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Peirce's Ethics: Problematizing the Conduct of Life

E. San Juan, Jr.
University of Connecticut and Washington State University
United States of America
philcsc@gmail.com

abstract

Charles Sanders Peirce's ethics is based on his pragmaticist theory of meaning elucidated by his phenomenology and its transcoding into practice. An example of how meaning acquires practical effect is cited from Peirce's lecture on signs and their interpretation. His anti-imperialist stance against U.S. colonization of the Philippines has never been discussed before. This is the first time Peirce's politics is manifested in conjunction with his anti-nominalist explanation of signs and their ethical implications.

Keywords: Peirce, Ethics, Pragmatism, U.S Colonialization, Politics

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Introduction

When the famous Moscow Trials (1936-38) against Trotskyists and other alleged enemies of the Soviet Union, pragmatism was still relatively an academic affair. Peirce died in 1914; his collected papers did not appear until 1931. William James's popularization of Peirce's ideas, *Pragmatism: A New Name for some Old Ways of Thinking,* was published in 1907. In 1931, John Dewey traced "The Development of American Pragmatism" in the wake of his major discourses on experimentalism in *Reconstruction in Philosophy (*1920), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), and *Experience and Natur*e (1925). Not until after World War II will Peirce be acknowledged by Bertrand Russell and others as the United States' most wide-ranging, innovative and original philosopher. While Peirce could not have predicted and commented on the Moscow Trials, Dewey found the opportunity to intervene and put his mark on the controversy surrounding this memorable turning point in revolutionary politics.

The Moscow Trials, also known as Stalin's "Great Purge," exemplified one man's autocratic rule in a totalitarian state. The defendants were charged with conspiring with Western powers to assassinate Stalin, dismember the Soviet Union, and restore capitalism. They were suspected of exploiting the popular discontent brought about by Stalin's forced collectivization of the farms and the political crisis of 1928-33 In May 1937, the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky, was set up in the United States by Trotsky's friends to establish the truth about the trials. Chaired by the now famous philosopher John Dewey, the Commission travelled to Mexico to interview Trotsky and hold hearings from April 10 to April 17, 1937.

After a thorough examination of evidence, the Dewey Commission found all those condemned innocent of the charges, dismissing the trials as "frame-ups." Confessions were extracted by torture, blackmail, and terror (for analysis of this period, see (Ulam 1973, 410-33). Nonetheless, radical intellectuals like Langston Hughes, Stuart Davis, Lilian Hellman, Corliss Lamont and others approved if not endorsed the outcome of the horrible events. Millions involved in the trials were imprisoned or executed. Trotsky was assassinated in 1940 by Stalin's agent. In 1956, Kruschev denounced Stalin's monstrous crimes and began the rehabilitation of Stalin's victims such as Bukharin, Zinoviev, etc., as "honest Communists" (Garraty and Gay 1972, 1002-1004). In January 1989, the official newspaper *Pravda* reported that 25,000 persons had been posthumously rehabilitated.

Leon Trotsky, the chief accused in the Moscow Trials, wrote a defense of his case in 1938 entitled "Their Morals and Ours." His primary argument deploys the efficacious power of the class struggle in history which serves as the rational basis of individual choices and decisions. He rejects the ascription to Bolshevism of what he calls the Jesuitical maxim of "the end justifying the means"; historically, Trotsky contends, the Jesuits represented the forces of reaction against the progressive Protestants. Eventually, the Jesuits adopted Martin Luther's opportunism by adapting themselves to "the spirit of bourgeois society" (1969, 14). Ultimately, Trotsky appeals to a universal criterion that can validate the legitimacy of group actions: "From the Marxist point of view, which expresses the historical interest of the proletariat, the end is justified if it leads to increasing the

power of man over nature and to the abolition of the power of man over man" (1969, 36; see the discritimating critique of instrumentalism by Lukes [1985]; see also Somerville [1967] for an overview of the problem).What Trotsky failed to specify is the historical mission of the proletariat, the privileged class, to advance the humanist project of developing the capacity of society to control the natural environment and adjust social institutions so as to fulfill the needs, spiritual and physical, of the majority of the toiling masses, outlined in Marx and Engels' "Communist Manifesto" (1968, 31-63). The fundamental premise of Marxist ethics is derived from the persistence of class antagonism (rooted in contradictory modes of production and social formations) as the ultimately conditioning rule or principle determining, historically contingent consequences that can be judged eiher right and wrong, good and evil (Singer 1994, 243-46).

Dewey's Interpellation

Dewey's comment on Trotsky's polemic concerned the putative Marxian gloss on the relation of means and ends in social action. Dewey states: "I hold that the end in the sense of consequences provides the only basis for moral ideas and action, and therefore provides the only justification that can be found for means employed" (1968, 52). Dewey insists on the close interdependence of means and end. He requires actors to perform an "unscrupulous examination of the means that are used, to ascertain what their actual objective consequences will be as far as it is humanly possible to tell—to show that they do 'really' lead to the liberation of mankind." The end in

view also functions as the means to direct action. But this is not a matter of personal belief, Dewey emphasizes," but of the objective grounds upon which it is held: namely, the consequences that will actually be produced by them" (1968, 53); see the expositions of Shahakian (1963, 318-40); and Kaplan (1961, 13-52).

Dewey faults Trotsky's reasoning because it invokes "an alleged law of history," the historical movement of the class struggle reduced without taking into account what Agnes Heller calls the "ethics of the personality and the good" (1984, 163). Instead of an inductive investigation of the reciprocity of means-consequences, Trotsky's wrongly deduces results from a "fixed law of social development." Dewey concludes that "No scientific law can determine a moral end save by deserting the principle of interdependence of means and end," so "given the liberation of mankind as end, there is free and unprejudiced search for the means by which it can be attained" (1968, 55).

Rational dialogue and intelligent contract/agreement between persons are involved in Dewey's inquiry. While Dewey's formulation envisages the intended results of individual actions, which resemble the classic utilitarian consequentialist argument, it also involves an experimental analysis of problematic situations, not single objects. It engages "the contextual whole of experience" which furthers the growth of creative intelligence as "the only moral end" (Talisse and Aikin 2012, 120). This departs from the orthodox arguments of utilitarianism and its variants, as elaborated in Foot (1967) and in Weinberg and Yandell (1971). On the surface, there is no basic antagonism between Trotsky's objective of

systemic change and Dewey's reconstructive improvement of the system via educational reform. Nonetheless, Bernstein judges Dewey's program as insufficiently radical because "he underestimates the powerful social, political, and economic forces that distort and corrupt" his ideal of expansive creative intelligence (1971, 228). I think Bernstein's opinion ignores the nuanced evaluation he made in his earlier introduction to Dewey's philosophy (1960, ix-xlvii).

The Peircean Difference

How would the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, Dewey's friend, treat this situation? Peirce's evaluation of Trotsky's ethical standard would concur with Dewey's logic of experimental inquiry in line with the pragmatic maxim of appraising conceivable practical effects (Scheffler 1974). But Peirce's position would differ in three respects (discussed further below): 1) Knowledge of values (good or bad) depends on mediation via the intersubjectivity of interpreters, or community of inquirers; 2) Hypothetical reasoning is a process mediated through signs oriented to the future, the counterfactual discovery of the coincidence of truth and reality in the long run; and 3) Mediation of the theoretical by the practical is carried out from the horizon of the 'ethical, as 'socialist logic,' by history and commonsense" (Dussel 2013, 162).

The Latin-American philosopher Enrique Dussel affirms a solidarity between Peircean pragmatism and the ethics of liberation gounded in the life of the subject as "the ultimate uncircumventable criterion of truth" (2013, 172). For Peirce, the human subject is the purposive

community of inquirers cognizant of the role of chance (tychism) in a universe governed by continuous possibilities (synechism). Values cannot be separated from the teleology of active interpretants (Short 2007, 344-47). By way of Peirce's evolutionary cosmology, the historical field of forces enters the investigation of ideal ends that inform the normative science of ethics. The ethical will of the scientist can unite with evolutionary love, the eros of the universe, in a temporal process of search and discovery (Peirce 1992, 352-71).

Logic and ethics are therefore rooted in a social principle, what Dussel calls "the processual reality of the corporeality of the life of the cultural, historical, and human subject" (2013, 162). Moreover, Peirce's discourse on "evolutionary love" amplifies the argument for a knowable reality, the liberation of human powers in a future consensus that would witness the fulfillment of the hypothesis of the unity of truth and reality in historical time. Evolution defines the parameter of ethical judgment. The formation of habits or rational conduct (beliefs translated into action) which mediate mind and matter, chance and law, demonstrates the evolutionary tendency of the world toward concrete reasonableness. In this context, the inquiring sensibility manifests a moral character equal to that of the self-sacrificing heroes of revolutionary struggles in history, as Peirce reflects: "At the very lowest, a man must prefer the truth to his own interests and well-being and not merely to his bread and butter, and to his own vanity, too, if he is to do much in science"(CP1.157).

In what follows, I explore the interanimation of Peirce's ideas of liberty and concrete reasonableness achieved through self-control. The *summum bonum* is the

ethical destiny of "the reasoner's aspirations," a social good equivalent to the liberation of humanity and the fulfillment of universal physical and spiritual needs. Reasoning, for Peirce, is a form of controlled conduct—the locus of ethical wisdom—whereby a person can "make his life more reasonable. What other distinct idea than that, I should be glad to know, can be attached to the word liberty" (1998a, 248). This encapsulates Peirce's dialectic of thought and action, theory and praxis. We need to contextualize this theme in terms of how pragmatism has been publicly received and appraised before citing a particular instance of its application.

Clearing the Ground

By consensus, Peirce laid the groundwork for pragmatism as scientific theory, later vulgarized by psychologist William James so that Peirce himself in 1905 rechristened his view "pragmaticism." In 1878, Peirce proposed a way of ascertaining the meaning of words in propositions. He said: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (1998a, 135). James, however, misconstrued this as a theory of truth so that ideas prove their truth "just so far as they help us get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience," manifesting their "practical cash value" (1982, 213), and thus converting it into an instrumentalist if not subjectivist, idealist notion. This is how the Soviet Union scholars treated James's pragmatic

truth as valid on the basis of practical utility which "understands not confirmation of objective truth by the criterion of practice, but what meets the subjective interests of the individual" (1967, 358). Such a transmogrification of Peirce's philosophy into a mode of bourgeois instrumentalism speaks volumes about totalitarian state dogmatism (San Juan 2017).

For Peirce, truth can only be legitimately pursued by the cooperative work of inquirers committed to a socially constructive goal, not by isolated individuals. Peirce argues that the private self has no intuitive or introspective faculty allowing access to cognitive insights. "Self" is a hypothesis needed to account for errors, ignorance, inadequacies (Appel 1981). In short, the monadic ego/persona is cognized through mistakes, misconstruals, fallibility. Opposed to philosophies of consciousness (inspired by psychoanalysis or Heideggerian ontology), Peirce posited mind as comprised of the complex articulation of feeling (Firstness), reaction or contradiction (Secondness), and rules of learning or representation connecting the first two (Thirdness). We elucidate further this dialogic hermeneutics of the mind and its ramifications later on.

That banal misconstrual of pragmaticism degrades even a sophisticated survey such as *Contemporary European Philosophy* by Polish Dominican scholar I.M. Bochenski, an expert on Soviet dialectical materialism. Bochenski opined that pragmatism denied the existence of a "purely theoretical knowledge" since it reduced "the true to the useful" (1969, 114). Following that repeated doxa, pragmatism is considered synonymous with utilitarianism, instrumentalism, even opportunism. In contrast, Peirce's

texts insist that both reason and experience are symbiotically operative in pragmaticism. Essentially, Peirce proposed a method for clarifying the differences among ideas through anticipating their conceivable future practical effects, even discordant or incongruous sensible effects that evince practical significance. In "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce distinguished between belief as action-guiding disposition, and doubt that disrupts usual behavioral patterns but also "stimulates enquiry in the struggle to attain [revised] belief" (Flew 1979, 245). Not action for action's sake, but deliberate action socially legitimized with rational purport, is what Peirce upheld as a fundamental principle in scientific research.

For a long time, this tendency to foist all kinds of excesses on pragmatism ran wild. Peirce's notion has been equated with diverse philosophical schools, among them: radical empiricism, irrationalism, meliorism, "apology for bourgeois democracy" (a charge against John Dewey made by mechanical/vulgar Marxists), experimental naturalism, neopositivism, semantic idealism, operationalism, and Hans Vaihinger's "as-if" conjectures (Wheelwright 1960, 138). Assorted thinkers, aside from James and Dewey, were held complicit: F.C.S. Schiller, Sidney Hook, C.W. Morris, P.W. Bridgman, C.I. Lewis, R. Carnap, W. Quine, etc.

While generally correct in summarizing Peirce's early view, the famous dissident philosopher Leszek Kolakowski wrongly labels Peirce a positivist, nominalist and scientistic. And so he ascribes to Peirce a rather ascetic, puritanical stance nowhere to be found in Peirce's rich, wide-ranging speculations: "The world contains no mystery, merely problems to be solved" (1969, 154). But

this simplification obfuscates rather than illuminates Peirce's rejection of nominalism, nihilist relativism, and pseudo-pragmatic antifoundationalism (exemplified by Richard Rorty), which all subscribe to absolutizing subjectivity exceeding even the metaphysical thesis of William of Ockham, the historical originator of nominalism (Hookway 1985; Peirce 1997).

Prologue to Intervention

Before delineating Peirce's dialectical reflections, I want to counter the equally wrongheaded notion that he was politically conservative if not indifferent to social controversy. Of course, being part of the Cambridge elite, Peirce's family shared the values of intellectuals such as William James, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, and his friends in the Metaphysical Club (circa 1870-1872). While Peirce shared his father's prejudiced view on slavery, the father changed his views at the beginning of the Civil War. Louis Menand's thorough study of this milieu, *The Metaphysical Club,* argues that Peirce finally opposed economic individualism and determinism, affirming the indeterminacy and intelligibility of the cosmos. While affected by a conservative climate of opinion, Peirce and his associates all defied conventional expectations.

None of the two extant biographies (Brent 1998; Ketner 1998) mentions Peirce's attitude to the bloody conquest of the Philippines which this essay, for the first time, foregrounds vis-a-vis Peirce's categorial paradigm. Only James and Twain of the major American intellectuals conscientiously deplored U.S. imperialism and aligned themselves with the plight of the Filipino people at that

time. Even Peirce's conformity to the genteel New England morality of his day (or the Emersonian transcendentalism then in vogue) needs to be qualified by his unequivocal dismissal of morality as "essentially conservative" (Collected Papers (afterward CP) 1.50; Liszka 2012). Morality as petrified folkway is contradistinguished from ethics as a study of what we ought to do according to a universal principle, independent of what the status quo obliges or forces one to do.

Contrary to the biographic accounts, Peirce was not totally indifferent to the crises surrounding him. In fact, he characterized his epoch as "the Economical Century; for political economy has more direct relations with all the branches of its activity than has any other science" (CP 6.290). Echoing the oppositional sentiments of writers like Henry James (whose friendship he enjoyed in Paris in 1876), Peirce was nauseated by the rapacious individualism pervading that rapidly industrializing era of Reconstruction. He denounced specifically "the Americanism, the worship of business, the life in which the fertilizing stream of genial sentiment dries up or shrinks to a rill of comic tit-bits, or else on the other hand to monasticism, sleepwalking in this world with no eye nor heart except for the other" (CP 1.673). The prophetic socialist scholar Cornel West concisely sums up Peirce's anti-Establishment sensibility and world-outlook: "The historic emergence of American pragmatism principally results from Peirce's profound evasion of 'the spirit of Cartesianism' owing to his obsession with the procedures of the scientific community, his loyalty to a Christian doctrine of love, and the lure of community in the midst of anomic *Gesellschaften* of urban, industrial capitalist

America" (1989, 49; for its interface with semiotic deonstruction, see Muller and Brent [2000]).

Anti-Monopoly Capitalist Wrath

William James, Peirce's closest friend, was one of the leading founders of the Anti-Imperialist League. In March 1899, James sent a letter to the newspaper *Boston Evening Transcript* bewailing the horrible, "unspeakable meanness" of President McKinley's treatment of Aguinaldo's government: "Could there be a more damning indictment of that whole blasted idol termed 'modern civilization'…? Civilization is then, the big, hollow, resounding, corrupting, sophisticating, confusing torrent of mere brutal momentum and irrationality…" (1972, 225). Later on, another progressive member of the League, the novelist Mark Twain followed with an ironic boast that he was now proud of the flag after the slaughter of 900 rebellious Moros (including women and children) in the Battle of Mount Dajo, Philippines, on March 9, 1906 (Zwick 1207, 131). Adding the figure of 500 Muslims killed by General John Pershing in June 1913 at Mount Bagsak in the same province of Sulu, Philippines, the total number of Filipinos killed in the Filipino-American War of 1899-1913 amounted to over one million (Francisco 1987, 19; for more background, see Hofstadter 1967; Miller 1982).

Peirce joined colleagues, among them, James, Twain, William Dean Howells, Andrew Carnegie, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Samuel Gomper, etc., in denouncing U.S. aggression with a pungent satiric address to his pro-imperialist cousin Senator Henry Cabot Lodge: "All men are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. No

Phillipino is entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Hence, no Phillipino is a man" (quoted in Brent 1998, 266). This mock-syllogistic quip was a decorous understatement of the ongoing carnage in the Pacific rim.

Peirce could not remain indifferent in his retirement years. In 1903, during the bloody pacification of the Philippines, after thousands of Filipinos have been killed, tortured, and starved by the "scorched earth" tactics of technologically superior U.S. troops, Peirce once more expressed his criticism obliquely in a talk explaining generality, Thirdness or mediation. He is referring to a general principle operative in the real world, in which words produce physical effects, such as those of the revolutionary hero Patrick Henry asserting how three million Americans, "armed in the holy cause of Liberty,…are invincible against any force that the enemy can bring against us." Its generality conformed to the synechistic architectonic of his teleology.

Peirce apprehends in Henry's words a "general law of nature" transcending the initial circumstances of their making: "it might. for example, have happened that some American schoolboy, sailing as a passenger in the Pacific Ocean, should have idly written down those words on a slip of paper. The paper might have been tossed overboard and might have been picked up by some Tagala on a beach of the island of Luzon; and if he had them translated to him they might easily have passed from mouth to mouth there as they did in this country, and with similar effect" (1991, 245). The "Tagala" on the beach is a trope for migrant possibilities. In Peirce's speculative guess-work which he calls "abduction", any prediction of what would happen in any working out of a project or unplanned event

is enabled by general laws of nature immanent in regularities occurring in life. Consequently, "a true-would-be is as real as an actuality" (1998a, 451). The impossible hypothesis becomes possible, actualizable.

In effect, ideas beget agendas, suggestions, recommendations for vital, aspirational agents. Possibility turns into actualizations and processes of performing experiments. Such actions are a product of self-controlled, deliberate judgment taking a critical position on issues of the day. A more accurate precis of the implied politics in Peirce's views was offered by Donald McKay: "Instead of elaborating theories about passive "states" of knowledge in a knowing mind, or 'contents' of knowledge within its own fixed and immutable 'forms,' pragmatism offered a working hypothesis concerning the *practice* of knowledge in 'the real business of living' (1950, 398). For Peirce, meanings and values are discovered through inference, informed guessing, pragmatism as "the logic of abduction" (Brent 1998, 349).

It is clear that Peirce's theory of meaning, when communication takes place, carries an ethical and political charge, an agenda. Immanent to every hypothesis is a network of "conceivable practical effects," i.e.,meanings. After describing the interlinked steps in the process of apprehending experience, we will trace the conversion of thought into action in the constellation of logical inferences. Whether this demonstrates a materialist dialectics that approximates Marx's critique of Hegel's method, remains to be seen. Hegel's *Geist* is basically mediation or generalizability, Peirce's Thirdness emerging from connectng Firstness and Secondness (Taylor 1975, 104-06). Meanwhile, we need to parse the dynamics of

Peirce's phenomenology as the matrix of his triadic theory of signs. Can Peirce's semiotics be a feasible foundation for a radical politics?

Architectonic of Mediation

Not problem-solving or Cartesian methodical doubting but acquiring knowledge of reality by fallible means, is Peirce's paramount aim. Peirce refuted Cartesianism as the source of foundational metaphysics in key essays such as "Questions Concenrning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man" and "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" (1998b. 66-118). To anticipate doubters, truth for Peirce designates knowledge of the real (universals mediated in experienced particulars) in everyday life.

In "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," Peirce formulated a convergence theory of truth/reality: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is real" (1998a, 155). Meaning is a thought-experiment, a virtual fruit of the transformation and interpretation of signs in ongoing dialogue. For a Peircean truth-seeker, "every intelligible question" will be answered provided it is "sufficiently investigated by observation and reasoning" resulting in a belief implemented by habitual action, by a future-oriented construction of reasoned discourse and purposive conduct by the participating groups involved.

Our hypothesis about reality, articulated in language/discourse, can converge with the real in the long term, in principle and perhaps in practical terms. This

fallibilist stance is shared by a community of inquirers, so that the pursuit of knowledge/truth implies a collective, social responsibility (see Appel 1995). Moreover, in contradistinction to James and Dewey who subsumed the scientific quest for truth to the demands of immediate human interests, ideals and problematic situations, Peircean scholastic realism dictates that these knowledge-claims are ultimately controlled by the structure of reality. As Hilary Putnam reminds us, for Peirce, "it is precisely by prescinding from all practical interests that science succeeds" (1992, 74). Reality can prove or disprove hypotheses (inductive, deductive, retroductive) violating laws, observed patterns of regularities, etc. Science confirms possibilities by experiment, testing, inquiry.

Except as ancillary topic (validating truth-claims), my chief aim here is to investigate the presence of a dialectical logic in Peirce's speculations that can ground a program of political transformation. By dialectic here I refer to the application of a method or process of reasoning to comprehend the material world, its laws and principles, as well as the movement of society/history. In Hegel's dialectic, the process of cognition occupies center-stage as a "grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative" (Findlay 1958, 62).

In this context, categories or forms of consciousness emerge from each other to constitute more inclusive totalities, whereby contradictions are resolved through their incorporation (by sublation) in fuller and more concrete universal conceptual wholes. The truth results from the unfolding of the whole dialectical process, making explicit what is implicit, articulating antagonisms into tense unities. Roy Bhaskar notes that in contrast to

reflective or analytical thought, Hegelian dialectics "grasps conceptual forms in their systematic interconnections, not just their determinate differences, and conceives each development as the product of a previous less developed phase, whose necessary truth or fulfillment it is; so that there is always a tension, latent irony or incipient surprise between any form and what it is in the process of becoming" (1983,122). Peirce's pragmatism concretely exemplifies this process of actualization.

We stress the fact that this interpretation rejects the banal, mechanistic notion of a three-step procedure of thesis-antithesis-synthesis which Walter Kaufmann (1972) already refuted a long time ago. Of course, as everyone knows, Marx stood Hegel's idealism on its head (the epistemic fallacy of reducing being to knowing), purging the mystical shell of the self-motivating kernel, and unsettling the hypostatized, reified or eternalized realm of thought. Marx refuses the Hegelian Absolute, Idea or Spirit in favor of becoming, of an ontological stratification evinced in a complex, concretely articulated material history. Marx also emphasized historically causal, not conceptual, necessity; he also limited teleology to human praxis and its rational explanation. This is not the occasion to elaborate fully on Engel's version of dialectics as the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society, and thought, elaborated in *Anti-Duhring* and *Dialectics of Nature (*on Marx and Engel's dialectic, see Bhaskar 1993, 87-99).

As a scientist-philosopher, Peirce was concerned not just with an adequate theory of meaning, the signification of ideas, for the terminology of conceptual thinking. He was grappling with the validity of scientific

laws for which the nature of potentiality, possibility, is central in proving hypotheses. This demanded a whole metaphysics of being, of reality, and the status of universals, which would ground his pragmaticism. Thus, he would be engaged in the formulation of categories necessary for substantiating science and knowledge.

Peirce's ultimate position on the controversy between nominalism and realism is a moderate realist one. From this angle, general concepts found in our grasp of meaning are real, with a counterpart in the percept, the equivalent in consciousness of a Firstness present in the perceived object. Peirce was neither a realist nor idealist in the orthodox sense, for he neither focused on hypothesis as solely deduction (rationalism), nor hypothesis as solely induction (empiricism). His pragmaticism was a fallibilist inquiry via abduction or inferential reasoning, in a world evolving lawfully in a sea of contingencies (Russell 1959, 277). But this is to proceed ahead of our exposition, so let us review Peirce's categories.

Syncopation and Dissonance

In December 1897, Peirce wrote to James about the Cambridge lectures he would deliver in which he mentions that his Categories—Quality, Reaction, Representation or Mediation—will show "wherein my objective logic differs from that of Hegel" (1992, 24). Peirce agreed with Hegel that the science of phenomenology is basic to the foundation of the normative sciences (logic, ethics, aesthetics). But Hegel's "fatally narrow spirit" gave it the nominalistic and "pragmatoidal" character, dismissing the irrational qualities

and recalcitrant contingencies in experience. This is what Theodor Adorno (2017) criticizes as Hegel's obsession with systematizing totality, Spirit's absolute identity and reconciliation of subject/object in Absolute Knowledge. Peirce adds that Hegel overlooked or forgot that "there is a real world with real actions and reactions" (CP 1.368). To my knowledge, Peirce has not read Marx's critique of Hegel, but his theory of mediation (the triadic process of logic as semiotics) concurs with Marx's thesis that "the question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. In practice, man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking" (1968, 28).

We intend to mark the dialectical passage of thought via Peirce's triadic schema of classifying domains of experience. Thought or understanding, by its nature, begets contradiction and is therefore dialectical, Hegel asserts. Not only thought but everything surrounding us: "We are aware that everything finite, instead of being stable and ultimate, is rather changeable and transient; and this is exactly what we mean by that Dialectic of the finite, by which the finite, is. Implicitly other than what it is, it is forced beyond its own immediate or natural being to turn suddenly into its opposite" (Hegel 1904, 150).

Analogously, Peirce's dialectics is the movement of thought (inferential reasoning) from the first immediate content of observation that is posited only to be differentiated into a subject and predicate of judgment, this mediation in turn sublated or integrated in a concluding belief (Mure 1940). All three stages of reflection, while analytically discriminated as discrete moments, are present

simultaneously at the end of the pragmatic process of abduction which is an articulated, self-moving totality. It includes the transition from theory to practice, ideas to actions.

Peirce declared that his phenomenology will not just analyze experience but "extend it to describing all the features that are common to whatever is experienced or might conceivably be experienced or become an object of study in any way direct or indirect" (1998a, 143). Potentiality and the virtual future occupy center-stage. Peirce claims that he arrived at his universal categories independently, although in his contempt for Hegelianism, the German philosopher might have exercised an "occult influence" on him. Indeed, Peirce admits that Hegel's three stages of thought as "roughly speaking, the correct list of Universal Categories" (1998a, 148). Peirce also claimed that his categories differ from those of Aristotle, Kant and Hegel in that they never paid serious examination to what can be observed in phenomena (phanerons), universally applying to anything we can think of (the possible, the utopian, the variegated cosmos of phantasy). Hence Peirce's pragmatism is more inclusive.

