Transnational Counter-Insurgencies: Desultory Readings of Selected Critical Anthologies and Documents on Southeast Asian Literature

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Abstract

Though often understood as an American-incited foreign policy and political discourse during the Cold War era, anti-communism, even in its origins and present deployment, has always had a transnational character. A cursory look at the diametrically-opposed positions of then leading anti-communist organizations such as the World Anti-Communist League, International Council of Christian Churches, Mont Pèlerin Society, and the Interdoc would prove the futility of attributing the origins and centrality of anti-communist discourse to a single nation-state. In the same way, the anti-communist aspect of ASEAN was first met by Southeast Asian nation-states with responses ranging from collaboration (Indonesia) to isolation (Vietnam). Often viewed as a political and economic project, ASEAN, as a form of collectivity, has also made its presence felt in the field of literature and literary processes such as canon-formation. In the past few decades, literary and critical anthologies conceived and organized around the concept run abound. Following Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova's model for a denationalized literary history, this study attempts a distant and desultory reading of selected works (collections, documents, and anthologies) on Southeast Asian literature, such as J.C.S Davidson and Helen Cordell's The Short Story in Southeast Asia (1982), David Smyth's The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures, and Thelma Kintanar's Her Story: Women's Narratives in Modern Southeast Asian Writing (2008). Focusing on national and transnational literary processes (i.e., literary awards, translation, pedagogy, criticism, anthologizing) involved in the formation and consolidation of the literary canon in Southeast Asia, on the one hand, the study eschews the predominantly interpretive tendencies of close reading. On the other hand, through desultory readings of relevant texts, the study attempts to plot and map within and outside the confines of national and regional canons the extent through which anti-communist discourse has influenced literary imagination and scholarship.

Keywords: Anti-communism, ASEAN, anthologies, literary criticism, literary canon, reading methods

Introduction

As E. Ulrich Kratz puts it in his seminal essay "The Canon of Indonesian Literature: an Analysis of Indonesian Literary History available in Indonesia," all discussions about a nation's literary canon are always tied to its literary history. To this end, Kratz (2000) defines literary history as a branch of literary studies and criticism which aims to introduce and analyze dominant and emergent literary practices, foreground specific social, historical and political conditions which gave rise to literary institutions, and eulogize writers who represented through their writings the culture, history, and aspirations of a people and a nation. Conceived as such, literary history then becomes a written account of how a nation is textualized and represented. And since both framing and periodization are inherent processes in the writing of such history, literary history, in a way, arrogates to itself the task of reading. And since "reading" is also an act of "representation," literary history, in its own twisted way, can be seen as an authoritative representation of the many and divergent representations of the nation.

However, since literary history and canon-making are almost always exercises in accumulation and repetition, both critics and anthologists, in the process of imagining a specific form of collectivity, (un)wittingly espouse a singular and homogenized vision of the nation. This problem has been alluded to by Laurent Dubreuil in "What is Literature Now?" pertaining especially to unending attempts of literary critics to come up with a definitive definition of "literature" (2007 44-45). Since the discipline of reading and writing requires a certain sense of order and coherence, it is inevitable for particular narratives of the nation to be undercut and relegated to obscurity. For instance, one can ask: In light of the collapse of socialist regimes all over the world, how is communism or communist nationalism represented the literary canon of Southeast Asia? What views on socialist realism are dominant in Southeast Asia? Simply put, narrating and representing the nation is in and by itself a violent process.

Interestingly, in attempting to historicize the emergence of literary institutions in Cambodia, George Chigas (2000) claims that the rise of the Khmer Rouge regime interrupted the mapping of Cambodia's literary canon. Likewise, in Vietnam, Dana Healy (2000) claims that the war during the 1950's up to first years of the 1970's was an unsettling period for any literary activity. A quick gloss on both assertions about the nature of consolidating and understanding national (and regional) canons reveal a very interesting fact: that socio-historical and socio-political events circumscribe the process of writing literary history canon-making. However, is it not the process itself of consolidating, understanding, and institutionalizing national and regional canons interruptive and disruptive? Linking the project of writing literary history and understanding and consolidating a canon to the project of nation-building, Caroline Hau suggests that the very process itself is mired with a constitutive violence (2001 7-8). Canon-making cannot be isolated from so-called external events because it is also in itself a historical and political event.

Moreover, as Tuan Ngoc Nguyen proves in his dissertation on the very political character of socialist realism, the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) recognized the key role of culture, especially literature, in ideological tussles with the enemy (2004). This led to drafting of the "Theses on Culture" by two communist cultural cadres, Hoc Phi and Tran Quoc. This document

hugely draws from Mao Zedong's "Yana'n Talks on Literature and Art," most especially in its attempt to convince people that there is a veritable link between literature and struggle. It also helps that literature can be used to justify the rightness and timeliness of war and struggle. Talking about the views of Vietnamese cadres and writers on culture as one of the revolution's "important fronts," Nguyen states (2004 17),

> Such a cultural resistance occurred in Vietnam in the twentieth century. Since the early 1940s, ten years after its establishment, the Vietnamese Communist Party confirmed that culture, including literature, was one of the three most important fronts, other two being the military and the economy. Writers were
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> labelled as cultural soldiers. On the literary front, as Hồ Chí Minh espoused,"poems should be tempered steel / And poets too should join the fight", 54 or as Sóng Hồng urged, poets should "seize the pen to cast down the world's tyrants / Make rhymes into bombs and from verse make grenades."55 Writers and poets, however, went further. They not only used their pen as a weapon to fight against
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> enemies, they also used literature to construct their own national discourse, which was separate from that of colonialism. Along with music and traditional theatre, literature existed as "codes" and "symbols" to support the idea of a uniform national culture.

