# Her (Sub)version of History: The Works of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil

by

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# Her (Sub)version of History: The Works of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil

## Chapter 1. Introduction

### Part I. Research Question

With the proliferation of various postcolonial ideologies over recent decades, history has shifted from monoglossic to polyglossic discourse; hence, in addition to traditional accounts from former colonizers that would constitute long-established dominant discourse, alternate historical narratives have emerged from members of societies who would have previously been labelled as *subaltern*. These works are crucial, as these writers take back agency in the construction of their own historical narratives, often times creating a dialogue between colonial historiographies and their postcolonial counterparts. In the case of the Philippines, a former colony of both Spain (1521-1898) and the United States (1898-1946), history textbooks tend to present colonial rule in a non-critical light, suggesting that dominant historical discourse still narrates from a colonial perspective. Scholars like Reynaldo Ileto, author of the essay "Orientalism and the Study of Philippine Politics" (1999), make claims that American scholarship on the Philippines continues to contain an inherent "Othering" quality, analyzing Philippine history and politics through an Orientalist lens. Debates over the issue of epistemic authority are further complicated when one considers the position of Filipino scholars based in the United States or other countries abroad. Indeed, history textbooks written by Filipino scholars educated in North America often still overlook the more oppressive features of colonial rule in the Philippines. Regardless of whether or not one can ascertain a distinct dichotomy between "native" and "foreign" scholarly perspectives, what does remain clear is the necessity to draw from both narratives in order to ensure a discursive balance.

In the Philippines and elsewhere, former colonized subjects—many of whom are women—have produced written works that subvert existing narratives of colonial history. One literary genre that is prominently employed by these writers is the autobiography, of which the works of Filipino author Carmen Guerrero Nakpil (1922-) offer a compelling example. Although works of Philippine literature are often analyzed within historical, colonial, and nationalist contexts, there is little existing research which focuses on Nakpil or other Filipino women authors as operating within the genre of women's autobiography. Scholars like Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson, and many others have distinguished the ways in which women's life narratives functions compared with their male counterparts; hence, they provide valuable insights into the time and place within which they are set. As such, this study offers an analysis of the first book in Nakpil's autobiographical trilogy, *Myself, Elsewhere* (2006), in order to show how, in addition to offering a candid portrayal of the writer's life, the author accomplishes three things: (1) she establishes herself as a patriotic intellectual who possesses the authority to provide an alternate history of the Philippines under Spanish and American colonial rule; (2) she portrays the historical area of Ermita as an exceptional 'space' within which Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and Third Space are manifest to an intense degree; and (3) she deconstructs and critiques both forms of Western imperialism, while demonstrating how women's writing acts as a subversive tool by which to destabilize dominant discourse in the domain of colonial history.

Although Nakpil has established a name for herself in the world of Philippine letters, there is very little academic work which focuses on her writings. Born July 19, 1922 in Ermita, Manila, Nakpil came from a well-educated, upper class Tagalog family. She graduated from St. Theresa's College in Manila with a Bachelor of Arts

degree in 1942, and after World War II she would worked as an author, a public servant, and also a journalist at several publications, including the Evening News, The Philippines Herald, & the Manila Chronicle. She has also published 10 books, including *Woman Enough*, *A Question of Identity*, *History Today*, *The Philippines and the Filipinos*, *The Rice Conspiracy* (a novel), the *Centennial Reader* and *Whatever*; as well as a the wildly successful autobiographical trilogy *Myself, Elsewhere*; *Legends & Adventures*; and *Exeunt*. The book on which this analysis focuses, *Myself, Elsewhere* offers a window onto a transitional period of Philippine colonial history through a first-person female narrative, effectively providing an "alternate" history which responds to more pervasive historiography that narrates through the "Western gaze" typical of most Philippine historical narratives. Nakpil offers a critique of two periods of Philippine colonial rule from the vantage-point of the Filipino, female colonial subject. For these reasons, an analysis of Nakpil's writings proves invaluable; in sharing her version of events, she creates a counter-narrative which complements, corrects, or outfight refutes dominant narratives which originate outside of the Philippine colonial subject.

## Part II. Literature Review - Philippine Literature: Under the Shadows of Empire

### Primary texts

a) Carmen Guerrero Nakpil - *Myself, Elsewhere*. Nakpil Publishing, 2006.

The first of three autobiographical works, this book narrates the author's experiences growing up in Ermita, a district of Manila. It covers the period from the early 1920's to the end of World War II, when the Philippines were under colonial rule. The author begins with a physical description and brief history of Ermita,

followed by a recounting her family's own history in the town. Afterwards, Nakpil retells the circumstances of her own birth, and then proceeds to document major life events and more prominent memories from when she was growing up in vivid detail. Although Nakpil's memoir proceeds chronologically, her narrative is not temporally linear, as she often uses flashback and fast-forward in order to assign certain events with a historical context. In fact, Nakpil endeavours to do this with most details in her narrative.

Nakpil not only details the prevailing cultural norms that were characteristic of Ermita, but also provides a socio-political commentary on the historical events which shaped the lives of herself, her family, and her fellow citizens.

b) Carmen Guerrero Nakpil. *Woman Enough and Other Essays.* Ateneo de Manila, University Press, 1999.

As an accomplished journalist, Nakpil went on the publish essays on various topics, including women's roles, politics, history, and collective memory. These essays complement her memoirs, as they are textual reflections borne out of her own lived experiences. Many also elaborate on certain cultural topics mentioned in her other books.

c) Carmen Guerrero Nakpil - *Heroes and Villains.* Cruz Communications, 2010.

This purpose of this book is twofold: firstly, it aims to honour the heroic efforts of several prolific Filipinos who fought for independence from colonial rule against the Spanish and the Americans; secondly, it also denounces the actions of certain individuals from one of the groups of colonizers who acted in ways which

surreptitiously oppressed the Filipino people, despite claims that their intentions were noble.

**Secondary texts**

a) Linda Anderson, Paul John Eakin, Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson – Women's Autobiography

These scholars explain the genre of autobiography in all its forms, and its function within certain scholarly contexts. Anderson's book, entitled *Autobiography* (2001) provides a thorough introduction to the genre of autobiography. It offers a historical overview, and also discusses different types of autobiographical narrative, such as diaries, memoirs, and confessions. It also covers subjects such as women's writing, postcolonial writing, and modern criticism. Eakin, in *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative* (2008), outlines the structure by which "narrative identities" are created through the writing of the autobiography. By presenting examples from various texts, he explains how the process of writing an autobiography is an act of "self-determination" which is subject to external influences (such as social discourse, for example). This idea presents an alternate view of the autobiographical genre as fiction rather than fact. Smith and Watson's book, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001), provides a manual by which to read and analyze autobiographical texts. It talks about theoretical approaches to life writing, as well as its various components, such as memory, experience, and identity, among others. These scholars present different perspectives from which to contemplate Nakpil's text and, as will be demonstrated further on, categorize her writing as a classic example of women's writing and/or postcolonial writing.

b) Homi K. Bhabha: Mimicry, Ambivalence, and Third Space

In his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha discusses several concepts which aim to contextualize cultural hybridity within postcolonial societies. In addition to elaborating on subjects like colonial mimicry and cultural hybridity, he uses other terms such as "interstice" and Third Space in order to label the spaces located between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized subject, within which culture takes on a new form. All of these concepts, which are manifest throughout Nakpil's texts, give cultural references a theoretical significance, and elucidate the means by which these concepts in practice can lead to the subversion of the colonizer. Thus, Bhabha's theories offer a basis by which to analyze certain cultural practices portrayed in Nakpil's works.

Following, I will begin by doing a close reading in which I will first draw out textual elements that justify the placement of Nakpil's text within the genre of women's autobiography; these elements will then be used as tools for its historiographical contextualization. Then, once this has been done, I will focus on elements that reflect Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and Third Space. Once these features have been established, I will show how Nakpil's text is a subversive narrative which challenges dominant historical discourse prevalent in Western scholarship on the Philippines.

## Part IV. Research Scope and Hypothesis

As revealed in my analysis of Nakpil's writing, her memoirs portray her hometown as an area where Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and Third

Space were observable within the Philippine context in its highest concentration. It also elucidates how Philippine colonial subjects occupied different positions with the Third Space in direct relation to the "likeness" of their mimicry in comparison to the colonizer, thus creating further divisions among themselves. I propose that, ironically, it was precisely the authenticity of the characters' mimicry and the resulting ambivalence that it created within them that permitted for a counter-narrative as powerful as Nakpil's and others like her. I anticipated that her descriptions of certain historical events would be chronologically similar to traditional accounts, but disparate in terms of socio-political context and the motivations of the actors involved, while also being more replete in terms of its depiction of life as it carried on while these events took place. Nakpil's work possesses many of the characteristics associated with the genre of women's autobiography, allowing for an understanding of how the author's text accomplishes the task of constructing a counter-narrative by operating in accordance with the conventions of the genre. Furthermore, this historical reconstruction is one of the author's primary goals, and not a mere side effect of recounting memories from her younger years.

