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Spatial Rhetoric in the Autobiographical Essays of Susan Evangelista, Marra Lanot and Sylvia Mayuga

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This paper will highlight third wave feminist spatial rhetoric in the autobiographical essays of Susan Evangelista, Sylvia Mayuga, and Marra Lanot as manifestations of identity formations within shifting local/global locations.

In her article, "Feminism in/and Postcolonialism," Deepika Bahri who problematizes the term "postcolonial feminism," offers alternative ways of viewing and addressing the questions common to both terms: representation, voice, marginalization, and relations between politics and literature. She speaks of a meaningful "transnational literacy" which requires the recognition of readers and of reading as a socialized activity within a particular context (20).

The post-structuralist approach to literary texts is predominant in discussions of Feminist literary theory. Roland Barthes in his article "From Work to Text," posits that "every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belongs to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins: to search for the 'sources of' and 'influence upon' a work is to satisfy the myth of filiation" (77). This will be contested by such Feminists as Reina Lewis who cites Nancy Miller in "Race – Femininity – Representation." According to her, Nancy Miller argues for a reinscription of the specificity of author and reader in response to a deconstructive position that takes no referent outside the text. This corresponds to the idea of the "local" mentioned by Susan Friedman in her discussion of geopolitical literacy and the "ordinary and everyday" in Toril Moi's concluding statements in her book, *Sexual/ Textual Politics.* Although these writers problematize the question of the source or origin of meaning, what they have in common are the concepts of overdetermination, the plurality of meanings, and the multi-positionality of subjects in texts.

The feminist contentions regarding overdetermination and the multi-positionality of the feminine subject is further supported by Vron Ware in "Defining Forces: 'Race', Gender and Memories of Empire." She fuses feminist politics and historical memory of empire, positing the reconstruction of histories of ideas about women. She proposes a perspective of feminism that takes in not only the shifting parameters of gender itself but also the interrelated concepts of ethnic, cultural and class differences in order to alert us to the multi-layered images of femininity and to understand their relationship to the past.

Centering on women's positionality, and the (dis)locations which allow the self to rewrite itself in her article, "Deterritorializations: Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse," Caren Kaplan speaks of a writing that travels and moves between centers and margins, dismantling notions of value, genre, canon, etc. She speaks of a fictional terrain, of a reterritorialization that has gone through several versions of deterritorialization, of a theory of location based on contingency, history, and change (197).

This paper will use as its main framework, the concept of locational feminism posited by Susan Friedman in her article, "Locational Feminism: Gender, Cultural Geographies, and Geopolitical Literacy. "Like cultural studies in general, formulation of a locational feminism requires a compensatory emphasis on the spatial over the temporal" (16). Developed as a way to deal with the differences among women, the spatial rhetoric of multipositionality characterizes the third wave feminist rhetoric of identity. It posits dynamic and dialogic motion through socially constructed spaces, instead of an underlying linear narrative of progressive development. Whereas gender is the main focus of the temporal rhetoric of awakening trends, such cultural categories as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, national origin, age, and so forth interact with gender in the spatial rhetoric of location. This geopolitical and transnational literacy begins in recognizing five tropic patterns: the metaphorics of nation, borders, migration, "glocation," and conjuncture" (Friedman, 2001:26).

The presence of spatial tropes in women's texts would reveal a notion of identity that is mediated not just by gender but by other cultural categories such as race, class, and ethnicity. The concept of nation in all its local aspects, its links to the global village, along with notions of migrations across borders resulting in hybridization and transculturation is crucial in understanding the constitution of identity.

I shall be discussing the autobiographical essays of three Filipino women writers. This paper, therefore, is located within the Philippine context, and will hopefully contribute to the post-colonial project of what Professor Priscillina Legasto identifies as the "the twin processes of critique and affirmations." In the context of feminist postcolonial studies in the Philippine setting, I hope to contribute to the project of "retrieving and revaluating" counter-hegemonic/alternative texts written by postcolonial Filipino women writers.

Susan Evangelista was born in Michigan and has travelled to Africa, Japan, China, and Thailand. She settled in the Philippines when she married Oscar L. Evangelista. She taught literature and writing in the Ateneo de Manila from 1967 to 2000, doing workshops with teachers as an ACELT (Ateneo Center for English Language Teaching) trainer. She retired in 2000 and moved with her husband to Palawan, where she continues to teach and write. She has three children and two grandsons. Written in the first person, Susan Evangelista's *Growing Into Asia and other Essays* is a collection of personal essays, like pieces lifted from her

private journal, covering her experiences as a migrant, traveller, and Peace Corp volunteer. The collection brings us to the far ends of Mindanao, the refugee camps in Burma, the peaceful suburbs of the US, and back to the flooded streets of Manila.

