



## Ramon Guillermo, Scholar-Activist of Indonesian and Philippine Society



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[ *Abstract* ]

This paper presents the work of Southeast Asian scholar Ramon Guillermo. Using sophisticated computer-aided methods, Guillermo approaches a range of topics in the wide fields of social sciences and the humanities. A creative writer as well as an activist, Guillermo grounds his studies in nationalism and Marxism. Particularly interested in Indonesian and Philippine society and culture, Guillermo engages with the writings of labor leaders Tan Malaka and Lope K. Santos, translations of Marx's *Capital* into Bahasa and Filipino, and studies as well the discursive and historical connections between the Communist Parties of both countries. The paper aims to introduce the innovations of Guillermo's studies, particularly in the fields of cultural studies and translation studies. The type of cultural studies Guillermo practices is empirical, taking inspiration from innovations done in the digital humanities. Guillermo is most opposed to trendy, fashion-seeking approaches that are not grounded on history. He reserves particular ire for "hip" postcolonialism, and instead praises studies that are founded on politics and materialism. In translation studies, Guillermo goes beyond the mere cataloguing of mistakes. For him, it is the mistakes

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and "perversities" of a translation that is interesting and illuminating. Guillermo himself is a translator, and the paper ends with a brief discussion of his production in this field.

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## I . Cultural Studies

Let us start with cultural studies. This isn't the apolitical or "aesthetic" cultural studies commonly done in the West. Guillermo is no postmodernist. His brand of cultural studies is political, and informed by sophisticated computer-aided methods. Exemplary of this brand of cultural studies is his article "Child of Two Nations: Indonesian Perspective on the Case of Mary Jane Veloso."

Recall that Mary Jane Veloso is an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) who had been working in Indonesia for a long time. She got involved in a drug-related crime and was sentenced to death. Indonesians and Filipinos alike, on social media and elsewhere, appealed for her life.

At first glance, Guillermo's paper would seem to be standard "cultural" cultural studies; for example, explicating Veloso's letter to Indonesian President Joko Widodo, noting her rhetorical devices and use of metaphors: "Veloso used the word "Bapak" three times in the sentence above. The first usage is close to the English word "Sir" so that "Bapak yang Mulia" could be translated as "Honourable Sir." The second refers to Jokowi as the "Bapak Negara Indonesia" so that he becomes the "Father of the Indonesian Nation." The third refers to him as a "father" who must protect his "children" (anak-anak), which refers to all the children of the Indonesian Nation, or its people. Veloso therefore claims her place as a child of the Indonesian nation" (2017: 184). As for Veloso's letter to then Philippine Vice-President Jejomar Binay, Guillermo notes her continuing use of the "father image," her use of the Filipino "amin/aming" to signify her recognition of non-Filipino readers of her letter, and her use of the Indonesian "Pilipina/Filipina" to refer

to Filipinos in general (2017: 185).

Aside from Veloso's letters, Guillermo also analyzes Twitter tweets and hashtags related to the social media campaign to appeal for Veloso's life. Maddeningly, Guillermo counts the number of times certain hashtags were used in the trending tweets. For example, #SaveMaryJane was used in 852 tweets on April 28, 2015 (2017: 186). Guillermo also notes that not all tweets using this and other related hashtags were supportive of Veloso. The issue of "foreign-ness" was also brought up, an important issue in this age of globalization. Some Indonesians reject Veloso's claim to be a "child of Indonesia," and complained about the lack of outrage from Indonesians for fellow Indonesians who share Veloso's situation (2017: 189, 196).

Guillermo's examination of the various texts surrounding Veloso's case is a prelude to his ruminations about "human" rights. At play are two discourses regarding human rights: one that is based on birth, and one that is grounded on the recognition of the self in the other. Guillermo rejects the former, and calls for "internationalist solidarity" regarding the rights of migrant workers in the world.

Later in this work we will have an opportunity to read some of Guillermo's translation from Indonesian to Filipino. For this section however it is enough to highlight a quote from Guillermo in a paper discussing the translations by Jose Maria Sison of some poems by the famous Indonesian poet, Chairil Anwar. Rather than just interpret the act of translation as an expression of admiration, Guillermo invites us to see them as "a kind of gesture toward a larger commitment to a continuing dialogue with Indonesian comrades, a commitment that is also necessarily linguistic in nature" (2018: 21). This quote may in turn be interpreted as Guillermo's project as well: a gesture, an invitation to Indonesian academics to continue dialoguing regarding Southeast Asian concerns.

