

THE HETEROTOPIC GROUND OF THE *BAYANI* TRADITION AS EMBODIED BY THE MULTITUDE OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

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This interdisciplinary theological article provides a meta-ethical critique of the practical paradoxes manifested in the bayani tradition as embodied by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). OFWs have been recognized by the Philippine government as mga bagong bayani (new/modern-day patriots/heroes) for their contribution to nation-building through remittances and their immeasurable sacrifices brought by physical separation from their families. Despite the economic gains of OFWs, labor migration also has its social costs, which are symptoms of deeper social-structural causes. Politically, despite their acculturation in modern and higher-developed countries, it is observable that OFWs as overseas voters still adhere to traditional Filipino political culture based on ethnolinguistic regionalism and indifference to liberal democratic values. Against this background, the article argues that while OFWs' contribution to nation-building is part of the Filipino multitude's engagement in modernity, their adherence to the bayani tradition as seen in traditional Filipino politics however causes their critical disentanglements to realize this modern project. Employing Antonio Negri's multitude and Michel Foucault's heterotopia as key concepts for doing a meta-ethical critique, the paper analyzes this political ontological 'grounding' that causes the practical paradoxes of the bayani tradition.

Keywords: *Bayani (Hero/Patriot), Overseas Filipino Workers, Multitude, Heterotopia*

Granted, then, that the supreme mystery of despotism, its prop and stay, is to keep men in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check, so that they will fight for their servitude as if for salvation, and count it no shame, but the highest honour, to spend their blood and their lives for the glorification of one man.

Yet no more disastrous policy can be devised or attempted in a free commonwealth. To invest with prejudice or in any way coerce the citizen's free judgment is altogether incompatible with the freedom of the people.¹

– Baruch Spinoza

INTRODUCTION

President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr. and Vice-President Sara Duterte-Carpio’s electoral victory during the 2022 national elections shows the OFWs’ ambivalent political engagement and disentanglements in nation-building. Ironically, the contemporary Filipino culture of labor migration traces back to Ferdinand Marcos Sr.’s labor-export policy in response to the State’s need for capital investment caused by the Langley-Laurel Agreement’s expiration in 1974. Although it kept the Philippine economy afloat throughout the decades, overseas work also created numerous social costs. During Corazon Aquino’s term, the Philippine government recognized OFWs as *mga bagong bayani* (new/modern-day patriots/heroes) due to their sacrifices of being physically away from their families while sending remittances to take care of them and develop the country.² Despite working in highly developed countries for a long time, OFWs do not seem to be acculturated with the modern democratic values of human rights, government transparency, and rule of law as seen in their electoral preference for populist leaders. This paradoxical observation shows the latent aspect of OFWs’ political practices resulting in the disentanglement of socioeconomic issues from political concerns in nation-building.

To analyze this paradox, this theological ethical article offers a theoretical framework to expose the ground supporting the *bayani* tradition’s political and ethical contradictions as embodied by OFWs. It analyzes the ambivalence of OFWs’ practices from

¹Baruch Spinoza, “Theological-Political Treatise,” in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2002 [1677]), 389-390.

² Jean Encinas-Franco, “Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as Heroes: Discursive Origins of the ‘Bagong Bayani’ in the Era of Labor Export,” *Humanities Diliman* 12, no. 2 (July-December 2015): 56-78.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's political anthropology of the 'multitude'. Beneath this theorization of OFW subjectivity, this research argues that the (meta)physical ground undergirds the multitude's ambivalent practices is heterotopic brought by the tension between the co-existing traditional and modern worldviews in contemporary Philippine political culture. The first section discusses the *bayani* tradition's historical-cultural development to clarify the practical paradoxes actualized by OFWs. The second section analyzes the *bayani* tradition from Negri's concept of the multitude as a political anthropology. Using Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the third section demonstrates the ambivalent ground that allows the co-existence of tensions between the premodern and modern political engagements in the *bayani* tradition. With these political-cultural observations, the article's last section derives its pastoral, theological-ethical, and Christological implications for evaluating the *bayani* tradition.

The *Bayani* Tradition: Overseas Filipino Workers' Engagements and Disentanglements in Filipino Nation-Building

Filipino migration has generated the popular cultural narrative of *bagong bayani* to recognize OFWs as new patriots/heroes. Their patriotism stems from the value of sacrificing oneself for the country's economic survival and the greater good. Personal sacrifice as a cultural value is replete in Philippine history, bearing heroic personages for succeeding generations to emulate amidst the personal and practical contradictions they encounter in their challenges. This sub-section thus presents the *bayani* tradition's practical paradoxes as seen in the OFWs' contributory role to nation-building vis-à-vis OFWs' corrupted desires due to their populist-nationalist sentiment and nostalgia.

BAYANI TRADITION: HISTORICAL-CULTURAL ROOTS OF OFWS AS MGA BAGONG BAYANI

Bayani etymologically comes from the Malay *berani* which means "brave, courageous, fearless", showing that a person has

warrior-like qualities to withstand challenges confronted by a community.³ As a cognate, a *bayani* is linked to the *bayán* (people or town) as a person who promotes and fights for its welfare. Spanish missionaries define *bayani* as “A valiant man of many forces, fights twenty men and can lift [something] that six people cannot.”⁴ In this regard, the Filipino *bayani* tradition’s origin traces back to the different pre-colonial personalities involved in a *barangay*, a coastal community of 30-100 families.⁵ Zeus A. Salazar states a *bayani* was embodied by the *barangay* personalities of the *datu* (local chieftain), *babaylan* or *katalonan* (priests/priestesses or healers), *panday* and *mamalayok* (blacksmith and potter), and the *bagani* (warrior).⁶ People embodying the *bayani* tradition have warrior qualities whose task is to organize, nurture, and protect the community from enemy pirates or rival *barangays*.

The *bayani* tradition’s warrior qualities continued during the Spanish (1565-1898) and American (1898-1946) colonial times but gained a more nuanced meaning throughout the 20th century. The *ilustrado* propagandists and the *katipunero* revolutionaries who fought for Filipino nationalist causes were recognized as *bayani* for their courage to challenge Spanish colonialism. During the American times, politicians, intellectuals, and guerillas who fought for Philippine sovereignty and resisted imperial Japanese invaders became models of heroism in Philippine history. After the United States “recognized” Philippine sovereignty in 1946, the Filipino elite took the noble responsibility to rebuild the nation from the

³ For its Malay etymology, “Bayani: bayáni:bayáni° = heroe ⇔ Mal. Berani: bēráni° [...] (Fav. 2:287) = brave, courageous, fearless [la/ēly/r] PAN ba-Rani° (Demp).” Jean-Paul G. Potet, *Tagalog Borrowings and Cognates* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Lulu Press, 2016), 62.

