PERSONIFYING RESISTANCE: NINOTCHKA ROSCA'S *STATE OF WAR* AND ADORA F. DE VERA'S CULASI, *SA MULING PAGBALIK*

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Abstract

Personification—representing a thing or an abstraction as human—is a master trope of storytelling. This article looks at Filipino literary and political uses of personification (pagsasatao) as a rhetorical device to depict and narrate everyday as well as organized resistance against state surveillance and repression. The revolutionary organization Katipunan invoked the personifications of Spain and the Philippines as Inang Espanya (Mother Spain) and Inang Bayan (Mother Country) respectively in their foundational documents to justify the Philippine archipelago's separation from Spain. This article focuses on two exemplary literary works by Filipino women activist-writers Ninotchka Rosca and Adora Faye de Vera. Rosca's novel State of War (1988) and De Vera's short story Culasi, sa Muling Pagbalik (1998) demonstrate the ways in which personification and related issues of character mask/ing are not only strategies for survival, but also weapons of the weak (to use James Scott's term) that bear eloquent testimony to the self-reflexive capacity, endurance, and resilience of resistance movements.

Keywords: Counter-hegemonic narratives, torture, revolutionary literature, digmaang bayan, resistance studies

1. "Master Trope of Writing"[1]

What is personification?

> *Personification (noun)*
>
> 1 The representation of a thing or abstraction as a person.
> *Art* the symbolic representation of a thing or abstraction by a human figure.
> b An imaginary person or thing regarded as representing a thing or abstraction.
>
> 2 A person or thing as a striking example or the embodiment of a quality.

1 Clymer, 1995, p. 353.

3 A dramatic representation or literary description of a person or character.

Personify (verb)

1 Represent (a thing or abstraction) as a person; attribute a personal nature or personal characteristics to.
Art Symbolize by a figure in human form.

2 Make or turn into a person; give a human form to. *Rare.*

3 Be an embodiment of (a quality, etc.); exemplify in a typical manner.

4 Pretend to be, impersonate. *Now rare.*

(The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary [Brown, 1993, p. 2172])

Personification has long been considered a "fundamental trope of narrative" (Miller, 1995, p. 79). To write is to "bring to life"—to give form and substance, in some cases to *give a face*, to—a person or group of persons, a thing, or a concept (Paxson, 1994; Clymer, 1995; Miller, 1995).

Personification is a "metafigure" (Paxson, 1994, p. 5), a figure of speech that reveals the workings of figurative language itself, the stuff of poetry, fiction, drama, and other literary forms and genres. Fiction, the focus of this essay, allows writers and readers to put on "masks" of "possible selves," to experiment with ways of being, seeing, behaving, and acting (Miller, 1995, p. 69). The critic J. Hillis-Miller goes so far as to argue that "without personification, there can be no storytelling" (p. 75).

The Western classical term for personification—the Latin *prosopopoeia*, in turn derived from the Greek *prosōpopoiia* (προσωποποιία), "the putting of speeches into the mouths of others," from *prosōpon*, "person; face; dramatic character," etymologically "that which is toward the eyes" ("Prosopopoeia," Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.), reflects its dramaturgical origins in Greek theater. *Prosōpon* also carries the specific meaning of "mask," donned by actors as they perform their respective roles.

In fact, the idea and practice of mask(ing) figure prominently in the root of personification. The word "person" (ca. 1200, *persoun*, "an individual, a human being," from the Old French *persone*), derived from the Latin *persona* ("human being, person, personage; a part in a drama, assumed character"), originally referred to "'mask, a false face' [possibly from the Etruscan *phersu*], such as those of wood or clay, covering the whole head, worn by actors in later Roman theater" ("Person," Online Etymology Dictionary). In modern English, the word "persona" can refer to the role played by an actor, the "voice" that speaks within a literary work, or the aspects of a person's character as they are projected by them or perceived by others.

Who or what can be personified? "Emotions of children, women, nations, and even voiceless things" (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, in Paxson, 1994, p. 49); "social groups and institutions" (Melion & Ramakers, 2016, p. 1); "inhabitants of a city, a republic, or an entire country" (pp. 1, 15); "infants and children, women, the aged, the feeble-minded, insane, or infirm, and members of ethnic, religious, occupational, or racial minorities" (Paxson, 1994, p. 50) – that is, someone or something "other" than male, adult, sane, and citizen.

Personification encodes distance and difference between actor and character, person and role, between front and back, outer and inner, form and substance, façade and the real thing. Above all, it is a "material *translation* of one quantity (often ideational or abstract) into another (usually a person)" (Paxson, 1994, 39, emphasis added). To this "most weighty, intensifying ornament" is granted the power not just of amplification and persuasion, but also of substantialization, or of conjuration even, "the power of bringing the dead back to life" (Soarez, 1565, as cited in Melion and Ramakers, 2016, pp. 14-15; see also Paxson, 1994, p. 166).

In his treatise *On Style*, Demetrius of Phaleron (ca. 360-280 BCE) illustrates this "figure of thought" (*figura sententiarum*) with a telling example: "Imagine that your ancestors, or Hellas, or your native land, assuming a woman's form, should address such and such reproaches to you" (1902, p. 265, emphasis added).

Another influential treatise, *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* (attributed to Cicero, ca. 80s BCE), makes a similar point by recourse to nested quotations:

> Personification [the Latin term used here is *conformatio*] consists in representing an absent person as present, or in making a mute thing or one lacking form articulate, and attributing to it a definite form and a language of certain behavior appropriate to its character, as follows: "But if this invincible city would now give utterance to her voice, would she not speak as follows? 'I, city of renown, who have been adorned with numerous trophies, enriched with unconditional triumphs, and made opulent by famous victories, am now vexed, O citizens, by your dissensions. Her whom Carthage with her wicked guile, Numantia with her tested strength, and Corinth with her polished culture, could not shake, do you now suffer to be trod upon and trampled underfoot by worthless weaklings?'" (Rhetorica Ad C. Herennium, Book IV, p. 66)

The choice of "a woman's form" (the native land *speaking* as a woman) is telling, as the Greek and Latin concepts of personification were rooted in assumptions about women's absence from the stage (in theater and politics) that necessitated acts of representation (both *speaking of and speaking for*).

2. Inang Espanya, Inang Bayan

For different reasons and purposes, and drawing on their own specific intellectual, cultural, and political resources and traditions, countries which experienced colonialism and embraced nationalism have their own practices of gendered personification. One key personification strategy has been to make women the fictional embodiment of demarcated territory as "motherland" (Heß & Klee, 2021; on representation of the colonial subaltern as proxy and portrait, see Spivak, 1999, pp. 258-59).

Damon Woods (2008) traces the centuries-long fluidity and accretion of meanings that enabled the Tagalog word *bayan* to signify place/location, community, and nation. Zeus Salazar (1997) highlights the rootedness of the pre-Hispanic concept of bayan in the multidimensional – at once spatial and temporal, physical and mental/imaginative, human and natural – aspects of permanent-housing settlement as the basis of a community of inhabitants

within a territory. Bayan overlaps with the term *banua* (used in Bikol, the Visayas, and Mindanao, and also the Indo-Malaysian and Oceanic world) except for banua's broader emphasis on the land or territory of one's residence rather than the permanent house(s) built on it. By the late eighteenth century, the place-making meaning of bayan had expanded its identity-marking and people-and community-making function to include claim-making (both legal and political) on behalf of a community vis-à-vis (and in resistance and rebellion against) the Spanish colonial state. By the nineteenth century, bayan had become a translingual term as the concept of community expanded to include Western political ideas of *nación* and *patria* and was used to speak of the archipelago as a single spatial and political unit (Woods, 2008).

Personification is in fact a key rhetorical trope in the revolutionary Katipunan's polemical justification of the Archipelago's independence from Spain. The first sentence of the Katipunan's foundational document, "Casasysayan; Pinagcasundoan; Manga Dakilang Cautosan" [Narration; Covenant; Great Commandments] (Richardson, 2013, p. 6), employs two personifications: "Pag sasaysay ng mga cadahilan ng pag jiualay ng Capuloang ito sa nag aanquing Yna" [Declaration of the reasons for this Archipelago's separation from the Mother who possesses it (translation mine)]. The Katipunan speaks in the voice and persona of the Archipelago, which is conjured as a child in the act of declaring independence from Mother Spain (Espanya, identified by the ellipsis "E….") and explaining the reasons for this decision.

The document employs the we-exclusive, first-person plural pronoun "amin" (as opposed to the we-inclusive "atin") to differentiate this Archipelago (*Capuloang ito*) from Mother Spain, and, more important, to performatively cut off the Mother from the familial, communitarian speaker "we"[2].

The we-Archipelago goes on to explain: "Ang umodioc sa amin na humiualay sa E….. ay ang malabis niyang ugali, matigas na loob, catacsilan at iba pang manga carumaldumal na gawa sa jindi dapat gamitin ng sino mang Yna sa alin mang anac…." [What impelled us to separate from E… are her abusive nature, hardheartedness, treachery and other forms of abominable treatment to which no mother should ever subject any child…] (p. 6).

Then follows a litany of 22 complaints against Ynang E…, complaints that run the gamut from "the exorbitance and pitiless levying of taxes on us, even on our bodies, even on our belongings and wealth" (cataasan at ualang auang pag singil ng buis namin, maguing sa aming catauan, maguing sa mga are o cayamanan namin) (ibid.) and "taking away what little profit we make when we engage in any industry; that is a means to keep us weak and unable to uplift ourselves" (pag caltas sa caunting quiquitain naming cung cami ay gumamgamit nang anomang industria; yaon ay isang paraang cami ay mang jina at juag maca bangon" (p. 6; from barring the Archipelago from representation in the Spanish Cortes (parliament) (item 10 [p. 7]) and enforcing strict press censorship (item 2 [p. 7]), to lauding as good work the pitiless abuses inflicted by the Guardia Civil, inside and outside their barracks in the capital of Manila, upon anyone they seize, whether guilty or otherwise (item 19 [p. 8]), to friar fornication with women (item 21 [pp. 8-9]).

