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## Time in Wilfrido D. Nollado's Fiction

Gerardo Z. Torres



Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space. If you can bend space you can bend time also, and if you knew enough and could move faster than light you could travel backward in time and exist in two places at once.

—Margaret Atwood

The concept of time is "one of the most inscrutable mysteries confronting man when he tries to reach an understanding of his own existence" (Gadamer 1977, 33), and has been one of his principal concerns over the centuries. Throughout the history of humankind, scholars of different disciplines have formulated theories to delve into, and consequently to bring to light, the profound hidden essence of time. Ironically, "the more deeply the idea of time is explored, the more difficult it becomes" (*Encyclopedia Americana* 1982); this only illustrates how broad and elusive the subject is.

Literature is one field of human knowledge that gives considerable emphasis to the interpretation of time. The intricate and all-encompassing phenomenon of time, an essential aspect of human experience, is examined in detail and rendered intelligible in "linguistic formalities variously called poetry, fiction, and drama" (Bautista 1988, 195). In this light, every work of literature is not only a creative reproduction and delineation of the thoughts, emotions, and aspirations of man, but also a digging into the most basic, significant, and indispensable features of time. In the words of French hermeneuticist Paul Ricoeur (1977, 18):

no culture can refer back to its own conception of time without having resort to the vital "narrative" activity which, linguistically, is expressed in an immense variety of stories . . . Myths which recount how things began, the marvels which nurture legends and folk tales, epics or tragedies retelling the deeds of heroes stronger and more intelligent than mortal men; chronicles, annals, tales on their way to becoming more conventional history, stories of men like ourselves, realistic

fiction leading in modern times to the naturalistic novel . . . I do not mean that a culture's symbolic systems find expression only in narrative form, but only that the universality of narrative . . . shows how symbolic man's consciousness of time is.

Through narrative activity, the writer humanizes and articulates the concept of time (Kermode 1973, 44-45). With this in view, the analysis of time in literature eventually takes the student to the examination of "the writer's whole conception of life and death, man and nature, the human and the divine" (Lloyd 1976, 144).

Wilfrido Dayo Nolloedo, "the most distinguished and outstanding writer of his generation" (Yuson 1981, 22), manifests a deep and ardent interest in exploring the definition and treatment of time in his novels and short stories. Much of his fiction consciously projects the passage of time through plot construction, character delineation, psychological probing, and thematic design. Nolloedo inextricably links the concept of time with the themes of the "loss of innocence, the conflict between past and present, guilt, suffering and renewal" (Reyes 1979, 150-51).

The purpose of this present article is to describe and analyze the explicit conceptualization of time in Nolloedo's selected novels and short stories. The study aims to explain the definitions of time in Nolloedo's fictional narratives and exemplify Nolloedo's use of time in the delineation of his characters.

### **The Definition of Time**

One of the contributions of Nolloedo to Philippine literature in English lies in his daring and skillful handling of time in his prose narratives. In his fictional narratives, Nolloedo exhibits profound concern with understanding the nature of time. He shares this interest with other modern writers, such as Proust, Mann, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Joaquin, and Brillantes. His novels and short stories deliberately explore the meaning of the concept in terms of the conflict between time past and time present, the relation between historical time and fictive time, and the difference between mechanical time and personal time. As such, these works become a deep well of information about the nature of time.

Nolloedo invariably delineates the conflict between time past and time present in his novels and short stories. He shares this concern

with Joaquin, one of his major literary influences. His prose narratives often juxtapose the past with the present. They include "A Lily in the Sea" (1955), "Because Your Eyes are Deeper than Conches" (1959), "Of Things Guadalupe" (1960), "Guernica and the Blue Star" (1960), "Rice Wine" (1961), "All Men Follow" (1962), "Cadena de Amor" (1962), "Canticle for Dark Lovers" (1964), "Amor de la Calle" (1965), "Not Without Icons" (1965), *But for the Lovers* (1970), and *Sangria, Tomorrow* (1981). These works depict the past as untainted, idyllic, and sane; the present as corrupt, sordid, and mad.

