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Kaherak-herak na Orag: Gender, Violence, and Cultural Translation in a Bikol *Romeo & Juliet*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a 1993 adaptation of William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet *from Camarines Sur in the Philippines' Bikol region. Written in Bikol colloquial language and set amid 1990s Bikol culture, the play offers a culturally specific rendering of Shakespeare that foregrounds male violence and diminishes female agency. In* "Ang Kaherak-herak na Pagkaminootan na Romeo & Juliet" *(The Tragic Love of Romeo and Juliet), attributed mainly to Rodolfo Alano, Shakespeare's tragedy is rewritten and adapted through the lens of* orag *(a complex cultural term connoting male excellence, prowess, bravado, and dominance) and* pagkamoot *(love). Shifting the tragic focus from forbidden or doomed love that is romanticised in many Philippine adaptations, Alano's play critiques the violent consequence of this patriarchal order, transposing the tragedy from the realm of pure and transcendent love to that of masculine pride. Drawing on Bikol cultural studies of* orag *as male-oriented Bikol aesthetic as well as gender and translation frameworks, this paper argues that Alano's cultural translation serves as a gendered critique of local power structures, demonstrating how Shakespeare can be "claimed" not simply as a source but also as a site for rethinking Bikol regional identity and masculinity.*

Keywords: Philippine Shakespeare; Romeo and Juliet; Bikol adaptation and translation; gender and literary criticism; Bikol orag

SHAKESPEARE, TRANSLATION, AND VIOLENT DELIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Rodolfo Alano's *Ang Kaherak-Herak na Pagkaminootan na Romeo & Juliet* (The Tragic Love of Romeo and Juliet) is a 1993 Bikol adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, reworking the iconic tragedy into the linguistic, social, and cultural context of the Bikol region in the Philippines. Performed by students of the Ateneo de Naga in Naga City, Camarines Sur, Alano's play transforms the story of star-crossed lovers into a cautionary tale where local values – particularly *orag* (a complex term for masculine excellence and bravado) and *pagkamoot* (love) – violently collide. This adaptation joins a long global tradition of reimagining Shakespeare, whose works have been translated into over 100 languages and continually recontextualised in cultures far removed from Elizabethan England (Waters, 2016). As scholars have noted, Shakespeare's presence on the world stage, i.e., his "literary endurance and global iconic status" (Kapadia, 2008, p. 3) and "universality," derive "not from Shakespeare's transcendence but from his malleability, from our own willingness to read in the pastness of the texts and find ourselves there" (Kennedy, 1993, p. 301). In Alano's hands, the localising impulse turns toward a critique of patriarchal power that is embedded within the language and gender codes of Bikol society.

Alano passed away in 2010, and his Bikol translation was never published. However, in 2021, a copy of his manuscript was made available to Bikol literature researchers by his children.[1] As of this writing, Kabulig Bikol, Inc., a non-government organisation dedicated to supporting Bikol arts and culture, has proposed a project to transcribe and publish this. The Bikol play survives in the form of a typewritten script with handwritten additions, marginal handwritten corrections, and production notes. Author and translator, Rodolfo "Rudy" Alano, was a writer, lecturer, organiser of writing and literature workshops, and a Jesuit-educated English professor from Naga City who conceptualised this localised modernisation three years before Baz Luhrmann's critically acclaimed 1996 *Romeo + Juliet* starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes. Unlike Luhrmann's global, cinematic spectacle, however, Alano's adaptation was staged for Bikol audiences in a peripheral city in the Global South. Three performances were held at the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Naga University, with another mounted in the basketball court of the small coastal municipality of San Jose, in the Partido district of Camarines Sur.

"Of all of Shakepeare's dramas, none holds more sway over Filipino sensibility and sentimentality than the tragedy of star-crossed lovers in *Romeo and Juliet,*" was an observation made during the first-ever International Conference on Shakespeare in Asia, held in 2013 at the University of the Philippines (Marchadesch, 2013). Philippine Shakespeare scholar Judy notes that despite being excluded from official curricula and banned by Church-run schools and absent from public education materials, the play is "nonetheless the most translated, published, and circulated Shakespearean play as text in the Philippines in the American colonial years and beyond" (2020, p. 72). The play's theme of "sawi na pag-ibig" (doomed love), Ick observes, resonates deeply with Filipino literary traditions that privilege emotion, sacrifice, and familial tension (2013b, p. 10). This perhaps explains why it has appeared in vernacular translations, secular poetry, moralized retellings, and a variety of school performances. Some adaptations that reflect this impetus include G.D. Roke's Tagalog *awit* (a metrical romance in dodecasyllabic quatrains) titled *Ang Sintang Dalisay ni Julieta at Romeo* (1901), Pascual de Leon's Tagalog novel *Bulag ang Pagibig* (Love is Blind) (1917), and Salvador Magno's "Romeo kag Julieta" in Cebuano (1932).

