

Memory and Food in Philippine Literature: A Molecular ‘Re-siting’ of the Filipino Kitchen

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abstract

The paper explores the relationship of food and memory in selected Philippine literary works as textual monuments in confronting the traditionally molar Filipino kitchen. The articulated memory figures help relay common segmentarities and similitudes recounted in the narratives depicting the Filipino kitchen as rather molecular, minoritarian, hence ‘re-sited’ a posteriori into a plane of recall and revision. Asymmetrically, the morphing capacity of the Filipino kitchen is favoured in order to escape the dualism machine that still consigns traditional culinary practices to the molar system of domesticity and monumentality. The process of refunctioning traditional kitchens encapsulates both the dynamics of interrogation and practice; more specifically, the sensory experience obtained from the stories can be reworked into a narrative of activity that distributes sensory images for critical reception and memory re-reading, which is possible through proximal correlation with language and desire that necessitate gestic movements like walking or strolling as a demonstration against, say, the kaleidoscopic metropolis of puissance. As molecular memory suggests the exchange and transfer of cultural remembrances among sites of contestations, the paper therefore identifies these sites as distinct kitchens if not similitudes of the domestic type, among them 1) fictive, 2) domestic, 3) sari-sari. Each type of kitchen—already fashionably ‘re-sited’—elicits a case of either nostalgia, forgetting or cultural amnesia. The result is the morphing of the Filipino kitchen into a metaphor, mentality, or simply a memory.

keywords:

Carnival, Filipino Kitchen, Memory, Sari-sari, Site into Sight



Introduction

Who would have thought that praying and eating are all in the same sonority of murmurous spiritualizing, of theorizing gastronomic rapture that the soul satiates with familiar home ingredients and sometimes, though a little overwhelming, cultural différance? Spicy, bitter, sweet, tasty, briny and tangy—these temperamental *gustus* in the textured and textualized presentation of food sought human creativity and cultural refinement. Although cooking is just another talent, craft or art on the one hand, eating on the other is tied to one's gustatory marvel, which requires nonetheless flavouring the results or simply *ninanamnam*, hence “savouring it with tongue and lips and memory [to create] an exact, remembered taste” (Fernandez 85; emphasis added). Such that taste no matter how depoliticized it was perceived in gastronomy, but dramatically politicized in cultural studies given that it assumes a predilection toward luxury and necessity, may predispose taste feelers (or thinkers) to class difference and social inequity.

Literature like food with its concomitant ingredients and identifiable source context, requires a definite if not presentable truth; and truth here as was its wont to varnish no whines refers to the preparation and adjustment that writers and cooks foresee while materially concentrated upon the conditions forcing them to produce a folklorized memory within the confines of every Filipino kitchen: food *as* cultural capital. Predestination, or forced choice, can be scooped out, measure the method that is not invariably ascribing to gender, class nor diachronic traditions alone; the domestic and the carnival, both channelling folk memory, therefore can reconstruct a kitchen that is intensely Filipino and contingently informed by taste and sensory memory necessitating concerns about the language of food and the gastro-politics of foodways and food eating. Memory addends like place, symbols, mythic time, ways of cooking or eating, colonial or folk, presuppose the cultural conditions of significantly articulating the experience, expressions of taste, the feeling of being *there* consuming *it*—the dish that is everyone's wish, as if the pleasure of eating and staying is heightened by the memory.

Doreen Fernandez in *Tikim* made an apparent synthesis about the traditional Filipino kitchen, that having localized foreign

cuisines, withholding still the family's palatable moments and other communal occasions like neighbourhood parties and fiestas, the ordinary Pinoy foodie at his most finicky when it comes to taste and the spatiality of the local, ought to remember provincial delicacies—"those no longer made in one's own or in modern kitchens, or requiring ingredients or methods now found only in the provinces" (6). She reconciles the diverse emotive energies of taste by referring to the "tastiness" of food as more exhibiting a symbolic identity; had she not initiated a semantic perusal of food there wouldn't be gustation or ingestion of what has been authentically Filipino, in taste and in fine manners. Moreover, the traditional Filipino kitchen manifests in itself a carnivalesque way of redefining culture, thus I deem to call this deeply-rooted kitchen *sari-sari*, as there is not an 'imagined' framing of time and space. The Filipino kitchen is likewise viewed in a Bakhtinian swirl of festive feasting of images, experience, and of existence. Thus Doreen Fernandez consigns the Filipino kitchen to the atmospheric feel of the fiesta, as there is no logocentric fixity to assume, and there is:

... no indoor kitchen could contain or provide for the hectic, festive, quantity cookery. The yard becomes the kitchen, where flies and spits were set up for the *lechon*; more fires for the hot water (for cleaning utensils and butchered animals) and the *kava-kava* of *adobo*, *caldereta*, *dinuguan*, etc. (107)

Additionally, the tastiness of food referred to by Fernandez and Edilberto Alegre in *Sarap* comes into three (3) rhythmic palatal descriptions: *masarap*, *malasa*, *malinamnam* (61). To put their utter distinction, both 'malasa' and 'malinanam' only denote food, while 'masarap' has a wider domain, say, "Masarap siyang tumawa." Simplicity and sincerity to the art of colonizing the kitchen only suggests that the distinctive and changing (say, regional) taste of, and the authentic show of *pakikisama* (fellow-feeling) by, the Filipinos speak of the way they are, yet adjusting to the needs of modern living. Like slow food cooking, Filipino food is love. The Filipino kitchen has a long history of the literature of love. 'Slow' because Filipino food, as Chef Horatius Mosquera claims, is indeed "cooked with no shortcuts, no scrimping on ingredients, but instead with painstaking care, and thus only with a whole lot of love" (Panlilio and Sta. Maria, *Slow Food* 197-198).

Although the purpose of the paper allows the author to reconstruct and re-imagine the familiar Filipino kitchen, for it is

ostensibly interesting to note how tradition undergoes transition and transformation especially the ‘re-siting’ of culinary expressions and practices from the Filipino “kusina”, deriving it thus from the wealthy taste factory known for centuries, the Spanish *cucina*. The activity of ‘re-siting’ in this paper is a matter of ingesting culture and re-imagining it in the process to offer an alternate site of contestation and consumption. This is the kind of hunger Resil Mojares informs us Filipinos, “[We] ‘eat places’ when [we] partake of local food while travelling or on the road. It is not just calories but culture which [we] ingest” (139). In short, the paper aims to articulate the language and relationship expressed by food when linked to home or food spaces as a cultural construct of social interaction and folk memory sited or re-sited in Nick Joaquin’s *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*. Once again, the siting or re-siting of memory can be foregrounded as the close reading of the text tries to establish the connection between mother and child, between the colonizer and the colonized, as polarized by the power relations inherent in food and space and their dialogic exchange of mostly prosthetic figures if not anamnestic examples.

The taste culture of Filipinos surely remains steadfast in its remembering of home, albeit precipitated by material necessities (say, career or even *amor fati* informed by the conditions of existence) in transforming the traditional notion of domestic labour. Such taste has been tested physically and metaphysically. The material or physical culture of Filipinos is prized because of the “cultural siting” of memory or mythic time to flow in a borderless, fissiparous heteroglossia of a cooking nation. To fully understand Filipino food in context is the singular appreciation of welcoming the proudly branded Filipino “hospitality and generosity—two of the most universal aspects of Filipino culture” (Besa and Dorotan, *Memories of Philippine Kitchens* 14). Consequently, the paper explores the differential relationship of food and memory in Nick Joaquin’s fiction as a textual monument in confronting the traditionally molar Filipino kitchen. The articulated memory figures help relay common segmentarities and similitudes recounted in the narrative depicting the Filipino kitchen as rather molecular, minoritarian, hence ‘re-sited’ *a posteriori* into a plane of recall and revision. Asymmetrically, the morphing capacity of the Filipino kitchen is favoured in order to escape the dualism machine that still consigns culinary practices to the molar system of domesticity and monumentality. The process of refunctioning traditional kitchens encapsulates both the