One of his early stories, "Because Your Eyes are Deeper than Conches," tells of the loneliness of a married woman in her early thirties brought about by her internal struggle with time.<sup>1</sup> Thinking that the present betrays the promise of the past, Luz Corazon develops some kind of remorse for it. Her life at home and in school is empty and unhappy. The opening part of the story captures vividly the plight of the main character:

Luz Corazon sat cramped between chair and table in her classroom, wielding a color pencil, at thirty-four, an English professor who worried to insomnia, who loathed the title school teacher in all possible forms. And that was why she took pills and vitamins, to relax the systolic murmur of the heart the doctor claimed she had. Before her in wanton disarray lay the injury of her life: her English themes, the child in the dark; her husband, the Saturday wonder on swivel chair. Who feared her still in all these years. Feared her pout, her poise, her silence, and would speak her surname most discreetly in their green duplex on Calle Paz, Corazon, Corazon, so that she heard it all night and every time she was proud and would not go to him. (Nolledo 1959a, 55)

Her loneliness becomes more intense as the narrative unfolds. To keep her sanity, Luz Corazon takes refuge in the past:

Luz Corazon slept thus, and so remembered. Of that winter night abroad in her one and only fellowship. She had written amorous letters, had seen spring. Remembered most of all the tales and times of Noel in school long after he was gone. (Nolledo 1959a, 59)

There, the protagonist feels safe with her thoughts and dreams. There, she can be honest about her feelings for Noel, her student who loves her in secret. There, she can forget about the drabness and emptiness of her existence.

At the end, however, reality asserts itself and proves to be overpowering:

"Sit down!" she shouted, then meekly, "Sit down," with a voice that could not be heard because it was not her own. For this the doctor would write still another bill for still another murmur and the summation of all her collected palpitations would take her husband, doctor and budget to the grave. The hammer in her breast would be extracted by an apprentice in white with rubber gloves and placed with loving care inside Raul's tool chest. It would be dropped to the bottom of the ocean, there to pound no more. On her tombstone mourners would read her name, Corazon, died in 19— of multiple murmurs. R.I.P. (Nolledo 1959a, 61)

The text reminds the readers about living in the present not in the past. The last part of the story hits the nail right on the head:

If I make a noise, she thought, will someone ever hear me?

And he always came now after her classes to stand under her window in the wind and even in the rain: Raul. He stood there and called and called and, when she came down to him, he would look up and for a while it seemed he understood. She would step down from the flight of stars and, when she came near, he spoke as a child, as though they were not bound terribly together, "Corazon . . . ?" (Nolledo 1959a, 62)

Luz Corazon is stuck with her husband, Raul, who may be compassionate but lacks the sensitivity to feel her terrible aloneness and utter helplessness. Her struggle with time continues as the narrative closes.

Nolledo's "All Men Follow" relates the travails of a mother, Donata, and her thirty-four-year-old son, Sekoya, in the city. They come from the highlands, and thus have a different notion of time. How they wrestle with the present is the focus of the text. Life in the city proves to be dehumanizing for Donata and Sekoya. They are forced to accept menial jobs. People regard them with suspicion if not with contempt. They occasionally look back to the past, but try not to be carried away by nostalgia. They see the past as a source of inspiration in their struggle in the present. The narrative ends with the heroic death of Sekoya:

Later, a search team could not distinguish the janitor's remains from the blood of books, rags, and the shells of watermelon seeds. Neither the number saved nor the man lost was certain, but all things belong-

ing and going back to nature, the tale was told and a legend was repeated and it was about a man they called Sekoya, that they called Sekoya of the Schoolhouse who was the savior of an evening. (Nolledo 1962a, 77)

The protagonist carries with him the splendor of the past when he rescues the children from the burning schoolhouse. Indeed, the modern-day world has need for people like Sekoya and Donata.

Nolledo's stories about war capture vividly the tension between time past and time present. Among them are "A Lily in the Sea," "Of Things Guadalupe," "Guernica and the Blue Star," "Adios, Ossimandas," and "Not Without Icons." These works depict the present as beset with madness and hopelessness. They portray the past as some kind of refuge from the chaos of the present. One notices the intensity of the conflict between the two in these texts.

Nolledo's *But for the Lovers* relates the Philippine war experience. War brings out the worst in the individual. This is reflected vividly in the novel. The men and women who inhabit the fictive world of the writer are power-hungry, self-centered, and sex-starved. Among them are Hidalgo de Anuncio, Molave Amoran, Tira Colombo, Miguela Fabian, Zerrado Susi, Placido Rey, and Paeng Redoblado. The contrast between the splendor of the past and the sordidness of the present is fully delineated in this text.

The conflict between time past and time present is likewise explored in Nolledo's *Sangria, Tomorrow*. The work tells of how the past catches up with the present. Furthermore, it warns the readers about the danger of tampering with the past. Most of the characters in the novel go astray as a result of their meddling with the past. The protagonist herself goes back in time at the end of the narrative. This shows the importance of confronting the past in order to come to terms with oneself.