## Part III. Theoretical approach & Methodology

For this study, I will focus my analysis on Nakpil's book *Myself, Elsewhere*, while making occasional reference to other works. I will conduct a close textual analysis of the autobiography, and apply concepts derived from theoretical perspectives on autobiography – namely, theories pertaining to women's autobiography - concepts derived from postcolonial theory, especially Homi K. Bhabha and Edward W. Said, and examine Nakpil's text within the framework of Svetlana Boym's concepts of nostalgia. I will ground my reading in the colonial and postcolonial histories of the

Philippines, and engage with critical perspectives on Nakpil's and Philippine literature.

Transculturation is a prominent feature of Philippine colonial legacies. This reality is manifest through the presence of Spanish loanwords in local languages, the use of Spanish or Hispanicized surnames, Spanish culinary influences, the retention of certain customs, the pervasiveness of the Roman Catholic church, and even concepts of beauty. In my view, Homi K. Bhabha.'s concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and Third Space offer useful insights when analyzing the ways in which Spanish and American imperialisms influenced the Filipino subject. In Nakpil's work, as well as countless other works written in or about the period after the Spanish American War and before World War II, the critical reader can detect colonial mimicry - a term which refers to the adoption of colonized subjects of certain practices and behaviours from their colonizers - at its highest intensity. As such, I argue that one can also observe depictions of ambivalence; that is, instances which suggest the colonized subject finds certain aspects of the colonizer enviable, and other aspects contemptible. In fact, I contend that the higher the degree of "likeness" achieved by the Filipino subject vis-à-vis the Western colonizer, the more intense their feelings of ambivalence. I also propose that Bhabha's Third Space – the space within which the colonized interpret the cultural projections of the colonizer – evidences "degrees of separation" between groups of colonized subjects that are situated within that space. For instance, if one group of colonial subjects performs mimicry to a higher degree of "authenticity" than another group, a divide emerges between these groups, despite their belonging to the same larger category of colonial subjects. What's more, the discrepancy between the "authentic" version of culture enacted by the colonizer and

the "facsimile" produced by the colonized subject is at times imperceptible in the eyes of other subjects with less "authentic" cultural performances.

In his work *Orientalism* (1979), Edward W. Said explains how Othering was among the practices by which the colonizer declared their superiority and legitimized imposing power over their colonized subjects. Nakpil details the extent to which this concept was prevalent through the re-telling of historical events and daily brushes with colonial mentality. I believe that her alternate version of history not only speaks from the perspective of the "colonized subject", but also holds both Spain and the U.S.A. accountable for motives that are whitewashed in official versions of colonial discourse. Her written accounts also provide a living context within which she places her family and herself; the effect is both derisive and subversive. In another one of Said's works - *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996) - he creates a profile of the public intellectual by elaborating a list of traits and functions. Tellingly, an analysis of her narrative shows that Nakpil self-represents as a Filipino intellectual in Saidian terms both through descriptions of her coming-of-age, as well as her deconstruction of history and society.

I also show that *Myself, Elsewhere* can no doubt be described as resulting from the workings of nostalgia in one of the eldest women of letters of the Philippines; however, in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), scholar Svetlana Boym differentiates between two kinds of nostalgia: the first is "restorative nostalgia", and the second is "reflective nostalgia". If the "restorative" form yearns for a return to those long-lost truths in the name of tradition, "reflective nostalgia" is simply a fond revisiting of that which is cherished but gone for good (xviii). A close reading of Nakpil's text suggests that, despite the author's wistful recollections, her memoir is

more a bittersweet reflection - from which powerful lessons can be derived - than it is a call to reinstate the customs and practices of that time and place.

Generally, scholars have looked at the relation between literature and colonialism in the Philippines, but the focus has been on works of fiction written during the period itself. In his Ph.D. dissertation, *"This Humble Work": Puerto Rican and Philippine Literature between Spanish and United States Empires*, William S. Arighi applies Kantian theory to analyze literature produced in Puerto Rico and the Philippines during the periods immediately preceding and following the Spanish American War. He proposes that the content of these works was directly influenced by the colonial rule under which they were produced. Additionally, he presents various literary texts which prove that these texts reinforced the legitimacy of these colonial hierarchies, just as they, in turn, justified the "literariness" of these texts which depicted a Kantian "ideal subject" in an aesthetic that was dictated by Euro-American imperial agendas (Arighi 1). Arighi's work clearly establishes the link between literature and Empire; however, he focuses on how this relationship manifests within the creative works produced between 1849 and 1926 rather than how these works offer insight into the colonial settings within which they emerged. Furthermore, his analysis is centered exclusively on texts of fiction.

In her book *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980*, Caroline S. Hau examines the relationship between Philippine literature and nationalism from two perspectives. Like Arighi, she discusses how literature contains political symbolism, hence acting as a tool by which the Filipino subject could form a "national consciousness". Likewise, Hau also analyzes how literary texts reflect the social realities of the time, including cultural and political developments that were anti-colonial, documenting how some Filipino writers used literature as a means by

which to protest colonial injustices and incite revolt. In her own words, the importance of Philippine literature is based on "the capacity of literature to represent history truthfully, and the capacity of literature to intervene in history" (7). Citing examples from a breadth of well-known Philippine literary works, Hau (like Arighi) dedicates her analysis primarily to works of fiction rather than works that are non-fictional or biographical in nature like those of Nakpil.

With regards to Nakpil's texts, there has been very little academic writing that discusses the importance of her contribution to Philippine literature. Satoshi Nakano's article "Methods to Avoid Speaking the Unspeakable: Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, The Death of Manila, and Post-World War II Filipino Memory and Mourning" is among the few scholarly publications to focus on the works of Nakpil, as well as her sibling, Leon Ma. Guerrero. However, Nakano concentrates his analysis on the ways in which these texts depict the traumatic events of World War II and the destruction of Manila, and not the colonial periods prior to the war that mark the focus of this study.

Given that women's autobiography bears traits that distinguish it from its male counterpart (which I will delineate further in my analysis) and female writing in general is often examined in order to collect narrative details which are absent in dominant/male discourse, research which takes Philippine women's narrative and places it within a postcolonial framework fills a gap in Philippine Studies scholarship, both locally and internationally. Nakpil's writings offer a window onto a dynamic period of Philippine colonial history through first-person narrative. This type of writing not only assembles various "oral histories" within, it also provides an "alternate" history by virtue of its narrative perspective – that is, the lived experience of that history by the author as first a colonial subject, then a Filipino subject, and most especially as a woman. In fact, Nakpil offers a critique of two periods of

Philippine colonial rule from another perspective: that of the Filipino colonial subject. For these reasons, a research project which underscores the importance of both Nakpil's writings (and by extension women's autobiography) in the realm of Philippine postcolonial literature is long overdue.

## Chapter 2. *Myself, Elsewhere* – Individual Memoirs, Collective Memory

First appearing in *The Philippine Quarterly* in March 1962, Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's essay "I Remember Ermita" is a narrative reconstruction of her hometown. In this piece, she remarks how her the Ermita of her childhood seems "impossibly colonial and blissful" when contrasted against the preoccupations over Filipino identity that characterized the 1960s (*Woman Enough* 136). She recalls that during those days, no one fretted over fears of cultural hybridity, American cultural imperialism, or the loss of the Filipino spirit. She states: "If anyone had suggested that our culture was hybrid, my father would have hissed a trilingual imprecation that would have frightened away the most determined social analyst. Now I know that those were the years when we were most truly Filipino" (136). This essay would later be re-published alongside other journalistic selections in the book *Woman Enough and Other Essays* (1999), and key elements would re-appear in the book *Myself, Elsewhere* (2006), the first in Nakpil's autobiographical trilogy, which documents her experiences growing up and living in the neighbourhood of Ermita until the decimation of Manila at the end of the Second World War. The second book, *Legends & Adventures* (2007), begins in 1946, describing Nakpil's life after the end of the war in a newly independent Philippines, and ends in 1983. The third book, *Exeunt* (2009), once again continues its depiction from 1986, starting in the politically turbulent 1980's, and ending in 2009.

There are several layers to the significance of *Myself, Elsewhere* as a memoir. Most importantly, it can be classified according to its textual characteristics within the genre of women's biography. Estelle C. Jelinek has observed a number of differences between men's and women's autobiographies. She states that men's life writing

creates a distance between narrator and subject by combining a history of their respective eras with personal success stories, while presenting their subjects in an idealized and heroic light. These stories tend to be plenary, systematic, and chronologically linear (qtd. By Smith & Watson, "Introduction" 9). Women's writing embraces the intimate details of everyday life, exploring the connection between their subjects and other people. They are self-meditative, and seek to make sense of the subject's existence through conscious recollection. Furthermore, these texts are more fragmented, both temporally and discursively. Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson explain: "a pattern of discontinuity consistently characterizes women's autobiography just as it marks their lives" ("Introduction" 9). Jelinek's template has been criticized for essentializing woman's experience and ignoring the differences between different women's narratives while also making assumptions about the "truth" and "readability" of one's experience (9). Despite this, there is no denying that Nakpil's narrative possesses all the characteristics that Jelinek attributes to female autobiographical narratives; Nakpil's memoirs depict her daily life in vivid detail, and continually present how the narrator/subject comes into being as a direct result of the influence of her environment and the people that surround her. Moreover, the author jumps back and forth from different points in the past; I propose that the rhetorical function of flashback and fast-forward is to ascertain the centrality of Nakpil's trajectory within national history, as well as her worthiness as an autobiographical subject and Filipino intellectual.

