, he laments the plight of Asian intellectuals within an oppressive neoliberal metrification of research and teaching; and yet, at the same time, by insisting on and ensuring the inclusion of Asian intellectuals in the international circuit as a way to overcome this inequality, he assumes that the primary goal of all Asian intellectuals or any intellectual for that matter, is to be heard or be visible in the global scene. Ironically, by insisting on an equal playing field, he unwittingly enforces a kind of unevenness, or underdevelopment, where scholars, so long as they are wanting in international recognition, are at a disadvantage, as though marked by the "stigma of unrealized self-representation" (Harootunian 2012: 17). Such belief can only imply that the significance or value of their scholarship hinges only on their inclusion in the global circuit.

Furthermore, despite good intentions, Jackson's critique of the neoliberal metric system, ignores the obvious, albeit significant, relation between the collective obsession for research assessments and Impact Factor and the establishment of the hegemony of the English language. One wonders then if Jackson's understanding of the problem of unevenness coincides with the way intellectuals in the peripheries perceive and experience it, or if his view and the solution he provides are reflective merely of the anxiety and desire of some intellectuals who wish to be part of the "international circuit." Obviously, it is a concern with which Jackson can easily sympathize given that he himself moves in this global scene. But what then of intellectuals whose priority lies not so much on being heard by the so-called gate-keepers of "global knowledge?" What of intellectuals who choose to write in their vernacular, not even as a form of resistance to the global, neoliberal order, but simply because other forms of unevenness concern them?

On this regard, Ileto's autobiographical account is not only significant in the way it unravels an entire drama of power relations (i.e., unevenness) that takes place, albeit taken for granted, in academic discourse. By presenting a myriad of opposing voices, coming from the center as well as the peripheries, and views from

other mandalas and rival institutions, including the dissonances within intellectual traditions and camps, he reveals how power exists in multiple locations and thus can never be absolute nor concentrated in a single place. He further reaffirms this by demystifying the idea of a "golden age," by exposing the conservative and oppressive elements that co-exist with its narrative of a progressive, radical intervention. Ileto will continue this work of exploring other mandalas by inviting Southeast Asian historians to a workshop at NUS in 2004, creating a space for scholars such as Adrian Lapian, Syed Hussein Alatas, and Zeus Salazar among others, to discuss the histories of their respective countries, and share experiences and homegrown concerns regarding "local scholarship and the study of Southeast Asia" in the region (Ileto 2013: 9). Through this initiative, Ileto takes the idea of positionality further, far beyond the notion of intellectual locatedness or self-reflection, which, although undeniably crucial, merely ponders the conditions of one's status quo. By encouraging intellectuals in the region to converse with each other, and perhaps even recognize an alliance towards establishing or strengthening their own mandala, positionality ultimately becomes a creative power—the unique opportunity, given one's location, identity, and history, to build one's own intellectual community and create a space for one's own thinking, i.e., to perceive and interpret the world in one's own terms. Here, what matters is not so much one's visibility in the global circuit as the capacity to think one's own ideas and influence knowledge production, within the intellectual sphere in which one circulates, vis-à-vis forces that constantly threaten to control thought through neoliberal structures and measures and/or discourses of underdevelopment.

As an attempt to provide space for voices suppressed by more powerful discourses, my study on the intellectual history of Filipino philosophers is clearly inspired by the task of addressing this unevenness in knowledge production. In this sense, my work is influenced, not by Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979), but by his autobiographical essay. His reflections on his sojourn to America has inspired me to ponder on my own position as a scholar, and to acknowledge the particular cause to which I had been drafted. This

meant not only understanding how Singapore, with its advantage of geographic proximity to its Southeast Asian neighbors, constitutes a very different mandala, but more importantly, seeking and reaching out to the intellectual centers that have been relegated to its peripheries.