dynamics of interrogation and practice; more specifically, the sensory experience obtained from the narrative can be reworked into a synchronic narrative of activity that distributes sensory images for critical reception leading to “a memory re-reading of the now”, which is possible through proximal correlation with language and desire that necessitate gestic movements like walking or strolling as a demonstration against, say, the kaleidoscopic metropolis of puissance. As molecular memory suggests the exchange and transfer of cultural remembrances among sites of contestations, the paper therefore identifies these sites as distinct kitchens if not similitudes of the domestic type, among them 1) fictive, 2) domestic, 3) sari-sari. Each type of kitchen—already fashionably ‘re-sited’—elicits a case of either nostalgia, forgetting, or cultural amnesia. The result is the morphing of the Filipino kitchen into a metaphor, a mentality, or simply a memory.

The Fictive Kitchen: A Home Most Lovely, Lost

Admittedly, what defines the Filipino kitchen is not the scope of the study. But what negotiates the cultural asperities (and differences) of memory and food literature certainly makes sense as to realize the salvific worth of praying, and as to, in a way both Christianizing and memorializing, confront food images in their contemplative myth-making. I will get to the core of myth-making as a procedure of re-functioning the usual close reading of food images and the scaling of the context they represent. The fictive kitchen, this built-in workhouse of static and ecstatic words, is the mental factory that facilitates language and expression, with sensory experience at the wayside and the gift of remembering being at the core-sink. Before words are transmuted into a unit like the language of rituals and hymns, thus coalescing expressivity to be rather performative in nature, remembrances of home arrange themselves, carefully diced and then cooked, until they form an original out of the origin memory perfectly seasoned and marinated. By original I refer to the simulacrum of the origin, or the myth that is manufactured simply put. And by origin I mean the memory events and histories that framed sensorial fragments (premonitions, agitations, mishaps), for the latter may sour social connections and continuities resulting to cultural amnesia. One rare spice of modernity changes how people act and see things. Consequently,

Doreen Fernandez augurs these fragmentary possibilities impacted by cultural amnesia, or “the cultural loss ... [she] saw occurring in the primate city, Manila” (227; emphasis added). To note, one of these dramatic changes effected by technology and mobility, such that Fernandez observed that young people no longer remember or care about provincial cooking, about the importance of slow eating that speaks of not only the Filipino tradition and values but of the memories that were once flowing freely like the silken hair of water.

So, the fictive kitchen constructed here is the ‘imagined’ reservoir of homely hummings, as it were, the brusquely memory at work. The marginal, the memorial, the scientific and sanitary, all pick up the dreaded sentiment of beauty, exposed and expanding like any other home kitchens, of that delicacy, confirms David Hume, of imagination conveying a sensibility in the presence and absence of the object, which in the study arrests people’s assumption of food regardless of the physical appearance (cited in Korsmeyer 118). Note that deformity does not adhere to any degree of aesthetic presentation. In the study supported by a literary text, Nick Joaquin challenges the appearance and the disappearance of object which can be food itself as text, or of image which pertains to memory with its concomitant elements of contestation—language, spirituality, family, home. A basketful of cultural presences, as it were. In an instance in which a mother devotes most of her time to childcare and food preparation, while the father spends time furnishing office work, domestic labour attached to the kitchen has been contested due to economic securities and corporate opportunities befitting specific gender roles. However, cooking as craft, Fernandez affirms, is “not tied to gender, but to the person” (84). Let us establish instead the class difference which effects the transmission of cultural capital that can be deduced, as it were, from the food preferences consumers optionally maintain. In order to illustrate the gendered preferences for food—as portions of its likewise can be interpreted—and ways of eating, Pierre Bourdieu in contradistinction explains the division which both sexes recognize as disparate and diverse as the cultures of gustation of the different regions in the world. Although it would be unfair to synthesize this analysis culturally, but based on dietary findings foods like cheese or meat, the nourishing food par excellence, is the dish for men, whereas women are satisfied with small portions of it, especially if vegetables or salad are not served (cited in Korsmeyer

75). To succumb to this conclusion however, is to defeat tradition's practical commonality, that is, the Pinoy experience of food sharing.