⁴ “Hombre valiente y de muchas fuerzas, pues se tiene con veinte, y levanta lo que seis no pueden.” Francisco de San Antonio, OFM, *Vocabulario tagalo: Tagalog-Spanish Dictionary*. ed. Antoon Postma (Quezon City: Sources for Philippine Studies, 2000), 37.

⁵ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* Eight Edition (Quezon City: Garotech Publishing, 1990), 40; William Henry Scott, *Barangay Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 199), 4-6.

⁶ Zeus A. Salazar, *Kasaysayan ng Kapilipinuhan Bagong Balangkas* (Quezon City: Bagong Kasaysayan, 2004), 12-13.

ruins of World War II.⁷ Recognizing a *bayani* has thus expanded from someone who edifies the community to someone who is constitutive of nation-building. After World War II, the political elite and war veterans no longer have a monopoly on heroic narratives. If before the *bayani* tradition confronted foreign imperialism, the post-colonial Philippine situation transformed the *bayani* tradition to confront local challenges as seen in the tensions between the Filipino elite and the multitude. Common personalities like popular folk leaders, communist rebels, farmers and workers organizations, indigenous peoples, human rights activists, and other marginalized groups who challenged the Filipino elite's constituted power became recognized as *bayani*.⁸

Overseas Filipinos' political activism against Marcos's dictatorship demonstrates their heroic engagement in nation-building to restore democracy.⁹ In the United States, Filipino migrant activism flourished through Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship (CAMD) and affiliate organizations Anti-Martial Law Coalition (AMLC), Friends of the Filipino People (FFP), Movement for a Free Philippines (MFP), Philippine Support Network (PSN), and Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP) among others. Among the prominent oppositionist in exile were Benigno Aquino Jr., Eugenio Lopez Jr., and Sergio Osmena III. Also, during this period, Marcos Sr.'s administration embarked on its labor-export policy in 1974 through the Philippine Labor Code by recognizing the overseas contract workers' (OCWs) role in economic development.¹⁰ On one hand, the need for capital

⁷ *Treaty of General Relations and Protocol, signed at Manila, on 4 July 1946, and Exchange of Notes constituting an Interim Agreement, Manila, 10 and 12 July 1946*, accessed 15 June 2015, http://web.archive.org/web/20090326035729/http://untreaty.un.org/unts/1_60000/1/6/00000254.pdf.

⁸ See David R. Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines 1840-1940* (New York: Cornell University, 1976).

⁹ Jose V. Fuentecilla, *Fighting from a Distance: How Filipino Exiles helped topple a Dictator* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Article 17. par. 1 states "To promote and overseas employment of Filipino workers through a comprehensive market promotion and development program". Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Presidential Decree No. 442 - A Decree Instituting a Labor Code, Thereby Revising and Consolidating Labor and Social Laws to Afford Protection to Labor*,

investments to modernize the country through remittances became Marcos's economic strategy. On the other hand, it addressed the lack of employment opportunities in Manila due to its burgeoning population brought by local migration since World War II ended. Despite its economic returns, the Philippine labor-export policy was vulnerable to political disorder. As a reaction to Benigno Aquino Jr.'s assassination and the consequent economic tailspin in 1983, Marcos Sr. issued Executive Order 857 that forced OFWs to remit 70% of their salary or else their passports and work contracts will not be renewed.¹¹ In response, OFWs in Hong Kong organized protests abroad led by United Filipino Against Forced Remittance (UNFARE), eventually influencing Marcos Sr. to repeal it through Executive Order 1021 on 1 May 1985.¹²

After the Marcoses have fallen from power in 1986, President Corazon Aquino recognized OFWs' as "*bayani ng ekonomiya ng ating bansa*" in her 17 April 1988 speech to the Filipino domestic helpers at St. Margaret's Church, Hong Kong. She further applauds their sacrifices for keeping the country afloat during the time of Marcos Sr.'s dictatorship.

*Kayo na mga manggagawang Pilipino sa ibang bansa
na nagtiis ng lungkot at nagsakripisyo na malayo sa
inyong mga mahal sa buhay ang siyang tumulong ng
malaki upang buhayin at ibangon ang ating bansa*

Promote Employment and Human Resources Development and Ensure Industrial Peace Based on Social Justice, 1 May 1974, accessed 23 March 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1974/05/01/presidential-decree-no-442-s-1974/>.

¹¹ Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Executive Order No. 857, s. 1982 – Governing the Remittance to the Philippines of Foreign Exchange Earnings of Filipino Workers Abroad and for Other Purposes*, 13 December 1982, accessed 23 March 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1982/12/13/executive-order-no-857-s-1982/>.

¹² Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Executive Order No. 1021, s. 1985 – On Encouraging the Inward Remittances of Contract Workers Earnings through Official Channels*, 1 May 1985, accessed 23 March 2021 <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1985/05/01/executive-order-no-1021-s-1985/>; Migrante International, *OFWs slam solon for resurrecting Marcos Decree on "Forced Remittance"*, 4 March 2014, accessed 4 March 2023, <https://migranteinternational.org/ofws-slam-solon-for-resurrecting-marcos-decree-on-forced-remittance/>.

noong tayo ay nasa ilalim pa ng diktador. Sa ngayon, ang sakripisyong ito ay patuloy pa rin sa pagtatayo muli ng ating bansa.¹³

Despite Aquino's opposition to Marcos, the Philippine labor-export policy continued as a development strategy. It nonetheless faced criticisms in 1995 during President Fidel V. Ramos's administration due to the unfortunate cases of Sarah Balabagan and Flor Contemplacion.¹⁴ In response, the Philippine government legislated Republic Act 8042 *Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995* to protect the rights and welfare of OFWs and explicitly state that the country no longer pursues labor-export policy as a development strategy. Despite its legislation and the incalculable risks involved, it did not deter millions of Filipinos to work abroad even during the 1997 Asian economic crisis and later during the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.¹⁵ Seeing that Filipinos continue to emigrate primarily for economic reasons, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration legislated RA 9189 *Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003* and RA 9225 *Citizenship Retention and Re-acquisition Act of 2003* so that Filipinos abroad could exercise their right to suffrage by allowing dual-citizenship.¹⁶ With these laws, OFW's ambivalent political and economic engagement and disentanglements with their homeland have come to a full circle.

¹³ Corazon C. Aquino, *Address of President Aquino to the Filipinas working in Hong Kong*, 17 April 1988, accessed 31 July 2022, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1988/04/17/address-of-president-corazon-aquino-to-the-filipinas-working-in-hong-kong/>.

¹⁴ Graziano Battistella, "Philippine Overseas Labour: From Export to Management," *ASEAN Economic Bulletin* 12, No. 2 (1995): 257-273.

¹⁵ Alfie Maria R. Custodio and Alvin P. Ang, "Impact of the Global Crisis on Overseas Workers and the

Families-Left-Behind: A Snapshot of the Philippine Case," *Asian Social Science* 8, no. 3 (March 2012): 251-264.