Ⅴ. On the Idea of Positionality: Reflections Beyond Anglo-America

In exploring further what we mean by positionality, and how pivotal it is to a conception of a Southeast Asian Studies beyond Anglo-America, I draw reflections from two Filipino scholars who have shaped the discipline of Philosophy in the Philippines, namely Zeus A. Salazar, a historian/ anthropologist/ ethnolinguist from the University of the Philippines (UP), and Jesuit philosopher, Fr. Roque Jamias Ferriols, S.J. While both have devoted their intellectual life to thinking in the Filipino language, and became pioneering forces in the Filipinization movement in the 1970s, Ferriols was influential primarily in the field of philosophy, whereas Salazar's contribution was groundbreaking not only in history and historiography but also in the indigenization of the social sciences as a whole.

Given their zealous call for a return to the Filipino language, Salazar and Ferriols have easily been accused of nativism, or worse, a xenophobia that deliberately excludes the foreigner from taking part in local discourse. But I argue that in precisely reflecting on their positionality, as scholars who have lived in a society with a long history of American colonialism, and continue to witness how the English language is used by the affluent and educated to exacerbate the socio-economic divide, their resolve to produce scholarship and create a space for a community of learners in Filipino, is not so much discrimination against the "outsider" as it is a struggle to include those who have long been excluded from intellectual discourse.

5.1 Fr. Roque Ferriols's Idea of Positionality as a Discipline of

Ambiguity

To understand Ferriols's reflections on positionality, it is important to situate him in the context of the Philippine student activism of the late 1960s, and specifically, as part of this larger cause, the Filipinization movement that took place in the Ateneo de Manila University in the 1970s. While this surge of protests was inspired by a wave of student activism that swept the globe, such as the anti-Vietnam war in America and the Paris Commune of 1968 in France, there were "homegrown causes" that triggered the youth's discontent. Some of the issues raised were the lack of school facilities and unreasonable tuition fee hikes, as well as the imperialist intervention in the country's political and economic affairs, and the government's abuse of power (Totanes 2005:2). The tensions between the government and the student activists would escalate to a series of violent confrontations and tragic deaths that would be infamously called the "First Quarter Storm" of 1970. This would eventually lead to President Marcos's declaration of Martial Law in 1972.

Enraged by Marcos's support for the Vietnam War through his signing of the Vietnam Aid Bill, and displeased by the Philippine-US Military Bases Agreement and Mutual Defense Treaty, the student activists expressed a strong anti-American sentiment, identifying American cultural imperialism as the enemy. It was therefore no surprise that the Ateneo, the bastion of "American-influenced education" (Totanes 2005: 9) and under the auspices of American Jesuits, would undergo critical scrutiny and elicit a clamor for change under the banner of Filipinization, an "immersion… into things Filipino" (Magadia, S.J. 2005: 216).

What particularly triggered the Filipinization movement in the Ateneo was a manifesto written by five Ateneans published in the university newspaper. It criticized the Catholic Church, as well as the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, for being dependent on the powerful elite, and for maintaining the status quo that perpetuated the socio-economic injustices in the country. What aggravated the problem was that the Jesuits were promoting an education with a Western, neocolonial orientation, that had become

both irrelevant and alienating, widening the gap between Ateneans and their fellow Filipinos.

In an open letter to the first Filipino rector and president of Ateneo, Fr. Pacifico Ortiz, alumnus Antonio C. Abaya argued that at the core of this "process of miseducation" was language. Describing the Ateneo of his day (1947-1956), Abaya writes how students

> were forbidden to speak any language except English. Each time anyone was caught uttering a word of Tagalog or Visayan or Ilocano, he was punished by being made to stand in the midday sun for one hour (1969).

Ferriols himself experienced this language rule when he was a Jesuit scholastic in the 1950s, but it had already been abolished when he returned home from his graduate studies in Fordham in the 1960s. Nonetheless, western habits continued to persist, and Ferriols found himself struggling against not only the Americans but fellow Filipinos who seem to have adopted a colonial way of thinking.

