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Translating politeness cues in Philippine missionary linguistics: "*Hail, Mister Mary!*" and other stories

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The earliest and most extensive systematic descriptions of Philippine languages are found in the grammatical and lexicographical works of Spanish Catholic priests from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Tagalog was the most studied among these languages, and was generally portrayed as the most "refined" because of certain cues that overtly mark verbal politeness. As these politeness cues were taken as translation constraints in Latinate tongues, they are often explained through solutions that operated on arbitrary equivalences between Tagalog and Castilian. A closer reading of these equivalences reveals that aside from the reduction of language to the usual categories of grammar, the proposed translation solutions also inscribed verbal politeness within a hierarchized vision of colonial polity, and repurposed the pre-existing mechanisms of Tagalog so as to articulate a Christian(ized) discourse.

Keywords: translation; politeness; Tagalog; missionary linguistics; Philippines

1. Introduction

If out of piousness a speaker of English were to learn his Catholic prayers in the Tagalog language, he would probably read the first line of the *Ave Maria* with bewilderment. While the Latin phrase "Ave Maria, gratia plena" – an allusion to the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary (cf. Luke 1:28) –, is usually translated to English as "Hail Mary, full of grace!", the Tagalog translation renders the same prayer as "Aba Ginoong Maria, napupuno ka ng grasya!", or literally, "Hail, Mister Mary, you are being filled with grace!" Some questions would have to be asked unavoidably: Why did the Tagalog translation add the word *ginoo* to a rather straightforward incipit? Why was this word chosen to refer to the Virgin when it actually means "gentleman," "mister" or "sir"? Why were the alternatives *ginang* "madam" and *binibini* "miss" not selected? The answers to these questions can be derived from a juxtaposition of the principles of Tagalog politeness with those of translation theory and missionary linguistics.

The history of the Philippines is often described as a series of successive colonial flows (Bankoff 2001, 541). So powerful is this imagery in Filipino historiography and humanities that there is a certain unease in locating the country within the complexities of identitarian discourse, which on the one hand situates it within the geographical boundaries of Asia, but on the other underscores its intimate cultural links to a sociocultural West (Zialcita 2001, 16–17, 2009, 164). It therefore comes as no surprise that whatever

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scant reference there is to a Philippine translation history necessarily resorts to the metaphor of an East–West encounter with all its concomitant discontents. Lumbera (1986), for example, argues that local poetry is identified for the first time when it is "committed to writing […] in the middle of the eighteenth century" at a time when the incipient Filipino nation was under Spanish colonial rule (1). He also adds that the reckoning of the history of written poetry in the Philippines coincides with the establishment of the printing press during this same period (22). The capital city of Manila, on the other hand, is historically construed as a translated language landscape that thrives in the duality that generally characterizes an Oriental city with a Western visage:

> When the Spaniards conquered Manila in 1571, they established an outpost of their global empire in Asia that would be linked to the Americas through the port of Acapulco in the Viceroyalty of New Spain until 1815. Las Islas Filipinas, as they were officially designated, would remain, demographically speaking, an overwhelmingly Asian possession of the Crown. **Manila was an Asian city wearing a European mask**. (Buschmann, Slack, and Tueller 2014, 63, emphasis mine)

Of late, writers such as Rafael (2005, 2008, 2015), Barbaza (2005) and Alburo (2011) contend that translation practices in the Philippines should be framed within the protracted linguistic debates in the country, where indigenous languages coexist and compete with the languages of its former Western colonizers.

This metaphorization of the Philippine translation tradition as an East–West encounter can be traced back to the writings of Spanish Catholic missionaries from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is in this body of texts that we find the earliest and most systematic attempt to understand the Filipinos on the basis of their language and cultures (Franco Figueroa 2013; Sales 2008, 2015; Sueiro Justel 2002). And it is through these missionary texts that Filipinos nowadays are often afforded with a memory of their past (Rafael 1993, 12) through a medium – Spanish – that has paradoxically grown so foreign and so alienating over time (Lifshey 2012, 5) that it is typically accessed at present through translation (Cano 2008; St-Pierre 1993).

"The past," however, is not only limited to the grand narratives of colonial exploits and popular revolts, even if the history of nations does tend towards this direction. When read through the lens of translation, missionary texts also serve as an important corpus for evaluating the cultural aspects of language teaching and usage that have emerged as a result of contact between cultures. One of these cultural aspects is linguistic politeness.