The atmospheric feel of fiestas in the province aromatizes an invigorating community of senses: more than nostalgia and memory can penetrate someone's deep heart's core. As a communal experience rooted in the kitchen, whether taking place in backyards or in tree-shaded grounds, the Hispanized fiestas of Filipinos find profound values which ignite more than anything the talent and manpower of the barrio folks most especially seen in their evocation of *pakikisama*, a quality which also adjusts to the needs of modern living, by all dynamism and deference. The study of food as text welcomes the premise of this paper's cultural approach using a Nick Joaquin story to further the elaborate relationship between tradition as manifest in prayer as the latter seems to regard a concentrated communicative act with the high above, and food imagery which articulates most picturesquely the memories of home.

Deterritorializing the Centrality of Taste

Sensing gustatory pleasure from food is a foretaste to memory, and this privileged desire to feel through bodily organs the reflective sublimity of an indissoluble matter, more so the reality that taste eventually validates aesthetic judgment. Food and drinks, eating habits and foodways, deserve a space for sociality and dialogic interaction that charges intellectual engagement with the whole gastro-spectacle, that is, from food alone, taste culture, to the unseemly cultural politics of culinary practices, slow eating, and countercuisine. Therefore, taste and food consumption presuppose class relations, social inequity, as well as freedom to follow one's appetite. In a more Kantian sense, there is subjectivity in our pleasure to satisfy our gustatory craving but this does not mean there is no social or moral use for it. What is beautiful for us could be universally justified since our aesthetic response also applies to the reaction of interested social participants, thereby causing the gastro-spectacle that I raise here to be multi-built for pluralized verbal constructions and reconstructions. According to Immanuel Kant, "Taste is the faculty of aesthetic judgment which makes universally valid discriminations" (quoted in Korsmeyer 213). Extracting discriminations in the first place is a valid yet risky

attempt to associate what is tasty in food or what is memorable in memory with the sublime's many of differential qualities appertaining to aesthetic judgment.

From tasting food gestured by the mad swirling approbation of the tongue, to dramatizing a memorable Proustian moment, the study prefers to single out taste and smell as the two most necessary senses in connecting food to memory, which as a result emanates a lyrical expression from the psalmic language of food images and from their *relationship* with the story narrative that anticipates their mythicizing potential. I chose the story *The Legend of the Dying Wanton* simply because of the repertoire of food images which are good tropic(al) examples to discuss memory and myth as flavour-makers of human experiences. The centrality of taste is nevertheless deterritorialized by the unfolding cultural narrative and by the ontological shock of folk memory reacting against modernity. Roger Bromley arguably contends that “each deterritorialization (of people itself; of [taste] or genre) constitutes and extends the territory itself; it is a way to keep on opening up meanings” (cited in Velasco 351). In concurrence with this, taste referred to by Kant and Hume is subjective, positional, plural, or molecular in the Deleuzian sense of the word. The re-sited Filipino kitchen, as a result of catering to multicultural taste and ‘schizoid’ cultural memory, is shaped by lived experience through an imagined dialogue which provides a space for a multicultural subtext that is contingently carousing with the carnival.

Site into Sight:

Memory Studies and Bakhtin's Theory of the Carnival

In the production of collective memory, the Filipino kitchen as a site of memory, and in order to achieve a level of sustained rhythmic dialogue, speculates before a framed time and space a balanced yet fluid oscillation between presence and absence. There is no site, as in the mythic flow of time, to take shelter from and no history to visualise in its shapely diachronic skeleton, but only a sight to remember. Bakhtin's conception of time and space operates a temporal machine orchestrating “at the forefront of this dance of de-coding and re-coding of space: memory sites play complex games with time by keeping the past visible and comprehensible in the present, curating narratives and conveying sentiments” (Bach

49). Memory studies rhetoric would recount in Joaquin's narrative an obvious counterfactual movement and siting of traditional practices. To re-site these practices however offers an alternate memory construction which is now to be imagined as a dialogic discourse, or what I critically view as a contingent process of re-temporalizing site into sight, hence a memorial and molecular landscape like the re-sited Filipino kitchen.