In his essay "Blood-Brothers" which appeared in the journal *Southeast Asian Studies* from Kyoto University, Guillermo defends Jose Maria Sison, founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines, against allegations of plagiarism (2018: 23-24). While the accusations have no weight, as the one who made them doesn't

even say who Sison plagiarized, Guillermo nevertheless presents an analysis of Sison's *Philippine Society and Revolution*, and Dipa Nusantara Aidit's *Indonesian Society and Revolution*. While there are some similarities, for example, the self-presentation of both texts as textbooks/introductions, the topics gleaned from the table of contents, the differences are striking. For our purposes here, however, what is most interesting about Guillermo's study is his method. As I mentioned above, Guillermo counted the number hashtags used regarding Mary Jane Veloso. Something similar to this counting occurs in his "Blood-Brothers" essay. Here, he used sophisticated computer-assisted techniques to perform the foundation of his textual analysis, a so-called n-gram analysis to empirically show if any act of plagiarism occurred (2018: 29-30). In an n-gram analysis, "n" refers to a number, in the case being discussed a number of words. Comparing the original text and a translation (a "plagiarism" or "plagiarized translation") would reveal the same pattern (because they would be "one" text). Overall, the results reveal that what we may call "catchphrases" of Marxists are what the two texts mostly have in common, such as "broad masses of the people," "exploitation of the people," "world proletarian revolution." Both Sison and Aidit, Guillermo explains, speak "Marxist," or "Marxist-Leninist."

Two points need to be made here. One, this is not the only use case of Guillermo's computer-assisted methods. And two, just as with his Veloso essay, in "Blood-Brothers" Guillermo also takes a political stand: condemning the plagiarism accusations against Sison as a means by which his [Sison's] credibility as an author is shamed. As well, Guillermo attacks the right-wing writers in the Philippines for their not-very-subtle insinuations that the Philippines would be better-off if a violent genocide against leftist movements was enacted (2018: 33).

As a final sample of Guillermo's brand of cultural studies, let us now turn to his study of Pramodya Ananta Toer's novel *This Earth of Mankind*. Here, Guillermo returns to his love of "counting," explicating the novel via "frequency and collocation analysis" (2017: 5). The idea of collocation reveals to us that certain words occur more frequently near one another (for example "eat" and "food," as

opposed to "eat" and "shoe"). A collocation analysis of novels would reveal which words occur more frequently near each other, and reveal what we may consider the structural theme or ideology of the text.

Because of his knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia, Guillermo is able to read Toer's novel in its original language. Guillermo's essay explores the semantic domains of the words "dunia" and "bumi" in Toer's novel. While "dunia" ("world") and "bumi" ("earth"), Guillermo explains, have similar connotations in modern Bahasa Indonesia (ibid), Toer's use of them in his novel is quite different. "Dunia" in Toer's novel is always found with certain words, for example, "dunia modern" ("modern world"), as well as other permutations including "modern science," "modern civilization." Tellingly, the word "world" appears in such phrases as "search the world," "own the world," as well as "world of pleasure" and "world of comfort." Guillermo gives us a startling reading of these frequent collocations: "the rise of the notion of the "world" itself as expressed in the word "dunia" has become inseparable from modernity which lends to its strong connotations of modernity" (2017: 11) in Toer's novel.

This, Guillermo contrasts to the use of "bumi" in *This Earth of Mankind*. "Bumi" appears in such phrases as "sky and earth," "from the sea and the earth," as well as "land of ancestors" and "land of birth." Thus, Guillermo tells us, in Toer's novel, "bumi" is more closely related to "the natural world" (2017: 12).

Guillermo, however, avoids the trap of pitting "dunia" against "bumi," a so-called "modern world" against a "native" earth, as it were. Rather, he shows through his explication that "this earth of mankind" is a response to "the modern world." This modern world of capitalism, having destroyed people's faith in tradition and "the past" is itself full of confusion and uncertainty (2017: 15-16). Toer's novel, being a novel, offers no solutions, but instead opens up the question to its readers.