As part of an attempt to address this problem, and at the same time, to mitigate the escalation of violence and politics of hatred, there was a call among some members of the faculty, Jesuit scholastics and priests, to re-define Filipinization in more constructive terms. Among them was Ferriols, who, seeing a "positive value in the 'Down from the Hill' idea" (Magadia, S.J. 2005: 218), firmly believed that the time had come for the students to "de-Americanize." But for him, having been inspired by the words of Luis Taruc, the former leader of the *Hukbalahap* (*Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon* or the Nation's Army Against the Japanese Soldiers) and champion of agrarian reform in the 1960s,[2] Ferriols saw Filipinization as a rediscovery of the depth of Filipino culture and language, which is merely a step towards establishing real solidarity with people from

[2] After pleading guilty to rebellion for organizing the Huk insurgency in the 1950s, and sentenced to life imprisonment, Luis Taruc was granted amnesty by Marcos on September 11, 1968. On September 20, 1968, Taruc was invited by the Ateneo to deliver a speech on "Land Reform and Community Development." This was his "first public appearance," and his speech was published in the university newspaper *The Guidon* (October 2, 1968).

below. In an interview, Ferriols explains,

> The Atenean has to begin from the bottom. When Taruc came to speak here, one of the students asked him what the Atenean could do for the peasants and workmen. Taruc did not answer by suggesting projects but by beginning at the rock bottom. Go to the barrios and the poor sections of the city and make friends with the people. We like to make plans for the poor. We forget that to make an effective plan we should be only one of the makers of the plan. We should cooperate with other people. This means to known them as human beings, to such an extent that we learn from them, and together with them we plan and execute (Guidon, December 11, 1968).

Ferriols's response to the call for Filipinization was thus to teach Philosophy in Filipino, to enable a community of learners to engage, think, and speak with people in the barrios. But while Ferriols's initiative was "boasted of in public," it was tolerated privately and gained very little support, judging from the unfavorable time slots to which his classes were assigned (Ferriols 1974: 338 - 339).

While Ferriols's advocacy was focused mainly on an immersion "into things Filipino," his support for the student movement certainly went beyond the classroom. Not only did Ferriols, to the delight of students and the editors of the university newspaper, *The Guidon*, publicly articulate a defense of Filipinization, which was particularly crucial at a time when "certain usually vocal American Jesuits" refused to openly discuss their views (Carpio 1968); he also explicated the rationale behind the policy changes that the students were demanding. One controversial issue was the demand to replace some of their American administrators and professors with Filipino counterparts. He argues,

> One who was born in a foreign land and grew up among foreigners cannot be sensitive to the nuances of our present cultural crisis. He cannot appreciate our rich heritage from within. This is not a stigma on the foreigner; merely a fact about him. He is, as a matter of fact, incapable of developing a Filipino culture. The Ateneo has neither faced nor acted on this fact (Puno and Cabanero 1968).

In a personal conversation with Ferriols in 2009, he recounts how those troubled times created political divides and deep-seated resentments, prompting a number of American Jesuits to leave the country. They felt that the Filipinos were ungrateful, despite everything they had done for their country and its people, and blamed Ferriols for provoking student dissent. Ferriols, in his defense, explains that he could not have been responsible for the movement. Filipinization was the desire of the times, and students, acting on their own judgment and volition, clearly did not need to be told what to do. Furthermore, Ferriols argued that the basis of his Filipinization was not political but theological, i.e., that his intention was not so much about taking sides, or choosing a position of, for, or against Americans, but about fulfilling the Church's mission to uphold cultural pluralism. Filipinization, for him, was never about disavowing the contribution of the Americans or denying their place in Philippine society. Ferriols claims that this explanation, which he proffered in a *Guidon* interview, was unfortunately omitted from publication. Believing he was deeply misunderstood, he tries to clarify three decades later:

> I was not fighting the Americans. I encouraged [students] to be Filipino. And if you are to be Filipino, there are American ways to which you cannot agree. Not because you don't want the American, but because you want the Filipino (2009).

