

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Myth, Dream, and Resistance in Ninotchka Rosca and Emmanuel Lacaba's Fictions

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Despite Ninotchka Rosca's international acclaim as a Feminist novelist and Emmanuel Lacaba's national renown as a martyred resistance poet, the dearth of scholarship on their collections of short stories—written from around the time of the 1970 First Quarter Storm to the early years of Martial Law—has also left unanswered how their fictions evinced a new paradigm of resistance literature as the critique and revision of modernity in the Third World. In this paper, I address this gap by looking into Rosca's transformation of fiction into mythopoeic speculations in *The Monsoon Collection* (1983) and Lacaba's experimentation with oneiric or dream-like narratives in *Salvaged Prose* (1992). I argue that the fictions of these authors register the periphery and juncture of world modernity as the incomplete, delayed, or aborted self- and collective emergence of Filipinos. At the same time, the authors also revealed the normative relevance of resistance literature within and despite modernity, which is its capacity to rethink humanity as social and collective relations of social justice. Drawing on the volatile yet explosive zeitgeist of 1970s Manila, the authors therefore reconceived resistance writing from outside political orthodoxy into new artistic forms.

**Keywords:** Ninotchka Rosca, Emmanuel Lacaba, resistance literature, anti-dictatorship fiction

At the vanguard of the circle of radical writers in the 1970s, Ninotchka Rosca and Emmanuel Lacaba were also leading members of the nationalist Left cadre that led the insurrection against the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. As they were earning accolades from national literary award giving bodies for their fiction, each was also embarking on a separate line of political work. Rosca's underground organizing in the late 1960s as a student and, later on, as a journalist led to her imprisonment in 1972 when Martial Law was proclaimed. Since her self-exile in the US in 1977, she has continued with her

international human rights and feminist activism and writing (Mendible 355). Meanwhile, Lacaba, who began as a militant university student and instructor, joined the New People's Army in 1975. At age 27, just a year after he joined the armed resistance, he would be a victim of a summary execution of his guerrilla squad in Mindanao (Remollino). In the course of their political involvement, they pursued writing as intensely as any kind of revolutionary activity. Writing was, in fact, at the core of their political work. And yet even while the international recognition of Rosca as a contemporary Feminist novelist increases and national

commemorations of Lacaba as a resistance poet never cease, the dearth of scholarship on their collections of short fiction—written at different points during the Marcos rule, right before the First Quarter Storm of 1970 to the early years of Martial Law—has also left a gap in the understanding of radicalism in the works of these committed intellectuals.

In this paper then, I wish to address this lacuna by offering a preliminary reading of the fictions of Rosca in *The Monsoon Collection* (1983) and of Lacaba in *Salvaged Prose* (1992)<sup>1</sup> as “resistance literature” (Harlow 9). Foremost, I must note here that the term “resistance literature” is Barbara Harlow’s borrowing from Palestinian intellectual-revolutionary Ghassan Kanafani, who first employed the phrase in his 1966 critical essay as a label for protest poems against Israel (Harlow 2). Harlow redeploys the term to refer to the militant cultural discourse arising from and linking together the anti-colonial and post-independence resistance movements in the twentieth century, across the Third World.

But while I draw on Harlow’s lesson on the historicity of resistance literature as that which arises from within the national democratic struggle, I also consider Benita Parry’s response to Harlow that literary “inscriptions of the political” require diverse “textual procedures” (15), thereby engendering novel ways of codifying resistance. In this light, I hazard a claim here that resistance writing, exemplified by the fictions of Rosca and Lacaba, targeted the effects of world-scale historical changes in the twentieth century, which subtended the national democratic movement in the Philippines. Throughout this paper then, I argue that myth and dream in *Monsoon* and in *Prose*, respectively, provided modes for the authors through which they could index the processes of economic and political alienation of Filipinos and of the cultural negation of their realities. Put another way, I posit that the authors’ recasting of the fictional medium into what I consider as mythopoeic speculations in *Monsoon* and oneiric or dream-like landscapes in *Prose* were the results of their artistic struggles to critique neocolonial modernity in the Philippines. These 1970s fictions emerged historically to register the difficulty of self-realization and collective emergence of Filipinos in the face of the compounded odds of sexism, economic

alienation, political disenfranchisement, and mass media manipulation—all of which were exacerbated by the regime and dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. In what follows, I will introduce mythopoeia and the oneiric genre as they have been defined in literary and cultural studies, with a view to illustrating how these fictional forms give rise to a new aesthetic-political paradigm.

As a literary term, “mythopoeia” means the creation and engendering of myths either by oral communities as part of religious and cultural practice or by an individual writer in her or his development of an ethical-creative principle. That a contemporary text is mythopoeic also means that it intentionally invokes or rewrites archaic myths (“Mythopoeia”). In my past studies of Rosca’s novels, I have also drawn on the scholarship of Michael Bell who situates mythopoeia in the modern period with his study of twentieth century British writers. According to Bell, Nietzsche’s avowal of archaic myth as the artistic fruition of ancient man’s affirmation of his relations with the world spurred the modernist writers to “self-conscious[ly]” emulate such myth creation as their own aesthetic posture of affirming humanity’s worldly relations with modernity (206, 208). I have taken up Bell’s point further in my analysis of *State of War* (1988), Rosca’s first novel, by arguing that her own mythopoeic-aesthetic position, which she painstakingly pursues in writing the postcolonial condition in the long form, is also the place of political commitment (Ojano 175). Published five years prior to *State of War*, *Monsoon* may be read as Rosca’s emergent mythopoeia in that she speculates into withheld or subtracted worlds of individual and collective self-emergence of her protagonists: families, women, the youth, and children who live through unfreedom and political alienation in the neocolonial periphery of capitalism.

Briefly, I must mention that the stories are only a part of *Monsoon*. In between these nine stories are real-life accounts, spoken directly by Rosca’s nonfictional “I,” about her life in detention with fellow Martial Law political prisoners. Blurbed as “vignettes,” these rather lean sketches detail the rape, physical and psychological torture, deprivation, and other forms of violence in prison. And yet, in stark contrast with her mythopoeic re-imaginings of a world, these diary entries make up a bare-bones documentation of activism and commitment, stripped of exalted ideals of heroism and sacrifice. In fact, these non-fictional

1 Hereafter, *The Monsoon Collection* will be referred to as *Monsoon* and *Salvaged Prose* as *Prose*.

accounts render the struggles of the activists as random and unimpressive, so that they do not simply serve as the counterweight to the grandiose proportions that the author scales in her stories. More importantly, the capacity of the diary accounts about day-to-day prison survival to overturn victimhood is salutary in a larger collection of fictions about vain struggles of ordinary people against imperialism and patriarchy.