Moreover, as a woman's autobiography, it narrates from beyond the confines dominant/male discourse. In her article "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", Elaine Showalter includes a diagram which depicts one model of male and female culture as proposed by Edwin Ardener. It depicts intersecting male and female circles that share

an overlapped area within which male culture is “dominant”, and female culture is “muted”. There is also a part of the female circle that does not overlap with the male one, which Ardener labels as a “wild” space. In Showalter’s words, this space “must be the address of genuinely women-centered criticism, theory and art, whose shared project is to bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the visible invisible, to make the silent speak.” Other feminist critics add that it is from here that “a woman can write her way out of the ‘cramped confines of patriarchal space’” (31).

So what, then, does this narrative position allow Nakpil to accomplish? In essence, the author is able to place her life narrative within a historical context; Nakpil’s writings offer a window onto a transitional period of Philippine colonial history through a first-person narrative. In order to better grasp the scope of Nakpil’s text, it is important to briefly recount the history of Spanish and American colonialism in the Philippines. The earliest documented European expedition to the Philippines was that led by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan. Sponsored by King Charles of Spain, his mission was to find a route to the Spice Islands by sailing West across the Atlantic Ocean to South America, then across the Pacific. His fleet left Seville on August 10, 1519, and landed on the island of Homonhon in the Visayas on March 16, 1521. He named the islands the Archipelago of San Lazaro. From there, the ships proceeded to the isle of Limasawa, and then onto the port of Cebu, where Magellan would form an alliance with its leader, Rajah Humabon, who agreed for himself and his wife to be baptized. Shortly thereafter, Rajah Humabon convinced Magellan to help him fight against another chieftain on the island of Mactan by the name of Lapulapu. On April 27, 1521, Magellan and his men arrived on the shore of Mactan, confident that it would be an easy victory; however, Lapulapu and his men

defeated the Spanish, slaughtering many, including Magellan, in the process. Another twenty-six of the remaining crew were also slaughtered by Humabon when Magellan's slave, Enrique de Malacca, informed him that Duarte Barbosa, one of the two leaders of the expedition, would not set Enrique free as written in Magellan's will. In the end, the survivors of the expedition sailed of in three ships, with only one ship and only eighteen members out of the original crew of 260 people arriving in Sanlúcar de Barrameda in 1522. It was a later expedition led by Miguel López de Legazpi, a Spanish Basque conquistador based in Mexico whose mission was to secure a base in Southeast Asia for Crown Prince Felipe (or Philip II), that would lead to the successful colonization and Christianization of the archipelago. Setting out on November 21, 1564 from Natividad, Legazpi and his men established a base in Cebu in 1565, and began forming alliances with datus (sovereign rulers or monarchs) in the Visayas. Later on, Legazpi heard about another settlement up north on the island of Luzon called Maynila. It was ruled by Rajah Suleiman who, along with other datus in the area were converts to Islam. A Spanish exploratory mission was led by Martin de Goiti and Juan de Salcedo in 1570. Although the Spanish had originally taken a conciliatory approach with Suleiman, fighting broke out between the two sides. The Spanish won, and Maynila was burned to the ground. The Spanish left Maynila and returned the following year, along with Legazpi, twenty-seven boats, and a large contingency of Spaniards and Visayan warriors - called *pintados* ("painted") in reference to their tattoos. Despite forming an alliance with other datus in the area, Suleiman was defeated on June 3, 1572, and Maynila became Manila – the seat of Spanish power in the colony, formally named "El Nuevo Reyno de Castila", but more commonly referred to as "Las Filipinas" (Francia 59). The Spanish ruled over the

islands for nearly three and a half centuries until colonial corruption and abuses began to incite revolt in the local populace.

In his novel *Noli Me Tangere* (Latin for “Touch Me Not”) in 1887, Philippine national hero Dr. Jose Rizal wrote a fictitious work which not only critiqued colonial society in the Philippines, but also documented the desire on the part of its Filipino characters for social and political change. This work, along with its sequel *El Filibusterismo* (also known in English as “The Subversive”) published in 189,1 would eventual condemn Rizal in the eyes of the Spanish government. In 1892, Rizal would also establish *La Liga Filipina* (“the Filipino League”), an association dedicated to reform in the Spanish colonial government. Shortly afterwards, the government disbanded the group and Rizal was deported to Dapitan on the southern island of Zamboanga. Rizal eventually volunteered his services as a medical doctor to administer to victims of yellow fever in Cuba, and was given a letter of recommendation by Governor General Ramón Blanco. Rizal, along with his lover Josephine Bracken left Dapitan for Cuba via Spain just after the Philippine Revolution broke out on August 1, 1896, but Rizal was captured in Barcelona and repatriated to Manila to stand trial for inciting rebellion and executed on December 30, 1896. Although Rizal was not directly involved in its planning, he was implicated because of his relationship to those who were.

The Philippine Revolution began when the Spanish authorities discovered the *Katipunan*, an anti-colonial secret organization. *Liga Filipina* member Andrés Bonifacio and some of his associates established a secret society called the *Katipunan*, whose aim was to gain independence from Spain through armed revolt. The discovery of the organization by the Spanish led to the Philippine Revolution of 1896.
The *Katipunan* organized a revolutionary government, and led a failed attack on the

capital city of Manila. This spurred sporadic conflict all over the colony. Following Bonifacio's death in 1897, Emilio Aguinaldo became leader of the *Katipunan*.
The signing of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato on December 14, 1897 promised a truce between Spanish colonial Governor-General Fernando Primo de Rivera and Aguinaldo, after which the latter, along with other Filipino officers, went into self-exile in Hong Kong. However, conflicts persisted to a lesser degree.

On April 25, the Spanish American War of 1898 was declared following the sinking of a U.S. ship off the coast of Cuba. The United States navy launched a blockade of Cuba, and on May 1, Commodore George Dewey led the U.S. Navy's Asiatic Squadron to defeat the Spanish army in the Battle of Manila Bay. Forging an unofficial alliance with the United States, Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines on May 19 in order to resume attacks against the Spanish, with the rebels gaining control of the majority of the islands with the exception of Manila by June. On June 12, Aguinaldo issued the Philippine Declaration of Independence and formed a new government under his leadership. Filipinos thought that three centuries of colonial rule in the islands was over; however, the Treaty of 1898, which officially ended both the Spanish–American War and Spanish rule in the Philippines, also ceded control of the Philippines and other territories to the United States. The United States took possession of the archipelago by paying Spain $20 million. On February 4, 1899, fighting broke out between the Filipino and American forces, resulting in what was called the Battle of Manila. Many historians believe the Philippine-American War, which lasted from 1899 to 1902, to be the first counterinsurgency fought by the United States. The Philippines would remain under U.S. colonial rule until the end of World War II, first becoming a commonwealth in 1935, and then gaining full independence in 1946.

Nakpil's text offers a critique of these two periods of Philippine colonial rule from the vantage-point of the Filipino, female colonial subject. For these reasons, an analysis of her writings proves invaluable; in sharing her version of events, she creates a counter-narrative which complements, corrects, or outfight refutes dominant narratives which originate outside of the Philippine colonial subject. Homi K. Bhabha concept of Third Space allows me to examine the place from where the colonial subject interprets the cultural projections of the colonizer as the Third Space. This concept can be summarized as follows: the "first space" is the one within which the native people and their culture dwell; the "second space" is made of colonial structures, including culture and the organization of the colonized society; then the Third Space is where articulation takes place between the first and second spaces. Bhabha explains: "The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as integrated, open, expanding code" (Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity" 156). Also, just as in any autobiographical work, Nakpil first asserts her own "exceptionality" – a quality that is key for any author who wishes to present themselves as worthy of being an autobiographical subject; once this is done, she presents herself as an intellectual – one that is worthy of the illustrious family from which she hails, and one who is qualified to speak with authority on the state of Philippine affairs over the course of the most recent century, most especially the end of Spanish colonialism and the imposition of American hegemony in the first decades of the 20$^{th}$ century.

