

**AESTHETICS OF MUSICAL EMBODIMENT  
ON THE CONCEPT OF MUSIC AS PRESENCE (USING PHILIPPINE MUSIC  
EXAMPLES)\***

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**Abstract**

This paper compares the aesthetics of three songs from two musical traditions (one from the indigenous Manobo community in non-Islamic Mindanao Island and two from urban popular songs). It argues that song is not merely a personal expression but a performance (song-act) that indicates concrete "presence effects" of relationships to a material, social world. This philosophy of music aesthetics departs from the once dominant European concept of absolute music as form but on the not-so-recent studies on music embodiment or incarnation where song makes sense as a substantial act in social worlds.

I begin this paper by showing you a video footage of spirit-possession in a curing ritual among the Agusan Manobos in middle Agusan Valley in 1996. Back then, the people who practised this form of healing was living in an enchanted world where environmental spirits of nature are said to penetrate human bodies whose malevolence means illnesses. Yet the nature of these very same invisible agents can be transformed in ritual and by human rhetoric, thus inverting their negative relation with humans into benevolence and compassion. I bring in this example to introduce my topic on how aesthetics (sensations) is not an idle philosophical idea but a drastic physical experience of presence. Song is emitted from the officiating medium's body as a proof of spirit incarnation or embodiment. **[play video clip]**

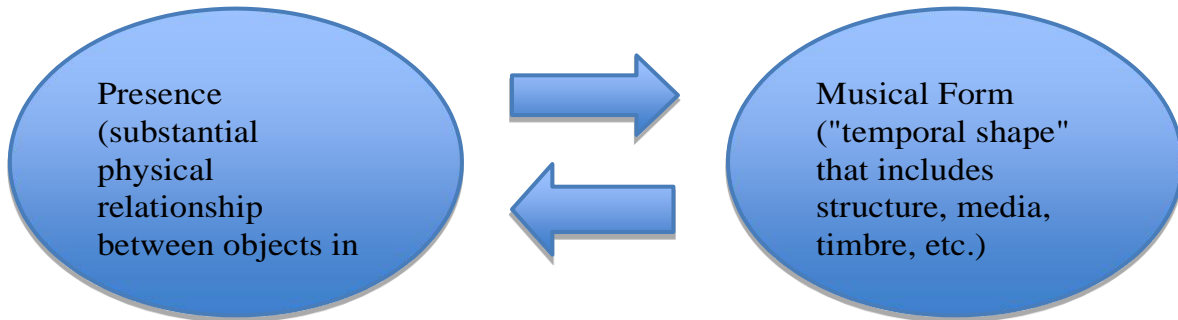
In the video that you saw, there was a face-to-face meeting between two families, the family of the sick person and the family of the medium. It started with the ritual officiant explaining to the spirit medium the reasons for the gathering: the need to cure the sick. The drum and gong invoked the spirits to the ritual space and as the human plea is rhetorically spoken to the spirit, the medium responds to the human call with bodily tremblings and

song, both crucial symptoms of spirit incarnation. But why is song, a sounding, a physical marking, be necessary in that interpersonal encounter? Is there a way we can compare it with other songs such in popular music? Setting aside the notion of song as emotional outpouring (though certainly there is a lot of it in the sounding), what is sound doing in a performance?

In this paper, I argue that the medium incarnates song in his or her body because that medium is an *indicator of the relationships of bodies and objects in ritual space*.<sup>i</sup> What I am driving in here is the concept of song not merely a solipisistic personal expression (itself an act) but an act or a performative that pulls something to incarnate what is called “presence.” I define presence, following Hans Gumbrecht of Stanford University,<sup>ii</sup> as a “spatial *relationship* of bodies to the world and its objects.” In the essay, I argue that the presence of spirit functions as a deixis because it points to,<sup>iii</sup> via ostension, the physical relationships of worldly bodies and objects during--what Benveniste has felicitously termed--a “specific instance of discourse” or “here-and-now” (Latin: *hic et nunc*), that is performance.

To demonstrate the song's performativity, or to the question of what song does to the singer and to his or her is singing, I present three examples from three different traditions to illustrate the specificity of the song-act and its effect on the song's substance, in this case the medium. In the first example, I use another Manobo ritual song performance, this time not curing but on the primordial act of facing another person.<sup>iv</sup> The actualization of the ritual song-act *almost always* leads to the incarnation of a spirit in the singer's body, as medium.<sup>v</sup> The incarnation is preceded by *bodily* tremblings (*yana-an*) as the channel, which portrays the recognition of persons *qua* existent beings. The once-immaterial spirit (an “utterly other,” a “not-one-of-us,” “dili ingon nato” as Visayans call a “spirit”) intrudes drastically as a physical form--a literal embodiment or incarnation, word-made-flesh--into the medium's body.<sup>vi</sup> This “presence effect” enlarges the seeing of the contiguity of bodies in ritual space much as it discloses thoughts (*ginhawa*) to the hearer and, hence, actualizing the taking place of song performance as an event.<sup>vii</sup> Then I go to two more examples in Filipino pop music to demonstrate the process by which “presence as meaning” shapes specific or contingent sound forms. By extending the illustrations, I argue for comparativism as a method of study. The process is mimetic in which presence (spatial relationships of subjects/object) is “imitated” or “presented” in a particular sound form. Drawing in Nicholas Cook's idea of relationships in multimedia, there is what is called a “mutual implicature” between sound

and presence. Because "presence" is about physical relationships in space, I construe it as absolutely substantial in a worldly context and not merely as a disembodied meaning.