Linguistic politeness has generally been regarded as one of the most marked features of Tagalog, the basis of the Philippine national language called Filipino. While modern linguistic thought has discredited the notion of discourteous languages, given that the manifestation of politeness varies across cultures, and is therefore very contextual (Haverkate 1994; Xie, He, and Lin 2005; Mills and Kádár 2011), it is not uncommon for Filipinos nowadays to regard Tagalog as the "most polite" among the languages of the archipelago. There even appears to be a consensus among linguists about the centrality of collectivist thinking in the Tagalog ethos (Ishii, Reyes, and Kitayama 2003, 42), which is often associated in politeness research with the obligation of choosing the appropriate linguistic forms to express one's self in an acceptable discourse (Ide 2005, 56).

The characterization of Tagalog as a polite language has well-documented historical antecedents. Missionary records have firmly established the link between linguistic competence, politeness, urbanity and religion, as evidenced in this oft-cited description of Tagalog by Jesuit historian Pedro Chirino (1604, 35):

> From the Hebrew language came its mysteries and complexities; from the Greek, its articles and distinction, not only for the appellatives, but also for proper nouns; from Latin, its copiousness and elegance; and from Spanish, its politeness, propriety and courteousness.[1]

Chirino proceeds to compare Tagalog with Visayan, the major language spoken in the central and southern islands of the archipelago, and suggests that the former is more polite than the latter (36). This generalization is repeated in the history of another Jesuit, Francisco Colín (1663, 57), and will only be refuted a century later by yet another member of the order, Juan José Delgado ([1751] 1892), who argues that "urbanity is the same in all languages, even though Fr. Colín said that Visayan was more impolite" (334).[2]

The missionaries consider the systematization of the linguistic knowledge in the colonies as a form of compliance of the divine mandate to reveal the grandeur of God's salvation to the world, the so-called *divinorum sensuum maiestatem* "the majesty of divine meanings" that Fray Francisco Blancas de San José preaches in the prologue of his book (1610, n.p.), the oldest extant grammar of Tagalog. Anyone who wishes to minister to the Indios, Blancas asserts, must possess *elegancia* "elegance" in the local tongue in order to transmit the wisdom of the Gospel and save the colonized people from ignorance. The redemptive and deific nature of language is a common trope in missionary writings, and is, in fact, proclaimed by the Franciscan grammarian Sebastián de Totanés (1745, n.p.) in so sardonic a manner:

> There is another powerful reason that greatly compels the minister to study this language [Tagalog] as much as possible, and it is the callowness of the Indios, who must be governed through it. These indigenes are generally crude, uncouth and of little reflection. The great Father of families assigned but a small portion of talent to them […] and they have little use for it. They seldom negotiate with it because of their natural dullness and degeneracy. If to these properties is added whatever is uncultivated, unschooled and unrefined in the minister with respect to language, the damage will be even greater, because the words of the Divine Sentence – that there will be children who seek the bread of doctrine, and there will be no one to give them any – will hence be fulfilled.[3]

While the Franciscan blames the colonized Filipinos for being naturally uncouth, he also insinuates that their ministers can be faulted for their failure to evangelize them in the local tongues. This concern for the expedient evangelization of the Indios through autochthonous languages is another trope in missionary texts. Missionary writers often admonish their brothers in the cloth to exert all efforts to learn not only the structures of the languages, but also the connotations of the words they say. This is how Tagalog politeness cues are presented in the missionary corpus. In the analysis of this feature of Tagalog, particular emphasis is given to the politeness clitic *po*.

2. Approximating *po* in colonial discourse

Tagalog grammars nowadays describe *po* and its variant *ho* as clitics used for "talking politely to older people, superiors, adult strangers and adult customers" (De Vos 2011, 369). A sentence such as *Magandang umaga* "Good morning" can be rendered more politely by inserting *po* in the appropriate position (i.e., *Magandang umaga po*). Despite certain similarities with the formal second-person pronouns of neo-Latinate languages (*usted* in Spanish, *Lei* in Italian, *vous* in French), these clitics are in no way pronominal. Their use in a sentence entails that the pronominal constituents be altered accordingly to

agree with the polite form (i.e., in the nominative case *kayo* or *sila* "formal you," instead of *ikaw* "informal you"; see Schachter and Otanes 1972, 423).