Parsing Peirce's Dialectics

We summarize here Peirce's revised theory of categories of experience, and phases of thinking linked to them, in his late period (1903-1914): Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness as "phaneroscopic categories" (Peirce 1998a, 145-169). The internal relations among these three, the process of their unfolding, parallel the Hegelian "self-supersession of the finite determinations of the

Understanding" (Findlay 1958, 60). However, the central movements of contradiction and sublation in the dialectic are governed by logical criteria and empirical constraints; hence, the labors of negation and mediation are not representations of Hegel's Absolute Spirit, of Substance as Subject (Hegel 1977, 14), but the activities of cooperative participants reasoning about the validity of inferences and hypotheses, the community of calculating experimenters. In short, there is a world out there heedless of what you, I, or any other person thinks about it which is our field of inquiry.

Firstness is "quality of feeling," which is "the true psychical representative of the first category of the immediate as it is in its immediacy, of the present in its direct positive presentness" (1988a, 149-50; CP 8.328). The idea here is not actual but potential, a possibility. It cannot be compared to Plato's hypostatized Forms, but it is not a thought in some mind; it is between a mere nothing and an existent, therefore a possibility to become actual when it enters the mind by virtue of experience. For example, a possible sense experience such as a color sensation, "blueness," or sensation such as a toothache—possibilities that may become actual. The process of actualization transpires in the attention given to the sequence of the embodiment of qualities apprehended by the experient. Hegel dismissed the irrationality of Firstness, the indefinite possibilities in the future implied by chance happenings in experience, as an aspect of Firstness.

Firstness as Presentness includes the irreducible variety and plurality of things, both actual and virtual. In Peirce's comment on the U.S. colonial incursion across the Pacific Ocean, the scenario of Patrick Henry's words

appearing on a piece of paper and then thrown into the sea functions as part of Firstness, which is what it is. Its floating on the sea, its fortuitous salvaging by a Tagala, its transfer to translators, and its hermeneutic application, can be treated separately as elements of Firstness. Each transient feeling shades off into another, producting Reaction (Secondness). However, as Peirce notes, "that one is logically two as part of its conception" (quoted by de Waal 2013, 41). One divides into two. In Hegelian dialectics, this one-sided determination of the finite is immanently transcended in its negation: the debris is negated as something opposed to it, something not wasted, now appropriated. Possibilities (feelings, qualities) populate Firstness.

Secondness is briefly reaction, brute force, struggle or conflict as dyadic relation. It is "the Idea of that which is such as it is as being Second to some First, regardless of anything else and in particular regardless of any law, although it may conform to a law,… Reaction as an element of the Phenomenon" (CP 8.328). An example of Secondness is the existing object, the embodiment of qualities (Firstness)—not yet actualized until experienced by some mind, whereby the qualities become percepts, an image or feeling. This process of actualization (the Tagala's discovery of Patrick Henry's signs and thei subsequent interpretation and dissemination) is complex and the topic of ongoing psychological inquiry.

Hegel discounted this level of the immediate "hic et nunc of sense perception" by subsuming it to general concepts in the transition from the doctrine of Being to the doctrine of the Notion. By doing so, Peirce contends that Hegel valorized for philosophy "only the world of

completed facts, the past, and not the real possibilities of things, *esse in futuro*" (Peirce 1998a, 358-59). For Peirce, the future as event or sequence of realization of what is intended, based on past discoveries and current habits, is what matters most in carrying out scientific research.

Secondness is the realm of contingency, the accidentally actual and unconditional necessity, the reign of brute force (Gallie 1952, 197). In the case of Peirce's piece of paper floating in the ocean (thrown out or blown by accident from a ship), Secondness involves reaction—whirled into the ocean as debris, then its discovery by a Tagala in a Philippine beach, seemingly occasioned by "a blind force." Existence of this object goes through struggle and competition for recognition.

Meanwhile, unexpected otherness enters the scene. Opposites interpenetrate, leading to some kind of temporary reconciliation (Ollman 2003). Everything finite is what it is by its negation, by its sublation: debris becomes the vehicle of a message in its eventual Thirdness. An adventuring Tagala encounters that floating debris. That paper with Henry's words then becomes translated/interpreted, an instance of mediation or Thirdness. The iconic object becomes, for the interpretant, an index of a historic event parallel to the Filipino resistance to barbaric colonialism. Something from the U.S. historical archive or memory is grasped as contrary to what the Empire's troops are doing in the Philippines, the antithesis of Henry's idea of the American people's will to self-determination against the British empire (Zinn 1980; Kolko 1984).

Surely, this hypothetical narrative drawn from Peirce's lecture does not imply that the American patriot is

the only source of the idea of liberty, of the struggle for national sovereignty. It is a hypothetical intervention. What is conveyed is the irony of the ideals of the American revolution presumably giving support to the Filipino resistance against U.S. aggression. Possibilities are diverse: either the signs fail to induce purposive conduct, or stay dormant until future use, or incite urgent mobilization. What the Filipinos will do if they examine thoughtfully Henry's words concerning the popular struggle for liberation is what really matters. If interpretation of signs leads to conceivable purposive praxis, then one progressive step in the evolution of concrete reasonableness in the world is accomplished. Entire communities stand to benefit from this continuum of dialogue and exchange of serviceable, utilizable ideas.

Hermeneutics of Praxis

We now approach the moment of sublation, Hegel's *Aufhebung* or self-transcendence, a movement in thought which negates one part, preserves another part, and synthesizes them in a new standpoint. Thirdness is the "Idea of that which is such as being a Third, or Medium, between a Second and its First….Representation as an element of the Phenomenon," containing the concept of "True Continuity." (Peirce 1998b,150,160). Thirdness designates a general concept, the universal idea abstracted from the percept found in the first and second moments, which Peirce also calls "generals." According to Richard Robin, "Peirce's metaphysical realism, then, consists in his view that the general concepts that go to make up meanings are real…They have a real external counterpart

in the percept—which is the equivalent in consciousness of a firstness present in the perceived object" (1998b, 11). Every concept (Thirdness) refers to a sense-percept (Secondness) to bear some meaning (the real, the conceivable practical effect or consequence).

No concept is meaningful unless it refers to sense-experience, which is subjected to attention and abstracting elements from the percept to generate concepts expressed in a judgement, such as "This orchid is crimson." "Crimson" is not a fiction of the imagination but a quality possessed by things in the world. "Crimson" can be predicated of many other things, hence it is a real general, that is, the crimson of an orchid is not identical with the crimson of blood, but they are similar. As long as there is something in the physical world that exemplifies particular qualities (not all of the particularizing determinations of generic and specific qualities ascribed to objects), the concept containing them is a real concept. This refutes all allegations that Peirce reduced everything to mind or rationality. These three modes of reality, categories of being or three universes of experience, provide the coordinates for Peirce's epistemology as well as his singular theory of pragmaticism.

Applied to that salvaged piece of paper with Patrick Henry's statement, we have an instance of mediation when the words are translated and made intelligible. The power of that piece of paper to represent a historic event (the American revolution and its justification) is expressed as a transaction between object (signifier or representamen) and the message (signified) by the interpretant—the discoverer/translator, which stands for a transindividual/collective agency. There are various

modes of interpretants conforming to plural historic contexts and empirical situations. The experience of Thirdness is the encounter with the intelligible, "concrete reasonableness," which for Peirce, becomes the ground for humans taking action to change what is irrational, illogical, and inhumane. This is an example of Peirce's political intervention into that crucial juncture of U.S-Philippines relations.

Toward Alternative Transformations

What is the relevance and applicability of Peirce's categories to the understanding of political or social change? How is pragmatism connected to the normative sciences of logic, ethics, and aesthetics? Cheryl Misak and Richard Bernstein have speculated on Peirce's implicit ethical and political outlook based on his pragmaticist principles. They both quote Peirce's propositions: "Thinking is a kind of action, and reasoning is a kind of deliberate action; and to call an argument illogical, or a proposition false, is a special kind of moral judgment," and "He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is illogical in all his inferences, collectively" (cited in Misak 2004, 170, 173). Everyone commends Peirce's final affirmation of "concrete reasonableness" as the highest good that all our intentions, projects, and acts should strive for. In short, ethics and politics are, in reciprocal interchange with Peirce's epistemology, realized in an evolving semiotics.

Peirce's cognitivism, in the larger context of his metaphysics, is based on his evolutionary cosmology in which chance and necessity coalesce. No doubt, thought

controlled by rational experimental logic is what Peirce valued in the conduct of marshalling evidence and argument for fallible but workable beliefs. No doubt also, Peirce rejected Cartesian intuitionism and James's and Dewey's psychologizing of his pragmatic maxim in favor of self-control and self-criticism (Bernstein 2010). Anarchic individualism is also ruled out because public deliberation and consensus are needed for effective social changes in habits and modes of thinking of citizens. In short, genuine revolution is a totalizing process.

Lest readers again impute individualistic bias to Peirce, we emphasize that reflexivity can only take place within a definite community of persons engaged in critical inquiry, a "community without definite limits," which functions as a regulative ideal in pragmaticism. Bernstein asserts that the social character of the individual is defined by the forms of participation in community life, citing Peirce's insight: "A person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is 'saying to himself,' that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming to life in the flow of time. When one reasons, it is that critical self that one is trying to persuade; and all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language" (Bernstein 1971, 190). We are confronted here not just with deliberative pluralist exchange, discursive debate or communication, but also with collective programs for institutional changes toward genuine participatory democracy.

What is indisputable is the gravity of Peirce's civic-minded or communalist sympathies. In the final analysis, the mobilized community of inquirers—activists in performing critical self-control and realistic orientation of

behavior—is the chief protagonist in Peirce's political world-view. This protagonist is the transindividual organic intellectual in Antonio Gramsci's (1971) politics and the proletarian party in George Lukacs' (1971) dialectics. Reason as Aristotelian energy engenders the action imitated by discourse.

We cannot elaborate here on Peirce's theory of evolutionary change, on synechism and tychism in which the role of chance or accident functions as the matrix of innovation, radical transformation, and the pursuit of concrete universality requiring the "absence of self-conceit" (West 1989, 51; Smith 1966). That remains for another occasion, but a brief summary is appropriate here. For Peirce, the development of Reason is the fundamental motivation behind social progress, the aesthetic ideal governing ethics and logic: "The one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fulness as far as we can comprehend it….The ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of the creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as the slang is, it is "up to us" to do so" (1998a, 255).

The Responsibility of Intellectuals

In the context of intellectual exchanges, there is a plausible danger of fetishizing Reason and idealistic rationalism. Or jettisoning it in favor of nominalistic anti-foundationalism such as that of Richard Rorty. But Peirce's belief in a world outside of our minds, his scholastic realism, prevents this extremism. Concepts without

experienced material are vacuous; sense-data without concepts are blind. Rational activity connected to social interests entails action which, Dewey reflects, serves as an intermediary, modifying existence, "in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody generals'; in other words, "the process whereby the existent becomes, with the aid of action, a body of rational tendencies or of habits generalized as much as possible" (Dewey 1982, 25).

Moreover, Peirce's revolutionary slogan, "Do not block the road of inquiry," warrants also sanctioning "the one ordinance of Play, the law of liberty" (1998a, 436). It is this perspective that John Dewey (1969) applied to his critique of Leon Trotsky by stressing the indeterminacy of means in relation to ends previously agreed upon. Concrete historical situations overdetermine the means-ends nexus (Hook 2002, 152-53). Peirce's stress on consequences, rational purport coordinated with universal principles, and the purposive bearings of any inquiry, testifies to his conviction in the feasibility of a transformed, ameliorated future.

As already discussed, Peirce did not engage in any sustained reflection on ethics or politics except for a few remarks on the normative sciences. Only Roberta Kevelson has speculated on the reciprocal interaction between Peirce's Existential Graphs and utopic propositions dealing with political economy, in particular the modal graphs of possibility. Kevelson observes that "a cut of a graph may be an instance of a possible universe, or, in other words, a graph-replica in a kind of utopic representation, a possible of a figment of a possible" (1999, 113). Space-time continuum, for Peirce, signifies lawful

evolution of knowledge analogous to evolution in nature which is characterized by the intrusion of chance breaks and accidental ruptures (as theorized by Peirce's synechism and tychism (on synechism and science, see Haack 2008). Virtualities in the realm of potentiality supervene over actualities. Not everything is possible, but some are contingent on historical specificities and collective protagonists/personalities involved.

It bears repeating that the radicalism of Peirce's realist dialectic is fully evinced in his repudiation of nominalism (exemplified in positivism, radical empiricism, deconstruction, etc.) which reduces the abstract to the sensory, the general to the individual. Peirce's inaugural vision is contained in his critique of Berkeley. It addresses the rugged individualism prevalent in the 1870s when the utilitarian economics of Bentham and Marshall based on Ockham's denial of universals and the positivist's denial of religion and metaphysics (Murphey 1993, 100): "The question whether the *genus homo* has any existence except as individuals, is the question whether there is anything of any more dignity, worth and importance than individual happiness, individual aspirations, and individual life. Whether men really have anything in common, so that the *community* is to be considered as an end in itself, and if so, what the relative value of the two factors is, is the most fundamental practical question in regard to every public institutions the constitution of which we have it in our power to influence" (1992, 105).

We cannot over-emphasize Peirce's socialist commitment. The individual mind, for Peirce, signifies fallibility: "The individual man, since his separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error, so far as he is

anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and they are to be, only a negation" (quoted in Murphey 1993, 175; see also Ketner 1998, 325; Colapietro 1989). This negation, however, can be a powerful matrix for affirmation, as witness the mutable occasions featuring Patrick Henry's words which, if decoded properly by a scientifically-minded collective agency, are capable of stoking the fires of revolutionary struggle across the oceans.

In the context of the search for concrete universals in ordinary experience, Peirce's humanistic communalism proves to be an open-ended, imaginatively creative approach to analyzing sociopolitical problems. His methodology of "critical commonsensism," combined with meaning-critical realism, rooted in a community of interpreters serves an emancipatory socialist-oriented goal (Apel 1981). Peirce subscribes to the Enlightenment principle of autonomy and self-controlled conduct. It affirms an earlier anti-Cartesian insight that there are no intuitive cognitions, and all hypothetical propositions are tentative and fallible. In this context, freedom is possible only in an objective inquiry into an impersonal truth about nature and society whose institutions and processes are always under construction.

Modern science has no self-authenticating, *a priori* foundations, only the quest for methods of discovery and proof. Likewise, nothing is self-authenticating for Peirce as he muses on the constellation of self, nature, and law; and thus, "the dialectic of moral life is set up, between inclinations rooted in flesh and moral duty grounded in reason. Freedom depends both on there being that dialectic and on our choosing morality over inclination. But this depends on the moral law not being arbitrary"

(Short 2007, 346). Peirce also held that "By the 'practical,' I mean everything that is possible through freedom" (Murphey 1993, 177). Scientists may be at sea, but not for long. Land, the harbor, looms ahead. Just as that piece of paper with Patrick Henry's words on liberty was not self-authenticating until it passed into the zones of Secondness and Thirdness, Peirce's philosophy remains to be investigated in the same spirit of risky adventure that he expressed in his 1905 letter to William James, who initially introduced Peirce's pragmaticism into the world with all its unpredictable consequences (note the sea metaphor recalling our specimen of Peirce's intervention): "There is nothing, however, more wholesome for us than to find problems that quite transcend our powers and I must say, too, that it imparts a delicious sense of being cradled in the waters of the deep—a feeling I always have at sea" (quoted in Short 2007, 347). *Terra incognita,* "concrete reasonableness" as utopia, remains to be discovered, understood, and fully appreciated.

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About the Author

E. SAN JUAN, JR. graduated in 1958 as an A.B. magna cum laude from the University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City. On Fulbright fellowship, he obtained his PhD degree from Harvard University in 1965. He was a professor of comparative literature, ethnic studies and cultural studies in the following universities: University of California at Davis, University of Connecticut at Storrs, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Washington State University, Wesleyan University, University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila, Bowling Green State University, Leuven University in Belgium, and National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. He was a professorial lecturer in cultural studies at Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

Reclaiming *"People Power"*: Prospects for Renewed Civil Society Engagement and Democratic Governance

Emy Ruth D. Gianan
Polytechnic University of the Philippines
Sta. Mesa, Manila
erdgianan@pup.edu.ph

abstract

With mounting challenges to democratization and the threat of regression, one asks how do we best reclaim spaces for engagement and public participation. The paper turns to civil society and revisits the case of the Philippines. It takes a closer look at their contributions, experiences, and insights as to challenges faced by the country relative to democratic nation-building. Towards this end, the paper discusses prospects for renewed engagement towards inclusive and democratic governance.

Keywords: Civil Society, Democracy, Philippine Government, EDSA People Power, Political Engagement and Participation

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Introduction

One of the important pillars of democratic nation-building is strong civil society and vibrant public participation. In the Philippines, the first EDSA People Power Revolution was a testament to the strength and stature of civil society in the country's politics as Filipinos from all walks of life joined together and deposed the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. These people were either individuals or members of different organizations with specific causes and advocacies, several of them fuelled by competing ideologies. But these did not stop them from airing a unified voice to restore democracy and civil liberties that have long been eroded. Since then, civil society are at the fore of promoting democratic governance in light of the evolving socio-economic and political issues that challenge the Philippines today.

In the Philippines, civil society is often associated or equated with people power. Primarily because renewed calls for government accountability flourished after 1986. Non-government (NGOs) and peoples' organizations (POs) pitched efforts to rebuild democracy and ensure that the gains of nation-building were sustained. Streams of funding support from foreign governments and donor foundations expanded civil society work and allowed them to engage more groups and communities. Their work, influence, and important contributions to political development are often met with mixed reactions. Some people praise the audacity to criticize the government and hold that protests are effective mechanisms to keep public officials accountable to their constituents. Successful advocacy campaigns have led to better and

more inclusive government policies such as anti-smoking in public spaces, removal of pork barrel, and full government subsidy for tertiary education. But for others, they find these public actions inconvenient, unnecessary, and increasingly becoming dangerous. Several civil society leaders and members have been the subject of government crackdown; veiled threats and absurd allegations for their continued work; while others were tortured or killed by unknown assailants. These concerns are further exacerbated by technology and social media, heightened historical revisionism, and authoritarian tendencies. Often, these would discourage people to participate and be more vocal about their stance on issues, thereby weakening the foundations of a democratic society.

Mounting threats to regression and descent to dangerous populist politics require a sincere study on one of the country's democratic pillars: civil society. The paper examines its development, contributions to political development and nation-building, and how it remains a potent weapon towards reclaiming spaces for democracy to flourish. The paper is divided into three major sections: literature review, discussion and analysis of findings stemming from interviews with experts and a focus-group discussion with local government leagues officials, and conclusions and recommendations.

Conceptualizing democracy and political participation

Aside from competitive elections and peaceful transitions of power[1], effective and functioning democracies also feature unbridled access to information, freedom of speech and expression, the active involvement of its citizenry and their capacity to equally discuss and arrive at a political consensus, and the assurance that all benefit from the nation's wealth. Without these[2], people grapple in the dark while powerful interests take the reins and benefit from information and power asymmetries. People suffer from unresponsive government policies, pay steep prices to access basic services, and eventually make bad, uninformed choices to their detriment, if information and other forms of freedoms are not accessed. It creates a vicious cycle of irresponsible service delivery, misinformation and deliberate ignorance, which eventually creates a disincentive for vibrant citizen's participation.

[1] Definitions of democracy can be classified as "thin" or "thick" according to Schumpeter. For Robert Dahl, the terms are "procedural" and "substantive." The aforementioned definition is on the thin or procedural category. A thick or substantive definition of democracy includes the following attributes, as expounded by Larry Diamond: individual freedom of belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, broadcast, assembly, demonstration, petition, and the internet; freedom of ethnic, religious, racial and other minority groups to practice their religion and culture, and to participate equally in political and social life; right of all adult citizens to vote and to run for office; genuine openness and competition in the electoral arena, form a party and contest for office; legal equality of all citizens under a rule of law; independent judiciary; due process of law; institutional checks on power and balances; real pluralism in sources of information and forms of organization independent of the state and thus a vibrant civil society; and, control over the military and state security apparatus by civilians who are ultimately accountable to the people through elections.

[2] Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, "Thinking About Empowered Participatory Governance," (2003), add that the central ideals of democratic politics rest on facilitating the active involvement of the citizenry, forging political consensus or ensuring a platform for dialogues, crafting public policies that promote a productive economy and healthy society, and ensuring that all citizens benefit from the nation's wealth (3).

Elections provide immediate platforms for public participation as it allows people to vote for their chosen representatives. It also creates avenues for feedback and regular exchange of insights between elected representatives and people directly affected by socio-political challenges that beset a certain community or the whole nation. When people extend their participation from elections towards participation in deliberation and decision-making, it creates a more credible air of legitimacy to actions undertaken and ensures accountability on the part of representatives. Essentially, these people entrusted with mandates are working to improve their lives and the overall welfare of the society. Participation is therefore a central driving force of a democratic society as it "relies on the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasonable deliberation." The benefits of freedom, democracy, and participative decision-making are vast and enticing enough for societies to commit to its ideals and create spaces for these tenets to take root and flourish: mutual accommodation from among stakeholders; generates higher levels of trust; and, introduces broader platforms to rethink and evaluate policies and programs designed to help the people. But alas, these are difficult endeavors to work through.

In Southeast Asia, societies believe that a democratic system is good, but they also favor at least one form of authoritarianism and/or other non-democratic alternatives[3]. Strong governments often see

[3] Matthew Carlson and Mark Turner, "Public support for Southeast Asian democratic governance," (2008). All modern Southeast Asian states have experienced rule by a powerful leader (dictator or autocrat) or military rule, the rule by experts, and bureaucratic authoritarianism. Their reaction and orientations about

dissent as a direct affront to their leadership and authority. So whenever civil society voices out concerns, criticizes policies, and demands better solutions, governments resort to large-scale crackdowns or a show of force to sow fear, restore public order and secure the legitimacy of the regime[4]. Recent events in the region reflect this: democratic participation often led to state crackdown on protestors and dissenters as seen in the Red-Shirt-Yellow-Shirt demonstrations in Thailand, demands for minimum wage among garment factory workers in Cambodia, and movements against draconian policies in Indonesia, to name a few.

Surveying Philippine civil society[5]

democracy could partly be attributed to Southeast Asia's familiarity with authoritarian forms of government, hence their endorsement of at least one non-democratic regime type (227). Most of these countries were branded as "pseudo democracies," "semi-democracies," "unconsolidated democracies," and "low-quality democracies." In the same study, Southeast Asians become more critical of democratic practices as one moves from the abstract towards specific performances of the central government. There appears to be a sizeable gap between citizen perception of democratic ideals, and actual practices of democratic rule—a key challenge for the region's leaders and civil society if they are to ensure that their states would continue to be democratic (237).

[4] John Kane, Haig Patapan, and Benjamin Wong, eds., *Dissident Democrats,* 2008. "Dissent is a natural feature of democracy; but dissent is just what authoritarians fear most. Authoritarians, relying on compulsion or co-optation, are unable to distinguish public consent from fearful acquiescence or selfish expediency, and this uncertainty makes any display of dissent alarming to them (13)." Dissent implies a direct challenge to the authority of a regime, prolonging it means instability, hence the immediate reference to state coercion or violence to curb such opposition (15).

[5] The succeeding discussions are largely based on Ledevina Carino and the PNSP Project Staff, "Volunteering in Cross-National Perspective: Evidence From 24 Countries." *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 39. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 2001, along with the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) *Civil Society Briefs: Philippines*, February 2013.

Amid all these challenges to participation, how does civil society remain vigilant and relevant? A survey of Philippine civil society history offers important insights. Based on the 2011 Civil Society Index, the country has a respectable civil society rating—people participate in various types of civil society groups, are well-represented in these platforms, and engage in several activities that embody their advocacies. Extant literature has also commended the entrenched role of civil society in empowering democratic governance in the country.

Philippine CSOs have often worked on the sidelines, content with helping and filling in certain social welfare needs present in their communities. Pre-colonial history highlights the concept of *bayanihan*, *kapwa* (shared inner self), *pakikipagkapwa* (holistic interaction with others), and *pagtutulungan* (mutual self-help) which embody a culture rooted in the tradition of reaching out, helping, and generosity. These concepts reflect the important notions of equality, mutualism, and interdependence; starkly different from Western notions that emphasize unequal relations between members of civil society and state authority. With the entry of colonial rulers, the dynamics would change in favor of those in power. During the Spanish occupation, community relationships were governed by Roman Catholic teachings and networks were confined in *cofradias*. Participation were embodied in town fiesta preparations and charitable activities such as feeding the poor and visiting the sick. These endured under the Americans with the overarching theme of benevolent assimilation. At the height of their occupation, state and church relations were delineated, offering a varied perspective with regard to community

participation and social work. Philanthropic activities initiated by members of the upper echelons of Philippine society flourished, alongside private-led organizations such as rotary clubs and business associations.

Independence from colonial rulers opened doors for more sectoral-based CSO work. Farmers and laborers gradually organized themselves to form unions that would advance their legislative interests and political agenda. Some were tied with church-based groups, while others under cooperative schemes. Peasant dissatisfaction on rampant government corruption and inefficiencies compelled them to collaborate with early communist networks, much to the chagrin of the state. This eventually waned after a strong campaign against the *Hukbalahap* and its affiliate groups after the Second World War. Efforts focused on rehabilitation, but several social issues lingered—rural underdevelopment, government corruption, and increasing poverty. When Ferdinand Marcos came to power, he promised greater heights for the country only to succumb to martial rule after a stronger wave of communist ideology swept the countryside, student activism strengthened, and basic commodity prices increased[6]. Civil society groups attempted to work under the specter of martial law; but were eventually hindered by the government from organizing and welfare support. Some of these groups were also working with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), hence the massive government-

[6] Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos* (Quezon City: Bughaw, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1976, 2017); Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, "Marcos, 1965-1986," *State and Society in the Philippines*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017) 193-229.

sponsored crackdown against communists and dissidents. Most of these civil society groups went underground "to continue working for people's welfare apart from or against the state[7]."

Several historical junctures triggered thousands of Filipinos to decry the oppressive rule of Marcos and depose him by marching in the streets of Metro Manila, convening at the infamous Shrine of Mary, Queen of Peace along EDSA. This has since been known as the 1986 People Power Revolution which effected regime change and appropriated a "transformative role" for civil society in the country's politics[8]. Several key accomplishments began at the creation and ratification of the 1987 Constitution, which enshrined strong people's participation, local autonomy, respect for indigenous peoples, upheld the role of women and youth in nation-building, and social justice[9]. Leaders from various civil society groups were credited for these groundbreaking constitutional principles, which laid out the foundation for a more democratic Filipino society.

