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Special Thematic Issue

Ethical Literary Criticism in Asia

Edited by Maria Luisa Torres Reyes

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Collected in this special issue are papers delivered at the international conference on Ethical Literary Criticism held at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines on April 27-28, 2019. Understandably, the papers mostly came from the Philippines, but also elsewhere in Asia, like Taiwan and South Korea.

Noteworthy is the affirmation in these papers exclusively from Asia by Asian scholars of certain theoretical orientations and methodological possibilities in the practice of what is now broadly referred to as "ethical literary criticism."

First, and most dominantly, ethical literary criticism is multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary in its methodology:

"*Dreamweavers*: Organic Reality in the Poetry of Marjorie Evasco" by Hope Sabanpan-Yu considers Evasco's poetry in *Dreamweavers* as a representation of an "ecopoetic style that conveys real nature." Such a style, according to Sabanpan-Yu, "showcases nature that is freed from perceptions anchored on anthropocentric ideals. It is a way of blending nature and poetry and uses a language capable of expressing organic reality."

"Literary Criticism as a Philosophic Praxis" by Jovito V. Cariño states that there is a need for philosophy in the Philippines to overcome a myopic disciplinal orientation. His paper proposes "a strategy" by which philosophy and literary criticism may be interfaced in the hope of prompting "philosophy in the Philippine context to be more different, critical and inter-disciplinary," which, in these senses, might result in an ethical cross-disciplinary practice. It asks, "What can the interface between philosophy and literary criticism contribute to the advancement of doing philosophy in the Philippines?"

"The Poetry of Theory: Jean Baudrillard's Philosophy as Fiction" by Gian Carla Agbisit addresses the conflicting critical and sympathetic readings of Baudrillard's social theory by arguing that "to read Baudrillard is to take a double-bind that primarily operates on the context of fiction, the acceptance of which

enables a better understanding of theory." This entails "recognition of the validity of poetry and literature as theoretical musings," allowing for a recognition "the possibility of philosophical discourse as form, or genre."

"The Wave, the Wound, and the Witness: Climate Trauma, Ethics, and Listening in *Les mains lâchées*" by Jocelyn S. Martin explores the ethics of witnessing in *Les mains lâchées*, a well-acclaimed novel by Anais Llobet (2016). A narrative that revolves around a survivor's guilt, "the persona finds herself listening to survivors, while dealing with issues on voyeurism, witnessing and ethics." It argues that *Les mains lâchées*, as a literary form, allows for empathic, ethical listening, and postcolonial witnessing.

Finally, "The Literary Roots of Critical Media Studies" by Joyce L. Arriola contends that "the basic tenets of ethical literary criticism have influenced the supposed ethical framework of media studies" owing to the rhetorical, semiotic, constructionist, phenomenological, hermeneutic and poststructuralist traditions that continue to propel and animate the discipline.

Second, ethical literary criticism is national, international, and transnational in its scope:

"The Ethics of Living in Diaspora in Filipino American Literature" by Ma. Socorro Q. Perez, demonstrates how selected Fil-Am texts consciously or unconsciously write from an "ambivalent" position and subjectivity shaped by "the 'American dream' or 'desire to be white'" which is "an overarching mythos and aspiration for Filipinos and Filipino American immigrants." Such ambivalence "can be recuperated," however, "to serve as a site for questioning the constitutive power of the American dream and the ensuing Filipino American immigrant's realization of what is right and principled."

In addition, "An Ethical Revaluation of Carlos Bulosan's famous classic Filipino-American novel, *America is in the Heart*," by Francis C. Sollano focuses on the ethical underpinning of the narrative as it focuses on "the relationship between the internal and external worlds of Allos/Carlos and his brothers, especially Macario." It argues that Allos's fraternal feeling toward Macario and his brothers is the primary condition and drive for his social and ethical self-making and search for "America."

Third, and last but not the least, ethical literary criticism is embedded at the interface of text and reading strategies in the sense that its practice is cognizant of the text's formal features as implicated in its ethics, as well as of its ethics as implicated in its formal features:

"Middleman Minority: Ethics, Ethnicity, and the Chinese Middleman in *The*

Woman Who Had Two Navels" by Iping Liang discusses *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961), the novel by Filipino author, Nick Joaquin. She notes that while "the mysterious Chinese deity adds spice to 'pagan fatalism,' there is no doubt that the figure of the middleman minority plays an important role in the narrative tapestry" of the novel. In her analysis, she points out the postcolonial over-determination of ethics across multiple intersections of ethnicity and representation in Hong Kong as a site of "exilic agency."

As well, "Why They Prefer Bartleby? Ethics of Theory in Political Critique" by Woosung Kang foregrounds *syuzhet*, the emplotment of Herman Melville's famous novella, "Bartleby." Critical of previous interpretations that focus on Bartleby's "peculiar implication as a resistant political subjectivity," by ignoring "the way he is represented as a part of a singular literary narrative," this paper demonstrates" how theoretical analysis of a literary text often depends upon the cursory reading of the *syuzhet* of the text and how it drives the whole argument into its own ethical abyss."

The papers, indeed, might serve to remind us all that ethical literary criticism has been rooted in Asia, nurtured, developed in and embraced by it as much perhaps owing to its indigenous moorings and configurations as in its continuing relevance to the complex socio-historical reconfigurations of the glocal-global nexus that is our contemporary world.

Dreamweavers: Organic Reality in the Poetry of Marjorie Evasco

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Abstract In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell explains anthropocentric thought that renders the human dominant over his or her environment. This ideological influence is a key concern in the poetics of Marjorie Evasco. Her acknowledgment that humans are subject to the weaknesses of anthropocentric thinking inspires a pursuit of an ecocentric perception where the poet can see and translate the world in language that is capable of comprehending the multiplicity of nature in its organic state. This paper considers Evasco's poetry in *Dreamweavers* to represent an ecopoetic style that conveys real nature. This specific style showcases nature that is freed from perceptions anchored on anthropocentric ideals. It is a way of blending nature and poetry and uses a language capable of expressing organic reality.

Key words ecopoetics; Marjorie Evasco; nature poetry; organic

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Introduction

The study of ecology shows us that no living being exists apart from the elements found in its environment. The same may be said of the literary arts—that no poet writes without an awareness of the environment from which she comes. Marjorie Evasco, a Cebuano poet, is not often recognized as a nature poet. While her work constantly deals with the imagination's capacity to go beyond perception, her poetry provides a deep insight into human interactions with the landscape. This paper offers an exemplar to the ecological qualities in Marjorie Evasco's poetry. Through close

readings I will show that her poems reflect an understanding of how the human person contributes to all that she perceives in the natural world and discovers a way in which she can overcome the limitations of such perception.

Ecopoetry

To clarify the basic terms in this study, it is necessary first to define what ecopoetry is and how such definitions work in this paper. In *The Environmental Imagination,* Lawrence Buell first identified qualities necessary to works that are considered as environmentally oriented. These qualities were the presence of the nonhuman as more than simply a backdrop; the expansion of human interest beyond humanity; the sense of human accountability to the environment; and, the treatment of the environment as a process instead of a given.[1] Out of these traits gradually evolved the definition for ecopoetry. Leonard Scigaj defines the term as "poetry that persistently stresses human cooperation with nature as a dynamic, interrelated series of cyclic feedback systems."[2] In 2002, J. Scott Bryson defines ecopoetry as "a subset of nature poetry that, while adhering to certain conventions of romanticism, also advances beyond that tradition and takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues."[3] Three defining features, according to Bryson, characterize ecopoetry: an "emphasis on maintaining an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the interdependent nature of the world ... [which] leads to a devotion to specific places and to the land itself, along with those creatures that share it with humankind" (5-6); "an imperative towards humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature" (6); and, "an intense skepticism concerning hyperrationality, ... [which] usually leads to an indictment of an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe"(6).

Marjorie Evasco

Marjorie Evasco is a multi-awarded Cebuano poet born in Maribojoc, Bohol, Philippines on September 21, 1953. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Divine Word College of Tagbilaran City, Bohol in 1973. In 1982, she got her Master's degree in Creative Writing from Silliman University in Dumaguete City and in 1998, she obtained her Ph.D. in Literature from the De La Salle

1 Lawrence Buell. T*he Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996) 4.

2 Leonard Scigaj. *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Ecopoets* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999) 37.

3 J. Scott Bryson. *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002) 6.

University in Manila. She was also the Director of the Bienvenido N. Santos Creative Writing Center of the same university.

Evasco has received many awards, among them, a writing fellowship at the International Retreat for Writers in in Hawthornden Castle, Midlothian, Scotland in 1991; a travel grant and residency in Bellagio, Italy (Rockefeller Foundation) in 1992; the Palanca Award for the Essay Category in 1983 and 1989; the Philippine Free Press Poetry Prize in 1992. The Mariano Manguerra Foundation of Cebu City chose her as Outstanding Writer in the Literary Arts in 1993. Her prize-winning poetry collections are *Dreamweavers: Selected Poems 1976-1986* (1987), *Ochre Tones: Poems in English and Cebuano* (1999), *Skin of Water: Selected Poems* (2009); and *Fishes of Light: Tanrenga in two tongues* (co-authored, with Alex Fleites) (2013).

Evasco's other books include *A Legacy of Light: 100 Years of Sun Life in the Philippines*, *Six Women Poets: Inter/Views* (co-authored, with Edna Manlapaz), *Kung Ibig Mo: Love Poetry by Women* (co-edited with Benilda Santos), *A Life Shaped by Music: Andrea O. Veneracion and the Philippine Madrigal Singers* and *ANI: The Life and Art of Hermogena Borja Lungay, Boholano Painter.*

Ecopoetic Project

Any reader who is familiar with Evasco's poetry will immediately distinguish her ecopoetic project because of the strong attention she pays to nature in her writing. While there has been no book-length study on Evasco yet, this paper aims to fill in what I see to be a gap in the ecocritical studies to date in proposing explanatory ways by which to read Evasco, a poet whose nature writing demands recognition. This paper will focus specifically on how Evasco uses the natural environment as fertile ground for poetic source material. She takes her immediate local surroundings as focal point and her grounded sensory experience of it as a point of departure for larger statements about her contemporary milieu. Her use of the local details serves as a register of her perceptions and imaginative happenstances with the physical world. Such happenstances can be additionally read as the direct sensory experience that Evasco and the reader have with nature.

The poem that follows might give us a useful structure of how Evasco's process of the "local as global" can be comprehended in a linguistic as well as ecological claim. In "Blood Remembering" the first section reads:

I. At the Mirror's Edge
The house was barely through;
From the hardwood floors,

The walls stretched up
Stiff and bare boned
To the ceiling.
Mother used to unroll the reed mat
And gather us
Into her evening stories.
"Encantos," she whispered.
And we dreamed along of trees
Growing luminous into
Our childhood landscapes. (18)

For Evasco, the motivation need only be felt through sensory experience, then universalized in poetry, to prove priceless. By keeping objective and sensory details, she adds materials by which readers understand the world—that they may better enjoy it.

When Evasco writes of the house as "barely through," she moves from the concrete materials (the hardwood floors, the walls and the ceiling) into the active movement of "unroll[ing] the reed mat" and "gather[ing]" weaving in the "encantos" (enchanted beings), she draws a functional line from grounded reality into abstraction. When we study this in an ecological context, we can see Evasco taking the reader from the natural subject of the "house" to the cultural "encantos" and finally into the "global" imagination of a human being.

Last night I turned thirty.
She came back and unrolled
The reed mat almost rotten,
Leaning against the dark wall
Of my mind.
I saw her at the mirror's edge:
Myself, gathering my own
And planting enchanted trees
Outside my children's windows.

The persona who turned thirty, imagines her mother returning and unrolling the old mat and sees the mirror image of herself gathering her own and planting enchanted trees. The children are at the end of this whole linear arrangement. It is not merely their designation that is the end point, it is their strength and nature as part of an

interdependent generational relationship. People make instruments to hold the resources of the world and readily accept the nurturing elements of the landscape, but our closest link to nature is with the living beings that serve as collaborative members in our ecosystem.

A feminist interpretation of this verse might come to the conclusion that the house is important, but it is the value of the persona as culture-producer (in the children) that takes priority. Similarly, their ecological value is as fragment of a cycle in which a mother engages in storytelling upon which the child listens, upon which people feast on (indirectly), and all then serve to symbolically sustain the poet, who consumes them together in this reflective moment. Evasco's poem derives much of its success from its transition from the detailed objective opening to the final stanza's human vision of the future.

Ecopoetry depends on the experiential and authorial presence of the poet who wants to affect her audience ethically. Reading Evasco's work exposes us to the ethical dimension of her work. "Sampaguita Song," is such an example. Written in the first-person, it shows the poet with her role as the poem's grammatical subject and also as background to, the poem's focal subject.

We see you every night intercept
The narrow chance at highway
Living, the jammed traffic of your days
Run-down by those who do not see
Your flag of white
Small flowers. [...]
Sampaguita, Sir!
Sampaguita, Ma'am!
Sariwa, mabango
Piso po ang tatlo. (28)

Immediately, the persona demands that one must "see" by recognizing that every night "you" [the child vendor] intercept the narrow chance at highway living." The effect of this is universalizing in the manner it allows the reader narrative entry into the poem, or at least to be able to identify with the persona. The acknowledgment of its human world as "highway living" allows one to recognize the disconnection that occurs between perception and reality. As he/she continues to follow the movement to "the edge of danger," one hears the vendor's call. Once the persona interprets the call, there is a progression towards the image of "brown hands" that are "flower-

laden" and smell "like old memories." This closeness between poet and reader and even to extend to that of the poetic subject, makes Evasco perceptively aware of the kinship of the particular actors. Only in the quiet recollection can one stop translating real nature into human constructs. Memories are "left and miss[ed]" and "sampaguitas dry in an earthen dish," in order to see nature as it is. The persona exposes this connection/reduction as the poem ends: "leaving the scent of warm / brown palms that offered / an extra garland for / *Buena Mano*." When nature is viewed without human influence, it can be seen accurately: as purely sampaguitas drying. More than presenting nature as such, Evasco's poetic voice is ecologically sensitive, positing a relationship between ethics and aesthetics. "Poems best succeed at awakening one to the natural word through the emotive and rhetorical power they have over readers"[1] writes Scott Knickerbocker of ecopoetry. Among the Philippines' more enduring urban legends is the one that the flowers sold at traffic lights or street intersections are actually floral offerings either stolen from the city's graveyards or from the religious statues inside the churches. In the poem, the moral awareness that accompanies the grave danger that human beings have come to pose to themselves and other living things demonstrates how intensely attuned the poet is to the dimensions of capitalism's impact on nature and the marginalized, and the scary likelihood of ecological destruction.

In "Jade Mountain Peak," which is one of Evasco's most interesting nature poems, we encounter a unique kind of dialogue between the persona contemplating her solitude, and the environment, Jade Mountain, offering contrast to her voice and providing details about the poem's subject and context.

> I have reached Jade Mountain peak
> But the thatched cottage is empty.
> Under the blossoming raintrees
> The beaten grass path tells:
> The master's familiar footfall
> Is seeking another secret trail. (48)

Evasco uses her lyric to listen to the inner voice of the mountain as she meditates on the surroundings, "listen[ing] to the windsong / A stringless lute whispering / The long day away into evening." The poem is grounded so specifically in its own time and place and Evasco takes this particular and makes it universal, a move that is in

1 Scott Knickerbocker. *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012) 3.

a manner not only a derivative of the visual goal of her poem but also a rhetorical passage in her portrayal of the mountain's gift: "the lesson of meaningful silence." Evasco's talent to show with greater identification for the mountain of her poem gives us a richer illustration of an ecological perspective.

It is necessary to point out Evasco's approach to how she sets up the landscape in relation to the reader. In "Ixtlan, on First Visit" there is a first-person, human persona and the central subject of this place referred to in Carlos Castañeda's book *Journey to Ixtlan*.[1] Her approach is all-encompassing, rhapsodizing on the rite, then the environment, and finally the world that is "timeless, edgeless, and without urgency." The occasion for the poem is the summer harvest and lighting the ritual pipe of natural elements from the landscape: "Roots, stalks, leaves and flower heads, / Dead-burn, ash-glow between our breaths" to experience "This white pungency ... / Slow alchemy of elements purifying" so that they become "transformed landscapes, / Soft and silent as God's true touch." In an interpretation, and perhaps roughly so, we note the altered state of consciousness is a fulfillment of the meaning of Ixtlan:

> Counterpointing this rain
> Your whispering nightlimbs
> Grow surreal trees, leaves and flowers,
> Greening my stirred earth.
>
> I hear you grow vertical to my horizon
> (This graceful flight is of angels or laughing fools)
> Timeless, edgeless, and without urgency.

The poem is an clear illustration of an "elevated perspective" and a commentary on the possible unconventional relation between humanity and nature. Rather than writing the predictable, Evasco gives us a biocentric, synaesthetic standpoint. The result is a playful experience. Reading into the "transformation," we realize that the inevitable environment into which human beings shy away from completely losing themselves in nature are the conventions they have grown into which the "alchemy of elements purifying" them can help ease away such obstacle. The images given employ a thought-provoking nature-centered vocabulary where the "surreal trees,

1 Ixtlan is the metaphorical hometown to which the "sorcerer" or man of knowledge is drawn to return, trying to get home. In the novel, Castañeda shows a progression between different states of learning.

leaves and flowers" grow verdantly on the persona's "awakened" system, perhaps let loose by the creative alchemy.

The reader of this poem can largely construe what Ixtlan means in describing mankind's "distance" from nature, an estrangement, seemingly, to the intimacy nature itself offers. Here, the ritual pipe—access to nature—mocks human processes. Bearing this implied meaning, we can interpret "pipe" as an entrance, a communion with unmediated nature. The implication seems to be that we depend so heavily on what we have been taught that we would be better served if we were to allow our own natural consciousness, uninhibited, to inform us. The freer we become, it seems to say, the closer we allow ourselves to essential knowledge that really matters and is rooted in sensual experience.

Staying in the vein of the "elevated perspective," Evasco wrote "Scaling Jade Mountain." The poem is ecological in its content. It opens with a narration of its persona and at the same time provides the point for its ecological value system:

Overtaken by mist
A moss-covered rock I take
And lay my head upon.
The half-way climb
Has brought me here
Where willows sing
A plaintive lullaby
And dewdrops taste
Of orange-blossom nectar
In a golden cup. (33)

The persona catalogues the joys of her interaction with nature. Evasco finishes the poem with a promise to climb Jade Mountain's other half. If the persona fails to find the person she is waiting for there, she writes "I will stand the summit air / And breathe to you / A wistful song of waiting." By the end of the poem, the reader will come to see the wisdom Evasco's persona discovers in nature, a wisdom the mountain already has. But throughout, as the persona quietly communes her way toward this understanding, the poet seeks a deeper communion with nature, to climb the "other half." The take-away lesson for the reader is to seek that communion, just as the poet does and just as nature seems to already do. Indirectly, the persona reveals that the pleasure she ascribes as experiencing is nothing new to the mountain. However, human as she is, all she can offer is the ineffectual "song of

waiting" for that someone to share her fascination with the natural environment. The union of self with the mountain is more implied, as Evasco's poetic persona seems to assume that she is already interconnected to it, whether or not the poet says it so.

Conclusion

Evasco shows a well-defined indebtedness for the interrelation of all things in the community — living, spiritual or environmental. She clearly communicates several ecological qualities in focusing her art so strongly in the "local" and a firm argument about how the human being's comprehension of, and relationship to, nature has been sometimes compromised to the anthropocentric perspective. She is radical in the fact that she is focused on the value of the immediate surroundings for artistic expression and for understanding the world at large. The result is an organically and temporally instant encounter with nature and her imagination.

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Literary Criticism as a Philosophic Praxis

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Abstract Much has been written about the problematic theme "Filipino philosophy" but it remains to be seen how much of this idiosyncratic pursuit has in fact contributed to the furtherance of Filipino intellectual tradition. On its own, the notion of a local philosophy appears to be harmless but when the same notion is assumed as a foregone conclusion rather than an ideal which must be critically nurtured, it becomes an invitation for a philosophic praxis that can only be described as parochial. To a certain degree, the perception that philosophy is a sterile intellectual terrain derives its validity from the propensity of this kind of doing philosophy to be a ready victim of its own domestic concerns. The need for philosophy in the Philippines to overcome this myopic orientation is a genuine concern. In this paper, I shall try to explore an alternative way by which this can be achieved. In my discussion, I shall propose, as a potential constructive strategy, the creation of an interface between philosophy and its kindred discipline, literary criticism. My basic claim is that such interface is crucial in prompting philosophy in the Philippine context to be more different, critical and inter-disciplinary. The whole paper is guided by the question: What can the interface between philosophy and literary criticism contribute to the advancement of doing philosophy in the Philippines?
Key words literary criticism; philosophy; critique; literature; Filipino philosophy

Introduction

The preceding years have seen a huge turnout of philosophic publications from a number of Filipino scholars. Anyone then on the lookout for textual evidences of Filipino philosophizing would find in these works a handy testament of

intellectual productivity.[1] However, it is one thing to trumpet our scholars' individual achievements and another to use them to gloss over the state of Filipino philosophic tradition or as some prefer to call it, Filipino philosophy. I believe this matter deserves to be further threshed out given the ambiguity inherent in the understanding and use of the said term. Does Filipino philosophy exclusively mean a philosophy written in Filipino language? If it were, how may one define Filipino language? Or does it suggest a philosophy advanced by Filipino scholars regardless of the language used? And if it were, once again, should such philosophy evoke a worldview that is patently ethnic or one that evokes a more universal resonance. These are some of the major issues which make Filipino philosophy a recurrent topic for discourse and ones that invite much invested engagement from its proponents. In this paper, I will try to address two elements which, precisely because they are often overlooked, require a more careful deliberation: these are, first, the propensity of some advocates of Filipino philosophy for identitarian thinking; and second, their seeming oblivion of the other sources of Filipino critical tradition. The former is manifested by the said advocates' chronic pursuit of Filipino philosophy as a

1 Some of the authors who have had their works published in the last decade or so include (in alphabetical order): Agustin Maria Rodriquez (*Governing the Other: Exploring the Discourse of Democracy in a Multiverse of Reason*, ADMU Press, 2009; *May Laro ang Diskursong Katarungan*, ADMU Press, 2014; Alfredo Co (*Across the Philosophical Silk Road: Comparative Philosophy and Postmodern Thoughts*, UST Publishing House, 2009); Emmanuel C. de Leon, (*Mga Tomasino sa Pilosopiyang Filipino*, Aklatng Bayan, 2019); Jove Jim Aguas (*Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla*, UST Publishing House, 2014); Kenneth Masong (*Becoming-Religion: Alfred North Whitehead and a Contemporary Philosophical Reflection*, UST Publishing House, 2015); Ma. Liza Ruth Ocampo (*The Dignity of the Thinking Person: A Philosophical Reflection on Human Nature*, UST Publishng House, 2006; *Break Open A Stone: An Invitation to Metaphysics*, Lighthouse and Dynamite Publications, 2011); Moses Angeles (*God Beyond Metaphysics: The God-Question in Martin Heidegger's Problem of Being*, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2012); Paolo A. Bolaños (*On Affirmation and Becoming: A Deleuzian Introduction to Nietzsche's Ethics and Ontology*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2014); Ranilo Hermida (*Imagining Modern Democracy: A Habermasian Assessment of the Philippine Experiment*, SUNY Press, NY, 2014); Raymund Festin (*The Black Nazarene and Philosophy*, Logos Publications, Inc., 2018); Reynaldo Pilapil (*Recognition: Examining Identity Struggles*, ADMU Press, 2015); Robert Montaña (*Thomistic Ethics: A Beacon in the Contemporary Moral Landscape*, UST Publishing House, 2015); Roland Theuas DS Pada (*Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition: Freedom, Normativity, and Identity*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2017; Rolando Gripaldo (*History, Philosophy and Culture*, C&E Publishing, 2010). A more extensive and exhaustive documentation of Filipino philosophic publications may be found in Rolando Gripaldo's *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography, 1774-1997* (DLSU Press, 2000).

national philosophy; the latter is demonstrated by the failure of the same to tap into other sources of Filipino critical thought like literary criticism. This paper hence is presented as an exploratory undertaking towards a possible interface between Filipino philosophic practice and literary criticism. In my discussion, I put forward a claim recognizing literary criticism as a tributary of Filipino critical tradition and therefore have the potential to introduce a new strand of Filipino philosophic discourse. I consider this interface significant as a measure not only to temper the pervasive pursuit of a national philosophy but also to close the gap between Filipino philosophic practice and other domains of critique of which literary criticism is a representative. With this undertaking, I hope I could introduce a more nuanced articulation of the link between philosophy and nationalism on one hand and on the other, between philosophy and literary criticism as kindred disciplines. My discussion shall proceed in three parts. In the first, I will problematize the philosophic practice in the Philippines by building on the arguments advanced by Prof. Alfredo Co and Prof. Paolo Bolaños on Filipino intellectual history. In the second part, I will propose an alternative trajectory of philosophic practice away from the self-legitimizing and identitarian proclivities of the advocates of a national philosophy. In the third part, I will lay down fundamental considerations to guide future explorations on the proposed philosophy-literary criticism interface. I will conclude by affirming the significant consequences once this interface is carried out and achieved.

Problematizing Philosophic Practice in the Philippines

More than three decades ago, Dr. Emerita S. Quito published a monograph on the state of doing philosophy in the country.[1] In the said piece, Dr. Quito mentioned a plan to establish an Asian Institute of Philosophy with the backing of UNESCO. She also cited several concrete initiatives meant to bolster philosophic education in the country such as the mandatory use of Filipino as a language of instruction in schools and universities across the country, her call for a more critical approach towards Thomism and her specific exhortation to both Ateneo and De La Salle to jointly put up a doctoral program in philosophy to disrupt the monopoly which the University of Santo Tomas until such time enjoyed.[2] The vision advanced by Dr. Quito certainly deserves revisiting, especially now that we are anticipating the 40th anniversary of her landmark monograph. To commemorate its publication,

1 Cf. Quito, Emerita S. *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines.* Monograph Series No. 5. Manila: De La Salle University Research Center, 1983.

2 ibid., pp. 14, 56-57.

various universities and philosophic organizations in the Philippines might want to consider working on a common project to update and in fact expand Dr. Quito's work. The need to engage Dr. Quito and other leading Filipino intellectuals cannot be overstated. There is really a need for philosophic practice in the Philippines to breed and nurture a tradition of discourse. This is the kind of philosophic practice that must complement and supplement the current genres of celebratory essays, interview transcripts, taxonomic documentation and bibliographic reports which populate our local philosophic journals today. Discourse guarantees that what we speak and write about is in fact *philosophical*. According to Prof. Alfredo Co, authentic Filipino philosophic tradition, if such a one would eventually emerge, must coincide with the existence of a body of works which, in turn, is constituted by and constitutive of an active and sustained exchange among its progenitors. In a lecture delivered at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Prof. Co pointed out that:

> Without a body of literary and philosophical writing, no culture could hold solid claim to a serious philosophy. Great philosophy comes with the birthing of ideas, these ideas have to be committed to a rational discourse and in writing to form a body of literature, refuted by an opponent, followed by many amplifiers supporting for or arguing against the ideas first raised by some great minds. Great ideas are discoursed along the corridors of time, honed by great hermeneutics across ages, to give birth to a body of literature that forms the core of the indigenous philosophy.[1]

The use of the vernacular alone, in other words, and much less, appeal to nationalism will not enhance the local philosophic practice if the larger context of hermeneutic exchange is missing. A genuine hermeneutic engagement requires an honest effort to bring oneself into an interface with an opposite voice to induce, not an interpersonal conflict, but an epistemic crisis which eventually finds its resolution through a well-argued discourse. The rigor involved in this interface is exacting as it demands a proponent to be conversant both with the argument she brings into the

1 Co, Alfredo. "The Legacy of Filipino Philosophy Pioneers that Shaped the Emerging Filipino Consciousness." An unpubllished paper presented on the occasion of the UNESCO 2018 World Philosophy Day Celebration of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities, Center for Philosophy and Humanities and *Societas Philosophiae* of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, 29 November 2018. My profoundest gratitude to Dr. Alfredo Co for allowing me access to his lecture for this research.

table as well as the specific issue represented by the thinker she is reacting against. Sadly, not too many among us have the appetite and competence to do this. The customary tact has been either to trumpet the legacy of our philosophic heroes or to simply dismiss what does not fall within the range of our interests. This is oftentimes the stigma that ails the reception of various philosophies in the country like Thomism. In a number of lectures and publications, I have heard and seen Thomism reviled as medieval, colonial, conservative, metaphysical, essentialist, Catholic among others and hence, according to its haters, it has little philosophic consequence, or more specifically, it has little Filipino philosophic consequence.[1] The popular logic has it that because Thomas Aquinas was a friar and Filipinos were once subjugated under the oppressive dominion of the friars, Thomas Aquinas and the philosophy that he espoused, so the convention goes, were anti-Filipino. What is ironic is that despite the sustained polemic against the philosophic heritage of Thomas Aquinas, one is yet to see a scholar from the opposite side willing to take up an issue with Manuel Piñon on metaphysics or Fausto Gomez on bioethics. Hardly can one find a conscious attempt among practitioners of philosophy in the Philippines to take interest on the latter's works enough to read or write on them. Once again, this detached attitude may be attributed to the prevailing trend which confines Filipino philosophy within the parameters of nationalism. While it is not impossible to be philosophical and nationalist at the same time, it is nonetheless naive to assume that mere nationalist sentiment can supply the critical merit that an infirm philosophic work does not have to begin with. What can be said with this misencounter with Thomism is as true when one turns to other frontiers of philosophic research like ethics, political theory, epistemology, philosophy of religion among others. We have enough number of scholars who can discourse on any philosopher, from Aristotle to Zizek, but there are not too many of us who can be bold enough to call out each other on key philosophic questions, at least not on paper. It is this absent conversation between and among ourselves that Dr. Co decried when he lamented the non-existence of a "body of philosophy"[2] which alone, said he, can warrant the authenticity of a native philosophic tradition. Dr.

1 See for example Demeterio III, Feorillo Petronilo. "Assessing the Development Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," Philippiniana Sacra XLIX, 147, May-Aug (2014): 189-230; Abulad, Romulo. "Contemporary Filipino Philosophy," *Karunungan : the official Journal of the Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research 5* (1988): 1-13; Quito, Emerita. Ed. "Pilosopiyang Filipino." *Ensayklopidiya ng Pilosopiya* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1993) 38.

2 *ibid.*, p. 4

Paolo Bolaños, for his part, referred to this missing exchange as our "historical memory,"[1] that is. the chronicle of our collective spirit which for now remains inarticulate pending the cultivation of a culture of a discourse among peers via the medium of writing. Both these reputed scholars, Prof. Co and Dr. Bolaños, think that we have much to prove and improve on this score.

If Filipino practitioners of philosophy seem to be disengaged from each other, it should not come as a surprise if their rapprochement with other sources of critical thought outside philosophy appears equally less encouraging. I remember an incident where I overheard a senior scholar excitedly announced to a group of peers the invitation he received from a foreign university for a lecture on art and politics. Our senior scholar was beaming with pride and enthusiasm. It was not usual after all for an intellectual from a third-world country to get invited for a lecture by a university of a more celebrated stature. He described the whole prospect in glowing terms and praised the topic as something that is truly novel. According to him, the novelty of the theme was indicative of how backward our philosophic scholarship is compared to the progress other universities have made. Initially, I was inclined to disagree with our good senior scholar. I would have wanted to correct him and tell him that no, we are not too far behind and I was willing to point out his invitation as proof of this claim. On second thought however, I realized that maybe our senior scholar was right. Maybe, we are indeed lagging behind and the fact that something like "art and politics" can still surprise a scholar of a supposedly superior caliber may confirm this point. One of his peers tried to engage him and suggested Theodor Adorno as a potential research take-off point. Our senior scholar took the suggestion with a detached smile and with Adorno's name, the conversation was abruptly terminated.

As someone eavesdropping, I would have been delighted to learn where the conversation would have led had it in fact proceeded. A struggling academic that I was, there was eagerness on my part to listen in on the conversation of my betters and pick their minds. And yet I know I would probably end up as tight-lipped as our senior scholar had I been in the same situation. Very few among us after all could really be conversant about art and politics and much less about Theodor Adorno. Despite the plethora of available resources relevant to such, Filipino practitioners of philosophy have been relatively out of the loop because of our estrangement from the very discipline which treats art and politics as staple motifs; such discipline is literary criticism. Art and politics are research topics our

1 Paolo Bolaños, "Foreword" in Cariño, Jovito V. *Muni: Paglalayag sa Pamimilosopiyang Filipino* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018) 163.

local literary critics have been pounding on for a long time yet we in the domain of philosophy act like the good neighbor who is simply too immersed with his own business and won't be bothered with the goings-on at the other side of the fence. Apparently, the lacuna in our intellectual history alluded to by Prof. Co and Prof. Bolaños is far more serious than it seems. It is true, as they claimed, philosophic practice in the Philippines is held back by our inability to read and write on each other; what they didn't mention is that this default is conditioned partly by our disengagement from the larger Filipino tradition of critique. This sorry state of affairs is demonstrated no less by our liminal recognition of literary criticism as a tributary of our native critical tradition. As a consequence, we have become victims of our literary naivete which usually rears its ugly head when a situation crops up similar to what our senior scholar has found himself in. Such constraint would have been easily avoidable had he been adequately exposed to the writings of our more known Filipino literary critics, past and present. A good starting point would have been Salvador P. Lopez's *Literature and Society* (1940) or Epifanio San Juan Jr.'s *Toward a People's Literature: Essays in the Dialectics of Praxis and Contradiction in Philippine Writing* (1984) or Patricia Melendrez-Cruz's *Filipinong Pananaw sa Wika, Panitikan at Lipunan* (1994). Other selections may include Bienvenido Lumbera's *Writing The Nation / Pag-akda ng Bansa* (2000) and Virgilio Almario's *Ang Pag-ibig sa Bayan ni Andres Bonifacio* (2012). An extended list of authors and works should likewise include the works of the likes of Soledad Reyes, Rolando Tolentino, Reynaldo Ileto, Vicente Rafael and Caroline Hau among others. The list can go on if we bring in the contributions of emerging yet equally gifted literary critics. Any researcher, in other words, who wishes to write on this theme with the Philippines as the main context surely will not start from scratch. Even if he finds the name Theodor Adorno intimidating, he could have his plate abundantly full by poring over the works of our local literary gurus alone.

Unfortunately, practitioners of philosophy in the Philippines, like our senior scholar above, seem to take very little notice of the works of our literary critics due to an intellectual horizon which restrains us from looking at literary criticism as a kindred philosophic discipline. Even at the level of the undergraduate philosophic education, very few (or almost none at all) could recognize that what they are reading from Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, Sartre, Levinas among others are in fact extensions of literary criticism. If we turn to the East, as pointed out by Prof. Co in the aforementioned lecture, we find ourselves saddled with the same predicament. We would sometimes cite in our lectures thinkers like Terry Eagleton, Roland Barthes, Frederic Jameson,

Gilles Deleuze, Gyorgy Lukacs among others, but our appeal is made more to their authority as philosophers rather than as literary critics. This sad state of affairs which put philosophy on one side and literary criticism on the other has only the philosophy students and practitioners at the losing end and ultimately, the very public we cater to. There has to be a way by which this phantom divide may be overcome and in my estimate, it is we, Filipino practitioners of philosophy, who have much to gain when this is done.

A Question of Nationalism

I introduced this paper by pointing out the need for philosophic practice in the Philippines to develop a closer link with literary criticism. This link, as I claimed, is crucial if Filipino practitioners of philosophy do not wish to be willing captives of philosophy's own solipsistic language-game. In the segment that followed, picking up from the insights of Prof. Co and Prof. Bolaños, I problematized further the philosophic practice in the Philippines by tracing its pathology to an intellectual culture with an underdeveloped discursive practices. I also raised a concern over the current academic trend of pitting both philosophy and literary criticism as polar singularities. The persistence of these perspectives, I pointed out, is counter-productive to the discursive formation of native philosophic thought. In the ensuing paragraph, I will further explain why such dichotomy is untenable and I will show as well how, by developing its kinship with literary criticism, Filipino philosophic practice cannot avoid but be political in the process.