The above quote paints a different picture than that of most critics after the collapse of socialist regimes in Europe and after socialist states in Asia underwent disparate periods of political, economic, and cultural renovation. Though one cannot really homogenize the exegesis of critics during this period, one cannot help but detect a kernel of anti-communist discourse in them. As Edel Garcellano quips, the problem of most critics of the left is that they assume that, "the text that has pronounced the left's infallibility is in itself beyond exegetical doubt (truly, doubter of authorial meaning), the correct ideological utterance, a paradigmatic solution to an empirical Gordian Knot" (1987 23). This is most true in the context of ASEAN's emergence as a form of collectivity during the period when communism was besieged in all fronts. And considering ASEAN's history and origins as an anti-communist project, one can ask: What kind of national and regional consensus do national literary and critical anthologies foment? What about regional anthologies? Knowing that the ASEAN project gained sizeable momentum after the collapse of socialist states in Europe and the weakening and/or dissolution (especially in the case of Indonesia) of Communist parties in Asia, what kind of collective binding does it offer?

In Indonesia for example, how does the dominant reception of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's writings during his LEKRA years as "stale" and "unsophisticated" (Kintanar 2008) by top Indonesian critics like H.B. Jassin influence critics and readers' perception of literary trends such as socialist realism? For instance, in the Philippines, what narrative(s) and project(s) of the nation do Leopoldo Yabes' two-volume anthology of short stories or Gemino Abad's anthology of Philippine short stories in English put to the fore? In a similar fashion, since national canons are

part and parcel of larger canon-making projects, the question can be extended to earlier regional anthologies: What "Southeast Asia" do anthologies like Anthology of ASEAN Literature and Modern ASEAN Literature envision? Can these anthologies be read, in light of widespread LIC campaigns in Asia, as texts that reinforce ASEAN's political project?

Individual works and critical anthologies on (and from) the literature of the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia will be read (and not be read) for the purposes of the study. For the Philippine context, Thelma Kintanar's *Her Story: Women's Narrative from Southeast Asia* (2008) and the introduction of the first and second volume of Gemino Abad's *A Hoard of Thunder: Philippine Short Stories in English, 1990- 2008* (2012), and the coda of Virgilio Alamrio's seminal work on Philippine poetic traditions, *Balagatsismo Versus Modernismo* (Balagtasism versus Modernism) (1984), will serve as the primary texts. Selected essays from the David Smyth's anthology *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures* (2000), sections on culture and the literary arts in party congress documents of the VCP, and Tuan Ngoc Nguyen's *Socialist Realism in Vietnamese Literature: An Analysis Between Literature and Politics* (2004; published as book in 2008) on the other hand, will be the bedrock of analysis of the Vietnamese experience. Lastly, Hilmar Farid's reading on Hans Bague Jassin's *Kesusastraan Indonesia dalam Kritik dan* Esei (Modern Indonesia Literature in Criticism and Essays) and, Andries Teeuw's two-volume opus *Modern Indonesian Literature* (1967 and 1979), and *Prahara Budaya: Kilas-Balik Ofensif LEKRA/PKI* (Cultural Catastrophe) (1995), edited by Taufiq Ismail and D.S. Moeljanto, in his dissertation will account for the Indonesian experience. To account for the study's comparative thrust, reference to J.C.S Davidson and Helen Cordell's *The Short Story in South East Asia: Aspects of Genre* (1982) will be made.

Anthologies from these countries were chosen for they represent different approaches and characteristics of obeisance and/or resistance to the dominant national and global narrative. It is well-known, for instance, that when Suharto took power in 1965, the Communist Party of Indonesia or PKI fell into shambles. In a span of three years, the Suharto regime was able to exterminate, imprison, and exile more than hundreds of thousands of communists and alleged sympathizers. Simply put, of the three states, the Indonesian experience easily represents the success of the anti-communist aspect of the ASEAN project. On the other hand, despite suffering major setbacks on the political and military front in the past few decades, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing the New People's Army still boast the broadest and longest active resistance against the state in the region. Vietnam, on the other hand, offers a different and interesting set of dynamics. Like most remaining socialist states in Asia, Vietnam is in the process of integrating itself to the world through market-oriented economic reforms. However, like China and Laos, Vietnam still claims to be committed to the principles of socialism.

In the same way, as has been alluded to, the endeavors of literary critics to understand and consolidate the literary canon of Southeast Asia should also be read as a form of representation. As such, anthologies of criticism can be treated as containing categorical statements about the literary culture of the region and the countries belonging to it. It is for this reason that such endeavors also becomes the primary problem and object of this study. If literary anthologies serve

as representations of various national aspirations, then critical anthologies are ways through which these representations are reinforced or interrogated, re-interpreted or supplanted.

For this reason, first and foremost, a method that tries to avoid the theological and overly-interpretive tendencies of close reading (who can escape close reading, anyway?) is in order. A method that tries to look at canon-making as a process that lies *between* the extra-literary and literary matters. The key then is to read for ideological tussles in this in-*between*. This reading of what is in *between* lets the current study steer clear away from the danger of assuming an immediate relationship between the social and the literary (Bennett 2010: 253-276). For Immanuel Kant and Jacques Ranciere (and to some extent, Tony Bennett as well), the third terminology is aesthetics.

Second, to underscore the transnationality of anti-communist discourse in Southeast Asian literary scholarship, anthologies will be treated, as in Caroline Levine's formulation (2015), as a distinct literary form—as a *form of possibility*—while nations will be treated as liminal spaces. As such, anthologies and nations form a network: the former serving as edges while the latter functioning as nodes. And to read this network, distance and movement must be the primary condition of knowledge.

The Affordances of Distant and Desultory Reading: Denationalizing Anti-Communism

Two essays included in the anthology *Distant Reading* (2013) serve as the foundations of Franco Moretti's formulation of 'distant reading'. The first essay, "Conjectures on World Literature," attempts to give a definition of distant reading. On the other hand, the second essay, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature," can be considered as an application of the said method on English detective novels. In "Conjectures...," for instance, Moretti defines distant reading as (2013 53-54),

> Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more. If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor. But it's precisely this 'poverty' that makes it possible to handle them, and therefore to know. This is why less is actually more.