Going back to the Agusan Manobo song performances, there is a cosmological basis for the presence effect that the embodiment does in their song culture. Manobos used to live in a rainforest environment teeming with life and spirits, some of whom have to be constantly appeased. Manobos have a repertoire of rituals, some needing spirit medium others not, to cope up with the predatory advances of malevolent spirits. Ritual objects mark spaces, separating society and nature. The transgression of spirit to human space in spirit possession rituals is marked with song for it is a *deixis* that indicate that spirits have pitied human beings and are there in space to help humans. As a *deixis*, Manobo ritual is, therefore, primarily intelligible through the objects whose substances can articulate relationships of objects and persons.<sup>viii</sup>

### **I. On the spirit/presence of song**

Manobo *tud-om*--unaccompanied, sung solo, and improvised--is an expressive vocal gesture that mediates the act of facing another person. It is a quintessential verbal art, resembling parallel musical idioms for expressing personal sentiments and thoughts among indigenous communities in Mindanao Island. In Manobo curing ritual, *tud-om* is the voice of a personified spirit, whose voice can also be appropriated during a "secular" interpersonal meeting, Agusan Manobos are keen on listening to the voice in song and to the messages that it conveys. Breath (*ginhawa*), the vital principle inside a living person, or any animate being for that matter, is the origin of this sound of life. There is a rich lore underpinning Manobo understanding of what the *ginhawa* is and its articulation in performance. Due to time limitation, I cannot fully account for the rich lore surrounding the song's hermeneutics. What I can present below is a mere sketch.

Figure 1: Components of the Manobo Self.

Inside	Outside
1.) ginhawa	3.) umagad
4.) baylan	4.) Kadengan-dengan

A Manobo person is made up of two entities (see Figure 1 above). *Ginhawa* is inherently the essence of the body. But it has a counterpart that exists substantially outside of it called *kadengan-dengan*.<sup>ix</sup> For mysterious reasons of desire, envy, and jealousy and the like, essences are made to move away from their places of origin and interpenetrate with one another, either temporarily or permanently.<sup>x</sup> Dreams, illness, and curing rites in which there is spirit possession (literally called *yana-an* or bodily tremblings) are examples. Dreams and illnesses temporarily displace the *ginhawa* to the “outside” of bodies. Spirit possession is the reverse, a process that presences the *kadengan-dengan* in the “inside” of bodies. In physical death, *ginhawa* is permanently detached from its origin inside the body and thus Manobos hold a number of rites to prevent the reversibility of the final existential movement from death to life. In spirit possession, this is indicated by the medium whose body tremblings at the onset of ritual convey the incarnation of the spirit helper who pities. Symbolically, this incarnation means the death of the medium in ritual, a negativity that makes possible the entry of authoritative languages that enable the medium to heal.<sup>xi</sup>

Regarding the direction of temporary movement away from the self, the *ginhawa* becomes the *umagad*, a process known by the term that indicates the dislocation of consciousness outside itself. In a reverse process, as when an external spirit is invoked to pity and hence is incarnated in the medium’s body for curing, the foreign element (*kiham*) assumes the role of a “spirit helper” (*baylan*). This role is now benevolent, for the formerly illness-causing spirit of the past is given a name and a habitation in the medium’s (*baylanen*) body. It is interesting to note that the possession of such entity inside the medium during curing rites makes the reversibility possible because without possession, the expiation of illness and death *away* from the patients’ bodies in curing rites cannot materialize.<sup>xii</sup>

In curing rites, the possessed medium speaks languages, which sonorous, vocal materiality exists both inside and outside his or her body. This ambiguous location of the voice draws on the phenomenon of “hearing-oneself-speak” that we are familiar with (French: *s’entendre parler*).<sup>xiii</sup> It is a physiological fact that human beings can speak and hear their own voices at the same time.<sup>xiv</sup> When one speaks, one “throws” one’s voice outside of one’s body for an external auditor to hear. Yet, the voice comes back to the speaking self as if it never left that body. Voice is thus simultaneously heard within and without one’s self; it returns to its source—the body or self—to affect it, a principle known as auto-affection.

Manobos are aware of the non-locationability of the voice, specifically that which accompanies singing. They associate the singing voice with the clairvoyant spirit called Daligmata who is capable of mysteriously siezing a susceptible person in his or her sleep as in a dream. No Manobos would know where the seeing spirit really comes from. In rituals, however, it is anthropomorphized, becoming a mythical spirit-character with an identity of geographic origin from the mountain world or skyworld. This spirit sings to disclose the vision of movements of the patient’s body and of life and death in the cosmos. Manobos claim that the singing voice cannot be taught; one finds it in one’s own self. Yet, as the belief in spirit possession shows, this voice comes from the outside as well because it is the voice of the spirit. Manobo ritual song therefore speaks to the unbinding of essences in the cosmos, as a self interacts with, or is being interacted upon by, other beings. This metaphysical movement is the primary cause of Manobo ritual song.

In my fieldwork during the 1990s, I was fortunate to document hundreds of this song type called *tud-om*. In those acts of recordings, there was always great uneasiness among the singers, particularly the religious specialists (*baylanan*), who reluctantly complied to my request. Placing this in proper perspective, the singers were afraid to utter their own voices because these were also part of *other voices*, those of spirits. Most mediums verbalize that some of these were their inherent doubles as mentioned above. Nonetheless, I did record many songs from the many singers because the song was normatively sung in face-to-face gatherings that the recording sessions themselves lent to.

