

Hunger, Desire and Migratory Souls: Interethnic Relations in Three Short Stories by Satur P. Apoyon

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Abstract

Modern Cebuano fiction comes from an oral tradition that goes back to pre-colonial Philippines. An important shift in the direction of Cebuano literature took place after the Pacific War when Visayan communities had been firmly established in Mindanao. Migration created an audience outside of Cebu and, consequently, encouraged writing that depicted the migrant's life. In turn, realities that spring from the history and cultures of Mindanao came to be represented in Cebuano fiction with relative care and integrity. Satur P. Apoyon was among the Visayan writers who consciously sought to describe realities in Mindanao using a Cebuano literary tradition.

This essay examines three short stories from Apoyon's *Ang Gakit Ni Noebong Ug Ubang Mga Sugilanon* (Noebong's Raft and Other Stories). These stories feature interethnic relations between a Visayan and a Bagobo in "Dili Alang Kang David Ang Baboy Ihalas" (The Wild Boar is Not for David) and a Maguindanao and a Teduray in "Ang Jihad ni Hadji Aribani" (Hadji Aribani's Jihad). "Mga Gutom" (The Hungry Ones) describes a symbolic relationship between human and animal that portrays an analogous dynamic found in the stories about settlers and the indigenous.

This essay will employ Resil B. Mojares's concept of the Filipino writer's wandering soul ("The Haunting of the Filipino Writer" 300) to describe a trauma that Apoyon's fiction repeatedly re-enacts in the form of encounters between characters from different ethnic groups. Using Mojares's lens, the three stories will be read as being "haunted" by the spectre of the Lumad: the indigenous peoples of Mindanao whom migrants from Luzon and the Visayas had displaced after waves of migration that occurred during the American colonial period.

Keywords

Philippine literature, Satur P. Apoyon, Mindanao, interethnic, settler, Lumad

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Modern Cebuano fiction comes from an oral tradition that goes back to pre-colonial Philippines. The rise of a publishing industry during Spanish colonisation, the incorporation of European and Christian narratives, the establishment of an American educational system and the impact of the Second World War contributed to the genre's evolution during the first half of the 20th Century. At the heart of novels and short stories written in Cebuano was the impulse to capture a distinctive Cebuano sensibility that describes the workings of Visayan society and culture (Mojares, "The Beginnings of Cebuano Prose Fiction" xiv).

Before the emergence in the 1960s and 1970s of writers like Marcelo Geocallo in Lanao del Norte, Gumer Rafanan in Iligan and Satur P. Apoyon in Davao, Mindanao had been depicted in Cebuano fiction as an exotic terrain inhabited by the Other, as Rosario Cruz-Lucero observes, in stories such as Vicente Sotto's "Donato" (119). This xenophobic vision of Mindanao can also be recalled in "The Monkeys Have No Tails in Zamboanga," a march song sung by American soldiers during World War II. Contradictory images of Mindanao as the land of abundance and the territory of the wicked were so widespread in the Visayas that in the 1920s, journalist and fiction writer Vicente Rama wrote "Adunay Kahoy sa Mindanaw nga Mokaon ug Tawo?" (There Are Trees in Mindanao that Eat Humans?), a story that dispelled rumours of flesh-eating trees that only grew on Mindanao soil (292).

An important shift in the direction of Cebuano literature took place after the Pacific War when Visayan communities had been firmly established in northern, central and southern Mindanao. Migration created an audience outside of Cebu and, consequently, encouraged writing that depicted the migrant's life. In turn, realities that spring from the history and cultures of Mindanao came to be represented in Cebuano fiction with relative care and integrity.

Satur P. Apoyon was among the first Visayan writers who consciously sought to describe realities in Mindanao using a Cebuano literary tradition. Originally from Bohol, he wrote in a rigorously formal Sinugboanong-Binisaya (Cebuano-Visayan) style of prose favoured in Cebuano-language magazines such as *Silaw*, *Bag-ong Suga*, *Alimyon* and *Bisaya*. What is remarkable about Apoyon's fiction is his material. His depiction of encounters between the Visayan and the Lumad (the Visayan word for "native") reveals a recurring thematic concern: the cultural, economic and political usurpation of indigenous peoples by settlers.

Apoyon's Migration

The sixth of eight siblings, Saturnino Pinoso Apoyon was born on December 24, 1935, in Lincod, Maribojoc, Bohol. His father worked in an abaca plantation in Davao, while his older brother, Albino, settled with a family of his own in

Zamboanga. At an early age, Apoyon became curious as to why so many people left for Mindanao.

