Avenging the Entertainer and the Comfort Woman: Japanese Theatrical Forms in Anton Juan, Jr.'s *Tuko! Tuko!*

Melissa Vera MARAMARA
Assistant Professor, Department of Fine Arts
Ateneo de Manila University

Abstract

Tuko! Tuko!, a play by Dr. Anton Juan Jr., confronts the abuse of Filipina comfort women during World War II and the exploitation of post-war Filipina entertainers, both in the hands of the Japanese. In contrast to media representations that play up these women as victims, *Tuko! Tuko!* offers a more nuanced portrayal, and restores their agency. More importantly, it appropriates the Japanese theatrical forms of *butoh*, *bunraku*, and *kabuki* to confront this historical trauma and claim redressive action. The article ends with several recommendations on how Philippines-Japan relations can move forward.

Keywords: Anton Juan, comfort women Philippines, Japayuki, Appropriation, Japanese Theater, Butoh, Bunraku, Kabuki

Introduction

In 1992, sixty-five-year-old Rosa Henson became the first Filipina to testify about her experience as a comfort woman. Abused by Japanese soldiers in the Philippines during World War II, she inspired other women in the country and in neighboring Korea to come out, tell similar experiences, and file a class action suit against the Japanese government (Mydans 1997). Her revelation came shortly after the controversial death of Maricris Sioson, a Filipina nightclub entertainer. Sioson's body bore marks of abuse, suggesting murder, and her death was linked to the Yakuza's trafficking of women for sex and entertainment. Investigations exposed twelve other Filipino deaths in Japan, which "took place under 'suspicious circumstances'" (Hunt 1994). Initiatives to achieve justice and reparation involved the Philippine government's failed investigation of Sioson's murder and the Japanese private sector's efforts to set up the Asian Women's Fund for comfort women that closed down in 2007. However, there was no official public apology from the Japanese government to the victims and the Filipino people (Morris-Suzuki 2007, 2).

In response, and inspired by his own personal interactions with several Filipina workers he met in Japan from 1993 to 1994 while training at the Kazuo Ohno Dance Institute, Filipino theater artist, Dr. Anton Juan, Jr. wrote *Sakurahime*, the prototype for *Tuko! Tuko!* (Palanca and Gabardano 1995, 11). The play won first prize in the full-length play category of the Philippines' Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature in 1995. It was staged at the Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero Theatre in the University of the Philippines Diliman in the same year.

National Artist Bienvenido Lumbera (1995, 8) lauded its rich, poetic dialogue and attributed the play's poetry—successfully employed in its narrative architecture—to the Japanese theatre styles Juan learned or witnessed during his training.[1] He interprets the play's two main characters as symbols for the Philippines-Japan relationship, and the slain worker's story as the dichotomy of "the seduction, lust, hatred and revenge that

simultaneously brings the two countries together and tears them apart" (ibid., 8; translation mine). On the other hand, Jose Bernard Capino (1995, 7) laments the "occasionally annoying poetic outbursts," questioning the conspicuous hand of the playwright, who was also the director and main actor. He found the play's two main characters to be flat "metonymies and mouthpieces" and attributed this to Asian aesthetics that leaned more towards presentational rather than representational theatre, wherein the artifice of the spectacle is rooted in being more ritualistic rather than realistic (7).

Lumbera and Capino offer invaluable insights on the play; but neither elaborates on how it reacts to the failure of the Philippines and Japanese judiciary to account for the case of Henson, Sioson, and other victims. Furthermore, Capino's seeming dismay over the presentational leanings of the performance misses the symbolic nuances of the gestural tensions within the text and performance.

Juan reworked *Sakurahime* into *Tuko! Tuko!* in 1997 to incorporate the issue of comfort women, whose memory intersects with that of the fate of Maricis Sioson. *Tuko! Tuko!* was staged at the Khora Technon in Athens, Greece. Theater scholar Hélene Ahrweiler penned an introduction to the play, stating that

> the underlying subject of the play is not so much the Japayuki from Manila but the theatre as a place of transgression; that while Juan is inhabited by the symbols of the Philippine fate (that of the Japayuki), he is also fascinated with the theatre where gestures are liberated from the convention of language. (Ahrweiler 1997; translation mine)

Ahrweiler, however, does not specify the play's transgressive quality, but simply refers to the general capacity of theater to go against the norm. Indeed, more than the play's vivid portrayal of sexuality often shunned in polite society, it also pushes boundaries through its highly innovative appropriation of Japanese theatrical forms to respond to contemporary issues, confront historical trauma, and claim redressive action.

The first part of the article looks at recent scholarly work that critique the media portrayal of comfort women or Filipina entertainers, which relies on superficial stereotypes that marginalize Filipinos in Japan, treat them as commodities, and deprive them of agency. The second part of this article analyzes how *Tuko! Tuko!* counters these representations without denying the realities of oppression and injustice, and appropriates Japanese theatrical forms to expose and connect the sexual abuse of comfort women during World War II and the exploitation of Filipina entertainers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Tuko! Tuko! A Summary

The play opens with a Filipina comfort woman describing her assault by Japanese soldiers. She begs the *tuko*, a giant nocturnal lizard endemic to the Philippines that in folk knowledge clings on to evil entities, to avenge her. As the tuko arrives, so does the protagonist, Mulawin, a Filipino theater director studying theater in Japan. The comfort woman's lament segues into the celebration of two young women boarding a plane to work as entertainers in Japan, and the murder of a Filipina worker—identified in the stage directions as Cherry Sioson—by the Yakuza.

Outside training, Mulawin immerses himself in Japanese culture. His classmate, Toshiko, takes him to a traditional bunraku puppet play. Master puppeteers manipulate a pair of dolls while the narrator chants all the lines. The puppet play tells the story of a priest and his acolyte, who are ill-fated lovers fleeing their temple for Lizard Mountain and planning a double-suicide to escape a disapproving society. After the acolyte jumps to his death, the priest loses heart and fails to fulfill his promise. The acolyte emerges from death as Tuko-san, the Princess of the Lizard Moon, seeking to avenge herself from the betrayal of her cowardly lover. She seduces the priest and murders him to regain honor.

