Spring 4-11-2022

King Behind Colonial Curtains: Kasilag and the Making of Filipino National Culture

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An Honors Thesis
Presented to the Department of International Studies
Macalester College
Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA
Advisor: Dr. Ahmed I. Samatar
April 11, 2022


PILIPINAS
P12
Lucrecia R. Kasilag
National Artist for Music
1918 - 2018 • Birth Centenary

"There can be no music without ideology. The old composers, whether they knew it or not, were upholding a political theory. Most of them, of course, were bolstering the rule of the upper classes."

– Dmitri Shostakovich

Acknowledgements

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and this thesis as a product of passion and curiosity is no different. For their insights and help, I thank Jose S. Buenconsejo, Epifanio San Juan, Jr., Welfredo Patungan, Luis Mesa Martinez, and many whom I had a chance to chat over tea or through emails.

My deepest gratitude to Magisch Orkest, the University of the Philippines College of Music Library, and Professors Earl Clarence L. Jimenez and Amiel Kim Q. Capitan of the Philippine Women's University – School of Music for sharing scores and resources that I so needed for this thesis.

Many ideas in this thesis are a result of my time with the Filipino Association at Macalester. Our experiences together helped shaped my understanding of culture and authenticity. I am also beyond grateful for Angelo B. Perez and Tara Mercene for their camaraderie and our meaningful conversations on what it means to be Filipino and an artist during these precarious times.

I thank all the educators who imparted their wisdom. Outside my departments, my thanks to Althea Sircar and Prof. David Blaney for their guidance and support when I decided to pursue studies and research in music and culture. Their teaching helped me think radically about my place in academia. A million thanks to Tita Karin Aguilar-San Juan and Jake Nagasawa for providing me reflexive spaces where I can be kind to myself. Our long conversations shaped many ideas in this thesis.

I deeply appreciate my folks from the Music Department. Thanks to Kate Roarty for always reading my works. I thank each professor in this department for imparting me most of my music training, specifically Victoria Malawey and Randy Bauer for theory/composition and Chuen-Fung Wong for ethnomusicology. I also thank Mark Mazullo, not only for teaching me piano and musicology, but for pushing me towards places, old and new, that helped towards the development of this thesis.

Of course, the International Studies Department! I am indebted to Janessa Cervantes for sustaining *the* magnificent collection of tea in the office that always caffeinated me over this honors journey. I thank Prof. David Chioni Moore for providing me the arsenal to articulate my cultural experiences. I am deeply indebted to Prof. Ahmed I. Samatar for pushing me and my growth by leaps and bounds since my first semester in college. As an adviser for this thesis and beyond, I appreciate all the nudges, advice, and tough love that prepared me for the academic life here and beyond, and for continuously reminding me that we are always shifting to higher gears and to stay on top of things.

I can never forget my first piano teacher as a kid, Myrna Vinarao, for introducing me to Classical Music, and for introducing me to Tita King. Teacher Myrna, I can never be thankful enough.

Of course, I want to thank my everyday people—my family and friends—especially my parents for supporting my decision to pursue an academic and artistic life as a musician.

My utmost appreciation towards my friends in the mountainous North of the Philippines. Their music and warmth would always remind me that the finer things in life are often the simpler ones.

Finally, I am grateful to the teacher, that, without her, this thesis could not even be remotely possible, Lucrecia R. Kasilag. Tita King who constantly reminds me that no matter how difficult the arts can be, it is always worth it. As she said once, "we live it, we love it."

Abstract

Filipino National Artist Lucrecia "King" Kasilag sought to preserve folk cultures and melded these with her Western training to produce works—scholarly, pedagogical, and compositional—that shaped national music and culture. This thesis is a critical biography that combines perspectives from postcolonial studies, political economy, and musicology to highlight forces that shaped Kasilag's life while illustrating her successes and shortcomings on national culture. Through this biography, I argue, Filipino national culture must originate from intersectional struggles and negotiation among elites and masses; that this culture is about both resistance and acceptance—a national culture that is syncretic and quintessentially dynamic.

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Prelude

The Philippines has never been a monolith. Composed of over 7,000 islands, the Philippine archipelago might as well have a unique culture for every island it may house. Exaggerations aside, the nautical separation between local societies in the Philippines hindered its peoples to unify until today. Even then, there have been countless efforts—both successful and otherwise—to construct a national Filipino identity and culture. But this national construction, even if it may try to espouse a sense of Filipino pride and originality, cannot escape the haunting shadow of its colonial past. Having been imperialized by Spain, the United States, and Japan—for a combined period of nearly four centuries—the Philippines and its peoples cannot elude the pervading influence of these three colonizers. From the centuries-old *hacienda* system to our obsession in the English language, colonial influence deeply roots itself in the quotidian life and culture in the Philippines. To allow a visage of Filipino identity to thrive, let alone survive, its peoples must "move faster, defensively" and "look for patterns" from this syncretic chaos.[1] By searching for and creatively adapting these patterns can colonized cultures survive, even if it results in cultural hybridity. These two pressures, the fragmenting of a nation and strong colonial influences, make it difficult for the

[1] Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 16, no. 1 (February 1974): 3–14, 10.

Philippines, let alone most postcolonial nations, to rebuild its identity and construct its national culture.

Music faces no different circumstances. From casual humming and karaoke to concert choirs and music conservatories, music in the Philippines occupies a large portion of daily life. Each region has its musical tradition that are unique from each other, yet they are all still called under a single umbrella called "Filipino." At the same time, the Western tradition is thriving and alive in conservatories as students learn and play Beethoven and Mozart in the classroom. At the outset, popular music is also rising, picking elements from both the Filipino tradition and foreign popular music scene.[2] Tracing the development of Filipino music and its influences is a conversation much intertwined in the cultural history of the Philippines. This means exploring the (post)colonial implications of the country's history and, equally important, the two-decade dictatorship that the country experienced under Ferdinand Marcos whose wife, Imelda, advanced the arts and culture in the Philippines with much corruption and controversy. Much of this history is condensed in the twentieth century when decolonization spread especially in the middle of the century. During this time, one cultural figure was a pivotal force in shaping national music and culture in the Philippines: the national artist, Lucrecia Roces Kasilag.

An educator, ethnomusicologist, and composer, Kasilag sought to preserve the sounds of the Philippines by exploring the myriad cultures of the archipelago and tried to meld these with her Western training to produce works—scholarly, pedagogical, and compositional—that contributed to shaping national music and the institutions that house it.

[2] The presence of artists such as Ben&Ben, December Avenue, and SB19 show an emerging approach to Filipino popular music or Original Pinoy Music (OPM). One can clearly trace Filipino traditional *kundiman* elements in their songs with passionate outbursts, while mimicking electronic music elements from foreign popular music—notably the American pop music scene and the South Korean one.

Her work in music was so tremendous that she was recognized as a National Artist for Music in 1989.[3]

By examining Kasilag's life, I try to explore three primary questions in this thesis in relation to the issue of national music and culture. First, how did Kasilag demonstrate musical excellence and what were the circumstances that allowed her to flourish and become a leading figure in Philippine music? While Kasilag's accolades speak volumes about her musical excellence, understanding her story and hardships in obtaining this high level of performance offers us insight into the historical time that she lived in. This allows us to contextualize how her circumstances catalyzed her excellence in music pedagogy, ethnomusicology, and composition.

Second, what specific role did Kasilag play in building national culture? Even if she overflows with musical talent and skill, that does not automatically merit her recognition in nation building. One must examine how she contributed to forming national institutions, specifically in music, to realize the gravity of her work in helping develop a visage of national culture. These institutions house cultural ideas and knowledge that outlast their producers, making them apt instruments to preserve and sustain cultural heritage. Kasilag poured tremendous efforts to preserve and innovate with Filipino culture through these very institutions. However, we not only explore the glorified parts of her contributions to culture, but we also examine challenges during her career and leadership, as well as her eyebrow-raising connections with the Marcoses at that time.

Third, what are the lessons that current Filipino artists and intellectuals learn from Kasilag's life to deepen and democratize nation building? Her contributions to Filipino music and pedagogy are undeniable; however, it only reached, at most, the upper stratum of

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[3] Lucrecia R Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story* (Manila: Philippine Women's University, 2000), 128.

Filipino society in that time of the Marcos dictatorship. This gatekeeping practice extends beyond the Marcos regime, as Nowak and Snyder suggest, "the basic trend in the Philippine elite has been toward consolidation and concentration."[4] While Kasilag's intentions, I believe, are in good will, the circumstances of that time inevitably excluded a huge of portion of society from opportunities to widen and deepen their cultural achievements. She strived to promote musical excellence in the Philippines through the National Music Competitions for Young Artists (NAMCYA) which still exists to this day. Kasilag would send talented Filipinos to study abroad, and she herself nurtured many important Filipino musicians today. As Frantz Fanon argues, "each generation must discover its mission," and the mission then of today's national artists and intellectuals is to learn from history, Kasilag's in our case, and continue the cultural fight.[5]

In the end, the critical purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, I intend to investigate Kasilag's life through the lens of cultural studies and (post)colonial (or perhaps, post-independence) framework to contextualize her important work in music and culture as an educator and ethnomusicologist during a time when most colonized nations gained independence and struggled to construct a national culture and identity. Previous biographies written about Kasilag do not connect these salient historical conjunctures to her cultural work, and I believe that these obvious connections provide rich insight into the current state of Filipino culture.[6] While Kasilag as an individual is only a cog in the entire machine that is Filipino culture, hers is a gigantic one that allows countless other cogs to continue moving even after her death, owing to her teachings and innovations that strengthened cultural

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[4] Thomas C. Nowak and Kay A. Snyder, "Clientelist Politics in the Philippines: Integration or Instability?," *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 3 (1974): 1147–70, 1148.
[5] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, Reprint edition (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 145.
[6] See De la Torres and Kasilag.

institutions in the Philippines, as we discover later. The second purpose to this thesis is this: to highlight how the disconnect between the national bourgeoisie and national masses produced a national culture with an identity crisis. While thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci believe that there must be a hegemonic bloc that leads a nation, the Filipino nation during Kasilag's time—the dictatorship—was plundered for the sake of this bloc. This alienated the masses from the "high culture" and extravagance that the elite—led and ill-funded by Marcoses— programmed for themselves to hide the crippling situation of the Philippines. As Fanon notes, "the bourgeoisie…[erects] imposing edifices in the capital and [spends] money on so-called prestige projects" so that they can hide the country's stagnation and plunder.[7] These two purposes provide a cultural and political narrative of Filipino nation building through the lens of a critical individual but, at the same time, through the lens of the relationship between the national masses and the hegemonic bloc which Kasilag operated in. The approach allows us to be intimate with the larger cultural forces in play, especially in twentieth-century Philippines, but it also steers us away from a myopic perspective in understanding the cultural and political history of the time.

To achieve my purpose and to answer the primary questions of this thesis, I distill conversations to place emphasis on three central concepts. First, through this genre of **biography**, I intend to highlight Kasilag's musical excellence and contributions. By doing so, I justify why her life is an exemplary representation of achievement and of a colonized individual who helped in building national music and culture. Second, I am interested in how **national culture** developed through the 20th century in the Philippines, notably how the Philippines constructed its notion of identity. Here, I inspect this primarily through musical developments in the Philippines especially during Kasilag's time. Third, I want to dissect

[7] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 111.

how **ethnomusicology**—in its various theorizations, as ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl describes, influenced Kasilag in her role in the development of national culture in the Philippines.[8] As a field of study, ethnomusicology was malleable (and still is) during Kasilag's time. Perhaps, she was not intentionally articulating her work as ethnomusicological (in the strict academic sense of the word) but as work of a colonized intellectual trying to "[reclaim] the past"[9] and "discovering [their] native musical roots"[10] through excavating various Filipino music cultures as well as putting them into practice in pedagogy and compositional innovation.

Methodologies

Since this project works in the intersections of postcolonialism, ethnomusicology, political economy, and cultural studies, I employ a tripartite methodological framework that seeks to combine different strategies to examine national culture through Kasilag's life and work with the larger forces and currents at play during her time. First, I consolidate biographical accounts of her life primarily using two existing biographies on her: an autobiography and another life account by Visitacion R. de la Torre that outlines how Kasilag became *An Artist for the World*. I also gather accounts of her life moments from past recorded interviews of hers and her close circles, institutional appointments, newspaper articles, and reception history of her work. By combining multiple perspectives on her life, I try to paint a holistic picture of her as person of her time—molded by the context of the period defined by colonialism and decolonization struggles. At the same time, I also want to highlight how her music and art played a central role in her development stages that propelled her into the

[8] See Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 12-3.
[9] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*., 148
[10] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag*, 39.

music stage as a performer, educator, and an innovative leader. Through this approach, we can appreciate how both personal agency and an indeterminate environment interact to produce an artist like Kasilag—both a product of her time and a person who stands out in the field of music.

Second, I utilize a theoretical framework that aims to construct a (post)colonial narrative of nation building and culture in the Philippines. This overarching approach works at the intersection of postcolonialism, cultural studies, and political economy. At the base of this framework, I trace a tradition of postcolonial thought that echoes the ideas of Orientalism, imperial, national, and hybrid cultures coming from Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Derek Walcott. Above this base are ideologies on culture as described by Stuart Hall. I think that approaching culture in a semiotic manner allows us to understand how individuals create a national imaginary composed of national symbols and conventions. Understanding music this way enlightens us on how this artform can convey multivalent meanings. While my base focuses on postcolonialism and above it is the visible artefact of cultural signs, below it (should I say underground) is an analysis of social relations between different classes. Class analysis finds (but not limited to) a long and rich tradition in the writings of Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci, and as a method enables us to trace a series of struggles through social relations, particularly in capital and labor. At the root of forming any community is the struggle to live and contend with other forms of organizing life. Class, I recognize, is a large part of living and neglecting to analyze social labor relations is to overlook at how life and societies are organized. I cannot offer a sufficient account of anyone's life without undergirding this exploration with their positionality in the social structure. Having said that, I recognize the importance of race and gender among other factors in the making of this structure, and I hope that combining class analysis with

critiques and observations from postcolonial and cultural studies help me build an expansive yet cohesive theoretical framework to tell a complex narrative of nation building and culture in the Philippines.

Third, I employ methods of music criticism to analyze Kasilag's compositions to highlight how her work in ethnomusicology and in nation building is apparent in her music. I reference some of her works to point out how Filipino folk and traditional music influenced her style of composition and musical priorities. On the opposite side of the coin, I also emphasize how the Western Classical tradition pervade her musical idiom. In a sense, I am trying to show through her works how both musical traditions from the "East" and from the "West" mingle to create a hybrid form of music. I utilize ideas from musicologist Susan McClary and various Filipino music scholars to gird my criticism of Kasilag's works. I take McClary's arguments on tonality and musical form to base my discussion on the Western tradition while weaving this discussion with Filipino music scholars' arguments and observations on both Filipino folk music and contemporary ones from the twentieth century. As a result, I claim that her work offers a possibility as to how Filipinos can embrace the colonial past and its influences, rework them as they see fit, and articulate an experience that reflects the current times—a mosaic of cultural shards that creates entire repertoires of masterpieces. At the same time, however, I point to moments where Kasilag may trip into the pitfalls of what Fanon calls "inventory of particularisms" or collections of folk and indigenous elements that do not tackle their cultural significances and often result in exoticization.[11] I try to be as careful as possible to point out small moments in her works where folk elements are simply particulars and that the Western technique she employs is

[11] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 160.

"cloaked…in a style that is meant to be national but is strangely reminiscent of exoticism."[12] To identify such particularisms, I employ Theodor Adorno's concept of the "formal law of freedom" which focuses on the idea of form as the locus of subjectivity and rejection. I believe that Kasilag had no intention to exoticize Filipino folk traditions and music. In fact, she yearned to uplift our culture, but she was doing so in a realm where Western culture dominated the musical public even until now.

Compromises were made during her time, intentionally or not, but her musical contributions paved way for future musicians to create their more authentic forms of hybridity. Now that more attention is paid to questioning the dominance of European epistemology or simply "common sense," contemporary Filipino musicians, artists, and intellectuals should choose not to create works that please the white gaze but to celebrate Filipino lives and experiences through art and culture that enact the present. What this looks like should never be prescribed, but this should be a movement that does not simply excavate the precolonial past, but an exercise that embraces our sedimented interwoven histories and daily iterative performances[13] that produce and constitute today's peoples and cultures.

This tripartite method approaches the genre of biography through critical frameworks of national culture and music criticism, and it is admittedly influenced by Edward Said's "contrapuntal reading."[14] This type of analytical reading encourages to identify and evaluate various interdependent forces that act in a phenomenon. By this way of analysis, one gets a sense of the microscopic view of forces at play while understanding the macroscopic consequences of how all these forces interact. Said receives inspiration from

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[12] Ibid.
[13] See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 159.
[14] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 25447th edition (New York: Vintage, 1994), 66.

the counterpoint of Western Classical music, where "various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work."[15] This method aims to "connect the structures of a narrative to the ideas, concepts, experiences from which it draws support," and in this thesis, then, I explore accounts of Kasilag's life (biographies, interviews, musical works) as the text while also trying to emphasize contexts in her life that are "off-stage" such as imperialism, decolonization, and national culture.[16]

While possibly controversial, I want to also explore how her intimate connection with Imelda Marcos affected her work and engagement with the national masses. A narrative less trudged, I believe that exploring national culture during the dictatorship is critical to painting a comprehensive picture of the current state of national identity. Stories of (academic) resistance against the bourgeois national culture and aesthetics, especially in music, are still quite limited to the same elite circles and frankly difficult to access by scholars outside of this niche.[17] While I extend Said's method to include texts that are not necessarily a piece of traditional literature such as Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) or Giussepe Verdi's *Aida* (1871), contrapuntal reading is necessary to "take account of both processes, that of imperialism [and dictatorship] and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded."[18] Using my

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[15] Ibid., 51.
[16] Ibid., 67.
[17] My research for texts and academic materials that discusses cultural resistance against the Marcos dictatorship, and to a large extent—national culture, has been too difficult due to limited knowledge and circulation of these works. Luckily, Rolando A. Gripaldo compiled a critical bibliography of Filipino academic writings from 1774 to 1997 from which I can excavate original research and works by Filipinos about music and culture. Even then, most of these writings are not widely circulated to the public and require access to certain enclosed libraries in the Philippines. See Rolando M. Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography (1774-1997)*, 2nd ed (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 2000).
[18] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66-7.

tripartite approach, I excavate background narratives in Kasilag's life to put on-stage those stories that are not commonly thought of.

Overview

The way I segment Kasilag's life is deliberate and merits a brief explanation. The first chapter offers a short summary of the Filipino musical history from precolonial times just before 1900. Understanding that this history spans over four hundred years, I only aim to equip my audience with the background and context necessary to engage with my discussion of Kasilag's life in the twentieth century. Starting with the native peoples in precolonial times, I place emphasis on each epoch's social structures and outline how music's role in society evolved over time. After this, we start to explore Kasilag's life while emphasizing the context of her time.

In the second chapter, we start to get to know Lucrecia Kasilag's family and early life. I underscore here the importance of American colonialism and context in shaping Kasilag's life. Her family is from the middle class—bourgeoisie—and not to mention, her mother and siblings are all musicians, forming their own ensemble when she was a child. Understanding these social and musical contexts are necessary as these are what Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson call "critical junctures"[19]—events with seemingly small impact but those that propel history to change in an exponential manner as time passes by.

The third chapter unveils how Kasilag's career as a music educator and composer began. We witness her beginnings as a teacher in the Philippine Women's University (PWU), her alma mater. We see as well how her study abroad experience at Eastman School of Music in Rochester molded her compositional style.

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[19] Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, 1st ed. (New York: Currency, 2012), 101.

The fourth chapter explores how Kasilag started learning about local Filipino cultures as an ethnomusicologist and was gaining fame as an international artist who specializes in intertwining "East" and "West" music. She began touring musical conferences around the globe where she encountered the world's different musical traditions. More importantly, during these travels, her encounters with notable ethnomusicologists such as Zoltán Kodály impelled her to look towards her roots for inspiration when it came to her compositions. Aside from these conferences, Kasilag's deep involvement in touring with the Bayanihan Dance Company, the national dance troupe of the Philippines, extended her embrace for the local tradition and arts as well. This chapter also explores the notion of the folk and the folkloric. To differentiate the two terms highlights the nuanced role of many colonized intellectuals in using indigenous folk cultures and decontextualizing them for the stage as the folkloric. Using this as a framework helps in sharpening our understanding of what music of the "East" portrays.

The fifth chapter focuses on the history and elements of "Western" music and how it permeated into Filipino music making. To understand what music from the "West" means in this project, we investigate the tradition of Western music, particularly tonality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to understand the contours and characteristics of Western music. Here, I specifically analyze works from the Filipino canon in the twentieth century to outline how tonality was conceptualized in the early part of the century. Afterwards, I take available examples from Kasilag's music to illustrate how she made use or broke into tonality and integrated this with Eastern musical elements. I take note of how deeply Kasilag engages with the folk material and how she might or not utilized these inspirations beyond a peripheral level. In other words, is the inspiration simply an adornment and quotation or is it integral to the logic and form of the piece? Because access

to Kasilag's works is strictly limited, I can only analyze the small number of works that I can have. Having a deeper understanding of "East" and "West" music is essential to locating Kasilag's position and role in nation building and in demystifying the methods of how she may have syncretized the local culture.

The last chapter investigates Kasilag's legacies and her involvement with the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Imelda Marcos appointed her as the first theater director of the CCP, and later, as its president where she tried to strengthen and promote local culture and tradition while bringing international artists such as the legendary pianist, Van Cliburn. Kasilag's efforts were to build a sense of national pride and consciousness on the Filipino as a nation. However, on the other hand, I illustrate how the "conjugal dictatorship" of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos abused the notion of the national culture to exacerbate the political drama and tensions already present in Filipino history. In addition, we explore the idea of a national crisis stemming from a complex web of reasons: deep colonial scars and broken institutions from a destructive dictatorship. Kasilag lived through these times in the twentieth century, and not only did these factors shaped her as we see in earlier chapters, but we also witness in this part how she tried to influence and mold the national culture through music as an intellectual and artist expressing the ideas of her time.