¹⁶ Republic Act 9189 - *An Act Providing for a System of Overseas Absentee Voting by Qualified Citizens of the Philippines Abroad, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes*, 13 February 2003, accessed 24 March 2021, https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2003/ra_9189_2003.html.

OFWS' POPULIST-NATIONALIST SENTIMENT AND NOSTALGIA

OFWs played a decisive role in the presidential victories of Rodrigo Duterte and Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during the 2016 and 2022 national elections. Numerous reports observe that many OFWs voted for these populist leaders despite their blatant identification with human rights violations, impunity, and corruption.¹⁷ As *'mga bagong bayani'* who struggled during Marcos Sr.'s dictatorship, many overseas Filipinos ironically supported politicians who campaigned under the banner of illiberal democratic values. Their political campaigns discredit the 1986 People Power Revolution narrative for its 'failure' to uplift Filipinos from economic hardships. The presidential administrations from Corazon Aquino to Benigno Aquino III were accused of incompetence and defenders of the oligarchic status quo. Thus, the 30-year 'yellow' narrative's dominance has been detracted in social media as an abysmal failure, resulting in the people's disillusionment with liberal democracy.

After Marcos Sr. died as a political exile in Hawaii on 28 September 1989, his family members were able to entrench again in local and national politics since their negotiated return in 1991. Although Marcos Sr.'s widow Imelda Romualdez-Marcos lost the presidential race in 1992 and 1998, she and their children, Imee, and Bongbong, nonetheless secured gubernatorial and congressional seats in the subsequent elections. Through this

¹⁷ Marielle Descalsota, "Philippine Election: Why are Overseas Filipinos such a Big Fans of Bongbong Marcos Jr.," *South China Morning Post*, 2 January 2022, accessed 17 August 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3161800/philippine-election-why-are-overseas-filipinos-such-big-fans>. Sundy Mae Locus, "Marcos Jr., Sara courts OFW Votes in Online Rally," *GMA News*, 2 April 2022, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/827137/marcos-jr-sara-court-ofw-votes-in-online-rally/story/> [accessed 17 August 2022]; Staff Report, "7 out of 10 OFWs Worldwide vote for Marcos-Duterte," *The Filipino Times*, 10 May 2022, accessed 17 August 2022, <https://filipinotimes.net/latest-news/2022/05/10/7-out-of-10-ofws-worldwide-vote-for-marcos-duterte/>; Catherine S. Valiente, "Marcos gets Landslide Win in Overseas Voting," *The Manila Times*, 17 May 2022, accessed 17 August 2022, <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/05/17/news/marcos-gets-landslide-win-in-overseas-voting/1843966>.

political maneuvering, they secured again their bailiwick in Ilocos Norte and Leyte. During the 2010 national elections, Marcos Jr. secured a seat in the Philippine Senate, which was also the time when Benigno Aquino III, whose political clan is Marcos's long-time adversary, was elected to the presidency.

The Marcoses' political narrative of reclaiming the presidency gained traction during President Rodrigo Duterte's term. Despite Bongbong Marcos losing the vice presidency, Imee was elected to Senate in 2019. Duterte's popularity surged despite his blatant disregard for liberal democratic values such as human rights and rule of law was reminiscent of Marcos Sr.'s iron hand rule. Duterte's decision to bury Marcos Sr.'s remains at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* amplified the Marcoses' impunity. With the Supreme Court favoring the Marcoses, it shows that a kleptocrat dictator who destroyed the country's democratic life can still be honored as a *bayani* (patriot/hero) because he was a soldier in World War II, a former president, and thus a commander-in-chief.¹⁸ Lionizing Duterte and the Marcoses through social media propaganda thus created a populist-nationalist discourse across social classes.

Duterte and Marcos's supporters proliferate social media with counter-narratives that glorify Marcos Sr.'s iron hand rule. They rationalize that the declaration of martial law in 1972 was imperative to save the Republic of the Philippines from the Communist and Moro insurgencies.¹⁹ Moreover, they also argue that the Marcos administration's concrete accomplishments were public works such as the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), San Juanico Bridge, Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Philippine Heart Center, Coconut Palace, Lung Center of the Philippines, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Manila Film Center, and Palace in the Sky among others. Marcos Sr.'s accomplishments trigger the populist-nationalist sentiment of

¹⁸ Republic of the Philippines Supreme Court, *Satumino C. Ocampo, et al. vs. Rear Admiral Ernesto C. Enriquez, et al.*, G.R. Nos. 225973, 225984, 226097, 226116, 226120 & 226294, November 8, 2016, accessed 25 July 2022, https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri2016/nov2016/pdf/gr_225973_2016.pdf.

¹⁹ Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Proclamation No. 1081 s. 1972 - Proclaiming a State of Martial Law in the Philippines*, 21 September 1972, accessed 23 March 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1972/09/21/proclamation-no-1081/>.

Filipinos who are nostalgic about its ‘glorious’ past.²⁰ However, Marcos Sr. funded these infrastructures through foreign debt, amounting to US\$ 28.6 billion by 1986, which until now is paid by Filipinos.²¹

In contrast, the liberal democratic values that Filipinos advocated during the 1986 People Power Revolution are demonized for being hypocritical of human rights, adhering to foreigners’ interests, and lack of efficient infrastructures, public order, and security. Concerning human rights, they also accuse through *tu quoque* arguments that the Aquinos also committed violence against ordinary Filipinos such as the 1987 Mendiola Massacre, the 2004 Hacienda Luisita Massacre, and the 2015 Mamasapano clash that massacred 44 Special Action Force members. Enemies of the yellow narrative interestingly perceive that the Philippine status quo is maintained by liberal or civil society groups, foreign and local media, the Catholic Church hierarchy, reformist military, leftist party-list organizations that are identified with Communist insurgents, and the United States of America – the key political actors against the Marcoses.²² Suspicions of foreign involvement in Philippine politics are brought by the Marcoses’ bitter experience of being ‘betrayed’ by the United States as its key ally in Southeast Asia for fighting the Communists. Moreover, the prohibition to re-open the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant which could have created accessible and cheaper electricity is

²⁰ Cecilio T. Arillo, “Marcos’s Unmatched Legacy: Energy,” *Business Mirror*, 30 October 2015, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2015/10/30/marcess-unmatched-legacy-energy/>; Cecilio T. Arillo, “Marcos’s Unmatched Legacy: Hospitals, Schools and Other Infrastructures,” *Business Mirror*, 13 November 2015, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2015/11/13/marcess-unmatched-legacy-hospitals-schools-and-other-infrastructures/>.

²¹ Corazon C. Aquino, *Speech of President Corazon Aquino during the Joint Session of the U.S. Congress*, September 18, 1986, accessed 30 November 2015, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1986/09/18/speech-of-president-corazon-aquino-during-the-joint-session-of-the-u-s-congress-september-18-1986/>.