In *Prose*, Lacaba's signature as a screenplay writer and playwright is evident in the dreamscapes which he creates in his three stories. One of the innumerable characters who populate "Punch and Judas," Maggie Terra, who "found it hard to differentiate between dream and waking" (*Prose* 27), bares to the reader the dreaming narrative mode that underlies all three of Lacaba's fictions. Specifically, I mean that the dream (or nightmare) in *Prose* is the mode or the medium in which his characters live through social relations and, at one point, tentatively resolve conflicts, and struggles. Here then, I find the term "oneiric" useful in referring to Lacaba's fictions. Loosely defined, "oneiric" describes a situation, a narrative, or, as in cinema studies, a film landscape that resembles or concerns dreams ("Oneiric"). European psychoanalysis has probed oneiric cinema's layers such as its strong historical-political links with the avant-garde movement, its ontology, its manifest and unconscious elements, and spectatorship (Rascaroli par 2, 6). Meanwhile American film analysis posits the screen as the "extension" of the unconscious (Eberwein 5), thereby rendering film as an "oneiric universe" (6). While I share this paradigm's basic assumption on the strong "analogies between film and dream" (Rascaroli 3), I will not necessarily adopt psychoanalysis in this paper. Instead, a more strikingly similar example of my task here is Eileen T. Bender's examination of the cinematic characteristics of the oneiric fictions of American Jewish writer-filmmaker, Isaac Bashevis Singer. According to her, dreams in Singer's fiction function as "suture" (117) or the thread connecting disparate temporal, cultural, linguistic, or literary elements. Singer also utilizes the dream as a cinematic device for "succession, superimposition, dissol[ution], and [fade-out]" (117). Finally, the dream in Singer's writings also facilitates the "intertextual process" (119) or the breach of fictive boundaries. As a whole, the stories in *Prose* also make up different oneiric worlds which negate each other. In other words, the dream is the intertextual thread as well as turning point connecting the three stories in the collection.

As I have suggested, there is currently only a smattering of commentary on both *Monsoon* and *Prose*, but they already touch on the architectural and thematic distinctions of their fictions. For instance, in her 1984 review of *Monsoon*, Doreen Fernandez notes how Rosca shifts between fiction and non-fiction and adjusts lenses from focused to "impressionistic" portrayals of "survival" during the Martial Law period (477). In Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo's brief survey of Filipino women writers who deploy the character type of the innocent, young woman or the "ingenué" to dramatize a "gentle subversion" of gender mores, Rosca, with her story "Generations," stands out for the unexpectedly "disturbing" coming of age of her protagonist, when she strikes fatally her father, whom she had earlier rescued from prison by sacrificing her virginity to the soldiers on duty ("A Gentle Subversion" 312-315). In a recent North American book about theorizing the Bible through affect, Jay Twomey references in a footnote *Monsoon*'s "Our Apostle Paul" as an example of a fictional treatment of Saint Paul, likened to the figure of a slain revolutionary in Rosca's story, as a figure of failure (159).

At the moment, the only accessible commentary on the stories in *Prose* are the book's concluding editor's notes. Jose Lacaba, editor of his brother's posthumously published prose collection, also cites the judges' reviews of one of the stories, "Punch and Judas," as the winning piece in the 1970 *Free Press* short story contest. One of the judges, Elmer Ordoñez, observes how "Punch and Judas" takes the length of a "novelette" given the need for this modern story to demonstrate its own "technique" (211). Meanwhile, Armando Manalo reads it as Lacaba's inversion of his own social awareness through his "mythic modern hero" who is afflicted with hollowness, thereby leaving unsure the success of this hero's "quest...[for] reality" (211). Finally, Nick Joaquin, who gives a comprehensive and instructive analysis, notes the novelty of form or the "overwhelm[ing]... contemporaneity" (209) in Lacaba's depiction of his politically charged era of 1969.

The commentators' notes above on Rosca's narrative gear shifts and Lacaba's self-awareness of technique are central issues in conversations on the aesthetics and politics of resistance literature to which my essay contributes. In particular, I align my work with studies that have sought to resolve or take up the debates on literary form and content. For instance,

my efforts continue Soledad Reyes's interrogation of the dichotomy between realist and non-realist fictions in twentieth century Philippine literature. In her 1984 essay, she re-examines popular and vernacular forms during colonialism, which employed the "romance mode," or mythical and medieval (that is, religious or courtly) archetypes, and concludes that these precursors of contemporary literature are not at all "escapist" forms (171) but actually "engage reality in diverse ways" (163).

With this paper, I also engage scholarship on the nationalist literary tradition such as the 1996 compendium, *Nationalist Literature: A Centennial Forum*, edited by Ordoñez. Briefly, I highlight the political context of revolutionary aesthetics drawn in this book as the basis of the paradoxical emergence of Lacaba and Rosca's fictions. The book includes Patricia Melendez-Cruz's 1980 essay which inquires into what the politics of committed literature in the present must be, based on the vicissitudes of "the modern Pilipino short story": from its individualist aestheticism in the modernist era of the 1930s to 40s; to its liberal humanist ethos in the 50s; and, finally, to its anti-imperialist, nationalist vision in the mid-60s to 70s. Melendez-Cruz consolidates her genealogy around the 1972 manifesto of the Panulat Para sa Kaunlaran ng Sambayanan (PAKSA), the group of militant writers, which sought to hammer out the standards of committed literature that would serve the "struggle for national democracy" (166). And yet, even as, according to PAKSA, the partisan politics of committed literature requires writing that "reflect[s] social reality" "of the majority among us who are workers and peasants" (qtd in Melendez-Cruz 168), Bienvenido Lumbera, in his essay in the same collection, also reveals that when Martial Law was declared in 1972, writers had to specifically work around political censorship by "asserting [nationalism] through approved artistic trends." As such, for Lumbera, there would emerge in the 1970s a corpus of "new writing" outside of the proletarian artistic canon that, nevertheless, comprises nationalist literature. These are the works which demonstrate literary or artistic "circumvention" of Martial Law censorship through, for instance, "[n]ativist nationalism" or "the retriev[al] of forgotten folkloric material" and "cosmopolitanism" or "extensive publicity for imported cultural presentations" (15).

The odds of Rosca and Lacaba's respective

mythopoeic and oneiric writings conveniently suiting Lumbera's accommodations of nativist nationalism and cosmopolitanism is noteworthy. But in Lumbera's gesture, I want to point up, instead, the implied and yet undeniable contradiction that Rosca and Lacaba, who were, around that time, active members of underground movements, produced fictions which were largely and stylistically at variance with PAKSA's injunction in 1972 to "reflect[] [the] social reality" of the proletariat. To put it bluntly, these fictions, included as part of the nationalist literary tradition, were written from the authors' epistemic privilege as petty bourgeois intellectuals. I do not wish to contest such fact. Instead, I wish to interrogate the presupposed anachronism of these fictions which I believe is part of the deeper reason for the scant attention to them since their publication. Put another way, the obscurity of *Monsoon* and *Prose* in the tradition of resistance literature has to do with the misrecognition in scholarship of experimental modes of narration as non-realist or historically incongruous forms. In what follows, I then briefly turn to theories of modernity which grasp the emergent anti-imperialist paradigm revealed by experimental literary forms such as the fictions of Rosca and Lacaba.