In "The Slaughterhouse of Literature," meanwhile, Moretti shows us how is it possible to read literary texts differently (2013 69),

> Where I did act responsibly was in the amount of reading I did for the essay: all those forgotten detective stories that I chart in the text. But was it still reading, what I was doing? I doubt it: I read 'through' those stories looking for clues, and (almost) nothing else; it felt very different from the reading I used to know. It was more like what Jonathan Arac described, in the controversy around 'Conjectures', as a 'formalism without close reading'; a nice formulation, of which 'Slaughterhouse' was perhaps the first clear example: identifying a discrete formal trait, and then following its metamorphoses through a whole series of texts. The 'Quantitative Formalism' that gave its title to the first pamphlet of the Literary Lab had not yet occurred to me; but, after 'Slaughterhouse', it was really just a matter of time.

In the case of this study, anti-communism can be likened to the discrete formal trait that Moretti trained on in his 'readings' of English detective novels. The difference, however, is that Moretti still reads the detective novels as literature while anthologies, in this study will be read in various ways, and without privileging any point of attack. Though anthologies of literary criticism are the primary materials of the study, anti-communist discourse, as deployed in national and regional canons, is still the main socio-literary trait trained on in the study. To this end, distance must lend itself to movement, to both contingency and indeterminacy. If anything, as many experts have agreed upon, if communism, in its first conception is an internationalist movement, then it follows that resistance to it also has an transnational character (Scott-Smith 2012; Van Dongen et. al 2014). And this, on the other hand, is what 'desultory reading' provides—the opportunity to foreground anti-communist discourse's Janus-faced trait: the national and transnational. First developed by Samuel Johnson, autodidacts, and from dictionary reading methods, Brad Pasanek, in his work *Metaphors of the Mind: An Eighteenth-Century Dictionary*, defines desultory reading as (2013 9),

> In a section that follows, this "transitory application" of keywords to books will be named and promoted as "desultory reading"—a variety of skipping and skimming associated with the dictionary—but one that takes a whole archive as its text. Sorting metaphors by family resemblance, I would often begin with a single keyword (say, tabula rasa) only to knock off with a more varied set (see, for example, the keywords listed in Writing). This dictionary of metaphors is, then, a writing out of my experience of reading at large in the manner Williams and Austin brought to bear upon their dictionaries—a style of reading that the eighteenth century recognized as desultory and the current moment understands as digital or "database" reading. In composing a philosophical dictionary, one that dramatizes its relation to other reference works, I would emphasize the circle of hermeneutics. I take dictionary or desultory reading as both a means and an end. The work may be consulted or referenced, but it asks still more emphatically to be read.

Through desultory reading, the shortcomings of distant reading are limited to the fact that it can assume an immediate relationship between the political, the economic, and the literary. Moreover, since the study takes on an comparative approach, distant and desultory readings will help underscore the existing and yet-to-exist congruities and contiguities of the literary environments being compared. For instance, if readings of anthologies are limited under national or local lines, the tendency is to have a very provincial notion of, for example, anti-communist discourse. As Moretti says, the problem with close reading is not that someone is reading deeply, but instead that someone reads within a very small canon (52-53), which, in turn, results into narrower and more predictable readings of texts. Simply said, the goal of distant and desultory reading is to see forms as possibilities and not as containers or containments.

One other affordance of distant and desultory reading is a denationalized reading of literary texts. Spearheaded by Pascale Casanova in *La République mondiale des lettres* (1999), she believes that to uncover the transnational literary processes the makes possible the formation of various national literary canons, "Literature" must be treated as an autonomous space which articulates its own set of rules albeit maintaining an elective affinity with political, social, and economic realities of the world. In the case of this study, ASEAN and/or Southeast Asia, are types of collectivities that can serve as the organizing and denationalizing metaphors. This means that literary phenomena seen under national lines will be reterritorialized from time to time. As a literary trait, say anti-communism, gains more distance from its national womb (in spirit, of course), the easier for us to understand it's spectral nature. And rightfully so. As pointed by the existence of various anti-communist groups and organizations across the world (Scott-Smith 2012; Van Dongen et. al 2014) with different beliefs and methods of carrying out their political tasks, a nationalized and localized study of anti-communism—though a delight for specialists—tends to understate communism's international dimension.

At this point, it is instructive to be reminded of the fact that close reading cannot be completely abandoned despite the specific aims of the study. Doing so will reduce the study into an empirical formalism without any direction whatsoever. However, I would like to argue that close reading, in its most traditional and most rigid, has the tendency to ignore extra-literary processes in between the social and the literary. This include, for instance, blurbs, distribution, award-giving institutions, and, in the case of this study, literary criticism. The point of any close reading is to engage the text as such, for a reader to be attentive to details that announces a text's very own textuality. But on the other hand, as Craig Dworkin reminds us, "a sufficiently radical formalism pursues the closest of close readings *in the service* of political questions, rather than to their exclusion" (1998 5).

Textual Counter-Insurgencies: Encounters, Omissions, Renovations

In this part of the study, I argue that the deployment of anti-communist discourse in the scholarship on Southeast Asian Literature can be characterized in three ways, with its salvos directed specifically against any strain of the 'socialist realist' style. The first deployment of anti-communist discourse can be characterized as a direct *encounter* between diametrically-opposed forces. In my mind, the Indonesian experience, especially the conflict between Manikebuists and LEKRA writers, fits the first typology. The second deployment can be described as a form of

omission, a flattening of differences and/or nuances—a common practice in the writing of literary history and anthologizing in the Philippines. The last deployment is what I call *renovations*. This typology is characterized by a slow and constant process of rehashing and retracting certain collective literary positions, which in turn materializes as state policies, based on national and transnational processes. These processes are the in-betweens that I mentioned earlier in the study, processes that are not completely literary nor completely political. The Vietnamese case, in my view, best represents the third typology.

Before proceeding, though, it must be noted that the three typologies do not work in how typologies are usually rigidly formulated and operationalized. In fact, at certain points in history, these typologies coalesce and collapse into each other—an elective affinity of some sorts. But in the final analysis, of course, the point is to distinguish the prominent typology in a given literary culture.