Items 7 and 8 are of interest in that they dwell richly upon Ynang E…'s favoritism, her preferential treatment of other children and her negligence, nay, active ill-treatment, of *this* child, "Capuloang ito": her prohibitive behavior against her child, except when it comes to punishment of any wrongdoing (Ang

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2 At the Supreme Assembly on November 30 and December 1, 1895, the minutes of the meeting would begin with "In the name of the native country" (sa ngalan ng Bayang tinubuan).

hindi cami payagang na tulad sa caniyang manga anac, datapoa, i, oo tuncol lamang sa parusa nang anomang casalanan), her denial of the privileges that she grants her other children (Jindi cami pagcalooban ng mga biyaya [privilegios] gaya nang manga ibinibigay sa caniyang manga anac na siyang lamang inibig) (p. 7).

As its name suggests, the Katipunan (Kataastaasan, Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan) describes itself as a katipunan of the "anak ng bayan" (children of bayan) (Rodriguez-Tatel, 2014, p. 214), and the assertion of the Archipelago's independence from Spain is thematized, as Reynaldo Ileto succinctly puts it, as "the changing of mothers—from Spain to Inang Bayan (Mother Country)" (Ileto, 1979, p. 105). Andres Bonifacio is generally credited with popularizing the term "Inang Bayan" (Motherland/Mother Country). Stanza 7 of the poem attributed to him, "Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa" (Love for Native Land), published in the first issue of *Kalayaan* (1896), the organ of the revolutionary Katipunan, contains the following lines:

> ¡Ah! ito'y ang inang Bayang tinubuan,
> na siyang una't tangi na kinamulatan
> ng kawiliwiling liwanang ng araw
> Na nagbibigay-init sa lunong katawan.
> (Bonifacio, reprinted in Richardson, 2013, 96)
>
> Ah! This is the native Motherland,
> the first and only one from whom springs
> the beguiling light of day
> that warms the weary body.

Here, Inang Bayan is identified as the originary, sole wellspring of energy that re-animates the enervated narrator. Mary Jane Rodriguez-Tatel (2014) traces the primacy of the motherhood trope to women's key role in the continuation of *lahì* (a flexible term that can denote a people, or a lineage, or race/ethnicity) and the high status accorded women in Philippine culture, as evident in the exaltation of the babaylan, the valorizing of women in the epics, and the body of writings attributed to Bonifacio. A poem attributed to Andres' brother, Procopio Bonifacio, echoes the Katipunan founding document's politically charged and emotionally resonant personification, with its framing of independence in terms of a family driven to break up owing to the neglectful, abusive "Mother Spain" (*inang Espanya*). Inang Espanya is addressed by "we Filipinos who are your children" (kaming Pilipino na iyong anak) who ask for forgiveness (humihinging tawad) now that the time has come for them to separate (magkatiwatiwalag) from her for reasons of her non-fulfillment of her duties and obligations toward her children and her negligence (sa di mo pagtupad, sa masamang lingap) (P. Bonifacio, in Santos, 1935, p. 18; see the insightful analysis of this poem and other revolutionary awit by Ileto, 1979, pp. 103-105 and 157-158).

While Inang Bayan can be compared to the Spanish feminine noun *pátria*, there is an important (gendered) difference between these two terms. *Pátria* comes from the Latin *patria*, an ellipsis of the collocative term *terra patria*, from *terra* (land, country) and *patria* (family clan), with *patria* being a feminine form of *patrius* and ultimately deriving from *pater* or "father" based on the Wiktionary. Furthermore, Zeus Salazar (1999) argues that Bonifacio and the mass-based Katipunan's ideas of Himagsikan and Inang Bayan/Haring

Bayan differed substantially from the ilustrados' notions of *nación*; the ideas that informed them represented different (linguistically rooted) "projects/aspirations of nationhood" (p. 39).

The cleaving (in both senses of joining and splitting) of these concepts of Inang Bayan, on the one hand, and *patria* and *nación*, on the other hand, is a testament to the political potency and growing popularity of the term Inang Bayan, on the one hand, and the deepening ideological, socio-economic, and geographical rifts within the revolutionary movement itself and within the country more generally, on the other hand (Woods, 2008). The discourse on Inang Bayan drew inspiration from the religious prominence accorded the Virgin Mary in popular Catholicism and millenarian movements (Ileto, 1979) and by the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (Rodriguez-Tatel, 2014).

3. Arts of Resistance

Filipino utilization of the trope of personification (*pagsasatao*) – which will be discussed in the conclusion – illuminates the mechanics of domination and the "hidden transcripts" and "arts of resistance" (Scott, 1992). Could the "masking" effects of distancing and differentiation that are characteristic of personification as a (meta)figure of thought have critical potentiality as both self-reflexive cognitive process and as a "weapon of the weak" (Scott, 1987) that women, in particular, can wield and as part of the larger arsenal of everyday and organized resistance against authoritarian repression?

The final chapter of "The Book of Revelations," the concluding book of Ninotchka Rosca's novel *State of War* (1988), contains this remarkable passage:

> It [the military siege on the urban resistance] came to a finish, though—for the enemy's actions were based on a momentary spasm of rage. Against this, the resistance poised infinite patience, a steadfast passion that knew full well the nature of both the enemy and time. The enemy saw the resistance as an irritant, a disruption in the normal conduct of its affairs. The resistance, on the other hand, saw only the enemy. It had no festivals to celebrate, no career to worry about, no property to protect, no manuscript to finish. It absorbed its losses, withdrew its people from exposed positions, clothed itself in anonymity. In *due time*, it saw the flagging of the enemy's zeal, saw its attention waver and, at last, turn to other matters. Then, the resistance stirred and reached out. (Rosca, 1988, p. 379)

A bomb planted by rebels explodes onstage during the official festival ceremony over which the Commander is supposed to preside. The attempt on the Commander's life fails, with serious consequences for the novel's three protagonists. Adrian Banyaga is seriously injured. Eliza Hansen, taken away by the henchmen of Colonel Amor (who loses an arm) immediately after the explosion, is "salvaged" (now known by the term EJK, "extra-judicial killing"). The government responds with repression. The third major character (and the focus of this essay), Anna Villaverde, having thrown in her lot with the rebels, evades the urban cordon and makes her way safely to the rebel base in the countryside.

State of War characterizes the endurance and resilience of resistance against the dictatorship by deploying the literary device of personification.

Endowing "the resistance" with human, person-like attributes, this figure of speech alerts and prompts the reader to move beyond the literal, ordinary meaning or usage of language. For while "the enemy" is a collective noun that groups together, in the context of the novel, a number of people associated with the military and other state authorities, and, more generally, with the powers-that-be as a whole, "the resistance" (with a small "r") is an abstraction that can mean several things. Like "the enemy," "the resistance" can function as a collective noun that refers to people who oppose "the enemy." At the same time, "the resistance" refers to the act (and also the sum of acts) and activity (the sum of activities) of responding to "the enemy." Furthermore, "the resistance" can refer as much to individuals who undertake acts and activities of responding to the powers-that-be as to the groups and organization/s and, broader still, the movement/s that mount concerted opposition.

Scholars in the field of resistance studies define "resistance" as aresponse to power from below—a subaltern practice that could challenge, negotiate, and undermine power, or such a practice performed on behalf of and/or in solidarity with a subaltern position (proxy resistance). Irrespective of intent or interest, we view resistance as (i) an act, (ii) performed by someone upholding a subaltern position or someone acting on behalf of and/or in solidarity with someone in a subaltern position, and (iii) (most often) responding to power (or…other resistance practices, which in turn emerge as a response to power). (Baaz et al., 2016, p. 142)

Resistance is "plural, malleable, evolving,…a phenomenon with many faces" (Baaz et al., 2016, p. 138; note that the preceding sentence also makes rhetorical use of personification to get its point across to the reader). Scholars agree that individual actions can gain critical momentum through organization, thus snowballing into collective, mass action capable of challenging state authorities and regimes. Resistance can be transformative, capable not only of changing society and history, but also changing the individuals and people who undertake it.

In other words, "the resistance" encompasses, or more precisely, exceeds the binaries of, subject and object, position and practice, agent and process that organize the very concept of resistance. The fictional character of Anna Villaverde embodies (in the two senses of concretizing and exemplifying) the transformative possibilities of this non-binary resistance. The novel charts Anna's character development as a process of political radicalization that entails active self-fashioning from bystander into participant in "the resistance."

Anna's personal-political transformation unfolds in three stages. At each stage of her character development, resistance is rendered through a series of personifications. In the first stage, Anna and her husband Manolo Montreal are bystanders who witness the confrontation between protesters and soldiers at the intersection of Quezon Boulevard and Recto Avenue in Metropolitan Manila. The protests, fueled by the spike in oil prices, ignites when a bus passenger heeds an angry bus driver's comment that "Some son-of-a-goat had better do something" (Rosca, 1988, p. 23), and picks up a stone and hurls it at the street. Other people quickly follow suit with a barrage of "empty bottles," "rocks, pebbles, concrete chunks, stones, and broken glass" (p. 23). By nightfall, thousands of people barricade the main avenues and light a bonfire of buses (p. 23).

"*Amazing*, Manolo said over and over and over again, *they're fighting back. Amazing*" (p. 24). Anna watches as, amidst the gunshots and tear gas, "the crowd retreated, smashing display windows of unaffordable merchandise. They scattered, regrouped, gave way and regained lost ground, dragged out

the wounded and the dead, crawled through debris to hurl pillboxes with their makeshift shrapnel of nails and glass shards, and yelled from time to time, in bitter humor, at the soldiers. *Surrender now*, they shrieked in half a dozen languages, *we are the people*!" (p. 24).

The crowd is heterogeneous, composed of specific individuals assembling to occupy a certain (public) space, air their grievances in "half a dozen languages," and organize themselves. The crowd takes part in sundry protest actions, including barrage, bonfire, and barricading (on the importance of barricades as a mode of urban protest, see Pinches [1987] and Arcilla [2022]). Scholars have theorized the concept of "the people" as process, historical accounts of which can only be "reconstructed retrospectively from the history of political struggles" (Ochoa-Espejo, 2017, p. 613).

If "[t]he people, then, is a series of events in which individuals participate, rather than a specific collection of individuals or disembodied legal procedure" (p. 66), *State of War* dramatizes the *event* of the emergence of "the people" by having the crowd of protesters actively *practice* personification, taking the subject and speaking position of "the people." Vocally proclaiming "*we are the people*!", the crowd declares the justness of their cause and the unity of their stance. At the same time, the eventfulness of that proclamation – the fact that protesters inhabit the subject and speaking position only in that moment of the event – makes the concept of "the people" provisional and contingent, and for that reason, open to other simultaneous and future events in which other individuals and groups take up and occupy the speaking and subject position of "the people" in the act of putting up resistance against state repression.

