

# Autobiography as revolutionary praxis: Memorializing and memoir-making in *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway: Talambuhay ni Tatang* and *Ka Bel: Mga Liham*

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## ABSTRACT

The construction of a “non-individualistic ‘I’” in the autobiographies of organic intellectuals who are known leaders of the workers’ movement subverts the traditional notions of autobiography. In Cesar Lacara’s memoir *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway* (1988) and Crispin Beltran’s letter anthology *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* (2010), the self either disappears and blends with the masses, or is constructed to glorify a working-class hero who committed his life for the masses. This is due to the underground nature of Lacara’s life; his memoir was published while he was still active in the movement. Thus, details of his life must not be divulged. On the other hand, Beltran’s letters, though not intended for publication, were published posthumously to commemorate and memorialize his life as a well-known labor leader. They also offer glimpses of his private life as a father raising a revolutionary family. Through interviews with the editors of these autobiographies, one glimpses the mode of production of these texts. These autobiographical narratives were written in the midst of their revolutionary praxis with the help of the collective. Through editing, the polyphonic voices of the collective may be heard or are muted in the texts. The narratives and the self in these autobiographies have no closure: they are continuing and open-ended like the revolution they wage.

## KEYWORDS

autobiography, Crispin Beltran, Cesar Lacara, revolutionary literature, Philippine literature

On 27 May 2008, a congressman fell to his death while fixing the leaking roof of his small house in Bulacan.

“His death is as simple as his life,”<sup>1</sup> wrote journalist and editor Kenneth Guda. Initially a messenger, gasoline boy, and taxi driver who was not able to finish college, Crispin “Ka Bel” Beltran was a labor leader of the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno or KMU (May First Movement). Beltran was imprisoned from 1982 to 1984 during the Marcos dictatorship. He became a legislator under Bayan Muna (People First) and Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) partylist from 2001 until his death in 2007. Despite being a public official, he was detained again from 2006 to 2007 for his staunch criticisms of the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration. In a country where the moneyed elite controls politics, Beltran was the poorest congressman with a net worth of 50,000 pesos (approximately 1000 US dollars) based on his statements of assets, liabilities and net worth.<sup>2</sup>

Beltran organized the Confederation of Labor Unions of the Philippines (CLUP) in the 1960s with Cesar Lacara, a veteran of the labor movement. So that Beltran would be remembered by the masses, Lacara christened him with the monicker “Ka Bel.” Lacara, who himself went with the title “Tatang” (“father”), was a sugarcane worker in different haciendas in Central Luzon. He fought as a Huk guerrilla against the Japanese during World War II. He also organized the workers and peasants in Northern Luzon, Central Luzon and Manila-Rizal during the postwar period. A member of the first Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas during the colonial regime, he helped reestablish the Communist Party of the Philippines in the later years of his life.

Both Lacara and Beltran were writing their life stories while they were active in the movement. Born in 1933, Beltran was penning letters to his family and close friends since the 1960s up to his death in 2008, even during detention under the Marcos and Macapagal-Arroyo presidencies. His letters were compiled posthumously in a collection entitled *Ka Bel: Mga Liham (Ka Bel: Letters 2010)*. Born in 1910, Lacara wrote while staying in underground houses in Metro Manila during the 1980s. His autobiography is titled *Sa Tuncki ng Ilong ng Kaaway: Talambuhay ni Tatang (At the Tip of the Enemy's Nose: Autobiography of Tatang 1988)*.

Traditionally, autobiography records the life of great individuals and could be seen as furthering a Western and middle class subjectivity (Anderson 3, Huddart 2-3, Smith and Watson 2-3). Notions of selfhood and individualism, along with the rise of private property, characterize the origins of autobiography (Eakin 92-93). Yet working class writings, as part of emergent literature, aimed to reverse these values through new forms—or in this case “adaptations of form” (Williams 126).

Autobiographies by Philippine leaders of the revolution were nothing new—for instance, Andres Bonifacio wrote letters during the Spanish revolution, while Emilio Aguinaldo's and Artemio Ricarte's memoirs were published later. Narratives such as these may be read as documentary evidence of historical events. They may also expose or shed light to historical controversies from the point-of-view of these leaders. Moreover, memoirs usually highlight the extraordinariness and heroism of one's individual in the building of the nation. However, Lacara's and Beltran's narratives differ because they explicitly detail the collective nature of writing and publishing, which also affect the writing of their selves. This paper explores how life stories have become integrated with revolutionary praxis. Through writing, Lacara and Beltran sought to further improve themselves as leaders of the revolution and to impart lessons in waging it. Yet, their selves were projected differently: if, according to Caroline Hau, Lacara was constructed as “the self *as* others” (134), Beltran was presented as the self *for* others. Lacara's self was subsumed and melded with the collective. In contrast, Beltran was portrayed as a larger-than-life revolutionary hero. I will also analyze how the polyphonic voices of the collective appeared in the texts, as well as the intentions and interventions of the editors.

### **Revolutionary autobiography, autobiography for the revolution**

With his death, Beltran was lionized as a hero of the worker's movement and was honored in the *Bantayog ng mga Bayani* Wall of Remembrance for leading the anti-dictatorship struggle. Aside from Beltran's public pronouncements through statements, letters to the editors, and speeches, Beltran had a habit of quietly writing to his family. This was a little-known aspect of Beltran's life. His personal letters to family and friends occupied four steel cabinets, only two of which were rummaged to select the letters for publication. According to daughter Ofelia “Ka Ofel” Beltran, her father wrote memo-type letters to his wife and children even if they were living in the same house. These letters were a way to communicate with the family in spite of Beltran's busy schedule in the labor movement. Moreover, writing letters was a way for Beltran to control his emotions amidst his anger. Ofelia Beltran recalled, “I asked him why he needed to write us when he had misgivings with me and my siblings, when he could just easily scold us. Ka Bel replied, ‘No, I love you. I don't want you to get hurt.’”<sup>3</sup>

Even if Beltran was prolific in writing letters, these were written with no regard for publication. *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* (2010) was an offshoot of Ina Alleco Silverio's biography *Ka Bel: the life and struggle of Crispin Beltran* (2010). While researching for Beltran's biography, family and comrades encountered his letters and decided to compile them into a book. Kenneth Roland Guda started working on the letter compilation just as Silverio was finishing the last chapter of the biography. Both Beltran and his family were meticulous in keeping the letters, the earliest dating back to the 1960s.

The letters were collected and published posthumously by his family and journalists from alternative presses. Both have close linkages to the movement. Ofelia Beltran explained that they intended to publish the book first, to preserve his letters and second, to counter the negative image that the government projected of him. She reminisced, “Maybe he is more of a father compared to those who accuse him. More human, loving, compassionate and nationalistic. He is recognized not only in

the Philippines, not only in the community, but also internationally.”<sup>4</sup> Beltran’s personality unfolded in bits and pieces through his own letters, which the editor organized like a jigsaw puzzle to portray a noble and almost mythical working class hero.

These letters revealed a different “Ka Bel” from his popular public image as a militant leader of the *masa*.<sup>5</sup> From his letters, Guda realized that Beltran was a well-read and introspective individual who carefully thought through his political opinions and actions. Moreover his politics also permeated his personal relations:

I did not think that he was consciously trying to document his life through his letters for later publications. A lot of the letters were very personal, to his family members, wife, daughters and son. But we use the letters to get a glimpse of Ka Bel not only as a political animal, but also how his politics is related to his personal life and how he conducted himself as a father and as a grandparent.