According to Macario D. Tiu, in his book *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory*, the American colonial government had created an emigration programme (122) after the implementation of the Land Registration Act of 1902, which had advanced the establishment of plantations across Mindanao. These land claims turned the natives into tenants in their own land, and they were eventually dispossessed (30).

Such was the success of the American campaign for migration to Mindanao that by 1936, around half of Davao's population were settlers from Luzon and the Visayas, many of whom were Cebuanos (120). Peasant workers were promised jobs in abaca and rubber plantations whose harvests were shipped to America. Apoyon's father was among those who heeded the call (Bengan, "Personal Interview with Anecita D. Apoyon"). In less than half a century, the migration to Mindanao of homesteaders from northern and central Philippines dramatically increased and hastened the systematic displacement of the indigenous population whom the Spanish had not been able to fully subjugate.

Apoyon was attending elementary school when World War II broke out. After the war, he returned to school, graduating in 1952. He then left Bohol and stayed with his brother in Zamboanga, where he enrolled in a typing class in 1954. Returning to Bohol, he finished high school at the Saint Vincent Institute in Maribojoc. Apoyon's literary and journalistic career began to flourish around the same time. His first published short story "Sama sa Gapnud" (Like Driftwood) appeared in *Bisaya* magazine in 1955. He became a "town correspondent" for the local newspaper, *The Bohol Chronicle*.

From 1960 to 1966, Apoyon moved from Bohol to Zamboanga, then to Davao, and then back to Bohol, and finally settled in Davao City where he married Anecita C. Diao. During this period, Apoyon worked as a journalist and editor for Davao and Bohol newspapers. He was also publishing fiction in *Silan*, *Bag-ong Suga*, *Alimyon* and *Bisaya*. In 1966, he became publisher of his own short-lived newsletter, *Southern Times*.

Apoyon's life as a nomad and journalist shaped the trajectory of his fiction. After serving the Department of Social Welfare until 1980, Apoyon became the bureau chief of the Philippine News Agency (PNA), the government's official news outlet that in 1973 replaced the privately owned Philippine News Service, for which Apoyon had already served as correspondent for years.

His appointment as PNA bureau chief entailed traveling across Mindanao as a "wire service journalist" (Apoyon 93), covering deadly flash floods, the intrusion of logging and mining corporations over indigenous peoples' ancestral domain and the war policies of Corazon Aquino and Joseph Estrada. He

reported stories about the Moro insurgency and the New People's Army in Mindanao. These events undoubtedly informed Apoyon's short stories such as "Ang Magtiayon sa Bakilid" (The Couple in the Valley), "Ang Jihad ni Hadji Aribani" (Hadji Aribani's Jihad) and "Si Bandoyong ug ang Kataposang Lasang" (Bandoyong and the Last Forest).

The Stories

Because of the unavoidably oblique way Apoyon treated his subjects on account of his chosen language and literary genre and, perhaps more significantly, his being a Visayan settler, it is tempting to dismiss his efforts as forms of romanticising the native. Spivak has argued that the intellectual is complicit in perpetrating epistemic violence on the subaltern about whom he writes (24-28). Thus, the Colonial Subject as Other is merely the Self's Shadow.

However, Apoyon's writing does not readily fit this categorisation, seeing that in Mindanao, the distinctions between the coloniser and the colonised had been distorted. The Visayan and other homesteaders were themselves colonised subjects whom the Spaniards and the Americans had systematically driven into resettling in Mindanao. Apoyon's writing represents a peculiarity of the imperial terrain from which it emerged. Elleke Boehmer calls this literature "settler texts," a "newly self-conscious" form of writing that "speak[s] from and beyond the boundaries and contact zones of what was once the empire" (xxxiv).

Read as a form of settler literature in the context of today's political grouping of Mindanao's "tri-peoples" (Moro, Lumad, Christian), Apoyon's fiction presents self-images shaped by contact among colonised peoples, several of whom were rendered more vulnerable and consequently dispossessed by the colonial notion of land claims.

This essay examines three short stories from Apoyon's *Ang Gakit Ni Noebong Ug Ubang Mga Sugilanon* (Noebong's Raft and Other Stories) published by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in 2008. What begins as a collection of twelve stories about Visayan migrants driven to despair later becomes a fictional representation of the ethnic relations among Visayan settlers, Muslims and indigenous peoples.

"Mga Gutom" (The Hungry Ones) describes a symbolic relationship between human and animal that portrays an analogous dynamic found in the stories about settlers and the Lumad. The two other stories feature interethnic relations between a Visayan and a Bagobo in "Dili Alang Kang David Ang Baboy Ihalas" (The Wild Boar is Not for David) and a Maguindanaon and a Teduray in "Ang Jihad ni Hadji Aribani" (Hadji Aribani's Jihad).

