

Pagpánaw: The Solon House Deaths, Wakes, and Culture of Grief

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Abstract

A journey through three generations, *Pagpánaw* answers the question: How does a family hold space for grief and construct meaning around death? Tethered to cultural memory theories, the paper examines death and grief in the smallest unit of society—the Solon House, also a structure in the village of Mabolo in Cebu City, Philippines. Through autoethnography and phenomenology, the exhumed data in the form of written reconstructed memory evocative vignettes and narrated lived experiences gathered from chat and interview transcripts are analyzed and coded to extract and name grief and its many faces and describe the spaces it inhabits. The collated data reveal the rituals and cultural beliefs not only limited to the family, but also part of a larger death and grief culture. A belief example, mind the sumpa (counterspell) when arranging the funeral in the house to avoid successive deaths—the coffin placement of the recently deceased family member must not be in the same spot as the earlier held funeral. One of the offshoots of the *Katingaláhan* study, the paper also lightly touches on the curious connection between ghost sighting or katingaláhan manifestation and the family's concepts of grief and death. It informs other area studies and disciplines including Asian studies, thanatology, memory, and vernacular language heritage.

Keywords: cultural studies, place memory, death, grief

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Introduction

How does a family hold space for grief and construct meaning around death? This is the overarching question the *Pagpánaw* paper tries to answer.

Pagpánaw Defined

Traced as far back as proto-Austronesian, proto-Malayo-Polynesian, and proto-Oceanic, *pánaw* and its reconstruction means “travel, journey, go, walk away, depart (on foot), leave on a journey” and “die; death” (Blust et al., 2023). Understandably, *pagpánaw* contains the words *pán* (bread; make bread) associated with “life” and “sustaining life” which can *pánas* (erase) hunger, shifting to mean “death” especially —*sa láing kalibútan* (Wolff, 1972). Suffice to say, *Pagpánaw* essentially contains life, journey, and death—a person’s entire lifespan.

Cultural Memory

How societies remember their past to construct identity in the present is the realm of cultural memory, the “handing down of meaning” from mimetic memory, memory of things, and communicative memory that functions as identity construct, adaptation, and resistance (Assmann, 2011; Halbwachs, 1950; Nora, 1989; Steigler, 1998). The act of remembering reworks to re-define and re-construct depiction—*paghulagway*—and identity, a constant update grounded in the language of the current milieu (Kintanar-Alburo, 2026). Collective memory finds interest in developmental memory, neuroscience, reconstruction, autobiographical memory and narratives, etcetera (Conway, 2001; Elliot, 2016; Larcy & Stark, 2013; Nelson & Fivush, 2004; Roediger III et al., 1993; Roediger III, 2001; Schneider, 2011; Smorti, 2011).

Place and Space

A space with meanings, the Solon House, a place located in the village of Mabolo in Cebu City built before the Second World War (descriptive approach), celebrates not only history, but importantly, family and intergenerational stories; a reflexive space that welcomes (home)birthing, accommodates living, and supports dying, death and grief (social constructionist approach). The family’s perception and lived experience connects them to the physical structure and spaces through meaning attachment (phenomenological approach), the root of place-making and knowledge of places (Del Aguila et al., 2019; El-Bizri, 2018; Halbwachs, 1950).

Death and Grief

The finality or temporal ideas on death are usually associated with grief. Origins and beliefs surrounding death by early Filipinos are documented in Demetrio (1966) while attempts to capture how the dead remain and linger on in the minds of the living are in Ruin (2019). For the current paper, *Pagpánaw* takes from the psychological and philosophical approaches using the theories of five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross, 1997, 2026), sixth stage of grief in perspective (Kessler, 2019), grief meaning reconstruction (Neimeyer, 2006), and phenomenology (Heidegger, 2008).

Autoethnography

Defined as an autobiographical genre of academic writing that draws on and analyzes the lived experience of the author and connects researcher insights to self-identity, cultural and communication practices, traditions, shared meanings, and emotions utilized in family research, autoethnography is the best method for *Pagpánaw* (Adams & Manning, 2015; Poulos, 2021). Because the self is a basic unit of culture “consistently connected to others”, my sharing of personal narratives with verisimilitude as qualitative data, which bares the most vulnerable experiences that shaped me, gives me the agency to interpret them as best I can (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2022; Beattie, 2024; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2016). As an autoethnographer writing *Pagpánaw* vignettes, I help preserve intangible heritage that embodies culture and enable “cultural continuity” (Kintanar-Alburo, 2015). Autoethnography bridges creative writing through vignettes to heritage studies to memory studies, and goes beyond genealogy and memory (Ortiz-Vilarelle, 2021).