In the Bikol region, engagement with Shakespeare has produced several texts that blend Western narrative structures with local languages, genres, and values. Poet and playwright Godehardo B. Calleja, for example, published Bikol translations of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets in 2017, using not one but multiple Bikol-based languages and dialects. As for *Romeo and Juliet,* there are two Bikol metrical romance versions from the 1960s, Rosalio Imperial Sr.'s two-part *awit* (song) version and Zacarias Lorino's *rawitdawit* (traditional Bikol poetic form). According to one study of these, Shakespeare's tragedy is filtered through religious or didactic lenses, in which a "Shakespeare, but not quite Shakespeare" (Garinto, 2018) moralizes that one must choose one's love with wisdom or "*pilion na gayo saindang namotan*" (Imperial, 1968, p. 17).

This paper hopes to explore what happens when Shakespeare is localized not just linguistically, but culturally via the tragedy of *orag* rather than love. Specifically, it looks into how Alano's 1993 adaptation departs from the moralising approach of earlier Bikol versions and reframes Shakespeare's tragic love story through Bikol colloquial language and culture to critique the patriarchal, violent excesses of *orag* – a culturally specific mode of masculine aggression and power, thus repositioning this machismo as the central tragic force of the play. This paper's recovery and analysis of a regional adaptation will hopefully contribute insights into the nuanced ways in which Shakespeare becomes a site for negotiating local identity, values, and aesthetics.

[1] The manuscript is attributed to Alano and the written notes are in his hand, though there may previously have been contributions to the content of the play from a group of his students, which he may have later revised.

As Ick's scholarship has documented, Filipino writers and translators have long participated in a tradition of "writing Shakesepare *in*" (2012; 2013a, p. viii) rather than merely "writing back" from "limited and limiting" postcolonial perspectives (2013a, p. viii). This paper will demonstrate how a specific Bikol adaptation writes *Romeo and Juliet* not only in Bikol but also *into* Bikol culture wherein, as with other regional translations, Shakespeare becomes "only one among many points of origin" (Ick, 2013b, p. 1).

In examining how Alano's adaptation functions not only as a regional retelling of Shaksepare but as a critique of patriarchal power in the Bikol region, this paper draws mainly from Bikol cultural studies, Philippine and Bikol theorising of translation, and gender criticism grounded in both Anglo-American and Bikol contexts. This introduction has already situated Shakespeare's play within Philippine and Bikol adaptation and translation histories, establishing that Shakespeare's role is not simply as a colonial legacy but as a malleable text open to local reinvention. In the following section, studies of key terms *orag* and *pagkamoot* within Bikol cultural, philosophical, and literary traditions will be presented to frame the discussion, along with perspectives from Filipino translation studies. The paper will then explore how Alano reconfigures the *kaherak-herak* or tragic structure of *Romeo and Juliet* to foreground the destructive consequences of gendered violence. Through close readings of the use of this word in relation to the love story, tragic end, character dynamics, and performance, the paper demonstrates how *orag* overtakes love as the central driving force.

TRANSLATING *ROMEO AND JULIET* AS BIKOL *ORAGON* AND *PAGKAMOOT*

Bikol oral traditions, in forms such as riddles (*paukod)*, proverbs (*sasabihon*), and poetic toasts/verbal jousts (*tigsik*), are deeply embedded in the region's social life, often functioning as performances of communal identity, generational knowledge, and "sentiments of a certain social period" (Cabredo qtd. in Banzuela, 2013), as well as encoding power relations and social hierarchies in terms of gender, age and status (Matza, 1998). Bikol literature scholar Paz Verdades Santos (2004) has noted that verbal prowess in these traditions is frequently coded as masculine, especially in the context of competitive or performative speech acts where *orag* can be displayed. The *author*, Santos, says, "a male… rooted in the Bikol region" (2004, p. 84).

As those from Bikol know, *orag* (sometimes spelt *urag*) is a multivalent, "multilayered" (Remodo, 2019, p. 25) term in the Bikol language, one that encompasses a wide semantic range – from "excellence" and "prowess" to "fierceness," "cockiness," and even "arrogance."[2] Malcolm Mintz's *Bikol Dictionary* (1971) lists variants and meanings related to being virile (*maurag*), feeling sexually hot (*uragon*), lust (*pagkaurag*), "to clobber" (*uragan*), and "to be angry" (*maurag*) (p. 413). The word connotes a kind of intense, sometimes aggressive and negative energy, commonly associated with strength, skill, and assertiveness. Another definition from Mintz (1971) is "to be an expert in a rough sort of way, to be a hell of a *guy*" (413), while the *Urban Dictionary* defines the adjective *oragon* as "Bicol slang for somebody who is feisty, determined, principled, *fighter*, unafraid of consequences, and one who stands up for *his* principles" [our emphasis] (Jamoralin, 2006). Danilo Gerona (2023), in his essay "Orag as a Bikol Virtue", traces the term's evolution from a pre-colonial symbol of heroic courage to its vilification during Spanish

