

## The Form and Ideology of Leyte's Popular Radio *Siday*: A Critique

Jose Duke S. Bagulaya

---

*This article is a Marxist critique of Leyte's most popular poetic form – the radio siday. It historicizes the siday's roots and divergences from the classic satires of the Leyte ilustrados as well as the role played by the writer and the radio station in the production of the form. Moreover, the article includes a critical analysis of the siday's ideological positions in relation to the state and religion. Finally, the article concludes that the siday's formal stultification is a symptom of its ideological backwardness.*

---

*'Under monopoly capitalism all mass culture is identical'*  
Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno

Most Leyte scholars today agree that when the word *siday* is mentioned, it generally means poetry. It includes all forms of poetry from the *durogas* to the lyric and from New People's Army (NPA) poetry to the modernist poetry of the academe. It is therefore used to refer to all the varieties of Waray poetry whether it is moralistic or humorous. However, during the 90s, the word *siday* slowly became tied to a single poetic form broadcasted over a dominant AM radio in Tacloban City, DYVL. This poetic form, which will be examined in this chapter and referred to here as the radio or DYVL *siday*, has become so popular among the Warays, through the mass medium of radio, that they have totally become unaware of the great variety of Waray poetry. Most Warays associate the word *siday* to the only poetry they hear which is none other than the daily broadcasted DYVL *siday*. This ignorance is not wholly the fault of the people, for the DYVL since its first

broadcast of the siday in 1979, never experimented with other forms of poetry. The radio station has consistently stuck to the traditional poems sent by its listeners (or poems it wants its listeners to send). For these reasons, the Waray siday has become the DYVL siday. The DYVL siday is now “the poetry of Leyte and Samar.”

Aware of this problem, two modern Waray critics, who are poets themselves, gave their evaluation of the contemporary siday. Victor N. Sugbo, who also writes in Waray, views the siday in a somewhat balanced manner. In spite his new critical training, he does not dismiss the form as degenerate traditional poetry that should remain obscure and unacknowledged by scholars. For Sugbo, the siday, which is read after the morning news, deserves a closer look for the form has been “attracting” the “local folk.” As he writes, “up to the present time, DYVL’s siday program has been attracting poetry penned by local folk – farmers, housewives, lawyers, government clerks, teachers, and students who live in Tacloban and in far-off towns of Leyte and Samar.” Although he adds that compared to the *ilustrado* siday, most radio siday are “didactic” and lack the “humor” of the former, Sugbo admits that “the audience loves listening to them” (Sugbo, 2002).

The DYVL siday is similar to its predecessor – the *ilustrado Durogas* – in that both follow the traditional form of rhyming. They are also both didactic, since both poetic forms push something political, although they differ in goals. This means that both forms are rooted in the social and political issues of the day. Like the *ilustrado*, “the radio poets function as social critics” (Sugbo, 2002). Their only difference, for Sugbo, is that the siday has lost the *Ilustrados*’ “humor and sense of irony.”

In *Locating Voice in Waray Poetry*, the poet Merlie Alunan (1998) offers another interesting critique. This article must be praised in spite of its theoretical limitations, for it is the first sustained critique of the siday and one of the few critical articles on Waray poetry produced in the 90s. Speaking from a new critical viewpoint, Alunan says that there is a problem of ‘voice’ in the

DYVL siday. She says that the DYVL siday exhibits a monotonous voice emanating from a single persona. Unlike the ilustrados, the siday poets have not used a variety of persona. Instead, the latter has only relied on one persona, usually the poet's own. As she says, 'the ordinary voice in Waray poetry issues from a displaced or dislocated public voice, usually that of the poet's. It is as if every time one composes a poem, one dons a certain "poetic" attitude, climbs the "poetic" platform from which the poet then speaks, out of a presumed or pre-agreed or predetermined "poetic" authority (155).

Through this platform, the Waray siday writers confine poetic production so that they have not been able to produce "different" poems. The persona from one poem to the other is the same, reducing everything to indistinguishable poems. This platform is really more of a prison cell than a space where one could freely speak or write. Alunan (1998) puts it succinctly: "They might each be saying different things, but they [say] them in the same way, in the same tone, and [they] [project] a similar hortatory attitude" (155). A poem might have discussed a government policy, the mother-child relationship, or a romantic relationship, but all would be the same. This homogenous product, for Alunan, is due to the shaman-like status of the siday's persona and poet. The poet is like "Moses bearing the stone tablet." The poet assumes a "high moral" authority position that is unquestioned and accepted by the audience (159-160). This is the reason why the siday is not just homogenous, but also didactic.

In summary, the critiques of Sugbo and Alunan are necessary for younger critics. They are breakthroughs and serve as a starting point for future critical evaluations. Their criticism clears some aspects and characteristics of the siday like the versification, the persona, and the content. The only problem is that there are still questions that remain unanswered: first, if the ilustrado satire and the siday are relatively didactic and traditional in form, what made the siday lose its sense of irony? and second, what is the

politico-economic reason behind the difference in the development of the satire and the siday?

These are questions not pursued in Alunan and Sugbo's analyses. Both critics focus on the formal elements of the siday. They have touched on the persona and the tone, but not on the formation of such poetry. One thus wonders how the siday became different from the satire when both forms follow that of traditional verse. In other words, what is needed here is a more symptomatic reading of the siday, which means considering the formal elements of the poetry as symptoms of a new economic formation and a new ideological position.

The first question therefore seeks the specific economic development that may have determined the formation of the DYVL siday. It looks at the new contradictions that exist among the classes of the region as an effect of the movement of monopoly capital. In this process, one may be able to study the classes as represented by the writers of the siday and on the new aesthetic development that could possibly change traditional poetry, meaning the ilustrado's rhymed and metered satirical verse.

The second question, meanwhile, seeks to show the ideological positions that determined the siday's form. Given the Marxist view that content determines form, the examination of ideological changes may explain why the satire and the siday could never be the same poetry. For it is not enough to say that a poem lacks humor, the question should be why does that poem lack humor. Thus, an analysis of ideological content, which is also formed by the material conditions of society, is relevant. As the communist poet Pablo Neruda would say: "*El mundo ha cambiado y mi poesia ha cambiado*" (The world has changed and so has my poetry).

### **Traditional Poetry: From the Durogas to the Siday**

A textual critique of the radio poetry cannot be done without comparing it with the durogas or satire. In spite of the

obvious difference in irony, both forms of poetry apparently belong to a tradition of versification—the use of rhyme and meter. From the viewpoint of form, the two poetic forms are closely related. Their ties are the only evidence of continuity in Waray poetry. This is because modern poetry and revolutionary poetry have already separated themselves from this tradition through the use of free verse.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, what ties the radio poetry to the *durogas* are almost 8 decades of ironing out a versification disciplined by rhyme and meter.