Nolledo defines time initially as the conflict between the past and the present. Time in the writer's fiction may also be viewed as inextricably linked with history. Nolledo illustrates—successfully, to be sure—the relationship between time and history in his novels and short stories. Among them include "Of Things Guadalupe," "Guernica and the Blue Star," "Rice Wine," "Canticle for Dark Lovers," "Not Without Icons," *But for the Lovers*, and *Vaya Con Virgo*.

In his war stories, the writer consciously delineates the march of time by making use of the experience of the people during the Japanese Occupation. Nolledo's "Of Things Guadalupe" is set at the out-

break of World War II, and tells of the travails of three characters—Evangeline, Rafael, and Quasimoto.

Nolledo's "Guernica and the Blue Star" likewise makes use of history to portray the movement of time. It reconstructs the experiences of two prisoners of war. It is set during the last days of the Occupation. The bombing of Manila is accurately depicted in the narrative, but acquires new dimension at the hands of the writer. The same thing may be said of his other stories that deal with the Philippine war experience.

Nolledo's *Vaya Con Virgo* traces the incidents that catapult the main character to the Philippine presidency. Set in the later twenty-first century, the novel alludes to one of the most significant series of events in Philippine history—the assassination of Senator Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. to the EDSA Revolution—which was responsible for making Corazon C. Aquino President of the Philippines.

The novel opens with the imminent assassination of labor leader Ciderio Encargado:

On the eve of the following Sunday which was forty-eight hours away from the afternoon—sunset in the Metro—they killed him, she lay abed with him for the last time. . . . In the humid air of the motel room still hung the cloying bouquet of rum coco and sweat the color of crushed tangerine where lovers complete with middle names on the register ("*Viva, los novios*") had clashed like private armies under the magenta sheets. Two hundred pesetas, maestro, and check-out time is *a la una y media*, pronto no toothbrush. As an afterthought, perhaps a wooden crucifix tipped just slightly above a varnished cabinet with its native embroidery of cornstalk lace. Looped through a mounted pair of bull's horns was a necklace of garlic heads. In retrospect, she would try to reconstruct the scene down to its minutest frame, simulate every gesture and nuance, freeze it, bottle it, throw it into the ocean where it would lie in the murky fathoms of her grief: the Excalibur that was. Merlin, it didn't work. (Nolledo 1984, 1)

The story follows the train of events leading to the unification of the people against their oppressors. The novel ends as the widow of the slain expatriate president of the Associated Workers of Luzon (AWOL) leads the people in their fight against oppression and injustice:

The various labor leaders and student heads had coordinated with Ariel Carranceja and the AWOL-UNICO to get Virgo Encargado into the Luneta Park that Sunday afternoon, and he did. And there they were, what *Time* and *Newsweek* would later put on their covers, the 2.5

million Filipinos gathered to hear the widow of the fallen "union supremo," Ciderio Encargado, "in a theater all her own," addressing the "angry best" of what had been long in germination over the Greater Manila area. (Nolledo 1984, 246-47)

Nolledo's *Vaya Con Virgo* is about the phenomenal rise to power of the incumbent President of the country. It acquires new dimension in that it is set in the future. There are many historical facts in the text that have been transmogrified to make them transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. It proves to be an interesting work to study in terms of how it makes use of history to weave a fictional narrative.

Finally, Nolledo explores the nature of the concept of time in terms of the difference between clock time and internal time. Much of his fiction shows reference to mechanical time, but puts emphasis on personal time through psychological probing. His short story, "But for the Lovers," refers considerably to the movement of time as indicated by the clock or calendar. The work reconstructs in chronological order the events of one night in the lives of two young people who care deeply for each other. War is raging in the country, and the main characters cannot help but feel uncertain about their future. To keep their spirits alive, they take refuge in their own dreamworlds. It seems to be the only way to survive in a war-torn city:

And now the boy had his dreams and his dreams were of wars and of storms and of great battles and in them he was always the hero. He was the hero in his little brother's dream too and in them he could run faster than lightning, jump higher than the mountains and in the game of war he was the only one with the grand immunity: no one could shoot him down dead like all the others. But in the girl's dreams he was none of these because in them he was sickly and frail and was never in great battles nor in great storms nor in any other contest where his poor health could fail him. In her dreams he always lost (if he ever fought at all) or was always captured, and when he leaped or ran he always fell and in the end, he was always alone. In her dreams, he was always gentle. (Nolledo 1959b, 13)

Nolledo's "The Far-Away Mountain" likewise presents the point of divergence between objective time and subjective time. Set shortly after the Liberation, the story revolves around an American soldier named Simon Jacobs. It tells of his pain and anguish. The work refers largely to the march of time based on what the clock or calendar says:

By seven o'clock he was dressed. The automatics were big and heavy in his pockets. He thought it might be better if he carried only one of them. That way he could run faster if he had to. Well, if the old silencer worked and he did not have to run, then he was just as well off with two guns as with one and that way it was a lot safer. They were damned heavy though.