The concluding postlude recapitulates the main questions of the thesis and revisits how to address these queries after our long exploration with Kasilag. I try to press how the outcomes of our discussion should materialize into tangible action towards the development and democratization of the culture and the arts in the Philippines. It is my hope that my engagement with the Philippines's history and national culture may shed light and inspiration to other young intellectuals and artists to return and remain home to help develop our

culture. It is also my hope that many others, like me, continue to keep a critical eye yet be inspired by Lucrecia R. Kasilag.

A Note on Interludes

In today's age, academics and allies are increasingly questioning the role of the omniscient voice of the author, especially in ethnomusicology and anthropology. As Edward Said notes, Orientalism was produced by the plethora of intellectuals and artists from the West that resulted in false perceptions of the colonized world.[20] As a response, music scholars and anthropologists are employing reflexive interludes to address this issue in their scholarship to "[disrupt] the illusory authority of third person text."[21] Since we, artists and scholars, as humans are never infallible, I find it crucial to demystify the idea that since I did fieldwork and an ethnographic study—"I was there"—then I have some sort of unquestionable authority. Moreover, Filipino scholars are employing a traditional form of didactic storytelling known as *katakata.*[22] Music scholars such as Christi-Anne Castro and Áine Mangaoang utilize *katakata* in their interludes to "communicate knowledge and experience as mediation rather than exegesis."[23] And if we consider ourselves, the scholars as also artists, "then one must know something of that writer in order to make better sense of the text" and often, we create works that exemplify our desires and worldviews, and struggles.[24] As Roland Barthes reminds us, scholars frequently write about what they love, and often, they mask it in the veil of scholarship.[25]

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[20] See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978).
[21] Christi-Anne Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, The New Cultural History of Music Series (Oxford University Press, 2011), 20.
[22] Áine Mangaoang, *Dangerous Mediations: Pop Music in a Philippine Prison Video* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 11.
[23] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 20.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Roland Barthes, "Loving Schumann," in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1985), 293–98, 298.

We must be critical of the content of scholarship, but I think that we must also question the forms in which we are producing and sharing knowledge, so we can find ways to accessibly share our works without compromising their quality. For all these reasons, I utilize these interludes to precede my chapters to negotiate my place in academia that houses both resistance and conformity.

Interlude One

I always knew that I am a Filipino. I was born in the Philippines. I have Filipino parents. And it says so in my birth certificate. But beyond that, I never asked myself the question, "What does it mean to be Filipino?" until I left the country to study abroad in Germany. I was exposed to various ideas and wildly different lifestyles that I often compared my life between Manila and Freiburg. I appreciated the greeneries that surrounded my school and the lively cultural scene especially for music and the arts. There were public pianos that I played on in European train stations, and when I performed in public, people would often stop by, and in some cases, gave me a few Euros. I was moved and amazed as I walked through the streets of Florence as I saw history come to life in the birthplace of the Renaissance. When I came back to the Philippines, I lamented the way we set up our society, especially towards arts and culture. "Why don't we invest in our museums? Why don't we have a better music scene? Why are our libraries dilapidated? Why does everything look so neglected?"

Filipinos believe that our government and the elites failed us—that they are too high up the ivory tower to understand the common plight. But at the same time, we forget that many of our problems came from colonialism, yet we praise our colonizers for "saving" us and bringing in civilization despite their plunder. No wonder that we topped the global surveys in 2014 when asked: "Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the US?" We surpassed even the Americans. Because of how poorly we were taught our histories and cultures, we never understood our position as Filipinos. We know that we are good singers and dancers, but we never learned nor understood why. Our understanding of our heritage remains superficial—by design.

No wonder the only thing we know anchoring us to our Filipino-ness is our birth certificate.

Chapter One

Setting the Stage

The Philippines Before 1900

Dubbed as the Pearl of the Orient Seas, the Southeast Asian nation of the Philippines is one of nature's greatest glories that always catches new visitors off-guard with its beauty. In the bustling city of Manila, the bay offers dazzling sunsets where light is reflected across the seas like sulfuric beams. The North towers with mountainous chains with lush greeneries and magnificent rice terrace fields. The Mindanaoan South is bountiful with arable land, awe-inspiring earth, and water formations. The central Visayas islands are abounded with breathtaking views of the West Philippine Sea.

Having said that, the Philippines is also home to a many natural terrors. Situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire, the island nation is blessed (perhaps, also cursed) with twenty-one active volcanoes and over two hundred dormant ones. It also experiences an average of five earthquakes a day of various intensities. In 1990, Baguio, a city in the northern part of the Philippines, was cut from the rest of the country as a 7.7 magnitude earthquake destroyed roads, bridges, and communication lines. A year after, a stratovolcano, Mount Pinatubo, erupted after a two-hundred-year dormancy, leaving affected areas of over 200,00 acres covered in ash as if a snowstorm ravaged the region. In addition, the country hosts around

twenty typhoons a year.[26] The most powerful recorded typhoon, Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda), even struck the Visayan Islands in 2013.

Despite all the terror and beauty that the Philippines experiences, what enriches the island nation aside from its nature is the diverse cultures and inhabitant peoples that it houses. As historian David Joel Steinberg notes, the Philippines is a "blend of ethnic groups and different races."[27] The earliest settlers were the aboriginal people called the Negritos, and, after, they were followed by the Malays who compose most of the lowland peasant culture. The mountainous uplanders are nomadic slash-and-burn farmers, while the lowland Filipinos grow rice, perform sharecropping, fish, among other similar practices.[28] The lowlanders are also known as the peasants who "practiced and established impressive systems of living and beliefs even before the Europeans arrived on the islands."[29] Even if the lowland peasants share many common characteristics and similar lifestyles, they are often fractured "by geography and by language."[30] While there are over a hundred languages, the majority comprising ninety percent of the people speak any of nine languages.[31]

The uplanders are also equally diverse. The subject of many ethnographies and folk studies in the Philippines center around the uplanders with their resilient oral traditions, strong sense of cultural identity, and native expression in aesthetics and art. In modern times, even though they are also Filipinos, the peasantry views the uplanders as "exotic, primitive, and very fierce" owing to the uplanders' loyal embrace to their native cultures.[32]

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[26] David Joel Steinberg, *The Philippines: A Singular And A Plural Place*, 4th edition (Boulder, CO: Routledge, 2000), 12.
[27] Ibid., 39.
[28] Ibid.
[29] E. J. R. David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino - American Postcolonial Psychology* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2013), 3.
[30] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 39.
[31] These nine languages are Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Bicol, Waray, Pampangueño, Pangasinense, and Maranao.
[32] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 39.

Instead of acculturating the uplanders to the tradition of the lowland peasants, the uplanders embrace the idea of cultural diversity which allowed them to preserve their culture thereby uplifting a stronger sense of pride and identity. As a point of interest, the uplanders are the center of attention for tourism and celebration of cultural diversity that concretized the tolerance for the multiplicity of cultural currents in the island nation. The tension between the uplanders and the lowlanders adds a layer of complexity to the issue of national identity, but it is also this same tension that brought rise to this plural society.

In this chapter, I intend to trace the social development of the elite as they traverse Philippine history and become the modern-day national bourgeoisie. From this social environment, I trace how music—its structures and styles—changed and developed over the course of this history. I also examine how music practices and reception evolved over the millennia. The lowland indigenous folk are always persisting in the background amid all these colonial developments. While several indigenous folks are pillaged by the Spanish and American colonizers, many still exist and flourish today in the mountainous province in the North and many tribal locales throughout the country. These groups and their cultures, we witness, are the inspiration of many modern-day colonized intellectuals to consolidate national identity and culture.

Precolonial Beginnings

Before Ferdinand Magellan stepped foot on Homonhon in 1521, the Philippines as a nation nor an imagined community did not exist. The now nation-state comprises of various cultures, social systems, and traditions that may as well differ from one island group to another. Many of these precolonial societies, particularly in lowland Visayas and much of

Luzon (both the upland and the lowlands), had a three-class social structure.[33] At the top were the *datu*, who acted as the chief of a particular kingdom assigned to any sex.[34] After them were the *timawa* or the free people. In hyper-simple terms, they cannot be bought or sold in the market but typically must pay tribute to the *datu* or *rajah* like a knight or vassal.[35] Lastly are the *oripun* (in Visayas) or the *alipin* (in Luzon) both translated as slaves. Even within this stratum is a social scale dependent on whether the individual is caught as a captive, born into slavery, or "earned" their way to slavery through debt. In Luzon, these slaves were all debtors as they continued to serve their masters or creditors until their debt is paid.[36] When one is born into slavery, what really happens is that they inherited the debt of their parents, and they carried the responsibility to pay that off. If an *alipin* and a *timawa* conceived a child, their offspring would be considered a half-slave, only paying half of the *alipin* parent's debt.[37] Similar to Luzon, Visayan societies then would operate on debt and dependence, where "one person was dependent on the decisions of another, the one exercising choice, the other not."[38] Thus, a person's position in society was measured by how much control they had over their time and labor in their life: the *oripun* or *alipin* on one extreme, the *timawa* on the other. For the slaves, their dependence was strictly measured by how much debt they owed then to their master. Understanding this social hierarchy is crucial to mapping how power structures were molded during the colonial strategy of indirect rule and even until today where Filipino societies operate in a clientele system and concentrate

[33] William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Phiippine Culture and Society*, 1st edition (Manila, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997), 219.
[34] Ibid., 129.
[35] Ibid., 131.
[36] Ibid., 224.
[37] Ibid., 225.
[38] Ibid., 135.

social resources within the same networks and families to consolidate power.[39] The function of artforms and aesthetics such as music are also molded by these same social structures.

Music during these times did not act simply as a form of entertainment but as a marker of social function. For the Visayans, they "were said to be always singing except when they were sick or asleep."[40] Poetry is not separate from song, in fact, all poetry is sung. Many of these poems are believed to keep a record of Filipino history and beliefs.[41] There are songs for funerals, eulogies, pleas for supernatural beings, and other passages of life.[42] As musicologist DRM Irving argues, "narrative vocal practices, ingrained within Filipino society, were thus identified as a crucial foundation on which law and order functioned, by which religion was observed, and by which rituals were enacted."[43] In addition, dancing marked celebrations like harvests and wedding, and these are accompanied with music and gong playing. These events are always sponsored by the *datu* or the chief.[44]

Filipino American psychology professor EJR David observes that precolonial Filipino societies "celebrate, depict, and display their culture and daily lives" through "art, literature, music, and dances."[45] While David's description may imply that the common folk were also included in the practice of precolonial culture and aesthetics of the quotidian, the arts and literature were primarily observed by the free people.[46] As historian William Henry

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[39] Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz, "Ferdinand Marcos: 'Apotheosis' of the Philippine Historical Political Tradition" (Philadelpha, University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 42.
[40] Scott, *Barangay*, 109.
[41] Ibid., 110.
[42] Ibid., 111.
[43] D. R. M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 88.
[44] Scott, *Barangay*, 111.
[45] David, *Brown Skin, White Minds*, 6.
[46] While David recognizes that he is not addressing "complexities and key differences between the very diverse groups of indigenous peoples," he does not address a key aspect of social structures, especially the three-class structure, prevalent within precolonial societies. Per David, his historical accounts of precolonial Philippines are "Filipino-centric," yet these narratives do not address class structures that, I think, are crucial in understanding precolonial culture and mindsets.

Scott notes, great folk epics and dances—which comprise a huge chunk of precolonial aesthetics—are usually accompanied by music depicting an "aristocratic form of literature."[47] The protagonists come from elite classes, portrayed as valorous heroes embarking on quests. Aristocratic wealth also bestows these heroes "an almost mystical nature."[48] In the Ifugao epic of the upland Mountain Province, *Hudhud*, Bugan carries her brother's prestigious sword belt to find a suitable mate, and only a man of an acceptable class shall fit it. When the poor Daulayan fits this belt, people knew that he comes from a wealthy lineage even though that is unknown to him. These epics affirm that recognition is usually conferred to "wealthy aristocrats who have qualified for their status by the performance of a requisite number of extravagant prestige feasts."[49] As we see later, these epics become a large source of inspiration to Kasilag and other artists in postcolonial Philippines.

Music, in precolonial times, primarily vocal, was not isolated from other artforms, in fact they were never separate as we see with Visayan poems and local epic folk traditions. Music, in my account, has two salient functions. First, it acts as a vessel to preserve community history and tradition through sung poetry. Boat people and fishing folk sing poetry to pass tradition and maintain history, and this practice begins as early as childhood. Epic traditions, on the other hand, are aristocratic literature that depict the lives of the wealthy, and these epics focus on the valor of the elite classes and the mystic elements of their treasures and wealth (typically weapons such as swords). Second, music serves as a social marker for life events and grand celebrations such as weddings and harvests. Because these events veer towards the aristocracy and the free people, precolonial culture and aesthetics were constructed through the lens of this class. The cultural terrain of precolonial

[47] Ibid., 261.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

times lies on the bed of social class structures which becomes crucial to understanding how natives negotiated power and culture through colonialism.

Under the Convent of Spanish Colonization

When Ferdinand Magellan and his party came to the Philippines in 1521, one of the very first things they did was to befriend and convert the local chief, Rajah Humabon, into Christianity and host the first Easter Mass in Mazaua.[50] Christian conversions were so marred with brutality (think of the *requerimiento* in the Americas) that conversions in the Philippines can be thought of as just violent. However, Humabon became, in fact, a *kasi-kasi* or a blood brother, of Magellan.[51] Humabon freely converted to Christianity and Magellan "proclaimed the unification of all the kingdoms on Cebu island into a single state, with Rajah Humabon as head of state."[52] However, this angered Lapu-Lapu, the chief of the nearby island of Mactan, "who appears to have considered himself, and not the Christian king, as the paramount local ruler."[53] When he refused to pay tribute to Humabon, Magellan wrecked the settlement at Bullaia and built a cross there, but Lapu-Lapu still did not budge.[54] However, on 26 April 1521, Zula, a subordinate chief of Lapu-Lapu, requested help from Magellan as the dissident chief prevented Zula from paying tribute to Humabon. Regardless of whether this might have been a ploy, Magellan accepted this request even at an overwhelming opposition from his officers. Grossly underestimating Lapu-Lapu's forces, Magellan succumbed to his death during the Battle of Mactan.[55] What is critical to my discussion is certainly not Magellan but both Humabon and Lapu-Lapu. These two figures

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[50] Richard J. Field, "Revisiting Magellan's Voyage to the Philippines," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 34, no. 4 (2006): 313–37, 319-20.
[51] Ibid., 317.
[52] Nick Joaquin, "Lapu-Lapu and Humabon: The Filipino as Twins," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 7, no. 1/2 (1979): 51–58, 55.
[53] Field, "Revisiting Magellan's Voyage to the Philippines," 320.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 321.

represent how Filipinos negotiate power and how they push and pull outside influences into our culture. Filipino National Artist Nick Joaquin put this sentiment in words so succinctly that I cannot do better:

> In our every revolt against Western culture there has been the figure of Lapu-Lapu, still resisting the invader. And in our every advance in culture, whether it be in technology (the use of wheel and plow), or in art (the use of painting and the theater), or in politics (the use of the democratic ways and means), there has always been the figure of Humabon, still modifying and being modified by what he accepts. And therefore, our true history is this double activity of Lapu-Lapu and Humabon, not the activity of Lapu-Lapu alone, since ours is not purely a history of resistance, nor the activity of Humabon alone, since ours is not purely a history of acceptance either, but the joint effort of Lapu Lapu and Humabon.[56]

The history of Filipinos is not simply a history of class resistances or Manichaean struggles, nor it is a history of acceptance and submission; it is a history of negotiation of power and survival. While focusing on brevity misses many details in the three-hundred-year rule of the Spanish in the Philippines, I try to give a sense as to how the race politics and religion in Spanish Philippines developed the elite landowning class of the Philippines through a system of negotiation. I also illustrate how music's social role changed as these new structures were put in place.

During the dawn of Spanish colonization, Filipinos as a label only applied to "a type of insular Creole, a Caucasian born in that particular piece of the Spanish Empire, the Philippines."[57] The natives were not remotely called Filipino, instead the Spanish called them *indios* and savages. To control the natives, colonialists used Catholicism as a tool to subjugate and to pacify resistance. Local chiefs were also bribed through tributary exemptions for them to force their constituents to recognize the Spanish King as the natural ruler.[58] In

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[56] Joaquin, "Lapu-Lapu and Humabon," 56.
[57] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 47.
[58] Nilda Rimonte, "Colonialism's Legacy: The Inferiorizing of the Filipino," in *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity*, ed. Maria P. P. Root, 1st edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1997), 39–61, 54-5.

addition, the colonialists, typically the priests, would study the native culture and write detailed descriptions of their traditions, styles, and practices as an effort "to control and change" the natives, particularly through vocal music.[59] As Irving writes, the Spanish efforts to study "Filipino music—especially singing—became fundamental to their attempts to control and manipulate indigenous society."[60]

Friars wrote chants in the local language, and they used music to propagate Christianity. In a more long-term program, a friar would adopt enough native culture to become accepted into or tolerated by a native community, he would then "adopt" the community's children to live closely with him, catechize them, and imbibe to them some general knowledge which included music. These children would then articulate what they learned in their own artistic expression—these Hispanicized cultural practices are passed on to these children's children.[61] A similar practice is done to native musicians whom Spanish friars taught Western classical technique, and the former is expected to spread these Western skills to their fellow natives.[62] In fact, eight singers, more specifically *cantores*, are assigned for each church, and they were exempt from paying taxes for the musical services they offer to the church and the town.[63] Having a Filipino appointed as a cantor then would allow them to become "socially mobile and enjoy a greater degree of enfranchisement within colonial society."[64] This heightened the competition (implying division) among the natives to enjoy these privileges afforded to the *cantores*. In the larger picture, this business of acculturating to, or better yet, mimicking Spanish culture was a way to negotiate one's way for survival. As Abigail de Kosnik, director and professor at the Berkeley Center for New Media, argues, it is

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[59] Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 97.
[60] Ibid., 88.
[61] Ibid., 111.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 189.
[64] Ibid.

necessary to consider "the pervasiveness of the stereotype of Filipinos as musical mimics in the context of the Philippines's colonization."[65] Nevertheless, the natives remained *indios* despite their acculturation to the Catholic religion and culture—the Filipinos remained exclusive to the white Spanish folk.

However, there existed social tensions due to racial (un)belongingness of the mixed-race mestizos and the revolutions in Latin America that challenged that notion of Filipino. The range of mestizos was wide, because the Spanish Empire was a truly global one stretching from Europe to the Americas and to Asia in the Philippines. However, one kind of mestizo had a large effect on the social fabric of the country—the Chinese mestizos. Because of their (usually) native mothers, these people are brought up into the traditions of the Catholic church and the local Filipino tradition. On the other hand, through their association with their Chinese fathers, the mestizos can navigate through Chinese communities. Because of their upbringing, they "eventually became the core of the elite."[66] They numbered around a quarter million out of the four million people in the country, and they also excelled in trade and commerce.[67] They were also masters at acquiring land that a Catholic priest, Father Zuñiga, said of the Chinese mestizos, "if no remedy is found, within a short time, the lords of the entire archipelago will be the Chinese mestizos."[68] However, the rush of Chinese immigrants to the country challenged the sway of the mestizos. Steinberg even notes that for any prolonged economic or price war, "the ethnic Chinese almost always beat the mestizo, even though the mestizo had much stronger ties to the society and a historical record in the community."[69]

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[65] Abigail De Kosnik, "Perfect Covers: Filipino Musical Mimicry and Transmedia Performance," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 3, no. 1 (March 2017): 137–61, 141.
[66] Steinberg, *The Philippines*., 45.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 47.
[69] Ibid., 46.

The rise of the Chinese in the archipelago impacted the mestizos not only economically, but they also branded the mestizos as "bastard Chinese."[70] The mestizos realized that they were neither *indio* nor Chinese. Being increasingly influential but apart, they joined with the Spanish mestizos who were also under fire as revolutions in Latin America broke the Spanish Empire and Spanish creoles born in the Americas were under suspicion by the mainland Spanish people.[71] The dynamically changing social fabric impelled all mestizos of any ethnic gradation to reformulate a social identity for themselves by reinterpreting the term Filipino as a person "born in and identified with the interests of the archipelago, whatever [their] race, creed, or national origin might be."[72]

Reinterpreting *Filipino* in this case highlights how the term, as an identity, is highly syncretic and socially constructed. Echoing Joaquin, this notion of a *Filipino* is "our national heritage: the yes of Humabon, the no of Lapu-Lapu. In every Filipino today there is a Humabon and there is a Lapu-Lapu; these two are one in that ambivalent creature called a Filipino."[73] However, since ethnic purity can no longer be the determining factor for social class, money and wealth decides it.[74] It does not matter who your ancestors were if you have enough money to buy your place into the elite class through marriage or simply claiming a position in the social stratum. Landowning also became a sign of success when acquiring positions in the Spanish government or clergy was highly restrictive.[75] This material culture permeates the society to this day where elites display their status through their wealth and assets.

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[70] Ibid., 47.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Joaquin, "Lapu-Lapu and Humabon," 56.
[74] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 48.
[75] Ibid.

What happened then to the *datus* amid the racial politics of the mestizos and the new Filipinos? The Spanish retained the *datus* as the leader of their communities but renamed them as *cabeza de barangay* (head of the village).[76] As a classic colonial state, the Spanish relied on native allies to govern as collaborators. Because the Spanish were spread throughout the archipelago, they relied on Catholic priests to monitor these cabezas. This native elite transformed their political power into an economic one through tributary taxes, and they were able to become landowning elites, known as *cacique*.[77] Per sociologist Meneleo D. Litonjua, native allies were also increasingly selected through a restricted electoral process at least at a municipal level.[78] The Spanish saw political office as the right to serve, but Filipinos saw this as "surrogates for struggles to survive, to manipulate patron-client relations, to advance economically, and to wield a measure power in a situation in which they were inherently subordinate and subservient."[79] Instead of honing an ethos of public service, Filipino bureaucrats learned to manipulate and exploit the government. This resulted in "a small landed elite who held economic power, and a weak and incompetent bureaucracy mired in the politics of patronage and clientelism."[80] In the nineteenth century, according to Steinberg, mestizos often intermarried with the cacique which brough fresh perspectives into the otherwise isolated landowning class.[81] The new Filipinos gain the economic means to access an elite education due to their affiliation with the landowning class, resulting in the *ilustrados* (enlightened ones) who, as Litonjua observes:

> …after their studies in Europe would agitate for reforms in the colony, wrest the leadership of the Philippine Revolution, collaborate with American imperialism, the

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Meneleo D. Litonjua, "The State in Development Theory: The Philippines Under Marcos," *Philippine Studies* 49, no. 3 (2001): 368–98, 375-6.
[79] Ibid., 376.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 48.