Anna herself eventually abandons her bystander status and joins the resistance movement. When she hears about the alleged death of her husband after he is picked up by the military following his involvement in an exposé of oligarchic control over the economy, Anna vows to recover his corpse. She is arrested, detained, and tortured. Her stint in detention puts her in touch with the charismatic rebel leader Guevarra, who engineers a successful escape from prison. Upon her release from prison, Anna, who had hitherto been intent "only to exist" (p. 49), pulls off her own exposé, blowing up and in the process revealing to the public the existence of a warehouse full of the dead bodies of people salvaged by the military. "Somewhere, sometime, she had committed herself to what had seemed to be proper action and that was that…All it had taken was the conviction that she knew what had to be done and that she would do it. That was all" (pp. 20-21).

Anna herself briefly (and provisionally) takes up and occupies the subject and position of "the resistance" – shuttling back and forth between the subjective, personal, first-person plural pronoun "we" and the objective, impersonal (or indefinite) third-person singular pronoun "one" – on behalf of those who, imprisoned and tortured, endured nonetheless.

> And if he [The Commander] dared touch the children, harm them, murder them—why we [underscoring added] would remember, we who woke to find his curse woven in the barbed wires before our windows, held by the guards before our doors, in the cement walls which turned cold with each scream of pain wrung from a body of too vulnerable flesh. God, if there's one, don't let all of us die (the house! the house!), allow one to survive and wear down the eternity of the dictator, if he lives to a hundred, let us last a hundred and ten, long enough to spit on his grave and drown his corpse in the lagoon of our

> contempt; if he lives to two hundred, let us survive two hundred and ten, just long enough to fertilize the gardens with the shit of his memory; and if he's thinking of living through his sons' sons, allow us to outlive them all, just for the pleasure of being alive when he dies, before we bury him in the amnesia of our relief at his passing. After that, why, after that, there will be time for everything, time to lift this drink to one's lips, time even to turn our faces to the sun's fragrance in the unbearable fragility of this country's morning. (p. 340)

This passage suggests that endurance goes beyond any single person's lifetime. The "we" that speaks in the name of "the resistance" is neither individual, nor group(s) of individuals. Instead, "the resistance" can be personified either by a speaker (or speakers) taking up the subjective, personal, collective first-person pronoun "we" or the objective, indefinite/impersonal third-person pronoun "one." Both pronouns span generations and time. Even if individuals die, the "we" and "one" of "the resistance" live on and will outlive the dictator and his "sons' sons."

The conclusion of *State of War* stresses the objective, impersonal, indefinite "one" of the resistances. By that time, Anna has left the city for the revolutionary base in the countryside. The resistance is no longer other people ("the crowd") that Anna first encounters at the start of the novel. The resistance is not reducible to Anna taking up the subject and speaking position of "we are the people" and "we," nor to any of the often middle-class, educated people who expatiate on it: "It had no festivals to celebrate, no career to worry about, no property to protect, no manuscript to finish" (p. 379). Instead, "the resistance" has acquired a life of its own; it is as much a character in the novel as Anna and the crowd. Characterized by "infinite patience," it is "one" that "absorbed its losses, withdrew its people from exposed positions, clothed itself in anonymity," one that, "[i]n due *time*,...saw the flagging of the enemy's zeal, saw its attention waver and, at last, turn to other matters. Then, the resistance stirred and reached out." (p. 379)

The play of personal and impersonal pronouns, of object and subject, agent and process engendered by these strategies of personification effectively substantialize "the resistance," endowing what is essentially an abstraction with the characteristics of its members. Moreover, the resistance becomes itself a leading character, the protagonist, of the novel, one endowed with a force of character of its own that goes beyond any individual or group or organization that, at various times in history, speaks and acts in its name and in the name of "the people," "this Archipelago," and the Inang Bayan or "Motherland."

4. The Festival of K—

Personification – giving human form and attributes to abstractions like "the resistance" and "the people" – is not the only notable literary device deployed in *State of War*. Another notable feature of the novel is its use of "the Festival" as setting, metaphor, and analytical ground.

Ruth Pison (1997), Viet Thanh Nguyen (2002), Myra Mendible (2002), and Rose Arong and Daniel Hempel (2017) have fruitfully analyzed the novel's use of the carnivalesque Festival as metaphor and mise-en-scène for resistance and rebellion. This line of argument draws from a rich intellectual tradition of theorizing festivals as events of "collective chaos, effervescence, liminality and creative play" (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, pp. 116-117). The subversive potential

of the festival exists alongside its generative potential (see Jean-Jacques Rousseau's championing of popular festivals not as Dionysian but as events where society regrounds and regenerates itself anew [Ozouf, 1991, p. 54]). Freud's idea in *Totem and Taboo* (1938, pp. 914, 915; 1922) that "A holiday [*Fest*] is a permitted, or rather, a prescribed excess [*Exzeß*], a solemn violation of a prohibition" and that "in the very nature of a holiday there is excess" (an idea that Roger Callois would develop [2003, p. 119]), along with Mikhail Bakhtin's exploration of the "suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival times" as having utopian potential (1984, p. 10), are borne out in real life by the fact that European "[m]edieval authorities were aware that peasant revolts and urban insurrections would begin precisely during such ritual moments" of the festival (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 546). An example of the insurgent potential of the fiesta is the scene in Rizal's *Noli me tángere* (1978, Chapter 40), in which the people of San Diego start throwing stones at the cuadrilleros sent by the alferez to shut down a public theatrical performance. Ibarra, unable to restrain the angry crowd, appeals to Elías for help, and Elías persuades Bruno and Tarsilo, the instigators, to calm down the crowd[3].

Viet Thanh Nguyen (2002) cogently argues that Rosca's "guerrilla theater" (p. 129) emphasizes the fact that the revolutionary struggle is at once an armed confrontation and a battle "for the representation of history and the past" (p. 130). Marie Rose Arong and Daniel Hempel (2017) point out the "transgressive, revolutionary dimension of Rosca's festival" (p. 60) and its mnemonic function (p. 57) as "a festival of memories" and a "festival of commemoration" (Rosca, 1988, pp. 46, 337, as cited in Arong & Hempel, 2017, p. 60), a "site on which a peculiar state of war manifests itself" (Arong & Hempel, 2017, p. 58).

The Festival of K— is modeled on the Ati-Atihan festival in Kalibo, Aklan, and draws on the latter's chant (*Hala bira!*), dancers in soot and warrior costumes, and Catholic ritual (Pison, 1997). As Peterson (2011) illustrated, the Ati-Atihan festival has undergone metamorphosis over centuries. In the Spanish colonial era, authorities had originally created a fiesta system as a strategy to draw natives into the spatio-temporal, administrative, economic, and spiritual ambit of the church and the state. The Ati-Atihan festivities were linked to the feast of the Santo Niño in the time of the encomendero Antonio Flores (1581); other versions link the festival's origins to the Spanish-Aclan victories against Muslim piracy (Reyes-Tinagan, 2001).

Kalibo mayor Frederico O. Icamina is credited with branding the fiesta by promoting it locally and nationally in the 1960s (Reyes-Tinagan, 2001). Ati-Atihan troupes were invited by Imelda Marcos to perform at the Nayong Pilipino in January 1971. The "theatricalization" of the fiesta gained momentum under Martial Law (1972-1981) as part of the Marcos regime's creation of the infrastructure of "nation-wide fiesta system" (Peterson, 2011, p. 507) to promote various regions of the country as domestic and international tourist spots and hubs (see also Arong & Hempel's discussion of the "Mardi-Gras-ization" of Filipino popular festivals [2017, p. 57]). Under the dictatorship, the centuries-old Fiesta of the Sto. Niño in Kalibo would undergo a process of commercialization and rebranding, with the Brazilian Mardi-Gras carnival as inspiration, a rebranding signaled by the crucial name change into the Ati-Atihan ("being [or acting] like the Atis") festival in 1972 (Peterson, 2011, p. 512). Although elements of the festival – from the blackening of skin with soot or burned coconut husk to costuming oneself in readily-available materials, from

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3 I thank Teo Marasigan for reminding me of Rizal's own fictional exploration of the subversive potential of public events.

street processions to *sadsad* dancing – date back decades, the reorientation of the festival added value to a dictatorship intent on promoting its brand of authoritarian development. At Tourism Minister Jose D. Aspiras' behest, the Ati-Atihan was staged at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Folk Arts Theater in 1973. In 1975, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos flew to Kalibo with a retinue of officials and foreign and local VIPs to attend the Ati-Atihan (Reyes-Tinagan, 2001).

However, the festival's popular significance is subject to multiple interpretations. Folklore traces the origins of the festival to motives ranging from "ceremonial act of friendship" between the Malayan datus of Borneos and the native Atis (Reyes-Tinagan, 2001, p. 36) to "peace pact" between hitherto hostile groups (p. 37) to Atis "gratitude" for Maraynon "provid[ing] food for their friends, the Atis" in times of natural disasters (p. 37). Peterson recounts one informant saying that the blackface tradition commemorates a time "when rebels came" and "people painted their faces black to hide from the Moros" (Peterson, 2011, p. 519). Others evince critical awareness of the fact that the Barter of Panay being commemorated by the festival is "not a happy history of peaceful coexistence, but rather a long history of the violation and subjugation of the indigenous people by the dominant culture" (p. 520).