Encounters: The Case of H.B. Jassin, A. Teeuw, Pramoedya Anata Toer, and LEKRA

Take, for instance, the post-war Indonesian literary scene. With the emergence of Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (LEKRA) [Institute of People's Culture] during the late 1950s and the early 1960s as a cultural organization, non-communist and anti-communist writers felt threatened and the need to supplant any form of progress by the group. This confrontational stance against writers who are affiliated or identified sympathizers of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) will take full swing during the early years of the Suharto regime, with many artists and writers being sent to prison camps, disappeared, or stripped off of opportunities. Among the many victims of this witch hunt is Indonesia's most popular writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Pramoedya was most notable for being one of the many writers imprisoned in Buru island for more than a decade during the Suharto regime. His most extensive account about his imprisonment can be read in *The Mute's Soliloquy*.

Although not a cardholder or an official party member, he became the scapegoat of the anti-communist intellectuals and some *Manikebuist*s. They accused Toer of chastising and executing (algojo) writers who do not adhere to communist ideal through 'Lentera', *Bintang Timur's* cultural section (Farid 2014). Describing the anti-communist literary environment during the Orde Baru and Pramoedya's path to obscurity, Farid comments (2014 4-5),

> After the New Order took power there was a constant attempt to reduce Pramoedya's role in literary history. His name was removed from school text books and teachers were banned from discussing his works in the classroom. The problem was that he was prominent and had a very strong presence partly because of Teeuw and Jassin's studies. Forcing that agenda too far might thus cause both of them to
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> lose credibility as reliable scholars and critics. A different strategy was thus devised, which was to focus on Pramoedya's dark side, and particularly on his role in the cultural politics of the 1960s. The bright image of Pramoedya as a liberal writer of the 1940s was offset by a

> darker image of him as a LEKRA propagandist. Yahaya Ismail takes this approach in his MA thesis, written under Jassin's supervision, on LEKRA (Ismail 1972). Pramoedya is portrayed there as a propagandist and 'executioner' (*algojo*) for LEKRA whose main task was to silence all opposing voices through slander, personal attack and political blackmail. The evidence used to support the claim is Pramoedya's set of articles about 'universal humanism' that were published in 'Lentera', the cultural page of the radical nationalist daily *Bintang Timur*. Ismail selects particular passages in those articles that he thinks reflect the 'dark side' of Pramoedya. He gained considerable success in that regard. His book became an armory for anti-communist writers in their attack on Pramoedya whenever the latter was placed under the spotlight: after his release from prison in 1979, on the publication of *Bumi Manusia* in 1980, and when he was granted the Magsaysay
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> Award in 1995. In the last incident a group of senior writers and critics signed a petition to protest the decision, using Ismail's study as evidence. Two of the signatories pushed their arguments by publishing *Prahara Budaya*, a collection of documents, including essays by Pramoedya as 'evidence' of Pramoedya's crimes in the past.

Two important points can be gleaned from Farid's observation. The first one, that Jassin and Teeuw, arguably the most respected Indonesian literary scholars of the post-war period, in their early works, held a deep appreciation for Pramoedya's early works. For instance, in the first volume of Teeuw's *Modern Indonesian Literature*, he expressed great dismay at Pramoedya's turn to the Left during the mid-1950s for it was the time "that the dream of the poet was exchanged for the action of the social fighter" (1969 167). The same can be said for Jassin, who thought that the Pramoedya who held fast to liberal humanist values was the best version of himself as a writer. However, for some reason, both were silent about Pramoedya's works after 1956. Aside from *Citra Manusia*, there were almost no writings within Indonesia that tried to shed light on the accusations against Pramoedya. Corollary to that, before Keith Foulcher's seminal work on LEKRA entitled *Social Commitment in Literature and in the Arts: The Indonesia Institute of People's Culture 1950-1965* (1986) and Ariel Heryanto's glowing review of it and Ajip Rosidi's brief mention of LEKRA in his *Ikhtisar* (Outlilne) (1969), there was no comprehensive study on LEKRA aside from the pro-Suharto and anti-communist propaganda churned out by writers and scholars such as Taufiq Ismail, D.S. Moeljanto, Yahaya Ismail, Bokot Hutasuhut, among others.

Interestingly, on the other hand, in E. Ulrich Kratz contribution in the anthology *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures* (2000), he observed that there were two main strands in the Indonesian canon: the universal humanist strand and the LEKRA strand. Unfortunately, he also admits that after the event in 1965, the consolidation of the LEKRA canon came into a screeching halt (2000 165). Perusing the anthology's contents echoes this coordinated stoppage of the consolidation of socialist realist literature in Southeast Asia. It was only Dana Healy, in her article on doi moi literature, who made the socialist realist tradition and the challenged it face the object of her study.

The second point is the actual existence of *Prahara Budaya* as the full embodiment anti-communist literary discourse in Indonesia. Containing LEKRA documents, essays by various writers, clippings (guntingan), and statements, the anthology is a centerpiece of writers and intellectuals who are against Pramoedya. Incidentally, F. Sionil Jose, one of the most popular writers in the Philippines was also one of the signatories of the petition to deny Pramoedya the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1995. In addition, as Farid notes, some writers in Indonesia carved out a career by being staunch anti-communists (fn., 5). But going back to *Prahara Budaya* as a form textual counter-insurgency during the Orde Baru, a direct encounter between diametrically-opposed forces, it must be noted that since it was published in 1995, its effect on readers was not the same with that of texts and speeches published or delivered during the height of Indonesian anti-communist sentiment during the 1960s and the 1970s. A cursory look at the *Goodreads* page for the book would open up varying opinions on the villainous portrayal of Moeljanto and Ismail of Pramoedya and LEKRA. For instance, one reviewer notes that, "Buku yang buruk karena mencoba melakukan penggiringan opini public" (Dec 29 2014). In that passage, the use of the 'buruk' (decayed, foul, bad, nasty, etc.) and 'penggiringan' (to herd, to stir) opens up the very ideological dimension of the anthology. As a counterpoint,

Such views that are supposed to reinforce the dominant national and international narrative lost its force after the socialist states in Europe collapsed. At that point, what was commonsensical (to be an anti-communist) became a perfunctory and belabored stance. This is what Ranciere reminds us about when he talks about the regime of the 'sensible' (2004; 2010). In the case of the Jassin and Teeuw's ambiguous and incomplete views on Pramoedya's work and LEKRA's role in Indonesian literary history, they became complicit with and ended up reinforcing what was 'sensible' during the Suharto regime. How can it be possible for a four-volume work not to tackle Pramoedya's later works? How can it be possible for a two-volume work to reduce LEKRA's role as an adversary of the proponents of universal humanism? Though complicit with the Orde Baru's anti-communist stance, the silence of Jassin and Teeuw also fits the second deployment of the anti-communist discourse in literary processes, particularly in literary scholarship—that of *omission*.