Guillermo's papers which can be categorized under the rubric "cultural studies" can be viewed as deploying two layers to analyze certain texts. The first layer, the empirical side of Guillermo, is where the counting occurs. Guillermo's arranges texts into

analyzable units. It is these units that are explicated in his second layer of analysis. It can be said, therefore, that the first layer involves words, while the second layer involves meaning. However, as Guillermo himself notes (2009), in a critic's decision regarding how a text is to be divided into analyzable units, she is already in the middle of the act of analysis. It is in this sense that we can say that Guillermo's cultural studies is political.

To delve into this issue, it is best to compare Guillermo's works on Benedict Anderson, who was himself a scholar of both Indonesian and Philippine society. One of Guillermo's essays dealing with Anderson talks about the latter's essay on "the languages of Indonesian politics." There, Anderson discusses what he calls "revolutionary Malay," which, we might say, is a fusion of the vocabulary of Dutch colonialism, Western democracy/socialism, revolutionary nationalism, as well as the vocabulary of Javanese tradition (2016: 3). Tan Malaka, the Indonesian communist leader, is said to be "thinking in Dutch while writing in Malay." Guillermo uses Anderson's essay as a way to think about what may be considered "revolutionary Tagalog." In particular, he looks at the word "tao" [human being] as a focal point in his study of a Philippine revolutionary vocabulary. One might say that his essay is a repetition of Anderson's, but instead of Indonesian, he studies Tagalog.

The first part of Guillermo's analysis already borders his work on translation studies. The first instance of "tao" that he delves into is with its usage by the Filipino national hero Jose Rizal in his translation of Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell*, from German to Tagalog, from 1887. What happens in Rizal's translation is what is called "translational neutralization." Rizal unproblematically reduces the many words that German has for human being, evoking ideas of class and hierarchies, to "tao" (2016: 5). "Herr," for example, is translated as "mataas na tao." The German word for citizen, "Bürger," is also translated as "tao," and "Natur" (nature) is translated as "pagkatao." "Tao" is likewise used in Apolinario Mabini's self-translation of his *Proposed Constitution of the Philippine Republic*, from 1898 (2016: 7).

In his discussion of the Tagalog translation of the anarchist Errico Malatesta's *Dalawang Magbubukid*, by Filipino labor leader Arturo Soriano, Guillermo once again subjects the texts to lexical analysis. Guillermo here finds the birth of a new vocabulary, a new language, "the terms are either directly borrowed or they break away and generate new lexical equivalents from preexistent or newly minted words" (2016: 10).

Moving away from his remarks on translated text, to which we will come back below, Guillermo moves on in his essay to his analysis of the digital text corpus of the political literary works of two of the most important Filipino writers, namely the conservative Lazaro Francisco, and the labor leader Amado Hernandez. Remarks Guillermo, "By combining [these works] ... into a single corpus, one would obtain a corpus which would combine and represent the language use of two of the greatest Tagalog writers of the twentieth century who stand at opposite poles of the Philippine political spectrum (2016: 11). By examining "tao" and its collocates, Guillermo shows that political ideas entered the Tagalog vocabulary through "tao" and its permutations (2016: 13-14). His lexical analysis can be said to show how words like "society" and "rights" introduce themselves into Philippine political vocabulary by anchoring themselves to "tao."

What advantage, exactly, does Guillermo's computed-assisted methods give him? What good is his first layer? His empirical base, his obsessive counting, I would argue, anchors his second layer, his interpretation, preventing them from becoming impressionistic "misrecognitions." This being tethered to reality, or at least to facts, allows Guillermo to critique the more speculative bent of Southeast Asian scholars like Vicente Rafael (2007: 57). Recall the accusations of plagiarism against Jose Maria Sison: Guillermo's analysis proves these to be empirically false.

Of course, Guillermo himself cautions against his methods being taken as a cure-all for the ills of the humanities (2017: 293). Instead, the methods should be taken for what they are: tools meant help facilitate thought and research. Indeed, Guillermo does not make a fetish of the empirical. This will become more obvious in

the discussion of his papers properly categorized under the domain of "translation studies." Before venturing forward and discussing this domain, however, it might also be beneficial to present non-computer aided studies that Guillermo agrees with, as well as more of those approaches he finds disagreeable.