If the real-life Ati-Atihan is a mnemonic of a ritual with two sets of potentially competing rituals and historical memories (i.e., the Barter of Panay and the splits among indigenous peoples, Maraynon, and Muslims, on the one hand, and the Feast of the Sto. Niño and the split between Spanish and Filipino, on the other hand), Rosca's fictional version of "the Festival" adds yet another complex layer of meaning and practice. In fact, the Festival amalgamates not one, not two, but *three* different historical commemorations. This is evident in the following passage:

> But such was the power of the ceremonies at K—, on the windward side of the island, that whenever festivals were mentioned, K— sprang readily to the mind. Perhaps because the Festival was a singular evocation of victory in a country of too many defeats. Or perhaps because the first celebration went beyond the memory of the grandfather of the grandfather of the oldest grandfather at K—, which made it no one's and yet everyone's personal history. (Rosca 1988, p. 3, emphasis added)

The "singular evocation of victory" is undoubtedly a reference to Lapu-Lapu's victory over Ferdinand Magellan at the Battle of Mactan on April 27, 1521. Furthermore, Resil Mojares (1979) states that in the oral tradition of Mactan dating back to the seventeenth century, there is no "single legend," but rather a complex of legends composed of two "stories" – that of Lapu-Lapu's father Datu Mangal's petrification and Lapu-Lapu's battle. Stories that Magellan and his men were attacked by an army of sea creatures and that Lapu-Lapu lives on persist to the present.

The commemoration of the Battle of Mactan was similarly incorporated into the fiesta system of the Marcos regime. The first contemporary reenactment of the battle which had earlier been called "Bahug-bahug sa Mactan" (loosely translated as Melée in Mactan) but is now called "Kadaugan sa Maktan" (Triumph in Maktan, note the orthographic substitution of "c" by "k" ["K is for De-Kolonization," as Megan Thomas [2007] argues) is believed to have been staged on April 28, 1979, around the same time that a statue of Lapu-Lapu

was installed at the Liberty Shrine (also known the Mactan) (Bersales, 2019). Ninotchka Rosca explicitly references Lapu-Lapu when she locates her own writing in a Philippine literary and political tradition that "reflects the pride, the commitment to independence that saw Lapu-Lapu skewering Magellan in 1521 for his crime of intervention in domestic affairs" (1990, p. 241, in Mendible, 2014, p. 4). Ramon Guillermo (2022) cogently argues that the figure of Lapu-Lapu (paired with the Enrique de Malacca / Panglima Awang circumnavigation story) challenges European domination and exposes the limits of the construction of the universal (but actually parochial) European subject.

Given such complex layering and amalgamation of fiction and reality, history and legend, Spanish colonialism and internal colonialism, Rosca's fictional Festival can be understood as a fiesta *system* institutionalized by the authoritarian regime and a fiesta *complex* that invites multiple contending (including subversive) historical and political interpretations, depending on which element of the Festival is brought into play and by whom.

5. Strategies of Character Mask/ing

The novel's showcasing of the Festival as carnivalesque "guerrilla theater" is revealing of its thoroughgoing preoccupation with masks and disguises[4].

Public social interactions have a dramaturgical dimension, as they involve conceptions, projections, and performances of selves, either in relation to, or, more often than not in tandem with, other selves (the dramaturgical model of social interaction was proposed by Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [1956]). Psychologists have even developed facework theory (based on Goffman, 1967) to account for the roles that people play (whether self-fashioned or imposed) in such interactions and the ways where people manage the impressions (encapsulated in such phrases as "save face" or "lose face") that they make on other people or that others have of them. Facework entails self-image, but more importantly, the "interpersonal skills or strategies (i.e., work) needed to maintain or elevate, and in some cases, hinder, others' perception of an individual's right to deserve respect" (Fletcher, 2016, para. 1). At its core is the assertion and protection of one's dignity as well as that of other people.

In *State of War's* personification of "the resistance," the resistance "clothed itself in anonymity (Rosca, 1988, p. 379). Viet Thanh Nguyen singles out the iconic, insurgent figure of the transvestite as "revolutionary actor" and draws out the figurative, epistemic, and political potentials of ambiguity inherent and publicly performed in "transvestite identity" (p. 139). Anna's musing that "[i]n such a [transvestite] disguise… man-woman, one could live safely in illusions and avoid all confrontations" (p. 15) is belied by her transvestite companion's deft use of ironic wit to poke fun at officialdom. In one scene, this character sends up an official conference with her effusive gestures of idolatry throwing into sharp relief the pomposity and mendacity of technocratic and regime doublespeak.

There is a historical basis to the use of costume as disguise to evade authorities. Key figures of the revolutionary Katipunan—including Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, Genaro de los Reyes, and Agapito de Leon—were

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4 As to Rosca's own persona, scholars differ in their accounts of who coined the nickname that Rosca adopted as her professional nom de plume. Some say it was the writer Nick Joaquin (Feria, 1991, p. 84), others (Casper, 1991, p. 86) say it was the playwright and publisher Alberto Florentino. An amusing anecdote recounted by Dolores Feria (1991, p. 85) has a professor flunking student Rosca "in outrage over the spontaneous look of disapproval on her face every time he entered the classroom."

known to have "put on clothes that did not belong to them," dressing up as women, or as Chinese and Indians, and wearing shoes too big and sleeves too long, to escape detection and gain safe passage through territory under Spanish control, right under the noses of Spanish authorities (Alvarez, 1992, p. 24). Women rebels like Gregoria Del Pilar were known to have donned men's clothes as they moved from one place to another (Zaide, 1970; Fernando, 1978). Codes and aliases are still routinely used by revolutionaries to protect to the secrecy of their movement (Mongaya, 2022).

In *State of War*, rebellion does break out during the Festival on the island of K—. The carnivalesque atmosphere of costumed, drunken revelry, and social leveling enables the rebels to move about unnoticed and, when the time is ripe, to stage their surprise attack. In the novel, authorities learn too late that "the whole fucking place was a nest of insurgents—every single resident.... Transvestites whipping out sawed-off shotguns from under their shirts; half-naked warriors...Lord, those spears were real!" (Rosca, 1988, p. 370)

Recalling the dramaturgical/theatrical roots of the term person in masks, "false faces," and "assumed character," we can read *State of War* as a meditation on the self-reflexive strategies of character mask/ing as a tool for survival and self-fashioning under conditions of domination and resistance.

By far the most striking thing about Anna Villaverde as a literary character is her "face without expression" (Rosca, 1988, p. 12). Unlike her best friend, the flamboyant and sexy Eliza Hansen, Anna is "watchful, quiet...a still point in the boil of noise" amidst the festivities (p. 12). Her lover, Adrian Banyaga, describes her as the "princess who could not laugh" (pp. 13, 45) and "couldn't cry" (p. 46).

> Emotions froze her [Anna], made her rational. You would think she was indifferent. She'd stand there like a statue, *her face a mask*—but behind that, her mind was raging, pacing, tearing through one thought after another, calculating desperately. (p. 46, underscoring added)

When Eliza informs Anna about her pregnancy by her professor, her best friend's face is predictably expressionless, and Eliza only senses "cold waves of rage radiating from Anna, studying her intently, as though weighing something on her mind" (p. 47). Anna is the one who resolves Eliza's dilemma by making the professor cough up the money for the abortion that Anna arranges for Eliza.

Anna consciously creates a mask of her face as a way to mask her expression and character: "Reading signs from the cards she created a mask, her other Anna, and worked on it, giving it all the virtues required to survive" (p. 73). Banyaga observes her "detached, clinical expression even when making love" (p. 123), her knack for "observing but not being engaged" (p. 139).

> At first, such masking has a basic function. Anna explains this to Eliza:
> Better not call attention to yourself, better to live like the trees, better to be merely there like the plants, with no desire except to eat, sleep, and work, have a few thoughts, a few moments of happiness, not joy but happiness, better to exist without destiny, only to exist. This what I learned from all the books and all the lectures—the virtue of mere existence" (p. 49).

Character mask/ing is a strategy and a technique for survival. It is a mode of self-protection and self-defense against invasive state surveillance.

In the novel, the repressive, penetrative capabilities of the authoritarian state and its police and military authorities is personified by the ironically named Colonel Urbano Amor. Neither urbane nor loving, The Loved One is at his element in "the romance room" (p. 55), where he, the voyeur, views the physical, mental, and psychological torture of dissidents and (suspected) rebels through a two-way mirror. Delegating the actual physical manhandling (including physical rape) to his minions, he prefers to "fuck the soul" and sees the extraction of information from the unwilling as a form of "exquisite rape" (p. 67). Colonel Amor's doctoral dissertation, "a distillation of so much human pain," so horrifies the university committee that they unceremoniously graduate him without requiring him to defend his thesis and lock the manuscript away in the archive (p. 378).

As the Grand Inquisitor of the State, Amor has no patience for terms like "They, theirs, the enemy. He disliked the vagueness of those words. He needed a face (faces), a name (names), a body (bodies) of flesh and blood. An identity (identities) he could hook his claws into and dissect into information" (pp. 348-49). Amor tells Eliza: "If there's anything at all I've learned in my years as—well, as an expert on conspiracies—it is the living nature of resistance. All information about its internal processes is rendered obsolete by revelation" (pp. 52-53). Of those who "confessed," he is dismissive: "Traitors…Oh, I shouldn't call them that. Patriots. Maybe. But the truth is a man who betrays is simply a traitor. Period. One can't have too much respect for him. Despite his help." (p. 52)

Indeed, the novel's personification of "the resistance" at the end of the novel is at once a confirmation of Amor's insight about the "living nature of resistance" and an explicit refutation (more, a repudiation) of the power of dictatorship and repression. Possessed of "infinite patience," the resistance masks itself. It "absorbed its losses, withdrew its people from exposed positions, clothed itself in anonymity." In time, the resistance "stirred and reached out" (p. 379).

The novel makes much of Anna's refusal to divulge any information under torture. As her interrogation report describes it, "Subject did not break" (p. 344). Colonel Amor grudgingly acknowledges this by telling Eliza that "Women, like children, can be absolute in their loyalties" (p. 52). Released from prison, an Anna transformed by her experience inside it (more about her encounter with the rebel leader Guevarra in the next section) now finds that she is, after all, "capable of guile" (p. 113) and proceeds to plan and pull off the explosion of the warehouse containing corpses of salvaged people. Referring to a drunken American tourist who accidentally discovers the cache of arms and is killed by his men, the guerrilla Rafael (himself disguised as a member of the Constabulary Intelligence) tells Anna: "Stupid foreigner. Doesn't half-know half of what's going on…We must look pretty silly to them. Small and quiet and smiling. Always smiling." To which Anna responds: "Someone should tell them our teeth are simply on the edge." (p. 119)

Richard Jonathan Taduran (2012) observed that of the six basic emotions (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise) that Filipinos are able to recognize in facial expressions, fear has "the lowest correctness in judgment and…the biggest discrepancy in agreement rate compared to other cultures" (p. 76) – that is, Filipinos have a harder time reading fear in other people's faces and are more likely to confuse fear with surprise (p. 76). At the same time, fear is a "secondary emotion in the sadness stimuli" (p.77),

meaning that similar situations are capable of evoking fear (in anticipation of the negative event) and sadness (after the fact of the event).