Marra P. Lanot has a B.A. in English and an M.A. in Spanish from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. She is known for her pioneering work in the women's movement. Currently, she is a columnist and literary editor of *Mirror Weekly* as well as a professional lecturer and Resident Fellow in UP. She is married to film scriptwriter Pete Lacaba and has one son. In *Déjà vu & Other Essays,* Marra P. Lanot, speaks of her writing and her travels from China to Mexico, and from Sampaloc to Cebu. There is a whole section devoted to her passionate desire for "Freeing Women," and another to "Reviewing Sounds and Images" in Filipino cultural phenonomena.

Sylvia L. Mayuga was born in Manila, has a B.A. in English from St. Therese College, and an M.A. in Comparative Journalism from Colombia University. She is actively involved in NGO's working with the women's sector and the environment. She was married to writer Alfredo Yuson and has one son. The thickest and most wide-ranging book in the selection is Sylvia Mayuga's *Between the Centuries.* Even though it is written in the third person and with a journalist's stoic tone, it reveals her fierce and painful love for the environment and her country. The topics range from economics, politics, and culture to the personal struggles and joys of a grandmother.

Susan Evangelista, Marra Lanot, and Sylvia Mayuga are constituents of (and constitute in turn) their *nation*. They are women living out the material/psychological/emotional manifestations of "*border*-hood", women who have experienced the meanings of *migration*, whose past and present were/are irrevocably linked to "glocational" circumstances, women who have learned to live in the "in-between," or that "epistemological *con*juncture" where differences are not compared but accepted.

Nation

Emerging out of the impact of colonialism and postcolonialism, the discourse of nation and nationalism resonates most clearly with the conventional definition of the geo-political state-to-state relations in international context. The relation between gender and nation is full of contradictions. The contradictory relationship between nation and women is marked with ambiguity, where women are "caught between identification with national aspirations and recognition of men's special privileges within most state formations." (Friedman, 2001: 26)

The rhetoric of nation identified in the essays are located in spaces that are "home" to these writers: their own bodies, their families and communities. Their words reveal their

perception of themselves as women of their class, educational background, race, and ethnicity.

What were/are these women writers' thoughts regarding nation and nationalism? How are they "constituted" by these thoughts? What are their responses to their perceptions of their nation?

A woman's body is her first home. Her self-image is reflected in the way she describes her own body. Susan Evangelista relates: "Whenever my two daughters express unhappiness over any aspect of their bodily selves, we agree that it's all my fault. "It's the genes," we say solemnly: all the women in my family have big thighs, crooked teeth, and circles under their eyes" (82). Who sets the standards for beauty? The way the body is referred to already shows how the self-image of a woman is constituted by those around her. It is interesting to note the writer's speaking about her racial identity: "Our bloodstream carries an amalgamation of races, from the Nordic and Germanic to the Chinese and Malay, so we can expect a variety of skin tones and hair tints and even body shapes"(85). Third wave feminism posits an awareness of feminism as both global and local.

In the country of her birth, the writer recognizes an aspect of oppression: "I discovered racism only when we made a trip out West when I was nine: my mother was relieved to find a Laundromat, but the sign on the door said "Whites only." This, I presumed, meant we wouldn't be able to do my jeans, my sister's red shirt, etc; the possibility of excluding a whole race of people from use of a set of washing machines had never occurred to me"(17). In such ordinary places as laundromats, identity and one's (hierarchical) difference from others can be formed.

Crossing continents, Evangelista marries and settles in the Philippines. She describes her second home as a mix of first world and third world experiences: "Here, living in Manila and operating half in the First World of ATM banking, cable TV, cold beer before dinner, and Sweet Haven walnut torte for dessert, but half as well in the Third World of flooded streets, homeless children begging from passers-by, bureaucratic snafus, police torture, electrical failures and unfailing personal warmth, here and now, I am being tested and testing myself, learning, finding out where I really belong" (14). Such is her concept of this nation, a concept that becomes a border-experience of being in-between, of not really being sure where she belongs.

In her visits to a depressed area near Katipunan, she encounters urban poor women oppressed by their husbands and recognizes how lack of both material and emotional space adds to the poverty of Filipina women. She speaks of a wife who is in trouble with her husband: "With everyone against her, she was completely stifled; she could not even run off to another room to be by herself with her anger, because there was no other room. There was no place to go in the community, and everyone knew everything about her – except

perhaps how she felt"(27). There is no solid ground, no home, no space for this woman. Evangelista relates that when this woman's husband beat her up, she said philosophically, "This is the way men typically react when they are cheating on their wives" (27).

The writer herself has had concrete experiences of being constituted as a female. Along with her desire to learn how to whistle, she also learns about gender roles and expectations in her home: "When I finally had it down, my grandmother chimed in with the first bit of concrete admonition on gender roles that I was ever given: *When girls and crowing hens always come to some bad ends"* (72).