²² Rigoberto Tiglao, “Not a Divided Nation: Only Yellow-Brainwashed Elites versus Ordinary Filipinos,” *RigobertoTiglao.com* 23 March 2022, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://rigobertotiglao.com/2022/03/23/not-a-divided-nation-only-the-yellow-brainwashed-elite-vs-ordinary-filipinos/>.

blamed on Corazon Aquino's vengefulness against Marcos Sr.'s accomplishments. It must be refuted, however, that it was Marcos Sr. who decided not to re-open the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant because of the scientific findings that it is "a potential hazard to the health and safety of the public".²³ Aquino III's administration is also accused of inefficiently handling the disaster brought about by Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. The perceptible lack of security and inadequate mass transportation system reveal government inefficiency since the 1986 People Power Revolution. The Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), which was a symbolic place of liberation from dictatorship, has turned to symbolize the Philippines' turtle-paced development from 1986-2016 as felt in its daily heavy traffic congestion.²⁴ For Marcos supporters, the 1986 People Power Revolution's 'yellow narrative' as symbolized by the Aquinos was thus a grave mistake in Philippine history.

THE MULTITUDE OF MGA BAGONG BAYANI: THE DOUBLE BIND OF CORRUPTED POLITICAL LOVE

The multitude makes the *bayani* tradition a universally relatable political anthropology by showing how its embodiment by OFWs leads to cooperative action (ethical dimension) while respecting their individual differences (ontological dimension). Antonio Negri defines the multitude as "an ensemble of singularities whose life-tool is the brain and whose productive force consists of co-operation. In other words, if the singularities that constitute the multitude are plural, the manner in which they enter into relation is co-operative."²⁵ The multitude gives a more holistic

²³ Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Letter of Instruction No. 957, s. 1979*, 13 November 1979, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1979/11/13/letter-of-instruction-no-957-s-1979/>.

²⁴ Gideon Lasco, "EDSA as Metaphor," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 21 November 2015, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/90513/edsa-as-metaphor>.

²⁵ Antonio Negri, "Kairòs, Alma, Multitudo: Nine Lessons to Myself," in *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (New York and London: Continuum Books, 2003 [2000]), 225.

understanding of labor migrant subjectivity since it tackles difference, plurality, and relationality as opposed to the modern atomistic, reductionist, and autonomous understanding of the human person.

Negri conceptualizes the multitude based on the changing technical (demand for skills) and political (workers' relation to capital) composition of labor in the 1960s. These changes transformed labor subjectivity from the Marxist-Leninist proletariat mass worker that manufactures material goods to late modernity's social worker that produces society through immaterial labor (i.e. affects, knowledge, symbols).²⁶ In collaboration with Michael Hardt, Negri wrote *Empire*, *Multitude*, *Commonwealth*, and *Assembly* to construct an analytical model to situate the contemporary state of capitalism.²⁷ They elaborate that the multitude is the multiplicity of singular differences "that can never be reduced to a unity".²⁸ In contrast, *Empire* is the global state of capitalism beyond the traditional nation-state borders that subsumes in totality the multitude through biopolitical means to achieve 'peace' and 'order'. It represses the multitude's subjectivity to express its desire through precarity of debt, mediated information, irresponsive representation, and securitized violence.²⁹ In their struggle against *Empire*, the multitude's goal is to construct a commonwealth to go beyond the confines of the state's control of the public or the private enterprises' domain. The commonwealth deals with common concerns like the environment, education, food, health, knowledge, etc. Through their singularity of differences, the multitude resists global capital by achieving a common revalorization of their labor subjectivity.

²⁶ See Antonio Negri, *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy*, trans. Arianna Bove, Timothy S. Murphy, Ed Emery, Francesca Novello (London and New York: Verso, 2005 [1997]).

²⁷ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000); *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); *Commonwealth*. (London and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); *Assembly* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²⁸ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, xiv.

²⁹ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo, 2012).

For Negri, the multitude's love is its "ontological motor" as expressed through its desire to innovate one's being and create the common. Hardt and Negri describe that the multitude's love is fruitful when 1) it actualizes the common, 2) it is directed to freedom, 3) it overflows limits by transforming organizations, 4) works through reciprocity, and 5) it consolidates the multitude through institutions.³⁰ In contrast, the multitude's love is corrupted when it becomes self-referential and discriminating against the 'other'. This happens when love is merely concerned with one's limited notion of a social body as family, nation, or enterprise. For this reason, Hardt and Negri theorize that evil is not merely the privation of the good as Augustine of Hippo thought but the corruption of love as an expression of desire for the good.³¹

Negri's multitude is influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's political philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari theorize the 'schizophrenic' character of late modern subjectivity due to its paradoxical desire to be subservient to the capitalist state while resisting or escaping from it. Following Baruch Spinoza's observation, Deleuze and Guattari write, "Why do men fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?"³² Spinoza's question would continue to be relevant during the 20th century through the Marxist-Freudian framework of Wilhelm Reich, who criticized the multitude's willing subservience to the Nazi regime, and later with Herbert Marcuse, who analyzed the multitude's debilitation of eros due to civilizational demands.³³ Deleuze and Guattari offer an answer to Spinoza's problem by referring to Gregory Bateson's concept of "double bind",³⁴ the

³⁰ Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 196-197.

³¹ *Ibid.*,

³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Penguin Classics, 2009 [1972]), 29.

³³ Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970 [1933]), 36; Herbert Marcuse, *Eros, and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry to Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974 [1955]), 78-105.

³⁴ Gregory Bateson, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley, and John H. Weakland "Towards a Theory of Schizophrenia," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, ed. Gregory Bateson (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 201-227.

subject's confused state to follow contradictory verbal and non-verbal communication demands from an authority. In this case, the multitude's 'schizophrenic' subjectivity comes from its desire for "voluntary servitude" to perpetuate the capitalist state while not desiring to be marginalized through "machinic enslavement".³⁵ In this regard, the laborer's participation in the liberal capitalist state is not just structurally induced but also subjectively desired. The multitude's double bind is thus actualized when it paradoxically desires its own source of repression by participating in sustaining the liberal capitalist state while attempting to resist or escape it.

The multitude of overseas Filipinos' 'double bind' that results in corrupted love is a paradoxical issue to evaluate. OFWs are well qualified to be defined as part of the global multitude that struggles against Empire's biopolitical power to manipulate their subjectivities. Their desire for modern political and economic development by working abroad while voting for populist-nationalist leaders like Marcos and Duterte reveals the corrupted political love in the *bayani* tradition. As much as OFWs invest their love in their left-behind families by sending them remittances, which in turn helps the Philippine economy, their desire for populist-nationalist leaders is not helpful to sustain a modern liberal democratic political system. Here, we see a gap between their political and economic imagination toward creating a future. As an ensemble of singularities, OFWs' productive force is economically channeled through remittances while its political influence is seen through social media. While the economic aspect of labor migration operates through neo-liberal globalization, the political narratives of labor migration are built on traditional worldviews that function through strong interpersonal and paternalistic relationships.