The succeeding administrations saw a civil society that remained a reliable and stalwart force demanding transparency, accountability, and good governance from public officials. CSOs were instrumental in popularizing

[7] Resil Mojares, "Words that are not moving: civil society in the Philippines," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 34: 1 Special Issue: Three By Mojares, (March 2006).

[8] P.T. Martin, "The First Quarter Storm Library," offers a collection of images, articles, and other information regarding student activism in the Philippines during the martial law era. A summary of all public demonstrations were also outlined in "A History of Philippine Political Protest" at the website of the Official Gazette of the Philippines.

[9] Eleanor R. Dionisio (ed.), "What is good about the 1987 Constitution?" *Intersect Quick Facts* 5:1 (January 2018) 1

Fidel Ramos' social reform agenda, majority of which broke monopolies and opened markets for competition. The more populist Joseph "Erap" Estrada appointed civil society leaders to key cabinet positions and instituted broader poverty alleviation programs. His dalliances with women, friendly ties with known shrewd businessmen, and allegations of unexplained wealth imperiled his presidency in 2001. New communications technology changed the dynamics of recent public assemblies and street protests, most notable of which was EDSA Dos[10]. Civil society members coordinated the four-day protest in the streets of EDSA through a series of text messages sent across their network of friends and colleagues. Within hours, a large mass of people from various sectors of the society gathered, decried his immoral leadership, and demanded Erap's resignation. The political opposition leveraged this opportunity to their political advantage with Erap finally ousted. Incumbent vice-president at that time, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA) fulfilled the remaining presidential term. Her rise to power however fuelled class-based protests—middle class and young professionals worked with student movements, church-based organizations and several other advocacy groups supporting the new regime and calls for virtuous leadership, while the other end featured a large

[10] Raul Pertierra (2012). "The New Media, Society and Politics in the Philippines." *Fesmedia Asia Series.* Berlin, Germany: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and fesmedia Asia. The discussion notes that new media / new communications technology altered the Philippine political sphere, but other factors remain equally strong in shaping the country's politics and governance. Text messages served as a tool to drive expression of dissent into political action in the streets, as in the case of Erap; but not in the case of GMA. Pertierra argues that "in the absence of a confluence of factors favouring change, new media activism is insufficient to achieve it. In other words, the new media in itself is unable to bring about fundamental political change (23)."

mass of urban poor groups and Erap fans demanding his return to office[11].

Her nine years into office were marked with protests and a divided government. She also contended with mounting opposition to her economic policies aimed at liberalizing markets and cultivating a larger room for the forces of globalization, her firm support to the American-led war on terror, and her dismal human rights records. It also did not help that she ran for re-election despite initially promising to fulfill Erap's remaining term, followed by controversies tied to electoral fraud and vote manipulation during the 2004 elections. Since then, she cracked down against dissent often against civil society leaders and social movements through a nefarious use of her constitutionally-granted extraordinary powers[12].

A disgruntled Filipino population banked on the promise of fresh politics offered by Aquino scion, Benigno III, also known as PNoy. His campaign and eventual election as president was backed by a motley

[11] Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*; Glenda M. Gloria, "Remembering the Iglesia-led EDSA 3," *Rappler*, August 29 2015. Erap supporters disgruntled by the arrest of the former president gathered at EDSA for a protest. On May 1, a group of people broke away and proceeded to Mendiola, in front of the Malacanang Palace, "where they fought a a bloody street battle with police and military forces." GMA then imposed a state of rebellion wherein a number of protesters were arrested and a few of them were killed. EDSA 2 groups tried to dispel the memories of EDSA 3 by labeling it a "drug-crazed mob" and mobilized by leaders who were not even there; however, it remained a classic manifestation of lower class grievance against a government callous to their needs and an upper economic class comfortable with the status quo.

[12] Raul C. Pangalangan, "Political emergencies in the Philippines: changing labels and the unchanging need for legitimacy," in *Emergency Powers in Asia: Exploring the Limits of Legitimacy*, eds. V.V. Ramraj and A.K. Thiruvengadam (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). He describes GMA's approach towards dissent as follows: "each time, she has deliberately avoided using the exact language of the Constitution in order not to trigger off the built-in safeguards, and she has not been fundamentally repudiated by either the Supreme Court, the Congress or the people (413)."

crew: civil society groups, prominent academic institutions, several student movements, Aquino loyalists and the Liberal Party, politicos abandoning the ruling party to shed off the "GMA curse", and thousands of Filipinos hungry for change[13]. He started off strong with policies aimed at removing corruption and promoting good government. He also scored good relations with civil society given his progressive policies on engagement and inclusive governance as exhibited in the full disclosure policy (FDP), bottom-up budgeting (BUB), and campaigns towards freedom of information (FoI)[14]. Halfway through his leadership, he was saddled by similar concerns on red tape, political favoritism and partisanship, and elitism. The public were dissatisfied with his administration's approach to traffic congestion, poor public transportation, and non-appearance in critical situations (i.e. Typhoon Yolanda visits and other disaster-related concerns), to name a few[15]. These became decisive issues in the next presidential elections, which easily

[13] Chay F. Hofilena and Miriam Grace A. Go, *Ambition, Destiny, Victory: Stories From A Presidential Election,* (Anvil Publishing: Mandaluyong City, 2011). The rise of social media platforms and video-sharing sites opened new opportunities for public participation and engagement during the elections season. It yielded modest results for public officials who took advantage of technology; but the strength of PNoy's "fresh" brand of politics and the symbolism of Cory Aquino's death proved to be a potent weapon to ultimately clinch the presidency (Pertierra, "The New Media," 2012: 23).

[14] "Inaugural Address of President Benigno S. Aquino III," *Official Gazette of the Philippines,* June 30 2010, accessed: https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2010/06/30/inaugural-address-of-his-excellency-benigno-s-aquino-iii/

[15] Nile Villa, "10 of Aquino's biggest hits and misses, as seen through social media," *Rappler,* June 18 2016, accessed: https://www.rappler.com/technology/social-media/136480-president-aquino-term-social-media-reactions

handed the victory to popular and candid local chief executive of Davao City, Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

Compared to 2010, social media platforms and the internet played a more crucial role during the recent presidential elections. Numerous fan pages and social media groups were created to popularize candidates, mobilize a broader base of support, and spread their political messages across a larger section of the population[16]. These mechanisms helped secure an overwhelming victory for Duterte, commanding 16 million votes and becoming the country's most popularly elected president. When he assumed office, he introduced several initiatives that proved to be both reform-oriented and polarizing; which in turn, increasingly highlighted the evolving discourse on how the country's development should be shaped in the years to come[17].

Today, the government seems intent on following an alternative path on foreign policy and economic development: lesser interventions from traditional allies in the West, and more friendly ties with the emerging

[16] Aim Sinpeng, "How Duterte won the election on Facebook," *New Mandala,* May 12 2016, accessed: https://www.newmandala.org/how-duterte-won-the-election-on-facebook/; Maria Isabel T. Buenaobra, "Social Media: A Game Changer in Philippine Elections, *The Asia Foundation,* April 27 2016, accessed: https://asiafoundation.org/2016/04/27/social-media-a-game-changer-in-philippine-elections/.

[17] The Philippines comes from a short period of impressive economic growth, second to China in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate; and an aggressive stance on the South China Sea dispute compared to its Southeast Asian neighbors with competing claims. During the younger Aquino's administration, the Philippines secured several ratings upgrades from top credit rating agencies (Clarissa Batino and Cecilia Yap, "Philippines Wins S&P Upgrade as Aquino's Changes Seen Enduring." *Bloomberg*, May 9 2014). It was also during PNoy's period where the Philippines formalized its claim on numerous islands located at the South China Sea, with The Hague eventually ruling in favor of the Philippines (Paterno Esmaquel II, "Aquino: The president who brought China to court," *Rappler,* June 29 2017).

powers of China and Russia; coupled with a strong-handed approach against narcotics and on ensuring peace and order within the archipelago. More populist stances on social welfare, health, and education were also introduced[18]. The environment sector had also seen its fair share of limelight on the administration's focus with the six-month rehabilitation for popular tourist destination Boracay hitting the front-page. It is important to highlight that these positively sounding developments come with a bloody price tag. While not causative, one also has to take into account the government's implied disregard for human rights abuses—an estimated 12,000 lives were slain in the President's flagship drug war; unemployment rates continue to soar, and would see more with looming inflation due to the poor implementation of the new tax reform law[19]. Indigenous

[18] Examples include: larger taxes for higher earning individuals and removal of taxes for minimum wage earners; continued support for the conditional cash transfer program (4Ps); increasing benefits through rice subsidies (i.e. from TRAIN Law package); a reiteration of the No Balance Billing Policy for the poor; and, the recent free tuition for college students in state universities.

[19] According to Human Rights Watch, at least 12,000 lives were taken due to the President's relentless drug war. Majority of them are suspected drug users and dealers from poor families living in urban slums. Perpetrators are said to be police officers and for several other cases, by unidentified gunmen (HRW, "Philippines: Duterte's 'Drug War' Claims 12,000+ Lives," January 18 2018). With regards to unemployment rates, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) pegged it at 5.4% on July 2018; but in IBON's estimates it is at 9.2%.

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Package 1 of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) was signed into law by the end of 2017. It was then implemented immediately by 2018. The tax reform cut workers' tax rates and increased their take-home pay, but also increased excise taxes on oil and petroleum products, and introduced new taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and vehicles (Joann Villanueva, "TRAIN on its 1st year of implementation," *Philippine News Agency*, December 28 2017). Leading think tank IBON Foundation note that TRAIN is behind the continued spike in inflation rates, and its continued implementation would add to inflationary pressure (IBON Foundation, "TRAIN still behind high inflation, IBON Infopost, January 14 2019).

peoples (IPs), farmers, fisherfolk, and families affected by abusive mining practices, are at the whipping end of the government's pursuit for change and socio-economic development[20]. Civil society leaders particularly those who lead labor, urban poor, and IP movements, as well as vociferous critics of the government are either jailed or accused of vague charges. And while corruption and bad practices of government officials are relentlessly shown in media, most of them do not receive commensurate sanctions[21]. The public have yet to see fruition of the administration's election promises and civil society is divided more than ever.

Examining the challenges that beset Philippine civil society

Three (3) broad issues faced by civil society are discussed in this section. The first two issues require reflection and introspection on the part of civil society members; while the last one is an external issue civil society has to actively work on, and to which government has to also think about and act upon. These issues are discussed briefly based on literature, and then extensively in the analysis shortly:

[20] Human rights organization, Karapatan, reports that at least 134 individuals were slain under the Duterte administration. Majority of those targeted were farmers. On January 30 2019, National Democratic Front (NDF) consultant Randy Malayao was fatally attacked in broad daylight in Nueva Vizcaya. Other human rights defenders who have tragically fallen include Lumad farmer associations in Davao, Compostela Valley, and South Cotabato (Janella Paris, "Human rights defenders also killed under Duterte administration," Rappler, February 7 2019).

[21] Alan Robles, "If Duterte's so proud of firing corrupt officials, why hire them?" South China Morning Post, November 19 2018); Michael Bueza, "Notable Duterte admin exits and reappointments," Rappler, June 29 2018).

- Sustainable funding and accountability. CSOs rely on two major sources of funds: self-imposed fees or charges, and donations from other institutions. Smaller organizations such as those comprising farmers, fisher folk, and grassroots-based groups rely on self-imposed fees or charges; while the larger coalitions gain access to external sources of funding, as discussed in CS Index 2011. Both are unsustainable: smaller organizations with members coming from lower-income groups need larger bases of support so as not to strain their pockets; while groups with access to external sources see dwindling assistance with donors moving out of the country or are limiting areas for possible funding. These create further concerns at the domestic level: organizations are already working with fewer staff, who in turn are not receiving full benefits of work or are working as volunteers, and interventions are either limited or cut short to meet funding requirements. There are also perceptions of corruption among CSOs.

- Clear focus, objectives, and audience engagement. CSOs began as relief and welfare groups, then transitioned towards community enhancement and promoting sustainable systems for development, and more recently to introducing alternative forms of development. As observed in the case of the Philippines, CSOs have successfully accomplished these things through progressive policies, championing the voices of

the poor and the marginalized, and organizing communities for expanded participation[22]. Over time, long-term goals have been obscured in favor of short-term gains. They are criticized for cooptation, compromise and other actions that may have demanded government accountability but through extra-constitutional means[23]. Funding institutions have also gradually shaped some of the advocacy's participation through various measures, indicators, and identified targets. At some point these are helpful metrics, but to a certain extent, these have been the focus of organizations instead of the actual people they need to work with and support. In a way there is a need to "go back to the basics", reflecting on the greater need to secure development that is not segregated from the people and the overall social movements through which these initiatives are grounded[24].

- Strong frameworks, values promoted, and enabling environment. Civil society participation is vibrant, active, and fully entrenched in the Philippines if seen through the lens of its policies and legal frameworks. After all, the country has provided both constitutional and statutory safeguards for public participation. Decentralization also multiplied avenues for

[22] Isagani Serrano, *Civil Society in the Philippines* (Undated).

[23] Resil Mojares, "Words that are not moving," (2006).

[24] Dorothea Hilhorst, "The power of discourse," 29

> participation at the local level. But when juxtaposed with operations and implementation, literature shows that the laws on enhanced public participation have yet to be fully implemented, and decentralization in turn have registered mixed results relative to its impact on democratization. In particular, studies emphasized the need to maximize the use of local special bodies such as local development councils (LDCs) that mandate the presence of civil society groups[25]. One of the issues point to the lack of registered / accredited CSOs at the local level, but also the lack of groups with adequate capacity and expertise for engagement with government.

Historically, one can already glean the love-hate relationship between the government and civil society. One always must give in to compromises—and often, this happens to civil society. Governments are more powerful and authoritative, hence actions that may stifle dissent or inclusive participation may be done if civil society is often antagonistic. This is understandable, but not valid and healthy for a democratic society. Democracy thrives on dialogues, dissent, and engagement. Government must realize that in order to retain their legitimacy and integrity, a tight grip on power is not the answer; rather, on a deeper trust on the capacity of its people to help and improve the society.

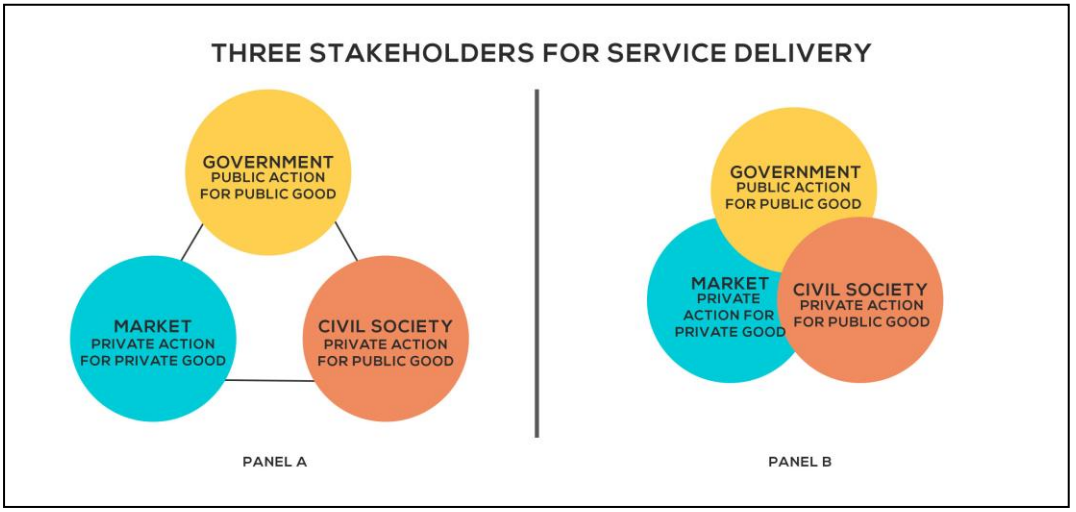
[25] Czarina Medina-Guce, "Substance over Form: Improving Assessments of Local Development Councils (LDCs) and Local Development Investment Programs (LDIPs), *Policy Note for DILG (Support for Local Governance Program)*, (2018)

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

This section is divided into three (3) sub-sections. The first part outlines how the different experts interviewed defined civil society, how they understand the role of civil society in governance, and the accomplishments clinched relative to enhancing participation and introducing good governance. The second part delves into the issues and challenges that affect civil society today, how these can be compared and contrasted with the challenges they faced before, and how these contentions open opportunities for further reflection on the role and value of civil society. The last part collates the recommendations and final insights from the experts relative to the continuing significant role of civil society in democratic societies.

Evolving definition of civil society. In general, definitions for civil society remained consistent with those observed in literature. It is a "broad aggrupation of citizens and people" distinct from the government and market that provide direct services and welfare assistance to the public. Civil society definition gains nuance when compared with the two other key stakeholders in Philippine society—government and market. In the figure below, they are illustrated as separate spheres connected by lines to connote their modes of engagement (Panel A). The idea is that they are distinct but interact, work together, or even counteract each other relative to delivery of goods and services. The respondents affirmed this idea, but also added that increasingly over time, the spheres are moving closer to each other as characterized by overlapping circles in Panel B.

Figure 1. Three Main Stakeholders



The overlapping circles offer two insightful scenarios according to the respondents. First, it could mean that they are really working closer together relative to ensuring accountability and meeting public needs. This should be seen in a positive light as this offers broader platforms for service delivery and engages more people in the process. Private sector social responsibility could be a way to move towards a more humane and inclusive perspective on economic development and globalization. Government NGOs (GRINGOs), to a certain extent, could be a way to bring government closer to the people. Areas with only a small number or without CSOs would see GRINGOs as a seed for a more vibrant civil society.

On the other hand, and of equal importance, these may literally mean overlapping work and engagement to the

detriment of civil society. Compared with the two other sectors, civil society relies on volunteerism and civic participation—government sources its authority from public mandate making it a powerful force, and market on private capital and hold over economic forces. The respondents note that overlapping work connote skewed power relations, with civil society at the mercy of government and market forces. For instance, some local governments set up their own NGOs which then serve as representatives in local councils or as primary supporters of administration policies and programs. One can say that this is public participation; but with local government at its back, these NGOs are given token power. Other NGOs critical of the sitting public officials or those diametrically opposed to their platforms or policies are crowded out of the discourse. The effects of such nefarious mechanism may not be immediately felt, but over time, this crumbles democratic institutions and eats away public enthusiasm for discourse. In the end, democratic societies cannot expect a vibrant and legitimate public opinion when participants are filtered.

Business- initiated NGOs also create a dilemma on democratic and participatory governance[26]. They offer an alternative perspective, one that humanizes capitalism and globalization forces even as these take advantage of the poor and those who work on the informal sector. Further, they also serve as masks for unjust labor and economic practices done by companies. As long as they champion a global cause or advocate for a certain policy, they gain the good graces of the public. A good example

[26] Shingo Mikamo offers an extensive discussion in "Business associations and politics in the post-EDSA Philippines: neither oligarchy nor civil society," *Philippine Political Science Journal.*

would be companies with advocacy arms championing Filipino identity and nationalism but are actually shortchanging their workers by hiring them on a contractual basis. There are also companies which participate in coastal cleanup activities or tree-planting ceremonies, only to find out that they are prime violators of the country's environmental laws. These actions cheapen volunteerism and public participation into tokenistic, one-time campaigns; and blindside people as to their motives. While these may not be true for all business-initiated NGOs, there is a need to fully account these kinds of actions to prevent further abuse and negative impact on participation in the long-run.

Expanding civil society roles. The respondents note how civil society dons numerous hats. Their answers could be summarized into three general roles, as discussed extensively in the succeeding parts. **The primary and most prominent role of civil society is welfare provision and assisting communities.** Most of them provide interventions in conflict-ridden zones, far-flung barangays, or poor communities. Civil society is central to fulfilling gaps in service delivery. As often, government could be overwhelmed by the sheer number of tasks expected of them, while markets only provide for consumers willing to pay for the good or service, or when there are subsidies that enable them to extend provision to areas where they're not usually expected. Civil society groups provide resources and work with the community by organizing them into people's organizations or empowering them through livelihood programs with the end goal of making them more sufficient and less dependent to external interventions.

When state authority or the might of economic resources tend to be too much for the public to handle, **civil society takes on the cudgels of representing the people.** A more organized front offered by a civil society group or a coalition of NGOs could be an effective counterbalance against powerful forces that prey on the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized peoples. Representation could also be sectoral, as in the case of women, children, and persons-with-disabilities (PWDs); or could be for a specific advocacy, such as gun control, gender discrimination, or traffic congestion. Often, NGOs tend to speak for, work for, and fight for the people through campaigns, lobbying of policies, and coalition-building. They rely on their network and expertise to accomplish whatever goals they undertook for the sector or cause they represent. But there are also circumstances when the people themselves are organized to speak for themselves, work and fight with their colleagues, to achieve their common goals. This is observed in labor and trade unions, cooperatives, and even people's organizations.

Finally, **civil society also serve as watchdogs.** Their perspective operates differently from government and market, and often they may see indiscretions or forms of abuses that may undermine public welfare. Their membership in boards and public councils accord them the power to check and balance the two other sectors. In cases where they are not included in the circle, civil society groups still step forward by creating independent committees and watchdogs to monitor government policies and programs, or even market practices. These formal undertakings may prove to be inadequate, and so

other platforms may be done such as street protests, mobilizations, boycotts, strikes, and other campaigns. The idea behind these is to elicit public attention, invite further debate on a side-stepped issue, or demand immediate response from concerned stakeholders.

Evolving challenges. This section revisits and validates the three (3) issues raised in the literature review. In essence, the same challenges confront civil society today. **Funding and accountability remain a major concern for groups engaged in civil society work.** According to the respondents, being elevated into middle-income country status prevented the Philippines from securing more funding options. States with lesser incomes or are facing equally alarming geopolitical issues attract more assistance from donor groups. The respondents noted how these challenges push their colleagues to venture into social enterprising and partnership agreements with business groups willing to support their causes. These actions pose both positive and negative impacts, PhilDHRRA and INCITEGov affirmed. On one hand, it creates a steady source of income for CSOs, pushes them to be self-supporting, and opens opportunities to promote their products. On the flip side, some organizations compromise their principles in exchange for funding. The respondents did not elaborate much on compromise, except on the fact that they become less critical of their funders especially those from the business and/or government sector. The respondents also cited cases of competition among POs and NGOs for projects and funding support. Often, POs become direct implementers of projects because of their proximity to the desired beneficiaries. NGOs receive

smaller grants to pursue research, advocacy campaigns, or lobbying at the national level. No specific cases were provided by the respondents. Corruption within the civil society is a veiled issue. The Napoles-Revilla plunder case in 2015 did not fully erode public trust on civil society but was quite detrimental for those organizations which are not accredited, PCNC explained. DSWD-NCR added that this affirmed the need to strengthen current accreditation processes among government agencies to make them effective partners for good governance. Over time, the concern relative to funding and accountability is anchored on the need to ensure sustainable civil society work in the long-run. Their value as an important stakeholder wanes, and the provision of extended public service is imperiled when resources necessary for their continued existence would not be secured.

For the second concern, the respondents noted the **lack of focus, off-tangent objectives, and failure to engage their audience as a major challenge for civil society today**. These are more apparent as people are more socially conscious and information is more accessible. Ultimately, it has to be effectively balanced between the people represented by these organizations and the agencies that support and fund them. However, the question is more difficult to answer and may yield contentious responses. Funding and accountability are directly tied to this second set of issues. First, CSOs find it imperative to meet the indicators set forth by their donors. While these are important metrics to ensure social transformation, there are times when figures become more significant than the lives and communities given the intervention. No specific cases were cited by the

respondents, but they recognize that within their coalitions and groups, there are certain circumstances when their decisions tend to be abrasive and less sensitive to the actual needs of the people they serve. Second, members of civil society often succumb to "analysis paralysis." There is a tendency to debate about better solutions to the country's numerous social ills, without arriving at any concrete action point or mechanisms to move forward. If not fully addressed, the respondents noted that these challenges would continue to breed more problems later on: lesser funding and public support in the long-run; proposition of technically sound policies but politically unfeasible when implemented; and a public disillusioned and frustrated from countless arguments while the poor remain hungry, angry, and repressed. All of these do not bode well for a vision of a democratic and participatory governance.

Finally, the respondents argue that **even with a constitution that supports public participation and several more legislations ensuring safe and free spaces for political discourse, the overall political climate in the Philippines continues to stifle dissent and resent opposition.** Civil society is once again at the crossroads. The continued oppression from the government and the diminishing support for human rights make the environment less supportive of civil society participation. The respondents admitted that within their ranks, they are divided as to their level of support for an administration that has a skewed perspective on civilian liberties. Several groups, they shared, have remained silent about certain controversial issues either because of weak values formation, fear in

these dangerous times, or their deliberate decision to remain neutral. The respondents shared that an open government is a vital element for democratic governance. The existence of local special bodies is a progressive step towards this envisioned goal of participatory governance; however, the reality shows that these have not been maximized. As shared by the respondents, several LGUs create their own NGOs to sit in special bodies partly because of the lack of active CSOs in their communities, while on some other cases, these are deliberate attempts. There are no specific policies as to oppression, but government statements and actions paint a bleak future for participation. Technological advances create more opportunities to spread fake news and misinformation; and coupled with poor voter education, public opinion would be imperiled. While civil society should not be monolithic, it should also not be too fragmented to introduce cognitive dissonances and polarizing political decisions.

As noted in the literature portion, these issues were already present and have been consistently contended with until today. The fact that they continue to exist and evolve into larger concerns, as affirmed by the discussions with the respondents, partly reflect the lack of effective intervention to really address these challenges.

Upholding the value of civil society in democratic governance. Civil society has come a long way since it has started to assert its influence and part in Philippine politics and governance. The previous discussions showed aspects of civil society participation that have to be assessed honestly and worked on, to ensure the significant contribution of public participation to better

governance in the Philippines. The respondents provided several recommendations for an improved civil society, and they are summarized into three (3) themes as follows:

1. **Honestly reflect and assess where civil society is now, in relation to political participation and democracy.** They suggested discussing among their colleagues the possibility of mapping our major coalitions, networks, and associations of organizations; and also taking stock of current engagements and ideological biases. These would help them better understand the terrain of civil society work today. Further, this would also assist them in establishing common grounds and agreements as to human rights, free expression, and human development—issues that were quite contentious and divisive today.

2. **Diligently work towards community organizing, reframe methods to meet current demands if necessary, and attract younger people to CSO work.** The respondents emphasized the need to go back to community organizing. They believe that interacting with ordinary people and sharing in their struggle would help ground their ideals and motivations; areas which have since been diluted by being out of touch from the people they represent. It is also imperative to revisit their methods for organizing and advocacy building as these have been significantly changed by the current political landscape and the advent of technology. Labor

unions for instance, must rethink organizing workers, especially with the rise of contractual work and freelance types of jobs. The same is true for NGOs and POs, where one can observe how themes have been split into more specific areas of interest and concern. The value of political correctness and sensitivity would also have to be ascertained and given room in civil society work today. Finally, all the respondents need a fresh generation of passionate civil society workers to continue blazing the path. Several factors may contribute to the lack of young people in CSO, and they would have to really work this out lest they see long-standing organizations fade out.