While studying at a university in the 60's, she recalls that the highest praise ever meted out to a girl student was, "You think like a man!" For her, "It meant the degendered woman could think logically, could perhaps handle mathematics. It meant she showed some interest in political situations, in the power relations the world is built on. It meant she didn't see gender-imposed restrictions"(73). This observation also shows her awareness of how women are interpellated (in the educational system, no less) as inferior to men who must be emulated.

"I still hated it when anyone said I was motherly, I guess because that meant *old* to me, instead of *earthy, nourishing,* or *soulful"(*75). How this writer thinks of the maternal function of women speaks of how her society also views motherhood. However, from personal encounters with the women in depressed areas, Evangelista realizes this: "For it was the women who held life together, working, often providing the only income in the family, managing still to care for the children and do some rudimentary cooking. The men usually sat around in small groups drinking away their puzzlement with life: in fairness to them, most would have been all too happy to work but jobs for unskilled male hands were few"(76).

Evangelista's nation is hybridic, transculturated, personal and communal. Home (where she lives, who she is as a woman, an American, a Filipina) is a space in-between. The search continues.

Marra Lanot, in an essay entitled "Home," discusses how the concept of home and identity shifts as different cultural, political, and social categories come into play: "One was either progressive or bourgeois, revolutionary or reactionary, and the world was colored black and white, and danger spelled life…Feminists came to the fore, and gender equality became a hotly debated issue…Home was a growing number of single parents…where the mother, wife, daughter, and children may think differently from the patriarch of the house." For this writer, "home is still where love and understanding reign" (53).

This writer's home is located in a nation with a painful history rife with economic, political social disturbances. She writes about the 70's as a "howl of protest" (42), of a

"nation's image split between politicians and activists, between the wealthy and the poor," of an "era when rumor couldn't be sifted from the truth"(43). In her essay "Protest '83," the images of the same nation a decade later are still the same, or even worse: "The thing is, there is a crisis, and it has obviously been brewing for years" (57).

In this nation, "women were not expected to run in the streets and defend themselves, much less compete in sports, or perspiring in public. If ever they were supposed to perspire as housekeepers, they were supposed to be clean and fragrant before their husbands came home from work." She says further: "Missing out on the fun and the freedom, most housewives are crippled by daily routine, paranoia and neurosis. The marital ring around the finger becomes a symbol not of the dream it used to be but a physical and psychological prison"(18). Thus she reveals the ambiguous relations women have with their nation.

Marra Lanot devotes a whole section of her book to her advocacy of "Freeing Women." She writes about Philippine women's movements addressing the issues that women face such as domestic abuse, fetal/women's rights, pornography, representations of women in cultural phenomena, household conditions, as well as their political, economic and social positions. For her, "no nation is free if its women are in chains" (47).

She speaks of bonding with other women beset by the various faces of oppression and drawing strength from them: "I was able to forge a deep bonding with my mother and with others whose condition was compounded by poverty, war, and domestic violence. I found strength in women." She relates how her own husband has also been liberated from patriarchal rule: "my partner found the courage to write about non-sexist lexicon, gender equality and sloughing off machismo"(10).

True to her awareness of the multiplicity of her own position and her great respect for women, she writes of herself as "a petite bourgeois who's gone through college" and says: "If a woman is a perpetual women's libber, she's got to have bread and stamina to bring along her child anywhere she goes, for she wouldn't want to chain a maid to take care of her child or burden poor grandma with an extra bundle"(14).

For this writer, "the great Filipinas are priestesses, witches, healers, babaylans; they are also Superwoman, Lilith, Eve, Isis, etc. Like water, they give life. Like the moon, they create dreams…Their greatness cannot be measured by money or trophies or other forms of worldly gain. They are great not because a fickle public says so. They are great because" (51).

Home for Marra Lanot is going for a run in the early morning: "During rainy seasons, I sometimes try to get caught in the rain to have an excuse to run wild. In air and water, I'm in my natural elements"(19). For her, "the spaces to breathe in are a must now more than ever, for the multiple selves also make up home…"(54).

Sylvia Mayuga's essays manifest the ambivalence that marks a woman's loyalty to her nation and her personal identity within a society ruled by the patriarchal order. At the heart of this writer's nation are such places as the mountains of Banahaw populated by groups of people whose religious beliefs go all the way back to the roots of waterfalls and by fairies weeping for the loss of their homes as government not only turn a blind eye, but even sometimes facilitate the death of thousands of trees. "*Dugo nila ang tumulo sa mga puno,*" Mayuga quotes Ameng, the mountain guide. This deep concern for the environment extends to the streets of Manila: "For sheer survival, those who are awake need to wake as many as they can if Metro Manila is not to drown in its own filth…"(71).

The writer also speaks of corruption in her nation: "Corruption in a nation born of both the blood of martyrs and our people's visionary strain continues to obstruct its life force" (239). She speaks of the deleterious effects of "progress" (read: MMDA) on the culture and tradition of our "ancient city's roots in Binondo's old *alcaicerias (*storehouse)."