[2] Jerry Adrados' (2012) dictionary lists multiple negative definitions: two of "orag" as a noun, "animal in heat" and "abhorrence"; three definitions of *oragon*, the first two as adjectives meaning "dishonest, corrupt" and "lwed, obscene, indecent" and one as a noun for "prostitute"; as well as eight different usages of *oragon* as an interjection outside it [*sic*] true meaning" (p. 267).

colonisation, when it became linked to lust and excess. In the postcolonial period, *orag* was reclaimed and celebrated, becoming "the most favourite symbol of the best in the Bikolano," with the derivative term *uragon* popularly used to signify someone exceptional in strength or ability (Gerona, 2023).

Despite its widespread use as a marker of excellence, Gerona (2023) and Bikol writer and language scholar Victor Dennis Nierva (2018) note that *orag* remains ambivalent: it is at once admired and vulgar, often evoking masculine prowess but still considered "a taboo in many Bikol homes." This cultural ambiguity is essential to understanding the gendered dynamics within Alano's translation. As Santos argues in her essay "*Orag* as Bikol Aesthetic" (2004), the concept of *orag* is deeply gendered, operating within a literary and cultural landscape dominated mainly by male authorship and speech practices. Santos observes that not only is the *oragon* writer typically male but also that Bikol literary traditions tend toward combative or competitive discursive forms – what she calls "one-upmanship" in poetic or performative contexts (2004, p. 84). Within this framework, *orag* becomes not just a personal characteristic but a performative stance, one that valorises domination, verbal assertiveness, and symbolic conquest.

On the other hand, *pagkamoot,* or love in the Bikol context, is a value linked to stability, social harmony, and communal peace. Mintz (1971) defines its root *moot* (also commonly spelt *muot*) as "to love" (p. 254), while Adrian Remodo (2019) says that *pagkamoot* derives from *boot,* another complex and layered term referring to a person's core, "inner faculty" or soul (p. 27). Remodo notes how the identity-related concept can extend to "emotions, feelings, and dreams"; without this tempering *boot,* he asserts, *orag* may dominate, resulting in an egotistical life of "*blind* passion or drive" (2019, p. 27). The concept of *pagkamoot* as "the fruition" of the self (*boot*), finding or recognising the other (*ka-boot*) (Remodo, 2019, p. 28), can be seen as a positive value: the stretching beyond individual desire to include and emphasise compassion, unity, and community care. This aligns with Filipino cultural values like *pakikisama* ("how one relates to others") and the larger core Filipino concept of *pakikipagkapwa* ("shared inner self and shared identity"), which is "embedded in the socialisation process of Filipinos, in which one veers away from self-centeredness" (Kobayashi et al, 2024, pp. 8, 2). Thus, a Bikol translation/adaptation of a popular romantic text such as *Romeo and Juliet* may reveal tensions between a broader Filipino-Bikol ideal of love and more Western and individualistic expressions of romantic passion.

Translation in the Philippine context has been theorised – usually from a postcolonial lens – not merely as linguistic transfer but as a cultural and political act, often involving transformation. Renowned translator Ronaldo Tinio (1964) noted early on the necessity of transformation in theatre, saying "[t]he play must modify its meaning in order to remain meaningful" (p. 283). The Tagalog root word for translation, *salin*, Raniela Barbaza (2005) points out, means "to pour the contents of one container into another container, such as pouring a small can of juice into a glass" (p. 258), while the Bikol word for this is *dakit taramon,* literally a crossing of words. Given the linguistic richness and historical marginalisation of the region's languages, crossings can be particularly charged. While aiming to look beyond "limiting" postcolonial paradigms, Ick's perspective about the "richer tradition of writing Shakespeare in" (2020, p. 81) aligns well with Barbaza's theorising of translation as a form of claiming (*pag-aangkin*) by the cultural group that is doing the translation (2009, p. 111).[3] Both views help understand how Alano's play departs

[3] The original passage, in Filipino, is "S*a plosang sakop ng maikling pag-aaral na ito, lumitaw na ang pagsasalin ay isang kilos na* ***pag-aangkin*** *ng grupong kultural na nagsalin. Ang pag-aangkin ay usapin ng kabuluhan; aangkinin ang akdang pampanitikan upang maging makabuluhan sa kulturang tatanggap nito*" (Barbaza, 2009, p. 111).

from fidelity to Shakespeare's text in order to reimagine its emotional and moral centre through a distinctly Bikol lens.