3. **Actively demand for inclusion and spaces to participate in local politics.** This would require more than just discussions and meetings; but continued presence in local activities, and protests if necessary, to make government accountable for its actions. The need to organize new groups and individuals at the local level would be a necessary step towards demanding more participatory space. Since there would be a greater number of participants later, then a platform to listen to their pleas and ideas would be an important result.

Conclusion: Reclaiming "people power"

Over the course of the discussion, three (3) important insights are underscored. These serve as foundation for future studies relative to understanding their current role

in politics and governance, and subsequently, the value of civil society in enhancing democratic governance in the Philippines.

- **One, democratization should be examined critically as to its quality and depth.** Democratization was fulfilled procedurally as explained in the previous statements; but it is equally important to examine it based on substantive fulfillment through notions of citizenship and participation, and state – civil society relations. The decentralization experience illustrates the government's commitment to broader public participation by delegating powers at local units, along with other policies on participation. But these should transcend those written on paper to concrete action and full implementation of the law.

- **Two, civil society proved to be a formidable and reliable public institution but is unstable and has unequal power relations with the state.** Throughout history, civil society assumed broader roles relative to social welfare, and politics and governance. It has also gained the recognition of the state given their involvement in formal bodies and policy-making forums. But the field remains unequal as the state defines their terms of engagement and incentives for participation. The state can tune out civil society especially if it becomes critical to its policies. While this is difficult to do in the national level,

this is fairly easy to undertake at the local level where chief executives are patrons and act as benevolent masters to their constituents. These then lend to its instability as they become mere pawns in public discourse. Decentralization therefore is a linchpin for creating a more enabling environment for quality and enhanced public participation.

- **Three, the issues and challenges confronting civil society are similar but evolving.** It is akin to hydra as the problems and concerns that impact civil society were not fully addressed and have even reared more dangerous heads difficult to resolve. These then require the civil society to reflect more seriously as to its role as a public institution and its commitment to ensuring participatory governance in the Philippines. In particular, issues close to their turf: the need for better funding resources and increased transparency and accountability measures; as well as the value of anchoring their work to public service delivery and improved human development. This should work hand-in-hand with government expanding areas for civil society engagement. One cannot work without the other; hence, a more collaborative environment should be cultivated, if one is committed to a more inclusive democracy.

The study provided an updated sketch of the country's civil society landscape. The current undertaking illustrates

where civil society is today, the challenges they continue to contend with, and areas where the community can start working on to ensure their sustainability and more effective contribution to political discourse and social development. Much has to be done, but more importantly the community has shown its willingness to assess and work towards a better civil society, one that is indeed geared towards genuine participatory and democratic governance. □

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About the Author

EMY RUTH GIANAN is a faculty member of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. She is a holder of a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science (PUP) and Master in Asian Studies (University of the Philippines, Diliman).

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Rhetorics of Ecocriticality: The Ecocomposition of the Selected Poems of Francis C. Macansantos

Jan Raen Carlo M. Ledesma
University of Santo Tomas
Manila, Philippines
jmledesma@ust.edu.ph

abstract

Based on Hubert Zapf's theory of the "Ecological Force" of Literature and Timothy Morton's theory of "Ambient Poetics", this study attempts to flesh out tropes of ecocriticism in the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos from his collection Snail Fever: Poems of Two Decades (2016). From these theories, Macansantos' selected poems are revealed to deploy the rhetorics of ecocriticality linking literature to a greater web of discourses concerning nature and the environment. In particular, discourses which are grounded in the interactions of the spheres of culture and nature become, in literary studies, the springboard for fleshing out ecocritical ranges and forces. This is further shown by expanding and thematically analyzing Dobrin and Weisser's concept of ecocomposition or "literature's constitutive

existence." Capitalizing on ecocomposition supported by ecomimesis, the study posits that the ecocomposition and ecological rhetoric of Macansantos' selected poems take their cue from his ecocritical-creative stance from which place, situatedness, ambience, nature, and environment become discursive ecocritical categories. The analysis of the selected poems with strong ecological bent reveals a remarkable variety of ecocritical themes: the polarity transpiring between the anthropocentric and ecocentric domains of ecology, the precepts of shallow ecology that support the continuity of the anthropocene's life through the resources of nature and the environment, the decentering of the anthropocene through the notion of deep ecology, the rhetorics of environmental debasement, and thoughts on sustainability as reflected in literature.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, Biosphere, Ecology, Ecological Force of Literature, Ecocriticism

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Introducing Ecocriticism

In literary studies, the concepts of nature, wilderness, environment, ecological wisdom, and physical settings have played an important role in rendering literature a remarkable site for environmental discourse and as an avenue for examining the negotiation between the human and non-human domains. This very assumption falls under the literary lens called "ecocriticism"—a theory that attempts to "green" the endeavor of literary criticism made possible through its biocentric and geocentric approaches. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, two of the leading names in this area of specialization, in their anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, have defined it as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment taking the literary endeavour from the perspective of ecology and its concomitant complexities. It takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (1996, xviii).

It proposes to project a literary world where the environmental concerns, ecological values underscoring geography and biography, life interactions and processes, movements of materials and energy, disasters, and biodiversity are rendered as core elements and key features in examining literature. Literature is viewed and imagined as a compound biosphere in which matter, physical phenomenon, theoretical ideas and discourses engage with each other as if it has one foot in literature and the other on land showing the anthropocene and the environment as broad problematic ecocritical categories (Glotfelty 1996, xix). The whole ecosphere becomes a springboard for literature to problematize on the

interconnections between nature and culture disclosing its complexity and duality.

As an avenue for "greening" the theoretical discourse in literature, it is essential to assert that the biosphere can also stand as a character on its own, being presented as an ecocritically interlacing narrative of alteration, aftermaths, chaos, and interconnectedness. Stuart Cooke, in an article titled *What's an Ecologically Sensitive Poetics? Song, Breath, and Ecology in Southern Chile*, is right to argue that the ecology, when examined from the point of view of poetic consciousness, can offer many ways of articulating and presenting the very relations between its attendant elements (Cooke 2014, 92). The unrestrained environmental continents of literature are then furnished to become the avenue for scrutinizing the word "nature" and the notion of place as a distinct conception. Literature is seen to function both as a referent and a participant in the environmental condition (Potter 2005, 1). This paper aims to underscore the conceptualization of the ecocomposition and ecological rhetoric of the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos dealing with nature and the environment from his collection *Snail Fever: Poems of Two Decades* (2016) leading to the perusal of the ecological foreground in his poems shaped by ecocentric and anthropocentric ideologies.

In fleshing out the ecocomposition of the selected poems of Macansantos, the selected poems of Macansantos are chosen for their notable ecopoetic undertones. Such undertones reveal that the figuration of landscapes are presented not as merely symbols of representation as ascertained from the vista of place, situatedness, and ambiance, but also as metaphors and

emblems for the varying stances of the anthropocentric and ecocentric domains in the ecological foreground of his poems. It touches on the notions of connection/disconnection on an intimate ground with the ecological domain projected in the light of unity, diversity and disarray. In this regard, literature and the environment become a potent avenue for creating discourses on ecological and environmental shifts (Potter 2005, 2). The ecocritical approach utilized shifts the critical focus from social to natural and situates the subject as someone who is emplaced in the complexity of the biosphere—the totality of ecosystems and the very system that unifies all living beings and their attendant relationships with each other. In consonance with Vathana Fenn's ecocritical concepts discussed in her essay *Roots in Ecocriticism,* the literary sense of place is not only viewed as a setting, but as an essential expression of bonding or even alienation from a specific natural context (Fenn 2005, 114). This makes the environment in literature a voluble domain to examine.

J. Scott Bryson, in his book titled *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry,* mentioned the earmarks that comprise the concept of ecopoetry. These earmarks posited by Bryson can also be seen as forming and comprising the foreground of Macansantos' selected nature poems. To quote Bryson:

> Ecopoetry is seen to be having an ecological and biocentric perspective recognizing the independent nature of the world. It also possesses a deep humility with regard to our

> relationships with human and non-human natures. (2005, 82)

It is from such assumption in which one can see that one speaks not only from one's gendered, classed, and racialized position as affirmed by the various lenses of literary theory, but also from an ecologically situated body and perspective. It is in this regard whereby one can see that discourses in literature are not heavily dependent upon location and position, but also within specific ecological contexts, geographics, and natures. In dealing with the ecological foreground, ecocomposition, and tropes of ecocriticism as reflected in the selected poems of Francis Macansantos, this study introduces the concept of ecocomposition. In this paper, this concept is considered as a descriptive-analytical avenue for examining concepts and literacies from the perspective of ecology, bringing to light nature and environment as dominant characters and as interwoven narratives imbued with various ecocritical foregroundings in the poems of Macansantos.

On the Notion of Ecocomposition

In examining the environmental rhetoric and consciousness in the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos, this paper will capitalize on the so called "ecocomposition." In their book *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*, Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin provided an operational definition of the term. To quote Weisser and Dobrin:

> Ecocomposition is an area of study which, at its core, places ecological thinking and ecocomposition in dialogue with one another in order to both consider the ecological properties of written discourse and the ways in which ecologies, environments, locations, places, and natures are discursively affected. That is to say, ecocomposition is about relationships; it is about the constitutive existence of writing and environment; it is about physical environment and constructed environment; it is about the production of written discourse and the relationship of that discourse to the places it encounters. (2001, 2)

The whole ecosphere is a resilient springboard for literature to problematize on the interconnections between nature and culture. This is the very endeavour of engaging with the action of "greening" literature as reflected in the selected poems of Macansantos, noteworthy for its resilient poetics of ambience and situatedness, a strong foundation for this paper to also underscore the ecological themes of biophilia, the shallow and deep ecologies, anthropocentrism, environmental debasement, and sustainability. In further exploring these themes, this paper gives the very affirmation that it is possible for literature to be preponderantly ecological and biocentric in its point of view (Bryson 2005, 82)—a testament to the field's interdisciplinary aspect further

differentiating it from the earmarks offered by the Romantic movement and perspective in literature. Nature and the environment are considered as the forces directing and guiding literature (Relph 1981, 168).

In attempting to deduce the ecological and biocentric foreground of the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos as guided by Dobrin and Weisser's concept of ecocomposition, this paper attempts to answer the question that highlights the relationship between the human and non-human spheres bringing to light the various ecological concepts of the biosphere, anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, ambiance and situatedness as discursive ecocritical categories:

- What is the ecological rhetoric and ecocomposition of the selected poems of Macansantos as indicated by their metaphors, images, symbolisms, and nuances disclosing the environment and nature as an ecologically interweaving image of relation, disharmony and disconnectedness?

Taking the cue from Dobrin and Weisser's definition of ecocomposition, the area of study and upshot of ecocriticism that centers on the "constitutive existence of writing and environment" underscoring the interdependent relationship of "written discourse" and "ecological thinking" (Dobrin and Weisser 2001, 2), Hubert Zapf's *Theory of the Ecological Force of Literature* and the *Theory of Ambient Poetics,* or simply called as *Ecomimesis Theory,* by Timothy Morton provide good lenses for highlighting the ecocritical metaphors, images, symbolisms and nuances that reveal the biosphere as a

threshold concept in literature. With Zapf and Morton's ecocritical notions situated in the foreground of the analysis, the tropes of ecocriticism can be further fleshed out in the selected poems of Macansantos.

Zapf's Theory of the Ecological Force of Literature

Zapf's essay titled *Literature as an Ecological Force within Culture* from his critical work *Literature as Cultural Ecology*, asserts that literature possesses great dynamism as shown in its power to partake in all areas and aspects of the "discourses of the larger culture" (Zapf 2016, 27). It is in this assertion in which one can see how literature is rendered as a remarkable site of contestation—opening avenues for critically ruminating on and even challenging the beliefs and truth-claims of human life. The textual ecological potency of literature links literature to a greater web and system of discourses. Literature is rendered as a metamorphic and reframing site of exploration and reflection operating on both constructive and deconstructive heights. In this conception, literature becomes noteworthy for engaging other vistas and discourses. To quote Zapf:

> Literature as an ecological force within culture operates as a sensorium and imaginative sounding-board for hidden conflicts, contradictions, traumas, and pathogenic structures of modern life and civilization; and as a source of constant creative renewal of language,

> perception, imagination, and communication. (2016, 28)

The ecological force of literature underscores the transitory and dynamic foreground of literature. Such a foreground is not delineated by merely euphuistic or notional terms but through a kind of a "textual energy" which is defined by Zapf as a cardinal and constitutive reciprocal action between nature and culture. It is the very force that contravenes social and worldly conventions creating the discourses that focus on ecocritical energy ranges and forces. This situates such discourse in the fluid and invigorated processes of life and in "the ecocultural biotopes of language and the text" (Zapf 2016, 28). Grounded on the interactions of domains of culture and nature, literature becomes integrative and compositional reflecting the complexity of the ecocritical ranges and forces. Using this as assertion as groundwork, Zapf avers that literature becomes a viable textual site operating "in a high-energy field of open discursive space" obtaining its spontaneous and calculated creativity and concentration from the linkages transpiring between cultural and natural ecosystems. The "force", or simply labeled as "vision" and "imaginativeness" when placed in the context of literature, goes beyond the social sphere as it can also exhibit the very elucidation and restatement of the natural into "cultural energies, elemental forces of life into the communicational, self-reflexive space of language, culture, and aesthetics" (Zapf 2016, 29). The ecological potency of literature discloses the idea that literature has opened various avenues and created many means when it comes to underscoring the reciprocal action between nature and

culture. This shows that literature can remarkably partake in the production of ecological knowledge.

Ecomimesis: Morton's Theory of Ambient Poetics

Timothy Morton, in *The Art of Environmental Language* from his book *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics,* underscores the notions of "place referentiality" and "situatedness" as essential concepts to consider in fleshing out the rhetorical stance of ecological texts. In positing such concepts as a means of enkindling the so called "here and now of writing" (Morton 2007, 32), Morton offers the theory of ambient poetics or ecomimesis. This is a theory that invokes "emplacement" as opposed to the idea of "where one is coming from." The person, dealing with the texts, primarily centers his prospect on the environment, and subsequently on the mobile elements such as the person or the anthropocene in the foreground.

Ecomimesis is a means of attesting to the ecological foreground of a literary work. In accordance with this, "situatedness" and "emplacement" become a form of rhetoric that is grounded on ambience and the encompassing world. It offers a narrative of relation with the circumambient whole of a multifaceted structure disclosing the regard for land or earth, place, water, time, wind, trees, and even the nation. Such an assertion show that its excursive stance complements its critical foregrounding. For the literary criticism of the environment to be deemed as accordingly analytical, it must capitalize on the concept of ecomimesis. To quote Morton:

> Ecomimesis is a pressure point, crystallizing a vast and complex ideological network of beliefs, practices, and processes in and around the idea of the natural world. It is extraordinarily common, both in nature and in ecological criticism. (2007, 33)

Ambience is the very core of ecomimesis. For Morton, the term aids in rendering the literary discourse on ecology to be multifarious, vibrant and dual in nature moving in consonance with its goal to make antic and peculiar the idea and view on the environment. Ecomimesis is comprised of six principal components: *rendering*, *medial, timbral, Aeolian, tone* and the *re-mark* (Morton 2007, 34).

Rendering is the most fundamental goal of ambient poetics. It is concerned with creating a pursuant sense of atmosphere moving in relation with the idea of the "simulacrum" by Jean Baudrillard. For Morton, rendering "attempts to simulate reality itself" (2007, 35). It is through this rendering in which one can see that a present and unmediated world is projected by the literary text disclosing as well the realistic imaging of the environment with no illusions fomented by an augmentative framework of some sort.

The medial element is parallel with the concept of foregrounding. It centers on the atmosphere in which the message is transmitted (Morton 2007, 37). As ecomimesis works to underscore the environment, the medial is also being engaged. Ecomimesis makes one cognizant of the

atmosphere encompassing the environment and the action transpiring. The medial can be regarded as the very "echo" that is situated in the background of the action.

The Aeolian is conceived to be synesthetic in nature. This is the element that provides the consecrated and transcendental intensity of ecomimesis—a means of echoing the environment through textuality. This element entails expanding one's conceptuality and perception of the natural. The stance and outlook of a particular work augments its physicality. The Aeolian element guarantees that ambient poetics effects the "sound form" of the place that is being unfurled.

Ambience is an expansion of the space-time continuum in a work of art (Morton 2007, 43). It is with this assertion that Morton brings in his delineation of *tone*. For Morton, tone is equivalent to place resulting for him to posit the concept of the "ecozone" (2007, 43). The tone in ambient poetics refers to atmosphere and to the environmental space. It is fomented by the narrative forepart of ecomimesis. Tone is further concretized through pictorial description or ekphrasis.

Re-mark is the last element and is also considered as an essential and underlying property of ambient poetics. This the element that distinguishes the concepts of the *background* and *foreground* in an environmental work. Background refers to materiality and concreteness. The foreground is highlighted when a particular sound, concept, or notion is fleshed out in a narrative or text. Merging both background and foreground, re-mark becomes a sort of echo—a peculiar and uncommon mark to be considered as they make one conscious of nature and environmental signifiers embedded in an

environmental artwork. The logic of the re-mark makes one sentient to the idea that there is something to comprehend and realize in a work of art that deals with the complexity of nature and environment.

Establishing the Connection: On the Ecocritical Bond

In ecocriticism, one does not examine nature as an entity on its own or from a one-sided point of view. The study of nature is rendered inclusive—one that includes the complexity of the physical environment projecting the bond between the human and non-human realms. This notion serves as the foundation by which one can further examine the "ecocritical bond" operating on the grounds of being biocentric and anthropocentric with a vantage point that is commiserative and radical respectively. The interconnection between the two creates a bond which is the basis of ecocriticism (Mishra 2016, 169). Utilizing a sympathetic vantage point in examining this bond, the concept of a "perfect ecology" is brought into the picture in which one can see the relation between the living and the non-living elements. In its generic sense and as an earmark of ecological consciousness, this affirms the balance and affinity between the natural and human spheres. It is through this assumption that the concept of nature is further delineated from the ecocritical perspective. It is imperative that this notion be raised as it provides the springboard for liberating nature writing from its conventional conception—one that shows an area of study that simply deals with looking into the

representation of nature in the text. Expanding these precepts, it must also reveal the "connection" of man with his environment, supporting the viewpoint that in ecocomposition, writing is deemed to be "constitutive" (Dobrin and Weisser 2001, 2).

The poem *Baguio Fog* discloses the ecological consciousness of maintaining the image of a "perfect ecology" or the idea of maintaining the bond between the human and the non-human domains. In the poem, the speaker, as seen in his apostrophe and in the poem's "rendering" and "foreground", incites the power of nature symbolized by the "strange" and "nudging" "fog" and how it can reinvigorate his wearied predilection. The "sense of commitment" (Buell 1995, 430) imbued to this ecocritical approach on nature is corroborative of the notion that the "human" and the "natural" live in "such a harmony that none dominates or destroys the other" (Suresh 2012, 147). The interactivity between the two elements, particularly that of the human and the non-human, underscores the emotive dimension and aspect of the poem:

> What is this privacy
> We share, moist-lipped,
> Eyed? You seize me
> By the muffler,
> By the heart,
> Me, a private denizen (Macansantos 2016, 1)

The apostrophe in this poem espouses the idea of interconnection—an affirmation of what Lawrence Buell

calls as "cognitive biophilia." The innate tendency revealed by the kind of "privacy" that the speaker shares with nature or his environment projects the interactive and interpersonal form of ecological thought and consciousness. Love and affection with one's environment serve as the basis of this "biophilia". In consonance with what Gregory Bateson said in *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, this ecological consciousness and its attendant relational principles entails the act of sensing and detecting configurations in the various provinces of the environmental domain (2007, 2). The center of this pooled predicates is stated in the last line of the poem:

> This hushed presence, I
> Am immersed
> In this immensity
> Of an embrace,
> Precipitately blessed,
> So many times
> At once
> Reborn (Macansantos 2016, 1).

The relational precept of ecological consciousness is in contrast with the ecocentric conception of the poem *In My Garden*. Examining the ecocritical bond from a twofold perspective, the poem *In My Garden* projects the image of the speaker finding recluse in his garden, deemed as symbolic of "nature" in the poem, and at the same declaring his mawkish melancholy emanating from his anthropocentric nature and mindset. The emotive conception that can be deduced from the speaker's

disposition as reflected in the first line of the poem: "I swear, nothing loves me here" reveals the contempt of himself juxtaposed to the "garden" that "is all wealth." As a sort of wealth and armament, the poem's pictorial description espouses an image of nature that is regenerative and edifying as the "trees and shrubs" provide a "screen" from "the sun at random." From such a dualistic interpretation, the foreground of the poem, in consonance with the subject's perception of the natural, professes the ecocritical foundation of the "anthropocentric" moving in opposition with the "biocentric." The first stanza of the poem supports this notion:

> I swear, nothing loves me here.
> And yet I am at peace—even under that vine
> That seems to spring at me from the limb of a tree,
> But had coiled around the branch
> Before it could make its point,
> An admonition that is best well-taken,
> With no malice, at all, presumed
> (Macansantos 2016, 61).

The repercussions of anthropocentrism is seen asserted in the first line of the poem and in the "coiled limb" of the tree—taken not as an instance of self-pruning but as a metaphor for the tree already starting to lose its vitality which the speaker takes as an "admonition" without biased and wrongful intentions. The pronouncement of the speaker in the first line of the

poem is a testament as to how the "biocentric" decenters the "anthropocentric" character and disposition of humans. The first stanza of this poem encompasses two notions of anthropocentrism. The first is seen on the part of the speaker declaring his "sentimentalizing" of the peculiar pacification that he is acquiring from "under the vine," and from this sentimental dejection emanates the idea of the "ecocentric" that decenters the "anthropocentric" vision because of his actions and its attendant "dominant civilizational reality-systems" (Zapf 2016, 104). The poem reveals over again the dangers of this anthropocentric consciousness as supported by the "carcass of an animal who wandered in" and the neglectful gardener who is not cognizant of the business of "reaching sunlight" or establishing a strong affinity with nature that results to the interrogation of the notion of "perfect ecology." Supporting the poem's biocentric undertone, the last stanza of the poem provides a sort of a "counter" to the tendencies and coercion of domesticating, violating, and symphonizing nature with the anthropocentric eye and will-power:

> Yet this garden is all wealth, all generosity—
> Perspective, even: A carpet-ride
> That crosses the sky by day, by night—
> With grass, leaf, and flower the flag I clip
> And trim and swear by. Not love but pure constancy
> That I admire but cannot make my own (Macansantos 2016, 61).

The profusions and prosperousness of the "garden" is considered as the ecocentric domain's counter to the anthropocentric ideology. In this regard, the essence of the anthropocene is seen as to be defined by its association with the "nonhuman other" (Zapf 2016, 110). In accordance with the "re-mark" and "tone" of the poem, the figuration of the garden in the poem, on one hand, shows the superlative revelation of the ecocentric vision providing a kind of a cradle to the anthropocentric subject. On the other hand, the ecocentric decentering power of the "garden" typified by "wealth", "generosity", "perspective" underscores the dissipation of the anthropocentric narrator. With the poem acting as a sort of a "sensorium", the affluence of the garden is a signifier of the imaginative counter to the anthropocentric hubris.

Who are the Life Forms of Value?: The Shallow Shades of Ecology

A fundamentally anthropocentric point of view is associated with the concept of shallow ecology. The anthropocentric mindset discloses the idea that humans are the masters and controllers—the think tanks that usher in the methodical and efficient thinking concerning sustainability and continuity. The anthropocene can use nature's resources to maintain the continuity of its life. This notion of instrumentality is upheld by the poem *Fisherman's Sonnet*. The "timbral" and "Aeolian" earmarks of the poem project the utilitarianism of the environment espousing the idea that the anthropocentric subjects are

the ones that benefit from this shade of ecological consciousness. The images of the father and son conducting their quotidian affair of fishing aver the foreground of taking on a pragmatic approach towards the environment as a means of advocating for the sustainment of the anthropocentric subject at present and for future generations. The fishing activity in the poem is reflective of the anthropocene's consumerist agenda and attitudes towards nature:

> As the banca lolled on the water, we waited,
> Father and I, for the tardy fish to bite.
> The sea, rolling out of its rim and sight
> Counseled patience—indeed, exaggerated.
> The sun hurt my skin, my eyes, but Father seemed elated.
> Likely, he chose that day to set things right.
> His patience with the fish, with me, held us tight
> In a fishing-line bind that all but lacerated (Macansantos 2016, 6).

The fishing activity of the anthropocentric subjects in the poem, particularly the father and the son, situates them as the "life forms of value" in the octave of the sonnet. As shown by the "elation" of the father as he conducts the activity of fishing, the "counseled patience" of the father is indicative of the fact that he knows how to interactively deal with sphere of place (the sea in the

poem) that he is emplaced in. As anthropocentric subjects, they are the representative of culture dependent on nature for their survival. The anthropocentric medial of the poem underscores the mind that is situated in what Sergio Manghi calls as the "self-generating grammar of living processes" (2002, xi). With the father and son dependent on nature, human interests are the only things deemed essential. Their "consumption-oriented values" are further shown in the following lines (Drengson 2012):

> The rod he was wont to wield had sprung a line
> Tipped with something I could only guess.
> Whatever it was, I suspected a hook (Macansantos 2016, 6).

The father holding a hook flaunts the image of the consumerist disposition of the father and son's cultural emplacement. They become the bearers of value in an anthropocentric world. The "grammar of living processes" (Manghi 2002, xi) is both understood by the father and son in the sonnet. The activity of fishing discloses the shallow shades of ecocomposition because the sonnet remarkably shows how the anthropocentric ideology of the subjects (father and son) reveal how they establish the social circuit of communication when it comes to dealing with nature and in sustaining the anthropocentric life-forms of value—reflective of the notion that they both process, balance, maintain and drive the survival and evolution of their anthropocentric world.

In fleshing out the shallow shades of ecology, it is remarkable to note that the shallow undertones of ecology in the poem *Fisherman's Sonnet* establish a strong link with the poem titled *Fish*. We see how the anthropocene's disposition provides a new imaging to the monolithic view on "nature. In *Fish*, the opposition between nature and culture is further upheld in as one can see the anthropocentric subjects working to have the treasures of the sea "dredged" for them to be raised in "expectant joy". The discourse of the anthropocene can be seen to have unsettled the equilibrium of the ecosystem. From a shallow ecological perspective, the concept of "nature" no longer operates on a undiversified perspective as espoused by the ecocentric vista and natural ecology. The anthropocene and their cultural histories have effected and constructed its radical and manifold foregrounding. As "man enters the ecological scene, he markedly introduces the super-organic factor of his culture" (Steward 1955, 323). The pictorial description of the fishes in the poem is an asseveration of the anthropocene's humanistic magnitude:

> They had flapped about, crimsonly iridescent,
> Like rebel flags on the boat's hull-floor.
> Some rippled their sinuous quicksilver,
> Some zigzagged a hopeless vacant getaway.
> *No water, no water to breathe*, in horror declared
> The fish-eyes, mouths agape gasping for water,

> Taking in the treacherous air, instead—
> Oh too much air, filling up the body
> with nothing (Macansantos 2016, 85).