I wish to begin by clarifying what I mean by political. In an essay entitled, *The Social Function of Philosophy*, Max Horkheimer, one of the pioneer theorists of the Frankfurt School, pointed out that: "The real social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevalent… Philosophy exposes the contradiction in which man is entangled in so far as he must attach himself to isolated ideas and concepts in everyday life."[1] This view of Horkheimer on the dialectical function of philosophy provides the larger theoretical context of my proposal to imagine a political turn for our local philosophy via its interface with literary criticism. This is not to say that a work on philosophy becomes less worthy of its name when it has little or almost zero political content. I am only suggesting that, if we take Horkheimer's remarks seriously, there will be no other recourse for philosophy to fulfill its mandate except to confront or articulate what is otherwise. A philosophic undertaking of this kind takes critical engagement and not self-legitimation as its primary goal. The

1 Max Horkheimer, "The Social Function of Philosophy" in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al (New York: Continuum, 2002): 264-265.

decision to juxtapose philosophy with literacy criticism is meant to highlight this important point. By making philosophy turn to something otherwise (though not completely otherwise), I was hoping I could provoke willing listeners to look at philosophic practice in the Philippines otherwise. As I have earlier advanced, taking from Horkheimer's original claim, a philosophic practice becomes political when it assumes a critical stance against what is dominant and identitarian. Stretched to its necessary conclusion, it is probably safe to say that the imperative for philosophy in the Philippines today, besides the challenge to do otherwise, is to be otherwise.

This is how I frame my main contention against equating philosophic practice in the Philippines with crass nationalism. In its crude form, nationalism serves as a political surrogate of identity thinking. Philosophically, it represents a thought system that feeds on a self-contained, self-absorbed and self-legitimizing discourse. In a more traditional expression, nationalism provides the kind of argument that trumpets identity both as a premise and a conclusion. No wonder that for an identitarian thinker, nation has ceased to be something imagined but one that is conjured as a one-dimensional, monolithic entity. One detects the telltale signs of a philosophic writing absorbed into this nationalist bandwagon in the way it makes Filipino philosophy so predictable. It usually begins by assuming the phenomenality of Filipino philosophy and concludes by affirming the same assumption. Sometimes, this takes the form of an exposition of the scholarly feat of one's philosophic hero or a bibliographic report to validate the latter's intellectual pedigree. There are several labels that can be used to describe these initiatives but the word *philosophical* may not be one of them. If we take Prof. Co's advice, the designation *pre-philosophical* might do a better job as a descriptive term. Is there a way then to do philosophy and advance nationalism without falling into the trap of identity thinking?

I will attempt to address this issue by making a distinction between a *national* philosophy and a *nationalist* philosophy.

In very general terms, a *national* philosophy is commonly considered as an expression of a collective worldview which, in itself, is deemed as ethnocentric in character. For its advocates, a national philosophy is key to the understanding and articulation of what they purport to be a national identity. Every detail of culture, every aspect of socio-political life, every episode of history, every facet of language is for them emblematic of an identity that is either inarticulate or damaged hence the necessity to re-create it through different modes philosophical exploration. As a medium of identity, a national philosophy shares the symbolic value of the other fixtures of popular culture like the national costume, national fruit, national animal, national flower, national food among others and partakes likewise of their inherent

fetishistic character. My critique of national philosophy is informed by this claim. Its complicity with identitarian discourse is ingrained and is counteractive to the emancipatory aims of a genuine philosophic exercise. It is national philosophy that writes from within the genre of the honorific, the bibliographic, the taxonomic, the interview transcript, the anthropological, the descriptive, the repetitive. As philosophic outputs, they too have the potential to be political but only if the propensity for identity thinking is overcome.

Nationalist philosophy, in contrast, is the type of philosophic discourse that sets aside the problem of identity and raises the question of what is otherwise. It is not as if such thinkers are unconcerned with the value of collectivity or shared worldview; they are merely convinced that either of the two cannot supersede critical engagement which is the basis of any philosophic activity. The impetus to ask what is otherwise stems from the imperative of critique. Scholars of the nationalist philosophy make it their constant stand to be suspicious of everything including nationalism itself. This to me is necessary as it is timely given the strong local and global resurgence of nationalism and its complicity with the rise of authoritarian regimes. I have earlier suggested that the main philosophical distinction between a *national* philosophy and a *nationalist* philosophy is defined by their polar positions on the issue of identity. If nationalism then is taken as a political extension of identity thinking, one can only imagine how this distinction may be further magnified if nationalist philosophy confronts nationalism head-on. The purpose of such critique is to discredit not so much nationalism per se but the way it plays into the ideological machinations of a totalitarian order like what is current in the Philippines today. If the philosophic practice then in the Philippines should pursue the political, it is necessary, as I already manifested, that it insists on what is otherwise than the identitarian imaginary. This undertaking however is no ordinary feat as it requires a re-evaluation not only of our thought processes but also of our research practices. In the next segment, I shall discuss initial considerations for the discursive formation of an otherwise nationalism and explain why advocates of a nationalist philosophy should turn to literary criticism to achieve this.

Philosophy in the Philippines and Literary Criticism

Earlier I have advanced a claim underscoring the close affinity between philosophy and literary criticism as kindred disciplines. This claim needs no further belaboring given the adequate examples both from the Eastern and Western philosophic traditions that would warrant such. What I wish to do in the current segment is offer preliminary considerations which can serve as guideposts to any taker who

wish to explore my proposal to turn the direction of our philosophic research from near obsession with national philosophy to a critical engagement with nationalism. Besides boosting the prospect of sharpening its political edge, this strategy can also be useful in forging an alternative to a *national* philosophy which for lack of a better term I provisionally call *nationalist* philosophy. In the segment that follows, I wish to lay down fundamental considerations to further clarify the essential features of this alternative and use them to argue why it is obtainable via the interface between philosophy and literary criticism.

First, nationalism is a narrated phenomenon. One therefore cannot simply barge into a nationalist discourse without considering the larger narrative tradition which set the context of an issue in question—be it national identity, national consciousness or even nationalism itself. That nationalism has a narrative origin clearly underscores the need to recognize and understand its literary origins. An important requisite therefore of a critical engagement with nationalism includes adequate exposure on texts that take up the question of nation or those that examine the formation of national consciousness or national identity as one may read in Florentino Hornedo,[1] Reynaldo Ileto[2] or Vicente Rafael.[3]

Second, nationalism is a complex ideology and is very far from being a monolithic political concept. The nationalism adopted by Ferdinand Marcos to defend his decision of placing the country under martial rule is completely different from the kind of nationalism which compelled Lorenzo Tañada to oppose it as it is different from the variant of nationalism Jose Ma. Sison is espousing to justify his protracted war against the state. There is also a specie of nationalism common among the global Filipinos spread across the world today. One finds a facet of sentimentality in this latter kind which makes its critique all the more compelling and timely. Still another is the brand of nationalism which leans closely towards populism, the kind that fuels the dictatorial fantasies of strongmen like Rodrigo Duterte. The perspectives of a global intellectual like Caroline Hau would certainly be useful in helping us make sense of the multi-layered nature of nationalism as a literary phenomenon.[4] Eventually, the critique of these multiple strands of

1 Florentino H. Hornedo, "Notes on the Filipino Novel in Spanish" in *Ideas and Ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2001): 109-158.

2 Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1920* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989): 131-159.

3 Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988): 23-54.

4 Caroline S. Hau, *On the Subject of the Nation: Filipino Wrtings from the Margins, 1981-2004* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004): 227-270.

nationalism should lead to the formulation of a more liberative social imaginary hence the importance of my third point, that is the formulation of new grammar for nationalism.

Articulation of a new grammar for nationalism begins with a critique of its theoretical underpinnings. It may be conceded that Marxism continues to be a dominant paradigm of the current forms of nationalist literary discourse as one would read, for example, in Epifanio San Juan, Jr.[1] However, over the years, we have seen how a variety of phenomena like labor migration, the rise of populism, the dominance of market economy the spread of digital economy, the demand for recognition by LGBTQ community, the continuous marginalization of indigenous groups, the worsening environmental degradation among others continue to pose challenge not only on the way we understand ourselves as a nation but on the manner by which we select and apply theories to synthesize and interpret these experiences. Adopting new grammar for nationalism should not necessarily result to the creation of a new national identity; it only suggests that the identity we thought we knew be examined in a different light and, if need be, be interpreted otherwise. One may find examples of this initiative in some of the works of Resil Mojares[2] or Virgilio Almario.[3]

Conclusion

Ultimately, this interface between philosophy and literary criticism should lead to a better understanding of the wider latitude of Filipino critical tradition. For the moment, such tradition awaits recognition until such time that the phantom divide putting philosophy on one side and literary criticism on the other is overcome. This proposal to put philosophic practice in the Philippines in close proximity to literary criticism points towards this direction. It may appear initially as if this initiative is no longer necessary given the pronounced philosophic bent of the writings of our local literary critics; however, since the reciprocal warming up to literary criticism has yet to find a written form in Filipino philosophic practice, I believe the project still merits consideration. The disproportionate account of

1 Epifanio San Juan, Jr., "Ideology, Class Consciousness, History: A Reading of Rizal's Novels" in *Rizal In Our Time: Essays in Interpretation* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2011): 89-144.

2 Resil B. Mojares, "Time, Memory and the Birth of the Nation" in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002): 270-296.

3 Virgilio S. Almario, *Ang Pag-ibig sa Bayan ni Andres Bonifacio* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012): 168-219.

my own discipline herewith presented is aimed precisely at making a case for this interface. I also resorted to the same deliberately as a strategy to open up a space for philosophic practice in the Philippines to be otherwise. As I have argued, to do an otherwise philosophy in the Philippines is to articulate philosophy differently. It means moving beyond the limits of its parochial domain and disabusing itself from the discourse of self-legitimation. Doing an otherwise philosophy also demands philosophy to be political, that is, it imposes upon philosophy the imperative to be self-critical as it should be critical of an identitarian social imaginary. Necessarily, an otherwise social imaginary must be inclusive and emancipatory. A task of this kind cannot be performed by Filipino philosophic practice unilaterally. Seen from this perspective, an interface between philosophy and literary criticism will not only appear compulsory but doable. Hopefully. philosophic practice in the Philippines will take this challenge and forge a path that would make our philosophic discourse truly Filipino.

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The Poetry of Theory: Jean Baudrillard's Philosophy as Fiction

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Abstract This paper aims to articulate the performative dimensions of Jean Baudrillard's theory, and to problematize the seemingly separate domains occupied by philosophy and literature. I argue that attention to the style of philosophical discourse is important not only because it is that which presents and reinforces the strength of theory, but also because in cases, such as Baudrillard's, "philosophical discourse" is the style. Criticisms directed against Baudrillardian philosophy assume the seriousness of his social theory, while the most sympathetic readings call for a selective forgetting, gleaning the academic from the performance. Instead, I argue that to read Baudrillard is to take a *double-bind* that primarily operates on the context of fiction, the acceptance of which enables a better understanding of theory. A recognition of the validity of poetry and literature as theoretical musings allows us to recognize the possibility of philosophical discourse as form, or genre.

Key words performative theory; poetics; fictionality; Jean Baudrillard; science fiction

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"Cipher, do not decipher."[1]

Introduction

In academic philosophy, as in everything else, meaning is of utmost importance. Our preoccupation with language is not so much a preoccupation of utterances, as a preoccupation of its capacity to contain meaning, its ability to mediate

1 Jean Baudrillard, "Radical Thought," trans. by David Macey, *Parallax* 1:1 (1995) 61.

and transfer a thought from one mind to another. To a serious academician, everything—utterances, gestures, cultural practices, historical events, even spaces and monuments—is seen as a text, as language from which meaning is mined, excavated. This also means that there is a certain amount of seriousness that we ascribe to everything.

With the advent of postmodernism, the incredulity of grand narratives, we have veered away from the one true meaning, but still subscribe to meanings. We recognize that the cheek-in-tongue performativity of the clowns of postmodernism still rely on a reference, albeit more reflectively. We read into Marcel Duchamp's *La Fontaine* as somebody who is introducing a ready-made art, but at the same time, taking a piss at the art world; the same thing applies to Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*.

However, what makes these different and meaningful still is the temporary suspension of seemingly fixed structures. The suspension of the privilege of content over form—in the end, dissolved by an assurance that the form *is* the content—enables one to recognize the value of postmodern art as guaranteed by an artistic theory.[1] Its attempt to evade meaning is superficial, to demonstrate further another dimension of sense.

In the same manner, we read other stylistic works as operating from a kind of suspension and suspicion. The dichotomy that we have of content and form, or subject and object, or truth and fiction, are often toyed with by intellectuals who are aware of the arbitrariness, but also the importance, of language, in strengthening their theory. But of course, this also comes from the idea that philosophy and literature occupy different, albeit sometimes overlapping, domains, where philosophy's focus is content and literature's, form.

The preoccupation of meaning in the dichotomy of content and form assumes the objective existence of subject and object, of truth and fiction, and of the idea that "theory" is an attempt to mirror reality. This preoccupation of meaning is also what drives the criticisms against Jean Baudrillard's refusal to affirm these dichotomies.

The frustration of pinning his theory down is due to his insistence of reversibility. Instead of a temporary suspension of the realm of truth for the world of fiction, as Danto argues for postmodern art, Baudrillard stubbornly accepts both. The absence of a dichotomy or a semblance of any form of bifurcation, even a temporary one, meant that everything is the same as everything else. It is eternal reversibility, a TV screen in a perpetual channel-flip.

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1 See Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61:19 (1964) 581. He writes: "What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art is a certain theory of art. It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible."

Baudrillard's Theory

Like most intellectuals during the May '68 student revolt in France, Baudrillard was also influenced by Marxist ideas, and has critiqued the capitalist system. Evident in books such as *The System of Objects* and *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard proposed an extension of Marx's critique of capitalist systems by saying that in addition to the use-value and exchange-value proposed by Marx, the logic of capitalism follows what Baudrillard calls as the "sign-value." Our use, production, and consumption of objects, especially in the age of techno-capitalism, is fueled by the arrangement and manipulation of signs attached to these objects. If for Marx, the idea of exchange-value came about with the eventual use and development of money, for Baudrillard, sign-value came about through the rise of mass production. From the creation of different brands of the same object rose the need for social differentiation. This functions in the levels of both economy and psychology.

From the point of view of economy, the creation of different brands of the same product forces different producers or manufacturers to resort to advertisement that will help in improving the "image" of the product. This means that beyond the product's use and exchange value, capitalists must expand the edge of the product by creating meaning, backstory. From the point of view of psychology, the abolition of aristocracy, and the rhetoric of free market, and liberty made the conditions ripe for the creation of new social hierarchies, this time hierarchies that value, not bloodline but hard work. In aristocratic societies, certain objects are forbidden and/or unattainable. In capitalist societies, access to objects and products that are also mass-produced became easier. To differentiate oneself from the other then means not only a reinstallation of social classes, but also of the creation of more cultural spaces where the manipulation of objects, treated as signs, did not escape. The over-presence of sameness makes the idea of difference all the more valuable, and the producer and the consumer each have reasons for wanting social differentiation, hence the attachment of an unstable idea of sign-value.

Upon developing his idea of the sign-value, Baudrillard gave an account of the exchange done before the rise of capitalism. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard seemed to be tracing the purer form of signification through his idea of the symbolic. Influence by Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille, Baudrillard affirms that even before, object already carry meaning, but that their signification was more rooted in their original difference. The value of objects then came from its rarity, conditions of scarcity, whereas today, the value of objects comes from its excess.

From connecting the idea of sign-value and symbolic-value, Baudrillard began

to explore the other implications and trajectory of his initial project of extending Marx through semiotics. Baudrillard's transition from his focus in the *System of Objects* and *Consumer Society* to that in *Simulations and Simulacra* implies, I argue, a complex theory of language, metaphysics and epistemology. How do we perceive the world, and what is the relation of our perception of it to our use of language, specifically, our use of the language of objects?

Whilst functioning at the level of a post-Marxist critique of capitalism, Baudrillard's theory of simulations also comments on our perception of reality. In a way influenced by the Situationists and Walter Benjamin, Baudrillard's concept of the image, our valorization of it, affects the way we communicate, we act, we see the world. This valorization of the image—already hinted by the idea of sign-value—permits us to manipulate and be manipulated by images.

Later, Baudrillard would go on to say that everything has become an image, and that even our concepts of reality has become entangled with appearances. It is in this context that Baudrillard declares the end of politics, and art, and culture, and so on. Already present in his earlier works, though not as explicit, the tone in his later works assume a bleaker view of reality. The irony, however, is that, while the other post-Marxists and critical theorists flirt with the project of diagnosing social problems and prescribing of solutions, Baudrillard decides to parade his suggestion, that of excess. Not quite admitting defeat, Baudrillard insists that whatever damage the system, or the precession of images, or simulacra has done, is irreversible, but that at the same time, in pushing the system to its limits, a total revolution, the system will eventually collapse.

This seemingly outright diagnosis of the society, and the prescription to give up is not easily acceptable to the academic world, especially when part of one's strategies is to assume a hostile demeanor, challenging Marx, Foucault, the feminists, among others.

Baudrillard and His Critics

The polarizing character of Jean Baudrillard's philosophy stems mainly from his style of writing that further emphasizes the apparent contradiction of his concepts to the issues he claims to address. In what it seems as his attempt to diagnose culture and society, his rhetoric often misses the point, which explains why a few other scholars think Baudrillard has lost himself in the carnival of concepts. He has

gone too far to even relate his ideas to reality.[1] Baudrillard's philosophy is said to "degenerate into sloganeering and rhetoric without any systematic or comprehensive theoretical position."[2] Best and Kellner would go as far as to add that Baudrillard could be read as a cyberpunk science fiction. However, contrary to positing science fiction as completely removed from reality, Eugene Thacker focuses on "the distance that separates the imagined future of science fiction from the empirical reality of society"[3] hence making the efficacy of science fiction as a gauge for the state of reality. At the same time, he posits that as a genre, science fiction also serves as fuel for man to "intervene in the history of the present."[4] Kellner adds nuance to his critique by saying that comparable to Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World,* while Baudrillard "takes current trends to possible conclusions, and provides instructive warnings about certain social tendencies and phenomena…. [he also] takes current trends and possibilities as finalities, treating tendencies as realized states."[5]

Like Kellner, Rojek and Turner observe that Baudrillard's arguments "[collide] with most of the assumptions and conventions used to manage normality in everyday life"[6] which makes Baudrillard's philosophy interesting, and dangerous—dangerous because this notoriety could veer philosophy away from solving the real problems. Paul Hegarty would also note that the main contention critics have of Baudrillard is "his removal, through analyses of the 'real world,' of reality,"[7] that is, whilst his poetic imagination runs free, his "fiction" masquerading as a "theory" runs the risk of downplaying significant resistance at stake.

In subverting the epistemological binaries of subject and object, Baudrillard

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1 See Christopher Norris, "Lost in the Funhouse: Baudrillard and the Politics of Postmodernism" in *Textual Practice,* vol.3 no.3 (1989): 360-387. Together with Norris, A. Keith Goshorn, in his article "Valorizing the 'Feminine' while Rejecting Feminism?: Baudrillard's Feminist Provocations" also mentions Arthur Vidich's "Baudrillard's America: Lost in the Ultimate Simulacrum," and J. Hoberman's "Lost in America: Jean Baudrillard, Extraterrestial."

2 Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (London: Macmillan, 1991) 140.

3 Eugene Thacker, "The Science Fiction of Technoscience: The Politics of Simulation and a Challenge for New Media Art," in *Leonardo,* vol.31 no.2 (2001) 156.

4 Thacker, p.158.

5 Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (USA: Stanford University Press, 1989) 203.

6 Chris Rojek and Bryan Turner, "Introduction," *Forget Baudrillard?* (London: Routledge, 1993) xi.

7 Paul Hegarty, *Jean Baudrillard: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2004) 2.

would employ the metaphor of seduction linked and likened to the woman—described by Baudrillard as an object—that holds the secret power. This rhetoric denies, delays, and undermines the demands for change, warranting Goshorn's suspicion that, despite "the possibility that Baudrillard in his most recent writings may have arrived, almost in spite of himself, at a position on gender and sexuality that at times intersects favorably with the most progressive trends in current feminist thought,"[1] it might be understandable for feminists to be offended by his "rude-boy tactics."[2]

Much like the reversibility Baudrillard attributes to the subject and the object, Ian Almond also articulates the inversion of West vs. Rest binary in looking at Islam, and explains how Baudrillard's rhetoric converges different meanings to claim that Islam is the end of the West's suicide.[3] While read as provocations, critics also point out the inconsistencies in Baudrillard's texts.

Even his most useful concepts, such as hyperreality and simulation, are sometimes downplayed as diversions and distractions from more pressing problems. Aaron Schwabach, for example, dismisses Baudrillard's critique of virtual wars as "facile, meaningless, and morally empty"[4] as this does not deny the fact that real lives were, and still are, at stake. Moreover, Timothy Martinez criticizes Baudrillard's pessimistic prose as that which "serves to reinforce the sense of the inevitability and irresistibility of simulated realities"[5] instead of providing necessary tools for resistance, while others might claim that Baudrillard's theory is a "politics of parody,"[6] and that "despite [its] weaknesses… Baudrillard's critical project does cast new light on the problematics of postmodernism. And even with its flaws, this framework still is instructive for developing fresh insights into the workings of power and politics within informationalizing systems as they develop hyperreal

1 A. Keith Goshorn, "Valorizing the 'Feminine' while Rejecting Feminism?: Baudrillard's Feminist Provocations," *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader,* ed. By Douglas Kellner (USA: Blackwell, 1995) 257.

2 Goshorn, p. 286.

3 Ian Almond, "Two Versions of Islam and the Apocalypse: The Persistence of Eschatology in Schlegel, Baudrillard and Zizek," in *Journal for Cultural Research,* vol.13 no.3-4 (Jul-Oct 2009): 309-321.

4 Aaron Schwabach, "Kosovo: Virtual War and International Law" in *Law and Literature,* vol.15, no.1 (2003) 10.

5 Timothy Martinez, "The Afterlife of Modernity in the Politics of the Postmodern," in *New Political Science,* vol.20 no.2 (1998) 205.

6 Dana Villa, "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere" in *The American Political Science Review,* vol.86, no.3 (September 1992) 719.

tendencies in their cultures and societies."[1]

Most of the defense for Baudrillard's theory are anchored on a selective forgetfulness that attributes Baudrillard's lack to his eccentricity, and pardons him for some of the useless exaggerations he offered. Richard Opalsky, much like Rojek and Turner, calls for a selective forgetting.[2] As a result, we are offered with a partial Baudrillard, edible only after breaking him down into pieces.

There are others, however, who would explain Baudrillard's mistakes as deliberate strategies, that his inconsistencies are actually the charm and strength of his theories. Hegarty admits that the difficulty of putting Baudrillard's theories to use could be considered as the very strength of his theory, that is, "his texts, [as] theoretical objects… resist critical interpretation and [also] encourage critical misinterpretations."[3] William Pawlett in his book, *Jean Baudrillard: Against Banality*, claims that, contrary to what Kellner calls as Baudrillard's pataphysical break, if read from the concept of symbolic exchange, one would be able to see coherence in Baudrillard's philosophy.[4] Pawlett would even explain the inconsistencies and hyperbolic proclamations as Baudrillard's attempt to pull back the world and reality from the unfolding banality caused by a simulated world. This symbolic lens Pawlett attributed to Baudrillard would allow Pawlett to explore other concepts such as violence without having to resort to the common conceptual binaries.[5]

As in his book,[6] Rex Butler notes the interesting performance Baudrillard makes: the *double strategy* that enables one to follow Baudrillardian logic while criticizing the inconsistency in Baudrillard. According to Butler, this is evident in the philosopher's *The Conspiracy of Art* where Baudrillard commits the same conspiracy, of being both "good" and "bad." Butler cites the idea of parallax in Baudrillard's works. It is the logical paradox that allows Baudrillard the tricky Mobius strip escape that adds to the genius of his theory. The content of his critique, which is that everything has become a shallow sign, is contradicted by the form his theory takes, which could be explained as the restoration of the disappearance.

1 Timothy Luke, "Power and Politics in Hyperreality: The Critical Project of Jean Baudrillard," *The Social Science Journal,* Vol.28, no.3 (1991) 353.

2 See Richard Opalsky, *Spectacuar Capitalism: Guy Debord and the Practice of Radical Philosophy,* London/ New York: Minor Compositions, 2011.

3 Hegarty, p.2.

4 See William Pawlett, *Jean Baudrillard: Against Banality,* New York: Routledge, 2007.

5 See William Pawlett, *Violence, Society, and Radical Theory: Bataille, Baudrillard, and Contemporary Society,* USA: Ashgate, 2013.

6 See Rex Butler, *Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real,* London: SAGE, 1999.

This is what Butler considers as Baudrillard's tactic: the introduction of a split; one from the first-order of thought, and the other from the second-order. While Kellner, operating from the logic of critical theory, where there still is a desire for the restoration of dialectics, is undecided "whether [Baudrillard's] work should be read under the sign of truth or fiction,"[1] Butler, echoed by Victoria Grace,[2] insists that Baudrillard must be read "in his own terms."

Read as science fiction in the tradition of Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Ray Bradbury, Robert Heinlein, Baudrillard's dystopian society is convincing in the sense that it was able to foresee what the rationality of scientific progress failed to do. Read as a social analysis or a political forecast, the concept is too radical and irrational, that intellectual readers who are used to the Enlightenment's definition of "serious" theory, cannot picture a world of Baudrillard's scene.

Baudrillard's Theory as Fiction

Baudrillard offends and confuses because what he gives us is a theoretical terrorism. He challenges accepted beliefs of truth, reality, reason, language, political action and the privileged place of the subject through this reversibility, or what Butler calls "doubling." Baudrillard rejects compromise and instead accepts both sides unconditionally. In the opposition of epistemology, to either be rational or irrational, Baudrillard's strategy is to elude interpretation, to not be caught within the standards of the scientific test. In the opposition of politics, to either be the left or the right, Baudrillard calls for a terroristic hyper-conformity. In the opposition of the logic of sign, Baudrillard calls for poetry, a kind of fluid movement between sign and referent. In the opposition of real and theory, of truth and fiction, he proclaims the annihilation of the real.

Paul Sutton writes, "Baudrillard's intellectuality is one of provocation, exaggeration and excess… The hierarchical relation of opposites is pushed in one direction to a point of absolute extremity where it becomes the other and as such nullifies the opposite."[3] Beyond the futile attempt to describe or mirror reality and beyond the hypocritical claim that one, indeed, was able to do this, Baudrillard claims that theory can never cross this distance to reality. The "simulated disorder of things" moves in a speed that makes impossible for theory to mirror it.[4]

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1 Douglas Kellner (ed), "Introduction," *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader* (USA: Blackwell, 1995) 18.

2 See Victoria Grace, *Baudrillard's Challenge: A Feminist Reading,* London: Routledge, 2000.

3 Paul Sutton, "Jean Baudrillard: Transintellectual?," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2:3 (1997) 194.

4 *The Perfect Crime,* p. 101.

Moreover, there are always radical uncertainties, things we do not expect because they were not catalogued in cause-effect normalcy. Hence, theory must be radical. It must be like lightning, anticipating an event that is less likely to happen.[1] Baudrillard says,

In my opinion, theory is simply a challenge to the real. A challenge to the world to exist…Theory is ahead of the state of things, that it moves too fast and thus is in a position of destiny with respect to what could happen…Theory is simulation.[2]

Baudrillard insists that theory, and the whole of his theory, is a challenge. It is a seduction, a game that does not really end. Much like science fiction, it is necessary for Baudrillard's theory to be excessive, fatal. But it was also necessary that the radical theory retain recognizable traces of reality, like the culture of consumption, some forms of simulation, etc. This way, the seduction is more effective. It lures us as close as possible.

In addition, his writing embodies the concepts and strategies that Baudrillard suggests. In fact, for him, there is no distance nor difference between his radical

1 In a sense, Adorno's idea of the non-finality of truth is similar to Baudrillard's premise for radical theory. Adorno writes: "Philosophy distinguishes itself from science not by a higher level of generality, as the banal view still today assumes, nor through the abstraction of its categories nor through the nature of its materials. The central difference lies far more in that the separate sciences accept their findings, as indestructible and static, whereas *philosophy perceives the first findings which it lights upon as a sign that needs unriddling.* Plainly put: the idea of science is research; that of *philosophy is interpretation.* In this remains the great, perhaps the everlasting paradox: philosophy persistently and with the claim of truth, must proceed interpretively without ever possessing a sure key to interpretation; nothing more is given to it than fleeting, disappearing traces within the riddle figures of that which exists and their astonishing entwinings." (Theodor Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy," in *The Adorno Reader,* ed. by Brian O'Connor (MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000): 30-31.) Adorno recognizes the fleeting character of reality; therefore, our interpretation of reality must keep up with the changes. Adorno insists that the task of philosophy is *interpretation*. The task of philosophy is to solve riddles, but not in a sense that there is one concrete answer. There is no hidden meaning that waits to be disclosed because truth is not only non-final. It is also a multiplicity. While Baudrillard may agree with Adorno that truth could be non-final and multiple, Baudrillard's social milieu is that of a fast-paced society. The speed of change brought about by new technology complicates philosophy's task of interpretation. In addition, these new technologies—what Mark Poster calls the mode of information—have changed the domains of reality. Our concept of what is real includes simulation and simulacra. Hence, Adorno's idea of philosophy's task of critical interpretation (of the now) becomes to Baudrillard the theory's (hyper)radical anticipation (of the not yet).

2 Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault: Forget Baudrillard* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987):131-133, 124.

writing and radical theory. He writes: "Radical thought does not decipher. It anathematizes and anagrammatizes concepts and ideas just as poetic language does with words, and thanks to its reversible progression, it accounts simultaneously for meaning and the basic illusion of meaning."[1]

As a performative gesture, Baudrillard's writing style is an attempt to liberate language and transgress the cage of signification logic, making language wild again.[2] At the same time, the fragmentary and uncommitted writing in *America* and *Cool Memories* is also in itself an experience of the TV screen, like Kerouac's car drive.[3]

Conclusion: Baudrillard and Danto

The way Baudrillard talks about theory, as something that does not attempt to mirror truth and reality, but as a simulation and a challenge, seems at first similar to how Danto conceives artistic theory as that which grants legitimacy to the postmodern art of Duchamp and Warhol. Danto's proclamation of the end of the art (as representation), is much like Baudrillard's proclamation of the end of politics, and the disappearance of the real. For Danto, it is theory that makes the artworld and art possible. Theory, then, becomes a bridge between the normative everyday-life and the realm of fiction and art. If prior to what Danto calls as the "post-historical sate" of art, works of art have had a necessary place in normative society because works of art represent reality, incite resistance against real oppression, and so on, Danto argues that now, the development has made art retreat to the regions of fiction. The recognition we afford postmodern art is only possible because we accept that it is now theory that art represents, theory that art resists, and so on. And theory is a bridge because even if it is not "real," it is its mirror, its simulation.

What separates Baudrillard from Danto however is that Danto, standing at the plane of normativity looks at the world of art through the bridge of theory. Baudrillard's works seem to be the bridge itself. To read postmodern art is to read it the way Danto did, a temporary suspension for the sake of a different world. To read Baudrillard is to accept both worlds. For critics like Kellner who understand Baudrillard as an "intellectual," Baudrillard will forever be inconsistent. For critics like Rojek who compare Baudrillard's musings to Kerouac's, Baudrillard will be read as a detached postmodern writer, without political commitment. Rex Butler

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1 Jean Baudrillard, "Radical Thought," trans. by David Macey, *Parallax,* 1:1 (1995), p.60.

2 Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories V* (London: Verso, 2006) 7.

3 See Bryan Turner, "Cruising America," *Forget Baudrillard?,* ed. Chris Rojek and Bryan Turner (London, Routledge, 1993): 146-160.

finds in Baudrillard a doubling effect that is characterized in his writing but is also a logic of the concept of postmodern society. Butler writes that Baudrillard's writing is both an imaginary solution and a real one, neither an empirical refutation of these systems of simulation which shares the same real as them, nor a pure fiction which bears no relationship to them. Rather, the defining quality of Baudrillard's work is that it is *both*.[1]

The contemporary theorist or intellectual, for Baudrillard, must "say something more, something other, something different."[2] Perhaps, what we could learn from the schizophrenic character of Baudrillard's "theory" is that while the intellectual's task may be that of interpretation, this interpretation does not always come in the form of unriddling.[3] Sometimes, the riddle too is interpretation.

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1 Butler, p. 122.

2 Jean Baudrillard, "Intellectuals, Commitment and Political Power," *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews,* ed. Mike Gane, (London: Routledge, 1993) 79.

3 Here, I am deliberately misappropriating Theodor Adorno.

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The Wave, the Wound and the Witness: Climate Trauma, Ethics and Listening in *Les Mains L*â*ch*é*es*

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Abstract On 8 November 2013, super typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc in the Philippines, killing over 6,000 people thus making it one of the most powerful typhoons in recorded history. One of the literary works that have since tried to make sense of this climate trauma is the well-acclaimed novel *Les mains lâchées* by Anaïs Llobet published by Editions Plon, Paris, 2016. *Les mains lâchées* recounts the story of Madel, a reporter who realises she just survived a "triple tsunami." She is plagued by survivor's guilt, having let go of the hand of a child she was entrusted with and leaving the body of her lover, Jan. Forced by her editor to cover the catastrophe for the TV news, the persona finds herself listening to survivors, while dealing with issues on voyeurism, witnessing and ethics. I am interested in exploring the ethics of witnessing in *Les mains lâchées*. Thus, in this essay, I propose to first define trauma and witnessing, then theorise ethical listening and clarify why survivors resort to writing. After close-reading, I examine why the novel can be an appropriate medium in order to do justice to witnessing. Lastly, I explore translation as a form of "listening again" and interrogate the role of the reader, especially as receiver of trauma fiction. Ultimately, I argue that *Les mains lâchées*, as a literary form, allows for empathic, ethical listening, and postcolonial witnessing.

Key words Yolanda; survivor; empathy; novel; translation

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Making six landfalls in Eastern Samar on November 8, 2013, super typhoon Haiyan, locally named Yolanda, lashed the country "with wind speeds of more than 300 km/ h" and storm surges — tsunami-like waves — of over four meters (Featherstone, et. al. 7). Areas up to 100 kilometers from the eye of the typhoon "suffered 80% to total destruction of public facilities, houses and commercial establishments" (European Commission 2). Damaging 1.1 million houses, and displacing four million people, Haiyan affected more than 14 million people (Featherstone, et. al. 7). Killing over 6,000 people, Yolanda is now known as "one of the most powerful typhoons ever to make landfall in recorded history" (Lagmay, et. al. 1).

Since then, several writers have resorted to poetry, fiction, plays and essays in order to either come to terms with the catastrophe and/ or to pay tribute to the ones who passed away. Perhaps the two most famous volumes that should be mentioned are *Our Memory of Water*, edited by Merlie Alunan; and *Agam*, commissioned and edited by the ICSC (Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Cities). These edited books feature the works of Filipino poets, fictionists and essayists. The award-winning *Agam*, notably, highlights 26 photographs and the literary works of 24 Filipino writers in eight local languages. Last but not least, the Philippine Educational Theater Assocation (PETA) adapted Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in bilingual Tagalog and English. However, instead of focusing on a Magician, his daughter and Caliban, the storyline underscored the effects of a terrible storm surge or tsunami threatening the lives in an island.

The Haiyan phenomena also attracted writers outside the Philippines. One such literary work is the well-acclaimed novel *Les mains lâchées*, published by Editions Plon, Paris, in 2016. *Les mains lâchées,* which literally means "released hands," or, in the context of the book, "lost grip[1]," is based on the first-hand experience of AFP French journalist Anaïs Llobet. The novel recounts the story of Madel, a reporter who realizes she just survived a "triple tsunami." She is plagued by survivor's guilt, having let go of the hand of a child she was entrusted with and leaving the body of her lover, Jan. Forced by her editor to cover the catastrophe for the TV news, the persona finds herself listening to survivors, while dealing with issues on voyeurism, witnessing and ethics.

