




The Poetry of Rustica C. Carpio: A Mirror of Humanistic Discourse, Truths and Values

Jan Raen Carlo M. Ledesma, PhD 

Department of Literature, Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas

jmledesma@ust.edu.ph

[Submit to this journal](#) 

[Other related articles](#) 

Announcements

[Other PUP Journals](#) 

Other citation formats:

Article History:

Received: April 8, 2025

Accepted: June 23, 2025

Revised: June 25, 2025

How to Cite this paper:

Ledesma, Jan Raen Carlo M. "The Poetry of Rustica C. Carpio: A Mirror of Humanistic Discourse, Truths and Values." *Mabini Review* 15, no. 2 (2025): 125–149. Accessed [Month Day, Year]. <https://doi.org>.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at mabinireview@pup.edu.ph.

The Poetry of Rustica C. Carpio: A Mirror of Humanistic Discourse, Truths and Values

Jan Raen Carlo M. Ledesma, PhD 

Department of Literature, Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas

jmledesma@ust.edu.ph

Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to analyze eight poems in Filipino written by a prominent woman of Philippine letters, Rustica C. Carpio. Her disposition as a promising poet had never been the subject of local literary scholarship. As a poet, Carpio can be situated within the tradition of humanist poetry with her poems published in her book “Tilamsik ng Panitik” efficaciously chronicling the complex nature of man. The analysis situated the poems of Carpio within certain prominent traditions in Philippine poetry. In the form and content of her poetry, it is evident that we can see the strong influences of the mimetic, didactic, and representational modes, impulses and traditions in Philippine poetry. As mimetic, representational, and didactic poems capturing humanist discourses, truths, and values, her readers can witness the depth and complexity of how she made sense of the actions and ideologies of man, stressing different humanistic truths and values. The poems show how she provided an image of man with the goal of understanding his daily, promising, resilient, infallible realities, his naturalistic capricious disposition, utopic vision, and his morality and sympathy engaged in life’s vicissitudes rendering them as mirrors in understanding humanistic ideas and discourse. Leaning on the humanist discourses of Andrew Copson, Richard Norman, and Jeaneane Fowler, the offshoots of these humanistic leanings of the poems also provide potent points for ruminating on the good life, humanistic deeds, and wholeness of the human person, the search of true humanistic happiness, and the morality of his interpersonal connections.

Keywords: *didactic poetry, humanism, mimetic poems, Philippine poetry, Rustica C. Carpio*

INTRODUCTION

Rustica C. Carpio (1930-2022) was a prominent name in the fields of Philippine education, drama, literary, and cultural studies. Regarded as a drama or theater icon and stalwart, she is known for being a stage, radio, television, and movie actress. With her remarkable contributions to the arena of Philippine performing arts, Carpio was recognized by the *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas* as one of the Ten Outstanding Women of the Philippines in the year

1968. She was also included in *The World Who's Who of Women* published by the International Biographical Center in England in 1982. Her other recognitions as an expert and shaper of performing arts in the Philippines include the Green and Gold Artist Award from the Far Eastern University in 1988, the *Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinangan sa Larangan ng Tanghalan/Dula* in 2003 during the 432nd anniversary of the city of Manila, and was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School in 1998, coinciding with its Diamond Jubilee Celebration because of her outstanding contributions to the field of Literature. As an academician, Carpio was a respected teacher of drama and performing arts. She taught in different universities here and abroad: Philippine College of Commerce (Polytechnic University of the Philippines at present) - 1953-1954 and 1956-1957; Teachers Seminary of America in New York – 1956; Manuel L. Quezon University – 1958; Far Eastern University - 1957-1967; Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila - 1967-1984; and in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines since 1984 (CCP, 2022). In her long stint in the Philippine academe, she served as head of Student Affairs of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, Dean of the College of Languages and Mass Communications, and Graduate School in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. She earned her AB English Degree, *magna cum laude*, from the Manuel L. Quezon University; MA in Education major in Speech Education from New York University in the USA; and PhD in Literature, *meritissimus*, from the University of Santo Tomas.

As a scholar and renaissance woman, she published more than 200 local and international papers ranging from research and journalistic articles, scripts, books, and creative works. Included also in her writing laurels are some of the poems that she wrote as a teacher and scholar of the humanities, which were published in one of her scholarly books written in Filipino titled “*Tilamsik ng Panitik*,” published by the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House in 2003. In previous articles, causeries, and tributes, Carpio was admirably depicted as wearing the various hats of a professor, administrator, writer, thespian, and director. Her insights and ruminations as a woman of arts and letters were published in her books “*The Shanghai of My Past, and Other Essays*” (2005), “*Literature is Life*” (2003), “*Dramatic Poundal*” (2002), “*Readings in Literature*” (2001), “*Life is a Stage*” (2001), and “*Hermogenes Ilagan: Father of Tagalog Zarzuela*” (2000). Her disposition as a promising poet had never been the subject of local literary scholarship, previous academic research outputs, and treatises in Philippine literary and cultural studies. As a poet, Carpio can be situated within the tradition of humanist poetry with her poems efficaciously chronicling

the complex nature of man.¹ Such intricate re-counting is a solid reflection of the knowledge that she had about human feelings, an expression that is markedly self-indulgent and not just a plain representation of the feelings of man.² With her deploying the language of metaphor and the concreteness of her native language, her poems unveil a certain kind of balance in man's reasoning, spirit, and desire. Evidently didactic in nature, the poems also provide an imaging of man procuring greater capacity for judgment, rationality, and wisdom.³ Emplacing the poems within the humanist tradition, the poems can also be seen as partaking in the various philosophical inquiries delving on the truths of human nature, good life, the role of reason, power, vices, and virtues in becoming human, the nature of man's knowledge, the end of man, and how he makes sense of such finality cognizant the hovering presence of a Supreme Being in his life.⁴ The weight of Carpio's poetic representation of these humanistic themes and concerns lies on the remarkable duality that she provided in framing such issues. We can see that this is a "poiesis" that affectively and cognitively sheds light on man's minuteness, efficiency, largeness, happiness, corruption, fallenness, worthiness, connection, and disconnection with God. Truly, the instrument of her poetry is human experience, with these experiences crystallizing into a kind of spatter or splash, affirming the titular "tilamsik" in Filipino, confirming the truths of various humanistic values, existence, and knowledge. Carpio also accentuated the truth of this poetic spatter and power revealing how the imaginative order of words and imagination in literature reveal the essence and substance of man's greatness, thought, and relationality. This literary act and its remarkable connection with the stories of mankind were rhetorically declared by Carpio in her book "Tilamsik ng Panitik":

*Tulad ng mga butil ng palay o patak ng ulan,
ang mga pirapirasong butil ng isipan ay unti-
unting bumubuhos, unti-unting dumadaloy,
manaka-nakang kumakalat upang maghasik
ng kanilang iwing kayamanan at kariktan.*

1 Arthur Dobrin, "Humanist Literature in Perspective," *Humanism Today from American Humanist Association* (March 2016): 59-62, https://americanhumanist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/02_11_dobrin.pdf

2 Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 24.