CULTURAL REINSCRIPTION AND CLAIMING IN ALANO'S *ORAGON* ROMEO AND JULIET

READING THE ADAPTATION: LANGUAGE, STRUCTURE, AND SETTING

Alano's script is composed primarily in colloquial Bikol characteristic of the early 1990s, capturing the everyday speech rhythms of the region during that period. The language reflects distinct social registers: upper-class elders are addressed with Spanish honorifics such as *Señor* and *Señora,* while the younger characters often code-switch to English, mirroring common patterns in urban Filipino speech. The localisation of names (e.g., Romeo is nicknamed Romy, Gregory becomes Gregorio, and Tybalt becomes Tibaldo) and references to 1990s Philippine popular culture, including nods to film and television personalities such as Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos, further anchor the adaptation in its contemporary moment. The use of nativized Spanish expressions like *sinverguenza* ("shameless") and "*que horror!*" (how horrible!) reflects typical practices from that period, a legacy and lingering influence of the colonial language.

In adapting Shakespeare's five-act structure, Alano condenses the play into four acts, streamlining and combining many scenes, speeches, and even characters. The original setting is reimagined in a modern Bikol context: The star-crossed lovers are portrayed as college students, swordplay is replaced by knife and gun fights, and key figures are localized. For example, Friar Lawrence becomes the sari-sari store owner Tata Enciong – perhaps to placate the Jesuit administrators of the school in which the adaptation was first staged, while the Prince is modernized into a police lieutenant Teniente Escaro, tasked with keeping the peace between two warring clans, the Montaños (a localized renaming of the Montagues) and the Capuletos.[4] These changes not only localize the narrative but also infuse it with a distinctly regional sensibility that foregrounds class, violence, and kinship within Bikol society.

THE VIOLENCE OF *PAGKAMOOT* AND *ORAG*

A close reading of the text immediately draws attention to one of the most striking shifts in Alano's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet:* the dominance of *orag* in its more aggressive and destructive meanings and registers and its frequent displacement of redemptive or idealized dimensions of *pagkamoot* (love). The latter is, in fact, often aligned with combative aspects of *orag,* or with sorrow, conflict, and death. This orientation is evident from the beginning, in the translation's emphasis on death rather than love in the prologue: Its iconic phrase, "a pair of star-cross'd lovers" is rendered as the less romantic "*duwang sinignos na nagkamootan*" (two ill-fated lovers), while "the fearful passage of their death-mark'd love" becomes "*Ang makangirhat na inagihan kang saindang pagkamo'ot*" (The ghastly/fearsome experience of their love," which is rooted in their parents' rage (Shakespeare, n.d., Prologue; Alano, 1993, Prologo). This shifts the narrative weight away from love's transcendent or saving qualities, which Ick notes are the highlight of many

[4] "Tata" in Tata Enciong is a shortened form of "Tatay" (father) and is attached before the names of community elders in the Philippines to express warmth, affection, and respect.

Filipino vernacular adaptations (2013b, p. 18), toward an exploration of how masculine pride, configured through *orag*, engenders conflict and tragedy.

This emphasis on masculine-coded love can be seen through the play's pervasive use of martial metaphors in relation to *pagkamoot*. When Romy describes his emotional state in the play's first act, like Shakespeare's Romeo, he says that love is not tender, but then goes beyond the description of a rude, boisterous, pricking thorn to characterize it as invasive, violent, and gangrenous: "*Para sakuya ang pagkamoot bakong maboot. Ini bagay na maisog asin kun makatudok garo sarong taklaon na tonok"* (For me, love is not kind/tender. It is something fierce, and when it pierces, it is like a venomous thorn/a rust-filled barb). Mercucio's flippant response is that Romy should retaliate in kind, which reinforces a view of love as duel or skirmish, a test of will and power rather than mutuality. This violent framing is echoed later in the play, Act II, Scene II, when Romy asserts that love is a *panlaban* or a weapon against the hostility of Juliet's kin, in contrast with Shakespeare's Romeo who frames love, in the equivalent of these lines, as an empowering force.

Notably, the Bikolnon counterpart of Friar Lawrence, Tata Enciong, omits the canonical line "violent delights have violent ends," and instead of advising the youth to "love moderately" (Shakespeare, n.d., Act II, Scene VI) literally joins the young men in an earlier scene than that in which he first appears in Shakespeare's original. He aligns himself with them by glorifying romantic pursuit as a kind of relentless offensive, remarking: "*An pagkamoot daa mayong pasibog-sibog... mayong puso nin daragang dai matutuhog kan pana ni Kupido... Abante sanang abante*" (Love does not retreat... there is no maiden's heart that Cupid's arrow cannot pierce... always advance, just advance) (Alano, 1993, Act II, Scene II). In this configuration, romantic desire becomes equated with male conquest.