Taduran speculates that the reason for such controlled expression of emotion may lie in the value assigned by (Asian) cultures to collectivism and interdependence and the role that controlled facial expression plays in maintaining harmonious relationships. He also speculates that it may also be a product of the Philippines' specific history of colonialism and authoritarianism, and the impact of oppression and the imposition of authority from above and from outside on social relationships. "Due to constant exposure to threats and danger, Filipinos have conditionally grown to manage the expression of fear." (p. 82). Research on other countries like Japan show that people "mask their negative emotion when conscious of someone else or an authority figure observing them" (p. 82).

6. Personifying Charisma

Questions of loyalty and betrayal are explored at length in State of War, both in the present time of the novel and in the entangled family histories of its protagonists and minor characters. Sundry characters betray each other. Maya betrays her husband with Hans (Rosca, 1988). Anna's father, Luis Carlos, kills Jake Montreal (Manolo's father) for betraying the guerrillas to the Japanese. Anna would make herself a widow after learning that her husband Manolo betrayed the movement in exchange for his life and has been working for the state all this time.

Anna's relationship with the charismatic rebel leader Guevarra – a platonic and no less emotionally charged connection first formed during their time in detention – is similarly fraught, and complicated by issues of loyalty and betrayal. Guevarra's ability to resist the humiliations and depredations imposed on him by the authorities touches Anna deeply, though as usual, she keeps her face impassive. "Sometimes, as they ate, Anna would see him looking at her over the bowed heads of his companions and she would stare back with flat eyes, unwilling to let him see the hope she felt" (p. 69).

Anna learns about Guevarra's response to his own wife and son, both of whom had been "broken" by Colonel Amor under torture (the son was forced to watch his mother being raped) and had revealed his routes to the authorities from Rafael, who reveals that, later on, both wife and son are put on trial by the rebels.

> "They [Guevarra's wife and son] were executed. Guevarra cast the first death vote. Nobody else would." Another silence. "You've never seen an execution. Bullets aren't wasted on informers. The men used a crowbar. Guevarra watched." (p. 359)

Anna's response is in keeping with her personality: "She opened her hands helplessly" (p. 359). It is a silent gesture, but a pregnant one, to be interpreted only by the reader.

When Anna makes it safely to the rebel stronghold, she listens to the tape where Guevarra explains himself:

> "It was with pride [said Guevarra] that I cast my vote. The rules were clear. Death to the traitor. I looked at my wife. Once, long ago, she had helped me in my loneliness. But she was old now, tendons standing out on her arms, spatulate fingers restless

> under my scrutiny. I looked at my son. He was merely another barefoot, filthy child littering the landscape, lost in ignorance. He had absorbed all the ugliness of my flesh. No nobility there. I had been away from the two of them too long.
>
> "The rules were clear, are clear. I could give a hundred unassailable reasons for my verdict of death. None would be any good at all. No good at all. I had no answer to my questions. I still don't. For no man acts according to rules but simply, according to the dictates of his heart. When I looked at them, didn't I--but for the moment, true, just as it was true that the thought had been there--wish for a better wife, a better son? What woman, what child, came to my mind then? Was my verdict heroic or base? I have no answer. We begin as accidents and end as the sum of accidents. The rites of this land seize us by the hair and force us into a design begun a long, long time ago." A shy laugh. (p. 381)

The above passage provoked strong criticism from Leonard Casper (1991). Casper took issue with the novel's overall approach to characterization, its "confusion of characters' identities, motives and even action" (p. 88), the "cartoonish quality of Rosca's caricatures" (p. 90) and "stereotypes" (p. 90)[5]. The three main characters are "personifications of the radical chic (or hack radicals, fueled by pop political science)" (p. 92): Colonel Amor as "a stock character" (p. 92), Manolo as a "plot contrivance" (p. 92), and Rafael as "shadowy as the absentee cult hero, Guevarra" (p. 92). Casper reserves his most scathing criticism for Guevarra:

> Later, Anna listens to him, wondering on his tapes whether this decision made him heroic or base. But he wonders if, as he passed judgment on his family, he wishes for a better wife and son—better, presumably, for his revolutionary purposes. Is he essentially different, therefore, from Colonel Amor or the depraved Mad Uncle Ed? Anna doesn't ponder such questions and, indeed, will give her son (why a son, in a novel whose women seem stronger than the men?) Ismael as his first name, without a single moral shudder or more than a momentary doubt? (pp. 92-93)

I will explore the implications of Guevarra's serious character flaw later on in this essay For now, let me just say that I beg to differ in my reading of Anna's response to Guevarra's character flaw. Anna has warned Rafael that several of their comrades have joined the festivities at K— and Rafael has been sent to warn them to avoid going near the stage. Anna confers with Rafael about whether she ought to warn her own friends, as Adrian is slated to appear onstage with the governor and the Commander (Rosca, 1988, p. 19).

> "I came with friends." [said Anna]

5 Early reviews of the novel similarly focus on the issue of character development. John Domini in his review of *The Monsoon Collection* (Rosca, 1983) sees Rosca's characters as "predictable types" (1984, p. 14). Dolores Feria states that Rosca's portrait of the Left "becomes a bit shrill" (1991, p.92). Gerald Burns notes the "grotesque" personalities of Rosca's characters (1993, p. 532).

> "Rot. They'll be safe. They won't go near the stage."
>
> "Should I warn them?"
>
> He made an incredulous sound. She shrugged.
>
> "Then I have to stay."
>
> A pause. The he shrugged. "Suit yourself. But remember who you are, what you are. You're in no position to be generous."....
>
> "But what about—?"
>
> "The well-fed pig?" He spat the words out. "If you keep thinking of that being as a well-fed pig, you won't have so many problems. And if you kept in mind what you are, you won't even have a well-fed pig to worry about."
>
> "That's not fair," she said fiercely. (pp. 19-20)

Anna refuses Rafael's reduction of human being (whether Commander or a member of the elite like Adrian) to "well-fed pig." The climactic scene has Anna running toward the stage, calling out Adrian's name. What flashes through her mind just before she decides to warn Adrian is precisely the thought of "Guevarra's wife and son, and his vote of death" (p. 366). Her thought process goes like this:

> He could have said no. She could have said no. Don't go. (p. 366)

For Anna, Guevarra need not have cast the vote of death, but her thinking quickly segues from judgment of Guevarra to judgment of his (unnamed) wife. Herself a rape survivor who "did not break," Anna assumes the moral high ground in her judgment of both. That Guevarra's wife had confessed under considerable duress (tortured by rape while her son was made to watch), along with the brutality of the executions of wife and son by clubbing, had once reduced Anna to a "helpless" silence. This time around, when it comes to her loved ones, Anna elects to act differently from Guevarra by deciding that she will warn off Adrian.

"She was nearly in time" (p. 366), and Adrian "takes a step away from the stage" (p. 367), but it is too late. That step away saves Adrian's life, but injures him mentally (and takes one of Amor's limbs). Anna's departure for the countryside makes the continuation of a relationship with Adrian impossible. What happens next? The novel largely sidesteps the issue of loyalty and betrayal by documenting Anna's safe passage from city to country, her relocation and her decision to give birth to (and presumably raise) her and Adrian's son in the folds of the rebel stronghold signaling the decisive break from her own past. The novel does not provide any details about the total number of people killed by the bomb. It only suggests that the Commander escaped death, that the state of war continues, and that Anna's best friend Eliza is abducted and salvaged by the military in the immediate aftermath of the bombing.

One final character masking involves the emergent character that is "the resistance" itself. This is evident in the novel's withholding of specific information about the history and inner thoughts and workings of "the

resistance." This is reflected, too, in the novel's reticence about the details of Anna's everyday life inside the rebel stronghold. *State of War* draws a veil over this part of Anna and her subsequent life and career behind "enemy lines" (at least from the viewpoint of the state).

As for Guevarra's character(ization), I read Guevarra's attempt to explain the decision he took against wife and son as exposing the cracks on the heroic persona that the leader projects and that people project unto the leader.[6] A leader's charisma inheres in part in the force of his or her character and in part in his or her ability to function as a personification (an embodiment and also an exemplary) of the ideals and virtues associated with resistance—imagination, courage, fortitude, endurance, resilience.

Guevarra is self-aware enough to question whether his verdict was "heroic or base? I have no answer" (p. 381). "I could give a hundred unassailable reasons [he says] for my verdict of death. None would be any good at all…For no man acts according to rules but simply, according to the dictates of his heart" (p. 281). The "dictates of the heart" evidently engender a series of harsh judgments that Guevarra passes on the character and worth(iness) of his family members: "When I looked at them, didn't I—but for the moment, true, just as it was true that the thought had been there—wish for a better wife, a better son?" (p. 381). His wife, he says, "had helped me in my loneliness. But she was old now, tendons standing out on her arms, spatulate fingers restless under my scrutiny. I looked at my son. He was merely another barefoot, filthy child littering