Phenomenology

Smith (2018) defines phenomenology as “the study of structures of experiences, or consciousness” which examines how death and grief appear to the Solon House and their meanings. Phenomenology, a first-person vantage point, is a suitable method for dissecting the *pagpánaw* lived-experience narratives of my family, including the ethical handling and careful analysis of how grief is embodied through rituals, how our home shaped the family’s death and grief sensory experiences, and how generational mourning is observed. *Pagpánaw* digs into my family's personal narratives from interviews and group chat transcripts—the primary source of data.

Summary

Briefly, the *Pagpánaw* paper tethers to cultural memory as it maneuvers a three-generation walk with and inside the Solon House through autoethnography and phenomenology, sweeping every nook, crevice, and corner of embodied experience, trauma, and reconstructed memory for a collective meaning of death and grief.

Party and Silence: Death of the Solon Patriarch and the Solon Bishop

My earliest memory of death was that it felt like a party without balloons. At least that was how it seemed like during my paternal grandfather's funeral in our ancestral house. I was barely two years old. My faint, reconstructed memory included lights all over the place, more lights near the casket, which was taller than me, so that my mama would carry me in her arms to take a look through the casket’s glass at my sleeping grandfather. There were servings of food and drinks, novena recitations, various games, like cards, bingo, and mahjong, and us kids ran around after endless amin to elders. There were various kinds of emotion and gesture roasting—laughter, cries, hugs, explosive greetings, reunions with relatives and old friends from distant places. There might be other deaths and funerals of family and relatives in our eskinita and barangay where I was taken along by my parents, and I surmise they come in the same experience to a child—a party without balloons.

However, when I was about eight years old, I remember being ushered by my Papa from the family bedroom to the sala to meet and ‘bless’ the man reading a newspaper, sitting near the sala-balcony door Sa Taas (upstairs). I was asked to call him Titi Benny.

I reached for his hand, which he obliged to give, then tapped the back of his hand to my forehead—the gesture of *amin*, a sign of respect to elders and for elders to shower blessings on the young.

That was the only encounter I had with Titi Benny. My mind as a kid was always occupied with finishing homework, a license before playing with cousins and neighbors.

The next scene in the same area Sa Taas sometime later was the arrival of my Tita Eva and her siblings from Iligan. Papa rushed to open the balcony door and meet them, and that was when I heard my Tita Eva calling my papa's name and saw her break down in tears. They were comforting each other on the balcony.

I was standing next to the wooden railings of the stairs near the altar wall looking at grief—immensely hovering from the balcony to the sala before taking on the entire Solon House.

Across the balcony door and about five feet from the sala floor protruded the altar where the large portrait of the Sacred Heart of Jesus hung with backlights. The portrait was what anyone can see from the bottom of the stairs climbing up. That was what Tiya Lucy sees as she climbs up the stairs to meet her nieces. When she arrived Sa Taas where I was still standing next to the wooden railings of the stairs near the altar, I asked Tiya Lucy what happened to Titi Benny.

Tiya replied with a heavy silence. Her eyes were like the large *tangke sa tubig* (water tank) Sa Gawas (outside) our home, which is connected to the *puso* (water pump)—after four hundred ninety-nine manual pumps are done—full and only a pump away to overflow.

The weight and intensity of that particularly unnamed silence was inconsolable.

It was grief desperately yearning to find closure.

Titi Benny—known by many as His Most Excellency Bishop Bienvenido Solon Tudtud—Tatay Bido and Bapa Benny to close friends, was the first Prelate of Iligan and Marawi. For everyone, he was a dearly loved bishop. For Papa and Tiya Lucy, he was first and foremost their first cousin, our beloved family member.

Titi Benny perished in the plane crash on board Philippine Airlines flight 206, the one from Manila on its way to Baguio on June 26, 1987. Every single soul in that flight perished—all fifty of them. Nothing was recovered. Everything was ash.

How does a family mourn this kind of departure?

The scene of grief in the balcony that I witnessed as a child would make sense decades later when my generation lost our eldest first cousin, our Manoy. But we were able to

see our Manoy, held his funeral, and saw him off to his burial. Papa, Tiya Lucy, Tita Eva and the family never had that chance to do the same for Titi Benny.

Inside the Solon House that time in 1987, some sinister fiend named Death found a way to prick all colorful balloons, bursting them all at once. Death turned our home unbearably gray and silent.