Back at training, during the *butoh* chair exercise, Mulawin is transported back to his childhood. He hears his family's stories of suffering

at the hands of Japanese soldiers during World War II. After recounting the experience to his sensei, Mulawin realizes his heightened awareness of space—both in actual and metaphorical terms by employing memory as a device—and how Japan is directly involved in his family and his people's suffering. Mulawin also notes the well-kept, secluded, traditional home where he has sex with a mysterious Japanese man, Fujio. Unknown yet to Mulawin, Fujio is the murderer of Sioson, who is well-known amongst the Filipinas working in Perla's Bar, which Mulawin frequents and where he spends time with fellow Filipinos.

When Mulawin attends the *Bon Odori*, the Feast for the Dead, he expresses a desire to light candles for the dead Filipinos in Japan who have no one to pray for them. Toshiko warns him against carelessly practicing a tradition he does not understand. Stubbornly, Mulawin prays and unknowingly summons the ghost of Sioson who begs him to remember her and her fate. She possesses him, and her pain begins to manifest in his butoh exercises back in the training center. Soon after, Mulawin dons a *kabuki* dress and make-up, and becomes the specter of the slain Sioson who comes back from the dead, as does the Princess of the Lizard Moon. Through Mulawin, Sioson seduces Fujio, makes him confess to his crime, and murders him. Mulawin then dresses Fujio up with the kimono and wig, places him in a *harakiri* (honorable suicide) position, and names him Tuko before finally leaving to lie in the river, where he dies.

Critical Discourse on Filipina Entertainers in Philippine Media

Tuko! Tuko! is one of several artistic forms that tackle the plight of abused Filipino women, including Filipina entertainers in Japan. These include the films, *Maricris Sioson: Japayuki* by Joey Romero and Lualhati Bautista (1993); *The Sex Warriors and the Samurai* by Nick Deocampo (1995); and *Markova: Comfort Gay* by Gil Portes and Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. (2001), as well as songs such as "Pa-Japan-Japan" by Paul Toledo

(1992) and "Japayuki Lady" by Joey Ayala (2015). This output elicited critical discourses about eroticized and sensationalized representations.

Tyner (1997, 25) draws attention to the media portrayal of Maricris Sioson's death. This was "framed around the larger context of exploitation of migrant workers," which was attributed to the entertainers' "character" (ibid.) and to the government's unwillingness to address the problem. Tyner also cites 1991 Philippine Senate Report No. 1681, which reveals the official government position that categorizes female migrant entertainers as "willing victims."

> ...although women are aware of the potential abuses that are associated with the entertainment industry, they nevertheless choose to go. An image emerges, therefore, that does not question the process of migration nor the situation within the destination, but rather the character of the women. (Tyner 1997, 26)

This prejudice persists in different government sectors, emphasizing the agency of entertainers rather than the labor conditions abroad that allow abuses (27). Instead of ensuring that Filipino migrant workers are protected by law, if not by other means, Philippine government policies are hinged on the assumption that abuses will be "minimized (and perhaps eliminated)" if legal and skilled performing artists are of good moral standing (29).

Nobue Suzuki (2011) criticizes the oversexualized images of Filipino entertainers in media representations like those in Romero and Bautista's *Maricris Sioson*, *Japayuki* and Toledo's song, "Pajapan-japan." She points out the invisible cultural politics behind the victim narratives. Claiming that these portrayals merely perpetuate negative stereotypes of these women, she also argues how they solidify an association between women and victimhood. Similarly, she adds, the representations entertain the international middle-class with "imaginaries of these laboring women abroad" while the "obfuscated" lived experiences of the women render them as commodities (441–42). Mindful not to invalidate the accounts of

abuse experienced by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), Suzuki asserts that the feminist ideology behind popular films are self-serving discourses to both said ideology and the middle-class imaginary which are "unmindful of the multidirectional ramifications of these support groups' victim narratives" (446, 452).

While Suzuki admits the immense contribution of such groups to the welfare of distressed migrants, she also points out that the victim narrative reinforces an "erotic-pathetic stereotype of Asian women" (446). She also counters sociological explanations that point to economic and family-related motivations for labor migration. For Suzuki, reducing the entertainers' motivation to that of economic mobility traps the women "within the geoeconomy of the 'Third World,'" and

> fails to see them as multidimensional historical subjects situated in the contexts of uneven power. (454–55)

She concludes that the entertainers go to Japan fully aware of their motivation to earn money, and are capable of making choices under an intricate web of circumstances. The same line of thinking informs Tyner's discussions of Senate Report 1681 and its perception of Filipina entertainers as 'willing victims.' Indeed, both articles of Suzuki and Tyner shift some, if not all, responsibility towards the Filipinas in Japan despite the risky and less-than-ideal labor conditions; this, of course, does not justify the abuse. Suzuki merely stresses the capability of the women and their multifaceted reasons for traveling to Japan; she simply aims to depict the entertainers as more complex individuals than as mere victims.

Similarly, Da-anoy-Satake (2017, 2) argues that the media's oversexualization of Filipina entertainers and brides (*hanayome*) in Japan creates superficial and demoralizing stereotypes of the women who lead more meaningful lives.

> Literary as well as media depictions of Japayuki allow us to imagine them only as sexual, erotic subjects, in pubs and clubs, but not as individuals engaged in ordinary daily routines...or as individuals embracing their own sets of religious or moral beliefs and practices. Their individual identity is reduced and serialised into sexual objects, denying their multiple roles and contribution to both the economic and social welfare of Japanese society. (Da-anoy-Satake 2017, 10)

Da-anoy-Satake (2017, 1–2) also writes, "these simplistic class, gender, and racial biases have perpetuated the further marginalisation of these women in Japanese society." Contextualizing the entertainers' narratives within racial and gender norms of Japan, she observes that "the rational and pragmatic responses of women to their contextual realities—the economic constraints back home and the conditions in receiving countries —imply a pattern that contradict most of these mis/representations" (22–23).