He was a very voracious reader and had many newspaper clippings. Within those clippings, he would write marginal notes, highlighting several points that he wanted to clarify later, to write about and to talk about for his interviews or whatever. So he did not read for academic purposes. *He read to enrich his political actions* [emphasis mine].

So it gives you an impression outside his public persona as a very vocal spokesperson of the labor movement in the Philippines. He was also very contemplative. This means that as he read he also wrote. And he wrote not to make his writings into a book in the future. He wrote to enrich his praxis. For me, his passion for writing letters was not separated from his political life.

In contrast, Lacara was still alive when his book was published in 1988; he died in 2000, 12 years later. Lacara wrote about his recollections of armed struggle, community organizing, and Party building from his youth up to the time of his writing as an old man in his 70s. As will be discussed in the next section, *Sa Tungki* was written with the help of the collective.

Gelacio Guillermo, one of the editors, acknowledged that it is “typical for old people to talk about themselves and their childhood.” However, Guillermo continued, “What is good about [Lacara] is that he does not talk too much about himself. He talks about how he has moved within certain historical circumstances.” Guillermo expounded that Lacara’s text differed from the usual, highly individual autobiography:

So all the time that he was writing, he knew that this was not for self-glorification. This was how he and his comrades would work in these areas—the dangers, the possibilities, the state of the people and the role of the enemy around. He was very conscious of those factors. So it is not biography for self-glorification. That is the usual autobiographies of these bourgeois—to bring themselves up, to clear themselves of any mistakes, any responsibilities, which has gone awry. But for him, it was not like that. That is why it was a teaching team. He was writing his autobiography so that some comrades may learn. That, I think, is the function of autobiography in the movement.

Both texts constructed the narrator/protagonist as having exemplary lives, but in different ways. Beltran was placed in the limelight for being a simple man who championed people’s rights. His motivations to become an organic intellectual was presented as extraordinary in a society where the middle class has arrogated to itself all scholarly endeavors. Glimpses of his private life added to his

humanity. This could be juxtaposed with the typicality of Lacara, who was presented as an “*ordinaryo’t dukhang tao*,” an ordinary and poor person (LINANG 11). He, along with many others, was located in the fringes of history, “at the tip of the enemy’s nose” as the title would suggest. Nonetheless, as one poet would illustrate, they are “the faceless enemy [...] The ever moving, shining, secret eye of the storm” (Lacaba 220-221). According to Hau, this could work two ways: “[Lacara’s] ordinariness enhances his acts of heroism, but it is also possible to argue—as revolutionary literature has done—that he is heroic *because* he is ordinary” (137). The next sections will demonstrate how editorial interventions as well as the specific contexts of these textual productions created these personas.

### **Autobiography as dialogue, polyphony and collective voice**

Both *Sa Tungki* and *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* were edited and produced collectively by non-mainstream publishing houses. *Sa Tungki* was published by LINANG or *Kilusan sa Paglilinanang ng Rebolusyonaryong Panitikan at Sining sa Kanayunan* (Movement for the Cultivation of Revolutionary Literature and Art in the Countryside), an underground publishing house which aims to propagate literature by the workers, peasants and guerrillas. *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was created by the Crispin B. Beltran Resource Center or CBBRC, a research organization established in memory of Beltran that promotes workers’ rights.

The autobiographies of revolutionary leaders in this study were written using the dialogic method, perhaps to draw less attention to the self and to show that others were interested in one’s experiences and insights about the revolution. By its very nature, letters are dialogic even if the replies of Beltran’s recipients were not published. But unlike Beltran’s personal letters, which were immediate, targeted to a direct addressee, pragmatic and not for publication, Lacara’s *Sa Tungki* were intended for publication and created via a series of questions and answers. However, *Sa Tungki* was different, because its polyphony was not made apparent.

Unlike the usual writing of autobiography, which is a solitary endeavor, Lacara wrote surrounded by the collective: he would write in longhand in a free-flowing manuscript as he transferred from one underground house to another in Manila. Younger comrades would encourage him and ask questions. These exchanges guided and developed Lacara’s writing (LINANG 11). The younger activists would continually press the veteran Lacara for further clarifications until the manuscript was recommended for publication and shown to a pool of editors.

According to Guillermo, Lacara’s manuscript underwent several revisions: “We met him finally, and we interviewed him again based on written accounts which he did for confirmation, elaboration and some more specific additions to the texts.” In addition, the editors consulted other scholarly works to corroborate Lacara’s narrative, such as Renato and Letizia Constantino’s *A Past Revisited* and *The Continuing Past*, Benedict Kerkvliet’s *The Huk Rebellion*, Alfredo Saulo’s *Communism in the Philippines* and Amado Guerrero’s *Philippine Society and Revolution* among others, which were referred to in endnotes. Through this, the editorial team elevated Lacara’s personal narrative to a broader historical narrative about Communist Party organizing and anti-imperialist resistance from the American colonial period until the Marcos dictatorship. Guillermo added, “So something happened in the course of the editing: some repetitions were corrected, some facts had to be elaborated on, some aspects of earlier history of the old Communist Party had to be elaborated on also. Otherwise, it will only remain as his personal experience. It may have significance on the development of things and how things developed.” Together with the editors, Lacara was involved throughout the process.

The structuring of the book was also the work of the editors, which they divided into two parts: the first, a “straight” autobiography about Lacara’s life, and the second about certain organizations and individuals, whom Lacara met in the movement. According to the publisher’s notes, the second part was a “variation” (“*baryasyon*”) of the first part (LINANG 12). For Guillermo, this editorial “intervention” was done “to make the narrative structure clear.” Although the life and the narrative was Lacara’s, organizing the book was not entirely his task. He was the source of information, a well of experience from which the collective and editors drew, shaped and forged the narrative of

the revolution from the vantage point of one man. It also became the narrative of everyman who was exploited and struggled against bigger societal forces.

Even if produced collectively, *Sa Tungki*'s polyphonic voices were subdued: the questions of the collective members were not stated, unlike in a question and answer or interview format. Rather, the text was arranged in a seamless narrative divided into sections. Yet, the presence of the revolutionary collective was recognized in the Publisher's Notes, which briefly discussed collective efforts in producing the book. The book's acknowledgement page thanked a long list of people, who were identified by their aliases—seldom full names and usually first names, some prefixed by “Ka” (comrade). Members of the movement's underground publications such as *Ang Bayan* and *Ulos* and the organization *Artista at Manunulat ng Sambayanan* (Artists and Writers for the Country or ARMAS, a Filipino word derived from Spanish which means weapons) were also acknowledged. In addition, underground activists using the aliases Ka Bino and Elias de la Cruz wrote the Foreword and Preface. The book was also dedicated to an even longer list of leaders of the labor movement and revolutionary martyrs from the American period up to post-Martial Law, as well as unnamed “heroes of the Philippine Revolution—workers, farmers, fisher folks, students, professionals, national minorities, religious, writers, artists—all who have loved, inspiration of Tatang and the struggling Filipino people” (Lacara 3).<sup>6</sup> All of them contributed indirectly to the creation of the book because Lacara drew inspiration from them. In the same vein, the author hoped the book would lead others to draw inspiration from Lacara as well. That the book was not dedicated to Lacara's close family and friends signified that it was created for and dedicated to an abstract entity—the broader masses and the revolution.