In recording singers who were themselves mediums, their voices involuntarily *transubstantiated* to that of another one. By “transubstantiation,” I mean there was a change in the perceived materiality of the voice, from that of a person to that of its double, the spirit. [Incarnation or embodiment refers to another concept. Spirit possession is incarnation, but when there is shift in voices with the medium, I call it “transubstantiation.”]

Below is an excerpt of a *tud-om* sung to me in 1991 by one such singer-medium. In this example, the “shift” in the substance of the voice is preceded by bodily tremblings. It is important to note that the reason for the tremblings was not because the singer was prodded and that, against his will, tremblings ensued, but because he was a religious specialist whose body was already habituated to the form of presencing the spirit, which “effect” was guaranteed because the singer himself was a medium and because he was “caused by” my presence who was an other to him. In the sound example that you’re going to hear, tremblings, a symptom of spirit possession, come immediately after saying the following:

*There is a word here.*

*I will know.*

*The forehead of the face,*

*Who has entered the one.*

Notice the deixis: the demonstrative pronouns “there” and “here,” the latter *indicating* the “word,” i.e., what the singer had just uttered. The spirit—which indicates the spatial relationship between the singer and the visitor—comes at the precise moment of seeing the “face,” that other who has “entered” the performance space. Hence, the medium’s body shudders at the sight of the vision of bodies in that very moment, as in the experience of epiphany. **[Play sound excerpt and refer to handouts for text transcription and translation.]**

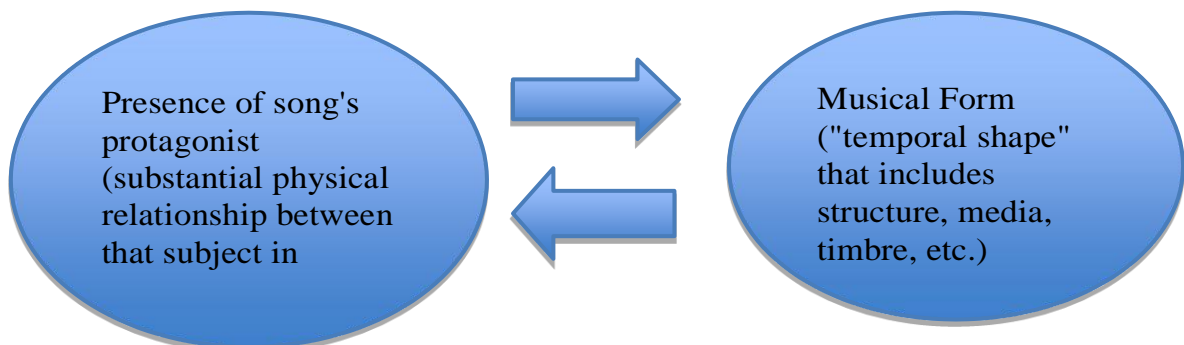
In the sound excerpt we just heard, the transubstantiation attends to the act of co-presencing beings, i.e., persons in the image of spirit. For truly, the spirit-voice *is* the sensation of seeing that person, a gesture that attends to the act of meeting an other in a singular moment. Following this line of interpretation, the act of singing among the Manobos is a reflexive metacommunicative device for expressing the relationship of the voice to bodies in the “here and now.” Of course, song also expresses the singer’s *sentiment*,

but beyond such naivety, it is an act of yielding to an other whose being or presence is what conditions the recognition of the “I” or “me” and its relationship to I’s object—the other--in its particularity.

Manobos literally describe the act of singing as responding (*panubad tubad*) to what confronts them because these beings—persons--are physically existent.<sup>xv</sup> The extensive use of the demonstrative pronouns such as “here,” “this,” and “that” indicates the physical relationship of bodies in space and time. In this sense, the incarnation of the spirit carries the effect of showing real things. It functions to define those relationships in sheer physicality, demonstrating that the song-event is taking place. In contrast to nouns and verbs of predication, the reference to which the voice as deixis pinpoints to is meaningful only in the events of utterance that contain them, for deixis are acts of indicating things that are present in specific moments of articulation. Indeed, *the unleashing of the spirit in the act of singing is a confirmation of the taking place of the act of facing another person.*

But how are we to make of this mimetic principle of ancient song in relation to modern song? The next section will explore this process in recorded sound. It must be noted that, being recorded, the materiality of sound-as-substance remains even if one is no longer physically dealing with live performance by a flesh-and-blood singer co-presencing with his or her listeners. In recorded sound, the movements of sound color (see right hand circle of Figure 2 below), its linear unfolding, shapes, and patterns are constitutive of immanent figural music subjects that attend to the performatives being enacted by the song's protagonist in the left hand circle. I thus speak of the presence effects in the acts and performativities of the song's protagonist (left) and the figural subjects in the musical form (right) that are construable in the music's unfolding.