Using the notion of the "tone" in highlighting the ecomimetic shade of the poem, the fishes are seen personified as captives experiencing horrible torments by the anthropocentric subjects. Man's nature in this poem moves in accordance with authority, power, control and hierarchy. Cultural ecology underscores this relational stance between the culture (the anthropocentric subjects weightily dredging the treasures of the sea") and nature (the tormented fishes moving like rebel flags at the feet of nature's master) further affirming their despondent state:

> But death, the loss of motion, did not change the fish.
> Under the ruthless afternoon sun the catch
> Refused to look like they had come
> From the dark depths of the sea. Their blues
> Were a jewel version of the cloudless sky,
> Their reds richer than the sun's vehemence.
> Death rigorously recorded, mimicked
> Each final swerve toward an imagined refuge (Macansantos 2016, 85)

When examined from the perspective of the shallow shades of ecocomposition and ecology, the first two

stanzas of the poem strongly conveys the notion of what Hubert Zapf calls as "cultural ecology" (Zapf 2016, 86). As reflected in the poem, this idea of the cultural ecology unveils the two broad notions of "connectivity" and "difference." Through the fishermen conducting the activity and livelihood of fishing, the poem makes one aware of culture's evolution and history. Such a twofold relation (connectivity and difference) is reflective of the idea that the human domain greatly benefits from the non-human domain. One sees the exploitative and consumptive nature of the anthropocene affirmed in the last two stanzas of the poem:

> But oh the tide, rising, of expectant joy!
>
> III
>
> Fish steaks exploded in the mouth of fragrance
> That resonated down the corridors of taste
> And rose, reached up the mouth-roof and shot up to the head
> Somewhat like wine does, directly up to the dome, the sky
> Opening in a flower, a dawn.
>
> The treasures of the sea had been dredged,
> And now were raised, lifted up to behold,

> And as the chambers of the body were filled,
> Newly enriched, the fullness buoyed us,
> We breathed surprisingly light,
> As though afloat on an enormous sea within (Macansantos 2016, 86).

As shown by the consumerist orientation of the human subjects in the poem, the anthropocentric context moves in relation with the idea of physiocentric ideology in which nature serves as an impetus for survival and a bringer of well-being as symbolized by the dying image of the fishes in the poem. These dynamics and politics of the two-fold relation in ecology are part and parcel of the "cultural project" (Bohme and Bohme 1996). If this "dredging" is taken on greater heights on the part of the anthropocentric subjects, the result is the culturalist diminution of nature and the environment and its attendant instrumentality deemed as vital for the anthropocene.

The poems *Fisherman's Sonnet* and *Fish* avow the pragmatic approach of the worldview of the anthropocentric sphere. Such an anthropocentric take on humanism does not take into consideration the intrinsic value of nature and the environment which can be interpreted from a radical mindset. Put simply, the shallow shades of ecology in these two poems of Macansantos show the cultural decrement of nature taking its very cue from "physiocentric interests" of anthropocentric humanism. The shallow shades of these poems of Macansantos place man at the center of the

biosphere with him possessing a disposition that is not mindful of the intrinsic value of every element of nature or the environment.

Displacing the Anthropocene: The Deep Shades of Ecology

In ecocritical discourse, the environment is also endowed with the power to decenter the human subject through the precepts of deep ecology. Deep ecology goes beyond the mere idea of treating nature as a kind of a bountiful banquet for the anthropocentric domain—one that is very much open for humanism's exploitation. As a sort of a counter-discourse to the diminution and paralysis of nature, the poems *No Random Bird* and *Wild America* vividly project the reductionist practices of the civilization anthropocentric systems juxtaposed to the idea that such systems and schemes are very much immoderate and extravagant, reducing the very diversity of life.

The poem *No Random Bird* underscores the magnitude of the presence of the anthropocene's excessive diminutive activities that devalues the environment. Opposing shallow ecology, this is concerned with an environmental ethic that upholds the intrinsic value of the environment. The titular *No Random Bird* avers this mandatory and profound regard for the environment. In the poem, one must not regard the image of the bird as mere "random" disclosing disregard for nature's creatures. This bird being referred to in the poem also has its own intuitively clear and obvious value axiom (Naess 1973, 96). In the poem, nature is portrayed

as already destroyed by anthropocentric undertakings and already decentered by its cultural-civilizational agendas. The presence of the "green thumb friend" in the poem is a powerful re-mark of the earmarks of deep ecology particularly that of protectionism and conservationism:

> Two years since the guava tree,
> Its trunk dead, its leaves sun-charred
> And curled up into little beggared-
> hands,
> Was felled for mercy's sake.
>
> This year, a green thumb friend,
> Knowing the tree was missed,
> Came with a gift of sapling
> Hardly shoulder-high,
> Still too young to bear
> Even the lightest perch (Macansantos
> 2016, 40).

In the light of the deep ecocomposition of this particular poem, it can be inferred that the notion of "sentience" will not suffice when it comes to establishing an affinity with nature. It must encompass as well the very assumption of "supernatural intimacy and holism" (Devall and Session 1985). This image of the "green thumb friend" is a potent means of unsettling the one-sided view of the anthropocentric discourse in ecological thought. The poem is remarkable for its high romanticism of the intrinsic value of nature. This is powerfully revealed by the speaker's reflection and yearning to see the past which for him is now only an "apparition". This

is the lamentation of the fated speaker in the poem upon seeing the bird patiently waiting to experience the familiar sensation of the tree providing shelter and rest to the bird's wearied body:

> The pole is bamboo—
> Slim but season-dried-tough and
> sheeny.
> The bird, a veteran of flights,
> Back after a long time,
> Perhaps from way across
> The West Philippine Sea,
> Knows it is a mere pole,
> And sits on its tip, silently, head bent,
> Watching the apparition of a tree,
> Waiting for it to grow (Macansantos
> 2016, 41).

From the poem's tone, the speaker recognizes that he is also responsible for the image of the tree now becoming an apparition resulting for the bird to be devoid of a home or resting place. This is the result of the anthropocene's consumptionist approach towards the environment. The lamentation is a strong earmark of deep ecology. The speaker has "returned to a kind of an ancient scenery" and as an anthropocentric element, he is part and parcel of this environmental conundrum. The epiphany and the identification of the speaker with the apparition of a beautiful nature is an indication that the speaker sees not merely the instrumentality of the environment but its value and sacredness. It is essential to note in this poem how the anthropocene and the

environment link with each other recognizing their similarities when it comes to their valued stances regardless of being human or nonhuman:

> All the same,
> We look quite like a picture,
> Bird, tree, and I—
> Bird and I equal in vigil,
> In the ache to protect
> Not just this seeming wraith,
> This curious resurgence,
> But also what it evokes:
> The ineffable presence of the former
> tree (Macansantos 2016, 42).

The excessive anthropocentric mindset of the speaker is the impetus for this reflection and identification with the devastated environment in the poem. As reflected in the lament of the speaker, the regard for the environment was not guided by the deep ecological hallmarks of cooperation, collective action and coexistence. Using the concepts of Arne Naess, it can be deduced that such a re-mark in the poem is the very repercussion of not advocating the ecological precept of "live and let live" (1973, 96). Leaning on the concepts from Arne Naess, the repercussions of this sense of nostalgia in the poem entails reorientation and the redirection of cultural and historical undertakings of the anthropocene. It is through this particular redirection in which "ecosophy" (harmony or equilibrium) can be achieved in the ecological perspective (Naess 1973, 99).

The poem *Wild America* provides support to this notion of equilibrium through the discourse on animals. It is essential to note here that animals are also considered part and parcel of the discourse of ecological literary criticism as supported by Greg Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism* (2012). The principle of ecological egalitarianism is further expounded through the representation of the animals in the poem "Wild America." The poem affirms what Peter Singer calls "speciesism" which is synonymous with the idea of thralldom (Singer 1983, qtd. in Garrard 2012, 146). In the poem, the workings of the anthropocene are once again conveyed to us as revealed by the situation of the animals in the zoo:

> At the zoo the children stare
> At stone-bored tigers.
> In the late spring heat,
> They pet the dusty lambs
> That stink to high heaven.
> Cats from various continents
> Prowl in their own space,
> Making their own orbits.
> Lying on his back, half-asleep,
> The king of beasts
> Has all of his underbody exposed
> (Macansantos 2016, 31)

The animals are considered as essential animated elements of nature. In ecocritical discourse, these animals contribute to the affluence and heterogeneity of the environment. The actions of the animals indicate that

they are incarcerated in a place not suitable for their peculiar natures. They are regarded as mere spectacles—symbols of entertainment for the children—"speciesism" at its finest. The plight of the animals in the poem affirms the violation of the edict of utilitarian equality as it states that every living being is eligible to moral consideration. The incarceration of the animals in the poem becomes similar with the thought of slavery—an asseveration of what Naess calls the "master-slave role" (1973, 96).

This is where the poem brings forth the notion of environmental ethics in connection with deep ecology. This is in connection with the idea of placing and emphasizing ethical consideration for all non-human elements. In accordance with the re-mark of the poem and its ethical stance, the poem's notion of deep ecology underscores the importance of regaining the agency and essence of animals which is disregarded by the dominance of the culture over the nature element. Reflective of deep ecology, the presentation of the animals calls for the utmost revision of the anthropocentric worldview and the formulaic opposition of culture and nature.

The Rhetorics of Environmental Debasement

According to Greg Garrard, the scrutiny of nature's defilement is considered to be one of the major concerns of ecocritics (2012, 10). In ecocriticism, the cultural domain is considered to be a part of this picture of degradation. The anthropocene is regarded to be as a threshold and powerful concept as it is the bringer of environmental pollution and destruction. These are the issues that are summatively termed as "eco-injustice."

Coming from the point of view of this environmental degradation, it is essential to note that the concepts of "ecosystemic balance and harmony" are to be rendered as problematic categories. The common trope that one can see in these selected poems is the notion of loss of biodiversity—or the narratives of grand environmental endism as mentioned by Carolyn Merchant in her examination of the ecocritical literatures produced in the 20th century (The Conversation 2013).

In the poem *Indian Fall*, we see the speaker faced with two scenarios in his mind. The first projects the forest in its glory typified by the images of the trees as "fair-haired boys" and "fair-haired girls" further animated by their "blazing blonde, deep-red, rust-brown" chromaticity of nature. Emblematic of the natural order, it affirms what Aldo Leopold calls as the "beauty of the biotic community" (1989, 162). This is the stability and symmetry of nature's beauty and glory. However, this imagining and illusion of nature's beauty is tentative as the speaker in the poem engages in intrapersonal communication regarding his role in unsettling this beauty of nature:

> But what should I fear
> From faces that look like mine:
> Darkly luminous in the water?
>
> Sometimes, shadows seem to move
> under my feet,
> And I feel awkward, worried by the
> notion

That I am treading holy ground
(Macansantos 2016, 25).

The anthropocene is again seen as a central force that brings in the debasement of the environment. The speaker is cognizant of his disposition as seen in his affirmation that he is "treading holy ground" symbolic of the environment's sacredness. He is the conscious element that will bring in the destruction of his environment's ecosystemic balance. The loss of the variability of life on Earth is represented to us by the degradation of the forest and its concomitant dynamic elements. The disturbance of the harmonistic views on the forest is clearly made manifest by the remarkable elements of "technological civilization" (Zapf 2016, 140):

Their hair, bones, blood, and flesh,
Over time, and with the help of human hands,
Have been kneaded into the basic loom.
Over all, asphalt and concrete,
And trimmed lawns form a seal, a tomb,
With which to bury their memory (Macansantos 2016, 26).

In these lines from the poem, the line "hair, bones, blood, and flesh" refers to the elements that comprise biodiversity, the variability and variety of life on Earth. With the consumerist and radical work of the "human hands", this variety of life is slowly "kneaded into the basic loom"—the loom of anthropocentric civilization and advancement. This is a strong image of chaos in this poem. Such a chaos-oriented vision of ecology is the

radical reductionism and endism of the nature. The turbulent nature of man is projected as the driving force for instability and imbalance and for nature being thrown in a constant state of deterioration. The workings of anthropocentrism are clearly shown in these lines from the poem:

> Only with a reconquering imagination
> Can I pull the beams apart, dump the
> bridges
> Into the ocean, demolish the pretty
> towns
> So that the forests can reemerge, and
> the call of birds
> Rise with the chorus of the living tribes
> (Macansantos 2016, 26).

These lines disclose the horrors of deforestation. The forest is destroyed for the purpose of urbanism, commercialism, and civilization as supported by the images of "pretty towns, "bridges" and interconnected "beams". The image of nature as a proportionate and poised entity is nothing but a proactive projection of man and his decentering ideologies. This is the image of a "betrayed Eden" as posited by Lawrence Buell (1995, 37). The subversiveness is the result of civilizing hubris of the anthropocentric space. With the debasement achieved through the activity of deforestation, this depiction of chaos and defilement spews forth from the poem the concept of "kalliphobia" as mentioned by Arthur C. Danto in the article *Kalliphobia in Contemporary Art* (2003). This is the concept that deals with the abuse of beauty

and stability of nature (quoted in Zapf 2016, 140). In this regard, the poem functions as a kind of "sensorium" in projecting to us the very debasement of nature emanating from cultural radicalism and disregard of the principles espoused by deep ecology. The romantic discourse is part and parcel of this dirge concerning nature's beauty and glory in the past. The elements of civilization, specifically that of the "anthropocentric socio-political order" (Zapf 2016, 147), have severely decentered the environment's compelling semiosis. The speaker in the poem recognizes the consequences of his workings of debasement as seen in his personification of the voiceless and bygone land:

> With nothing but an echo.
> The land has lost its echo,
> And no one but a fool
> Would lie down now as they did then,
> Pressing ear to sod
> For what it had to say.
> Brick, steel, and cement,
> Are pure dead-weight,
> Deader than the land they have killed
> (Macansantos 2016, 26).

"Brick, steel, and cement" are symbolic of the debasing power of the citified and industrialized domain destroying nature—a retroactive exposition of man's turbulent and chaotic world. The holistic view of environmental degradation is given to us by the poem *Yakal, The Goldenrod.* This poem discloses the noxious discourse that persistently destroys the environment. The anthropocentric elements notable in the poem show the

confluence of the horrors of devastation. We see a world with no refuge from the anthropocene's toxic penetration (Carson 2002, 38). In the poem, Papa, Uncle Kinny and the speaker are regarded as skilled loggers—destroyers of the "shorea astylosa", or prominently known in the Philippines as native tree "yakal". Coming from Jeremy Bentham's "principle of utility", the tree is known for its utility in providing high durability in high level of construction activities, useful in the construction of wharves and bridges in particular. The three destroy the yakal tree which is presented "like a convict calloused to beatings, tormenting them with suspicion"—a great simile for the activity of deforestation. In this poem, the concept of place is no longer deemed as a "mutualistic category" as shown by the debasement committed by the human subjects. The intrinsic value of the yakal sustains the inherent and persuasive worth of the anthropocene. The debasement in the poem is an affirmation of the alarming "conquest of space" (Garrard 2012, 15). The poem shows this particular kind of conquest:

> Shaven smooth and rootless, it became, by itself,
> The golden, secret pillar of a house of wood
> I grew to early manhood in, the primary root
> That never rusted, and rested so well under the earth
> You could forget it—it was always there,
> anyway, earth-clenched.
>
> The house is gone—where it once stood
> Is a bank of commerce built of steel and concrete (Macansantos 2016, 92-93).

The convergence of the "anthropocentric utilitarianism" in the poem is the complete picture for the world slowly transitioning into a futurist and industrialized world—a result of what we can call as "civilizing pollution" leading to the transition from an Edenic world to a toxic and polluted landscape. In expounding the rhetoric of defilement, the poem *Cinema Verite* can be used as a springboard for exaggerating the debasement brought by pollution. From Morton's concepts of "ambience" and "rendering", *Cinema Verite's* objective situation takes place in a movie house. The highly conscious speaker is observant of his surroundings leading him to disclose the undeniable "thoroughness of its reality". This is the reality of unlawful pollution/littering. In ecological discourse, this is considered as a serious issue that plagues the environment affecting the quality and experience of life in general. The speaker vividly conveys the weight of this pollution as he reveals:

> What makes the movie unique
> Is the thoroughness of its reality.
> How can you deny it?
> You are in it with the whites
> The very ones you had seen back home
> From a broken-down, lackadaisical seat
> In a stinking movie house
> Littered with melon and peanut shells
> (Macansantos 2016, 33).

Using the image of a movie house, these lines declare the pollution of the environment by the inhabitants of the Earth itself. As the speaker describes the place as "stinking", it affirms the very dictum that pollution diminishes one's experience and delectation of the public spheres of life. In accordance with ecological thought and consciousness, the ecocomposition of this poem represents the notion of the "dark ecology" (Morton 2007, 16)—the ecological thought that emphasizes decadence and degeneration.

The speaker finds himself enveloped by this experience of pollution, an experience that defiles the pleasure of his existence. This is considered as a challenge on the part of the speaker as littering is considered as a serious environmental issue. If taken on greater heights, the re-mark of this poem powerfully projects environmental decay, degeneration and abjection. Such are the very earmarks of the toxic discourse in literature. The "ego" and the "eco" clash in this poem. A self-centered individual ushers in this eyesore. The defilement is not only confined to the pollution of the land. In connection with the notion of pollution, the poem *Early Morning* extends the ecological rhetoric of pollution to the body of water. The speaker in the poem finds himself perplexed by the screaming silence of nature. In this poem, nature is no longer dynamic and animated but already silenced by the anthropocene's civilizing undertakings. In examining the image of the environment, the speaker is seen to be confounded between "the environment that was" and "the environment that is":

Now the ocean and the sky, the coconut trees,

> No longer speak the language that they are,
> That they used to be. Now, everything is
> uncertain,
> Needing constant verification.
> The ancestors no longer live as light
> In the eyes of those that stare at the dull lagoon
> (Macansantos 2016, 51).

With nature depicted as persistently being threatened by the impacts of civilization, the debunking of the edenic mythography is clearly shown through the different forms of environmental degradation. This endism is the very offshoot of the anthropocentric mindset. The weight of the anthropocentric worldview provides the impetus for unsettling the "enhancive and painterly signifier of the natural world" (Adorno 1997; quoted in Zapf 2016, 140). The wild and unstable dynamical system resulting for the cessation of environment's life and diversity points out the self-ascendance and conception of the anthropocentric inhabitants of the earth. The environmental debasement points out to this aforementioned "loss" supported by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*:

> The chemicals to which life is asked to make its adjustment are no longer merely the calcium and silica and copper and all the rest of the minerals washed out of the rocks and carried in rivers to the sea; they are the synthetic creations of man's inventive mind,

> brewed in his laboratories, and having no counterpart in nature. (2002, 7)

The impact of the anthropocene is clearly disclosed and affirmed by Carson as she projects the image of man emplaced in a scientific world that no longer value the sacredness and value of his environment. From the perspective of cultural ecocriticism, the ecocomposition of Macansantos' selected poems in this section, specifically refererring to the notions of environmental debasement, posits the very scrutiny of the term "human" or the "anthropocene" itself. It is a bifocal term that brings about the romantic notion of the "commune" where everyone is committed to uphold the value of nature resulting to the formation of mutualistic affinities in all aspects of life (Clark 1990, 9). It also shows the naturalistic disposition of man as a kind of a predator or a victim of environmental forces compelled by his environment and nature to work for his survival whereby life is derived by absorbing the glories and wonders of the environment. The lost of the land's voice and its incapacity of producing even a mere echo and the overwhelming redolence of the anthropocentric subject as aroused by the very spectre of his environment in *Indian Fall*, the lackadaisical atmosphere of the cinema created by the suffocating littering of man in *Cinema Verite*, the ocean, sky and trees no longer speaking the language that they used to know in *Early Morning in Samoa* and the land slowly transforming into a place created out of steel and concrete by the anthropocene's iron fist in *Yakal, The Goldenrod* are the images that avow a dialectical point of view or a means of re-imagining the dualism that

is given to the role and place of the anthropocene in the environment.

Into the Blooming Realm: On Sustainable Thoughts

The poem *My Aunt's Garden* brings the reader to the "blooming realm" of sustainability, equality, diversity and connectivity—the realm where the anthropocentric desires and tendencies are not seen as destructive forces in the environment but a kind of space that espouses the sustainable notion of relationality. Such an image of relationality projects the image of world devoid of anthropocentric cataclysm—a kind of world free from debasement, pollution, and garbage. The poem is seen to be providing its own notion of sustainability through the espousing of an equilibrium with the other elements in the environment. The poem's re-mark reveals the eco-friendly foreground of the poem as the speaker declares his heightened sensibility for the worth, value and place of every living being in the biosphere. Every element of nature finds their appropriate place in the environment. As the poem veers away from the anthropocentric stance, the image of the speaker, the poem becomes remarkably ecocentric as opposed to the anthropocentric as each element are observed to be harmoniously situated in their proper places in the ecology of relationalities:

> Flowers, like birds, proclaim their territory, too,
> But silently. There is no troop of geese honking here,

> But angel's trumpets, jolly yellow bells, will do
> Just as well. The star-like hibiscus struts out
> Its pollen-dusted flute. Bougainvillae choirs,
> En masse, quiver in the breeze silent chorales (Macansantos 2016, 60).

The image being projected to us in this first stanza of the poem, as typified by the environmentally sensitive speaker, upholds the notion of order and the adherence to the ideology of the co-existence of the culture and nature dichotomy. The speaker situates the birds in their fitting territories in the vast expanse of the skies. The troop of geese does not make any obnoxious sounds that may affirm the hostility of the anthropocentric subject but they remain peaceful as an indication that nature and culture are moving in consonance with one another. The first stanza of this poem is dominated with images of a nature viewed from a romantic perspective where man is in strong affinity with his environment. Observing the interconnected wonders of his environment, the speaker directly points out the environment's "elegance" and "royal decorum" as he sees every creatures of the environment enjoying the positive atmosphere of interdependence and survival espoused by the principle of co-existence and sustainable development.

The poem is noteworthy for its powerful image of sustainability and responsibility as seen in the character of Aunt Flor. The aura of Aunt Flor, described by the speaker as "oozing goodwill" serves as the foundation of

the poem for effectively carrying out the thought of "cradle to cradle". Aunt Flor is the element of ecological regeneration and harmony. In the context of the poem, she also reveals the re-oriented mindset of the anthropocentric subjects in ecological consciousness as she modifies the great difference between nature and culture and its concomitant ideologies. The good environmental life and ecological balance is upheld by Aunt Flor as the garden is noted for its gently peaceful atmosphere where the flowers beautifully bloom and the air imbued with fresh and regenerative power. The physical description of Aunt Flor serves the potent force of sustainability grounded on a heightened sensation and strong commitment to the principle of relationality. She is the resilient element of the anthropocentric actions translated into thoughts of positive environmental connection. The poem supports the agenda on sustainability based on the image projected of Aunt Flor. As seen in her disposition reflected in the poem, she remarkably and outstandingly becomes the symbol of biospherical cognizance:

> My aunt Flor's form, tall, stalk-like, moves among them
> With placid beak in the air and pleased demeanor,
> Not at all disdainful, oozing goodwill, almost.
> All is gently peaceful in the garden where flowers flaunt
> Richness in the air for passing bees and butterflies (Macansantos 2016, 60).

The vivid and detailed description of Aunt Flor is the poem's way of strongly flaunting the agenda of the translation of anthropocentric norms and worldviews to the undertakings of sustainability. It is also notable in the poem that the speaker recognizes ecology's tragic instances which can lead to the destruction of her garden, but Aunt Flor is the very emblem of control and "self-domestication of the dominating anthropocene" which effectively hinders the fruition of this ecological tragedy (O'Grady 2003, 9). With Aunt Flor sensitively placing the elements of nature in her garden where they really belong, it becomes evident that she makes herself a part of the world and the world a part of herself. This reciprocal notion is further underscored as she values equilibrium and the very precept of substantial interconnection with the sacred communicational environment:

> The long spell of peace instilled by conquest
> And enslavement dissipates. In the misty past,
> She only had to say, her lips pursing, "Common!"
> And they were put to rout. A magical word!
>
> The spell seems broke, but her steps
> Are straight and firm, her bones sleek.
> She will enforce the semantics of her blooming realm (Macansantos 2016, 60).

Aunt Flor's magical word, the "common", is a strong testament to her commitment to uphold the balance between nature and culture. Put simply, "common" (harmony and equilibrium as ecocritically read in the poem) can be translated into what Braidotti calls "sustainable becoming" (2006, 393). The smile that can be seen in the face of Aunt Flor is the very reminder that she is emplaced in a world that is responsibly harmonious and poised. This is the courage of adhering and propagating the ethical takes on a life that is grounded on rational and responsible sustainability and motives and good patterns of association between nature and culture. With the poem acting as a kind of a "sensorium" to the pillars of sustainability namely society and ecology (Zapf 2016, 17), the poem's strength is the ecological rhetoric of sustain and ability, when joined together it becomes "sustainability", as shown by the lines "she will enforce the semantics of her blooming realm"—the former referring to the anthropocentric subject, symbolized by Aunt Flor, turning his thoughts to regeneration and conservation of the environment cognizant of the notion of "harmony among differences" (Gadotti 2009, 13) while the latter projecting the man ("Aunt Flor) as the principal instrument, mediator and negotiator of balance, efficiency and perspectival regrounding.

In this regard, the "background", "rendering" and "Aeolian" of the poem serve as the ground for the expansion of the discourses on sensibility and awareness—a way of avowing that the "common" pursing from the lips of mother nature (Aunt Flor) is the edict that will usher in a space and future that is highly

sustained and protected. It is the "magical world" that can efficiently recover the overlooked and disremembered vestiges of nature in the overpowering culture of the industrialized world.

Conclusion: The Literary Perusal of the Biosphere

The ecocomposition of the selected poems of Macansantos is deployed as the literary perusal of the biosphere presented as a loquacious domain in literature. The depiction of the biosphere in his poems discloses and problematizes on the interconnections between nature and culture disclosing ecocriticism's complexity and duality. This complexity supports the ecological potency of literature bringing literature beyond the social sphere as it can disclose the biosphere as a "reflexive space of language and aesthetics" (Zapf 2016, 29)—framing from a literary perspective the connections and tensions occuring between the spheres of nature and culture such as biophilia, the earmarks of deep and shallow ecology, cursory and revisionist ecocriticism, environmental devastation, pollution, the power and retaliatory movements of Mother Nature resulting to environmental disasters, and thoughts on sustainability.