Hau considered *Sa Tungki* as “both an autobiography and a biography” because of these “interventions” and “multiplicity of voices” (131). However, the text proper did not reveal these and without paratextual explanations, these would not be evident. *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was also marked by interventions and multiplicity of voices. But unlike *Sa Tungki*, the biographical and the autobiographical in *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* were clearly demarcated by making the polyphonic voices more pronounced. The autobiographical in *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was further buttressed by biographical pieces attributed by their writers' bylines. Moreover, the overall structuring of the book could be considered biographical: it presented a narrative of one's life as arranged by another, which posthumous publishing would inevitably demand.

*Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was also a product of a collective activity. Even before these letters were collected in an anthology, Beltran was writing in the midst of his revolutionary activities in the labor union, during imprisonment, and while waging the armed struggle in the countryside and the parliamentary struggle in congress. Implicitly, Beltran was surrounded by the collective. He wrote personal letters instructing his family to become good activists, and extended warm regards to fellow activists in other countries.

As a revolutionary figurehead, Beltran also wrote “open” letters and statements for public readership under his name—letters to the editor, letters to Marcos and other high-ranking military and government officials, media statements, speeches, and letters to trade unions in the Philippines and other countries. Beltran's offices in the trade union and congress had speechwriters to write some of these public letters and statements. It is a practice no different from offices of other public leaders and government officials. However, Beltran's staff functioned as a collective, since his congressional staff were mostly activists. Thus, the sentiments of the collective were processed and consolidated under Beltran's byline. Guda expounded that Beltran was also part of this collective process in making these public letters and statements, some of which were included in *Ka Bel: Mga Liham*: “His staff told me that they wrote many of them, but Beltran will personally read it, criticize it, and edit it. So he had some input on many of the writings under his name that came out as press releases and statements. I think it is valid to say that they are writings on his behalf.”<sup>7</sup>

Like *Sa Tungki*, choosing the texts for *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was done in close collaboration with editors and Beltran's family members who were also activists. However, the author was not part of the selecting and editing process since he had long been dead. Since Beltran wrote these letters piecemeal,

Guda explained that as the editor, he had to fill in the gaps. First, he wrote a short biography of Beltran as an Introduction to the book. Second, Guda wrote editor's notes beside each letter explaining its context and Beltran's circumstances at the time. And third, he added letters and short newspaper articles by other people—open letters from his wife and daughter, and a brief journalistic account of how Beltran was arrested. Guda also included eulogies. One of these was a reprinted article from the Philippine Daily Inquirer written by an “apolitical” college student, who unexpectedly witnessed how Beltran was well loved by ordinary flower vendors. It also included an open letter from his ghostwriter, read during his wake. Guda explained that this editorial intervention was necessary in understanding Beltran's letters: “Ka Bel is not conscious in writing every step of his way and to document his letters. So there really are gaps. For instance, if you haven't read the biography but read only the letters, you would not understand the chronology of his life. So the letters [from other people] helped—they are also in the same form, they are also letters.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the polyphonic voices in *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* were heard and pieced together to construct an image of the man, unlike Lacara's seemingly unified narrative. Beltran's personality unfolded through his personal and public letters, which were buffered by testimonials from other people. Choosing the letters for publication was a highly selective activity, subject to the limitations of the editor. Guda explained, “When we were making the book, we haven't located all of the letters. Among those that have already been located, we only chose letters that would represent the different aspects of Ka Bel. For instance, three or four from his pre-Martial Law days and then some after his capture. They are representative letters. So I was not able to read everything, even the two cabinets full of his letters and documents.”<sup>9</sup> But unlike Lacara's manuscript, Guda preserved the entity of Beltran's letters since he only made minor corrections in grammar and style.

Furthermore, these letters and testimonials were arranged chronologically and divided into chapters, which showed Beltran's multiple roles at various stages of his life both in the public and the private spheres—a loving father in “*Rebolusyonaryong Pagpapamilya*” (“Revolutionary Family”), a militant mass leader in “*Lider-Obrero*” (“Labor Leader”), a political prisoner and guerrilla during Martial Law in “*Pagkakakulong at Pagkilos sa Kanayunan*” (“Detention and Struggle in the Countryside”), an activist promoting international solidarity in “*Pandaigdigang Kapatiran*” (“International Brotherhood”), a progressive and pro-poor legislator in “*Gawaing Parlamentaryo*” (“Parliamentary Work”), and a political prisoner once again under the Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency and his death in “*Muling Panunupil at Huling Sandali*” (“Suppression Once More and Final Moments”).

Thus, writing in the midst of the collective, a “self” imbued with revolutionary values was formed. The self in autobiography was not only constructed by the writers but also by the editors, who revised Lacara's manuscript several times, and selected and arranged Beltran's letters. But even if both books were produced collectively, the authors presented their selves differently.

### “Tatang” and the subdued self

It is rare for those in the underground to write autobiographies. According to Bonifacio Ilagan, one is always on the go and has no time to write. Moreover, doing so is a security risk. Guillermo mused, “Maybe there are a few autobiographies especially of top cadres because there are many things that cannot be said.” Furthermore, he added that some of the narratives about guerrilla life might actually be autobiographical, but disguised in the form of fiction (such as Macario Tiu's *Sky Rose*). But *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway* was forthright in labeling itself as autobiography, and designated itself as “*Talambuhay ni Tatang*.” The book's Introduction “*Mga Tala mula sa Andergrawnd*” (“Notes from the Underground”) written under the pseudonym Elias de la Cruz pointed out the marked difference of *Sa Tungki* from other mainstream works: “This work is part of the growing alternative literature which features a totally different world from the literature of the establishment” (15).<sup>10</sup> The book was different not only in subject matter, but also in the function of the “I”.

*Sa Tungki* was unlike other autobiographies that highlighted the author's extraordinary life—to the point that most would have the author's picture as the book cover, and the name of the author as

the title of the book. In *Sa Tungki*, the author's full name did not appear in the title page or anywhere else in the text. The book cover did not show a full face but only a black-and-white picture of someone's eyes. The identity was mysterious and gender unknown, with the dark and wrinkled parts of the eyebrow, cheeks and forehead suggesting that the person may be old or from the working class.

As a Party cadre, Lacara was not allowed to disclose his full name and identity for security reasons, especially since he wrote during Martial Law and was still alive when the autobiography was published three years after the end of the dictatorship. His full name was disclosed after his death and was mentioned in other works.<sup>11</sup> Lacara's autobiography left no room for self-glorification, since the self should not stand out and be easily identified. One's own self in the underground became a security risk. Like guerrillas in the countryside, the identity of the author in *Sa Tungki* must blend with other characters in his autobiography: the common people, composed mostly of workers and peasants.