Figure: Relationship between song's presencing and musical form



## II. Presence in pop song "Farewell"

The first popular song to be examined is “Walang Hanggang Pa-alam” (Eternal Farewell) by Joey Ayala, an independent folk-pop artist. This song, to my mind, clearly produces presence that indicate a relationship in musical space of an envisioned social world.<sup>xvi</sup> The lyrics of the song is about the irreducible singularity (or separation) of self from the Other despite the deep human relationships that both have carved such as love. The lyrics is as follows:

Di ba tayo'y narito

Upang maging malaya

At upang palayain ang iba

Ako'y walang hinihiling

Ika'y tila ganoon din

Sadya'y bigyang-laya ang isa't-isa

[Chorus:]

Ang pagibig natin ay

Walang hanggang paalam

At habang magkalayo

Papalapit pa rin ang puso

Kahit na magkahiwalay

Tayo ay magkasama

Sa magkabilang dulo ng mundo

Ang bawat simula ay

Siya ring katapusan

May patutunguhan ba



Ang ating pagsinta

Sa biglang tingin

Kita'y walang kinabukasan

Subalit di-malupig ang pag-asa

[Chorus:]

Ang pagibig natin ay

Walang hanggang paalam

At habang magkalayo

Papalapit pa rin ang puso

Kahit na magkahiwalay

Tayo ay magkasama

Sa magkabilang dulo ng mundo

[Chorus:]

Ang pagibig natin ay

Walang hanggang paalam

At habang magkalayo

Papalapit pa rin ang puso

Kahit na magkahiwalay

Tayo ay magkasama

Sa magkabilang dulo ng mundo

Sa magkabilang dulo ng mundo

Because the song is about a protagonist presenting sublime love to an interlocutor, the musical form (constituting style and musical arrangement) responds by alluding to the archaic 19<sup>th</sup> century Tagalog song form, the *kundiman*, which is conventionally associated with it in the first place.<sup>xvii</sup> Joey Ayala or (what we would more accurately say) the song's protagonist thus presents his spatial relationship with his Beloved by using the *kundiman* form, which is a simple binary structure and the quintessential symbol of love.<sup>xviii</sup> The first section (the verse) is in a parallel minor key to that of the second (the chorus). The use of 19<sup>th</sup> century instruments *bandurria* and *octavina* effectively clothe the music with the Spanish-Filipino heritage sound effect. The song is also peppered with the same 19<sup>th</sup> century musical style. The most noticeable of these is the vacillating minor-major melodic gesture that the guitar (as it sounds indexical to Spanish-influenced Filipino majority) and the said stringed instruments articulate in the transitions [play **music excerpt**]. Furthermore, the song form is conventional for its symmetrical phrasings (i.e., all are 8-bar phrases). The melodic shapes contain small “sighing” gestures that are akin to hymns sung in Philippine Catholic churches today.<sup>xix</sup> [**music excerpt**]

In addition, as in most *kundiman*, *Walang Hanggang Pa-alam* also transforms longing and loss in the first part to *freedom in the acceptance* of the inevitability of separation in the second. Given this presenting of self to other, the *kundiman* form is incarnated with its sheer sonic substantiality. In other words, the substantiality of musical form cannot be separated from the fictional musical space created by the presenting or en-acting protagonist vis-a-vis his Beloved. The mutual implication of the protagonist's presence in an imaginary space and form means that the protagonist's messages and musical shapes co-construct each other, albeit within the bounds of cultural conventions.<sup>xx</sup> In short, the subject of love and freedom is what brings the idiom of the *kundiman*, *indicatively speaking*. It seems as if the form/idiom itself is the message of presenting itself, so that because the message is about love and freedom, then it has necessarily to be in *kundiman* form/idiom.<sup>xxi</sup>

Subsequent to its composition, *Walang Hanggang Pa-alam* was made the theme song of a film *Bagong Buwan* in 2002.<sup>xxii</sup> The film clarifies or specifies the song's ironic meaning of love in the context of leaving. The film tells the story of Moslem civilians in Mindanao who were caught and displaced by the all-out war (engineered by the deposed, actor-turned-politican President Estrada in 2001) between the government military and that

of armed group, then the militant Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The main characters in the story are civilians, yet they are related by blood to the local fighters.<sup>xxiii</sup> In particular, it is about a Moslem medical doctor from Mindanao working in Manila who had to go back home when news reached him that his only son was killed by the paramilitary vigilantes. The doctor had wished to bring his mother and his wife to Manila after his son's funeral, had it not been for a Moslem insurgent-military ambush incident that forced the Moslem civilians and the doctor's family to move out of their temporary place of escape for fear of retaliation by the military. Thus the doctor had to lead his kindred—along an agonizing journey at the heartland of Mindanao—to a safer land because of the war. In the process, the doctor realized blood loyalty to his people, renewed family ties, forged friendships with sympathetic Christian strangers, and with a twist of fate, ironically gets killed in the military assault to the local armed group. The story, however, does not end with a tragic note but with *acceptance* of the inevitability of separation.

Parallel to the mimesis of presence conveyed by the protagonist of the song, the film *Bagong Buwan* incarnates the song precisely during moments when the same cultural ethos of resilience is invoked. It is heard in three sentimental—but poignant—scenes, the last two of which occur in the end as the survivors of the war part from each other. In the first sentimental scene, the music is primarily utilized to create atmosphere and to underline the psychological states of the main characters and the family ties they have. The quoted music, this time serving as the musical protagonist in a way, re-inforces the sentimentality of the action: embracing his wife, the Moslem doctor remembers his only son who got killed by the paramilitary vigilantes. In this scene, the tune of Joey's song is not quoted verbatim, but only alludes to it, a process that is *indicative* of the act of remembrance. (Credit here goes to Nonong Buencamino, the film scorer, not Joey Ayala). This evocation of the past—the character (played by Cesar Montano) recalling the presence of his son with Joey's music in the background as a sonic sign—is a rhetorical device that is similar to the recall of the archaic Spanish sound in the context of the message of love in the song. That is, the musical fragments giving way to the tune of *Walang Hanggang Pa-alam* is the act of remembering itself. [video clip from **Bagong Buwan**]

This act of remembering contrasts with the other two scenes near the end of the film, which I won't have time to talk about due to time limitations.<sup>xxiv</sup> Suffice it to say that in these

two parting scenes the song is used mainly a tear-jerker, background filler and for continuity.