The *ilustrados* themselves mastered the “rhyme and meter scheme” that controlled the flow of their satire. Lucente, Makabenta and Trinchera played with rhyme and meter, which they might have adopted from Leyte’s oral tradition. Cashiano Trinchera, for instance, uses the a,a,b,b quatrain rhyme scheme and combines it with a 12 meter verse in a poem called *Semana de Limpieza* (1924).

*An karabaw, baktin, baka, ug kabayo,  
kun dire higtan labihan kaayo,  
bas makapanhangrabhan humayo, kamoti,  
kun mapakalsada, ayaw paghumuti.*

(The carabao, pig, cow, and horse,  
set them loose, it’s best for them  
so they can eat the rice and potatoes,  
when on the street, leave them.) (31).

This form was so much employed by the *ilustrados* that even after their decline as a class and *culturati*, other poets followed them. Although the *ilustrado* influence is difficult to prove today, it is theoretically permissible to say that their versification has grown in the poetic unconscious of the Warays. Thus, the *siday* poet, who does not know the satirical verses of Lucente, may have heard verses somewhere in the environment. Since Waray literature is not taught formally even in Leyte and Samar’s colleges

and universities, the would-be-poets learn their craft during drinking sessions.

In Maning V. Paranas' *siday* (1999), which won the 1991 contest, this constraint of rhyme and meter also emerges. The poem *Anak*, whose content is reminiscent of Freddie Aguilar's popular song, tells the story of a prodigal son who went astray with illegal drugs. Unlike Aguilar's tune, however, Paranas' *siday* becomes blatantly moralistic only in the last two verses. But that is just one point. What is more relevant is to show that *Anak* uses an a,a,a,a, rhyme scheme and 12 meter verse.

*Ikaw nahimugso dinha kalibutan  
bunga ka han gugma han im guinikanan  
ikaw guin mayuyo labaw han ngatanan  
tikang pa ha tiyan hasta kalamragan.*

(You're born into this world  
due to your parents' love  
you were loved above all things  
from the womb to the light.)

The poet pursued such versification through the 8 quatrains of *Anak*, although a closer look reveals that in the 7<sup>th</sup> quatrain, the rhyming becomes a,b,a,b. The poet may have not been aware of the fact that "*pamation*" (to hear) does not rhyme with "*polong*" (words). But "*polong*" rhymes with the third line's "*matupong*" (to be of equal height), while the 4<sup>th</sup> line's "*kabubwason*" (future) rhymes with the "*pamation*." Thus, the poet shifts from an "a,a,a,a" to an "a,b,b,a" rhyme scheme.

*Salet, mga anak angay pamation  
kan nanay ug tatay magtamis nga pulong  
mga pagpaura nga waray matupong  
kay an ira hingyap im kabubwason.*

(So, children, you must listen  
to the words of your parents  
for their caring is never equaled  
for their wish is your bright future.)

This shifting in rhyming is even more apparent in other poems. Here is one of Sarah Reposar's siday (1998) criticized by Alunan in a workshop.

*Hunyo 12, 1898, petsa mabingungdanon nga totoo  
ini tuig, kabubwason para han mga pilipino  
kay aton mga bayani... Andres Bonifacio  
Emilio Aguinaldo ug iba pa nga rebolusyonaryo  
ha Kawit, Cavite nagsilibrar kagawasan nahimugso.*

(June 12, 1898, a day of importance  
this year is new to the Filipinos  
for our heroes... Andres Bonifacio  
Emilio Aguinaldo and other revolutionaries  
in Kawit, Cavite celebrated freedom.)

In addition to the historical distortion that puts Andres Bonifacio side by side with Emilio Aguinaldo, the rhyming is "forced," according to Alunan. The line "*ha Kawit, Cavite nagsilibrar kagawasan nahimugso*" is grammatically awkward without being poetic. "*Nahimugso*" is forced after "*kagawasan*" just to rhyme with the previous lines "*rebolusyonaryo*." One, of course, knows that "*rebolusyonaryo*" does not rhyme with "*nahimugso*." Moreover, Alunan is also right when she observes that the meter is not consistent. Thus, what she cites is an example of the degeneration of traditional verse in the hands of the siday poet.

It might be deduced from these observations that the relationship between the siday and the durogas is one of continuity and discontinuity. The siday takes the traditional versification,

meaning the use of rhyme and meter, from the earlier satire of the ilustrados, but changes it in the process. Whether the change is a degeneration or development is a matter of viewpoint. If one views it from the siday writer's eyes, the change is an innovation. But if one views it from the ilustrados' eyes, like Alunan's, one indeed concludes that the siday is second-rate ilustrado verse.

Therefore, what is proposed here is an acknowledgement that the siday has its roots in the ilustrado tradition, but has become a new form of poetry. One must not judge it according to ilustrado standards, because it now has its own. By difference of standards, one does not mean relative standards per se, but relative class standards. The difference, then, is a class difference. The ilustrado, as a class, has formulated an aesthetic pursuing its own interests. The siday writers, as mediated by corporate capital, have also formulated their own aesthetics. One must remember that the ilustrados never openly advocated a "moralistic" standard for their poetic production. Although they could not avoid moralizing, they opted for the use of irony in their poems. They chose not to be priests, but to be poets.

This is not true with the radio poetry. The radio poets and their corporate masters seem to have agreed because of contest rules that poetry must have a "moral" (Custodio, 2002 & Quina, 2002). Moreover, even if the radio poets were influenced by the corporate masters or the other way around The point is that the radio poets' own ideological positions seemed to have reinforced and reproduced the corporate ideology for its own benefit.

### **After the Ilustrados: The Formation of Monopoly Capital**

After the Second World War, the shift to the semifederal, semicolonial economic base, an economy dominated by foreign capital, local compradors and landlords, slowly pushed the ruling ilustrados aside. This defeat was realized by two factors: the arrival of big compradors like the Elizaldes (this is discussed later

in the section of the DYVL's aesthetics), and the consolidation of the Chinese merchant class as a new economic power bloc.