Because of this, the identity of the "I" in Lacara's narrative has become a composite character. He started his autobiography with a series of aliases, birthdate and birthplace: "Name—Cesar, Rodel, Marcial, Lauro, Jose, Roy, Tatang, etc., born in the year 1910, August 21<sup>st</sup> in a barrio near the sea in the town of Bacnotan, La Union" (Lacara 19).<sup>12</sup> By mentioning his birthdate and birthplace, Lacara asserted that he was indeed an individual who existed. At the same time, he could be anybody and anyone. He stressed his multiple identities by enumerating his aliases, which were typical male Filipino names. His list began with his given name Cesar and ended with Tatang, the name he was popularly known in the movement. Tatang, his main alias that formed the title of the autobiography, is not a first name, but an "honorific" (Hau 138) yet generic title meaning "father." Thus, amidst many aliases, Lacara's main identity was nameless. He was known by a signifier—the father of anyone—which connoted wisdom, seniority, familiarity and paternity. His unnamed name signifies that he was an ordinary yet father-like figure in the revolution (cf. Hau 138).

Likewise, he mentioned his family but gave sparse details. Unlike other autobiographies that flaunted one's ancestry, Lacara's parents and siblings were anonymous. At most, they were mentioned in terms of their class origins. His father was from the petty bourgeoisie who fell into penury during the American colonial period when he left the military service, which he served under Spanish rule. Since then, he became part of the working class who took odd jobs as a swidden farmer and fisherman. Lacara's mother became a seamstress, weaver and livestock raiser. Even if his parents were not named, Lacara discussed their lives in relation to the hardships they experienced because of poverty and government neglect. For instance, he mentioned the absence of doctors in their town that resulted in the death of his sister and father, the odd jobs that he did as a child to augment their meager income while studying, and finally the decision to stop schooling to become a sugarcane worker (Lacara 19-21). Not much was said about his marriage and private life, although there was passing mention about his first wife. At most, his wife's relatives in Ilocos Sur were mentioned as a liability when he was expanding the Party during Martial Law. Through his wife's relatives, the other residents became aware of his underground work, which caused him to be reassigned to another area (57-58).

Lacara did not inscribe much of his self in the autobiography even if he relayed his life story. Lacara's narrative was limited within the ambit of his experience. Lacara also wrote about his activities and leaders of the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) during the American period, his observations and criticisms of the Lava and Taruc leadership, and his participation in the reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines. But his narrative was only situated in Northern Luzon, Central Luzon and Manila-Rizal, with no mention of Visayas, Mindanao and other regions in Luzon.

Nonetheless, *Sa Tungki* was locus-based as Lacara mapped how he moved from one region to another. Lacara divided his autobiography based on these places. The first part of his autobiography was entitled "*Mula Bacnotan hanggang Tundo*" ("From Bacnotan to Tundo"). His section headings were also names of places and regions. He would connect the places with historical events and activities, as he recounted his life as a sugarcane worker during the American period and a Huk guerrilla during

World War II. He continued writing about his activities in the labor movement and the PKP, his imprisonment in the 1950s, and his expansion work in the CPP.

The way the history of the resistance was given primacy over the self was also evident in the selection of pictures, which formed a separate section placed between the first and second part of the book. These pictures gave visual credence to the actual people, places, and events described in the book. Among these were pictures of left-wing leaders such as Crisanto Evangelista, Amado V. Hernandez and other PKP officials; heroes of the Philippine-American war such as Teodoro Asedillo; and the municipalities of Camiling and an *asukarera* (sugar plantations), where Lacara worked. The book also highlighted imperialist aggression and resistance as it also included pictures of war-torn Manila during World War II and Huk guerrillas. The visual narrative continued until the Marcos dictatorship. Among the pictures were the newspaper front page reporting the declaration of Martial Law, the student demonstrations in the 1960s, activists Jose Luneta, Ka Payat and Bert Olalia, the fire in Tondo that ravaged Lacara's house, and NPA fighters.

The picture collection also showed two maps, giving importance to the sites where Lacara moved. The first illustrated the concentration of Huk guerrillas in Central Luzon. The second was a cartographic sketch of the places Lacara settled in Luzon for his revolutionary activities. This was the only time that this section mentioned Lacara's name as Tatang. Despite the thick collection of pictures, Lacara's image was markedly absent. Aside from the map, a reproduction from Lacara's original handwritten manuscript in good penmanship was also featured as a more tangible proof that Lacara and the autobiography existed. Both the map and the manuscript defined Lacara, not his face or his body. With a self that was hidden, one could only imagine Lacara living through all of these events and inhabiting these cartographic spaces. Although there may be no visual image of Lacara, his narrative and other pictures implied his presence in historical events and familiarity with the revolutionary leaders.

*Sa Tungki* was descriptive but not too detailed, and imparted Lacara's observations and activities in general terms. The self in Lacara's autobiography was not self-absorbed but was outward and emotionally detached: a reporter of his immediate surroundings and circumstances. The Publisher's Notes in *Sa Tungki* pointed out Lacara's function as narrator, "As a document, Tatang's autobiography gives light to some historical events, mass organizations, personalities and places based on his personal knowledge of these" (11).<sup>13</sup> For instance, he wrote about the economic conditions in the *asukarera* (sugar plantations) where he worked, and calculated the low wages in relation to the working hours. More details were devoted to the concrete working conditions than his feelings. Thus, Lacara supported his opinions by actual observations and not abstract theorizing. He also showed that his decisions were not fleeting and whimsical, but carefully thought out and studied:

From the month of May until October, one can work again in the hacienda if you like. There are many kinds of work in the sugarcane plantations, you can clean, water, plant, put fertilizer etc. Everyday, one works for 12 hours for 80 cents per day. I was able to endure these hardships for six months. But my mind is rebelling against these conditions.

There are thousands of workers and one worker can produce one ton. P0.80 is for the worker, P1.20 for the contractor. How many thousands of pesos does the contractor earn in one day? Even if you compute it upside down, we workers are surely oppressed. You can't do anything about it, because if you complain, the contractor will be angry. The monster will curse, complain to the hacendero and the hacendero will command his stewards who have guns. The contractor will force the workers to work, who will then close their eyes and follow his whims, for if the workers don't work in the sugarcane plantations, the factory won't have anything to grind in the *sentral*. But the earnings of the big employees like the Japanese engineer,

the sugar boiler from Japan too, the White chemist etc. won't be affected. Even if the factory is not running, their salary still continues.

With what I see, all the more that my fighting spirit is kindled. Ever since those times, from 1926-28, I was thinking about these policies little by little and the hardships that we have experienced must be opposed and found a solution. (Lacara 23)<sup>14</sup>

Lacara's view may be confined to his immediate surroundings, but he was part of the revolution long enough to point out its continuity. *Sa Tungki*, as a historical document of one's revolutionary praxis, could impart valuable lessons to younger activists. One of these was the continuity of practices in community organizing and armed struggle. The places where he was stationed had a long history of guerrilla warfare. He was assigned to revive these during Martial Law, such as one area in Eastern Rizal: "Many people here know the guerrilla struggle because this place is a former base of Marking's guerillas in the previous war. It was also the base of the Huks from 1950-51" (Lacara 50).<sup>15</sup> Some of the guerrilla tactics could be traced to the Japanese period, but were used against new enemies: "If the military itself comes to us, surely, we will strike since we are ready with our long weapons. This guarding by the masses now is just like the way the neighborhood organizations during the Japanese times kept watch. These guards also guided the guerrillas to where they are headed" (58).<sup>16</sup>

But more important than military tactics was forming close relationships with the masses, which Lacara stressed, "I became close and was loved by them. It is a big factor if you are close with the masses because just in case principles are at stake, even if they cannot accept the principles you present to them, surely somehow they will love you because of your actions and your kinship with them, except for a few outright enemies" (Lacara 52).<sup>17</sup>

In his foreword, Ka Bino, wrote that he was puzzled with Lacara's reply when he asked why Lacara was charged with rebellion in 1957: "Because I am with the masses in fighting our enemy" (11).<sup>18</sup> This sounded simplistic even to a fellow activist, and Ka Bino opined, "his standpoint and convictions are 'vague'" (11).<sup>19</sup> What was first thought of lacking depth and profundity showed that Lacara's understanding of the revolution was more experiential and practical, and not merely theoretical. The masses, even if an abstract entity, were not separate from his identity. He cannot conceive a self without them.