Sidonie Smith summarizes the complexity of life writing by pointing out that the writer takes on the roles of observer and subject. Citing poet-critic Stephen Spender, she points out that the life narrator must deal with two "lives". She states: "One is the

self that others see – the social, historical person, with achievements, personal appearance, social relationships…but there is also the self-experienced only by that person, the self felt from the inside that the writer can never get 'outside of'" (*Reading Autobiography* 5). It is this duality which divides scholars on how self-narratives ought to be perceived by the reader. In his article "Autobiography as De-Facement," Paul de Man argues that autobiographies are by nature works of fiction, since a self-narrator must textually render his lived experiences into figurative language, thus resulting in *prosopopeia* (literally "the giving of a face") (cited by Anderson 12). This notion implies that an autobiography is incapable of presenting "truth", but instead is only capable of "representations of truth" – in other words, it cannot be treated as non-fiction. Similarly, in his book *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative*, Paul John Eakin describes the autobiographical narrative as an act of "self-construction"; a process in which the person self-narrate while adhering to set of rules. Furthermore, he points out that there are consequences when these rules are not followed, as they are policed by both others and ourselves. (24). These rules are imbued from childhood, and dictate what and how to self-narrate. Eakin refers to this concept as a "narrative identity system" (31). Conversely, Philippe Lejeune insists that in an autobiography, the protagonist/narrator and the author are one and the same – a criterion that he refers to as "the autobiographical pact", and which allows the theorist to conceive the genre as non-fiction (17).

Hence, the version of autobiography proposed by Eakin, which entails a necessary disparity between author and protagonist in the name of regulated convention, differs from that of Lejeune, in which the author's enunciation via the protagonist is accepted by the reader as authentic, with inaccuracies due to memory lapse or misperception being seen as involuntary discrepancies that do not call its

truthfulness into question. Although the title of Nakpil's work - *Myself, Elsewhere* – appears to suggest a narrative distance between author/narrator and protagonist, it is not one that exists between a self-narrator and their mask. In this case, it alludes to a static "self" maintained across changing times and landscapes. As I will prove later on through textual analysis, Nakpil discursive intentions are made explicit throughout her work; that is, far from assuming a fictitious persona, Nakpil makes it her aim to address and counter inaccuracies in colonial history, as well as to affirm her identity as a public intellectual, one whose trajectory can be verified as per the contract that binds the identities of author, character and narrator in autobiography.

Furthermore, Nakpil's narrative consistently shows that she consciously chooses not to abide by the set of rules mentioned by Eakin (and suffers the consequences as a result) – which allows her to narrate without "systematic" restraint. However, it must be noted that her autobiography takes the form of a memoir – not a diary – and is thus spared the immediacy of any socio-cultural impositions that prevailed during the periods they narrate. For these reasons, it appears that Nakpil's text most closely resembles Lejeune's assessment, with the author's fidelity to the "autobiographical pact" manifest through her conscious self-colocation within historical and social contexts.

At the same time, in order to justify the writing of an autobiographical work, the author must be able to justify that their existence possesses a particular exceptionality; this is so as to distinguish oneself and one's story as standing apart from other mundane existences which do not merit the composition of a life narrative. Although condemned by scholars like de Man who might equate this type of textual posturing with fiction, rhetorical strategies which are conducive to the construction of exceptionality are vital to this end.

How does Nakpil construct her own exceptionality? Indeed, the author acknowledges she and the people that lived in her hometown enjoyed a privileged existence, though not through any directed effort to do. She notes: “While we lived there, none of us felt that we were living better, different, portentous, or exceptional lives. The even tenor of our days was not marred by thoughts of our uniqueness or significance” (6). This statement suggests that the writer, and by extension the people that surrounded her, came into an existence of note by virtue of locale. Through her descriptions of her hometown, Nakpil constructs the area of Ermita as an exceptional “space” – which I will analyze further later on - within which to situate her own narrative. However, space is but one element upon which Nakpil establishes her subjectivity. A second, more direct influence is the family into which she was born.

Nakpil self-represents as an intellectual; one whose thirst for knowledge is inspired by a family of intellectuals with patriotic inclinations. In doing so, she gives herself the credence necessary to critique Philippine socio-political history with authority. In his lecture *Representations of the Intellectual*, Edward W. Said defines the characteristics of the intellectual. He states that the intellectual is a person who is “endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a view, an attitude, philosophy, or opinion to, as well as for, a public” (28). Having worked as a career journalist, author, and public servant, it is clear that Said’s description could easily be applied to Nakpil, who spent a lifetime establishing a reputation, a recognizable discourse, and a public following. Finally, the author details the way in which her vocation and professions interacted throughout the course of her career, creating rhetorical complicity among the three.

**Part I. I, We, The Nation – Weaving Together Identities**

In the genre of autobiography, an author must present their life writing as a textual representation of an exceptional existence. In men's autobiography, this goal becomes the driving force of the narrative, and is carried out throughout the text's entirety Smith, *Reading Autobiography* 96; 112). If one assumes that Nakpil's work follows the formula of women's autobiography, how, then, does she assert her own exceptionality? Since *Myself, Elsewhere* focuses on the author's formative years, Nakpil spends time documenting the people, places, and events that shaped her as a person. Although much can be said for Nakpil's accomplishments – which are detailed to a greater extent in the sequels *Legends & Adventures* and *Exeunt* – she attributes much of her exceptionality to serendipitous factors, such as the time and place of her birth, and the family she was born into. In order to make sense of her own personal trajectory, Nakpil goes to great lengths to list the characteristics, achievements of her illustrious family members, as well as her interactions with them. In doing so, she demonstrates that she comes from a family of intellectuals and patriots. Her family, the Guerrero clan, had lived in Ermita for several generations by the time the author was born, with each member of her family being exceptional in their own right. Nakpil says: "Our forebears were recorded in the parish archives as *indios de este pueblo*, the town's natives. They owned no land other than the small plots on which their houses stood. The family's capital was, apparently, education and talent to go around"[1] (*Myself* 4). Indeed, as Nakpil goes about her own self-construction, she also attributes different aspects of her own self as being due to the influence of the members of her own family.

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[1] Similar to how the term was used in the Americas to refer to the local indigenous population, *indio* was what the Spanish used in the Philippines to refer to a local person of Malay-stock; Spanish born in the Philippines were called *insulares*, whereas Spaniards from Spain were called *peninsulares*. Chinese were referred to as *sangleys*, and people of mixed ancestry were called *mestizos*.

She explains that her grandfather, Leon Maria Guerrero, had been among the first batch of students at Ateneo Municipal (now known as Ateneo de Manila University), and had a licentiate and doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Santo Tomas; her great-uncle, Lorenzo Guerrero, had been awarded the Spanish Governor General prize (but rejected it because he was required to wear Western suit, which he didn't own nor see the need for). Her father, Dr. Alfredo León Guerrero, and mother, Filomena Francisco de Guerrero, were both graduates of the Liceo de Manila (now Manila Central University). Alfredo León Guerrero had also spent a few years in the United States for medical school at Washington University in Missouri. Filomena Francisco, prior to marrying Dr. Guerrero, had owned her own pharmacy, and was renowned as being the First Filipina Woman Pharmacist; as such, she had been labelled by the press as "*Esperanza de la Patria*" (18). Nakpil reveals that her mother was also a member of the seminal "*Asociación Feminista de Filipinas,"* counting her as one of the early feminists (18). Her older brothers, Leon Ma. Guerrero II (or Leoni, as he was called) and Mario Xavier Guerrero, both attended Ateneo for the entirety of their schooling. Leoni would eventually spend his career as a journalist, author, lawyer and diplomat, whereas Mario would eventually become a physician and college professor. Indeed, as a family, the members of the Guerrero clan were highly educated.

In addition, however, they were also raised to be patriotic Filipinos. Nakpil declares that she acquired a firm sense of identity from her family, stating: "I have always known who and what I am and have been free from the qualms and confusions others have had to wrestle with. What a valuable gift from the instinctive pedagogy of my elders!" (23). Nakpil reveals that as an infant, her mother would sing her to sleep with one of two lullabies: one was the poem *El último adiós* (The Last Farewell),

written by national hero Dr. Jose Rizal, and the other melody was that of a popular American campaign song in 1899 called “There’ll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town, Tonight” but new, satirical lyrics in Pidgin English substituted the original ones. They were: “One, two, t’ree, Americanong na sawi (One, two, three, the heartbroken American )/ Four, Fie, Americanong namatay; (Four, five, the American died)/Mini-hot tie, hot-tie, tonigh’” (21). She reveals that Filipinos would sing the song in ridicule of both the imposition of the English language, as well as the numerous American casualties during the Filipino-American War (21). Not only is this song an embodiment of anti-American sentiment, it also symbolizes how language was appropriated by the Filipinos as a tool by which to subvert colonial discourse (which I will analyze in further detail later on). She also recalls that growing up when her brothers’ playfighting would get out of hand, one of their aunts would call out “Valiente Filipinos!” (brave Filipinos!), and the dispute would immediately be de-escalated. Likewise, when Nakpil herself got hurt, the phrase “Valiente Filipina!” (brave Filipina!) would be used to get her to be strong. She reflects on the significance of these incidents, and concludes that it was an early form of character reinforcement. She says:

> I would wonder why other wailing children who had hurt themselves would be kissed and consoled with tender endearments, while I was forced to suppress my tears, dust myself off and remember I was Filipina. Why did being Filipino include so much pain and suffering? It took me a long time to realize that all those displays of tough, patriotic love were meant to inoculate me against the rigors that face all other Filipinos. (23)

Thus, starting from a young age, the development of Nakpil’s personal and moral character was consistently placed within the larger context of national identity;

furthermore, the framing of hardship as an integral part of the Filipino experience would accord Nakpil the resilience to take on the challenges that would come her way by consequence of her being a Filipino woman.