The next song comes from another tradition in popular music repertory.

#### **IV. Presence in the Musical Space of "Anytime"**

Produced in 1996, "Kahit Kaylan" is composed by Jay Oliver Durias and, in the original mix, is rendered by Durias and Brix Ferraris, lead vocalist. They belong to a band from Southern Philippines called South Border. This group is a jazz-R&B, soul group influenced by the ballad-soul of the 1990s, especially Brian McKnight's arrangements (Cayabyab, personal communication). The song was in the band's first album of 1996 released by Sony Music Philippines.

"Kahit Kaylan" is a sentimental song and had a wide appeal among "emo" youth subculture. This is understandable given the intense emotionality projected by the song's protagonists.

Nagtatanong ang isip  
Di raw maintindihan  
Kung anong nararamdaman  
Dapat mong malaman  
Sa puso ko'y ikaw lamang  
Ang nag iisa...

Pangangamba  
Dapat bang isipin  
Walang hanggan  
Asahan mo na...

Kahit kailan  
Di kita iiwan  
Kahit kailan  
Di kita pababayaang  
Kahit kailan  
Kahit kailan...

Bulong ng 'yong damdamin  
Pagibig na walang hanggan  
Ang siyang nais mong makamitan  
Ngayon ay narito ako  
Handang umibig sa iyo  
Na walang katapusan...

Pangangamba  
Dapat bang isipin?  
Walang hanggan  
Asahan mo na...

Kahit kailan  
Di kita iiwan  
Kahit kailan  
Di kita pababayaang  
Kahit kailan  
Kahit kailan...

Kung ikaw ay mawala sa piling ko  
Di na alam kung kakayanin pa kayang  
Umibig pang muli  
Kahit na ano pang mangyayari  
Di maaring ipag-balik  
Sasamahan pa kita  
Hanggang sa huli...

Kahit kailan  
Di kita iiwan  
Kahit kailan  
Di kita pababayaang  
Kahit kailan  
Di magbabago  
Kahit kailan  
Kahit kailan...

The song is a reflection by the song's protagonist of his faithfulness to a Beloved. The song exists in the mind of the main protagonist who is accompanied by placid, repetitive piano passages in the verses. These lead to a bridge, which is introduced by another protagonist who is in dialogue with the first, putting the ineffable feeling (*pangangamba*) into words. This questioning brings a firm resolution in the chorus in which protagonist confesses and promises eternity in his love of the Other and whether if he is able to love again.

The space of mental questioning is introduced by a lush meandering gossamer of string sounds as if opening up a dream sequence, some kind of a hallucination that presages what is to come. It is precisely this choice of opening that we get the sense of presencing, an expansion of musical space, through which the song's protagonist would reveal and confess his feelings. The presences take on substance so to speak, an incarnation of emotionally-laden words delivered speech-like. Jay Durias's voice, following the characteristic of R&B

singers of the early 1990s enacts the main protagonist role, in a raspy voice in low register voice. His is counterposed by Ferrariss's high-pitched voice. The initial presencing of musical form leads to extraordinary bridge after two repeats of the verses. At this point, another questioning is introduced, this time about the possibility of love lost (Kung ikaw ay mawala sa piling ko). The abrupt modulations in this section embody another presencing, transposing it to the possibility of absence. This leads to the climax of the piece in which Ferraris delivers a "screaming" high note, a primal cry indicating the assured presence of his sublime love. This note is reached by way of unrelated modulations that suggest the unboundedness of infinite love. The musical gesture is then caught by the saxophone (played by Ric Junasa) on the same note, truly a gesture by which the substance of the vocal presence infects the substance of musical form. The saxophone instrumental that follows accentuates the song's quirky qualities that encapsulate the ethos of envoicing an intense emotion, almost at the edge of control.

Overall, the music of the piece substantiates the unusual drama of the voice as it states his presence to a Beloved. This presence is, however, as a subtle listening to the music would suggest, a suppression of undifferentiated feeling that always threaten to annihilate presence. The whole piece thus grows from the initial musical space opened up by the strings but, along the way, its presence of love flickers through the thickets of its pronouncement. It meanders harmonically, is clothed with obsessive syncopations and even has an unsingable melody. The idiosyncratic passage of the scream has been so memorable that later live and recorded performances would always emulate the depiction of the depth of infinite love.