1 In this essay, all translations from French to English are mine.

Consequently, I am interested in exploring the ethics of witnessing in *Les mains lâchées*. Rich in questions related to ethics of representation, the novel leads me to ask the following questions: when does media coverage start venturing to "climate disaster porn? How does Madel negotiate her position as a Western journalist-turned trauma survivor?

Not only is the plot worth discussing from an ethical point of view, equally interesting to examine is its form. In an interview[1], Llobet revealed how she needed to write a novel, instead of just a news piece, in order to do justice to witnessing. In this sentence alone, three ideas are already implied which need further analysis: the impetus to witness after trauma; witnessing through writing, and the choice of the novel as the more appropriate medium.

Thus, in this essay, I propose to first define trauma and witnessing. Corollary to the description of witnessing, it is necessary to theorise ethical listening and to clarify why survivors resort to writing. After close-reading the novel, I will examine why the novel can be an appropriate medium in order to do justice to witnessing. Lastly, I will also explore translation as a form of "listening again" and interrogate the role of the reader, especially as receiver of trauma fiction. Ultimately, I argue that *Les mains lâchées*, as a literary form, allows for empathic, ethical listening, and postcolonial witnessing.

Trauma, Witnessing, Listening, Writing

Originally from Greek, the word *trauma* refers to a "wound of the mind" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 4). According to Sigmund Freud's 1914 essay "Remembering, Repeating, Working-through," one key characteristic of trauma is what is called *Nachträglichkeit*, which some translate as "afterwardness" or "belatedness." Belatedness is a situation in which the effects of trauma still come years after the traumatic event, thereby impeding the linearity of one's life, interrupting the subjective fluidity of one's chronological sense of time.

In the 1980s, the American Psychiatric Association gave trauma a canonical psychiatric classification in the form of PTSD or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. By including PTSD in its diagnostic manual edition, the APA acknowledges a "new illness" from people who usually have escaped death, serious injuries, wars, disasters, accidents, or other extreme stressor events" (Luckhurst 1). Symptoms include depression, cynicism, and total absence of recall (Visser 270); but also "intrusive flashbacks, recurring dreams … emotional numbing ... loss of temper control, hyper-vigilance or exaggerated startle response (Luckhurst 1).

1 With Joris Zylberman in *Asialyst*. See as well her interview in TV5 Monde.

PTSD has since undergone a lot of revisions in order to be inclusive of newly explored cases[1]. At any rate, for our present concerns, suffice to retain that individuals suffering from trauma can be described as caught in an oscillation between "a crisis of death and a crisis of life" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 7). Thus, those who live to tell trauma are usually survivor-witnesses.

A witness is frequently associated to "eyewitnesses" (Hartman 37) whose testimonies are "told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts" (Beverley 31). However, in her award-winning work on Rwandan women's writing, *From Surviving to Living*, Catherine Gilbert explains how the category of "witness" has since expanded to three categories: The first category belongs to the survivor-witness or direct witness from whom one demands his or her "presence at the event and the authenticity of testimony" (Gilbert 54; 59). According to Dawes, survivors are usually confronted with the following paradoxical dilemma: "Do I have the right to talk about this? And, do I have the right *not* to talk about this?" (24, emphasis in original)"[2].

Next, the secondary or indirect witness includes outside observers and, later, second generation survivors[3] (54; 59). LaCapra extends this category to include "interviewers, historians and commentators (such as academics), as well as viewers/readers of testimony (98)."

Lastly, the reader-witness, as the engaged receiver of testimony, can be

1 In 1992 Judith Herman coined the term "complex posttraumatic stress disorder" to include prolonged and repeated trauma. Classified in this category could be "hostages, prisoners of war, concentration camp survivors, and survivors of some religious cults" (Herman 121) who have undergone a history of subjection to totalitarian control over months or years. Examples can also include "those subjected to totalitarian systems in sexual and domestic life, including survivors of domestic battering, childhood physical or sexual abuse, and organized sexual exploitation" (ibid.). According to Herman (ibid., 122), the advantage of naming this new category "represents an essential step toward granting those who have endured prolonged exploitation a measure of the recognition they deserve" (ibid). Further, in the fifth edition of its*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*(*DSM-5*) the American Psychiatric Association (APA 2013) clarifies the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. I have elaborated these developments in a recent work published in *Philippine Studies* in 2018. See Works Cited.

2 Dawes continues: "The act of bearing witness is bounded by 'the poles of entitlement (What gives me the moral authority to tell this story? How can I prove my authenticity to my readers?) and obligation (How much of myself am I required to give to this story? What is my duty, and when am I free of it?)' (24-25)".

3 Like children of Holocaust survivors, who, although they never experienced the Shoah first hand, their lives have been shaped by the trauma and silence of their parents. See "The Generation of Postmemory" by Marianne Hirsch and the *Holocaust Novel* by Ephraim Sicher.

classified under the third category (Gilbert 54). I will talk more about the reader-witness at the end of the essay. In *Les mains lâchées*, Madel, survivor of Haiyan, clearly satisfies the criteria of the first category. However, by listening and recording the stories of other survivors, Madel will also inhabit the role of secondary witness.

As receivers of testimonies, the secondary witness-listener "plays an active role in the construction of the narrative rather than simply listening" (Gilbert 135). In point of fact, witnesses need to know that they are talking to a real person. "Bearing witness to trauma is, in fact, a process that includes the listener" (Laub and Allard 809) since testimonies are not supposed to be "monologues." Witnesses need to know that "they are talking to *somebody*" (Laub and Allard 809, emphasis in original). As such, listeners "make witnessing happen" (Gilbert 132). They enable testimony (Laub 58) and help restore "the survivor's sense of agency and belonging" (Gilbert 135). Listening can function as "an act of attention that registers uniqueness of the other's narrative" (Couldry 9) where telling a story can be "a form of recognition through which we recognise our stories as entangled with the stories of others" (Bassel 9). Such exchange, hopefully, creates "new, wider spaces of participation where narrative resources are redistributed" (Bassel 65).

Of course, there is always a risk for the listener to "shape or alter the witness's story according to the listener's own intentions" (Gilbert 136), thus exercising a sort of hegemonic control over the other's narrative. The challenge, in other words, can be described as "selective audibility, not being heard on one's own terms" (Bassel 34). However, for Bassel and Dobson, instead of letting such risks hamper the politics of listening, dialogue should be understood as a "structured disagreement." According to Dobson, "dialogic democracy" takes its time, "engineers silence [and] makes sure all voices have been heard — and then it listens again" (Dobson 138).

Another form of what I call "mislistening" involves diluting oneself into the uniqueness of the other's story. In his book, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick La Capra notes the difficulty that "arises when the virtual experience involved in empathy gives way to vicarious victimhood, and empathy with the victim seems to become an identity" (47). Against an empathy of fusion, he coins the concept of "empathic unsettlement" which "involves a kind of virtual experience" wherein one tries to put oneself in the position of the other "while recognizing the difference … hence not taking the other's place" (LaCapra 78). Such a stance allows empathy without claiming, what Claude Lanzmann has called the absolute "obscenity" of trying to understand[1] (Thanassekos 45).

This is why, first and foremost, listening assumes "responsiveness to difference"

1 «Ily a bien une obscénité absolue du projet de comprendre».

and "receptive generosity" (Bassel 4). Leah Bassel illustrates these points in her work, *Politics of Listening*: "The first step for me was to stop talking, to shift from speaking to listening… listen with humility rather than charging in with a pet theory and fitting complex events within it" (4). Similarly, Andrew Dobson's "apophatic listening" (2014) involves "temporary suspension of one's own categories, frames and expectations" with a view "to listening to what is 'actually being said', and to listening out for the unexpected and surprising" (Bassel 5).

Hence, in this essay, in view of examining ethical representation and witnessing, I shall pay attention to forms of listening and empathic unsettlement in the content and form of *Les mains lâchées*. At present, however, I want to clarify the last-but-not-least itinerary in trauma and witnessing: writing, writing as "giving birth," writing as a process of agency, writing as coming to terms with the past, writing as requiem.

Of course, "survival does not include any particular responsibility other than continuing to survive" (Frank 137). Survivors don't necessarily have to witness nor write. For most who have been endowed with the blessing — or the burden — of a "second life," however, the impetus to write comes from the survivor-witness's need to make sense of the past in order to, with time, "recover" agency. According to Kali Tal, writing "serves both as validation and cathartic vehicle for the traumatized author" (21). Again, the key element of PTSD, belatedness, interrupts the linearity of the survivor's present life through flashback, hypervigilance and startled responses. Narrativity, therefore, helps in the process of linearity by allowing the person to establish a certain chronology and to discern past and present. Henke, for one, calls such writing "scriptotherapy" (Henke xvi). This is why LaCapra describes post-traumatic writing as "a means of bearing witness to, enacting, and, to some extent, working over and through trauma whether personally experienced, transmitted from intimates, or sensed in one's larger social and cultural setting" (105). Hence, writing makes one open up to a larger community.

Consequently, this "act of testimony constitutes a means of honouring the memory of the victims and may also be an attempt to assuage the guilt felt by survivors" (Gilbert 69). Survivor syndrome, which is composed of "gnawing feelings of self-reproach because they survived while their loved ones did not" (Leys 44), empowers the witness with what Lifton labels as a "survivor mission" (Caruth, *Trauma* 138) or a "duty to remember": to live to tell. Such is the situation of Madel, our protagonist in *Les mains lâchées*.

The Protagonist as Critical Survivor-Witness

The first person point of view of the novel is clearly Madel's through whose eyes and thoughts the reader follows an itinerary of trauma and empathy. Again, Madel is a first-degree trauma survivor herself. She satisfies most criteria of PTSD: intrusive flashbacks, recurring dreams, exaggerated startle-response, and hyper-vigilance (Luckhurst 1). Nightmares disturb her nights (Llobet 58) and, all throughout the novel, the perennial refrain of survivor's guilt haunts her. Her abandonment in searching for Jan's body and her inability in retaining Rodjun's hand evoke the title of the novel, *les mains lâchées*, the cause of trauma. Even a year after Yolanda, Madel suffers from *Nachträglichkeit* or belatedness, the distinctive characteristic of trauma, wherein the past interrupts the linearity of present life. The minute she enters her room, she remarks: "They were there, waiting for me. In the kitchen, on the couch, in my bed, near the window. The shadows of Jan and Yolanda never leave my apartment, like shameless guests who don't decide to leave" [1](Llobet 152). As such, her situation as survivor establishes her personal involvement in the disaster, much like the real-life status of Anais Llobet.

After realising that she is alive, Madel joins the company of other in the gym-turned-shelter. The kindness and hospitality of the Filipinos—even during a catastrophe—win her over. Madel is surprised when a mother, without a single trace of irony, interpellates her: "Welcome to the Philippines, ma'am. How is your trip?" (Llobet 24). And again: "You are our guest!" they say (Llobet 25). This is not the first time Madel is astonished by the Philippines, which she first experiences as "a destination for vacation, cheaper cocktails, but with clearer waters than elsewhere" (Llobet 66). As such, the Philippines is not only associated with catastrophe, but with hospitality, even in the most incongruous circumstances.

Moreover, the book looks beyond the Philippines by juxtaposing the Haiyan trauma vis-à-vis other trauma signifiers of the region. With a mix of sadness and irony, Madel remarks: "No people should be destined to die, sacrificed on the altar of climate change… These cataclysms are destined for other children, those from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, those *who are used* to see their children die" [2] (Llobet 45-46, italics in the original). What is happening here, in fact, is a

1 «Elles étaient là, à m'attendre. Dans la cuisine, sur le canapé, dans mon lit, près de la fenêtre. Les ombres de Jan et Yolanda ne quittent jamais mon appartement, comme des invités sans gêne qui ne se décident pas à partir». I was thinking of the option «guests who have overstayed their welcome" but this would not highlight the *non*-decision to leave or not.

2 «Aucun peuple n'est destiné à mourir sacrifié sur l'autel du changement climatique … Ces cataclysmes sont destinés à d'autres enfants, ceux des Philippins, Sri Lankais, Indonésiens, *ceux qui ont l'habitude* de voir mourir leurs enfants».

self-critique that Madel engages in because she realises her privilege of not living in a disaster prone area of the world. The italicised portion, "used to," emphasises a climate trauma that is not for exceptional occasions only, as in Western contexts[1].

This extract, also, once more, underscores the need to address climate change which, nowadays, has become a question of injustice within the scope of the environmental humanities. Places like the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia suffer from what Nixon has called "slow violence" (2011)[2]. Such condition, moreover, is made complex within "cultures of disaster" (Bankhoff 2003)[3].

Thus far, while Madel is portrayed as satisfying the criteria of PTSD survivors, she is also described as a critical survivor-witness as seen in her reflections on climate injustice and in her appreciation of Filipino hospitality. Certainly, falling in love with the tall Filipino aesthetic surgeon, Jan, and coming with him to his home in Tacloban, "tames" the foreignness of the French young woman.

The Protagonist as Indirect Witness-Listener

Once in the shelter, her skin colour, which Madel describes like that of "a weakening firefly,"[4] makes her stand out. Certainly, her notoriety, both as Jan's girlfriend and as a reporter, has also made her conspicuous. Suddenly, in spite of her similar survivor status, others invest her with a new role: that of an indirect witness by listening to the story of others—not as source for her news reports, but out of empathy: "I listen to each wounded person's version of their Yolanda" (Llobet 51)[5]. Notice the possessive pronoun "their," specifying the uniqueness of each person's story. Madel's way of listening is rendered in a particular way through the form of the novel where some chapters are recounted solely from the first person point

1 For example, E. Ann Kaplan, in her work, *Climate Trauma*, develops the notion of *pre-trauma* via her analysis of Hurricane Katarina. Against the more familiar Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is a condition triggered in the present by past events, Pre-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PreTss) denotes a "fear of a future terrifying event of a similar kind" (Kaplan xix). However, societies that are used to cyclical typhoons and climate disasters – the Philippines experiences, on average, 20 typhoons a year – I wonder if pretrauma is appropriate to such contexts.

2 "Rob Nixon calls climate change a form of 'slow violence' [which] occurs gradually and out of sight […] It is a 'delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space': although the effects are disastrous, they are played out across a range of temporal and spatial scales that mostly exceed the human scale" (Mertens and Craps 136).

3 Greg Bankhoff's term for "creative adaptation to environmental hazards in the Philippines" (2003).

4 «Une luciole faiblissante» (23).

5 «J'écoute les blessés me confier 'leur Yolanda'» (51).

of view of other survivors. As such, one gets the impression that they speak for themselves rather than through Madel's voice, as if they are being offered agency. Of the 22 chapters of the novel, four are written in first-person point of view other than Madel's.

In Chapter Four, Madel "yields the stage" to Liliana who narrates, in four pages, her version of the disaster. Liliana, plagued by survivor's guilt, mourns her daughter Shoshanna and others. In Chapter ten, Jack, brother of Liliana and friend of Jan, tells his version of his loss. In Chapter thirteen, Rosie explains her new ad hoc job as scribe of the deceased. Finally, in Chapter eighteen, Teresa Cadingoyan, recounts the helplessness of an OFW trying to locate her home and family after the storm surge. The novel allows malleability of narration through these shifts in points of view. As such, it illustrates listening as "an act of attention that registers uniqueness of the other's narrative" (Couldry 9), as well as the possibility for "our stories"—in this case, Madel's—"as entangled with the stories of others" (Bassel 9) that create "new, wider spaces of participation where narrative resources are redistributed" (Bassel 65). Such a form also illustrates empathic unsettlement which separates Madel's voice from others, thus satisfying the non-diluted narration between listener and speaker. Madel's empathy will later make her question voyeurism, transforming her from a detached journalist to an unsettled empathic witness.

Liliana, Jack, Rosie and Teresa represent survivors from immediate families, friends, those who find themselves taking care of the dead. Indeed, the survivor "becomes witness and reaches beyond the individual into the consciousness of the community" (Frank 63-64), especially with the inclusion of Filipino diasporans like Teresa.

Furthermore, as seen in the examples of Rosie and Teresa, trauma is made more complex: Rosie is a direct receiver of traumatic tales, thus, a secondary witness. Teresa, while not a direct witness of the storm surge herself, has not only most probably lost her family, she has already has her share of suffering as an OFW. As such, not only is the sense of community and solidarity extended even to receivers and exiles, the novel resists a "hierarchy of victimisation"[1]. Different types of pain are included and presented in their own terms. Indeed, "survivors should not be denied the right to speak... simply because they cannot know the whole truth of

1 At times, to "have been a victim gives you the right to complain, to protest, and to make demands" (Todorov and Belos 143). See Fassin and Rechtman's *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* which traces the trajectory from suspicion of victimhood to one that even "excites sympathy and merits [financial] compensation" (5).

an event" (Gilbert 60). Thus, cross-traumatic affiliation[1] is encouraged.

Moreover, the inclusion of Teresa enlarges the scope of the novel to transnational realities of Filipinos, thus also underscoring the global repercussion of climate change. However, if trauma demands justice in order for reparation to take place, then who is guilty? The novel gives us a hint: "*Storm surge*, said the radio, and we didn't understand that it meant a 'tsunami' instead… I want to put them on the benches of the accused and ask them why they couldn't translate two words that could have saved so many lives[2] (Llobet 47, italics in the original).

The above passage illustrates at least two issues that will be discussed shortly: on the one hand, Madel criticises the media– journalists like Madel herself – for their lack of clarity. On the other hand, the excerpt shows how bad translations can actually lead to death. Except for some counter-examples in *Les mains lâchées*, some journalists are portrayed as the "anti-listeners" which I shall explore in the next section.

Media as "Mislistener"

Madel is a foil to Herman, her editor; and to Irene, the camerawoman. Learning that his reporter finds herself in the thick of the catastrophe, Herman exclaims: "How lucky you're there![3]" not so much because Madel is alive, but more so because she can do the coverage for the news. He thus sends Irene to film the disaster.

External to the event, Irene becomes a consumer of "shocking images" as described by Madel: "The survivors watch the camera with curiosity and then turn away. Irene does not see them: she sees only their image in the frame ... 'Ask them

1 According to Stef Craps, cross-traumatic affiliation encourages transcultural empathy in which two or more different cultures, which have undergone different types of traumas, seek to understand the other's trauma for their own sake and in their own terms (19). Elsewhere, I have elaborated on this concept as follows: "Cross traumatic affiliation is a disposition which allows one party to relate to the trauma of another based on the former's own trauma experience while, at the same time, recognising the uniqueness and difference of each culture's experience. By avoiding such homogenisation or dilution of two distinct experiences, one acknowledges pain according to the terms of that particular culture. Last but not least, cross-traumatic affiliation encourages solidarity independent of (political, financial, mediatised) justifications of one's "hierarchy" of victimhood" (Martin, *Manilaner's* 821). Therefore, cross-traumatic affiliation presupposes differentiation and solidarity. It suggests an ethical attitude which does not pit one trauma or victim status over another.

2 «*Storm surge*, disait la radio, et nous n'avions pas compris qu'il fallait entendre 'tsunami'…. Je voudrais les mettre sur le banc des accusés, leur demander pourquoi ils n'ont pas su traduire deux mots qui auraient pu sauver tant de vies» (47).

3 «Qu'elle chance de t'avoir sur place» (41).

questions', she whispers to me. I start but then Irene sharply cuts me off. She asks other questions, shorter, harder" (Llobet 61)[1]. Contrary to Madel's empathetic stance, Irene is reminiscent of Saïd's orientalist "watcher," fashioning the victims in her own image that make "climate disaster porn" sell.

Further, Martin Jay makes a distinction between what he calls the epistemological view and the ontological view. Whereas the former evokes spectatorial distance, objectification, an exclusionary and staring gaze; the latter is caring and aletheic. While the epistemological viewer is unethical; the ontological viewer situates himself within the visual field; he is embedded; not controlling (Oliver 125). In *Les mains lâchées*, Irene, clearly takes on the epistemological view.

Contrary to ethical and emphatic listening and witnessing, Irene fails to suspend her own framework and instead imposes her point of view in the service of knowledge/power. Thus, the interviewees are what Viet Thanh Nguyen calls as "misremembered" (2019)—they are neither forgotten nor remembered. However, they are present in the screen without speaking for themselves. Accordingly, I draw from Nguyen's idea to argue that Irene, who only sees "their image in the frame," also *mis*listens—when the receiver, in this case, Irene, the indirect witness, neither silences them—"ask them questions"—nor emphatically listens—she cuts off Madel, implying impatience to wait for the answers. Thus, on the screen, the interviewees are objectified. Emphatic listening, on the contrary, demands paraphrasing *their* narrative in *their* own terms, when appropriate.

The Novel as Medium of Witnessing

As if to emphasize the limits of media in trauma narratives, in the case of Llobet, again, she chose the literary form over the journalistic or legal one, which "rarely provides survivors with the freedom for personal expression" (Gilbert 55). Consequently, one can evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the novel. It is interesting that Llobet did not opt for the testimonial, the example *par excellence* of which is Primo Levi's *Si Questo è un Uomo* or Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit*. I can put forward at least three reasons that argue for fiction's advantage: Firstly, the malleability and length of the novel allow for coming-to-terms. Secondly, the possibility of figurative language in fiction permits what is immediately not expressible to be expressed. Thirdly, fiction affords Llobet the faculty of distancing,

1 «Les survivants observent le camera avec curiosité et puis détournent la tête. Irene ne les aperçoit pas: elle ne voit que leur image dans le cadre... «Pose-leur des questions», m›intime-t-elle. Je commence mais Irene me coupe d'un ton tranchant. Elle en pose d'autres, plus courtes, plus dures». See also pp. 60-65 and 81-82.

with the possibility of making Madel as the former's avatar.

The other individual testimonies—those of Liliana, Jack, Rosie and Teresa—remind one of a collaborative text where "it is not always clear who is doing the actual *writing*" (Gilbert 130, emphasis in the original). Indeed, "the position of the collaborator is complex, often fulfilling several roles simultaneously: that of listener, secondary witness, writer and mediator" (Gilbert 130). However, fiction dispenses Llobet of the complications of collaboration, especially with post-trauma survivors. While "authenticity"—as first-hand direct witnessing—of the testimonial may come as an issue, one may simply argue that, by preferring the genre of the novel, Llobet was never after a testimonial in the first place.

Furthermore, interestingly, the chronology of the plot of *Les mains lâchées* is linear. Thus, it does not at all ascribe to postmodern aesthetics dear to early advocates of trauma fiction. The postmodern novel has become the preferred literary genre in early trauma studies where spectral presences, aporetic prose, nonlinear narratives, and temporal disruption, among others, abound (cf. Luckhurst 90). With the postcolonial turn of trauma studies, however, critics like Kali Tal (17) have warned against a mandatory and recent elitist use of postmodern aesthetics in order to highlight trauma, thus excluding other possible contexts. As such, *Les mains lâchées*, unwittingly perhaps, ascribes to the postcolonial trend in trauma studies. It responds more to Caruth's ethical goal for trauma studies, which, according to her, "may provide the very link between cultures" (*Unclaimed* 11).

Translation as Listening Again

Interestingly, in the context of *Les mains lâchées,* trauma and translation can be studied in the perspective of ethics and survival. Similar to trauma, translation can be perceived as an afterlife: "To cross the threshold from life to death and from death to afterlife is to be translated, to be in translation. Translation is the mode through which what is dead, disappeared, forgotten, buried, or suppressed overcomes its determined fate by being borne (and thus born anew) to other contexts across time and space" (Brodzki 6). Of course, Walter Benjamin was perhaps the first one to formulate this idea so eloquently in "The Task of the Translator," where "to survive" corresponds to two words in the German language: whereas "Überleben means above life—that this life referred to exceeds nature, biology, organic corporeality alone," "*Fortleben* means the prolonging of life. Übersetzen means, not surprisingly, translation" (Brodzki). Furthermore, in her seminal work, *Can These Bones Live?,* Bella Brodzki explains translation as a cultural practice and symbolic action, and above all as a process that extends life, but one that also

prolongs the meaning traces of death-in-life, life after death, and life after life. Both bodies and texts harbour the prospect of living on in their own remarkable ways" (5). Consequently, the translator, in his or her task to prolong life, engages in ethical practice.

In *Les mains lâchées*, Llobet effectuates work of translation, whether it be interlingual – from Llobet's experiences mostly in English into French—or intralingual—Madel's "transcription" of the other survivors' tales. As such, there are several layers of attempts at "prolonging the lives" of the Yolanda survivors. On a self-reflexive note, I as reader and critique, also participate in this movement, in this "listening again" of excerpts into English.

Conclusion: A Call for a Reader-Witness

The reader of climate trauma then, or any testimonial for that matter, is also called to witnessing. Indeed, "to read is to witness" (Collins 14). The testimony invests the reader with a responsibility and a "duty to listen and to validate the survivor's story, just as the survivor of trauma has a duty to tell the story" (Gilbert 84).

Instead of coming full circle, the conclusion of *Les mains lâchées* unsettles the reader by reminding him or her that "Yolanda" is more than just a super typhoon: it is a politico-social problem: "[a] mix of political arrogance and badly relayed information have killed 6300 people, made 1061 persons disappear, not to mention the 28, 689 wounded and millions of displaced who lost everything" (151)[1].

Such realisation takes us back to the impetus of *Les mains lâchées*: Anaïs Llobet's way of making sense of the past by resorting to the novel as a more appropriate medium of recounting trauma. While the novel offers a critique of the risks of climate crisis pornography, through Madel, empathy, witnessing, and ethical listening are illustrated. Lastly, ethical listening is extended to include translation and the role of reader as another witness, especially in trauma literature.

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1 «Un mélange d'arrogance politique et d'informations mal transmises a tué 6300 personnes, fait disparaître 1061 d'autres, sans compter les 28.689 blessés et les millions de déplacés qui ont tout perdu».

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The Literary Roots of Critical Media Studies[1]

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Abstract The study of media is a very young discipline but its roots in literature can be traced as far back as 60 B.C.E. with *Rhetoric* by Aristotle. From the early days of print, to the age of social media, and with the new technologies that are expected to grace the fourth industrial revolution that is now being felt by the current generation, the discipline of media studies has consistently worked around frameworks and methodologies drawn from both the humanities and social sciences. However, it is from literary criticism that it draws its incipient and later on, deeply-entrenched, theoretical and methodological impulses. More specifically, the literary roots of critical media studies may be identifiable in the following elements: 1. The continuing use of rhetorical criticism; 2. The influence of linguistic theory and the semiological tradition; 3. The role of narratology through the constructionist and the phenomenological-hermeneutic traditions; 4. The influence of phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition on reception studies; 5. The emphasis on textual analysis using critical theory and poststructuralist approaches; 6. The commitment to expose the interplay between power and communication; 7. The openness to the link between theory, criticism, and social action. It is therefore the contention of this paper that the basic tenets of ethical literary criticism have influenced too the supposed ethical framework of media studies. The proof of such assumption may be linked to the rhetorical, semiotic, constructionist, phenomenological, hermeneutic and poststructuralist traditions that continue to propel and animate the discipline.

Key words literary criticism; media studies; rhetoric; semiotics; constructionist; phenomenological-hermeneutic framework; post-structuralism; ethical framework

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1 This is a revised version of the plenary presentation delivered at the International Conference on Ethical Literary Criticism and Interdisciplinary Studies held on April 26 to 28, 2019 at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila.

and Adaptations, which won the National Book Award for Film/Film Criticism in 200, tackled the intersection between literary criticism and film theory through a sampling of texts. Her research interests include postcolonial and postmodern literary and cultural studies.

Introduction

This paper explores the complementary existence between literature and media, how one sometimes supplant the other, or perhaps become the other's resurrected form. The paper does not claim that critical media studies is just an offshoot of literary criticism. Rather, it claims that the rise of media is part of a major turning point in literary development or a shift in literary history. It can be seen too from a reverse perspective: literature is itself a medium. This paper then will undertake a historical explanation of the parallel developments between literary criticism and the critical study of media, which eventually point to their complementary ethical trajectories.

Is It a "Turn" of a Revitalization?

A "turn" connotes a major shift, a change in consciousness, or a transformation in modes of thinking. Insofar as the concept of "ethics" has always been attached to the nature of function of literature from the beginning, this "turn" to ethics may be claimed to be more of a revitalization of the concept rather than a new one.

Any study in the history of Western literary criticism would commence on a discussion of the contrary positions of Plato and Aristotle on the nature and function of literature. While Plato raised concerned for the possible negative influence of poets to the citizens of the Republic, Aristotle noted the value that the mimetic quality of poetry has on its hearers. Ethics is at the core of this dialogue that has influenced the course of literary production and literary criticism down the ages.

The idea of literature has been as old as the concept of the word itself. In the King James Version of the Bible, John noted in Chapter 1 Verse 1 the inextricability of the word from the concept of creation in the passage: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God." Such primeval partnership between word and narrative points to the inherent value of language and communication which governs the relationship between a divine power and a community of believers.

If language has always been around, then literature and media have had a long tenure too on earth. However, if we follow what Walter Benjamin said in his essay titled "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," our idea of art

today had only a remote connection to what they had in ancient times, from classical Greece for instance. Ancient tools of technology were developed in the name of religion. Foundry, sculpting and recitation of epics were part of temple rituals. The world would wait some 3,500 years more for mechanical reproduction to supplant the world of originals. Past the period of antiquity, they came to be known as art. But they are known by another name to the mechanical world: they were called the media. To quote Benjamin: "We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind…..Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art" (223-224).

The Period of Orality

Oral speech was the first medium ever invented by humanity. That which we call oral literature today may in fact be more aptly referred to as verbal performance of "tales, oratory, and song" (Ong 331). Walter Ong, the Jesuit scholar who wrote on Marshall McLuhan, notes that the phrase "oral literature" or "oral writing" results to a "confused nomenclature" (331) because it is so distinct from our conception of literature as written.

Nie Zhenzhao also shares that view. In his interview with Charles Ross, Prof. Nie said that "oral literature is an incorrect term, since it was narrated through memory. It can be better addressed as brain text. In other words, oral literature is not literature per se but the brain text related via oral narratives" ("A Conceptual Map of Ethical Literary Criticism: An Interview with Nie Zhenzhao," www.fwls.org/plus/view.php?aid=247).

The world will have to wait for 500,000 years before learning to write. And when it finally happened, the vanguards of oral culture issued a warning to the death of memory. Plato wrote on this in "Phaedrus" whose recreation of the conversation between Socrates and the Sophist Phaedrus, as they were walking by the walls of Athens, may be considered as sort of cautionary discourse on the diminution of memory when the new skill of writing that had been introduced into Athenian society at that time.

Socrates, in that conversation, recounted the story of Theuth who presented "his arts" (Leitch, et al. 81) to Thamus, then King of Egypt. When the subject wandered into Theuth's new invention called writing, Thamus replied "O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of

those who learn it…. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality..." ("Phaedrus," in Leitch, et al., eds, 81). And so, as Thamus has voiced out, human memory would become a prized possession in the subsequent age of writing. Therefore, the conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus addressed the role of memory in a society that is increasingly adopting the technology of writing.

The Age of Written Literature/The Age of the First Information Revolution

Media historian Irving Fang (1997) considers the invention of writing sometime in 4,000 B.C.E. as the first media technology, the first information revolution, so to speak. The discovery of writing materials such as clay, animal skin, bones, papyrus, and parchments helped ancient people conceive media as a tool to carry out the task of survival and eventually, in laying the foundations for a concept of community. Most relevant to this investigation is the utility of writing as medium of literature. In fact, in can be deduced from Benjamin's analysis that literature had always been the language of ancient belief.

From the ideographic writing of the Egyptians to the phonetic system of the Babylonians, the technology of writing took the function of what today's media does: documenter, chronicler, mediator, memory archive. These early literature was interchangeable with daily human activities. Literature was media. Ong (2002), for instance, traces the beginnings of writing from the Sumerians sometime in c.3500 B.C. to the Aztec script around A.D. 1400 (333). Meanwhile, Real (1989) divides ancient writing systems into ideographic and phonetic writing (25).

The very first impact of media technology on developing literature as an art form was "fixing [of] the spoken words," which Fang (1997) said "changed the human condition" (9). Literature, for its part, passed from oral to written, and so its function adjusted too — from ritualistic to aesthetic.

But the world would soon give way to a new context—the context of writing—which did not happen overnight. It took 496,000 years for the oral or tribal age to transition into a writing age and the transition from ideographic writing to phonetic writing waited two thousand years to happen.

During the entire middle ages, the monks perfected the art and science of writing technology. As Fang (1997) reports: "In a monastery scriptorium monks copied books onto parchment, a prepared animal skin, usually from a sheep or a goat" (24). Such monastic preoccupations led to the development of a host of book production-related skills, namely: annotating, translating, copying, illuminating, binding, cataloguing, abstracting, medieval calligraphy, paper technology and book

archiving. But the biggest invention of theocratic Middle Ages was the culture of reading itself.

With Johann Gutenberg's movable type, the eyes of the world grew fixated on the printed text. And it seemed that Socrates fear of writing have had only a remote connection with what would come after. Printing gave birth to a generation who will rebuild the old world. A visual interpretation in the book *The Medium is the Massage* captures it well: "The hand that filled the parchment page built a city" (McLuhan and Fiore 48). It was the second information age, and it was writing at its finest.

Printing allowed the world to think in symbolic terms. While the oral world is cyclic and temporal, printing is linear and fixed. People were no longer listening to a recitation of an epic, they were reading a version of that epic. The new medium carry with it knowledge and memory. It is perishable but it is also replicable.

It took three millennia and a half for the world to pass from writing to print, but when it finally happened, literature was never the same again. The first book printed, the King James Bible, contributed to the wide popularity of exegetical reading, beyond the confines of the monasteries.

The newspapers, said Benedict Anderson, was crucial in the birth of modern nation-states. They are, in Anderson's words, "one-day bestsellers" (35) that can unite the consciousness of a community. To the colonies, the newspaper played a key role in galvanizing resistance against the empire. People who have not met at all except in an "imagined community" forged their dream of liberation, guided only by the news of the day.

Through Gutenberg print, stories were serialized in magazines and mass advertising became a regular part of the penny press. Mass consumption of affordable periodicals led to mass literacies. The invention of printing provided space to new literary genres. One of such was the novel. As Fred Inglis (1990) has said "The novel, grandest of art forms invented by the bourgeoisie of capitalism, expresses through its structure its sense of its novelty and the importance of the individual in all his or her individuality. The titles of some of Europe's most famous novels tell us this: Tom Jones, David Copperfield, Emma, Jane Eyre, Anna Karenina, Pere Goriot. Personal moral psychology is at the very heart of the novel" (11).

By the early 19th century, the coming of electronic media led to major shifts in literary production. With the birth of telegraph, telephone, phonograph, motion pictures, radio broadcasting and television, literary genres, forms and styles became more dynamic and experimental, accommodating the mechanistic, provisional and

aural context of the new media.

Despite the concerns against electronic media, literature adjusted its forms and function. As Adam Hammond (2016) has noted, "Precisely because new media threatened literature with extinction—precisely because they seemed to possess the ability to unseat it from its historical position of power—they prompted such critics into a productive reconsideration of what literature was" (29).

Literary Studies and/as Media Studies

Scholars used to regard media studies as a subfield of communication studies. Today, it is now perceived and practiced as a separate discipline. Although it is still deeply intertwined with communications studies, it has already developed its own set of theories and research frameworks. The rise of social media and the birth of super technologies and systems such as artificial intelligence, robotics, internet of things, and the other products of the fourth industrial revolution have forced us to give it more serious thought.

However, it cannot be denied that one should acknowledge the synchronic development of literary studies and media studies. Early communication studies trace its lineage from literary study. The word "communication," for instance, is connected to the tools by which knowledge may be attained. Communication in its earliest senses involved language. During the Middle Ages, the subjects called trivium address the need for communication competence. Grammar, rhetoric, and logic were but the means of language to seek knowledge about the world. Subsequently, quadrivium or the subjects pertaining to music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy were introduced to develop competence in the use of language, which then was based on Latin.

Early media studies borrowed theories, conceptual frameworks and pedagogical approaches from literature, finding its strongest link in the centrality of language in communication. The early faculties that studied communication in the United States were the speech and drama faculties. These faculties started in the first half of the 20th century as small breakaway groups from the English departments which then were dominated by literature scholars.