Economically, the double bind of OFWs is paradoxically manifested when OFWs desire to be free from poverty by working abroad while participating in the global capitalist system that once marginalized them. By participating in the neo-liberal economy,

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980]), 460.

they perpetuate the global system of marginalization that caused them to emigrate abroad. In many cases, the lack of recognition of their professional qualifications abroad has made some OFWs underemployed for the sake of receiving higher salaries in the foreign job market. Interestingly, the International Office for Migration (IOM) traditionally defines labor migration as ‘voluntary’ migration while those migrants fleeing from poverty as ‘forced’ migration.³⁶ It must be understood, however, that poverty is forcibly caused by the economic crisis within the capitalist state to subsume and maximize the labor market. Given that poverty is capitalist state-created, it is thus ironic to observe that OFWs desire to reap the rewards of working in a more competitive foreign environment that marginalizes them while fleeing the impoverished situation in the Philippines that operates in the same capitalist logic.

Politically, the double bind of voting for populist leaders under a ‘liberal’ democratic system is found in the schizophrenic desire between freedom and security. The multitude of OFWs sustains the traditional patronage system in Filipino political culture through the paternalistic relationship between voters as children and a leader (Duterte or Marcos) who acts as the father figure of the nation. Paradoxically, OFWs desire the populist leader’s iron-hand repression (political security) to resolve poverty (economic insecurity). It also shows why the multitude serves their oppressive source of salvation as the corruption of political love has permeated throughout Philippine society due to the lack of virtue to create alternatives to escape its structuring conditions. As José Rizal writes, “Resignation is not always virtuous, it is crime when tyranny alienates; there are no despots when there are no slaves.”³⁷

³⁶ High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019* (Copenhagen: UNHCR Global Data Service, 2020), 64-66.

³⁷ José P. Rizal, *El filibusterismo* (Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961[1891]), 52. Translation mine.

HETEROTOPIC GROUNDING OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS: THE AMBIVALENCE OF *MGA BAGONG BAYANI* IN FILIPINO NATION-BUILDING

The article's task now is to expose the spatial preconditions that ground the multitude of OFWs' subjectivity as *mga bagong bayani*. Being transnationally 'located' in developed and developing countries, their subjectivity involves both engagements and disentanglements in Filipino nation-building. In this regard, Foucault's concept of heterotopia is helpful to explain the *bayani* tradition's ambivalent foundation as seen earlier in the multitude of OFWs' paradoxical political practices.

In his essay *Des espaces autres*, Foucault conceptualizes heterotopia to show how the physical dimension of place conflates with the mental experience of different subjects in one place.³⁸ In contrast to utopias which are non-places, heterotopias are sites where the non-place is together with a real place, such as a mirror, thus making them a virtual place. Heterotopic places are not merely locations or extensions of a subject but "the bundle of relationships" (*l'ensemble des rapports*) that simultaneously links opposites in a place, which entails an individual or social body's position.³⁹ He elaborates that heterotopia is built on six principles. First, all societies have their heterotopias, which can be classified as heterotopias of crisis or heterotopias of deviation. This principle reveals a subject's liminal situation when it deviates from social norms, putting it in a 'crisis' in a given place. Second, heterotopia happens when societies predetermine the function of a place while changing its purpose over time. It makes any place contentious for retaining its past purpose with new function and meaning. Third, heterotopias concentrate multiple contradictory elements in one place through the interplay of manifest and latent contents. Fourth, heterotopias consist of contrasting notions of time co-existing in a place as heterochronies. An example of this principle is a cemetery as a place that blurs the distinction between the past, present, and

³⁸ Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres," *Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits: Tome IV* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1984 [1967/1984]), 752-762.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 755.

future or when eternity conflates with a fleeting moment. Fifth, heterotopias have a gatekeeping system through rituals that include or exclude subjects. These places involve cultural practices that create distinction among subjects while classifying them into similar identities. Lastly, heterotopias conflate illusory and real places that are differentiable from neighboring places. Individual or social bodies in this state have the same but not quite resemblances. These six heterotopic principles show the intertwining binary oppositions in one place that grounds the paradoxes among different subjects. In this way, Foucault overcomes the empiricist-rationalist debate by theorizing about a place as the convergence of physical and mental experience based on the subject's practices. Such is the case when labor migrants of whatever nationality are physically present abroad while mentally connected to their homeland.⁴⁰

Applying Foucault's six heterotopic principles to analyze OFW's subjectivity as *mga bagong bayani*, the following internal and external contradictions that determine their being are explicated. First ambivalence: while the Philippines is constitutionally a nation-state, Filipino labor migration has made it a transnational state, a heterotopia itself consisting of crises and deviation. This is actualized through the contemporary practice of *bayani* tradition which is no longer solely dependent on the heroic narratives of elite personalities. Heroes of pre-colonial times or a pantheon of 19th-century heroes have become classic representations that gave birth to Filipino national identity. After World War II, the *bayani* tradition became more inclusive by recognizing ordinary people's efforts, as seen in OFWs, to edify the national community. While there was a dialectical relationship in the *bayani* tradition as an elite cultural representation vis-à-vis the multitude of ordinary Filipinos, the advent of social media in contemporary times has demonstrated that the two poles are interdependent with each other. Social media has made the heroic narratives 'popular' enough to be widespread through its enablers or influencers but more politically contentious to be recognized. Populist leaders like Duterte or Marcos have

⁴⁰ Abdelmalek Sayad, *La double absence: De illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 7.

garnered social media supporters both as trolls and real persons through transnational ties. The *bayani* tradition has actualized the mutual reinforcement between elite representation (populist leaders) and the multitude (OFWs) that socio-politically identifies with the former through the country's internal crises.

Second ambivalence: predetermined symbolic places' functions have changed throughout time, showing how their political purpose affects the country's cultural life. A key example of this is Rodrigo Duterte's decision to bury Marcos Sr. at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* while EDSA has become a symbolic place of political disorder and economic frustrations for the last 30 years. The changes in the symbolic perception of these places are symptoms of OFWs' intention for better economic conditions by earning abroad going side-by-side with their desire to elect populist-nationalist leaders who are identified with iron hand discipline, public order, and security. Their political choice to elect illiberal leaders is incongruent with modern democratic values. While Western democracies are premised that liberalism develops together with capitalism, the Filipino sociopolitical and economic situation shows a gap between politics and economics. This paradox accentuates the global crisis of liberal democracy that the capitalist economy can be embraced while rejecting liberalism such as in the case of China. Thus, while modern liberal democracy has its predetermined agenda, the multitude of voters could retrofit the purpose of places and symbols for illiberal ends.