My premise in this study is that the preponderance of myth and dream in *Monsoon* and *Prose*, as tropes and modes of storytelling, is a result of the confluence of many factors including the authors' grassroots involvement and underground activities especially during the FQS as well as their post-Romantic and avant-garde influences. Partly then, it is possible to rethink *Monsoon* and *Prose* in light of the views of Michael Löwy, whose scholarship traces the historico-political continuity between Romanticism and surrealism as radical aesthetic movements in Europe. In one of his essays, he rejects the European Left's disparagement of avant-garde works as "modernist anti-realism" or "non-realist." Instead, he argues that modernist writings are criticisms of "social reality" even though they may not necessarily imitate "life as it really is." In effect, these modes of representation, which he calls "critical irrationalism," express "protest, outrage, disgust, anxiety, or angst..." against history and reality; that is, European modernist literature is an "implicit negative critique" of bourgeois life and capitalism ("The Current..." 196).

But it is Raymond Williams who has sought to locate modernism within a more vast and long-standing historical process. In his 1987 lecture, "When

was Modernism?," he admonishes his audience not to narrowly freeze the meaning of "the 'modern'" as the sole achievement of the European and Anglo-American avant-garde and modernist movements of the twentieth century. In other words for Williams, the attention to the twentieth century modernism must be de-provincialized. Primarily he notes that modernism is a vector of its Romantic forerunners whose works, as explained separately by David Duff and Löwy, rejected the inherited conventions of genre (Duff 8) and the larger trappings of the nineteenth century bourgeois society (Löwy, "The Current..." 197; *Morning Star* 29). More importantly, Williams underscores the multitude of other factors, including breakthroughs in the late nineteenth century in film, photography, and mass media, which brought about the modernist signature of politically self-conscious art (50).

By far, Keya Ganguly's *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray* has been one of the most outstanding, recent attempts to take up Williams's lesson on the dynamism of cultural forms within an as-yet unfolding modernity across the globe. In her work, Ganguly positions the critique of modernity from the periphery through the cinematic oeuvre of twentieth century Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray. Particularly in her introduction to the book, she realigns the avant-garde label often ascribed to Ray's films by critics who suggest that his cosmopolitan artistic tastes diminish the pertinence of his work to national issues. On the contrary, her altogether copious discussions clarify the profound political affinities of Ray's body of cinematic work with modernist art across the world in challenging "the ways that organic social relations are everywhere deranged under capitalist modernity" (17). Her revelatory insights into Ray's modernist cinema as "paradigmatic" of a new relation of art to capitalist modernity must be specified here (25). According to Ganguly, while Ray's modernist cinema is a "refraction" of the alienation of social relations in the time of capital (17), the art form also has the capacity to shatter the image of this alienated condition (31) in order to present "nondocumentable, negative realities" (26) that, in turn, provide a glimpse of a "futural dimension" of life and social relations (25). Concertedly with modernist art, Ray's cinema therefore forges a new relation with modernity: it figures more as a "conceptualization of the world rather than a representational reaction to it" (26). Finally, Ray partakes in bringing across the anti-imperialist politics

of modernism by exploiting in his films the meta-cinematic possibilities of depicting the instruments and the production processes of filming. This way, his films bring into view the "debris of mass culture" which conditions filmmaking in the Third World (17, 22). And in this manner, the larger modernist commitment to collective and liberatory meaning-making is also made possible by Ray's film, but with the detritus of capitalism as the condition of its possibility.

I therefore take my cue from Ganguly and the scholars above in positing *Monsoon* and *Prose* as forms of twentieth century literature in the Third World which take part in the larger modernist thrust to "rethink the conditions of possibility of art under capitalism" (Ganguly 25). But to be more particular, I shift the reading of *Monsoon* and *Prose* as creative responses to a national historical crisis stemming from the ramification of capital through Filipino life. Indeed, this crisis facilitated Martial Law but it had also been already underway decades before the dictatorship. It is the historical crisis of non-meaning which the stories of Rosca and Lacaba mark out as a result of the imperialist "weapon[ization]" of modern mass media and entertainment in the Philippines beginning in the 1950s. Drawing on Renato and Letizia R. Constantino's investigations, Jonathan Beller underscores how the Philippines, with then president Ramon Magsaysay, became an American military stronghold in the Cold War campaign against the spread of Sino-Soviet Communism in the country (and in the Southeast Asian region). Philippine mass media, controlled and manipulated by the American CIA, became the counter-insurgency propaganda machinery. The US poured in money and technology for broadcast and print media, as well as for film and television to reach "new levels of sophistication" in "the waging of war with images." As such, "visual technologies" made up the "reactionary weapon" of the neocolonial state "for the expropriation of the imagination" of the masses (Beller 38, 39). Thus, a conspicuous feature of Philippine modernity and of imperialism in the Third World is epistemic violence or what Beller highlights as a new form of mediated cultural dispossession on top of older forms of expropriation of natural and human resources.

But the distinction of the Martial Law regime as a modern state was not simply mass media manipulation and repression but its violent appropriation of art and cultural forms as an extension of power and

propaganda—as seen for instance, in the disastrous erection of the Film Center led by Imelda Marcos, shortly after the building of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (Beller 36). Such is the context in which Beller locates the political re-emergence of “modernism” as a homegrown practice among Filipino artists, one of which was National Artist H.R. Ocampo. As a social realist writer and painter in the 1930s, Ocampo would turn to abstract painting from 1950s onwards. But the author reevaluates abstraction as Ocampo’s attempt to overcome the inadequacies of nationalist aesthetics so as to evince a visual field which sought to supersede the ideological determinations of imperialism (36). Thus for Beller, modernism became the means for Filipino visual artists to transgress oppressive ideologies through art. In the following sections, I then embark on readings of *Monsoon* and *Prose* with a framework that considers resistance literature as a critique of modernity. Specifically, I substantiate how the fictions of Rosca and Lacaba took part in giving form to the alienation of Filipinos from experience and their erasure from history as part of the world-scale, modern historical crisis of meaning. In this light, I argue that *Monsoon* and *Prose*, if they are stylized as mythopoeic and oneiric fictions, by the same virtue, are also the necessary artistic forms in registering the periphery and juncture of world modernity as the delayed or aborted self- and collective emergence of Filipinos.