The early teachers of oral communication drew from the classical theory of *Rhetoric*, the oldest communication theory. The speech teachers developed courses around "public address, oral interpretation of literature, radio announcing, drama, debate, and roundtable discussion," which were modern extensions of the theories of "Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian" (Griffin 21). Aristotle named three rhetorical methods that can help in producing an excellent public speech, namely:

"Logos (which refers to its argumentative and ideational content), pathos (which refers to the speech's emotional appeals), and ethos (which pertains to message source credibility)" (John Smith 269).

After the Second World War, variations of classical rhetoric and Neo-Aristotlelianism became famous in universities. In contemporary times, rhetoric is appropriated in communication studies as "the practical art of discourse" (Griffin 13). In terms of examining effects, the field of rhetoric is largely humanistic. To avoid the use of quantitative methods, they came up with methods of analyzing message designs that lead to analysis of effect of speech or public speaking.

Early critical media theorists came in the wake of the rise of mass society in the 19th century at the height of the Industrial Revolution. However, the concern for massification has been there ever since the printing technology was invented in the 16th century. Inglis notes the indebtedness to literary criticism of the liberal and Marxist traditions of critical media studies.

The 19th century was still reeling from the influence of romanticism and its heavy emphasis on the value of the individual. As capitalism and modernist lifestyles pose a threat on the value of the individual, the liberal-humanist imagination makes its loudest and most pointed critique of society. Matthew Arnold issued a prescription on the value of criticism in educating modern man on the "best that has been thought and written in the world (in Leitch, et al. 824).

Arnold would be complemented by the Leavises. The wife, Q.D. wrote in *Fiction and the Reading Public* of the manipulative strategies deployed by commercial publishers in influencing the way of life of the unmindful readers. The once established status of the canon, of the great tradition, is giving way to mass media and F.R. Leavis, that last vanguard of the said tradition, lamented the so-called onslaught of massification in the book *The Great Tradition*. Leavis' solution is "to use the educational system to distribute literary knowledge and appreciation more widely" (qtd in During, ed., 1993).

The British Cultural Studies is another tradition of critical media studies that draw from the literary criticism that was prevalent in the early 20th century. It has been influenced by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and later, Stuart Hall of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Hoggart, one its stalwarts, decried, along with the Leavises, the impact of media on the masses, partly owing to the demise of the supposed superior education provided by literary classics. However, Hoggart was more thoughtful in pointing out that the masses may have the ability to discriminate from among the mass-produced materials circulated in public. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart issues a caution on

outright dismissal of popular culture and blind veneration of elite culture.

Literature and media are of equal footing in William's estimation for they arose from the ordinary lives of the people. Williams contradicts McLuhan's theory of technological determinism, claiming that society is a determining factor to the production of cultural forms.

Stuart Hall, for his part, continued the early scholars' position on the levelling of hierarchies between elite and popular culture and in negotiating between literature and media. The British Cultural Studies scholars, then, represented by Hoggart, Williams and Hall, see both literature and media as texts of culture whose nature and function are decided by their contexts.

The other theoretical tradition that has influenced shifts in the function and reception of literature in the 19th century and the growing concern over the proliferation of mass media was the Marxist theoretical tradition.

Central to Marxist analysis of literature is a critique of the mode of production and the relations of production. Literary works, according to this framework, are assessed according to how they examine the impact of capitalism on the work; how the concepts of class and labour shape the worldviews of authors; how the entire ecology of literary production may intrude on the production, distribution and consumption of the works; the external factors that influence the circulation of the works; and, the role of social institutions like family, religion, government, education, arts and media in influencing the whole cycle of economic and creative activities.

Marxist literary theory treats the concept of class category and how the consciousness of the bourgeoisie have been a seepage in both the content and form of literature. For instance, the Marxists see the consequence of printing as two-fold: On the one hand, print technology allowed the serialization of the novels and their accessibility to the masses. On the other, the mass distribution and consumption of said novels were instrumental in affirming middle class morality and maintaining the status quo.

One example is Terry Eagleton's critique of Karl Marx who observed the supposed "eternal charm" of the Greek classics such as the *Iliad* when the original contexts in which they were produced are no longer in place. But then the Neo-Marxist in Eagleton (2001) is quick to point Marx's residual elitism:

> But how do we know that it will remain 'eternally' charming, since history has not yet ended? Let us imagine that by dint of some deft archaeological research we discovered a great deal more about what ancient Greek Tragedy

> actually meant to its original audiences, recognized that these concerns were utterly remote from our own, and began to read the plays again in the light of this deepened knowledge. One result might be that we stopped enjoying them. We might come to see that we had enjoyed them previously because we were unwittingly reading them in the light of our own preoccupations; once this became less possible, the drama might cease to speak at all significantly to us. (10)

Eagleton's view on the problematic stance of Marxists on the aura of the classics is instructive in understanding how the shifts in the function and reception of literature also affected the function and reception to media texts in the 19th century. On the one hand, the Marxists decry the massification supposedly engineered by capitalists through the bourgeosie. On the other, they can also valorize elite culture through which the class and gender divide originated.

Along the Marxist lines, is the towering contribution of The Frankfurt Institute, consisting of a group of scholars who came together in Germany in 1922 but fled from the Nazis and re-established themselves at the University of Columbia in the United States and came back only to Germany in 1949. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin were the names of the scholars who studied both literature and media before and after the 2nd World War.

The Frankfurt critics read beneath the surface of literary and media texts. This is called the "hermeneutics of suspicion," which Ott and Mack (2013) define as a mode of analysis with a deep distrust of surface appearances and "common sense explanations" (16). This kind of hermeneutics therefore prevents either an outright dismissal of the text produced by media nor a blind acceptance of everything they produce. For instance, Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, particularly the chapter on "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," issued a condemnation of the technologically-enhanced products of mass media as a manipulative, totalizing, and deceptive entertainment that lead to a homogenization of taste and the affirmation of the status quo.

Walter Benjamin, seemed have a more complex view of mechanization, which he said "changes the reaction of the masses toward art" (234). He noted too the aesthetization of Fascism in his time but has also predicted the subsequent response of the masses by politicizing art—which means that reproducibility will allow them to take the role of critic, through in an "absent-minded" (241) way, having been given the chance to see its worth on their own terms.

The liberal-humanist and Marxist Literary and media studies coincided with the growth and development of positivism and empiricism in natural and social sciences. It must be noted that despite the humanistic thrust of European media studies, which culminated in the peak of liberal-humanist and Marxist theories, empiricism dominated American media studies. The scientific or empirical tradition has been a residue of 19th century positivism. Greatly influenced by August Comte's Positivist Philosophy relies on empiricism, evidence and observation.

Twentieth century positivism, largely championed by the U.S., led to large-scale research projects deploying the survey method and quantitative content analysis that measure the amount of knowledge, attitudinal and behavioral response to mass media.

How did literary approach to media analysis fare during the peak of positivist communication science?

From the 1930s to 1960s, the use of the analysis of effects became so dominant in communication. One example is the Payne Fund study conducted in the U.S. in 1933. The study measured the impact of feature films on the young and their delinquent behavior through quantitative data and field interviews (Blumer and Hauser, Hanson and Maxcy, eds.). Similarly, a classic case of suggestibility and panic occasioned by the radio production of Orson Welles' adaptation of the H. G. Wells classic *The War of the Worlds* saw the people in Chicago and nearby states being so affected by the broadcast (Cantril, in Hanson and Maxcy, eds.). Unmindful that it was only a dramatization of the Wells novel, a segment of the population became panic-stricken and started calling up their relatives and fleeing their homes. The literary sources seem to produce a curious response eliciting either a direct or indirect responses from the audience.

The effects tradition depended on the scientific method, more particularly the influence of behavioral science (Griffin), the connection to the literary was still identifiable. For example, Harold Lasswell, a political scientist who studied Nazi propaganda and developed the functionalist model, came up with a theory that connects to the art and science of persuasion, which traces its roots to the theory of rhetoric.

Propaganda analysis and the scientific study of effects co-existed during the first half of the 1900s, proving that the literary method continue to influence the study of communications media even if the latter have been increasingly encroached upon by social scientists who employ quantitative methods. Since they both deal with texts, literary criticism and media analysis attempt to unmask the ideologies that underpin them.

The rise of qualitative research methods and the interest in critical theory may be linked to the disenchantment of scholars over the limits of quantitative science in unmasking the misinformation and disinformation linked to wartime propaganda. After the Second World War, Lasswell and his colleagues at the University of Chicago, now associated with the famous Chicago School of theories, began analyzing Adolf Hitler's massive propaganda campaign to promote the Third Reich in Nazi Germany. The work of Hitler's information chief, Alfred Goebbels, and that of his official filmmaker, Leni Reifentahl, of that infamous *Triumph of the Will* film, could not simply be subjected to the cult of objectivity of promoted by quantitative science. Propaganda and its negative consequence required a fuller understanding of communication persuasion.

One methodology that has been used to unmask ideology is structuralism. Claude Levi-Strauss's method of structuralist anthropology has been particularly useful to literary studies and has since migrated to media studies. The method of decoding binary oppositions inspired many readings of literary works, going through both surface structures and deep structures of texts. The structuralist methods of Tzvetan Todorov and Vladimir Propp launched analysis of fairytales, folk tales, and myths and have migrated into analyses of films, television soap operas, comic books, popular music, advertising, and recently, online games, wattpad stories, and other forms of narrative media.

The provenance of the structuralist framework in literature particularly in reading epics, tales, and written versions of oral literature, inspired their deployment in media forms which now serve as the new portal for their adaptations and reprise. Herein, structuralist methods intersect with narratology, adaptation and intertextual approaches spearheaded by scholars such as Gerard Genette and Mikhail Bakhtin.

Aside from structuralist analysis of media texts, literary studies have also influenced the employment of semiotic analysis on media texts. One of the most influential semiotic theories came from Ferdinand de Saussure through his work titled General Course on Linguistics. Saussurean linguistics have aided language, literature, and media scholars in unraveling the arbitrary rules of language and their function in communication. The semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce (Littlejohn 63), Roland Barthes (Griffin 110), and Umberto Eco (Littlejohn 62) assist in examining the signification process that take place in decoding literary works. The same theories facilitate the study of media and cultural texts.

Semiologists in literature have the tendency to be eclectic and multidisciplinary. One example is the body of works of scholar and novelist Umberto Eco whose writings range from the literary criticism to analyses of media texts is Umberto Eco.

His novels like *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum* are novels of ideas and theoretical discourses at the same time, tackling semiotics, the postmodernist literary styles and cultural analysis such apocalypticism, millenarianism, marginalia and the like. His novels teem with foregrounded discussions of theories of the novel. His works of criticism serve as architexts to his fiction and they include analyses of media texts, treating these as extensions of literary and cultural criticism.

Connected to the study of the ideological apparatus of texts is the analysis of the political economy of literature, communication and media. Political economy is the critique of the production, distribution and consumption of literary and media texts.

Both literary studies and media studies share this analytical lens, using methods drawn from sociology and economics in examining the cultural capital or the specifics of production, distribution and consumption of literary and media texts. The assumption is that the capitalist mode of production and the nature of media have their significant effect on the types of literary works and media texts that are circulated. It also has an effect on their reception by the different classes of society.

The concept of social construction of reality is connected to phenomenology, a grand theory that has affected practically all knowledge. There has been a welcome shift from the emphasis on objective reality to one's experience as a source of knowledge. Objects and events come to our consciousness and we process them as part of our experience and this is the basic assumption of phenomenology.

Connected to phenomenology is hermeneutics which is the method of interpreting any event, object, and text. Literature drew on the earliest works of biblical hermeneuts called exegesis or interpretation of scripture for the process of what would later on be known as the method of close reading. Eventually, biblical exegesis led to the philology or the interpretation of literary texts and social hermeneutics or the interpretation of personal and social interactions. The attention of literary analysis on the texts and their specific features influenced latter-day analyses of news stories, reportage, editorial cartoons, broadcast news, dramas, documentaries, films, games, advertising, and other media texts. The narratives produced drawn from events also borrowed from the methods of literary narratologists and cultural anthropologists.

Paul Ricouer's phenomenological and hermeneutical methods are assisted literary critics, particularly the New Critics, the formalists, and the pragmatic critics, in closely reading the internal features of texts (In Skinner, ed., 1985). For scholars of media, the method helped in appreciating the elements of forms and genres that are re-appropriated, beyond their original contexts.

The phenomenological and hermeneutical position of Hans-Georg Gadamer (In Skinner, ed., 1985) pay premium to people's assumptions about the world and the role of language in it. Gadamerian hermeneutics is useful in mapping the experience of the various media forms through time; how there can be no universal experience of reality but only highly selective, individual experiences. This only sharpened the idea of selective perception that guide theories like uses and gratifications and personal influence model.

Aside from the intersubjectivities inspired by phenomenology, some theoretical traditions still privilege the broad interpretation of literary and media cultures. Working on broad strokes, culturalists connect media environments to overarching consciousness.

The most important scholar who crystallized this view was Canadian literary critic, Marshall McLuhan, who in the 1960s released the controversial book titled, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, where he claimed that the content of the medium is immaterial compared to the components of the medium itself. Thus, the medium is the message. As a Shakespeare professor at the University of Toronto, McLuhan found out that his students' diminishing interest in the classics was connected to the increasing influence of electronic media. Instead of denouncing the new medium, he examined the kind of culture that was produced by that generation, citing it as major shift in consciousness. Where media was only a tool to approach knowledge before, the media became itself a reality, a worldview by itself.

McLuhan points to the same progression by citing the media eras of the tribal age, the writing age, the print age, the visual age, the electronic age, and so forth. For McLuhan, no medium will ever die. It will only re-appear in another form. Writing is survived by print. The book is survived by cinema. Cinema is survived by television. And the list goes on.

McLuhan sought to approach to communication and media studies from the perspective of literary criticism. He noted the transformations that happened to communities as a new medium is introduced. The media serve as extensions of human senses so that a new culture reared on the medium is born. McLuhan media eras are therefore literary eras and that is if we will disabuse the conventional view of the print-based literature. McLuhan died just before the dawn of the digital age but his theory continues to be relevant as a new technology is introduced to a certain community or generation.

In the Philippines, one may consider Nick Joaquin, National Artist for Literature, as a cultural theorist who followed McLuhan's path. Joaquin's theorizing helped explain his creative works and sometimes the creative works served as

extension of his cultural critique.

Joaquin appropriated McLuhan's cultural view of technology when he said in "Culture as History" that the Filipinos have indeed become the media environment that they inherited and altered. To quote Joaquin : "Culture has so come to mean its loftier dicta (like literature and the arts) that we needed a Marshall McLuhan to remind us that the medium itself is the message. And the message is: metamorphosis. We are being shaped by the tools we shape; and culture is the way of life being impressed on a community by its technics" (5). Joaquin's adoption of McLuhan's media eras helped crystallize his theory on the Filipino as an amalgam of identities. His theories on form—the fiction and nonfiction—reflected his integrated view of literature, media, and culture.

Conclusion: An Ethical Framework of Literary and Media Studies

The final point that may be considered here is the intersection between criticism and social action. This is where, I think, the ethical function of literary criticism and media studies may be located. Commitment and social action have always been linked to criticism.

In the 19th century, the rise of sociological approach to literary criticism, the concern for entities outside of the text, the reference to the actual, and the translation of intellectual commitment into social activism, have been the shared advocacies of socially-conscious literature and critical media studies.

Arriving late in the history of ideas, critical media studies draws inspiration from the realist, romantic, and liberal-humanist literary movements and from the political stance of Marxist literary theory. It is an umbrella term used to describe an array of theoretical perspectives which, though diverse, are united by their skeptical attitude, humanistic approach, political assessment, and commitment to social justice (Ott and Mack 15).

As earlier mentioned, it might not be correct to view media studies only drawing inspiration from literary criticism for as I have shown through an analysis of their beginnings and growth, literary and media technology developed synchronously.

To recapitulate, both disciplines therefore share the following components:

1. Common language;
2. Roots in the English literature programs;
3. Common interest in rhetoric;
4. The influence of the liberal-humanist tradition in their ethical and moral frameworks;

5. The influence of Marxist theoretical tradition in their political stance;
6. Their response to the challenges posed by the positivist tradition;
7. Their shared work and commitment to unmask the underlying ideologies in their texts;
8. The political economy of their circulation;
9. The phenomenological and hermeneutical methods that they appropriate through narratology;
10. Their contribution to cultural theory and cultural studies.

Furthermore, it can also be claimed that the ethical framework of critical media studies is somehow drawn from the same ethical framework that animated the transformations that literary criticism has undergone in the nineteenth century. Although they can now be studied as separate disciplines, they are connected by both method and aspiration, which is the humanistic method and the commitment to inspire social action. Even if the consequences of discourse for both literary studies and media studies have remained, for the most part, within the realm of thought or intellectual reflection, the commitment to change will always be their permanently shared aspiration.

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The Ethics of Living in Diaspora in Filipino American Literature

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Abstract The contemporary phenomenon of globalization or the transnational circuiting of goods, information, capital, people, among others, has engendered untold and radical consequences on the people's way of life, one of which is diaspora. Migration and diaspora have enabled people to settle in different parts of the world for various reasons. While the opening up of countries, like Japan, Korea, Singapore, Europe, Canada, and Australia, etc., has offered more job openings and choices for Filipinos, our colonial and neocolonial relations with the US render the latter as the classic destination for a large number of Filipino immigrants. Filipino American narratives and discourses revolve around assimilationist aspirations, border crossings, departures and returns, and the construction of "home." They written from diasporic realities and consciousness. This diasporic identity and consciousness is not limited to the oscillation of subjects in transnational spaces but is formed and produced by US hegemonic norms, racialized immigration laws and policies, and the discourse of "white ideal," rendering a diasporic subjectivity that is dialectically complex. Though the "American dream" or "desire to be white" can be elusive, it remains an overarching mythos and aspiration for Filipinos and Filipino American immigrants. The chasing of the "desire to be white" and/or "middle class" status (read as American dream) is contingent on a US citizenship, its award of which is underpinned by adherence to US's regulatory norms. But while the compelled character of regulatory ideals that Filipino immigrant subjects are constrained to abide and identify with renders closer to the realization of the "American dream," subjects are never totally constituted and that resistance against these norms and standards is possible. Thus, by its diasporic circumstance and condition, Filipino American literature, as demonstrated by selected texts, consciously or unconsciously write from an "ambivalent" position and subjectivity which can be recuperated to serve as a site for questioning the constitutive power of

the American dream and the ensuing Filipino American immigrant's realization of what is right and principled.

Key words Filipino American diasporic literature; ethics of diaspora; diasporic consciousness; Filipino American subjectivity

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Introduction

Filipino American diasporic writing will never take on a triumphalist, carefree stance as history and the hard life of the country the Filipino immigrants have left behind and the challenges confronted by the immigrants in America, the receiving country, will continually hound its writing. The Filipino American authors will never be freed from the summons and responsibility of looking back to their Mother country and blissfully settling in America. Memories of home will continue to chafe the much-beleaguered Filipino immigrant- writer, opening up a Filipino American

diasporic consciousness that is decidedly stricken by an ethical sensibility. This is the ethical diasporic consciousness from which s/he writes.

In Nie Zhenzhao's ethical conceptualization, he points out that the subject of ethics is informed by historical, contextual, and material forces and determinations rendering a fuller understanding of ethical decisions made by people and why such decisions are made. Thus, following Nie's formulation, it is imperative to locate the intrications or intersections of Filipino-American immigrant subject to its present site and space, vis-a-vis memories and conditions of home in this globalized situation.

Laying Down the Context

The 21st century is characterized as an unprecedented movement of vast number of people around the globe- some are driven to leave their homelands due to war, political oppression, natural disasters, famine, economic crises. Other people set out to seek better lives for themselves and their families and choose their destinations. Globalization has allowed untold opportunities and prospects of travel and possibilities of improving lives-materially and economically. The transnational circuiting of goods, services, information, capital, and people has engendered radical consequences on contemporary condition, one of which is migration and diaspora, and the Filipinos are not exempted from this phenomenon, bringing them to different destinations and parts of the globe.

For many Filipinos, the circumstances of departure are largely and mainly driven by the dismal and lamentable living conditions in the Philippines, such that the difficult decision of working abroad or taking the leap of settling in and forging a new life overseas may be the only option that could alleviate such present oppressive set up and conditions. Given this colonial and neocolonial "special relationship" between the Philippines and the US, the classic destination of Filipinos is America. Consequently, the legacies of American colonialism in the Philippines have had overarching consequences on the dynamics of positioning, such as how the Filipino immigrants are positioned in the US and their corresponding subjectivity and positioning of themselves in the receiving country**.** This dynamics of positioning is a consequence of a neocolonial, racialized discourse that has generally and largely rendered the Filipino-American immigrants in a liminal position. Thus, given this dynamics, the hyphenated Filipino- American identity is fraught with contradiction and ambiguity in the struggle for self -representation and determination in the US. The question is, how does one understand this ambiguity and contradiction that characterize Filipino- American subjectivity?

Mimicry as a Neocolonial Discourse

Neocolonial discourse remains entrenched and efficient way of disciplining the immigrant subject. It replicates the ideological rhetoric of "civilizing mission" through the apparatus of the White Ideal mimicry that was once deployed by the colonial project (in this case, both Spain and the US during their respective regimes). Thus, the apparatus of mimicry " emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha). Of note, however, is the contradictory effects of mimicry: first, given the aspiration of immigrant subject of mimicking the white ideal; and second, mimicry's "elusive**"** character as it is "constructed around an ambivalent space" (Ibid.).The ambivalent space refers to the immigrants' identity, culture, difference, and their discrepant histories that may impede or negate the success of the colonizing mission. In the same way, the regulation and discipline of the immigrant subject through the neocolonial discourse is interfered by the ambivalent space. What comes out in the process, is an incomplete, "impartial presence." Said says, "within that conflictual economy of colonial discourse … is the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination - the demand for identity, stasis - and the counter pressure of the diachrony of history - change, difference" (Bhabha quoting Said), which renders the incomplete accommodation of the neo-colonial discourse .Now, while mimicry is an effective strategy of containment, this distorted, impartial presence renders a space for recuperation.

The desire for assimilation and the vaunted green card that is dangled at the immigrants by the neo-colonial discourse compels them to cultivate the model minority subjectivity. But there are slippages. While the Filipino American immigrant subject desires or aspires the white ideal, and copying it in the process, America's neo-colonial project of producing a "reformed, recognizable Other," has yielded "*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha). This subject of difference or impartial presence ruptures the neo-colonial discourse and opens up not only memories of home and the looking back but engenders the ethics of diasporic sensibility, consciousness, and responsibility.

The Discourse of Delay Within the Globalized Condition

In this accelerated, highly globalized condition we are in, there is hardly any room for slowing down, for savoring and reflecting on things. There is no place for meandering lines as the cargoes must reach their destinations on time to restock the shelves, so to speak. The contemporary absorption with capitalism is deep. The

question is, how can people decelerate to allow a moment for a reorientation and a rethinking of one's bearings?

Jaimey Hamilton, an art critic uses the notion of conceptual "delay" to help us come to some decisions and solutions to contemporary predicaments She uses the metaphor of the seas to explain the analogy of delay. She says that the watery elements like the oceans and seas in their "consistent thwarting of human progress" (Hamilton's Lecture 2015), can be a geo-poetic and geo-aesthetic imaginary that have the potential to delay us. The ocean's vastness can be seen as a space of waiting, boredom, and futility. She says that when Captain Ahab in the novel Moby Dick sails the world in search of the whale that destroyed his leg, out of the expanse of the ocean's nowhereness, he asks his men if they see anything, the men answer, "nothing, nothing." But Hamilton posits that in this space of nothingness and boredom, and "futilitarianism" (a useful futility) is the potential for the emergence of an "in between," a "middle passage" and a "becoming" (Hamilton). It is the "in between" and its potential for recuperation that can aid in the attainment of some perspective that is often passed over by the constant motion of globalization. In the Filipino American texts that I will be reading, this crucial, disorienting moment of delay allows the Filipino-American protagonists to stop, rethink, and to take stock of themselves, in turn, coming to an understanding of a Filipino-American diasporic subjectivity and identity that is informed by an ethical sense and sensibility.

Ethical Literary Dimension

Coming from an ethical literary dimension, Nie Zhenzhao states that the function of literature is the presentation of a "historically contingent ethics and morality…" (Ross). He states further that ethical literary criticism "grounds itself on certain historical context or ethical environment of [the] literature produced, and sees the contemporary value of literature as its historical value [is] rediscovered" (Shang). In turn, "reading literature helps human beings reap moral enlightenment, and thus make better ethical choices" (Ross). Thus, framed from the broader lens of historical context, literature rendered in artful presentation brings into focus ethical choices for one's "enlightenment and education" (Shang). In other words, "literature is fundamentally an art of ethics" (Yang). For instance, the discourse and goal of attaining the American "green card" predispose or render on the Filipino immigrant a sense of forgetfulness as the desire is an assimilation with the host country, America. However, Filipino-American writing doesn't allow the erasure of memory. The Filipino-American writer writes from an ethical perspective. The writer jolts back the immigrant from straying too far and becoming oblivious to the call and the

pressures of home. The ethics of literature aims to "move readers to virtuous action" (Ross).

Moreover, Nie Zhenzhao points out that the "overarching aim of ethical literary criticism is to uncover ethical factors that bring literature into existence and the ethical elements that affect characters and events in literary works. It seeks to illuminate issues concerning the events, the characters and their actions from an ethical perspective, and to make ethical evaluation accordingly" (Ross; Yang). Such ethical responsibility is embodied by Gunglo Dagiti Mannurat iti Ilocano ti Hawaii (GUMIL Hawaii), a community-based association of Ilocano writers based in Hawaii. The Association was organized in the early 1970s, with the objective of preserving the Ilocano language, culture, history, and identity whose identity is constantly threatened by the systematic erasure of neocolonial discourses and norms. GUMIL Hawaii writing is informed by the responsibility and commitment to provide some sort of guide for some forgetful, straying Filipino/IlocanoAmerican immigrants. This association of Ilocano writers write from an ethical perspective**.** But this study looks at two Filipino-American diasporic texts: (a poem "Confessions of a Green Card Holder" by Fatima Lim-Wilson and a short story, "Something's Gotta Give" by Bataan Faigao). It coaxes an ethical reading following Nie Zhenzhao's formulation.

Ethical Reading of Filipino American Texts

The poem, "Confessions of a Green Card Holder" by Fatima Lim -Wilson essays a moment in the life of a Filipino-American green card holder. The protagonist can either be a male or a female immigrant. Laying down the dramatic situation of the poem, the persona green card holder, buys apples for a dollar a dozen, as well as two bottles of wine for a dollar in a local store in America. As the persona gets his loose change, a penny rolls down the counter. At this point, he debates whether to get down on the floor to retrieve the penny or leave it. This juncture whether to get down on the floor to look for the penny or just leave it is crucial as it causes the persona to rethink his/her action causing this brief stream of consciousness. First, he remembers the letters of back home, especially relating of mothers boiling bones for their family's next meal and a father, carving his son. Thus, the grim letters about home delays and puts into perspective this careless dismissal of the penny's little value and compels the immigrant to get down on his knees to look for it. The interior monologue yields in the persona the realization of the penny's buying power and its value for his people in Tondo. In the end, the persona is left with two thoughts: first, where to store his apples to keep them fresh, and second, with the

wine the persona bought, he wonders who to celebrate the wine with and what to celebrate about.

The Green card is officially known as a permanent resident card issued to the immigrant after a month or two in the US.[1] This signifies a change in status giving the immigrant some privileges accorded to a legal resident. The issuance of a green card opens up opportunities for legitimate work. The persona in the poem is a green card holder. One's identity practically rests on the green card; it defines the holder; it is a step away from that vaunted naturalization, and therefore, once naturalized, more rights is accorded to the US citizen. It is important to note that immigrants may also be denied the US citizenship as deemed fit by the Immigration officers, thus, the immigrant is expected to live an exemplary life, to take on a "model minority" behavior in order to be awarded the US citizenship in due time. Lisa Lowe posits that the "life conditions, choices, and expressions of Asian Americans have been significantly determined by the US state through the apparatus of immigration laws and policies, through the enfranchisements denied or extended to immigrant individuals and communities, and through the processes of naturalization and citizenship" (Immigrant Acts). Thus, one notes the extensive power of the US, legislating or emending immigrations laws and policies as it sees fit.

The persona is faced with two problems: 1) where to store the apples to keep them fresh, and 2) what to celebrate the wine with and who to celebrate it with. The persona's problem is in sharp contrast to another thought running in his/her head: the extreme poverty back home in Tondo, and the value of a penny which could yield much in peso currency, which is allegorically likened to the "multiplication of fish and loaves." Thus, the US penny that is changed into peso can feed a family back home in Tondo.[2]

The problem/conflict of the persona reveals the subjectivity of the persona. Subjectivity is a term most commonly used as an explanation for that which influences, informs, and biases people's judgments about truth or reality (Sethi, Janum). It is a central philosophical concept related to the person's consciousness, agency, personhood, reality, and truth which is variously defined by sources" ("Subjectivity"). Also, the category subjectivity is a collection of the perceptions, experiences, expectations, personal or cultural understanding, and beliefs specific

1 "In order to apply for a Green Card, you must be eligible under one of the categories listed below: through family, employment, special immigrant, through refugee or asylee status, etc." US Citizenship and Immigration Services.https://www.uscis.gov/greencard/eligibility-categories. Accessed 20 April 2019.

2 Tondo is a district in Manila.

to a person.[1] Finally, subjectivity is the person's internalization and identification of ways of a particular locale, undercut by the past, by memories, vis-a-vis pressures of the host country.

The persona's subjectivity is shaped by his having settled in America for some time now, long enough to have been granted the green card, and in turn, enjoying its privileges. He has taken on the American ways, concerns, and angst, as evidenced in his primary problem of where to keep or store the apples to keep them fresh, and secondly, who to drink the wine with and what to celebrate. For the persona, the wine is not just a drink to accompany meals but has its social function. Moreover, the sense of wastefulness or the "throwing away culture" that America is known for, as evidenced in the line "at the back of the store are baskets of scraps half a day old which a whole village would steal, even kill for," referring to his community in Tondo. The persona seems to have already imbibed this wastefulness, as demonstrated in his/her momentary hesitation to retrieve the penny, as it is ascribed little value, anyway. The persona's pseudo problems are in stark contrast to the grinding poverty back home. While the persona demonstrates middle class subjectivity and concerns and may have already imbibed some of the values of America, this American subjectivity, however, is not fully internalized as he stops, looks back and remembers his family back home in Tondo. This diasporic ambivalence allows him to oscillate between America and Tondo, rethinking in turn, his/her values. The question is what prevents the persona from completely turning into an "American."

Alienation: One Possible Consequence of Diasporic Identity, Consciousness, and Pressures of Diaspora

While the persona may now be experiencing relative ease and some comfortability in America, and whose condition is perhaps considered middle class as compared to life back home in Tondo or the Philippines, such price of securing a green card is loneliness. Here, the persona has no one to enjoy the wine with or finds no reason to celebrate. The lack of "wholeness" or the persona's experience of fragmentation and gnawing loneliness primarily emanates from his dislocation from home, a dislocatory condition. This alienation is the lack or absence of a community, amidst diasporic pressures. The racialized immigration laws can withhold the granting of a green card or a US citizenship, and therefore, an exemplary behavior is expected of the Filipino American green card holder. The long hours of work, for example,

1 A subject is an individual who possesses conscious experiences, such as perspectives, feelings, beliefs, and desires.

that the green card holder persona has to put in (necessary for sending remittance to folks back home) can probably be one reason that has prevented the immigrant persona from finding friends or connecting with fellow Filipinos. These are some material realities that plague the immigrant persona. Moreover, this alienation and the chafing discomfort that he feels intermittently, especially when it is provoked (here, it is the penny's small value in America but has much value for his community in Tondo) is weighed down by the ever-present awareness of poverty back home, which ultimately, does not allow the persona to forget his past and be careless with money. Thus, this alienation is the experience of unsettlement that will always gnaw at his diasporic being, consciousness, and identity, and will never allow the persona to rest and to forget memories of home.

The Ethical Consciousness

The persona's act of re-negotiation of space is not quite apparent in the poem, but the fact that s/he oscillates between America (as the new home) and the Philippines/Tondo as both his past and present, remembering or keeping in mind the sad, sad letters of home (grinding poverty and of a father going crazed due to hunger), opens up the diasporic consciousness of the persona. It opens up a "middle passage" that is shot through and informed by an ethical stance. This ethical consciousness enables the persona to be materially grounded on the realities of both spaces and allow him or her to make ethical choices and decisions. This is good and even a desirable condition as it prevents the total cooptation of the immigrant persona into the corporatist system and ideology that is the US (desire for the American dream, for example).More crucially, this diasporic, ethical consciousness has the potential of planting a critical grounding in the persona, thus, allowing a critical understanding of his diasporic values that are informed by his experiences and positioning, vis-à-vis the discourses, practices, regulatory norms, and sets of ideology deployed by the US hegemon, stopping his total cooptation into the vaunted American dream and white ideal.

This ethical sensibility is also illustrated in the another Filipino American character. In the story, Manong, the protagonist, makes difficult ethical choices.

To Be Human or to Be an Animal?

"Something's Gotta Give" by Bataan Faigao, takes us to Manong's life in New York City as a billboard painter. When the story begins, Manong was working on the giant face of Marilyn Monroe, which he was commissioned to do. Up on the rafters and suspended by scaffoldings, he meticulously works on her pouting lips,

sleepy eyes, and mole to capture the face of this American iconic figure. Manong started as a sugar plantation laborer in Hawaii but knocked up a hapa-haole or half-white woman, so he had to escape to San Francisco or risk imprisonment. In the 1930s, roughly around the time Manong arrived in Hawaii, the anti-miscegenation law[1] prevented Asians from dealing or marrying white women, otherwise, they get thrown into jail. In San Francisco, he worked as a dockhand but wanted more, compelling him to move to NYC, where he was finally able to land a job as a billboard artist. After several years of being trapped in a work in New York which is not much to his liking, he finally settled in a job as a billboard artist which he liked and had stayed on for a good ten years now when the story begins.

Living with Manong for a couple of months now is Beverly, a white woman, who, bedraggled and badly beaten up, stumbled into Mabuhay restaurant one day. Mabuhay restaurant is a diner owned and managed by another Filipino immigrant, with other Filipino immigrants and other ethnicities as restaurant crew. Beverly was running away from this big burly of a Marine man. Manong and the rest of the restaurant crew came to her rescue and were able to stave off the marine from finishing the girl. Manong brought her home and took care of her and practically adopted her, taking her into his life. Beverly, however, was deep into drugs.

Manong, on the other hand had fallen deeply and hopelessly in love with the white woman, who was always half-dazed, half-conscious due to drugs that she injects on herself. Everyone from his small group of friends knew his feelings for Beverly. Once he and Isidro (another Filipino) got into a fight, as the latter pushed

1 In the United States, anti-miscegenation laws (also known as miscegenation laws) were state laws passed by individual states to prohibit interracial marriage and interracial sex. Anti-miscegenation laws were a part of American law in some States since before the United States was established and remained so until ruled unconstitutional in 1967 by the U.S. Supreme Court in Loving v. Virginia. The term miscegenation was first used in 1863, during the American Civil War, by American journalists to discredit the abolitionist movement by stirring up debate over the prospect of interracial marriage after the abolition of slavery. In those of the original Thirteen Colonies that became states and enacted such laws, they were enacted as state law in the early 18th century; a century or more after the complete racialization of slavery. Typically defining miscegenation as a felony, these laws prohibited the solemnization of weddings between persons of different races and prohibited the officiating of such ceremonies. Sometimes, the individuals attempting to marry would not be held guilty of miscegenation itself, but felony charges of adultery or fornication would be brought against them instead. All anti-miscegenation laws banned the marriage of whites and non-white groups, primarily blacks, but often also Native Americans and Asians. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-miscegenation_laws_in_the_United_States. Accessed April 17, 2019.