While Shakespeare's Romeo speaks in oxymorons of "brawling love" and "loving hate" (Shakespeare, n.d., Act I, Scene I), the Bikolnon Romy articulates these as two mutually exclusive states. The counterpart of this declaration in Alano's Act I, Scene II, is "*Kun dai ka namomoot, nakikiiwal ka. Kun dai ka nakikiiwal, namomoot ka"* (If you're not in love, you're fighting. If you're not fighting, you're in love), which breaks the paradox into two opposing emotions that cannot coexist. In contrast, Alano's Juliet articulates a more ambivalent and nuanced understanding of love. Decrying the need for blood to be spilled in order for her and her lover to be together, she characterizes Romy's love as simultaneously "*madugo na mahamis; harani alagad harayo; banal na kriminal"* (sweet and bloody, close yet distant, holy but criminal). However, this complexity is subsumed and marginalized by Romy's view and by the presence of *orag* in the characters and plot.

This dominance of *orag* over *pagkamoot* is reinforced not only thematically and linguistically in Alano's adaptation but also via other aspects of performance. From the opening act, verbal displays of male bravado and sexualized mockery establish the tone much like in Shakespeare's original. The violence and references to sex stand out even more however in colloquial 1990s Bikol, as the characters do not bear the swords and bucklers of Shakespeare's time. In the opening game of checkers or Spanish *dama* in Act I, Scene I, Gregorio mocks Samson, deriding the size of his *payo* (head) with a vulgar pun – "payo-payo" (little head) – alluding to the penis. The insult, couched in playful aggression, is met with Samson's retort asserting his unmatched ability and his willingness to face anyone in a fight, whether this be in chess, a brawl, or a knife fight. Although *orag* is not yet used here, the play begins with the assertion of male power and domination through both intellectual and physical prowess. Tibaldo's entrance in Scene 2 marks the explicit articulation of *orag:* He says to Benvolio, "*Kung talagang* ***maorag*** *ka, madya*

ta kitang duwa man" (If you're truly fierce/powerful/great, then come at me, and the two of us can fight it out). Notably, when he repeats the threat in his next line, it is reworded as "*Kung talagang **lalaki** ka, lumaban ka!"* (If you're truly a man, then fight).

Read as Alano's Bikol translation of "Draw if you be men" (Shakespeare, n.d., Act I, Scene I), this exchange participates in a normalization of *orag* as the operative mode of male social interaction, one in which wit, bravado, and threat converge in a performance of male identity. Interestingly, writer Dante Adan asserts that the statement "Oragon ka!" (You are *oragon*) "could be complimentary or disdainful depending on how the phrase is delivered" (qtd. in Santos, 2023, 180). In Act I, Scene IV, of the adaptation, for example, Tibaldo describes Romy as ***uragon** na iniho* and ***garo uragon** na iniho,* respectively "this *uragon*" (blowhard) and "this guy who thinks he's *uragon*" (conceited fool) to comment on Romy's gall – or colloquially "balls" – for showing up at the Capuleta's party. This is, notably, a translation of the scene in which Tybalt twice calls Romeo a "villain" (Act I, Scene V). Later, in Act II, Scene III, Mercucio acknowledges that Tibaldo is ***uragon*** because he is renowned for fighting, likening him to Bruce Lee and noting how he is *tagas* (hard/tough), a tournament winner, and difficult to face up against.

In the opening of Alano's Act III, there is not only a thematic intensification of *orag* but also a deliberate linguistic saturation, as the use of many variations of *orag* escalates in the male characters' dialogue. This same scene in Shakespeare is filled with puns and wordplay (e.g., "consort," "man," "fiddlesticks") that call attention to the rapid shift from jest to tragedy. Alano substitutes all these with variants of *orag,* maximizing 's flexibility as a rhetorical device capable of expressing insult, challenge, admiration, provocation, contempt, and status. The fact that *orag* appears six times in this act's opening signals its centrality to the climactic confrontation. Tibaldo utters it three times in just one of his dialogue turns. First, he says "***uuragan** ko na an mga hayop na ini*" (roughly, "I will trounce/beat up these animals") in reference to the Montanos, employing *orag* as a verb connoting physical dominance. Referring to Romeo, he uses it as an insulting and sarcastic noun when he asks "*Haen an **oragon** na yan*? (loosely, "Where is that asshole, that so-called great fighter?"). A handwritten note above *orago*n, suggesting an alternative to it is "*daeng ugali*" (person with a bad attitude), and deploys the word as a metonym for posturing and empty bravado. This is followed by a challenge that calls into question Romy's masculinity: *"Magluwas ka digdi kun talagang **maurag** ka!"* (Come out and face me if you are truly great/truly a man.)

Mercucio then attempts to calm Tibaldo down by using *orag* in a "malfunctioning" sense to suggest that the latter's response is excessive. He says, "*Pighahapot ka sana, garo ka na **oragon***" (I'm just asking you a question, and you're acting up/overreacting). Tibaldo responds by saying "*Anong labot mo? **Maorag** ka?*" (What do you care? Are you maorag?). In this sense, *maorag* is a taunt, one that is meant to "signal a fight between males," yet another usage of the term listed by Adan (qtd. in Santos, 2004, 77); by using *orag* in this way, Tibaldo essentially challenges Mercucio's manhood.