Missionary grammarians are very much aware of this. They know that *po* is used to convey politeness, and that it is not an exact equivalent of *usted*, or the more archaic Castilian pronoun *vos*. The most common strategy the missionaries have adopted as a solution to the translation constraint is summed up in this entry from the dictionary of Jesuit lexicographers Noceda and Sanlúcar [1754] 1832, 317):

> *Po*. A word that denotes respect and reverence, and corresponds to the word *Señor*. *Papopò*, to say it. *Pinopòpò*, I, *Pinopopoan*, to whom. To do so frequently. *Mapag*. If done many times, *mamopo*. To whom, *Pamopoin*. To use the mouth, *ipa-mopo*. Where, *Pamopoan*, Frequently, *Mapamopo*, I. *Mapopoin*. Note that when placed after a word, it is written as a single syllable, but it becomes two when referred to. May this serve as a reminder for other one-syllable particles. *Ang popo ang marami, cun mağusap*\ when he speaks he says *po* many times.[4]

The solution consists of establishing an arbitrary exo-grammatical equivalence (cf. Auroux 1992, 35) between the Tagalog clitic *po* and the Castilian noun *señor* "lord, sir." In other words, the clitic is exo-grammatized by forcing its translation as a nominal into the target language. This procedure would have paralleled what translation theorists Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet call as the process of *transposition* (Munday 2008, 57). Because politeness clitics are inexistent in Spanish, *po* must be transferred from the source into the target language by transposing it as another part of speech. The clitic in the source becomes a nominal in the target. It is not taken as an independent feature that is unique to the language, but rather as a mere variation of an already existing category in the languages previously known to the grammarians.

The strategy proves to be quite consistent throughout the corpus. In the grammar of the Augustinian Manuel Buzeta (1850, 42) we read, "*acó.y, nánalisna. Paálamna* ***po*** *acó*," which he then translates as "pido licencia, **señor**, para irme" "I ask for permission, sir, for me to go" (my emphasis). Elsewhere he writes, "y se responde: *taga Paete* ***po*** *acó*," which according to him is equivalent to "**señor**, soy de Paete" "Sir, I am from Paete" (103, my emphasis).

Although the equivalence between *po* and *señor* is seen by and large as a feasible translation solution, its schematic arbitrariness reveals certain acceptations that are difficult to account for in the target language. For instance, Franciscan historian Juan Francisco de San Antonio (1738, 145) alleges that the usage of the clitic varies in relation to the gender of the speaker:

> Among the polities, Tagalog, Pampango and Visayan are considered as the principal languages and the mother tongues. Tagalog is the most polite and the most decorous among them, not because it lacks Tú – the primitive pronoun Ycao, or Ca, is used quite often even with persons to whom greater reverence is owed –, but rather because of po and po co, which are used to express the same thing and which mean My lord. The first one is used by men, and the second, by women. When interspersed with other words, they convey reverence and courteousness, such as when a woman says "yes" with an Oo, po co, which without the po co would have sounded so unrefined.[5]

This observation is shared by Franciscan lexicographer Domingo de los Santos (1794, 759).

The equivalence between *po* and *señor* becomes even more problematic when set in specific discourses, as these sentences from Franciscan grammarian Joaquín de Coria (1872, 86) show:

> Where are you from? – ¿Taga saan ca?/ From Tayabas. – Taga Tayabas./ But to ask politely, they say:/**From where are thou** [usted] **from? – Taga ano po siya?**/ From Manila, sir. – Taga Maynila, po./ **Where are you from? – Taga ano ca?**/ From Mulanay. – Taga Mulanay (my emphasis).[6]

In this example, I have chosen to translate *usted* as *thou* deliberately to highlight the pragmatic difference between the formal and the informal second-person pronouns, albeit my choice is exceedingly archaizing in this context, and is even incompatible with the verb (i.e., *are* instead of the archaic *art*). Be that as it may, what should instead be noted here is that the approximation of *po* as *señor* is eventually negotiated in this passage to account for the usages that have emerged in the discourse as a function of the politeness rules in the target language. Since the nominal *señor* takes the formal pronoun in Spanish, Coria has to extend the field of equivalence to include *usted* as a possible translation of *po*.