Manong to have sex with Beverly. He said, "it is no big deal to fuck a whore especially if you are paying her rent" (Faigao 60).This remark incensed Manong and "decked [Isidro] right off" (Ibid.).

Manong was desperately in love with Beverly but could not confess this hapless and hopeless love for her. This craven feeling could be due to his position in America: first, as an ethnic, Filipino minority in the US, he can only do so much. Though this episode with Beverly is a more recent event in his life as a citizen of America, probably in the 1950s, the anti-miscegenation law (which was implemented strongly in the 1930s but has been outlawed in some states in the 1950s)[1] prohibiting Asians, like Filipinos from dealing and most importantly, from marrying white women, this practice, nonetheless, persists even after its being questioned and outlawed in the 50s when the story unfolds. One recalls that Manong left Hawaii in the 1930s for getting a hapa-Haole or half-white girl pregnant. The anti-miscegenation law was much enforced then or the jail for him. After he left Hawaii, finding a stable job was difficult. For years, he did odd jobs. It took several years before he got a job he liked in New York. Since then, he had been behaving well, living a model minority existence.

Secondly, Manong's white idealization of Marilyn Monroe is conflated with what he feels for Beverly- that is, to yield in to this desire for her would be a desecration of the white ideal. Once, Manong dreamt of making out with Marilyn Monroe but this dream unsettled him, leaving him with a strange feeling of "desecrating the white goddess" (Faigao 56).

Moment of Delay and Disorientation

While doing the finishing touches of the giant face of Marilyn Monroe, Manong experienced a dizzy spell. The sudden jerk he made caused the bucket of paint to spill over, splattering on Marilyn's giant face. One hundred fifty above ground and suspended by scaffoldings, he tried to regain his balance, his equanimity, and shock from this near death. Manong was literally suspended on air and the dizzy spell

1 The constitutionality of anti-miscegenation laws only began to be widely called into question after World War II. In 1948, the California Supreme Court in Perez v. Sharp ruled that the Californian anti-miscegenation statute violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and was therefore unconstitutional. This was the first time since Reconstruction that a state court declared an anti-miscegenation law unconstitutional, and California was the first state since Ohio in 1887 to repeal its anti-miscegenation law. As a result, during the 1950s, anti-miscegenation laws were repealed or overturned in state after state, except in the South. Nonetheless, in the 1950s, the repeal of anti-miscegenation laws was still a controversial issue in the U.S., even among supporters of racial integration. See "Anti miscegenation law".

caused him to momentarily suspend work on the painting. From his perch, 150 feet above ground, he looks down at the perpetually busy Broadway Street, indifferent to Manong's near death. His life flashes before him. He thinks of his journey from one state to the other for various reasons and finally finds himself in New York. He becomes a billboard painter in New York City, and he thinks he has come full circle, but could not confess his love for Beverly as this could have changed the dynamics of their relationship.

The disorienting effect of the giant face of Marilyn, that fills up his vision renders him dizzy. This momentary disorientation causing a dizzy spell has allegorically opened up an understanding of this fascination and desire of the white ideal as demonstrated in the meticulous care he works on Marilyn's billboard sign, this dream of making out with her, and by extension, this despairing love for Beverly, which remains undisclosed. The paint that runs down Marilyn's giant face, marring it in turn, can be allegorically read as a jolting out from this white ideal syndrome. Meantime, Manong's desperate and real love for the totally- messed up Beverly is encapsulated in this poignant song which a blind man along Broadway croons, accompanied by his blues guitar:

> Got me a woman, yeah
> got me the blues
> Got me a white woman,
> got me the blues, yeah
> Got me the white woman
> blues…

Manong could have easily taken advantage of Beverly who was always half-conscious or totally out of it, but he didn't. Moreover, as Beverly is much indebted to Manong for saving her from her abusive lover and for taking her out from the streets, and both are aware of this arrangement, Manong could have easily insinuated or bluntly sought sexual favor from her, but he didn't. For Nie Zhenzhao, the decision to transcend the "animal" in human beings and allow the reasoning man to prevail is what makes human beings different from animals, otherwise, man and animal remain essentially similar, just like Adam and Eve before they ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The fair reasoning and deliberation of Manong's actions prevented the baser instinct from winning over reason.

This great and heroic restraint that Manong put out comes from this essential goodness, which includes "sympathy, sociability, justice, and benevolence" (Jincai).

These come from the higher faculties of human beings. If Manong were allowed to stay in Hawaii he would have probably married the white girl or would have done his part as a father of the child the white girl was carrying, except that the anti-miscegenation law, a much- racialized and discriminatory law against Asian minority immigrants in the 1930s, forced him to flee to another state. His act of inviting Beverly into his apartment and getting her out of the streets (though he could not take her out of drugs) is a selfless act and even exposing himself to further trouble. The burly and abusive Marine lover of Beverly issues a threat of retaliation against Manong for daring to go up against this white dominant figure. Indeed, the man came back to challenge Manong, ending in a fight in an alley that badly injured him. Manong's actions and decisions come from being an essentially good man, an ethical man who would do what is proper and right. His journey from Hawaii as a plantation labor, to San Francisco as a dockhand, and finally settling in New York City as a billboard artist had given him ample learning and lessons on what is right, just, and ethical. Someone who knows how to use arnis or kali cannot be a cad. Like the rest of the martial arts (karate, taekwando, aikido, etc.), arnis[1] is informed by a gentleman fighter's code; that one's knowledge of martial arts is not used to bully or to attack people but for defense. He used his skill of arnis to bring down a bad man.

While Manong is a Filipino American living in New York and has been given a break through his talent as a billboard painter, he is not going to mess up this good life by getting into trouble. We see here that his actions and decisions are not only grounded on what is expected of an ethnic, minority immigrant but is essentially grounded on ethics, or the right thing to do. First, he accepts the challenge of the burly Marine lover of Beverly to fight him because this man is abusive and disrespectful of women and should be put in his place. Manong cannot allow this to happen to the girl or to anyone who is in an aggravated position. Secondly, he cannot confess his love for Beverly because it would be taking advantage of her situation and her helplessness. Beverly could have probably said yes but this could not have been the kind of love Manong wanted. Thus, he suffered silently. His decisions are calibrated by his past experiences as an immigrant and later as Filipino American citizen, yet such decision is essentially informed by an ethical dimension that is shaped by a diasporic consciousness.

Conclusion

The global phenomenon of diaspora will continue and will probably take on new

1 Arnis also known as Kali or Eskrima, is the national sport and martial art of the Philippines. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnis. Accessed 17 April 2019.

trajectories, forms, and consequences. More and more people will move and settle elsewhere, where they can find better jobs, better living conditions. The Filipinos will continue to disperse away but their ties with the home country will keep them grounded. According to Hall, the Motherland is a signifier of a desirable past, a past which can only be retrieved through memory. The image of the Motherland, therefore, serves to anchor diverse experiences. It is positioned at the center of diverse cultural identities…beneath shifting divisions and vicissitudes of an actual history," lending the dispersed immigrants an "imaginary coherence" (Hall 393). Affixing the Motherland as the center amidst diverse experiences, values, and relationships serves as a panacea, a salve for brokenness for dislocatory condition of the immigrants. It is a balm that heals severed and forgotten connections. Hall posits that the Motherland enshrined at the center "restores an imaginary fullness and plenitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past. The originary and the familiar serve as resources of resistance and identity with which to confront the fragmented and pathological ways in which Filipino American experience has been reconstructed within the dominant regimes... of the West" (Hall 394).

However, the Motherland not only serves as a wellspring or a fountainhead for dislocatory condition but is recuperated and refunctioned as a strategic site or signifier from which to confront racialized, discriminatory neo colonial practices and discourse in the US. The commonality signified in the Motherland renders the Filipino-American immigrant with strength and a strategic reference point. But more importantly, what gives the Filipino American immigrant subjectivity and identity some grounding are the ties with the Motherland that is shot through with responsibility and the ethics of remembering. Filipino American writing writes from this resolve; it will not allow the Filipino immigrant to forget.

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An Ethical Revaluation of Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*

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Abstract Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* captures the struggle of Filipino peasants in the United States. Even at the wake of the "American century," when globalization has taken the façade of a US neocolonial capitalist ethos to the disenfranchisement people in the diaspora and the Global South, the novel continues to be socially relevant. This paper is a revaluation of Bulosan's classic novel from an ethical literary perspective by focusing on the relationship between the internal and external worlds of Allos/Carlos and his brothers, especially Macario. Without neglecting the context and informed by Bulosan scholarship, the paper argues that Allos's brotherly feeling toward Macario and his brothers is the primary condition and drive for his social and ethical self-making and search for "America." The paper also argues that an ethical literary perspective will further highlight new themes and meanings in Bulosan's other multi-genre works.

Key words brotherhood; Carlos Bulosan; ethical literary criticism; Filipino family; Filipino values

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"I Am Your Brother… I Am Allos!"
(Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* 123)

Born in Binalonan, Pangasinan in the Philippines, Carlos Bulosan migrated

to the United States in 1931 and, from that time, experienced racial violence, unemployment, and prolonged illness until his death in 1956. Aside from active labor union work and editing the 1952 Yearbook for International Longshore and Warehouse Union, he wrote poems, short stories, and essays, gaining substantial publication and critical success. These short works were collected in *Letter from America* (1942) and *Laughter of My Father* (1944). A collection of his letters, *Sound of Falling Light: Letters in Exile* (1960), a multi-genre collection, *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan* (1995), a novel, *The Cry and the Dedication* (1995), and a short story collection, *The Philippines Is in the Heart* (2017), among others, were also published posthumously. He is most known for his novel, *America Is in the Heart* (1946/1973), hereafter *America*, which is considered "a social classic" as it "reflects the collective life experiences of thousands of Filipino immigrants who were attracted to [the US] by its legendary promises of a better life" (McWilliams n.pag.).

The readership of *America*, however, has not been consistent throughout the decades. After its initial publication in 1946, *America Is in the Heart* did not gain much attention until the late 1960s due to the political milieu in the US at that time.[1] It was through the efforts of scholars such as Dolores Feria and E.San Juan Jr that Bulosan's works were "rediscovered" during the years of the Civil Rights movement, leading to the republication of *America* in 1973; since then, the novel has been part of the US ethnic literary canon. Told from the first person perspective

1 Michael Pante and Leo Angelo Nery explains that Bulosan's works until the end of Second World War were used by the US literary establishment to promote "a neutered multicultural pluralism, devoid of his socialist and anti-imperialist leanings" (347). This was used merely as a token for the multiethnic population who were suffering inequality and oppression, even as these people were instrumental in sustaining the US economy especially during the War. After the War, the multicultural rhetoric has taken the backseat. As Susan Evangelista explains, pro-US and anti-communist sentiments were prevalent that most ethnic groups simply tried to "be as American as everyone else." Bulosan's activism—evident in his writings and in America—such as his support for labor unions were considered suspect because many believed in "a strong connection between 'foreign' and 'communist'". Therefore, ethnic literature mostly did not flourish during the ten to fifteen years through the postwar period. However, the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s also promoted ethnic consciousness that started among Black Americans and led to "a new cultural phenomenon ... in the form of Asian-American consciousness" (42-43).

of Allos/Carlos,[1] Bulosan's alter ego, the novel is described by Carey McWilliams in his 1973 introduction to the novel as "the first and best account in English of just what it was like to be a Filipino in [the West Coast] from 1930 to 1941" (n.pag.).

The milieu of the novel's publication and readership affected its critical reception. In *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of Class Struggle* (1972), the book that pioneered the historical materialist reading of Bulosan's works, E. San Juan focused on the novel's critique of labor exploitation, imperialism, and racism in the US:

> *America Is in the Heart* endures as Bulosan's testament of hope in the power of socialist humanism which informs the collective struggle of the working class and the anti-imperialist nationalism of oppressed peoples everywhere. It reaffirms the ideas of solidarity, militant radicalism and self-sacrifice that animate his poems, stories, letters and essays. It memorializes the Filipino workers' rise to self-awareness, the acceptance of their historic mission, by revolt against feudalism and capitalism. (93)

Michael Pante and Leo Angelo Nery contends that most Bulosan scholars—such as Susan Evangelista, L.M. Grow, and Marilyn Alquizola and Lane Ryo Hirobayashi—are still largely corroborating and supplementing San Juan's main arguments here decades after San Juan's book was published (346-348). In a metacritical move, Pante and Nery's essay emphasized the history of the struggle of the peasantry as the context both of San Juan's book and the dominant critical reception of Bulosan's works. These intersecting voices that focus on the themes of poverty, social injustice, and oppression are not surprising, given the history of nationalism and socialist realism in Philippine novels since Jose Rizal and carried over until the resistance to US imperialism. Maria Luisa Torres Reyes notes that many "nationalist" fictional works, exemplars of which are Rizal's "realist" novels, are "loosely referred to as 'social realist' are basically 'homegrown,' akin, but not necessarily directly related to, the international art movement in the West that ... drew attention to the everyday conditions of the working classes and the poor, and who are critical

1 The name "Allos" is used in the first three parts of the novel. Toward the end, the name changes to "Carlos" to signify a turn in the writer's self- and social consciousness, as will be discussed later on. However, to avoid confusion, "Allos" will be used hereafter to refer to the main character and narrator of the novel.

of the social structures that maintain these conditions" (55).[1]

Another dominant approach to Bulosan scholarship highlights the transnational position of the writer and the post- and neocolonial relationship of the Philippines and the US. Aside from San Juan's contribution to this approach in his latter books, scholars on Filipino American Studies (and more generally Asian American Studies[2]) have situated Bulosan in the matrix of diaporic peoples and movements and their multicultural context. In this sense, Bulosan is lined up alongside writers who have attempted to construct a Filipino sense of identity and community belonging to the *Manong* generation (such as Bienvenido Santos and NVM Gonzales) and the next ones (such as Jessica Hagedorn, Luis Francia, Eric Gamalinda, and others), as well as Asian American writers. These materialist and transnational approaches often intersect because the US neocolonialism of the Philippines has always been predicated on a capitalist and neoliberal logic. Martin Joseph Ponce explains these two major approaches in the Bulosan scholarship through the use of the phrase "socially articulate"—a phrase that Bulosan used to describe himself as a writer. Ponce analyzes of this phrase to mean being articulate *about* the social ("the articulation of social ideas"), *to* the social ("to speak to the Filipino masses and to be understood by them"), and *in* the social (a transnational Bulosan) (49-50). As a Filipino writer in the US, whose migration has been possible only through the colonial connection between the two countries and whose writings represent the experience of racial and labor injustice, Bulosan is at the juncture of

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1 Reyes contextualizes "socialist realism" in the West with its definition as a "trend in American art originating in about 1930 and referring in its narrow sense to paintings treating themes of social protest in a naturalistic or quasi-expressionist manner" (from Encyclopaedia Britannica qtd. in Reyes 55). In this sense, *America* may also be read parallel to the works of US writers in the "cultural front" such as John Dos Passos, Malcolm Cowley, Langston Hughes, Edmund Wilson, Lincoln Steffens, among others, just as Michael Denning had done.

2 Situating Filipino American Studies inside Asian American Studies is, of course, not without its problems. As I have reviewed elsewhere, this is one of San Juan's main contentions in his recent book Carlos Bulosan: Revolutionary Filipino Writer in the United States (2017), echoing the concerns of other Filipino Americanists. San Juan argued that Bulosan understood the distinct position of Filipinos in the multiethnic social fabric of the US: "Bulosan was one of the first organic intellectuals of the Filipino community to have understood this singularity [of Filipinos being unique from other Asians in the US] precisely in his depiction of the Filipinos as subjects occupying a unique position: participating in the class struggles of the citizens in the U.S. for justice and equality… while at the same time demanding freedom and genuine sovereignty for the Philippines as a necessary condition for their being recognized fully as human beings" (San Juan, Carlos Bulosan: Revolutionary Filipino Writer 77).

overlapping discourses. The connections among these discourses transform the ways in which the writer and his works are read and interpreted until the present, making Bulosan arguably the most read and written about Filipino writer in English outside the Philippines.[1]

Notwithstanding the rich Bulosan scholarship as briefly discussed, this paper provides a revaluation of *America* from the perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism (ELC) that has made its resurgence in the 1980s and even more recently in Asian academia. The complementarity of this reading with the existing scholarship is done in the light of Nie Zhenzhao's formulation of ELC which emphasizes "historicism." Nie explains that unlike moral criticism that takes ethical values as absolute and judges "good" or "bad" from today's standards, ELC's "historicism" provides an "examination of the ethical values in a given work with reference to a particular historical context or a period of time in which the text under discussion is written" (84). Ethics, therefore, is a cultural artifact that may be understood and evaluated according to the standards of a particular milieu or history, making the prescriptive agenda of moral criticism and didactic criticism suspect. According to Tomo Virk, determining the function of a particular literary work is more complicated because there can be no general statement on what is intended to be descriptive or normative, as literary "function" depends on a variety of factors, such as the author and his culture, not least the historical context (6-8).

In this sense, Bulosan's writings can only be fully appreciated in the context of the ethics they reflect. This is not far-fetched from Bulosan's project as a writer. In fact, in a letter to Florentino Valeros that Alquizola and Hirabayashi considers as "a blueprint for *America Is in the Heart*," Bulosan makes a statement about the historicity of culture:

> Now culture being a social product, I firmly believe that any work of art should have a social function—to beautify, to glorify, to dignify man. This assertion has always been true, and it applies to all social systems. But always art is in the hands of the dominant class—which wields it as a power to perpetuate its supremacy and existence. Since any social system is forced to change to another by concrete economic forces, its art changes also to be recharged, reshaped, and revitalized by the new conditions. Thus, if the writer has any significance, he should write about the world in which he lives; interpret his time and envision the future through his knowledge of historical reality. (qtd. in Alquizola and Hirabayashi 177)

1 A testament to this is the publication of *America* as a Penguin Classic this year.

Here, what is universal—the "assertion [that] has always been true"—is not culture (and its ethical content) but the social and critical function of art. Therefore, the writer's role is to represent his situation and, if need be, as is almost always the case because "art is in the hands of the dominant class," to question that reality. The writer, though necessary situated in his context, is instrumental in remaking that context—part of him is grounded but part of him looks for new possibilities. More importantly, the writer can remake the future *only through* his grounding in historical reality.

The revaluation of *America* through ELC, therefore is not to replace the previous approaches to Bulosan, but to supplement those readings by emphasizing its ethical content. This paper argues that the main ethical drive in *America* is Allos's familial (especially brotherly) relations. I will focus on the Allos's connections to his brothers while growing up in the Philippines and while struggling as a writer-activist in the US. This fraternity also metonymically represents the working-class collectivity as Michael Denning suggests,[1] but in this paper limits its scope to Allos's biological brothers as his model and inspiration. What is true both with regard to the familial and the collective is that "[t]he drama of the narrative lies in its attempt to resolve the contradictory nature of this kin structure, which is the source of community and solidarity as well as of strife and violence" (Denning 275). Sociologists and psychologists have studied the centrality of the family in the Filipino psyche and culture, but the theme is barely applied in reading literary works. Allos's family is crucial to the narrative and the character's formation, but the theme has been neglected by previous scholarship, a gap that can be addressed by applying ELC to *America*. In addition, an ethical revaluation also leads to an aesthetic revaluation of the novel because it is only through Allos's "brotherly love" that readers can fully understand the character's *agon* from which the conflict and other elements of the novel come.

It may be surprising to many readers of *America* that the novel's "rhetorical climax," a speech that closes Part Two of *America* (Ponce 51-52), is not delivered

1 According to Denning, the character system of *America Is in the Heart* is "organized around a network of migrant brothers. The book opens with brother Leon returning from the First World War and it closes with his brothers Macario and Amado going off to the Second World War. […] The book's fraternity is not limited to biological brothers; the network of young migrant men from the same region serves not only as a microcosm of the Filipino community, but as a gallery of alternative lives and fates…. Many of these are thinly disguised versions of Bulosan's friends; but… they are less portraits of real people, as one finds in a memoir or autobiography, than projections of a collective subject" (275).

by Allos but by his brother, Macario. Toward the end of that two-page speech that could have been lifted from a manifesto calling for a united front, Macario ends with the following lines:

> America is also the nameless foreigner, the homeless refugee, the hungry boy begging for a job and the black body dangling from a tree. America is the illiterate immigrant who is ashamed that the world of books and intellectual opportunities is closed to him. We are all that nameless foreigner, that homeless refugee, that hungry boy, that illiterate immigrant and that lynched black body. All of us, from the first Adam to the last Filipino, native born or alien, educated or illiterate—We are America!
>
> The old world is dying, but a new world is being born. It generates inspiration from the chaos that beats upon us all. The false grandeur and security, the unfulfilled promises and illusory power, the number of the dead and those about to die, will charge the forces of our courage and determination. The old world will die so that the new world will be born with less sacrifice and agony on the living... . (*America* 189)

In these oft-quoted statements, Bulosan made Macario, not Allos, as his mouthpiece as if it is the former, not the latter, whose character development the readers have been following throughout the novel and whose struggle the novel narrates. Allos became only an observer to his brother's words that "seized [Allos's] imagination, so that years afterward [he is] able to write them almost word for word" (*America* 188). Why did Bulosan not make Allos speak these words, the effect of which would have been more direct and arguably stronger than making Macario speak them, especially that these words are a call to action? I think the reason has to do with how the novel also presents a coming-of-age of Allos as the main character. That means that Allos has to imbibe the principles of the collective as part of his gradual transformation to become a "socially articulate" writer-activist. In other words, Macario is the permeable membrane between the social and the personal that made the osmosis of ideas between these two spheres possible. According to Martin Ponce, *America* includes two discursive modes: first is the "lyrically rendered pastoral representations of the homeland widely used by Philippine writers at the time" and the second is the "class-based social analysis derived from interwar proletarian literatures and theories" (55). I argue that these two are bound by the fraternal-based ethics that may be found especially in Allos's relationship with Macario.

San Juan also comments on Allos's "personalistic ethics" based on his relationship with his father. However, "Macario, the intellectual in the family, [was the one] who first inculcated in Bulosan the Crusoe ethics which affords a paradigm of his quest in America" (*Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination* 95). San Juan refers to the Crusoe ethics here as "idealism" but more specifically, it is the lesson that Allos learned when Macario read him Robinson Crusoe's story early in the novel:

> [Macario] started reading the story of a man named Robinson Crusoe who had been shipwrecked in some unknown sea and drifted to a little island far away. My brother patiently explained the struggle of this ingenious man who had lived alone for years in inclement weathers and had survived loneliness and returned safely to his native land. I was fascinated by the bearded man, and a strong desire grew in me to see his island.
>
> "You must remember the good example of Robinson Crusoe," my brother said. "Someday you may be left alone somewhere in the world and you will have to depend on your own ingenuity." Then he pointed to the picture of the lonely man and his faithful dog sitting side by side on an unknown shore. "Maybe you will be thrown upon some unknown island someday with nothing to protect you except your hands and your mind…."
>
> It was the beginning of my intellectual life with Macario, the beginning of sharing our thoughts with each other; and although he went away not long afterward to escape a tragedy that was. (*America* 32)

Crusoe's story foreshadows what Allos would later on experience when he migrates to US. Here, Macario teaches Allos not only a fiction lesson ("the beginning of my intellectual life") but also the life lesson of how to survive the hard life of an outcast. In Crusoe's story, being an outcast is brought about by the geographical elements ("some unknown sea," "a little island far away") but Allos's is from the racial and labor conditions in the US. This lesson is recalled later on, almost two hundred pages after, when Allos is already a writer-activist, where the island imagery is treated more as a metaphor: "'The world is an island,' [Allos] said again, remembering. 'We are cast upon the sea of life hoping to land somewhere in the world. *But there is only one island, and it is in the heart*'" (*America* 323; italics in the original). This is the lesson that Macario wanted Allos to learn in order to survive being "left alone somewhere in the world" and being left "to depend on [one's] own ingenuity." Allos learned Crusoe ethics from his brother first, but the test of character would be given by the reality of "America" later.

The metafictional function of Crusoe's story in the novel prompts the readers not only to be attentive to the parallel between Crusoe's and Allos's situations but also to the connection between the fictional and the non-fictional. Through metafiction, a "text" becomes conscious of its own fictionality. However, the self-consciousness of the "text" of its intention to be read as fiction is complicated in *America* as the "work" is also based on Bulosan's life. What needs review here is the text/work binary which is a necessary move in ELC. Yang Gexin notes that we should review this distinction in order to highlight the moment of reading as an event. He says that what is lost in the emphasis on the "text" is "the idea of the creative labor that is continued in the moment of reading" (41). Because of Barthes, the poststructuralists, and the New Critics, the author has been deemed "dead" and irrelevant; however, ELC implies and necessitates that "the words as part of the continuous work have 'the quality of authoredness'" (Gexin 41). To focus on the ethical content of the work, the holistic "creative labor" from the author to the reader through the work that has been broken down needs to be reconnected: "The 'workness' of the text ... lies in the effects it produces in the reader" (Gexin 42). In other words, every reading of the novel as an event is a continuation of Bulosan's "work"—and ethics—as a writer. This is befitting the fact that *America* is partly autobiographical. The Crusoe ethics, therefore, is passed (or continued) from Daniel Defoe's "work" to the Crusoe "text" in *America* and from Bulosan's "work" to the readers of the novel, making literature a prolonged "event" rather than a mere object of critique. Gexin also comments that the event of literature "is to feel oneself taken into a new realm of thought and feeling, perhaps only fleetingly and temporarily, but occasionally with profound and long-lasting effects" (42). In *America*, Allos was lead to his transformation through "new realm of thought and feeling" that he first encounters when Macario read Crusoe's story to him. Inside the fictional world of Bulosan's novel, Macario and Allos are the readers to which Defoe's novel had "profound and long-lasting effects." Consequently, these same effects may arrive to the readers of *America* decades after Bulosan's novel and centuries after Defoe's novel.

Macario's role in Allos's self-making, moreover, is not only to him a person but also as a writer. At the end of Part Three, while Allos was already sick and could not do hard labor that was expected of Filipinos immigrants, Macario told Allos, "I'll sacrifice my life and future for whatever you think is right…." from which Allos got his drive to be a writer, changing his name again to "Carlos":

> I felt vast and immortal. Now he had used my native name again. I looked at him and knew that he meant it. I knew that he would help me live for a while so that I

> could write about our anguish and our hopes for a better America. I knew that if he died somewhere in pursuit of what he had wanted to be, he would live again in me and in all the words that seized my mind. (*America* 261)

If Macario's speech is the novel's "rhetorical climax," this part is specifically the formal climax of the novel, prompting the character transformation of Allos. It is Macario's brotherly sacrifice that conditioned the writer's self-making. Allos wanted to be a writer primarily to be make Macario and everything that he represents—the working class, racial minorities, Filipino peasants, and all victims of oppression—live again through literature. In the light of Macario's speech noted earlier, Macario is the "America"—the collective "we" that Macario himself articulately spoke about—that Bulosan is writing for and writing about.

What makes Macario that crucial so as to determine the transformation of Allos? It is here that the Filipino "value" of the family operates, especially as seen in Bulosan's life and in the novel. According to PC Morante in his biography of Bulosan, the writer has four brothers (Aurelio, Apolonio, Silvestre, Dionisio) of which he is the youngest and two younger sisters. Morante also notes that Bulosan's activism for a just world comes from "a very sensitive soul" because of his personal experiences and encounters:

> Because Carlos was a very sensitive soul it was inevitable that the seed of protest against the idea of being ordered or pushed around would find nourishment for growth in the unhappy situations he saw and in every social injustice he observed or personally encountered. The themes of all his writings revolve around the following: the struggle for equality and fairness and freedom; defense of the poor and the oppressed; a yearning for peace and idyllic life. In him we saw the seed grow and survive the original stresses (social, economic and political) burdening the people in his native soil. (40-41)

Even after Bulosan has moved away from Binalonan, he has maintained closed connections to his brothers and other family members as shown in the copious letters he has written to them.[1] Morante provides the details of how Bulosan credits

1 For example, Oscar Campomanes and Todd Gernes wrote about Bulosan's letters to his nephews, which "in their attempt to renew family ties and to refresh social and cultural solidarity, shed light on Bulosan's act of writing." These letters to family members and friends are full of ethical content as well as they are "designed to uplift his people from the ravages of a deeply-rooted social oppression" (19).

his brothers in shaping of the various facets of his character:

> Apolonio taught him to be "a man of few words"; another brother taught him "to love the earth"; another told him "to always stick to [his] convictions"; and another impressed upon him "the importance of study." […] [Carlos] credited his brother Aurelio for encouraging him to keep up with his literary pursuits." (Morante 40)

What the biographer shows to the readers of Bulosan is how the writer is an ethical formation only possible through his familial and brotherly relationships. If the literary work is a product of the writer's creativity, the writer himself lends to that work a part of his ethical formation, in this sense, through the mediation of his family. His brothers' influence in Bulosan's life is reflected in Macario's role in Allos's, as discussed above.

Jaime Bulatao's eminent study of Filipino values discussed that "emotional closeness and family" is the most significant because of its double function:

> First, it provides an outlet for the need of a person to get out of himself and come into contact with another person in a free and unguarded emotional exchange. Secondly, it provides understanding, acceptance, a place where, no matter how far or how wrongly one has wandered, he can always return. (11)

Congruent to what was mentioned previously, Macario is the outlet for Allos to go outside the world and to whom Allos can first exhibit concern for fellow humans and common humanity. When Macario left for the US in the first part of the novel, he told Allos that he will "be brave" like his younger brother and prompting him that maybe Allos can come to visit Macario when Allos has grown up. Allos answered with certainty, "I will come" (*America* 46). Macario also becomes Allos's home in the "unhomeliness" of the social injustice that he experiences in the homeland and in the diaspora—no wonder that Allos has been looking for his brothers the moment that he has stepped foot in the US. Allos's exclamation, "I am your brother… I am Allos!", is both a plead for recognition and a cry of triumph that he has found his brother in a world of struggle and injustice. Throughout the novel, one senses that Allos suffers not only personally but also collectively, a suffering as mediated first through the plight of his family members, especially when they lost their land, when his mother was humiliated in the market, and when his brothers were forced to go away from their hometown. Allos's migration to the US, then, may be seen as

a search primarily for his brothers and the connection he has with them, and only incidentally of "America." What sustained Allos to endure hardships is this search of "home" far away from home, but this search also prepared him to a greater purpose and brotherhood. Bulatao also notes that the value of "patience, suffering, endurance" is among those that "in large part [a] means for the attainment of [the value of the family]" (22, 19).

If Macario is central to Allos's character transformation and the novel's climax, he also figures prominently in its resolution. Macario decided to leave and Allos had a sense that he is seeing his brother for the last time.

> I knew it was the end of our lives in America. I knew it was the end of our family. If I met him again, I would not be the same. He would not be the same, either. Our world was this one, but a new one was being born. We belonged to the old world of confusion; but in this other world—new, bright, promising—we would be unable to meet its demands. (*America* 324)

Note how their last meeting in the novel's last pages also heralds what Allos has been struggling for: a new world. The end of their family is also the beginning of new world that the brothers, and the rest of the family help usher. If there is a role for ethics in the novel, it is this ushering forth of a "new, bright, promising" world. *America* is a novel of this movement from the ethical to the social or, if more precisely, of this transformation of the social through the ethical. Even San Juan concedes that even if it is not Bulosan nor his family that is the hero in *AIH*, but rather "the Filipino peasant-worker transposed into different social backgrounds and milieus that occupies the focal space in history," Bulosan needs "a mediating device, a consciousness that will bring various interesting possibilities together in some discernible pattern of meaning or purpose" (*Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination* 94). I argue that formation of that consciousness that would function as a mediating device is shaped by the familial and brotherly ethics, especially of Allos and Macario.

Toward the end of the novel, Allos's brothers are thankful to him for realizing the transformation of the world through his character, works, and activism. When Amado also bids farewell to Allos, for example, he says "Thank you, Carlos... . Thank you for being my brother" (*America* 297). Like Macario's, Amado's farewell also shows the cyclic flow of the present promise and memories of past struggles:

> I saw him in the pale light waving his hand with the long scar. He was

> weeping— not because I was going away from him, but because of the swift, frightening years. His eyes, when he looked at me for pity and understanding, were haunted with the terror of those years. They were the same eyes that had looked at me kindly in the heavy rain of Mangusmana. They were the same eyes that had looked startled when my father had struck him sharply across the face—the same eyes that cried with a deep brotherly love when he shouted to me in the heavy rain, "Good bye, Allos!"
>
> It seemed so long ago that Amado had waved his hand to say good-bye. When I remembered him waving at me with his mud-caked hand, I was startled when I discovered that it was now scarred. […] I knew that in a strange way we were together again—that no terror could ever make us hate each other. (*America* 297)

The brotherhood among the characters in *America* is the main ethic that sustains the narrative from the start to end. Of course, this brotherhood is also framed by Allos's relationship with his whole family, together with his father and mother that he left in Mangusmana. Even if this paper does not deal specifically with that topic, an ethical reading of Allos's the parental relations would supplement the examples given here. The transnational and activist consciousness of Allos is formed through his memories of childhood, especially of the poverty, hunger, and humiliation that his parents experienced. By connecting the past memory of home and his present struggles in the US, *America* can be read using ELC as a bildungsroman novel, just as Reyes did to Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (54-60), where the transformation of the main character becomes allegorical of the transformation of the nation. Bulosan's other works in fiction and poetry, in relation to his letters and essays, may also be read for their ethical content.

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Middleman Minority: Ethics, Ethnicity, and the Chinese Middleman in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*

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Abstract By adopting the notion of the "middleman"—how the Chinese migrant merchants had straddled between the Spanish conquistadors and the local indigenous peoples in colonial New Spain, this paper investigates the representation and intermediation of the "*middleman minority*" in Nick Joaquín's seminal novel, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961). While the mysterious Chinese deity adds spice to "pagan fatalism," there is no doubt that the intermediation of the middleman minority plays an important role in the narrative tapestry. In this paper, by drawing on the work of David Parker, Nie Zhenzhao, Shirley Lim, Rey Chow, and Emmanuel Levinas, I look into the intermingling of ethics, ethnicity, and the representation of the Chinese "middleman" in Joaquín's work. Moreover, I apply Edward Said's thoughts on postcolonial exile to the setting in Hong Kong and investigate how the island space, as a site of Foucauldian heterogenic intermediation, is also a "middle place" that provides Filipino expatriates with a sense of postcolonial exilic agency.

Key words Nick Joaquín; *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*; middleman minority; ethics; ethnicity; heterotopia; postcolonial exile

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Introduction

In 1973, sociologist Edna Bonacich at the University of California, Riverside published an essay "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," in which she argued that "there is a general consensus that a number of ethnic groups in the world have occupied a similar position in the social structure. Among these are the Jews in Europe, the Indians in east Africa, and the Chinese in Southeast Asia... . In contrast to most ethnic minorities, the middlemen occupy an intermediate rather than a low-status position. They tend to concentrate in certain occupations, notably trade and commerce, in the host country" (583). Updating the notion that was first conceptualized by Hubert Blalock in 1967, Bonacich's "theory of middleman minorities" has gained a wide recognition in the field of ethnic Chinese studies. For example, Charles Hirschman, a sociologist at the University of Washington, states in his essay "Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia: Alternative Perspectives" (1988) that "the historical experience of the Chinese in Southeast Asia is rather different. Perhaps a more appropriate model is the 'middleman minorities hypothesis,' proposed by Edna Bonacich (1973; also see Bonacich and Modell, 1980: Chap.2; Turner and Bonacich, 1980; van den Berghe, 1981: Chap.7). The theory [underscores] the intermediate position of ethnic Chinese minorities concentrated in the small business sector" (23).[1] Moreover, Evelyn Hu-DeHart, a historian at Brown University, in her study of Chinese migrant merchants in the Spanish empire claims that "European trading posts in Southeast Asia, such as Manila and Batavia, attracted a large number of Chinese migrant merchants. Because imperial China

1 Cecilia Green and Yan Liu in their study of the Chinese in the Caribbean also observe that as Brereton and others have noted, soon after their arrival, the Chinese in the British West Indies "quickly emerged as a classic 'middleman minority,' a small ethnic group carving out a niche in the shop keeping sector" (2).

did not allow direct contact with Europe, Chinese migrant merchants became the 'middlemen' in the Sino-Spanish maritime trade network" (31).