Third ambivalence: OFWs' manifest preference for populist leaders shows the latent resurgence of traditional patron-client ties in a modernizing Philippine political economy. The traditional feudal political economy revolves around the relationship between the patron landlord, who often builds a political dynasty, and its tenants as clients who get material support in exchange for their votes during elections. Industrialization and overseas work disrupted the feudal economy by liberating ordinary Filipinos to seek opportunities in urban centers and abroad.⁴¹ It

⁴¹ See Amando Doronila, "The Transformation of Patron-Client Relations and its Consequences in Postwar Philippines," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16,

allowed them to uplift their socioeconomic class, making them no longer politically and economically dependent on the landlord's patronage. Through social media, however, political dynasties, which were once built on regionalistic patron-client ties, have been strengthened as evidenced by the 2016 and 2022 national elections. Filipino political culture's patron-client ties that once manifested in agricultural land through feudal relations have thus expanded to cyberspace through transnational ties.

Fourth ambivalence: the heterochrony of OFWs as *mga bagong bayani* due to their selective social memory to remember past government abuses. The preference for Marcos and Duterte who campaigned for "unity" created a political divide by ignoring their past corruption and human rights abuses. In turn, the 'yellow-pink' narrative led by presidential-candidate Vice-President Maria Leonor Robredo who campaigned for modern political governance is described as self-righteous, intellectual, and elitist for maligning the Marcoses and Dutertes.⁴² By criticizing the 1986 People Power Revolution's legacies, its ambivalence also gives a historical rationalization for OFWs the need to work abroad brought about by the perceived lack of development over the last 30 years. Forgetting or ignoring Marcoses or Duterte's past atrocities is linked to the 'hopeful' development in the future, as Imee Marcos says, "move on" from those political controversies while having nostalgia for Marcos Sr.'s accomplishments.⁴³ The historical

No. 1 (1985): 99-116; E. San Juan Jr., "Contemporary Global Capitalism and the Challenge of the Filipino Diaspora," *Global Society* 25, No. 1 (2011): 7-25.

⁴² Antonio Contreras, "Academic Elitism and Robredo's failed Campaign," *The Manila Times*, 24 May 2022, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/05/24/opinion/columns/academic-elitism-and-robredos-failed-campaign/1844798>.

⁴³Zena V. Magto, "Imee Marcos asks Filipinos criticizing her family: Why don't you move on?," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 21 August 2018, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1023660/imee-marcos-asks-filipinos-criticizing-her-family-why-dont-you-move-on#ixzz7fVyF4KDW>; Kurt Dela Peña, "Move on': The Shallowness of Calls to bury Martial Law Memories," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 21 September 2022, accessed 11 October 22, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1668302/move-on-the-shallowness-of-calls-to-bury-martial-law-memories>.

narrative is thus reinvented to justify and legitimize the return of the Marcoses to the presidency.

Fifth ambivalence: the Filipino value of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) in traditional patron-client ties, when placed in the bigger context of late modernity, has created a new site of practical contestation for the *bayani* tradition's gatekeepers. OFWs who have been residing abroad for a long time are expected to have acculturated to their host country's modern sociopolitical and cultural environment. However, their political preference for populist leaders reveals how Filipino ways of relating based on patronage ties and political dynasties endure in contrast to a meritocratic preference promoted by modernity. *Utang na loob* is also practiced among OFWs who belong to the same group of friends, relatives, or communities that voted for Marcos and Duterte so as not to be 'different' from their usual Filipino social circle, which is already limited abroad.

Sixth ambivalence: a *bayani*'s heterotopic significance poses the question of whether a person is really a continuing symbol merely a fantastic illusion of heroism for the multitude to emulate. The 1986 People Power Revolution, which was a multitude's source of hope, can be reinterpreted too as the source of frustration or illusion after 30 years of lack of development. A person who has been exalted before as a hero can be vilified depending on the reception of their legacies by future generations. As Socrates Villegas sadly reflects on the 1986 People Power Revolution's 31st anniversary months after Duterte's presidential election and Marcos Sr.'s heroic burial in 2016, "History books are rewritten. Historical memory is revised. The hero is a villain. The plunderers are now heroes."⁴⁴ In this case, the multitude of OFWs, as *mga bagong bayani*, that was once a political body of liberation against dictatorship and poverty have turned into a repressive force of insecurity. Thus, while the *bayani* tradition is ontologically dependent on its popular response to a crisis as its reason for

⁴⁴ Patricia Evangelista, "Full Text: Archbishop Villegas' Open Letter to Cardinal Sin on EDSA," *The Rappler*, 25 February 2017, accessed 5 March 2023, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/162405-archbishop-villegas-open-letter-cardinal-sin-edsa-31/>.

existence, internal crises caused by its ambivalences over the years could result in alternative historical narratives as new foundations to chart the nation's future.

PASTORAL, THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL, AND CHRISTOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Having analyzed the double bind condition and heterotopia that grounds the *bayani* tradition embodied by the multitude of OFWs as *locus theologicus*, the article discusses its pastoral, theological ethical, and Christological implications. The sub-section will be divided into three areas: 1) double bind's implications for the practice of political love concerning ecclesial and political authorities, 2) heterotopia as spatial grounding for understanding grace and sin, and 3) the *bayani* tradition's ambivalence in relation to Jesus of Nazareth's messianic role.

THE MULTITUDE'S DOUBLE-BIND: CONFRONTING BLIND OBEDIENCE AND A NON-INCLUSIVE POLITICAL LOVE

Echoing Vatican II and liberation theology's pastoral insights, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines teaches solidarity and preferential option for the poor (particularly OFWs in crisis) to respond against the permeating economic poverty and political corruption in the country (PCP-II, n. 108; PCP-II, n. 388-399; PCP-II Decrees, art. 52, #3). By siding with the poor, the Catholic Church actualizes its charitable mission to uplift the marginalized and oppressed as it did during the brutal days of Marcos Sr.'s martial law era and Duterte's drug war campaign. The Church's engagement with the poor, however, becomes complicated in practice when the multitude continues to vote for populist politicians that have a clear record of authoritarianism and corruption. Its entanglement with the Filipino masses who are induced to work abroad as OFWs makes the practice of charity in the political and economic realms an uphill struggle. It begs the question of how the poor can be liberated if they themselves

continue to support the problematic causes that once marginalized them.