This is the same translation solution found in Buzeta's 1850 grammar: "[t]he question is formed with *taga* or *ano* or *saan*, e.g., *tagaanóca?* 'Where are you from?' And to ask this politely, *tagaanó po siya?* 'From where are thou?'" (103).[7] Even though a straightforward explanation of Tagalog politeness cues initially adduces to the binarism between *po* and *señor*, the discursive occurrences of *po* do not neatly lend themselves to the linearity of the proposed equivalence.

3. Occluded meanings

It is in the grammar of Minguella de las Mercedes (1878), however, that we read lengthier discursive examples of the equivalence of *po-usted-señor* in translation. The Augustinian Recollect presents his lessons as translation exercises where long Tagalog passages are examined. The following passage is lifted from his eighth lesson:

> Magandáng árao **po**: magandang árao namán sumagót ang **panginoon**: Anóng ibig mo? Acó **po** ay isang tauong mahirap matandá nang totóo at may saquit pa: ang aquing cabesa,i, humihiñgi sa áquin nang bouís at acó po,i, ualáng uala maláon náng hindi ako humihipo nang cualta Paáno **po** ito? Íbig co sanang tumanóng sa **inyó** cun dápat acóng bumouis. Ilán ca náng taón? Anáng pañginoon. Humiguit cumúlang sa pitóng pouó. Cun ganían hindi ca dápat bumouís. Salámat **po**. Acó,i, aalís na (76).

> "Good morning, Sir. – Good morning, replied the master, what do you want? – I am a poor old lady, and I am sick. The head of my village asks for my taxes but I do not have absolutely anything. It has been so long since I last touched money. What should I do? I would like to ask you if it is fitting that I pay – How old are you? – Seventy years old, more or less. – In that case you must not pay taxes. – Thank you, Sir, I am off." (My translation and emphasis)

A dictionary equivalent, or what he calls a *versión literal*, is then supplied underneath each word of the passage. The first two sentences of the aforementioned paragraph, for instance, are rendered as "Hermoso día Señor: hermoso día también contestó." A more fluent translation to Spanish appears right after the passage to facilitate reading.

While Minguella adheres to the proposed equivalence between *po, señor* and *usted*, he also suggests that *po* is an abbreviation of the Tagalog word *poon* (62, 75), a highly reverential title that is used by a slave to address his master (Noceda and Sanlúcar [1754] 1832, 321). Santos (1794, 759) also makes an oblique suggestion to this effect, saying that the word *señor* has the acceptations of both *po* and *poon*, but Minguella seems to be the

only one among the missionary grammarians to maintain that *po* is a derivative of *poon*, as far as I can gather from the corpus.

The leap from the Castilian *señor* to the Tagalog *poon* has very interesting implications, for as Tymoczko (1999) observes in her analysis of the incommensurability of translation,

> [m]any of the differences between source text and translation are inescapable, resulting from the shift from the obligatory features of one language to the obligatory features of another. Other shifts have a cultural basis; the translator must decide how to handle features of the source culture (e.g. objects, customs, historical and literary allusions) that are unfamiliar to the receiving audience, adapting and modifying the source text in the process, if only through the process of explanation. Still other differences have to do with information load … (23)

In the Minguella passage cited above, the conversation is set between a Spanish colonial official and a 70-year-old Tagalog woman. The translation makes it appear that the use of *po* is non-reciprocal (i.e., the woman addressed the Spaniard using *po* while the Spaniard used the informal form to address her back), and that the politeness clitic is employed in this conversation in deference to the social position of the Spanish official.

A native speaker of Tagalog, however, would have found this rather unusual since conversations with the elderly almost always require *po*. While it is true that the clitic is non-reciprocal in certain situations and that the social status of one of the interlocutors can compel the other to utter the word, using *po* to address the elderly woman in this particular context would have been preferred. That Minguella makes it appear that the Spanish official has no obligation to say *po* in a conversation with her signals a change in what Austin called the perlocutionary act of the utterance (Austin [1962] 2011, 21–24). What may have been read as a "neutral" translation in Spanish is actually a marked conversation in Tagalog. Although the officer is imagined in the fluent translation as an *amo* "master," he in Tagalog is actually presented as a *panginoon* "lord," a word that has very strong political and religious overtones. The colonial officer, in other words, is Minguella's *poon* who requires *po* to accentuate his status. It is soon revealed in the conversation that the colonial officer is ultimately the arbiter who decides whether or not a sickly 70-year-old woman needs to pay taxes.