The sixth use of the word in this scene is significant in terms of how the logic of *orag* is adopted, albeit reluctantly, by Romy. His first invocation of the term, "*Madya kun talagang **maorag** ka*" (Come fight me if you're truly as excellent/as much of a man as you claim to be) – is not merely a mirroring of Tibaldo's challenge but a moment of transformation: Romy is no longer the conflicted lover but becomes a man pushed to claim his masculine authority through retaliatory violence. In this moment, the ideological arc of the play veers decisively away from transformative love or *pagkamoot* and toward *orag* as the dominant framework for action, identity, and resolution. Romy's act of killing Tibaldo is thus not only narrative retribution but perhaps also a symbolic

surrender to the same gendered ethos and hypermasculine code of *oragon* that he initially (and weakly) resisted.

This climactic shift culminates in the adaptation's most dramatic deviation from Shakespeare's original: the reconfiguration of the lovers' iconic deaths. Alano's reimagining foregoes the romanticized double-suicide that has long been seen as the tragic emblem of love defying societal constraint. Instead, the final sequence is steeped in male aggression. Romy and Juliet run away together, temporarily taking shelter in Tata Enciong's store, but Paris discovers them, and during a brawl with Romy accidentally shoots Juliet. Romy then stabs Paris but is shot by him and dies. The fact that Juliet's death occurs not as an act of personal agency or tragic resolve, but as collateral damage in a masculine power struggle is significant. Romy's subsequent act of stabbing Paris and then dying from a gunshot wound – all of which happens within a span of just a few lines of dialogue – strips the scene of its emotional complexity and tragic inevitability, reducing it instead to a grim scene of reactionary violence.

In his "unfaithful" translation of Shakespeare's ending, Alano effectively de-centers the potentially connection-building *pagkamoot* as the emotional and moral force of the narrative, supplanting it with the self-destructive pride and tragic performativity of *orag*. There are no lengthy declarations of love; teenagers do not take their own lives in this adaptation. But by removing the lovers' mutual suicide, Alano denies the audience the catharsis of romantic sacrifice, replacing this with the consequences of toxic masculine performance. While it is possible that the omission was shaped by the play's Jesuit-school context (Tata Enciong lectures against suicide in Act III, Scene III), or practical performance constraints, the effect remains profound. The death scene underscores the hollowness of *orag* as a cultural ideal and invites the audience to question its place in shaping both personal and communal tragedy. In this light, Alano's adaptation functions not merely as a transposition of Shakespeare's plot but as a reworking that engages critically with Bikol masculinities and their violent ends. This revision invites a reading of the adaptation not as a celebration of love thwarted by fate, but as a localized critique of patriarchal excess.

NO *ORAGON* WOMEN: THE SILENCING OF JULIET

Although in more recent popular discourse there has been some reclamation of the term for "tough, resilient, non-nonsense women" (Doyo, 2020) or women displaying art that is "true to the Bikolnon oragon spirit" (Concepcion qtd. in Balonzo, 2025), traditionally, the word *orag* has not been associated with women. Roughly around this period, columnist Conrado de Quiros (1996) remarked that "Nobody calls a woman 'oragon'" (p. 6). Citing Gerona, Nierva notes that it was "only during the Spanish colonial period when the word *orag* was given a female attribution" but that this made a woman who received it a "social pariah" (2018). The variant *ooragón* in Roman Catholic sermons, for example, is a label for a prostitute (Gerona, 2023). Remodo also notably observes the gendered nature of the word, saying, "*an lalaki oragon, an babayi inooragan*" (25); this represents men as strong, powerful, excellent) but women as acted upon by such prowess, as receivers/objects of *orag* (power or libido) or, at best, riled up with emotions that are strong to the point of hysteria.

Are there any *oragon* women in Alano's *Romeo and Juliet*? A close reading of both the words and stage directions relating to Juliet reveals the consequences for women of *orag* in the portrayal of gendered speech, agency, and relational power. One of the most telling transformations is the relative silence of Juliet, which relates to her diminished agency, an issue already discussed in relation to the play's ending. While some might classify Shakespeare's Juliet

as the former in the angel/monster binary critiqued by scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979/2020) – and is even literally costumed as an angel in Luhrmann's 1996 film – contemporary feminist scholarship has offered more nuanced readings. A journal article by Abbigail Jackson (2021) remarks upon her autonomy as a character who actively shapes her own fate, while a master's thesis by Mara Anderssen (2022) uses psychoanalytic and feminist theory to demonstrate Juliet's rebellion and self-assertion, noting that her emotional awakening and sexual desire render her a "dangerous" figure of feminine resistance.