## **V. Summary and Conclusion**

In this paper, I discussed the materiality of music aesthetics, particularly paying close attention to the substantiality of presence, constituted by physical objects in space either live or in a mental space. This presence necessarily mutually implicates conventionally appropriate specific musical shapes and forms. I illustrated the argument with three song performances: (1) the body of the medium in ritual which incarnates a spirit in song performance so as to indicate the physical presences; and (2) in two pop songs, one incarnating the kundiman form, the other of the scream of presence amidst the undifferentiated ocean of feeling. In all these, I demonstrated that musical forms have a substance, which aesthetics are sensed *because* song performances are a form of social

action. My argument entails that the music in song must not be interpreted as a disembodied form. On the contrary, it has a materiality. This produces presences that demonstrate the participants' or song protagonists' relationships to worldly bodies and objects in performative space, literally or mentally. Musical form thus demonstrates the taking place of protagonists' acts/performativities in the "here and now". In the first example, spirits in curing ritual function as a material marking, a deixis. Spirit possession the medium's body is constitutive of actions in curing ritual as drama. This enables the marking of ritual discourse to produce truthness of the presence of beings who are concretely related to the worlds that ritual mimetically produces.

I conclude this paper by showing you the production of presence in my recent documentation of notch flute in another part of Mindanao Island. The presence in this documentation is observed in the attentive listening to a performed music that one can witness in the video clip. It's notch flute music rendered by a remarkable Manobo Obo musician named Akoy from a remote mountain in Datal Lawa. I observed the intense concentration Akoy manifested as he played. He replicated the mimema (mental representation) of the myths of nature that his music was about. I recorded his music in a promontory sloping to the picturesque Lake Sebu.



Upon reaching the second place one late morning, Akoy was touched by the sheer beauty of the place. This prompted him to immediately play without even asking my instruction to start playing. It was an intuitive performance. Being in that space made him forget that he

was there for the recording. The beauty of the place was what demanded him to respond immediately as if the spirit of tradition was one with him, being in a place of nature. In other words, this mental image immediately grabbed and possessed his consciousness. Sitting motionless, with a gaze towards a distance space, he played without pause the entire repertory of his music tradition. I cannot describe in words as I write this essay the ineffable feelings that affected me so much as I sensed his music in the right place, demanding rapt attention to his music. In that session, birds in fact flocked on the tree where Akoy was performing as if listening too. The experience was stunning and seemed as if Akoy's performance reached some kind of "peak" or even reached the "infinite."<sup>xxv</sup> The nearest description to that sensation which was equally shared by those who witnessed that event was that his music was about presence. It incarnated the act of making (poesis) the mimema. As I defined "presence" in this paper, it is that which is "brought forth in one's encounter with objects in space." The aesthesis of being-in-that-world obliterated ordinary time so to speak; Akoy entered the "inner time" of music. He enlarged his experience of presence and incarnated this ancient tradition that he had known from his uncle. I use the term "incarnation" here to signal the nature of the signs we were then experiencing. His music cannot be reckoned as a modernist signifier-signified thing but more like the ancient Aristotelian idea of substance, which transformed Akoy's body and the music it embodied (read: the form is incarnated) into a meaning. The gentle and delicate music he performed moved his sister-in-law, who was there with us in that occasion, to tears, without a reason perhaps. After all, in the words of Gumbrecht, that experience was both drastic (i.e., beyond words needing a hermeneutics) and full of meaning. Like the spirit of song as deixis, Akoy's music reflexively intensified the seeing of the spatial relationship of bodies in a particular moment of encounter or performance-- his body and nature. In all these examples, I showed the diversity of presence effects of songs that have music, materially elucidating a reflection worlds of human relationships and their drastic ties to the things of the earth.

Thank you.

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Sources:

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Transcription and translation of tud-om (excerpt)

<b>Text in Original Agusan Manobo Language</b>	<i>Free Translation in English</i>
	Medium singing
<i>Adoq.</i>	Pity.
<i>Su kena menang egyundo.</i>	It should not have been given.
<i>Ke ade egboylagay ko.</i>	Pity if I do not share.
<i>Dew medu-on egkadumbenge.</i>	And this would have been the cause of resentment.
<i>Ade, egkayandajon.</i>	Please, would have resulted to that.
<i>Eh</i>	Eh
<i>Su nawa kay te dagney ko,</i>	Goodness, my person,
<i>Ke bido te tugam-an ko,</i>	That who is near my name,
<i>Ay kinuyang te dangen ko.</i>	Lacking is my situation.
<i>Ke wada kadayojangan ko.</i>	I have nothing.
<i>Eh, iyan kay egyando,</i>	Eh, that will be given,
<i>Te yantey egkaboylagay ko.</i>	The song that I will share.
<i>Medu-en egbenteyan ke kani.</i>	<b>There is a word here.</b>
<i>Egyankilajen ko</i>	<b>I will know</b>
<i>Ne bonabon te kilajan,</i>	<b>The forehead of the face,</b>
<i>Eggenen te sambayudan.</i>	<b>Who has entered the one.</b>
<b>Medium's body trembles</b>	
<b>Medium's wife responding (speaking)</b>	
<b>Adangay, di panguwa kew...</b>	Please, so you were...
<i>Natingaya kew buwa</i>	Perhaps you were surprised
<i>Nanakuwat's tud-om.</i>	To hear the song.
<i>Su malised te migsugo ita.</i>	It is difficult because we are requested,

Notes:

\* This paper is a reworking of a paper that appeared in Data of this paper came from my doctoral dissertation, the fieldwork of which was funded by the University of Pennsylvania from 1996 to 1997. It was presented as a lecture at the University of the Philippines Department of Anthropology on July 26, 2006.

Not all spirits though sing when incanted. The one that does is the normative spirit from the mythical mountain to which the idea of tradition among the Agusanon Manobos is associated. Karl Marx, "The fetishism of commodities," in *Power: a critical reader*, edited by Daniel Egan and Levon Chorbajian (Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005). See Thomas Sebeok, "Fetish signs," in *Signs: an introduction to semiotics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of presence: what meaning cannot convey* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford UP, 2004), xiii-xv, 17.