Nakpil provides another example of how the conditioning she and her siblings received as children would influence them in adulthood. She tells about how her brother, Leoni, would be called on to perform for visitors to the home. He would recite the following Spanish poem: "*Moreno pintan a Cristo, Morena la Magdalena, Morenos los de mi tierra, Viva la gente morena!*" (They painted a brown-skinned Christ, and a brown-skinned Mary Magdalene, Brown-skinned are those from my land, Love live the brown-skinned people!) (23). It was an ode to a dark-skinned Christ, a dark-skinned Mary Magdalene, and dark-skinned people from all over. Nakpil says that Leoni was the "darker" sibling compared to Mario, whose nickname was "Blancoy" (or "Whitey"). She and Leoni were "Malay-colored", while Gemma and Mario had "the right shade of light pigmentation" (19). Nakpil notes that skin colour was a "paradoxical affliction" of her mother's; however, this may have been because Nakpil's mother knew that her children's skin pigmentation would accord them different privileges in the outside world. Nakpil reveals that Leoni would eventually become a "radical nationalist", and that while working as 7$^{th}$ Philippine President Magsaysay's Foreign Affairs Under-secretary, he would be sent by that president's American advisors "on exile to Europe" in response to an "Asia for the Asians" policy speech (24).

Aside from her nuclear family, Nakpil says that both her grandfathers were also fiercely loyal to their country. Her paternal grandfather, Leon Ma. Guerrero - whom she refers to as *Abuelito* (Spanish for 'granddaddy') or by the nickname *Bitong* – roughly three decades prior to working as a scientist and botanist at the Bureau of

Science and becoming Dean of Pharmacy at the University of Santo Tomas, he had been a member of the Malolos Congress (the Revolutionary Government of the Philippines from 1898-1899), he was rector at the *Universidad Científica y Literaria*, and he was also a member of President Emilio Aguinaldo's cabinet during the First Philippine Republic (1899-1901). He accompanied Filipino forces retreating from the Americans, teaching them how to make gunpowder from local plants, and for a time was a prisoner of war held at Intramuros (the walled neighbourhood of Manila which historically was the seat of the Spanish colonial government). In the words of the author, "[h]e was a full-blooded, home-grown, *Indio-Filipino ilustrado* (or native-Filipino intellectual) and one of the last of his generation to die" (26).[2] Her maternal grandfather, Gabriel Beato Francisco, who she affectionately refers to as *Lolo Abeng*, would write novels, plays and histories, and only spoke to Nakpil in Tagalog when the family would visit her mother's relatives in Sampaloc upon discovering that she was weaker in the national language than she was in Spanish. She would discover later in life from a book about Tagalog literature that during the Filipino-American War, her grandfather had been an *insurrecto* (rebel) playwright, and that during one performance of his anti-American plays, the American police came and shut everything down before arresting everyone present. Nakpil suggests that this might explain her own political ideologies, stating: "How I wish I had known that earlier. I might have cited DNA when, in 1966, the NBI…denounced me on the floor of the Senate as a subversive" (27). This comment underlines the notion that Nakpil's own trajectory makes her worthy of her ancestral lineage in addition to her own exceptionality. It is also an example of how the author uses fast-forward as a narrative technique to make connections between people and events across time, and

[2] All translation from Spanish or Tagalog to English are my own.

more importantly, to establish clear connections between the trajectory of her ancestors and her own. She also credits Lolo Abeng for sending his two daughters to the first co-educational school, *Liceo de Manila*, to receive an education, which eventually led to Nakpil's mother becoming the first Filipina chemist-pharmacist, and her sister, Maria del Pilar, to becoming the first Filipina lawyer. Nakpil relates the importance of this event, saying "They were only a few of many thousands of Filipino women who firmly established the fact of gender-equality in the professions long before it was debated and won in the West" (28). After graduating from university, these two sisters and their cousin, Felisa Francisco, would also use their degree-holder status to found a school for women called *Centro Escolar de Señoritas*. This school was eventually registered as a business and the management was taken over by others, becoming today's Centro Escolar University (155). Thus, Nakpil's family lineage intertwined with knowledge and political consciousness; furthermore, this aspect is not limited to the men of the family. As such, the exceptionality of the women in the Guerrero clan is due to the fact that the family's intellectual legacy was never defined by perceived gender roles.

After the author enumerates the both intellectual accomplishments of her family members and the ways in which they exhibit their love of country, it becomes evident that, in one sense, Nakpil does not need "overcome" the circumstances of her birth to become exceptional, but instead that she is cut from an exceptional cloth, and her trajectory has emulated that of her forebearers. Beginning with her grandparents, and then passed down from one generation to the next, Nakpil and her brothers were born into an family that was both *indio* (native Filipino) and *ilustrado* (intellectual); this fact was central to their collective and individual identities. In this way, Nakpil

textually interlaces her individual identity with that of her family, and then between her family and the nation.

**Part II. Flashback and Fast-forward – Temporal Layering and Women's Narrative**

If men's autobiographies omit the smaller details of everyday life in favour of grander narratives, Nakpil uses these details as points of departure; she then delves into their historical significance, or skips forward into the future to give these somewhat mundane items a future relevance. For example, when she describes her childhood playmate Lucing, the daughter of her grandmother's cook, she first talks about how they were almost the same age, and that growing up her duty was to let Nakpil win at any games they played; then, Nakpil mentions how Lucing elopes with a neighbourhood boy with the surname Cruz around the age of the 13 or 14, returning a year later with a baby that she has named Gemma (after the author's sister who had died in infancy) – the baby would bear the same name as Nakpil's own daughter born several years later; Nakpil then mentions that she paid Lucing a monthly pension until her death at the age of 70. Even after Lucing's death, her children would come by and ask Nakpil for money, which she would ultimately give them (9). The author uses this writing technique of description followed by flashback or fast-forward not only with people, but also places, events and conversations.

Nakpil's uses the same formula when she describes their home at 117 A. Mabini Street. After a vivid portrayal of the atmosphere growing up in that house, she then talks about when the house was built in 1905 or 1906 by her grandfather to replace an earlier house with a thatched roof and lists all of its features. She describes an old photograph of the house, saying: "It shows a traditional, two-story frame-house

typical of the American colonial period in the country high, wide, and handsome, with a row of louvered front windows, a downstairs and a front gate topped with broad-leaved vines" (11). She then talks about the ways in which it was remodelled in the 1930s, which included the addition of a third floor, an extra three bedrooms and bathrooms, a rooftop garden, and a patio. Afterwards, she fast-forwards again, saying: "This was the house I was married from, when I was 20. Shortly afterwards, it was bombed by an American plane, and shelled again and again by U.S. artillery, torched by the Japanese during the Battle for Manila in 1945" (13). In this way, Nakpil layers historical contexts onto certain items in order to create certain effects on her reader. The Guerrero home is a synecdoche of Ermita; its construction, modification, and eventual destruction all mirror the changes that the entire town underwent during the U.S. colonial period. More specifically, I propose that this is an example of the element of chronological "discontinuity" typical of women's autobiography mentioned by Jelinek; going forward, Nakpil constructs images of people and places in the past, then later presents their deterioration or disappearance. This both assigns a historical context, while also weaves together fragments of memory.

She also uses this technique to make a commentary on past and present versions of certain customs and traditions. Nakpil compares the *Santacruzan* (a popular Philippine festival) as she experienced it during her youth against the modern version. Although she admits that her family did not consider it represents a form of "folk Catholicism" and not a religious festival that required stringent forms of piety, Nakpil states: "It struck a chord in my wild heart" (60). She enjoyed the "native" aspect of the festival, which was a folkloric interpretation of characters from the Bible. She notes than in the religious procession, there would be the *Abanderada*, a young girl charged with carrying a Filipino flag; a brown-robed Methuselah (*Matusalén*) from

the Old Testament with an entourage of Aetas; a white robed *Justicia* (Justice); the Three Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity (*Fe, Esperanza*, and *Caridad*); Judith with the head of Holofernes; the Divine Pastor (*Divina Pastora*); Queen Convicted (*Reina sentenciada*), who represents early Christian martyrs; *Abogada* (Advocate/Lawyer), defender of the weak; Mythical Rose (also called *Reina de las flores* or Queen of the Flowers), carrying a bouquet; and finally Empress Helena, who represents St. Helena, carrying a cross and accompanied by her son, Constantine. At the very end of the procession, the Holy Cross would emerge, throughout which everyone repeats the refrain *Dios te Salve* (God Saves) and Hail Mary while guitar music is played (60). She comments on how modern-day version of the *Santacruzan* by saying: "Happily, I did not know then that it would become a profane sex-loaded coupling of beauty contestants and their boyfriends, smirking through the media-covered cakewalk" (61). In this passage, Nakpil first indulges the reader in a fond memory of the Santacruzan of her youth retold through the lens of nostalgia before presenting a critique of that same cultural tradition in its modern-day consumerist form.