Electing leaders that promote the common good necessitates the practice of political love. Hardt and Negri suggest that we need to recover love as political practice from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Love means precisely that our expansive encounters and continuous collaborations bring us joy. There is really nothing necessarily metaphysical about the Christian and Judaic love of God: both God's love of humanity and humanity's love of God are expressed and incarnated in the common material political project of the multitude. We need to recover today this material and political sense of love, a love as strong as death. This does not mean you cannot love your spouse, your mother, and your child. It only means that your love does not end there, that love serves as the basis for our political projects in common and the construction of a new society. Without this love, we are nothing.⁴⁵

Pope Francis's *Fratelli Tutti* shares similar concerns regarding political love. He writes, "It [Political love] is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering" (FT, 186). As an act of love, exposing the social conditions of suffering allows us to change the oppressive situation that perpetuates it. Political love thus implies a critical approach to political leadership that is rooted in self-interest by expanding its practice beyond the confines of the family, class, or nation.

In contrast to what Pope Francis, Hardt and Negri advocate, a self-centered practice of political love is only for short-term security and does not liberate because it blindly surrenders one's subjectivity to authority, showing a lack of political maturity.

⁴⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 351-352.

An egotistical political love happens when social institutions manipulate the multitude's subjectivity through 'double bind' practices instigated by populist leaders. In this scenario, the multitude that desires to change social structures through mere obedience to political authority, as what populist leaders promote, is rewarded with 'security' while criticism is confronted with repression. As a response to this unjust situation, Francis also advocates the need to overthrow oppressors to protect human dignity and achieve justice (*FT*, 241-243). Individuals who voted, even in honest discernment and out of love, for politicians of questionable reputations become morally accountable for supporting policies that perpetuate an oppressive political structure. Challenging the culture of blind obedience to political authority even under the pretext of 'public order' is thus necessary.

In this case, Francis's call for synodality and *parresia* is relevant not only as an ecclesial practice but also as a sociopolitical practice for the multitude to promote a more democratic orientation to power and authority.⁴⁶ These changes in the Church's pastoral orientation toward the multitude should thus cease the Church's traditional hierarchy-centered obedience as an ecclesial norm. By implication, it would be hopeful if the synodal approach toward ecclesial authority would also influence the laity's attitude toward political authorities. To become a good example to society, the Catholic Church institution must thus welcome charitable criticisms as a social condition to educate the laity to learn how to discern, follow, or even dissent from all other kinds of authority as a democratic endeavor.

HETEROTOPIC SUBJECTIVITY: BEYOND A BLACK AND WHITE UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE AND SIN

The multitude of OFWs' heterotopic grounding second implication is the reconfiguration of grace and sin as moral

⁴⁶ See International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2 March 2018, accessed 2 March 2023, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_synodalita_en.html.

theological categories. It shows that these contrasting theological states of being are not mutually exclusive but rather co-existing conditions. As a heterotopia of grace and sin, the multitude's subjectivity further shows that their decision-making and participation are entangled with sociopolitical and economic structures. Although social media's disinformation has been instrumental to OFWs' populist voting preferences, the rise of populist narratives and leaders is only a symptom of their frustration with sociopolitical and economic structures' failure to realize liberal democratic ideals compounded with impoverishing neo-liberal policies. There is no one to blame for freely and willingly electing populist leaders but the multitude's lack of virtue to resist them amidst social-structural injustices. As seen here, emphasizing the relationality of OFWs to sociopolitical and economic structural failures provides a holistic understanding of their voting preferences for populist-nationalist leaders instead of pursuing the hegemonic liberal ideological lens that pedestalizes a person's autonomy. This is especially the case of OFWs who voted for Marcos and/or Duterte because they come from the same social network (e.g. friends, family, community, region). While free and non-violent elections are structurally fundamental to liberal democracy, its instrumentalization by many OFWs to choose illiberal leaders for one's perceived security reveals the heterotopia or internal differences within Philippine democracy since the 1986 People Power Revolution.

The 1986 People Power Revolution was a moment of liberation from a dictatorial regime, a historic and gracious moment in Philippine history, the 'ground' for establishing the Fifth Republic's democratic life. However, the 1986 People Power Revolution is also the same 'ground' of Filipino political economic frustrations in the Fifth Republic. This can be proven by the increase of Filipinos working abroad for the last three decades, which is imputable to poverty and lack of opportunities.⁴⁷ In this

⁴⁷ See data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, which was later absorbed under the Department of Migrant Workers, *Deployment per Skill per Country per Sex 1992-2010, 2015-2020*, accessed 27 March 2023, <https://www.dmw.gov.ph/archives/ofwstat/ofwstat.html>.

regard, the political (liberal democracy) and economic (neo-liberalism) aspects of the Fifth Republic born out of the 1986 People Power Revolution, which is encapsulated in recent years as the ‘yellow’ narrative, contain internal tensions that must be resolved. As much as the key political bearers of liberal ideology in the Fifth Republic promoted human rights, rule of law, and meritocratic governance (grace), the multitude’s impoverishment, marginalization, and repression (sin) also happened through neo-liberal privatization, which consequently led to the recent populist-nationalist sentiment and nostalgia.

The OFWs’ ambivalent political behavior who once participated in resisting authoritarianism but many of which later condoned as seen in recent national elections shows the multitude’s heterotopic grounding. It echoes the gospel narrative when the multitude who acclaimed Jesus as the returning kingly messiah is also the same crowd who clamored for his crucifixion (Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-40; Jn 12:12-19). Their preference for releasing Barabbas reveals human desire’s perplexity as to which direction it is leading or investing in (Matt. 27:15-31; Mk 15:6-14; Lk 23:13-24; Jn 18: 39-40). The multitude’s ambivalence as a political body further shows the heterotopicity of Golgotha, the “place of the skull” where Jesus was crucified (Mt 27:33; Mk 15:22; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:17). While criminals are executed in Golgotha, it is also the place of Jesus’s exaltation, showing the crucifixion event’s ambivalent ground of scandal and glory. In a similar view, as much as the 1986 People Power Revolution serves as the symbolic ground for the Filipino multitude’s political liberation from dictatorship, it is also the Fifth Republic’s reference for the country’s slow economic progress due to decades of neo-liberal policies.