6 *State of War's* bombing at K— differs considerably in its details from the August 21, 1971 Plaza Miranda bombing. The Plaza Miranda bombing maimed a number of Liberal Party politicians—then allies of the CPP—and took the lives of nine people, including a child. While some accounts of the Marcos dictatorship finger Marcos as the mastermind behind the bombing (for example, Bonner, 1988, p. 80; Karnow, 1989, p. 380; Mijares, 1976, pp. 147-49), the bombing would have long-term reverberations and repercussions for the Left movement. The Katotohanan at Katarungan Foundation, a military-funded organization, published ex-rebel-turned-returnee Ruben Guevarra's account alleging Sison's masterminding of the bombing operation (1988), a charge also leveled by soldier-turned-rebel-turned-soldier Victor Corpus (Jones, 1989, pp. 59-69). Despite his denial of his planning of the bombing, Sison would spend decades hitting back at the allegations (Sison, 2001, Saturay, 2016, Narra, 2018), declaring that "Those who attack me have varying motives. The ideologically motivated attack me as the *personification* of the entire revolutionary movement. They calculate that by doing so they have a short cut for discrediting the entire movement. There are also some attackers who turned renegades or traitors to the revolutionary movement and try to justify their renegacy or betrayal by vilifying me and the entire movement. There are also mere crooks. They attack me in order to a make some bucks. They do so now as paid agents of Bongbong Marcos" (Sison, cited in Gonzales 2016, emphasis added). The serious allegations troubled some party members and officials (Jones, 1989, p. 65). The Plaza Miranda bombing was among the issues that were to have been included in the list of controversial questions to be prepared for discussion at the party congress following the party's Politburo meeting in 1991. Said Ric Reyes: "And among the early questions that were up for discussion was the Plaza Miranda bombing and the whole adventurist program of 1971, the convert of the First Quarter Storm into an upsurge of armed struggle via Karagatan and the Plaza Miranda. (…) But because nobody could really ascertain whether the Plaza Miranda was a plan of the party, it would be thrown into the Congress for investigation and then we would write a formal letter to Joma for him to be more open" (cited in Caouette, 2004, p. 566). The discussions were kept confidential to "safeguard the integrity of the Party" (Joy Jopson, cited by Pimentel, 2006, p. 198), as both the Plaza Miranda and Kampanyang Ahos have been used by state and military authorities and by certain journalists to discredit the CPP as a whole. Filipino activists and rebels have grappled with the ethical dilemmas of violence (see, for example, Weekley, 2001, pp. 166-67; Jones, 1989, pp. 68-69). The Congress, however, did not take place, as the release of Sison's Reaffirm document brought into the open the serious rift (and subsequent split) within the Party. Benjamin Pimentel perceptively argues that "As other political observers have noted, in many ways, the controversy boiled down to conflicting views of Sison—his political track record and, more importantly, his character. Those who saw him as the visionary who created one of the most successful political movements in Philippine history dismissed the claim as an attempt to taint his reputation. Those who viewed Sison as a cold and manipulative political strategist believed him to be a ruthless leader capable of murder" (2006, p. 199).

the landscape, lost in ignorance. He had absorbed all the ugliness of my flesh. No nobility there. I had been away from the two of them too long" (p. 381).

Guevarra's explanation is ethically troubling and politically problematic. When does high-mindedness tip into self-righteousness and intolerance? What political consequences can this have when it comes to the way in which organizations (not limited to political ones, but also including social, cultural, and religious ones) treat their members and the larger populace? What weight does/should a forced confession carry in trials? Why is it used in this case to classify, and justify the execution of, a person as a "traitor"? Should a person be classified and treated (let alone executed) simply as a "traitor" because s/he is forced to give up information under torture? (Note that other members of the jury refuse to vote for the death penalty.) If so, as Casper points out, does Guevarra not share the same assumptions of a Colonel Amor, whose flat declaration "But the truth is a man who betrays is simply a traitor. Period. One can't have too much respect for him. Despite his help." (p. 52, emphasis added) brooks neither nuance nor complexity nor mitigating circumstance?

Guevarra's decision, based on a simplistic moral-political notion of "traitor," begs further (self-)analysis. Revealingly, his disillusionment is visceral, leavened with distaste (if not disgust), his wife and son assuming the forms of lesser mortals who fail to live up to his Olympian standards and expectations. Guevarra describes his wife as "old now, tendons standing out on her arms, spatulate fingers restless under my scrutiny" (p. 381). His son, "barefoot, filthy" has "absorbed all the ugliness of my flesh" (p. 381). "When I looked at them, didn't I—but for the moment, true, just as it was true that the thought had been there—wish for a better wife, a better son?" (p. 381).

What is the "ugliness of my flesh" counterposed against? The purity, rectitude of principle represented, presumably, by Guevarra's mind, will, and courage, the example he himself sets when he is imprisoned and tortured? Rather than probe his projection of the flesh/mind split within himself onto his (former) loved ones and the institutional ramifications of his acceptance of information obtained under torture as grounds for execution of "traitors" in real life[7], Guevarra instead brings his ruminations to an abrupt, unsatisfactory close by invoking forces larger than himself: "We begin as accidents and end as the sum of accidents. The rites of this land seize us by the hair and force us into a design begun a long, long time ago" (p. 281)—followed, the novel tells us, by "a shy laugh" (ibid.). Blame history, not himself.

No wonder, then, that critics like Casper (1991) see this passage as a moral and intellectual copout. Casper goes so far as to link it to Rosca's larger body of work, whereby "characters seem unable to find love and loyalty compatible and, under stress, will sacrifice the beloved to a generalized ideal" (p. 94). He argues that this failure is reflected in the novel's failure in characterization: "If persons are readily disposable (Guevarra's wife and son, for instance), then why not characters a well?" (p. 94). He also questions why

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7 Questions like "Who is a traitor?," "How should an organization deal with a 'traitor?,'" and "Should torture be used to extract information and is the information thus extracted admissible as evidence in court?" were at the heart of the Operasyon Kampanyang Ahos in 1985. Taking its name from the metaphorical use of garlic to ward off demons, the campaign to root out the "deep penetration agents" who had allegedly infiltrated the revolutionary movement in the Mindanao involved the use of torture ("hard tactics") and resulted in the killing of some 600 cadres and related personnel, with devastating results that arguably weakened the movement (see the analysis by Abinales, 1996). In the 1990s, the Party overturned its initial judgment that the operation, despite "mistakes," was a success, and declared that Kahos, along with Oplans Missing Link (Southern Tagalog) and Olympia (Manila-Rizal), were "criminal" (De Jong, 2016, p. 115). Other purges include Operasyong Kadena de Amor (Quezon-Bicol), Takip Silim (Southern Quezon), and Zombie (Mindanao).

the next generation of rebels is not represented by women, despite the example set by Anna herself.

State of War charts the growth of Anna's political consciousness principally through her transformative encounter and relationship with the charismatic Guevarra. The novel's vexing depiction of Guevarra raises important questions about the potentials and, just as important, pitfalls of personifying "the resistance." For while leaders are often viewed and held up for emulation by their admirers as personification of resistance, the glamorization and valorization of charismatic authority may also run the risk of shading into a cult of personality that forestalls deeper inquiry into – and measured, impartial evaluation of – the leader's personality, thinking, behavior, actions, and decisions.

This problem is not specific to any organization (radical or otherwise) but can be found in institutions such as the state, the church, the school, and the home, in political parties and other organizations seeking to mobilize large numbers of people for whatever cause, whether in the Philippines or elsewhere. We can see it in the cults that have sprung up around strongmen like Ferdinand Edralin Marcos (whose posthumously rebranded, social-media-amplified charisma was arguably instrumental in securing his son the presidency in 2022), Rodrigo Duterte, and other founders of political dynasties.

The problematical portrait of Guevarra the man suggests that "the resistance" may be personified by people (including leaders) who engage in it, but it is neither synonymous with, nor reducible, to these embodiments and exemplars. State of War emphasizes this by having the name "Guevarra" (ironically, not a nom de guerre) endure beyond the life and death of the human person whose legal identity it is. The name Ismael Guevarra becomes a nom de guerre, a mask that retains its function as a personification of resistance above and beyond the man who legally bears the proper name. The capture and execution of the rebel leader by "the enemy" does not put an end to the resistance. Another young man leads a "fledgling guerrilla group" that attacks and destroys a military base. "The leader, a young man of few words, had named himself after a great man. He called himself Guevarra" (Rosca, 1988, p. 378). In homage to Guevarra, Anna too decides to name her son Ismael Villaverde Banyaga.

"Ismael Guevarra" acquires seriality, breaking up and multiplying in the course of its circulation and transmission across time, space, and among people. Guevarra, insofar as the proper name is resistance personified, acquires a(n after)life of its own outside of the all-too-human person who used to bear the name, much as resistance outlives those who participate in it. Other people will take on the persona of "the great man," giving their own form, character, substance, and integrity to what is now a floating signifier that personifies "the resistance."

7. Pagsasatao ng Digmaang Bayan

State of War's privileging of the "subject did not break" narrative represents only one end of a continuum of responses and decisions that people make under horrific conditions of oppression and repression. Torture and salvaging are experienced differently by different people.[8] What class one

8 Rosca underwent five interrogations and was detained for six months after Martial Law was declared (Rosca, 2013, p. 15). She was subjected to the psychological torture typical of interrogation methods, but unlike Adora de Vera, she was neither raped nor beaten. (Writes Bob Sipchen [1988], who interviewed Rosca: "Perhaps because of the connections derived from a middle-class background, Rosca was not tortured or raped during the six months she was detained, as were many of her friends. But the interrogations took a toll.") Rosca has stated

belongs to, one's occupation (whether one is an intellectual, for example), and the extent of one's access to personal, familial and social networks that can publicize one's disappearance and press on state authorities to release the prisoner—all these have an important bearing on who is tortured, for how long, and whether one has a chance of being released or salvaged.[9] One of the reasons that there are no exact figures for human rights abuses under Martial Law was the fact that "'small fries,' or common people were rarely mentioned at all; only names of celebrities or popular people were published" (Melencio, 2019, p. 80). (This has since been rectified in recent decades, as organizations documenting human rights abuses have made efforts to release and publicize the names of people who are abducted by the police and military.)

Harrowing testimonies by survivors of rape and torture bear out the continuing usefulness of character mask/ing as a survival strategy.

Twenty-two-year-old Adora Faye De Vera, a student on National Science Development Board scholarship at the University of the Philippines, had been doing organizing work in Lucena City, Quezon Province, when she, along with Rolando Morallos and Flora Coronacion, was taken by plainclothesmen (whom she eventually learned were members of the 2MIG, 2CSU and 231st Philippine Constabulary Company) on October 1, 1976 (De Vera, 1978, p. 288). Subjected to repeated beatings and rape by multiple persons, De Vera "hatched an idea to survive the ordeal. She played mind games with her tormentors. Dong [De Vera's nickname] thought that if she chose one military to become her boyfriend, only one man would be raping her" (Melencio, 2019, p. 91). As the highest-ranking officer's "concubine," she was allowed to do clerical work. She unsuccessfully attempted to escape. The active, public campaign by her family, friends, and supporters to "surface" her put pressure on the military to release her. De Vera stated that she was "forced to sign" several sworn statements (i.e., agent's agreement and the so-called "information purchase agreement") as requisites for her release, and that these statements would be leveraged as "threats" (the military called them "warnings") to compel the victims' silence following their release. Morallos and Coronacion were very likely salvaged. Released on June 31, 1977, De Vera was re-arrested on October 27, 1983, following an encounter with the military in Bicol during which she was shot and wounded in the leg. She was released in 1986, along with other political prisoners, just after the EDSA Revolution.