In 2016, Ferriols published his autobiography, entitled *Sulyap: Sa Aking Pinanggalingan* (*Glimpses: Into My Beginnings*), giving an account of the first four years of his life as a Jesuit novice during World War II. While the entire narrative is pervaded by death and the horrors of war, it is, at the same time, a story revealing the bond forged among the Filipino Jesuits and their American brothers during those difficult times. The autobiography, more than a historical account of war is a testimony of friendship and an expression of gratitude towards all his American teachers.

Understood against the backdrop of the student movement in the 1970s, Ferriols's autobiography is not just a remembering but an attempt to rectify the misunderstanding caused by what he perceives

as a politically-driven over-simplification of a complicated reality, where there was not just one but an entire spectrum of Filipinization. His own version attests to a Filipinization that struggled indefatigably against Americanism but equally refused to forget the kindness of individual persons who fought against the violence of a colonial system they were expected to uphold. Here, Ferriols locates the intellectual *beyond* the divisive politics of affiliations and agendas and re-defines positionality as a commitment to bear witness to a complicated reality, the fullness of which could only be grasped by one who dwells in ambiguity.

Contrary to the lack of certainty or exactness which ambiguity often evokes, Ferriols argues that dwelling in this precarious space in fact demands acuity and precision in drawing out the contours of a complex reality beyond simplistic representations. Thus, for Ferriols, it requires discipline, both in skill and perseverance, as one who has learned to come to terms with ambiguity will know that the exactness one seeks will never be a fixed point, but one that constantly changes according to circumstances. This "discipline of ambiguity" (*disiplina ng alanganin*), as one of the basic tenets of Ferriols's philosophy (Ferriols 1991), is what defines intellectual locatedness, not merely as one's place in the nets of power, or a critical reflection of the conditions of one's discipline, but a unique position to reveal reality from where one stands, and to think for oneself beyond, and sometimes even against, the forces that shape and control our knowledge.

While Ferriols believes in the possibility of an autonomous, non-political stance, Ileto sees the intellectual constantly caught within the ambit of power and influence. And yet, in his own autobiography, Ileto himself appreciated the value of ambiguity, depicting reality as full of moral ambivalence and complicated relations. While his mentors at Cornell were colonial scholars who asserted their influence and power as "gate-keepers" of knowledge and were not at all timid in labeling their negative other as authors of "bad" scholarship, they were nonetheless great teachers and pioneers in their field, which could only be appreciated in relation to their great passion and awe for the Empire. Ileto also problematized boundaries and fixed notions, arguing for example that, while

Agoncillo was labelled a nationalist, his text was "by no means an imposition of the state on its citizens." In fact, Ileto claims that Agoncillo was open to revisions, inviting his readers to make corrections and criticisms (Ileto 2013: 20).

5.2 Zeus Salazar's Idea of *Pook* (Place) and the Task of Translation

Like Ferriols, Salazar was part of the milieu of student activism in the 1970s. In fact, he took an active role in the Diliman Commune of 1971 that barricaded UP entrances for eight days, in an attempt to keep the military and the police from entering the university premises. UP Professor Petronilo Bn. Daroy argued that the Diliman Commune was an attempt to create a "*revolutionary cultural base* from which would ensue scientific knowledge meant to effect the liberation of the oppressed and exploited masses" (1971: 40, quoted in Totanes 2005: 29). And it was in creating and developing scientific knowledge through the indigenization of the social sciences, that Salazar, along with Virgilio Enriquez of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology) and Prospero Covar of *Pilipinolohiya*[3] would dedicate their life's work.