She writes of gender issues in relation to politics, religion, culture, and economics within the Philippine society. In a battle with Mayor Atienza over the preservation of riverside ground, the Mehan gardens and the Jai alai buiding, she writes: "the audience to another classic battle between a political macho and Filipino woman power is growing"(56). In her essay, "Redefining the Priesthood," she speaks of seminarians being "brainwashed by long years of seminary training to define women as temptations or as adjuncts to a noble all-male mission…"(205). She reports the initial refusal of BPI to encash a check for the beads and ritual weaves of the Tinguian women: "This exchange underscored the deep alienation of a banking system from its motherland's severely tested soul" and quotes Cecilia Afable: "We have to weave together to compete in the world" (191). She speaks of Sarah who defended herself against her foreign employer and was beset by the media upon her return to the country: "It is a fierce inborn dignity beyond media fame, nationality, age, gender, class, education, even religion" (289).

Beyond the central city of Manila, Mayuga writes about her experiences in Mindanao's 'separate reality' which became her "first naked encounter with centuries of Philippine history: Filipino is what a stranger like me is called in these parts, a name spat out when not used to frighten fitful children"(194). She quotes a Cebuano writer who wrote about Butuan: "Before there was a Philippines, there was Butuan." She cites migrant artist Anoy who spoke of his first encounter with a lumad: "I will never forget his face – red mouth, prominent cheekbones, burning eyes, exposed veins… They were so kind" (196).

Towards the end of the book, we are given a glimpse of a grandmother struggling with domestic realities and global ideals: "I bleed when I give in, realizing that even environment-friendly nappies, like clean air and organic food, require an entire life-support system not yet in your motherless home."

It is not easy being a Filipino woman living in a nation rich in natural resources, culture and tradition, and plagued by corruption, political chaos, and economic strife. Yet in a gathering of women with such names as Magenta, Lilac, and Violet, the writer speaks of women's strengths, detailing the joys and travails of each one in the group: "Tears mingled with laughter as we dived together, touching the universal in one another's depths."

For these three women writers, "nation" is a plethora of images – of the body, the family, government, cultural phenomena, the natural world; each category of race, class, ethnicity and gender a shifting base for constantly negotiated identities.

Borders

The geographical borders between nations suggest the material conditions that impact on gender formations. As the liminal space in between, this describes "the psychological, spiritual, and cultural borderlands in between differences of all kinds, the interface of self and other, the interstitial location of syncretic transculturation." As spaces of desire for connection, utopian longing, and the blending of differences, borders highlight the paradoxical processes of connection and separation and are porous sites of intercultural mixing, cultural hybridization, and creolization. Identity ensures clashing differences and fixed limits (Friedman, 2001: 27).

What are the "border" experiences of these women writers and how do these configure in their sense of themselves and their writing?

The first essay in Evangelista's book is set in an airport terminal. She recounts how she arrives on Philippine soil from the US, how the connecting flight is delayed, how she and her daughter had to take the inter-island boat with the other passengers, and how there was a suicide attempt in that ship. The waiting at the terminal, the travelling and the encounters during the movement through space are concrete border-experiences carrying their own physical, psychological, and cultural imprints. This border-experience is evident in most of her essays.

Susan Evangelista speaks of herself as the outsider, the wild crazy woman: "I write as Gilbert and Gubar's crazy person, the outsider, the wild woman walking down dark, rainy streets and looking into lighted windows"(1). There are things she cannot write/speak about: "I find, even now, in what I consider extreme middle age, that there are many things, personal things, that I find hard to write about, sometimes even think about. I can't write about love or sex, or children very well"(4). Writing about a woman writer she met, she speaks of her struggle to find her own authentic voice: "–as what? Filipina? As American? She, too, seems to have found herself…as she is, a Filipina from the island of Cebu, who migrated, as an adult….but I suspect if you pinned her down, she writes for herself, as part, again of

the process of realizing herself and her own identity. She writes as I do, as a sort of an outsider, a bicultural transnational observer, if you prefer the fancier terms, and this particular view from the periphery turns out to be a refreshingly liberating one" (5).

At the border of things and places, one is neither here nor there: "On my worst days, of course, I feel like I don't belong anywhere. I found out many years ago that I don't really fit in anymore in the US. But then again, I know I don't *really* belong in Asia either, not in my inner core"(16). There is a sense of rebelliousness, a longing for something more, something else: "I was especially rebellious against the trimmings of the affluent society into which I was born"(17). There is a utopian longing for a better life: "We have to keep struggling for better things for more people…here we are, grounded, complete…"(31). There is also a longing for wholeness.

Upon meeting a Filipina in Japan, Evangelista writes: "She was beautifully centered and knew how to live from that primal core that held everything in balance. In her I saw the possibilities of wholeness"(77). Such "longings" may find expression in writing: "As I grew older I became more conscious of the resolution of male and female within. I became more engrossed with women's thoughts and problems, women's writing"(77).