The contradiction between the ilustrados and the Chinese merchants is firmly recorded in the *durogas* or satires from the 1920s to the 60s. In Tacloban, this struggle between the two classes was tackled by the dominant ilustrado writers – Lucente, Makabenta, and Trinchera – in their poetry. They continuously attacked the Chinese for their allegedly tricky accumulation of capital, and warned that the natives might be subjugated by the Chinese in the future. This warning was actually becoming a reality because, as the 60s came, the ilustrados were being isolated to their last space, the political bureaucracy, while the merchant class was slowly gaining ground in the economic space, mainly involving the distribution of commodities in the new semicolonial era. In this process, the ilustrados became dependent on the merchant class for economic support, particularly during the bourgeois elections. City councilor and businessman Wilson Chan would claim in a conversation that his father, whose business was the distribution of electric power in the city, supported speaker Daniel Romualdez in the latter's bid for speakership and in return Romualdez got rid of the tariff on the importation of machines for electric power (W. Chan, personal interview, August 2002). In other words, the Chinese merchants were not only able to dominate the economic sphere, they were also able to pressure the political structure of the city. The Chinese merchants, whose money was used to finance the expenses of the politicians, became the king-makers of the city. This dependency would last for decades until the 1990s when the Chinese merchants, who had become the new regional compradors – or the mediators of foreign and big capital in the semicolonial economy – would already compete against the old politicians for bureaucratic power.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, this ilustrado decline was also aggravated by the coming of big comprador business groups as exemplified by the Manila Broadcasting Company's DYVL. Later on, more foreign

companies – from petroleum to food chains – would make Tacloban their center of operations in the region. These included Shell, Caltex, Jollibee, McDonald's, Chowking, etc. It must also be pointed out that these big businesses are often handled and brought into the city by the rising Chinese merchant class. What appears, therefore, is the union of the local merchant class and the big foreign and comprador businesses of the country. This union made the formerly small Chinese merchant class not only circulators of petty commodities but also arbiters of big capital. To simplify things here, what has happened after the shift to a semicolonial, semifeudal economy is not the movement to a new capitalist economy, but an intensification of monopoly capital's dominion over the feudal economy. In other words, the economy remains indirectly controlled by big foreign interests with the help of big compradors, big landlords and bureaucrat capitalists.

This ilustrado decline had a direct effect on the production of poetry in Waray. Since the ilustrado class, at the height of its power, controlled the publications and the writing of poetry, the decline of their class also meant the decline of satire. As expected, as the class declined, so did its literature. The problem was that the new regional compradors (Chinese) are no writers. They are practically cultural philistines who could not care for anything but profit. But it is no problem after all. When one does not have a woman, one buys a prostitute. If one cannot write a word, then buy a writer. Thus, another class had to fill this void and a new elite had to formulate its aesthetics. Indeed, with the ilustrados' fading and the compradors' continuous accumulation, the lower petit-bourgeoisie and the peasants filled the space vacated by Lucente, Makabenta, and Trinchera. Poetry, then, had become mass poetry, as it is now produced by people from the lower classes. Yet, on the other side, a 'corporate elite' determined its aesthetics since the DYVL radio, a branch of the monopolistic Manila Broadcasting Corporation that entered Tacloban during the rise of the compradors, became this poetry's outlet. This dialectical

coalition of corporate aesthetics and mass writers led to the formation of a new poetry in Waray. This poetry would become the most popular form since the ilustrados' satirical works. This poetry was none other than the DYVL's siday

### **Monopoly Capital and the Aesthetics of the Siday**

The formation of mass-produced poetry, referred to here as the radio siday, can only be understood through an examination of the ideological machine that produced it. This ideological machine, which is determined by the flow of monopoly capital into the country, is the radio station DYVL of Tacloban. This positioning of the mass media, especially radio, as determined by the growth of surplus capital, is relevant in order to counter the notion of technological determinism. One must remember that “technological determinism” is the conceptualization of technology as the base of societal changes, including literary change. It is admitted that technology, a part of the forces of production, indeed plays a role in the changes in the superstructure – consciousness, literary modes, or culture. However, to argue that ‘technology’ is the basis of all the changes is just not acceptable. The positioning of technology as a primary factor hides the importance of the relations of production that sometimes hinder or push the change in the mode of production. Hence, what is proposed here is a historical analysis of technological development. It must be recalled that the rise of radio in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was practically connected to the military preparations of the imperial countries, U.S., Britain, France and Germany, in the redivision of the world by capital. In their desire for colonial territories and markets for surplus capital, the imperialists needed a reliable killing military machine that was strengthened by radio communication. Thus, the development of radio is historically linked to the growing crisis of monopoly capital.

The entrance of DYVL into Leyte also signaled the expansion of monopoly capital, meaning big conglomerates, into the country. The first radio station in Leyte on October 17, 1956, DYVL was part of the Manila Broadcasting Company owned by the Elizaldes. “After the war,” its owner Manuel Elizalde “started its expansion program, establishing radio stations in different parts of Luzon, Visayas, and few in Mindanao.” By 1972, Elizalde was not only owner of 8 stations in Manila, 2 in Cebu, Dagupan, Laoag, Legaspi, Roxas, but also owner of Channel 7 in Manila and Cebu and of the newspaper Manila *Evening News*. He was also involved in “mining, insurance, shipping, import and export, steel and iron corporation, paints, oil, rope” (Maslog, 1988). There is no doubt that DYVL’s founding was part of the formation of a big monopoly.

The connection between DYVL and the whole monopoly is revealed by the structures of the station. In its *Brief History of DYVL Station* (n.d.), one reads that “each MBC station... maintains an administrative, a program, and an engineering section, all sections reporting to the their respective departments/section heads who in return report to the station manager”. “The station manager,” then, “reports directly to the Makati head office.” In other words, DYVL is not any ordinary radio, it is really a direct offspring of capital accumulation at the center. One does not wonder why it could “boast(s) of its brand new and dependable 10 kw Nautel transmitter with 10 kw Harris gates transmitters standby.” This powerful transmitter is supported also by “a 50 kva Perkins generating set ready to be used during power failure.” This technological capability does not only make DYVL a competitor, it also ensures an advantage in the oligopolistic competition in the radio industry. One must be reminded that under a competitive economy, the capitalists produce the same product that makes up a pure competition market. But when one of the capitalists begins to produce a much better product due to a larger capital backing, this market competition turns into a monopolistic competition.

Pure competition is no longer possible because one capitalist has a complete advantage over the others.

To sum up, DYVL, a station formed by monopoly capital, is not in Tacloban for no reason at all. It exists due to the reproduction of capital and it will exist for no other purpose than to reproduce that same capital. As its profile would admit, "DYVL's uniqueness does not lie only in its 42 long years of service to the almost 4 million population of Eastern Visayas, but also in its ability to meet the advertising needs of both local and national advertisers." There is no more explanation needed when one hears it from the horse's mouth itself.

The profit motive of DYVL is too obvious not to be recognized by critics. Even non-Marxists like Victor Sugbo think that the reason why the siday has been crystallized in its traditional form since its first broadcast in 1979 is due to the drive for profit. In an interview, Sugbo says that DYVL is afraid of change in the siday's form and content for it might lose its listeners, which may mean also its advertisers (V. Sugbo, personal interview, July 17, 2002). The apparent principle is to stick to what is profitable. Change must only come from the exhaustion of profits.

Nonetheless, the DYVL siday was actually not born an adult. Like any other poetic form, the siday also went through infancy to maturity. According to DYVL's station manager Babes Custodio (personal interview, July 17, 2002), who first instituted the siday program of the station, the radio siday started with a *puplunganon* or quotations/proverbs. The *puplunganon* is one way of getting the pulse of the listeners. She says that the *puplunganon* was so enthusiastically accepted that after a few months the listeners began sending longer opinions that later became the radio siday. From 2-3 lines, the opinions grew into stanzas and from stanzas, grew into poems. Yet, one must remember that the content of both the *puplunganon* and the siday are the same. They both deal with national or local issues- political, economic and social. They also concern themselves with "moral values." In other words,

the shift from 2-3 lines to 3-5 stanzas is not so much due to the change in content, but to the content's search for the right form. The form needed to expand, and it did.