### **Emergent Mythopoeia in *The Monsoon Collection***

Published in Australia in 1983, *Monsoon* could only be released to a mostly Western audience whose commentary, Rosca ironically finds, was blind to the “Western myth...of Antigone” lodged at the heart of her ultimate story, “Earthquake Weather.” (Rosca, “Myth...” 240). In its ancient context, Antigone’s tragedy begins with her righteous yet humble commitment to preserve cosmic order by burying her slain rebel brother, thereby earning her the king’s punishment of entombment while alive. Indeed, the analogy with the plot of Rosca’s “Earthquake Weather” is unmistakable: a photojournalist, Anna, detained together with the doctor, Eliza, for their political activities, plans to bury Gordo, another dissident, whose rotting body was intentionally left hanging by the prison gates, under the orders of Colonel Amor,

for the psychological torture of prisoners. Rosca does tinker with the logical turn of Antigone’s imprisonment which is her suicide; in this case, “Earthquake Weather” ends with an anticipation of Anna’s escape with the other women prisoners in order to bury their comrade.

While it is frustrating for the author that the reviews could not see her rewriting of the mythos of coming to a “womanhood in accordance with the needs of the times” (Rosca, “Myth...” 240), it is not surprising that her critics would attribute individuality to her authorial “voice.” For Rosca, this distinctive voice or subjectivity is a Western fixation that could not be farther from what her stories convey. Instead, as she demonstrates in her opening story, it is the titular “neighbourhood,” or a community of humans and, together with it, the unquantifiable organic world which voice her narratives. Specifically, an indistinct “we,” or a first-person plural narrator, bears witness to the volley of human and environmental catastrophes that turns the life of the neighbourhood on Gomburza Street upside down. Fringed by the slums in the Tambakan or the dump site where the jobless carpenter, Tiagong Itak, and his charming young daughter, Flordeliz, lived, Gomburza Street is also bordered on its other end by middle class households. For example, the Chinese mestizo mother-son pair of Mrs. Santillan and Victor rented a unit in the *accessorias* or two-storey apartment buildings and across them a middle-aged couple, the Santos, lived in a bungalow with a picket fence. Indeed, Gomburza Street is the microcosm of postcolonial modernity, with the assortment of dwelling places found in it: modern and colonial houses and, quintessentially, the slums. The monsoon season finds Tiagong Itak doing fence repairs for Mrs. Santos, whose constant jeering he had to endure. At one point, he does woodwork for Mrs. Santillan, before she dismisses him in the end lest he persuade Victor, her future pianist of a son, to become a carpenter. And in these unavoidable liaisons, a forbidden love between the youths Victor and Flordeliz leaves the latter pregnant. As a result, towards the end of the story, the panicked collective narrator details two successive occurrences of relentless rage: Tiagong Itak, turned “*juramentado*” (9) by the fate of his daughter, attacks Mrs. Santos and other Gomburza residents with his machete; and the rains—yet unappeased by the death of Tiagong Itak, done in eventually by police—escalate into a typhoon which, in turn, capsizes the Tambakan. Lost to her critics, this “collective self,”

constituted by human and non-human subjects alike, is the inheritance of contemporary Filipino writers from a literary tradition that has drawn from folklore, even in the face of its fragmentation in the centuries of colonialism ("Myth..." 240).

Indeed, her notion of a collective self and Reynaldo Ileto's "collective consciousness" (Ileto 13) are closely akin, but each author also locates this communal folk sensibility at a different point in Philippine literary history. One of the "histor[ies] from below" examined by Ileto is the anonymously authored 1814 version of the *Pasyon*, or the passion of Christ, as evidence of a collective folk subjectivity that ran counter to the values of Christian servility and conservatism inculcated by the colonial Catholic church. Ileto's historicist analysis reveals that the nineteenth century *Pasyon* is a result of a communal authorship by the religious folk community who curated episodes of Christ's suffering, transmitted, and revised them such that the narrative became a continual and dynamic expression of willful, collective, and proto-revolutionary self-determination (14). Needless to say, the collective voice in "The Neighbourhood" can only arise as the discontinuous and mediated form of the folk subjectivity described by Ileto. Nevertheless, this voice of Gomburza Street brings itself into existence from the fragmentary voices of not only the overbearing middle class citizens and cultural aliens but also of the gossipy laundry women, who speak in the narrative through their radio dramas, and finally, of the displaced and muted voices of the slum dwellers, Tiagong Itak and Flordeliz. But the vanishing of Flordeliz after the death of her father, with rumors that she miscarried, finally signals the insurmountable precarity of this voice and its unnarratable futurity. In keeping with my argument then, "The Neighbourhood" ironically reveals that occasioning a re-emergence of a collective voice is an always-threatened possibility. For good measure, Rosca further ironizes the story of the neighbourhood with a remarkably grisly ending: the surfacing of "millions" of worms, relinquished from the filthy pit of the Tambakan by the storm and floods (*Monsoon* 14–15). The story ends with the sight of these worms now wrinkling and stretching themselves all over and, once and for all, blacking out the street named after the three secular priests, Gomburza, whose martyrdom "cataly[zed]" the bloody anti-colonial revolution of 1896 (*Pasion*). Unmistakably, these worms are the metonym for environmental harm wrought by

capitalism in the Third World. Here then is where I locate Rosca's emergent mythopoeia, whereby the author deliberately occupies myth and folklore, in their necessarily displaced and compromised forms as a result of colonialism and capitalism, as optics through which she writes about or responds to her own time.

As Pheng Cheah puts it, postcolonial literature is always and already a rewriting of the European literary canon—being the globalized commodity of imperialism—as an address to and document of the experience of decolonization (18). For this reason, emerging scholarship has focused on new artistic modalities arising from the way Filipino artists have self-consciously and intentionally repurposed European literary conventions. It is also in this light that I briefly examine here Rosca's "Our Apostle Paul" as her deliberate inversion of the structure of Chekhov's framed narrative about Byelikov, who lived as "the man in a case" throughout his life as a teacher of Greek, until his sudden accident and death. What if this time, Rosca asks, Chekhov's "man in a case" lives to tell about the time of political turmoil? True enough, Rosca's unnamed narrator, who is a priest and schoolteacher, remains unperturbed by the insurgency in the city. Only in his intermittent reunions with his childhood friend, Rene, now transformed into an unkempt-looking activist with a "beatific smile" (25), does the priest find himself momentarily vexed. Now that Rene is dead, he is especially annoyed by his friend, in whose funeral he now has to be a pallbearer. In true Chekhovian fashion, the priest, at one point, considers opening his umbrella while carrying Rene's coffin to save his shoes and cassock from getting drenched by the monsoon rains. Such petty thinking, if silly, is a clue to his failure, so that, contra Twomey, he is the actual Saint Paul figure in the story. This failure, or his "obsolete[ness]" (24), is a political one: the narrator could not see beyond his blinkered view why he has never had a chance of proselytizing and boxing the apostate Rene into his image of the convert Paul, who, for him, epitomized impervious devotion and conservatism.