In other words, Nakpil's reflections in *Myself, Elsewhere* re-create pre-war Ermita in order to superimpose layers of past and present. Nakpil states: "Today's educators and pundits write that Filipinos are befuddled only because they don't know their own history" (24). Nakpil's memoirs, and women's biography in general, allow for the author to make sense of a life lived through nostalgic rumination. Svetlana Boym differentiates between two kinds of nostalgia, which she refers to as a "historical emotion": the first is "restorative nostalgia", and the second is "reflective nostalgia". She states:

> Restorative nostalgia stresses *nóstos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *álgos*, the longing

> itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately… Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt. (xviii)

*Myself, Elsewhere* can be classified as the latter rather than the former. Nakpil admits: "I write about my years in Ermita before World War II, not with the usual maudlin, nostalgic weakness for the past, but in profound affection for that lost place and time" (*Myself* 6). Thus, although her memoir does often favour certain aspects of the past over its counterparts in the present, her purpose is not to have these items reinstated. Indeed, she admits that when she began working as a journalist after the end of World War II, her set of Ermita manners was an "inconvenience", misconstrued by male colleagues as flirtation (52). She also reports that her brothers Leoni and Mario attempted to maintain semblances of the Ermita lifestyle in their old age; but when Nakpil would visit bearing dishes like the ones they would eat in their youth, or call at times that were deemed inappropriate according to Ermita's intricate code of social conduct, the apparent discrepancies from "what they remembered" and the futility of their efforts to observe Ermita customs long after it had been destroyed would prove to be a source of distress (53). Herein, she acknowledges the impracticality of restorative nostalgia.

In the same vein, Nakpil is in many aspects a product of Ermita; however, her exceptionality lies in the fact that her umbilical cord to this place is gradually severed, and she comes into her own being. In this way, she is unlike the other female figure in their nuclear family, her mother, and also unlike her siblings. In Nakpil's mother

Filomena, the reader sees a woman who was educated, pious, and a devoted wife and mother who initially struggled with conforming to Ermita social norms when she married into the family (140). In author's words, "[s]he had a fierce, proud, pugnacious and generous heart caged within the bars of eccentric Ermita and the Guerrero clan" (19). Likewise, she remarks that her brothers, "fulfilling the Ermita curse of solitude and loneliness" in their final years, were "Ermitenses to the very end" (53).

# Chapter 3 Her Sub(version) of History – Female Narrative

## Part I. Ermita – Nakpil's Narrative Third Space

In his work *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha uses several terms in order to analyze the effects of imperialism in colonized societies, including cultural hybridity (also referred to as transculturation), and colonial mimicry - a discourse whose aim was to turn the colonized subject into something that resembled the colonizer, but was still distinguishable as being different. These concepts, along with Third Space, are useful when analyzing Nakpil's portrayal of Ermita in the pre-war period; although readily observable in various aspects of Philippine culture, the degree to which these characteristics are manifest within Nakpil's text portrayal of Ermita is the precisely the basis upon which the author bases her claims of exceptionality. In a broader sense, Nakpil's text transforms Ermita into a geographical representation of Bhabha's Third Space, while emphasizing the ways in which its residents lived a lifestyle that exemplified colonial mimicry, cultural hybridity, and as a result, cultural ambivalence. I would go further and propose that Nakpil's Ermita suggests the possibility of a hierarchy of Third Spaces whose exceptionality depends directly on the authenticity of its mimicry, as does the intensity of its cultural ambivalence.

Nakpil informs the reader that prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the archipelago was not one state, but rather housed several small kingdoms nestled amid abundant natural beauty. The Malay people that inhabited the islands were sea-farers, warriors, farmers and artisans, and engaged in trade with the Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and Egyptians (Nakpil 40). Then, after the arrival of the Spanish, the country came into being, with the gradual cementing of its borders through treaties and conquest serving as a geographical designation by which to delineate Spanish territory from the rest of

colonized Asia, and within which to carry out Spain's colonial objectives. Nakpil depicts the arrival of the Spanish colonizers from the gaze of the colonized:

> Bearded white men appeared in their caravelles, with arquebuses and canons, set their flags and crosses on the land, claiming the country for the Spanish king. His name was Philip II (it became our name). A son of the Hapsburg emperor, he was an imperialist and an evangelist, with an obsession to Christianize and colonize. The explorers drank blood-compacts of friendship, baptized the natives, took up the sword and, turned conquerors and stayed to rule. (41)

Throughout the book, Nakpil makes repeated mention of the fact that the name of Philip II became the name of their country. The Philippines did not exist as a nation prior the arrival of the Spanish conquerors; thus, the author's emphasis alludes to the inseparability between the country and its colonial history, which is preserved in nomenclature.

Notably, Nakpil's historical account of how the Philippines came into existence resonates with Edward W. Said's theory of *Orientalism*. Said explains: "To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact" (39). This was indeed the case for the Philippines; in fact, one might say that the nation, and by extension Ermita, was borne out of Orientalism. In a similar fashion, she points out that Ermita was originally a Tagalog fishing village called Lagyo, and was discovered shortly after Spanish soldiers lead by Miguel López de Legazpi seized rule of Maynila from Sulayman, its Muslim ruler; Malate, on the other hand, was a more recent development, its main area an American subdivision with streets named after U.S. states in commemoration of the American brigades who came from them to fight in the

Filipino-American War (2). Hence, Nakpil creates a historical parallel between Ermita and Spain (and likewise between Malate and the United States). Nakpil transition from Lagyo to Ermita by recounting one of the earliest instances of transculturation on the part of the Spanish on the day Legazpi's men discovered it. As a group of soldiers were walking along the beach, they discovered a group of local villages worshipping a wooden *anito* (an idol). The Spanish believed it to be an image of the Virgin Mary and carried the idol away (2). Later on, this idol would be renamed *Nuestra Senora de Guia*, (Our Lady of Guidance) and would become both the patron saint of the town and protectress of the Spanish royal navy. Nakpil adds that for centuries, the residents of Ermita would await the return of the galleon ships arriving on its beaches from Acapulco. Thus, the author presents the idea that Ermita has been in intimate contact with the Spanish since shortly after their rise to power in the area; this explains the pervasiveness of Spanish culture in Ermita, This distinction also justifies the stronger opposition of many Ermitenses against American colonialism, while proffering the historical and geographical happenstance against which to support both Nakpil's authority to critique Spanish colonialism (due to Ermita's relationship with Spain) and its American counterpart, and her capacity to compare the two against each other.

It is important to note that Nakpil situates the townspeople's identity within a historical context. Nakpil begins the book by declaring that the Ermita of her childhood in no way resembled the district with the same name in modern-day Manila, which she refers to as "garish", but was instead a colonial town which she likened to other seaside locales, such as Casablanca, Acapulco, and Nice (1). The author goes to great pains to describe the town's architecture and infrastructure, rife with both European influence and American modernity, as well as mention by name the various hotels, schools, and government buildings and other important landmarks that could

be found within its jurisdiction. She also remarks that Ermita was multicultural, with Spanish, British, Chinese, Filipino Malays, *mestizos* and Americans included among its residents (2). As witnessed through the author's comparison of pre- and post-war Ermita, one technique Nakpil uses to highlight Ermita's character is by talking about what it was not. In addition to enumerating its charms, she is also quick to distinguish the town from its neighbour, Malate, explaining that each town has its own "charms and peculiarities" (2). Nakpil states:

> Ermitenses bristle when people mistake their town for Malate. It is a historical sulk. Malate is a corruption of Maalat, referring to the place with the salt beds; while Ermita was named after a crusty old Spanish hermit monk who had camped on its beach for so long that the town became known as Hermita, or Ermita, for Hermitage, nothing so mundane as salt beds. (3)

Nakpil also credits Ermita for possessing a characteristic charm which also contributed to its exceptionality among the *arrabales* (neighbourhoods or quarters) that surrounded the part of Manila known as Intramuros. She declares: "Ermita had 'it', the x factor, charisma…being from Ermita gave us an immediate and unexplainable, social cachet, although I never gave it a thought" (4).

However, if Nakpil's birth into the Guerrero family was itself incidental, so was the time at which occurred. Nakpil notes: "The year I was born, 1922, was midway in the half century of American formal rule of the Philippines, equidistant from 1898 (when Spain ceded to the U.S. a colony it no longer held) and 1946 (when America granted independence to the Philippines)" (5). In this instance, Nakpil presents her birth as being historically serendipitous. As such, the reader becomes conscious of Nakpil's narrative intent: to establish herself as possessing all the necessary traits to speak authoritatively about Philippine history based on her own lived experiences and those

of the people close to her. It also becomes clear that she possesses the traits of a public intellectual, which I categorize in Saidian terms. Said elaborates: “So in the end it is the intellectual as a representative figure that matters-someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers” (12). In a sense, Nakpil makes it a point to present her “barriers” as anecdotal scarecrows within her text before subsequently knocking them down.