Unlike Ateneo, which under the American colonial government was intended to "excel in the teaching of the English language" through a modification of its curriculum and textbooks (Torres 2010: 139), UP was conceived, from its inception in 1908, as a "university for the Filipino" with the vision of being "relevant to the Filipino people" (Torres 2010: 149). But while the Filipinization policy that granted Filipino teachers to take control of UP's educational system came decades before the Filipinization movement in the Ateneo (Torres 2010: 164), the English language would also officially become the medium of instruction. Thus, even when bilingual education (the use of English and Filipino as medium of instruction) was finally implemented in 1974, the preceding decades of formation in the English language had already resulted in the "miseducation of the Filipino" that had led to the development of a colonial mentality

[3] *Pilipinolohiya* cannot simply be translated as "Philippine Studies" since it is against the latter that the former differentiates itself. For an explanation on their differences, see Salazar(1998: 301-323).

(Constantino 1966). With literacy measured in terms of English proficiency, what ensued was a significant, cultural divide between the educated Filipinos and the illiterate Filipinos who spoke in their native language (Torres 2010: 165).

For Salazar, this cultural divide that disconnects the acculturated group of elites to the rest of the Filipino people is what lies at the very heart of the problem of Philippine society. And if one analyzes its history, one will realize that it is a recurring theme:

> From the time of the Spaniards until now, the Propagandists were writing (and the intellectuals today who replaced them—i.e., ilustrados with their pensions, Fulbright scholars and others who have been sponsored by America, and now, by Japan and other nations) in a foreign language. This is to show that they can [do it] too—and, indeed, they can. That is, though, to create in Spanish (or American English), it would be necessary for those yearning to be "Filipino" to become Spanish (or American, and perhaps in due time, even Japanese). In other words, it would require them to detach themselves from (and leave) their own native culture… [and] later to return to it to use some of its elements in their construction (in truth, to create [something] "different" or "original!") in Spanish (and later, in American). This is the "intellectual" work of the Filipinos from Rizal and Paterno until Villa, Tiempo and Locsin, Sr. cum Jr. What they were able to create therefore was only a local counterpart ("local color" in literature) of whatever foreign culture of which they had taken part (Salazar 2000: 97).

To this day, Salazar has remained steadfast in his advocacy, in his effort to address and rectify the adverse effects of the Americanization of the Philippine education system. In this regard, he has publicly accused a few diasporic Filipino intellectuals for producing what he calls "comprador scholarship," which has consequently earned their ire. A recent case in point was the heated exchange on Facebook between Salazar and Patricio Abinales. Salazar accuses Abinales for being a comprador scholar, i.e., for selling his data about the Philippines to foreign countries and promoting separatism.

> I am referring to the way you sell yourself as a scholar from and of

> the Philippines to a foreign power that is one of those that oppressed the Philippines… and had been a colonizer of it. And almost everything that you write about the Philippines is meant to cast aspersion on the situation here instead of helping to improve its situation, to uplift it. And what it aims at is to separate one part of the country… you can't even strengthen the *loob*/resolve of the nation to fight against the forces that are trying to divide Filipinos. I know, you don't consider yourself a Filipino [sic], that's why your [sic] bent on selling your put-downs of the country's situation to the Japanese and Americans (quoted from Chua 2010, translated by Caroline Hau 2014: 47-48).

In an exchange like this, scholars often cite how Salazar was involved in Ferdinand Marcos's *Tadhana* history-writing project, and how he collaborated with a tyrant "[who] was carrying out the massacre of Moros in Mindanao in the name of the nation" (Chua 2010: 28). Caroline Hau highlights how Salazar responds to Abinales's accusation, by claiming "the moral high ground" of working with someone (i.e., Marcos) who was at least not trying to destroy the nation (Hau 2014: 48). For Hau, this

> uncritical embrace of the nation in the name of national unity, which shades off into identification with the state and its leaders, represents one extreme consequence of a "nationalistic" standpoint that is critical of OFW intellectuals but turns a blind eye to its own problematic status in the Philippines and the inequalities and hierarchies that obtain therein (Hau 2014: 49).