Omissions: National Anthologies and Apologies

In this section, I will attempt to concretize the second type of deployment of anti-communist literary discourse. Again, as was mentioned in the earlier sections, within the literary field, I argue that the most salient manifestation of anti-communist discourse is the adamant dismissal of works that are considered within the ambit of socialist realist tradition or any work that espouses any revolutionary content. To this end, I look into three texts by three of the most influential critics in the Philippines, namely Gemino Abad, Virgilio Almario, and Thelma Kintanar. The first text is the introduction in both volumes of the short story anthology *Hoard of Thunder: Philippine Short Stories*, 1990-2008, edited and introduced by Abad himself. The second text is the long postscript of Almario's work on the Philippine poetic traditions, *Balagtasismo versus Modernismo*. And lastly, Kintanar's exegesis on women writers in Southeast Asia, *Her Story: Women's Narratives in Modern Southeast Asian Writings*.

Unlike the Indonesian literary scene during the New Order where most writers affiliated with PKI were either disappeared or sent to prison camps, the Philippine case presents a different set of dynamics. First, during the Marcos regime, though it was imperative for writers to be more involved politically was widespread, there were writers and critics who found themselves in the interstices of state bureaucracy, getting the opportunities of their contemporaries who went underground to fight the dictatorship. Gemino Abad is part of the first group of writers mentioned, although it must be noted that he never took an adversarial or confrontational stance against writers of the Left. On the other hand, there were writers especially during the 1970s and 1980s who were part of the communist movement and members of its cultural organizations (i.e., GAT, ARMAS, etc.) who subsequently left the movement and denounced it. Virgilio Almario was one of those writers and critics. Before his turn to the Marcos regime, was the founding president of Galian sa Arte at Tula (GAT), a writing organization that started out as weekly workshop session for poetry and fiction. Because of his position, Almario has been the object of criticism by some of the sharpest leftist literary critics in the Philippines, Edel Garcellano and Gelacio Guillermo.

Talking about the anti-communist literary scene in the Philippines, Edel Garcellano, remarks, "In a general sense, today's generation of writers is leery of the Left, or any proofing of the Marxist aestheticizing reality. What passes for today's realism is but subtextualizing of the anti-socialist discourse, which consistently has been gaining ground among the orderly infantile whose main preoccupation these days—and I am referring to urban-based intelligentsia with access to media—is the translation of their texts into a market commodity…" (2001 152).

In a similar fashion, in his retort to Almario's statement that politics is heavy baggage in the writing of poetry, Guillermo says: "Just like some revolutionaries, ex-revolutionaries, or counter-revolutionaries (indeed, the revolution has been waged so long that it created a new group with this kind of people), Almario learned the word "baggage" from Mao Zedong's "Combat Liberalism" (there are no more Maoists today, according to Almario), which pertains to the way of thinking and labor of those from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class that serves as hindrance in the conduct of ideological, political, and organizational work[1]" (2011).

Two key attitudes can be gleaned from Garcellano and Guillermo's biting criticism of the Philippine literary scene during and after the Marcos regime: the first being that of "leeriness" with the Left; and the second, a great disdain for any form of politics in literature. These two dispositions perfectly exemplify the "omitting" character of the second typology of anti-communist discourse.

This omitting tendency can be gleaned in Abad's "four phases of the Philippine short story in English." The four phases are as follows: (1) "Forging a Language, 1920-1940"; (2) "Alienation and Social Commitment, 1950s-1960s"; (3) "Nationalism and National Identities, 1970s-1980s; (4) "Human Rights, Globalization, Ecology, and the Changing Moral Order, 1990s-2008." At first glance, there seems be no problem with Abad's periodization. But just like Farid's observation on

[1] Tulad ng ibang mga rebolusyonaryo, ex-rebolusyonaryo o kontra-rebolusyonaryo (kaytagal na nga ng rebolusyon para makalikha ng bagong pangkat ng ganitong mga nilalang), natutunan ni Almario ang salitang "bagahe" mula sa "Bakahin ang liberalismo" ni Mao Zedong ("Wala na ngayong Maoista," anya) na tumutukoy sa istilo ng pag-iisip at paggawa ng mga kasapi ng Partido mula sa mga uring burgis at petiburgis na nakasasagabal sa pagtupad ng gawaing IPO (Ideolohia, Pulitika, Organisasyon).

Jassin's "angkatan" model, Abad's periodization assumes a clean break between the phases he identified, denies any possibility of varying narrative projects, and homogenizes a particular period of literary production. Meanwhile, a cursory look at the table of contents of the anthology will reveal the absence of any writer affiliated with the Left despite the fact the even after EDSA, the literary activity of its cultural cadres and urban intellectuals were at its height. The exclusion and omission of such writers becomes all the more suspicious considering that anthologies of revolutionary writing such as *Muog: Ang Naratibo ng Kanayunan sa Matagalang Digmang Bayan sa Pilipinas* (Fortress: The Countryside's Narrative in the Protracted People's War in the Philippines) (1998) are already in existence years before *Hoard of Thunder* was published.