This essay will employ Resil B. Mojares's concept of the Filipino writer's wandering soul ("The Haunting of the Filipino Writer" 300) to describe a trauma that Apoyon's fiction repeatedly re-enacts in the form of encounters between characters from different ethnic groups. Using Mojares's lens, the three

stories will be read as being “haunted” by the spectre of the Lumad, the indigenous people of Mindanao whom migrants from Luzon and the Visayas had displaced after waves of migration that occurred during the American colonial period. Another manifestation of Apoyon’s haunting is the clash of his Catholic worldview and the indigenous culture he writes about. In reading the three stories, the essay will examine these two influences.

The metaphor of the dislodged spirit, according to Mojares, is “an eloquent sign of our social malaise as Filipinos, a symptom of the profound affliction of a nation not quite conscious of itself” (“The Haunting of the Filipino Writer” 298). He calls for a Filipino poetics that draws from “the colonial encounter with its specific, creative enactments of subversion and appropriation of alien forms” (“The Haunting of the Filipino Writer” 305). The fraught encounters between Apoyon’s characters signify a larger disturbance. Thus, his stories can be read as parables about the colonial experience in Mindanao. The essay will also look at ethnographic and historical data to extend Apoyon’s fictional representation of the Lumad and to bring into sharper focus the reality he sought to describe.

1. *Symbolic Hunger and History of Displacement*

There is a Visayan folk belief about hunger that echoes Mojares’s metaphor of the haunted wandering soul. A person must not go to sleep on an empty stomach, lest the soul leave the body in search of food. Fumbling for leftovers in the kitchen, the soul might fall into the rice pot and, once the lid is closed, trap itself inside. Until someone opens the pot, the soul will not be able to return to the body.

Of the twelve stories in *Gakit*, five describe characters seeking food or the means to obtain it. This hunger drives a character to either kill, steal, or invade, mirroring the encounter between settler and the indigenous, the coloniser and the colonised. In the end, physical hunger is revealed for what it truly is: the desire to conquer the territory of others.

In “Ang Mag Tiayon sa Bakilid” (The Couple in the Valley), warring forces of communist rebels and government combatants extort food from a Boholano couple, placing them in the middle of the armed conflict. In “Gumikan sa Iyang Baroganan” (Upon His Grounding Principles), another Boholano migrant strapped for cash accidentally finds a duffel bag filled with American dollars. After bouts of indecision, he eventually surrenders the bag to the authorities and gets rewarded for returning the money of an American venture capitalist in Davao City. In the same story, a tourist hotel is named after the Mansaka, suggesting how the indigenous has become an empty sign for cultural identity.

Among the stories about hunger, one powerfully exhibits Apoyon’s dialogical depiction of interethnic relations. Published in *Bisaya* in 1969, “Mga

Gutom” (The Hungry Ones) is a fictional explication of the Cebuano expression “ting-bitay sa iro” (dog-hanging season), which describes a period of scarcity where people are forced to slaughter dogs for food.

After the mayor he supported fails to win in the election, Raymundo loses his job at the municipal hall. Desperate to feed his family, he hunts down a stray dog. The animal fights back and momentarily escapes Raymundo. Later, the dog is cornered inside a makeshift village occupied by Visayan informal settlers. After discovering that his prey also has offspring to feed, Raymundo changes his mind. His compassion reveals a desire to understand the Other. In spite of Raymundo’s resistance, a mob of hungry Visayan settlers tears the dog to pieces.

More than a dramatisation of Visayan desperation, the story can be read as an allegory of the coloniser’s guilt. In the end, Raymundo laments his participation in the slaughter: “Nangling-lingo si Mundo sa kaluoy sa iro. Kon dili pa tungod niya, dili pa unta mapagan ang irong kabangon (Mundo shakes his head in commiseration for the dog. If not for him, the spotted dog would not be dragged into trouble) (7).

Though he manages to rescue the dog’s three pups and escape, carnage has already begun. The Visayan have blood on their hands. Raymundo turns away in horror at the monstrous sight of the hungry preying on the hungry. The story introduces a trope Apoyon employs in his later stories, that explicitly describes intercultural relations.

“Mga Gutom” reads like a morality tale. Raymundo, whose name when read playfully means “light of the world,” somewhat functions as a moral beacon against the murky impulses of his fellow Visayan settlers. His conscience brings some feeble light to an otherwise gloomy finale. The emaciated animal stands in for the original inhabitants of the land, whose abject condition in reality is far worse than that of those who got off the boat starving. The coldblooded brutality of the settlers in the story seems to recall the fact that the first colonialists, according to the historian Heidi K. Gloria, were mostly outcasts of society: “fugitives, army deserters, and political exiles.” A number of these “outlaws” married indigenous women who converted to Christianity (55).