### **The proletarian individual: constructing a working-class hero and identity**

The short and catchy name "Ka Bel" signified Beltran as leader of the masses. This name also formed the main title of the book *Ka Bel: Mga Liham (Ka Bel: Letters)*. Unlike the more metaphorical sounding *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway: Talambuhay ni Tatang (At the Tip of the Enemy's Nose: Autobiography of Tatang)*, where the full identity of "Tatang" was kept hidden due to its underground nature, *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* portrayed a larger-than-life and almost mythical figure of the revolution. Guda called Beltran a "Symbol of the worker's movement and militant opposition in the Arroyo government" (15).<sup>20</sup> Urban poor leader Carmen "Nanay Mameng" Deunida wrote in the book insert, "Ka Bel can be called a hero."<sup>21</sup> Beltran's self was constructed as an individual. Details of his private life and his unique personality surfaced beyond his public persona.

While Lacara's photograph never appeared in *Sa Tungki*, myriad evidences of Beltran's existence abound in *Ka Bel: Mga Liham*. The book cover showed handwritten words from one of his letters forming a sketch of his face. It implied that Beltran and his letters were the subjects of the book and that the letters formed his identity. *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was also more visually appealing. Its editor Kenneth Guda explained, "They want to make a small coffee table book with photos. So it's not only textual, because one has to contextualize and visualize the letters, which are only encoded. So there has to be photos and colors."<sup>22</sup> Printed on good paper, the pictures authenticated Beltran's life and death. It contained a reproduction of Beltran's birth certificate, a government record that recognized Beltran's

birth and citizenship. It also reprinted the front page newspaper headline of Beltran's death, followed by photographs of his casket, his mourning wife and the funeral march.

These pictures also established the materiality of the letters. Printed in full color, they were handwritten in good penmanship or typewritten on different kinds of paper. Some of the letters to his wife and children were written on office stationery with the trade union letterhead. Also included were pictures of Beltran writing while in police custody during his second arrest, and his daughter Ka Ofel with a box full of his letters.

These photographs provided a visual narrative since they documented different facets of Beltran's life. They were arranged chronologically and thematically to support the chapters that highlighted Beltran's role as father, labor leader, underground guerrilla, activist promoting international solidarity and legislator. Except for a small ID picture, these pictures were not static and they showed Beltran in full action. Hence, one could see Beltran speaking in rallies and linking arms with workers since the 1950s, Beltran with clenched fist when he was tried for rebellion during Martial Law, Beltran lecturing in front of labor leaders in Australia and Canada, Beltran speaking in congress, and Beltran talking to fellow progressive lawmakers during his hospital arrest. Even pictures with his family portrayed him engaged in various activities such as inspecting the family farm with his wife and renewing their wedding vows at their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. In the few shots where he posed and directly faced the camera, Beltran's surroundings told the story of his circumstances: a grim portrait of him in prison, a casual and relaxed group photo with his grandchildren during a family outing, and a smiling Beltran in the hospital with his two daughters.

The discourse when these books were published also determined the way the authors showed their individuality. Because *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* was published posthumously, it glorified the author who was a leading figure in the movement. In contrast, the underground nature of *Sa Tungki* necessitated that the author be unknown. In addition, *Sa Tungki* was published during the Corazon Aquino administration, which also saw the continuation of the anti-communist tactics from the Marcos dictatorship.

The choice of genre and the way they were written also spelled this difference. Even with editorial intervention (as discussed earlier), Beltran's personal letters not intended for publication may portray their writer's "raw" personality compared to Lacara's "straight" narrative that was edited numerous times for publication in collaboration with the author. Moreover, Lacara had the time to pause, reflect and reconstruct his narrative since the events in *Sa Tungki* passed decades after they were written. Beltran's original letters to the family and the public were written in the moment, and their immediacy showed how he addressed pressing issues of the day and the discourse during that time. Beltran's letters also illustrated the everyday struggles, where larger economic conditions permeated his private life. For instance, Beltran's early letters to his family detailed how he budgeted his meager earnings while working in the trade union.

While Lacara addressed an unnamed "younger generation of activists," Beltran gave detailed and individualized instructions to his family. Letters also revealed how "social roles [are] enacted [and] relationships secured" (Smith and Watson 196); in this case, Beltran's praxis of raising a revolutionary family. The letters were written in the form of activist memo-type letters, which according to Guda may be seen as highly impersonal, yet showed the difference between bourgeois and proletarian discipline and values (Guda 22). One letter written in prison even included the postscript "Note: This letter is for our family only, including Santi, George and Dubog. Let them read it and discuss with them" (Beltran 77).<sup>23</sup> This was like the "*ipasa pagkabasa*" (pass after reading) written at the bottom of memos—a directive for the document to be passed around in activist discussion groups.

Even if written like a memo, these letters were nonetheless very personal (Guda 22) and demonstrated how much Beltran knew his children, in spite his incarceration and hiding with the New People's Army during Martial Law. Particularly, the letters from the countryside were difficult to transmit, and Beltran expressed concerns about their possible delays. His daughter Ofelia Beltran likewise affirmed that it could take months for the letters to arrive. Thus each letter was long and

comprehensive. Signed as “Daddy,” Beltran addressed his letter collectively “*Para sa Minamahal kong Asawa at mga Anak*” (“To my beloved wife and children”), but later on directed individualized advice to each of his ten children. He noted each child’s strengths and weaknesses, and focused on his children’s schooling, vices, health, disposition and participation in the movement.

As a political prisoner during Martial Law, Beltran became a celebrity case and his revolutionary family was put in the spotlight. The self was put above the rest as an example for the masses. In one poignant letter written during his birthday in prison, Beltran pointed out that a birthday is a cause for celebration, thereby affirming the self: “All this time, only you are in my mind and my heart. Perhaps you have gathered with the neighbors and the relatives with the customary expression of reliving an incident—a ‘birthday’” (Beltran 73).<sup>24</sup> He then segued that like him, his family had also received attention for campaigning for his release, and for being active in the movement. They should then continue their exemplary behavior: “We are all under focus—from Mama to Butchie, you are all wonderful and impressive” (73-74).<sup>25</sup> Beltran molded his children to become examples in the community: “Because all of you are leaders (this cannot be avoided now), your leadership should be felt through this principle ‘say what you do’ and ‘do what you say’” (76).<sup>26</sup> Through strengthening the self, one then can serve and defend the masses: “Lastly—you must cultivate your minds and strengthen your convictions for the workers and the oppressed” (76).<sup>27</sup> As a birthday gift to self, Beltran wished that his children would give their selves to others.