What is the nature of these barriers? To answer this question, it necessary to first classify Nakpil as an intellectual. Since she goes to great lengths to create a “nativist” discourse which runs parallel to colonial historical narratives, I would classify Nakpil as a nationalist intellectual; one who, by her own accounts, was born at a key point in history, and surrounded by influential family members whose experiences contributed to the formation of Nakpil’s own cultural identity. Nakpil reveals that some of the men that were around when she was growing up had known Filipino national hero Dr. Jose Rizal personally, while others had witnessed his execution by firing squad at Luneta. Still others had served in Emilio Aguinaldo’s insurgent government, or participated in the war against the United States (5). Notably, Nakpil’s memoir does not begin with Nakpil herself. As indicated earlier, the entire first chapter of the book is nearly totally dedicated to the reconstruction of Ermita and its history, followed by her family’s history as one of its long-established families. It is only once this has been accomplished that Nakpil places herself at the center, creating the sense that she was part of something much bigger than herself that existed long before she came into the world. Furthermore, she became her own person because of and in relation to her environment, family and community, and not, as is often the case in male autobiography, despite it.

In the same way, Nakpil describes her coming in the world as occurring in a similarly matter-of-course fashion. She states that her mother's water had broken during mass, so she hurried home, only to find that her husband, a doctor, was off at work. She called her cousin Laling, a nurse, to come into Ermita from the town of Sampaloc to help her. Nakpil says: "Mamá said she had decided to lie in bed and await developments, when, without any effort on her part, there I was" (8). As a colicky baby who would cry inconsolably through the night, Nakpil remarked: "Only a few days old, and I was already a nuisance!" (7). One interpretation could be that, from day one, Nakpil depicts herself as being "self-born"; thus, these descriptions of her infant years are both an allusion to her own self-construction, as well as a way to show hints of her determined nature in her earliest days.

**Part II. Subversive & Discursive Intent**

Upon reading her text, there is no doubt that Nakpil's discursive subversion is intent, and not mere circumstance. Indeed, she has commented to this effect in her other works. In the introduction of her book *Heroes & Villains* (2010), a collection of seventeen Philippine historical tales, she writes: "I've been called a 'revisionist' because the stories I tell maybe somewhat different from common lore or colonial textbooks. But I've made sure they are truer to the facts than the traditional accounts read by many Filipinos" (*Heroes* i). As referred to earlier, it is important to understand that both foreign and Filipino scholars alike have composed versions of Philippine history which resemble each other – most notably in their attitude toward foreign rule – due to the fact that they narrate through the same overlying dominant historical discourse. In his article "Hegemonic Tool?: Nationalism in Philippine history textbooks, 1900–2000," Rommel A. Curaming examines 15 Philippine history

textbooks used in schools over the course of the 20th century. He mentions how textbooks are a tool by which modern states create a cohesive notion of the nation-state, and with pedagogical scholarship in the Philippines and elsewhere, this basic notion presupposes that the way in which nationalism is presented in school textbooks allude to the interests of society's most powerful groups. Curaming elaborates by saying: "The dominant groups control the state apparatuses, including the school system, and they design and operate them in ways favorable to their interest…[they] are aware of the shape of the discourse that serve or are compatible with their interests" (442). With specific regards to colonialism, Curaming notes that a favorable attitude towards the Americans and the Spanish was common among all these texts with even Teodoro Agoncillo – arguably the most nationalistic among all the writers – declaring U.S. "exploitation" of the Philippines to have been beneficial for both colonizer and colonized. While most authors concurred that "Filipino civilization" existed prior to the arrival of the Spanish, David Barrows (the only non-Filipino writer among those analyzed) believed that Philippine history became a national history with the beginning of European influence (436). Thus, Nakpil's narrative – which solely claims allegiance to historical truths - must operate from beyond the restrictions of dominant colonial discourse, providing "revisions" where necessary. This could at least be partly symptomatic of its belonging to the genre of women's autobiography, and as such is by virtue dominant discourse's opposite.

What kind of commentary does Nakpil make on colonial forms of rule in the Philippines? She admits that Spanish colonialism did bring about two "blessings": Roman Catholicism, and Spanish culture in the form of art, music, certain European institutions, and most visibly, language (41). In fact, Nakpil makes mention of several

encounters with “colonial mentality”, with many of them being linguistic anecdotes. One encounter was with her father’s first cousin, Tia Liling, a retired Spanish-language teacher who the author described as “a snob, with airs and pretensions to superiority”, who would teach Nakpil and a few other children how to read and write. Nakpil recalls one instance when Tia Liling says to them in Spanish, “Whenever you are asked for your favorite flower, never say ‘kalachuchi’ or ‘gumamela,’ as you have been saying, but always ‘roses’ or ‘lilies’ or ‘carnations’…and never say you like ‘siniguelas’ or ‘kasuy,’ but ‘peras, manzanas’ or ‘uvas’” (30). Although the text does not specify the aunt’s motivation for suggesting these Spanish alternatives, the only perceptible reason appears to be that the words ‘kalachuchi’, ‘gumamela’, ‘siniguelas’ and ‘kasuy’ are all Tagalog words. Interestingly, since the author reveals that both sides of her family were *indio* (ethnic-Malay stock), the reader might induce that this relative with her “dark, pock-marked face” is not of European origin; as such, she embraces the colonizer’s mentality towards her own culture, and in turn attempts to imbibe her students. However, Nakpil reveals that, although they were outwardly complacent in the aunt’s presence, they would eventually come to mock her. She states: “When we got to know the world better, we would make fun of her snobbery, and her efforts to change our native tendencies” (30). Nakpil’s reaction to this character is one that exemplifies Bhabha’s theory of the colonial Third Space; this idea is central to understanding how the Guerrero clan, who culturally had become very Hispanicized, could still be anti-colonial without paradox.

Another example of ambivalence as it relates to language emerges amid Nakpil’s description of her two older brothers, Leoni and Mario. Aside from describing them as handsome, multi-talented ladies’ men, she also makes mention of their linguistic

capabilities. She says: "They spoke Ateneo English (which was at its best Irish-American accent then) and Ermita *Castellano*, but could only manage execrable Tagalog. Ermita had ruined their cultural nationalism. They loved their country to perdition…but they had to do it in borrowed languages and, in justice to them, they regretted it" (49). "Ateneo English" refers to the variety of English taught at the Ateneo de Manila University, once of the most prestigious universities in the Philippines; hence, the ability to speak this localized "dialect" along with that of "Ermita Spanish" would imply that one belonged to an elite class; however, one might infer that belonging to this class might also explain their deficiencies in Tagalog. Despite this, Nakpil redeems them by saying: "I owe them both ideology and mundane wisdom and also the English language, which somehow rubbed off on me. They showed me how to love my country by standing up to every single slur uttered or written by a foreigner, *mestizo*, or indeed a wayward Filipino" (49). In other words, among other forms of knowledge, language became a tool with which Nakpil could counter colonial "utterances" by first recognizing them, then addressing them in that same language.

At the same time, it became clear that within the boundaries of Bhabha's Third Space, language created several cultural sub-spaces (or, in Bhabha's words, "interstices") occupied by individual subjects. Due to its higher concentration of Spanish influence, Ermita was a geographical entity whose interstice was situated in closer proximity to the "second space"; something which would set them apart from other Filipinos. Nakpil reports that when interacting with relatives on her mother's side who lived in another town, there was a noticeable divide. "I noticed at once that, while our aunts took pains to speak to us children in Spanish, they and their children spoke in friendly, affectionate Tagalog to my mother. Our Ermita Spanish had quickly set us off as strangers" (75). After the war, Nakpil would also come to realize how much other

Filipinos had resented "Ermitense hauteur" (83). She describes one encounter in which she and her cousin, Leny, had gone to the bank in order to apply for a loan to restore their properties. After the two were kept waiting for several hours, a banker finally emerges and addresses them in "bad Spanish" after they two greet him in English. Nakpil recalls: "He gave us some convoluted explanation of the bank's finances and policies in the same embarrassing Castillian (while I wished he would revert to English) and turned down our application" (83). It was later discovered that the banker had snubbed them intentionally upon discovering who they were, and recalling them from his days living at a boarding house in Ermita while a student at the University of the Philippines before the war. So, in an attempt to speak "at their level", he elected to speak to them in Spanish. Ironically, the banker's poor linguistic mimicry resulted in an auditory dissonance which undermined his original intentions.