During the funeral, the memory of Rene, beginning when they were just Catholic schoolboys until his passing, increasingly annoys him. But he comes unprepared for his final test, as it were, in the person of Rene's bereaved sister. She is Rosca's counterpart for Chekhov's Aphrodite figure, Varinka, whose spiritedness, contrary to expectations, does not nearly reform the incorrigible Byelikov. If, in Rosca's story,

Rene's life choices occasionally confuse the narrator, then it is his sister's worldly pride in the life of her slain brother, magnified by her exuberant beauty, that shocks, seduces, and, finally, undoes the narrator. Rene and his sister, then, both cipher political contingency which the Chekhovian narrator stubbornly and uncomprehendingly mutes and denies. Thus, among the stories in *Monsoon*, "Our Apostle Paul" stands out as Rosca's deliberate experiment with fictional perspective in that from the view of a character who is implacably convinced that he can control the world, the time of imminent social change is obscured.

My discussion above brings me to my specific point that *Monsoon* is constituted by mythopoeic speculations into these withheld or subtracted worlds of individual and collective self-emergence in larger stories about political alienation in the neocolonial periphery of capitalism. But I specifically argue that Rosca rethinks this question on the limits of form as her Feminist contestation of her own medium: She exposes how fiction can only partially, if at all, tell about sexuality, embodied by her adolescent female characters. It is important to note that in *Monsoon*, the adolescent female characters already possess sexual knowledge and maturity, such as the quietly alluring Flordeliz of the Tambakan in "The Neighbourhood;" or the young yet coy Martha in "The Goddess," as well as the outspokenly obscene Perla in "Earthquake Weather," and the unnamed granddaughter of the senile, old farmer, Selo, in "Generations." As a counterpoint to Pantoja-Hidalgo's observation then, I would hazard to say that the character type of the ingenue does not exist in the world of *Monsoon*. For Rosca, sexual innocence is impossible in the kind of society propped on the commodifiable vulnerability of its women and children. Instead, there are the likes of Martha or Selo's granddaughter whose profound sexual self-awareness, as a result of rape and brutalization, serves as their grounding in a sexist and misogynistic world. And yet such sexuality can only be told as a hidden, interior life.

Rosca confronts this problem of the near impossibility of conveying the event of a young woman's sexual awakening as self-emergence in "Generations," where what has founded a peasant family's survival in poverty are the generations of elders, parents, and kin who serve as the custodians of feudal-patriarchal values. Only obliquely can the story gesture towards this coming to a self, signaled

fleetingly by the girl's self-approval when she looks at her mirror reflection and subsequently seeks out, through the mirror, the photograph of an actress. She convinces herself with a smile that "God willing, she would have a future" (111). For a moment, it would seem as if this future would come to fruition when the young woman, as one of the youngest generation, attempts to redress social wrongs. On the day that her family's harvest was forcibly taken away by the landlord, her drunkard father was caught by soldiers for breaking the curfew. Dispatched by their mother, the three children then keep tabs on their father. As a kind of a backdoor event in the story, the girl, left with no choice, trades her virginity to the vile soldiers for the life of her wayward father; after which, she kills him. But these two successive events of violence are never directly told. Rosca's storytelling can only imply them by transmogrifying the young woman into a fanged nocturnal creature (115) and, finally, to a "bat shrilling" in the night (118). Here, what fiction cannot overtly say but merely suggest is that self-realization for the powerless young woman requires an absolute and singular action, which is her symbolically avenging act for her sexist brutalization. However, her radical acts of self-emergence, or her coming to a sense of sexuality, is unthinkable in a feudal-patriarchal rural existence. Thus, the girl's future self makes up the unaccounted caesura in the whole story.

In contrast, the city setting affords some of Rosca's characters an outlet for repressed sexuality. For example, in "The Goddess," Martha, forms her secret, "mica world" (48) as a schoolgirl in the city, in her conspiratorial encounters with furtive boys and men in random places, such as along the street on the way home, or during a bus ride with her mother, in their house garden, or in a shady movie theater (50). But in the adult life of Martha, now with a corporate job and engaged to be married, sexuality is the source of dissonance. She would continually relive her affair with a Frenchman, thirty years her senior, who would archaize sex with Martha as if a ritual of worship for her (58). These trysts, where the Frenchman, and the men before him, expressed a perverted "need" for her, as if a goddess (57), drew her out from the world of things in her typist's cubicle, which seems to be absorbing her, and brought her back to a realm of visceral and embodied meaning, that she knew her future married life would lack.

It is the inexorable logic of thingification which



working girls like Martha and, her foil, Vi want to resist. However this time, Vi is Rosca's showcase of a woman's relentlessly bankrupted life: From her thankless typist's job to her pointless affair with a married man, Vi finally and predictably hurtles unmitigatedly to her fatal fall to become the eponymous "[ ] Girl Who Died Dancing the Boogie." Although Vi's life may seem the opposite of Esteban Mallari's in "The Epiphany of Teban the Terror," a closer look would reveal that both figures live out the temporality of capital. A nondescript post office clerk, Esteban or "Teban the Terror" is actually the city's wanted vandal and bomber. It is true that his acts of terror explode the unitary space-time of the city. And yet, as the story reveals, Teban's radical nihilism follows a nefarious logic: by all means, he must destroy a world which causes him unutterable despair, even if it entails literally exploding himself with such a world (which is the ending of the story). Therefore, the humor in these two stories cannot mask the harsh critique against neocolonial capitalism which Rosca conveys through the tragedies of Vi and Teban, whose lives were so flattened out or warped by capital that they could only yield to self- and world-annihilation. It is also with these stories that the author demonstrates the self-critical stance among writers in the 1970s in the Third World periphery of modernity; that is, she reveals the failure of the fictional medium in rewriting the temporality of capital into what Cheah would later optimistically anticipate as non-hegemonic and minor teleologies of postcolonial redress and self-actualization (Cheah 214).

But the author gives her strongest indictment of sexism and misogyny in "Words of Wisdom," a story of two sisters and their single mother. The elder sister has just debuted her paintings, after apprenticing with a Manichean master artist. And yet, increasingly, she finds art to be an impotent "translation" of goodness or truth (64). Her final provocation comes when, with the aid of their mother, an American businessman marries her special needs adolescent sister, whom he had impregnated. If her Manichean maestro had left her to indulge in the circle of "rich sugar planters buying culture" (71), then, in her gnostic revulsion of such world of corruption and guilt, she pursues the other opposite extreme of the Manichean dualism. Helpless in the unstoppable cooptation of her defenselessly handicapped adolescent sister—the only true ingenue in Rosca's world—the young painter hints at her intent

of suicide. At this point Rosca reaches the insuperable limits of fiction: Here, she broaches the fact that art is incommensurable with the need for redemption of life and social relations from the suffering and debasement guaranteed by neocolonial modernity.