In the mid-19th Century when the first few Visayan settlers arrived after Jose Oyanguren established the first settlement, colonialists had difficulty tilling the swampy Davao terrain. The settlers had to transact with the natives in the uplands who had mastered agricultural technologies suited for the land (Gloria 56). Political unrest turned for the worse when the Americans seized control of the region. In a move to manage the newly established plantations, indigenous peoples were forced to live on “reservations,” which caused them to retreat into the hinterlands. Over the years, the settlers’ political, cultural and economic dominance in Davao grew. In contrast, the Lumad groups had to fight for their ancestral domain.

In the 1970s, Davao City Mayor Elias B. Lopez conceived of Apo Duwaling – a festival intended to pay tribute to the natural resources and indigenous heritage of the Davao region. Lopez himself was a Bagobo. According to a promotional article, Apo Duwaling became the Kadayawan Festival in 1988, during the first term of current Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte (Tacio). Held every August, the festival has become one of the city's main cultural activities, staging food bazaars, a beauty pageant among indigenous women, a floral parade and a street dance contest inspired by the cultures of the Davao indigenous groups. Though still in accordance with the intentions of its predecessor, the Kadayawan Festival, after 30 years of enactment, needs to be assessed in terms of its portrayal of the indigenous peoples. For one, it must be considered how the pressing needs of the Lumad are addressed by staging such extravagant festivals. In a news article published in *Sun.Star Davao*, the Davao City local government was said to have allotted 10.8 million pesos for the promotion of the event (Cudis). While Kadayawan also keeps the settler population aware of the cultural roots of Davao, it still remains to be fully articulated elsewhere how the proliferation of these cultural pageants has contributed to the trivialisation of the concerns of the indigenous peoples.

The festival jarringly exists alongside the alarming rise of killings and harassment in Lumad villages, whose community leaders are being tagged by the Philippine military with the New People's Army, the Communist Party of the Philippines's armed division. Caused by the clash between the military and the New People's Army and the formation of paramilitary groups, the killings have in turn driven the Lumad away from their ancestral lands, forcing them to live in settlements in urban centres. In an article in *Time* magazine, Carlos Conde, a researcher for the Human Rights Watch, calls the spate of killings a "civil war" (Spear). The Lumad's history with the New People's Army goes back to the 1970s when the State's aggressive development strategies sanctioned logging and mining companies to arrogate ancestral lands. In 1997, more than two decades later, a comprehensive Indigenous People's Rights Act was enacted. But according to Aida T. Vidal, in her book *Conflicting Laws, Overlapping Claims: The Politics of Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights in Mindanao*, the implementation of the law met with difficulties and even caused tension among the inhabitants of contested lands (44).

In the meantime, the local government of Davao City encourages the arrival of Lumad groups in town centres each year during December as part of the city's Christmas celebration. According to a news article, around 48,000 Lumad flocked to gymnasiums in eight different towns in Davao City in 2014 (Alviola). Food drives and donations are supposedly in place. However, poor planning and lack of facilities continue to trouble this supposed gesture of good will. For a few weeks, families live inside gymnasiums like evacuees. Others spill out into the streets where they would have to lay mats or cardboard sheets to

sleep on at night. Many of the Lumad children and adults, most of whom wear clothes donated to them, resort to panhandling. These temporary shelters strangely resemble the squatters' zone described in Apoyon's story.

2. *Hubris of the Trespasser*

"Dili Alang Kang David Ang Baboy-ihalas" (The Wild Boar is Not for David) was published in *Bisaya* in 1999, thirty years after "Mga Gutom." Prompted by his wife and children to search for food, the Visayan David asks his friend Atong, a Bagobo, to go on a hunting trip in the mountains. They eventually find a wild boar struggling to escape the grip of a large snake. "[K]inahanglan molampos ko." *I must succeed*, David tells himself. "Kinahanglan modaog ako karon niining una kong pangayam. Dili ako molugsong sa amo nga walay dala" (I must win in my first hunting trip. I will not go home empty-handed) (Apoyon 12). A suggestion of ethnocentrism lies in David's belief that a human has more right to claim the wild boar than what he perceives to be a lesser creature. But unlike Raymundo who finds affinity with the dog, David sees his need as more important in the hierarchy of nature. "Agawon ta," David tells the Bagobo, referring to the boar. *Let us seize it*. Atong explains that the rules of hunting in the forest prohibit the taking of an animal already caught by another. But David offers a skewed humanist perspective: "Di ba mas gikinahanglan kanang baboy-ihalas sa tawo kay sa baksan? (Isn't it so that a human needs the boar far more than a snake does?) (Apoyon 12).