Reflexivity Turn

My reconstructed memories in paragraph 1 are gathered based on later experiences of death rituals at home. I pieced together the few snippets of my lived experiences (e.g. lights, height of the casket, mama carrying me to view my sleeping grandfather) to form meaning, following the notions of autobiographical and narrative memories as well as memory reconstruction (Conway, 2001; Elliot, 2016; Nelson & Fivush, 2004; Lacy & Stark, 2013; Roediger III et al., 1993; Roediger III, 2001; Schneider, 2011; Smorti, 2011). Writing the vignettes, Jackson's (2026) words ring true: "Every elder who passes without sharing their knowledge represents an irreplaceable loss." Tatay Andy and Titi Benny, whom I knew only from the stories shared by elders and palpable evidence of typewritten manuscripts (please see *Figures 1 and 2*) are irreplaceable losses. To wonder what writing would have been like for me had I the good fortune of conversing and learning from "dialogues" about their crafts is missed-chance in action, a particular grief I named **Anúgon**—a thought, a feeling to describe grief in a small "what a pity" incident or a large-scale lament (Binisaya.com, 2007). The elder Solon writers' deaths meant a period of wrestling with my own identity, so that I had to find a semblance of connection at universities (studied and taught language and literature). The identity wrestling is not isolated as my 4th generation niece wrote:

Papa mentioned how Lolo Andres dabbled on a lot of things, [...] worked in radio, he was also part of a group that created poems using old Bisaya language [...] wrote scripts and not just poems. I remember being surprised and happy when I heard that, Ate said maybe that's where I get it from and that really made me think – if our passion and interests can be genetically inherited? Did I get it from him or did I choose this path? Either way, I'm very glad that we share the same interests and love for words. Hearing that he was also a writer gave me comfort somehow. (Solon Descendants, 2022, p. 15)

She went on to share her childhood experience seeing the ghost of Tatay Andy sitting on the rocking chair in the sala with a reflective reference to *anúgon*:

I noticed there was a glow, I then saw a bright apparition sitting on the rocking chair, I walked closer and that's when I could make out his face but since I didn't know who he was then (I only knew it was Lolo Andres when Kuya Mark showed me a photo of him the next day) I ended up running. I wonder sometimes if I hadn't run away then what would've happened, what would he have said? (Solon Descendants, 2022, p. 16)

Reflecting on spectral and Ruin's (2019) "the dead remain and linger on the minds of the living as an incomplete process of mourning" idea, I found myself curious on how a child like my niece had an "incomplete process of mourning" when she did not even know or meet her own great grandfather in the first place. Interestingly, Steigler (1998) tackled three types of memories: (1) genetic—through DNA, (2) epigenetic—through the central nervous system, and (3) epiphylogenetic—through language, rituals, books, etcetera. Can incomplete mourning be passed down through genetic and epigenetic memories? Epiphylogenetic—evidenced by the

manuscripts of Tatay and Titi plus the Solon House's ongoing intangible heritage documentation as bridge linking ancestors and descendants—is an accessible “matter of survival” memory storage for generations down the line that longed for connection and identity like my niece and I did (Kintanar-Alburo, 2015).

Full Circle: Death of the Solon Matriarch

My first vivid encounter with death was with my Lola Nena, my paternal grandmother and the Solon House Matriarch. I was in first year high school, around thirteen years old.

I was present when Lola Nena succumbed to a heart attack. Lola was seated in her favorite chair Sa Silong (ground floor), near the dining area and the kitchen. Deep, resonant snoring was heard, overpowering the volume of the radio drama she was listening to while holding her hand-made paspas (mosquito duster). The snoring was no longer normal. I went closer to her and tried to wake her up. My cousins also did the same, but our Lola would not wake up. My Mama, who was washing clothes Sa Gawas (outside) the house near the puso (water pump), and Ate, my cousin's girlfriend, a registered nurse who was off-duty at that time, rushed to Lola's aid. Then there was such a commotion, a panic difficult to ignore. Mama instructed me in the form of a command to call an ambulance.

Still in shock and with no prior briefing what to do during emergency cases like this, I dialed the Emergency Rescue Unit Foundation (ERUF) number. It took a while between panic and fear in my Lola's life for me to realize that I was repeatedly screaming the complete address of our home to the ERUF responder on the other end of the phone because the responder would not hurry. They kept trying to calm me down. They were asking for landmarks.

‘Unsa may kinaduolan nga building o tindahan sa inyoha?’ (What's the nearest building or store near your home?)

I replied, ‘Luyo sa Caltex, duol sa simbahan.’ (At the back of Caltex, near the church.) The responder assured that the rescuers would arrive in a few minutes.

I put the phone receiver down and screamed, “Padung na ang ERUF!” (ERUF is on its way!)

Everyone was hysterical. More cousins and elders arrived at the scene where my Lola was still heavily snoring. High on adrenaline, Tiyo carried the dead weight of our Lola from the rocking chair to the dining table. My Mama and Ate tried to revive our Lola with the heart pumping cardiopulmonary resuscitation that seemed like forever at that time. When the ERUF paramedics arrived, they carried my revived Lola onto the stretcher, rolled her out of the house, then slid her in the back of the ambulance. A family member went in to accompany Lola.

An awkward disbelief vacuumed the Solon House. Intense. Suspended in the air like dark, nimbus clouds. A stillness gathering storms like the one before Super Typhoon Ruping released its wrath at our home barely two years prior. Several minutes after the ambulance drove off, Category 5 made its landfall. Silence broke free. Stillness turned

to chaos. Packed with maximum sustained winds and intense wind gust, each family member emotionally shared their experience at the eye of the storm.