> Japanese occupation, and the Marcos dictatorship, having ensconced themselves as the economic and political power elite of Philippine society.[82]

These *ilustrados* were hopeful, and they believed that they had the ability to improve the Filipino society while repudiating the fierce inequality that Spain brought into the archipelago.[83] Precisely because they have the education and the wealth, the *ilustrados* believed that they can effect change, in whichever direction, and this goes beyond the Spanish colonial era. Tracing the development of this elite class is necessary if we are to paint a holistic and convincing narrative of how national culture in the Philippines developed up to this point. However, echoing De Kosnik, I must emphasize that mimicry is also a crucial factor that shapes Filipino culture. As she notes, in the late nineteenth century, during the late period of the Spanish occupation, Filipino bands were trained to provide Western music in social occasions, usually in Macau, Shanghai, and Hong Kong.[84]

Throughout the Spanish colonial period, the struggle for survival is negotiated and mediated through mimicry and assimilation to Spanish cultural and religious practices. Nonetheless, Spanish racism could never tolerate any motives towards mimicry or assimilation. Even the National Hero Jose Rizal—an *ilustrado* who accrued wealth and education, spoke Spanish (in addition to several other languages), acquired a medical degree, and cultured in philosophy—was still jailed "for failing to salute to a member of the local police."[85] This elite had to negotiate power with the Spanish that both resisted and accepted parts of the empire. The *ilustrados* displayed this tendency: they were staunch believers of private property and defended the economic circumstance and chances that their families have already founded. In addition, as Steinberg notes, they used nationalism as a drive to

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[82] Litonjua, "The State in Development Theory," 375.
[83] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 49.
[84] De Kosnik, "Perfect Covers," 141.
[85] Rimonte, "Colonialism's Legacy," 56.

"increase their share of the pie" in the Philippine economy dominated by the Spanish.[86] Even having exposed the abuses of the Spanish clergy and government in his novel *Noli Me Tangere*, Rizal was reluctant to an all-out revolution to topple the Spanish Empire in the sequel, *El Filibusterismo*.[87] In fact, prominent members of the *ilustrados* who advocated for the Filipinos in the Spanish Court wanted reform (hence they are also known the reformists) and not independence. It is only when, in 1898, an incompetent Spanish bureaucracy ordered the execution of Rizal that the *ilustrados* got so enraged that they cut of any ties they may had with the Spanish and supported independence movements and revolutions.[88]

When the Treaty of Paris was signed on 10 December 1898, through which Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States for twenty million dollars, Spain was in control of "only a few isolated outposts in the country."[89] The Filipinos were victorious in their war for liberation, and as Filipino historian Renato Constantino notes, "it was really a people's victory, not only because it is the people who supplied the manpower and contributed the casualties in the actual battles, but also because the soldiers of the Revolution found spontaneous and overwhelming support among the masses almost everywhere."[90] However, having said that, during the declaration of independence from Spain in 23 January 1899, the elite displayed material tendencies that mimicked the West. In fact, the menu was European and written in French with dishes such as "Coquilles de Crabes" and "Filet a la

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[86] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 50.
[87] In *El Filibusterismo,* the sequel to *Noli Me Tangere*, Jose Rizal did not end the story with the murder of the colonial elite. Simoun, a mysterious jeweler who seeks revenge against the colonial elite planted a bomb in a lamp that he offered as a gift to a wedding attended by the colonists and the elites. A schoolboy that Simoun trusted, Basilio, knew that the bomb was hidden in a lamp, and threw the lamp before it could explode in the building. This ending to *El Fili* sparked discussions whether Rizal supported an all-out revolution or not, or whether he even supported to topple the colonial government in the first place. While this is a heated debate, the ambiguity in the ending of the novel may imply a parallel ambiguity to Rizal's support of a violent revolution against the colonial elite.
[88] Steinberg, *The Philippines*, 50.
[89] Renato Constantino and Letizia R. Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited, Vol. 1* (Quezon City: Renato Constantino, 1975), 213.
[90] Ibid.

Chateaubriand."[91] There was already a kind of snobbery from the elite that revolutionary thinker, Apolinario Mabini, coming from a relatively poorer background, had "latent hostility between [him] and the wealthy *ilustrados* in the cabinet and Congress."[92]

Understanding the class dynamic even between Filipinos are crucial in mapping how national culture and identity developed in the Philippines after the 1900. The reason I have spent some time outlining this history is to provide a strong background to the political and cultural drama that the national elites—the national bourgeoisie—liken to stir in the twentieth century. It is impossible to understand the cultural complexity of the Philippines without understanding the class struggles and native habits that originate all before 1900 and dating back to precolonial Philippines. As Soren Kierkegaard argues, "life must be understood backward." However, he also writes that "it must be lived forward."[93] Only upon knowing the stage where Kasilag's life has been set can we fully appreciate how she lived her life forward.

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[91] Ibid., 215.
[92] Ibid., 212.
[93] Soren Kierkegaard, "JOURNAL JJ," in *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks, Volume 2*, ed. Alastair Hannay et al., Journals EE-KK (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 133–288, 179.

Interlude Two

It was an early afternoon, and my piano teacher and I were practicing one of Mozart's piano sonatas. Drills after drills, I felt as if my fingers were fighting against the keys, and my articulations were less precise. I could not, for the life of me, sightread music as well as she wanted me to, and coupled with tricky articulations, I did sound as if a toddler was tripping all the time. Perhaps because we needed fresh air after a long time of practicing, we stepped out of the studio and had a small chat.

She mentioned she had this piano professor in her college days at the Philippine Women's University who was strict but equally humorous, and, importantly, had a quirky personality. Our moments inside the studio just earlier reminded her of this piano teacher. This teacher, who she referred to as Tita King, would reprimand her when she would get on the sloppy side of playing. She admonished her that she needs to get the notes in her hands and an effective way to do it is to forget about articulations first and press each note as hard as you can and slowly.

It felt counterintuitive. I thought I needed to get the articulations in my hands from the beginning, and to practice them wrong is to set yourself back ten times. But my piano teacher did say that Tita King was unconventional, but that she was a magnificent pianist, that is, before she had problems with her hands. We only talked about her for a short while, and I never really gave her a second thought, since, during that time, she was just one of my piano teacher's teachers.

Only when I started to study Filipino music seriously did I encounter the name, Lucrecia R. Kasilag, a National Artist for Music, known for her unorthodox compositions and legacy in teaching and research. The short biography from the Cultural Center of the Philippines referred to her as Tita King. Only then did I connect the two dots.

Chapter Two

King on the Stage of American Empire

The turn towards the twentieth century marked significant changes to the Philippine archipelago. The Philippine Revolution under Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence from Spain on 12 June 1898. However, the loss of Spain to the United Stated in the Spanish-American War put to question this declaration. For twenty million dollars, the Philippines was sold to the United States under the Treaty of Paris which transferred the island nation from one colonizer to another, with disregard to the Filipino people's victory. Under the rule of the United States, around "thirty thousand [Americans] killed a million [Filipinos]," and other Filipinos "benevolently assimilate" to American standards to discipline the undisciplined child in the Filipino.[94]

When US President William McKinley declared "benevolent assimilation" in the Philippines on 21 December 1898, this paved the way for Americans to unknowingly label their cruel occupation as a "mixed blessing."[95] McKinley ended his executive order with a crafty statement that perhaps solidified the idea that the Americans came to the Philippines to espouse democracy and their idea of a civilized nation: "we come, not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and

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[94] Mark Twain, "Thirty Thousand Killed a Million," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1992, 63.
[95] Maria Sereno I. Diokno, "'Benevolent Assimilation' and Filipino Responses," in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel M McFerson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 75–88, 75.

in their personal and religious rights."[96] However, this benevolent assimilation is far from pure kindness nor pure force; it is a mix of both. Maria Sereno Diokno, a professor of history at the University of the Philippines Diliman, writes that the Americans established themselves in the Philippines in a paradox, where they aimed to slowly entice and integrate the Filipino elite into the colonial administration by giving them seats in various branches of government, and this process was aptly called *Filipinization*.[97] Only those who can read, speak, and write English or Spanish, and owned land or paid substantial taxes were allowed to vote; and of course, only a few of the locals qualified with only less than three percent of the Filipino population able to vote during the 1903 Municipal Elections.[98] Those who could not qualify, the vast majority of which were poor and rural folks, had a different kind of treatment. To avoid revolutionary sentiments from these people, the Americans first quelled the revolution and eliminated the leaders, either by deportation or execution. The Sedition Law of 1901 was also passed which banned any form of transgression and advocacy of independence even if it was peaceful.[99] If the benevolence was applied to the elites, the cost of conquest and assimilation was visited upon the poor and uneducated masses.

On 31 August 1918—during the American occupation—in San Fernando, La Union, Lucrecia "King" Roces Kasilag was born. She was the third child of Marcial Kasilag, Sr. and Asuncion Roces Kasilag. Her father was a successful district civil engineer and government official while her mother was a violin and solfeggio teacher. Other biographies thoroughly describe the Kasilag Family as middle class; however, I think it not as how Filipinos think of middle class today with decent stone houses and some air-conditioning units. This middle

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[96] William McKinley, "Executive Order," The American Presidency Project, December 21, 1898, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-132.
[97] Diokno, "'Benevolent Assimilation' and Filipino Responses," 76.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

class is exactly the *bourgeoisie*—typically associated with elites in the Philippines, but in fact, is literally translated as "middle class." As historian Peter Gay writes, while the bourgeoisie has diverse layers throughout the historical tapestry from political aspirations, commerce, to arts, they reveal patterns in their attitudes that espouse that of the "free [individuals] who set their own course, though within a given, gladly accepted framework of family, society, and state."[100] The Kasilags displayed these experiences and tendencies as well, being properly inducted into the traditional bourgeois values of filiality and conformity but with the stamp of American approval, often branded through education. In fact, Marcial, King's father, was part of the first cohort of the *pensionados*.[101] These pensionados were a group of selected Filipino students sent to US universities and colleges to study and upon graduation must return to the Philippines to render their services to the insular government.[102]

Marcial Sr., as one of the pensionados, was employed as a civil engineer of the Bureau of Public Works and eventually the first Filipino to head the same Bureau and later the first Filipino head of the National Power Corporation.[103] Because of this, the Kasilags were itinerant. Wherever the father would go in inspection trips, his wife and children would come; however, Marcial was in the official government car while the rest were separated in a blue Buick as King's father thought that it was "a matter of principle."[104] During vacations,

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[100] Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture 1815-1914*, Revised ed. edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 32.
[101] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 2.
[102] Alexander A. Calata, "The Role of Education in Americanizing Filipinos," in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel M McFerson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 89–97, 93. The pensionado program was one of the ways that the United States propagate their culture into the Philippines. In fact, children of the pensionados tell that their own "Americanization" spring from their parents' stay in the United States. According to Calata, Virginia Lopez Licuanan, a daughter of prominent pensionados, speak that because of her parents' stay in the United States, her "Americanization" was deepened, even saying that her first word as a toddler was probably "apple," because "'apple pie was very likely' her first solid food."
[103] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 3.
[104] Ibid.

the Kasilags would often go to the provinces of Marinduque and Batangas, enjoying "the rustic life at [their] coconut farm" in the barrio.[105]

Despite these provincial trips, King grew up in Paco, Manila, which was already the Philippines's premier capital. They lived in Perdigon Street on the east side of Herran, now more commonly known as Pedro Gil.[106] The gentry in Paco consisted of famous families in private circles and in government such as the Arranz, Yulo, Benitez, Paras, Paredes, Silva, Teodoro, Velez, and Zulueta, whom King remembers were "all in great houses with lots of parties and hordes of guests chauffeured into grand driveways snaking around fountains."[107] The Kasilags lived in a "fine, high-ceilinged American colonial two-story house with three arches adorning a wide upstairs balcony, another porch downstairs and a filigreed iron roof over the porte cochere" with several housemaids and helpers which included the six Kasilag children.[108] Even with these privileges, no one ever grew up with a rotten attitude. Marcial was typical of Filipino fathers of the time who want their children to grow up virtuous and as good Christians. Nevertheless, the senior Kasilag never raised his voice in anger or in asserting authority.[109] His children would recall that unlike other government officials of the time, Marcial would never abuse his power as his "outstanding virtue was his integrity."[110] Moreover, he would always feed his children with what they dubbed "brain food" such as "complete, expensive sets of books, like 'The Book of Knowledge' and other encyclopedias."[111]

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Visitacion R. De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag: An Artist for the World* (Manila: V.R. de la Torre, 1985), 1-2.
[107] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 6.
[108] Ibid., 5.
[109] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 2.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 3.

On the other hand, King's mother, Asuncion, was the "master of the kitchen" but she also served as her children's first solfeggio and violin lessons.[112] King was six when she first started her lessons, and she recalls that on "Saturday afternoons, [their] Mama would give the three eldest Kasilag children solfeggio lessons out of Hilarios Eslava books 1 to 3," but they would sometimes sneak out of these lessons: "screaming the notes at the top of [their] lungs, [they] tiptoed out of the sala" singing louder as they run off the streets to skate Peñafrancia Street with their friends.[113] Their mother's assistant cook would often warn them about their mother coming back so they may return to their lessons in the nick of time.

King, even though received violin lessons from her mother, was more known as being a pianist. She received her first piano lessons at age seven with an elderly Spanish woman, Doña Concha Cuervo. She also learned under Mrs. Mercedes Melgar Mossessgeld, albeit for a short time, and continued with Doña Pura Lacson Villanueva.[114] King recalls that she had her first recital at age twelve where she played Felix Mendelssohn's "May Breezes" from *Song Without Words*. Being a musical family, Asuncion organized the Kasilag Rondalla where King played the *banduria*, a local stringed instrument like the guitar. She would take turns playing this instrument with his older brother, Octavio. Natividad or Nati as they call her, the eldest daughter, would play the violin together with their mother, and the younger Kasilags, Mina, Marcialito, and Pedring played the *torotot* or tin horns. Every Saturday, after their solfeggio lessons, the Kasilag Rondalla would play for the family or guests when there are any.[115] During the weekends, the Kasilags would spend time with their father's assistant engineers where King would often play music with their close family friends. King also

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112 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 3.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 4-5.
115 Ibid., 3.

recalls that she and her brother Octavio, who was advanced in piano, would take turns to accompany their mother's violin playing, often performing pieces from Filipino national artist Antonio Molina to Fritz Kreisler and Cesar Franck.

A hardworking genius, King reaped accolades in various fields as a young girl. She remembers that she would occasionally "bring home nice little surprises from school such as ribbons and medals, and even a lovely vase won at a spelling bee, among [her] other school rewards."[116] Engaged in the school newspaper, drama, sports, and the scouts, King ran back and forth that she often forgets to report to her family including how she won that spelling bee vase. Only when her parents checked in with her teacher that they knew about the origins of the vase. In 1930, King graduated as valedictorian from Paco Elementary School.[117]

Right after, King enrolled for high school at the Philippine Women's University (PWU) where she once again excelled in both inside and outside of the classroom. Voraciously hungry for books, she would read all kinds of literature from music biographies to action and adventure genres. At the time, she was thinking of becoming either a lawyer or doctor, so literature on these fields were part of her reading routine. In addition to these, she often read Philippe Oppenheimer, Agatha Christie, and Ian Fleming.[118] She read books that were available to her, and at that time, these were books, primarily in English, made accessible by the American education infrastructure.

While King was strict about her work ethic, she was "not exactly the all too obedient and meek student in high school."[119] At PWU, King and six other classmates were

[116] Ibid., 6.
[117] Ibid.
[118] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 5.
[119] Ibid.

accelerated to their sophomore year in the same year they were enrolled. Hence, these group called themselves the "Ostracized Sophomore Gang" or OSG for short.[120] Nena Alberto would recall that King was a favorite of their biology teacher, Laura Zalamea, for King's strictness and organization. But King thinks that she was not the prim person that Alberto recalls but that she was quite the rebel. She once wrote to her social-civic studies teacher, Miss Josefina Altiveros, an apology for her "rebelliousness" when she stepped out of line especially after being inducted as the president of the student council in her senior year as she was supposed to be a role model.[121] During school functions, the rest of the students would wear high heels and a hair bun with the gown, but King would wear what is more functional usually foregoing the heels and the gown altogether.[122] Only after three years, in what would be normally four, in high school, King graduated as valedictorian of her class with Nena Alberto as their salutatorian.[123]

King attempted to enroll in college to take up pre-medicine at University of the Philippines in Manila. However, because of the daunting registration procedures and confusing bureaucracy of enrollment, she gave up on medicine. Her parents stepped in to speak with the president and co-founder of PWU at that time, Francisca Tirona Benitez, where they decided that King would continue her studies at her alma mater.[124]

Taking up a Bachelor of Arts with an English major, King once again performed excellently inside and outside of the classroom.[125] She graduated as *cum laude* with straight 1s in her report card save for a single bright-red "5" in swimming, which was King's "'wet'

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[120] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 8.
[121] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag.*
[122] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 8.
[123] Ibid., 9.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 10.

debacle."[126] Outside of academics, Kasilag became the editor-in-chief of the college newspaper, *The Maroon and the White*, associate editor of the *Philippine Women's Magazine*, president of the Liberal Arts student organization, and secretary of the Collegiate Student Council. She also engaged in their dramatic guild, cheering squad, and track-and-field.[127] Still keeping in touch with her rebel spirit, King and her closest friends formed a group called GO-LA-KA-OR-GA which is the first two letters of their last names put together. She was joined by Inocencia Gomez, Lilia Lavada, the now National Artist for Dance Leonor Orosa (Goquingco), and Esperanza Garma, all of whom planned novel activities with King, some of which earned them notoriety.[128]

Being a daughter of a *pensionado* still had its influence on King's life. The children of the first cohort of pensionados were called "The Chickens of 1903" where its members would socialize with other boys, usually at the Philippine Columbian Club, an organization by the *pensionados.* King had the chance to become the president of the "Chickens" for a year.[129]

While King was a college senior, she decided to cross-enroll at the Conservatory of Music at St. Scholastica's College which is a few blocks down the road from PWU. This conservatory was the first in the country and was founded in 1908 by a German missionary nun, Sister Baptista Battig, who herself was an accomplished concert pianist. King recalls that Sister Battig was "very exacting and thorough…[but]…was full of humanity. She used to intone during [King's] lessons, 'Look for the beauty of tone, beauty of line."[130] In St. Scholastica, she was pursuing her Music Teacher's Diploma where she had Josephine

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[126] Ibid. The collegiate grading system in the Philippines generally goes from 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest and 5 as a failing grade. Often, failing grades are written on cards with a bright-red pen.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 9.
[130] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 11.

Cojuangco, former President Cory Aquino's elder sister, as her first piano student.[131] When asked, "which way to Carnegie Hall, please?" King would answer "practice, practice, practice."

Equipped with talent and diligence, King became one of the very few Filipinos to perform Beethoven's towering *Hammerklavier* sonata at age 18. As award-winning Filipino pianist Jonathan Arevalo Coo notes in an interview, he "doesn't know if there is even any [other] Filipino pianist who performed Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* sonata…at age 18."[132] At her junior recital in October 1936, a Spanish newspaper at the time, *La Vanguardia*, wrote that Kasilag is a "*maestra de piano* with the ability to execute technique, spirit, and emotion of the heart to give life to a musical piece."[133] In 1939, King received her Teacher's Diploma in 1939 performing difficult pieces, with her teacher, Doña Pura wielding the baton. As Kasilag writes, "a woman conductor in those days was quite an eyebrow raiser, and raise eyebrows did Doña Pura did."[134] Doña Pura was not the only woman on the stage who raised eyebrows. King performed piano pieces from Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 10*, Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* sonata, Bach's *Organ Prelude and Fugue in G minor* (transcribed for piano) to Chopin's *Nocturne in G Major* and some of Medtner's Poems. Her *piece de resistance* was Ignaz Paderewski's *Concerto in A Minor* for piano and orchestra.[135] After her recital, King concertized, courtesy of her father, in several cities in Japan which includes Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka, and Nagoya.[136] Having gone far in piano performance, King

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131 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*., 11.
132 Interview with Jonathan Arevalo Coo taken from NCCA Philippines, *Lucrecia Kasilag*, Sagisag Kultura (Manila, Philippines, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNUAzuXGf8s, 06:20.
133 De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 13.
134 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 13.
135 Ibid.
136 De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 13.

enrolled again at St. Scholastica to pursue a degree in Bachelor of Music (but got interrupted by the war).

Around that time, Kasilag, being a true literary glutton, joined the Philippine Literary Musical Society or Philimus, where she was acquainted with people of stature such as the future Secretary of Justice Ricardo Puno.[137] King invited the legendary cellist and Filipino composer and now National Artist, Dr. Antonio J. Molina, to be Philimus's adviser as he himself set out his life to organizing literary and musical groups. Molina proved to be a huge influence on Kasilag's compositional style as under the former's tutelage, Kasilag wrote an early significant composition in the form of a tone poem in A-flat major called *April Morning* (1941). While the piano plays, someone reads a poem by Kasilag's friend Angela Manalang-Gloria.[138] Kasilag's love for Debussy also came from Molina who is known as the Claude Debussy of the Philippines for his strong impressionistic style. Kasilag recalled him citing Debussy frequently for "his economy of notes but great depth."[139] Molina would tell Kasilag "Too many notes…write with fewer notes, more depth."[140] In later years, it was also him who was one of the people who inspired Kasilag to utilize indigenous instruments for her compositions. In fact, Molina is one of the early proponents of using indigenous musical instruments.