The primordial use of the Tagalog *po* for marking politeness is thus covertly supplanted to hierarchize the interlocutors in the discourse. Contemporary studies in linguistic politeness indicate that central to the usage of honorific forms in many Asian languages is their potential to index power relations, identities and roles in any given interaction (Ide 2005; Sales 2007; Strauss and Eun 2005). In this regard, Pizziconi (2011) emphasizes that

> [a]s grammaticalised linguistic devices typically interpreted as markers of deference to people of higher status, they [honorifics] are commonly conceived as exhibiting a "core" deferential meaning, coded in the very honorific form, therefore constant across instances of use and always presupposed. **Deferential forms are assumed to selectively mark literal or metaphorical distinctions of rank or horizontal distance, and therefore we are left to explain how meanings other than social ranks and roles – e.g. affective stances such as aggression or hypocrisy, intimacy, affection – can be routinely conveyed by the same forms** (45, my emphasis).

In the translation of *po* in the Minguella grammar, what at first glance appears to be a lesson about Tagalog politeness can alternatively be read as a codification of a stratified relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, where the politeness clitic is appropriated to fit the regimes of colonial polity. The language of the colonized, in a

sense, is repurposed in order to articulate emergent ideations of power and social relations from the colonial encounter. In the words of Rafael (1993),

> [i]t is as if Tagalog were alienated from the Tagalogs by the missionary-translator, who, after endowing it with a grammar and a lexicon in his *arte*, gave it back to them in the form of prayers, sermons, and confessionals. The vernacular is thus refashioned into an object to be classified and dissected, a gift to be circulated, and an instrument for the insertion of its speakers into a spiraling network of obligations with the Father (38).

While it is originally the missionaries who have to learn Tagalog to proselytize the early Filipinos, they eventually assume the role of re-mediators who add "multiple layers of information" (Tymoczko 1999, 23) to local linguistic practices. The missionaries translate *po* in such a way that it becomes a discursive mechanism that not only marks politeness but also conveys a certain sense of colonial social order. "Language is an opaque medium," Tiffin and Lawson (1994, 4) write, "whose ability to obscure can be deployed just as readily as its ability to express." Such is the translation of *po*, for beneath the gossamer of linguistic decorum lies the articulation of hierarchy in the language of the colonized other.

4. Colonial translation as discursive (dis)placement

Another example of the re-mediating role of missionary exo-grammatization is seen in the *Aba Ginoong Maria*, the prayer I alluded to at the beginning of this paper. The word *guinoo* (or *ginoo*, because of the ever-changing orthographical rules of the time) appears even in the *Doctrina Christiana* ([1593] 2005, n.p.), the oldest extant text printed in the Philippines. The first line of the prayers says, "Aba guinoo Maria matoua cana, napopono ca nang graçia."

The use of *guinoo* in relation to the Virgin Mary is sustained in other Tagalog missionary grammars printed thereafter. Franciscan grammarian Magdalena (1679, n.p.), for example, mentions that, "when talking about Our Lady, the form *si guinoong Santa Maria* is very much in use."[8] Writing almost two centuries after Magdalena, Buzeta (1850, 9) records that, "for the same reason of courteous affection that a servant or a slave says *si Pañginóon*, my Lord, or *si Guinóo*, my Lady, we all have more reason to say *si Guinóong Santa Maria*, Our Lady, the Virgin Mary."[9]

There are, however, certain discrepancies as regards the referent of *guinoo*. In the first Spanish-Tagalog dictionary to be ever published, Franciscan lexicographer San Buenaventura (1994 [1613], 653) claims that *guinoo* is used to refer to a *noble* or *prinçipal* "nobleman," as well as to a *señora* "madam," a view echoed in Santos's work (1794, 27 of the Segvnda Parte). On the other hand, Noceda and Sanlúcar (1832 [1754], 154) remark that *ginoo* is for women and *maginoo* is for men, except in Comintang, the ancient name of the province of Batangas, about 100 km to the south of the capital city of Manila, where *ginoo* is said for both.