THE BAYANI TRADITION’S MESSIANIC DIMENSION: AN AMBIVALENT FILIPINO CHRISTOLOGY

The third implication of the *bayani* tradition’s heterotopic grounding is its ambivalent determination to the popular Filipino understanding of Jesus’s messianic role vis-à-vis individuals

recognized as *bayani*. During the Spanish colonial period, Pedro Chirino, S.J. and Francisco Ignacio Alcina, S.J. wrote ethnographic accounts of the *indios*' ritual practices of giving reverence to a dead *datu*. In Luzon and Visayas respectively, they observed that *indios* would embalm him with the best perfumes and clothing. The *datu*'s relatives issue an interdict that the community must observe silence. Nobody should eat meat, travel through the river, or take a bath during a *datu*'s wake.⁴⁸ Based on these accounts, Francisco Nakpil Zialcita observes that these rituals accorded to a dead *datu* are also practiced during Good Friday to Christ as represented by the *Santo Entierro*. Zialcita comments, "The cult of the dead leader persists in the taboos surrounding Good Friday" further stating that "perhaps the converts must have accepted the new taboos because they saw Christ as the new *datu*."⁴⁹ The *bayani* tradition embodied by the *datu*'s warrior personality is thus analogical to a Jewish messianic king in the Old Testament, both of which are political leaders demonstrating strength and power.⁵⁰

However, the *bayani* tradition also has passion, sacrifice, and death narratives. Apolinario Mabini writes that Christ's crucifixion has served as a model for understanding José Rizal's execution who was popularly revered as the "Tagalog Christ".⁵¹ Reynaldo C. Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* also shows how popular folk leaders of revolutionary movements who fought the Spanish and American colonizers embodied messianic motifs like Apolinario de la Cruz, the *Katipuneros*, Macario Sakay, and Felipe

⁴⁸ Pedro Chirino, *Relación de las islas Filipinas/The Philippines in 1600*, trans. Ramon Echevarria (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1969[1604]), 88-89, 326-331; Francisco Ignacio Alcina, S.J., *History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands: Evangelization and Culture at the Contact Period Part 1, Book 3*, trans. Cantius J. Kobak, O.F.M. and Lucio Gutierrez, O.P. (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2005[1668]), 310-311.

⁴⁹ Ferdinand N. Zialcita, *Authentic though not Exotic: Essays on Filipino Identity* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2005), 203-204.

⁵⁰ Lawrence S. Pedregosa, *Bayani: A Filipino Postcolonial Heuristic Device in Understanding the Messianic Role of Jesus of Nazareth* (Manila: Unpublished M.A. Thesis, De La Salle University, 2011).

⁵¹ Apolinario Mabini, *The Philippine Revolution with Other Documents of the Period: Volume II* (Manila: The National Historical Institute, 2001), 183.

Salvador.⁵² Ileta further observes that the Christ-like motif of self-sacrifice was also seen in Benigno Aquino Jr.'s assassination and other political activists who died fighting for human rights.⁵³ On this basis, Christ's passion narrative is also applicable to OFWs who are recognized as *mga bagong bayani* due to their sacrifices for their families, and consequently, their country. Despite *bayani* tradition's cultural evolution into different kinds of personages in Filipino history, the Christ-like motif has been a repetitive metaphorical concept for the Filipino value of sacrifice.

Even though the *bayani* tradition's positive values are accentuated in Philippine history, it is also the same cultural criteria that allow us to evaluate why populist leaders like Duterte and Marcos Jr. are elected. The political preference for *datu*-like qualities shows a popular perception of their strong-willed capability to ameliorate the country's situation just like Israel's long-awaited messianic king who would restore the Davidic throne. Marcos Jr.'s presidential victory echoes this messianic theme of restoring Marcos Sr.'s so-called "Golden Age" which advocated public order by repressing its critics as troublemakers.⁵⁴ The Marcoses' return is thus a populist-nationalist eschatology reflective of Christ's Parousia who would redeem the country's situation after three decades of stagnation. Despite the pending public clamor for justice, their election victory has been a redeeming factor for their family, which Manuel Quezon III comments as "absolution" by the Filipino people.⁵⁵ By implication, the *bayani*

⁵² See Reynaldo Ileta, *Pasyon and Revolution Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1979).

⁵³ Reynaldo C. Ileta, *Filipinos, and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1998), 173.

⁵⁴ Floyd Whaley, "30 Years after Revolution, Some Filipinos yearn for 'Golden Age' of Marcos," *The New York Times*, 23 February 2016, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/world/asia/30-years-after-revolution-some-filipinos-yearn-for-golden-age-of-marcos.html>; Joel Ruiz Butuyan, "Marcos Years: Golden Years of What?," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 November 2021, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/145870/marcos-years-golden-age-of-what>.

⁵⁵ Manuel L. Quezon III, "The Marcos Restoration: 30 Years in the Making," *Asia Sentinel*, 15 May 2022, accessed 11 October 2022, <https://www.asiasentinel.com/p/marcos-restoration-30-years-making>.

tradition's ambivalence as a heuristic device to understand the messianic tradition necessitates us to re-emphasize the possibility of corrupt Jewish kings who "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, just as his ancestors had done" (2 Kings 23:32). A *bayani* or messiah rests on shaky grounds since it presents itself not only as a source of stability or 'unity' but also as an unstable set of relationships with the current political actors, events, social structures, and circumstances. Given that heroic recognition is political, the *bayani* tradition is in a perpetual state of crisis open to evaluation and re-evaluation by the Filipino multitude.

CONCLUSION

This article is a theopolitical ethical commentary on President Marcos Jr. and Vice-President Duterte's election whose populist-nationalist campaign was supported by many OFWs who are popularly recognized as *mga bagong bayani*. Marcos and Duterte's electoral victory reveal the entanglement and disentanglements of OFWs' political and economic role in nation-building. In a liberal democratic and capitalist environment, their preference for populist-nationalist leaders shows a crisis regarding the relationship between politics and economics. OFWs participate in neo-liberal globalization to achieve modern development but their choice of authoritarian-leaning leaders does not lead to the preservation of liberal democratic values.

OFWs are part of the global multitude that underwent changes in labor subjectivity since the 1960s. In contrast to an atomistic political anthropology, Negri's concept of multitude provides a relational understanding of human subjectivity. In the neo-liberal capitalist system, the multitude of OFWs experiences a 'double bind' that manipulates their desires by imposing the experience of lack on its subjectivity so that it desires to attain economic security while participating in the system that once marginalized them. Their preference for populist leaders who have authoritarian leanings also shows their desire for political security under the duress of a 'father' figure who could provide public order in the country.

The article also utilized Foucault's concept of heterotopia to investigate the spatial preconditions that determine OFWs' ambivalent political and economic engagement. It reveals that the *bayani* tradition's grounding contains internal crises based on the tensions between traditional and modern worldviews informing the Filipino political culture. These tensions trace back to the unresolved issues of modern political and economic development since the 1986 People Power Revolution, which has led to their popular frustration with liberal democracy. *Bayani* tradition's reliance on a collective effort to accomplish communal tasks has led to the resurgence of pre-modern patron-client ties despite modernity's promotion of meritocracy and transparent governance.

The political ambivalence of the *bayani* tradition embodied by the multitude of OFWs puts into question how political love reveals theopolitical ethical issues concerning the practice of solidarity and preferential option for the poor. Their preference to follow authority for the sake of public order puts the practice of political love to attain the common good in peril. As a heterotopic subject, they are standing on contentious grounds: it is a political body that liberates while desiring disciplinary authority. The *bayani* tradition is therefore not only a source of benevolence (grace) but can also be utilized for malevolent purposes (sin). Despite its salvific messianic dimensions, its popular reception also consists of corruption in political leadership which must also be emphasized to better understand the *bayani* tradition's heterotopic grounding.

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