Much of this resistance is elided or transformed in Alano's version: Her first scene is excised altogether, and the audience is introduced to her only when Romy first sees her, eliminating the chance to witness her as an individual and mature character with interiority before she becomes an object of desire. Another omission involves her opening speech in Act 3, scene 2, where she commands the night to move, expresses her sexual desire and conflicted feelings, and destabilizes male heroism by calling Romeo a "damned saint," a "honourable villain." Moreover, she and the friar/Tata Enciong never interact, so she has no chance to forcefully assert her choice of death either in an exchange with him (Act 4, Scene I in Shakespeare). Overall, Alano's staging emphasizes Juliet's timidity and subordination within a male-dominated narrative; this is done via elliptical passages where she hesitates or trails off and never completes her line. Unlike Shakespeare's Juliet, who is daring, witty, and rhetorically assertive, Alano's Juliet is given a smaller, more cautious voice. In a section inserted in the typewritten script, her first exchange with Romy ends with her asserting "*An mga santa dai nakakahiro miski ma pamibian*" or "saints do not move even if you pray to them," echoing the lack of action and agency of her own character.

This silencing is further reinforced in the staging of the iconic balcony scene, Act II, Scene II in both Shakespeare's original play and Alano's adaptation. Rather than reclaiming space or power, Alano's Juliet performs *pakipot* behavior, a gendered term referring to "the Filipina art of playing hard to get" (Genosa, 2025), the equivalent of English coyness, often seen as a flirtatious, withholding behavior expected of young women. Multiple stage directions for this scene make Juliet repeatedly back away from and then return to Romy, and she refuses his kiss before changing her mind when he says he will leave. This is in stark contrast to Shakespeare's Juliet who rejects the conventional feminine behavior expected of her, valuing sincerity in her declaration of her fondness for Romeo over performative modesty. While she knows the game of female coyness, she offers to play it only if it makes Romeo more serious in his pursuit. Shakespeare's Juliet insists that her love is as deep and boundless as the sea and is the one to suggest marriage, while Alano's Juliet never articulates the strength of her feelings and sexual (or romantic?) desire independently.

In subsequent scenes, Juliet's "bounty" is greatly reduced, and she is reactive, anxious and tearful/fearful. There are many stage directions and lines of dialogue that describe her as *naghihibi* or crying, and one of her most frequently uttered words is *halat* (wait). After Romy kills Tibaldo and the lovers are reunited, she asks him three times what they should do. In the final scene of Act III, she stands up to her parents, declaring that, for her, love is more important than reputation ("*Mahalaga saindo ang dangog, mas mahalaga sako ang* ***pagkamoot***"), but her lines are truncated and punctuated by crying (seen in several stage directions). Her father is given many more lines to ridicule *pagkamoot* as impractical. Her expressions of fear and reluctance (e.g., telling Romy to slow down, sobbing until he tells her there is no going back) affirm a performance of femininity that is deferential and dependent, conforming to what Gilbert and Gubar (1979/2020) describe as the traditional and gender-stereotypical life of "contemplative purity" of the angel-woman, rather than one of "significant action" (21).

As mentioned earlier, rather than acting as a co-agent in the lovers' fate, Alano's Juliet is rendered collateral damage. In Shakespeare's original, Juliet takes deliberate and courageous steps to shape her destiny: She consents to a dangerous plan involving a sleeping potion, braves solitude in a tomb, and ultimately takes her own life upon discovering Romeo's corpse. These acts, while tragic, affirm her agency and emotional resolve. In contrast, Alano's ending displaces the emotional and narrative weight of Juliet's decisions. Her fate is no longer of her own making but is instead the consequence of the actions of men: Romy, Tibaldo, Paris, and even Tata Enciong. The final act, where Juliet is accidentally shot, is an elimination of her last opportunity to act meaningfully. Her death is not a tragic assertion of autonomy, but an incidental casualty, an outcome that reflects the broader gendered power imbalance at the heart of the adaptation. In a world governed by *orag*, where masculine pride and rivalry dictate the arc of the story, women like Juliet are relegated to the periphery, voiceless and vulnerable, their lives determined by others' conflicts.

This gendered imbalance is mirrored in the characterization of Pedro, Alano's substitute for both the Capulet's servingman and Juliet's nurse. Pedro is portrayed as an effeminate, comic character – a trope common in Philippine popular cinema and theater, particularly in the *zarzuela* tradition and Filipino films in the 1980s and 1990s. While he is sympathetic to the lovers, Pedro is ultimately a figure of ridicule; unlike the nurse's humorous utterances, it is Pedro's queerness, exaggerated through mannerisms and limited dialogue, that creates comic effect. His characterization reflects the marginalization of queer identity within both the play and the broader cultural ideologies that it represents. At one point, when Pedro defends Juliet, her father dismisses his words, saying "*Dai mi kaipuhan ang tsismis mo digdi*" (We don't need your gossip here). As with Juliet, Pedro lacks a voice (and the omission of the Nurse's wise and witty lines), he is excluded from the masculine performance of *orag*, and his queerness, rather than offering an alternative to destructive masculinity, is neutralized through humor and stereotype.