Recognizing the significance of the aforementioned ecocritical tropes fleshed out in this paper, the discourse on ecocomposition, one that underscores ethics and commitment, provides an understanding of the workings of the anthropocene in this present geological epoch. It reveals how their ideologies critically shape the ecology and environment, and how humans conduct themselves as active players in the biosphere in numerous ways

resulting for them to seek nature's power as a revitalizing force, to plan its destruction, and to draw from it the impetuses that will sustain the affairs, necessities and undertakings of the current anthropocentric age. Highlighting these forces in the ecopoetic foreground of the poems, they become poetic hollers of "sustainability" and how the anthropocentric elements must be cognizant of their significant impact to the environment—an avenue for examining dynamics of "ego" and "eco" consciousness through literature.

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About the author

JAN RAEN CARLO MIJARO LEDESMA is an instructor of literature and humanities in the University of Santo Tomas - Faculty of Arts and Letters. He currently serves as the editorial assistant to the Scholar-in-Residence of the UST Department of Literature. He is also a managing editor of UNITAS (Semi-annual Peer-reviewed Online International Journal of Advanced Research in Literature, Culture, and Society). He earned his BA (Magna cum Laude) and MA (Cum Laude) in Literature from the University of Santo Tomas. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Literature in the same university. His research interests include postcolonialism, ecocriticism, queer studies and William Shakespeare.

The Troubled Dual Construction of Ethnicity of Recent Chinese Migrants and Third Generation Chinese-Filipinos in Binondo, Manila

Jeffrey P. Yap
Intramuros Administration
Philippines
jeffreypyap@gmail.com

abstract

The paper examines literatures written by Chinese-Filipino migrants that were published between 1980s to 2010s. It tries to explore the genealogy and development of Chinese-Filipino community in Binondo and the factors that caused the troubled dual construction of ethnicity of recent Chinese migrants and third generation Chinese-Filipinos in the area. Consequently, the paper determines the extent of stereotyping experienced by recent migrants and the third generation Chinese-Filipino families in the cosmopolitan district.

Keywords: Third Generation Chinese-Filipino Migrants, Chinese Stereotyping, Ethnicity

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Introduction

In Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City," he emphasizes the of the city's space "that is of its streets and squares, edifices, and monuments and how the city preserves the character of the community." (Lefebvre 1996, p. 67) The district of Binondo, since its establishment in 1594, as a settlement for the Chinese Catholics, its cultural space has different layers and stories to tell particularly its people who lived and preserved its history and traditions. The City of Manila itself has numerous accounts on how its population grew but the stories of migration is of particular interest especially for a city that has become a melting pot of different cultures. Popularly known as Manila's "Chinatown" as depicted by mainstream media, film, and literature, the former suburbs of Intramuros, the island of Binondo, surrounded by esteros, is one of the most densely populated areas in the city. With about 18,000 residents (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015), its narrow streets and alleys are occupied by people from different ethnic backgrounds although most of the residents are referred to as Chinese-Filipino.

Who are the Chinese-Filipinos? Philippine history would state that Chinese and Filipino relations can be traced as early as the Sung period from 960 to 1279 (Wickberg 2000), from this direct contact was the emergence of a Chinese community in the banks of the Pasig river right across Maynila, the wooden palisade of

King Soliman. This precolonial contact tells a lot about the harmonious exchange between the early Filipinos and the Chinese through the barter of goods and eventually, culture and traditions. The arrival of the Spaniards in Manila in 1571 has made significant changes in terms of interpersonal relations particularly among the Filipinos and the Chinese.(Chu 2016) The Spaniards who took over King Soliman's palisade built a stone wall that was supposed to protect the people living within the walls but it had also become a visible and invisible divide. The Filipinos, or *indios* as the Spaniards called them, and the Chinese or the *sangleys*, which means a person with pure Chinese ancestry, were living in the peripheries of Intramuros or the walled city of Manila.

This separation set by the Spaniards from the rest of the community triggered the tension between the Spaniards and the Chinese. Staggering taxes and forced labor had prompted the Chinese to stage several uprisings against the Spaniards, only to lose in the end and receive more maltreatment and injustice. To reduce the tension and seek the loyalty of the Chinese, the Spaniards have decided to allot a piece of land across the river from the walled city to the Chinese on the condition that they will convert to Catholicism. Hence, Binondo of the Chinese was born, and with the intermarriage of the Chinese with Filipinos came the Chinese Mestizo that evolved into Chinese-Filipino.

All these references to the Chinese living in Manila as Chinese-Filipinos and Chinese mestizo were called *Instik*. This Tagalog term may have been originally used to introduce a Chinese newcomer (Chu 2010). However, its Filipino usage came to acquire negative

connotation (Hau 2014). From *Sangley* to *Instik*, the Chinese-Filipinos were given derogatory names almost similar to Filipinos being called an *Indio*.

From the 19th century until the early 21st century, the Chinese-Filipinos of Binondo have attempted to assimilate themselves to prove to the rest of the Manila community that their district may have its own distinction, but is still uniquely Filipino even if the "Filipino" concept was still a work in progress and the concept of nationalism was still being re-introduced by the Americans in the 1930s. However, despite the efforts of the Chinese-Filipinos to integrate with the community, several laws from previous decades such as the Chinese Exclusion Act on the 1920s and even the Filipino First Policy of the 1950s has alienated the Chinese-Filipinos who were doing business with Filipinos and whose supplies were coming from their homeland in China(Chu 2016).

All these exclusions have caused two negative effects. First was the reaction of the Chinese-Filipinos toward Filipinos. Despite the attempts to assimilate and enculturate, the lowly *Instik* was still regarded as an outsider because of their ethnicity. Second was the perception of the Filipinos influenced by laws that oppresses the Chinese. The concept of a hybrid culture of community was unfamiliar and was never taught in schools hence Chinese-Filipinos were sometimes teased and discriminated. As a result, the Chinese-Filipinos would create their own groups and associations thus separating themselves all the more from the rest of the Binondo community.

In this regard, this paper would like to know if the troubled assimilation of the Chinese-Filipino community in Binondo with the rest of the population living in the same district is grounded on questioning their own status in the community.

To understand the plight of the Chinese-Filipinos, the paper will discuss a number of Chinese-Filipino literatures written by recent migrants and third generation migrants that was published in the late 1980s to 2010s. These periods were the height of the awareness campaign of Chinese-Filipino advocates to refer to the Chinese-Filipinos as "Tsinoys," a contraction of *Tsino* meaning Chinese and *Noy* from the term *Pinoy,*the colloquial term for Filipino.

Qualitative research was done and data were collected from a number of recent Chinese migrants and third generation Chinese-Filipinos living in Binondo. Online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews were conducted to determine if the recent Chinese migrants and third generation Chinese-Filipinos still face difficulty in garnering the acceptance of the Filipino community and experience insecurity derived from being "outsiders" despite their active community involvement with the Filipinos from the past up to present. As Chinese-Filipinos question their status in the community, we will look into how they form their own "exclusive" groups, and how this form of exclusivity in some ways, deters the growth and improvement in interaction with communities inside and outside of Binondo.

The paper lso examine the origin and development of the Chinese-Filipino community in Binondo from the time that it was conceived as a land

devoted to the conversion of the native Chinese to Catholicism and their settlement in 1628, with particular focus on the Spanish, American, Japanese, and postwar periods. In addition, the particular role/s of the Chinese-Filipino community in Binondo during the Spanish/American/Japanese colonial/Postwar era and if there were significant changes in their role/s in the community will be studied. With these, the paper will be able to determine the types and extent of stereotyping that recent migrants (2000s to present) and third generation Chinese-Filipino families in Binondo receive from the Binondo community.

By tracing the past and present interactions of Chinese-Filipinos with fellow Filipinos, the paper will be able to determine if there were instances of their attempt to assimilate with the Binondo community and if such attempt garnered an acceptance or otherwise.

The Chinese-Filipino Community of Binondo and their literature

The *Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran, Inc.* a non-governmental organization that advocates "the active participation of the Tsinoy community in the local and national development" (Kaisa 2017) along with Society of Contemporary Arts and Literature published a number of books written by third generation Chinese-Filipinos that were mostly based in Binondo and nearby districts. For more than twenty years, from the late 1980s to late 2000s, the books were sold to the general public with the

intention to promote integration and acceptance of the Chinese-Filipino in the community. The books were simultaneously published with Tulay: the Chinese-Filipino Digest. The Filipino word *Tulay* in English is *Bridge* and *Tulay* that was published fortnightly had a similar intent of "bridging the gap" towards acceptance.

Discovering New Horizon, published in 1989, features short stories, poems, and essays by Chinese-Filipino writers that explore different issues on the Chinese-Filipino experience. The anthology is divided into three sections: The Self, Relationships, and Society.

A prominent theme that runs through the collection is the alienation experience by Chinese-Filipinos. Jane Que Tiu's *Life in This Country: Through a Pair of Chinky Eyes* narrates the author's personal experiences of stereotyping and isolation and her resolve nonetheless to show her sentiments to the Philippines where her ancestors migrated:

> How does it feel to live among one's people? I don't know really for I have always lived otherwise. Are you asking me if I am living in a foreign land? To tell you frankly, I don't know which is which already…How could someone with chinky eyes and yellow complexion be part of the Filipino race? Yes, yes I know. I know that I am not a Filipino."
>
> "'Chang chang cheng chung cheng chang chang.' When I was small, I used to hear these words from the smirking, laughing 'Kanto Boys' whenever I walked

past them. I'd always ask my grandmother
and my 'yaya' what those boys were
saying. My 'yaya' never answered me.
Grandma, however, told me that those
boys were imitating the way the Chinese
talk.(Tiu 1989)

Tiu reasserts this resolve in her short story *Double Happiness*, which tells the troubled intermarriage between a Chinese woman and a Filipino man.

Transplantation and the construction of ethnic identity also figure prominently in the anthology. Lao Bi Eng's vignette *Soliloquy of a Gardener* uses the roots of a tree as a metaphor for how established the Chinese identity is within the Filipino social landscape. Returning to China as the motherland is also expressed in Eddie Choa's poem *Home*.

It's a summer morning in China
Where once my roots began
Where shadows of my ancestors
Are cast by the rising sun

And though I've to leave this land of mine
My head shall look behind
For one day I shall return
And wrinkled smiles again I'll find (Choa 1989)

The other essays focus on the relationship between the Chinese-Filipino community and the broader ethnic Filipino society as well as on the development of Filipino and Chinese-Filipino literature. Mario Miclat's

"=*China Impressions and Other Stories*"= discusses the extensive history and the richly diverse culture of China, which in turn yields a wealth of impressions about the country. Albert Lim's *Filipino-Chinese: Are We or Are We Not?*points out that the alienation of Chinese-Filipinos is due to the differences, misunderstandings, and the mutual distrust between the two groups. In *Cradle of a Long Discord*, Lim traces the origin of the tension between Chinese Filipinos and Filipinos to Spain's attempt to divide the country and preserve supremacy. In the two essays, Lim encourages unity and the observance of statesmanship.

In "=*Tsapsuy: Mga sanaysay, tula, salin, at iba pa*"= (Tsapsuy: essays, poems, translations, etc.) being a Chinese-Filipino, as presented in this anthology, is a struggle to overcome the perception of being an outsider and to be part of Philippine society that is equally challenged by its own "narrow nationalism."

Beginning with *Nationalismo, uso pa ba?* (Nationalism, is it still trendy?), author Joaquin Sy describes how difficult it is for the Chinese-Filipino to be part of Philippine society whose own citizens do not love and respect their country. Sy further explains that the stigma, negative perception, and discrimination that the Chinese-Filipino experience hamper their desire to be rightfully identified as Filipinos. *Ayyy...Nasyonalismo* likewise echo the sentiments of Sy of how important it is for the Chinese-Filipinos to have a well-grounded cultural identity in the Philippines to feel secure and worthy in a place that they can also call their own.

The succeeding essays by Sy such as *Sanlibo't isang dahilan* (One thousand and one reasons), *Sintomas ng*

panahong darating? (Symptoms of things to come?), *Tigre na tayo?* (Are we tigers?) describe the sentiments of most Chinese-Filipinos on how Filipinos' devaluation and disrespect of their own culture and history result in the discrimination and lack of understanding of the Chinese-Filipino community's good intentions and efforts at integration.

Go Bon Juan's essays *Sapagkat siya'y mahal pa rin natin* (Because we still love her), *Sapagkat ito'y karapatan natin* (Because it's our right), and *Mahigpit na pagkakaugnay* (A tight connection) assert that a Chinese born and raised in the Philippines can be as nationalistic as an ethnic Filipino as he considers himself a Filipino citizen whose dual cultural background contributes to the enrichment of Philippine culture and tradition.

Juan also calls for understanding of the circumstance of the Chinese-Filipino particularly the perception that they are rich and powerful hence they are abusive. Juan highlights that the Chinese-Filipino has a long history of good relations with Filipinos even before the Spanish colonization. Furthermore, Juan stresses that the Chinese experienced the same oppression Filipinos endured under Spanish rule and that they support Filipinos' effort towards solidifying nationalism.

The theme of nationalism continues in James Na's *Niyebe* (Ice) and *Kalesa* (Horse-drawn carriage), wherein he uses themes of diaspora and understanding one's ethnic roots and cultures. Charlie Go's *Bakas* (Imprint) and *Kalawanging Bakal* (Rusty steel) briefly relinquishes themes of struggles specific to being Filipino-

Chinese; rather, themes of love and life struggles prevail in his poems.

Lyonel Ty's *Ang bulag* remains consistent with the collection's theme of Chinese-Filipino experience as problems of alienation are depicted through metaphors like leaping blindly through a cliff just like when the ethnic Chinese migrated to the Philippines. Ty continues with *Pader* (Wall), which symbolizes the social divide that the Filipino-Chinese experience as they continue to understand the Philippine way of life.

Sze Man Chi's *Panununluyan* (Transience) describes how migration created a rootless generation that longs for acceptance and understanding. Likewise, Ivan Tsang's *Istasyon sa munting bayan* (A station in a small town) retells the alienation of the Chinese-Filipino. Tsang describes the lingering sense of alienation, which winds through the initial struggle with linguistic or cultural differences and the perennial pursuit of dual construction of ethnicity.

Go Bon Juan concludes with the poetry section as well as the discussion on acceptance through the piece *Patulang kasaysayan ng mga Tsinoy* (A poem on the history of the Chinese-Filipino), which allegorizes the Chinese and Filipinos like fish and water, constantly needing each other, working hand in hand, and helping each other such as during the Philippine revolution and the Second World War. Juan concludes with the assertion that the Chinese-Filipino's full integration into Philippine society can only come through mutual study and understanding of a centuries-long cultural exchange that yielded shared old and contemporary cultures, beliefs, and traditions.

Voices – Mga Tinig is a collection of short stories, poems, and essays that were originally published in

Tulay, the newsletter of Kaisa. Questions about the nation and identity are raised by the Chinese-Filipino writers, who write not from an outsider's point of view but from that of someone immersed in the Philippine way of life.

Harriet Ann Dy's essay, "Living Precariously in Dangerous Times," describes the effect of the abduction of Chinese Filipinos in their community, particularly those living in Binondo.. Dy explains that the perception that most Chinese-Filipinos are wealthy is the cause of these abductions and clarifies that there are also working class Tsinoys that struggle to make both ends meet.. On the other hand, in another essay, *Face to Face with Rural Living*, Dy celebrates the undaunted spirit of the Filipino people and her shared heritage with them as she witnesses village people in La Union rebuilding their lives in the wake of a tragedy.

Doreen Yu's *Singkit Nga Naman* (Oh, the Slant Eyed) and Audrey Lim Tan's *Ang Tsinoy Ay Pinoy Rin!* (The Chinese Filipino Is Filipino Too!) tell of the disadvantages of having slanted eyes in the Philippines. Chinese Filipinos must endure the fear of being kidnapped for ransom and being taunted for being *singkit*. Yu and Tan argue that Chinese-Filipinos, being a minority group, naturally want to belong, but they must constantly prove themselves more Filipino than the average Filipino.

The theme of connection to one's roots is evident in Caroline Hau's *Stories* presents a father's stories of his life before and after migrating to the Philippines from the T'ang Mountains in China. *The True Story of Ah To*, also by Hau, tells of the narrator's communist father who leaves China to escape the war. Despite his integration into

Philippine culture, he is disinterested in the social and political events in his adopted country because of his sense of alienation.

Taken together, the selections in these anthologies may seem pessimistic because of their disappointments. However, one should consider that these written works presents the truth in the hopes of influencing the community hence it is still optimistic about the Chinese-Filipino relations without denying areas of tension.

A personal understanding of the Chinese-Filipinos in Binondo

All these stories, poems, and essays written by the Chinese-Filipino residents of Binondo and other places in Metro Manila with a huge concentration of Chinese-Filipinos reflects how the long-time dwellers feel and perceive the place that they call their home in the literal sense, as most of them are Filipinos by citizenship and in a figurative sense, a place where its people call it home but still have reservations because of the perception of Filipinos who also live in the area.

Binondo, prior to becoming "Manila's Chinatown" as branded by the media was a hilly terrain where its former inhabitants tilted its land for farming. It was also a fishing village because of its proximity to the Pasig river and the Manila bay. For centuries, Binondo or Binondoc, as it was originally called, was left untouched, as Chinese traders and Filipino traded in the nearby town of Baybay, now called San Nicolas, which was not originally part of Binondo but was eventually integrated with the district. The Chinese traded their silk, porcelain,

and jade up to the arrival of the Spaniards and conquered Maynila, which is now called Intramuros. The Chinese went on with their lives, trading goods and slowly integrated with the community and had their place called the Parian, or the marketplace. It was in this Chinese ghetto where they made a living selling goods and servicing the needs of their fellowmen, the Filipinos, and the Spaniards.

The Chinese migration in the Philippines from the 16th to the early 19th century was intermittent but frequent. Coming from the Fujian province in China, the inequality and overpopulation forced its inhabitants to look for a place to make a decent living as traders (Chan 2015). Hence the Chinese population in Manila grew through the centuries and this alarmed the Spaniards. While it is only trading that the Chinese intended in Manila, the Spaniards assumed that the increase in their population was a threat to their turf and security. After being "attacked" by the Chinese Limahong in 1574, there was no room to trust the Chinese. However, recent researches would present that Limahong arrived with women and children and came to Manila as refugees, not as a conqueror (Ang See 2014).

The discrimination against the Chinese was frequent and consistent despite their contribution to the community as traders and artisans. The native Chinese were treated unfairly as they were forced to pay higher taxes and work in building stone walls and churches, day in, day out. After the British occupation of Manila in 1764, the Spaniards considered them as traitors for siding the British during their two-year occupation. The native Chinese thought that the British was going to help them

and considered them as allies. This disloyalty to the Spaniards resulted to their periodic expulsion from the Philippines. The Chinese readmission to the Philippines after 1772 was due to the dire need of the Spaniards for their goods and services. It was the Chinese after all who were the original market sellers and craftsmen. (Escoto 2015)

The island of Binondo during these tumultuous period was already a place where the Chinese-Christians converts and trade and live freely. After being bought from Dona Sebastina del Valle and Don Antonio Velades in 1594 and the Dominican mission was also established, Binondo became an arrabal of Manila (De Viana 2001). However, it seemed that an assurance of a place to "live and work freely" was thwarted with some shady intent, as the town was just a canon shot away from the walled city of Intramuros.

The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1902 during the American occupation in the Philippines aggravated the already dwindling relations of the Chinese with Filipinos (Chu 2016). The Filipinos in particular were already hostile to the Chinese for the reason that the Chinese were more successful in trading and were taking over most of the businesses, jobs, and services that were initially meant for them. The Americans eventually supported the slogan "Philippines for Filipinos" and passed a law excluding the Chinese skilled workers and kept them of the Philippines until about 1939 (Alejandrino 2015). However, the act had loopholes and still allowed merchants to enter the Philippine, hence there was still a significant increase of Chinese working

and living in the Philippines despite the enactment of the law.

Postwar Manila in the 1950s was recovering from the destruction of the Second World War brought about by the fighting between the Japanese and the Americans. The Chinese community in Binondo supported the Americans and Filipinos who were fighting the Japanese by forming their own armed group.

However, despite the support of the Chinese to the Americans and Filipinos during and after the war, the Retail Nationalization Act of 1954 restricted ownership in retail trade to Filipinos. In addition, President Carlos P. Garcia, created the "Filipino First Policy" in 1958 to assert the economic rights of the Filipinos over the dominance of free trade by promoting Filipino-owned establishments (Abinales 2005).

Even if majority of the Chinese-Filipinos were involved in the political and social issues within their community, their ethnicity was still a disadvantage. During that period, the Chinese-Filipinos had difficulty sustaining their small businesses and the closing of China's borders in 1949 had left the Chinese in the Philippines stuck and nowhere else to go. They were forced to transfer their business names to their Filipino wife or husbands, or marrying a Filipino to sustain their business. Most of them also took the risk of shifting to mid-scale businesses such as hardware and construction that were not covered by the existing laws and policies. Whether these Chinese-Filipinos succeeded or failed, the next decades thereafter aggravated the "clash" of the Chinese and Filipinos particularly in trading and business (Dannhaeuser 2004).

"It is not our fault if we are successful businessmen, merchants, and artisans. We were forced by the circumstance to this profession," said by Sy* (*name withheld upon request)[1] one of the residents and old-timers of Binondo whose family belonged to the first generation migrants from Fujian in the 1930s that escaped the economic turmoil in their native land but only to experience several challenges while staying in the Philippines.

"It is not just the ethnic difference that causes the hostility of some Filipinos already living in Binondo, but the growing business culture of Binondo dominated by Chinese-Filipinos involved in various businesses from retail to wholesale (Sy 2016)."

The tension caused by the dominance in business by the Chinese-Filipino was extended to the social space that the Filipinos and Chinese-Filipinos occupy. From the streets and alleys, it has been observed by third generation Chinese-Filipinos that they were teased by Filipino workers and bystanders as *mayamang instik* (a rich Chinese) or public spaces such as malls and restaurants, they would learn from fellow Chinese-Filipinos that some Filipinos think that all the Chinese in Binondo are "abusive Chinese employers as seen on television."

It is for a fact that these stereotypes against the Chinese-Filipinos are all said in passing and sometimes told behind their back. Such perception was becoming ingrained and worsened by mainstream media's depiction of the Chinese merchant in films, television series, and

[1] Name withheld upon request.Interviewed in February 2017, Binondo, Manila

news that merely focuses on the crimes committed by a Chinese national and not necessarily by a Chinese-Filipino. Sy added that one cannot deny that there are unscrupulous and abusive Chinese businessmen. However, he also said that there are "unscrupulous and abusive Filipino businessmen" in Binondo that "are twice deceitful as their fellow Filipino staff."

As narrated by a first generation Chinese migrant who has been living in Binondo for the past 20 years, Mrs. So* (*complete name withheld upon request[2]) said that she is not yet a naturalized Filipino because she found the process of naturalization "tedious and full of red tape." Further, "it was expensive and takes a long time." In addition to the discrimination and corruption that Mrs. So wanted to avoid, she felt that there was no need to naturalize for the reason that she has been living in Binondo for the past two decades and being referred to as "Filipino" "does not have a real bearing."

Mrs. So admitted that she felt that she has somewhat assimilated with the Filipinos particularly with her staff of about five Filipinos working for her small retail store of Chinese trinkets. She said that in the late 1990s, she migrated from Hunan, China with her Chinese husband and put up four commercial establishments in Binondo. However, one of her Filipino staff stole money from the cash box and she eventually lost her trust in Filipinos. To determine if it was only an isolated incident, Mrs. So mentioned that this incident happened twice when her other staff left without a word and also stole

[2] Name withheld upon request. Interviewed in January 2017, Sta. Cruz, Manila

the shops' earnings from the cash box. In Jacques Amoyot's "Manila Chinese," the tension caused by trust issues affects the Chinese and Filipino relations. "To a Chinese, majority of Filipinos are out to take advantage of him. Any non-authorized foreigner who becomes curious about him is suspected of being a spy of some sort for Filipino officialdom which is considered to be ever seeking new ways of exploiting the Chinese." Mrs. So added that she did not intend to lose her trust in Filipinos. However, she said that she felt that Filipinos' general perception of Chinese business owners as abusive is only a scapegoat. "We came here to conduct business and live harmoniously with Filipinos. I hope that they (Filipinos) do not take out their frustrations to us because not all of us are bad people."

On the other hand, Mr. Ivan Man Dy, who is involved in cultural tours focusing on the culinary history and built heritage of Binondo, said that the integration of Chinese-Filipinos into the community was gradual and natural. He was aware that when he was growing up that he was different because of his ethnicity, but also knew that he was a Filipino by political identity. Studying in Chinese schools in Manila made him feel part of the Chinese-Filipino community and was able to preserve much of the culture and tradition of his firstgeneration grandparents. As one of the members of the third generation families in Binondo , he sees Chinese-Filipinos as one of the many ethnic groups in the Philippines. "We are not as foreign as you think we are. We just as local as everyone else. Our ethnicity is Chinese, but we are Filipino citizens especially the third generation who were born and raised in Manila."

Mr. Dy's observation of the difference between the first generation/ recent migrants and the third generation Chinese-Filipino is that the first generation/ recent migrants value their being merchants. The motivation for migrating to Manila was to make a living, to put up business. "They are more industrious while us, third generation are already in different fields and have more freedom in terms of choosing what career or profession best suits us."

This brings us to question if the firstgeneration recent migrants had more difficulty assimilating with Filipinos than the third generation Chinese-Filipinos. The cultural traits of the first generation recent migrants are more traditional, as they still practice most of the Chinese beliefs and practices at home compared to the third generation Chinese-Filipinos wherein some of them could no longer speak Chinese. In an interview with about fifteen (15) third generation Chinese-Filipinos for this paper, eleven (11) of them said that they did not encounter difficulty assimilating with the Filipinos because they were born and raised in Manila and knew how to speak English and Filipino. Despite studying in Chinese schools, interaction with Filipinos whether in work and other public spaces, was "not at all problematic except for the usual stereotyping and perception that they are either rich Chinese or abusive Chinese business owners."

Whether it was difficult or not for the first generation and third generation Chinese-Filipinos to assimilate themselves with Filipinos in Binondo, it is still apparent that stereotyping is present in both generations up to this day. This brings us to explore the Chinese

home communities in Binondo to understand their struggles.

In the case of Mr. Stephen Pamorada, a cultural worker and a third generation Chinese-Filipino living Binondo, his growing up years in the district was relatively peaceful. His grandparents were living in central Binondo near the market place since the 1940s and owned a building with a grocery in the ground floor and their residence is in the upper floors. Since most of his family members still lives in the building, it can be considered as a clan house. By definition, a clan house is a place where a group of people of common descent lives. Since they have established a business and a place of residence in the area, people in the area have a high respect for them. This proves Amoyot's research in "The Manila Chinese" that "there is a regional association called t'ung hsiang hui or home hsiang association where it groups people according to origin. Same as a small village with members having the same surname. Mr. Pamorada's family clan house in Binondo may be due to circumstance. Nevertheless, the elements of clan house are evident in the intent of the family to maintain kinship and unity.