At seven twenty-five, he was walking out on the road. (Nolledo 1961a, 39)

The text, however, is deeply interested in exploring the internal experience of time. The main character often embarks on mental journeys into the past to keep his sanity. Here is one of his excursions into time past:

When it was gone, Simon Jacobs suddenly remembered how they were particularly snow white in '39, the mountains, when casualties topped the list and when there was a gigantic pour after the danger signal had elapsed and skis were hard to buy. That was also when Ginnie Hart was still working in the Salvation Army. He wondered what she was doing now. (Nolledo 1961a, 93)

The work ends on a tragic note with the imprisonment of the protagonist for his having murdered a man and a woman. He has only the past to hang on to as the story closes.

Nolledo has many other stories that deliberately portray the difference between clock time and personal time. Among them are "Home to Celia" (1960), "Maytime" (1960), "The Moon is Love Enough" (1960), "In Caress of Beloved Faces" (1960), "The Last Caucus" (1963), "Canticle for Dark Lovers" (1964), "Amor de la Calle" (1965), "Moraya, Waiting" (1965), and "Juego de Prenda" (1977). His three novels likewise explicitly delineate the point of divergence between the two kinds of time. The writer invariably shows that the individual in the twentieth century has control over the movement of time. Nolledo's body of fiction challenges the notion that modern-day man is a slave to mechanical time.

### **Time in Nolledo's Character Delineation**

Nolledo deliberately portrays the movement of time through character delineation. Most of his characters feel contempt for the present

and "hark back to the Old World of conquistadores, virgins, and ghosts" (Yuson 1981, 22). Among them are included Santiago ("Rice Wine"), Gayo Labrador ("Cadena de Amor"), Hidalgo de Anuncio (*But for the Lovers*), Sangria Mayor (*Sangria, Tomorrow*), and Virgo Encargado (*Vaya Con Virgo*). His works revolve around the confrontation of these characters with the past and their coming to terms with the present.

Published in the 14 October 1961 issue of the *Philippines Free Press*, "Rice Wine" is one of Nolleddo's oft-anthologized fictional works. It won first prize in the *Philippines Free Press* Short Story Contest in 1961 and third prize in the Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature in 1962. It is "a fable of failure between generations, and betrayal of the unfinished Revolution" (Casper 1987, 126). The piece captures vividly the conflict between time past and time present as experienced by the characters. This is shown in the following scene from the story:

They sat there, ("los grandes"), the aficionados of the Lost Republic, both flaming in their piety, burning the marble epitaphs, correcting history, fumbling, precise, rigid, restless, whole, divided: the future of the past.

'Remember how we used to read Carlyle?' sighed De Palma.

'Remember the Mayorca?' chorused Santiago.

'The ayuntamiento?'

'The Fort?'

'The mauser hidden in the mind?'

'The Treaty?'

'The Domecq?'

'The Zorilla?'

'The Pasig?'

'The Yanqui?'

'The carriages?'

'The Binondo?'

'The theater?'

'The opera?'

'The assignations?'

'The Cause?'

'The secret literature?'

'The parks?'

'The puñal?'

'The rogues?'

'The women of salt?'

'The fandango?' (Nolleddo 1961b, 70)

De Palma was once the lamp lighter of Old Manila; Santiago the courier of Malolos. Together, they wrestle with the great changes that have taken place since the country was ceded to America by Spain. Throughout the story, they continually look back to the past:

He [Santiago] lay as he had lain in the green fields of the wild young country in the days of *The Dream*, looking into the eyes of *The Man* who told them about the coming of *The Time*. Lying in the sweet air, eating nothing but praise in the sudden doubling of a fist in the heart that now lived only in the memory of the loveliness, the bread was not stale, nor the water salty . . .