Supplying a queer angle to analyze the link between media representations and the demoralization of the comfort women and Filipina entertainers on a national level, Robert Diaz discusses the former in his analysis of two films dealing with homosexuality—Portes and Del Mundo's *Markova, Comfort Gay* and Deocampo's *The Sex Warrior and the Samurai*. He explores articulations of Filipina victimhood beyond the framework of feminism. On the one hand, the comfort women were depicted as

> metonymic figures for national incapacity, most embodied through sensationalized scenes of Japanese-inflicted abuse. (Diaz 2016, 3825–26)

He adds that the depiction of their complex experiences fails when placed alongside the repetitive narratives of their (supposed) lack of agency. On the other hand, the entertainers are depicted either as heroes making a sacrifice for their families or as willing victims "because of an irrepressible feminine materialism" (3858). Diaz points out that imagined and heteronormative representations of female victimhood are combined with

anti-Japanese notions that lead to "redressive nationalism," which requires "activation of patriotic sentiment and nationalistic zeal by linking such nationalistic fervor to symbolic and economic forms of redress" (200). This redressive nationalism, however, fails because of the Philippines' incapacity to identify the link between the need to address its colonial history and the expansion of transnational capital (3869, 3879). Diaz's reading ultimately uncovers the limitations of gendered assumptions in the allegorical representation of the victimized female identity in the comfort women and Filipina entertainers (4290).

In response, the articles, Suzuki's and Da-anoy-Satake's in particular, stress the need to resist, or at least nuance, such portrayals. *Tuko! Tuko!* takes up the call, seeking to reverse the simplistic representations of Filipina entertainers as victims and to highlight their agency without denying the realities of oppression and injustice.

Representations of Filipinas in Japan

At first glance, *Tuko! Tuko!* risks perpetuating the same negative stereotypes because it highlights the sexual exploitation and victimization of comfort women and Filipina entertainers. Indeed, the nameless comfort woman and the murdered Sioson are juxtaposed at the beginning of *Tuko! Tuko!* . However, Juan circumvents this risk by exploring the circumstances and deepening the characterizations of Filipina workers in Japan—Perla, Delia, Celia, Erika, and Martha. All of them make choices to assert their agency and competency, and discuss their different motivations.

Perla is the main hostess of the nightclub Mulawin visits. She proves to be a cunning and ruthless opportunist who can sing "seductively, funnily, and plaintively all at once" to extort her clients for money in exchange for a full range of favors (Juan 2017; Act II, Scene 1, 24). She purposefully elicits sexual responses from a Japanese customer and then talks about him in Filipino, "This silly fool, ten thousand yen for a song. Must be in love." Then she switches to English and later to Nihonggo, "Hey, Papa!

It's better for you to buy another bottle for everyone. I'll sing for you anytime" (Act II, Scene 1, 24). She may be a ruthless opportunist but she provides for others.

Delia and Celia are both entertainers who work with Perla, and are foils for one another. Working against her will, Delia is the contemptuous type who needs to be drunk to stomach the sexual tasks and favors that the job demands. Celia is a contented lover of a Japanese whose son has been accepted by the man's family despite his mixed nationality (Act II, Scene 3.2, 52). Completing the ensemble is Erika, whose boyfriend is a Filipino seaman. Delia warns her about getting pregnant (Act II, Scene 3.2, 53). All the women are fully aware of the moral repercussions of their choices. The reasons behind their actions illustrate how they negotiate the relationship between moral imperatives and the need to earn a living. They all share in the joke that they are simply playing a game with the Japanese who are "like children," but Martha warns them about dangerous Japanese (Act II, Scene 3.2, 54).

For all its nuanced portrayals, *Tuko! Tuko!* does not deny the victimhood of Filipinas in Japan, not least because its plot centers on the murder of Cherry Sioson and the abuse of the Filipina comfort women in World War II. Also, in one scene, Martha tells Perla about the official findings of the Japanese government on Sioson's death, but Perla notes their incongruence with those of the Philippine's National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

> Of course the autopsy findings of the NBI (Philippine National Bureau of Investigation) is different from the findings of their Foreign Affairs. The cause of death in the report of the Embassy is different from the NBI. The cause of death is allegedly hepatitis. But if you saw the corpse, Sister, you would shudder. Different parts of her body are like popped pork rind with cigarette burns. Bruises black and blue. Lumps of the head. They even gouged her eyes out. They burned even her ass! And her vagina... oh son of a bitch. Son of a bitch! They are animals, Sister! Animals!] (Act II, Scene 3.2, 55, author's own translation)

Juan (2016) claims that the monologue is based on actual reports, and reveals the inability of the Filipina entertainers or the Philippine government to exact justice. As such, the scene is fraught with anger and highlights the helplessness and lack of agency of the entertainers, if not the Philippine state. This anger, this drive for jutice, manifests in Sioson's ghost that possesses the artist, Mulawin, who is compelled to put the specter at ease. Here, the play appropriates Japanese theatrical forms to expose these injustices and seek vengeance, if not a sense of justice.

The Japanese Characters in *Tuko! Tuko!*

Three Japanese characters in the play serve as vehicles that introduce the three Japanese theater styles and their significance to the revenge narrative. The first is Mulawin's child-like classmate, Toshiko, who carefully explains the bunraku play's use of puppets and the philosophy behind it.

> We Japanese contain our feelings in a form... We bring the feeling out only if we can put it into another form. Like a box inside another box — you will learn that later. The puppeteer — you saw him bring out the life and place it inside the doll. The doll, in turn, lived and died in a space assigned to her by the puppeteer: strict and pure form. (Act I, Scene 2, 12)

Form, or the material expression of abstract notions through disciplined practice, is highly valued in Japanese art. Artists devote their lives to master conventions and techniques that are refined and passed on for generations. Even non-artists must be disciplined enough to observe the refinement of form in everyday life, such as the wearing of kimono, the preparation and serving of tea, or the observation of formalities in speech and behavior.