So far, I have demonstrated how the *Monsoon* stories encapsulate the author's struggles with fiction's impotence in tackling the unstoppable corruption and alienation of life. But the larger dialectical shifts animating *Monsoon* includes Rosca's attempts to overcome the faults of fiction by indulging in mythopoeic extremes. For instance, she turns the story, "The Rings of Saturn," as the site of the full emergence of mythopoeia, or of art becoming an anti-capitalist and anti-fascist worldview for perseverance. The story begins when, upon the death of an important and nationally revered artist, his seven year-old grandson recollects his last conversations with the old man. The story then is mostly a remembrance of a bequeathal of a gift from grandfather to grandson. The gift takes the form of a story or a myth which the old man forges with the boy about who they both really, or mythically, are as Saturnians. He tells the boy that he is descended from the rings of Saturn. Like other Saturnians, he was an incorporeal entity, a mere intensity, which took nurturance from the rising and ebbing musical cycles of the planet's rings. But there are chances when cosmic storms would throw off Saturnians, like him, from the rings to be catapulted to Earth to lead corporeal lives. Now with their lives riddled with contradictions, Saturnians on Earth would thus turn to art, story, music, hoping that these would offer life's "consolation" (87). As the elderly and grandson partake in the story, it becomes clear that the consolation is not solely the creation itself but, more than that, the love for fellow Saturnians that such creation offers. Kindness and love for others, constituting one's art, is the impetus for living through the contradictions and suffering visited by an unjust world. In a way then, this story is the culmination of a writer's painstaking work of putting into words the ethical reasons for committing to life and community through art in a time when such commitment is assailed by political violence, corruption, and rigid ideological polarities. Or put differently, the reason why "The Rings of Saturn" is one of Rosca's most moving and exquisite pieces of writing is because, as a story, it follows the process of "wrenching" into form (81), and risking the objectification of, the unquantifiable gift of love

or meaning (which is the obverse of the abyssal horror of chaos that Teban has glimpsed), if it means the sustenance of one's life and of others in despair.

Altogether, I have shown above that Rosca's mythopoeic writings are shot through with insoluble tensions caused by fragmented, unformed, or incipient possibilities of self-actualizations which are, in turn, concealed by the structures of life-devouring hardship, alienation, and violence, that engender them. In my discussions below, I will then show that for most of Lacaba's oneiric worlds, the instances of generative or militant collectivity come about as mediated events (that is, filmed or fictionalized within the story), or as decentered images or replicas, and as denied upheavals. In this case, what *Monsoon* intuits as inexpressible affects and possibilities and what *Prose* reveals as non-synchronous events or self-consciously inauthentic subjectivities are important criticisms of these "modalit[ies] of alienation under capital" (Ganguly, "Temporality" 175).

### Oneiric Narration in *Salvaged Prose*

In Lacaba's *Prose*, I focus on the three stories that make up this translingual volume of his play and scripts, screenplay notes, and essays. Foremost, I note how the novella-length opening piece, "Punch and Judas," splices dreams and hallucinations with fictional and filmed fabrications of history to create an altogether surreal setting. This opening story about bohemian artists caught in the midst of the insurgency also frames the last two shorter pieces about spacemen in an expedition and a guerrilla encounter in the countryside. As if in a playful intertextuality, the daydreams, madness, and duplicating events or people in "Punch and Judas" thread themselves through the subsequent science fiction story, "The Planet," and the final guerrilla account written in Filipino, "Sa Bawat Gubat" 'In Every Forest.' As such, when read together, the three stories make up a singularity in the collection as they invite readers to inhabit a phased experience of the "oneiric," or the dreaming, worldview (Löwy, "The Current" 194). From an initial intoxication and unhinging induced by the first two stories, readers undergo a rude awakening from a "masamang panaginip" 'bad dream' in "Sa Bawat Gubat."

*Prose* is the second of two posthumously published collections of Lacaba, after *Salvaged Poetry* which came out in 1986. As such, when *Prose* entered the

national literary scene in 1992, Lacaba had already become a poignantly iconic figure as the martyred resistance poet. To this day, his poem, "Open Letters to Filipino Artists," completed in 1976, the year of his slaying, continues to be immortalized by his national audience as the capstone of his writing vocation (Remollino). It is true that "Open Letters" is the event of Lacaba's revolutionary self-fashioning. As poet and persona, he marked his *becoming* "a people's warrior," first, by disowning his own belonging, the "lumpen culturati," and, finally, by casting off the label ascribed him, "brown Rimbaud" ("Open Letters" stanza 4 to 5). However, I believe that the reasons which made Lacaba disparage his generation's hippie culture and reject the Rimbaud epithet actually make up or springboard the revolutionary. Specifically, *Prose* demonstrates the full force of the author's avant-garde influences, that is, Rimbaud's anti-bourgeois lawlessness and moral-political intransigence (Meyers 168–69; Löwy, *Morning Star* 22, 30), and the surrealist seduction with phantasmagoria or this nightmarishly bizarre succession of conjured and duplicated visions of history. Therefore, in narrating the dictatorship through madness, hallucinations, and dreams, Lacaba in *Prose*, like Rosca in *Monsoon*, conceives of the historical as a crisis, the inexorable consequence for which is rupture.

Tentatively, I would simplify "Punch and Judas" as a story about a cohort of young artists, intellectuals, and dissidents who frequent the cafe, Los Noviembre Grises. The cafe had been the old haunt of those who belonged to "the Golden Age of Philippine Bohemia" (23). But its renaming as Los Noviembre Grises, or 'The Gray Novembers,' suggests a culturati in decline. Indeed, "Punch and Judas" reads like Lacaba's eulogy for what had been his "lost generation" ("Open Letters" stanza 7) expressed in the narrative as the characters' spiritual limbo, cultural decadence, and even hedonism. The apparent plot of "Punch and Judas" is the pursuit of the Noviembre intellectuals of their friend, Philip Angeles, a sojourner in Manila who, in the end, spontaneously joins a peasant insurgency. As a kind of nod to his namesake, Philip Latak, the divided postcolonial subject in F. Sionil Jose's 1959 "The God Stealer," Lacaba's character lends itself initially to discussions on national identity. But in Jose's story, redemption for Philip Latak, the cultural thief and traitor, through ideological cleansing is assured by a retributive world. In contrast, Lacaba's "Punch and Judas," written about his 1969 era, withholds

any answer to this question on who the Filipino is. Instead, the author invents an improbable Filipino in Philip Angeles who not only spurns his given name, "Filipino," but is also a US-born Filipino Jew. Thus, he broaches, through his Philip, an always already diasporic self who is only nominally but insubstantially linked with his nation.