(Aguinaldo!) Like the terrible strength of all beginnings; the wine of his dream dancing wildly in his eyes, now a dried old man, a wraith in a rocking chair, sick, convalescent, a trophy honored once a year, a patriarch of the tomb, alone with revolution, transfixed in the twilight, a poet whose poetry rushed like pearls in the landscape. (Nolledo 1961b, 73-74)

People like De Palma and Santiago are an anachronism in the modern-day world. They find it difficult to be assimilated into the present, for it is beset with enormous changes. They see the past as some kind of refuge from the madness of the world.

The narrative ends with the death of the principal protagonist:

And when Santiago fell—falling like a tear from a man's grief—he fell not on a pile of jute sacks in a sawdust yard above the estero, but on a cool moonscape of grass in a long ago September, in the hallow of belief, in the pool of all their blood, in the mountains. Like a sigh, like an old coin, gleaming that would soon roll, lost, in a hole, he fell, as fallen he was part of the city's mountains whose loneliness became his fall; whose loveliness became his absence. So still he died, the bullet that took him almost seemed a gift once given seemed absolute, seemed somehow a god of peace, a feast to God. Then alone, in a quiver of rice, he lay there with no one, save a sword and the sequins in the sky. (Nolledo 1961b, 75)

There seems to be no more hope left for Santiago as the story closes: the community is faced with poverty, there is widespread oppression among the people, and his daughter Elena has lost her dignity by selling her body to lonely and hungry men. It seems that only death can redeem him from the ugliness of the world. His death melts times past, present, and future into one. It is those who have been left behind who will have to struggle and continue the journey.

Nolledo's "Cadena de Amor" likewise explores the struggle of the Filipino to come to terms with the present. Time-concepts are embodied in the four major characters—Gayo Labrador, Leocadio, Candido, and Ouida—whose lives seem to be intertwined. The conflict of the past and the present is delineated through the character of Gayo Labrador. The three other characters represent the promise of the future.

The story opens with the meeting of the principal characters:

A boy who had been promised a silver coin beat on a drum as if he were already digging a grave in the animal skin. A girl trudged in the distance, singing. Men and women weaved on both sides of the coffin, shaking their heads, scowling at the sun as if to confirm their mission. The drum beat on, the girl sang, and they believed an ocean was talking back to them as they plodded forward, trailing that lap of sea like fishermen following a star.

Their procession blocked the feeder road when the ambulance, without horn or siren, came limping into view, headed for Punta del Rio. Inside the vehicle was a stretcher where an old Spaniard lay, flanked by two young men. Leocadio, the one in the white uniform and the taller of the pair, pointed to the procession. The second one, Candido peered out of the glass window. For in the heart of the crowd, a girl was singing hymns. When the ambulance was about to slip through a gap in the line, the procession halted. An elder was exhausted and was now sitting in the middle of the road while they fanned him with palm fronds. The girl went on singing. (1962b, 20)

Gayo Labrador is an octogenarian who has a strong sense of nostalgia for the past—the old world of monarchs, tertulias, and revolutions. His roots stretch all the way back to one of the clans of feudal lords in Spain. The juxtaposition of Gayo Labrador with the two young doctors, Leocadio and Candido, dramatizes the sharp contrast between the dying culture of the Hispanics and the emerging culture of the Filipinos. But it also portrays the opposition between the stability of the past and the instability of the present. Together with the young woman Ouida, the two young doctors represent the splendor of the future. They are the proverbial hope of the motherland.

Throughout the narrative, the principal protagonist constantly embarks on mental journeys into some romantic and chivalric world of time past. This is clearly delineated in the following excerpt:

The Spaniard was dreaming now. He had left the balcony, the marsh of honor, the sunset. He was in a battlefield, wearing a white armband with a cross on it. He had no rifle, only a roll of bandage; and whenever anyone fell on either side, he rushed to the victim, propped up the head on his lap, and felt for the heart. He stopped whatever it was that was bleeding and yelled for a stretcher. He dreamed he did this all through the wars, ministering to both sides, applying tourniquets. When he was covered with blood, shrapnel toppled him, and he died. They put him into the sea, for he was a pearl. (Nolledo 1962b, 60)

There are other similar scenes in the narrative which present the dynamics between dream and reality, tradition and modernism, past and present. Like Santiago and De Palma, the old Spaniard does not belong to the modern-day world. He continually harks back to the past to keep his sanity in a world gone awry. His loneliness and alienation become even more intense in the presence of the three young and vibrant characters in that they become a constant reminder of his long vanished youth.

Interestingly, a deep sense of hope pervades as the story closes:

For he was gone: he had left them. A fine day would drift in from the sea again; children would come and care again; the night could never leave yet must go away again . . .