However, respect for a clan in a community does not necessarily equate to assimilation because stereotyping still needs to be addressed. The common remark that the Chinese are rich or in a higher social status is a stigma that does not go away according to Mr. Pamorada.

Tsinoys 'bridging the gap' towards acceptance

The word "acceptance" especially for the Chinese-Filipinos is part of the process towards integration and assimilation with the rest of the Binondo community. The district is composed of recent Chinese migrants, Chinese-Filipinos and Filipinos, and while the exact number of "Tsinoys," Chinese migrants and Filipinos are unknown and the Philippine Statistics Authority only has the total population of 18,000 as of 2016, the Chinese-Filipino community in particular, are making an effort to "bridge the gap" between the Chinese and Filipinos towards understanding and acceptance of their ethnicity.

The *Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran* (Unity for Progress) is non-government, non-profit organization founded in 1987 with an objective to "integrate ethnic Chinese into mainstream Philippines society." (Kaisa 2017). By being involved in cultural, educational, and social work, Kaisa has put itself in the map of social development. The present Kaisa headquarters in Intramuros (a place where the native Chinese was not allowed to live) has a museum of the Chinese history in the Philippines and a library collection of books on Chinese studies. In 1992, Kaisa also became popular for coining the term *Tsinoy*, a contraction of Tsino (for Chinese) and Pinoy (for Filipino). It is an attempt not only to popularize the term itself but to re-introduce the Chinese-Filipino as Filipinos.

In the museum of Kaisa called *Bahay Tsinoy*, there is a particular wing dedicated to prominent figures in Philippine history and society. Names like Jose Rizal, the national hero and Corazon Aquino, the former Philippine

president offer visitors an understanding that Philippines is diverse and only through an understanding and acceptance that the Philippines has been diverse from the very beginning and no race or ethnic can claim exclusivity to a particular place. It is only though this awareness and acceptance of diversity that the Filipinos can move forward to becoming more educated and tolerant of other groups of a different ethnic backgrounds.

However, the 'gap' may still remain for most Filipinos, as stigma towards the Chinese-Filipino remains. A long-time Chinese-Filipino resident explained that due to the influx of Chinese from the mainland in the recent years, "there has been an increase in the negative perception of the Chinese in Binondo in general and since almost all Chinese in the district look the same despite being a resident, Filipinos, especially those working for the recent migrants as store helper or house helper, perceive all Chinese as abusive for "paying them a pittance for working more than 12 hours."

This generalization of the Chinese affects Filipino and Chinese relations especially with the rise of the Chinese tycoons as presented in the Philippine mass media. The richest man in the Philippines is a Chinese-Filipino who reportedly hires a huge number of employees on a contractual basis. In the small businesses owned by Chinese-Filipino families and recent Chinese migrants, all store helpers are Filipino except for the person attending the cash register who is either the son or daughter of the owner or the owner himself/ herself. The divide is even more evident in the district and as one of the Filipinos employed by the Chinese-Filipino said, *"Ang tagal na namin dito. Halos isang dekada na pero minimum pa rin*

ang sinasahod namin! Ang yaman na ng instik na yan!" (We've been here for almost a decade but we are still minimum wage earners! That Chinese is already rich!).

We return to the problem of this clash between the Chinese and Filipinos as more sociological in origin. Tracing the history of repression and persecution of the ethnic Chinese in Manila and other parts of the Philippines, it is undeniable that the Chinese thrive wherever they go. This cultural trait of successfully making a living in a foreign land may not be entirely exclusive to them. However, centuries of diaspora and oppression made an impact on their race and culture hence the lowly Chinese coolie carrying two baskets of goods and selling them on the streets of Manila from morning until evening has more advantage to a Filipino or Spanish closing shop in the afternoon to take a nap.

The trait of diligence is ingrained but what is criticized is the monopoly of work and business run by the Chinese. Their dominance is a threat, as mentioned in previous historical accounts hence laws were passed to restrict them from entering and/or leaving the Philippines. With all these exclusions of Chinese into Manila society, they were left to adjust or improvise to survive. The 1954 retail trade nationalization law gravely affected small retail business of Chinese-Filipinos hence they resorted to selling wholesale thus forcing them to change their line or business or increasing their purchase and ballooning their deficit. The insensitivity of the laws enacted resulted to either the fall of the Chinese business owners forcing them to close shop or the rise of the new tycoons who succeeded in the wholesale business (Chu 2016).

Rupert Hooder in his analysis of the economic power of the Chinese mentioned that "the economic strength attributed to the Chinese in the Philippines is no less remarkable than in other countries in the Southeast Asia. It is commonly said that, although the Chinese constitute only one to two percent of the population, their share of market capital is between 50 to 55 percent."

Hooder may have only focused on the recent rise of the economic power of the Chinese in the Philippines, however, such figures is similar to 300 years ago when the Chinese monopolized the galleon trade that spanned 250 years. It is easy to assume that the Chinese may have taken advantage of the circumstance, but their entrepreneurial nature cannot be denied. Nevertheless, recent call for the Chinese in the Philippines by non-governmental organizations to take part in political and social development has somehow diverted the community into focusing on helping the district and nearby communities' living conditions, as the Chinese are always perceived to be only focused on earning money. This may not be the case for other sectors of the Chinese community, as diverse as they are in their backgrounds and interest. Literary and cultural groups in Binondo has thrived especially with the help of the social media. The third generation of Chinese-Filipinos in particular are no longer mere store cashiers or owners but are working professionals in various fields and they have also advocated for the rest of the community to be civic leaders and volunteers as well.

Historically, the ethnic Chinese are sensitive to other people in their community. In a research by Jacques Amoyot (1973), he mentioned that "the Chinese have

tried to avoid commercial activities that would have placed them in open competition with wealthy Filipino groups and big American and Spanish interests in order not to arouse the antagonism of groups that could command political hearing." This means that other Chinese who are interested in small-scale businesses became empathic to the needs of the rest of the community. This attempt is evident in the rise of small Chinese stores in Filipino colloquial term the sari sari store, which simply means a shop where one could buy various goods by retail. The Chinese even gave credit to Filipinos buying from their store. However, the laws passed as previously mentioned restricted the Chinese who have been restricted to even work as laborers or in other professions such as the Filipinos. This gave them limited choices to pursue a career in business/ entrepreneurship or corporate work.

Adding insult to this oppression is the unfair perception that all of the Chinese-Filipinos in Binondo belong to the upper middle class. Little did the people know that Chinese-Filipinos are from different classes and a number of them belong to the lower middle class. This stereotyping has caused tremendous harm to the Binondo community as robbers and kidnap for ransom syndicates targeted Chinese-Filipinos. From the late 1980s to mid-1990s, several Chinese-Filipinos were abducted in exchange for money. This resulted to a wider divide between the Chinese and Filipinos. The Chinese have lost their trust in the Philippine national police and the Philippine government especially when some Chinese-Filipinos who have been kidnapped were killed (Ang See 1997).

However, the anger of the Chinese community in Binondo against the apathy of the police and the government was pacified by the support of Filipino groups and community that supported the Chinese. Pressure from both the Chinese and Filipino community has helped decrease the number of kidnappings in the district. It would take a tragedy to unite Chinese and Filipinos to understand and accept each other to gradually remove the stigma and centuries-long oppression and discrimination of the ethnic Chinese and Chinese Filipinos, not just in Binondo but in the entire Philippines.

Conclusion

The rise of the third generation Chinese-Filipinos working in multinational companies and business processing outsourcing companies at present is a good indication that the acceptance and complete assimilation of the Chinese into the community has taken the first step. Assimilation is not just by having the citizenship and residence as other Filipinos but becoming part of the community in all aspects particularly in cultural and social development. Various non-government and special interest groups formed by Chinese-Filipinos in social media are taking the lead in different cultural activities to raise awareness in the relevance of Philippine history. Aside from Kaisa that has become one of the official voices of the Chinese-Filipino community through its publications and media mileage, groups such as *Tsinoy Chinoy Life* and *Escolta Youth* headed by the younger Chinese-Filipinos in Binondo are slowly integrating into

the mainstream Philippine society. Their regular events in the district and nearby cities bring together various groups of people from different sectors of the society. Indeed, the "troubled assimilation" may be a thing of the past if said advocacies through events and activities will be sustained in the years to come.

There are a number of limitations in this paper that the writer looks forward to seeing being addressed in future papers. A thorough research on the current demographics of ethnic Chinese and Chinese-Filipino will be helpful and relevant especially to researchers who intend to continue what this paper has started that is to know if the Chinese-Filipino community in Binondo, Manila no longer feels oppressed or discriminated. Another subject worthy of discussion in the future is the "beleaguered" relations between the recent Chinese migrants and the long-time Chinese-Filipino residents of Binondo. It has been observed through the course of this research that some Chinese-Filipinos have resentments toward the recent Chinese migrants for being "crass" and "lacking in etiquette and decency." This divide among the Chinese may be one of the reasons why total assimilation may take a longer time. The constant migration of the ethnic Chinese in the Philippines calls for a continuous adjustment both of the Chinese-Filipino community and the Filipinos. Several groups based in Binondo such as the one in Liberty Hall on Benavidez Street may address this "silent tension" in order to improve the current efforts of the rest of community towards complete assimilation and acceptance. Moreover, the call for unity among recent Chinese migrants and Chinese-Filipino community is stronger than ever. The Binondo

community is encouraged especially by Ms. Teresita Ang See, founder of Kaisa not to be "mere bystanders and fence sitters." Instead, they should take part in the activities to fully integrate themselves to the community.

This paper concludes that much effort is still needed for the Chinse-Filipino community to feel less insecure of their place in the community. The efforts of the community towards acceptance should not be one sided because the full support of the Filipino community as well as various Chinese-Filipino groups to come together and have one aim which is for the Chinese-Filipinos not to question their place in the community. We all look forward to a time when Binondo would still be referred to as "Chinatown" but populated by Filipinos. Eventually, Chinese-Filipinos will simply be called Filipinos and the term *Tsinoy* will become *Pinoy*.

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About the Author

JEFFREY P. YAP was born and raised in Manila. As a cultural worker, he has lobbied for the protection and preservation of built heritage in Manila. He is also a member of a homegrown, community-based group in Manila whose Tsinoy members conduct events and activities to promote the history and heritage of Manila's Chinatown.

The Years of Permanent Midnight: The Liberalist Construction of the Philippine Nation in Cinema Under the US-Aquino Administration

Jeffrey Deyto
Far Eastern University
Manila, Philippines

abstract

This study seeks to define the role of cinema in the formation/construction of the nation amidst the acceleration of global capital and the heightened need for outsourced and remotely-managed workers (both were manifested to the fruition of the BPO industry) in the earlier part of 2010s – both of which are supported by the intensification of the liberal economics and politics of the then administration of Benigno Aquino, III. Cinema is not referred in this study as a general aspect of nation-formation/construction, but rather a node from a wide network of apparatuses deployed to support and maintain the nation and subjects that were continually produced/reproduced. Jonathan Beller referred to this network of apparatuses as the

World-Media System which, for him, is also a "dominant network of abstractions that would organize all social processes in the service of capital." The study aims to arrive at the kind of nation formed/constructed by these setting through the subjects produced by the World-Media System. The nation, as Kojin Karatani would stress coming from Benedict Anderson, is imagined through a certain mode of exchange. Karatani, however, would like to think of another kind of exchange than commodity-exchange. This study would depart from that notion considering the differences of historical developments between the global north and south: between the historical developments of former colonizers and former colonies. It is concluded in this study that the kind of subjects produced / reproduced by the World-Media System in the Philippines in 2010-2016 reflects much of the liberalist economics and politics of the then administration. These subjects produced, which I would later identify as the modern cynic, constitute a wider aspect of the definition of the nation.

Keywords: Liberalist Construction, Cinema, Media, Nation Formation, Government

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The Liberalist Construction of the Nation

The film *Year of Permanent Midnight*[1] opened with a young man and a young woman talking about the conflict which caused the split of the progressive student organization at the University of the Philippines during the 90s, where the film was set. On a later scene, we see the two persons knocking at a condo unit. They are welcomed by another person who later introduced us to their activity. The third person is describing in detail the progress of their project: to hack into a financial institution and digitally steal money. In this instance, the student-movement conflict that was being discussed earlier no longer rings in our ears. Instead, the wired room flattened the conflict into a singularity: it becomes a film about exploiting the hole of the then early global financial market. What seems to be an imbalance in writing makes sense to me as a symptom of the times of early digital age: the time when globalization is gaining a heightened momentum.

This study treats the Philippine nation in the logical sense of this momentum: the Philippines, being totally wired to the global market can only be imagined as

[1] A short film directed by then film-student, Clare del Rosario, and written by Carlo Cielo. The film was shot as partial fulfillment for Del Rosario's Film Directing class. The film was first screened at the Annual Black Beret Competition at the UPFI Film Center in 2014.

such. Several factors are to be considered: the acceleration of global capital, the heightened need of the global community for outsourced workers (both as manifested to the fruition of the BPO industry) in the 2010s – both are supported by the intensification of the liberal culture and politics of the then administration. The Philippine nation is imagined in this essay in the same manner as the film mentioned above, only as one which has gained more maturity. With this, the manner of the nation-formation which lead to the nation being imagined only through and by globalization, as mentioned above, was enabled by liberalism.

The liberalist construction of the nation does not differ in imagination than that of a globalist one. The liberal thought is founded on the notion of "openness," much like globalism, which aims to "encompass ever greater numbers of world spaces" which would eventually lead to "integration and interconnectivity."[2] This integration and interconnectivity is never going to be possible without liberal method of "everyday political negotiation, consisting of various civic and cultural referents."[3] Lisandro Claudio, in his book-length defense of liberalism through an intellectual history of its deployment in post-war Philippines, would look into liberalism more as the backdrop (in his words, "blueprint") of the country's overall composition. While

[2] George Ritzer, "Introduction." *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization*. Ed. George Ritzer. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 16-28.

[3] Lisandro Claudio, *Liberalism and the Postcolony: Thinking the State in 20th Century Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017.

he keeps mentioning that his "liberal heroes" have had a hand with economic-policy making, he did not perceive liberalism's blueprint also working on the economic level. He viewed liberalism generally as a polity – moreover, a polity of possibility and openness.[4]

This openness manifested in Philippine cinema through a new variation of production popularly termed as "maindie". The release of CinemaOne Originals' commercial breakout film, *That Thing Called Tadhana* (2014), indicated its first full realization. In an earlier period, Rolando Tolentino identifies as the "mainstreaming of independent cinema" as a practice which has become prevalent on the latter part of 2000s.[5] What was before in the periphery of cinematic market is now in the center of discursive and practical approaches of both the affirmative and critical sides of the film scene. The big studios banked into producing or distributing similar works – and most gaining same reception - as *That Thing Called Tadhana*.

For this study, I would like to look at "maindie" as the site of the liberalist construction of the Philippine

[4] "…openness makes liberalism the product of governance… an openness to dissent and the willingness to compromise…" "Liberalism [is] a fleeting concept that operates more as a blueprint than as an ideology[…]"; "…liberalism does not have steady friends or foes, it is because it negotiates those categories through constant praxis." ibid, 2-3.

[5] This was, for him, embodied by the existence of Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival and its emphasis on "narrative, continuity [and] suture," similar to the focus of Hollywood. See Rolando B. Tolentino, *Indie Cinema at mga Sanaysay sa Topograpiya ng Pelikula sa Filipinas*. (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2016), 15.

nation in cinema. It would be argued, however, that this construction does not just take place politically or culturally, more so, economically. Kojin Karatani would consider nation-formation as something which can also be located in economics: "[…]the nation is an "imagined community," but it is not a mere fancy or fantasy; it functions as the imagination that mediates and synthesizes the state, [its apparatuses] and market society."[6] He would further argue, however, that the existence of the nation economically differs from the general conception of the nation-state founded in commodity-exchange. He suggests looking at the nation as enacting reciprocal exchange.[7] But I would argue, however, that what Karatani is suggesting here can only be possible on nations which did not go through a history of colonization. Being in a post-colony presupposes that we look into the uneven exchanges set out the current condition and disposition of one nation. Unlike Japan, which was founded more in the dominance of an internal warlord, postcolonial nations like the Philippines was dominated from the exterior, hence, the conditions by which a nation's economics, politics and conditions will differ since the source of hegemony came from somewhere else.

What I'm agreeing with Karatani is how the nation is imagined through exchange, albeit, an uneven exchange on postcolonial nations. With this, I'm offering a hypothesis: the nation is imagined through the

[6] Kojin Karatani, *Nation and Aesthetics: On Kant and Freud*, Trans. Jonathan E. Abel, Hiroki Yoshikuni, Darwin H. Tsen, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11.
[7] ibid, 4.

formation of a national-subject. Under conditions of dominance, like ours, I'm arguing that the nation is imagined by the ruling class through a projection of themselves on others. It is in this instance that the symbols of nationality become important such as the flags, the anthems, and all the other images and texts which most has referred to as icons of the nation. The national-subject is constructed through its interpellation with the use of the national symbol.

But come 21st century, the dependence on national symbols has depleted. As instantiated with *Heneral Luna*'s epilogue where we see a CGI Philippine Flag burning, with its conscious rejection to subject itself into any symbol, the imagination of the national subject becomes different. In a time when disbelief on national symbols or when the "framework" of the nation has been shaken, Karatani suggests that "empire" or world capitalism was being "referred to as an alternative principle to the nation."[8] This is not to say that the nation is being dissolved in this sense, but as exclusive exchange within the geopolitical boundaries are becoming harder to imagine, the sense of having symbols of nation is being treated as too "closed", openness to globalization is a feasible alternative for the liberalist logic. The task then, for *maindie* cinema as the site of liberalist construction of the nation through its subjects, is the construction of subjects which would definitely see themselves as part of this globalized imagined community. The subject, then, of a nation constructed under liberalism must be someone who believes in tolerance and openness, effaces the need

[8] Ibid, 22.

for symbolization (which includes identification of one's self in a contradiction, or in symbolization through labor,) and firmly believes that even though the system is not perfect, it is still the best one he can have and there is no alternative for it (this nihilism is also one which is needed to be tolerated). The subject of a nation constructed under liberalism must be one which absorbs all these negation of symbolization and still performing / contributing to its economy through its conscious participation to commodity exchange: the modern-day cynic.

Faced with the challenge of taking-on globalization in the discourse of the liberalist construction of the Philippine nation in cinema, I see it fit to look into the work done by Jonathan Beller in his theorization of the world-media system as the basis of the economic base responsible for the reproduction of globalization in cinema. Beller here employs Guy Debord's concept of the "spectacle" on his theorization of the world-media system as a "higher articulation of "pseudo-community" of the commodity."[9] For him, the world-media system "names the organizational protocols that simultaneously structure culture and economy."[10] He further adds that these protocols engineer also the perception through machinations of what passes through both faces

[9] Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle*. (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), 22. Also, see See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books, 1995), 172.

[10] Jonathan Beller, *Acquiring Eyes: Philippine Visuality, Nationalist Struggle and the World-Media System*. (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2006), 6.

(repressive and ideological) of state apparatuses. The world-media system produces the "dominant network of abstractions that would organize all social processes in the service of capital."[11] World-media system's mode of social organization takes from the appropriation of global capital of what he calls the cinematic mode of production: cinema, for Beller, reproduces social life and subjects through the deployment of cinematic techniques.[12] Reflecting on Louis Althusser, Beller would posit the reciprocity of this mode of production into the political: the mechanisms of the cinematic mode of production reproduces the subject "not only through wage labor [and the alienation of it] and the necessities that can be purchased with wage, but, psychologically, as it were, through a process [Althusser] called as interpellation – the calling of worker-subject into being by ideological apparatuses."[13]

In this study, since we are considering cinema's deployment of nationalism in the light of the cinematic mode of production, we are assuming that nationalism is indeed, an ideology. In a way, as Althusser would put it, nationalism can never exist in any other form but through apparatuses.[14] The national symbols as embodiments of the nation have legal origins and implications – the law as

[11] Jonathan Beller, *Acquiring Eyes.*, 7.
[12] Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production,* 38.
[13] Ibid, 291.
[14] The argument over the materiality of ideology through its "exist[ence] in an apparatus and the practice or practices of that apparatus" marks the radical break of Althusserian theory of ideology from the conception of Marx in *The German Ideology*. See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*. (London: Verso, 2014), 184.

an ideological apparatus. Cinema, being the site of liberalist construction of the nation, is considered also as one of the apparatuses through which nationalism, being an ideology, exists.

Reproduction of the Nation

As discussed in the earlier section, this essay perceives the construction of the nation through the construction of the nation-subject via the exchanges they encounter. In this sense, the construction also of subjectivity becomes important. The source of this subjectivity in its origin, however, is impossible to trace, as this also became a product of exchanges throughout history of the formation of the subject. As Jacques Lacan would put it, subjects "relay with each other in the course of intersubjective repetition,"[15] presupposing the formation of the subject has always been in a manner of exchange or, in Lacan's terms, of discourse.

This is where I came to break with Karatani's model of nation being imagined through reciprocal exchange and came with a different model fit with our country's history of colonization and dominance. Intersecting with Lacan is Benedict Anderson's reframing of the formation of the collective subjectivities which has led to nationalism "with consideration of the material, institutional and discursive bases." The bases, as Anderson would like to

[15] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 16.

suggest, generates two contrasting types of seriality: the *unbound* and the *bound*.[16] It is on these dialectical model that we can perceive the nationalist subjectivity came to be through its exchanges via the serialities generated by the material, institutional and discursive bases. The challenge here, and what is being addressed on this section of the essay, will be to locate cinema's place on those bases.

These bases that Anderson talks about are the various apparatuses in operation in the deployment of ideology. Its *bound*-ness, so to speak, can be considered as an effect of the operations of these apparatuses. On this complex network of apparatuses in operation, cinema can be found on one of its segments. Althusser identified a "number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions."[17] He called these the *Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA)*. Among these "realities" are the cultural ISAs where we can locate cinema functioning as apparatus. But, in the light of globalization, cinema in the 21st century, can no longer be considered as merely *cultural* (in the manner that Althusser considered cultural ISAs as institution

[16] The unbound seriality is "is exemplified by such open-to-the-world plurals as nationalists, anarchists, bureaucrats and workers. It is the seriality which makes the United Nations a normal, wholly unparadoxical institution." Bound seriality, on the other hand, "is exemplified by finite series like Asian-Americans, heurs, and Tutsis. It is the seriality that makes a United Ethnicities and United Identities unthinkable." See Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons*. London: Verso, 1998.

[17] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism,* 243.

separate from the trade and communication ISAs). Starting in the 20th century, under capitalism, culture is already being captured by the economic to function as economic mediation. Beller further expounded:

> Culture, then, has been recast and reprogrammed by the acculturated who, at every level of the socius, labor under the heliotropism of capital and its leveraged exchange. This capitalization of action, thought, the unconscious, and desire, among other biosocial functions, is otherwise known as commodification.[18]

It is in this sense that the break from Karatani is completed, as a reversal of his break from and consequently returning to Marx: of reconsidering the commodity exchange as a framework of rethinking the exchanges that happened in a nation which history of uneven development speaks a lot of its formation and construction. In the light of globalization, the repetition, distribution and the mimesis then of ideology – of nationalism – can never be but in the form of commodity exchange.

Cinema as an apparatus, can be said to appear as a specific form of ideology, among the the many apparatuses ideology can take shape from. The appearance of ideology in cinema is specific due to its specific form: the ideology is in the formal quality of the films. This form, of course, is determined by the political-economy which informs its content. Nationalism, being the content interrogated in this essay, also appears as such. But in the age when the nation's framework is being

[18] Beller, *Acquiring Eyes*, 2.

shaken, nationalism in this sense, take an alternative principle, and that is of "Empire" or as Karatani would note it, of "world-capitalism".[19]

Negotiating with Empire

Since the notion of the "nation" is being uncomfortable – that is, the nation in the traditional sense of a closed economy in the realm of geopolitics, the recourse of liberal economics is to open itself to the global market. In the process, the effacement of any symbolization that would refer to the old nationalism has become a necessity. And in the process of exchange, it expects to produce a subject which is also open to this.

Cinema, in this sense, become paradoxical in its operation as apparatus: what is to be represented (since cinema mostly functions through representation and suggestion) if it aims for less symbolization? If it is the "traditional" notion of the nation that will be erased from representation, if not, "nationalism" itself, what then is to be done with cinema? It needs to have another object – another ideology – to represent. This was resolved by a new sub-genre in romantic comedy, which is *hugot*. The word literally means "to pull-out," which in this context, a *hugot* in literary sense is a recontextualization of a certain passage or sentence which is *pulled-out* of personal reference

In an earlier study I made, I identified the way of which *hugot* films succeeds on reproducing ideology through the repetition of the dialogues uttered by the

[19] Karatani, *Nation and Aesthetics*, 22.

characters into the films' visual plane.[20] The *hugot* in the film do not remain exclusively dialogical (it's no more a compendium of "*hugot* lines"), but is being repeated as a spectacle. What this signify in the context of the nation is that, what replaces the symbolizations and significations referring to anything that has something to do with the nation and nationalism are being replaced in *hugot* films by seeming representations of characters' frustrations.

For instance, in *That Thing Called Tadhana*'s opening sequence, we see Mace (Angelica Panganiban) unloading her bag to clear her off the excess baggage weight at the exit terminal of an airport. Mace justified that it is heavy because it contains the totality of her life ("*dala ko kasi buong buhay ko dito*"). The things which are "the totality of her life" – what's she removing from her bag – are mostly things which suggest that reminds her of her former partner. In another scene, Anthony (JM De Guzman) tests Mace if she can still carry the bag while crossing a pedestrian over-pass. Mace said to Anthony that she still can and she doesn't need help ("*kaya ko*"). The bag which burdens her was suddenly left behind while they go for another trip to somewhere.

The same film-language is applied in *Ang Kwento Nating Dalawa*, on one of its heightened confrontations. In a scene at a bar, Sam (Nicco Manalo) tried to talk things through with Isa (Emmanuelle Vera) on the state of their relationship. While Sam signaled with a hesitant silence, Isa tried to shift the topic over the script she's

[20] The study is titled "Pick-up Lines and Hugot: pop-culture phenomena against the back drop of Philippine Base and Superstructure." This was written in partial fulfillment of Media Theory (Media 210) under Prof. Cecilia Ilagan.

writing for their screenwriting class. Isa, with an angry look on her face, read some lines from her script to Sam. The following is the exchange which took place between the characters, which highlights the displacement of their conditions towards another aspect of the film as a means of its repetition:

Sam

Sorry. Kanina, para pala akong bata. Ang dami ko lang kasing realizations lately. Ako. Ako lang naman yung may problema sa 'tin, eh. (Sorry if I was acting like a kid earlier. I've just had a lot of realizations lately. That it is me, and only me who has problems between us.)