By adopting the notion of the Chinese "middleman"—as Bonacich, Hirschman, and Hu-DeHart have observed, I use the "middleman" as a trope in my reading of the representation of the Chinese in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961), a canonical Filipino fiction by Nick Joaquín. Whereas most critics have paid attention to the "two navels of the Philippines"—for example, Rocío Davis argues for the notion of "cross-culturality" of both the Spanish and the American cultures (269); Mina Roces states that "the Filipino having two navels representing the Spanish and the American colonial heritage" (303)—I aim to examine the representation of the Chinese, the ethnic group that constitutes about 25% of the present population in the Philippines.[1] According to Edgar Wickberg, the well-known historian who pioneered in the study of the Chinese in the Philippines, "direct contact between China and the Philippines had existed at least from the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279)" (3). The role of the Chinese and the Chinese mestizos has been "of great significance to Philippine historical development" (*The Chinese Mestizo* 1). Wickberg notes that the Chinese demonstrated their talents in commerce and "rose to prominence as ... middlemen wholesalers of local produce and foreign imports" (*The Chinese Mestizo* 47). It is clear that the role of the Chinese in the Manila Galleon, or *la nao de la china*, signified the intermediation of the Chinese merchants in the Manila-Acapulco maritime trade network that had connected the Pacific and the Atlantic for 250 years (1565-1815). As we know, the term "Sangley" was used by colonial Spaniards to refer to Chinese migrant merchants who went back and forth between Macao and Manila. Their children born in Manila became the "mestizos de Sangleys." By the time Chinatown, the first of its kind, was established in Binondo, Manila in 1594, it testified to the settlement and thriving of the Chinese in the Philippines. The growth and concentration of the Chinese community in Manila was remarkable. By 1603, the population of the Chinese was estimated around 20,000 while that of the Spaniards was only about 1000 (Wickberg, *The Chinese* 3-4). To sum up, the history of the Philippines, as Chinese Filipino historian Richard Chu claims, may have been "more Tsinoy than we admit."[2] In the words of Bernardita Reyes Churchill, "What is important insofar as the history of the Chinese in the Philippines is to weave it into the history of the Philippines so that the Chinese are included in the national

1 25% refers to the mixture of the Chinese and the Chinese mestizos. For the population of the Chinese in the Philippines, please see <https://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Chinese_Filipino.>

2 This is the title of Chu's book, "more Tsinoy than we admit" (2015).

narrative, not as immigrants or a separate community, but as Filipinos."[1]

Accenting the historical prominence of the Chinese in the Philippines, the purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, I aim to investigate the representation of the Chinese as an ethnic group in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels,* one of the most well-known Filipino novels in English. By drawing on the work of David Parker, Nie Zhenzhao, Shirley Lim, Rey Chow, and Emmanuel Levinas, I look into the intermingling of ethics, ethnicity, and the representation of the Chinese "middleman" in Joaquín's seminal novel. Secondly, I draw on Edward Said's postcolonial theory of exile and argue for a postcolonial contrapuntal mirroring and intermediation of the spaces between Manila and Hong Kong. I contend that Hong Kong, the Chinese quarter, literally becomes the space of Foucaultian heterotopia, where the exilic Filipino revolutionaries could achieve a sense of postcolonial agency. In other words, in addition to the representation of the Chinese middleman, I examine the heterotopic intermediation of the Chinese middle place, i.e. Hong Kong. My arguments are divided into four parts. In part one (the current section), I explain the notion of the "middleman minority" by drawing on the work of Edna Bonacich, Charles Hirschman, Evelyn Hu-DeHart, and Edgar Wickberg. In part two, I give a theoretical account of the relationships between ethics and ethnicity by drawing on the work of Shirley Lim, Rey Chow, Emmanuel Levinas, David Parker, and Nie Zhenzhao. In part three, I analyze the Saidian exilic space of Hong Kong and examine how it is taken as a space of heterogenic and postcolonial intermediation of Manila. In part four, I make the conclusion.

Ethics and Ethnicity

Shirley Lim in her critique of US ethnic studies turns the focus to the sense of ethical responsibility in relation to the other. She welcomes studies that focus on "the relationship between ethnicity and ethics to foreground readings that investigate politics, history, social values … class, nation, race, gender and all kinds of multiplicity inscribed in ethnic- and nation-bound cultural productions" (4). She cites Rey Chow and her book *Ethics after Idealism* to accent "a practice of a 'supplementing imperative'" that aims to "counter [the] tendencies to a totalizing rhetoric about the other" (qtd. in Lim 4). Moreover, she relates Chow to Emmanuel Levinas and argues for the commonality in their mutual concern about the ethical responsibility toward the other. She argues that "Chow pushes further Levinas' thesis on the 'ethics of responsibility,' rising out of the recognition of the obdurate

1 This is cited from Churchill's review of Chu. Please see <https://shop.vibalgroup.com/products/ more-tsinoy-than-we-admit.>

existence of the unknowable others, to the determination, nonetheless, for a practice of interpretation that is informed by close studies of other cultures" (4).

Lim's insight is applicable to the case of the ethnic Chinese in the Philippines. Despite their active presence in the history of the Philippines, the Chinese have suffered from a sense of ethnic otherness. Caroline Hau observes "by the early twentieth century, the Chinese mestizo class in the Philippines had largely disappeared as an entity into a nascent 'Filipino' national community under American colonial rule, a Filipino community that came to see itself as standing apart from the 'Chinese' who were now considered [as] an alien minority" (106). She argues that is why "the novels of the Filipino national hero, José Rizal, who was technically a Chinese mestizo, are revered and studied as masterpieces of *Philippine* literature" (106). Hau's observation could be related to the notion of "ethical unconscious" that is coined by David Parker. In his book, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel* (1995), by alluding to Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), Parker argues that "post-structuralist theory has been largely unconscious of its ethical bearings, in much the same way as the old humanist criticism was often unaware of its allegiances to the interests of a particular race, class, and gender" (4). The fact that José Rizal, "a Chinese mestizo," is being taken as "a Filipino national hero," crystallizes the assimilation of the Chinese into the mainstream Filipino society. As a result, Rizal's Chinese ethnicity has been foreclosed.

Given the historical presence of the Chinese in the Filipino history, it is important to be reminded that "the Filipino has a three-fold historical heritage: the Oriental-Malayan, the Spanish, and the American" (192),[1] as Lourdes Busuego Pablo had pointed out back in the fifties. Pablo also indicated that "it is obvious that [Joaquín] cannot afford to ignore any of these" (192). I argue that the representation of the Chinese as an ethnic group is therefore noteworthy in the novel. It manifests not only the "ethical unconscious" that Parker illuminates in relation to the "humanist allegiances to the interest of a particular race, class, and gender," but also, in more active terms, the "ethical responsibility" that Lim argues with regard to the "interpretation of other cultures." It is notable that the presentation of the Chinese in the novel is handled with a sense of "liminal virtuosity" that reveals the distinct and ubiquitous presence of the Chinese in the Philippines. In the words of

1 To be precise, there are at least four aspects in Filipino heritage—the indigenous Malay-an-Austronesian, the Chinese, the Spanish, and the American. The conflation of the "Oriental" and the "Malayan" reveals the misconception of the dominant Filipino society, which however has not dealt with in this paper.

Nie Zhenzhao, it elucidates the un/conscious "ethical choice" made by Joaquín.[1] According to Nie's theory of ethical literary criticism, Joaquín "zooms in on the various factors of the ethical contingency, in which the character would have to make an ethical choice" ("Towards" 88). That is to say, Joaquín literally acts out the "ethical responsibility" of being in the surroundings of the ethnic Chinese in the Philippines. By placing the novel at the intersection of ethics and ethnicity, I aim to examine not only the presentation of the ethnic Chinese, but also how this figure of the middleman—as Chinese migrant merchants had played in the Manila Galleon trade—is achieved through the spatial intermediation of the exilic space in Hong Kong, which I turn to in the next section.

Postcolonial Exilic Agency

Joseph Galdon argues that one "basic theme in Philippine fiction is the theme of alienation and the failure to communicate. This is reflected most clearly in the theme of exile that recurs time and again among writers of Philippine fiction particularly in the post-war period" (xiv). *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* would fit the bidding—not only because the theme of the novel centers on exile, but also because the narrative time is set in the post-war era—right after the Philippines gains independence after WWII in historical actuality and after the trip made by General Monson who has been on exile since the country is taken over by the US in the novel. While the theme of exile is self-evident, the locale of exile—Hong Kong—is noteworthy. As Galdon points out, "Hong Kong in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* is a symbol of exile" (xiv). Similarly, Marie Rose Arong argues that the significance of Hong Kong lies in its historical association with Filipino revolutionaries, expatriates, and historical figures such as José Rizal, Emilio Aquinaldo, and Artemio Ricarte. She points out that Hong Kong was the place where Dr. Rizal practiced medicine, where General Aguinaldo led his government-in-exile, and where General Artemio Ricarte went on exile—whom she actually considers as a source that might have inspired the characterization of General Monson.[2] In this section, by drawing on the work of Edward Said and Michel

1 Please see Chapter 2 "The Sphinx Factor and the Ethical Choice" in Nie (2014: 32-49).

2 Arong writes, "Hong Kong is an important locale for Filipino revolutionaries and expatriates. Jose Rizal practiced as an ophthalmologist in Hong Kong prior to his exile in Dapitan, and the first Philippine republic led by General Emilio Aguinaldo used Hong Kong as its base for its government-in-exile. Doctor Monson's character is loosely based on another Filipino general—General Artemio Ricarte—who spent time as an exile in Hong Kong (Zialcita 222) after refusing to pledge allegiance to the US and controversially returned to the Philippines at the request of the Japanese during the occupation of Manila" (463).

Foucault, I contextualize the Filipino exilic experience, examine the exilic space of Hong Kong, and analyze how the "Chinese quarter" is able to create a postcolonial exilic agency by being a space of heterogenic intermediation.

In "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said depicts the condition of exile and the possible solution out of the predicament. He says,

> Exile [is] an alternative to the mass institution that dominates modern life. Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you. But, provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous [sense of] subjectivity." (2)

Said cites the works of post-war German intellectuals, such as Theodor Adorno and Erich Auerbach, who wrote their representative works on exile.[1] According to Said, "[*Mimesis*] owed its existence to the very fact of Oriental exile and homelessness... . [It is] a work built upon a critically important alienation from [the west]" (1984: 8). Comparing Said with post-war German exilic intellectuals, David Morgan argues that Said, as an Arab living in the West, is able to "name a space and a subjectivity that allows the postcolonial subject to critique power from a distanced perspective while also acknowledging the subject's grounding in the cultural and political milieu" (19). He maintains, "Said's exile both acknowledges its embeddedness in a network of discursive powers and resists them through exilic criticism" (23).

By drawing on Morgan's work of the Saidian "model for critical postcolonial agency" (1), I argue that the exilic subjectivity is what characterizes the political and ethical action of the postcolonial project that Joaquín aims to do in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*. To start with, it is this political and ethical practice of "postcolonial exilic agency" which motivates the Monsons' expatriation in Hong Kong. It is therefore important to observe the series of flights made by General Monson, Connie Escobar, Senora de Vidal, and Paco Texeira. They want to escape from Manila in order to get away from the shackles of colonial trauma in terms of the US regime, mother-daughter betrayals, bodily stigmata, and gothic hauntings (94). Most crucially, it sets the tone of postcolonial defiance in the case of General Monson, who goes Hong Kong to assert "the secret pride, the secret exultation" (42) of Filipino nationalism.

Moreover, I argue that the island space of Hong Kong, while being outside of

1 Adorno wrote *Minima Moralia* (1951) while on exile in the US and Auerbach authored *Mimesis* in Turkey (1946).

the colonial regime of the United States, becomes the "transitional stage" (San Juan, 174) that mediates between the pre-colonial Manila and the present US colony. It literally occupies the Foucauldian notion of the heterogeneous space. According to Foucault, "there are, in every culture, real places—which are something like counter-sites—in which the real sites ... are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (3). In the case of the novel, Hong Kong is undoubtedly a real place, but it is also the "counter-site" of the homeland in Manila, which has, by force, become a US colony. In other words, there is a mirroring relationship between the real site (Hong Kong) and the heterotopia (Hong Kong as the counter-site of the homeland in Manila). Laura Rice elaborates, "heterotopias ... are real (that is, material) places that serve as mirrors of other real (material) sites, destabilizing them" (38). That is to say, the material place of Hong Kong mirrors the imaginary homeland in Manila, destabilizing both. Moreover, I argue that the island space of Hong Kong is therefore a Foucauldian heterotopia, mirroring pre-colonial Manila, while contesting, inverting, and destabilizing both. In the following I analyze how the heterogeneous space of Hong Kong is able to break free from the confinement of US colonial power and functions as a postcolonial space of heterotopic intermediation.

The novel starts with an emphatic confrontation with the heterogeneous space of Hong Kong—where Connie Escobar seeks surgical help from (the young) Dr. Monson and where an exilic homeland is displayed in the clinical room—

> And why *here*? wondered Pepe Monson, removing bewildered eyes from her face and looking rather dazedly around the room; feeling the room's furniture hovering vaguely—the faded rug on the floor; the sofa near the doorway, against the wall; the two small Filipino flags crossed under a picture of General Aguinaldo; the bust of the Sacred Heart upon the bookshelf, between brass candlesticks; the tamaraw head above each of the two shut windows." (4)

While the opening powerfully sets up the chronotope of the story, it is also charged with the effect of Gothic haunting—where the furniture hovers and the eyes are bewildered[1]—as if the clinic is not real. It is riveting how Joaquín zooms in on the

1 What follows the descriptions of the furniture and decorations is the "fog [bulging] against the windowpanes, as though elephants were wedging past" (4). Arong also points out that "in Gothic literature, mist or fog is conventionally used to blur objects not only to reduce visibility, but also to usher in terror, be it in the form of a person or a thing... . Hong Kong's infamous fog, especially during winter, generates the ideal Gothic atmosphere for the novel" (463).

immediacy ("hereness") of Hong Kong in order to highlight the forsaken homeland "away" in Manila. In this way, the spatial mirroring between Hong Kong and Manila sets off the heterotopic relationship between the two cities. Moreover, like Manila, Hong Kong is a harbor city surrounded by water—where there is always a view "of the harbor, gay with junks and ferryboats; where the Monson family would swim with the English, the Chinese, or the Portuguese in Deep Water Bay," (9) and where they would realize that they are stranded "on the foreign sands of a foreign shore" (9). In other words, the harbor city of Hong Kong is situated at a "critical distance"[1] that wavers as a space of "intermediation" between the Philippine archipelago and the US continent.

If the setting of Hong Kong is introduced by Pepe Monson, the elder brother of the Monson boys, it is reiterated by Tony Monson, the younger brother, who like Joaquín, is sent to the monastery to be trained as a Catholic priest.[2] Being presumably the persona of the author (Joaquín) himself, Tony gives another spellbinding picture of the heterotopic space of Hong Kong—

> [H]e stood by his cell window, felt a sudden bitter tenderness for the city spread out and humming joyously beneath him, for this doomed heathen town that was home and not home, that was birthplace but not native land, that he had loved and feared and finally rejected, but whose beauty—soggy in spring time, steamy in summer, perfect in autumn, perverse in winter—his foreign bones knew like a wife and regarded like a stranger; never quite familiar, never wholly embraced, being still the rented habitation of his childhood, where he had dwelt in body though not inspirit, and in whose streets he had walked the streets of that other city, the true native city he had had never known ... whose clear image had always overlaid these hilltops that he had climbed as a boy, ... and the sea, and the harbor with the ferryboats, and Kowloon beyond, smoky and sprawling black and gold in the sunshine, where his father lay dying in exile." (88)

In his vivid and sensual descriptions of the houses, streets, seasons, hilltops, harbor, and ferryboats, Joaquín gives a most fascinating heterogenic picture of Hong Kong, the "rented habitation" of the Monson family on exile. While the mirroring relationship between Hong Kong and Manila is emphatically accented by the

1 Please see Morgan.

2 It is also important to note that like Joaquín, Tony Monson refuses to go back to St. Andrew's after his meeting with Connie (197).

hallucinating repetitions of the contrast between home and exile, native and heathen, wife and mistress, spirit and body, etc., it clearly unveils the "critical distance" between Hong Kong and Manila, the uncanny similarities between the two (material) places. Most importantly, from the point of view of Tony, who is standing by the cell window at this juncture, the sight "beneath him" (the streets, roofs, harbor, and ferryboats sprawling beneath and beyond) allows him to see the other place (Manila,) where he is not. It reminds us of the visual and spatial mirroring that Foucault comments—"the mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes the place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, *and* absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (4, *italics added*). Following the Foucauldian theory of mirroring, Hong Kong thus becomes the heterotopia of Manila. .

Moreover, the mirroring relationship between Hong Kong and Manila is doubled by Pepe Monson and his buddy, Paco Texeira. While they share the same experience of an exilic childhood in Hong Kong, Pepe's imaginary of Manila is associated with the waters and Paco's is with the mountains. Born in Hong Kong, both Pepe and Paco get to know Manila from their fathers. For the Monsons, they like to swim in Deep Water Bay, where the father and the sons would "race each other all the way to an island across the bay" (9) and where the mother would sit "knitting beside the lunch basket" (9). It is by the waters "while [his mother] handed the sandwiches around, his father would tell them about the waters back home he had swum in when a boy. But what [his father] most loved to talk about was the river that ran right behind their house in Binondo" (9). Like the harbor sight viewed by Tony, that provokes the mirage of Manila, the waters in Deep Water Bay mirror those in the Pasig River, flowing through Manila.[1] It is needless to say, a relationship of mirroring heterotopia is created between the two watery cities.

As for Paco, his imaginary of Manila is associated with mountains. His father tells him that the mountains in Hong Kong are

> bald and wrinkled like old dogs that had lost their hair, and so small you could climb up to their tops and down again in half an hour ... [They are] not like the mountains back in the Philippines that took days and even weeks to climb and were thick with trees and shrubbery and dangerous with wild animals. Then he had begun to tell Paco about a range of mountains just across Manila Bay that looked like a woman stretched out in sleep. (26-27)

1 For details, please see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laguna_de_Bay.>

This imagery of "a range of mountains stretching out like a woman in sleep across Manila Bay" then becomes the dominant landscape that registers the imaginary of the motherland. The imagery later repeats twice in the narrative. It appears again when Paco goes to Manila for the first time, seeing "from the railing of the ship ... with a shock of recognition, a range of mountains that looked like a woman sleeping" (27). It makes such an impact that Paco feels powerfully "a stirring of clan-emotion—a glow, almost, of homecoming" (27). Then, most intricately, this "stirring of clan-emotion" re-surfaces when he meets the senora de Vidal, who embodies "a combination of primitive mysticism and slick modernity" (27); who symbolizes "the mountains and the [mythic] woman sleeping in a silence mighty with myth and mystery" (27); and who reminds him of the "range of mountains that looked like a woman sleeping" (28), which his father had told him back in Hong Kong. Thus, the narrative at this juncture runs a full circle by going between Pepe and Paco, between waters and mountains—the seascape and landscape that invoke the memories of the Filipino motherland—and between Hong Kong and Manila, the (almost) homed and unhomed harbor cities—to render Filipino nativism, postcolonial exile, and heterotopic mirroring full force in the narrative tapestry of the novel.

The Chinese Quarter

Most importantly, in the geopolitical context of the story, I argue that the "Chinese quarter" of Hong Kong plays an important exilic place of intermediation to counter colonization. On the one hand, Hong Kong, the "Chinese quarter," is the place where the Monsons seek refuge in defiance of the US empire; in other words, as San Juan points out, Hong Kong "functions as a quasi-utopian standard for measuring the subversive potential" (187). That is to say, the island serves as a space of subversion. Moreover, Hong Kong, as the Chinese quarter, is related to Chinatown, which also functions as a space of subversion. Back in the Philippines, it is the "Chinese quarter" of Manila Chinatown, where Connie goes for shelter when she denounces her parents. This incident takes place when Connie discovers that her father, who works in the colonial US government, is involved in bribery and embezzlement. Refusing to be "educated on stolen money" (Joaquín 14), she decides to quit school, runs away, and goes to Chinatown. She finds a job, "working as dishwasher in a chop suey joint in the Chinese quarter" (15). Connie, the lead female protagonist, and her action to denounce her parents, then, should be taken as a symbolic gesture to rebel against US colonialism. It also explains why she wants

to see old General Monson before she elopes away with Paco. By paying tribute to the old hero whom "they had all betrayed" (204) and to whom she confesses her sins, she is finally able to make peace with the past and exorcize the "ghost from her childhood" (204). Here in the small room in Hong Kong, "two generations that had lost each other *here* met in exile" (204; *italics added*). That is to say, more than anyone else, Connie is the female counterpart of the old hero. Likewise, she's the young revolutionary, fighting for free will and self-autonomy. Her choice to run away and go Chinatown manifests how the heterogeneous space of the Chinese quarter is engaged in a postcolonial project to counter colonization—just like what Hong Kong does in the geopolitical context of the novel.

It is also interesting that Joaquín picks on small details to present the Chinese heterogeneity in Hong Kong, which echo a general impression of Chinatown. I'd like to provide three instances. First, it is the Chinese house-boy who allegedly gives the "drug" to General Monson after he returns from Manila. The mention of the opium brings to mind the morbid picture of the opium dens that Arnold Genthe had captured in the Old San Francisco Chinatown photographs. Second, when Pepe visits the Texeiras, Mary offers him a cigarette and apologizes for its poor quality—"It's just a Chinese brand" (39). So, the understatement is that Chinese brand is cheap in price and quality, which suits the general impression of Chinatown groceries. Third, it is also important to note that Paco's mother, who is originally from Macao[1] and who marries a Filipino musician, works in a Chinese clothes factory in Hong Kong, which brings to mind the labor-intensive sweatshop industry and which hires mostly female garment workers in Chinatown.

If Joaquín is able to showcase his "liminal virtuosity" in the representation of the Chinese by picking up notable details, such as the Chinese house-boy, the Chinese cigarette, the Chinese clothes factory, and the Chinese chop suey joint—in presenting the ethnic-scape of the Chinese quarter, it is also interesting to observe how the heterogeneous space of Hong Kong is later toned up by a more exquisite and exotic sense of Orientalism. When Mary visits the senora, she admires the latter's dignified regal appearance—"[the senora] was wearing a Chinese dress of black wool, slit at the knee, with a stiff collar and a golden dragon prancing up in front" (26). This image of a mysterious, prancing dragon comes to an accent in the jazz music played by Paco and his band in the night clubs in Manila—the "Manila-Hong Kong" and the "Boulevard Shanghai"—"which would be reminiscent of

1 It is very likely that his mother is mixed-blood as her family name is "Texeira," which is Portuguese (22-23). In other words, Paco is also mixed-blood, having Chinese, Portuguese, and Filipino lineages.

nightlife in those cities; ... to accentuate an atmosphere to be created by Chinese prints, lanterns, and mirrors on the walls, Chinese cigarette girls on the aisles, White Russian hostesses on the dance floor, and armed Bombay bouncers under the tables" (23).

This picture of a cosmopolitan Hong Kong being transported to post-war Manila, however, brings us to the ancient Oriental heterogeneity that is at home in Manila Chinatown, which however serves as the nodal point in support of native Filipino postcolonism. When Paco eventually meets Connie in Manila, he accompanies her in one of the city tours to the Chinese quarter—"They drove through the cramped slums where the Manila Chinese are kenneled: wet walls, wet cobbles, bridges arching over stagnant canals, craggy tenements dripping rain into tight twisting streets, a raggedness of black roofs and the arrowy silhouette of a pagoda soaring in the rainy moonlight" (36). Paco follows Connie to a temple, where he sees "an old bearded Chinaman, sucking a long pipe" (36)—just another familiar image of old heathen Chinatown. It comes to the climax when Paco overlooks Connie worship "an old fat god, with sagging udders, bald and white bearded and squatting like a Buddha; and the sly look in its eyes was repeated by the two navels that winked from its gross belly" (36).

The figure of Biliken has been rendered as a fetish of "pagan fatalism," which has strangely become "a source of comfort" to Connie (Arong 468). It is the statue of the laughing Buddha that she searches for most desperately when they return to the family garden after the Japanese occupation. It is Biliken, who not only redeems the sacrifice of Minnie,[1] but also suffers from the war-ridden destruction of Manila, where he is found being "fired twice ... [with] two small black holes peered like eyes from the top of the great belly" (166). It is important to realize that Connie feels a strong sense of self-identity with Biliken, the heathen deity, as, he, like her, also suffers from the colonial trauma of physical disfiguration and psychic schizophrenia (being a symbol of savage evil). It is San Juan, who not only appreciates how Joaquín makes avail of the "mythopoeic power of the Chinese culture" (187),[2] but also gives the Chinese pagan deity a most promising interpretation:

> While war destroyed Manila and its fabled ramparts, ravaged the gardens and fairgrounds where Connie played, Hong Kong remains the promise materialized: Biliken's dominion, the self-renewing carnival which overthrows

1 It refers to the doll, Minnie, which helps Connie "discover" her two navels.

2 It is also important to understand the temporality of the Chinese New Year and the imagery of the Chinese Moon in Chapter 4. Please see San Juan.

> Platonic Ideas and sanctifies the heterogeneous drives of the body, the transversal orgies of *jouissance*." (188)

Here, I argue that the "heterogeneous drives of the body," as well as the "transversal orgies of *jouissance*" in association with the pagan deity Biliken worshipped in the old temple in the Chinese quarter, provide the material space for Filipino postcolonial exilic agency. Most importantly, it is the Chinese quarter—either Hong Kong or Chinatown, Manila—that provides a space of heterogeneous intermediation for subversion. Thus, it is interesting to point out that the old family house of the Monsons is located in the neighborhood of the Chinese quarter. General Monson, while swimming in Deep Water Bay, would always tell the Monson boys,

> [H]ow their old house in Binondo had a large stone azotea behind, with steps going right down to the water, and how you could go out on that azotea and buy everything you need—rice, fish, honey, eggs, live poultry, feed for the horses, fruits and vegetable—from villagers rowing into town in small boats that looked something like American Indian canoes. (9)

Conclusion

I hope that my theoretical elaborations and textual readings so far would have driven home the trope of the Chinese middleman minority that I started with. I would conclude by turning to the relationship between ethics and ethnicity again. I argue that against the historical racialist discourses of the "inscrutable Chinese," Nick Joaquín is able and willing to present the Chinese "otherness" as a practice of "supplementing imperative' that aims to counter [the] tendencies to a totalizing rhetoric" about the marginalized Oriental others. Most importantly, as I have argued in this paper, Joaquín has done so by providing a heterogenic spatial mirroring relationship of intermediation between Hong Kong and Manila. In a seemingly centrifugal manner, his baroque swing of narrative intermediation is however anchored in Binondo, the oldest part of Metropolitan Manila and "the most labyrinthine" (8). It is the place of the old Monson family house, where General Monson reminiscences about the old days of precolonial Manila, and it is also the place where the Monson boys would dream about—humming "*the house of our fathers is waiting for us to come home*" (73, *italics original*), which runs like a refrain throughout the novel. We would imagine centuries ago when the Chinese fathers came to do business, selling silk and tea, in Manila, they would have mixed

with the native Malay peoples in the archipelago, who were as old as Native American Indians. General Monson may have been a Chinese mestizo like Dr. José Rizal. Well, he may be.

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Why They Prefer Bartleby? Ethics of Theory in Political Critique

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Abstract Herman Melville's famous novella "Bartleby" has been circulated and consumed in the terrain of philosophical discourses aptly demonstrating the problematic status of a literary text within the realm of critical theory. Plenty of literary and critical theorists from Agamben to Deleuze like to take the figure of Bartleby as a political symbol supporting their arguments, but they often ignore the way he is represented as a part of a singular literary narrative. They tend to separate Bartleby from "Bartleby," capitalizing exclusively on his peculiar implication as a resistant political subjectivity which is supposed to signify something subversive in the systematic order of global capitalism. As a result, the figure of Bartleby, isolated from the literary context, has been easily reduced to a free signifier representing what the critical theorists desire to prove. But Bartleby in "Bartleby*"* is constitutively described by the unnamed lawyer to be a pathetic melancholic or a man of mental disorder whose inscrutable commanding presence with enigmatic formula, "I would prefer not to," is thought to configure a certain political potentiality. Reformulating the way Bartleby is co-opted and pathologized by the discourse of the lawyer, I would like to re-situate the figure of Bartleby within the contextual representation, taking the issue with theoretical and philosophical appropriation of a literary text. Taking example of recent critical analyses of Bartleby, I hope to demonstrate how theoretical analysis of a literary text often depends upon the cursory reading of the *syuzhet* of the text and how it drives the whole argument into its own ethical abyss.

Key words Bartleby; political subjectivity; "I would prefer not to"; potentiality

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(2007), *Painting as the Gaze of Philosophy* (2014), *Poe Translated* (2014), and *Freud Seminar* (2019). He also published articles on American writers, Japanese films, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and other critical theorists, including Korean translations of Derrida's major works and Avital Ronell's *Stupidity* (2015).

Why Bartleby?

The failure of May '68 left practical as well as theoretical task to the critical thinking of the politics in general. One is the urgent need to analyze why Marxist political program in the barricade could not succeed what it was supposed to achieve in the real revolutionary situation. The other is the necessity to explain the role of critical theory in the revolutionary politics, especially it concept of resistant subjectivity against capitalist world system. The disappointment of May '68 as anti-system movement forces us to rethink the viability of political engagement aptly expressed in the Sartrean philosophy of subjectivity and its collective desire of a cultural revolution. The resilience of capitalist system itself and the micropolitical power structure despite drove anti-systematic movement to its debacle. Marxist or New Left model of collective subjectivity has to be reformulated. Foucault was the first to raise a challenging question to the politics of the left based on class antagonism, emphasizing the scientific understanding of power structure itself in terms of what he calls "discursive formation." He criticized the left political theory for its lack of attention to "the mechanics of power in themselves." He also hoped that "analyses of power would prove fruitful in accounting for all that had hitherto remained outside the field of political analysis" (Foucault [1984] 58). He insists that "one has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that is, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework" (Foucault [1984] 59).

Like Louis Althusser's controversial notion of ideology as "interpellation," however, Foucault's concept of discursive power has largely been misunderstood by many Marxist thinkers to be a retreat into micropolitics that would eventually help to promote the smooth operation of actually existing system in the macropolitical struggles (Eagleton 36). No coincidence then that the lesson of May '68 could not be extended to the radical rethinking of the political itself, only to witness the subsequent collapse of socialist bloc and the triumph of capitalist neoliberalism afterwards. The task of the so-called "post-theories" was thus doubly charged; it has to procure practical agenda for the worldwide resistant political struggles and at the same time fight with the internal differences concerning the role of critical theory

for enhancing revolutionary politics. Was the problem really the lack of analysis about the system and its intricate structure of micropolitical power?

But one thing was broadly shared among critical theorists. Not the state but the culture has been the central territory where the power struggle has to be fought. The politics in the future must not be defined in terms of the radical change of state power; it tacitly involves with reformulating the complex web of manifestation of individual desire. How is it then possible to conceptualize the sudden upheaval and the fatal demise of revolutionary resistance in terms of political subjectivity? How to reconfigure the political transformation without supposing the highly conscious political subject such as proletariat or the worker? To put it otherwise, "why do men fight *for* their servitude and stubbornly as though it were their salvation?" (Deleuze and Guattari 29). For Deleuze and Guattari, the question of unconscious desire might be "the fundamental problem of political philosophy" after May '68. Concentrating as it does on why "it happens that one desires against one's own interest," he desperately wants to explain how "desire devotes itself to operations that are not failures of recognition, but rather perfectly reactionary unconscious investments?" (Deleuze and Guattari 257). Individual subjects, no longer a simple victim of structural and systematic oppression, a voluntary participant in their own submission and repression. In this sense, both Marxism and psychoanalysis fell far short to provide a viable political alternative.

Therefore, to continue to struggle against the system itself as a revolutionary subject or to stoically withdraw from the territorializing power of capitalism could not constitute a practical option. In order to cope with such an aporia of political subjectivity, critical theories attempted to reflect, or de-speculate, for that matter, on themselves. For Foucault, the task of critical theories after '68 would thus be to imagine what he called "Non-Fascist Life." Critical questions should be "less concerned with why this or that than how to proceed" and political theories must devote themselves to delving into the very mechanism in which "desire deploy[s] its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process of overturning the established order" (Foucault [1983] xii). This explains why Bartleby was chosen as a representative figure of radical resistant subjectivity within the system itself.[1] Bartleby defies any category of traditional subjectivity. He is neither a proletariat nor an alienated worker nor a radical intellectual. But he effectively performs a radical negation with his gesture of absolute non-action. In short,

1 Another favorite political figure would be Judith Butler's 'Antigone,' a gendered version of thisnew subjectivity of Bartleby, who performs political resistance with absolute negation to the established orders of patriarchy and power system. See Butler 23.

Bartleby has been thought to prefigure the coming of new political subjectivity. Everybody seems to summon his or her own Bartleby.

"Bartleby" as Biography

What was frequently missed the notice, however, in the critical appropriations of Herman Melville's well-known novella "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is the fact that the tale actually consists of three different narrative discourses.[1] The first part is the three paragraphs of self-introduction of the lawyer-narrator who describes himself as an elderly man having kept the policy of following his motto, "the easiest way of life is the best," and insinuates the motive for writing "the life of Bartleby, who was a scrivener, the strangest I ever saw, or heard of" (Melville 92). According to the storyline, the narrative time of the first part spans from 1848 after the death of John Jacob Astor to 1853 when the story first appeared in *Putnam's Magazine*. The main story of Bartleby as we know it constitutes the second part where the arrival of Bartleby and his brief sojourn at the lawyer's office are presented. What happened in the lawyer's biography of Bartleby during his stay of six months covers the period from the summer of 1843 to the early 1844. The last section of the story, clearly demarcated by the asterisk mark from the preceding one, tells the lawyer's speculations after Bartleby's death concerning the rumor of his past at the Dead Letter Office. The report was inserted to have presumably been found sometime after Bartleby's death in 1844 and before the launching of the first part of the story in 1853. This means that the lawyer was already fully aware of the rumor before the whole story begins to be deployed, but, strangely, the first part does not give us any hint of his pre-recognition.

Of the three, the lawyer's postscript has a quite problematic status in its relation with the other two because it, written as a sort of narrative epilogue signifying Bartleby's biography as a queer tragedy, attempts to convince the reader of the lawyer's innocence and responsibility towards Bartleby's death. Nonetheless, the reader can also easily discern here Melville's effort to put himself in ironical distance from his lawyer-narrator by demonstrating as it does an almost comic absurdity of his reasoning itself which sentimentally links the unfounded rumor of Dead Letter Office to Bartleby's morbidity: "Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men?" (Melville 131). Indeed, the whole afterthought of the lawyer-narrator sounds like an obituary in a newspaper in which the reference to the dead

1 The original title was simply "Bartleby" as Melville's letters to the publisher clearly indicated, but the rest of the title had been added when it finally appeared in *The Piazza Tales*. See Bergann 432-433 and McCall 132-133.

letters often invoked the reader's sentimental responses.[1] What Melville intended with the addition of report about dead letters as an appendix appears clear enough; he wants the readers to take critical distance from the lawyer's narrative strategy of excessive sentimetalization and concentrate on his blindness to the possible damage the sudden dismissal from the Office inflicted on Bartleby's morbidity.[2] By transforming Bartleby's biography into an irretrievable tragedy resulting from an incurable disorder of a mentally unstable and overtly pathetic individual and ascribing his morbid helplessness to a symptom already pre-given at Washington before his arrival at New York, lawyer *as narrator* tries to ethically exempt the lawyer *as employer* from the possible accusation of irresponsibility or guilt towards his employee's misery.