This is not to say, however, that the evolution of the siday was a spontaneous process. It was not a Darwinian process of natural selection, but conscious social construction. First, it was DYVL that decided on the themes or issues just as newspaper editors decide on the headlines. Second, Custodio admits that DYVL had to limit the siday from a minimum of 3 stanzas to a maximum of 5 stanzas. Third, DYVL had formulated a sort of "aesthetics" for choosing its weekly, monthly, and annual winners.

The criteria for judging included 40% for originality, 20% theme, 20% rhyme, 10% purity, and 10% adherence to the rules. These criteria are problematic. The most ambiguous criterion is "originality." If the siday followed the traditional form of stanza, rhyme, and theme, what aspect of it would be innovative? Metaphor? Irony? Yet, the metaphor could not be the basis for the siday's originality since most of its metaphors are trite. And neither does the siday have a sense of irony. This leaves "originality" to the subjective taste of the judges whose composition was most of the time, due to time constraints and sponsorships, is not professionalized. Usually, the judges came from the sponsoring organizations – Atty. Aurelio Menzon and Councilor Rebeca Pacanan, or somebody from the the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation, the contributors (former winners), and the DYVL staff or its vice-president Carlos Filamor. In this case, even the subjective tastes of the judges are suspect, because the judges are not practitioners of the craft or were not aesthetically trained. It would have been better to let the subjective tastes of the poet or critic prevail, rather than have a banker's subjective notions decide on what is good poetry.

Secondly, the 10% adherence to the rules is also problematic. A poet who observes the rules on rhyme, theme, and dialect is given points for it right away.

Now, the three rules on rhyme, theme, and dialect may seem the most important in shaping the DYVL siday. The three rules basically refer to the language, the form, and the content of the poetry. These three rules are what make the siday ossify in its traditional form.

It might be recalled that the notion of “purity of dialect” is not a new criterion. This is the aesthetic foundation of ilustrado nativism. Since the ilustrados belong to the second stage of what Fanon calls the development of a National culture, having been directly disillusioned by their loss of identity with the older ilustrados like Rizal and Luna, the Leyte ilustrados tried searching for the pure Filipino or pure Waray. This search led them to the Waray language which they found was being destroyed by Hispanic and English vocabulary. In reaction, the ilustrados, through the *Sanghiran San Binisaya* as articulated by Vicente de Veyra, called for the purification of the Waray language. As de Veyra would advise, do not use a foreign word if there is an equivalent in Waray. This nativism is echoed by the poet Cashiano Trinchera: “They even want to change the word for *suman!*”

The DYVL aesthetic here followed this ilustrado claim. The effect of this formulation was that the poets usually would use unheard of Waray words for verbosity. If the ilustrados said that a good poem was a poem that uses pure Waray, in later generations, this nativism is raised to a higher level: the good poem is a poem that uses deep Waray vocabulary. In other words, if one uses words others have not heard before, he is a good poet. Poetry is reduced to esoteric vocabulary.

This nativist formulation that has survived several decades since its formulation in the 1920s is symptomatic of the country's still semicolonial condition. Until now the Warays are purifying themselves from colonial intrusion. Moreover, this is also a symptom of the Waray's lack of a diachronic sense of language, a lack of history. “A word,” says the Soviet critic V.N. Volosinov (1986), “is either advanced to a higher rank or demoted to a lower

one” (105). Words change their meanings. Words appear and disappear in the language of a people. Some words are no longer used by young Warays, because they have learned new words from MTV. Language is a historical artifact. One’s tongue is determined by one’s history and society. As Volosinov would add, “ the generative process of signification in language is always associated with the generation of the evaluative purview of a particular social group, and the generation of an evaluative purview... is entirely determined by expansion of the economic basis”(105). For this study, it means the expansion of the economic base under monopoly capital brings new forms of experiences, words, and meanings that clash with the old forms of experiences, words, and meanings. This clash eventually leads to a revaluation of words and meanings in the language of a specific class in society. Indeed, with the globalization of the economy, the middle class may eventually have a new word for *suman*.

Second to this nativist aesthetic is DYVL’s notion of “theme.” It was through the “theme” that the corporate comprador capital controlled the content of the *siday*. By choosing the “theme,” for instance, “mother’s day celebration,” “Rizal day,” or “Valentine’s day,” capital now limited the possibilities of poetic production. Most of the time, the poets just end up praising the “mother” or “Rizal.” Although the *siday* was allowed to criticize politicians, the way of criticizing was often moralistic. Custodio says that their preference was the *siday* that expounded moral values. In other words, the *siday* only reaffirmed the dominant conception of morality.

This control on the content of the poetry was actually the most crucial of the rules. The two levels of control- the theme and the moral values- were decisive in the ideological positioning of the poem. By sticking to these two levels, the poet could no longer innovate. Instead he was forced to play around the rules. It is not impossible, therefore, that the poet ended up reaffirming the whole semicolonial, semifeudal system. This will be more elucidated by a textual analysis later on.

Thirdly, the limitation of “3-5 stanzas and rhyming” completed the aesthetic of radio poetry as conceived by the radio elite. This time it was “form” of the poetry that was controlled. A poem in free verse would not be admitted as a siday. In terms of rhyme, there were only one or two rhyming schemes. A textual analysis will reveal that the radio poetry, despite the DYVL's aesthetics, did not really exhibit a more subtle rhyming scheme like a,b,b,a or a,b,a,b.

The above aesthetic was the formulation of DYVL, as explained by station manager Babes Custodio (personal interview, July 17, 2002). Her aesthetics, of course, does not include the critical evaluation pursued in the previous discussions. Moreover, her discussion does not include the “aesthetic” from the point of view of the siday writer.

### **The Siday Poet and His/Her Aesthetic**

A dialectical view of the production of the siday would not be complete without taking into consideration the writer herself. As argued, the poetry's mode of literary production is made up of a productive relationship between the radio managers and the poets. In such relationship, the radio managers control the means of literary production that is the radio station. The managers are the ones who determine the content that should be written by the poet. They shape, accept, and distribute the poetry of their listeners. They also judge, based on the aesthetics discussed above, the poetry sent to them. But the poetic production is not one-dimensional. The poets, also to some extent, influence the writing of the poem. They may, in fact, have an antithetical aesthetic that puts them in contradiction with the radio managers and judges. They may have a personal notion of poetry that could form a different poetry. Thus, it is relevant to hear the poets talk about their craft.

Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that the literary relations of production, mediated by the economic relations, are unequal. Between the elements of production, the radio manager is more dominant. Her preference is the decisive influence on the poet's writing due to the former's power to pay. Station manager Babes Custodio says that they pay P75 for the daily winner, P100 for the weekly, P350 for the monthly winner, and P1500 for the annual winner. This money nexus positions the poet as just another petty producer. There is a price for the poet's output, not the poet's labor power yet. But this condition is already reminiscent of Karl Marx's brilliant description of bourgeois relations: "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers" (Marx in Tucker, 1978: 476).

The poet occupies a devaluated position in the society. This is apparent when one compares the ilustrados and the radio poets of today. The ilustrados were highly regarded by the residents. They never wrote for money nor sold their poetry. They were satisfied with the respect and high regard given in return by their audience and their society. On the other hand, the radio poet had to sell his work. Although some of them wrote for fame and not for money, there were writers who just write for the money. The ilustrado like Lucente, of course, would not accept such a measly sum of money. Yet for some radio poets, the P75 was already enough to buy them rice and fish. This is what cheapens the poet. That is why in spite of the radio's reach, there is no siday writer who has achieved the status of Lucente even in popularity. Nobody in Tacloban cares about any writer. Unlike before, the poet in the age of the radio has lost all individuality.

This loss of the poet's individuality may be attributed to the commodification of poetry. The transformation of the poem into a product produced by the poet and sold cheaply to the station results into the standardization of the product. Like the production

of a Jollibee fried chicken, the siday is produced according to a certain formula that is pre-determined by the station. This formula includes the rhyme, the nativist language, and the moral as conceived by the station. As a result, each poem becomes similar to its predecessor and no distinguishing artistic quality is produced. Since the product is devoid of any outstanding quality, the poet also remains anonymous like the audience of the poem even if the poet's name is mentioned on air.<sup>3</sup>

Let us return to the aesthetic of radio poetry. Salud de Veyra Quina is one of the most prolific siday writers. She is financial administrator of University of the Philippines in the Visayas Tacloban College (UPVTC) with a commerce degree from the Divine Word University and a master's degree from UPVTC. She has written numerous poems since the DYVL program started. According to her, she usually uses a pseudonym when she writes. She often uses her helper's name, her offspring's name or officemate's name.

Quina has been invited by Alunan to attend writing workshops but she has refused. Maybe, the reason is that she wants to preserve her personal notions of poetry. She does not want to lose the aesthetic that guided her writing for years. According to her, the siday must have a 'lesson' – be it moral or social. It also must be rhythmical and humorous. When writing, she says, she depends on her "mood and emotions" at the moment (S.V. Quina, personal interview, July 17, 2002).

These thoughts on poetic production may seem personal, yet a closer look tells one that it is the traditional aesthetic that has roots in the "sermons" and "rhymes" and "humor" of the ilustrados. In a sense, Quina's aesthetic is more of a social construct than a purely personal one. Such aesthetics has been there even before her. Moreover, her preference for "mood and emotions" seems like a romantic perception of spontaneity. Poetry must flow with the emotions, but not in tranquility. Her emotions are nearer to the muse than to Wordsworth's romanticism. What her aesthetic

shows, therefore, is a premodern conception of poetry. A poem is not planned although it must be based on morality — a morality which is Christian and medievalistic in essence.

Another poet who won the DYVL contest is Sarah Cobacha Reposar. She earned a degree at the Divine Word University and is currently clerk II at the UPVTC. She started writing poetry in high school, since she was much influenced by the popularity of the radio siday. From that experience, she began scribbling her own verses unconsciously following the radio's dictates on form and content. It is no wonder that her verses are mostly "occasional." According to Reposar (personal interview, July 17, 2002), she writes depending on the occasion that is determined by radio management. If the occasion is mother's day, then she would start writing a poem about mothers and children.

Like Quina, Reposar also derives her poetry from "personal experiences of life." She also needs "inspiration" to write. This makes her closer to Quina's "mood and emotions." But Reposar says that her poetry is not pure imagination. It is based on the real or reality. She adds that her poetry is based also on a "good idea" (*maupay nga ideya*) and realism (*tinuod nga natabo*). Thus, the poet gathers materials from her experiences and projects them as objective and social in the siday. Moreover, Reposar also previously thought that the siday must have "rhyme" and "humor" (*patarawan*). Like Quina, Reposar was gripped by traditional versification. She did not imagine poetry outside the confines of stanzas and rhymes. She did not imagine poetry as a fluid content in free verse. But that was in the past.

Last April 2002, Sarah Reposar joined Alunan's creative writing workshop and lost her traditional beliefs in poetry. According to her, Sugbo and Alunan showed that her poetry was far from unified (*damot loopholes*). The critics also said that her rhyming scheme was forced (*pinirit nga rhyme*) and that her ideas were repetitive (*balik-balik*). Above all, she learned that poetry must not be limited by the "occasion" (S. Reposar, personal interview, July 17, 2002).

This case tells one that New Criticism is actually competing with the premodern aesthetic propagated by the radio station. There seems to be a contradiction between the two. Together they vie for the adherence of the poets. However, according to Sugbo and Alunan, they have failed to convince the siday writers, especially the old ones, into leaving their traditional poetics and into embracing the modern one. In their experience, they would train the mature writers for a week, but after returning to their communities, they returned to their accustomed aesthetics. (M. Alunan & V. Sugbo, personal interviews, July 17, 2002).

It is now appropriate to examine a few siday to show their premodern aesthetic and ideological positions. Through this analysis, one may be able to answer why, in spite of their being contemporary poetry supported by modern technology (radio), the siday still lingers in the modern world. Moreover, this analysis may uncover the reasons why the siday has separated from the ilustrado satire despite their aesthetic similarities.

## The Siday and the Alienation of Religion

*Hoy los conventos son millonarios del país'*

Marcelo del Pilar

For traditional Marxism, religion is the first and oldest form of human alienation. With its invention, humanity began attributing its deeds to a powerful yet imaginary being that is, in the last analysis, its own inverted reflection. Humans started to work for the imaginary self they had made. This situation arose out of the underdeveloped mode of human production. This stage of the mode of production was, unlike the capitalist mode, not yet able to give men and women power over nature. This helplessness over nature pushed them to look for a stronger being who would protect them from the offensives of nature. They found God and institutionalized this misrecognition and invented religion.