Sensei embodies this commitment to form; he teaches butoh, a technique that allows a performer to maximize the use of his body to explore multiple realities. He is based on Juan's personal exchanges with

butoh founder, Kazuo Ohno, under whom Juan trained in 1994 (Juan 2016). The traditionally revered master, Sensei understands and questions the importance of tradition and form. He creates an avant-garde method ritualized into a new form, conducts himself with dignity, and treats Mulawin with profound respect. He notices how Mulawin imbibes the butoh technique with great ease, not unlike the Filipino's penchant for appropriating foreign influence (Act I, Scene 3.1, 17). Mulawin's facility with the technique does not spare him the difficulties of training. In fact, his growing mastery renders him susceptible to possession (Act II, Scene 3.1, 47). Sensei patiently allows Mulawin to go through the memory, which materializes in his body; he tells the Filipino, "it was an essence. An experience. You must be strong for it" (Act II, Scene 3.1, 49).

The third main Japanese character is the antagonist, Fujio. He is a member of the Yakuza who kills Sioson at the beginning of the play and later becomes Mulawin's lover. A complex character in his capacity for violence and gentleness, he has a penchant for privacy and yet greatly desires to converse. When Mulawin asks him why Fujio initially kept staring at him but refused to engage, he answers,

> FUJIO: Because maybe you're the dangerous kind.
>
> MULAWIN: Dangerous? (Laughs). Am I in leather or metal studs -
>
> FUJIO: Not that kind of dangerous. I thought you're the kind...who talks... No one chants Chikubushima on a bridge... or dangerous because you're the kind... someone I may really like talking to... so it won't be just for once or twice... (Act II Scene 2.2, 36)

Fujio is both threatened and compelled by the possibility of a connection with Mulawin which (and who) proves to be intense and ultimately fatal. At any rate, Fujio and Mulawin become lovers, which is crucial to the revenge plot of *Tuko! Tuko!*.

Appropriation for Revenge: Japanese Theatrical Forms in *Tuko! Tuko!*

Butoh, *bunraku*, and *kabuki* are essential to the three storylines of *Tuko! Tuko!*'s non-linear plot. The post-war movement technique of butoh collapses time and space in juxtaposing the narratives of the comfort woman and of Cherry Sioson. Bunraku, traditional Japanese puppet theater, frames the forbidden love affair of the priest and the acolyte, which leads to suicide, betrayal, reincarnation, memory, confession, and revenge. Mulawin's journey comes full circle in the most popular Japanese theatre form, kabuki, where the three storylines converge into the main dramatic action of vengeance. The appropriation of these forms serves as the platform to achieve—symbolically at least—recognition and justice for Filipina entertainers and for Filipino comfort women.

Butoh, Space, Time, and History in *Tuko! Tuko!*

> Butoh is a dance or performance genre originating in Tokyo in the postwar era, primarily through the activities of Hijikata Tatsumi. Butoh dances often feature near-naked dancers in white-face and body paint, with slow, precise, contorted movements either entirely improvised or highly choreographed. Butoh artists have often sought to plumb the depths of humanity or to provide a privileged aperture to timeless truths. Defining butoh must remain tentative: because of its acceptance as both theatre and contemporary dance, and rapid global expansion, butoh continues to embrace and elaborate a wide spectrum of methods and themes. (Baird 2016, 321)

As a highly expressionistic technique for movement developed by Japanese dancer, Kazuo Ohno and choreographer, Hijikata Tasumi, in late-1950s Tokyo, *butoh* adheres to surrealist theories, particularly "provocative images of the sensual, abject, and grotesque" (Curtin 2015, 546), which respond to the issues generated by the post-war modernization and westernization of Japan. Butoh has a particular method of using imagery

"from a distinctly non-human perspective... to propose new ways on inhabiting the body... and help an actor interpret the larger themes of the play" (Calamoneri 2016, 337). Hijikata sought to use diverse imagery to challenge the traditional socialization of the human body and mind, and liberate the self from "previously physical and mental strictures" (Baird 2016, 321–23). Juan interprets these strictures to include space and time based on his butoh training with Kazuo Ohno in 1994 (Juan 2016).

In *Tuko! Tuko!*, butoh dances provoke the audience through grotesque depictions of the different characters; they collapse time and space, and juxtapose the story of the comfort women and of Cherry Sioson to connect the Japanese occupation of the Philippines with Filipino migration to Japan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Of the three techniques, the play utilizes butoh the most: in the prologue, in the two training sessions with Sensei, and in Mulawin's first night at Perla's Bar. The prologue deploys the conventions of butoh to establish the revenge premise; it introduces the victim, the crime, and the main agent for vengeance. Titled "Butoh: the Descent of Lizards," this butoh sequence opens the play, with stage directions describing the Japanese soliders raping the comfort women.

> Japanese soldiers in their headgear and tanka loin cloths like that of sumo wrestlers' move in a synchronized warrior dance. Downstage three comfort women tied from suspended ropes; two tremble in fright and horror, but one is still. As the soldiers approach and fulfill themselves on the women like shadows of beasts, the still one is isolated in shreds of light and memory and begins to dance the butoh of the comfort woman. (Prologue, 4)

A woman then begs the tuko, also commonly used in the Philippines to frighten children, to attack her assailants. Mulawin enters as the indigenous lizard who responds to the call for revenge. He emerges from the audience area, "moving in a Butoh walk towards the stage, as through surfaces of time, space, and memory" (Act I, Scene 1, 5). The play, meanwhile, transitions from the prologue to Act I as the lights fade out on the comfort woman, the Japanese soldiers, and the lizard. He walks on the

hanamichi, a special footbridge in traditional Japanese theater stages meant to identify the performance space (UNESCO n.d.). His movement is called *suriyashi*, "where the sliding steps of Noh theatre is combined with a series of specific images [internal to the actor] that creates tension in the body" (Calamoneri 2016, 337). The stage directions imply that Mulawin in the prologue is haunted by war images that beckon him to the performance space. The imagery of postwar international conflict and sex trade is visible throughout his suriyashi.