It is necessary, however, to avoid hastily misjudging the lawyer-narrator's fundamental goodness towards Bartleby. Though Bartleby's morbidity has something to do with what happened at the lawyer's office, the lawyer himself, throughout the story, has not been described to be the immoral man of the world, who cruelly exploited his employees ignorant of their well beings. On the contrary, what was conspicuous is the descriptions of lawyer's benevolent and sympathetic attitude towards his employees in his office. Especially, the lawyer seems to have shown, as far as he could, every efforts to support Bartleby until his death. If we take narrator's descriptions at face value, Bartleby's adamant refusal to cooperate does not come from any hostility against the lawyer's mistreatment or his immorality. What is at stake is, however, the reliability of the lawyer as a narrator or, to be more precise, the structural impossibility to objectively figure out whether the lawyer's narrative is really convincing enough to believe his representation of Bartleby and his own self-description. Indeed, there is a strong possibility that the lawyer-narrator unwittingly or unconsciously justifies the "prudence and method" in his dealing with Bartleby. The tripartite structure of narrative compels us to pay attention to the often neglected fact that Bartleby's biography is actually a part and parcel of

1 As to the sentimental tendency of newspaper descriptions on dead letters during the 1850s, see Parker 90-99, McCall 2-3, and Bergmann 432.

2 The lawyer's ignorance of the fatal consequence of Bartleby's sudden dismissal from the Office appears doubly ironical if we consider the fact that the lawyer himself also suffered the similar loss of job as a Master in Chancery Court by the simple change of law. This is the only occasion in the whole narrative where the lawyer confessed he was really pissed off despite his mild temper. "I seldom lose my temper; much more seldom indulge in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages; but, I must be permitted to be rash here, and declare, that I consider the sudden and violent abrogation of the office of Master in Chancery, by the new Constitution, as a—premature act" (Melville 93).

the lawyer-narrator's autobiography. The lawyer-narrator's whole description of Bartleby's tragedy in the middle section signifies more than what it aims to achieve: it actively participates in the lawyer's desire to present himself as a good-hearted, benevolent, friendly individual who has been steadily sympathetic with the fellow human being of excessive morbidity and "pallid hopelessness" (Melville 131). This means that a detailed analysis of the lawyer-narrator and his unconscious drive to narrative containment has to be preceded in order to answer to the question, "Who is Bartleby?"

"Bartleby" as Autobiography

Before Melville published "Bartleby" in *Putnam's Magazine*, James A. Maitland wrote *The Lawyer's Story* in *The Sunday Dispatch* from February to May, 1853, with which Melville was clearly acquainted (Bergmann 433). *The Lawyer's Story* was, like "Bartleby," a New York lawyer's first-person narrative on the fate of his unusual scrivener. Maitland's first sentence runs very much similar to the introductory description of Bartleby in the second part of Melville's story.

In the summer of 1843, having an extraordinary quantity of deeds to copy, I engaged, temporarily, an extra copying clerk, who interested me considerably, in consequence of his modest, quiet, gentlemanly demeanor, and his intense application to his duties. (qtd. Bergmann 433)

In answer to my advertisement, a motionless young man one morning stood upon my office threshold, the door being open, for it was summer. I can see that figure now—pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn! It was Bartleby. (Melville 99)

If we compare the above two descriptions, Melville's is written with more emotionally charged words like "pallidly," "pitiably," and "incurably." What draws our attention is, however, not the difference in the narrator's responses but the one of narrative structure. *The Lawyer's Story* does not have any self-introductory remark about the lawyer-narrator, which indicates that it aims to simply record the biography of the scrivener. It seems that Melville, while transforming Maitland's story of scrivener, deliberately led the reader's attention not only to the pathetic characterization of Bartleby but also to the way the lawyer-narrator curbed Bartleby's biography within his own autobiographical impulse tacitly locating his autobiographical descriptions before Bartleby's appearance. Melville appears to be more concerned with putting an additional emphasis on the lawyer's self-justifying reaction than on the morbidity of the inscrutable scrivener himself.

Another critical difference of Melville's transformed narrative from *The*

Lawyer's Story is that while Bartleby's motive for successive refusal remains a pure conjecture Maitland's scrivener, Adolphus Fitzherbert, had a good reason for his habitual melancholy because of the disappearance of his beloved sister (Bergmann 434). Maitland's biography of Adolphus the orphan follows the standard of the popular novel of the period, making his paralysis a temporary one caused by the separation from the family and ultimately resolved at the end, with the intervention of the lawyer, by the reunification with the sister. Melville's Bartleby, however, does not enjoy such a typical narrative solution since the author intentionally leaves the scrivener's history in an obscure territory, only to insinuate the rumor concerning the dead letters at the postscript. As was discussed above, it is clear that Melville's lawyer-narrator knew the rumor in advance before he began to deploy the story, but he deliberately avoiding, for some reason, informing the existence of the report until the last moment. This deferral necessarily leads to the question as to why Melville did not let his lawyer-narrator follow the convention of biography making Bartleby a highly problematic figure throughout the story.

For Melville, "Bartleby" is not just an extraordinary biography of a tragic, forlorn individual whose melancholy of alienation has no individual cause; it is also an autobiography of an ordinary lawyer whose unusual reactions to his employee appears problematic. The lawyer keeps justifying his reluctant but sympathetic response to Bartleby by ascribing Bartleby's sheer negation to "passive resistance" coming from some unknown mental instability, but what we find most symptomatic throughout the story is rather the reader's overwhelming doubt as to why the lawyer resists so passively and defensively towards Bartleby's absurd insistence on preferring not to do anything. Indeed, what makes the narrative interesting and thrilling at the same time is the reader's growing curiosity over why and for what reason the lawyer finds himself so helpless and ineffective towards Bartleby rather than the true motive of Bartleby's inaction. Indeed, the lawyer keeps failing to identify the cause of Bartleby's refusal to examine, copy, and do nothing, often miscalculating it to come from a physical or mental disorder.

Why does the lawyer continue to fail to act according to the business assumption of the employer and postpone the decision to expel Bartleby from the office? As an employer, he has every right to fire him for the breach of contract. It seems that all the lawyer does in the story is to defer the act of dismissal and justify his own inaction and passive resistance towards Bartleby.

> Poor fellow! thought I, he means no mischief; it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary.

> He is useful to me. I can get along with him. If I turn him away, the chances are he will fall in with some less-indulgent employer, and then he will be rudely treated, and perhaps driven forth miserably to starve. Yes. Here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval. (Melville 105)

Here the lawyer once again persuades himself to acknowledge the reason why he still needs to keep Bartleby in his office *despite* his apparent lack of usefulness; he knows Bartley already denied any request from him and is not useful to him anymore. Is it really because the lawyer is preoccupied to display himself to be an exceptionally sympathetic and benevolent employer who has a good heart never to turn a poor fellow away from his care? As Bartleby's preference not to do anything gets more and more serious, the lawyer's legitimate assumption as an employer crumbles and it often drives him into occasional "evil impulse" to dismiss him once and for all. But strangely, he could not perform what he is expected to do. From this encounter on, the fact that "he was always there" (Melville 107), a token sign that Bartleby is still potentially useful to him, no longer gives the lawyer any consolation; "Just in proportion as the forlornness of Bartleby grew and grew to my indignation, did that same melancholy merge into fear, that pity into repulsion" (Melville 111).

Pathologizing Bartleby

Just as the lawyer's sympathy gradually turns into a feeling of repulsion and fear against Bartleby, so his narrative strategy of containing Bartleby's possible influence on him takes a pathologizing turn: the lawyer-narrator tries to ascribe Bartleby's resistance to the result of "innate and incurable disorder" (Melville 112). The lawyer even declares that "it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach" (Melville 112). The lawyer could not possibly fathom the reason why Bartleby acts like that, or more precisely, why he does not act what was assumed to be his share of the work, and it not only demonstrates Bartleby's dubious desire not to act but also highlights the lawyer's innate inability or blindness to the poverty and misery of the dispossessed. This is not because the lawyer is secretly an evil employer who attempts to hide his intention to exploit as much as possible by being only outwardly nice and friendly towards the employee but because he is a person who is inherently unable to imagine and understand what it means to be in poverty. What really matters for Melville is the lawyer's constitutive blindness.

As is clearly suggested in the lawyer's comic reaction to Bartleby's famous reply to the lawyer when he was asked of the reason of his inaction, "Do you not

see the reason for yourself?" (Melville 115), the lawyer, as a person who pursues the easiest way of life among the rich people, has no ability to feel for or with Bartleby and his poverty. Since he could not feel he is somehow responsible for Bartleby's current poverty and suffering, the lawyer easily resorts Bartleby's misery to the fact of his physical deformity: he simply added that "few weeks of his stay with me might have temporarily impaired his vision" (Melville 115). It was this disparity over what one is really responsible for concerning the other's suffering that makes the lawyer's gesture of hospitality doubly problematic. He is innately blind to the sufferings of the dispossessed precisely because he could only present himself a sympathetic and benevolent employer. This also explains why the lawyer so easily pathologizes Bartleby's resistance as a symptom of incurable disorder and minoritizes him into a victim of the sentimental tragedy.

This might be the paradox of class antagonism under the capitalist economic system itself. Is it possible to say that the lawyer and Bartleby constitutes a typically antagonistic relationship of class struggle like that of the capitalist and the worker? Not exactly. All the lawyer did do was to provide Bartleby with the money and shelter and even pay the emotional sympathy into the bargain. He did no harm to Bartleby. Still, he strangely feels guilty precisely of what he had not done to him. And Bartleby seems to blame the lawyer just for what he did as a sympathetic employer. How absurd is this situation for the lawyer! What then is at stake here? What was wrong with the lawyer? Though the lawyer offered to Bartleby more than what he possibly could do, materially and emotionally, as a benevolent employer, he failed to understand his employee, and it makes himself, not Bartleby, such a miserable fellow who is incapable of doing nothing but pathologizes his miserable scrivener. If the lawyer's guilty feeling is not without reason, it might be because he unconsciously feels that he unwittingly contributed to the continuation of the system of exploitation by his very willingness to give moral sympathy to Bartleby's exceptional misery. In this sense, Bartleby's absolute negation and unemotional animosity towards the lawyer and his role of lubricating the exploitive system coincides with the lawyer's lack of understanding of the working of the system itself and the pathologizing gesture towards his employee.

Though the lawyer does not represent the system itself and Bartleby is in no sense a typical alienated worker himself, there is certainly something akin to what we call a class antagonism between the two. Bartleby's struggle of inaction precisely targets this paradox of the lawyer's blind antagonism itself, neither the lawyer himself nor the system itself. What the lawyer does not see when he asked what went wrong with Bartleby is this paradox of invisible systematic antagonism

upon which he and Bartleby's individual relationship is based and which makes both of them blind to the very mechanism of the system itself. Thus the real tragedy of the story lies in the fact that once within the system both the employer and the employee, despite themselves, tend to misrecognize such an internalized system of exploitation and class antagonism to be those of purely individual, even ethical relationship.

No wonder then that the lawyer's gesture of pathologization and sentimentalization is a kind of defense mechanism against unconscious fear of disaster that Bartleby's constant presence and adamant refusal might bring to his "snug business" and "easiest way of life" (Melville 92-93). In this context, the lawyer's attitude intimately reminds us of Benjamin Franklin whose autobiography mostly consists of the descriptions concerning his success as a person, like the lawyer, of "prudence and method" (Melville 93) against his fellow human beings. Benjamin Franklin's motto for life comparable to the lawyer's prudence and method is "credit and character" for which he "took care not only to be in *Reality* Industrious and frugal, but to avoid all *Appearances* of the Contrary" (Franklin 54). Indeed, Franklin's self-presentation as a successful American business man is full of descriptions of his conscientious treatments, even when he acknowledges his errata, towards the others who failed to satisfy the social standard due to their innate individual malady. The lawyer appears to be the modern version of a Franklinian individual who could not understand the systematic antagonism inherent in the commercial economy, ultimately contributing to the continuance of the system itself. This connection explains also why Melville's novella must first be read as a lawyer's self-justificatory autobiography written blindfolded to this enigmatic antagonism before it could be recorded as a symbolic story of Bartleby's tragic resistance against the system itself.

Who is Bartleby?

It is not difficult then to figure out why Bartleby was so much preferred to other usual suspects in the current theoretical debates on the politics of resistant subjectivity against the capitalist system of exploitation. Bartleby has been easily identified with the political subjectivity whose downright gesture of rejection to work is valorized to be the heroic resistance against the system of capitalist economy. As an employee of the Wall Street and a scrivener of the lawyer's office, Bartleby was often upheld as a sort of tragic victim of systematic exploitation or as a subjugated individual representative of the exhaustion of labor under disciplinary system of society. For many, his famous formula, "I would prefer not to,"

symptomatically anticipates the arrival of modern alienated worker and its political resistance against the system. For Giorgio Agamben, Bartleby amounts to "the extreme figure of the Nothing from which all creation derives" and he "constitutes the most implacable vindication of this Nothing as pure, absolute potentiality" (Agamben 253-54). But Han Byung-Chul, opposing to Agamben's "onto-theological interpretation" of Bartleby as "the herald of a second Creation," flatly dismisses Bartleby's subjectivity and insists that "Bartleby's *Dasein* is a negative being-unto-death" (Han 28) and that "this 'Story of Wall-Street' is not a tale of de-creation, but rather a story of exhaustion" (Han 29).

Whether Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" represents absolute potentiality or the lack of desire or the symptom of exhaustion seems far from what the text itself illustrates through the structural insertion of the lawyer's discourses. In fact, Agamben's reading of human potentiality as im-potentiality in Bartleby is clearly based on the familiar epistemological framework of anti-representation. For Agamben, the ontological structure of modern subjectivity fundamentally concerns with the human faculty "to be one's own lack, to be in relation to one's own incapacity… to not being in actuality" (Agamben 182). Though a clean break with Aristotle's dialectics of *Aufhebung* which presupposes the elation of negative potentiality to the higher form of actuality, Agamben's negative conceptualization of Bartleby's impotentiality introduces a psychoanalytic notion of desire as lack through the back door because the ontological lack here has nothing to do with the fantasy or the desire to get at something positive. No coincidence that Agamben finds in Bartleby's gesture of non-action a perfect description of the human potentiality as im-potentiality.

Agamben also radicalizes Bartleby's preference to do nothing as a highly subversive insistence of sovereignty. By claiming his potentiality, or *impotentiality*, as his own act of non-action while capable of doing something, Agamben could valorize Bartleby's enunciation of impotentiality itself as the materialization of the politics of postmodern sovereign resistance; the system of capitalist exploitation with its super-structural law might be seriously interrupted and suspended by his absolute denial of work. Not surprisingly, most of the story of Bartleby predominantly describes the ethical bewilderment and psychical confusion of the anonymous lawyer-narrator in his confrontation with this inscrutable figure. "I felt strangely goaded on to encounter his new opposition—to elicit some angry spark from him answerable to my own" (Melville 72). According to Agamben, Bartleby's act of passive resistance is not passive at all, creating instead a sort of Messianic interruption or *caesura* at the core of the system of teleological drive in capitalism

and, consequently, witnessing the potentiality of de-creating the system itself. Confronted with this absolute negation of non-action, the lawyer's insistence on the will and necessary assumption, being debilitated, only lays bare the crack at the Symbolic suture through which the Real of uncanny Bartleby intrudes.

Agamben may be right to point out that with the intervention of the lawyer's pathologizing narrative "nothing is farther from him [Bartleby] than the heroic pathos of negation" (256). Simply put, Bartleby cannot be identified with a sort of postmodern revolutionary subject. But his refusal and negation is right there in the form of active but negative negation and it, as a negation, features a certain absoluteness. Indeed, Bartleby shows forth his own power of active negation towards the world that is dominated by what Han referred to as the ethics of positivity. He declined to do any productive work, any revolutionary resistance, and any nomadic escapism. His strong presence in this world of extreme positivity is uncanny in the sense that his inaction or act of subtraction demonstrates a certain unreality despite the lawyer's realistic description. Agamben's take of Bartleby as absolute potentiality, though powerful as it is, does not give proper due to the social implication of his active negation against the world of extreme positivity.[1]

On the other hand, Han's analysis of Bartleby as a symptom of utter exhaustion representative of the disciplinary society rather than as a melancholic subject of what he calls "achievement society" (Han 8) still leaves much to be desired. First of all, Bartleby cannot be straightforwardly identified with a subjugated subject even if he does not display the symptom of melancholy caused by the push of the excess of positivity. Indeed, Han's notion of melancholy is far from Freud's meta-psychological concept but much closer to the psychiatric or psycho-pathological concept of depression. Though similar in symptoms, Freudian melancholy has nothing to do with neurotic anxiety in depression; it is rather akin to a pervert drive to incorporate the lost object into one's own psychic system by replacing the impossible sexual relation with that of identification. Moreover, Bartleby's "lack of desire" does not explain the tremendous presence of his negativity upon the lawyer's immense anxiety and overwhelming awe towards his inactive scrivener. The lawyer as narrator incessantly attempts to represent Bartleby as a pathetic victim of incurable disorder in order to defense his own bewilderment but repeatedly fails to do so because Bartleby, an inhabitant of otherworld, moves and withdraws from the

1 Jessica White, pointing out why Bartleby, "who neither preserves the law nor founds a new one," is so attractive to Agamben, criticizes Agamben's symbolization of 'new Messiah' from Bartleby. She thinks Agamben wants to "think this indistinction of potentiality and actuality outside of the paradigm of sovereignty," which is really problematic (White 317-318).

lawyer's world in his own way.

Is Bartleby a Revolutionary?

Bartleby's withdrawal from the world of excessive positivity and the achievement society is as radical as it can be. He has neither the intention of acting Nothing nor any interest in the other's life. There remains nothing in him, nothing new whatsoever. So fundamental is his withdrawal from this world that some theorists try to find in Bartleby's negative negation the possibility to secure an allegorical signifier of a revolutionary subjectivity. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are the ones who attempt to theorize Bartleby's radical resistance as the birth of an anti-systematic subject whose rejection of voluntary subjugation might illustrate the symbolic beginning of "a liberatory politics" (Hardt and Negri 204) and the absolute denial of the global system of capitalist exploitation. For them, Bartleby illustrates the way the individual politics of liberation might possibly take in the era of neoliberalism but at the same time fails to create an alternative subjectivity due to the lack of envisioning solidarity with the multitude. Radical but solitary. According to Hardt and Negri, Bartleby symbolizes an exceptional upsurge of individual resistance with negative refusal ultimately conducive to the systemic proliferation for the lack of any collective horizon of political solidarity (Hardt and Negri 203). Their prescriptive insistence on the necessity of resistant individual to progress from solitary negation to positive construction in the collective horizon, from individual to community, seems rather to reveal their own theoretical debacle: a chronic symptom of pathological optimism and excessive positivity inherent in the post-Marxist revolutionary politics which assumes as if there is a preordained path of subverting the system of achievement society.

Meanwhile, Slavoj Žižek criticizes such a transcendental politics of multitude in Hardt and Negri's theory of capitalist empire, reformulating the significance of Bartleby in terms of "post-systematic" subjectivity whose absolute withdrawal from work aptly expressed in his formula, "I am not particular" (Melville 126), not only envisages the possibility of securing an anti-systematic political resistance but also implicates the further possibility of downright refusal to paradoxically lubricate the systemic itself by facilitating the system's movement of self-adjustment (Žižek 381). For Žižek, Bartleby's negation denotes not only the resistance against the system of antagonism itself but also the denial to help the system work by overemphasizing the excessive positivity within alternative movements, thus preventing them from becoming a precautionary alarm to the existing power structure.

> "I would prefer not to" is to be taken literally: it says "I would prefer not to," not "I don't prefer (or care) to"—so we are back at Kant's distinction between negative and in finite judgment. In his refusal of the Master's order, Bartleby does not negate the predicate; rather, he affirms a non-predicate: he does not say that he doesn't want to do it; he says that he prefers (wants) not to do it. This is how we pass from the politics of "resistance" or "protestation," which para-sitizes upon what it negates, to a politics which opens up a new space outside the hegemonic position and its negation. We can imagine the varieties of such a gesture in today's public space: not only the obvious "There are great chances of a new career here! Join us!"—"I would prefer not to"; but also "Discover the depths of your true self, find inner peace!"—"I would prefer not to"; or "Are you aware how our environment is endangered? Do something for ecology!"—"I would prefer not to"; or "What about all the racial and sexual injustices that we witness all around us? Isn't it time to do more?"—"I would prefer not to." This is the gesture of **subtraction** at its purest, the reduction of all qualitative differences to a purely formal minimal difference. (Žižek 382)

Žižek is certainly right to suggest the possibility that radical theorization of Bartleby's resistance might bring back the very excessive positivity he has been trying to dismiss. He is keenly aware of the danger of revolutionary politics which ignores, all too often, the possibility of the gap between public law and its scandalous supplement even in the revolutionary situation.[1] This explains why Žižek is so critical of the scandalous supplement of the so-called "identity politics" and multi-culturalism and their pseudo-revolutionary gestures in the post-theories. But in the context of "Bartleby" and the presence of the lawyer, Žižek's valorization of Bartleby's negation as "subtraction" seems more suggestive when it applies to the lawyer. Indeed, the lawyer does not represent the system itself and Bartleby's power of negation neither directly aims at overthrowing the capitalist empire itself nor targets the lawyer himself. Bartleby does not wage war with the system itself or with its representative: his gesture of negation towards the lawyer does not take the form of class antagonism but of a desperate call for love and friendship towards the lawyer and his blind persistence.

Despite differences in political implication of Bartleby's negation and inaction, theoretical interpretations have so far something symptomatic in common. Preoccupied with forging an alternative possibilities of political subjectivity from

1 Deleuze and Agamben also pointed out the declarative significance of Bartleby's formula, "I would prefer not to," in terms of the law and the lawyer's supplementary agency. See Cooke 86.

the figure of Bartleby, they unconsciously identify the lawyer as the representative agent of capitalism and its logic of oppressive regulation. Though it is true that the lawyer's description of "passive resistance" could aptly be applied to Bartleby's overall attitude of non-active refusal to do anything, what the story tells in its plot is completely different. Not in the level of *fabula* but in its *syuzhet*, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is not just an "impossible biography" of Bartleby but also the rhetorical autobiography of the lawyer. Indeed, it is not Bartleby but the lawyer himself who mostly suffers from his own incapacity to brace any direct confrontation with Bartleby. The lawyer even feels he becomes "somehow unmanned" (Melville 109) in Bartleby's presence and is clearly aware that his reasonable "assumptions" have no power over Bartleby's illogic of subjective "preferences." He deplores that "my procedure seemed as sagacious as ever—but only in theory" (Melville 117).

> It was truly a beautiful thought to have assumed Bartleby's departure; but, after all, that assumption was simply my own, and none of Bartleby's. The great point was, not whether I had assumed that he would quit me, but whether he would prefer so to do. He was more a man of preferences than assumptions. (Melville 117)

While Agamben and others intimately presupposed that Bartleby's preferred non-action be only active towards the lawyer as an upholder of capitalist legal system and the logic of reasonable assumption, Bartleby does not demonstrate any sign of direct antagonism against the lawyer. If there is a real target of Bartleby's inhuman antagonism, it would be the fantasy of class antagonism inherent in capitalist territorialization itself in which the poor and the dispossessed have nothing else to do but passively deny being subservient to the systemic operation and sending a call for friendship to the middle class people like the lawyer (Reed 257). Ironically, Bartleby is not a man of preferences who whimsically chooses not to do some particular actions useful to the system but a figure of absolute negation who declines the choice itself constantly imposed upon him by the assumptive power of systematic preferences. As it was repeatedly insisted upon by the lawyer—"Either you must do something, or something must be done to you" (Melville 125-126)—it was not Bartleby but the lawyer who sticks to the logic of preferences: Bartleby's preference not to do is neither the outcome of his will of negation nor the pure manifestation of im-potentiality. Bartleby cannot help but to simply take flight from all this importunate impositions of choice and preference unable to actively get out of the systemic assumptions. In a sense, his im-potentiality is the aftereffect of his

negative desire to subtract himself from all positivity.

What Is Left?

In this respect, Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of Bartleby as a symbolic figure of minority and pure foreigner makes much more sense in the theoretical terrains of post-'68 attempt to figure out a radical political subjectivity. For Deleuze, Bartleby's gesture of non-preference ("I would prefer not to") and non-referentiality ("I am not particular") at once denotes the discursive deterritorialization of the legal dispositive of economic assumption and the original reterritorialization of anti-Oedipal brotherhood of bachelors (Deleuze 73). According to Deleuze, the failure of Bartleby's "line of flight" and his death neither come from any innate psychic disorder nor from his inability to make any significant solidarity with the multitude in the street (Rancière 147). It derives from the lawyer's blindness to and deferral of Bartleby's offer of brotherhood.

The lawyer could not understand that Bartleby indeed offered his hand for the brotherly cooperation in the line of flight from the systematic stratification of capitalism. According to Deleuze, Melville's novella not only provides the way Bartleby's absolute negation was always already co-opted by the fantasy of class antagonism but also illustrates how the lawyer, as a liberalist middle class gentleman, is simultaneously alienated from and blind towards such a systematic exclusion. Both Bartleby and the lawyer are victims of such a territorializing power of the system and its biopolitics (Deleuze 74). Thus, Deleuze flatly dismisses and criticizes any attempt to pathologize Bartleby by the lawyer, relocating his political power of denial in the more radical plane of *not choosing to do*, rather than choosing not to do. Bartleby is not a man of negative preference or impotential potentiality but of nomadic flight onto the uncharted path of becoming politically immanent.[1]

Despite various attempts to theorize Bartleby as a symbolic political figure of post-'68 era, Bartleby is more symptomatic about the theory itself than representative of what theory desires to appropriate. Symptomatic both in the sense that he singularly anticipates the spectral return of the dispossessed in the neoliberalist capitalism and that he problematizes the poverty of political imagination in the liberalist drive epitomized in the figure of the lawyer. Bartleby's "pallid helplessness" does not allegorize the depressed individual in the post-industrial society, who suffers what Han called a melancholic hyperactivity

1 Though he is keen to thematize the power of Bartleby's formula which breaks out of the lawyer's discursive containment, Deleuze also puts too much emphasis on the figure of Bartleby. Rancière also criticizes Deleuze's tendency to "always come to center on the 'hero' of a story" (154).

disorder and a burnout syndrome ruthlessly driven by the neoliberalist ideology of endless competition and excessive positivity. Bartleby's symptomaticity does not derive from any particular pathological symptom or a stoic impotentiality of not working: he is neither a psychotic victim of the burnout society nor a depressed worker who could do nothing but to sabotage the labor or perform a hunger strike against the system itself. Rather, the death of Bartleby and the failure of his inaction symptomize the incapacity, *not* impossibility, of critical theories to imagine a new political subjectivity in no other terms than the very notion of political representation.[1]

With respect to Bartleby, critical theories have so far been strangely naïve and insensitive about the way a literary text resists the philosophical and political appropriation of its fictionality. Above all, critical theories' strategy of politicizing Bartleby all failed to discern Melville's fictional device of distancing the lawyer-narrator's autobiographical impulse from his self-justificatory pathologization of Bartleby. Especially, they could not take into account the peculiar status of Melville's insertion of heterogeneous report about the dead letters at the end of the text. The appended postscript about the rumor does not remind us of the paradox that "the man of the law furnishes the reader with correct information" but he "entirely fails to question the particular link between dead letters and Bartleby's formula" (Agamben 169). The rumor has nothing to do with Bartleby's past morbidity; it links Bartleby's fate to the lawyer's complacent self-satisfaction and "a delicious self-approval" (Melville 105). Unable to delve into the ethical implication of the lawyer's problematic narrative pathologization, critical theories end up exposing their own ethical dilemma. Ironically, the long trajectory of political speculations on Bartleby led us not to the revolutionary implication of Bartleby as a symbol of resistant subject but to the ethics of critical theories towards literary texts and the literary in general. Like the lawyer, critical theories have been much too preoccupied to utilize and appropriate literary figure of Bartleby for their own speculative justification, having been blindfolded to the self-deconstructive politicality of the literary text itself.[2] As Rodolphe Gasché insisted, a critique in a

1 Jacques Derrida succinctly deconstructs the practical equivocality of political representation in "Declaration of Independence" of British Colonies in 1776 and the politics of representation in general. See Derrida 7-15.

2 According to De Boever, the political significance of the figure of Bartleby in current political terrain could be connected to "a radical crisis to three debates in critical theory: on representative democracy, human rights, and sovereign power." But his idea is heavily indebted to Agamben's theory of potentiality (143).

genuine sense might come only when it can "raise what is separated into its proper rank precisely by contrasting it to what it is separated from" (Gasché 109); only when the theory can take the literary text as its absolute Other.

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Ethical Identities and Death Impulsion in *Green Tea*

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Abstract Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Green Tea* presents an ethical issue of Reverend Mr. Jennings who commits suicide because of a black monkey ghost. The death of Jennings is a tragedy caused by double predicaments in which a man strives for the meaning of human existence both in natural and social dimensions. Jennings' excessive intake of green tea indicates that his ethical identity required by the Victorian society is undermined; his interest in paganism and knowledge of the black monkey constitutes a doubt about his existence as a human in the context of Darwinian evolutionism. Jennings gradually loses the rational will and ethical consciousness in the chaos of ethical identities. Dominated by the irrational will, he thus makes an ethical selection prone to the beast factor which is represented by the black monkey. Sheridan Le Fanu depicts a process towards an unbearable passion for death when the rational will vanishes in the face of challenges from the spiritual world. During this process, green tea, the exotic which enters the human body, becomes the embodiment of the conceptual evolutionism that intrudes into human mind, and hence the entity green tea involves ethical considerations.

Key words *Green Tea*; Sheridan Le Fanu; death; identity

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Introduction

Green Tea (1872) written by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873), a famous Irish ghost story writer in the Victorian era, is one of the best-known works of supernatural terror and epitomizes the writer's career in ghost stories (Sullivan 12).

Le Fanu was fascinated by issues in about human mind under the influence of the Swedish philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg in his elderly years. *Green Tea* depicts a very simple story of the Reverend Mr. Robert Lynder Jennings who commits suicide and is finally exempted from torture by a hallucination in the form of a demonic black monkey. The little black monkey has attracted much attention in literary criticism. Peter Penzoldt holds that it is a production of schizophrenia (Sullivan 16). V.S. Pritchett considers it as a symbol of Jennings' original sin, and Michale Beganal, the punishment for Jennings' loss of faith as well as his ardour for intellect (Sullivan 17). However, the devil and imaginary black monkey involves social, scientific, tea, cultural contexts of the 19th Century Ireland. The death impulsion of Rev. Jennings is related to ethics, including the doubt and hesitation between faith and science; inconsistency of body and mind; the indigenous and the exotic.

Jennings indeed displays some schizophrenic traits but they are the representation of a wrestle between the good and evil characteristics of human rather than mere symptoms of a curable disease of the nervous system. According to the "three stages" of Jennings' disease in chapters seven, eight and nine, it can be found that there is a conscious connection between Jennings and the black monkey who gradually acquires the ability of action and speech, while Jennings, despite his appearance as a human being, step by step loses the ability to act and speak.

Scientific and Social Contexts

The short stories of Sheridan Le Fanu depict a series of characters who perish in despair as they are haunted and inflicted by supernatural spirits or demonic hallucinations. The characters' "phantoms represent aspects of the self displaced and imagined as things or people outside the self, often monstrous selves freed from most human constraints" (Gates 16). From this sense, ghost stories written by Le Fanu aim at not merely creating an atmosphere of horror, but also touching upon human's cognition of his essence. One typical feature of Victorian ghost stories is that ghosts appear in the form of animals which "in some cases […] occur to be the embodiment of these supernatural powers" (Irina 99-100). Thus, what constitutes *Green Tea* as a ghost story is the image of the black monkey with reddish glowing eyes.

The ghost takes its form as a monkey rather than other shapes in *Green Tea*, for one thing following the tradition of using animal images in Victorian ghost stories, and for another reflecting the influence of evolution theory in the nineteenth-century Ireland. Some scholars proposed the possibility of species evolution since 1735. Moreover, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) exerted enormous impact on

science and religion of his time. Religious definition of human beings was directly challenged. Darwin's theory of evolution entered the Irish society first not featured by its scientific basics but by sparking off debates among theologians in journals (DeArce 49). *Dublin University Magazine* edited by Le Fanu was one among them. Thus, it becomes easier to understand why the ghost is an image of a monkey instead of other animals when we consider the creation time of *Green Tea* and Jennings' clergyman identity.

Despite the image of the black monkey being an essential element,, it can be seen from the title Green Tea that Le Fanu intended not to make this novella a mere story about ghosts. Just like the theory of evolution, green tea seriously affected the identity of English people in the nineteenth century. Botanists, physicians and horticulturists were ambivalent about tea in the eighteenth century when this type of exotic goods initiated its first journeys all along to Great Britain from China. Then in the 1880s when the knowledge and market of tea were both enlarged, people gradually cleared up misunderstandings of tea, seldom regarded it as fashion, medicine or poison, and viewed it as a daily beverage (Ellis 93-176). Nevertheless, one could see the active posture of two camps in the nineteenth century, the teaist and the anti-teaist. The anti-teaists still believed that tea was detrimental to the individual, the society and the nation (Ellis 189). Since the mid-nineteenth century, medication of diet loomed large in Ireland, and physicians agreed that tea beverage could damage people's health. Ian Miller's *Reforming Food in Post-Famine Ireland: Medicine, Science and Improvement* states that physicians believed that excessive intake of tea was one reason for weak constitution (Crusack 180), which coincided with the character physician Dr. Hesselius's opinion that green tea harms human body.

Although Victorian ghost stories depict many characters who are sent to doom by ghosts and demons, the death of Jennings remains confusing because Jennings is quite different from other characters who take evil actions or have moral degeneration in stories of the same category. "Jennings is the only one of Le Fanu's suicides who is a good man with no very apparent guilt or reason to kill himself" (Gates 20). He shows no bad habit that deserves serious criticism, while his minor deviations, his addiction to tea and interest in Swedenborgian New Church, cause essential influences on ethical consciousness of Jennings under the social and historical contexts of the Victorian era.

Jennings is a man with few moral flaws only if he is judged by today's moral standards and ethical practice, because his minor vices in today's view, namely his addiction to tea and interest in Swedenborgian New Church are exactly lethal elements for a clergyman in the Victorian era. It would be confusing to understand

why the demonic monkey haunts Jennings and why Jennings finally commits suicide if we fail to place Jennings in a suitable context. Placing Jennings in the ethical system of the Victorian era, we may find that Jennings is denying his ethical meaning of existence as a human both in body and soul by dint of suicide.

Declination of Religious Identity

The appearance of the black monkey directly challenges Jennings' ethical identity as a clergyman that he lives by. The most conspicuous identity of Jennings is clergyman, and this ethical identity requires him to undertake corresponding responsibility and obligations (Nie 263). Meanwhile, the assumption of such responsibility and obligations strengthens his ethical identity. Thus, religious faith is of great significance to Rev Jennings. Jennings is first a rational existence because "rational will is driven by religious faith, moral principles and ethical norms or rational judgements in a particular context," and "rational will is the inner core as well as outer representation of human factor" (Nie 278). Hence the religious faith of Jennings consists of the pillar of his rational will. The first part of this novella tells readers Jennings' symptoms after repeatedly seeing the black monkey. For instance, Jennings sees the monkey while he is reading to his congregation. When the black monkey suddenly appears and squats on the scripts in front of Jennings, he fails to meet the duties of his sacred calling:

> "He has on a sudden stopped short, and after a silence, apparently quite unable to resume, he has fallen into solitary, inaudible prayer, his hands and his eyes uplifted, and then pale as death, and in the agitation of a strange shame and horror, descended trembling." (7)

Jennings' ethical identity as a clergyman diminishes when he falls from the platform. It symbolizes the incapacity of his religious faith to strengthen his clergyman identity. The drive of rational will is leaving. he loses the ability of speech and self-control in the encounter with the black monkey. Thus, Rev Jennings, who falls from the platform and loses speech along with free will, falls into the instinct of creatures from high standards of humanity.

Jennings' religious identity slides into chaos when he deviates from Irish Catholic traditions to the creeds of Swedenborgian New Church. Although Jennings concludes that the tenets of the New Church will do no good to his Catholic belief and his head, he even allows himself to search for answers in Swedenborgian classics when he is confronted with the black monkey.