It is clear to Atong that the wild boar belongs to the snake. He can only watch as the Visayan interferes in the struggle between two animals. He calls on the deities of the forest to pardon David's impudence; he shouts at David to retreat and save himself from danger. But David continues to stab the boar and the snake, until the snake turns away from its catch. "It is mine now," David tells himself, but the boar regains strength and rams itself against him. After an exhausting tussle with the boar, David finally wins. He announces his triumph but his "voice is swallowed by the loneliness of the forest" (Apoyon 14).

The Bagobo represents the voice of reason. Having an intuitive grasp of the ecological system, Atong warns David about intruding on the space of another inhabitant, the snake. But David dismisses the Bagobo's sensible advice, reflecting the Visayan settler's ignorance of indigenous knowledge. The story, with its allusion to a serpent in the garden, resonates like a Biblical tale. The battle between David and the snake is a fight for the land's food sources as embodied in the boar. In his refusal to heed the codes of hunting and his disrespect for Atong's practices, David implicitly reveals a prejudice against the Bagobo. He does not see Atong as an equal whose values and beliefs he too must respect. Instead, he ruthlessly snatches the catch of another animal.

David's excursion into the forest is not a simple search for food to provide for his family, but a demonstration of the invader's predisposition to

view the indigenous realm as a contestable, vulnerable and lawless domain. Apoyon presents an anti-hero and sidekick duo featuring the foolish Visayan and the wise Bagobo. David's arrogant and hostile seizing of the wild boar is symbolic of the taking of lands from the indigenous peoples of Mindanao.

Though David manages to grab hold of his prize, the snake's bite weakens and kills him. Hubris destroys the trespasser, and the Lumad is left with another task. The story's final image is that of the Bagobo carrying off David's dead body back to the valley. The story closes with a jarring refrain that Apoyon ascribes to the Bagobo character. Atong calls David a hero in his resolve to defeat the snake, but he also pities him. Atong becomes Apoyon's mouthpiece to convey his own conflicting feelings about the Visayan invasion of the indigenous people's land.

Apoyon's story focuses on the Visayan character's alienation from the land in which he had settled. In reality, it is the Bagobo who have had to withstand the tremendous consequences of colonisation in their ancestral lands. In her book *The Bagobos: Their Ethnohistory and Acculturation*, Gloria describes the alteration of the Davao landscape after the paving of roads into the mountains and the introduction of banana and rice crops along the gulf during the American Occupation. The arrival of homesteaders caused changes in the systems of labour and production (94). As a reaction to the exploitation of labour by plantation owners, many Bagobo departed for the uplands. In Apoyon's story, Atong is shown to possess a mastery of a highland territory.

Today, many Bagobo live in Davao City (Toril), Davao del Sur (Bansalan, Digos and Santa Cruz) and parts of Cotabato (Kidapawan and Makilala). They have been Christianised and, according to Tiu, the most acculturated to the Visayan way of life out of all the indigenous groups in Mindanao (Tiu 54). What is perhaps worth noting is how, in spite of colonisation, the Bagobo and other indigenous groups in Mindanao are able to preserve and vigorously assert their cultural identity, as opposed to the settlers in Davao – Ilocano, Ilonggo, Cebuano, Tagalog – who seem to blend into each other. Gloria attributes this phenomenon to a “melting pot” effect (95). The divide that has grown over the years between the migrant and the native has caused the former to blur ethnic distinctions. In the story, David never declares or considers his own Visayan identity, while from the third person point of view whose reach is limited to David's consciousness, Atong is always qualified as a knowledgeable Bagobo.

The stories “Mga Gutom” and “Dili Alang Kang David ang Baboy Ihalas” are prescient in recognising the undercurrents of despair and hostility in settler communities in Mindanao. Like Raymundo who witnesses the dog's slaughter, today's settlers continue to see the patronising treatment of the Lumad as signifiers of ethnic authenticity during annual “festivals” that draw crowds, their garments and wares manufactured and sold in tourist shops, their dances and songs mimicked by the children of the people who had driven them

away from the coast into the mountains. It is as though colonial history has been playing a prank, but the ones who suffer most are those who have been exiled many times over from their own lands.