And now she saw the boy alone with his drum waiting, who must have been waiting for her since it all began; and she ran to him, for they were lovers. She tossed him the branch with a single petal—she blew it like a kiss—and he caught it and himself ran to the grave to fulfill their litany. She ran past boy and grave, remembering another and all the others sleeping forever under the cadena de amor. She had loved them all, and they were one: and now in the calmness of this hour against the evening and the rain, the world of them were lovers. (Nolledo 1962b, 60)

While Leocadio and Candido fail to save the old Spaniard from death, the young maiden becomes her own woman at the end of the narrative. There is death, but there is also birth. Undoubtedly, the world belongs to men and women who have not lost their zeal and passion for life. The central image of the cadena de amor poignantly drives home the theme of connectedness among people in spite of differences in age, class, color, and creed. The three young characters represent the emerging culture of the present generation.

In Nolledo's *But for the Lovers*, Hidalgo de Anuncio, the vaudeville player, embodies the opposition between the grandeur of the past

and the sordidness of the present. War-time Manila is beset with disorder, poverty, corruption, betrayal, and decadence. Not a few feel nostalgic about the past. They see it as some kind of refuge from the madness of the modern-day world. Of all the characters in the novel, it is the old Spaniard who has suffered the greatest dislocation at the outbreak of the World War:

Hidalgo de Anuncio hounded the vaudeville like a lost legacy. A malingerer at theater lounges, he was the bane of producers casting low-budget revues. Booking offices listed him in several capacities . . . credits endless and unverifiable. What hadn't he done yet? Of course, this was in the days when his legs were supple, when his name alone (DE ANUNCIO TONIGHT!) had stature. Recently, however, the Hidalgo stock was in active decline. And why not? The man had been cranking his apparatus for ages. Nobody could tell with any degree of accuracy just how old he was. Like a trained seal repeating mechanical tricks, he ingratiated himself as the seventh spear in a *zarzuela*, as the basso profundo extra in a gaudy operetta. *Oye*, he was impresario of his own gifts grown sparse as his white hair and as antediluvian as his embossed *tarjeta*: HIDALGO DE ANUNCIO, *picaro*. (Nolledo 1959b, 26-27)

He has lost everything—fame, honor, and position—and has only his dreamworld to hang on to as the story unfolds. In this light, the narrative may be seen as a portrayal of one's quest for the splendor of the past. It is mainly about one's futile search for social order and lost tradition.

The novel may be interpreted as an allegory for the experience of the country at the hands of her three colonial masters through history. Maria Alma represents the Filipino, De Anuncio the Spaniard, Winters the American, and Shigura the Japanese. Amoran and Vanoye would be "some sort of twin reflections of the Filipino" (Yuson 1981, 24). "Molave, as a scavenger, is the realist," Nolledo points out. "Vanoye's the romantic" (Yuson 1981, 24). They represent vividly the conflict in the Filipino character. Both of them, however, may be considered as agents for change (Yuson 1981, 24). Maria Alma has survived the war because of her encounter with these two characters. How the lives of the six characters become intertwined is the central concern of the narrative.

Nolledo's *Sangria, Tomorrow*, one of the two grand prize winners for the novel in the 1981 Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, explores the conflict between the past and the present through the principal protagonist. This gothic-romance novel relates how the

past catches up with the present. One will notice some kind of mystery about the main character and the setting of the narrative. The opening part of the novel immediately brings to light this quality:

That she was to the manner born there could be little doubt, thought Sangria Mayor, 26, as she arched her neck, swivelled her hips and swayed almost angrily to the music. Save for the three of them—and, Mama, she liked to think no one was safe when she was between ramps—the beach was temptingly deserted, hardly the tourist footnote it was touted to be at prime time (four asterisks), although it was already five o'clock in the morning with the fishermen having set out for the deep sea half an hour past. (Nolledo 1981, 1)

The enigma becomes more pronounced and intense as the narrative unfolds.