Unfortunately, in such polemic debates, one easily loses sight of Salazar's real contribution: that again, the problem of the Filipinos is not primarily socio-economic but this cultural abyss that separates the acculturated elites from the rest of the Filipino people. But the solution he proffers is, in fact, fairly simple. Instead of producing knowledge and discourse that speaks to the foreign (a discourse which he calls *pansila*, or "for-them" perspective) or speaking in nationalist overtones that still addresses the foreign, albeit in a defensive position (a discourse which he calls *pangkami*, or "from-us-to-you" perspective), Salazar urges Filipino intellectuals to speak in a way where narratives are liberated from the vicious cycle of a neo-colonial discourse and finally rooted in and

influenced by the actual needs and concerns of the Filipino people. Such work, which he calls *pantayo* (or "from-us-for-us" perspective)

> [is] a work which [is] specifically engineered and written for the greater number of the country's population…. A pantayo work [is] not written in English; it is written in the language of the masses, in Pilipino…; and so, it is reflective of the culture of its readers as well. It is reflective of the greater Filipino culture, which one could normally read in this people's language and its linguistic qualities themselves (Reyes 2002: 379).

While all three perspectives lend different ways of conceiving positionality, the *pantayo* perspective (*pantayong pananaw*) clearly asserts a more reflective and profound connection between the intellectual's locatedness and her task. Here, Salazar's idea of place (*pook*) is crucial. According to Guillermo and Reyes, *pook*, for Salazar, has a dual reference:

> It is both the point where a culture or civilization of a particular period stands and one's place in that spatio-temporal continuum. It is from pook that one explains and understands oneself through the use of materya. Materya can run from language and memory to material culture. For a scholar, it pertains to his/her synchronic view of an available reservoir of knowledge and understanding of history and culture across time. Pook, used in conjunction with its materya, brings about narration. Salazar, in a lecture entitled "Pagsasakatubo ng Teorya: Posible ba o Hindi?" names narration as pook's concrete manifestation of itself, its dominant present in the face of its past. A historian at the same time possesses and functions as pook in the practice of history; pook constitutes her/his being that gives shape to a narrative, through which pook takes form through the body of text and its language (Guillermo and Reyes 2009: 80).

Thus, *pook* is the place where one is not just passively shaped and influenced by one's context but the space where one actively assimilates in making sense (*saysay*) and producing one's narratives (*salaysay*). The aim of *pantayong pananaw*, therefore, is to carry out the task of contextualization (*pagpopook/pagsasapook*), and in so doing, appropriate (*pag-aangkin*) all knowledge and wisdom that would otherwise have no significance. It is here that one realizes

that positionality for Salazar is not simply an awareness of one's location in the politics and history of knowledge production (as in Ileto), nor the search for truth by carrying out the discipline of ambiguity (as in Ferriols), but it is a task of translation.

Salazar demonstrates this point most effectively through his own translation of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (2000). Dissatisfied with the Leftist movement and what he perceives as its failure to contextualize and integrate Marxist theory into Philippine history and culture, he puts himself to the task of translating Marx's seminal work, from the original German to Filipino, to reveal elements in the philosopher's thought that may be dissimilar, or even incompatible, to Philippine historical experience. Salazar argues that, in order for real appropriation to take place, one must first understand that Marxism, emerging in the context of Western Europe, was not only a response to modern bourgeoisie but more importantly, influenced by Enlightenment and its idea of progress. The rise and movement of the proletariat is, therefore, merely part of the dialectic, linear progression of history, and its actors are automatons that are given no face. Salazar explains,

> As the effect/product of the expansion of the Bourgeoisie and its European civilization, the advancement and growth of workers within their culture is not essential, that is if we are to accept that they have any. They advance only as workers used/exploited by, and therefore what opposes against, the monstrous expansion of the Bourgeoisie in their midst. They do not exist and advance according to what may already be the dynamic/dynamism of their own culture and totality (2000: 151).