This misrecognition is what modern philosophers had to confront, so that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Feuerbach had to critique religion as “religious self-alienation” and “duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world and a real one” (Marx in Tucker, 1978: 144). In 1844, Marx had to declare that the criticism of religion is already accomplished. He wrote in his famous essay “*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*”: “Man, who has found in the fantastic reality of heaven, where he sought a supernatural being, only his own reflection, will no longer be tempted to find only the semblance of himself- a non-human being- where he seeks and must seek his true reality” (Ibid.). He adds, “Man makes religion; religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man’s self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or lost himself again...religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

Religion, thus, is humanity’s suffering as well as its protest against that suffering. But one cannot free one’s self from suffering if it has not abolished religion. Humanity must “pluck the imaginary flowers” that hide its oppression. Men and women must lose their illusions and “regain [their] reason.” But that was Marx in the midst of the capitalist revolution in Europe. In semicolonial, semifeudal Philippines, the human being is still in the medieval age either attributing everything to God or to the sinner. Humanity is still afflicted by its self-misrecognition. It has yet to find its reason. Three sidays will reveal this medievalism of the contemporary Waray. In her siday (1998) celebrating June 12, 1898, Sarah Reposar would credit God for the freedom achieved through the struggle of human beings against their oppressors. Freedom is God’s gift – the result of human struggle from colonial bondage. One produces the food that is given by God.

*Sanglit sentenaryo igmalipay ta  
igpasangyaw, kagawasan ta  
kay ini kanan Ginoo hat upa  
yukbo madaliay, igampo ta  
nga kagawasan magpadayon...*

(And so let's celebrate the centennial  
be proud of our freedom  
for this is God's gift  
bow for a while, pray for it  
that freedom may continue...)

Hence, freedom is not a human construction. It is God who gives it and takes it away. The men and women who fight, suffer, and get killed are not the sole achievers of freedom. And neither are they the protectors of freedom. It is as if one were saying God that will liberate and protect the Filipinos from U.S imperialism.

This medievalism is also apparent in Maning Paranas' *Anak* (1991). The poet first talks about how the son was born out of the parents' love. He praises the parents' unconditional care for their son. However, the love and care of the parents are not reciprocated by the son. Instead, to the disappointment of the parents, the son indulges in drugs. The poet says, "the illegal vice is your happiness." However, as it is in the parable, the son returns to the parents and asks for the latter's forgiveness. The poet says:

*Salet mga anak angay pamation  
kan nanay ug tatay magtamis nga polong...  
labaw nga tanan dire hingalimtan  
hugot nga pagampo iton kinabanglan  
kay waray malabaw han Diyos nga gambanan  
ha tanan nga takna babantayan...*

(And so children listen  
to mother's and father's sweet words...  
but above all, don't forget  
strong prayers are needed  
for nothing's above God, the almighty  
In all times, he guards us...)

Once again one encounters the trite parallelism between parental authority and God's. Both parents and God are the children's protectors. They know the children's future and they decide for the latter. This concept of an all-knowing and all-loving being is perpetuated to the disadvantage of the child's reason. The child must not question the parents' knowledge, just as the children of God cannot question God. In simpler terms, the authorities are reaffirmed by the *siday*. It is only possible to rebel if one would return to the authorities in the end. It is good to join the New People's Army so long as one ends up as a rebel returnee or even a CAFGU. One may simplify further: the authorities are responsible, there is no need to rebel.

The same metaphysics and politics are also in Rogelio Jomadio's *An Kinabuhì han Tarwo* (Man's Life)(1993), which is a six-quatrains meditation on life. In spite of its apparent triteness, the *siday* attempts to be philosophical: "*Kinabuhì han tarwo, puno hin misteryo/ damo nga pakiana, nasulod ha ulo/...kay ano may pobre, ug sugad man riko?* (Man's life is full of mystery,/ so many questions fill the mind.../ why are there rich and poor?) The poet tries to answer his query by saying that life is like 'the car's wheels.' So long as they 'roll, fate is not final!' Man, then, has a chance to overcome his troubles. How? Through sacrifice.

*Diyosnon nga tinguha, naunhan na barbaro  
para ta maabot, hingyap nga kauswagan  
kita pagsakripisyo, pagtadong hit dalan  
malimpyo nga tinguha, mayor pan bulawan  
kinasingkasing nga pagantos, dayuday naunhan.*

(With godly intentions, we will move and be on top  
in order to reach, desire development  
let us sacrifice, let's straighten our ways  
good intentions are more than gold  
with wholehearted sacrifice, we slowly progress.)

This concept of “sacrifice” for development may seem ambiguous, yet it pertains to a popular notion that man may overcome his suffering by working hard. That concept of “suffering” is a justification for the perpetration of inequality in the world.

Humans have to “sacrifice” their current happiness for the happiness of the future. In order to become a capitalist, humans must start as laborers. They must sacrifice for their future success in the corporate world and the bureaucracy. They have to accept a P250 daily wage or even lower, because it is part of their development. In short, their being underemployed is supposedly a natural and inevitable stage of their transformation into happy individuals.

This is the great illusion propagated by bourgeois economists and vulgar commonsense. There is no reason why one should accept daily wages that are not even enough for subsistence. There is no need to suffer if one could raise the daily wage and if one could abolish the wage system itself through the socialist transformation of the means of production. As Marx shows it in *Das Kapital*, the reason why wages are small is because profits are big. Wages and profits are dialectically opposed so that when one raises wages, profits fall and when one raises profits, wages fall (Marx in Tucker, 1978). Thus, the fight for higher wages is only a short-term goal. The real goal is to deny the bourgeoisie property.

## The Siday and the Comprador State

*'The state is an organ of class rule,  
an organ for the oppression of one class by another.'*

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

If religion is the oldest form of alienation, the state is its modern form. The critique of religion, which started in the enlightenment, reevaluated the dominance of religion in Europe. But just as human beings are freed from religion, they are forced to confront the modern expression of their alienation – the state. The young Marx in his Hegelian fashion said: "...the political state is nothing but the affirmation of their (other spheres of society) own estrangement. Up till now the political constitution has been the religious sphere, the religion of national life... Political life in the modern sense is the scholasticism of national life" (Marx in Tucker, 1978: 22). Therefore, the state is religion in a new form, a new form of alienation that distracts human beings from their self-misrecognition.

But what is in the state that makes humans misrecognize themselves? To answer this question, one must historicize the formation of the state. From the viewpoint of Engels, the state is the inevitable result and need of a society divided into antagonistic classes. The state, for Engels, "has not existed from all eternity," but has become a "necessity" in class society. In *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels (in Tucker, 1978) writes:

The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without...Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself...but in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in sterile

struggle, a power seemingly standing above society became necessary for the purpose of moderating the conflict, of keeping it within the borders of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society, but placing itself above it, and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the state (752).

In other words, the state is not what Rousseau thought: that the state is a result of the people's agreement with each other, or a neutral power that mediates between classes. In contrast, for Engels, the state is not the result of a social contract, but a power forced on a society divided by class interests. To contain the contradictions among classes, a mediator seemingly above classes is formed. This mediator position is assumed by the state. But one must not be misled by the word "mediator." It is not like a referee in a boxing match. It is more like a security guard brought in by one of the opposing forces to confront and control its enemy. In other words, the state is a tool used by the ruling class to legitimize, propagate, and protect its rule over the majority of the population. The modern state, as Marx puts it, is but the executive committee of the bourgeoisie.