3 Nisha Rakwal, "Humanistic Concerns in the Poem Song of Myself by Walt Whitman," *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (January 2022): 23-28, <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.71.6>

4 Peter M. Collins, "Philosophy and Humanism," *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (2008): 175-191, <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=4527>

*Samakatuwid, sa buhay ng tao ay ganyan din ang nangyayari, kadalasa'y nababahaginan ng lamukot na hinugot mula sa kanilang kabatiran. Alalaon baga'y mga tilamsik ng tubig-batis na habang naglalaglag ng mga patak ay lalong kumikinang, tila wari nagbibigay-buhay sa mga nilalang.*⁵

These strong didactic and humanistic bents are what makes Carpio's poetry different from other prominently published female poets in Philippine literature, such as Ophelia Alcantara-Dimalanta, Edith Tiempo, Angela Manalang Gloria, Trinidad Tarrosa-Subido, and Merlie M. Alunan. Carpio's poetry is written in her native language, namely in Bulacan Tagalog—a dialect of the Filipino language notorious for its rhythm and melodiousness. This dialect is also known for its clarity, sincerity, and directness, rendering the dialect a perfect tool that can be deployed in speech and didactic poetry.⁶ The other foregoing female poets of Philippine literature generally wrote in the English language, mostly centering on the experiences of women, femininity, love, romance, loss, memory, mortality, moral infirmities, gender roles, language, and politics. In her poetry collections, such as "Montage" (1974), "Lady Polyester: Poems Past and Present" (1995), Ophelia Alcantara-Dimalanta spoke about the horror of moral and spiritual frailness concealed by life's remembrances, festivities, and speeches, and how the existence of women can be fraught with certain contradictions wavering between the feminist and feminine.⁷

Edith Tiempo, one of the outstanding female writers in English, established a tradition in Philippine literature in English that is highly indebted to new critical doctrines from Western literary theory and criticism. Echoing Gemino Abad, such a tradition is known for making readers see the fine critical marriage of language and poetic form, concept and emotion—the perfect unities that can wholly capture Filipino senses and sensibilities.⁸ It is important to note that this was also affirmed by Leonard Casper in the anthology "Six Filipino Poets" (1954), a collection of works by Filipinos written in the light of the

5 Rustica C. Carpio, *Tilamsik ng Panitik* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2003), xi.

6 Julieta Mallari, "Central Luzon," *Ubod*, December 27, 2020, <https://ubod.ph/index.php/2020/12/27/central-luzon/>

7 Ma. Socorro Q. Perez, "Sexual/Textual Politics in the Poems of Ophelia A. Dimalanta," *UNITAS* 89, no. 2 (2017): 91-118, <https://archium.ateneo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1116&context=english-faculty-pubs>

8 Gemino Abad, "Introduction," in *Beyond, Extensions*, by Edith L. Tiempo (Diliman, University of the Philippines Press, 1993), xiii.

new critical tradition.⁹ In the body of works of Tiempo, this critical upbringing is manifested in how she made sense of various images of monkeys, bonsai, the cage, the sea, rage, and fishes writhing around as her means of making sense of her biography and its emplacement in the nation.¹⁰

Known as the poet matriarch of female poets writing in the English language, Angela Manalang Gloria notably addressed themes of love, romance, and passion as represented by a woman who “shattered every mullioned pane / To let a firebrand in. . . / for one insane / Moment with him” in the poem “Soledad.” She also spoke of romance that must be accompanied by a remarkable sense of wisdom in the poem “Pain”: “Pain at my side has been a sharp reminder / I must not love too much or cry / For brighter suns and firmaments.” It is also essential to highlight that she is also known for her critique of male prejudice and sexism as reflected in one of her famous poems titled “Revolt from Hymen”—a protest on marital rape with remarkable vigor and musicalness.¹¹

Trinidad Tarrosa-Subido, as reflected in her notable works, such as “Muted Cry” and “You Shall be Free,” addressed the problem of finding one’s voice and native language in a dominant culture, exploring the correlations between language and identity, and the act of relinquishing past connections, shedding light on the complexities of love and relationships correspondingly. In her poetry collections “Hearthstone, Sacred Tree” (1993), “Amina Among the Angels” (1997), and “Tales of the Spiderwomen” (2010), Merlie M. Alunan focused on the power of gloominess as both tragic, tender, and affecting, capturing it as an avenue for pursuing one’s truth and existence.¹² Her works also revolved around the themes of isolation, impermanence, and memory captured in diverse personas in her poetry, further serving as a testament to her mastery of the poetic medium, specifically contemporary English.

As one of the promising Filipina poets in Philippine literature, Carpio’s poetry is one of the exceptional testaments to the rhythm and harmony of Bulacan Tagalog, with her being a native of Paombong, Bulacan. This is a clear departure from the other Filipina poets who primarily wrote in English. I argue that the

9 Leonard Casper, *Six Filipino Poets* (Manila: Benipayo Press, 1954).

10 Cris Barbra N. Pe, “Marginal Voices, Silenced Annotations: Notes on the Life of Edith L. Tiempo,” *Akda: The Asian Journal of Literature, Culture, Performance* 3, no. 1 (2023): 11-22, <https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/akda/vol3/iss1/3>

11 Eileen R. Tabios, “Poetic Influences: ‘Angela Manalang Gloria,’” Marsh Hawk Press, 2025, <https://marshhawkpress.org/eileen-r-tabios-poetic-influences-angela-manalang-gloria/>

12 Michael Carlo Villas, “Merlie M. Alunan: The Filipino Writer as Bisaya,” *Likhaan: The Journal of Contemporary Philippine Literature* 14, no. 1 (2020): 326-337, <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/lik/article/view/7547>

expressed melodiousness of her poems in Filipino by virtue of their form and language best supports and channels the humanistic discourse and instructions embedded in them. Such is a theme and subject not thoroughly explored in the writings of Filipina poets as reflected in the foregoing foregrounding of their projects. As a mirror of humanistic discourse, truths and values, Carpio's poetry is a return to our humanistic anchorage that soundly arrests the "sputters" (the "tilamsik" that Carpio mentioned) of being human in both positive and negative lights. Furthermore, I posit that it is in her poetry where we can understand the dictums of humanism as a trend and discourse, and how it can be utilized as an auxiliary tool in the production of mimetic and didactic literature in the local context. As a result, we see a significant poetic substantiation of humanism as a philosophy and practice grounded in Carpio's native leanings. The succeeding section further explains how Carpio's poems can serve as important take-off points in understanding the correlation between literature and humanism—with them both exploring human dispositions in greater depths.¹³

Method: Reading Carpio's Poetry

In her poetry, I read the "splash" that Carpio mentioned as an affirmation of the diversity of the possibilities of being human—with the said term made possible because of the conjoined concentrations of his cognitive, affective, and performative dispositions. In this paper, I attempt to analyze eight poems written in Filipino by Carpio published in the second chapter of her book "Tilamsik ng Panitik." These poems are "Ang Lampara ay Maskara," "Bukod Bukod na Bulaklak," "Kasalanan bang Mangarap?," "Gumuhong Bantayog," "Katig na Marupok," "Totoo Nga Kaya?," "Masaklaw na Bagwis," and "Aklat na Buhay." In my analysis, I attempt to also provide a discourse on the kind of poetry that Carpio wrote shedding light on the formalistic elements of the poems particularly perusing their language, tone, rhythm, and images, and how such elements further accentuate the strong human-centered bent of her poetic discourse revealing them as mirrors of humanistic truths and values with them creating their own unique effectual literary spatters. The paper banks on the descriptive-analytical approach in analyzing the eight poems in the light of humanist tenors. The themes fleshed out from Carpio's poetry highlight the image of mankind at the crossroads of perfection and imperfection, rationality and meanness, and also as valuable springs of life and wisdom in an animated, pulsating, familiar language rendering them humanistically open and accessible. Capitalizing on the notion of humanism, it is fitting to provide here