This, however, is something true to almost all anthologies, especially those that aim at consolidating a representative body of texts. As John Guillory notes, even critics and anthologists taking the progressive stance perform a certain kind of exclusion in the process of critiquing or consolidating literary canons (1993). The point is not to cry foul about any form of exclusion because it is a constitutive of process of canon-making, but to be wary and critical of the nature of exclusion beyond the liberal humanist dictum of diversity, inclusivity, and plurality. For most part, Abad's critical introduction bears almost no sign of a concealed exclusion or omission, as he even acknowledged that from 1950s-1980s (which cover two phases in his periodization) the primary concern of writers was nation-building and social commitment. Interestingly, though, Abad's actual salvo against Marxist literary criticism comes at the final part of his introduction (2012 xxxii),

> There can be no question as to the legitimacy and fruitfulness of such an approach [Marxist literary criticism] except when it (or any other critical orientation) turns doctrinaire, exclusivist, and totalitarian. I would only say that the vibrancy in literary production in English, Filipino, and other Philippine languages, particularly Binisaya-Sugbuanon, is owing to a number of factors, not the least among these being the writer's sense of liberation from any linguistic imperialism and any shackle of literary theory. Craftsmanship in the literary arts is beyond any formula or intellectual fashion of the times, for it is the writer's intrinsically a writer's own linguistic medium, a matter of experimentation and "pushing the envelope" or "raising the stakes": to repeat Dalisay's adage, "the knowing is in the writing."

Abad's omission in this statement comes in the form of overstating the influence of Marxism in the literary scholarship in the Philippines and his eventual downplaying of it in favor of a more reductive and idealistic approach in reading literary works (New Critical, Formalist).

In Kintanar's anthology, the deployment of omission is somewhat similar to that of Abad's. A cursory look at the anthology's table of contents reveals the obvious fact that no critical essays on communist women writers included in it. Moreover, in the anthologies appendices, an interview with Jassin on modern Indonesian literatures is included—a dialogue of sorts between two anti-communist literary cultures.

Almario's omission, on the other hand, can be seen as a laborious and circuitous process of homogenizing the obviously varied poetic projects of writers by way of reducing the said projects under a very technicist lens. Commenting on the other poems from the collection of revolutionary poems, *Mga Tula ng Rebolusyong Pilipino* (The Poems of the Philippine Revolution), Almario laments (1984 315),

> The other poems in the collection only tried to dabble with cookie-cutter and run-of-the-mill metaphors and imagery. That said, they used popular folk imagery in such a way that is similar to that of the tactics and sentiments of the Balagtasista supporters of the New Society. The only difference being that the symbolization is reversed. For example, if the poets of the state liken the New Society to the "morning," the poets of the Communist Party of the Philippines see it as "darkness." If, for the poets of the New Society, the "storm of the revolution" has passed, the poets who advocate armed revolution believe that the "storm that would destroy its existence" is forthcoming[2].

Responding to the critics who took him to task for his criticism of revolutionary poetry, Almario comments (319),

> This kind of criticism of what is deemed at the present as political poems should not be treated as an act of merely tinkering [texts] based on the usual formalist standards. One critic once said that one should not look for "high artistic quality" in most of the poems in *Mga Tula ng Rebolusyong Pilipino*. [They say that] the revolutionary poetry has new demands which must be applied correspondingly with new standards of criticism. But is it not also possible for the poets who support the New Society to use this reasoning to demand for a new instrument of analysis since they are still experience the birthing pains of the "revolution from the center"? This kind of defense by critics of the anthology is merely a form of mystifying the revolutionary process, and is not enough to cover up for the increasingly apparent limitations—most especially artistic limitations which could be traced back to the tenuous grasp of the politics and ideology of the patronized side—of the so-called revolutionary poems, whether against or siding with the New Society.[3]

[2] Ang iba namang tula sa koleksiyon ay nagsikap lamang manalunton sa mga de-kahon at gasgas na metapora't imahen. Kung sakali, kinsangkapan ng mga ito ang mga popular na talinghagang-bayan sa paraang hindi nalalayo sa taktika't saloobin ng mga Balagtasistang maka-Bagong Lipunan. Nababaligtad lamang ang simbolisasyon. Halimbawa, kung "umaga" ang Bagong Lipunan para sa mga makata ng estado, ito naman ay itinuturing na "dilim" ng mga makata ng PKP. Kung tapos na ang "unos ng rebolusyon" para sa mga makata ng Bagong Lipunan , dumarating pa lamang "ang unos na wawasak sa kairalan" para sa mga tagapagsulong ng aramadong pakikibaka.

[3] Ang ganitong pagpuna sa maituturing na mga tulang pulitikal sa kasalukuyan ay hindi dapat ituring na pagbutingting sang-ayon lamang sa nakamihasnan ng pamantayang pormalista. Isang kritiko nga ang nagsabi na

Unlike Jassin and Teeuw, Almario stands outside the brewing political debate between the communist poets and the state poets to underscore his technicist concerns, which in turn, flattens out any possible difference between the two camps. This simplistic position is reminiscent of the one held by European liberals and nationalists who saw communism and fascism as two sides of the same coin. Lumping together two opposite poetic traditions, Almario was able to effectively belittle the efforts of communist poets by applying in their poems a standard of criticism that has its own specificities. Based on his exegesis, any political and ideological difference between the communist writers and the state-backed writers is annulled since both camps sound the same in their poems. In the final analysis, if one would take Almario's arguments to their logical conclusions, there is no point in distinguishing who, among the lot, is a reactionary or a revolutionary, an elitist or an organizer, a fascist or a communist, for in the realm of signification, their political principles are not represented as they are supposed to be.

Renovations: Literary Glasnost, or the Case of Vietnam's "Renovation" Literature

In this section, borrowing from the arguments of Pham Thi Hoai and Ch'o'ng-Đài Ĥòng Võ on the state of Vietnamese literature after the doi moi era, I argue that the deployment of anti-communist discourse in the scholarship on Vietnamese literature gets it's traction from the outright rejection of socialist realism by writers during the post-unification period (i.e., Nguyen Huy Thiep, Duong Thu Huong, Bao Ninh) and the eventual opening-up and integration of Vietnam to the world which began in the late 1980s and culminated in its membership to ASEAN in 1995. To this end, I look at two types of texts which represent this process of 'renovation' in Vietnamese literature.