> His memory: figures wrapped in gauze, white ghost-like shapes carrying luggage and boxes - as shapes and boxes on a conveyor belt... Lights continue shifting as in the transformations of a watercolor wash; sounds of water. The sounds of an airport montage through the music: An announcement (voice-over) of departure of Flight MS 864 bound for Tokyo. Two heavily made-up girls, in shining bikinis and wearing shining shoes on their hands and feet are dancing to the sound of relatives' goodbyes. Plane taking off. The shining shoes rise mid-air. As these sounds amass, Koto music mixed with clappers fade in, haunting and serene all at once, producing a sense of danger. The figures now slowly descend to the floor, heads raised like lizards in water, as...Lights fade in on the second stage level behind screens upstage. The screens open and four men appear. Throughout this scene no sounds are heard except that of a chanter's. A woman is trying to escape from four Japanese. She is Cherry Sison, a "Japayuki" (the term used for women, mostly Filipinos. Thais, and Russians in quest of a living in Japan, usually as entertainers, dancers or club hostesses). She looks up. Realizing what is to happen to her, she starts to plead. (Act I, Scene 1, 5)

Through butoh, the play combines the separate tragedies of the comfort woman and of Cherry Sioson. Time and space collapse, and the past and the present are not simply parallel but continuous, cyclical, and almost identical. In Act 1, Scene 3.1, Mulawin trains in butoh, and he speaks of memory as a metaphysical space that suffuses actual space with the weight of meaning.

> MASTER: Class, for those of you who are new students, Mulawin is a young director of theatre in Philippines. I call him now, because everyone moved to the chair, and (facing Mulawin, with a formal expression) and you...you did not move from your place. Why?
>
> MULAWIN: Because, Sensei, you asked - how far it is from my place to the chair.
>
> MASTER: And so? I ask you again, do you know?
>
> MULAWIN: How far it is... Memory...The chair is as far as memory. Memory came to me like a ghost. It entered me. I am the space of memory. I am the memory of the chair... (Act I, Scene 3.1, 18)

He continues to recount the memory—triggered by a chair—of how he as a child would listen to his family's conversations about the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II and about how one of his aunts was forced to become a comfort woman.

> MULAWIN: they forced her to sit on a block of ice (he now sits on the chair as if it were a block of ice, his legs slowly tightening) till she bled and she... (he falls slowly on the floor) I am here now... where this chair is... in this room... on this hill... in. Japan... the chair is in me... (Act I, Scene 3.1, 18)

Through this scene/memory, Mulawin occupies a space in Japan as a student of their culture, and also as a once-colonized subject twice over (i.e. he also embodies the comfort woman). In the succeeding scene, Act I, Scene 3.2, Fujio takes Mulawin to a traditional Japanese home, whose design, Fujio notes, will soon disappear because of a modernization process that favors dehumanizing, utilitarian spaces. Mulawin and Fujio grow increasingly intimate, and their conversation leads to a memory of their first encounter in Perla's Karaoke and Disco Bar. In Act II, the play tells in nonlinear fashion the unfolding of their relationship.

The stage directions in that act's opening sequence has everyone in Perla's Bar moving

> in the slowness of stretched movement [of butoh], the disco movements become a dance macabre that emulates what is being spoken in the dialogue. (Act II, Scene 1, 23)

Act II, Scene 2 has three subscenes moving backwards and forwards in time. These reveal the initial conversations and growing mutual desire between Mulawin and Fujio, as well as Cherry's possession of Mulawin when he lights a candle at the *Bon Odori* (the Feast of the Dead) against the advice of Toshiko. The intimacy between Mulawin and Fujio renders the former susceptible to possession (by Cherry's spirit). The next scene of Act II is also split. Mulawin is indeed possessed during butoh class, prompting Sensei to say

> It's not just a memory now. It's a spirit. It's the spirit of — what's her name?... Cherry...(Act II, Scene 3.1, 49)

Meanwhile, Perla and Martha discuss the contradicting findings of the NBI and the Japanese Foreign Affairs on Cherry's body. At the end of the scene, an entertainer's performance of "a vulgarization of [singkil] dance" is juxtaposed to the transformation of Mulawin as he "puts on a red wig, takes up a samurai sword, then slices the air with it" (Act II, Scene 3.1, 56). This foreshadows the revenge act, where he kills Fujio, in the same way that the Lizard kills the priest in the bunraku play he had watched.

Bunraku and Vengeance in *Tuko! Tuko!*

> Bunraku is a composite performance art in which stories are narrated to musical accompaniment while being enacted by puppets. The combination of the realistic, delicate movement of the large puppets with the intensely dynamic, virtuosic narration and shamisen playing creates a uniquely emotionally affective form of theatre. (Cummings 2016, 155)

Bunraku pertains to traditional Japanese puppet theater. Emerging in the 1600s when puppetry and sung narratives were combined, it drew its plots from "two principal sources: historical plays set in feudal times (Jidaimono) and contemporary dramas exploring the conflict between affairs of the heart and social obligation (Sewamono)" (UNESCO n.d.a). Among the canonical authors of bunraku plays, most relevant to *Tuko! Tuko!* is Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725), whose plays,

> grandly depict historical moments at both public and private levels, and at both extremes of the social scale...Often, women or men who have lost their status sacrifice themselves for a higher cause and thereby help restore political order...One remarkable aspect of Chikamatsu's works and joruri in general written by later playwrights is that almost every play has death and tragedy at its core...heroes and heroines who face tragedy and its consequences are not high-status... Yet these lowly characters achieve grand stature when facing tragedy, often accepting self-sacrifice for a greater cause – to save a loved one, to repay an obligation, or out of passion in a love suicide. (Gerstle in Shizuo 2016, 166–67)

The play's bunraku sequence sets up a clear conflict between desire and social obligation, a theme explored through the nonpolitical figures of a priest and his acolyte in the play-within-a-play, "The Princess of the Lizard Moon." This is evident in Act I, Scene 1, when the screens close on the murdered Sioson, and the next scene opens with Mulawin watching the puppet play, "Princess of the Lizard Moon." It tells of a priest and his male acolyte's forbidden love affair. A narrative that is atypical of the traditional bunraku, this play-within-a-play indicates the tabooed nature of their homosexual relationship. Indeed, their spiritual obligations to the temple render their love unacceptable.

