
Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



Discursing Cultural Trauma in Gregoria De Jesus' Memorial Poem for Andres Bonifacio Through Deconstruction of Grief Using New Historicism Approach

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Abstract: This study analyzes the grief in Gregoria de Jesus' or Ka Oryang's *Magmula Giliw Nang Lumisan Ka* which was penned during the pre-revolutionary period in Philippine history under Spain's rule in connection with the death of her husband Andres Bonifacio. As a memorial text, this poem was a tangible manifestation of cultural trauma experienced not only by Ka Oryang (De Jesus) but also by the members of a secret revolutionary society known as Katipunan, as a consequence of their horrendous experience surrounding the execution of Bonifacio—Katipunan's Supremo. In interrogating grief to discourse cultural trauma, the New Historicism approach is used for the proper identification of poem's meaning. This method necessitates that the elegy crafted by Oryang be viewed as a cultural product, rooted in its time and place through a text analysis that relate the poem to the dynamics of power, society, and ideology. It is in the poem's undercurrents that the cultural trauma surfaced necessitating some footnotes from the Philippine history for these lines to make sense.

Using the postulations in Cultural Trauma Theory (Alexander, 2004) which states that cultural trauma includes a group of people who continuously feel the impact of horrendous event and repeatedly get haunted by the said experience, Oryang, through the memorial poem, contributes to the support system necessary for





write. Witnesses of traumatic events often find themselves in a situation where the natural tendency to them is to articulate the inarticulable. That in the process of articulating the trauma through individual or collective narratives, there is the process of undoing oneself, the remaking of the self. When grief finds its way to a literary page as a short story, poem, eulogy, or memoirs, cultural trauma becomes more tangible, more discernible. Through grief, cultural trauma is given a human face, a human dimension. Grief gives a concrete form to trauma making it easier to grasp, to process, to write, to study and analyze. It is only possible to discourse cultural trauma, the moment grief becomes palpable, that is, when grief is being read on a printed page, when every detail of the human suffering is put into words, when grief is felt and expressed. As Shakespeare puts it in *Macbeth*: "*Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak whispers the other fraught heart and bids it break...*"

4. GREGORIA DE JESUS' TRAUMA UPON THE DEATH OF SUPREMO: A WIDOW'S WITNESSING AND ARTICULATION OF GRIEF

Gregoria de Jesus, popularly known as Oryang, had not been known to many, more so of the trauma she had been through. While historical accounts noted the role of Bonifacio in Katipunan, Oryang's own was not known to many. Her position in the revolutionary movement was very valuable because she held in custody all records of the society including names of its members, paraphernalia for campaign propaganda, and more importantly Katipunan's funds. She also created the Katipunan's own alphabet, a decoded language meant only for its core members. She was an endeared female figure



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she personally experienced. This horrendous event had recurred to her repetitively because she wrote about it and would share it with others. Literature, like this memorial tribute, enables us to bear witness to events that cannot be completely known and opens our ears to experiences that might have otherwise remained unspoken and unheard (Caruth, 1996).

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European Jewry: Essays on the History and Meanings.