Gendered references notwithstanding, missionary writers agree that the appellative customarily marks the addressee's privilege, status or rank in Tagalog. There is a wealth of examples in missionary writings where *guinoo* and its derivatives are used to represent these qualities. The word *caguinoohan* is repeatedly placed as the equivalent of the Castilian *principalia* "the elite" in the works of Totanés (1745, 106 and *passim*) and Hevia Campomanes [1872] 1877, 44 and *passim*). In his discussion of Tagalog poetics, Coria (1872, 544) offers a *diona*, a short Tagalog epithalamion, that reads, "Mey lalaqui

masigya,/**guinóo** cun tumugpa/aeta cun sumaloñga" (my emphasis), which I translate for the purposes of this discussion as, "[t]here was once a courageous man, who was noble when he swam out to the ocean, but proved to be an Aeta[10] when he swam back." This *diona* also appears in the Noceda-Sanlúcar dictionary ([1754] 1832, 363). We read an explanation of the verse in both Coria and Noceda-Sanlúcar: "There are brave men for escaping, and cowards for attacking."[11]

It is perhaps for this acceptation as a designation of privilege that *guinoo* is taken as a convenient term to expound on the concepts of divinity and holiness. The Catholic doctrine of the Holy Trinity – that is, that there are three persons in one God – is explained by Blancas de San José [1605] 1832, 104) as, "tatlong guinoo at sila'y nagcacapara nang pagcaguinoo nila" "three noblemen who are equal in their nobility." *Tatlong guinoo* as a translation solution coexists in the same textual space alongside the calque *tatlong personas* "three persons," and the two appear to be interchangeable throughout this section of Blancas's text.

The reference to God as *guinoo*, however, is rather infrequent in Tagalog missionary writings, given that there is an overwhelming preference for its usage as an appellative for the Virgin Mary (see, for example, Buzeta 1850, 9, Coria 1872, 47, Magdalena 1679, fol. 1, Hevia Campomanes [1872] 1877, 44, San Agustín 1787 [1703], 3, Totanés 1745, 8). Again, this is more than just a mere question of gender, for as Santos (1794, 379) insists,

> ang Guinoong Virgen Maria. The Blessed Virgin Mary. Ang Guinoong santa Ana. Madam St Anne. Although for female saints, it is more common to say Ang po.on, but for Our Lady, the Queen of Angels, Ang Guinoong Santa Maria.[12]

In other words, while *guinoo* can be said for other female saints (such as St. Anne, who in the Catholic tradition is the Virgin's own mother), it is the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Angels herself, who deserves the title over anyone else.

An argument can be made that since *guinoo* takes on the very human notions of social standing, it is appropriated in the missionary texts to present a hierarchized vision of Catholic hagiology. The usage of *guinoo* to refer to the Virgin Mary inscribes her within a Christian(ized) and colonial discourse, and underscores her divine queenship above her other attributes. It indicates a civilizing portrayal of the Virgin (cf. Rubin 2009, 21), one that equates her doctrinal dignity as the Mother of God to the standards of human nobility and prominence. She is *Guinoong Santa Maria* who occupies the higher echelons of heaven, an embodiment of a colonial privilege that is different from that of the "uncivilized" natives from below (cf. Sigal 2000).

More interestingly, Mary's Tagalog title of *guinoo* has survived the evolution of the Tagalog language. While modern translations have eventually updated the *Doctrina* translation of the prayer by supplying the missing ligature – *ng* (e.g., *guinoong*), deleting the phrase *matoua cana* "rejoice," and modernizing the orthography, the word *guinoo* has remained unquestioned in the discourse, even though it has already come to mean "mister" in modern-day Tagalog/Filipino.

A postcolonial reading of the text may help explain the enduring quality of the translation into Tagalog. As Homi Bhabha (2004) observes,

> [a]n important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/ historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition (94).