> ACOLYTE: The ancient priests said, who first came to this land,
> Of all loves, that which is forbidden is the deepest.
>
> PRIEST: A temple monk must not love his own acolyte. (Act I, Scene 2, 9)

The acolyte points out society's double-standards, where the temple folk are denied such affairs while the warrior class is free because of the power they wield, "he has the honor of the sword. The folk will accept desire–when it is protected by power that protects them" (Act I, Scene 2, 8). This privilege of the warrior class makes acceptable the liaison between Mulawin, an artist, and Fujio, a gang member who is akin to a warrior or a World War II soldier following orders.

The priest and the acolyte's tragic story of suicide and murder exemplifies the bunraku's themes of saving honor, redress, and passion. Their story parallels Fujio and Mulawin's forbidden desire, as well as Mulawin's social obligation; it also foreshadows how vengeance will be achieved through a double-suicide. In Act I, Scene 2 (1), Toshiko explains, "The puppeteer turns into the shadow of the doll. Soon, it is the shadow moving the doll." In the same way, Sioson is the puppeteer that moves Mulawin to exact her revenge. Toshiko alludes to the Japanese practice of indirectly expressing their emotions through form (Act I, Scene 2, 10). Sioson's rage turns into artistic expression, embodied in the Princess of the Lizard Moon, into whom Mulawin transforms. The transformation scene embodies the conventions of *kabuki*.

Kabuki and Redress in *Tuko! Tuko!*

> Kabuki is a vibrant traditional form, known worldwide for its colorful makeup, complex plots, beautiful dance, all-male performance tradition, intimate connection with the audience, broad, presentational, bravura acting, and integrated, cinematic use of music. Kabuki, which emerged alongside bunraku as the first commercial theatre forms in Japan, was largely nurtured by the commoner class, blossoming despite strict government regulation throughout the Tokugawa (Edo) period (1603–1868). (Iezzi 2016, 102)

Kabuki's specific conventions and purpose make it distinct from butoh and bunraku. The butoh expresses post-war anxiety through grotesque dance-like movements, and the actors, male or female, break their bodies into eccentric forms to collapse time and space. The bunraku contains the intricacies of emotion and expresses it through puppets, which physicalize characters while a separate narrator chants to a *jurori* song or narrative music. In kabuki, meanwhile, an all-male cast explores human complexity by merging self and role, fully transforming into a role through make-up and costume, and performing memorized lines and songs, as well as a series of recognizable gestures that indicate that specific character on stage (UNESCO n.d.). Kabuki plots are similar to those of bunraku, which are "about historical events or moral conflicts in relationships of the heart" (UNESCO n.d.).

In Act III, Mulawin enters "dressed up in a classical kimono... He is made-up exquisitely with a white face and red lips, and a shining red wig" (Act III, Scene 1, 58). This is the make-up called *keshÿ*, which "provides an element of style easily recognizable even by those unfamiliar with the art form" (UNESCO n.d.b). In dancing kabuki, Mulawin unifies the spectacular elements of the form, and upholds the actor's tradition, the skill required for a certain role, and the complexities of a role.

Bunraku and kabuki blend three levels of being. Bunraku puppets move with the puppet master as the narrator chants to the *shamisen*, while kabuki actors merge "the actor as Yakutia, the Yakutia as yakugara, and the yakugara as yaku" (Thornbury 2002, 232). *Yakutia* implies the "great stage name" that connotes years of training and immense skill of an actor, a name which lives long after the body of the actor dies; yakugara means role categorization under which an actor falls: such as the *onnagata*, the actor who plays female roles; and yaku means the character in the play's story (232–35).

The name of Mulawin, presumably an established Filipino director chosen as an artistic emissary to Japan for specialized training, is the Tagalog word for *vitex parviflora*, commonly known as the Molave tree, an endemic species in the Philippines harvested for its inherent hardness and durability (Almario 2001, 572). Connoting strength, "Mulawin" is presumably a "great stage name." He carries the pride of a yakutia (actor) and his effeminate movement predisposes him to the yakugara (role type) of onnagata, which allows him to play the yaku (character) of the Princess of the Lizard Moon, who is Sioson in disguise. Interestingly, Mulawin is based on Anton Juan Jr. himself who, as a renowned Filipino theater artist, went to Japan on a Hitachi Scholarship to study butoh under its founder, Kazuo Ohno. A versatile actor, he can assume female roles. He played Solange, the more docile of the two sisters in Jean Genet's *The Maids*, which was well-reviewed (Oliveros 2013). He also played Mulawin in the original staging in 1995.

Meanwhile, many of the female kabuki characters played by the onnagata were based on well-known courtesans (Leiter 2002, 215). They became the main source of information about women's femininity and sexuality at a time when they were greatly repressed (216). Interestingly, the kabuki women were also known to practice great agency

> choosing to take action with their own hands when the life or well-being of their husband or lover is at stake, when a family member must be avenged, when a political objective must be gained, or when the woman has been cruelly wronged. (218)

The courtesan finds a modern equivalent in Sioson, whose revenge story is exacted by Mulawin's kabuki performance.

> One of the chief ways in which [kabuki] women who have been trampled on become empowered is to turn into vengeful spirits after they have died. (225)

Indeed, as Mulawin wears the Keshÿ, he transforms into Princess of the Lizard Moon. This transformation sublimates Sioson's repressed anger and personifies the tuko that the comfort woman called for in the opening scene. Once transformed, Mulawin stresses the moral culpability of Fujio, and demands that the Yakuza take responsibility for his crime.

> MULAWIN: You killed me and you do not know me! Confess!...You rode me till you groaned and finished ... I cried out don't! Have mercy on me!...You took high the sword And pierced it Pierced it into my womanhood.
>
> FUJIO: No! Stop now. (He breaks down.)
>
> MULAWIN: Now confess! Confess! Speak!
>
> FUJIO: Yes! Yes! I confess, I confess. (Act III, Scene 3, 61)

Mulawin kills Fujio, but it's not enough that he dies. Fujio has to regain his honor.