Therefore, as suggested by Nakpil's text, language was a tool by which the Filipino could exert power. This is true in the case of the spoken language, or, in the case of the author herself, the written word. Notwithstanding, the damage done to the Filipino psyche was much greater. She explains: "The institutional racism of the Spanish government left Filipinos with an acute sense of inferiority, insecurity, and inadequacy, an almost total loss of self-esteem, a servile attitude to the white foreigner" (41). Repression over time led to revolt, with members from both the *ilustrado* (the educated, middle-class, native intellectuals) and the *katipuneros* (secret-society, anti-Spanish revolutionaries) seeking to overthrow Spanish rule. In 1896, Andrés Bonifacio, an *indio* (native Filipino) leader led a doomed assault on the Spanish armory. Fighting escalated all around the islands, continuing through 1898. That was the year the Spanish-American War began with the destruction of a US naval ship, the U.S.S. Maine, in Cuba. The Americans declared war on Spain, and

signed a treaty with exiled revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo in Hong Kong, stating the U.S. would assist Philippine resistance against the Spanish. The U.S. Navy later destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, and in December of that year the two countries signed the Treaty of Paris, a document which ceded the Philippines to the United States for payment of 20 million dollars. This, Nakpil points out, despite the fact that the Americans had witnessed the signing of the Declaration of Philippine Independence by Aguinaldo and his newly established government on June 12, six months prior. In her words, “a treaty was signed by Spain and American in which Spain ceded the Philippines a colony it no longer controlled to America for $20 million (or $8 per native head)” (43). Although Nakpil had not been born yet, she bases her account of events on those told to her by her grandfather. She quotes him as saying “It was a double betrayal. The Spaniards claimed it was beneath their honour and dignity to capitulate to the colored natives, and the Americans, pretending to be allies of the Filipinos, took possession of Manila” (42). Then, she elaborates, saying: “The Spanish said they would surrender the beleaguered capital only to white America, and American troops took the forts held by Filipinos and entered, doubly victorious, the city of Manila on 13 August 1898” (42). Thus, the Filipino American War broke out in 1899, ending in 1902. Instead of obtaining independence, the Filipinos became the subject of a new colonizer.

Nakpil aptly notes that the American efforts to develop the Philippines seem to be, a least in part, a matter of pride. She states: “The frenetic American efforts to prove they were better and more worthy colonizers, than doddering, effete Spain produced the urban miracle I knew as the Ermita of my childhood” (39). Due to American efforts to “refurbish their new property”, the Americans had taken and converted the 16$^{th}$ century town into one with modern amenities, which included a new water and sewage system,

a fire station, and new buildings and streets. Nakpil declares: “The Americans had parsed every aspect of modern urbanization and Manila had become the cleanest, most resplendent city in the Orient” (38).

According to certain scholars, the United States perceived itself as being a different colonizer. In the article “American Orientalism and American Exceptionalism: A Critical Rethinking of United States Hegemony,” Meghana V. Nayak and Christopher Malone use the terms “American Orientalism” & “American Exceptionalism”; the first concept refers to the way the United States distinguishes its political “Others”; American Exceptionalism is explained as a type of Orientalism in which the United States self-evaluates how it emerged as a nation of power, and also the ways it is “unlike Europe” in order to justify the creation of its own distinct discourse (253-276).

Yet Edward Said warns that, in fact, every colonizer makes claims to being “unique”, and state that their intention is to “enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy,” using force in extreme circumstances. He adds: “And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice* (Said xxi). The essence of Said’s remarks echoes in a statement made by the U.S. President at the time, William McKinley, who said:

> When I next realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them. . . And one night late it came to me this way. . . 1) That we could not give them back to Spain- that would be cowardly and dishonorable; 2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany-our commercial rivals in the Orient-that would be bad business and

> discreditable; 3) that we not leave them to themselves-they are unfit for self-government-and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's wars; and 4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died. (McKinley)

Once again, Nakpil responds to this blatant expression of American Othering by relating what she had been told by older residents of Ermita in response to McKinley's declaration that "it was his duty to Christianize and civilize the half-devil, half-child Filipinos" (6). She writes: "Some of the diehards vowed they would never learn English because they had been Christianized and civilized enough by another manic evangelist and empire-builder, Philip II, for more than 300 years" (6).

What's more, Nakpil does make mention of 'misery' and 'death' at the hands of Americans when the Filipinos tried to resist U.S. political takeover during the Filipino American War, stating: "The American pacification and assimilation campaigns including hamletting, massacres, torture and other atrocities" (43). Thus, just as Said declares the intellectual's "raison d'être" as being "to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug" (11) and to talk about that which is "embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant" (12), Nakpil points out those features of American colonialism which tarnish their stated noble intentions, and bring to light the absurdity of certain justificatory claims by those in power regarding the imposition of "civilization".

# Chapter 4 Conclusion

As the field of postcolonial studies continues to evolve in a way which makes it increasingly inclusive in nature, the resources from which scholars of Philippine history draw become diverse in a way which challenges long-standing accounts of Philippine colonial history. As an autobiography of both a woman and colonial subject, *Myself, Elsewhere* is one such historical document. Through the act of creating a memoir, Nakpil not only revisits a lost time and place, but also deconstructs Philippine colonial history with the intent of inserting a “native Filipino” perspective into these narratives by engaging with and critiquing one-sided colonial historiographies. It is important to make note that Nakpil acknowledges that Spanish and U.S. rule were not completely devoid of pleasurable aspects. She admits that she would often experience a sense of guilt for enjoying the fruits of their imperialist agendas. Notwithstanding, this does not prevent her from criticizing colonialism and calling attention to the ways in which the Filipinos suffered during and after both periods of rule.

Nakpil successfully establishes herself as a native Filipino version of Edward W. Said’s intellectual who, despite coming from an illustrious family, could seamlessly place her formative years within the broader experience of the Philippine colonial subject. The author does this by using the narrative techniques of flashback and fast-forward in order to channel history in virtually every detail of her text, be it in the form of precedence, consequence, or simple comparison. If women’s biography is characteristically unbound by the chronological retelling of events, then Nakpil’s discursive techniques make sense in this regard; however, somewhat paradoxically, history is a crucial aspect of her narrative. For this reason, one notes that the author’s

temporal digressions are circular, as their significance is still firmly rooted in the moments or experiences from which the author departs.

This fact is also tied in to the author's intention to present herself as a patriotic Filipino intellectual who is an inextricable part of the history she is presenting to the reader. Another factor, which she portrays as inseparable from her self-construction as a native intellectual, is the place where she was born and spent her formative years – Ermita. Although this place existed in time and space, it is also a suiting metaphor which I have defined in terms of Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space. The degree of Hispanicization in Ermita and the Guerrero household as described by Nakpil is remarkable when one considers the nationalist roots of the author's family. The same geographical boundaries and set of customs which set the Guerrero family and other Ermitenses apart from other Filipinos due to their resemblance to the colonial elite are what accorded them the exceptionality to counter and subvert these colonial forces. In the case of Nakpil, she is able to analyze the influence of two Western colonial powers in the Philippines, while exemplifying the subversive quality of women's writing vis-a-vis dominant colonial discourse.

In this regard, Nakpil's text offers powerful counter-narratives to dominant historical discourse prevalent for the very reason that her description of historical events possesses a distinct intimacy with both colonial and native perspectives. Nakpil enriches accounts of certain key events in Philippine history with the addition of Filipino points-of-view, and the modification of accounts which whitewash those details and thereby place the colonizer in an incriminating light. This is especially true in those passages where she brings to light instances of Othering and other colonialist features articulated by scholars such as Said, and reveals how they trickle down into local culture during the process of transculturation. Another feature, which is

characteristic of the genre of women's autobiography, is how Nakpil's work places the on-goings of everyday life at the forefront of her narrative rather than treating them as a backdrop. This is also due in part to the fact that her memoir is a nostalgic tribute. *Myself, Elsewhere* is a perfect example of Svetlana Boym's reflective nostalgia in that Nakpil relishes her memories of the Ermita of her youth, but she also respects the finality of its disappearance. In fact, it is the ripples of her experiences in the present which allow Nakpil to make sense of her own existence in retrospect.

In brief, *Myself, Elsewhere* is subversive in the way that it textually layers individual and collective memory, the perspectives of colonizer and colonized, historical cause and effect, and also dominant and subaltern discourse. The result is an "alternate" history only insomuch as it acknowledges details which, had they not been retold, might have been cast to the wayside due to their absence in dominant (but perhaps not male) discourse. Although I propose that these achievements are due the fact that *Myself, Elsewhere* belongs to the genre of women's biography, it needs to be pointed out that most of Nakpil's role models and mentors were men, and that Nakpil herself states that she does not identify as a feminist. In a general sense, as seen in Nakpil's autobiography, the construction of one's exceptionality also involves declaring what one is not – or rather, how one is unlike others. Likewise, the title of my analysis, "Her (Sub)version of Events," refers to this very phenomenon – that is, the subversion of prevailing historical accounts by simply providing an alternate account which narrates from a different perspective, thus calling into question their "completeness."

This analysis, which has focused on *Myself, Elsewhere*, is part of an ongoing research project in which I will examine the other two books in Nakpil's autobiographical trilogy – *Legends and Adventures,* and *Exeunt*. Through a close

reading of these texts, I intend to explore how the ensemble of Nakpil's memoirs examine Philippine history, politics and society in the post-war period.

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