Taking care of one’s self was not merely for individual gain, but was also part of revolutionary praxis. He ended one of his letters, “And you Mama, while struggling, take care of your self” (Beltran 91).<sup>28</sup> One should then take care of the body to better serve others. Regarding his son’s smoking, Beltran elevated his admonitions and pointed out its consequences, not just for the individual self, but for the rest of society: “If your self-discipline weakens, you will be picked up in the dustbin of history” (83).<sup>29</sup>

Yet, Beltran showed his affection to his children by balancing the seriousness of his advice with backhanded yet good-natured humor. For instance he chided his daughter Bikwa, “And you know, you are the cutest among all of us, right? Even if you’re skinny, your beauty still shows” (Beltran 86).<sup>30</sup> And to another daughter, he wrote, “And you Botchie, oh gee! You look like Ate Oda and Olive and me, right? Beautiful! Okay no problem with that—but you are a little knocked-knee when you walk, but don’t worry because it will be gone when you grow up [...]” (86-87).<sup>31</sup>

Beltran lauded his children’s own revolutionary praxis and singled his children out individually to form their own proletarian identity. He once played his son’s recording of revolutionary songs to his comrades in the countryside (Beltran 83, 85). Beltran also called them comrades: “Onwards, Comrade Nene!” (86)<sup>32</sup> and “Long live Boyet” (88).<sup>33</sup> Beltran imparted them with this advice: “I received good news about Nene and Boyet. Maintain and further develop self-discipline, and always progress in the movement and in the struggle” (93).<sup>34</sup>

Beltran’s own proletarian identity was locked into his existence after his death, and has crystallized as a symbol of the worker’s movement. The last letter in the anthology was an open letter to Beltran read by his anonymous ghostwriter during his wake. The letter began, “Ka Bel, consider this an elegy for you. This is the last salute from someone you chose to write your speeches. I am your ghostwriter” (qtd. in Beltran 150).<sup>35</sup> He/she worked with Beltran since his days with Kilusang Mayo Uno until his stint in congress, and provided Beltran’s public “voice.” As a public figure, Beltran also projected his identity through speechwriters but maintained control of his “voice”: “You said you wanted the feelings to be true in the writings. You said that you wanted the logic of truth to prevail. You said you wanted to hear inspirational messages” (150).<sup>36</sup> The ghostwriter, writing to a dead person, conjectured what Beltran would ask him/her to write regarding his own death if he were alive:

Thus, this is what you would probably say, if you were still alive. The news is so wrong. Definitely wrong. [Like one tabloid that said you were married to Ka Mameng.] One more. To set the record straight—the roof of your house did not

have a hole. You were fixing the tarpaulin that was hung from the roof because the rains were getting in. What do you expect from low cost housing? (qtd. in Beltran 150)

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If you were alive, Ka Bel, you would return the crown sent by Gloria. You would show them that you do not need crocodile's tears. You would rather that they would pass the bills that were left hanging in Congress, like genuine land reform and increase of workers' wages.

You would show them, Ka Bel, that power resides in the ordinary people—in the factories, in the communities, in the mines and plantations, in the mountains and fields and the vast countryside. (152)<sup>37</sup>

In the end, the ghostwriter, one of the people who maintained Beltran's identity and propped up his public persona, outlived his/her "signatory." Bidding his/her last farewell, this eulogy would also be the last time he/she would speak as Beltran's ghostwriter, as he/she must also cease his/her existence with Beltran's death. Yet, the eulogy ended by negating itself as a eulogy since it affirmed that Beltran lived beyond his death:

Tomorrow, when the sun rises, we will pass you by the roofs of Congress, we will march you along the streets with no roof, and we will bring you to your final destination. Not to rest, Ka Bel—not to rest, but to remain alive!

You are alive, Ka Bel, in our memories. You are alive, Ka Bel, among the masses. You are alive, Ka Bel, in the revolutionary struggle. (qtd. in Beltran, 153)<sup>38</sup>

The last picture in the book is Beltran's stone marker at Plaza Miranda, a popular site of workers' rallies. Jose Maria Sison has written at the end of the book, "Ka Bel will always live in our hearts and minds. His legacy of fighting for national and social liberation will inspire the people in the current and further generations" (159).

### **Open-ended texts, lives, history, and revolution**

One's legacy lives on through publishing one's life story. Guda observed that with the book's publication, "Ka Osang [Beltran's wife] was happy because it's as if Ka Bel was alive again [...] through his books." For his comrades in Anakpawis and Kilusang Mayo Uno, Beltran's letters provided good lessons. Among these were how to debate in public and the importance of continually reading and writing even if engaged in activist work.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, both the lives and texts of Lacara and Beltran were open-ended to signify that the revolution is "unfinished" (cf. Ilet; Hau145). In a sense, *Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway* never attained a proper closure. The first part, which relayed Lacara's autobiography, was entitled "*Hindi Pa Tapos ang Kuwento*" ("The Story Is Not Yet Finished"), and its last section was "*Tuloy ang Laban*" ("Continue the Fight). The ending of part one reaffirmed this unfinished narrative with Lacara's will to live and his resolve in continuing the struggle despite his physical limitations:

This story does not end here and the fight still continues. I am 72 years old now, but still good somehow. Maybe my life will be longer, my body is still strong.

Long live the Revolution! (Lacara 62)<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, the ending of the second part was left hanging, as the book concluded with meeting Jose Maria Sison and founding the new Party: “The place that they are organizing was also organized by Kumander Viernes of the HMB around 1947. Then it was the break of dawn, after we talked with Ka Joma, I went on to another region” (Lacara 143).<sup>41</sup> Despite the popular (albeit cliché) imagery of waking up to a new dawn to signify the start of a new world, the book ended abruptly, with Lacara moving to another region. Lacara briefly reflected on this moment as he linked the past with his memory and the present with his action. But the revolution was not stated in grandiose terms. Rather it was as simple as going on with everyday life.

*Sa Tungki* subverted the expectation of the genre, since a memoir is usually written towards the end of one’s life and signifies retirement. Elias de la Cruz wrote in his Introduction, “When you think about it, Ka Cesar did not write a memoir (*talambuhay*) because memoirs signify the end of an active life or revolution. Ka Cesar is really aware of the unending nature of the people’s war, and his spirit is not dampened. He really lived as a revolutionary. And Ka Cesar not only makes history, but he also writes history” (16).<sup>42</sup> A cadre writing his autobiography interweaves one’s life with one’s writing into a seamless whole. At the same time, one’s life goes beyond the text.

Through these books, the reader continues the author’s life and legacy. Not only did the publication of *Ka Bel: Mga Liham* mark the beginning of further studies on Beltran, it could inspire others to continue Beltran’s advocacy. Within the metanarrative of the revolution, the texts of dead cadres are not merely static material artifacts left behind. Rather, they are dynamic conversations between a labor leader and the masses that are best translated into action. Guda concluded his Introduction with the people (“*tayo*” or inclusive “we”) answering his letters not by writing in the literal sense, but by writing the people’s history:

One can learn many lessons from Ka Bel’s letters in this collection. Nonetheless, this is only the beginning of a more comprehensive collection, not only of Ka Bel’s writings, but also of his important contributions in the labor and mass movement. It is timely for the next generation of proletarians to study Ka Bel’s life and struggle. They—or more fitting, we—will continue his writings. We will answer his letters. (Guda 23)<sup>43</sup>

In the end, autobiography as revolutionary praxis is directed to the reader who is seen as part of the collective. The continuing revolutions necessitate that their writers have unfinished selves, despite old age and death. The self is kept infinite and alive through one’s own legacy, and the writing of their life story has become *our* life stories: the endings of these books spelled the beginning of our writing and continuing the narratives that they have started.