The first set of texts to be desultorily read are some remarks by scholars on Vietnamese literature on the problem of nation-building, relationship of literature and politics, and the aesthetic disposition of certain writers and critics after 1975. Helpful in this cause are the following texts: Tuan Ngoc Nguyen's exhaustive study on the relationship of literature and politics through his analysis of socialist realism in Vietnam from its inception to its state-backed form, Dana Healy's contribution to Smyth's anthology on the main features of doi moi literature, and J.C.S. Davidson's essay on the revolutionary tradition in South Vietnamese literature.

To underscore the institutionalization and bureaucratization of this process of renovation, I look at the culture and literary arts section of four different VCP documents from four different VCP congresses (1976, 1986, 1996, and 2011). This set of texts provides us a clear picture on how

hindi dapat hanapan ng "mataas na kalidad pansining" ang karamihan sa *Mga Tula ng Rebolusyong Pilipino*. May bagong kahingian ang rebolusyonaryong pagtula na dapat lapatan ng mga bagong pamantayan sa pagpuna. Ngunit hindi ba't maaari rin itong dahilan ng mga makatang maka-Bagong Lipunan na sapagkat kasalukuyan pa ring umaagpang sa pagbabagong hatid ng "rebolusyong mula sa gitna" ay nangangailangan din ng bagong instrumento sa pagsusuri? Ang gayong uri ng pagtatanggol ng kritiko sa antolohiya ay isang anyo lamang ng mistipikasyon sa proseso ng rebolusyon at hindi sapat para pagtakpan ang mga hindi nangingibabaw na limitasyon—lalo na't mga limitasyong pansining na mapapansing nakaugat sa kahinaan ng pagkagagap sa pulitika at ideolohiya ng tinatangkilik na panig—sa mga tinaguriang tulang rebolusyonaryo, maging salungat man o panig sa Bagong Lipunan.

explicit and implicit transnational processes and discourses such as anti-communism affects state policies on the culture and the arts.

Evaluating the role of literature, particularly socialist realism, in shaping the national identity of Vietnam and the role of nationalist ideology and politicians in literary discourse, Nguyen comments (2004 23),

> During these periods, the most influential factors affecting literary thinking were Maoism and the culture of war. One of the most striking characteristics of these periods was the lack of professional theorists. The top leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party were the chief proponents of literary discourse, issuing guidelines for discussion of all literary problems. The canonical texts of literary theory underpinned the leaders' pronouncements in conferences and meetings along with letters sent to writers and artists. Of these leaders, there were two authoritative figures: Trường Chinh (1907-88) and Tố Hữu (1920-2002).

This led Nguyen to conclusion that the socialist realism functioned as a tool to discredit and defeat the enemies of the VCP and Vietnam (2004 21-22). And that in the final analysis, the enemy is not its critics or the dissident writers but the market and the imperialist forces. This claim is echoed by Võ in what she calls Vietnam's "post-socialist" aesthetics which was ushered in by two challenges: the discontent of writers writing within and outside the state institutions and the increasingly apparent need to shift to a more market-oriented economy (2009). Moreover, witnessing Gobarchev's declaration of 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' in U.S.S.R., it became apparent to Le Duan, then party secretary of the VCP, and to some liberal officials within the ranks of the party that change was needed in Vietnam's domestic policies, particularly in the culture and in the arts. In the 4th party congress in 1986, doi moi was officially implemented as state policy. This led to a flurry of artistic and intellectual production from the ranks of artists, writers, and intellectuals who felt restrained and suppressed by VCP's insistence on socialist realism. Dana Healy, in her article on the doi moi literature, describes its formal elements as (2000 49),

> [Doi moi literature] it is highly innovative. Some writers are heading towards critical realism, while others are more modernist or postmodernist in their approach. Frequent shifts in time and space, use of diary entries, multiple endings, quotes, frank and matter-of-fact language contrasting sharply with the boastfulness of political clichés are employed to make the contemporary literature attractive and new.

Healy's description of doi moi literature is somewhat confined to the fact that the change in policy emanated from the will of the artists. This kind of analysis, albeit rooted from a solid historical grounding, tends to ignore certain political and economic nuances. For one, as has been alluded to by Hoai (2004) and Võ (2009), since the war, the VCP was weathering internal cultural criticism from its own artists and intellectuals while facing the external diplomatic and economic sanctions laid down by antagonistic nation-states. And for another, during the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, especially in the VCP's sixth and seventh party congresses, the party believed that a united

domestic front would usher in a more stable process of political, economic, and cultural transition (Healy and other critics also describe doi moi literature as a "literature of transition").

The aforementioned do not, by any means, belie Healy's analysis. However, Healy's analysis tends to paint a binarized picture of the artist and the state and sidesteps the role of transnational and extra-literary processes in bringing about this change (The image of the repressed individual and an oppressive totalitarian state will be the bread butter of big European and American presses publishing world literature dating back to the 1960s up to the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the past decades, dissident and exiled writers were translated for English-speaking readers. For the readers interested in Vietnam, the works of Duong Thu Huong, Nguyen Huy Thiep, and Bao Ninh were translated in various languages to give readers, as these books' blurbs would put it, a "glimpse of one individual's struggle in a totalitarian regime."). Without intending to, Healy's reading of the literary situation in those turbulent years became overdetermined by anti-communist discourse.

J.C.S Davidson's analysis of South Vietnamese fiction during the war years in his article "To Aid the Revolution: The Short Story as Pro-Liberation Literature in South Viet-Nam" is also similar to that of Healy's. The big difference between the two essays, though, is Davidson's focus on the congruency of revolutionary and pro-liberation sentiments in both the North and South Vietnamese fiction. However, in the course of Davidson' essay, he tried to differentiate the formal traits of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese writing. For instance, he described North Vietnamese fiction as restrained by "ideological demands, dictated by the political system," and that "it had to be edifying, didactic" (1982 208). On the other hand, he described South Vietnamese fiction as a "literature that subscribe to a wide range of literary schools: existentialist, romantic, realist; and political affiliations: pro- and anti-government, anti-communist, socialist, and so on." (208).