In other words, while the word *g(u)inoo* is originally put to signify respect for the Virgin Mary in keeping with the politeness rules of the ancient Tagalogs (Chirino 1604, 36, Colín 1663, 57), the honorific has come to function over time as an "*idée fixe*" (Bhabha 2004, 143) that makes the text of the *Ave Maria* prayer "static and unchanging rather than historically constructed" (Niranjana 1992, 3). Never mind if the Tagalog language has evolved from its sixteenth century form into a contemporary variety where the signifier *g(u)inoo* no longer possesses its original meaning. A modern reader would have generally read the prayer without challenging the wisdom of its translation.

The honorific thus stands out as a (dis)placed marker that historicizes the translated text as a material product of a specific period of Philippine history. It places its meaning within the context of a historical colonial order, while at the same time displacing its tangible form, the very signifier itself, to a postcolonial readership. In doing so, the translated honorific occludes the hierarchized meanings underneath the perceived historical remoteness of the colonial, and carries it as an anomalous incursion into contemporary Tagalog grammar and lexicon. *Guinoo* as a translation solution becomes a deified untouchable that sources its validity to its being an iteration of what has been regarded as a revered translation strategy, where the "[t]ranslation functions as a transparent presentation of something that already exists, although the 'original' is actually brought into being through translation" (Niranjana 1992, 3).

Bhabha calls such (dis)placement an *Enstellung*, an image that "can neither be 'original' by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it – nor 'identical' by virtue of the difference that defines it" (Bhabha [1985] 2006, 40). Zabus ([1991] 2006, 288), on the other hand, would argue that this was an example of relexification, for there were two languages – Tagalog and Castilian – that operated within the same text, "palimpsests for, behind the scriptural authority of the target European language, the earlier, imperfectly erased remnants of the source language are still visible." In both cases, the formulaic construction of this particular prayer reverberates as a metonymic reminder of the Hispanic colonial past of the Philippines. *Guinoo* banks on its being a "metonymy of presence" (Bhabha 2004, 128) that reminds us of the lingering translational influence of an old cultural hegemony through whose networks of meaning a particular translation solution has been imbued with legitimacy, acceptance, and fixity.

5. Conclusion

A translation constraint, Lefevere (1992, 12) writes, would always have to be connected to "a 'contrived' system, because it consists both of texts (objects) and human agents who read, write, and rewrite texts." It can be said based on the foregoing examples that such was case of missionary and colonial writings in the Philippines. Missionary grammarians and translators produced texts in keeping with the contrived imaginations of a colonial society and the role a religion had to play in such society. By analyzing the transposition of Tagalog politeness markers into Castilian Spanish, we see how the standards of the urbane colonized subject were enmeshed in the lexical and discursive modes of signification.

A postcolonial reading of these missionary texts is in no way an attempt to make any moralist pronouncements on the translation of these politeness cues. It does, however, wish to offer an alternative interpretation of the translation, "… for reality in the postcolony is necessarily pluralistic and chaotic and therefore resistant to the homogenizing effect of normative translation" (Bandia 2012, 420). Bassnett (2014, 46) remarks that "[l]anguage, the heart in the body of culture, reflects and articulates the

values of its culture, but when a translator makes assumptions about its universality, problems arise." We have seen this in the foregoing examples. We have seen how specific words that are initially read as innocuous and static formulations of interlingual politeness cues can be re-interpreted as veiled indicators of the colonial archetype of civilization.

I am reminded of Lefevere's questioning of the limits of our translation paradigms: "Can culture A ever really understand culture B on that culture's (i.e. B's) own terms?" (Lefevere 1999, 77). The answer, curiously, comes from a missionary writer. As far back as 1663, Francisco Colín (57) makes a surprisingly relativist summation of the historical description of Philippine languages, contending that, "I do not seek to disavow the language, for any language has beauty and elegance for the natives that do not glimmer in the eyes of the foreign.'[13] By looking at the translational tensions that these politeness markers brought about in the production of Philippine missionary-colonial grammars, one should come to the realization that the language of the colonized subject – the same language that has been repeatedly accused of being incapable of expressing the ideas of a Western religion and race – unwittingly became a translational encounter that interrogated the usefulness of a colonial language in explaining and ultimately understanding the colonial other.