In that interstitial place of the in-between, one looks at the inside from the outside. The writer speaks of her wanderings: "I spent many hours wandering about under gorgeous red maples, outside the campus, on the streets where the 'real' people lived, and when darkness fell and lights went on in the kitchens and living rooms, and mothers calling to their children, I felt utterly alone, detached, and yet somehow still enjoying this outside position, looking towards the lighted windows that were not lit for me"(90).

While in a Buddhist temple in Japan, she writes of her own yearnings and feels a measure of acceptance: "What I hear is a deep rootedness and content, a cessation of restlessness, acceptance… somehow it gives direction to my own restlessness – I want to come to old age in such security, such rootedness. Perhaps someday I will. Nevertheless, I remind myself that my wandering spirit is absolutely central to me, *is* me…"(94).

Marra Lanot's own "border" experience comes out as a yearning. She writes about a little girl who snips off her hair when she is left alone in the house by her parents. "Border" longing, when unfulfilled, comes out as anger, displaced in the third person.

Being at the borders of society could come about from choice. This writer speaks of Magdalena Jalandoni as one of the greatest Pinays: "Deviating from the social norm, at a time when Filipinas feared being tagged "old maid" or "spinster", Magdalena chose blessed singleness" (50).

The border is a space for desire and utopian longings: "Somehow the mistrust of strangers is replaced by a desire to know them, by the notion that we all belong to one community and are bound to help one another"(19). Marra Lanot also writes about her visions for the Filipino woman: "She will continue the struggle for her own dignity and that of the indigent, the indigenous, the marginalized. She has to realize that mere individual fulfilment is not enough; she must encourage organized, political action."

Sometimes, being at the borders, the margins, is not a choice, but a condition imposed upon groups of people. Sylvia Mayuga writes to the Pope: "Truth to tell, we who have found spirit fire burning more urgently for the least of Christ's brethren outside the folds defined by Filipinos in red berettas and their wealthy friends, have long felt an alienation from the official structures of Mother Church in this country…How 'catholic' (meaning universal, embracing all humanity) is catholic, when the spiritual depth of other world religions, Buddhism to begin with, can so easily be dismissed by our leaders, yourself included?" (202)

This writer's desire for connection is very much evident in her many essays that defend the "web of life": "I have begun to listen to foothill folk who know to their marrow how tightly woven mountain, winds, rains, birds, and human beings are"(12). She writes: "One day I encountered the rain forests of Banahaw and knew I had come home"(15). There is a longing for a return to rootedness: "Choosing native roots over Westernized tips, we may just regain old wisdom to help us cut through crude modern Western definitions of progress which have led our economies astray, with a lot of help from our own shallow sense of history"(85).

For this writer, longing is not enough, for there is hope: "The meek shall inherit the earth" (238), and beyond that hope true freedom, even within the confines of external and internal prisons. She speaks of one woman's inner liberation at the hands of enemies: "When a soul is pared down to nakedness where, wonder of wonders, the root of true and enduring liberation emerges"(248).

These women writers know what it is to live in the borders, not just between geographical places, but also within psychological, emotional, and spiritual planes. For women, being at the border of things is both a local and global experience.

Migration

The metaphorics of nation and borders are developed further by this geopolitical rhetoric, reflecting on the meanings of immigration, constant travel back and forth, and diaspora for spatial modes of thinking about identity. Identity acquires sedimented and palimpsestic layers as the body moves through space, crossing borders of all kinds, each

layer exerting some influence on the other layers and on identity as a whole. (Friedman, 2001: 28)

What were these women writers' experiences of migration? What meanings from these experiences helped to shape their understanding of themselves?

For Susan Evangelista, the train is both a symbol of crossings, as well as a sedimentation of self: "This became the new quintessential expression of my restlessness, tying it loosely to the love that had never been: I would move on, cast myself on to the winds of the world, wander" (89). She is a body constantly moving through space: "But I am what I am, sort of a wild-eyed activist by nature. I have seen much of the world, have worked in Africa, Japan, a refugee camp in the jungles of Thailand, neighbourhoods in the slums of Manila"(2). These wanderings come from stirrings deep within the heart: "And if I don't find what I'm searching for, the village of my heart, maybe it will be waiting for me in the next… My restlessness could be momentarily stilled, but it was always there, right below the surface, waiting for a whiff of foreign wind."

Evangelista sees the same restlessness elsewhere: "I could see the restlessness on the faces of the Japanese in the trains – the men, anyway – the women kept their expressions and maybe, their emotions, more guarded" (93).

Most of Susan Evangelista's essays are narrative accounts of her sojourns to nations around Asia, especially the refugee camps of such nations as Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia. She writes about her life on the peace zone/war zone Burmese border: "There is something easy to feel but hard to pin down – something that sometimes comes out in the rash statements of young men that they would be honoured to die for their country, but more normally exists as a deep undercurrent, a yearning for home, an uneasiness about the future"(34).