Sangria Mayor, one of the most sought-after commercial and ramp models in the country, exemplifies the beauty, strength, vitality, and mysteriousness of the Filipina. It is for this reason that she has been chosen to play the lead role in the documentary film on the Escondido house. "Because you're going to be more than just a pretty face to us," says the National Restoration Society (NRS) representative. "You will personify the place, the very spirit of Escondido. You'll not be merely a model; you shall be our, ahem, *Maja* . . ." (Nolledo 1981, 10)

The discovery of the historic house is recounted in the first chapter of the novel:

During one of his epic diggings, Dr. Emerito Romero (TOYM awardee in archaeology, who was reputed to have dug up 1/4 of the Philippine countryside) had stumbled on a summer resort somewhere in Northern Luzon—the Deep North, in trade lingo—which, after a second and prolonged stay on his large stipend, he discovered to be but a camouflage for an older, more historic house that went by the name of *El Escondido*. This was in the late '70s when the oil boom occupied centerpage; and while the Restoration Society and its related agencies were understandably agog, the discovery was kept under wraps, the proceedings therefrom contagiously furtive, everything connected with its development strictly hush-hush, and c-l-a-s-s-i-f-i-e-d—like the Manhattan Project of old? (Nolledo 1981, 7-8)

The house is "more than several centuries old" (Nolledo 1981, 42), and therefore represents the grandeur of the past. It is for this reason that the NRS has taken a deep interest in having it restored to its

former condition. Not only will it serve as a source of national pride but it will also instill in the people a strong sense of tradition.

The history of the house is reconstructed in the eighth and nineteenth chapters of the novel. Don Sotero Escondido, a renegade cavalier, had the house built on *Islas del Poniente* as a fortress for his militia men. He was forced to leave Spain and settle in the islands somewhere in Northern Luzon because of a failed strife with his wealthy rivals. He had taken it upon himself to liberate the oppressed among his people. Now he also wanted to save the settlers of the islands from their pagan ways. He felt it was fate that brought him to the place, and he was not going to let the opportunity pass.

His wife had dreamed of living in a castle as magnificent as any they had back home, and when he failed to build her one, she packed her things and went back to Madrid with their six-year-old son. There Doña Micaela learned Portuguese, attended balls, and raised her son to a life of learning. Four years after the building of the house began, she came back with their ten-year-old son to the islands. But things did not turn out as she had expected. The construction of the house had yet to be completed, the *caballero*—for that was how her husband's men called him—continued to harbor quixotic dreams, and the boy suddenly changed into a beast. It was a tumultuous life she led with her husband and his men. One night, while big with their second child, she fell from one of the rooms of the house. Doña Micaela died the following morning. The five-month-old fetus survived but presumably did not live long.

Meanwhile, the boy grew up. He had come to be known as *El Falcon*. His full name was Ruy Morga Gaston y de Saavadera Escondido. His father had aged, but remained as strong as ever. His aunt, Doña Lucrezia Cintron, became the official hostess of Escondido. The young heir had been away for a long time. When he came back, he was ready to raise his own family. His fiancée—who was promised to him by his father shortly after his mother died in the accident—had been waiting for his return to be his wife and tormentor. Her silent suffering during his long absence had made her strong and unyielding. Soledad/Salome had become as elusive as his dreams. Their life together was to be "simultaneously blessed and burning with the devil" (Nolledo 1981, 243; italics omitted). He himself had come to this realization on the night they declared war on each other. Their love presumably remained unconsummated at the end.

One may ask: What has the house and its history got to do with the narrative proper? It is through the main character that this ques-

tion is answered. The novel relates how Sangria Mayor becomes one with the place. It traces the incidents that lead to her journey back into the past. References to time predominate in the text. "No, that isn't it at all," says Leo Molinos, the editor, "the split is in time" (Nolledo 1981, 221). He is referring to the model who seems to be possessed by some strange spirit. Inez Paroco, the program director, believes Sangria Mayor has a case of split personality.

"All right, here it is," Leo avers towards the end of the narrative, "*she's going back*" (Nolledo 1981, 258; Nolledo's italics). The model herself admits to him that she is running out of time. His taped conversation with her reveals the intensity of her struggle:

SANGRIA, *pleadingly*.

. . . think I have no heart that I can do this to you? I am not heartless, Leo. But we are going to see each other again . . . I cannot remain here as you wish, today, because I do not have the time anymore!

LEO, *brokenly*.

Why, where're you going? Tell me that, even only that! Because I don't really understand this . . . I refuse, like all the others here, to understand what you think you're doing!

SANGRIA

What I am doing, or what I shall be doing, should have been done a long time ago . . . I am late, I am late . . . I am leaving now! (Nolledo 1981, 264; Nolledo's italics)

One wonders if the young woman is the reincarnation of Soledad/Salome. There are details in the novel that seem to indicate this: her nightmares and hallucinations, the mysterious portrait of the Escondido family, the fire in the darkroom, the pictures destroyed by the fire, and the taped conversation between Leo and Sangria. In this light, her journey back in time may be seen as an attempt to rectify her mistakes in the past.