There is a rich literature on this subject. In modern linguistics, deictics refer to personal pronouns such as I and you (which references are actualized in specific speech events); demonstrative pronouns such as this, that, there, yonder, here; and so on. Pierce calls these signs "symbols-indexes," while Jakobson calls the first- and second-person pronouns as "shifters." In Western speculative thought, the concept of deixis occupies a central place, particularly in the discourse on the metaphysics of Being. Aristotle's first of his ten "grammatical" categories pertains to the "this-ness" of substance (*prote ousia*). Hegel theorizes that the "taking of the diese" (*das Diese nehmen*) is grounded on negativity or death, and so did Husserl with his concept of Dasein (Being-the-there). For a summary of this argument from a nihilistic perspective, see Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: the place of negativity* (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), particularly pages 19-37 of the book. It is important to note that Agamben's theory concerns grammatology, the study of (the ontology of) writing which takes into account the Husserlian-Derridian concept of difference in "presencing." Death or negativity is central to Agamben's argument because writing is already an effacement of immediate presence.

Manobo: *katungod* or Tagalog: *katapat*, "one with whom the self is related."

That is, a necessary, but not sufficient condition.

Manobos verbalize that tremblings result from the "penetration" of some kind of a substance (read: matter) called *kiham* in their bodies. There are a number of ways this sensation has been described to me. Some mediums said it feels like a mass of cold air entering through their heads and thereafter spreading to their entire bodies. Some said it's like a black cloth covering their bodies, and so on. (In a description of the "modern-indigenous faith healing" in the context of the history of the *babaylan* complex, Zeus Salazar ["Ethnic Psychology and History: The Study of Faith Healing in the Philippines," in *The ethnic dimension: papers on Philippine culture, history and psychology*, Cologne: Counseling Center for Filipinos, 1983: 89-106] suggests this "air" has a materiality. Salazar imagines the "air"—like vapor perhaps?—as a "magnetic fluid," a "bioplasm," or "some mysterious electric current" (p101).) The intrusion of this spirit-voice, an outsider, can be explained in terms of the name of the familiar phenomenon as the "hearing-oneself-speak," a concept that Husserl developed philosophically. See Jacques Derrida, *Speech and phenomena, and other essays on Husserl's theory of signs*, translated with an introduction by David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973). The substantiality and the sensuousness of the phenomenon are not in doubt. See, e.g., Paul Stoller, *Sensuous scholarship* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1997). For the concept of deixis as a fundamental linguistic act, see Giorgio Agamben, *Language and death: the place of negativity* and Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971). I argue in this paper that the incarnation of spirits heightens the perception and the cognition of others during interpersonal encounters.

I argue that a hermeneutics of the act is important—contrary to recent writings in the humanities. See e.g., Gumbrecht's argument that the phenomenology of aesthetic objects oscillates between "presence" and "meaning." My data on Agusan Manobo possession rites suggest otherwise. The effect of spirits is not only physically experienced by the Manobos, but is also deeply cognized in their minds. In everyday life, acts embody the taken-for-granted habits. In ritual, it is different because it is mediated by a complex cosmology that cannot be separated from its physical embodiment. It needs to be emphasized that the Manobo concept of the *ginhawa* is far more holistic (i.e., mind, body, feelings, thinking are all bound up to each other) than that of the Cartesian, rationalist concept of the body, which is split from the mind. Gumbrecht's argument is contextualized within this Cartesian problematique. This paper investigates the presencing effect in a context of a system of beliefs that imbricates both levels of the metaphysical and the everyday.

In ritual invocations, spirits are enticed to incarnate into the ritual space (i.e., their substantial negativity is transformed to that of humanity). Ritual gifts accompany the humanly rhetorical plea for pity. These gifts actualize the bringing forth of presences that confirm the said physical relationships of peoples' bodies and objects in the performative space. The substantiality of these relationships is demonstrated in the utterance of magical spells. These are interspersed throughout the ritual proceedings. Although spirits are not incarnated per

se in the magical spell, the causation occurs at the level of the substantiality of speech sounds in which, as we shall interestingly see, sound-forms are linked to each other via the litany-like textual form.

This entity must not be confused with the Manobo concept of *umagad* (soul or commonly known as *kaluluwa*, see Zeus Salazar, "Ethnic Psychology and History" (citation above). Salazar's "kaluluwa" is parallel to the T'boli "tulus" (Manoleta Mora, *Myth, Mimesis and Magic in the Music of the T'boli, Philippines* [Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2005, page 83.]). Inherently located outside the body, the Manobo *kadengan-dengan* is a counterpart of—yet quite distinct from—the *ginhawa*. It is interesting to elaborate on this matter because Filomeno Aguilar, *Clash of Spirits: the History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), e.g., seems to conflate the *ginhawa* with the *dungan* (read: *kadengan-dengan*) in talking about charisma. Aguilar seems to base his interpretation from Alicia Magos, *The Enduring Ma-Aram Tradition: An ethnography of a Kiniray-a Village in Antique* (Quezon City: New Day, 1992). My data show that the Manobos relate charisma (an aspect of the *ginhawa*) to the *dungan*, but the latter's location is clearly understood as outside the body. In other studies, the *dungan* has been termed like an alter ego, i.e., the snake twin discussed by Ebermut. This Eurocentric label "alter ego" does not resonate however with local epistemology. Instead, the concept of *dungan* resembles more like the concept of talisman, an object with magical properties external to the body that a self identifies and hence useful as a device as a protection from sorcery.