While most of Kasilag's exposure to literature and music came from the Western canon, that should be no surprise during the American occupation, where schools prioritized works in English and suppressed the local languages and literature.[141] As Fanon theorized, colonized intellectuals would often be schooled in the Western tradition as colonialists

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137 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 15.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid., 19.
140 Ibid.
141 Calata, "Role of Education in Americanizing Filipinos," 95.

would often "wage a rearguard campaign in the fields of culture, values, and technology, etc."[142] They assert that "the essential values—meaning Western values—remain eternal despite all errors attributable to man."[143] The colonized intellectual would accept "the cogency of these [Western] ideas and there at the back of [their] mind stood a sentinel on duty guarding the Greco-Roman pedestal."[144] Kasilag's mentors, while mostly foreigners such as Doña Pura and Sister Battig, provided her a strict foundation in music and teaching. In her early years, Kasilag learned solfege from her mother. Even her knowledge of Debussy, a French composer, can be attributed to Dr. Molina, a Filipino artist.

Because the colonizers—both Spanish and American—created a violent cultural environment, artists and intellectuals like Kasilag were bound to learn the tongue and the culture of the colonizer. Ethnomusicologist Michael Tenzer even notes European tonality was so pervasive that Filipinos brought forth their musical genres stemming from this tradition. If the French have the *chanson*, the Filipinos created the *kundiman*. These were the music of Kasilag's time, and it "fed the tenacious illusion that there was nothing else musically [Philippine] to discover."[145] This is parallel to Fanon's first developmental stage of the colonized intellectual where they "assimilated the colonizer's culture."[146] I want to highlight that assimilating the colonizer's culture have been much more difficult for natives during the Spanish period as they were incessant in gatekeeping the language and the culture so that the natives cannot impede nor contest the Spanish hegemony. It took around two hundred years into the Spanish colonial era for the *ilustrado* class to emerge. On the other hand, the United States was innovative in its imperial project in the Philippines and co-opted

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142 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 9.
143 Ibid., 11.
144 Ibid.
145 Michael Tenzer, "José Maceda and the Paradoxes of Modern Composition in Southeast Asia," *Ethnomusicology* 47, no. 1 (2003): 93–120, 95.
146 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*., 158.

the land-owning *ilustrado* population to achieve cultural hegemony. As Filipino American literary scholar and critic E. San Juan, Jr. writes, the United States offered the chance for the *ilustrados* to be educated in line with the American standard and gave them administrative positions in government, in the name of benevolent assimilation.[147] This made the first stage much faster during the American colonial era than the Spanish one from two hundred years to a short span of around two years.

Nonetheless, there are Filipino intellectuals at the time who attempted to cultivate a movement for independence from American rule and its accompanying institutions. Filipino National Artist for Music Ramón Pagayon Santos notes that during the American period, "classical musicians expressed strong reservations on the aesthetic values of entertainment music" and this led them to search ostensibly for a national idea of Filipino art music.[148] As part of this movement, folk music and dances from around the territory were collected in the 1930s as part of a flagship project of the University of the Philippines under President Jorge Bocobo.[149] This project was central to the nationalist project in music as we see later with the Bayanihan Dance Company and to Filipino composers, but for now, I want to present that even if the American rule seems hegemonic, there were movements countering it and questioning its legitimacy for the sake of independence, and Kasilag was raised in this kind of environment: trained in the Western tradition but aware of the cultural movements occurring even within elite and academic circles.

There is no doubt that Kasilag's potential revealed itself early in her childhood. Her family background from her father being a *pensionado* and her mother being a music teacher

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147 Epifanio San Juan, Jr., *Maelstrom Over the Killing Fields: Interventions in the Project of National-Democratic Liberation* (Quezon City, Philippines: Pantas Publishing & Printing Inc., 2021), 9.
148 Ramón Pagayon Santos, "Nationalism and Indiginization in Philippine Contemporary Music: An Acculturated Response to Westernization," *Cuaderno Internacional de Estudios Humanísticos y Literatura*, no. 19 (2013): 125–32, 126.
149 Ibid.

propelled her into a rich intellectual and musical life early on. Not only that, the circles she socialized in were forged not by coincidence but by the circumstances of the American occupation from the concentration of the *pensionados* in the same private circles to her father's association with officials in the insular government. There is something to be said about the resources that Kasilag gained as part of the middle class in the American Philippines at that time – true to values of family, social achievement, and state connection. However, Kasilag's merits and talents are not to be understated, for a seed grown out on the American stage became a force to be reckoned with in the effort to build a national culture and music in the Philippines.

Interlude Three

It was summer of 2019. The University of the Philippines (UP) College of Music seemed humble: a small gate, a wooden table for security, and a canteen nearby. I could not get inside without an ID from the university, but I managed to enter because of an old friend from the Institute of Geology.

I came there to borrow scores by Filipino composers including Tita King's works for me to practice and potentially perform. Right there, I was informed that outsiders can neither enter nor borrow materials from the library without approval. Having said that, the staff were warm and kind. While waiting, I glossed over the books at the front, mostly on Western counterpoint and theory. I told the library staff what I was looking for and asked where they are. She mentioned that they were in a separate place and recommended I return with a letter detailing my request.

After a few days, I returned to the library for the scores. They walked me through the old music library, with thick layers of dust in and on the shelves, and it seemed as if no one plays any of this music. It was the old *Filipiniana* section, and I found it sad that many of our own music was left in the old section of the library, while all the scores and research on the Western tradition are on the forefront of the library. Perhaps they were in the midst of moving the materials. But the thick dust gave me the impression that these scores were rarely used.

In December 2021, I planned to go to PWU, because of their Kasilag collection. I learned from a staff over the phone that the music library has allegedly been turned into a classroom during the pandemic. I could also not borrow materials, not because of Covid, but because I was not a PWU student, and they could not grant exemptions to outsiders. That is what they told me on the phone, but a music professor from UP informed me that I might be able to borrow materials by contacting the dean of the PWU School of Music. It worked, and they were so accommodating.

The people I encountered were often nice, but the bureaucracy befuddled me.

Chapter Three

The Rise of "Baby Komposer"

After King's Asian concert tour, she returned to St. Scholastica to teach piano and music theory. She chose to remain in academe than to perform the piano publicly even if she was an excellent pianist herself. She believed that she "was not built for the concert stage," and instead went into the academic life, even though she was invited to play at concerts and over radio stations.[150] She explained that she "never hankered for a full concert life, because [she] had the feeling that there were other concert pianists better than I," a comment typical for the modest King.[151] Perhaps a more plausible reason is that there were only a few chances for concert pianists to flourish in the Philippines then (and even now). Concert pianists in the Philippines fight for a livelihood, and King recalls that when she and her friends perform, they would do it for free, out of love, as they say. Teaching, on the other hand, would offer her a livelihood and an opportunity to help develop young Filipino musicians.[152] King would also teach at the University of the Philippines and Assumption Convent (at the behest of her former teacher, Mrs. Pura Villanueva); however, it is at her alma mater PWU where she set down roots as an educator.

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[150] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 15.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

King's return to her alma mater was made possible in large part due to Miss Felicing Tirona of the Tirona family that founded PWU. In 1939, Tirona was made the dean of the college of liberal arts, and that summer of that same year, she called for King to come to her office. That was not their first-time meeting. In fact, Tirona had stirred the artist in Kasilag in the early 1930s when Tirona authored and directed a production in PWU called "Leap Year Fantasy."[153] King felt a bit of guilt and apprehension as she went into the dean's office. She remembered her tilted baccalaureate cap appearing in the newspaper—an image that displeased some university officials as it looked quite "unbecoming."[154] All her apprehension faded when Tirona offered her to teach music at her alma mater as PWU began to establish a Music Department that year. She quickly accepted.

However, on 8 December 1941, the United States declared war on Japan, and the bombs signaled that the Second World War has reached the Philippines. The premier university, the University of the Philippines (UP), was closed, and PWU was used as a hospital for the United States Army. Because of the war, the Music Department ceased to function, and Tirona, together with King and another close friend, Aurora C. Diño, organized the Philippine Conservatory of Music at PWU.[155] King taught piano and music theory, and Tirona invited UP professors who found themselves jobless. Antonio Molina was among the faculty and taught music history.

When the faculty were not teaching, some of them including Kasilag, enrolled in Nihongo classes. Their class was taught by a Japanese protestant minister, and this class ran twice a week for three months. Kasilag found Japan attractive and even intriguing thanks to

[153] Ibid., 16.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 17.

the boys at University of Waseda. As voracious a learner she was, King supplemented her Nihongo classes with dictionaries she bought for self-study.[156]

In addition to her teaching and Nihongo, King also worked for Tirona in her music studio as an accompanist.[157] King had nothing but admiration for Tirona who was a "consummate artist…a brilliant lawyer and thespian, [and] a no-nonsense educator."[158] Because of Tirona's skills and dedication to teaching, her students, many of who became notable artists, called her *sensei.*[159] It was Tirona who encouraged King to compose music, particularly songs. As Tirona was a talented singer, she exposed King to a wide variety of song literature, and challenged her to compose songs, with Tirona giving King texts for composition.[160] Tirona gave King a moniker, "Baby Komposer" with a K for Kasilag.[161] King confesses that over 350 works she has written, Tirona influenced at least half of her music in the form of art songs and choral works with over thirty folk song arrangements.[162]

When the war raged more intensely in 1944, Kasilag and her family, save for Marcial Sr. who had stay as general manager of the National Power Corporation, ran for safety to Batangas. On their way in two full busloads, they were stopped at a Japanese outpost in Nasugbu. Equipped with Nihongo, Kasilag bowed to the Japanese soldiers and spoke in Nihongo telling them that she was a Japanese teacher at a big women university in Manila, and that they were all innocent. The Japanese Soldier addressed King with reverence calling

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156 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 20.
157 De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 17.
158 Ibid.
159 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 23.
160 Ibid., 22.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.

her sensei.[163] They were let go and eventually reached Ibaan, Batangas where they stayed with their uncle's father-in-law who lorded over the area.[164]

In March 1945, the Kasilags returned to Manila; however, their house was no more as it was bombed. They lived in the mezzanine of their father's secretary's house for the meanwhile. When things could not seem to get worse, their father was framed as a Japanese collaborator and thrown to jail in the Bilibid prison.[165] With their chief provider gone, the rest of the family found employment wherever possible. King was miserably employed at the Base Censors' office in Port Area where she had to open letters of American soldiers and censor them for military secrets. To match the giddiness of her friends in celebrating the war victory, King would often have "too much champagne and sleep it off" on a bamboo cot.[166]

Around this time, King received an invitation to be a secretary at the UP Conservatory and teach piano and a few other classes. Kasilag encouraged her students at UP to enliven and learn about the Philippines's native music and traditions. She urged them to collect folk songs and indigenous musical instruments.[167] Her compositions also lived to see the light of day during her time in UP as she concertized with other faculty to bring life to her works. However, in the summer of 1947, Julio Esteban-Anguita, one of the lead faculty in the conservatory, had stormed out of the university together with about the entire music faculty. It seemed that he and Director Ramon Tapales had a huge argument and split. At the same time, the University of Santo Tomas (UST), another major university in Manila, was forming its own conservatory and swept a lot of UP music faculty with offers of high salaries which was a boon during the post-war era.[168] Kasilag left UP but not to join her

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[163] Ibid., 25.
[164] Ibid., 26.
[165] Ibid., 28.
[166] Ibid., 29.
[167] Interview with Jonathan Arevalo Coo taken from NCCA Philippines, *Sagisag Kultura TV*, 09:37.
[168] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 30.

colleagues at UST, but to return to PWU where Tirona invited King to help her plan to reorganize the College of Music, much to Tapales's relief.[169] At PWU, King assumed teaching and administrative responsibilities under Dean Tirona as secretary-registrar in 1947.[170] While fulfilling these duties, King continued her Bachelor of Music degree at PWU which she finished in 1949.

Tirona pushed for King to pursue graduate studies in music abroad, specifically at the Eastman School of Music housed in the University of Rochester. With Dean Tirona's recommendation and a Fulbright Scholar Travel Grant on hand, King went to Eastman under the helm of Dr. Allen I. McHose, the head of the Theory Department. King became McHose's graduate assistant for theory, which provided an extra ego boost to King. She helped McHose to also edit his books on counterpoint and harmony, where King's literary and musical background proved to be helpful.[171] Meanwhile, Kasilag studied composition under Dr. Wayne Barlow. When she presented her works to Barlow, which were heavily influenced by Molina and Debussy, she thought her works were *avant-garde*. Barlow commented that her works sounded nice, but she later knew that he was not impressed with her works.[172] From that moment on, Barlow proceeded to give Kasilag lectures on twentieth-century contemporary music and techniques which included unresolved dissonances, seriality, and polyrhythms—all of which were taboo during the student days of Kasilag.[173]

Kasilag learned to experiment with music and modern idioms at the time, but she also explored how music pedagogy abroad was practiced. Her Eastman class visited Juilliard and observed music theory students. She realized that these students did not have any theory

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169 Ibid.
170 De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 19.
171 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 32.
172 Ibid.
173 Ibid. Kasilag's other mentors included the composer Howard Hanson and the master orchestrator Bernard Rogers.

textbooks but only musical scores that they thoroughly analyzed.[174] King was so invested in music pedagogy that she developed her master's thesis about music education, and she entitled it "Teaching Music Theory in the Philippines."[175] King believed that no matter how deep the Western influence is on Filipino music, it is always latched onto its Asian core. Even as she explores Western modernism, she always doubted whether these would be applicable to the taste of Filipino ears and understanding. On the other hand, she recognized the need for innovation. Therefore, she reasoned that a balance must be found between the two. How could this balance be achieved? When is the right timing? Those are the bigger questions, according to her biographer, that she took on for a large part of her life.[176]

Kasilag hoped to attend the Chicago Music College for a year; however, Dean Tirona's failing health impelled her to return home. On her arrival, she played Tirona her modern compositions. Tirona, not used to dissonances of contemporary modernism, only responded with a puzzled "what was that?" Kasilag experienced a "culture shock" when she brought her impressionistic works to the United States, but she was met with the same reaction when she brought her modern ones to the Philippines—a common feeling among colonized intellectuals and artists schooled in the West. Tirona-sensei died shortly afterwards on 29 April 1952.[177] The next year Kasilag filled in the shoes of her sensei as the new dean of the College of Music at PWU. She also taught Pedagogy of Theory and Styles to students and cross-enrollees from other schools. She was also responsible for introducing contemporary works into the curriculum of not only PWU but other schools as well. She started with Béla Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* (1926-1939) which is a six-volume piano series.

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174 Ibid., 32.
175 Ibid., 33
176 De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 24-5.
177 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 33.

Another task that King had was to supervise a voice student who was on scholarship at PWU as this student was "often absent and thus undeserving of the scholarship."[178] Even after King called for her, she would hardly be seen in school, and that is because this student cut classes as she was endorsed as a candidate for "Miss Manila," a well-known beauty pageant then. Those who joined the contest then had the chance to appear in the Senate Gallery, and that had an upshot that King would never have thought of. This voice student was Imelda Romualdez, who would later become Ferdinand Marcos's wife and First Lady of the Philippines.[179] Their first meeting would turn out to be a crucial turning point for King's life as musician and as a pioneer in the field as Imelda and King would be closely involved in cultural projects in the country—for better or worse. But before Imelda made tsunami waves in her career and life, King would focus a great deal on understanding and preserving the nation's own culture and music.

[178] Ibid., 34.
[179] Ibid.

Interlude Four

I was trained as a classical pianist, and my teacher drilled on me Bach, Clementi, and Mozart. Alongside that, I started composing music (or at least experimenting) when I was ten. My works were no more than scribbles, but I managed to compose better as years pass by. However, I only started learning music theory in an institutional setting when I entered college. My exposure to the Western tradition far outweighed my own tradition, although I had a Filipino as my piano teacher back home. My compositions were strictly in the Western idiom because it is the only thing I knew. As I started learning about Tita King, it was only then that I discovered how I can intertwine my Western training with the sounds I hear from home. I took folk themes, and I incorporated them into my works. I also started collecting indigenous instruments, often experimenting with them.

But at a certain point, it struck me: this is not my tradition. Isn't this the tradition of the ethnic tribes from the North? I come to the North for my vacation and when I did research on their music, but it dawned on me: their music is not mine—what made me claim it as my own as well? Their traditions and rituals, we have decontextualized in our classrooms for performances, and those were the seeds that planted the idea that the Northern culture is Filipino culture. It felt as if I was misappropriating their music, especially as a Manileño from the capital region. But why is it that many of them are happy that I am incorporating folk themes, sounds, and instruments? I am still grappling with this. As an artist, I try my best to respect their cultures and borrow their music in a way that highlights them, not me. While the artist is important in the production of art, I think we are only part of a larger assemblage that comprise the arts we produce. Without everything and everyone else that made our experiences possible, the artist has nothing to make art with.

Chapter Four

Returning to Roots?

King and the Bayanihan

Like many colonized intellectuals, King came from quite a well-off background—well connected, well positioned, and well educated—and steeped in knowledge from the Western world from literature to music, particularly those that met American cultural standards. Since the Americans, unlike the Spanish, laid out strong foundations for educational infrastructure, their culture was easily diffused among the conquered elite, and consequently, English spread like wildfire in these communities.[180]

King was part of those circles, and the entire family was knit tightly into this network especially that her father was a *pensionado*. King's social and artistic circles, especially Philimus (see Chapter 2), was also centered around discussing and discovering works from the Western world. Despite this, King was interested in learning more about the culture and music of the Philippines; however, she professed that she "never had the time to study" about it.[181] King admits that she only got as far in studying folk music as learning the *banduria* in the Kasilag Rondalla.[182] However, when Kasilag became the dean of the PWU College of

[180] Calata, "Role of Education in Americanizing Filipinos," 95.
[181] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 35.
[182] Ibid.

Music, she felt the importance to study the nation's "own native instruments."[183] Therefore in 1952, King together with the rising ethnomusicologist José Maceda and PWU Liberal Arts dean Aurora Diño spent their Christmas visiting a Mangyan tribe in Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro. The three researchers went with their blue denims, which King thought was apt for their adventures, and they found that the "natives [were] peering at [King and others] and giggling among [themselves]."[184] The Mangyan were shy towards foreigners like them, but King's party tried to convince the chieftain to come with his folks to the mayor's home, where they were staying, to play music for them. In exchange for gifts such as beads and scarves, King was hoping that the chieftain would agree. After some time, the chief promised to present music to them on New Year's Day.[185]

When the day came, the natives became timid at the sight of the urbanites. There was a deafening and awkward silence between the two parties, but when King brought out the tape recorder, the Mangyan became enliven as they were amazed to see a "magic box" that can capture voices and play them back again. After that giddy moment, the natives played music and narrated stories and legends through chants. Even though they had bamboo instruments, no one was willing to play them. King, Maceda, and Diño noticed that most of the Mangyan's music were vocal as a difficult life mostly spent on foraging and hunting left the tribe little time "for the more pleasurable task of making music."[186]

Their expedition was successful, coming home with some recorded music, instruments, and written scripts on bamboo tubes. They concluded that there is much potential in studying this indigenous music. What this potential might be utilized for was left

[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid., 36.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.

vague, but these indigenous sources later provided the foundation for Filipino national music and culture as we see later. Kasilag and her company went to other tribes to study the music and culture of these peoples. They would preserve these traditions by tape-recording or transcribing the music, often through Western notation. She notes that because many of these traditions were dying. Not only were the elders the remaining people who remember their songs, but none of the younger folks could also speak their native languages. This sparked a "sense of urgency" in King and other ethnomusicologists.[187] But at the same time, they noted how diversely varied were the culture and music of the indigenous people "in form, style, and instrumentation" that proved the richness of these peoples' musical traditions but also the multiplicity of cultures that is present in the archipelago.

However, it was an international debacle that sparked King's drive to reclaim and build the national culture. From 25 December 1954 to 31 January 1955, King headed the Philippine delegation to the International Festival of Folk Dance and Music in Dacca, Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan).[188] This event was to expose the locals to other Asian art and culture, and there were about thirty-five shows held within those two weeks. Kasilag was amazed by the various cultural displays, music, and dances from the Pakistanis to the Indonesians. The Filipino delegation—consisting of King, six Physical Education teachers from PWU, and two from the Philippine Folk Dance Society—were preparing to present when King asked the hosts to provide a piano to accompany the dancers. The hosts protested as the piano is not an Asian instrument but Western. Nevertheless, the hosts provided a piano, but it was moth-infested and broken. King gave up on the piano and brought out her *banduria* instead, a Philippine five-stringed guitar. The organizers protested

[187] Ibid., 37.
[188] Ibid.

still noting that the guitar is Western. Nevertheless, King played as the delegation's one-person band who improvised on the *banduria* and the gong with a singer providing the melody.[189] This became the seed that grew out to be the Bayanihan Dance Company, the premier Filipino national dance troupe.

Upon their return from Dacca, Kasilag reported their "soul-shattering experience" to the PWU President, Francisca Tirona Benitez. Right away, Benitez tasked them to organize research expeditions throughout the archipelago to learn more about indigenous traditions and cultures. Over the next few months, King and her colleagues, notably the eventual National Artist for Dance Lucrecia R. Urtula, went all around the country to research tribal dance, record music, acquire musical instruments, and to sketch the attires of the natives.[190] This became the Filipiniana Folk Music and Dance Committee. This project is not simply an isolated one that stemmed from the Dacca experience. In the 1930s, as a response to American rule and to bolster the Filipino nationalist project, the University of the Philippines under Jorge Bocobo collected various folk dances and music from all over the country with Francisca Reyes Aquino heading dance research.[191] PWU was drawn into this movement,[192] and perhaps the Dacca experience was a final push to drive the institution towards this movement. As a result, Kasilag and her colleagues toiled to explore the nation in search of these folk inspirations and traditions. Even princesses from the Maranaos, an indigenous group in Mindanao, taught the student-researchers of PWU the traditional dance, *Singkil*, which became Bayanihan's all-time hit.[193]

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189 Ibid., 38.
190 Ibid., 40.
191 De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 33.
192 Ibid.
193 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*., 41.