There is, then, the alienation of the Filipino, because he or she accepts the interests of the state, which is the state of the compradors, as his own. This identification with the comprador state separates the Filipino from his or her real interests and the interests of his or her class. A worker, who identifies with the Arroyo regime, is separated from his or her interests, since the Arroyo regime, as the guardian of the comprador state, is in reality only pursuing the interests of the business class through the privatization and globalization of the economy. The decisions on the PPA and the P250 across the board wage hike are examples of the government's interested position. There is also this popular notion that what is good for the business class is also good for the state-an obvious political bias.

Alienation, in its modern sense, is revealed by two siday by writers, Archelyn Leonidas and Lolita Perol. In Perol's "*An Kinaiya han Tawo*" (Man's Habits) (1997), the poet tries to answer the question why the country is in crisis.

*Ano na ba ini nga nasod  
damo naman iton hitabo nga pinadlas  
maboot man kunta hitaas nga mihuras  
ngatanan naaraba riko o pobre.  
kon magkakaurosa gadla inin mga tawo  
mahimyang manta an tanan nga molupyo  
...uunanhon man kay iya iya la kita  
baga sabo an iba kun waray man grasya  
basta patigayon la an kada tagsa...  
kun aton mga labaw dire magmihanggad  
balaud di masabutan patinuna paghubad  
para unta matadong nga dire maglubadlubad."*

(What is happening to the Filipino nation?  
foolish events are happening again  
...all are whining, rich and poor.  
if the people would unite  
peace will come to the town folk  
...but we are individualistic  
never mind if the others have no food  
so long as we enjoy doing our own thing  
no need to bother whether they are hungry or in danger  
what I know is that this would not happen  
if those in power are not lazy  
if they would just study and implement the laws  
everything will be straightened by political will.)

The country, says the poet, is in crisis. But she does not relate the problem to class contradiction, which means that it cannot be easily reconciled by a mere appeal to “unity.” As the poet says, “all are whining, rich and poor.” Even the simplified dialectics of rich and poor is not seen as a conflict. The chaos, as the poet sees it, is the result of “individualism” and the officials’ “laziness.”

The class contradiction in her semicolonial, semifeudal society seems beyond the poet’s thoughts. Her solution still relies on the “state.” The government officials, as the arm of the state, must simply “implement the laws” with “political will” and everything will be fine. The poet thinks that the government is the government of the poor and hungry. This is her misrecognition. What makes her misrecognition even worse is the belief that the laws of society are for everyone. But law, according to the Soviet lawyer Sergei Alexeyev (1990), is “the will of the dominant class given force of law” and is the “socio-class regulator.” In short, the law has its class underpinnings, which makes it not representative of all members of the society. To hope that the law is above all is being naïve. The class bias of law is obvious in its protection of private property and the right to accumulate capital. The law that protects capital and other private property is the law of the propertied class and is directly antagonistic to those who have nothing but their labor power.

This political naivete is also apparent in Leonida’s *Kanay Kasaypanan* (Whose Fault?) (1997). Like the first siday, the poet acknowledges chaos in society. Although it attacks the bureaucrats in the beginning, the siday ends up throwing the blame on the voters.

*Inin diri pagursa hiton aton panggobyernohan  
kan kanay man kasaypanan?  
...amo ba ito an palakat han aton gobyerno?  
...an hitutungdan di nagios  
...yana hain man an iyo agi? Kay waray man ito hikikiti.*

*pero kon panahon pala han eleksyon  
kadamo hin mga panaad... an pakiana kanay man ito  
kasaypanan?  
Kanan opisyaales o kanan katawhan? Hino an napili  
...di ba tawo nga amo yana an naapektuhan?*

(‘This stagnation of our government  
whose fault it is?  
...Is that how the government governs  
...but where are those deeds?  
...where are the footsteps of your governance?  
but when elections time comes  
all kinds of promises are given just to win a seat  
and they are in positions  
they don’t even do their jobs  
the question: ‘whose fault is it?’  
Is it the officials’ fault? Or is it the people’s fault?  
Who chose the officials?  
Are not the people themselves affected by the  
present crisis?)

In the beginning, the poet attacks the politicians. He asks for results and for accomplishments. The politicians, according to her persona, are just a bunch of liars who keep deceiving the public before and after the elections. Yet, at the end of the poem, the poet turns her weapons on the public itself. This chaos, this crisis is the voters’ fault for they are responsible for their choice of public officials. But is it really the voters’ fault? This is not to defend the Filipino voters who were swindled in electing Joseph Estrada to the presidency. The point, however, is that the problem is not solely the politicians’ or the voters’. To reduce the problem to a matter of suffrage is to miss the point. The real problem lies in the whole system of oppression. The state, for Lenin, is an “organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another”

and “universal suffrage” is “an instrument of bourgeois rule” (Lenin in Tucker, 1975: 319). If the state is the instrument of the rule of the compradors, suffrage then is instrumental in legitimizing that rule. To give the illusion of freedom to the oppressed class, there must be elections that will bring the members of the ruling class to power. Such elections exclude the lower classes from participation for lack of financial and political machinery. Hence, the members of the comprador class inevitably control “their state” and pursue their interests. For this reason, it is not only futile to expect something from the bourgeois rulers. It is also idiotic.

This analysis eludes the poet’s thoughts again. Lenin, however, stated the solution in his masterpiece *The State and Revolution* (1917). To apply this to the Philippine condition, one can say that since the state is a comprador state and an instrument of the compradors, the laboring class has no other choice but to destroy “the state” and construct a new proletarian state – the proletariat’s instrument for ruling over the compradors. As Josef Stalin (1998) puts it in his book *Problems of Leninism*: “The dictatorship of the proletariat arises not on the basis of the bourgeois order, but in the process of the breaking up of this order, after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, in the process of the socialization of the principal instruments and means of production, in the process of violent proletarian revolutions” (44).

In plain language, the problem is not whether it is Estrada or Macapagal-Arroyo who should seat in Malacanang. The problem is not simply a change of leaders, but a change of state, a change of class rule. This can only be done through the destruction of the comprador state from “without” and the construction of a proletarian state that will abolish the compradors and landlords as a class. This formulation discards all form of naïve reformism, as peddled by the Social Democrats who think that everything will be fine by electing the right leader. A change from “within” is just not feasible: the reformers will

either be corrupted or be overthrown by a military coup. Therefore, if change is the aim: crush the old, build the new.

## **The Ideology of the Siday**

The semicolonial, semifeudal Philippine economy alienates human beings through religion and the state. This is even worse than alienation under capitalist domination where the criticism of religion has led to the decline of religion. The Europeans under capitalism have only the state to confront and solve the problem of human separation from labor. But this is not the case of the Filipino in the grip of semifeudalism and neo-colonialism.