As a scholar-activist with a Marxist background, Guillermo appreciates those studies that are historical in their approach. An example of a work he praises that does not use computers is the anthology *Philippine Modernities: Music, Performing Arts, and Language, 1880-1941*, edited by Jose Buenconsejo and published by the University of the Philippines. The essays in the anthology that Guillermo praises are those that involve the elaboration of the concept of the "commodification of musical labor" (2018: 390). He considers Buenconsejo's contribution to the collection of scholarly articles as particularly illuminating. Buenconsejo connects the figure of the "piano" in the Philippines during the early parts of the twentieth century to its broader social context. The piano, after all, is commodity, that was constructed and imported. Further, it held the status of a "fetish symbol" (2018: 392), as only the wealthy were able to afford it. Buenconsejo situates this with the multiplication of music stores in Manila, as well as the notion of the artist "owning" her work. None of the essays in the anthology engage in what in the digital humanities is called "distant reading," a particularly trendy way of examining the limitations and pitfalls of what is called "close reading." Close reading involves focus on particular, specific texts, some would call them canonical, something that may be found lacking from Guillermo's approach. But his praise of Buenconsejo's anthology proves this not to be the case. Indeed, for all the trendiness of his approach, Guillermo's work can also rightly be placed under traditional humanities, focused on the rigor of scientific scholarship. He is not particularly fond of "hip" approaches. Consider his review of *Beyond Bali: Subaltern Citizens and Post-colonial Intimacy*. He chides, for example, the unpolished transition the text attempted, from academic treatise to readable book (2019: 75). He takes offense in the almost mystifying way the author Ana Dragojlovic presents the idea of the "kris" and how the Balinese supposedly do not seem to be interested in the realities of



Dutch colonialism. Guillermo concludes that, for all its merits, *Beyond Bali* "just repeats what has already been done in countless dissertations influenced by mainstream academic postcolonialism" (2019: 77).

Guillermo's views on the goals of scholarship is best embodied in his "Foreword" to the sociologist Arnold Alamon's book, *The Nation in Our Hearts*. In praising Alamon, Guillermo contrasts him to other Filipino scholars in the social sciences and humanities, whom Guillermo describes as "addicted to the hipster products endlessly being churned out by the US academic publishing industry.... Many of us have mistaken the capacity to keep up with whatever is in vogue for theoretical sophistication and rigor. This kind of attitude breeds a general lack of respect for genuine and long-term commitment to ideas and their development...Today's theoretical fashionistas [posers] unceasingly denounce as hoary, false, or outmoded the radical ideas of past decades while mindlessly flitting from one guru of the moment to another" (Guillermo 2017: xiii). What, instead, should scholars do? According to Guillermo, they should start "from where we are, and [build] concepts with our own resources" (2017: xiv).

This short foray into Guillermo's views on scholarship will also inform the discussion of his translations, as well as his methods in translation studies, to which we may now turn.

## II. Translation Studies

In his essay "A Pouring Out of Words," Guillermo reviews the Oey Hay Djoen translation into Bahasa Indonesia, from the original German, the three volumes of Karl Marx's *Capital*. From what has been said about Guillermo's stance on reality, that it exists, for example, one would think that he would, in a paper about a translation, obsess about mistranslations and infelicitous renderings. Of course, he makes a note about the negations in Marx's text that disappeared in Oeys (2013: 224-225). He also asserts the importance of Marx's gelatine metaphor, lost in both *Capital*'s English and Indonesian translations (2013: 227).

However, he spends most of the paper discussing the peculiarities of Oey's text. Guillermo devotes some time talking about Oey's "Indonesianizations." Marx's "eggs," for example, become "pinang" (areca nut) (2013: 226). But Guillermo's focus is on Oey's "diversifications" (2013: 230-236), how the latter rendered Marx's rather rigid vocabulary into a plurality of Indonesian words. Examples of this include "expenditure," diversified into three words, and "substance." Instead of condemning Oey, Guillermo makes these features of the translation the focus of the review. Though not without caveats, Guillermo makes the case that "such terminological diversification may bring to light original and new possibilities of interpretation, previously hidden in the placid repetitions of the original text" (2013: 238).