As the music director of Bayanihan, King went "where the music originated—whether in the mountains, in the plains, or on an island."[194] She researched the "autochthonous music of the people" together with Maceda, and she observed, with Urtula, the rituals of the Badjaos of Zamboanga, the Bagobos of Davao, and the Muslim royal courts of Lanao, Cotabato, and Sulu in Mindanao, the south of the Philippines.[195] King recalled that her role in the Bayanihan became her enjoyable "baptism of fire" as she was impelled to move beyond the bounds of what she learned and start to learn more about local music. She admits that:

> It was kind of a research picnic, an enormous fun. But the main thing was that we finally began to identify the roots of our own music. Also, my involvement with Bayanihan opened my eyes to the necessity of integrating Philippine ethnic instruments into my compositions.[196]

Before Bayanihan became a national dance troupe, this Physical Education Club at PWU performed for then President Ramon Magsaysay who ignited a nationalist feeling across the land. Because of their engaging performances, they ended up dancing multiple encores with "the staging becoming more professional with each encore, and the repertoire more varied."[197] This catapulted PWU's PE club into widespread attention in 1956.

The troupe had its first foreign tour in 1957 to Japan, the first Philippine delegation to come to the island nation after the war.[198] That sparked the idea of organizing this dance troupe to represent Filipino culture around the world. What started out as a Physical Education Club at PWU blossomed to become the Bayanihan Dance Company in 1957.

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[194] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 42.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 41.
[198] Ibid.

They named it "bayanihan" as it loosely translates to a community effort, which the dance company was.

In 1958, the Philippine government requested Bayanihan to represent the nation at the Brussels World Fair. Because the government could only offer a small amount to finance the trip, the Bayanihan's members raised money for themselves. Rich parents of some of the students paid for their expenses, while Helena Benitez raised funds for the rest. Even King had to raise money for her own plane ticket. The first benefactors of the Bayanihan became part of its board, and they were tycoons in different fields such as Ernesto Rufino, Andres Soriano of Philippine Airlines and San Miguel Corporation, Don Luis Araneta, Carlos Fernandez, and the statesman Claro M. Recto.[199]

Their performance in Brussels was successful as they were showered with praise and featured in TV broadcasts. The World Fair High Commissioner, Howard Cullman, was also enamored by the Bayanihan, and he also pushed the troupe towards world recognition with his connections and wealth as the chairman of Phillip Morris at the time.

The following year, Cullman succeeded in convincing Sol Hurok, who was known as the "king of impresarios" to book Bayanihan for a performance in New York. Hurok is responsible for introducing the United States to big stars such as Arthur Rubinstein, Maurice Ravel, Maria Callas, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Mstilav Rostropovich, the Bolshoi Ballet, Kirov Opera, to name a few. Of course, the Bayanihan being no world star, Hurok demanded $50,000 from Cullman to insure Bayanihan just in case the performance flops.[200] Hurok looked down on Bayanihan, even insisting on tampering with Bayanihan's dance sequences, arguing that the critics would leave with their current setup.

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[199] Ibid., 42.
[200] Ibid., 47.

Bayanihan composed an original five-suite repertoire starting with the *Northern Suite* inspired by the culture of the Cordilleras. It was followed by the *Maria Clara Suite* reminiscent of the Spanish colonial heritage. Next was the magical *Muslim Suite* with Bayanihan's all-time hit, *Singkil*. What came after was the *Regional Variations Suite* and the *Rural Village Suite* which portrayed the lowland Filipino work life. The finale was the rousing *Tinikling* with the clicking bamboo sticks and frenzy moves.[201]

The Bayanihan never changed the sequence, and Hurok threatened that he would cancel the troupe's tour when the critics decimate them. Hurok did not even mind that the famous choreographer, Agnes de Mille, went to Manila to preview the show, and she stamped with praise and approval the Bayanihan's program and choreography.[202]

On the opening night, 13 October 1959, King watched the entire show from the wing, looking in to see whether the critics would stay for the entire show. To their amazement, the critics stayed, and the Bayanihan's technical director, Bobby Perez, counted fourteen curtain calls.

The next day, critics from the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* showered the Bayanihan with praises that even the condescending Sol Hurok acted as the "proud proprietor" puffing on his cigar. King even thought about Hurok, "Father, forgive him, for he is but a pompous ass," but the wonder of that day left Kasilag no room to entertain that thought for much longer.[203] There and then, Hurok ordered his company manager to tour Bayanihan around the United States for a month.

After the tour, Bayanhan returned to the Philippines with a full house during their homecoming performance at the Araneta Coliseum, which was Asia's premier arena back

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[201] Ibid., 42.
[202] Ibid., 49.
[203] Ibid., 50.

then with ten thousand seats under the dome. King recalled that that performance "felt like a national holiday, and our Bayanihan dancers were the celebrated heroines and heroes."[204]

Bayanihan: The Folk or Folkloric?

Christi-Anne Castro, a Filipino American ethnomusicologist at the University of Michigan, notes that the Bayanihan was crucial to building the national culture of the Philippines as they "helped to shape the Filipinos' own perception of their national culture."[205] I want to emphasize the word "perception." Many students in the Philippines who are tasked to perform traditional dances during the Month of the Filipino Language would refer to YouTube videos and recordings of these dances by the Bayanihan as students do not have the time nor resources to visit and learn from the indigenous tribes. Through school performances and YouTube videos, these sum most of the regular Filipino's exposure to local dance traditions. This has put a lot of responsibility and power on the Bayanihan to present folk dance and folk music traditions, and people in the Philippines look up to them when it comes to folk dances. However, there might be instances that Bayanihan may portray folk dances differently from its indigenous source, partly because these people may not be part of that folk culture or due to a lack of access to this tradition. Is the Bayanihan folk or folk-like, in other words, folkloric? To crystallize these distinctions, I want to discuss what the "folk" is and how it might be different to terms such as folklore and the folkloric.

The use of the word "folk" can be traced to nineteenth-century nationalist thinkers such as the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder who argues that the folk, *das Volk*—the people of the nation—is the source of identity and exuded the essential spirit of the nation, *das Volksgeist*. This means that a national culture is the cohering of a "national

[204] Ibid., 51.
[205] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 67.

body based on territory with a natural grouping of people based on a shared culture."[206] Considering this, then, the folk is "of the people," and it may describe materials, rituals, and values. Moreover, the folk nowadays, in contrast to Herder, can be used within a nation in plural and not solely singular terms. Thus, all the materials from the folk and those that can be considered as folk can be referred to as folklore.[207] Now, folk culture in the Philippines is typically tied to the lower rural classes, with derogatory terms such as *promdi* (originating from a thick-accented Filipino English "*from the* province") are used typically by urbanites to discriminate against those who come from poor rural backgrounds. However, folk culture can and usually invokes a sense of past, even though it exists in the present. Since the folk is so tied to the rural, it can be used as an antithesis to modern and urban, that it can also be construed as foreign.[208] Because of this, when one says folk, images of the distant past—against modernity—arises, which invites us to think of all past citizens and not just the rural workers.[209] This creates a paradox where the negative connotations of folk as *promdi* are seemingly mellowed out and in its place comes a romanticized (even exoticized) past. Therefore, even social dances of the colonial elite—typically of lowland origins—then can be included in this all-encompassing word "folk" as these dances are of the past. This is all convenient when all these folklores can be transformed to be a form of entertainment and performance for all types of audiences from across the spectrum.

When the folk becomes decontextualized and performed on stage for audiences, then it becomes folkloric, which is exactly the case for the Bayanihan.[210] Per Castro, the folkloric does not automatically entail the commodification of the folk, but it can certainly be

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[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid., 68.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.

the case in many instances.[211] Folkloric performers can be complete outsiders or intimate with the tradition. But as Castro emphasizes, we must avoid pitting the folk and the folkloric against each other, usually running along the lines of "folk is the source and folkloric is the benefactor," as these two can exist as parallel traditions.[212] As former Bayanihan music director Leonilo Angos recalls, the dancers had to learn a choreography from a research film, but since there were no sounds, he had to come up with the accompanying music. Later, when he visited the tribe of that tradition, he let them listen to it, quite concerned about what they think about his creation. The locals did not just approve of Angos's work, but they adapted it to their own repertoire as well.[213] This instance shows us the complex relationship between the folk and the folkloric, and it proves that not one is a source; the other a parasitic leech. Both can co-exist and influence each other. Regardless of this, both are still distinctive with folk being associated with the people, their tradition, and values and not simply its aesthetics (art, dance, and music), and the folkloric as decontextualizing this aesthetics from the values and the tradition surrounding it so that these aesthetic forms and performances can be put on stage. But because the folkloric decontextualizes the folk and puts it on a show on a stage, purists may call these performances inauthentic. However, for nationalists who seek to coalesce the different folks, they aim to expand what authenticity could mean—a term that has a lot of utility than its purist counterpart in the legitimation of national identity and pride. This brings into question then what authentic could mean. For now, we must understand that authenticity cannot mean a strict set of standards as we have witnessed how folk and folkloric mutually interact and influence each other, putting into question a

[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid., 68-9.
[213] Ibid., 69.

purist notion of the concept. Is authenticity, then, a fluid set of standards or an ever-going process? This is a question for later in this project.

The Nationalist Project

At this moment, I want to underscore two important issues that arise from this series of episodes, from the Mangyan visitation to the Dacca experience and the Bayanihan. First, because the Philippine islands house multitudes of cultures, it is difficult to build a national culture that takes into consideration the rich variability of cultures and peoples. Here, I refer to the *Volkgeist* and recapitulate Herder's notion of the folk—a "national body based on territory with a natural grouping of people based on a shared culture."[214] If we are to base national culture on something that is shared among Filipinos within the archipelagic territory, then coalescing these peoples into a single shared culture seems to be a difficult, if not, an impossible task. Even if a great deal of imagining occurs, a nation cannot simply make tangible cultural traditions and artefacts appear out of thin air, there must be an effort to excavate and preserve tangible practices and materials, and then creating the conscious decision to imagine them as part of the national culture, which sounds easier said than done. What is of interest is: what made King claim these indigenous cultures as part of a larger and shared imagination called "Filipino culture"?

King and many ethnomusicologists such as the legendary José Maceda explored the Philippine archipelago to preserve and codify the indigenous musical cultures scattered across the territory as either a part of or an offshoot of a larger project of the University of the Philippines. This project came from a desire to create an independent rule from the United States. In a sense, the nationalist project is a response to colonialism and imperialism.

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[214] Ibid., 67.

As Ramón Pagayon Santos notes, Filipino nationalism is an effort of the colonized to express liberation from the colonizers and free themselves from cultural subservience. At the same time, this kind of nationalism also expresses that the Filipino culture can "compete with the dominant culture for equality in all realms of intellectual, physical and materials pursuits."[215] This makes it clear that national culture is not natural, but it is constructed to legitimize sovereignty over bounded territories and independence from foreign control.

The mission of creating this national imaginary and articulating this concept of a national culture, for better or for worse, falls in the hands of the elites—both the bourgeois and the intellectuals. With an access to the territory's resources and the political monopoly of the state, the elites can establish a hegemony. Broadly defined, a hegemony is a domination by a historical bloc over people and society through a consensual (typically cultural) authoritative force. Succinctly, in echoing Gramsci, Hall views hegemony as "leadership which is in control, and that is what hegemony means: mastery."[216] Since the making of a hegemony is a "process of the coordination of the interests of a dominant group with the general interests of other groups and the life of the State as a whole," Gramsci argues that a historical bloc, typically composed of the bourgeois elites, requires mastery over the ebbs and flows of the plurality of cultural forces within a social setting.[217] To achieve this robust hegemony is to achieve what is called an *integral* hegemony. It is integral as it can hold together and integrate a plurality of forces and interest through a consensual authoritative power. To have a hegemony is to create a national imaginary so strong that the dominant

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[215] Santos, "Nationalism and Indiginization in Philippine Contemporary Music," 125.
[216] Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, Reprint edition (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 172.
[217] Ibid., 162.

ideology becomes "common sense," and does not require people to have a conscious mastery of its inner workings as this ideology is "taken-for-granted."[218]

This concept of hegemony is indispensable in explaining how polycultural states such as the Philippines can coalesce and consent to an authoritative national imaginary. During the American colonial period, the colonizers gained hegemony, primarily through two ways: first, assimilation of the local landed and bourgeois elites through education and state privileges such as voting rights and administrative positions, and second, the violent murder of over a million Filipino insurgents and rebels. As E. San Juan Jr. writes, the United States established hegemony through popular consensus, and they co-opted the mestizo *ilustrado* class (read elite) by utilizing "schooling, the civil service, and bureaucracy [to serve] as ideological apparatuses to accomplish that aim."[219] For the non-elites, around "thirty thousand [Americans] killed a million [Filipinos]" for those who resisted and deviated from benevolent assimilation.[220] Many of these local bourgeoisie started forming a counter-hegemonic movement based on national independence. Even if the Americans at that time may have promised independence, there was a looming anxiety among artists about the condition of the local arts. Because the Americans aggressively proselytized the locals towards this colonial culture, there seemed to be a risk of the local arts to wither out.[221] This feeling translated into an effort to cultivate a counter-hegemonic force, and it began as a project by the intellectuals in the University of the Philippines and other academic circles as they sought to collect folk materials from various indigenous groups.

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[218] Ibid., 165.
[219] San Juan, *Maelstrom Over the Killing Fields*, 10.
[220] Twain, "Thirty Thousand Killed a Million," 63.
[221] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 33.

I am not trying to argue that these intellectuals had a diabolical intent in collecting these folk materials nor am I claiming that they plotted to monopolize culture. Rather, I think that these intellectuals tried to rediscover their own culture by excavating the "past" which has strong ties to the "folk." The notion of the folk as past is romanticized because there is little to appreciate in the current culture. As Fanon suggests, "perhaps in their unconscious the colonized intellectuals have been unable to come to loving terms with the present history of their oppressed people, since there is little to marvel at in its current state of barbarity."[222] Looking at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, also called the Saint Louis World's Fair, Filipinos were portrayed in harrowing ways similar to an animal. Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, a professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, notes that during the expo, a Philippine Village was built to "display different people from the Philippines in their 'natural environment'…thereby collapsing everyday life with a decontextualized display of the exotic."[223] This village was the expo's "most popular stop" and that the "Filipino/a performing body was *the* spectacle to behold."[224] While these activities may well have been part of the quotidian and rituals of the natives, they were portrayed in the expo as some sort of a "missing link" in human evolution.[225] The image of the Filipino as a degraded animal inside a zoo is indeed nothing to marvel at, and it may, to some degree, make the colonized intellectuals feel ashamed and embarrassed of their own culture during that time.

The Philippine Village was an attempt to decontextualize the folk into a dehumanizing and deeply racist ideation of the folkloric for the white colonial gaze. Because

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[222] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 148.
[223] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012), 26.
[224] Ibid., 25.
[225] Ibid., 26.

of this, Fanon suggests that the colonized intellectuals have instead "decided to go further, to delve deeper, and they must have been overjoyed to discover that the past was not branded with shame, but dignity, glory, and sobriety."[226] In this attempt to bolster Philippine nationalism, the colonized intellectuals, which included Kasilag, undertook a project to consolidate a sense of national pride based on folk traditions to go against the grain of American colonialism and the racist portrayal of the folkloric but to also prove that the local culture can compete with its colonial and foreign counterparts. Kasilag even notes the success that Bayanihan achieved in changing the perception of the Filipino folkloric in the global stage from the disturbing scenes at the Saint Louis Expo to the grand dances at the Brussels World Fair. She proudly writes that the "Bayanihan was the first cultural delegation to the United States since poor Pit-a-pit[227] and his much-abused fellow Igorots were displayed as curiosities at the turn-of-the-century St. Louis Exposition."[228] This counter-hegemonic project became the basis of a national imaginary and culture.

The Dacca experience and the Bayanihan tours show a glimpse of how the national elites have the power and privilege to present what the national culture looks like. Even if Kasilag's delegation presented a medley of these various tribal dances, their choice of which local traditions to include already affected how Filipino national culture was presented on the world stage. While I understand that this is a small instance, this provides us with a glimpse into larger effort to build a national culture in later years—that the project of nation-building becomes the project of the elites or the hegemonic bloc.

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[226] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 148.
[227] Also known as Hilary "Pit-a-pit" Clapp was an indigenous Bontoc Igorot from Northern Philippines who was thoroughly assimilated during the American colonial period and went on to achieve a degree in Medicine.
[228] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 50.

The second issue relates to the complex relationship between the colonized culture and the imprints and scars that the colonial influences have left. Even if the local traditions already present a taxing problem of cohering a national culture, Western colonialism and imperialism left its mark so deeply in the Philippines that it has become part of its history and culture one way or another. As Michael Tenzer notes, "Western music in the Philippines is as old as the Spanish arrival in 1565, and its dissemination as hoary as Manila's University of Santo Tomas, which predates Harvard."[229] He even adds that European tonality was so deeply rooted in the artistic circles in Manila that they gave birth to their own piano traditions, art songs, and other music genres.[230] Among them is the art song of love, *kundiman*, and the transformation of the Spanish *zarzuela* into the Filipino *sarswela.*[231] The tension between Kasilag and the hosts in Dacca is a failure on both sides to recognize the complexity of Filipino culture and the deep-rootedness of European tonality in the music which is similar to the events during the Cairo Congress in 1932. King recognized the long history of the Western tradition in the Philippines, but she did not seem to own local musical genres stemming from this tonality. At the same time, she lamented how the Philippines was a lone wolf among its Asian peers exactly because of our colonial history and her experience at Dacca. She writes:

> Although long regarded as part of our cultural warp and woof, the piano and the guitar could hardly be called Filipino. In fact, we Filipinos didn't seem to belong among our fellow Asians. This was our first painful exposure to Eastern culture; somehow, we felt a sense of exclusion from our Asian milieu.[232]

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[229] Tenzer, "José Maceda and the Paradoxes of Modern Composition in Southeast Asia," 94.
[230] Ibid., 95.
[231] See Doreen G. Fernandez, "Zarzuela to Sarswela: Indigenization and Transformation," *Philippine Studies* 41, no. 3 (1993): 320–43.
[232] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 38.

Kasilag experienced a "sense of exclusion" from the Asians, but it is fair to claim that the colonizers also excluded most of the rural and belabored Filipinos in engaging freely in public and cultural life. Despite these exclusions, influences from these neighbors and invaders seeped through the fabric of local music as described by Tenzer. This situation problematizes Fanon's second developmental stage of the colonized intellectual. If the first is the assimilation of the colonizer's culture, the second is its rejection. How can locals reject a culture so entrenched in their own fabric? Kasilag and other artists responded by looking into the folk as we explored earlier. I think that even if the colonizer's culture has suffused into the local fabric, the nationalist project demands repudiating signs and symbols related to the colonizer, which leads to a type of colonial struggle that is Manichaean in its conception. In my observation, it is easier and simpler to conceive of the colonizer as the sole enemy and the native as the sole victim than thinking of the colonial problem as a problem of spectrum, when in fact the locals have the national bourgeoisie too as part of the problem. Nonetheless, the sentiment to distinguish the local imaginary against the colonizer's is real, and this still makes Fanon's second stage viable, especially during the early part of the twentieth century when independence movements are widespread and strong.

While the intent to reject the colonizer's culture is present, the method to achieve this is not consistent with rejection. At least in music, Santos notes that "practically all important works were either based on a Filipino folk melody or bore quotations of such structures as thematic materials."[233] These quotations were largely made possible because of Bocobo's folk collection project at UP. However, the underlying formal logic is still deeply rooted in tonality, in other words, forms and systems commonly found in the Western canon. For example, works such as Francisco Santiago's *Sonata Filipina* (1922) and *Piano*

[233] Santos, "Nationalism and Indiginization in Philippine Contemporary Music," 126.

Concerto in E-flat Minor (1924) and Nicanor Abelardo's *Panoramas* (1931) all utilize Filipino folk quotations, but their forms and logic are rooted in the Western tradition. Santos continues to claim that this "lack of a much deeper perception of native musics…produced only a peripheral view of their usefulness and musical significance in the compositions."[234] This is also echoed by Fanon when he describes what he calls an "inventory of particularisms."[235] When the form is largely based on Western technique, the music is then "cloaked…in a style that is meant to be national but is strangely reminiscent of exoticism."[236]

Kasilag is not exempt from this project. Her *Philippine Suite* (1949) for piano, while full of Filipino quotations and inspirations, are still based on Baroque forms. Each movement of the suite is based on a dance form: the Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Minuet, and the Gigue. Moreover, Caroline Besana Salido noticed that Kasilag's *Sonate Orientale* (1961), while replete with influences from Philippine, Indonesian, and Indian folk tunes, remains within the bounds of the sonata-allegro form no matter how modified it may be.[237] Santos notes that among Filipino composers during the early twentieth century, only Nicanor Abelardo "may have hinted on the exploring deeper the 'nativist soul' imbedded not only in the melodies but also in the forms and modal constructs of the traditional materials" as he explicitly used local forms such as the *kumintang* and *awit*.[238] With these in mind, Fanon's second stage should be reconceptualized not as rejection but as reimagination. I still think that there is a sentiment of moving away from the colonizing culture, but the term rejection in the case of Filipinos in the early twentieth century is too strong. Reimagining provides a space for the colonized to make use of the resources that they have and

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234 Ibid., 127.
235 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 160.
236 Ibid.
237 Caroline Besana Salido, "The Piano Compositional Style of Lucrecia Roces Kasilag" (Columbus, OH, Ohio State University, 2002), 36.
238 Santos, "Nationalism and Indiginization in Philippine Contemporary Music," 127.

repurpose these resources, primarily Western tonality, and utilize them how they see fit—in this case, for the purpose of nationalism.

What I think pushed King beyond this inventory of particularisms is her meeting with the Hungarian nationalist composer, Zoltán Kodály, who like Filipino intellectuals, spent time to collect and study his local folk themes. After Kodály looked at Kasilag's works, he asked whether she utilized the nation's own folk songs, to which King replied, "Just a bit."[239] Kodály embraced Kasilag and told her to:

> Go and research more into your own beautiful folk songs. There is so much you can learn from them as expressions of your beloved people. Through them, you assert your distinct national identity for national unity.[240]

King responded positively to this meeting and Kodály's advice as it "hastened [her] turn-about, giving momentum to the thrust to know more of our own people" which became a "guiding preoccupation in [her] creative life ever since."[241]

The nationalist project—plagued by two looming issues of polycultural diversity and deep colonial influences—drove King deeper into ethnomusicological practice, both in research and composition, for the next three decades of her life. This dedication of hers also helped a great deal in developing the Bayanihan Dance Company. King preserved and made use of folklore into her music to showcase the variety and the beauty of Filipino music, while utilizing her training in the Western tradition to innovate new and modern music. Kasilag did not simply excavate the folk and presented them on the stage as the decontextualized folkloric. She introduced syncretic changes in those forms that was true to her own subjectivity. As Fanon states, "culture never has the translucency of custom," and "seeking to stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history but

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[239] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*., 114.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.

going against one's people."[242] Whether it was conscious or not, she contributed to the image of national culture, especially in music—the melding of the folk and Western tonality. While we discussed what the folk is, we have been discussing tonality as if it was synonymous with the Western tradition of music. Tonality acted as a signifier for Western music, but we have never discussed its parameters or elements that qualify it as "Western."