Traditions of fiestas, family cooking, fine dining or touring around for several food stations in the street, as well as food buying and delivery highly encouraged by media, had been too overwhelming for the Filipino kitchen counter-pose. These contemporary food activities and culinary practices belong to the dominant order which folk memory finds itself so unlucky to determine a medium of excesses and expressions. As a result, foodways and food customs become a fixed memory of the past, which all the more renders their physical appearance as merely a site. Human mind, like Joaquin's protagonist's museum of mental images, seems to reconstruct a alternative world full of unperturbed imaginings and carnival moments of exaggerations. In moments of metamorphic transitions, the carnivalesque and the grotesque are the aesthetics of transgression that makes dialogue possible. Currito in Joaquin's story metaphysically enjoined himself in the festival of his own making—that is, both metal and memorial—in order to reach the waters of meaning and memory. This struggle thereby conjures an awareness to openly traverse the terrestrial discourse articulated by Bakhtin. In a new world freed from both bourgeoisie and totalitarian cultures, Bakhtin prefers to resuscitate life from individual loss and cultural amnesia in an atmosphere where the carnivalesque and the grotesque are hung suspended under mythic time. The carnival atmosphere like Currito's swirling memories of food representing places abstracted by human (sometimes mental) struggle, romanticizes a 'sight' where "participation rather than representation, dialogue rather than monologue, equality rather than hierarchy" is realized (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* 20). Another point in the narrative is the somewhat unrealistic confrontation of the ideal that lies in the carnival to mask the problem of forgetting. It seems that Currito is still in the state of denial regarding the subject-position of his remembering, thus his contested becoming is prematurely anathema to his total disavowal of fixed terms.

From Domestic to Sari-sari: An Interrogation of Cultural Belonging

With the potential of the Filipino kitchen to make real the fictive or the charged resolutions of the grotesque, Joaquin invites tradition to assume “the other ideal”—in which case the carnival moment, not just the status quo imposing the domestic chronotopes of the ordeal, the dominant order, as it were. Everyone knows that the kitchen is a place, a site, a habitus. But to confront the domestic familiar kitchen one should be privy to the compartmentalized socio-cultural standing of the family. The Filipino family embraces different social classes and this means having a well-furnished family kitchen is not enough. Some prefer to spend bucks for kitchen renovations and extensions. Such is the case of constructing a “dirty kitchen” as an inferiorly spare-space for middle to upper class families. In short, the domestic kitchen informs a culture of liminality and hierarchy. The grotesque elements in memory’s fictive kitchen therefore counteract the domestic kitchen’s activity of still caressing the centre and its traditional vicissitudes, say, the concentrated portrayal of opposites bereft of Bakhtin’s dialogic imagination. The fictive kitchen which is the site of memory “re-imagines a sight”; it makes the Filipino kitchen transformative and transgressive, rather than informative and submissive. Also, the art of reading the Filipino kitchen as a cultural text for collective meaning or fictive space for myth-making, involves the contextualizing of human memory. Hence the fictive kitchen, like episodic memory, “enables [Filipinos] to reconstruct and re-encounter autobiographical experiences which have occurred throughout the course of [their] lives” (Bietti et. al. 268).

Cultural belonging evokes an informed familiarity with the community, the Filipino people and their unparalleled textualizing of fiestas as totem amalgam of *pakikisama*. Barrio folks, families, and guests project another cultural identity of the Filipino kitchen: the sari-sari. The sari-sari, as the label apparently fetishizes on the carnival, “organizes an intricately coded experience that merges intimacy and publicness into a lifestyle constituted by kinship ties, [entertainment], and community service” (van Doorn 90; emphasis added). As a cultural text allowing the free flow of discursive thoughts and fissiparous expressions, the sari-sari as another type

Filipino kitchen, at least for the aim of this study, projects an extensive reach to facilitate an act of cultural remembrance—“a performance, literally, that seeks to make ‘remembering in common’ possible” (quoted in Plate 144). Given its totemic rootedness and constructedness in folk memory, the sari-sari transcends exchange value, a kind of anamnestic projection memorializing and mythicizing culture.