In effect, Lacaba dispenses with any notion of an originary Filipino identity, and the Noviembristas society complain about it as their inauthenticity. And for these characters who are self-acknowledged pseudos, they can only overperform their cultural and political impoverishment by vicariously living art and revolution through scenes shot by Pandy, the aspiring and voyeuristic auteur, and through the story lines of Terry, the pedantic writer. Furthermore, inauthenticity is not only the theme, but it also structures (the structureless) story. Doubling is the motif in "Punch and Judas," so that, in a disorienting manner, characters resemble each other, and events repeat themselves. Included in this unpunctuated parade of duplicating images are a potpourri of Biblical scriptures, Jewish litanies, and chants of the Lapiang Malaya, an actual anti-Marcos cult; mixed-up recitals or imitations of highbrow and vulgar art; and casual references to the Huk rebellion and to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (M-L-M) questions about the proletarian revolution. Lacaba's political and iconoclastic irreverence in his juxtapositions here resonates with Walter Benjamin's observations of Surrealist authors: They wrote fiction as a "trick" by which to override politics as an approach to the world. Opposed to any notion of "method," the Surrealists, instead, strung together historical images into a procession in order "to blow [up their own dearly held ideology and religion] to smithereens" (Benjamin 182).

With "Punch and Judas" then, Lacaba changes the means and ends of comprehension of fiction, at the same time that he reverse-engineers the unrequited love story embedded in it. Leading the vain pursuit of the heedlessly mad Philip is his lovesick suitor, Maggie Terra, who "found it hard to differentiate between dream and waking" (27). As such, "Punch and Judas" may be initially understood as the retrieval of Philip's traces by Maggie and the rest of the Noviembristas people through their interwoven dreams, fantasies, and drunken recollections, that are, in turn, almost always mediated by film and fiction. But ultimately, Lacaba sets up his fiction as the oneiric field where

the collision of incongruous images escalates into a surrealist anticipation: a transformative, if cataclysmic, eruption (Löwy, *Morning Star* 1).

Lacaba's inscription of the 1967 peasant revolt of the Lapiang Malaya (Freedom Party), an actual anti-establishment cult of Jose Rizal worshipers from Southern Luzon, is the incendiary moment that defines the surrealist nature of "Punch and Judas." As facts have it, the said cult challenged Ferdinand Marcos' re-election bid. In the run-up to the 1969 national elections, the police would violently disperse the group's anti-government rally on May 21, 1967, at the foot of the presidential palace. Leading to 33 deaths and a number of injuries, this peasant demonstration became a historic event of state violence in contemporary Philippine history ("A Bothered Archipelago;" "Lapiang Malaya"). In a characteristically surreal ending, "Punch and Judas" (re)stages the massacre, so to speak, with all the characters witnessing the scene fascinatedly. At this point, Philip, still the deranged anti-hero, suddenly emerges in—and, just as quickly, vanishes from—Pandy's shot of the commotion. Perhaps excited by the sighting of Philip, Terry interrupts to detail the plot of his planned story, "The Planet," with his mad protagonist bearing exactly Philip's brutally penetrating stare. In the next scene, Philip is now dead on the street, alongside murdered peasants. Suddenly, Maggie jumps out of the hysterical Noviembristas crowd to profess her love for Philip. She kisses every part of his corpse, thereby circling back to the cinematic blazon of her own body in the opening of the story. Thus, Pandy captures a strange penultimate shot of dead peasants in a street with an even stranger body of a hippie being kissed by a crazed woman.

Indeed, Pandy's camera seizes a composite shot of brutalized and hysterical bodies brought together randomly and yet factually by political violence. But the shot also registers the fanatical mysticism of the Lapiang Malaya, the spontaneous arousal of Philip, and, equally important, Maggie's startling avowal of love. Benjamin's reading of Andre Breton's novel, *Nadja*, sheds light on how such metaphysical elements turn into components of the dialectical force in Surrealist fiction. In *Nadja*, "love" serves as a "transport...[i]nto a world that borders not only on tombs of the Sacred Heart or altars to the Virgin, but also on the morning before a battle or after a victory" (180–81). Therefore in surrealist fiction, Benjamin locates love (as well as mysticism) on the threshold

of dreaming and intoxication. It is love which moves the lover or the dreamer forward towards a spiritual awakening and/or a “profane illumination” (181). In “Punch and Judas,” love or mysticism are also the eye-opening moments that catalyze Maggie and Philip to rush into the scene of the peasant mutiny and, finally, awaken to the reality of violence.

As Joaquin notes, this anarchic moment captured by Lacaba makes his 1969 story a prophetic text, given that the First Quarter Storm would later break out beginning in January of 1970. But that the story is ahead of its time means not so much that it predicts violence or tragedy in history. Rather, what makes “Punch and Judas” politically relevant and prescient is the way it visualizes the time’s socio-political relations in crisis as an impending combustion. Specifically, the ending scene shifts the attention to the image of a literal heap of bodies whose new juxtapositions now supersede the logics of ideology, religion, or romantic love which had initially drawn them together. Put another way, the freewheeling dream, delirium, and arousal that energize Lacaba’s oneiric narrative also bring together into new connections these images and bodies. “Punch and Judas” then yields this culminating picture where, in the words of Benjamin, “body and image so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge” ( Benjamin 192). At this point, the story outpaces its representational or reflectionist relation to history and inaugurates the “image sphere,” where fiction assumes a “plastic” form (184). Here, it is instructive to cite Beller, who also explains a new artistic emergence from the abstract experimentations of H.R. Ocampo. For Beller, what is elided in reductive interpretations of Ocampo’s abstract turn as an avowal of art for art’s sake or of political indifference is the “most important event indexed by abstraction—the opening up of the visual itself” (Beller 36).

In a manner of speaking, Lacaba points his readers of *Prose* to the contingencies of the anti-Marcos uproar. Just as this history may end on a high note as anticipated by “Punch and Judas,” so too can it assume an alternate or double ending, for which he offers “The Planet.” Primarily, the intertextual connection between “The Planet” and “Punch and Judas” is made obvious by Terry, one of the *Noviembre*s intellectuals, who plans to write a dystopic story set in outer space with a character bearing Philip’s mad eyes. However, “The

Planet” soon makes it clear that its central character, Kristov, with his delusion of omnipotence, is the opposite of the erratically delirious Philip. This is just one of the ways in which “The Planet” is profoundly indissociable with “Punch and Judas” as its antithesis. To summarize, “The Planet” is a science fiction story about, presumably, an alien race intent on conquering an “exotic and backward planet” (resembling Earth) (*Prose* 78). Kristov leads the space expedition with Jacquor, his friend and narrator. Soon enough the spaceship crew, convinced that it is a suicide mission, mutiny against Kristov. But the latter unyieldingly proceeds with the trek, which has dragged on for centuries, while he keeps Jacquor in thrall.