But to be blunt, what was tonality?[243] Discussing the history and the values that drive this musical system allow us to ponder deeper into why it became pervasive among colonized intellectuals in the Philippines, especially for Kasilag who engaged with tonality together with her passion for the folk. In the next chapter, we will take a slight detour back into the eighteenth century to look into Western tonality and how this permeated into Filipino culture, and eventually, in Kasilag's music in the twentieth century.

[242] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 160.
[243] A reference to Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

Interlude Five

I thought music was something you just listen to and play. I never thought that music can reveal so much about history and the feelings of the times. When I took a class on the Western music of the nineteenth century, I could image and somehow feel the excitement and anxiety during that time. Before, I would read about the nineteenth century as the age when the Industrial Revolution and nationalism blossomed in Europe; but studying and playing the music made me understand those times better, as if the music was a time capsule. But when I was learning about how tonality arose, I realized that music is not just an aesthetic; it can be pressed towards ideology. We say music is the universal language. I think what we are really saying is, tonality is the universal language, because like colonial languages, especially English, they were made to be universal.

As a Filipino, I am too familiar with that sentiment. I grew up listening to my grandfather singing Engelbert Humperdinck and Eric Clapton, and I grew up also speaking English together with Filipino. I learned piano by studying the Western canon, too. My ears and my tongue grew in the Western mold, and I, unfortunately, cannot write as well in Filipino than I do with English.

And when I started learning the *gamelan*, our instructor, Joko Sutrisno, would always say that we (read Western classical musicians) often learn music by reading it from the score and not from the heart. While this may not be the case with artists like Martha Argerich and Glenn Gould, I think it is because many of us obsess over technique instead of enjoying the music. He also said that we can be individualists, too. As a pianist, that was true. The *gamelan* can only be played as a community where each member knows every instrument. Joko somehow reminded me that music is something we should enjoy as a community. Getting out of the Western Classical mindset helped me with that.

Chapter Five

Form and Freedom

Tonality pervades the Western canon. While this is certainly the case in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, different modalities existed in Europe before, particularly the church modes. However, as musicologist Susan McClary argues, even if music scholars often assume that "tonality constitutes the foundation of Western music," they neglect eighteenth-century repertory that clearly enact the convention, and they fawn over the resistances against tonal convention from the rebellious Beethoven and nineteenth-century Romantics such as Brahms and Chopin.[244] What makes tonality so attractive to Europeans especially in the eighteenth century is its ability to express progress, rationality, and individuality.

Cultural priorities in those times are strongly influenced by the Enlightenment and the spread of reason and individuality as its primary tenets. Moreover, revolutions spread toppling monarchies to pave way for the age of the people. These priorities "focus almost obsessively on progress, rationality, intelligibility, quests after goals, and the illusion of self-contained autonomy."[245] This illusion ensnares people into believing a sense of freedom when they simply changed who is in charge and not the system itself. The French Revolution, while it deposed of the monarchy, brought forth the Reign of Terror under

[244] Ibid., 64.
[245] Ibid., 68.

Maximilien Robespierre, and it paved way to the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Even if there exists a feeling of autonomy among the populace, the values and the structure that govern them remain unchanged, if not, then by a little. They are confined within a system yet can paradoxically still express values of autonomy and struggle within it.

Tonality does exactly this. This system strongly expresses the values of progress, rationality, and "the illusion of self-contained autonomy"—that propel the eighteenth century. McClary argues that composers of that time, who inhabited the tonal system, utilized the simple procedure of the system: one that "proceeds through a series of arrivals, beginning in the tonic key, moving through a few other keys, and returning finally home to the tonic."[246] The modulatory nature of tonality provided composers the space to explore issues of individuality, rationality, and progress. The quintessential sonata form represents this struggle for progress. The linear narrative coheres the musical architecture through reason: square structures (2+2), standard harmonic progressions, and anticipated modulations between sections, among others. This dramatic procedure and labor for home and progress is what eighteenth-century composers strived to depict in their music. As McClary argues, "the self-motivated delay of gratification…was necessary for the social world coming into being in the eighteenth century…, and tonality teaches listeners how to live within such a world: how to project forward in time, how to wait patiently but confidently for the pay-off."[247]

The composers of the nineteenth century pushed the envelope of tonality by experimenting with chromaticism; but not too much as to breaking the entire tonal system.

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[246] Ibid., 66.
[247] Ibid., 67.

Starting with the rebellious Beethoven, his late works are full of "fractured landscapes"[248] that break expectations, yet no matter how anomalous he seems to be, his works always follows the Classical expectation to return to the tonic—and suddenly the world is whole again after a laborious struggle. Chopin's works, riddled with unique chromatic harmonies, does not always return to tonic, yet they take advantage of tonality to express struggle and identity through harmonic functions and keys. His famous Nocturnes, per musicologist James Hepokoski, can even be argued to take inspiration from the lyric binary form—a quintessential form used in dramatic operas, especially in the socially critical works of Giuseppe Verdi.[249]

Tonality is a system that does not need to be completely broken to express autonomy and freedom; it is simply baked into the system itself. While tonality and the values it stands for can be argued to be universal, its historical formation and usage are deeply rooted in the Western tradition. I also want to acknowledge that the West's colonial history allowed for the privileged conditions—the proliferation of universities, accumulation, and industrialization—that brought forth the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and by extension, the birth and expansion of tonality.

European tonality made its way to the Philippines through the Spanish, and it permeated deeply into the musical fabric of the locale, especially in Manila.[250] A close hearing of Filipino art songs would show that tonality was used or even broken into as a convention to express feelings of sorrow and love. Tonal convention as a musical technology is indispensable in expressing themes of individuality, freedom, and struggle for Westerners

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[248] Theodor Adorno, "Late Style in Beethoven," in *Essays on Music*, trans. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 564–67, 567.
[249] James Hepokoski, "Aspects of Structure in Chopin's Nocturnes," *Unpublished Work*, November 21, 2019, 3.
[250] See Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*.

and even Filipinos. Ever since tonality has resulted into the dominant musical ideology, the theory of music has been taught based on the principles of tonality.[251] While many can argue that adopting this convention as a standard may have come from the top, the utility of a shared musical language is too large to ignore and to dismiss as elitist. As McClary outlines:

> The eighteenth century was a period of almost unparalleled confidence in the viability of a public sphere in which ideas could be successfully communicated, differences negotiated, consensus achieved: thus the concern with compiling encyclopedias and with codifying language, the arts, and even thought itself, as well as the widespread standardization and adoption of conventions. To be sure, some of the impulses to codify came from the top down, most obviously in the regulated cultural practices of absolutist courts. But people who identified with liberal causes also put a premium on intelligibility and the efficacy of shared discourses.[252]

In the same manner, I think that colonized intellectuals and artists in the Philippines found the same appeal to tonality as the bourgeoisie and those allied with liberal causes in Europe in the eighteenth century. I do not think that Filipino musicians thought of tonality as a Western invention that plagues local society, but they must have unconsciously thought of it as the "common sense"[253] ideology that must be made accessible to the masses to promote the cultural capital and consciousness among the locals.

Institutionalizing Tonality in the Philippines

As early as 1888, a Filipino secular priest, José M. Zamora, wrote what he claimed as the "first book in music theory ever written in a Filipino language."[254] While this is an act of appropriating Western tonality by using the native language, Zamora saw how music can be lucrative as a form of cultural capital that may "assist the marginalized *indios* in gaining a

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[251] At Macalester, like most institutions, teach Music Theory I to III based on tonal conventions and harmonies. While it is taught as how we are used to hear music, no other musical conventions are often taught, except in an entirely different field altogether called Ethnomusicology.
[252] McClary, *Conventional Wisdom*, 64-5.
[253] Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 165.
[254] Arwin Q. Tan, "The First Tagalog Music Theory Book," in *Saysay Himig: A Sourcebook on Philippine Music History, 1880-1941*, ed. Arwin Q. Tan (Manila, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 2018) 26-31, 26.

better sense of economic equality in colonial Manila's capitalist society of the late nineteenth century."[255] The creation of the Tagalog music theory book implies Zamora's recognition of the Filipino identity, which was crucial to the project of the *ilustrados* to pursue equal representation, and later, a sense of nation. Even in the resistance against the American colonialism, the song (*awit*) genre, rooted in tonality, was popular among organized labor in the Philippines. Teresita Gimenez Maceda, a professor emeritus at the University of the Philippines Diliman, notes that the song's "great affective power to stir deep emotions and strengthen resolve made it an effective tool for organizing and mobilizing."[256] While Gimenez Maceda does not explicitly mention tonality, the use of the song among worker unions was prominent because of its capabilities to express ideas and struggles.

However, the institutionalizing of tonality into the Filipino repertory primarily started in the art song genre. When the Americans adopted benevolent assimilation, thereby opening education access to well-off Filipinos, local musicians who practiced music in informal settings, had the chance to earn degrees in music from academic institutions. The key institution where this germinated is the University of the Philippines Conservatory of Music.[257] Among the early students of the conservatory were Francisco Santiago and Nicanor Abelardo who were "largely responsible for establishing the Filipino at song genre by applying Western romantic technique and aesthetic to folksong structures."[258] According to Filipino ethnomusicologist Verna de la Peña, these two Filipino pioneers, under the mentorship of Guy F. Harrison and Robert Schofield, adopted models from the European

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[255] Ibid.
[256] Teresita Gimenez Maceda, "The Struggle for Freedom as a Sacred Cause: The Songs of Radical Movements, 1930-1941," in *Saysay Himig: A Sourcebook on Philippine Music History, 1880-1941*, ed. Arwin Q. Tan (Manila, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 2018), 206–11, 206.
[257] Verne De la Peña, "Filipino Composers during the American Colonial Period, 1898-1941," in *Saysay Himig: A Sourcebook on Philippine Music History, 1880-1941*, ed. Arwin Q. Tan (Manila, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 2018), 139–48, 139.
[258] Ibid., 141.

nationalist movements to revise folk forms like the *kundiman*, *kumintang*, and *balitaw* to incorporate lavish chromaticism and virtuosic passages.[259] As an example, Francisco Santiago's famous *Madaling Araw* (1949) exhibits a strong sense of tonality and chromaticism in expressing love and struggle. The song starts in F minor, but in the second section often leaves its home key of F minor to reach major-keyed tonal cells as a sign of yearning. In the third section, it strongly stays in F major as the subject imagines what life could be if their lover were to be theirs, but once again returns to F minor in the final section, where the subject once again longs for their loved one from afar.

King's East-West Offering

Consistent with this history are King's early compositions in the 1940s. In addition to Felicing Tirona's influence, the prevalence of the Filipino art song pushed King into composing vocal pieces, if not, these pieces would be strong reminiscent of the lyrical art song style. Looking at her early piece, *April Morning* (1941) (see Appendix A), which is a tone poem fantasy, Kasilag's idiom at the time has noticeable influences from the art song genre and the impressionistic style of Molina and Debussy. A glance at the opening lines of the piece greets the piano with a pentatonic scale, a staple of Debussy, and proceeds with sliding chromatic chords in the following two bars.

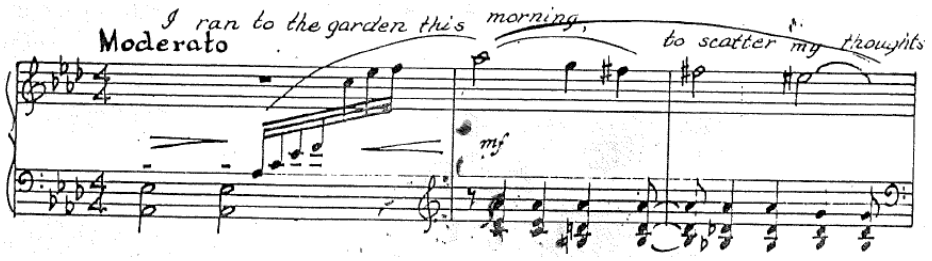

Figure 1. Opening of April Morning.

[259] Ibid., 142.

Instead of singing the poetry, Kasilag decided to set poem right above the score to inspire and accompany the piece. Despite this change, the text setting is as if it is an art song as the music reflects the meaning of the poem. As we see below, as the poem reaches "I reached for the sky," the piano reaches the upper register of the instrument.

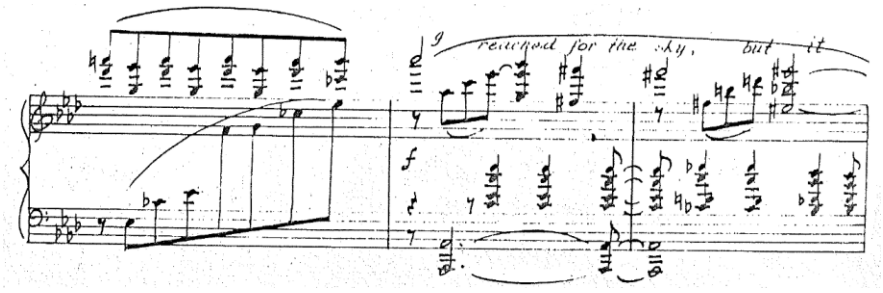

Figure 2. Text Setting for April Morning

As the text grows darker in the "Allegretto" section, the music becomes much more hurried, and the piece modulates in the relative key of F minor. The texture becomes noticeably thicker and the register much lower as the poem tells us twice that "my heart grew heavy in me." The music returns to its home key and resolves the way it began, on open fifths and with the pentatonic passage. These musical decisions in Kasilag's piece are parallel to the characteristics of both Impressionists and the art song genre as we see elements of post-tonal scales such as the pentatonic scale yet the chromatic drama and form stemming from nineteenth-century harmony.

In the late 1950s, however, when Kasilag was exposed to musical modernism, especially at Eastman, her vocabulary expanded and started to incorporate dissonances, polyrhythms, and post-tonal harmonies. At the same time, she tried to incorporate Filipino themes in her works. However, I argue that these influences still do not occur on the structural level but rather on the surface. Her *Sonate Orientale* (1961) exhibits these characteristics. This piece, as described earlier, loosely follows the sonata form with an exposition and a recapitulation, but with a long development section that seems to run from

beginning to end. The clear demarcations between sections are not observed, but the overarching form follows a fast-slow-fast structure like Prokofiev's *First Piano Concerto* (1912).

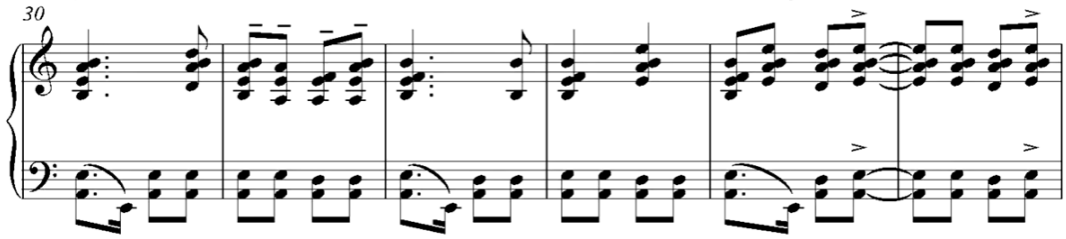

Figure 3. Extract from Sonate Orientale

A quick glance at the beginning theme of the *Sonate* shows the rampant use of quartile and quintic harmonies. The left hand strictly plays fourths and fifths while the right-hand plays chords based on quintic harmonies. Another important element is how King focuses on rhythm on this piece, almost treating the piano as a percussion instrument rather than a lyrical instrument, which is reminiscent of Igor Stravinsky's frenzied *Rite of Spring* (1913). Upon reaching the slow section of the piece, King decides to employ a five-note scale likely based on the *pelog* pitch system that is prominent in Indonesia. What is crucial to note is that Kasilag forgoes the use of a tonal key, a marker of musical modernism and a move away from tonality. This was already a common trend in the West at that time as figures such as Arnold Schoenberg and the Viennese School advocated moving away from tonality to emphasize intellectualism and serialism in music. And while Kasilag's *Sonate* does contain elements of music from the East such as the pelog system, its usage is still lacking musical significance and is subsumed within the Western tradition.

Kasilag's *Divertissement for Piano and Orchestra* (1960) (see Appendix B) is perhaps the piece that balances both Filipino and Western elements. This work is one of Kasilag's well known ones as it incorporates the Western orchestra, the piano, and the *kulintang* ensemble—a set of metal percussive instruments from the south of the Philippines. Broken

into three movements, the *Divertissement* utilizes various Filipino themes not merely as quotations but as forms as well. The first movement is entirely structured on the rhythm of *Singkil*, a Maranao dance from Mindanao. The second movement is based on rhythmic modes which is the primary driving force of the *kulintang* ensemble. While the second movement can be heard as a theme and variations, it is more accurate to call it a heterophony, where the variations are based on the rhythmic mode of the piece. This movement is particularly striking as it manages to combine the philosophies of a classic theme and variations with the local rhythmic modes. The last movement is in rondo form, a common Western Classical form, but it is based on the main structures and themes of the first two movements. In the *Divertissement*, no single tradition prevails as King managed to balance between her Classical training with Filipino folk music themes.

To make this point clearer, I define and make use of what Theodor Adorno calls the "formal law of freedom" (*das Formgesetz der Freiheit*) so I can have a way to describe the relationship between what is "East" and "West" music in Kasilag's musical syncretism.[260] The formal law "is an autonomy of pure force, the unimpeded will of a legal subject whose sovereignty is maintained through what it excludes and what it binds in its process of self-formation."[261] To have form, the subject must exert its freedom to exclude all foreign bodies that cannot be integrated into its structure. As Adorno notes, "without rejection there is no form."[262] The purer the form, the more violent the exclusion of the Other is, and in our case, whether it is a rejection of either Western or Eastern elements of music. Therefore, to achieve a form of syncretism that balances elements from both East and West, no single

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[260] Theodor Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 42.
[261] Daniel K. L. Chua, "Beethoven's Other Humanism," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 3 (December 1, 2009): 571–645, 580.
[262] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 162.

formal law must prevail. In other words, there must not be a singular form and style that dominate the music. In the first two Kasilag examples above, her music was still predominantly centered around the concept of Western tonality, whether the piece was inhabiting it as the case in *April Morning* or against it as shown in *Sonate Orientale.* However, in the *Divertissement* neither tradition dominate the logic of the piece. In other words, the form was impure; the formal law breached.

Another piece that breaches this formal law is King's *Toccata for Percussions and Winds* (1959) (see Appendix C) where she combined in the orchestration Western winds and percussions (which includes the piano) with instruments from the *kulintang* ensemble. This composition alternates primarily between the percussions and the winds. Again, King utilizes rhythmic modes such as *duyug* and *tidtu* where the percussions are dominant and five-tone scales where there are pitched instruments. King balances the East and West forms by alternating the instrumentation for each section giving a chance for each form to shine. For example, the first section utilizes *duyug* rhythms and the next section is inspired by a march. By the coda, King combines these formal elements together in a seemingly chaotic production. This piece is one that King hurriedly composed and scribbled right before she boarded her flight to a national conference.[263] Despite this frenzy, the *Toccata*'s premiere during the Philippine Music Festival was successful, and it received the Republic Cultural Heritage Award. King managed to win a second Republic Cultural Heritage Award for her *Misang Pilipino* which combined the traditional mass format (in Filipino) with ethnic tribal chants. These compositions show King's best when it comes to East-West syncretism; a state where the formal law is breached yet not broken.

[263] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 112.

One can surmise that at the end, then, the goal is to abandon this formal law, which implies excluding rejection and thereby form itself. However, every music has a form no matter how free it may seem.[264] One way to possibly solve this impossibility is to view every Kasilag's piece as a snapshot in time with its own form and various strictness in its formal law, and then, to see how iterative Kasilag is in incorporating not only quotations but also forms rooted in Filipino folklore. This approach decenters a fixity on standards and instead focuses on the process itself in identifying how authentic the incorporation of the folk (and Western elements for that matter) in any given work. While Adorno's formal law is useful in critiquing a fixed music score, it does not hold up quite well with historical phenomena that are constantly changing. Thus, focusing on an approach that highlights process, and therefore change, is much more apt to a field such as music, especially in composition where innovation and creativity are of utmost importance.