Marra Lanot also writes extensively about her travels. Her observations while in China reveals her own personal views about the plight of women. Of the Chinese women, she writes: "She has been an erotic object, but not anymore. The women have risen from their beds, kicked off their iron shoes, cut their hair short, and held up half the sky more firmly than before. As human beings, the Chinese women refuse to be mere baby machines or closed cells while change marches by" (237). In Mexico, she observes: "Frida Kahlo, an intense and "crazy woman" with highly personal visions, is among the lost and silenced women artists whose works are now being reproduced in postcards and expensive art books" (264).

She does not hesitate to make these observations about Filipinos in New York: "The rudeness of most Filipinos you meet on the streets of America astonishes me no end. They don't enjoy speaking Pilipino and are no worse than the barbaric or shrewd salespersons of

bazaars. Although Filipinos join labor unions, they cannot – at least as of now – solidify themselves into a community" (252).

She writes about being an alien in a foreign country: "Travelling is one thing, working in a foreign land as a second-class citizen is another. Aliens are aliens, and a strange land can be cruel, especially a superpower allegedly enriched by the business of war. Inequality may not be manifest in clothing or food, but it's keenly felt in racial prejudices" (258).

Oftentimes, when one travels, one carries the memory of another place within. Lanot's observations about another country brings about palimpsestic memories about her own: "We left Guadalajara with a smattering of a culture that was akin to our own, whether Asian or Latin American"(264).

This palimpsest of other places in the mind is also revealed by Sylvia Mayuga in her essays. She writes of her travels to Japan: "Antedating the imperial version that led to war, tribal Shinto's sacred spaces – cordoned by *shimenawa,* woven ropes of rice straw, and strands of *gohei,* triangular prayers on paper – recalled Banahaw's own pilgrimage route of rock, cave, waterfall, and river puestos with candles, incense and incantations etched in stone. Different climate and vegetation were like different flags of the selfsame bedrock of both spirit and geology" (166).

A place could leave its mark on mind and spirit. Mayuga writes about her travels to Mindanao: "Seen whole, Mindanao has a way of getting under the skin with yearning of a different order… Never has it felt more alive, more heart-rending than in gutted, raped and humiliated Mindanao"(195). Upon climbing the mountains of Banahaw, she writes: "Climbing a mountain has always had a mystical aspect… As the panorama unfolded – lilac water lilies and red algae in a still pool, sloe-eyed cows, limestone and basaltic rocks with mysteriously beckoning faces and symbols, silvery waters gurgling alongside a progressively denser ascending trail – exhilaration gradually became a sense of oneness with fellow trekkers, the trek and the trail itself" (9).

In the act of moving from one place to another – migration, travelling, diaspora – one carries a bit of each place, and leaves behind parts of the self. In this global village of mixed cultures and races, the moment one arrives at a space different from one's own, a transformation occurs. One's identity is not formed by a single culture, or a single race, or a single society.

"Glocational"

Grewal and Kaplan posits the avoidance of the homogenizing tendencies of "global feminism" through a form of transnational feminism that respects the material and cultural specificities of local feminist formations, and encourages analysis of how the

gender/race/class system in one location is politically and economically linked to that of another. Combining the terms *global and local,* glocational thought involves understanding how the local, the private, and the domestic are constituted in relation to global systems, and conversely, how such systems must be read for their particular locational inflection (Friedman, 2001: 30).

How do global systems affect the local world of these writers? How are they configured by these events? How is glocational thought manifested in their writings?

Glocational thought is very much evident in the essays of the three women writers. Susan Evangelista recognizes the influence of other cultures and nations on the Burmese youth she met in camp: "They study, read, listen to *Radio Veritas* and other international broadcasts, and learn. They know all about People Power in the Philippines; they even know about the *Ozone* fire. They know that Clinton is dragging his feet on sanctions against Burma – but they also have faith that the Americans and the rest of the world will help eventually" (39). She sees how global war spreads its destruction across borders: "For this was the war, this widening war that spread from Vietnam into Laos and Cambodia under the auspices of Richard Nixon and some misdirected American bomber pilots, this was the war that traumatized the American youth of my whole generation. It is a war, and a country, and a culture that I have felt connected with for a long time" (43).

Marra Lanot writes about the far-reaching influences of Western culture, acknowledging its presence right inside the bedroom of her own son: "From those Gulliver adventures, you proceed to re-enact feats of Batman and Superman and Dragon Ramon Zamora…you play with him games of the Funny Company, Little Indian and Bogs Adonardo" (15). During her own growing up years, she found herself in the company of "Mozart, Chopin, Beethoven, and Verdi. She enjoyed the movies, then stepped into the global world of teenagers whose language was rock'n'roll" (53).