If there was one thing that must be said: My Lola Nena was a fighter. She survived the second World War evacuating her family—and with her three children between the ages of six and four, no less—to the mountains of Cantipla in Balamban, the death of her two young sons at the age of seven years old and of six months, and the death of her husband. She lived on for her living children and grandchildren, managing the home as usual. There was no heart attack that could bring her down without a fight.

How does a family care for the sick and the dying?

Reflexivity Turn

The reconstruction of this memory was done in drafts and cross-references with the family's lived memories. A couple of actors during the emergency in my initial recall were not the ones present. For example, I thought it was my cousin Manoy B who carried Lola from the chair to the dining table. Mama, an early septuagenarian, corrected me and said it was my Tiyo M. I cross-checked with my cousin Manoy B and he said he was at work when the emergency happened. Mama was correct. I cross-checked with Tiyo M, an early octogenarian, who remembered being at the scene but forgot about carrying Lola's dead weight and attributed the lifting to adrenaline. Because memory is pliable, the practice of collaborative memory reconstruction is essential as it involves the family's "weaving together episodes and facts" into "a plausible story of our past" (Roediger III et al., 1993). While the experience in the vignette's paragraphs 4–6 taught me the value of landmarks in swiftly locating destinations, my elder cousins underwent rescue response training and became ERUF volunteers themselves, which was why, later on, Rescue 911 hosted by William Shatner became a must-watch television show at home.

Atiman: The Solon House Caring Rituals

Lola Nena spent months in the hospital. Family members took turns pagatiman (caring) for Lola. This went on until the family decided—her children, to be precise—to transform a quarter of the Solon House sala into a private hospital room, so that Lola Nena could finally come home. Years later, I understood that it is customary for the Solons to come home and rest eternally—as much as humanly possible, no one wanted to die in the hospital.

The hospital room in the sala was patient-ready when Lola arrived. Oxygen tanks, suction, and other medical paraphernalia were visibly installed and placed.

A hole in Lola's throat was a normal sight. It was an incision made so that a circular device was inserted as the entry point of the tube used to suck out phlegm, making my Lola unable to speak and only communicate through eye blinks or us lip-reading what she was saying. Older cousins became her private nurses—changing her dextrose, oxygen tanks, taking her vital signs and logging them, managing her medication schedule and such. Everyone had a role in caring. Older cousins taught us younger ones to do the same. My younger brother Mark was braver and learned before I did—I never had the emotional capacity to watch someone close in such a painful, delicate state. He

taught me how to execute the suction, adjust the dextrose drip, ease the bed pan in, wipe Lola's parched lips with a damp cotton ball, etcetera.

At least I was able to play the piano daily. Every day I sat on the piano bench in the sala, ran my fingers on the ebony and ivory keys, and played, among other pieces, Lola's favorite: Vera's Theme. Maybe Vera's Theme meant something more to my Lola, because that was always what she would request for me to play whenever I practiced. Before the fatal attack, Lola would climb up the stairs from her rocking chair Sa Silong when I started playing. I would know she was the one climbing up the stairs—she had a signature dragging of her steps from the staircase to the sala. Whenever she would land that final step, she always turned her face toward me while I played, catching her looking at me when I occasionally look up from the keys to note read. Opening the windows and the balcony-sala door as her way of telling the neighbors, 'Apo ni nako!,' a glow of pride on her face as she dragged her steps around, her daster (long skirt) sweeping the floors of the sala—the same signature dragging steps that would, in many late nights and witching hours later, haunt Kuya Andro, our uncle, who, even after Lola's passing, continued to sleep in our sala during his college days stay in the Solon House.

In caring for our Lola, love, gentleness, and compassion became a blueprint on how the family should take care of the sick and dying. For two months, our care routine went on—check and log the vital signs, change the dextrose, suction the phlegm, change the adult diaper, turn the body side to side and tap the back, monitor the oxygen tank, etcetera. We weaved caring into the fibers of our daily life, reporting to Lola duties and living our lives as usual—school and work, play and relax. No full disruption.

In the sala in the last quarter of '92, we celebrated Lola's 70th birthday, had our Christmas with her, and days into the New Year's, on my birthday, Lola Nena joined Tatay Andy. Mama knocked on my bedroom door not for my mañanita, but for information about Lola's passing. A cold breeze kissed my cheeks. Then the wailing and cries of death poured in, flooding our home.

How does one celebrate a birthday and a wake on the same day? How does a family celebrate the coming of a new year while in mourning?