For Adora De Vera, role-playing character masking was a matter of life and death. De Vera did what she could to survive, so that she would live to see another day and continue her work of resistance. Having survived, she would go on to provide important public testimony about her rape and torture. Her affidavit containing her account of her experience in detention (along with the

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that "People I knew—middle class, intellectuals—were being killed; women were being raped and assassinated." Her *Monsoon Collection* (1983) is a fictionalized testimony of sorts, as it contains powerful vignettes of women and their variegated experiences as political prisoners.

9 Torture is a gendered, state-centric concept. The paradigmatic definition of rape is one that assumes the victim to be male and the perpetrator(s) to be State agents. The rape of women in the domestic, private sphere was not considered torture. In the 1980s, feminist scholars and activists campaigned to expand the definition of torture under international law to encompass sexual violence committed by both State and non-State actors in the public and private spheres (Fernández-Paredes, 2015, pp. 57-59). The rights of women were finally recognized as human rights by the Vienna (1993) and Beijing (1995) Declarations. In January 2008, the General Comment no. 2 of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment made specific reference to rape and other forms of gender-based violence such as "domestic violence, genital mutilation, and trafficking" (United Nations, 2008, cited in Fernández-Paredes, 2015, p. 60).

list of the officers and men involved in her torture) was included in the Amnesty International Mission's Report to the Philippines 11-28 November 1981 (Amnesty International, 1982). Her testimony would also be included in the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Appropriations hearings in 1988. And just as Anna would record her stories on tape for her as-yet-unborn son, De Vera would send voice tapes to her own son, Ron de Vera (Melencio, 2019), who would go on to become a noted development worker, LGBTQ activist, and educator. Ron's father Manuel was a desaparecido (Bolledo, 2022b).

De Vera would go on to write a powerful short story, "Culasi, Sa Muling Pagbalik" (Return to Culasi), anthologized in the landmark literary anthology *Muog: Ang Naratibo ng Kanayunan sa Matagalang Digmang Bayan sa Pilipinas* (Fortress: Narratives from the Countryside on Protracted People's War in the Philippines) (1998), edited by the Instityut sa Panitikan at Sining ng Sambayanan with an Introduction by Gelacio Guillermo, a collection of literary works produced by writers who were either members of the revolutionary forces or had at one time or another been embedded with the revolutionary forces in the countryside that were fighting against the Marcos dictatorship (Guillermo, 1988).

Muog means "fortress." This anthology, published by the University of the Philippines Press, invites readers to immerse themselves (through reading) in the revolutionary movement, taking the reader inside the fortress to experience the everyday lives of a wide variety of people who resist the dictatorship. To use another metaphor, the anthology lifts the veil that State of War draws over "the resistance" by offering a collection of insiders' (and embedded cultural workers') accounts of the movement and its people, vicissitudes, history, and inner workings. While *State of War* demonstrates the ways in which the literary device of personification can be an important part of the repertoire of tropes mobilized for literary production by members or fellow-travelers of the revolutionary Left, in *Muog*, personification works to give life and force to the concept of the "people" in the course of the "people's war"[10] (digmaang bayan). Drawing inspiration from personification rhetoric and strategies developed by local communities, the Propaganda Movement, the Katipunan, millenarian movements, and peasant, labor, and other organizations over centuries, the revolutionary Left offers its own novel, militant, anti-imperialist inflection of personified Bayan and, in so doing, adds substantially to the repertoire and armory of weapons for building counter-hegemony through individual and

10 Digmaang bayan is the Filipinization of the concept of "people's war" renmin zhanzheng 人民戰爭, a term that was formulated by Mao Zedong in the context of the War of Resistance against Japan in the 1930s and 1940s. Waging "guerrilla war" *youji zhan* 游擊戰 means being prepared to wage war for an unknown duration of time ("protracted war" *chijiu zhan* 持久戰). This can only be viable if it is supported by people in the countryside (Guan, 2019, p. 175). As Guan Kai (ibid., 176) rightly points out, there is no historical Chinese term for "the people," as the traditional concept of *min* 民 only meant "ordinary" or "common" people (as distinguished from "officials" *guan* 官). Guan argues that the concept of "the people" came from the French Revolution (ibid.). The translation pathway is more circuitous, however, as *renmin* is based on the Sino-Japanese *jinmin* 人民 (*jin/ren* 人 human, person+*min* 民 people), a word that was commonly used during the Meiji era in debates whereby "the people" was posited in opposition to the government *seifu* 政府 (Burtscher, 2012, pp. 52, 58, 60). Because "[t]he fundamentally abstract concept of the people always requires a supplement to make it concrete," it is necessary to "examine in fine-grained detail the different historical moments and discourses in which the name of the people is invoked" (Guan, 2019, p. 176). The translingual nature of the term "people's army" (*renmin zidi bing* 人民子弟兵) (Guan, 2019, p. 177) is also evident in the name adopted by the New People's Army, an homage to the Hukbalahap (Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon), a name in turn that was said to have been suggested by the Wha Chi guerrillas (Tan, 1981, p. 175). The Chinese idea of a "people's army" employs the strategy of personification, as the army is the "child" (also "the younger generation" *zidi* 子弟) of "the people" and depends on the support of "the people" for its survival and victory.

community empowerment and resistance.[11]

In his Foreword to the anthology, Jose Maria Sison argues for the importance of producing literary works "that evoke the fighting spirit of the new democratic revolution" (Sison, 1998a, p. xi) [akdang nakakapagpabuhay sa mapanlabang diwa ng bagong demokratikong rebolusyon (p. ix)]. Such works are simultaneously expressions of the writers' "revolutionary commitment" and depictions of the "revolutionary struggle and aspirations of the toiling masses, especially the peasantry and the revolutionary forces" [pagtataguyod ng rebolusyon at pagsasalarawan sa rebolusyonaryong pakikibaka at mithiin ng masang anakpawis, lalo na ang uring magsasaka, at ang mga rebolusyonaryong pwersa] (p. xi).

In his Introduction, Gelacio Guillermo (1998, p. xxiv) identifies several noteworthy critical and literary tasks of revolutionary writing:

> "Inilalarawan ang mga pag-unlad sa iba't ibang larangan ng gawain, at sa mga pagbabago sa pang-araw-araw na buhay ng mga rebolusyonaryong pwersa at masang anak-pawis" (Depicts developments in various domains of activities, and the changes in the everyday lives of the revolutionary forces and the laboring masses);
>
> "Itinatanghal ang mga bagong pagpapahalaga na esensyal sa pag-iisip at pagkilos ng mga revolusyonaryo" (Showcases new values that are essential to the thinking and actions of revolutionaries);
>
> "Binubuo ang mga karanasan ng rehiyon, grupo o indibidwal bilang bahagi ng kasaysayan ng rebolusyonaryong kilusan" (Constitutes the experiences of the region, group or individual as part of the history of the revolutionary movement).

De Vera's *Culasi*, set in Antique, works through the literary challenge of depicting "the resistance" in concrete, human (especially feminist), ground-level terms. The protagonist Lida had once been active in the women's committee of the organization of farmers fighting to protect their land rights against development plans by a Japanese gem-mining company (De Vera, 1998). The Japanese company backs away from the plan, but the Philippine military stays on. Lida's husband Reno, head of the farmer's association, is shot and killed. Lida loses her child, following an epidemic of typhoid fever and measles triggered by the forced evacuation and reconcentration of the villagers by the military.

A grieving Lida retreats from activism into her own small clearing in the forest with her surviving daughter Bingbing. Her neighbors and fellow members of the association rally to her aid, chipping in to pay for Reno's burial, helping her build her hut on the side of the street, harvesting the farmland that she and Reno had once cultivated, and selling the harvest on her behalf. They also inform her that they have been organizing in secret for some months now ("Ilang buwan na kaming lihim na kumikilos dito") (p. 380). The forest and mountain to which some villagers have retreated fail to offer safe haven, as the

11 I thank Karlo Mongaya for helping me draw out this line of argument. Along with digmaang bayan and other keywords, the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army has also developed the concept and practice of welgang bayan, a Filipinization of "general strike" (see the excellent analysis by Mongaya, 2022).

military starts dropping bombs over the area. Meantime, the mining company announces plans to move ahead.

What is striking about "Culasi'" is its foregrounding of the critical potentiality of Marx's notion of the "economic character mask of persons" (*Charakter masken der Personen*) through De Vera's narrative exploration and critique of the pervasive, normalized phenomenon of forced personification, the imposition of social and economic roles, on ordinary people by the state and by capitalism.

Marx famously theorized individuals as "personifications" of economic categories and bearers (*Träger*, from the verb *tragen*, "to bear, to carry, to support or to wear") of particular class relations and interests (1976, p. 92, analyzed in Baasch, 2020, pp. 19-20). Indeed, the keyword-as-metaphor that Marx uses to characterize such personification and bearing of class relations and interests is "mask" (Baasch 2020, p. 21). The crucial point about Marx's use of the word "mask," as in "character mask," is the "non-identity" between the person and the mask she wears (p. 21). This "non-identity between the empirical and social individual," the "non-identity between the living and potentially free individual with the form in which individuals necessarily appear in capitalist relations" (p. 21). In other words, the fundamental, basic idea that the person is not to be conflated with the mask she wears, that there is a "person behind the economic mask" (De Laurentiis, 2001, p. 35), that character masks "cover up the true nature of man [sic]" (Mannheim, 1998, p. 104)—is what makes criticism of the exploitative relations and system possible. It is also what makes activism and resistance possible.

Apart from the economic mask imposed by the capitalist system on farmers who work on the land but are routinely shortchanged and dispossessed, "Culasi" details instances in which the state and the military try to impose social roles on the villagers by making them compliant with the roles the state assigns them.