13 Parpiyev Muxammadjon Tolibovich, "The Philosophical Essence of Humanism in the Renaissance," *Pubmedia Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2025): 1-7, <https://digital-science.pubmedia.id/index.php/pssh/article/view/357>

an operational delineation and understanding of humanism as a philosophy and trend in support of the objective of this paper. In the poems, we can encounter worldviews, life stances, attitudes, meanings, meaning frames, and reality frames.¹⁴ Carpio's poetry can be regarded as a potent tool for philosophizing, animated by three different factors. In them, one can encounter different layers, namely the spiritual, societal, relational, familial, and political. What makes these possible? What kind of life stance did Carpio, as a poet, adopt as reflected in her poetry? How did she concretize these layers with mankind's feats emplaced at the center of her poetry? I recognize what Carpio declared to her readers as they read the poems published in the second part of her book. We can regard this as a noteworthy deposition that effectively aligns her with the humanist tradition, disclosing how it functioned as a distinctive viewpoint in her poetry and as a method in creative discourses.

*Ang pangalawang bahagi na tinaguriang
"Tula: Sulyap sa Nakaraan, Pangako ng
Kasalukuyan," ay nagbabadya na kahit
saan mang sulok ng daigdig tayo dalhin
ng kapalaran, ay hindi nawawala ang
katauhan ng tao at ang ganda ng kanyang
pakikipagkapwa-tao.¹⁵*

The introduction that Carpio provided is an affirmation of the strong humanist foreground of her poetry published in "Tilamsik ng Panitik." Readers of her poetry can witness how she upheld a particular ethical, fair, and democratic stance and worldview. This can be read as her means of placing a high premium on the human person possessing the right to and task of meaning-making—specifically the task of giving, infusing meaning in their lives, further shaping and animating their intricacies. One can even affirm that the poems are human ethic-driven, with emphasis also given to the notions of free and liberalist inquiry and reason illustrated by the feats and capabilities of man.¹⁶ The poems are also striking in a manner that the subjects that she conjured actively deployed their senses in making sense of their experiences and engagement with their realities. This is an essential feature of her poetry as it effectively relates her

14 Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?" in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, eds. Andrew Copson and A. C. Grayling (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2015), 1-33.

15 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, xii.

16 International Humanist and Ethical Union, *IHEU Bylaws*, May 6, 2016, <https://humanists.international/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/IHEU-Bylaws-Internal-Rules-General-Assembly-Regulations-and-Membership-and-Dues-Regulations-as-amended-May-2016.pdf>.

work back to the humanist discourse, showing that it manifestly functions as the springboard of our daily engagement with life and reality. In the light of her poetic-humanistic discourse, we can see this as a confirmation of the truth that we have encountered, lived, and performed from birth. As reflected in the analysis, other humanistic elements that can be extracted from her poetry border on asserting and questioning the practicality and convictions of human actions. The truths and themes that are addressed in this humanistic ambit and discourse include the liberality of the human subject when it comes to meaning-making, a psychological and moral kind of upbringing and resilience, and the creation of a personalized kind of happiness and sadness that animate one's experience of establishing meaningful relationships. In the complex discourse of humanism, Carpio asserted the notion of a remarkable kind of revolution (*pag-inog* in Filipino) that typified the progress and devolution, the highs and lows of man in her writings. We can recognize this as Carpio's means of unveiling man's genetic and dynamic ability to develop his own means of experiencing and living the world.¹⁷ Carpio, the scholar-poet asserted the magnitude and consequence of this truth in her book "Tilamsik ng Panitik": "At sa pag-inog na ito, minsa'y mapa-ibabaw at minsa'y mapailalim ang tao sa gulong ng buhay. Ngunit tuloy pa rin ang paghabi ng kinapal ng mga matulain at mapangaraping bagay."¹⁸ The poems of Rustica C. Caprio are mirrors of lives, further giving attestation to the power and spatter of literature as they lay down the rhythm and reasons for life's beauty, struggle, and continuity.

Recognizing the importance of the foregoing statements on the discourse on humanism, it is also important to shed light on the kind of poet Rustica C. Carpio is, based on the kind of issues and themes that she chronicled in her poems, the poetic mode that she deployed in her poems, as well as the traditions to which Carpio's poetry can be classified. In doing this, I take into account some important tenors of Philippine poetry from prominent local scholars. Since the poems that she wrote were written in Filipino, I also bank on some significant discourses on Filipino/Tagalog poetry and illustrate how some of their key ideas have been affirmed and illustrated by Carpio in the poems that she wrote. As a descriptive-analytical disquisition, I affirm the importance of the foregoing humanistic discourses in coding and analyzing her eight poems in Filipino published in "Tilamsik ng Panitik." The succeeding section is a modest attempt to examine the formalistic aspects of her poetry.

17 Jim Herrick, *Humanism: An Introduction* (London: Rationalist Press Association, 2009), 92.

18 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, xii.

Poetic Alignments: Carpio's Humanistic Poetry, Modes, and Traditions in Philippine Poetry

Noticeably, the poetry of Rustica C. Carpio is not emplaced within the romantic tradition that prominently tackles love, passion, and plain sexualization. Her poems departed from this famously pronounced tradition in Philippine poetry. On the contrary, her poems provide a glimpse of how a poet can penetrate both the social, cultural, and political spheres of life armed with a remarkable touch of the personal and humanistic, and subtly even that of the spiritual. We can consider Carpio as one of the poets who had a skillful and adept control and exposition of both form and content that markedly led to the development of a special kind of correlation. This is the correlation between her organic and realistic imageries and cultural, social, and humanistic experiences. This correlation is a potent one, echoing the words of the poet Jose Maria Sison. The connection between the superbly personal, coupled with the quotidian and humanistic, and the social and even interpersonal can bring poetry a perfect kind of blending and seasoning.¹⁹ In its simplistic yet operative and controlling mode of imaging the issue or the subject matter, we see the poet remarkably charging them in order to provide clear and effective transcripts of good and bad, happy and sad experiences, vividly communicating the feels and weight of the humanistic issue being chronicled by the poem.²⁰ A sample from Carpio's collection is the poem titled "Gumuhong Bantayog." The poem is a plea and reproach to someone who had caused the downfall of the speaker. As an imploration, the speaker humanistically appeals to the one who destroyed her, further compelling him to strive for wholeness and recall her own humanity by conducting a strong and deliberate introspection of himself before destroying others' reputations. As a reproof, the curiosity of the speaker is markedly highlighted, urging her to acknowledge the importance of the human person, with that acknowledgment instrumental in the structuring of interpersonal relations and personal beauty, making possible the notion of humanistic communion. The poem succeeds in creating and making us digest the analogy with the charmingly combed hair of the speaker, particularly serving as the metaphor for her dignity. In this poem, the perception of the