Reflexivity Turn

I realized earlier on that I stopped playing Lola's favorite piece when I shared the grief story to family. However, the thought process in the above vignette's paragraph 4 landed on the paper a little differently. From radio drama to music, listening had been Lola's companion. In Atiman, music was (and is) part of the Solon House's caring ritual. It was (and is) a language fluently used by family members, the majority of whom are introverted—choosing a song for the specific ordeal to play on the cassette (Spotify in the current times) to communicate care—a hug without intruding, an assuring "I see you" without words, without leaving our room. This language is an intimate atiman which, in a larger reach, is similar to Heidegger's (2008) *Sorge*. Like music, Atiman's paragraphs 1–2 show how fascinatingly fluid a solid structure such as the house move and dismantle its interior elements—holding old spaces with new meanings—to accommodate and care for the family (Del Aguila et al., 2019; El-Bizri, 2018; Halbwachs, 1950).

Pánaw: The Solon House Death Rituals

Embalsamar

Lola was embalmed in the sala on my birthday. Her body was laid down on the long bamboo bench next to the long glass table where my annual birthday cake from La Fortuna, spaghetti, leche flan, maja blanca, lechon, humba, juice and soft drinks used to be displayed. Embalming paraphernalia like jars and hoses surrounded the table and bench instead of colorful balloons.

Papa held my hand and accompanied me Sa Taas to the sala where my Lola lay in repose. He allowed me to witness how the blood and fluids from my Lola's body were sucked out and explained why there was a need to inject formalin to preserve the body for a few more days. After the blood was sucked out and funneled into the jars before the formalin injection was performed, he led me away Sa Silong to help my Mama with chores. Papa only called me back to the sala when the air cleared. He stayed with me while we watched the carers put make-up on my Lola's face. Family members were also there to witness how caring for our dead loved one is performed, while elders do their duties: help put on Lola's fresh clothes and shoes, rosary in hand, scapular around her neck, and habak around her waist. I was front row witness through it all until Lola was entered into her casket.

Lugar sa Lungon

A specific belief was followed after: lugar sa lungon (placement of the casket). As sumpa (counterspell) preventing a series of family deaths, the casket must NOT be placed in the same spot as the last deceased family member's wake. For example, if in the prior wake of a dearly departed the casket was placed in the library then the next wake must not be in the same spot. Lola Nena's casket was specifically placed following the sumpa.

Haya

The Solon House sala was transformed again to accommodate the haya (wake). We put down, cleaned, and kept away the section of the sala where the hospital private room was located, making way for sofa and chairs to cater to family, relatives, neighbors and friends who would come to **bilar**, a custom for visitors to stay up until dawn in order to accompany and console the grieving family. To stay awake while nagbilar, traditions are observed: games like mahjong, bingo, and baraha; tagay (drinking session); and the serving of overflowing beverage and food. Stories and gossip are also brewed, if only those could raise the dead back to life. Guitar playing and singing of songs and other ways to comfort the bereaved family are allowed.

Novena sa Siyam Ka Adlaw

The family called on our neighbor and distant relative, Lola Mary, the suking mananabtan (our known prayer leader) to lead the family and nangbilar (visitors) for siyam ka adlaw (nine days) to pray the novena for the dead. The novena was always scheduled in the evening, around seven o'clock. Before the nine days end, I would have memorized the entire repertoire.

Our elders assigned us tasks. They approached the large daily events with the concept of divide and conquer, assigning us with the following: (1) suwat sa pangalan—keep the book where the visitors suwat sa pangalan (write their name), (2) dawat sa abuloy—treasurer who receives the donation and keeps the list, (3) tig-andam—a team to purchase and prepare the snacks, (4) tig-silbi—a team to bring the snacks from the kitchen area to the sala.

The evening of my birthday was also the first day of the novena. With bright lights on huge lampstands guarding the open casket plus all the fluorescent lights Sa Silong, Sa Taas, and Sa Gawas; visitors filling our home; and food and drinks being served, it was like a party again—without balloons.

***Lubong*¹**

A couple of days before the nine days novena ended, the lubong (funeral and interment) was held. In the Solon House, it is customary that the lubong starts with a mass officiated by a Catholic priest, usually one who is close to the family. It may be held at home or in St. Joseph The Patriarch Parish Church, the closest church to our home and itself a site of *katingaláhan*² where we were baptized and had other Sacred Sacraments.

Lola Nena's mass was held at home where the priest consecrated the casket with holy water and incense. After, a few elders gave their eulogy. Laughter and tears broke during the eulogies, allowing everyone to celebrate Lola's life while also mourning. Papa tasked me to send off my Lola while playing Vera's Theme on the piano. So, I did. Prior carrying the casket out of the sala and down Sa Gawas, all family members walked under Lola's casket while it was being lifted up by male family elders and members, another sumpa ritual to ensure there will be no series of deaths in the family. After I walked under the casket, I went back to the piano and continued playing Lola's favorite song while the rest of the family members were taking turns doing the ritual. After the sumpa, Lola's casket rested on the shoulders of male family elders and members before it was slowly carried out of the sala, climbed down the balcony stairs, and walked Sa Gawas to the purlon (a coach for the dead).