In a state of war, under conditions of militarization of the countryside, the state abandons all pretense of appealing to farmers to play by its rules. In exchange for rations, villagers have to sign blank papers and subject themselves to the interrogations of soldiers to give up information about the NPA and the members of peasant organizations. The interrogations Lida undergoes do not just take the form of questions. Rather, Lida is "pinagsasalitaan, kinagagalitan, binabantaan" [spoken to, scolded, threatened] (De Vera, 1998, p. 378). The supply officer in charge of the rations, when he is in a good mood, subjects her to sexist teasing about her widowhood and the "need to find a man" [pangangailangan niyang maghanap ng lalaki] (p. 378). Villagers are herded to the center of the evacuation zone and handed comic books purporting to detail abuses committed by the NPA. Ex-NPA-rebels make speeches urging villagers to persuade their relatives to come down from their mountain or else face the bullets.

The government promises to set up a cooperative. As part of its propaganda efforts, it organizes film showings (in English, not local languages) that dramatize the execution by Communists of dissidents while explaining its development projects and calling on people to join the Civilian Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU). A month passes and the cooperative does not materialize; neither does any villager join the CAFGU (p. 378). This does not mean that villagers are not under continual pressure and threat: Some women sell their bodies, while men sell information about the farmers' associations for money.

Lida draws renewed strength from the succor and solidarity of her daughter Bingbing, her neighbors and association members and the assistance provided by the New People's Army and by urban associations, lawyers, and human rights workers, and the fact-finding mission that is organized to look into the plight of the villagers. In this way, Lida regains her faith in activism. "Hindi nga siya nag-iisa" [Indeed, she isn't alone] (p. 382), and Reno's killing has not been rendered meaningless ("Hindi nawalan ng saysay ang pagkamatay ni Reno) (p. 382). News arrives of the NPA overrunning the military camp. Reno had once told her that "Mabuti nang mamatay nang lumalaban kaysa mamatay sa gutom na dilat ang mata" [Better to die fighting than to die of hunger with eyes open] (p. 377). Mayang tells Lida there is no guarantee ("[w]alang katiyakan") that what happened to Reno would not happen again. "Pero natuto na tayo sa naunang karanasan, at malakas ang pagkakaisang nabuo nitong huli nating pagkilos" [But we have learned from previous experience, and the unity we forged through our latest action is strong] (p. 382). Lida decides to work ("Magtratrabaho ako" [p. 383]), and with the support of her fellow villagers and her daughter Bingbing (who elects to stay with her mother), comes to a decision: "Hindi tayo aalis" [We are not leaving] (p. 384).

De Vera's story differs from Rosca's novel in the emphasis it gives to consciousness-raising and solidarity-building based not on the vertical, top-down allure of charismatic authority but rather on the horizontal solidarity built on the common endeavor of working the land, the organic community based on social cooperation among villagers (particularly among women), and community-organizing made possible by the farmers' associations and their expanding networks with other groups and organizations outside the village. Land and the community that grows out of the collective effort of working on the land, caring for the environment, and resisting the depredations of capitalism and state are the grounds for resistance and activism.[12] The story makes this

12 On the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army's Maoist-inspired strategy of "encircling the cites from the countryside" in the waging of a "protracted people's war", see Sison (1974). While the national united front is built on the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry, "the peasant population and the countryside have a special significance to us in waging people's war" (Sison, 1974). Moreover, strategies and tactics need to be adapted to "fighting in a small mountainous archipelago" (Sison, 1974), necessitating the building of guerrilla bases and zones across regions. Personality clashes (Pabico, 1999) complicated the theoretical and tactical disagreements against the backdrop of renewed government crackdown and the three-decades-long global crisis of socialism from 1960 to 1991 (the Sino-Soviet split, China's détente with the United States and reform and opening up, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union) informed the splits within the Philippine Left. The CPP had been established as a breakaway party from the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas in 1968. In the post-EDSA period, Marxist-Leninist-inspired breakaway parties were critical of Sison's position on the strategy of the "protracted people's war" that they claimed downplayed the role of the working class and the potentials of urban insurrection (Metro Manila-Rizal Regional Committee, 1994). They also favored a political-military combination strategy (as opposed to the primacy of the armed struggle) that could include establishing a united-front organization within the Third Bloc and even open mass movement (Pabico, 1999; see also the three-volume history of Philippine Communism by Fuller, 2011a, 2011b, 2015). In showcasing narratives of the "protracted people's war" in the countryside (kanayunan), the editors of *Muog* make clear their stance and stand on the split. Since the 2000s, the CCP-NDF (National Democratic Front)-NPA has formed its own political parties that have stood for congressional elections. It has taken part in several rounds of peace negotiations with the Philippine government. Ongoing counter-insurgency operations have been used by the government to justify the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020. In December 2018, Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order no. 70 creating the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), which institutionalizes the "whole-of-nation approach" to address "the root causes of insurgencies" by overseeing the "delivery of basic services and social development packages in conflict-affected and -vulnerable areas" (President of the Philippines, 2018; on the activities of the AFP and the NTF-ELCAC, see the analysis by Broome, 2021). The NTF-ELCAC has achieved notoriety for its red-tagging activities, which rely on the criminalizing rhetoric of un/masking. Lorraine Badoy, spokesperson of the NTF-ELCAC, has stated that "At the NTF-

emphatic point: "Narito ang lupa. Narito ang buhay ng isang magsasaka" [Here is the land. Here is the life of a farmer] (p. 384).

In his Introduction, Gelacio Guillermo (1998) highlights the importance that the story places on collective farming, known in Panay as *hil-ohanay*. Hil-ohanay is the communal practice of working of the field by an association of farmers. The association lends out farm implements and seeds at no extra charge and without taking any profit over a period of two harvests. In various Visayan languages, hil-o-hanay means "reciprocation" (a festival named after it was instituted by the municipality of Sigma, Roxas City, Capiz in 1990).

The other notable element of *Culasi* is its showcasing of women's leadership and activism, as exemplified by Lida herself (Guillermo, 1998). Lida's work of mourning does not end in solipsism and withdrawal, but, with the help of daughter Bingbing (an activist-in-training), their community, and the larger network of solidarity and mutual help and defense, leads her to re-engage with the world.

In real life, Adora de Vera continues to pay a steep price for her long-term, principled activism. On August 24, 2022, De Vera was arrested yet again by the Philippine National Police, on allegations that she is a ranking member of the CPP-NDF-NPA and will be slapped with charges of "multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder with the use of explosives" relating to the ambush of Army Scout rangers in 2005, along with a "separate criminal case for the crime of rebellion" (Bolledo, 2022a, para. 8).

People quietly engage in character-masking, doing their own work of cultivation and organization away from (or below the radar of) the prying eyes of the state and its authorities or representatives. Character mask/ing is not just the mode by which state and capitalism delimit the roles and lives of people. People in turn can use character/masking as strategies for survival and, just as important, as strategies for *organizing resistance*.

De Vera's story bears out specifically Filipino ideas of personhood that are essentially rooted in the dignity of the pagkatao of a person. A person's humanity, personhood, personality, and character are bound up with the process of being- and becoming-human (Alejo, 1990). Filipino theorizing of personhood posits that personhood consists of the all-important acquisition and cultivation of self-reflexive consciousness, the ethical imperative to be humane to others (including nature) and treat people and planet with the care and consideration to which they are entitled, and the will to fight against tyranny and injustice.

The Filipino term for personification is pagsasatao. The noun affix pag- denotes the act of doing, while the duplicated prefix -sasa suggests purposeful transformation of form. Like pagkatao (humanity, self, personality, character), katauhan (humanity, identity, personality, person, body, reputation), and

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ELCAC, we view it as our sacred duty to arm our countrymen with information and *strip the masks off* these terrorists who lie to steal our children away from us, who have murdered scores of our indigenous peoples and have damned the poorest among us" (cited in Panti, 2022, underscoring added). The Task Force dismissed accusations of "red-tagging" as "a myth created by the CPP-NDF-NPA to 'protect its fronts from being *unmasked*'" (Juanitas, 2021, underscoring added). A Philippine Senate-initiated inquiry into red-tagging ended up as a "he-said-she-said" forum for red-tagging (Mangosing, 2020). Along with intensified military crackdowns leading to the capture, killing, or capitulation of rebel soldiers and non-combatants, harsh anti-covid measures such as community quarantine had compounded the difficulties (food scarcity, limits to mobility, among others) that cadres faced. In 2020, Marco Valbuena, information officer of the Central Committee of the CPP, offered this rejoinder to the military's prediction that counter-insurgency operations were "push[ing] the rebels to an irreversible collapse" by 2022: "We must remember that through the decades, all of the AFP's past predictions of crushing the NPA have all been wrong" (cited in Dumlao, 2020).

tauhan (literary character), the root word of pagsasatao is "tao" (tau, tawo in other Philippine languages like Hiligaynon and Tausug, derived from the Proto-Austronesian *Cau and Proto-Malayo-Polynesian *tau, "person, human being" [Blust, 2013, p. 8]). Natauhan means to come to consciousness (after fainting, for example), but also to come to one's senses or realization (after, say, a spell of illness or mental confusion). In the Visayan languages, "a newborn who has become natawhan develops a consciousness of its being-in-the-world, or its *buot*" (Bautista, 2016, p. 229). Consciousness and the knowledge that informs it are integral elements of the ethics of action. To be without buot is, in the case of children, to be "innocent", and, in the case of adults, to be "irresponsible" (p. 229).

Skillfully navigating the inside and outside of mind, body, persona, and world, the tauhan in *State of War* and "Culasi" reflect and act upon the ethical imperative of survival and resistance against tyranny and injustice. These tauhan have character, demonstrating—through thought and action that affirm their pagkatao and katauhan—that they possess the consciousness, inventiveness, will, and determination to imagine that their situation can be different from what it is and do something about it. Their acts of invention (both thinking and doing otherwise) have ethical force as people seize the opportunity to reimagine and create new, better worlds (c.f. Marks & Rich, 2017, p. 410). Just as these tauhan come to (provisionally, contingently) personify resistance, it is out of the heterogeneity and out of the multifaceted, multifarious struggles and strivings of the oppressed that the tao, "the people" (drawing on Ochoa-Espejo, 2017, p. 613), emerges. As "the people" continually animates itself through those who engage in resistance, so too does digmaang bayan gain meaning, purpose, strength, and momentum.

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