On a larger scale, Marra Lanot writes extensively about global economic/political systems and their impact on the Philippines: "In the present situation of unrest (this was 1983), rumors abound as to whether the tabloids, the heated polemics, the urban and rural demos, and the clamor for the return of the vice presidency are backed by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, by clerico-fascists, or by Russian commies. The Philippines, after all, is the last showcase of the so-called democracy, American style, in Asia. Since the Philippines makes the multinationals super-rich, can they, the puppeteers of the world economy, afford another Vietnam war?" (60) Can there be a more comprehensive manifestation of how global and local, the economic, political, and social are so closely interrelated?

Lanot reveals a global consciousness of the effects of patriarchy as she writes a review on the movie *A Scream for Silence*: "Patriarchy and everything that it stands for –

power, violence, war, oppression of women – is strongly condemned as the main culprit. The suffering of the raped nurse is creatively juxtaposed with shots of Vietnam massacres, burnings, and looting, of women cut up in Africa, of children and women exploited and sold throughout the world. Patriarchy perpetuates evils as does political and economic domination of one country by another" (191).

In the section of her book where she writes about Feminist movements elsewhere in the world, she shows how feminism is both global and local. In one essay entitled "The Colors of October," she talks about The Philippine women's movement as well as the "donning of the color purple in New York"(23). She speaks of a strong woman's movement that "will seek to solve the problems of women not only as members of their class in an economically exploitative system and as citizens of the Third World controlled by imperialism but also as women in an oppressive patriarchal society"(67).

Of the three writers, Sylvia Mayuga is the most vocal and the most knowledgeable about international economic and political movements that affect the local situation. Her essays are detailed, humorous renderings of international events. She writes: "Given that "jellyfish" can plunge all of Luzon into a blackout, we had better make sure the Estrada government is spelling this one out correctly. Already there were signs of the formidable US lobby for GMOs sneaking in through the backdoor of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' ministerial meeting on bio-safety last October in Brunei" (68).

Mayuga has a whole section on "Economics" in which she discusses such economic issues as the demands of the IMF-WB, the programs of the Estrada government under GATT-World Trade Organization (WTO), Asian Free Trade Zone (AFTA) and APEC (90). She talks about the UN, NATO, the nuclear bomb and the RSS, the White House scandal, the VFA, US bases, globalization and its impact on ancestral domains, the US-Marcos dictatorship, and post-colonization. She writes: "When the 10 percent who control the whole world's wealth, their personal fortunes sufficient for several lifetimes, launch a pandemic of currency speculation with serious human costs in the Third World, poets must pay close attention" (157).

Beside this grim picture of glocational relations, Mayuga also has this to say about the Forest Conservation society in Japan: "Here they campaign for the preservation of Kumano's forests while training Asian students for reforestation in their own countries. Pine saplings from civic supporters are growing at this writing, to be planted on Nepal's denuded slopes in the spring. Kami willing, it may next be the bamboo groves to prevent yearly flooding around Banahaw"(172).

In the sense that it "emerges everywhere in indigenous forms that take shape through interactions with other feminisms with its own local conditions," and in the sense

that "any local formation is shaped in part by the presence of global forces within it," Feminism is global (Friedman, 2001: 15).

Conjuncturalism

The conventional comparison/contrast analysis of similarities and differences is replaced by this spatial mode of thinking. The focus is on the juxtaposition of different cultural formations. This epistemological juncture sheds light on each formation and for the way in which each discursive system interrupts the other. It corresponds with the term *cultural parataxis*, "a form of conjuncture or superimposition developed particularly as a part of modernist poetics to describe the radical juxtapositions that poets and artists made with a deliberate suppression of explicit connection." The two forms of parataxis are collage and montage. The reader/critic is invited to establish the connection not explicitly expressed by the artist or poet (Friedman, 2001: 31).

Living in the "in-between," or that "juncture" where differences abound, what juxtapositions of "different cultural formations" are revealed in the essays of these women writers?

Susan Evangelista portrays two places, two cultures, and two races in one thought as she speaks of the Burmese teachers she lived with: " I sense in them much of the same personal strength and centeredness I have felt in village people at home – that humanness which has to hide deep within, in self defense, to endure the concrete and crowds and hassles of the city. Here it just *is*"(34). When a woman is brought home safely, she thinks: "I could well imagine the same sort of scene in many parts of the Philippines – even in "dangerous" places, I think most people are good-hearted and anxious to do what is right" (53).

In this next quotation, the political and personal, the global and the local are merged in one thought as she writes about Cambodia: **"**a border which couldn't keep the war from spreading, couldn't save peaceful Cambodia from the ruthlessness of the conflict that tore three countries apart, the war that formed the background to my coming of age in another place half a world away" (53).