That was the last time I played Vera's Theme on the piano. I felt the song only belonged to my Lola and allowing her to take the song to her grave was my own way of dealing with grief. Maybe. Because it took more than half a decade after the funeral before I was able to play Vera's Theme again. But always, always, I would dedicate it to my Lola.

Prosesyon

The prosesyon (procession) of families, relatives, and friends of Lola Nena followed her purlon. Some walked, others rode in a car or van. The prosesyon from the Solon

¹ The Santo Entierro (Holy Burial in *Figure 3*) is the Solon House's panata (vow) every Holy Week's Good Friday procession. Now reaching the 5th Generation, the devotion was handed down to us from Tatay Andy's father.

² In Gumanay, J. (2024, September 21) Faith and Fear in the Church: An Analysis of Supernatural Tales in St. Joseph the Patriarch Parish Mabolo paper presentation

House to the cemetery was slow. There was no hurry. No appointment to miss. Each one sending off my Lola was allowed to grieve in slow pace.

Several barangay tanod (village policemen) assisted the prosesyon to ensure the traffic along the national road all the way to the burial place was smooth. Also, a part of the **abuloy** custom, passengers of jeepneys and other vehicles we came across threw out coins at the prosesyon while those who were in the prosesyon picked the coins up and added them to the abuloy. On the purlon, a sad song of mourning played on repeat as the prosesyon went on—usually, and in this case, ‘Hindi Kita Malilimutan’.

When the purlon and prosesyon reached the cemetery, the interment took place. A rectangular hole was already dug out for Lola’s final resting place. We had a last viewing of our Lola Nena before the lid of her casket was shut and the entire casket was lowered six feet to the ground. We took a bit of the earth to throw at the casket, a ritual of burying our loved one ourselves, before the caretakers in the cemetery shovel in more soil to cover the hole in the ground. The gravestone inscribed with my Lola’s complete name, date of birth, date of death, and epitaph became a mark of her new permanent address, with Tatay Andy, neighbors to departed in-laws and relatives.

How long does a family mourn the death of a loved one?

Subô: The Solon House Grief Rituals

Quarenta Dias

The Catholic belief of Quarenta Dias (Forty Days) or the end of mourning is customary in the Solon House. Quarenta Dias after the death of Lola Nena, a novena mass was offered for the eternal repose of her soul. On this 40th day, the family believed that Lola’s soul had completed the transition to the afterlife, and that she no longer walked the earth. The living family members gathered together at home for a celebration in the form of a special meal, a kind of party thrown, trusting that Lola is in a better place, or heaven, with all the ancestors and family members who passed on.

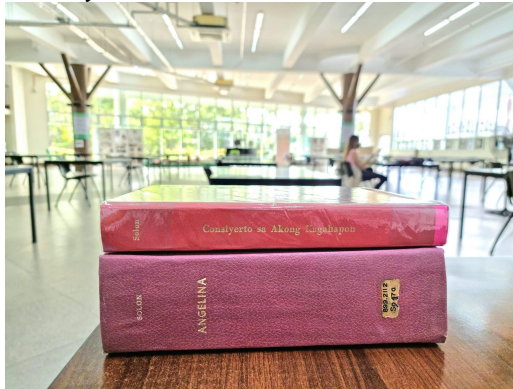
Although grief rituals suggest an end to mourning, Lola Nena’s ghost continues to walk the signature footsteps in the Solon House.

Reflexivity Turn

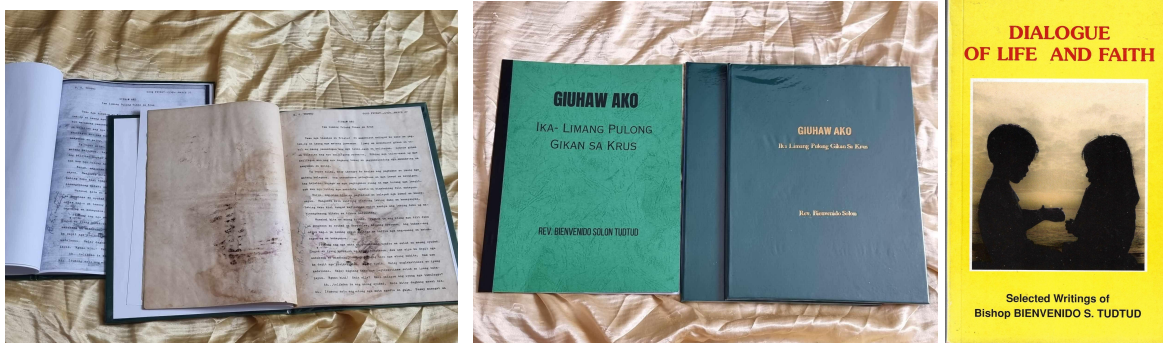
I used the two autoethnographic evocative vignettes to do the heavy lifting (Pitard, 2016). The Pánaw section shows the general template of the death rituals— at least in the 90’s. While there is an end to mourning as prescribed by the Quarenta Dias grief ritual, in actuality there is no telling anyone when to stop mourning nor is there a calendar scheduling grief’s end. In fact, it may never end, only carried with grace throughout life (Kessler, 2026; Kubler-Ross, 2026). After answering the “whys” embark on the Solon projects, I am convinced that this paper is a fraction of my grief work.