#### NOTES:

- 1 “*Ang kanyang pagkamatay, kasingpayak ng kanyang pagkabuhay*” (Guda 11).
- 2 Fides Lim, “Crispin Beltran: the politics of the possible—Fides Lim,” *abs-cbnnews.com*, last modified May 27, 2008, <http://rp3.abs-cbnnews.com/views-and-analysis/05/27/08/crispin-beltran-politics-possible%E2%80%94fides-lim>.
- 3 “*Pero nung tinatanong ko siya bakit minsan kapag may sama ka ng loob sa aming mga magkakapatid, isusulat mo pa, puwede mo naman kaming pagalitan. Sabi niya, ‘Hindi, kasi mahal ko kayo, ayaw ko kayong masaktan.’*”
- 4 “*Baka mas tatay pa nga siya kaysa sa mga nagaakusa sa kanya. Mas human, na mapagmahal, makalinga, makabayan. Ganun na tao kaya kinikilala hindi lang dito sa Pilipinas, hindi lang sa mga kumunidad, kundi internationally.*”
- 5 Masses
- 6 “*bayani ng Rebolusyonaryong Pilipino—manggagawa, magsasaka, mangingisda, istudyante, propesyonal, minorityang nasyonalidad, relihiyoso, manunulat, artista—lahat ay mangingibig, inspirasyon ni Tatang at ng nakikibakang sambayanang Pilipino*” (Lacara 3).
- 7 “*Mayroon diyan yung mga press releases, statements, letters to the editor— ang sabi sa akin nung mga staff niya, marami din naman staff yung nagsusulat, but he will personally read it and criticize it, edit it, so he had some input on many of the writings in his name na nilabas as press releases and statements. So I think valid pa rin naman sabihin na writings in his behalf.*”

- 8 “Kasi nga hindi naman conscious si Ka Bel na magsulat na every step of his way, and to document his letters. So may mga gaps talaga. Halimbawa hindi mo nabasa yung biography basahin mo lang yung letters, hindi mo maintindihan kung ano yung chronology nung life niya. So nakatulong yung iba pang mga letters na parang kapareho naman siya ng form, na letters din naman.”
- 9 “Kasi noong time na ginagawa namin ito, hindi pa nila nalo-locate ang lahat ng letters. So yung mga na-locate nila, pinili na lang namin the letters that would represent the different aspects of Ka Bel. Halimbawa, tatlo o apat lang yung pre-Martial Law days, tapos yung nahuli siya. Parang mga representative letters. So I was not able to read everything, kahit yung dalawa niyang cabinet na puno ng documents and letters niya, hindi naming napuspusan lahat.”
- 10 “[A]ng sulating ito ay parte ng yumayabong na alternatibong literatura na nagtatampok sa mundo na ibang-iba sa ipinapakita ng literatura ng istabliment” (15).
- 11 Notably Hau (2004). Also see “Sa Tungki ng Ilong ng Kaaway: Talambuhay ni Tatang,” *Goodreads*. 31 May 2016. <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/15705103-sa-tungki-ng-ilong-ng-kaaway>.
- 12 “Pangalan—Cesar, Rodol, Marcial, Lawro, Jose, Roy, Tatang at iba pa, ipinanganak noong taong 1910, 21 ng Agosto, sa isang baryo sa tabing-dagat, sa bayan ng Bacnotan, La Union” (Lacara 19).
- 13 “Bilang dokumento, ang talambuhay ni Tatang ay nagbibigay-liwanag sa ilang historikal na pangyayari, organisasyong masa, personahe at lugar batay sa kanyang personal na pagkakaalam sa mga ito” (LINANG 11).
- 14 “Buwan ng Mayo hanggang Oktubre, pwedeng magtrabaho uli sa asendero kung gusto mo. Sari-sari ang trabaho sa tubuhan, mag-linis, magpatubig, magtanim, maglagay ng abono at iba pa. 12 oras ang trabaho dito, arawan, 80 sentimos isang araw. Ang hirap na ito’y napagtiyagaan ko nang anim na buwan. Pero nagrebelde na ang isip ko sa ganitong kondisyon.  
“Libu-libo ang manggagawa at isang tonelada lamang ang matatrabaho ng isang tao. □0.80 ang sa manggagawa, □1.20 ang sa kontratista. Ilang libong piso ang kikitain ng kontratista sa isang araw? Kahit patizwarik na pagkukawenta ay tiyak na aping-api kaming manggagawa. Wala kang magawa, dahil kapag nagreklamo ka, siya pa ang may ganang magalit. Magmumura ang halimaw na ito, magsusumbong pa sa asendero at ang asendero nama’y mag-uutos sa kanyang mga katiwalang de-baril. Magiging katulong pa ng kontratista ang mga ito para piliting magtrabaho ang mga manggagawa, na pikit-matang susunod sa kanilang gusto, pagkat kung di magtatrabaho ang mga manggagawa sa tubuhan, walang gigilingin ang pabrika sa sentral. Pero hindi nasisira ang kita ng malalaking empleyado, tulad ng mga endyiner na Hapon, sugar boiler na Hapon din, kemist na puti at iba pa, kahit di umaandar ang pabrika ay tuloy din ang sweldo nila.  
“Sa ganitong nakikita ko, lalong tumitingkad sa akin ang diwang mapanlaban. Noon pa mang mga panahong yaon, 1926-28, unti-unti nang namumuo sa aking isip na ang ganitong mga patakaran at ang hirap na dinaranas namin ay dapat hanapan ng paraan kung papaano tututulan” (Lacara 23).
- 15 “Maraming tao rito na nakakaalam na ng pakikibakang gerilya pagkat ang lugar na ito ay dating base ng mga gerilya ni Marking noong nakaraang digmaan at naging base rin ng mga Huk hanggang 1950-51” (Lacara 50).
- 16 “Kung mismong militar ang nagpunta sa amin, tiyak na babanatan namin pagkat may mahahaba naman kaming armas na nakahanda. Ang ganoong istilo ng pagguguardya ng masa ngayon ay katulad ng pagbabantay ng mga samahang magkakapitbahay noong panahon ng Hapon, noong ang mga guardyang ito ay siya ring naghahatid sa mga gerilya sa kanilang pupuntahan” (Lacara 58).
- 17 “Napalapit at napamahal ako sa kanila. Malaking bentahe yaong mapalapit ka sa masa pagkat kung sakali at prinsipyo na ang pinag-usapan, kahit di gaanong matanggap ang prinsipyo mong ilalapit sa kanila, tiyak na kahit papaano’y mamahalin ka palibhasa’y napagkilala ang kilos mo at pakikipagkapwa sa kanila liban na lamang sa ilan-ilang pusakal na kalaban” (Lacara 52).
- 18 “Sapagkat kasama ako ng mamamayan sa paglaban sa ating kaaway” (11).
- 19 “malabo” ang kanyang pananaw at paninindigan” (11).
- 20 “Simbolo ng kilusang manggagawa at militanteng oposisyon sa gobyernong Arroyo” (Guda 15).
- 21 “Si Ka Bel ay matatawag na bayani.”
- 22 “Gusto nila na maglabas ng small coffetable book with photos. Hindi lang siya text, kasi nga yung letters kailangan mong i-contextualize and visualize dahil letter siya tapos encoded lang siya. Kailangan meron siyang photos at colors.”
- 23 “Nota: Para sa ating mag-anak lang ito, kasama na sina Santi, George at Dubog. Ipabasa rin at talakayin sa kanila” (Beltran 77).
- 24 “Sa buong magdamag na ito ay kayo lamang ang tanging nasa isip at dibdib ko. Marahil nagtipon-tipon kayo at mga kapitbahay at kamag-anak bilang kinaugaliang ekspresyon ng ala-ala sa isang insidente—ang ‘kaarawan” (Beltran 73).
- 25 “Ngumit ang pinakamahalaga sa lahat ay ang bukal na pinanggagalingan, at sa panahong ito’y pinagtutuhan ng paglingon o pagitiig ng marami—ang ating buong kamaganakan, ang ating pamilya’t pamumuhay. Tayong lahat ay nasa focus—at mula kay Mama hanggang kay Butchie, kasiya-siya at kahangahanga kayo” (Beltran 73-74).
- 26 “Sapagkat lahat kayo ay lider (ito’y hindi na ninyo maiiwasan sa ngayon)—ang liderato’y ipadama sa pamamagitan ng patakrang: ‘ang sinasabi ginagawa; at ang ginagawa’y sinasabi” (Beltran 76).
- 27 “Panghuli—kailangan ang pagpapaunlad ng kaisipan at pagpapatatag ng paninindigan para sa manggagawa’t iba pang inaapi” (Beltran 76).
- 28 “At ikaw Mama, habang kumikilos alagaan mo ang iyong sarili!” (Beltran 91)
- 29 “Pupulutin ka, kapag nanghina ang iyong self-discipline, sa basurahan ng kasaysayan” (Beltran 83).
- 30 “At alam mo sa lahat sa atin, ikaw yata ang pinaka-cut, ano? Kahit na patpatin pa’y kita na ang beauty” (Beltran 86).