Another work of Guillermo's that belongs to the domain of translation studies is his "Themes of Invention, Help, and Will," that analyzes translations into Malay and Tagalog of Joachim Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere*. Again, Guillermo emphasizes that his goal is to provide "insights into cultural transformations," and that he won't be assessing the texts' "translational accuracy" (2014: 4). In fact, the Tagalog translation of Campe's work, by Joaquin Tuason, is a relay translation, mediated by Tomas de Iriarte's *El Nuevo Robinson*. Iriarte admits to modifying Campe's original to better serve his readers, and Tuason does the same to Iriarte's bridge text (2014: 13-14). By once again subjecting the texts to his computer-aided methods, Guillermo shows the discursive difference between Campe's *Robinson* and Tuason's *Robinson*. He says that the "conceptualization of needs and their fulfilment in [Campe's work] is neutral in relation to the situation in which the subject finds herself/himself" (2014: 39). On the other hand, in the Malay translation posits a state of affluence for human beings that need help only after entering a state of difficulties. Meanwhile, in the Tagalog translation, what is emphasized is the "normativity of suffering and deprivation" (ibid). This reveals an political slant to the Tagalog translation. Its aim, according to Guillermo, as a "moral-religious treatise was, as with many deeply ideological works in the colonial religious canon, the preaching of endurance and suffering within the context of colonial exploitation" (2014: 41).

It will do us well to compare Guillermo's approach to translation studies with another scholar from a different background. Raniela Barbaza is an expert in literatures from the Philippines's various regions. In her two studies (2014, 2017), Barbaza shows her unique view of language. Based on postcolonial theory, as well as the philosophy of the Frenchman Jean-Luc Nancy, Barbaza analyses the "orosipon" of the Bicol region as a way to present a kind of nation-building without homogenization.

The Philippines as a nation was just being built in the period that Barbaza studied the literature and language of Bicol in her *An Orosipon Kan Bikolnon: Interrupting the Philippine Nation*. Because the popular image of the nation is of a monolithic entity, Barbaza's narration of the Philippine nation through the lens of the orosipon stands out as counter-intuitive. A common language imposed from above, in a top-down manner, is considered a foundation of a nation. But Barbaza presents a playful version of language: "a word becomes a word when it makes sense to at least two users. It is the word's intelligibility to at least two users that makes the word, a word. Otherwise, it is not a word. It is in the word then, or in language, that language users touch. ... As a site of commonality, however, language keeps itself to itself. That is to say, a word can never be owned by a single language user. To put it differently, language keeps itself precisely in the space between language users" (2017: xxi). While this might seem like a Western delusion, not really useful for Southeast Asian Studies, Barbaza makes the case for her view.

She does so by contrasting the concept of the orosipon to that of "narrative." In an orosipon, there is more than one storyteller. There is always a chance or an opportunity to "butt in," as it were, to "interrupt," as in the title of her book. And it is not just narration, but that which narration tries to create (i.e. the nation), that is "interrupted" (see Barbaza 2014: 94). Barbaza explains that "Orosipon's structural multiplicity and fluidity is contrary to the monologic and thus homogenizing tendencies of "narrative"" (2017: xxii; see also 2017: 38-40). The nation is what is being narrated. And outsiders, the foreign, is not the only problem the Philippines, as a thing, as a nation being constructed

via narration. Inside the Philippines too are many challenges. Barbaza explains that "The convulsions, which have always been present, are needless to say the speakings of new speakers. These speakings occur as interruptions of a current speaking. Interruption points, of course, to a temporal and spatial positioning within an already established current. The continuous interruption of the current of speaking, the nation, is thus a seizure of the position of speaker. To put it another way, it is a continuous claiming on the name "Filipino"" (2017: xxv). From the point of view of orosipon, in contrast to the point of view of narration, not one group or institution dominates the concept of "Philippines," of "Filipino." Barbaza contrasts the concept of "bayan" against that of "nation," or "country," or "nation-state." What is this thing called bayan? Barbaza explains that "bayan guards against the centralization of geopolitical power. Bayan, a contraction of the plural bahayag (a cluster of house), is also structurally multiple and fluid" (2017: 75). Following this exposition of the nature of society and the nation, Barbaza comes to a counter-intuitive conclusion regarding language. While she still sees some value, for example, in the notion of language standardization, she also says that standardization suppresses the "structural fluidity and multiplicity" of the Bicol language, and, it follows, Filipino as the national language. She continues, "Standardization largely involves rendering the language into a structure that can be seen and held, and therefore controlled. The orosipon's language demonstrates the author's/authors' and the editors' attempt to take control of the language. The standardization of the Bikol language is the solidification in representation that has to be apparent not only in the lexicon of the language (Which is Bikolnon? Which is not?) but also, of course, in the orthography of the language... The Bikol language was no longer just a means to communicate. It functioned as a representation of the Bikolnon, and therefore, an insistence of a space/place, in the national imaginary" (2017: 103). She comes to a harsher, harder conclusion when she says that "Standardization thus acts to take up space in the national imaginary even as it also removes differences and lends itself to commodification, and, thus, to the empowerment of the non-Bikolnon in the identity of capital."