Figure 1

Epiphylogenetic: Two of Tatay Andy's Original Manuscripts at the University of San Carlos Library

**Figure 2**

Epiphylogenetic: One of Titi Benny's Original Manuscript and Its Copies Donated to the Cebuano Studies Center, and the Posthumously Published Book

**Figure 3**

Epiphylogenetic in Rituals: The Solon House Santo Entierro Panata. (Solon Archive: Semana Santa Collection by Lucas Andre Tancawan Solon)



Pagpánaw Embodied: The Solon House Death and Grief Phenomena

The tables hereafter show the triangulation of concepts and the family's embodied grief.

Table 1

Phenomenological Themes Triangulation: Psychology, Philosophy, and Heritage Preservation

Psychology	Philosophy	Heritage Preservation
Stages of Grief (*Kessler's, 2019, 2026; Kubler-Ross's, 1997, 2026; **Neimeyer, 2001)	Phenomenology (Heidegger, 2008)	Cebuano Language (Binisaya.com, 2007; Kintanar-Alburo, 2015, 2026; Wolff, 1972)
Stage 1- Denial: meaningless feelings, surviving the loss	das Man: (the Anyone) – the Being's alienation	Paglimod (denial)
Stage 2- Anger: disconnecting, feeling abandoned	Geworfenheit: (throw, thrownness) – no control	Kalágot (disgust)
Stage 3- Bargaining: guilt, staying in past, negotiating ways out of hurt	das Noch-nicht: (the not-yet) – possibilities	Namásin (maybe, hoping)
Stage 4- Depression: deepening grief, withdrawing from life	Angst: – anxiety and dread	Kasubô (sadness)
Stage 5- Acceptance: maneuvering the reality that our loved one is mortally gone	Sein-zum-Tode: (being-towards-death) – embracing truth	Pagdawat (acceptance)
Stage 6- Meaning* & Reconstruction**: rebuilding meaning	Sinn: – meaning	Úyokan (essence)
		Anúgon (missed-chance) <i>extracted from vignette 1</i>

Table 2

The Solon House Pagpánaw Embodiment and Phenomenological Themes

Phenomenological Themes	The Solon House Pagpánaw Embodiment
1. Paglimod	<i>The First Loss:</i> kay mao ang pina ka first na experience na death (S14G); Lolo King was the first loss (S114G) <i>Sudden Death:</i> Manoy's passing was so sudden—he was cheerful when we last spoke, and then he suffered a stroke. I learned about it the following day, and within a few days, he was gone. (S34G) <i>Difficulty in expressing:</i> Sige pud balik balik sa ako huna huna ang phrase nga “mao ba?” murag dili maka tou ba (S143G); <nihilak ka?> Yeh ofc (S54G) <i>Shock:</i> At first, it did not feel real. (S114G); the feeling was always a mix of shock and heaviness (S104G); it didn't feel real (S104G); ...felt confusing and almost impossible to accept...(S114G).
2. Kalágot	<i>Witnessing pain & suffering:</i> dakog impact kay na feel niya kaayu ang pain (S14G) <i>Primary caregiver difficulty:</i> Ako bayay nag atiman ato. (S43G); mag ANTOS samtang g trapuhan g ingnn nako nga pahuway na sa imng kasakit DNA mahingawa. (S43G) <i>Anger and difficulty in Expressing:</i> Kung naay mopanaw either family or kaila, tungod kay introvert ko, kasagaran wala ko ka socialize, spend time or ka bonding pirmi, (S143G); Awkward pud ko kay pirmi ko dili kahibaw unsaon nako