19 Jose Maria Sison, "Social and Cultural Themes in Philippine Poetry," *The Philippine Collegian*, December 20, 1961, <https://www.josemariasison.eu/social-and-cultural-themes-in-philippine-poetry-part-i-of-ii/>

20 Bienvenido Lumbea, "Poetry of the Early Tagalogs," *Philippine Studies* 16, no. 2 (1968): 221-245, <http://www.philippinestudies.net/files/journals/1/articles/971/public/971-971-1-PB.pdf>

analogy of combing beautiful hair also makes possible the discernment of the poem's implicit educational value.²¹ To quote some lines from the poem:

*Bakit mo ginusot maganda kong buhok?
Iyong iginuho ang along maayos?
Kamay mong malupit gulok na matalim
Labnot at hila mo'y may kasamang lagim.
Minsan, namasdan ko ningas ng mata mo
Malinaw, maningning, subali't mapusok
Kaya't nang tumama ang mga tingin mo
Sa mga mata ko
Halos ay matunaw, halos ay maagnas
Ang katauhan ko.*²²

In these lines from the poem, we can see Carpio being aligned with the didactic tradition in Philippine poetry—a perfect springboard for analyzing the way man in the light of humanistic discourse. In the last few lines from the poem, the wickedness of the one being addressed in the poem is highlighted, asking him to look for that opportunity that will enable him to explore his feelings and emotions for others.²³ Carpio brings to light her high regard for a social and interpersonal kind of morality, compelling the addressee of the poem to examine the principles that govern his life interpersonally and socially. Complemented by the foregoing images, the humanistic discourse of the poem further shows to its readers that deliberate self-introspection is a progressive feat, as it can begin the man's liberation from the clutches of moral diseases, caprice, and avarice. In this regard, we see the importance of the self-critical act of questioning ourselves as well as others as the groundwork for according an essential degree of respect and deference to ourselves, and most especially to other fellow human beings.²⁴ To quote some lines from the poem:

*Kung ikaw'y may inggit, kung ikaw'y may poot
Bakit ang anyo ko ang nais wasakin?
Hindi mo ba kayang iyong pagyamanin
Ang sariling kuta, moog ng tungkulin?
Nang hindi sagihan ng takot at gimbal*

21 Donn V. Hart, *Riddles in Filipino Folklore: An Anthropological Analysis* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964), 60.

22 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 99.

23 Herrick, *Humanism*, 92.

24 Robert Pepperell, *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain* (Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 2003), iv.

*Hawiin mong lahat ang bumabalumbon
At nagpaparumi sa sariling mukha.*²⁵

It was mentioned that Carpio's poetry is armed with a strong didactic bent, coloring, and foreground. We can see a remarkable proverbial stance in her poetry similar to the worldviews reflected in the proverbs of precolonial Philippine literature. Like that of the proverb, Carpio brings to light a clear reference to nature and also that of the quotidian or the commonplace in commenting about life. To a certain extent, she also goes beyond certain descriptions of nature and the mundane in her poetry in order to provide a strong humanistic commentary about life. The proverbial stance affirms the didacticism of Carpio in her poetry. This is the reason why such feature truly renders her poetry efficient and powerful in chronicling the flowing fortunes and fates of man (Lumbera, 1968). An example poem that can illustrate this is the poem titled "Katig na Marupok." The titular "katig" is a mundane object. In our local context, this pertains to a seagoing canoe with an outrigger or brace for the canoe that serves as a stabilizer for it to float parallel in the water. Taking the stance of a proverb-maker, we can see Carpio utilizing the image of a drifting and steady canoe in declaring how we are continuously tossed to and fro by fate, illustrating man's movement and transition from being downtrodden and browbeaten to his ascendancy in life. According to Carpio's poem:

*Hindi ba't kahapong panahon ng lumbay
At ikaw ay lugmok sa nutnot na buhay
Wala ka pang ginto, at ni kahi't pilak
Ang aba mong lagay ay di makahawak?
Banga ka mo'y nabuay, mababaw ang yapak
Sa laot ng gubat laging nasasadlak
Sa dalamapasiga'y hindi makasadsad
At hindi matahak ang lalim ng burak.*

*Bakit nang umahon ka't makabalikwas
Sa laot ng gubat kay hirap matahak
Biglang nagkakulay ayos mo at tabas
Mukhang dating tataw ay salat sa timyas.*²⁶

In the light of humanistic discourse, this is Carpio didactically commenting on the fact that we are both subjects and objects of nature who have the power to shape our fates, and when success is achieved, it must be coupled with utmost humility, as man can be flimsy, insubstantial, and weak. As

25 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 99.

26 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 101.

a didactic kind of poet with the image of the drifting canoe encouraging man's humility, this is Carpio talking about the temporal order of man's life and also accentuating the importance of how we should learn from past experiences, to draw on them for means and standards that can both guide the present and direct the future.²⁷ Like that of the proverb in Philippine literature, Carpio's powerful and distinct proverbial disposition in these lines rendered us passive, compelling us to digest the moral humanistic dictum embedded in her poem, with her placing a high regard on humility:

*Damit ay palitan, baka maputikan
Iyong dalumatin at pakaingatan
May Kastilyo ka man, at lantay ang yaman
Ang katambal nito, sana'y katimpian.
Magpakumbaba ka sa iyong tagumpay
At iyong iwasan ang gawi ng hunghang
Baka kung kumati ang tubig sa parang
Katig na marupok sa burak maiwan.*²⁸

This strong, proverbial-humanistic bent and essence of Carpio's poetry finds its extension in the poem titled "Masaklaw na Bagwis." She further expounds on the theme of humility, deriving another poetic image from daily life and the environment. In the case of this poem, we can see the image of a bird with soft wing feathers pertaining to the term "bagwis" mentioned in the title. Through the central image of this poem, Carpio showed that she had a special eye for the humanistic and moralistic, further augmenting its potent didactic foreground. True to the elements of a Philippine proverb, it is also evident that Carpio also makes use of two poetic earmarks, particularly parallelism and contrast, in order to accentuate the weight of the didactic stance of her poem. "Masaklaw na Bagwis" centers on the image of a bird soaring high in the sky, with the speaker ruminating on the height of its flight paralleling the power, ascendancy, and superiority of man. The contrast is further accentuated by the conceived image of the bird slowly falling from grace and its flight by the speaker, most especially if the soaring is unwarranted and immoderate going beyond certain horizons: "Sukdulan ang tulin/Sukdulan ang bilis ng iyong binabagtas/Labis ang hangad mong magupo ang madala/Matalo ang lahat."²⁹ To further establish the weight of inculcating good manners and right conduct in one's life, the poet also further incorporates her upright and straitlaced disposition in addressing the human addressee of the poem whose actions parallel the flight of a bird.

27 Harold John Blackham, *Humanism* (London: Penguin, 1968), 69.

28 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 101.

29 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 106.