Isa

Uy.. Gandang line nun ah. Salamat, pwede ko bang hiramin para doon sa character doon sa script ko, si Mark? Ok ba? Pa-consult nga pala. Baka gusto mong basahin yung script ko, kaka-print ko lang bago pumunta dito. Pwede? (Hey, that's a good line. Can I use it for the character I've been writing on my script? As Mark's dialogue? I wanted to consult it with you. I just printed out my script before coming here, is that fine with you?)

(Sam looks at Isa in silence)

Isa (cont'd)

Tignan mo tong dialogue dito... Yung dialogue ng babae. Tignan mo kung sakto lang, kasi pakiramdam ko ang cheesy eh. Ito: "Parang ayoko na rin. Paulit-ulit na lang kasi tayong ganito since naging tayo. Kung nahihirapan ka, Mark, mas nahihirapan din ako. Kasi nagtitiis ako. At gawa ako ng gawa ng paraan." Cheesy, 'no? (Look at this dialogue here... The woman's. See if it's just right. I have a feeling that it's going to be cheesy. Here it goes: "Seems like I do not want to go on anymore. It's always

been like this ever since we get together. If you're having a hard time, Mark, I have it much harder. Because I've been keeping it in. But I am always finding ways to make us work." Cheesy, right?

At the end of the film, it is revealed that Sam is actually Isa's instructor for the scriptwriting class. As Isa submitted her screenplay project, Sam browsed through the script until he reached the part where it says *Wakas* (End), immediately reached out to his pen and erased the word.

What is happening on both instances cited above can be said to be a repetition of the frustration into another filmic element from the dialogue. This repetition – a *hypersignification*, in a sense – becomes in itself, an avoidance for anymore signification. The frustrations repeated in the scenes persist as the only significant part of the story: it begs to be taken as it is. The films "spea[k] to itself about itself, without discrepancy."[21] What is to be expected then, if we are considering this repetition as avoidance of signification as a mechanism of cinema-apparatus to reproduce ideology, of the subjects that it forms? Such formations identify the subject who is one which external contradictions are no longer a pressing matter, but all that must be resolved are exclusively personal. Beller stresses on this kind of signification as a kind of "flattening" between depth and signification where "[a]ll of the would-be contradictions, yesterday's

[21] Jean Louis Comolli, and Jean Narboni. "Appendix I: Cinema/Ideology/Criticism." In Jean-Louis Comolli, *Cinema Against Spectacle*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 255.

contradictions, are on the surface, and since there is nothing but surface they are no longer contradictions."[22]

What does this overdetermination of signification do? This is really what Beller called "capitalized mediation" wherein all of the signification's spatial and metaphysical properties were "sublated by capital logic."[23] Beller suggests that the images produced by these mediations, by highlighting its overloading of signification, are less of signs but are commodities. The filmic subjects (i.e. characters) disappear and become themselves bearers of exchange-value/use-value logic. This is exemplified by the way the characters relate to each other. Mace and Anthony met and mostly form their relationship on their trips (which are not for free). The same goes with the girls of *Camp Sawi* (Viva Films 2016) and *I'm Drunk I Love You* (TBA 2017). *Camp Sawi* itself is an actual getaway lodge and their relation to the Camp Master is basically just one of the services offered by the resort. Most of the interactions in *I'm Drunk I Love You* happened not just over alcohol, but also on places where *hypercommodification* happens (bar and the music festival). Isa and Sam, being student and teacher from De La Salle – Saint Benilde, inevitably has their relation placed on a hypercommodified environment: from their school cafeteria to the bar where they hang out.

Complementing the elimination of depth is the "annihilation of laws and boundaries that have, in the past, delimited the movement of the signifier." This functions, in the films above, through the films'

[22] Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production*, 219.
[23] Ibid, 220.

elimination of the characters' identities as workers through setting the films in the time when work is at rest: vacation, trips, graduation. What the characters do for a living in those films are mostly being talked about in-passing, some in detail, but never really bear any significance to the progress of its narrative. We are left with nothing in the films but to trust whatever they say who they are.

In *That Thing Called Tadhana*, the film is set at the time of the characters' arrival from a foreign country. They talked about careers, Mace told Anthony about a "career she gave up" so he can go to Italy and live with her former partner. Anthony talked about wanting to be an artist. But since the setting of the film was in their vacation, nothing can be seen which proves that Mace and Anthony are who they say they are. In *Ang Kwento Nating Dalawa,* most of the film is set on class-breaks and after-class. There's one sequence where Sam was seen sitting in a classroom, but eventually left. Their identities as workers — student and teacher — was only used as a plot-twist in the end. But the twist never helped forward this dynamics, but rather, pushed further the discourse of the affection (or the impossibility of it) between Sam and Isa. In *I'm Drunk I Love You*, it is mentioned through dialog that Carson (Maja Salvador) is a social welfare student and Dio (Paolo Avelino) is a film student. But since the film is set comfortably on their days before graduation, not to mention, their La Union vacation, so we can't see them doing any student-like activities.

This leads us to the discussion of the subjects constructed through the characters of the films mentioned above. What kind of a subject can be

produced if we are to combine the removal of any form of collective identification, such as nationality, class, work-force into the mirroring signification? What can be produced from the negation of presence? To clarify, there are still representations in the film-image of the subject, only this representation is being determined by a negation of anything that can be said to be "traditionally" symbolic. The symbols relating to any collective identification are being replaced by a highly individualistic character on screen. One of which identification is still symbolic, but only in the form of commodities.

The Liberal Nation-Subject: The Modern-day Cynic

Looking at the end of *I'm Drunk, I Love You* made me reflect a lot on the idea of cynicism. In its final sequence, we see Carson and Dio drinking in front of a store. Dio is still wearing his graduation get-up, while Carson already has changed her clothes. The scene, taken into the context of the film, do not really close the film in such a manner that it is being resolved. The seemingly open-end does not quite have that tone. Instead, the film, even from its beginning, sets itself in a certain distance as such that it can only be taken "as it is."[24] If so, it is an ending *without an end*. It is incapable of imagining such things: it does not resolve the loop that Carson is trapped in the shadows of Dio. It does not propose any

[24] I've made a longer note on *I'm Drunk, I Love You* on my blog: https://missingcodec.wordpress.com/2017/08/23/two-ways-of-alienation/

alternative for Carson. Rather, the film does not seem to believe that there will be any.

While not being a perfect manifestation, the end sequence of *I'm Drunk, I Love You* can be seen as a symptom of what Mark Fisher identifies as *Capitalist Realism*. The concept of Capitalist Realism can be explained in summary using the idea of the actual resort in *Camp Sawi*: the camp participants all went with the hope of moving on, only to prepare them for another round of falling in love. *Camp Sawi* gridlocks its participants on the loop of moving-on and trying again. If not now, maybe, as the words Gwen (Arci Muñoz) and Bridgette (Bela Padilla) gave a toast to at the end of the film, "someday" (*balang-araw*). The notion of love – and the preparation, moving on from it – is what is being commodified by *Camp Sawi*. Like most of the relationships on the films mentioned on this section, this gridlock is nothing more than the gridlock to capitalism. What happens here is that the belief of love is being collapsed into a ritual/loop or symbolic elaboration that "all that is left is the consumer-spectator, trudging through the ruins and relics."[25]

A capitalist realism has a cynical tone to it. As Fisher would put it, "capitalist realism presents itself as a shield protecting us from the perils posed by belief itself."[26] By belief, it means any more speculation outside of the capitalist logic. Capitalism, as Fisher would extend it, "brings with it a massive desacralization of culture"[27]

[25] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Hants: Zer0 Books, 2009), 4.
[26] Ibid, 5.
[27] Ibid, 6.

which, in effect, actively and forcefully "deideologize[s] art and literature," which is, as Edel Garcellano would put it, "at the heart of liberalist hermeneutics."[28] These desacralizations and deidologizations effectively brings the subject in a cynical distance between things, and should supposedly bring reason onto a new enlightenment through doubt towards "objectivity."

Peter Sloterdijk referred to cynicism as an "enlightened false consciousness:" the term *false consciousness* used here is the same when Engels[29] referred to it as the consciousness which is at operation in the process of ideology. Sloterdijk would insist, however, that cynicism is itself an heir to the enlightenment through its critical engagement with it: its critical engagement with enlightenment is precisely its fundamental nature. Cynicism constitutes "a consciousness afflicted with enlightenment that, having learned from historical experience, refutes cheap optimism." It "scarcely allow itself any hope, at most a little irony and pity."[30]

Sloterdijk's description of cynicism places the cynical subject in a position of awareness. Slavoj Žižek would expound more on Sloterdijk:

> The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the

[28] Edel Garcellano, *Intertext*, (Manila, Kalikasan Press, 1991), 58.
[29] See Frederich Engels, "Engels to Franz Mehring," in *Marx/Engels Collected Works Vol. 50. 1892-95 Letters*. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2004) 163-167.
[30] Peter Sloterdijk, *The Critique of Cynical Reason*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 6.

> less still insists upon the mask. The formula, as proposed by Sloterdijk, would then be: 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it'. Cynical reason is no longer naive, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it.[31]

Capitalist realism, in this sense, can be seen in the light of cynicism that insists upon the mask of capitalism for its defense. If we refer back to *I'm Drunk, I Love You*, we see the same attitude if we perceive Carson and Dio's relationship as a metaphor for this. Carson know too well that it is the vagueness of her relationship to Dio that's making her miserable. Dio is quite aware too. But they both insist on supporting each other's enjoyment at a certain distance.

Cynicism further empowers liberalist openness: since a cynic does what it does despite knowing what it is he's doing, he proceeds to but with a certain distance, which on most cases, leads to its own complicity with capital. Such is the case of a significant part of the independent film culture. Fisher would claim that the "establishment of settled 'alternative' or 'independent' cultural zones" such as the independent film scene, do not really "designate something outside mainstream

[31] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. The Essential Zizek Series, (London: Verso, 2008), 25-26.

culture; rather, they are styles, in fact the dominant styles, within the mainstream."[32] These zones and scenes may be considered as the cynical spaces of film production of which, if given a certain amount of time to mature, would be open to its cooptation to the mainstream.

Maindie, being the site of liberalist construction of the national subject, is also the site of cooptation of the independent scene by the mainstream. And so retains itself parts of the cynical attitude it bears from its beginnings. For instance, in the film *Apocalypse Child* (TBA 2015), Ford (Sid Lucero) knows too well that what her mother said who his father was is ultimately false, her mother knows too well too, but they continue to live the made-up story. The maintenance of this false consciousness is important to have them all go on living out their desire. It is this false consciousness that became their standard for living.

What for me cynicism opens ultimately is this negotiation with violence. Claudio's defense of liberalism only places its position to aver anything that is deemed extremist. In his own words, liberals "are willing to compromise." That being said, liberals have this "willingness to get hands dirty" which "lands liberals in the halls of power."[33] But what of non-totalitarian violence? Claudio can only give "moderation" and "tolerance" as a response, since the greatest liberal pursuit is *modus vivendi*. Since for him, there is a necessity for a "politics of mediation."[34]

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[32] Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 9.
[33] Claudio, *Liberalism and the Postcolony*, 151.
[34] Ibid, 4.

This politics of mediation is apparent also in *Apocalypse Child*. The end sequence of the film is a mediation between the tyrannical father's legacy through Rich (RK Bagatsing) and the orphaned Oedipus, Ford. Instead of condemnation, a pragmatic response can be heard from Rich's resolve over the history of abuses from his father: after all, he's learned a lot from his father and his abuses ("*marami akong natutunan sa kanya*").

In another film, *Hele sa Hiwagang Hapis* (Epicmedia/Sine Olivia 2016), a postmodern re-imagination of Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, one of the characters, Padre Florentino (Menggie Cobarrubias), is telling Basilio (John Lloyd Cruz) to forgive Simoun (Piolo Pascual) of his past mistakes: to forgive Simoun of his initial collaboration with the Spaniards since, as Florentino would see it, he's trying to make up for it. Basilio is insisting that he shouldn't at first. But after sometime of staying with Simoun at Florentino's hut, Basilio started to doubt his resolve. In the end, he asked Florentino that if he's forgiven, what would happen to the effects of his action to the revolution. Why do things need to end up the way it is? All fundamental questions pertaining to Simoun's actions' effects to history. Florentino left the answer to Basilio that only the young ones, in reference to the future, can answer his questions. ("*kayong mga nakababata ang makakasagot niyan*")

There are two things that are being mediated here: first, is the actual violence done by Rich's father to him, defending it for its supposed pedagogical effect; second, is the violence done by Simoun for the liberation movement, which is being defended by incorporating Basilio with Florentino's appeal for forgiveness. Cynicism

here as a political mediation displaces violence from its systematic and institutional origins to a more pragmatic and personal approach: "it subverts the official proposition by confronting it with the situation of its enunciation; it proceeds *ad hominem*"[35] Michael Neu noted that these moderation perceives such violence as just, and hence his collective concept for these kinds of violence as *just liberal violence*. "The liberal framework," according to Neu, "is obsessed with individuals [but are] blind to social hierarchies and interconnectedness." What is being forwarded as a replacement to systematic critique is an extreme moralization: "a fixat[ion to press] the complex material world into a binary moral structure of right and wrong."[36]

It isn't surprising, from this context that one of *Maindie's* most successful film in terms of box-office, *Heneral Luna*, wraps itself up in the notion of the assumption of individual agency as the largest perpetrator of the nation's demise and not its colonizers. On confronting the cabinet and the President, Antonio Luna (John Arcilla) remarked the following statement as a response to the sentiments of the businessmen at the meeting: *"May mas malaking kaaway tayo maliban sa mga Amerikano: ang ating sarili.*" ("We have a greater enemy than the Americans: ourselves.") Preceding sequences suggest the justification of this statement to mean exactly what it means: there are no instances of American violence against the Filipinos, war is depicted as a dignified and highly coded activity. At the end of the film,

[35] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 26.
[36] Michael Neu, *Just Liberal Violence*. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 100.

Luna was "executed" at the grounds of Aguinaldo's backyard. What sets the tone which supports the earlier quote isn't the execution itself, but the montage of subjective scenes which includes Americans laughing at the audience (addressing them as Filipinos) for "killing their finest war commander."

In the very last instance, cynicism brings about a highly individualize look at formation of history, individual or collective. Since the cynical subject doubts any institutions to actually affect his or her life, the blame is placed onto the individual's agency alone. Neu places this reactive agency as the agency "to act rightly regardless of awful things can get."[37] But the object here of "blame" isn't one's agency *per se*, but rather the individual subject himself. Mark Fisher would refer to this mechanism as "*responsibilisation*." It is the tactic wherein "[e]ach individual member of the subordinate class is encouraged into feeling that their poverty, lack of opportunities, or unemployment, is their fault and their fault alone."[38] It has become a dead-end for the cynic, since he no longer believes on institutions, the statement of Luna in the film can act as an overdetermination of his being: that indeed, him and only himself is the enemy.

The Nation under Permanent Midnight

Nick Dunn would remind us, on his reflection of the Nocturnal City, that "despite of the increasing

[37] Ibid, 99.
[38] Mark Fisher, "Good for Nothing" in *The Fisher-Function*, (London: [egress], 2017), 40.

homogenization of different places, it is important to emphasize from the outset that cities are not neutral containers nor aspecial."[39] We can look at our cynics on the same manner: despite of their seeming homogenized existence, they can never be considered as anyone neutral. If anything, their liberalist orientation of openness and negotiation made them complicit with whatever the liberalist construction of the nation is being complicit to, in this case, globalization.

The third person in the short film *Year of Permanent Midnight* is the very manifestation of the cynical subject: he mediates between the global heist and the seeming unimportance of the conflict that the other two characters bear. He instead, due to his distrust over the two as representative of institutions, helped himself on getting most of the exploits of their heist. His reign over the two marked the start of their life under permanent midnight.

The Permanent Midnight I'm referring to, which I lifted off the film's title, is the reign of the liberal thought over the country's political economy. The cynic as a product of the liberal-construction of the nation, is also a historical product of the country under liberalism. If as Claudio would like to claim, that we've had a long history of Liberalism – as old as the mid-19th Century – it is then that our production of the cynic as a subject is something that the country is historically determined to have. But this can only be made possible, and intensified, with the acceleration of global capital. The cynic is the product of

[39] Nick Dunn, *Dark Matters: A Manifesto for the Nocturnal City*. London: Zero Books, 2016.

liberalist negotiation to globalization. *The years of permanent midnight* has finally realized itself in this era of global capital being mediated through everyday negotiation of liberal values with exploiting classes and capitalist practices.

In a nation under permanent midnight, literally, everything becomes possible as long as it is within the bounds of negotiation. Even violence is somehow permissible, but the validation of it does not come from the subject. The 2016 documentary *Sunday Beauty Queen* is witness to this. In the film, the subjects are captured most of the time on their day-offs, either preparing for or participating at the beauty pageants organized by the Filipinos in Hong Kong as charity events. While the subjects themselves are revealing how is it hard to live as domestic worker in Hong Kong, even some of them getting rid of their employment but unable to get back, it would only take one statement from one employer, who happened to be a film producer in Hong Kong, to justify all these violence that the domestic workers experience: "without the domestic workers," according to the employer interviewed, "Hong Kong will not be as great as it is now."

The nation under permanent midnight, being at the excess of darkness, shrouds the structures which takes root of its conditions. Cynicism, ironically, as a guiding light, is blind of the structures. He is entrapped by a global mode of mediation. Beller notes of the role of the world-media system: it constructs a subject whose humanity, "under globalization," is "enjoined to produce

its own nonexistence."[40] The subject produced by the liberalist construction was abjected of his symbolic existence, and was left out as himself a mediation between commodities. The cynic, the subject produced by the liberalist construction of the nation, is also the perfect consumer of the global market.

The production of the cynic as a national subject, as mentioned earlier, can only be possible on a specific time. This time is covered by the films read for this study. It is the time after all the trust in institutions are displaced towards technology. The mainstream-indie-liberal politics connection traces back to the perceived beginning of the so-called Philippine New Wave. While independent film production has always been historically a practice in Philippine cinema, commentators, as Tolentino would suggest, traces the roots of the "movement" at the beginning of Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival in 2005.[41] What sets this movement against older independent film practices is their use of the digital technology as medium. Lav Diaz identifies the Digital Technology as "liberation theology".[42] In earlier writings,

[40] Beller, *Acquiring Eyes*, 5.
[41] Tolentino, *Indie Cinema*, 4.
[42] "Digital is liberation theology. Now we can have our own media . The internet is so free, the camera is so free. The issue is not anymore that you cannot shoot. You have a Southeast Independent Cinema now. We have been deprived for a long time, we have been neglected, we have been dismissed by the Western media. That was because of production logistics. We did not have money, we did not have cameras, all those things. Now, these questions have been answered. We are on equal terms now. Now there are new people who are doing these very diff erent things, such as Raya Martin, John Torres, or Khavn de la Cruz in the Philippines." Tilman Baumgärtel, "'Digital is Liberation

Khavn dela Cruz also sought the coming of digital technology as something which is positive for the artist and even assumes a "democratization of filmmaking" which enables the filmmaker to "shoot [his/her] opus in any [video] format."[43]

Technological determinism on the part of earlier practitioners of digital filmmaking is very telling of liberalism in a way that the coming of the digital technology also assumes that one is now free to do whatever he wants on whatever way he wants with the medium. For some time, the practice remained true to its political economy: dela Cruz and Diaz both have their own production outfits making their own films on their own time. Eduardo Dayao saw the movement back then as something similar to punk rock.[44] But like punk and its offshoot, grunge, indies got easily coopted by the mainstream after some years. This is due to indies' failure to sustain a critique of the mainstream: but this failure is not because of it not being conscious of its position in relation to the mainstream, but as Tolentino would also

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Theology': an interview with Lav Diaz" in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 177.

[43] Khavn dela Cruz, "Four Manifestos" in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 122.

[44] "Roughly ten years ago, give or take, independent cinema was punk rock (or hip-hop) for filmmakers, with the same energy, the same sense of adventurism, the same love for new forms, the same fervor for cross-pollination, the same carte blanche, the same economic freedom, the same disregard for gatekeepers, who were eventually cast out as their counter parts around the world." Eduardo Dayao, "Sleeping with the Enemy." *Kino Punch*, (2015), 40.

contend, in his commentaries of the films *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* (2011) and *Ang mga Kidnapper ni Ronnie Lazaro* (2012), that the indies are already aware that they are no longer in the age to assume any innocence of the practices (and excesses) that they appropriated from the mainstream, which is why a significant part of its earlier history were not dedicated to critique.[45]

But, since the limit of discourse of the then independent movement is technological-determinist in essence, it fails to sustain a running critique and resistance to the dominating practice of the ruling institutions. The arguments of digital liberation are left open to negotiation since it is mainly grounded on the celebration of technology. By 2012, all SM cinemas in the country have become fully digitized,[46] which signaled a change, too, for mainstream studios to shift into digital filmmaking. From filmmaking in the periphery for friends and selected venues, practices of big studios trickled down for the independent scene to follow.

As the great structures of power of the studio system managed to coopt the once-independent digital movement, it too has become the vessel of dominant-state agenda and ideology. It isn't an accident that

[45] Tolentino, *Indie Cinema*, 5, Tolentino will also further stress that the major contributing factor for the mainstream appropriation of the digital medium is Cinemalaya's emphasis for the development of "mainstream look" for independent productions which stresses on "narrative, continuity and suture," similar to classical Hollywood narrative films. Ibid, 15.

[46] "SM Cinema goes full digital." 27 August 2012. *The Philippine Star*. http://www.philstar.com/entertainment/2012/08/27/842405/sm-cinema-goes-full-digital. (accessed 05 November 2017).

mainstream-indie exchange, or *maindie,* zeniths in 2014, at the middle of the liberal administration of President Benigno Aquino III. It is then that the political-economic environment at the time is ripe and made possible to imagine this kind of openness as attuned with liberal values. The Aquino administration boasts of economic achievements as reflected by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increase and revenue from IT-BPO industries.[47] The then-administration' s Public-Private Partnership programs (PPPP) was also highlighted as signs of confidence of the public and private sectors. [48] PPPP has extended towards cinema through Quezon City's Local Government Unit's establishment of its own festival, QCinema International Film Festival, back in 2013, which give grants to filmmakers to produce films which will be premiered in the festival. The festival expands from just

[47] FDIs increased from $11.77 B (2005-2010) to $20.42 B (2011-2015) while IT-BPO revenues increased to more than 200% as compared with its revenue before the Aquino administration. *Achievements Under the Aquino Administration*, (Manila: Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office, 2016), 4-5.

[48] Elizabeth Marcelo: "Kayo na po ang magkumpara sa pagkakaiba. Dati walang nakikisama sa proyekto ngayon nag uunahan na ang mga pribadong kumpanya at nagbibigay ng premium," Aquino said.
Aquino said that while before, the government has to offer numerous fiscal incentives to attract companies to enter into a PPP deal with the government, now, private firms are the ones offering premiums to the government in order to secure PPP projects Elizabeth Marcelo. "PNoy cites PPP projects as proof of confidence in his administration." *GMA News Online*. http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/529626/pnoy-cites-ppp-projects-as-proof-of-confidence-in-his-administration/story/ (accessed 05 November 2017).

producing and exhibiting three films in 2013 to featuring 38 films from both commissioned works to invited films from international and local filmmakers. It isn't just the QCinema-filmmaker relationship which is reflective of PPPP, but also within QCinema. QCinema is being organized by a private studio, VPF Creative Productions, presented as a main partner. QCinema has opened a way for a budding studio, TBA,[49] to have most of its production be co-produced in the festival.

It should be noted, however, that despite of the achievements that the Aquino administration claims, the over-all economic condition has not changed throughout the country. The liberal and elitist policies of the Aquino administration have resulted to the intensification of what Amado Guerrero identified long before as "uneven and spasmodic development" in the different parts of the country.[50] The Communist Party of the Philippines' Central Committee would add: "[t]he illusion of economic growth in 2013 and 2014 is due to the heavy inflow of portfolio investments to the Philippine financial markets from the US and other foreign hedge funds. This kind of financial flow amounted to more than 60 percent of total inflows. The remittances of overseas contract workers and net inflows from exports amounted to a

[49] TBA is an abbreviation for three production companies it represents: Tuko Film Productions owned by real-estate comprador Fernando Ortigas, Buchi Boy Films owned by film producer and actor Eduardo A. Rocha, and Artikulo Uno, also owned by Ortigas.

[50] Amado Guerrero. *Philippine Society and Revolution*. (Manila: Aklat ng Bayan, Inc., 2006), 64.

small part."[51] Ibon Foundation's summation of their assessment of the Aquino administration would support this statement: "Even if FDIs increased and employment grew, jobs creation has fallen from 1.1 million in 2011 to just 638,000 in 2015. There has also been a 543,000 addition to the number of underemployed Filipinos in the same period, showing that there are now more temporary, low-paying and insecure jobs in the business-biased economy. Moreover, 63% of the total employed are non-regular, agency-hired, informal sector, or unpaid family workers. Wages have also been very insufficient: the P481 National Capital Region minimum wage, which is the highest across all regions, make less than half of the P1,093 family living wage or the amount needed by a family of six for subsistence. Aquino vetoed proposed increases in nurses' salaries and the elderly's pensions."[52]

In this complex history, the subject which is formed under these conditions is set into a field wherein institutions, due to it either being incomprehensible or just outright elitist, can no longer be trusted. It is as such that most films also depicted it that way: on most *hugot* films, while agency are being considered, the individuals' fate is being left into the care of commodities to accompany the effacement of institutionalized values and identities, at least in representations. Intensified by most *maindie p*roductions' call for responsibilisation, like in *Heneral Luna*, the individual has firmly wrapped himself

[51] "Intensify the Offensives on a National Scale to Advance the People's Democratic Revolution." *Ang Bayan* 29 March 2015, 5.
[52] "Elitist politics and economics: the real Aquino legacy." 01 July 2016. Ibon. http://ibon.org/2016/07/elitist-politics-and-economics-the-real-aquino-legacy/. (accessed 05 November 2017)

into the web created for himself. The nation which the liberalist construction would like to have is a nation which subjects prolong his own displacement from the collective identities he formerly holds, towards a new imagination of perceived "borderlessness." The liberalist construction of the nation places its subject on an imaginary "independence" while being negotiated for the global market.

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About the Author

JEFFREY DEYTO is a Lecturer at the Far Eastern University and a part-time instructor at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines where he also took his undergraduate degree in Clinical Psychology. He writes film-criticism for VCinema, a website dedicated for Asian Cinema. He was a fellow of the 2018 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival and Film Festival Dokumenter – Jogja's Film Criticism Workshop. He is also a filmmaker and scholar currently taking his Masters in Media Studies (Film) at the University of the Philippines – Film Institute. As a filmmaker, his works have been screened at S-Express, Cinemanila International Film Festival, FACINE – Filipino Arts and Cine Festival, Gawad CCP Para sa Alternatibong Pelikula at Bidyo, and QCinema International Film Festival. His research interest includes the role of ideology in cinema and deployments of new moving image disciplines across mediums.