Perhaps also because of the effects of colonisation, their encounters with mining and logging corporations and their involvement in the conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the New People's Army, the indigenous peoples of Mindanao have steadfastly held claim to their ethnic identity. Ethnic tensions remain among the Visayan and Tagalog peoples, but these are more pronounced for the Tagalog in Luzon and Visayan (Waray, Ilonggo, Cebuano) in the Visayas. The settlers from these groups who have been living in Davao are evidently more willing to dissolve distinctions in the service of conveying their sense of nation. One only needs to observe how settlers in Davao speak a dialect that seems to possess the linguistic structure of Cebuano but features the vocabulary of Tagalog.

Remarkably, the indigenous peoples' appropriation of the Visayan word "lumad" as a political declaration of identity, and therefore an assertion to the rest of the peoples in the Philippines of their own contemporary experiences, is one of the most concrete and emblematic ways in which they engage in the discourse of nationhood. Incidentally, the use of the term "Lumad" can be contentious since it underscores the political and cultural hegemony of the Visayan people in Mindanao. But over the years, leaders and members of indigenous groups in Mindanao have appropriated the term to assert identity and raise political consciousness. According to Vidal, the choice to use "Lumad" to refer to un-Islamised indigenous peoples in Mindanao first found expression in 1986 after the establishment of the now defunct organisation Lumad-Mindanao. Since then, indigenous groups have been using the term when expressing their grievances about policies and incidents that affect them. That the social media "hash tag" #StopLumadKillings has become a "trend" that steers national attention to the problems of the indigenous peoples (Conde) is proof of the continuing expansion of the word "Lumad."

"Lumad" has become a collective name that not only represents the indigenous population but also a particularly marginalised unit of Philippine society *located* in Mindanao. In repurposing a word, the indigenous people of Mindanao have reclaimed their voice from the Visayan settlers who have dispossessed them.

3. *Ethnicity and Sexual Desire*

Biblical archetypes of the woman as temptress, emasculating lover and demonic beast are seen in stories such as "Ang Tinagoan ni Pocholo" (Pocholo's Secret), in which a woman castrates her unfaithful husband; "Anak sa Wakwak" (The Wakwak's Daughter), in which a boy comes of age after discovering that the mother of the girl he likes turns out to be a monstrous killer; and "Ang Sakit ni

Mystika Brillante” (The Illness of Mystika Brillante), in which the titular character’s promiscuity and liberal attitude toward sex are pathologised.

But no other story in the collection better brings to the fore Apoyon’s problematic Christian views on sexuality, womanhood and ethnicity than “Ang Jihad ni Hadji Aribani.” In a book filled with troubling encounters, it is this story that is most haunted. What appears to be another Apoyon story about sexual seduction actually bears the weight of a violent history between two ethnic groups. Most of all, the story is set during the Marcos Dictatorship, a period when the Maguindanaon and the Teduray experienced one of the grimmest episodes in their shared history (Schlegel 231).

The American anthropologist Stuart A. Schlegel has provided a useful account of the history of the Teduray and the Maguindanaon. For generations, the Teduray and Maguindanaon societies have coexisted; the latter occupied the lowlands, and the former inhabited the mountains south of the Pulangi River. Historically, the Maguindanaon, the more politically powerful group, looked down on the Teduray and took them as slaves (Schlegel 2), while those who had converted to Islam were considered close allies by the Maguindanaon (Schlegel 3).

According to Teduray oral tradition, the Maguindanaon and the Teduray descend from the children of Shariff Kabungsuan: Ado, Amil, and Salabangon. Kabungsuan renamed Ado as Mamalo, which comes from the phrase “mamalo maislam dama kabaloy” or “he nearly converted to Islam.” Thus, the children in Mamalo’s lineage came to be known as “Tidulay na Bansa,” which refers to their near-conversion to Islam. The Teduray are Mamalo’s descendants (Masinaring 66).

In “Ang Jihad ni Hadji Aribani,” Hadji, a pious Maguindanaon man, finds himself inside the house of a Teduray woman named Dalina. Hadji was on his way home from the funeral of a relative, who happened to be a Muslim rebel, when government forces attacked the truck they were riding in. Dalina found him wounded on the side of the road and took him to her home.

Right from the start, Apoyon spells out Dalina’s motive. She thanks the Teduray deities for sending down a man who will finally satisfy her physical needs. Her husband Lawin had gone missing after Ferdinand Marcos’s constables tagged him as a member of the communist insurgency.

When Hadji asks Dalina where he is, she responds, as though to signal a confrontation, “Ania ka sa kalibotan sa mga tribung Tiruray... ania ka sa akong timawa apan hamiling panimalay” (You are in the world of the Teduray tribe... you are in my modest but noble abode) (15).