	pag istroya ang direct family, ang ending, wala koy ma istorya. (S143G); The most difficult losses for me to process (S34G); naglagut ug naguol (S93G).
3. <i>Namásin</i>	I remember questioning how someone who had always been present could suddenly no longer be there (S114G).
4. <i>Kasubô</i>	<i>Sadness and Grief:</i> Sad ko sa death ni lolo (S14G); Sakit to oy Kang mama (S43G); hilak pod sa kaluoy (S43G); aside sa kamingaw (S143G); I felt shocked katong and sad pag kabalo nako (S54G); pwerteng hilak nakos sakyanan (S63G); it made me feel really sad. I still miss them until now. (S84G); very sad (S93G); I didn't fully understand what death meant back then, but I could feel the sadness around me. (S104G); Grief came in waves, there were days filled with sadness and longing, and sometimes regret for the words I never got to say. (S104G); ...the first time I felt a deep kind of sadness and helplessness, a pain that came from something I could not change or control. (S114G); I was really just sad. (S124G); I was still young when they passed, I didn't know such emotions, other than sadness, exist. (S124G); naa gyud ang kasubo sa pag hinomdom sa memories ug naay moment nga numb kay dili maka tou. (S143G)
5. <i>Pagdawat</i>	<i>Time and acceptance:</i> but in other side happy pud KO Kay nahumana iya pag antus SA iya sakit (S93G); normal lng ang pain nga mawagtangan ka ug love ones (S133G); I can accept death (S24G); at first lisod.pero khbaw ko naa Ra cya perme.dawaton jud bisag lisod (S43G); At first, it was hard to accept because I didn't fully understand it, but as time went by, I slowly learned how to accept it even if it still hurts sometimes (S84G); but we both have a good time before he depart (S93G); Acceptance didn't happen overnight. It came little by little (S104G); Over time, that disbelief slowly turned into understanding (S114G); I began to accept that his absence was real, even if it still felt heavy in my heart (S114G); gidawat nako ang pag pass away nila tungod dako ko (S133G).
6. <i>Úyokan</i>	<i>Meaning-making:</i> Through this experience, I learned that grief does not disappear, but becomes something we learn to carry with love and remembrance (S114G); Ang kani nga idea mo pabilin nako bisan pag nahuman na ang lubong or buwan na ni agi (S143G); just to continue living (S124G). So iya burial, unique pud, Hawaiian style Sea Burial sa Chubu (Nagoya) Airport. Nag rent mi ug gamay nga Yacht nya gi scatter namo iya ashes sa dagat, so everytime mo uli mi Japan, inig landing namo sa Chubu Airport, mura mi gi sugat sa ako Mother-in-law (S143G).
7. <i>Anúgon</i> and other themes	<i>Anúgon: 1-Dying Young:</i> og young pa kaayu siya. (S14G); <i>2-Missed chance to see the dying:</i> not sudden, but it was just as painful in a different way. We didn't get the chance to see her while she was sick, which made it even harder to accept. (S34G). <i>Dealing with Death (Mental, Physical, Social) 1-Physical activities:</i> Na deal nako by stabilizing my emotions through fun activities. (S14G); Gipa aagi nko ug hilak ug inom (S73G); Atiman langs bata (S43G). <i>2-Remembering:</i> I just thought of the good memories (S54G); through remembering them, hearing stories about their lives, and realizing that even though they are gone, the love and lessons they shared are still with us. (S104G); everytime maka hinomdom ko sa nipanaw (S143G); ug sa memories (S143G). <i>3-Belief:</i> everyone will one day become part of the cycle of life and death. (S14G); Cge lang pamesa (S43G); na learn nga someday

	magkita ra mi (S133G); gidawat nako ang kamatayon moagi jud ta ana ky mao na ang plano sa Atong Langitnong Amahan (S133G). <i>4-Thinking of own mortality</i>: kay at the same time ma remind sa akoang pagka mortal nga mamatay man pud diay ko... (S143G); ma remindan ko anha pud diay ko padung. (S143G). <i>5-Support System</i>: nag comfort dayun ka namo (S14G); mga ig agaw nako...gi help ko og cheer up (S54G). <i>6-Memory and Place</i>: sa room nato na old (S14G); Naa mangko sa Talisay at the time (S54G); ddto mi sa Compostela.. pagpadulong namo og uli dapat nami sa liloan nanawag si mama na namatay nas daddy (S63G).
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***Pagpánaw* Concluded: The Solon House Collective Identity**

The Solon House holds space for grief and constructs meaning around death through intimate and anthropological ancestral practices, giving them their collective identity: *Atiman* (caring rituals), *Pánaw* (death rituals), *Subô* (grief rituals). Moreover, the Solon House's grief embodiment is tied to the larger cultural systems through overarching phenomenological themes: *Paglimod* (denial), *Kalágot* (disgust), *Namásin* (hoping), *Kasubô* (sadness), *Pagdáwat* (acceptance), *Úyokan* (essence), *Anúgon* (missed-chance). In conclusion, *Pagpánaw* tethered to cultural memory as it maneuvered a three-generation walk with and inside the Solon House through autoethnography and phenomenology, sweeping every nook, crevice, and corner of embodied experience, trauma, and reconstructed memory for a collective meaning of death and grief.

Contribution to Knowledge

The paper will be utilized in the writing of or included as a chapter in the family's second book project. Additionally, its discussion informs other area studies and disciplines, including Asian studies, hauntology, vernacular language heritage, philosophy, and thanatology.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that no AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate, refine, or correct the content in the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of research.

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