This inclusion of a moral kind of wisdom in the poem is an affirmation of the humanistic key idea that the speaker is mindful of the fact that a human person must undergo conscious introspection because of his complex personality. On the one hand, this is man's image that can be distinctly liberated, triumphant, prevailing, and controlling. On the other hand, it also captures his image as a petrifying, domineering, and persecuting agent—the very reasons why he must be thoroughly checked and introspected.³⁰ With the ethical stance and voice of the poet resounding in this poem, the didactic bent of the poem is significantly felt with her declaring this truth about the human person, encouraging further his self-development by beginning first with him acquiring the humanistic truth and value of modesty. In the words of Jeaneane D. Fowler in “Humanism: Beliefs and Practices” (1999), this is an essential part of the humanist agenda, an essential part that completes the human person.³¹ This remarkable gift of a folk kind of insight makes the poem noteworthy for its meaningful humanistic cadence, tapping into the strongholds of our consciousness and self-development.³² In relation to this, I quote this voice and stance of Carpio seen in her poem “Masaklaw na Bagwis”:

*Di ko naman nais na ikaw'y sumbatan
Sa gawaing pala na pinairalan
Di ko naman ibig na ikaw'y pigilin
At ang maling kilos ay siyang putulin.
Subali't sa bigat ng iyong indayog
Sa laki ng iyong sinaklaw na pook
Marami nang buhay ang iyong ginusot
At binahiran pa ng dumi at dungis.*³³

In further expounding on the strong didactic-humanistic impulse that we can see in the poetry of Carpio, her readers can also see and feel that her writings can also be aligned with the so-called “representational tradition” in Philippine poetry. I borrow here the definition that J. Neil Garcia provided in an article titled “Translational Poetics: Notes on Contemporary Philippine Poetry in English.” According to Garcia, poets can be classified into two kinds namely the “representational” where the mimetic and didactic, and even confessional can be located and the “post-representational” where the mimetic and mere

30 Copson, *What is Humanism?*, 15.

31 Jeaneane Fowler, *Humanism: Beliefs and Practices* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 9.

32 Dinah Roma, “Of Histories, Erasures and the Beloved: Glimpses into Philippine Contemporary Poetry,” *Asiatic* 9, no. 2 (December 2015): 60-73.

33 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 105-106.

representation are omitted and unheeded seen in how they structurally create the poem by making use of thick physicality of words, the marked deployment of statement (principle of telling) over imagery (principle of showing) disregarding conventional poetic visualization, narration, and description.³⁴ Based on the two poems of Carpio titled “Ang Lampara ay Maskara” and “Bukod Bukod na Bulaklak,” Carpio’s image as a representational poet can be further fleshed out. With them being representations, readers of these poems can see imitations and truths of life centering on embracing ancestry and the valuing of parental wisdom in the former and the connection and disconnection of man with the sacramental, the religious, and spiritual in the latter. The poem “Ang Lampara ay Maskara” captures the familial conversation between a child and her parents, with a special focus on the light being emitted by an old lamp enticing the child. Quoting the child’s curiosity in the poem: “Ang tanong ko’y ‘bakit po ba ang lampara ay maganda nguni’t liyab ay luma na wari’y lantang gumamela.’”³⁵ Upholding the image of a tender and warm exchange among the conversing subjects, the mimetic bent of Carpio’s poem also highlights the humanistic truth of being and feeling perfect-at-homeness in the universe.³⁶ The conversation between the child and her parents vividly upholds her consciousness as a child of the earth, with the alluring glow of the gas lamp serving as a reminder that she is regarded by her ancestors as the bearer of the dignity and pride of their time and ages. For the child subject whose cognizance is still developing in the poem, this cradle of comfort is the wellspring of refuge and well-being. This is the foundational wisdom that the child subject needs in order to fruitfully and magnificently traverse and experience the world. As a mimetic poem, the imagery used by Carpio affirms the significance of being a genuine human being in experiencing the world, with the light from the lamp capturing the fire of such authenticity. This genuineness can solidify into an authentic face (with reference to the term “maskara” in the title, which pertains to the face that one wears) that speaks of the utmost totality of the human subject in dealing with the world. This is also the reason why the poem pronounces the kinship between the two charged mimetic images, namely the lamp and the mask, because they represent the personal integrity and commendable relatedness that the child subject can possibly possess, emanating from the wisdom inculcated in her by her family: “Ang lampara at maskara ay magkapatid noon pa.”³⁷ These lines

34 J. Neil Garcia, “Translational Poetics: Notes on Contemporary Philippine Poetry in English,” *Likhaan: The Journal of Contemporary Philippine Literature* 7, no. 7 (November 2013): 177-194, <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/lik/article/view/5062>

35 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 94.

36 Fowler, *Humanism*, 108.

37 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 94.

from the poem, showing the voice of the family talking to the child (“anak”), affirm this humanistic truth and value:

*Anak, lampara ay ingatan
Baka siya’y mabulahaw
Kung mahulog at mabasag
Bagong mukha ang lilitaw
Mahahawi na ang birang
At maskara ang lulutang.
Hayun bata mong isipan
Magsasayaw sa kandungan
Ng maskara at ng ilaw
Upang mundo ay matangnan.*³⁸

Carpio’s poetry does not just chronicle the wholeness, perfection, and development of man. She also partakes in the humanistic discourse on human frailty and tragedy. In this sense, I recognize Richard Norman’s definition of tragedy from the book “On Humanism,” where he associates man’s tragedy with his failings, incompleteness, unwariness, and transitoriness of actions and dispositions.³⁹ The poem titled “Bukod Bukod na Bulaklak” focuses on how manifestly instantaneous the faith of man is, further shedding light on his blind adherence and tentative commitment to religion and spirituality. In particular, the poem projects the image of the people’s devotion to the Virgin Mary as queen of heaven and earth. These lines from the first stanza of the poem vividly paint this scene to the readers: “Sa araw ng pagdiriwang ng sa Reynang kaarawan, bukod bukod na bulaklak ang sa kanya’y ibinigay, sarisamot na kuwintas ang sa kanya’y inialay. Ang papuri’y may pagganyak may kamanyanang at halakhak. Daming uri ng bulaklak sa paa niya’y inilagak. Mga hiyas at dagitab ay kumpas ng kasayahan.”⁴⁰ It also shows how faith and religion serve as potent tools for meaning-making for mankind. However, it is noteworthy that Carpio provided a counter-discourse to this, showing that it can also be an unsettled and outmoded frame of meaning in life. In fact, there is also the attempt in the poem to disclose that it is an improbable ground for one’s ethical upbringing and development.⁴¹ This is the very reason why the poem brings to light the people’s non-religiousness as part and parcel of humanistic discourse. The dynamism and transitoriness of the people’s faith are powerful statements that reveal the truth that religion is only being pursued by virtue of

38 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 94.

39 Richard Norman, *On Humanism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 162–163.

40 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 95.