Marra Lanot speaks about two Christmases, fusing the past and the present: "Christmas in Marinduque linked me to my past when I had suckled at the breast of many different mothers for I was allergic to goat's or carabao's milk and my face would swell with evaporated Carnation"(40). At another Christmas, she recalls another place: "The cotton was, of course, snow, something which I didn't find incongruous then nor grotesque. For Chicago still lingered in me"(41). The same palimpsestic layering of memories can be seen in her descriptions of Mexico: "In Mexico city, as in Manila, pedestrian lanes and traffic lights

are often ignored. But there, unlike here, trains and buses run efficiently, drivers are friendly and honest, and passengers respect elders, children and the handicapped" (271).

The writer's consciousness of the conjunction of language and worlds is shown in her reviews of poetry. Here is her review of some of Lina Sagaral Reyes' poems: " In these poems, the poet employs facile shuttling between inner and outer worlds… Often, the two worlds become one, and the reader can hardly tell what is being described: whether a real or imaginary habitation, or whether it is the physical universe being alluded to or the inner house, or the emotional, psychological, spiritual terrain, of the human body" (157).

Sylvia Mayuga juxtaposes two religions and two revolutions for an alternative view of history: "That fascinating continuum from the Cofradaia's indigenous animism syncretized with Christianity led to the Philippine Revolution, in which *anting-anting* and *oracion* became as vital as bolos and stolen muskets. This continuum is to my mind authentic historical frame of 1986's EDSA Revolt"(8). A polyphony of voices can be heard and a montage of images can be seen in this paragraph: "And so, quavering voices echo in the humming silence of the evening – old people mourning the passing of an enviable way of life, the spirits of wildlife I may never see, playful winds rifling the pages of so many unread newspapers on the floor. There is not even enough time now to dwell on the fate of a Flor Contemplacion when so many more threatened lives need a voice to acknowledge and value their precarious existence in the open jaws of modern hungers" (13).

The same collage of images can be found here: "While Muscovites resorted to mimeographic machine, fax and photocopier in an emergency underground press to relay the coup score to the world, our home phone lay dead in Manila… Straight out of a Vaclav Havel satire on communist-speak was the Philippine Long Distance Company's nasal announcement that repair service was itself under repair" (112). The personal, local and global are juxtaposed as she describes the "peak experience" of accidentally witnessing the beginning of the end of the Cold War during "Germany's historical autumn in '89: "This Filipina had a reliable signpost called EDSA in a global turning that sharply mirrored an inner journey" (219).

The conjunctive thought is also evident in this writer's reviews of visual art. This is what she says of Fil Delacruz's art: "He had begun overflowing with new sights, sounds and insights, his inner landscapes shifting and altering with the other… There were mirages – people, trees in the distance were distorted. That's probably where my juxtaposition of planes and shapes began" (299). Of *Diwata and Kalikasan,* she writes: "There's something to be said for inhabiting the edge where waking, dreams and visions melt together with past, present, and future" (308).

Conjunctural thought mirrors the overdetermined position in which a woman often finds herself. Hybridity, transculturation, multiplicity, pluralism, and fluidity are notions connected to conjunction.

Conclusion

Spatial rhetoric emphasizes a reading that "maps" the local "contact zone, emphasizing awareness of difference rather than the universalization of the concept of woman. It reveals a way of thinking that does not follow essentialist concepts or developmental patterns of identity which assume the superiority of one value/person/idea over another. It brings to light the multiple incisions that cultural categories such as race, gender, ethnicity, and class make on an individual. Identity is no longer a question of being, but rather a question of becoming; not a question of who and what a person is, but rather a question of where and how one is.

For a reader like myself, the invitation is to approach the text not from a prescriptive viewpoint, but rather from a descriptive stance. This is a metacognitive stance, meaning, a suspension of long-held beliefs/expectations regarding what a woman *should* be, *essentially*, or how a woman should respond or act to any given circumstance. Being descriptive, it is a non-judgmental standpoint that allows for respect and acceptance of the overdetermined positions, and therefore the multi-layered subjectivities and identities of women. There will no longer be comparisons of binaries which always place one value or one identity over another. Rather, each value or identity will be allowed the space it chooses to create from wherever and however it is constituted. This stance is also based on an understanding that meaning can be approached from different axes, that it does not exist singly, and if found, any conclusions that may be arrived at will always become opportunities or openings for the discovery of further meanings.

My understanding of poetics, in the context of locational feminism, is not of Mayuga, Lanot and Evangelista as the arbiters of the meanings found in their essays, or of their essays as *reflections* of themselves and their lives. These meanings and ways of thinking were already there, around them, in their understanding of the world, and their lives. We cannot, however, remove these writers from this conglomeration of meanings, for these meanings passed through them, and were created anew – to become particular, specific, local forms of Filipina feminism.

Given their life experiences, these tropes or ways of thinking exist for Mayuga, Lanot, and Evangelista and became inscribed in their essays. In a paradoxical, *spatial* sense, they are both "creator" and "created," and the lines in between remain indistinct and fluid.

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