Alano's reconstruction of the *orag* is clearly conflated with the masculine. Anything that is not or is less masculine (i.e., feminine, queer, etc.) cannot be *oragon* and is either relegated to the periphery as with the character of Pedro, or at best, poised to function as a support or embellishment to the primacy of the central masculine character/s. This may have been reflective of the reality of the queer Bicolano subjects at the time the play was produced. Before the rise and spread of the LGBTQIA+ movement and social initiatives in the country, queer subjects were never rendered as strong and credible; they were regarded as wimpy, unreliable, and prone to exaggeration even if they held respectable positions in society. Queer subjects who held high positions or supposedly respectable social statuses (e.g., medical practitioners, teachers, lawyers, etc.) had to downplay their queer identities and characteristics and, if possible, assume or pass as masculine subjects in order to earn public recognition and respect, i.e., in order to be *oragon.*

CONCLUSION AND ALANO'S CRITIQUE: THE TRAGEDY OF *ORAG*

The Bikol adaptation *Ang Kaherak-Herak na Pagkaminootan na Romeo & Juliet* offers a powerful reworking of Shakespeare's classic tragedy by not just localizing Shakespeare's narrative but also critiquing the destructive consequences of the patriarchal *orag.* The romantic intensity between Alano's Romy and Juliet may initially have the potential to bridge social divisions, yet this is repeatedly thwarted by the violent posturing of male characters driven by *orag*. The failure of

pagkamoot to assert itself over *orag* underscores not just the tragedy of the individual lovers, but a larger cultural conflict: between love as an ethic of care and community, and *orag* as an ethic of dominance and assertion.

While it may seem to glorify this Bikol cultural value, Alano's play is in fact a critical representation of the costs or tragedy of *orag* or a drive that is not tempered by love and community care. In the world of Alano's 1993 adaptation, the patriarchal structures appear to be more rigid than those of the Shakespearean original. Here, women (and queer individuals) are sidelined, their speech constrained, their roles reactive rather than agentive. Such gender norms are reinforced by those of the older generation, like Tata Enciong, who mocks a despairing Romy by saying, *"Ano ka, bakong lalaki? Garo ka na babaing ingos-ingos na diyan"* ("What are you, not a man? You're like a whining, sniveling woman"). This line not only affirms Romy's need to suppress emotion in order to fulfill expectations of manhood, but it also casts female emotional expression as inherently weak and contemptible.

Importantly, the play's narrative closes not with a redemptive vision of love, but rather with its symbolic erasure. The monument to Romy and Juliet, presumably erected in their memory, is stripped of its affective power: They are not remembered for choosing love, but for being consumed by violence. The result is the kind of "cross-cultural encounter" described by Ick, wherein a Philippine translation "aspires to a reconciliation rather than reproduction" of "the English Shakespeare in a Philippine language" (2013b, p. 1). Alano's play does this by reinscribing *Romeo and Juliet*'s plot with regional particularities and gendered tensions to confront the contradictions of his own cultural milieu. *Pagkaminootan* in Alano's title importantly refers to "love" in the perfective aspect, which suggests a completed action, takes on a new meaning: the story of a love that has ended – or been extinguished.

As a Bikol adaptation, Alano's text underscores the potential of translation and transformation not just to bring global texts into local languages, but to interrogate the values and ideologies that are embedded in both. His use of the Bikol language, particularly its male-centered metaphors, deeply situates the play within the region's late-twentieth-century context. Yet, rather than affirming these values, Alano's adaptation destabilizes them – foregrounding *orag* not to celebrate it but to expose its fatal consequences.

The reading provided here points to broader implications for Philippine literary and adaptation studies. Philippine reimaginings of canonical works such as *Romeo and Juliet* can function as critical acts, making visible the often-unquestioned cultural structures that shape local identities. There is a pressing need for more gender-aware frameworks in the study of Philippine adaptations, especially in languages of regions outside the Center where patriarchal values may be subtly or overtly reinforced. Future research might explore women-authored Bikol translations or reworkings of *orag* that resist binary gender roles, perhaps even incorporating nonbinary or queer representations that complicate dominant modes of masculinity.

Ultimately, Alano's adaptation challenges audiences to rethink the ethics of love, violence, and pride, not just in Shakespeare but in their own communities. His *Ang Kaherak-Herak na Pagkaminootan na Romeo & Juliet* is not a tale of star-crossed lovers whose *violent delights have violent ends*; rather, it is a tragedy of *orag*, where the ideals of romantic love are silenced by the louder, more destructive demands of Bikolnon masculinity. Through this, Alano transforms Shakespeare from a distant literary icon into a vehicle for a Bikol critique and reflection.

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