41 Copson, *What is Humanism?*, 21.

aesthetic interest with the external and internal realities of the human person still domineering their colonially indoctrinated deistic world. The people are presented to be on their own, acting in the world with their own will, with such taking over the place of religious morality expected from their devotion to Mary, Mother of Christ Jesus. The direct and vivid descriptions of Carpio on man's complex anthropocentric affairs and consequences such as his obliviousness, insensibleness, blindness, and modernity that render the subject matter of God and religion as human inventions, speak of how man's worldviews are brimming with internal paradoxes and inconsistencies. With this reading, Carpio showed her true mark as a humanist, capturing man's polarization when it comes to one of the forces that act as a frame molding his meaning in life. In the context of the poem, this is the image of man already muted when it comes to celebrating his faith as a response to Catholic revelation, his absence in the streets that prove his support to the sacramental essence of religion and spirituality, and ultimately the consigning of faith to oblivion erasing all interests to a higher omniscient and omnipresent entity like that of God. Instead, the poem celebrates man's capriciousness, celebrating his anthropocentric glory that can possibly lead to the proliferation of his power, dominance, and ultimately to the death of God and religion—a metaphor prominent in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Such pertains to the metaphorical killing of God as an expression of the fear of the weakening of religion, the proliferation of atheism, and the lack of adherence to a higher and supernatural being in the modern period. Such forces could possibly usher in the chaotic in the lives of men, with religion being absent, as it is the one that provides order and meaning in the life of man.⁴² In the poem, Carpio makes the people celebrate the traitor Judas Iscariot over the Virgin, a clear reversal of Catholic allegiance and departure from the notion of faith being our response to religious revelation and dogma. These lines from the poem support this non-religiousness as part of the discussion on humanism:

*Panauhing nagdagsaan
Biglaang nagkubli sa araw
Rosas na humalimuyak
Sa sulok lang itinambak
Magarang saplot ay pinilas
Gintong alahas, kinalas
At isa-isang nilagas
Upang ihagis kay Hudas.*⁴³

42 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xii-xiii.

43 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 96.

In expanding the discourse on man's vulnerability and fragility, Carpio also ponders the concepts of human maliciousness and wickedness, even questioning man's capacity to perceive the commitment of such acts. The poem "Totoo nga Kaya?" is a rumination of man as an intentional agent—an agent of malice and mischief, causing the existence of his inhumanity to the idea of God as a provider of meaning and rationality in life, and most importantly to his fellow human being. Together with "Bukod Bukod na Bulaklak," "Totoo nga Kaya?" is a direct questioning of this possible dreadful record of man. The poem is a direct, realistic, and to a certain extent even a naturalistic description of human tragedy causing the downfall of man. Looking at the poem's structure, one can see that it is comprised of rhetorical statements raising points about the image and possibility of the humanistic discourse and the truth of moral evil. Carpio frames this by employing binaries in some of the lines in the poem, subtly accentuating the perversity of man's actions in the poem—a more profound and radical extension of the vulnerability of the human subject in the poem.⁴⁴ With such representations, readers of Carpio's poetry can see that she does not just acknowledge how human nature is instrumental in the creation of a perfect world but also in the proliferation of human suffering. Carpio, through her interrogative claims in the poem, showed how humanistic moral evil can be typified by various acts and consequences, such as opportunism, negative competition, corruption of the poor, human slavery, capriciousness, malice, greed, and lust for power and deception. These are the faces of moral evil that cause the tragedy and despair of man and ultimately the death of God in his life. This foreground of the poem of Carpio further accentuates the Janus-faced humanistic bent of her poems. The human person, together with his attendant actions and ideologies, is seen to be a complex entity for the reason that we can see how his experiences truly show what man is capable of at his best.⁴⁵ This is the kind of best that maintains the world, and one that can possibly lead the world to misery and tragedy. The ruminations of Carpio in this poem "Totoo nga Kaya?" complete the two-way means of humanistic representation, the spatter that she avowed in the book "Tilamsik ng Panitik." In English, the title of the poem translates to "Can it be true?" or "Is it possible?"—an interrogation that captures her perplexity when it comes to the fruition of this possible terrible record of man. We can take this as a more radical manifestation of her intellectual, passionate, and weepy expressiveness of man's complex disposition taking the cue from her mimetic and didactic dispositions as a poet. Despite the directedness, these features of Carpio's poetry align her with the tradition of early Tagalog poetry,

44 Bonaventure B. Gubazire, "Evil and Meaningful Existence: A Humanistic Response through the Lens of Classical Theism," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 2, no. 9 (September 2021): 120-129, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2021291>

45 Norman, *On Humanism*, 162.

echoing the discourse of Bienvenido Lumbera. Expounding on this, one can see the inherent recognition of the density of human experiences verbalized in detail in the poem. True to this local tradition in poetry, we can see a strong and clear reliance on analogues in order to name and frame such complexity of human experience and truth of wickedness and malice.⁴⁶ Carpio does this in a concrete and specific manner in her poem, just like what we can see in the poems of early Tagalogs. I quote the lines from Carpio's short poem to further substantiate these points on the form and content of her poem:

*Totoo nga kayang ikaw'y salawahan
At ang pagsamba ko'y ibig mong yurakan?
Totoo nga kayang ang mukha mong kristal
Ayaw makitungo sa salat sa yaman?
Totoo nga kayang ang iyong pahayag
Ako'y kukutyain hanggang sa mabita?
Totoo nga kaya na ang pagtingin ko
Ay tatampulan mo ng kutyo at tukso?⁴⁷*

The foregoing discussions and analyses of Carpio's six poems written in Filipino attempted to shed light on her disposition as a poet and the possible themes and truths that she recounted in her writings. Grounded on the strong mimetic, representational, and didactic impulses of Carpio as a poet reflected in the poems, the first six poems eclectically provide means to engage the idea of humanism ranging from man's perfect and promising disposition all the way down to his tragedy, fallibility, and despair. In particular, in them are the resounding dictums of humanistic wisdom that borders on and encapsulates the testing and building of one's personal resilience, the ethics of maintaining interpersonal relations, the warmth and wisdom brought by the familial sphere, the at-homeness of the human person with the world, the glory of man's perception, and the downfall brought by this grandeur as an emplaced entity in the world fashioning it according to his whims and desires stirring the discourse as well on the variability of his state and worldview. These truths actualize and augment the truths and powers of the "splashes" or "spatters" (*tilamsik* in Filipino, as mentioned in the title of her book) that literature and the literary can actually bring to its readers without effacing and overlooking both the form and content of her poems. In the last section, I attempt to further expand the humanistic discourse in Carpio's poetry with the help of the last two poems analyzed in this paper, particularly "Kasalanan Bang Mangarap" and "Aklat ng Buhay."

46 Lumbera, Poetry, 235.

47 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 103.