The novel ends as the young model finally disappears into the forest:

But now she was running and he knew he would never see her again. And the image seemed to repeat itself again, for him and for him, as she turned to look back, then said, with the plume of her century in her throat: "Remember, I have the technology . . . !" Then she turned, she turned, to run into the wind, to dash into the rain, into her rain forest. (Nolledo 1981, 281)

The text serves as a reminder to the readers about the danger of meddling with the past. Most of the characters who have gotten themselves involved in the restoration of the Escondido house go astray as the narrative closes.

Nolledo's *Vaya Con Virgo* (later titled *21 de Agosto*), which won the grand prize for the novel in the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature in 1984, is another interesting text to study with regard to its conceptualization of time. The material is derived largely from one of the most colorful events in Philippine history, but acquires new dimensions in that it is set in the twenty-first century. The novel traces the events that catapult the main character, Virgo Iglesias-Encargado, to the Philippine presidency. It is 2081. The country is under an Arab-backed junta. Philippine President ex-General Artemio de la Torre serves simply as a puppet of the new colonizer. The nation is slowly going down the pits. It is in worse condition than when it was after the World War.

Ciderio Encargado, exiled president of the Associated Workers of Luzon (AWOL), comes home to help in the rebuilding of the country but is assassinated upon his arrival at the Manila International Airport. The incidents that follow chronicle the transformation of his widow from a plain housewife to a political leader. "The Cid is dead," goes one of the obituarial asides, "long live the Queen" (Nolledo 1984, 54). While preparing for her homecoming, Mrs. Encargado looks back to her fifteen years of married life with her slain husband. Shortly after her arrival, the leaders and members of the opposition groom her for the highest position in the land. The novel ends as the main character leads the people in their fight for freedom, justice, and truth.

Nolledo's *Vaya Con Virgo* is obviously allegorical, as can be gleaned from the different characters and events that make up the narrative: Cid is Ninoy, Virgo is Cory, De la Torre is Marcos, Rosendo Gorman is Rolando Galman, and the 21 August 2081 assassination is the 21 August 1983 killing at the Manila International Airport. It is interesting to note that the novel was written before the EDSA Revolution which catapulted Corazon C. Aquino to the Philippine presidency. This clearly illustrates the prophetic vision of the writer.

The two major characters embody certain time-concepts. Cid represents the glory of the past, Virgo the promise of the future. Through the use of flashbacks, letters, and journal entries, the work recounts the heroism of the slain labor leader. Mrs. Encargado is able to weather all the challenges posed by the present because of her memories of her husband. The past is what sustains the main character.

The work revolves around her coming of age. "My whole life has been later," she says towards the end of the narrative. "I want it now, NOW!" (Nolledo 1984, 215). The widow becomes her own woman as the novel closes. Hers is the saga of the modern-day Filipina.

### Conclusion

In her article, "Literature and Philosophy on the Concept of Time (An Exploration into the Possibilities of Inter-Disciplinary Study)," Rosario Cruz-Lucero spells out the interdependence between literature and philosophy, and accounts for the diverse ways in which the concept of time is expressed in literary pieces, and provides an interpretation of the notion of time in Philippine literature. Lucero's concern with unraveling the relationship between time and literature can also be gleaned from her unpublished paper entitled "*Kairos* and *Kronos* in the Fiction of Gregorio C. Brillantes," where she examines the writer's apparent interest in delineating the theme of human solitude through deliberate treatment of time, that is, in linking the central idea of man's utter loneliness with Proust's "involuntary memory" and the Christian existentialist concept of *kairos*.

Lucero (1983, 31) points out:

There are three ways in which the concept of Time may be expressed in literature:

1. The writer's implicit and (perhaps) unconscious concept of Time in the form and structure of his work. In this sense, fictive Time is the way the writer manipulates the passage of Time without consciously or directly making a definition of it.
2. The writer's implicit concept of Time in defining the human condition. Here, we can take world classics as illustrations of the way human anguish can be defined in terms of Man's relationship with Time.
3. The writer's conscious and deliberate conceptualization of Time. In twentieth-century Western literature, Time itself is the theme, and the psychological experience of it has largely determined the form and structure of the literary work. The most familiar example of this is the stream-of-consciousness novel.

Prose fiction—particularly modern and postmodern—looks into the nature of time both as a thematic motif and a formal device. The

importance of the concept cannot be underestimated if one wishes to fully understand the meaning of human existence and the depth of Wilfrido Nollado's use of time in his fictional works.

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