Resurrecting Memory in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*

Before close reading the text as a literary means of cooking it, I first asked a few questions: Why does the narrative brush with Spanish diachronicity? Am I reading a text depicting a Pieta-inspired family picture? Is Doña Ana the Virgin who sheds light on the dying Currito? Why is augury related to memory and memory to myth? Will I find a banquet scene or a feast here so that food is all over the narrative? Like preparing ingredients, dicing and chopping, I ask questions to shine a light of curiosity. I even find the title ironic because of the telling resurrection I sense from the Christianized characters and sensory images. Conversely, the Proustian moment begins when prosthetic memory figures such as the chapel, wardrobe of “Santo Rosario”, and the chapel’s altar, flash before Doña Ana’s dissuading eyes, as if to remind her that being old and well-off is not an excuse to worship and to look after a son (Señor de Vera) whom she thought might wind up being savage and brutal and Filipino. The poor and uneducated wimp that the Europeans fear of entering their lifeways has been framed in the mind of Doña Ana. Here, the subversive figure of a son terrorizes a mother—“the blue dusk of her altar” signifying Christianity and tradition. However, some deconstructionist nuances pervade the fictive kitchen in a mythicizing fashion. So as the narrative proceeds a mythicizing of the altar or chapel being first and foremost the symbol and site of the Christian faith, takes part, is being cooked for unimaginable. A sacred house of worship can turn into a confinement: a jail, an asylum, a memory prison. There is a connection though, the iconographic sketch of the cross in the different houses of worship could be the same cross pinioned on hospital walls. This case of diversion from the rational, disciplining character of the mother into the idolatrous, submissive woman might change the complexion of the narration. But this is pure insight we cannot by de-mythicizing. Graphically the Pieta image

between Doña Ana and her son, and later between her and Currito who asked of her blessing to leave Malaga, is painted; with the sublime subsiding, this beautiful image of a mother-son-mother-stranger relationship becomes a scar, a gothic tropicity pervading the supposed merry memory.

Meanwhile, the presumption of the aesthetic gaze ascertaining taste and social judgment creates a stir in the part where Doña Ana studied the Lucifer-looking Currito, drunk and stinking in the street. But to her, Currito carried a different aura that reminded him of the innocently accused Christ. Perhaps his being alone stations him to be there, enough for easy judgment to make: "Alone, perhaps, in all the city, she knew another side of this man's character" (Joaquin 84). This, in short, counters the colonizing gaze of the affluent, and Currito felt he repulsed had he not been silent. The permission to speak likewise opposes the assumed visual interrogation. Currito was even given the chance to request from the Doña Ana a blessing which he believed would cleanse his soul of the sins he allowed entry. His life, now in the murkiest and most confused state, is begging for a new life. Permission that is being requested is not permission, but a form of begging that has eluded materiality. What is elicited therefore is spiritual help. Note also the distance that keeps the two; it means that this distance blurs the flighty hesitations hovering above Currito's head. When both distance and gaze are transposed, such familiar language is articulated, and this is the language of tradition, a Christianized favour to leave and love.

For a sinful man to depart for battle, he be blessed first. How desperate Currito is now that his revolve seems rock-solid and unchanging! Another way of interpreting this tradition is to consign it to the familiar fascination of readers with the picaresque or the ur-works in which the divine presence precedes battle. However, in the case of Currito, it is a poetic battle that stars him and his inner troubles, or somehow biblical that includes man and his sins tugging close at predestination. Given the blessing he desired, Currito unwittingly became once again an easy prey of a brewing speculation. This time the mythicizing feature of memory comes into play; so memory as augury as prophecy has instanced Doña Ana to foresee the hapless fate of Currito as a dying soldier, though not verbally communicating this to him.