Furthering the Humanistic Discourse in Carpio's Poetry

The poem “Kasalanan bang Mangarap” further extends the humanistic foreground in Carpio's poetry as it projects the discourse on utopianism. It is essential to note that this is a theme that always resurfaces in humanist thought and tradition, coming from the discourse of Andrew Copson on “What is Humanism?”⁴⁸ In utopianism, we see the act of imagining a better world, mindful of man's anthropocentric consequences shaping the earth. The verb “mangarap” (meaning to picture or to imagine) from the noun “pangarap” (meaning dreams, desires, or aspirations) perfectly supports this upholding of a spirit of utopia—the one that can possibly and progressively lead mankind to liberation from the clutches of worldly desires, malice, deception, and ignorance. In imagining a better world, we can see evident from the reflections of the speaker the creation of markedly high and perfect standards necessary for the attainment of this deliverance from a dystopic world. The poem also makes use of questioning and contrasting in asserting its message of utopianism. Carpio offers a utopic vision that upholds truth, genuineness, humanity, material and immaterial wealth, earnestness, and the dominance of light over darkness, and ultimately the human's perfection at par with the presence and perfection of God. According to the poem, “Kasalanan bang mangarap kung sa aking pangangarap mamasdan kong sa mukha mo'y halina ang dumadaloy? Kasalanan bang mangarap kung sa aking pangangarap marinig kong ang 'yong tinig ay malinaw pa sa batis? Kasalanan bang mangarap kung sa aking pangangarap ang kilos mo't iyong ayos taglay pag-ibig sa Diyos”⁴⁹ In the light of representational poetry and humanistic discourse, Carpio's poem upholds the notion of a good and even perfect life for individuals in society. The questionings and reflections of the speaker in the poem coalesce to create the imagined conditions promoting humanistic ideas and truths that a society consistently fights for, such as freedom, creativity, prosperity, and the actualization and fulfillment of all individuals emplaced within these ideals.⁵⁰ Pensive and democratic in viewpoint, the meditations are all-encompassing with the micro and macro aspects of the society involved in the discourse. In her thoughtfully absorbed disposition, the people flourish, and the nation is no longer doomed to experience lesser lights: “Kasalanan bang mangarap kung sa aking pangangarap ang bayan kong naghihirap lalasap na ng liwanag”⁵¹ This vision is noteworthy for its high and resounding standards that can shape the way the world can make sense of peace, a thriving economy,

48 Copson, *What is Humanism?*, 23

49 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 98.

50 Fowler, *Humanism*, 175.

51 Carpio, *Tilamsik*. 98.

and national democracy. This also includes security, equality, cultural enjoyment, political stability, freedom, and sufficient recreation—all projecting the image of mankind flourishing, satisfied, and actualized. As a humanist poem, Carpio also partakes in this discourse of envisioning the perfect kind of collective living and experiencing the world. This is the kind of vision that Carpio shared with her readers, vividly setting the way we can set humanity on its path to a better communal existence.

The poem “Aklat ng Buhay” centers on man’s disposition as an entity armed with individual and mutual responsibilities. It dwells on the theme of practical action, capturing the creation of individual contributions that can also contribute to the happiness of others. As a humanist in deed kind of poem, the title affirms the image of the book of life, markedly defined by pain, suffering, and decline. Carpio places a premium on individual actions, espousing that these are needed in the prevalence of humanism in a sense that they can lead to the creation of a sense of welfare on micro and macro heights and a system of security and the grace of fellowship. She does this by humanistically invoking our imperfections and fallibilities, even emphasizing them in the hopes of further cultivating our sympathies to our fellow human beings. These discourses and truths on the extension of our sympathies are accentuated by these lines from the poem:

*Kung ang aking damit ay gutay-gutay na
Gusgusin at tigib na punit at hila
Karima-rimarim at lusot ang hibla
Ako ay tulungang humanap ng iba.*

*Kung ang aking kamay di na makagalaw
Kapos na sa lakas salungat ang kampanya
Pawang kaguluhan ang sumusubaybay
Ikaw ay umakay nang di manlupaypay*

*Kung mga paa ko’y di na maihakbang
Simbiga’t ng mundong ayaw nang gumalaw
Ang kasukasuan ay pawang may tigpaw
Ako’y alalay’t nang di tumilandag.⁵²*

In the humanist stance of this poem, we can see Carpio mimetically portraying man’s infirmities, such as his poverty, physical and mental paralysis, and ultimately death. True to the humanist discourse, Carpio’s humanist moral view in this poem essentially prioritizes both suffering and welfare with the end

52 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, 107.

goal of trying to stir our compassion and consideration for our fellow human beings. This is what we can see written in the book of life (“aklat ng buhay”) illustrated in Carpio’s poem. In connection with the humanistic truths engaged by her other poems, it is from here where we can see the familiar outward stress, extension, and progression of the truths of individual moralities as expressed in our interrelations with other human beings. Readers can take this as Carpio’s poetic inflections of the weight of personal and social moralities that people must arm themselves with—the resounding principles that govern our common individual lives both at the personal and communal level. This is what we can acquire from the representational, mimetic, and didactic impulses of the poems of Carpio.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I attempted to situate the poems of Rustica C. Carpio within certain prominent traditions in Philippine poetry, illustrating their traces in the poems that she wrote in Filipino, published in her book “*Tilamsik ng Panitik*.” In analyzing both the form and content of her poetry, it is evident that we can see the strongholds of the mimetic and representational modes and traditions in Philippine poetry. As mimetic and representational poems moving in consonance with the humanist discourse, truths, and values that she chronicled in them, her readers can witness the depth and complexity of how she made sense of the actions and ideologies of man, stressing different humanistic truths and values. This is reflected in how she imaged man with the goal of understanding his daily, promising, resilient, infallible realities, his naturalistic capricious disposition, utopic vision, and his morality and sympathy engaged in life’s vicissitudes, resulting in the poems serving as mirrors for understanding ourselves. The offshoots of these humanistic leanings of the poems also provide potent points for ruminating on the good life, humanistic deeds, and wholeness of the human person, the search of true humanistic happiness, and the morality of his interpersonal connections. These humanistic discourses, truths, and values effectively relate back to the intensity of the literary splashes that she promised in “*Tilamsik ng Panitik*”: “Sa buhay ng tao ay ganyan ang nangyayari, kadalasa’y nababahaginan ng lamukot na hinugot mula sa kanilang kabatiran. Alalaon бага’y mga tilamsik ng tubig-batis na habang naglalaglag ng mga patak ay lalong kumikinang, tila wari nagbibigay-buhay sa mga nilalang.”⁵³

Future studies on Rustica C. Carpio can further intellectualize her dramatic poetics as reflected in some of her prominent films, such as Ishmael Bernal’s “*Nunal sa Tubig*,” where she played the role of Chayong, who mutedly

53 Carpio, *Tilamsik*, xi.

grieved over the death of her son. According to Amadis Ma. Guerrero, Carpio received heavy lambasting for such portrayal of a mother that does not accurately represent the grieving of rural Filipino women. In addressing the critiques, Carpio declared that her acting poetics was greatly influenced by Konstantin Stanislavski, a Russian actor, director, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, and originator of the Stanislavski method of acting. Taking the cue from some of her widely acclaimed films, Carpio's acting race as Lola Puring with fellow veteran actress Anita Linda in Brillante Mendoza's "Lola" and riveting performance as Soledad in "Captive," Sister Marcia in Vincent Sandoval's "Aparisyon," and Bona's mother in "Bona" by Ishmael Bernal provide good take-off points to understand her acting poetics carved by Stanislavski tenets on emotional memory, given circumstances, utmost objectivity, thorough line of action, physical action, and the magic if concept of imaginatively connecting with the experiences of a character. In an interview conducted by Guerrero, Carpio provided fertile points which can be used as an axial vista in understanding her craft as an actress. To quote Carpio: "I put my own personality, a little of myself, into the role, plus what the playwright expects. I have been influenced by Konstantin Stanislavski. I internalize the role, concentrate on it, and make it appear simply effortless."⁵⁴