Outside of her book, based on her dissertation from the State University of New York, Barbaza also presents her views on language in the essay "Wika at Identidad: Wikang Bikol bilang Lunan ng Bicolnon, 1890-1956" ("Language and Identity: The Bicol Language as a Space for Bicol-ness/the Bicol People, 1890-1956"). There Barbaza asserts her contrary stance against the monolithic form of the nation. She says that "What happens, in truth, in the movement for unity is nothing but homogenization" (2014: 74, my translation). Of course, Barbaza doesn't say that unity is needed, or that a lingua franca is very useful and necessary. What she says is, we can have a country, a nation, a bayan, without erasing individual characteristics. What she wishes to emphasize are the differences, of each language, and each region, that will have their own contribution to unity: "it is the nature of language, even more the de facto national lingua franca, to be different (i.e. has a lot of varieties, dialects), to have differences in its uses, while fulfilling the role of uniting the many" (2014: 76-77, my translation). This is a strange view of language, but it has a potential to be a shock to thought when pushed to its logical conclusion: "This is therefore the challenge to us now: to maintain commonalities and similarities in difference. Instead of a finished unity, the possibility lies in the identification and strengthening of commonalities that will maintain difference" (2014: 94). While Barbaza recognizes the structural, linguistic similarities of the various Philippine languages, she is more interested in the possibilities of their differences, which gives Filipino, i.e. the national language, an open nature. She explains: "The iterative feature of a language that has a common grammar and structure that allows it to be understood by all that also allows it to be used by all, is also what makes it open to change and difference every time it is uttered and used" (2014: 95).

This view of language complicated the process Barbaza underwent in translating tales from the Bicol language to Filipino (and English). The danger she tries to avoid is the erasure of identity, the identity of the source language, in the attempt to make the text readable for a national audience. There is a moment

of stream of consciousness in the academic text that is *Interrupting the Nation* when Barbaza exposes her multiple goals and desires on the page: "Are the sentences too long? When does a sentence end and begin? My educated Tagalog [Manila] eyes demand that the sentences be whipped into obedience: clean, clear, crisp sentences please. Where are the punctuation/s? Why is this word in capital letters? Why is this morpheme used here and not this other morpheme/affix?" The result is a "rough" text, but there is something to be desired in this roughness: "The roughness that is experienced by the reader is the experience of what is foreign/not-self or to be more precise in this specific translation project, the nonacademic/literary Tagalog" (2017: 160). Just as in translating regional languages and literatures to the national language Filipino, there is always that which cannot be assimilated, cannot be rendered into ordinary Manila-based, Tagalog-based, Filipino, there is also, in the construction of a nation, in its narration, something that sticks out, does not fit, always interrupting, a constant reminder of an insider outsider. Of course, a nation that erases difference is also a nation where the needs and wants of the different is ignored and violated.

### III. The Nation and Translation

In an interview, Ramon Guillermo emphasizes the value of translation in strengthening a nation. He gives the example of Germany, which, with the help of translation, was able to produce an Einstein. This remark is related to the project of the philosopher Hegel, to "make philosophy speak German," back in 1900. While it may seem strange to relate philosophy and Einstein's science, it would do us well to remember that in German, "Wissenschaft" does not refer just to the natural sciences, but to knowledge in the general sense. Guillermo explains that "Translation in a language makes this language stronger, such that it doesn't just match other languages, but attains the capability of creating its own ideas" (Guillermo 2019: 112, my translation). Of course, to be a nationalist does not mean becoming a racist, or resisting our globalized reality. Guillermo's discourse points to a way of being nationalist *and* being

cosmopolitan. To understand this, it is fitting now, to turn to Guillermo's own translations from Bahasa Indonesia to Tagalog, to read his remarks on Benedict Anderson as a translator from Bahasa Indonesia to English.