This approach allows us to see the importance of traditions, yet it allows for these traditions to change if these revisions are based on a historical process. This challenges orthodox understandings of cultural authenticity as based on fixed standards. When dealing with syncretic matters such as Kasilag's music, this idea of authenticity as fixed holds up poorly as it cannot account for all the dynamic changes—rejections and acceptances—that arise from blending multiple traditions and cultures. However, this does not mean one can blend different traditions without respect to the history that comes with them. This necessitates a new idea of authenticity that is rooted not only in iterative practices but also in the historical process and struggle. In relation to the colonial struggle, Fanon may argue that

[264] Even John Cage's *4'33* is confined within the bounds of time which makes the form, or at least, limits of the piece.

this authenticity espouses "the emergence of a new energy…that is linked to national consciousness"[265]

Kasilag aimed to espouse this kind of authenticity in her works by repeatedly incorporating the folk into Western musical traditions, not because she simply wanted to, but because she knew in her gut that no matter how deeply inculcated Western tonality is in Filipino music, it is still Asian at its core[266] with elements rooted in rhythmic modes, non-tonal scales, and song. Neither did she deny the Western influence in Filipino music and in her own personal life. King understood that Filipino music was not one or the other, but that history informs her that it is both. Bringing back Nick Joaquin, being Filipino is both "the yes of Humabon, the no of Lapu-Lapu. In every Filipino today there is a Humabon and there is a Lapu-Lapu; these two are one in that ambivalent creature called a Filipino."[267] In the project of syncretism, the constant process of acceptance and rejection implies developing one's own idea of subjectivity, and even if this might be called impure by the conservative view, this is the process by which the Filipino identity as an imagined community developed. Kasilag embodied such a philosophy, as she writes:

> Because I loved to tread on unbeaten paths or less traveled roads, I became venturesome, more original, combining techniques and idioms for a new language. I plodded on, resolved to be free from any restricting forms and conventions, and free to say what I wanted to say, trying to find my way through the 12-tone. Slowly I began to venture forth, trying to be more adventurous, more "impure."[268]

With this innovative yet nationalist philosophy, King developed a type of music that imagines the Filipino both as a polycultural and a postcolonial nation. While Kasilag's musical repertoire exhibits this dynamic syncretism, we must keep in mind that this music is

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[265] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 176.
[266] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 24-5.
[267] Joaquin, "Lapu-Lapu and Humabon," 56.
[268] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 113.

decontextualized for the stage. If we have explored how Kasilag may have woven together the East and the West in her music, we investigate next how this philosophy may have manifested beyond the confines of her music manuscripts. In other words, we gaze into the larger picture as to how Kasilag may have translated this philosophy into a force that builds a national culture. Thus, we shift gears from analyzing music to looking into King's role as a leader not simply within academia but in national and state institutions, particularly during the Marcos regime and during her tenure at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Interlude Six

I only went to the Cultural Center of the Philippines a few times, even though I wanted to attend events there more frequently than I could. There were not many concerts, operas, or performances there that I knew about. The orchestra was not as active as in Germany and in the Twin Cities. If they were, news of it never reached me. I did not know how to join their music workshops for young people. At times, I did not even know they existed. And even when I knew some events, I could seldom come because tickets were expensive, or even worse, I could not even come because it was inaccessible without your own car. But some time ago, because of discounts, I had the chance to watch *Noli Me Tangere* as an opera.

Inside the Cultural Center, we were ushered in as if we were some important people, and the people there were distinctively from the bourgeois class based on how they dressed, and especially how they spoke, because they expressed themselves primarily in English. Or that is how I viewed it. But I am not exempt as I blended in easily. I spent most of my teen years in the West, and as some of my friends would joke about me, "you're Americanized" or "you're Westernized," because I had the chance to study abroad even if it was under a scholarship. I had a deeply colonial mentality. But growing up in a working-class family made me unconsciously sensitive to the daily problems and suffering that most Filipinos experience. Being in the Cultural Center, even if briefly, shook me deep in my core that I started questioning my colonial mentality and my position in terms of class. That singular moment sparked something deeply embedded in me that compelled me to learn about my history, and that means learning about the history of my parents, their parents, and our ancestors.

Looking back, it was somehow humorous to me that the opera, completely written in the Western idiom, is critiquing the elite class in front of them. The best part? They all loved it.

Chapter Six

King's Legacies and the Edifice Complex

"Culture is not a priority," quipped Teddy Boy Locsin[269] in 1986 as Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency after the Marcoses ran to exile in Hawai'i.[270] Why, after decades of painstaking efforts to build a national culture, did Locsin claim that culture is not a priority? This statement highlights the problematic development of culture and arts in the Philippines during the Marcos regime. While there should be no debate about the atrocities that Ferdinand Marcos inflicted upon the Filipino people during his twenty years of what Filipino journalist Primitivo Mijares calls "conjugal dictatorship," the role that Imelda took to allegedly promote culture and the arts remains hotly debated.[271]

King's often absent student at PWU became the First Lady of the Philippines, and Imelda abused her position to pursue her personal interests and lavish eccentricities, which, aside from her three-thousand shoe collection, are often translated into her cultural projects. Viewing herself as a "Patroness of the Arts," Imelda with her stunning *Filipiniana* dresses and the native butterfly-sleeve dress earned her the nickname "Steel Butterfly."[272] But aside from her fashion sense, Imelda spoke frequently, especially during her husband's campaigns, to

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[269] As of this writing, he is currently serving as the Secretary of Foreign Affairs under President Rodrigo Duterte since October 2018.
[270] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 67.
[271] See Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos* (Manila, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017).
[272] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 106.

build institutions that would house the culture and arts of the Philippines. Through her, the Marcos regime nurtured an image as "the patron of nationalist culture" with extravagant celebrations such as *Kasaysayan ng Lahi*, fashion shows that exhibited local and national dresses, the Metro Manila Popular Music Festival, and the National Artist Awards Program.[273] Part of this project was one of Imelda's famous "edifice complex," the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Complex.[274] Built in 1969, the CCP is composed of multiple establishments which includes the Philippine International Convention Center, the Folk Arts Center, the Philippine Film Center, the Coconut Plaza, and the Philippine Village Hotel.[275] Imelda's "edifice complex," namely the CCP, is mired in a controversial history since its conception, because of its ridiculous cost and funding. In addition, according to Filipino National Artist Bienvenido Lumbera, the CCP was used to spread "state propaganda" cultural productions.[276] Having said that, Christi-Anne Castro notes that the Center had prospects to ubiquitously program both Western "high arts" and local art traditions; thus, potentially becoming a place where both can be "integrated together as part of Philippine culture."[277] However, how did the Marcos regime put this Center to use?

Exploring the issues surrounding the CCP unearths intentions around the making of the Filipino national culture. We touched on earlier that, because of their access to both state power and resources, the elites can establish an integral hegemony largely by creating a national culture and imaginary that different peoples within the archipelagic territory can consent to. In earlier chapters, I emphasized and outlined how national culture was developed to further the Philippine nationalism as a response to American colonialism and

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[273] San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte*, 81.
[274] Jee Y. Geronimo, "Martial Law Speak: Words That Defined the Anti-Marcos Movement," *Rappler*, February 24, 2016, sec. Philippines, https://www.rappler.com/nation/123550-martial-law-activists-lingo-edsa/.
[275] San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte*, 81.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 108.

hegemony. Now, with a different administrator in charge, national culture is co-opted to legitimize the hegemony of the national elites and sustain the status quo instead of being the seed of a counter-hegemonic force. I am not arguing at all those colonial forces are no longer in play, but that in the Philippine stage, after independence, the national elites took over as the new masters by inheriting the system that the Americans left us with. While it is important to investigate in detail how the elites manage to sustain a hegemony through the veil of culture, that project may produce an even larger assignment than this one. Because of my scope, I want to focus on one aspect of this hegemony—that is, the role of Kasilag in helping shape the national culture. And more crucial to the thesis is this: what roles did she play in the making of the CCP and in Imelda's cultural extravaganzas?

Soul Against Body

The debate surrounding the establishment of the CCP exposes the tension between the "hunger of the soul and the hunger of the body."[278] In defense of the CCP, its first president, Jaime Zobel de Ayala argued that the arts must be nourished not only during periods of prosperity but even during adversity.[279] This philosophy espoused that the arts embodied the soul of people, in other words, the folk. The elites adopted this position to justify the need and the outlandish (and questionable) funding for the Center, and by extension Imelda's projects. And as Castro notes, they only needed to seek inspiration from the West (especially in the nineteenth century) for idealized models.[280] However, unlike these formerly colonizing nations, the Philippines was not rich in resources. This problem made funding for the CCP difficult as the fledgling nation has yet to meet even the basic needs of low-income families, and this fundamental problem outweighed the need for the Center.

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[278] Ibid., 114.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.

Even if we argue that culture is essential in nation-building, the same way physical needs are, funding the CCP and how the Center was used must be questioned. Some argue that the funds may have been better spent in building a national theater and improving the National Museums and Libraries instead of building an entire cultural complex from scratch.[281] The location of the complex in Manila, while not surprising, also concentrates access within those who have the means to. Kasilag was part of the elite circles who supported the CCP Complex to high degree noting that "for the first time in the cultural history of [the Association of Southeast Asian Nations], a real theater for the performing arts would rise, a virtual oasis in the cultural Sahara."[282]

From the very conception of the CCP, the Center exuded elitism. A plethora of elites in various fields contributed to the making of the CCP, and its founding board consists of Filipinos prominent in business and the arts, with some of these people with an American education. They included Marcos crony Juan Ponce Enrile, a Harvard-trained lawyer; Horacio de la Costa, a priest with a doctoral degree from Harvard; I.P. Soliongco, a professor at UP; Andres Soriano, Jr., a Wharton-trained businessman; and prominent businessmen Ernesto Rufino and Antonio Madrigal. Kasilag served as the founding theater director of the CCP.[283] Subsequently, she became its artistic director and her mission "was to bring the best of the world to the CCP, and to show the best of Philippine artists."[284]

Kasilag was successful in fulfilling this mission as she was able to bring well known international artists to the CCP such as pianists Van Cliburn, Gray Graffman, prima ballerina Alicia Alonzo, and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, to name a few. King was also proud that

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[281] Ibid., 115.
[282] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 67.
[283] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 118.
[284] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 70.

"the greater bulk of the performances…were home-grown but worth Filipino artists who themselves had won world acclaim."[285] After nine years, King was appointed the president of the CCP on 27 March 1976. This position was concurrent with her current position as artistic director, and she became the first Filipino to hold both administrative positions.[286] Because of this, Kasilag barely had time to focus on her artistic pursuits and instead tackled her leadership responsibilities in the CCP. King was duly aware of the controversies that surround the Marcos regime, and because of that, she decided not to accept any favors from anyone during her term. Even for legitimate projects such as recordings of her own compositions, King would rather seek sponsors that utilize the resources afforded to her as the CCP president—strikingly like her father, Marcial, Sr.[287]

During her tenure as the president, Kasilag ensured the development of the arts in the Philippines and provided financial security for ailing arts organizations in the country. She managed the various CCP Filipino residencies such as the Ballet Philippines, Teatro Filipino and Bulwagang Gantimpala, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, and the world-known Philippine Madrigal Singer (also known as the Madz). King also oversaw the National Arts Center (NAC) dedicated to nourishing young talent. The NAC includes the Philippine High School for the Arts and the Makiling Academy and Research Institute for the Arts. Moreover, because of the resources that were funneled into the CCP, local musical organizations such as the League of Filipino Composers (LFC), which King was also a member, dovetailed their operations with the CCP so that they could fund music festivals, events, recordings, and commissions. As King recalls, "from 1976 onwards the League and the CCP help nationwide competitions for young composers, as well as composers'

[285] Ibid., 81.
[286] De la Torre, *Lucrecia R. Kasilag*, 84.
[287] Ibid., 85.

workshops and seminars promoting contemporary works in addition to the annual music festivals."[288]

One of King's ongoing legacies as the CCP president is the National Music Competitions for Young Artists (NAMCYA). In collaboration with the Young Artists Foundation of the Philippines, King founded NAMCYA to foster the arts and to encourage music in the nation. She became the competition's founding chairperson and president, and she toiled "to discover and develop young talents in piano, violin, voice, choral groups, string ensembles, family music groups and old and young ethnic musicians from all over the country."[289]

To address her "sense of exclusion from our Asian milieu,"[290] the LFC joined the Asian Composers League which held a conference in Manila in 1975 when King was still the president of the CCP. King gained another concurrent position when she was elected chairperson of the Asian Composers League, a post that she would hold for fifteen years.[291] She stressed that Filipinos should waste no time to acquaint themselves with their Asian neighbors as:

> Long have the [Filipinos] been strangers to the beautiful cultures of their brother Asians. Much more do we appear to know and appreciate the music cultures of the Western world to the apparent neglect of our own rich resources in the East.[292]

Although King focused more on developing a sense of national culture in the Philippines, her artistic tendencies to syncretize Eastern and Western traditions remained strong. Her convictions to highlight the folk as CCP president was relentless as she continued to showcase folkloric traditions in the CCP, primarily through the Folk Arts Center. She toiled

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288 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 57.
289 Ibid., 59.
290 Ibid., 38.
291 Ibid., 57.
292 Ibid.

to extend this way of thinking to other institutions especially as CCP president. She inculcated this type of syncretism into the Philippine High School for the Arts and provided spaces for ethnic music to be showcased in NAMCYA. Moreover, she composed pieces for these events and institutions that highlighted her philosophy of syncretism.

However, the intended audience and participants of the CCP and its programs were really the elite class who pushed for the complex in the first place. Per Castro, artists such as Kasilag feared that "the mere architecture of the CCP would be too intimidating a complex to attract the general (read poor) population" and that the general populace "were also to be disappointed by the expense of programs."[293] Even if there were discounted tickets, courtesy of Imelda, those $1 and $2 tickets far exceed the daily wages in Manila.[294] Castro notes that there exists little to no evidence of massive rallies that protested the expenditures towards the CCP, although street gossip would certainly include the questionable funding. It did not matter if a person was for or against the CCP, all people involved in the debate were part of the intellectual and cultural elite, thus shaping the discourse of national culture, seemingly forgetting *Juan dela Cruz*—the common folk as we name them in the Philippines.[295]

[293] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 118.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid., 119.

Figure 4. The Main Building of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Photo taken by Michael Francis McCarthy.

At this point, I want to dismiss claims that the hegemonic bloc must be solely responsible in achieving national excellence in culture. Since they have access to manage the national resources as the hegemony, they have a responsibility to ensure that these basic resources such as education and healthcare are dispensed accessibly. However, *Juan dela Cruz* must not remain complacent and wait for these resources to drop from the sky, but instead strive for the same excellence while keeping the hegemonic bloc accountable to ensure that the resources required to develop talents are made available. As a society, however, the Philippines remains captive, and the elites have the state captive as well.[296] In 1913, Filipinos were placed in charge of the civil bureaucracy that as early as 1916, the bureaucracy became a source of political patronage and clientelism. In 1918, the Philippine National Bank became bankrupt because of these fraudulent lending transactions born from patronage.[297] The state bureaucracy was (and still is) crippled and plagued by "nepotism, bribery, and corruption" all

[296] Litonjua, "The State in Development Theory," 383.
[297] Ibid.

of which are typically driven by predatory oligarchic families in the Philippines.[298] As historian Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz notes, "a legacy of the colonial bureaucratic mandates, the weak state provided for the entrenchment of the elite families in the economy and politics."[299] The state has become beholden to the oligarchic families of the nation.

These elite dynastic families, however, were afraid to counteract Marcos because he "controlled the levers of power and coercion, he monopolized the dispensation of patronage and privilege, his was a personal rule without ideological and institutional constraints."[300] However, he needed the support of his cronies and the military to control key sectors in the economy and the state. Because of this, the Marcos hegemony neglected its role in achieving national excellence as Marcos concentrated the national resources to himself and among his cronies by plundering the coffers and burying the nation deep in debt. The CCP was Imelda's vanity project, and while it had the potential to be a resource for all Filipinos and even if *Juan dela Cruz* wanted to take advantage of the Center's resources, they are barred from doing so, because of unaffordable tickets and opportunities that circulated almost exclusively among the elite families. In other words, these national resources have become privatized among the oligarchic dynasties. Geniuses can certainly come from anywhere, but they must cultivate their talents by seeking resources for their development. However, if these resources are nowhere to be found, an atmosphere conducive to public excellence cannot be established. Although not exclusive to them, I argue that *Juan dela Cruz* must act as a gadfly to prevent the hegemonic bloc from concentrating and privatizing national resources among only a select few. On the other hand, the bloc must direct its state power and resources to create an environment that is arable to cultivating excellence. All national

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[298] Ibid.
[299] CuUnjieng Aboitiz, "Ferdinand Marcos: 'Apotheosis' of the Philippine Historical Political Tradition," 43-4.
[300] Litonjua, "The State in Development Theory," 387.

classes, however, are responsible for producing the mettle and ambition to pursue merit and excellence. Kasilag, having established multiple education and cultural institutions, understood this task, but she alone did not comprise the entire hegemonic bloc. While the elites such as Jaime Zobel de Ayala recognize the importance of culture in nation-building, they focused on spending national resources on questionable and outlandish cultural projects that serve primarily Imelda's satisfaction, and they used the idea of a national culture to justify these expenditures when these funds could have been spent on already existing institutions. If national culture is indeed the goal, there must be a considerable effort among the elites and the masses to appreciate and uplift local cultures, while highlighting the syncretic quality of Filipino national culture.

Despite King's efforts to highlight local cultures and traditions, the elites still held Western art in higher regard than local productions. While all from cultural performances to the dinner menu at the CCP consisted of both Filipino and Western elements, there is still a tendency to view the West as superior. This is not to say that Filipinos must expunge everything Western, but they must also develop a sense of appreciation and knowledge of local arts and traditions that matches their interest in Western traditions if they are to promote the idea of national culture. Castro narrates that one of her consultants confided, with amusement and annoyance, how Imelda displayed a strong sense of colonial mentality:

> Imelda would present a Filipino performing group in the same production as the Western one, but that she would get up and talk during the Filipino performance after sitting attentively through the Western one.[301]

Interestingly enough, the opening night of the CCP was celebrated with a production run by an all-Filipino crew, the *Dularawan*, a theatrical piece composed by Kasilag herself. The *Dularawan*, whose music is played by a seventy-four piece all indigenous orchestra, is a tour-

[301] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*., 123.

de-force that displays Kasilag's deep understanding of folk music traditions not only in the Philippines but across Asia. The instruments hail from the continent with King requesting instruments from various countries such as an "*angklung* set of bamboo rattle shakers" from Java, Indonesia.[302] From this production, one might think that the CCP and its patrons would exude appreciation for the Filipino folk tradition, but the opposite was true. Despite Kasilag's efforts to write *Dularawan* to espouse a sense of Filipino pride, the piece itself is mired in controversy due to its questionable folk source.

The *Dularawan* is based on *Maragtas*, an epic that was first published by an Augustinian priest in 1902.[303] The epic was supposedly based on ancient manuscripts, but there is no evidence proving that they ever existed. The story of this epic is about ten Malay chiefs and their families escaping Borneo from an evil ruler, and somewhere along their journey, they stumbled upon the Philippines. There, they found and met with the local Filipino folk, the Aetas. The Malays exchanged their gold jewelyry for the Aeta's lands which forced them to live in the mountains. The Malays became the lowland Filipinos whom the Spanish Christianized while the Aetas became the uplanders (see Chapter 1). *Maragtas* somehow tells its audiences that the relationship between the uplanders and the lowlanders were kindred, but, in fact, the relationship between the two was inequitable as the Philippine government (coming from the lowlanders) often neglect and discriminate against the tribal groups. The *Dularawan* became a sort of an origin story, but one that truly fits the CCP as a place that testifies to the elites' power to institutionalize and control the narrative of national culture and euphemize the difficult history and abuse that the elites have done to its masses, akin to the United States' Thanksgiving celebrations.[304]

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[302] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 72.
[303] Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 123.
[304] Ibid., 124.

The CCP and Kasilag's *Dularawan* affirm what Filipino scholar Lucila V. Hosillos calls a "paradoxical quality," a characteristic of cultural nationalism that stems from the polycultural nature of the nation. Hosillos explains that Filipino nationalism has always been shaped by elite conceptions of the nation, and these ideas ultimately originate from Western concepts which included becoming a patron of the arts.[305] This notion of paradoxical quality ties in nicely with the Gramscian concept of hegemony as it is the prevailing historic bloc that conceptualizes the idea of the nation by defining and controlling the narrative and elements behind national culture.

Kasilag, as a part of this historic bloc, provided the theoretical foundations for the national culture especially during the 50s and the 60s where she promoted a style of music that syncretizes multiple traditions. This modernistic style allowed her to conceptualize a brand of national culture that is fluid and dynamic, and hence, can have the potential to be inclusive of the diverse cultures within the Philippines while being mindful of our colonial past. Through this, Kasilag was successful in reaching the first and the second developmental stages of the colonized intellectual as Fanon suggests. However, I think, King was short in reaching the third and final stage, to pursue a culture that is combative and based on the present struggles of the masses.[306] In other words, to Fanon, "[the artist] turns into a galvanizer of the people."[307] In her stint at the CCP, Kasilag promoted traditional programs, cultural performances, artistic fetes, and educational opportunities; however, her reach through the CCP stayed quite limited within the confines of the elite class. Even if the CCP presented 1,254 performances five years after Martial Law, this high artistic output still

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[305] Lucila Hosillos, "Cultural Nationalism and World Traditions," *Diliman Review* 18, no. 4 (1970): 306–17, 307-14.
[306] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 159.
[307] Ibid.

failed to obtain a diverse audience.[308] Kasilag, as president, was plagued with the same problem. However, the common folk is still compelled to feed their mouths than buy the cheapest tickets. It did not help that *Juan dela Cruz* needed to dress up in a suit they cannot afford just to enter and be socially accepted into the fabled halls of the CCP. King justified the CCP operations and encouraged people to come as the CCP tickets were often cheaper than cinema tickets, and she asserted that the Folk Arts Theater garnered more "masses" because of its lower ticket prices. At the same time, King also lamented how people with money may choose to go to a popular music concert than a classical one, and she thought that mass media and music miseducation was the main culprit.[309] Castro notes that Kasilag placed a huge emphasis on uplifting culture through programs primarily within the CCP instead of simply having a better music education for the masses. Kasilag observes that:

> The upper income groups, having been more exposed to culture will naturally be more appreciative of cultural shows than those in the lower income group. But now [ten] years after the CCP opened, we believe there is now a greater consciousness in culture among our people. Our people's tastes have been raised, and there is marked increase among theater goers. I think we are experiencing a renaissance now. We give free shows in the town plazas…Thus we arouse the rural folks' curiosity and their desire for the finer things in life. We present shows to lift the audience's level of taste.[310]

These "finer things in life," I suppose, was meant to be the cultural performances that are staged in arts centers and theaters. Because Kasilag placed importance on the "high arts," she neglected to see the important appeal of popular forms of music such as original pop songs produced in the Philippines by popular singers, indie artists, and those that may or may not have any training in the "high arts." This song genre came to be what we know as Original Pinoy Music or OPM which is pervasive among Filipinos, especially the masses.

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308 Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, 134.
309 Ibid.
310 Ibid., 134-5.

King did not hide her disappointment that people prefer popular music concerts than classical ones, but that lack of appreciation for popular culture is what disabled King from realizing Fanon's third stage.