Having laid the necessary exposition, Apoyon’s standard plot starts to turn. After feeding Hadji and tending to his wounds, Dalina executes her plan. Apoyon describes Hadji’s attractiveness through Dalina’s eyes. But it is not only

Dalina's desire that is displayed; Hadji acknowledges, through interior dialogue, Dalina's beauty.

The story proceeds to describe in ascending order the Teduray's seduction of a Maguindanaon through speech, touch, and finally, kisses. From Hadji's perspective, the seduction is an ordeal he must overcome. He takes out his Qur'an and reminds himself of his wife and children and his pilgrimage to Mecca. Apoyon pulls out all the stops. Hadji prays to Allah for the courage not to commit a sin. In turn, Dalina pleads to Hadji to satisfy her yearning.

From this point in the story, an interloper joins Dalina and Hadji: Apoyon's Christian assumptions about sexuality become so palpable that Hadji might as well have been a Christian conservative battling temptation. Hadji eventually rebuffs Dalina's advances by reading from the Qu'ran until he falls asleep.

In the morning, Hadji leaves Dalina's house, but not before he finds her bathing naked in a nearby lake – a final effort to lure the man. But Hadji thanks her for her hospitality and bids her goodbye. The story ends with Hadji saying thanks to Allah for helping him “in his fight with himself” (21), denying the existence of Dalina's own desires.

What haunts this story of the lonely Teduray woman who seduces a wounded Maguindanaon man is an event on February 1972, months before the declaration of Martial Law.

The undercurrents of tension between the Teduray and the Maguindanaon erupted in the 1970s. Following Ferdinand Marcos's all-out war campaign against Muslim separatists, the Philippine Army forced a group of Maguindanaon fighters to retreat into the forest inhabited by a Teduray community. When the Teduray refused the rebels' demand to offer them the sexual services of their women, the rebels killed almost everyone in the settlement (Schlegel 234).

Set against this historical narrative, Apoyon's story can be read as an attempt to reconcile, through fiction, these two groups driven apart by internal and external conflicts. This time, the roles are reversed – it is the Teduray woman who seeks to fulfil her sexual needs on a Maguindanaon. Hadji's prayerful refusal to yield to Dalina's supplications can be read as an act of atonement. In this fictional world, the Maguindanaon man does not wish to repeat what others from his tribe have done to Teduray womanhood. While Hadji prays, Dalina lays down her frustrations that may not only be physical, but also indicate a troubled soul: her husband has become a *desaparecido* – one of The Disappeared during the Marcos Dictatorship.

In establishing this scenario, Apoyon sets up several binary oppositions: Man/Woman, Lowlander/Highlander, Islam/Animism, Maguindanaon/Teduray, Virtue/Sin. By placing the woman and Teduray at the weaker end of the binary, Apoyon highlights the inequality between the Maguindanaon and

Teduray, but also raises several fraught assumptions. Cast as a mere agent to test Hadji Aribani's faith, Dalina becomes an irredeemable entity in the equation – a soul that cannot be saved, according to Apoyon's Christian viewpoint.

In the other chronicle of this encounter between the Maguindanaon and the Teduray, Schlegel also reveals his own European-American binaries. In his book *Wisdom from A Rainforest: The Spiritual Journey of an Anthropologist*, Schlegel repeatedly compares the sexuality and gender of Teduray men and women with Western conventions (113-14). Schlegel characterises the Teduray as having a "very positive attitude toward erotic pleasure" (141). The Teduray attitude is positive in the sense that Western prudishness is negative. The Teduray gender phenomenon of *mentefumaley libun*, or "one-who-became-a-woman," is compared to more stringent gender norms of the West. Both Apoyon and Schlegel have things to say about Teduray sexuality based on their own conceptual frameworks. Schlegel's is Episcopalian-American, while Apoyon's is Catholic-Visayan.

In the story, the two characters part ways without truly resolving the trouble between them. Dalina ends up alone in her house, waiting for her husband who may only come back as a ghost. Since the story is set around the same time when the actual killings took place, Dalina may as well be a ghost haunting Hadji Aribani, a "woman with no mercy," her sexual longing actually a yearning for justice. In fact, Dalina's one-dimensional characterisation renders her a spectral presence next to Hadji Aribani who is having a psychological bout with himself. The whole night, she haunts him.

Today, there are around 676,357 Teduray living in Lebak and Ezperanza in Sultan Kudarat; in Dohon in Talagyan Awang; in North Upi, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Tuduk Tantawan, Firis and Maganoy in Maguindanao. They are laying claim to their ancestral domain and in the process of establishing their own province called Mamalo, named after their ancient ancestor. The Teduray have participated in peace talks between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines by submitting a position paper that asserts a pact between the common ancestors of the Maguindanao and the Teduray (Masinaring 63).