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Notes

1. "De la Hebrea; los misterios, i preñezes. De la Griega; los articulos, i distinción, no solo en los nombres apelativos, mas tambien en los propios. De la Latina; la copia, i elegancia. I de la Española; la buena criança, comedimiento i cortesía." All translations from Spanish to English are mine.
2. "La urbanidad es la misma en todas las lenguas, aunq[ue] diga el P^{e} Colin que es mas grosera la Visaya."
3. "Otra poderosa razón hay que estimula grandemente á secundarle lo possible en este Idioma, y es la cortedad de los Indios, à quienes se ha de administrar con el. Son, por lo general, estos Naturales toscos, zafios, y de poca reflexion, les tocò en la repartición, que el Gran Padre de familias hizo de sus talentos, corta porción (assi lo quiso el Gran Señor, y esso les convendrá mas á ellos) y essa porción corta la trafican ellos poco, negocian poco con ella por su natural floxedad, y caimiento. Si á tales propiedades, pues, se llegasse lo rosco, inculto, y corto del Mnto. en su Lengua, será la lastima mayor; pues se vendrá á verificar a la letra la Divina Sentencia, de q los Párvulos piden el pan de la Doctrina, y no hay quien se lo parta." The Divine Sentence referred to herein harks back to the fourth verse of the fourth chapter of the Book of Lamentations in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible.
4. *"Po*. Palabra que denota respeto y reverencia, y corresponde á Señor. *Papopò*, decirla. *Pinopòpò, I, Pinopopoan*, á quien. Frecuent. *Mapag*. Si muchas veces, *mamopo*. A quien, *Pamopoin*. La boca, *Ipa-mopo*. Donde, *Pamopoan*, Frecuent. *Mapamopo*, I. *Mapopoin*. Adviértase que pospuesto es de una sola sílaba, pero nombrándolo es de dos; y quede advertido para las otras partículas de una sílaba. *Ang popo ang marami, cun maǧusap*\ cuando habla dice muchas veces *Po*." Italics in the source text.
5. "Entre las políticas se tienen por mas principales, y como Madres la *Tagàla*, la *Pampànga*, y la *Bisàya*; y aun entre estas la Tagàla mas política, y mas señora: no porque le falte el *Tu*, que es bien vsado con su Pronombre Primitivo *Ycao*, vel *Ca*, aun con Personas, â quien se debía mayòr reverencia; sino por el *Po*, y el *Po co*, que la explica; y significa *Señor mio*. El primero, que vsan los Varones; y el segundo las Hembras: que entretexido con las palabras, dà â entender reverencia, y cortesía, como, para responder vna Muger *Si*, dice *Oo, Po co*, q sin el *Po co* fuera demasiada llaneza." Italics in the source text.

6. "¿De donde eres? – ¿Taga saan ca?/ De Tayabas. – Taga Tayabas./ Pero para preguntar con cortesía, dicen así:/ ¿De dónde es usted? – ¿ [*sic*] Taga ano po siya?/ De Manila, señor. – Taga Maynila, po./ ¿De dónde eres? – ¿ [*sic*] Taga ano ca?/ De mulanay [*sic*]. – Taga Mulanay."
7. "La pregunta se hace con *taga* y *ano* ó *saán*: vg. *tagaanóca?* de dónde eres? I. (para preguntar con cortesía) *tagaanó po siya?* de dónde es V.?" *Usted* is a contraction of the archaic Castilian honorific *Vuestra Merced*, and is often abbreviated as *V.* or *Vd*.
8. "hablando de Nuestra Señora es muy vsado s*i guinoong Santa Maria*." Italics in the source text.
9. "Por la misma razón de respetoso cariño dice el criado ó esclavo: *si Pañginóon*, mi Señor. *Si Guinóo*, mi Señora. Y con mas fundada razón decimos todos: *si Guinóong Santa Maria*. Nuestra Señora la Virgen María." Italics in the source text.
10. One of the ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines, typically described in colonial texts as the short and black mountain-dwellers on the main Philippine island of Luzon.
11. "Hay hombres valientes para huir, y cobardes para acometer."
12. "Ang Guinoong Virgen Maria. La Virgen Santa Maria. Ang Guinoong santa Ana. La Señora Santa Ana. Aunque de las Santas mas común ès dezir, Ang po.on, pero de Nuestra Señora, la Reyna de los Angeles. Ang Guinoong Santa Maria."
13. "no pretendo desautorizarla, pues cada lengua para sus naturales tiene su hermosura, y elegancia, que no luze en ojos estrangeros"

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