An extension of these dramatic poetics heavily shaped by the Russian theatre can be further extracted by future scholars from her book titled "Dramatic Poundal" (2002)—her work that shed light on her experiencing the best of two worlds, namely Philippine drama and Russian drama. In her books "Tilamsik ng Panitik" (2003) and "Life is a Stage" (2001), future studies can further examine Carpio's critical discourses on feminism, the correlation between culture and cinema, the premium that she gave to literature educators, the problems plaguing literature, the engaging solutions that she offered concerning the teaching of literature, and the significance of drama in the world of education. An extension of the humanist discourse examined in this paper can be applied in the essays published in Carpio's book titled "The Shanghai of My Past and Other Essays" (2005). Animated by her experiences as a scholar, administrator, litterateur, thespian, and most importantly as a human being, Carpio's essays serve as her powerful retorts to "life's play of lights and colors."⁵⁵ This is life equated with the varieties of creeds, circumstances, upbringings, personalities, social and psychological traits of people. These are the fertile threads that comprise the thick web and temperament of humankind, capturing universal binaries such as

54 Amadis Ma. Guerrero, "Curtain call for Rustica Carpio," *Lifestyle.Inq*, February 13, 2022, <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/396996/curtain-call-for-rustica-carpio/>

55 Rustica C. Carpio, *The Shanghai of My Past and Other Essays* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005), ix.

the good and the bad, and the compassionate and cruel, essential in discoursing about human truths, values, vices, and virtues.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abad, Gemino. "Introduction." In *Beyond, Extensions*, by Edith L. Tiempo, xi–xxiii. Diliman: University of the Philippines Press, 1993.
- Blackham, Harold John. *Humanism*. London: Penguin Books, 1968.
- Carpio, Rustica C. *Tilamsik ng Panitik*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2003.
- . *The Shanghai of My Past and Other Essays*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2005.
- Casper, Leonard. *Six Filipino Poets*. Manila: Benipayo Press, 1954.
- Collins, Peter M. "Philosophy and Humanism." *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (2008): 175–191. <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=4527>.
- Copson, Andrew. "What Is Humanism?" In *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, edited by Andrew Copson and A. C. Grayling, 1–15. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
- Dobrin, Arthur. "Humanist Literature in Perspective." In *Humanism Today: Volume 2, The Aesthetics of Humanism*, edited by Robert B. Tapp, 59–62. Washington, DC: North American Committee for Humanism, 1986. https://americanhumanist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/02_11_dobrin.pdf.
- Dumaua, Mario. "Film, Theater Stalwart Rustica Carpio Dies at 91." *ABS-CBN News*, February 2, 2022. <https://www.abs-cbn.com/entertainment/02/02/22/film-theater-stalwart-rustica-carpio-dies-at-91>.
- Fowler, Jeaneane. *Humanism: Beliefs and Practices*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999.
- Garcia, J. Neil. "Translational Poetics: Notes on Contemporary Philippine Poetry in English." *Likhaan: The Journal of Contemporary Philippine Literature* 7, no. 7 (November 2013): 177–194. <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/lik/article/view/5062>.
- Gubazire, Bonaventure B. "Evil and Meaningful Existence: A Humanistic Response through the Lens of Classical Theism." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 2, no. 9 (September 2021): 120–129. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2021291>.

- Guerrero, Amadís Ma. "Curtain Call for Rustica Carpio." *Lifestyle.Inquirer*, February 13, 2022. <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/396996/curtain-call-for-rustica-carpio/>.
- Hart, Donn V. *Riddles in Filipino Folklore: An Anthropological Analysis*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1964.
- Herrick, Jim. *Humanism: An Introduction*. London: Rationalist Press Association, 2009.
- International Humanist and Ethical Union. *IHEU Bylaws*. May 6, 2016. <https://humanists.international/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/IHEU-Bylaws-Internal-Rules-General-Assembly-Regulations-and-Membership-and-Dues-Regulations-as-amended-May-2016.pdf>.
- Langer, Susanne K. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
- Lumbera, Bienvenido. "Poetry of the Early Tagalogs." *Philippine Studies* 16, no. 2 (1968): 221–245. <http://www.philippinestudies.net/files/journals/1/articles/971/public/971-971-1-PB.pdf>.
- Mallari, Julieta. "Central Luzon." *Ubod*, December 27, 2020. <https://ubod.ph/index.php/2020/12/27/central-luzon/>.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Norman, Richard. *On Humanism*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Pe, Cris Barbra N. "Marginal Voices, Silenced Annotations: Notes on the Life of Edith L. Tiempo." *Akda: The Asian Journal of Literature, Culture, Performance* 3, no. 1 (June 2023): 11–22. <https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/akda/vol3/iss1/3>.
- Pepperell, Robert. *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain*. Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 2003.
- Perez, Ma. Socorro Q. "Sexual/Textual Politics in the Poems of Ophelia A. Dimalanta." *UNITAS* 89, no. 2 (November 2017): 91–118. <https://archium.ateneo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1116&context=english-faculty-pubs>.
- Rakwal, Nisha. "Humanistic Concerns in the Poem Song of Myself by Walt Whitman." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (January 2022): 23–28. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.71.6>.
- Roma, Dinah. "Of Histories, Erasures and the Beloved: Glimpses into Philippine Contemporary Poetry." *Asiatic* 9, no. 2 (December 2015): 60–73.

- Sison, Jose Maria. "Social and Cultural Themes in Philippine Poetry." *The Philippine Collegian*, December 20, 1961. <https://www.josemariasison.eu/social-and-cultural-themes-in-philippine-poetry-part-i-of-ii/>.
- Tabios, Eileen R. "Poetic Influences: 'Angela Manalang Gloria.'" *Marsh Hawk Press*, 2025. <https://marshhawkpress.org/eileen-r-tabios-poetic-influences-angela-manalang-gloria/>.
- Tolibovich, Parpiyev Muxammadjon. "The Philosophical Essence of Humanism in the Renaissance." *Pubmedia Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, no. 3 (January 2025): 1–7. <https://digital-science.pubmedia.id/index.php/pssh/article/view/357>.
- Villas, Michael Carlo. "Merlie M. Alunan: The Filipino Writer as Bisaya." *Likhaan: The Journal of Contemporary Philippine Literature* 14, no. 1 (2020): 326–337. <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/lik/article/view/7547>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jan Raen Carlo M. Ledesma is a faculty member of the University of Santo Tomas, Department of Literature, Faculty of Arts and Letters. He teaches Art Appreciation, The Great Works of Literature, Literary Research, Shakespeare, Literary Theory and Criticism and Cultural Theory. His research interests include biosemiotics, ecocriticism, Shakespeare, literary theory and criticism, poetry, art studies and cultural studies. Presently, Dr. Ledesma is also a research fellow at the UST Research Center for Culture, Arts, and Humanities and the Library Coordinator of the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters. He earned his academic degrees from the University of Santo Tomas: AB Literature (magna cum laude), MA Literature (cum laude), and PhD in Literature (summa cum laude).