Thus, for as long as Marxism does not fully integrate the nationalist struggle of the Katipunan and the messianic movements in Banahaw, and denies the vision and language of revolution articulated by the likes of national hero, Andres Bonifacio, Filipino poet Francisco Balagtas, and religious leader, Hermano Pule, it will remain a foreign ideology.

One wonders, however, if a real integration of a foreign ideology is even possible in Salazar's scheme of things, given that an analysis and immersion into our historical and cultural heritage

would locate us in a specific and unique time and space register. Thus, the task of translation, as a way of appropriation, may seize glimpses of affinities and similar physiognomies, but only to reveal in the end our positionality, that is, the untranslatability of our unique historical and spatial experience.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

As a response to Jackson's call for a Southeast Asian studies beyond Anglo-America, I have tried to elicit the ideas of two Filipino philosophers, who, by virtue of their exclusion from the global circuit, may be easily deemed as examples of marginalized scholars in the region. Indeed, Jackson has well alerted us to the structural inequality that the neoliberal metric system has put in place. But he has also failed to recognize that, in some cases where scholars either defy or are simply indifferent to the attainment of international stature, the problem of marginalization is not so much a matter of unequal rights as it is the fabrication of a stigma of underdevelopment, of "unrealized self-representation." In fact, such stigma only forces "marginalized" scholars into a homogenous time, where the right to be heard and to equal stature are assumed to be every scholar's ultimate goal. But one further asks, to whose eyes do we appear "marginalized," and by whom exactly do we wish to be heard? In all of this, what seems to be assumed, and thus left unarticulated, is that the condition for inclusion in the global circuit is to accept and nurture English as the academic lingua franca.

For Filipino scholars like Ferriols and Salazar, who have time and again witnessed the effects of neocolonial education, and the vital role that the English language has played and continues to play in creating a social and cultural schism between the educated Filipino elite and the rest of the Filipino people, the inclusion into an English-speaking global circuit becomes an impossible path to take. Their dauntless pursuit of Filipinization, i.e, the immersion into "things Filipino," and the intellectualization of the Filipino language, is merely an expression of their location in a unique conjuncture of time and space.

Like Jackson, I believe that positionality plays a very crucial role in the formation and development of Southeast Asian studies beyond Anglo-America. But in understanding positionality merely as the scholar's geographical location in the nets of power, which in turn determines her inclusion in or exclusion from the global circuit, Jackson stifles the real creative force behind the idea. Thus, by drawing ideas from Ileto, Ferriols, and Salazar, I have tried to re-define positionality, not merely as one's throwness in the politics of knowledge production, nor a reflection of the conditions and narratives that have shaped one's scholarship; rather, it is the unique position determined by a specific register and confluence of time and space, which provides the intellectual the unique possibility to create a space for one's own thinking, to understand the world and produce knowledge in one's own terms.

It is, however, also in the unevenness produced by varying time and space registers that we find differing conceptions between Salazar and Ferriols regarding the positionality of the intellectual. Unlike Ferriols, Salazar refuses to see any value in a position of ambiguity. He is convinced that, given the politics that permeate knowledge production, it is imperative that the intellectual always makes a clear stance. Furthermore, Salazar believes that if Ferriols, at a later stage in his life, felt it necessary to give nuance to his position and invite his readers to understand his views in light of his gratitude to his American teachers, it is because the philosopher is mistakenly convinced that everyone stands on equal ground (Salazar 2018). Thus, while Ferriols believes in the possibility for personal encounters beyond affiliations and agendas, and sees positionality as a witnessing to truth, for Salazar, it seems that the intellectual is constantly at war. Thus, her paramount task is to produce meaningful narratives addressed to fellow Filipinos and knowledge that can help build the nation. But this agenda for intellectual liberation must be clearly distinguished from a discourse that seeks to claim equivalence or equal rights among scholars. Rather, it is by preserving and acknowledging an unevenness that Salazar seeks to constantly affirm the uniqueness, and thus, the untranslatability, of the historical and spatial experience of Filipinos as a people.

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