Things in their place remain tucked to memory, most especially to Currito who is about to leave but seems already has left

Malaga. This early sign of rootlessness envisages for him a “homing” in which all traces of home make their way inside. With this ‘inside’ memory storing precious signs and symbols, remembering food and home, the fictive kitchen that I’m proposing here all of a sudden touches modern thought and desire. Gossips, tall tales, and folk quarrels find their place in this new storehouse memory I’d like call sari-sari. Like in a small town sari-sari store, the so-called rumours or cheap talks could be mythicized into barrio legends or other otherworldly narratives; furthermore, the deliberate cataloguing of food and drink, warm women, Malaga, the fountains and streets in Granada, is welcomed by the sari-sari type of memory to interpellate the soul, “not the salvation of [Currito’s] soul but the things of earth his senses had enjoyed and would never enjoy again” (86). Let us consult the list of food, characters, and lifeways that cannot be decoupled from home and all memory that deems to portray the role of sari-sari:

food & drink + warm women = Malaga
 fountains & streets = Granada
 cypresses & bandits = Sierra Morena
 roasted lamb + shepherds + weeds + Romans = Ronda
 vineyards + convents + orange & olive groves =
 Guadalquivir & Cordoba

Stereotyping of sites has been finally ‘re-sited’ since cultural pollution or social nuances attached to these sites are as well interchanging. A traveller guising himself in other places may experience seeing and feeling these signs in Malaga, or sometime in Ronda or Cordoba. Like sites of memory foods also are expressive of their emotive relations to site and that contains them and to the traveller that reads them. Currito conveys the Proustian moment with his experience of travel and dying on an island alone and helpless. The after-life odyssey seems very fitting to revisit the memory spectacle in which the soul seasons sin with food and spices, forgiveness and salvation. The native dreaming here is vivified by the senses, and these senses are perhaps extra-sensory like the dream fingers of childhood memory crawling for “figs and boiled chestnuts and feeling happy” (87).

Lastly, I would like to expound on the critical relevance of smell to memory—a sensory faculty more personal and revealing than taste. Home sensitizes for real, remembers as well, not only the backward exchange of family narratives but also the experiences

with which most are transmuted to objects. As Immanuel Kant observes of the gift of smell:

Smell is, so to speak, taste at a distance, and other people are forced to share a scent whether they want to or not... Smell of food is, so to speak, a foretaste. (cited in Korsmeyer 211-212)

The Kantian privileging of smell as a foretaste is relatively true as was utterly briefed in the descriptive narrative placing Currito to smell home and other places from food. He reminisced Palma that smelled of clams, Tarragona of goats, and Seville and Toledo of their sweet wines. He even remembered food dishes and how they were cooked, which hint at the various ways of food preparation or the Filipino procedure of *pagsasangkap*, say, *kilaw*, *buro*, *iban*. Thus the following phrasal description alludes to masterly culinary skill: “whether *cold* in the cask or *warm* in the goatskin: nor to fish stewed in ripe lemons: nor to chicken boiled in thick olive-oil: nor to buñuelos during the ferias: nor to puchero on Sundays” (Joaquin 87).

Conclusion

Explored in the analysis of food and memory is the oscillation of the myth subject in the textual spaces provided in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*. Not only does the author put premium on the poetic layering of food images but he also reprises to undertake the role of myth-making. The myth in memory is indeed “flavourful” and “tasty”: with the direct articulation précising memory’s fictive construction of personal home, domestic kitchen, and the social sphere of interaction known as sari-sari. In the narrative discussion, the author uses these as memory constructs that confront the nostalgic dilemma and diasporic relationship of the characters with the high above, or the Christianized recognition of religion. Also, foods attached to their sites by memory flows or cognition are likewise free moving subjects, at least to the reading and remembering of the praying protagonist. Praying as a consequence results to confession, like the memory flow that makes ready the food images for critical analysis and metaphysical cooking.

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