> MULAWIN puts on FUJIO, lifeless on the mat, one sleeve of the costume of the Princess of the Lizard Moon, then the wig. Into FUJIO's loose grasp, MULAWIN places the sword, and like manipulating a puppet directs the movement of the sword in the hand to the bleeding wound as if re-enacting a suicide.
>
> MULAWIN: They will say you fulfilled the pact you made a long time ago. Or maybe they will say, when the bells rang, all the lizards descended into the earth, and devoured you... Now it is time for me to lie on the river. (Act III, Scene 3, 62)

It is a bittersweet ending as Mulawin walks to his own death. Possessed by the spirit of Sioson, Mulawin loses his agency and his life, and serves as the sacrificial lamb in the cycle of vengeance and violence. Here lies the limitation of the play, and points to the need for a kind of justice that lies beyond vengeance.

That Mulawin studies Japanese theater can be seen as an appropriation of colonial influence that turns the culture of the colonizer against himself. The deployment of Japanese theatrical forms also indicates a desire to confront the oppressor on his own terms, and to speak somewhat on an equal plane. It attests to the quest of the oppressed to be heard and the lengths they would go to ensure it. Also, the act of appropriation betrays an empathy that is paradoxically denied to Sioson and the comfort women. It also resonates with the theme of possession, of one entity entering another, and of love, as exemplified by Fujio and Mulawin's relationship. Such empathy, as well as their intimacy between the two, contrasts with the brutality of the killing.

At any rate, Mulawin uses the culture of Fujio against himself; and the play employs butoh, bunraku, and kabuki to express historical and present injustices—such as issues of the comfort women and harsh fate of Filipina entertainers—in terms that the Japanese can understand and respond to. *Tuko! Tuko!* confronts a trauma haunting Philippines-Japan relations, demands redress, and insists on memory and remembrance. The tuko is, after all, a grotesque and frightening a creature that refuses to let go, as does the Princess of the Lizard Moon. At the same time, Mulawin's staging of Fujio's harakiri indicates how honor may be restored in accordance with Japanese cultural norms. It is, more importantly, a symbolic acknowledgement of Japan (ese) crime committed against towards a Filipina, a recognition that has largely been denied in real life.

But one could argue that the vengeance plot of *Tuko! Tuko!* imprisons the demand for justice and recognition in a cycle of violence. Doesn't Mulawin's death add to the tragedy of Maricris (and Cherry) Sioson's murder, and the abuses of the comfort women? Is there an alternative way of demanding recognition and redress, along the lines of, say, transitional justice, as with South Africa's Truth Commission? Or could it be that the play's resort to violence already speaks of the futility, if not failure or tragedy, of pursuing such processes?

Moving Forward

The city of Osaka, Japan severed ties with San Francisco, its sister city in California, U.S.A. over the issue of comfort women (Hauser 2018). Tokyo also continues to struggle with Seoul on the same matter, straining their trade relations. Japan has, however, found more amicable treatment from the Philippine government. The latter refused to press the claims of Filipina comfort women against the Japanese government, and remains noncommittal to the efforts of private groups to commemorate the wartime atrocities against the women (Inquirer 2015; Reuters 2015; Hauser 2018; Gallagher 2019; The Japan Times 2019). In 2010, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled against the petition for aid filed by Malaya Lolas, an organization comprised by surviving Filipina comfort women. The Supreme Court decision stated

> The Executive Department has determined that taking up petitioners cause would be inimical to our country's foreign policy interests, and could disrupt our relations with Japan, thereby creating serious implications for stability in this region. (Manglinong 2018)

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has also refused to pursue the matter further. "*Masakit kasi na ulit-ulitin* [It is painful to keep repeating] and you start to imagine how they were treated badly" (ABS-CBN 2018). For the Japanese, the pain of bringing up the past arises from their culture of shame, under which any issues be dealt with in private instead. In the meantime, for President Duterte, he has said that although he is constitutionally prohibited from disallowing the erection of the Comfort Woman statue along Roxas Boulevard in Manila, the issue is over and done with as far as he is concerned (Rappler 2018). Thus, seventy-five years after the liberation of the Philippines, the state refuses to come to terms with a traumatic episode in the country's history.

At any rate, the first step in redressive action is a public acknowledgment of past events. The embodiment of these memories serves as markers that can ward off a historical forgetting. Staging *Tuko! Tuko!* can be taken as a necessary rite that symbolizes the comfort women's victory against the silencing of their traumatic pasts, where triumph is found in the public pronouncement of the victim's truth. Such a commemorative ceremony shapes communal memory, and its continual absence leaves that shaping wanting.

The trauma caused by Japanese soldiers hurt not only the victims from other countries such as the Philippines, but also Japanese, whose sense of shame is arguably much higher than Filipinos'. The Filipino people can be very reconciliatory, but the Japanese are very unforgiving when it comes to dishonor. Perhaps there are alternative approaches that can heal both victim and perpetrator. In the same manner that the comfort women should not be silenced, the articulation of their fate can ensure nation-building and help shape a collective Asian identity that Filipinos share with Japan. Perhaps a dialogue with Japan and their experts in memory studies should (continue to) occur, especially concerning the Second World War, and serve as yet another platform through which historical trauma can be confronted. *Tuko! Tuko!* presented a re-imaging of the Japanese, with complex characters that filled the stage. This re-imaging can help relive the past for the reimagination of the future. Perhaps Fujio and Mulawin can pursue a relationship without any of them dying.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her deepest thanks to Dr. Anton Juan, Jr., Dr. Charlie Veric, Dr. Hidde Van Der Wall, and Dr. Joyce Martin. She would also like to thank Mr. Janus Nolasco for helping shepherding this article to publication.

Conflict of Interest

The author did not declare any conflict of interest.

End Note

[1] Bienvenido "Bien" Lumbera was faculty of the Ateneo de Manila University's English Department. In 2006, he was named Philippine National Artist for Literature.

References

Ahrweiler, Hélène. 1997. "Un cèremonial: Tuko! Tuko!" Program for Anton Juan's *Tuko! Tuko!* at the Khora Technon, Athens. Playbill.

Almario, Virgilio S. 2001. *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*. Quezon City: Anvil Publishing.

Baird, Bruce. 2016. "Interlude Butoh: Dance of Darkness and Light." In *A History of Japanese Theatre*, edited by Jonah Salz, 321–25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Calamoneri, Tanya. 2016. "Dancing Hamlet in a World of Frogs: Butoh and the Actor's Inner Landscape." *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 7 (3): 375–88.