“The Planet” and “Punch and Judas” were published back-to-back in 1969 (211). And yet while both stories inscribe the political ferment preceding the FQS, “The Planet,” which is the futuristic narrative of social unrest, negates the subversive energies channeled by “Punch and Judas.” Unlike the latter, “The Planet” is fast paced and ends quickly in just less than four pages. Its sheer economy as a story becomes more notable in the way that its linear plot is assured by Jacquor, whose narrative perspective, despite registering dissenting voices, is trammled by his implacable leader, Kristov. Unmistakably then, Lacaba makes Kristov’s spaceship, where he is the autocrat, a microcosm of fascism. And yet while it is true that this piece anticipates the beginning of the Marcos dictatorship in 1972, I underscore the greater point here that together with “Punch and Judas,” “The Planet” actually betokens the fundamentally intractable energies at work in times of upheaval.

In his 1975 story, “Sa Bawat Gubat” Lacaba finally breaks the oneiric spell expressed by its narrator’s opening lines: “Isang masamang panaginip. Parang isa lamang masamang panaginip” ‘A bad dream. It was just like a bad dream’ (82). Immediately after this realization, the narrator, a young guerrilla, awakens to an ambush attack by the Japanese military army. The context of the story is the Huk rebellion, or the Anti-Japanese armed resistance in the 1940s. The main event is the murder of a veteran guerrilla, Tata Juan, and the torture of the unnamed narrator by the military, helped by the Makapili, or their masked spies and collaborators. A good part of the story is a set of flashbacks of the young guerrilla’s brief acquaintance with Tata Juan, who, as the old guard, has come to embody an ideologue’s social class bias and distrust.

In fact, the title "Sa Bawat Gubat" is part of Tata Juan's resigned expression: "...nagsisimula na yata akong maniwala na sa bawat gubat nga ay may ahas, likas na Hudang mga Pilipino" 'I am starting to believe that, indeed, in every forest, there is a snake; Filipinos are a natural Judas' (83). Therefore, the story jolts the reader to the time of resistance beset with political betrayals and disillusionment.

With his first-hand accounts of the past, Tata Juan then appears as the congealment of the proletarian history which becomes the problematic of this short story. Faced with Tata Juan's figure of authenticity, the young guerrilla, an image of anonymity and singularity, has to attest to political loyalty without any claim to history or memory. It is true that in the past, the young guerrilla would challenge the old man's loss of faith in his comrades. But the sudden death of the old man finally leaves the onus for attesting to the possibility of a sincere comradeship solely on him. Towards the end, when the young man was at death's door after going through the barbaric physical and mental torture, he does not betray Tata Juan to his abductors. Thus, through this story, Lacaba locates the possibility of political commitment in the individual, armed with nothing but his "kalooban" 'inner self' (84). Lacaba's unorthodox claim here may be understood in light of Glyn Salton-Cox's reading of the unconventional turns in Edward Upward's committed fictional oeuvre. Upward's example, according to Salton-Cox, suggests that "one must construct the subjects of political praxis rather than programmatically attune political action to apparently pre-existing subjectivities" (Salton-Cox 420, 424).

With all this, it is possible to say that the fictions in *Prose* make up an oneiric trilogy in the sense that one narrative supersedes the other by historical and political necessity. First, the depthless images that "Punch and Judas" strings together make for a sprawling narrative that reveals what Joaquin finds as an "overwhelm[ing]...contemporaneity" (*Prose* 209). In a way, Lacaba utilizes fiction as a means of unburdening his audience of the crisis of the time. To borrow from Ganguly, Lacaba's story becomes symptomatic of how modernity is experienced by Filipinos as an alienation from themselves and from history (Ganguly, *Cinema* 14). But as the index of the Filipinos' political estrangement, the dreaming mode in which the characters find themselves also facilitates the illogical and explosive juxtapositions of images.

In this manner, fiction stages the rupturing of socio-political structures of neocolonial capitalism which is, as Löwy stresses, the aim of a revolutionary and transformative surrealist imaginary (Löwy, *Morning Star* 1, 22). Subsequently, however, "The Planet," with its nightmarish futuristic scene of political impasse, swiftly undercuts the revelatory insights captured in the first story. Lastly, he necessitates a political awakening, or as Benjamin calls it a "profane illumination," from the horror of tyranny in the previous story to the harsh reality in "Sa Bawat Gubat" of political betrayals and disillusionment as the basis of a renewed political commitment. Furthermore, Lacaba's reflexive writing, whereby stories overstate their connections and tackle the mechanisms with which they are composed are ways for a Third World writer like him to problematize capitalism in its periphery. The stories expose the detritus of neocolonial capitalism as the inescapable raw materials for anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist creativity.

### Resistance Writing as a New Artistic Paradigm: A Conclusion

To conclude, I turn to Walter Benjamin in "The Author as Producer" where he criticizes the adherence of Germany's "bourgeois Left" to an established political line in their work. He reveals that, at least on the part of the author, this artistic process is "counterrevolutionary": the writer ends up limiting her/himself to the status of a sympathizer or an ally, even a benefactor, of the masses; and, literature, as the outcome of a program of practice, ultimately, becomes disconnected from attendant relations of production (226). As a counterpoint, Benjamin looks to the time of the 1920s Russian Revolution, when a writer like Sergei Tretyakov adopted the "technique" of working out this problematic divorce of literary form from content by "inserting [literature] into the living social context" of such a political upheaval (222). As a result, Tretyakov created novel artistic forms which Benjamin understood to be a historical-political basis of the writer's "solidarity with the proletariat...as a [fellow] producer" (226).

In light of Benjamin's rethinking of revolutionary literature, I consider *Monsoon* and *Prose* as productions of these radical Filipino authors who had to "enter into debate" with their fictional medium (Benjamin 234) as a colonial inheritance and a fungible cultural

commodity (Hidalgo, “The Philippine Short Story in English” 155, 163; Holden 348). The 1970s FQS and anti-dictatorship resistance, where each author was part of the underground or armed cadre, was the moment into which they thrust their medium into the “molten mass” of culture to undergo the “melting-down process” that would “recast[]” and “transfigur[e]” “literary forms” (Benjamin 231). As a result, the mythopoeic and oneiric fictions arose as necessarily heterodox forms of resistance. And, ultimately, in recovering these forgotten stories, I posit that *Monsoon* and *Prose* make up the body of resistance literature which historically emerged from outside of political orthodoxies.

Although tentative, these forms were the answers to the authors’ self-critical question on whether literature, especially in their time when the Marcos regime arrogated for itself such cultural forms as tools for deception, revisionism, and voiding of lived violence and suffering, could ever bring about the empowerment of Filipinos that the resistance movement aspired to. As I hope to have shown above, Rosca and Lacaba’s painstaking wrestle with fiction evinced a new critical relation of the literary form with modernity. Specifically, the authors’ mythopoeic and oneiric fictions, in light of Ganguly’s understanding of modernist art as a critique of capitalism in the Third World, ciphered alienated social relations and communities in their negative or futural forms. In this manner, the authors realized for literature its normative relevance within and despite modernity, which is its capacity to rethink humanity as social and collective relations of social justice.

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