- 31 “At ikaw Botchie, naku! Kamukha ka ni Ate Oda at Olive at ako, di ba? Beautiful! Okay, walang problema diyan—yaong kaunting piki lang sa paglakad, pero huwag kang mag-alala sapagkat habang lumalaki ka mawawala rin yan [...]” (Beltran 86-87).
- 32 “Sulong Kasamang Nene” (Beltran 86)!
- 33 “Mabuhay ka Boyet” (Beltran 88)!
- 34 “Mabuti ang balita sa akin tungkol kay Nene at Boyet. I-maintain at paunlarin pa ang disiplina sa sarili at paunlarin lagi ang pagkilos at pakikibaka” (Beltran 93).
- 35 “Ka Bel, ituring mo na itong elehiya para sa iyo. Ito na ang huling pagpupugay sa iyo ng pinili mong magsulat ng itatalumpati mo. Ako ang iyong ghost writer” (150).
- 36 “Sabi mo, gusto mong maging matapat ang damdamin sa mga susulatin. Sabi mo, lohika ng katotohanan ang gusto mong manaig Sabi mo, pagbibigay-inspirasyon ang gusto mong marinig” (150).
- 37 “Pwes, ganito malamang ang sasabihin mo, kung nabubuhay ka pa. Maling-mali ang mga balita. Maling-mali. [Tulad ng isang tabloid na sinabing mag-asawa raw kayo ni Ka Mameng.] Isa pa. To set the record straight—hindi butas ang bubong ng bahay n’yo. Inaayos mo lang ang trapal na isinabit sa kabilya dahil umaanggi ang ulan. Ano pa nga ba ang maaasahan sa low cost na pananahanan?” (150)
- “Kung nabubuhay ka, Ka Bel, isasauli mo ang korona na padala ni Gloria. Ipapamukha mo sa kanila na hindi mo kailangan ang mga luha ng buwaya. Mas pipiliin mo na maipasa ang binitin-bitin nilang panukala sa Kongreso tulad ng tunay na reporma sa lupa at pagtaas sa sahod ng manggagawa.
- “Ipamukha mo sa kanila, Ka Bel, na ang kapangyarihan ay iinatatag na ng karaniwang mamamayan—sa mga pabrika, sa mga komunidad, sa mga minahan at plantasyon, sa mga bundok at parang at malawak na kanayunan” (152).
- 38 “Bukas, pagsikat ng bagong araw, idadaan ka namin sa bubungan ng Kongreso, imamartsa ka sa walang bubong na lansangan, at ihahatid ka namin sa huling hantungan. Hindi para humimlay, Ka Bel—hindi para himimlay, kundi para manatiling buhay!
- “Buhay ka, Ka Bel, sa aming alaala. Buhay ka, Ka Bel, sa piling ng masa. Buhay ka, Ka Bel, sa rebolusyonaryong pakikibaka.” (153)
- 39 Kenneth Guda in discussion with the author, 26 March 2014. “Si Ka Osang, natutwa siya parang nabuhay ulit si Ka Bel. Parang ganun yung sinasabi niya, na nabuhay ulit si Ka Bel through his books.”
- 40 “Hindi pa dito magwawakas ang kvento at nagpapatuloy pa ang labanan. 72 taon na ako ngayon, pumupuwede pa kahit papaano. Marahil, magtatagal pa ang buhay ko, malakas-lakas pa rin ang katawan ko.
- “Mabuhay ang Rebolusyon!” (Lacara 62)
- 41 “Ang lugar na binubuksan nila ay ginalawan na nina Kumander Viernes ng HMB noong mga 1947. Nagbubukang-livawayway, pagkatapos naming mag-usap ni Ka Joma, umalis na ako patungo sa isa pang rehiyon” (Lacara 143).
- 42 “Kung tutuusin, hindi talambuhay (memoir) and sinulat ni Ka Cesar dahil ang talambuhay ay nagpapahiwatig ng paghinto sa aktibong pamumuhay o sa rebolusyon. Alam na alam ni Ka Cesar ang pangmatagalang katangian ng digmang bayan at hindi siya pinanghinaan ng loob. Totoong nabubuhay siyang isang rebolusyonaryo. At hindi lamang lumilikha ng kasaysayan si Ka Cesar, sinusulat din niya ang kasaysayan” (16).
- 43 “Maraming mapupulot sa mga liham ni Ka Bel sa koleksiyong ito. Gayunman, sana’y panimula pa lamang ito ng isang mas kumprehensibong koleksyon, hindi lamang ng mga sulatin ni Ka Bel, kundi ng mahahalagang mga ambag niya sa kilusang paggawa at kilusang masa. Napapanahong pag-aralan ng bagong mga henerasyon ng mga proletaryado ang buhay at pakikibaka ni Ka Bel. Sila—o mas angkop, tayo—ang magpapatuloy ng kanyang mga sulatin. Tayo ang sasagot sa kanyang mga liham” (Guda 23).

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