Guillermo notes that Anderson sprinkles his translations with footnotes, as a way to gloss references and bridge cultural gaps. Moreover, Anderson finds many words in Bahasa Indonesia to be "untranslatable." He takes time in his footnotes to ruminate about these words. In his discussion of Anderson, Guillermo refers to Friedrich Schleiermacher's distinction between "foreignness" and the "foreign" (Guillermo 2017: 248). Schleiermacher posits two types of people encountering a text. A student who encounters a foreign text with no knowledge of the language it is written in sees only "foreign-ness." On the other hand, a polyglot would see no "foreign-ness" at all. Counter-intuitively, they would both be bad translators. The student, obviously, because she doesn't know the foreign language, but the polyglot too, because she wouldn't see the language as foreign, wouldn't see the "foreign." Anderson, while a polyglot, avoids the pitfalls of the talent, by underlining in his translations this "foreign." This results, according to Guillermo, in a "stuttering cosmopolitanism," which is marked by "footnotes, explanations, descriptions and elucidations" (2017: 249). This "pedagogical translation praxis should connect academics with activists, activists with migrant laborers, and migrant laborers with the oppressed workers in their own countries and in those where they work" (2017: 249). Translation for Guillermo, as well as research in the social sciences and the humanities, is ultimately a political act. It comes as no surprise then that among his many translations, two from Bahasa Indonesia are political works. One is an excerpt from communist leader Tan Malaka's masterwork *Madilog*, that deals specifically with the Philippines, "Tungo sa Hardin ng Tao." It is a futuristic work that describes a kind of utopia where statues of Filipinos Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio can be found. Malaka, Guillermo explains, believes that both Rizal and Bonifacio are Indonesians, because the Philippines are part of a "Greater" or "Grand" Indonesia (Malaka 2013: 107). This is no imperialist apologetics, but rather a gesture of solidarity from one revolutionary

in a colony to two others like him. Visions of a better future like Malaka's serve as a critique of past and present regimes, as they present a picture of a life better than what we currently have.

And what a life Filipinos currently have! As is well known, the Philippine government, currently, is not above doing violence to its own citizens who happen to be critical of its policies. Guillermo translated three poems by Wiji Thukul, an Indonesian cultural worker and activist, who was "disappeared." Thukul discusses the worth of poetry in light of poverty. It is not just the subjective violence of the state that is attacked, but the violence done by socio-economic inequalities. "Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula?" asks the persona in one of his poems. "What is the point of my writing poetry?" As scholars, we also ask, "What is the point of my research?" Guillermo, by providing a model for a committed, political scholarship, in his work, answers this question.

Instead of a conclusion, then, I offer here some remarks regarding that aspect of Guillermo's work that engages with scholars of Philippine and Southeast Asian Studies that he does not dismiss as being merely fashionable, but nevertheless finds flawed and lacking.

A discussion of Guillermo's critique and extension of the project of the greathistorian Zeus Salazar is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the entirety of Guillermo's body of work would be unthinkable if Salazar's did not exist. In his most recent appraisal of Salazar's work, "Ang Dalawang Piging ng Kapitalistang Modernidad [The Two Feasts of Capitalist Modernity]," Guillermo characterizes his own long-term project as an "encounter" of the Marxist critique of global capitalism and the version of social science indigenization advanced by Salazar (2014: 184).

Guillermo's frequent skirmishes with the poststructuralist Vicente Rafael best encapsulates his views regarding scholarship, and the aims of scholarship. Guillermo, in his review of Rafael's *The Promise of the Foreign*, criticizes the author's "peculiar" definition of translation, as well as his "confusing" notion of a "coming ... completely other cultural and social order" (2008: 55, 58). Rafael, in Guillermo's view, is too enamored with word games and not in tune



with the material reality of the Philippines. Thus, Rafael's speculations, more often than not, serve as a launch pad for Guillermo's more grounded investigations. In his essay about baybayin, Guillermo assails Rafael's discourse on the ancient Philippine script as "irrelevant" and "puzzling," and points out that Rafael is mistaken about the function of the diacritic in baybayin (2017: 8-10). Paradoxically, writings such as Rafael's also serve as a foundation for Guillermo's scholarship. To mix metaphors, they serve as a kind of negative North Star, showing the way *not* to go.

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