Another reason as to why Kasilag failed to reach this third stage is that she believed that art is apolitical. "I do believe that artists should stay above politics," she writes, "art being partyless and far above the quagmire."[311] This statement is reminiscent of elites and people who remain neutral and stay outside of politics, but they can only do so because they are what political scientist Cathy Cohen would call non-deviants or those whose positionality allow them to live in social settings without experiencing structural violence.[312]

Art and music have always been used as a means of expressing meaning, performing resistances, and mediating power. As Said argues, arts and aesthetics are responsible for manifesting images and representations from which a "consolidated vision" of social and national identity is fostered, thereby creating a "near unanimity of view" towards the national imaginary.[313] His view is consistent with political practices in the Philippines where music and representations have been used to "render visible historical and contemporary connections, and colonial legacies that would otherwise remain invisible" such as resistance songs of the labor unions during the American period and the Martial Law era.[314]

These resistances from proletarian artists are consistent with Fanon's view of an artist in the third stage. For him, artists should become "storytellers who [recite] inert episodes revive them and introduce increasingly fundamental changes."[315] While Kasilag extracted the folk (read inert episodes) and innovated with their forms to match the

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311 Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 24.
312 See Cathy J. Cohen, "Deviance as Resistance: A New Research Agenda for the Study of Black Politics," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 1, no. 1 (March 2004): 27–45.
313 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 75.
314 Mangaoang, *Dangerous Mediations*, 12.
315 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 176.

sentiment of syncretism, Kasilag remained a storyteller that reifies the elite perception of culture, and she rarely stepped down from the "high arts" to collaborate with mass and popular forms of culture. Because Kasilag is not sensitive to the potential of art to be political, she gives little attention to popular forms of music which originates from these sites of mass resistances. Her focus on "high" and "traditional" art rendered moot her potential to use her positionality as a cultural figure to focus on the mass struggles, which art and music ought to and have always done so.

In a way, Kasilag and the CCP are similar. Both have the potential to be inclusive of the cultural diversity that the Philippine archipelago offers while being mindful of the colonial influences; however, they both stop short at including the masses into the project of imagining the national culture, thereby losing an opportunity to democratize the project of defining what it meant to be culturally "Filipino." As Edward Said notes, culture as "a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought."[316] This aspect of culture reveals that it is a source of identity and a primordial pool for subjectivity. Creating this sense of identity is not simply choosing what is best, but it is a constant engagement between various political and ideological causes, which Said considers to be a battleground where each cause exposes themselves for contention.[317] However, if the Filipino masses are already excluded in the cultural battlefield, they cannot enact any agency in a national culture that they have all the stakes in.

Come 1986, the Marcoses would be ousted from the Malacañang Palace and would seek exile in Hawai'i. Kasilag was merely waiting for her replacement to come as soon as

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[316] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*., xiii.
[317] Ibid.

Corazon Aquino assumes the presidency. In a few months, King found with great glee that a close friend has been appointed to be the new president of the CCP, Maria Teresa Roxas. Kasilag never asked for her appointment papers and happily handed over the position. Roxas asked King to stay as a consultant to the CCP which she gladly accepted and assumed for three years.[318]

Kasilag lived quietly yet itinerantly after her days at the CCP, and she was able to focus more on her artistry and research on traditional music and pedagogy. However, even if she was not working in the CCP anymore, the CCP always remembers King as people such as Roxas would always celebrate her contributions and music in those gilded halls. Crossing political boundaries and affiliations, Roxas has nothing but kind words and praises for King:

> One cannot think of the CCP without thinking of King Kasilag. She belongs to us. Her vibrations are in the walls and hallways of this building, and they will never be erased. The place she [holds] in our history and our hearts no one can displace.[319]

And indeed, regardless of the controversies that Kasilag and CCP may garner, the former dedicated her life in promoting culture and the arts the way she believed was of most help; the CCP was always there to provide her the platform to do so.

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[318] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 86.
[319] Ibid., 129.

Postlude

The Philippines is never a monolith, but because of the project of nationalism, the locals, with all their differences, can imagine themselves as a single community with other people as Filipinos. Lucrecia R. Kasilag was among the cultural giants who helped in forming such a national imagination. This thesis paid a critical homage in order to learn from her life and understand how she exemplified musical excellence and contributed to the national culture.

Throughout this work, I was guided by three questions in exploring and critiquing Kasilag's life. First, how did Kasilag demonstrate musical excellence and what were the circumstances that allowed her to flourish and become a leading figure in Philippine music? Second, what specific role did Kasilag play in building national culture? Third, what are the lessons that current Filipino artists and intellectuals learn from Kasilag's life to deepen and democratize nation-building? The first two questions are succinctly addressed below.

> As educator, writer, and lecturer, Dr. Kasilag has untiringly worked to raise the level of music education and appreciation in the country; striving to integrate the making and enjoyment of music in community life.[320]

On 10 June 1989, Lucrecia Kasilag earned this citation as she received the award for the National Artist for Music. It summarizes in a few sentences how she spent most of her life engaging with the aesthetic and music in the Philippines. This citation continues and it reads:

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[320] Ibid., 128.

> In her seventeen years as president of the Cultural Center of the Philippines and three more as special consultant, she has, through her leadership and achievements, forged lasting and important cultural links with the rest of the world.
>
> Today, after almost four decades, Dr. Kasilag's work continues unabated. She has returned to the academe from whence she first came, working once again with young musicians she so enjoys training. Through her devotion to her art, she has added important new dimensions to our musical tradition, earning the respect and admiration of many. More importantly, she has reawakened our people to the worth of the Filipino musician and music.[321]

Kasilag's citation encapsulates what she stood for—musical excellence and national pride. But looking back, music was not always her main goal. Music entered her life at such an early age owing to her highly musical family and background; however, through twists and turns in fate, Kasilag did not end up becoming a medical doctor or a lawyer as she first imagined, but she was pushed towards the aesthetics, and she owes her mentors, notably Antonio Molina and Felicing Tirona, in pushing her to pursue the arts. Because of her fateful encounters with such people, including José Maceda and Zoltán Kodály, she was pushed deeper into learning about the folk tradition, and this catapulted her into the nationalist project of building and gathering the scattered pieces of the Filipino creative identity. Aside from these important people, Kasilag was very much a product of her time—a period haunted by the specter of colonialism and the struggle for independence and the formation of national identity. She exerted her entire life's effort to ensuring the future of the Filipino national culture, tradition, and the arts.

Beyond the nation, Kasilag also served the Asian community, particularly the Southeast Asian nations, as she uplifted the national traditions of these countries through her project of syncretizing music, notably in her pieces such as *Dularawan* and the *Toccata*. Outside of her own artistry, Kasilag organized Asian music conferences and fostered relationships among Asian artists through her tenure as chairperson of the Asian Composers

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[321] Ibid.

League which to this day still stands strong, supporting various Asian composers through networking, workshops, and commissioning opportunities. Because of her utmost dedication to music, not simply as a national phenomenon, but a global phenomenon, she was named as one of the five International Artists of the World by the UNESCO International Music Council in 1993.[322]

There should be no doubt that Kasilag exuded musical excellence through her artistry as a pianist earlier in her career and as an innovative composer for most of her life. Moreover, her decades of research to build the foundations of folklore and her years of service in the CCP are a testament to King's contributions in molding the national culture. While there are issues surrounding the CCP and the making of national culture, I believe that Kasilag has done what she could, given the circumstances of her time and background with good intentions. Having said that, Kasilag naturally had shortcomings, especially in the question of democratizing nation building and culture. I see this as an important opportunity for younger intellectuals and artists to gather lessons from Kasilag's life to make cultural institutions accessible to the masses. Through our exploration of the three primary questions, there arises at least three important lessons that we can derive from Kasilag's life: shortcomings and successes.

The Lessons

Kasilag is indeed an inspiration to artists, and of course, her favorite mantra— "practice, practice, practice"—admonishes young artists to remain diligent and patient with improving our craft. With any great artist, those are fundamental lessons; however, moving beyond personal practice, I want to focus on what we can learn from Kasilag as an artist who struggled through the circumstances of her time. She persevered through times when the

[322] Ibid., 1.

field of music was dominated primarily by men. In fact, among the five 1993 UNESCO International Artists of the World, she was the only woman. On her endeavors, she was never alone, and I think her mettle and independence benefited from the company and mentorship of musicians such as Sister Battig, Dean Tirona, Lucrecia Reyes Urtula, and countless women who served as inspiration to her. Kasilag died never having married, and she always said that her life was ultimately tied to her devotion to arts, culture, and music. Since as a child, King displayed an immense dedication for excellence in various fields, and while she rarely discusses in her autobiography the implications of her gender, one can feel in her writing the tenacity and bravery she exuded as she encountered the Japanese, lived alone abroad in Eastman, and tackled through the male-dominated academic community in the Philippines. In the same way her mentors may have inspired her, Kasilag now serves as an inspiration to musicians who are otherwise marginalized and othered for their identities, especially their gender and sexuality.

To artists such as myself, Kasilag's artistic endeavors serve as important inspirations in the making of Asian modernism—one that syncretizes East and West elements of music. In a world that is continually pressurized yet expanded by the currents of globalization, we are seeing an immense exchange of cultural flows on a transnational level that it becomes increasingly necessary to conceive syncretism as inevitable. King recognized this inevitability by paying attention to her own circumstances and habits. Many contemporary composers would advise aspiring composers to search for inspiration in novel areas and unexplored habits. On the other hand, Kasilag, even if she said that she always chose the least taken path, would search inspiration from habits rooted in the nation and articulate these feelings. While she never adopted an utterly lyrical compositional voice, she managed to find a

balance between atonalism and the Eastern traditions that easily lend themselves to lyrical lines and tones.

Kasilag was a genius after all, but she strived to explore various local traditions and habits scattered throughout the island nation. After these explorations, she exerted tremendous mental and emotional effort to balance between her self-expression and being respectful and genuine in her usage of folk sources. Her endeavors should serve as a lesson and an inspiration for musicians and intellectuals who are engaged in the task of building the national culture. Kasilag's artistry was not only personal, but it was communal as her works not only comprised her own individual experience and expressions, but they also constitute the situation and traditions of the folk in the Philippines.

In terms of nation-building, Kasilag's life serves as an important interlocutor and example for intellectuals who are faced with the longstanding problems of salvaging and reconstituting shattered identities due to colonialism and class struggles. In a way, it is also a question of resistance against the hegemonic culture that Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos stood for. For artists, as Stuart Hall may describe, this resistance would mean a continual effort to articulate interests and over-determinate dominant cultures and ideologies.[323]

A. Negotiation

Early in King's artistic life and academic career, she navigated spaces in colonial Manila by learning the idiom of the hegemonic power at the time, which was the United States. While it is a given that her background as a *pensionado*'s daughter helped her in achieving this, Kasilag's fluency in the American and local elite cultures allowed her to inhabit both spaces. As an artist and composer, Kasilag wrote in a musical idiom that, while rooted in Western tonality, managed to incorporate the folk as an early sign of musical negotiation. These small

[323] Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 187.

yet important victories are all important. As Hall argues, "the moment of negotiation is also a moment of struggle and resistance."[324] Even if the dominant force cannot be overthrown, at least there are always small concessions and gains to be claimed. Constant negotiations are required among cultural forces to question and evaluate the integrity and suasiveness of a hegemony. As the American hegemony slowly changed to the local elites' rule, Kasilag's idiom went through some noticeable modifications to breach the formal law of both Western and Eastern traditions, and this change could not have been sustained without the small victories from negotiating musical idioms.

Extending this lesson to today's artists, negotiations impel us to tread ground so that we gain complete familiarity and organization of the hegemony. This affords us the potential to resist and survive it. By becoming well-versed in the terrain of the cultural battle zone can we only claim small victories which may hopefully translate into larger ones in the future. In fact, in music, Filipino artists and Original Pinoy Music (OPM) singers adopt this method of negotiation to incorporate techniques that worked well for Western popular music into traditional idioms of songwriting in the Philippines, which is largely based on the art song genre, *kundiman*. By doing so, OPM has gained traction again after years of losing spots in the top hits to foreign (read American) popular music.

B. Intervention

With an eye for what Hall calls "spaces for intervention," these spaces allow for opposing and marginalized subjectivities to survive and thrive.[325] When these spaces are identified, criticized, and intensified; they offer a room for marginalized subjectivities to become stronger, deeper, and better articulated than before so that it can be a force that can dislocate

[324] Ibid., 188.
[325] Ibid., 189.

and disarticulate these resistances from places they are subjugated and held hostage in.[326] These spaces need not to be physical spaces, but they can also be a specific congregation of people. During the struggle against the colonial hegemony, Kasilag and other intellectuals established spaces, primarily in the academe, where they can revitalize the folk tradition. Because of looming anxieties that American entertainment culture may flood and drown the local traditions, spaces for interventions such as the ones in PWU and UP were created, and Kasilag played a huge role in building up those spaces particularly at PWU. Her efforts to establish such spaces brought forth the Bayanihan which became one of the institutions where local culture and folkloric traditions flourished. However, in the case of the CCP, Kasilag was able to foster a multitude of spaces where culture could flourish; however, these do not serve as critical spaces for the masses to become better articulated. Rather, the CCP and its offshoots became spaces for consolidation (read state propaganda) where the hegemon solidifies its national vision and shuts off any counter-hegemonic drive against it.

Today's artists must distinguish between spaces for intervention and for consolidation. Oftentimes, because of the pleasure that is derived from the aesthetic, artists may over-indulge within a space that may consolidate their ideology. On the other hand, spaces for intervention provide an opportunity for the marginalized to grow. The line that demarcates the two is thin, because a sense of pleasure and achievement can be derived from both spaces; however, spaces for consolidation may push artists to conform and complacently indulge in hegemonic ideology, while spaces for interventions challenge artists to question this ideology, which often leads to paths of innovation and development.

In our times, what do these spaces for intervention look like? Like in Kasilag's case, institutions of learning may provide these spaces, but they may be used as a state apparatus

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[326] Ibid.

to duplicate and consolidate the hegemonic ideology. I think that spaces ranging from labor unions, local organizations, cooperatives, arts collectives to support and even small reading groups may be repurposed for interventions. Intellectuals must create these spaces, and ideally in a setting where a strong feeling of kinship[327] and empowerment can course through everyone, but, most importantly, these spaces must serve to uplift the most marginalized and not simply to indulge in pleasure.

C. Incipient Cultural Forms

According to Hall, when a marginalized group resists a dominant power, they often produce a material articulation of that resistance that comes in an emergent cultural form.[328] During the colonial period, King along with the composers at that time, such as Ramon Tapales and Francisco Santiago, were developing a kind of music that espoused Philippine nationalism as a response to the American occupation. These music genres, typically vocal, typified the musical expression of the Filipinos at that time who were well-versed in Western tonality but at the same time slowly discovering the folk traditions of the territory. This led to the emergence of distinct cultural forms such as the *kundiman*, *kumintang*, *awit*, and other Filipino art songs. In the same vein, labor unions co-opted the genre of song or *awit* to articulate feelings of resistance and suffering under the American occupation as well. Having said that, oftentimes politicians, scholars, and administrators such as then UP President Jorge Bocobo (see Chapter 4) should have articulated how those emergent cultural forms contribute to resistance. As Hall argues, "without that articulation, the movement would have even less shape and direction than it currently has, and we would presumably be in more trouble than

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[327] See David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010).
[328] Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 197.

we already are."[329] Therefore, aesthetic cultural forms, even if only incipient, are signs that there exists a strong subjectivity that lies in opposition to the hegemonic force. While these subjectivities may be small, there is potential and space for them to grow and find articulation in these emergent cultural forms. Moreover, this form of aesthetic might also alleviate the suffering coming from these strenuous situations as these cultural forms serve as an outlet to articulate and materialize the potential emotions welling inside.

In today's Philippines, emergent cultural forms often shoot out from the indie scenes, a space that many elites, including Kasilag, thought lowly of. These scenes are where the artist-hobbyists express through art how oppressed and alienated they are by the current social and labor conditions. These are also people who were not initiated into the tradition of the "high arts," and they would be seen as outsiders to mainstream conceptions of art. Despite the seemingly small significance of these artist-hobbyist, the works that they produce, while may not conform to the aesthetic standards of those within the ivory tower, convey meaning that reflects their social conditions. Not only that, but these artists also convey the same syncretic energy that Kasilag espoused as they often utilize conventions from foreign popular music cultures (such as the grunge scene of Seattle) into OPM. Artists such as Gloc-9 and Kolateral whose rap music expresses social inequities in the Philippines and displays syncretic musical conventions are instances of these cultural forms. It is then the job of the intellectual to articulate these emergent cultural forms so that they may take better shape in the realm of ideological battles.

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[329] Ibid.

Coda: The Mission of National Resistance

Kasilag's life focused on enacting cultural resistances against the colonial hegemony whether it was her primary intention or not. Most of the time, her actions towards the production of culture and the arts stemmed from her dedication to musical excellence and an appreciation towards the local culture. While there may be contentions between the distinctions of the folk and the folkloric in her efforts, the process of how she achieved the first two stages of Fanon's developmental stages are insightful for colonized intellectuals. It was expected for her to achieve the first stage of assimilation as the colonial era injected assimilation into the territories, at least among the elites. On the other hand, our investigation of how she achieved the second stage of rejection is enlightening. While she did not completely reject the Western idiom, she reimagined how these techniques can be used so that she can be true to herself, both as a product of the twin forces of American colonialism and Philippine nationalism. Her actions show that, even if she believed that arts must be apolitical, the personal pursuit of her own artistry and the consolidation of her identity as part of a larger imagined community contributed to the foundations of national culture.

Kasilag's disinterest in art's role in politics prevented her from actualizing the third and final stage, and that is to form a combative and resistant forms of mass national culture. Fanon emphasizes that culture must be rooted in the current struggles of the masses, and for it to be authentic, "[one] must recognize that national truth is first and foremost the national reality."[330] He then continues that "culture never has the translucency of custom," and "seeking to stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history but going against one's people."[331] I want to be clear here. Kasilag excavated the folk

[330] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 160.
[331] Ibid.

traditions and syncretized them in the spirit of staying true to her own subjectivity; however, the national reality was that most of the Filipino masses were struggling economically and experiencing the impunity of the elite-run state. Cultural authenticity must be iterative and rooted in the historical process—and a huge part of that process is the struggle of the masses, a history neglected by the artists and intellectuals of the newly independent Philippines. Kasilag missed half of the national reality.

We realize that the notion of the national culture was used as a response to American colonialism, and later, it was co-opted to sustain the rule of the national elites. The intellectuals of the colonial era, notably Kasilag, succeeded in forming the national culture as a response to colonization; however, they failed to advance the national class struggle. It is then the mission of the present artists and intellectuals to continue this national purpose to enact creative resistances against a state dominance that oppresses its masses. Such a strategy must focus on deviant strategies such as the ones we identified earlier to advance mass consciousness. As E. San Juan Jr. writes, "surely the Filipino people's durable tradition of counterhegemonic revolution needs no…reminders from Establishment gurus."[332]

In our exploration, we have seen that the unending process of building citizens and subjectivities is at the core of culture and can perhaps be the impelling reason why we continue to live, survive, and struggle amidst the hardships of daily life. Without culture to foster subjectivities, human life would be unvarying and perhaps homogenous. While these same subjectivities are what drives conflict among different peoples, as we learn from Said, they give humans reasons to progress and persevere, to seek and live out experience, and to form meaningful relationships with other people. The mission for national resistance involves that artists and intellectuals must learn to negotiate, create spaces for intervention,

[332] San Juan, *Maelstrom Over the Killing Fields,* 200.

and articulate emergent cultural forms so that they can uplift the national consciousness. Fanon reminds us that we must reimagine national culture to awaken the colonized consciousness to "[join] forces [with others] and [remain] strong" together as a nation.[333] Filipina feminist and nationalist, Delia D. Aguilar, echoes Fanon:

> It's going to be a long haul, no doubt about it. Hopefully a mass social movement will be formed that acknowledges the limitations of the previous decade's ad hoc, spontaneous forms of mobilization and will find ways to solidify and sustain itself by securing support from similarly located populations. It is hard to tell what is coming next, but this is a historic moment and a struggle that beckons all of us to get involved.[334]

And even if it has been almost fourteen years since Kasilag died on 18 August 2008, her marks and influence on the Filipino nation remain visible and strong: not only she left behind institutions that she founded and strengthened, but also because of the numerous students she taught and crossed paths with. Her legacy cements her as an innovator and a pioneer. Her shortcomings and successes inform and inspire today's artists to meet her standards, if not, even surpass her. Her art lives on as young artists such as myself continue to bring life to the music she so dedicated her life to. And with that, I would like to end with Tita King's words:

> The dictum "*ars longa, vita brevis*"[335] is one every true artist of any nationality deeply understands, and lives. For artists working in the Third World, however, the *ars* is even longer, and *vita brevis*-er. But no complaints. We love it, we live it.[336]

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[333] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*., 168.
[334] Delia D. Aguilar, "Reflections on Women and Race," in *Maelstrom Over the Killing Fields: Interventions in the Project of National-Democratic Liberation*, by E. San Juan (Quezon City, Philippines: Pantas Publishing & Printing Inc., 2021), 201–12, 212.
[335] Latin for "Art is long, life is short," but it is better understood as "skillfulness takes time, life is short." This aphorism reverses the order of the first two original lines from the text, *Aphorismi*, which was written by the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates.
[336] Kasilag, *Lucrecia Roces Kasilag: My Story*, 154.

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Appendices

In the following pages are some of the scores and manuscripts that I managed to acquire for Lucrecia Kasilag's compositions that I used for analysis. Since libraries in the Philippines were mostly limited during the duration of my research, I cannot gather complete scores for many works.

These scores are added here for interested readers who may want to investigate the music as they are difficult to access unlike most scores in the Western repertoire that are made readily available on the internet by organizations such as the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP). The scores here are made possible by the generous permission of the Philippine Women's University – School of Music. They are presented here as I obtained them from PWU, and I did not add here any of my own markings for analysis. Any markings that may be seen on the score were already present at the time I received them. Included in this section are the following materials:

Appendix A: *April Morning* (1941)

Appendix B: *Divertissement for Piano and Orchestra* (1960)

Appendix C: *Toccata for Percussions and Winds* (1959)

APPENDIX REDACTED

The full music scores have been redacted from the digital copy of this work for copyright reasons. Access to the full music score can be requested from the School of Music at the Philippine Women's University (info.music@pwu.edu.ph).