Capino, Jose Bernard. 1995. "Lighting the Incense of Understanding." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 12 August.

"Comfort Woman Statue in Manila Removed." 2018. *Rappler*, 29 April. https://www.rappler.com/nation/201320-comfortwoman-statue-manila.removed.

Curtin, Catherine. 2015. "Woman as Plaything: Configurations of the Feminine in Japanese Butoh." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 25 (4): 545–60.

Da-anoy-Satake, Mary Angeline. 2000. "The Social Constructions of the Filipina Japayuki and Hanayome and Their Locations in Japanese Household and Society." *Philippine Sociological Review* 48 (January): 1–26.

Diaz, Robert. 2016. "Redressive Nationalisms, Queer Victimhood, and Japanese Duress." In *Filipino Studies: Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora*, edited by Martin Manalansan and Augusto F. Espiritu, 197–226. New York: New York University Press.

"Duterte Backs Removal of Comfort Woman Statue from Gov't Property." 2018. *CNN*, 29 April. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/04/29/Duterte-backs-removal-comfort-woman-statue.html.

"Gabriela Seeks House Probe on Removal of 'Comfort Woman' Statue." 2018. *ABS-CBN News*, 10 May. https://www.news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/10/18/gabriela-seeks-house-probe-on-removal-of-comfort-woman-statue.

Gallagher, Chris. 2019. "Comfort Woman' Statue Pulled from Japan Exhibit after Threats." *Reuters*, 3 August. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-japan-labourers-statue/comfort-woman-statue-pulled-from-japan-exhibit-after-threats-idUSKCN1UT0DG.

Hauser, Christine. 2018. "'It Is Not Coming Down': San Francisco Defends 'Comfort Wom-en' Statue as Japan Protests." *The New York Times*, 4 October. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/04/us/osaka-sf-comfort-women-statue.html.

Hitachi Scholarship Foundation. 1994. Plaque presented to Dr. Anthony M. Juan in Commemorations of the Completion of your research at the Kazuo Ohno Dance Institute [Raw data].

Hunt, Jacqui. 1994. "Japan Hasn't Stopped Exploiting Asian Women." *The New York Times*, 21 September. https://www.nytimes.com/1994/09/22/opinion/l-japan-hasn-t-stopped-exploiting-asian-women-316180.html.

Iezzi, Julie A. 2016. "Kabuki: Superheroes and Femmes Fatales." In *A History of Japanese Theatre*, edited by Jonah Salz, 102–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139525336.011.

Juan, Anton, Jr. 2016. Interview with Dr. Anton Juan, Jr. by Melissa Vera Maramara, Indiana, United States

——. 2017. *Tuko! Tuko!* [Electronic copy from the author].

Leiter, Samuel. 2002. "From Gay to Gei: The Onnagata and the Creation of Kabuki's Female Characters." In *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, edited by Samuel Leiter, 211–29. London and New York: Routledge.

"Let's Not Insult Japan: Duterte Backs Removal of 'Comfort Woman' Statue." 2018. ABS-CBN News, April 29. https://www.news.abs-cbn.com/news/04/29/18/lets-not-insult-japan-duterte-backs-removal-of-comfort-woman-statue.

Lumbera, Bienvenido. 1995. "Sakurahime: Karanasang Japayuki Sa Pagtatanghal Ni Anton." *Isyu*, 2 August.

Manglinong, Dan. 2018. "Despite Statue's Removal, Battle for Comfort Women Pushes Forward." *Interaksyon*, 10 May. https://interaksyon.philstar.com/breaking-news/2018/05/10/126591/battle-for-comfort-women-commemoration-gathering-steam/

Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. 2007. "Japan's 'Comfort Women': It's Time for the Truth (in the Ordinary, Everyday Sense of the Word)." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 1 March. https://www.apjjf.org/-Tessa-Morris-Suzuki/2373/article.html.

Mydans, Seth. 1997. "Maria Rosa Henson, 69, Dies; Victim of Japanese Brothels." *The New York Times: World*, 27 August. https://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/27/maria-rosa-henson-69-dies-victim-of-japanese-brothels.html.

Oliveros, Oliver. 2013. "Review Roundup: The Maids, Starring Anton Juan, Topper Fabregas." *Broadway World*, 13 August. https://www.broadwayworld.com/philippines/article/Review-Roundup-THE-MAIDS-Starring-Anton-Juan-Topper-Fabregas-20130813.

Palanca, Clinton, and Marianne Gabardano. 1995. "Anton's Angst." *The Manila Times*, 23 July.

Shizuo, Goto. 2016. "Bunraku: Puppet Theatre." In *A History of Japanese Theatre*, edited by Jonah Salz, 155–83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

"South Korea Formally Closes Japan-funded 'comfort Women' Foundation." 2019. *The Japan Times*, 5 July. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/07/05/national/politics-diplomacy/south-korea-formally-closes-japan-funded-comfort-women-foundation/#.XVNM_pMzZN0.

Suzuki, Nobue. 2011. "'Japayuki,' Or, Spectacles for the Transnational Middle Class." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 19 (2): 439–62. muse.jhu.edu/article/453334.

Thornbury, Barbara. 2002. "Actor, Role, and Character: Their Multiple Interrelationships in *Kabuki*." In *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, edited by Samuel Leiter, 230–37. London and New York: Routledge.

Tschudin, Jean-Jacques. 2011. *Histoire du theatre classique japonais*. Toulouse: Anacharsis.

Tyner, James A. 1997. "Constructing Images, Constructing Policy: The Case of Filipina Migrant Performing Artists." *Gender, Place and Culture* 4 (1): 19–35.

UNESCO. n.d.a. "Ningyo Johruri Bunraku Puppet Theatre." *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/ningyo-johruri-bunraku-puppet-theatre-00064.

UNESCO. n.d.b. "Kabuki Theatre." *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. https://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/kabuki-theatre-00163.

"Winners of 1991 to 2000." 2016. Carlos Palanca Awards. http://www.palancaawards.com.ph/Testing3/winners-of-1991-to-2000/.