Again, the problem with this kind of analysis is its blindness to the beleaguered positions of both the North and South Vietnamese literary traditions during the war. While facing the military and ideological violence of the American military and its propaganda machinery, the need for a more combative and ideologically-informed writing became apparent for the writers in the North Vietnam. And this kind of writing, though littered with political clichés (Davidson 209-11), is exactly what they needed during that time. On the other hand, the writers from the south were also in a difficult position for although they are offered a mélange of literary schools to choose from, the one thing that they cannot do freely is oppose U.S. aid and South Vietnamese propaganda.

The two aforementioned are just the few nuances missed by technicist and descriptive studies on literary traditions mired in military, political, and ideological skirmishes. Moreover, the tendency to treat form as the final and determining instance in any literary debate and scholarship is hinged on the tactical suspension of a political interpretation of literature, which ironically, in the final analysis, serves a specific political interest. In the case of mapping the the process of cultural renovation in Vietnam, avoiding or putting less stress on the 'political' leaves out a lot of crucial factors in the analysis. For instance, looking at the 4th party congress, with Vietnam a year removed from its unification, the VCP, while encouraging literary production, took a very combative stance (VCP 2015 392),

> Our party encourages artists and writers to do research and discover the new. At the same time, it requests them to be fully conscious of their lofty mission to affirm their socialist stand in artistic creation as well as in the struggle to defend the revolutionary line against all bourgeois and opportunist tendencies, and the bad influences of modernism in art and literature; to oppose formalism, schematism and naturalism, and to bring a worthy contribution to the common victory of the socialist revolution in our country.

This position is emblematic of a nation-state that has just emerged victorious in a war and is in the process of consolidating its power. Giving more premium to the affirmation of the Party's political line and revolutionary ideals than to formal innovation, the literature during the post-unification years served as a weapon to ward off any attempt of certain forces within and outside Vietnam, to take back the power from the Party. Interestingly, the VCP's position on literature in the 6th party congress in 1986 will take a noticeable change in light of political developments outside Vietnam and pressure from writers and intellectuals within (668),

> The quality of the cultural, literary and artistic work should be raised. Each cultural, literary, and art activity should take into account its social efficiency, its positive effects on the psychology and the feelings of the people in raising their socialist consciousness and aesthetic standards. Attention should be paid to healthy demands and tastes of the people of different social strata and different age groups.

Two things stand out from this statement. First, there is noticeable emphasis on the need to raise the artistic standards of literary works. And second, the Party recognized the demands of very heterogeneous reading population. Aside from a brief interlude in 1991, when conservative forces within the ranks of the party reigned in the freedom enjoyed by artist, writers and intellectuals such as Nguyễn Minh Châu during the doi moi era (Võ 2009 31-32), the transition from socialist realism to post-socialist aesthetics took a more or less smooth road from the 8th party congress in 1996 (just months after Vietnam became an official member of the ASEAN) to the 11th party congress in 2011.

For instance, in the 8th congress, there is a noticeable absence of any form of affirmation of the party line. In addition, the Party also promised (910):

> To ensure democracy and freedom of expression for all cultural creation and activity, to foster talents, while upholding the sense of responsibility of writers and artist toward the public, the nation and the time. To encourage and create conditions for literary and artistic creations, to reject new elements in society, stimulating the good and the beautiful in relations between man and man, man and society, man and nature, criticizing the wrong, condemning the bad and the evil, reaching out to the true, the good and the beautiful. To timely disseminate good works and to incorporate elements of culture and humanism deeply into all of domains of social life into ones behavior

> and at home, at school, and in society, and also in production, business and other social contacts, etc.

The 11th party congress continues to carry this kind of position while at the same time affirming some of the Party and the state's basic principles (1298),

> Continue to develop and advanced Vietnam-ese literature and arts imbued deeply with strong national identities, and values of humanity and democracy that reflects the life and the renewal of the country encourage the right and beautiful, and condemn the evil and the cruel. Encourage the exploration of new methods and styles of arts that meet the diverse mental needs, and cultivate ideology and aesthetic tastes of the public, especially the young generation.

As evidence by the last two positions quoted in length, the process of literary renovation in Vietnam cannot be viewed in a decidedly anti-communist, anti-totalitarian, and overly-formalist lens. Doing so will leave the analysis vulnerable to incipient moralism and contain it on the shaky domain of individual freedom. By focusing on the transnational processes informing the Vietnamese political and literary field, its post-socialist aesthetic can now be understood not only as a product of anti-communist discourses but as a product of and as a response to neoliberal incursions within and outside Vietnam.

Further Notes: Towards a Transnational History of Anti-Communist Literary Scholarship in Southeast Asia

In the prior sections of the study, I argued for a new approach, though still within the ambit of comparative literature, in understanding (and hopefully, the writing of) the literary history and literary scholarship in Southeast Asia and on Southeast Asian literatures. Contrary to the sweeping, technisist, genetic, and vulgarly historicist approach of previous works and anthologies (i.e., Cordell and Davidson's, Jassin, and Abad's), I offer an approach that focuses on literary and political congruencies and contiguities of the literary cultures being compared. But even though I called for this denationalized point-of-view and tried to look for the *in-betweens* of the 'political' and the 'literary' by categorizing anthologies and documents as distinct genres simultaneously functioning as literary and political forms, it is evident that the study of literature, even extra-literary processes, has always been able to retain its elective affinity with the nation and the project of nation-building.

That being said, the imperative to read for transnational discourses binding these disparate nation-building projects in Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam becomes all the more apparent in light of recent political and economic developments in the region (i.e., ASEAN integration) and across the world. In the case of the study, anti-communism is the transnational discourse that informs almost every possible forms of life, expression, and community, but of course in varying shades and gradations. In the literary field, as was evident in the literary cultures surveyed, contiguities and congruencies surfaced by reading into the region's literary production and literary scholarship using anti-communism as an organizing metaphor. However, the challenge for any comparatist or

any comparative study lost in this labyrinth of *in-betweens* is to arrive at any form of knowability or unity in the face of the eternally self-replicating logic of difference. This, of course, calls for a more quantitative approach, which means bigger and larger swathes of data to be processed and analyzed. At the end, the quest for contiguities and congruencies ends when the quest for equivalences begins.

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