In his book *Understanding the Lumad*, Manggob Revo N. Masinaring emphasises the objectives of the Teduray according to Deonato Mokodef, who is the secretary general of the Organization of Teduray and Lambagian Conference (OTLAC):

That the Teduray must be represented in the ARMM [Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao] Congress and that political domination and discrimination against the Teduray must stop; (2) a stronger network between the Teduray and other Lumad to strengthen their struggle towards self-determination; and (3) That assistance intended for the Teduray should

reach them and should not be stolen by corrupt officials in government.
(64)

A recent study on the Teduray women of Rifao in South Upi in the context of the peace process in Mindanao identifies the need to improve the political education of Teduray women through “alternative learning spaces” to advance their immediate concerns and needs (Alojamiento 68).

Apoyon’s use of the sexual seduction plot to allude to the disquieting context between two ethnic groups is problematic at best, and yet he dares to confront this traumatic historical event. Whoever sets out to touch this livewire of a theme in Philippine literature should look back on Apoyon’s provocative, flawed, but undoubtedly bold approach.

Mojares’s analysis of the Filipino soul throws into stark relief Apoyon’s themes of physical and spiritual hunger, sexual trauma and violence among colonised peoples: “[If] we choose to confront our ghosts, wrestle with nightmare, and wrest out of it a new and heightened wakefulness” then we might be able to discover the possibilities that this haunted condition affords us. This haunting, demonstrated in Apoyon’s fraught interethnic encounters, may lead us to a better understanding of the self and the nation precisely because it recognises the trauma of our colonial past.

Thus, Apoyon’s stories about the intersecting lives of peoples in Mindanao transcend the provisional rubric of “regional literature.” This “haunted” writing that accounts for the troubling episodes of the nation’s history is what truly constitutes a national literature. In Mojares’s words:

It is in this haunting that the nation will be created – and not in that condition of denial where one refuses to acknowledge that one has been shocked, seduced, or has sinned, nor in that state where one has erased memories of what has been violated. Shock, seduction, and sin are elements in the field in which creativity flourishes – for so long as we can (and we surely shall prove ourselves strong enough to weave the various strands of our shared life into a stronger sense of self and nation, a fuller and richer soul. (311)

Conclusion

The stories from *Ang Gakit ni Noebong Ug Ubang Mga Sugilanon* convey a reality distinct from most Cebuano fiction published after World War II. “Mga Gutom,” “Dili Angay Kang David ang Baboy-Ihalas” and “Ang Jihad ni Hadji Aribani” offer a cross-cultural conception of reality and a sense of a larger, hybrid community beyond the Cebu Province.

Within the parameters of a popular genre, Apoyon manages to shed some light – dim and tinted it may seem at times – on the Mindanao situation. Hence, he became part of a group of Visayan writers based in Southern Philippines

who contributed to a stream of writing that reckons with the aftermath of Spanish and American conquests, and consequently, Luzon and Visayan migration to Mindanao.

Apart from Satur P. Apoyon, a number of writers in Mindanao, such as Macario D. Tiu, Agustin “Don” Pagusara, and most notably, the Higaonon novelist Telesforo S. Sungkit, Jr., have also explored the lifestyle of indigenous peoples. They are able to draw out finer nuances of experience, greater thematic range and richer psychological insights.

In comparison, Apoyon used bold strokes. His stories often bear the weight of the genre in which he wrote – the popular Cebuano short story published in *Bisaya* magazine. His great achievement is making the necessary aesthetic engagement with perhaps one of the most damning and least attended lessons in Philippine history and society: the plight of the indigenous peoples.

In the wake of the recent executions of leaders of Lumad communities, the Filipino public have perhaps never been more aware of the predicaments of the indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, the prospect of justice being served on behalf of these slain men remains unclear, considering the hundreds of unsolved cases of political violence in the Philippines, including the election-related massacre in Maguindanao in 2009, and the “misencounter” between the Special Action Forces and Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, in 2015. Scholars and advocates will undoubtedly thresh out the details. But the task of reckoning with the traumas of the past and the enigmas of the present lies with the artist. As demonstrated above, Apoyon’s haunted fiction has eerily foretold today’s atrocities.

There is no better time than now for readers and writers in the Philippines and elsewhere to engage, critically or artistically, with a writer like Apoyon whose trenchant voice is still little known in his own country. Apoyon’s vigorous language and sociological attention – an awareness of a region’s heterogeneous culture – makes his art a fascinating example of a stream of writing that developed recently in Mindanao.

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