The Filipino, as shown by the Waray texts, is still gripped by the oldest form of alienation that is in connivance with feudalism. One must remember that the spread of Christianity was parallel to the institutionalization of the feudal mode of production throughout the land. Although religion has existed even before feudalism, its institutionalization came with the feudal church. This is also the case in the rest of Philippines. The rise of religion as an institution was supported by colonialism, and the rise of colonialism was supported by religion. Lenin is indeed right: oppression is completed with the hangman and the priest. The hangman serves as the repressive arm of the state, while the priest serves as the ideological arm of the state.

In the Philippines, this medievalism persists not because the church is too strong but because the semifeudal economy is fertile soil for religion. The semifeudal economy is an economy of deprivation, poverty, and helplessness against the ruling class and the environment. It is an economy without the scientific and industrial revolution, and that leads the masses to believe in metaphysical nonsense. It is an economy where religion fills the gap of the human need for food, shelter, and stability. In this way, religion also protects the backward economy. It serves as the veil and the imaginary flower that covers the bloody chains of feudal rule.

In addition to pre-modern alienation, modern alienation as exemplified by the state also oppresses the Filipino. As shown earlier, the siday writer is too optimistic towards the state, fooling himself that the state represents his interests. He deceives himself that the problem can be solved by mere elections. He aligns himself with the state of the comprador. He does not comprehend that his interest is opposed to the interests of the masters.

The poet's alignment with the reactionary state is what differentiates the siday writers' ideological position from the earlier ideological position of the ilustrados. Thus, the ilustrados were "satirical" and "humorous" because their ideological position allowed them to be so. Since they were aligned with the disappearing old order, they faced the new colonial order with ambivalence and ambiguity. The ilustrados could not wholly identify with the new masters. In contrast, the siday poets aligned themselves with the reactionary state that represents the comprador interests. This alignment with the state did not allow the siday poets to laugh at the state's stupidity. They could not be ironic towards the state since they belong to it. To mock the state was to mock themselves.

These two different ideological positions are the overwhelming determinants of the divergence between radio poetry and the satire in spite of their traditional formal continuity. The ideological stance of the radio poet, that is, alignment with the comprador state, is the content that determined the formation of the siday as a distinct literary form. It could not follow the movement of satire because the poet has already sold himself to the compradores. The shift, therefore, from the ilustrados' alignment with the past to the siday poets' alignment with the status quo also produced the shift from the satire or *durogas* to the contemporary radio siday.

It is this alignment with the semicolonial, semifeudal state that ties radio poetry to pre-modernity and medievalism. In fact, the three main defects of the siday discussed in this paper – its premodern aesthetic, religious alienation, and the naïve concept

of the state – are symptomatic of the worst and most degenerate character of a backward society. In one sense, the propagation of the premodern aesthetic is not in contradiction with the pre-industrial economy of the country, an economy that cannot even produce a tractor. The religious fixation of radio poetry, moreover, diverts the audience, including the poet, from scrutinizing the real world of class contradictions, of neo-colonialism, and economic backwardness. The *siday* instead takes the audience into flights of fancies and fantasy worlds. No wonder then that its concept of state and politics does not go beyond the daydreams of reforms even if its idealistic conception crumbles before the harsh realities of Philippine society.

One may say that given its problematic nature, the *siday* does not only help add to the hundreds of millions in the bank accounts of big business, but also plays a role in the perpetuation of the whole system in which it is produced. This may not be the intention of the poets. They may not be conscious of their own ideological positions. But whether conscious or unconscious, the intensity with which the media propagate the form makes the poems at par with religion. The radio *siday*, therefore, may be considered a new kind of opium of the masses.

Indeed, so long as radio poetry is content with the pre-industrial state, it will remain backward. If radio poetry is to free itself and pursue its own development, it must be able to wrench itself from the control of the semi-feudal state. And this separation from the reactionary state also means the separation from the corporate entity that formed it. Indeed, the *siday* must cut its ties with the radio establishment until radio has no longer any control on its free formation. In short, the only way for such poetry to be free is to wrest itself from the motives of profit and dissolve itself as the radio *siday*.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Aside from the radio siday, there are three other major poetic forms in Waray Literature. They include the ilustrado satires of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the new critical poetry produced in the academe, and the poetry of the National Democratic Movement.
- <sup>2</sup> This does not mean that all merchants in Leyte are Chinese. The Romualdezes or the Spanish mestizos are still in control of Tacloban, just as the Ayalas are still in control of a big portion of the Philippine economy.
- <sup>3</sup> This formula has its mass appeal. However, the “mass” here is different from the “mass poetry” as formulated by revolutionaries. The siday’s mass character is produced for profits and not for uplifting of consciousness in the revolutionary sense.

## References

- A brief history of DYVL station. (n.d.). DYVL, Tacloban City.
- Alexeyev, S. (1990). *Socialism and law*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Alunan, M. (1998). Locating voice in Waray poetry. In Sugbo, V. (Ed.). *Illumined terrain*. Manila: National Commission on Culture and the Arts.
- Engels, F. (1978). *The Marx-Engels reader*. In Tucker, R. (Ed.). New York: Norton.
- Guerero, A. (1979). *Philippine society and revolution*. United States: IAFP.
- Jomadio, R. (1993). *An kinabuhi han tawo* (Man’s Life). Bagulaya, J.D.S. & Delgado, D. (Trans.), DYVL, Tacloban City.
- Lenin, V. (1975). *The Lenin anthology*. In Tucker, R. (Ed.). London: Norton.
- Leonidas, A. (1997). *Kanay kasaypanan* (Whose Fault?). Bagulaya, J.D.S. & Delgado, D. (Trans.), DYVL, Tacloban City.

- Maslog, C. (1988). *Philippine communication: An introduction*. Manila: New Day.
- Marx, K. (1978). *The Marx-Engels reader*. In Tucker, R. (Ed.). New York: Norton.
- Paranas, M. (1991). *Anak*. (Child). Bagulaya, J.D.S. & Delgado, D. (Trans.), DYVL, Tacloban City.
- Perol, L. (1997). *An kinaiya han tarwo* (Man's Habits). Bagulaya, J.D.S. & Delgado, D. (Trans.), DYVL, Tacloban City.
- Reposar, S. (1998). *Kagawasan kanoan nasod karikohan*. Bagulaya, J.D.S. & Delgado, D. (Trans.), DYVL, Tacloban City.
- Stalin, J. (1998). *Problems of Leninism*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press.
- Station profile*. (n.d.). DYVL, Tacloban City.
- Sison, J.M. (1998). *Philippine economy and politics*. Manila: Aklat ng Bayan.
- Sugbo, V. (2002). Unpublished Waray literature.
- Volosinov, V. N. (1986). *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

---

*Jose Duke S. Bagulaya is an assistant professor of Comparative Literature at the Department of English and Comparative Literature, College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philippines in Diliman. He is a native of Leyte and occasionally writes poetry in Waray.*