Generally, Manobos take emotions to be substances "sticking" inside human bodies.

There is some kind of a dramatic symbolization here, a narrativization of the act of spirit possession ritual held to cure the sick. Manobos can verbalize this narrative. For a documentation of a related Southeast Asian spirit mediumship that supports my perspective, see Raymond Firth, "Ritual and drama in Malay spirit mediumship," *Comparative studies in society and history* 9/2 (Jan. 1967): 190-207. Thus, Manobo curing ritual is like theater, i.e., a performance space for seeing "truths." See John Beattie, "Spirit Mediumship as Theatre," *Royal Anthropological Institute News* or RAIN 20 (1977):1-6. Also, see Zeus Salazar, "Ang Babaylan sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas," in *Women's role in Philippine history: selected essays*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: The UP Center for Women's Studies, 1996).

A similar process has been noted by James Siegel among the Achenese [James Siegel, *The rope of God* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2000)]. He found out that the bodily-ingressive possession materializes the releasing of the harmful spirit in the patients during a curing rite. For this reason, Siegel argues that it is not accurate to label Achenese curing ritual as "possession," but "non-possession." Assuming the principle of spirit possession-expiation among the Achenese is comparable to that of the Agusan Manobo, then Siegel misses to point out that the movement of nature-human interaction is bidirectional. The transgressive flow of essences works in both directions. The flow is transgressive because it spells out life and death on bodies, a metaphysical unbinding of essences in nature that the Manobo concept of song is ontologically associated with. While Manobos claim voice in song to originate from the *ginhawa*, its exact location in the cosmos is, in fact, ambiguous. See José Buenconsejo, "Manobo song (ted-em) and the ambiguous voice of the person and its double," *Bulawan Journal of Philippine Arts and Culture* 1 (2001): 18-37. As stated above, the *ginhawa* has an inherent double that exists outside it.

Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 78-81.

After all, one is mute when one cannot hear.

The same song style is sung to an invisible being, whose presence is nevertheless felt in the singer's imagination.

Incidentally, the songs "Talambuhay" and "Walang Hanggang Paalam" come one after the other in the album. The development of the kundiman genre actually occurred during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By "19<sup>th</sup> century" I mean the musical style.

An example of this type is the famous song "Bayan ko" (My Nation) of the 1920s which became the song that ignited the hearts of people in 1986 "People Power" revolution, ousting the corrupt Marcoses.

See, e.g., Esther Dadula's masteral thesis in musicology (2003, U of Philippines College of Music) regarding the musical style of the devotional songs to the patron saint in a migrant community in Masbate.

Similar to what Nicholas Cook has argued for the linking of image to a particular music by association in television commercials. See his *Analyzing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

Kundiman usually celebrates sacrificial, immortal love that triumphs at the end. In Walang Hanggang Pa-alam there is no celebration of sacrifice, but accepts the fate of eventual separation of lovers given the fact that death comes at the end after all. Nevertheless, the allusion to the *kundiman* is an effect of the musical medium wanting to indicate what the intermediary is articulating. Like most of Joey Ayala's lyrics, the actual context of love-separation in Walang Hanggang Paalam is ambiguous. Yet, it is precisely such ambiguity that makes the song so powerful for it invites multiple interpretations. For anyone familiar with Philippine contemporary society, the message of accepting separation easily connects with the social experience of diaspora in search of labor, owing to the cruel socio-economic reality at present. This, I believe, is due, in part, to the colonial imagination or phantom that migrating Filipino subjects cannot do without. The immediate reason for

composing this song is unknown to me or to the public, but the message of the song does hint reflexively at Joey Ayala's personal history; he himself has traveled back and forth between Luzon and Mindanao Islands, also for the same economic reason.

Previous to the movie *Bagong Buwan*, another song by Joey Ayala, entitled *Wala ng Tao sa Santa Filomena*, was the theme song of a movie *Ora Pro Nobis* by the late famous director Lino Brocka. This film is similar to *Bagong Buwan* because both are about the plight of civilians caught in the government's witch-hunting war against the political dissidents. They are also about the plea for human rights to survive and be recognized as humans, i.e., beyond the artifices of ethnic, political, and fanatical religiosity. Both films inscribe Joey Ayala's messages, defining their ambiguity that characterizes most of the lyrics of Joey's songs. The song *Wala ng Tao sa Sta Filomena* is a little bit different from *Walang Hanggang Pa-alam* because the song *Wala ng Tao sa Sta Filomena* precisely refers to the scene of *Sta Filomena* after this been devastated by military aggression during the Marcos regime.

The group MILF is not to be confused with the kidnap-and-ransom group *Abbu Sayaff* nor with the *Al-Qaeda Southeast Asian network*.

The music in the second parting segues into Joey Ayala's voice in the closing credits with its striking intertextuality to the perennial Moslem-Christian conflict such as the 9/11 terrorist bombing in New York and the atrocious Bush invasion in Iraq. The movie was made in 2002 and is about peace, which is still unattainable in Mindanao Island.

It must be this sensation that Jose Maceda had also felt when he analyzed the repetitive, wordless indigenous Philippine music in another article \_\_\_\_.