

## On Dissonance

“Rather than inviting the reader to become a vicarious victim, these texts denounce and fight the indifference of a privileged and empowered Western public to the suffering of the racial, ethnic, or cultural other.”<sup>1</sup>

Granted that this reading is taken in a post-holocaustic, and post-slavery context, I just found that this reading was very applicable in our context as Filipinos today. When we read literature, whether that's news articles, speeches by government officials, or even social media posts, we can't pretend to be in the shoes of those in the peripheries of society because we could never be victims of the same kind of maltreatment that they are currently experiencing. In his study, Craps wants to change the aesthetics of trauma theory to address readers “...not as an innocent victim, but as a bystander or potential collaborator”.<sup>2</sup> In short, reframe the way we understand the stories of the marginalized.

Instead of forcing our feet into their shoes, as if we know what it feels like to starve for days on end, not knowing when the next meals will arrive, he asks us to consider ourselves as individuals that have the potential to break the system that perpetuates the oppression that continues to debilitate the lives of the people that make this country what it is today. A heavy responsibility, no doubt, but in the same manner that we didn't ask to be born into this position of power, none of these people suffering asked to be put in their situation either.

As soon as we acknowledge this privilege, the sooner we're able to fight back. Quite frankly, dismissing people's frustrations as “useless noise” is just as dangerous as the President threatening to shoot down those that go against his regime. Understand that our anger is rooted in something important to us, so being passive is really not making the situation any better. The value of these protests don't necessarily rely on how massive its impact will be, but the sheer act of protesting has its own inherent value; it compels larger forces to recognize their shortcomings, and to find the necessary resolutions. Make it clear, by no means am I encouraging the cultivation of a Messianic complex, I just think that if people are actually trying to do something with the cards dealt to them, you are in no position to berate them about how “meaningless” these discussions are.

So yes, by all means, continue to bombard my social media wall with your outrage and critiques, because the last thing we need right now is an apathetic community.

Hold the people in power accountable. Continue to make noise for the people that can't. We all deserve so much better than this.

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<sup>1</sup> Stef Craps, *Postcolonial witnessing: Trauma out of bounds*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.