> "Yes, but not good for the mind—the Christian mind, I mean. Paganism is all bound together in essential unity, and, with evil sympathy, their religion involves their art, and both their manners, and the subject is a degrading fascination and the Nemesis sure. God forgive me!" (21)

Jennings' interest in Swedenborg results in a clash between his identity as a Catholic priest and a Swedenborgian follower. Jennings cannot meet his duties as a priest. The ethical identity as a priest, therefore, gradually diminishes. Despite his interest in Swedenborg, Jennings does not turn to a Swedenborgian clergyman for help; rather he chooses Dr. Hesselius to treat him. For now, Jennings has not yet converted himself into a determined Swedenborgian disciple, but he is already in a dilemma within the issue of faith.

Furthermore, the conflict between religious and scientific explanation about human's essence causes unfathomable ethical anxiety to Jennings. Jennings is influenced by the New Church, and one sentence of Swedenborg's *Arcana Caelestia* draws Jennings' special attention,

> "When man's interior sight is opened, which is that of his spirit, then there appear the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight" (14).

When the previously invisible interior spirit appears as a monkey in front of Jennings, he has to re-evaluate his essence and identity. Concerning the world of spirits, Le Fanu's ideas "are based to some extent on the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg" (Tracy xi), and Swedenborg taught that when one's inner eye, which each individual possesses, opened, it let us "see into the world of spirits, which interpenetrates our own world" (Tracy xii). The demon that originates in the outer world and befalls Jennings is the black monkey, whose appearance symbolizes that the anxiety of evolutionism haunts Jennings.

The demonic monkey is the phantom of evolution theory. Jennings even acknowledges that his head has much to do with a monkey. Especially at the third phase of his disease (chapter nine), when the monkey speaks to Jennings, he has a feeling that "it is not by my ears it reaches me—it comes like a singing through my head." The black monkey seizes the reasonable head and stops any possibility of prayers, dissipating the ethical consciousness that driven by religious faith. At the third phase, although Jennings has a human appearance owing to natural selection,

he fails to make a successful ethical selection.

Jennings' ethical consciousness of existence as a human is further threatened after his ethical identity has already been challenged. Swedenborg asserted that the soul is light which illuminates the existence, and love along with compassion is heat which flows from one world to the other (Sizer 411), and in this sense, the light and heat combines to form the black monkey's reddish glowing eyes. Once exclaiming "May God compassionate me" and pleading God to save his spiritual world, Jennings henceforth undergoes a consciousness chaos because the projection of light and heat, which should originate with God from a clergyman's point of view, turns out to be a monkey in the context of evolutionism.

Jennings is trapped in an ethical predicament in which the concept of evolution contradicts Swedenborgian ideas. The predicament is that he intends to choose an insight into his existence as a human between the evolutionary and religious explanation, but this is not a multiple-choice question. When he starts to choose, he starts to lose. The books of Swedenborg "directly and emphatically teach the impossibility of the evolution of one form of life into another, of one animal into another, and still more into a man,"[1] which directly contradicts the theory of evolution. Entrenched religious ideas and the emerging theory of evolution together restructure Jennings' ethical consciousness and meanwhile tear down this clergyman. The anxiety caused by the two sides encourages Jennings to make a selection so that he may remove such anxiety. However, the theory of evolution haunts him like a demonic monkey. On the basis of literary ethical criticism, human beings have undergone two selections, one is natural selection which entitles us to have human-looking, and the other is ethical selection which offers us reason and morality so that we are a species of ethical consciousness (Nie 32-3, 35). Thus, it can be safely asserted that ethics make human. However, Jennings intends to choose one of the two selections in order to define his existence. Either to abandon human appearance or ethics results in self-destruction. Jennings epitomizes men whose world was shattered when two selections were suddenly presented in the nineteenth century. The sequence is reverted of first natural selection and second ethical selection since Jennings has already existed as an ethical being before he noticed that he had removed beast form since time immemorial. The more the beast form haunts in his eyes, the stronger the beast factor becomes.

The suicide of Jennings is an ultimate act of forgoing his religious identity as well as faith. Le Fanu has his own consideration in making Jennings commit suicide. "Suicide in nineteenth-century England was both illegal and touched with

1 Darwinian Evolution in The New Church, http://www.heavenlydoctrines.org/dtSearch.html

the taint of insanity. […] suicide was a disgrace, as Sheridan Le Fanu fully realized. The Anglo-Irish shared with the English a terror of suicide" (Gates 15). Besides, "Victorian readers of 'Green Tea' would surely have been prepared for a link between religious doubts and felo-de-se" (Gates 21). Hence the suicide impulsion of Jennings indicates that his ethical consciousness is doomed to be encroached, demolished and dissipated. Begnal (28) pointed out that "most of his stories are men divided against themselves" as to Le Fanu. The black monkey trespasses from the self-contained soul to the suffering body and leaves Jennings possessing only human appearance. However, in the eyes of Dr. Hesselius who cannot feel the pain of Jennings, the exotic entity tea is the key to the monkey's trespass.

Declination of Social Identity

Confronted with the black monkey, Jennings turned first to Dr Harley and then to Dr Hesselius for help, and such choices manifest Jennings' cognition transformation of the monkey from bodily dimension to spiritual dimension. Jennings comments Harley as "one of the greatest fools" (17), despite Harley's reputation as an eminent doctor, because Jennings thinks Harley only cares about bodily changes, so he follows Hesselius, a person who can write "Essays on Metaphysical Medicine". Jennings' choice of the two doctors shows that he has clearly recognized that his illness is rooted in the spiritual world rather than actual life. The monkey phantom should be traced to heart and soul instead of flesh. That's why Jennings comes closer to Swedenborgian New Church since Swedenborg was considered as a man possessing the mystic ability of divine communion. Concerning the body, Jennings has an excessive intake of tea; concerning the soul, Jennings moves toward paganism, thus violating the Victorian male norm of temperance and self-control bodily and mentally.

Green tea influences both the body and social identity of Jennings. The narrator Dr. Hesselius pays much attention to Jennings' habit of drinking tea, and excessive intake of tea is his explanation for Jennings' suicide. Jennings drinks tea at night to keep a clear mind and life vitality; he even changes from black tea to green tea so as to better enjoy the nervous stimulus. Thus Jennings has a positive attitude towards tea. Although he takes tea mostly as a measure of staying awake, his private tea-drinking does not correspond to the custom of tea-drinking in the Victorian era. "After dinner, tea time time becomes a special ceremony for women. […] Women are the centre. They help themselves and others with tea, including men. […] Men are auxiliary, and they follow the women. […] The central role of women beside the tea-table is irreplaceable" (Ma 87). Tea-drinking activities are

important social interactions for women to be hostesses, while Jennings defies these customs. Lady Mary even has a quarrel with Jennings about his excessive intake of tea (10). In addition, Adams holds that "self-control, self-discipline secures the most fundamental attribute of traditional manhood, autonomy" in the Victorian era (qtd. in Rocha 142). For Jennings, the consumption of tea "is not a necessity; instead, it is a 'want,' a desire, he gives into" (Rocha 142). Therefore, Jennings' tiny vice of excessive private tea-drinking indicates that he violates the image of an ideal Victorian man. The excessive intake of tea for the body reflects a lack of self-control in spirit, and the deterioration of his health symbolizes the disintegration of his social identity.

Jennings falls into an ethical predicament when he takes excessive tea for a spiritual purpose. By means of tea, he unconsciously sacrifices bodily temperance to develop a clear mind and reserved disposition on the spiritual level. The conflict between flesh and spirit cannot be resolved for Hesselius as well since he can barely do anything before Jennings killing himself, and he even performs the treatment in an awkward way (Begnal 24-5). The mainstream view of flesh and spirit in the late eighteenth-century is that the two were irrelevant, and Hesselius can be seen as a representative in this mainstream because Jennings is just one of his many cases to verify the influence of green tea on men's nervous system. In contrast, Benjamin Rush, a doctor of that time, proposed that flesh and spirit did correspond, and he believed that diets, medication and other physical factors could influence people's judgement and intelligence, except that he could only offer a mystic explanation for how the two corresponded. Not until the late nineteenth century was Rush's view echoed (Sizer 407-8). Jennings is also one among the then mainstream followers. Whether Jennings selects the spiritual or bodily dimension, once the selection is made for the sake of only one side, he will put himself in perish.

Owing the appearance of the black monkey to green tea is an attempt at transforming conceptual evolution theory into an actual exotic commodity. Although Hesselius in his "Essays on Metaphysical Medicine" focuses on individual spiritual world, he does not link body with soul, and still cares more about body just like other doctors, which can be seen from his experience of reading Jennings' notes on Swedenborg's books. Thus, for Hesselius, concrete evidence is a qualified cause for Jennings' illness. Compared with theory of evolution invading into one's spiritual world, green tea, which invades into Jennings' body, is such concrete evidence, and they share similar attributes, namely "invasion" of new items. Tea-drinking was common in Victorian England; however, Irish doctors still believed that tea was detrimental to health in the nineteenth century. Moreover, good-looking tea leaves

"were directly imported from China," and English people drank their tea before bedtime while they "would complain of weak spirit when getting up" (Ma 39-40). This condition is very close to Jennings'. Hence, Hesselius thought of it as a pity failing to verify the relationship between tea and ragged nerves through Jennings' case. It is a nearly unavoidable conclusion given by a physician that Jennings dies of green tea.

The spiritual world and actual life should not be split into two distinct parts. What is seen is that green tea enters the body, while what is unseen is that the evolution theory challenges the soul, and the latter is the key of curing Jennings. Isolating body and soul delays the treatment of Jennings, and death impulsion is formed when one side aims to eradicate the other. The ethical consciousness of Jennings vanishes along with the chaos of his social identity in a great despair in great despair of unresolved conflict between body and soul under the context of evolution theory.

Jennings selects the spiritual world solely, and in order to demonstrate his free will, he ironically embarks on the death road that the black monkey sets for him. It seems that suicide contradicts Jennings' volition since he resists with some reason when the black monkey urges him to jump into a shaft for suicide. However, death is the ultimate appealing of Jennings. Ethical consciousness dissipated, ethical identities demolished, rational will and human factor surpassed by irrational will and beast factor, Jennings thus degenerates into beast instinct. The black monkey, which symbolizes the beast factor, becomes the master of Jennings' destiny. Free will, as a representation of the beast factor (Nie 39), satisfies the monkey's interference in the fate of Jennings, therefore, Jennings kills himself.

Conclusion

The death of Jennings is a tragic result of double ethical predicaments in which Jennings is trapped in making selections between his natural existence and social existence. A quiet monkey will not cause a normal adult to be clutched by terror in most cases, while Jennings cannot convey to others the horror that he feels when he first sees the monkey (24). In Jennings' eyes, the black monkey is not just an ugly animal, but an immovable idea of human essence in concept. The black monkey becomes Jennings' mirror image of exploring himself when evolution theory and religious faith encounter in Jennings' spiritual world, and such encounter projects the conflict as a monkey, whose image can be found in the real world. The three stages of Jennings' illness make Jennings identify himself with a monkey, namely phases of intensification that a mirror image projects itself on the subject. When

the black monkey starts speaking at the third stage, it presents itself just like God who creates the world by speech in front of speechless Jennings. Jennings thus must have had a feeling that he resembles the image of a monkey, and the speech of the monkey becomes Jennings' wish in life. Finally, the beast factor triumphs. *Green Tea* touches upon the relationship of various life forms, such as body versus soul, and faith versus intellect. This novella ends up with human destruction when irrational will, in the form of beast factor, drives Jennings' death impulsion to commit suicide; we thus witness a black monkey destroys a man. However, death impulsion can be avoided even if one's spiritual world is threatened. Humans can convert irrational will into rational will by fairly judging the wrestle between the human factor and the beast factor so that the human factor may triumph.

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A Tempest and *The Tempest*: To De-ghettoize the Classic and Cultures

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Abstract Postcolonial reading is a popular and interesting perspective to study Shakespeare's classic work *The Tempest*. Yet the discriminating images of the aboriginal people in this book impedes its circulation and its teaching due to ethnic issues. Is a postcolonial critique really incompatible with, and unfriendly to, the context of world literature? Martinican politician and author Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, an adaptation of *The Tempest* in French Language, seems to offer a good solution to answering this question. By replacing the word "The" with the word "A," Césaire's adaptation rebuts the attempts to make postcolonial reading exclusive and superior, and indicates the possible and inexhaustible diversity in rewarding various perspectives when interpreting the classic. This applies to not only specific classical works but also to national literature studies. In Chinese literature studies, diverged voices argue about which is the more representative: Chinese ancient literature or modern literature, and Chinese scholars' studies or those of overseas scholars. To anoint only one particular means, as the privileged method to understand and present Chinese literature and culture, is questionable. In this paper, the rebuttal against the ghettoization of classic works and literature will be examined and illuminated to prove that it is easier and more suitable to make links rather than build fences among different perspectives, times and people.

Key words *The Tempest*; *A Tempest*; Cross-cultural Communication; Chinese Culture; Postcolonial Study

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From "The" to "A": To De-ghettoize the Classic

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2008), Caliban, a member of the aboriginal population of the island, is depicted as ugly, uncivilized and even evil. Prospero, the intruder of the island, calls him a "poisonous slave" that is "got by devil himself" and an "abhorred slave" who is "being capable of all ill" (119-120). He hates and rejects the imported civilization as he curses that "You taught me language, and my profit on't is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you for learning me your language" (121). He even tried "to violate the honor of" the latter (349-350). The conflict between Caliban the aboriginal and Prospero the intruder seems highly resembles that between the colonizer and the colonized and it seems to be persuasive proof for postcolonial study of *The Tempest*. Yet the negative image of Caliban makes it a very sensitive and controversial perspective that brings unexpected trouble to the classic work.

An article titled "Who's afraid of 'The Tempest'?" appeared on the news website "Salon." It reported on a ban on ethnic studies in Arizona in the U.S. The ban results in the proscription of "Mexican-American history, local authors and even Shakespeare" (Biggers). Shakespeare's classic play *The Tempest* is involved. It seems that *The Tempest* is no less intimidating than a real tempest. The prompted debates and strong emotions can be more intense than a roaring storm. Whether *The Tempest* indicates a sense of discrimination against "the other" has given rise to a big controversy. It becomes a major public issue insofar as the study or performance of this classic play is concerned. But the question is how *The Tempest* has been transformed from a literary classic into a banned book? How and why does the postcolonial perspective become so overwhelming in determining the fate of this classic work? Is it justified to deprive potential readers of a classic work because of one way of interpretation only?

Dating back to 1808, Edmond Malone published a pamphlet with a long title *An Account of the Incidents, from Which the Title and Part of the Story of Shakespeare's Tempest were Derived; and Its True Date Ascertained*. In the pamphlet, Malone "reviewed the reports on the 1609 storms and voyagers caught in it" (Stritmatter and Kositsky 5). He means to "make apparent why he believed this particular storm inspired Shakespeare to write *The Tempest*" (5). Malone insisted that Shakespeare must have read about "one or more of the several descriptions that

appeared in London in 1610 and 1611 of the Gates-Somers expedition's shipwreck on Bermuda in 1609" (A. Vaughan and V. Vaughan 5). And with this assertion, subsequent scholars "contend that Shakespeare meant the tempest to be substantially about English imperialism" (5). Though some scholars notice how "tangential" the "ties between the pamphlets and the play" are, the influence of this claim persisted in the twentieth century (5). The validity of the claim is not based on historical facts. Neither does the authorial intention matter anymore. Because "what matters to many twentieth century interpreters are the power relations between colonizer and colonized that seem embedded in the play's plot and characters" (6).

Aimer Cesaire's *A Tempest*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, was produced under this circumstance. Aimer Cesaire is a Martinique born politician who had made consistent efforts in revolting against colonization. In 1969, he rewrote the story of *The Tempest* and titled it *A Tempest*. It was intended to be performed for the black audience particularly. Though plots of the original play have been preserved, the style of language and the features of the characters have been modified. Richard Miller, the translator of Cesaire's *A Tempest* from French to English, mentions that Cesaire "denied any attempting any linguistic echo of Shakespeare" (Cesaire, *A Tempest* II). Caliban, the most commented on figure among scholars of postcolonial studies, is also depicted differently in *A Tempest*. Unlike the cruel and uncivilized Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* in *A Tempest* Caliban stands out as "a hero through the illumination of his culture." He is brave and with integrity. Such a shift of Caliban's personality, as a commentator of the book suggests, is "perhaps the most significant accomplishment of *A Tempest*" (II). Considering Cesaire's political standpoint, it is not unexpected that he intends to depict Caliban as an outstanding fighter revolting against the evil colonizers. Cesaire in his book *Discourse on Colonialism* severely condemns the cruelty of colonization. He calls it not having "a single human value" (2). Some people, in an effort to justify colonization, argue that to colonize is to import civilization. To Cesaire, however, such claims are unjustified. Cesaire declares that "between colonization and civilization there is an infinite distance" (*Discourse* 2). *A Tempest* reflects Cesaire's political orientation. Roles are reversed and perspectives are switched. It speaks for the colonized and serves as a rebuttal against *The Tempest* which, under such circumstances, is regarded as a piece of work that embodies racial discrimination.

To some scholars, however, reducing *The Tempest* to a work only about colonization is an impetuous gesture; and to interpret the play exclusively from the postcolonial perspective provokes opposing voices. In his article "Stormy

Weather: Misreading the Postcolonial Tempest," Peter Hulme, who defends the postcolonial approach to *The Tempest*, quotes some of the scholars whose opinions diverge from his own. Brian Vickers, for example, is one of those critics. In his book *Appropriating Shakespeare,* Vickers fires the fiercest criticism against the postcolonial perspective. From the title of the book we can easily tell that he tries to designate a way of appropriateness to appreciate Shakespeare while criticizing ideological "appropriation" of the bard's works. To Vickers, distorted interpretations must be rejected. Vickers' accusation of postcolonial reading of *The Tempest* is serious. Hulme paraphrases Vickers' opinion and suggests that "According to Vickers, postcolonial readings of *The Tempest* are guilty of reducing the play to 'an allegory about colonialism with Prospero seen as 'an exploitative protocapitalist' and Caliban 'an innocent savage, deprived of his legitimate heritage'" ("Stormy Weather"). Vickers strongly objects to those postcolonial critics. The postcolonial reading of *The Tempest*, as Vickers furthers his criticism, is less an alternative perspective than "a kind of show-trial in which works of literature, amongst them *The Tempest*, are judged in the balance and found guilty of endorsing colonialism and its evils" (qtd. in Hulme, "Stormy Weather"). To Vickers, postcolonial reading is a distorting perspective imposed on the play. It is irresponsibly applied to the study of the play, and it deliberately disregards the most valuable parts of Shakespeare's work. The perspective which Vickers deems appropriate and indispensable derives from a less politically-oriented but more philosophical theme---"the dichotomy of art and nature" (Vickers 416). As Vickers argues, not only is it revealed within the play of *The Tempest* but it was "important in Renaissance thought and in Shakespeare" (416). To Vickers, this perspective must be more essential and enduring than the postcolonial approach.

Unlike Vickers who criticizes postcolonial reading by pointing out its defects and fallacies, another kind of critique, as Hulme suggests, is "to try to construct a third position, above or beyond the conflict" ("Stormy Weather"). Jonathan Bate is one of the scholars who embrace "pluralism" in interpreting *The Tempest*. Bate elevates Shakespeare's work to a level where it is "not just an icon of various European nationhoods but a voice of what we now call multiculturalism" (qtd. in "Stormy Weather"). To Bate, although "Prosperian" reading dominates, the alternative "Calibanesque" reading "has always been latent in the play" (qtd. in Hulme, "Stormy Weather"). Different perspectives, as Bate suggests, are not mutually exclusive. They do not compete with each other but co-exist with each other. Their validity is not challenged by each other. They all contribute to the study of the play.

Yet Bate's emphasis on the "capaciousness" of the play has been ironically attacked by Hulme. Bate's idea, as Hulme sarcastically summarizes, is that "all these readings have somehow been locked up in the play waiting for Frantz Fanon to come along and liberate them" ("Stormy Weather"). To Hulme, it is just a self-fancied illusion. It caters for the "classically liberal fashion" and it is too tolerant with conflicting and paradoxical trends ("Stormy Weather"). In another article "Nymphs and Reapers," Hulme also expresses his concern about this kind of "pluralistic incorporation." Unlike his direct denunciation of the plural reading in "Stormy Weather," Hulme's argument in "Nymphs and Reapers" begins with his admission that "different but contemporaneous inscriptions take place" (Barker and Hulme 195). He suggests that "*The Tempest* read by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1914 as the work of England's national poet is very different from *The Tempest* constructed with full textual apparatus by an editor/critic such as Frank Kermode" (195). Hulme seems to have recognized the possibility and validity of alternative perspectives, but he then warns that this "should not lead inescapably to the point where the only option becomes the voluntaristic ascription to the text of meanings and articulations derived simply from one's own ideological preferences" (196). Instead of accepting "a recipe for peaceful coexistence with the dominant readings," Hulme strives to initiate "a contestation of those readings themselves" ("Stormy Weather"). The winner of the contestation can be no other than postcolonial reading. Because postcolonial reading is "better" and "more interesting" ("Stormy Weather"), Hulme declares that postcolonial reading not only defeats alternative ways to appreciate the play but also shatters the illusion of "pluralistic incorporation."

It seems that Hulme not only argues for the superiority of postcolonial reading of *The Tempest* but also attempts to make it exclusive and dominant. Postcolonial reading is to displace alternative perspectives rather than parallel them. To Hulme, the authority of this exclusive perspective is never to be questioned. If postcolonial reading becomes the only approach to the play, however, the future of the classic play is not so promising, considering the ban on it ~~at~~ in Arizona. But the question is, is it possible and valid to confine a classic play to a single perspective?

In fact, if we look at Cesaire's *A Tempest*, which is developed from postcolonial reading, we can find it resonating with Bate's argument about "pluralist reading." Shakespeare's *The Tempest* with the definite article "*The*" seems to depict a particular tempest. It seems to be a specific event that had happened in history. The title resembles that of a documentary which records a devastating storm. Cesaire, on the other hand, displaces the definite article "The" with the indefinite article "A." It is a deliberate gesture to prepare readers for a fabricated story or a tale. Cesaire

may intend *A Tempest* more as an alternative in interpreting the play than a contrast against it. It reveals a different but not exclusive version of the story. It means to parallel the play. And it challenges the authority of it. Similar ideas can be found in the prelude which Cesaire creates and prefaces the adaptation with. The prelude reflects the indefinite feature of the play. It motivates readers to explore the diverse and multiple "alternatives."

The prelude begins with a narrator's voice, contextualizing the play within a live theatre. Following it are the words of a "Master of Ceremonies." His monologue directs readers' attention to the backstage. It discloses what happened behind the curtain and before the play.

> Ambiance of a psychodrama. The actors enter singly, at random, and each chooses for himself a mask at his leisure.
>
> MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Come gentlemen, help yourselves. To each his character, to each character his mask. You, Prospero? Why not? He has reserves of will power he's not even aware of himself. You want Caliban? Well, that's revealing. Ariel? Fine with me. And what about Stephano, Trinculo? No Takers? Ah, just in time! It takes all kinds to make a world. (Cesaire, *A Tempest* 1)

The context of the play, as we understand from the beginning sentence, resembles that of a psychodrama. And normally in psychodramas, "participants are invited to re-enact significant experiences and to present their subjective worlds with the aid of a group" (Kellerman 11). "The reenactments" however, "are as different from each other as are the lives of the people who present them" (12). Cesaire notices such personal and subjective feature in acting. Different actors have various life experiences and perspectives. Presentation of the same character by different actors, therefore, can be dramatically different. As Cesaire suggests in the prelude, the allocation of characters among the acting crew is "at random" and "at leisure." It is highly possible that the play can be another version if the set of characters are assigned differently. These indefinite characteristics of the play certainly differentiate it from historical events which are definite and objective. Unlike historical facts, the story can be fake. By giving actors "masks," Cesaire conceals actors' true expressions and differentiates them from the acting faces. These details in *A Tempest* encourage people to discover the uncertainty and fakeness which *The Tempest* bears. Audiences are intrigued to ask questions like how much truth can be derived from *The Tempest*. Is the assumption about its historical background

true and definite? Does the play reflect its context faithfully? And should we rigidly adhere to the self-opinionated belief that the play can only be studied from the postcolonial perspective?

Hulme's insistence should be refuted. In fact, what Hulme insists is not as well-supported as what he resists. Bate's argument about "pluralism" reading of *The Tempest* may find support from T. S. Eliot's idea about classic. In "What is a Classic," Eliot reminds us of the attributes that determine the value of a classic. They are "variety," "comprehensiveness" and "relatedness." "Variety," as Eliot elucidates, refers to the potential of a classic to be approached from inter-disciplinary perspectives. A classic should possess the quality to inspire intellectual minds from different specialized fields. Virgil's work, for example, is so inclusive that "n[N]o specialized knowledge or proficiency can confer the exclusive title to talk about Virgil" (Eliot 7). Such inclusiveness not only breaks through the boundaries between different subjects but also encompasses individual specialties and preferences. As Eliot points out, "e[E]ach can give his testimony of Virgil in relation to those subjects which he knows best, or upon which he has most deeply reflected" (7). A classic is not only academically inclusive but also emotionally comprehensive. The second attribute of a classic is "comprehensiveness." Classics, as Eliot argues, "express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak that language" (27). Classics "represent this at its best" and "have the widest appeal" (27). Classics are able to impress on people's minds and resonate with their feelings. And they can arouse people's empathy regardless of their conditions and backgrounds. The third quality of a classic is their "relatedness." Classics, as Eliot observes, reach beyond the monolingual or intra-cultural environment. To be aware of the excellence of another culture and to appreciate it will facilitate progress and elevation of a civilization. As Eliot suggests, "to make use of a foreign literature in this way marks a further stage of civilization beyond making use only of the earlier stages of one's own" (19). Virgil, as Eliot suggests, "was constantly adapting and using the discoveries, traditions and inventions of Greek poetry" (19). And "it is this development of one literature, or civilization, in relation to another, which gives a peculiar significance to the subject of Virgil's epic" (19).

To Eliot, therefore, classics are academically, emotionally and culturally inclusive. If we apply Eliot's ideas to the case of *The Tempest*, the conclusion reached must deviate from Hulme's. Postcolonial studies as a specialized field can certainly contribute new and provoking perspectives to interpreting Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. But it is not the only approach. The play is academically and

emotionally inclusive. It prompts different intellectual responses and emotional reactions. For example, Vickers' preference for a traditional way to interpret *The Tempest* is certainly reasonable. And his effort in finding the "dichotomy between art and nature" in *The Tempest* is certainly rewarding. The various and polemical responses not only reflect the inexhaustible richness of the play but also extend the life of it. The play will not become obsolete because of lack of new perspectives. It will remain lively and inexhaustible. And it will attract and nurture new interest in the play. The play is also culturally inclusive. It reaches beyond the domestic context and relates to a foreign culture. It travels from England to Martinique through the approach of postcolonial studies. But the approach is not a ghetto to confine the play. It is a bridge enabling communication between the two different cultures. Such communication benefits both. Both acquire better understanding of the play because they are informed of different perspectives. Through cross-cultural communication, the study of *The Tempest* maintains vigorous and progressive. The study of the play will be frustrated if we restrict ourselves to a single approach or one cultural perspective.

Mount Lu: Deghettoizing Cultures

To ghettoize literature within a specific culture is an unpopular side to stand with. The claim is especially unconvincing when circulation and communication between different cultures thrives in this age of world literature. In his article "What is World Poetry," Stephen Owen criticizes modern Chinese poets for their deliberate detachment from national history and literary tradition. He takes several passages from Bei Dao's poetry collection *The August Sleepwalker* as examples. The collection was translated by Bonnie MacDougall from Chinese to English. One of them is "An End or a Beginning."

> Ah, my beloved land
> Why don't you sing any more
> Can it be true that even the ropes of the Yellow River towmen
> Like sundered lute-strings
> Reverberate no more
> True that time, this dark mirror
> Has also turned its back on you forever
> Leaving only stars and drifting clouds behind. (Bei Dao 63)

Owen expresses his strong disapproval of poems like this. To Owen, Bei Dao

deliberately employs "circumscribed 'local color'" and "universal images" to cater for a foreign audience. The poems are "readily translatable" and they "give the international reader an altogether safe and quick experience of another culture" (Owen 28). Such poems, as Owen points out, denote "a sense of cultural loss and decline" (30). Owen even laments that the poems betray "the glories of traditional poetry" in China (30). National literature and literary tradition, as Owen indicates, is essential to literature. It is national and cultural specificity that orient literature. Cultural roots keep a national literature from being lost in pure "uncertainty" (28). Similar to Hulme, Owen upholds his specialization in Chinese classical literature and refuses to relate it to the external world. Owen considers Chinese culture and literature to be a closed circle. It fences off any external influence and change. New entries should inherit the tradition and conform to the fixed rules within the circle.

Such ghettoization of Chinese culture and literature provokes severe criticism. In her book *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies,* Rey Chow sharply points out that Owen's claim is of racial discrimination. It is more self-concerned than academically oriented.

> This is the anxiety that the Chinese past which he has undertaken to penetrate is evaporating and that the sinologist himself is the abandoned subject…writers of the "third world" like Bei Dao now appear not as the oppressed but as oppressors, who aggress against the "first world" sinologist by robbing him of his love…Owen's real complaint is that he is the victim of a monstrous world order in front of which a sulking impotence like his is the only claim to truth. (Chow 4)

To Ray Chow, Owen's disapproval of Chinese modern poetry indicates his personal unwillingness to step out of his intellectual comfort zone. He prefers to stay within the field of classical Chinese poetry which he is specialized in. Owen's dislike of Chinese modern poetry, therefore, originates because of his subjective prejudice instead of objective observation. Zhang Longxi in his book *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China* furthers the criticism to a disciplinary and cultural level. Owen's idea is not only an expression of personal preferences. As Zhang suggests, it is more an attempt to impede mutual understanding and cultural communication. Barriers are established between disciplines. To Owen, non-specialists in Chinese literature are not entitled to participate in the creation and study of it. Chinese literature and culture is taken as the ultimate other. It is trapped within a ghetto without any access to the external

world.

> It would indeed be fortunate if a scholar of classical Chinese literature were willing to step into the area of modern studies, for the willingness to pull down the usual barriers between fields of scholarly pursuit is a prerequisite for success in the attempt to get out of the cultural ghetto…his [Owen] views tend to ghettoize Chinese literature and to define China and the West, 'national' and 'international' poetry, 'as mutually exclusive, as closures.'" (Zhang, *Mighty Opposites* 133)

Owen's readiness to establish dichotomies between China and West, the national and the international, the classical and the modern, derives from "his predilection for cultural differences" (Zhang, *Mighty Opposites* 133). What he insists on is the "incommensurability" between China and the West (133). Chinese poetry, as Owen argues "remains in a fundamental continuum with historical actuality." But "Western poetry is fictional and detached from history" (134). According to Owen's assumption, Chinese poetry must intertwine with history so as to be differentiated from western poetry. Owen also uses it as "the most important criterion to disqualify Bei Dao's work" (133). To Owen, poetry that is detached from Chinese history and tradition should not be called "Chinese literature" but rather "literature that began in Chinese language" (131). By labeling Chinese literature as "the special other," Owen isolates and ghettoizes Chinese literature and culture.

Owen's claim resonates with Hulme's obsession with the postcolonial reading of *The Tempest*. Hulme's familiarity with postcolonial studies determines his preference for postcolonial reading of *The Tempest*. His specialization supports his faith in the perspective. In fact, the only evidence that validates the perspective is the "tangential ties" between Malone's pamphlet and the play. But Hulme still adopts it to evaluate and exclude alternative perspectives. Postcolonial studies become a closed field without addressing external but relevant fields of studies. *The Tempest* has also been reduced to a work only for postcolonial reading. Compared to Owen's insistence, Hulme's assertion seems to be more provincial. Owen resists embracing new and modern development because of his nostalgia for classical Chinese literature. Hulme not only refuses new perspectives but also denies the traditional reading of the play. Vickers' defense of the "dichotomy of art and nature" in *The Tempest*, for example, has been sarcastically criticized by Hulme. Hulme suggests that Vickers considers his perspective to be "a simple truth" ("Stormy Weather"). Ironically, this is the exact attitude Hulme himself holds toward the

postcolonial reading of the play. To Hulme, *The Tempest* is not only confined to the closed field of postcolonial studies. It also remains stagnant along the historical continuum.

To de-ghettoize classic and culture is urgent. And to expand one's tunnel vision and embrace alterity gains more support. Zhang, for example, argues for adopting multiple perspectives in China studies in his article "The True Face of Mount Lu: On the Significance of Perspectives and Paradigms." Similar to Eliot who reveals the inexhaustible diversity embedded in a classic, Zhang suggests that China studies should be illuminated from multiple perspectives rather than rely on a sole angle. By quoting a Chinese classical poem, Zhang initiates his argument.

> Viewed horizontally a range; a cliff from the side,
> It differs as we move high or low, or far or nearby.
> We do not know the true face of Mount Lu,
> Because we are all ourselves inside.
> —Su Shi, "Written on the Wall of the Temple of West Woods."
> (Zhang, "The True Face" 58)

Mount Lu is manifested in different shapes from diverse perspectives. No single angle can capture the whole picture of Mount Lu. Similarly, in Chinese Studies we should allow multiple perspectives. Chinese people are insiders. Their familiarity with the local culture is their advantage. Sinologists are considered as outsiders. They can benefit from their objective perspective. But neither of them can claim superiority or singularity in China studies. It "requires integration of different views from different perspectives" (Zhang, "The True Face" 68). "B[but] such integration," as Zhang proceeds his argument, "is not a simple juxtaposition of insiders' and outsiders' views; it is more of an act of interaction and mutual illumination than adding up native Chinese scholarship and Western Sinology" (68).

When rebutting Owen's claim about Bei Dao, David Damrosch expresses resonating opinions in his article "World Literature, National Contexts." Damrosch points out that "Rather than being a rootless cosmopolitan, Bei Dao is doubly or multiply linked to events and audiences at home and abroad" (527). Bei Dao's poetry not only relates to the domestic environment of China where his "prosody may be subverting Maoist calls to abandon the complexities of aristocratic poetry and return to the purity of the old Shih Ching (Book of Songs)." His creation also responds to external impact. For example, the "translations of earlier Spanish-language poets like Rubén Darío and Federico García Lorca" have influenced Bei

Dao's poetry creation (526). It seems that in this age of world literature, a solid mastery of national and special knowledge is not enough to sustain the dynamic development of world literature. Scholars nowadays need to adopt a more "general" and macro perspective. They need to be aware of and alert to the changes beyond national and disciplinary borders. They need to relate their special knowledge to other fields of studies. The relationship between generalist and specialist is mutually indispensable and reciprocal. Compared to generalist, as Damrosch suggest, specialist "is not always in the best position to assess the dramatically different terms on which a work may engage with a distant culture" (517). On the other hand, "specialist's knowledge is the major safeguard against the generalist's own will to power over texts that otherwise all too easily become grist for the mill of a preformed historical argument or theoretical system" (517). Only when they work in collaboration can we "understand the work effectively in its new cultural or theoretical context while at the same time getting it right in a fundamental way with reference to the source culture" (517).

Eliot's idea about classic, Zhang's opinion about perspectives and Damrosch's argument about collaboration between generalist and specialist offer us a solid ground to argue against Hulme's insistence on postcolonial reading of *The Tempest*. Postcolonial reading cannot exhaust the classic play. We cannot grasp the whole picture of the play by sticking to a single perspective, however productive it might be. And overemphasis on the special knowledge makes scholars less alert to the external and emerging changes. Possible connection and potential communication would be dispelled. The classic play is ghettoized and forgotten. Hulme's insistence on the play's historical connection is, to some extent, justifiable and may counts as serious scholarship. But to deliberately disregard other perspectives and downplay the importance of communication between different angles should be avoided.

William Hamlin, one of the scholars whom Hulme criticizes, seems to provide a more open-minded and progressive approach to study the play. Hamlin suggests that we should shift "the contextual ground from the highly politicized discourse of colonialism to the more taxonomic, speculative, polyvalent, and autonomous discourse of ethnography" (qtd in Hulme, "Stormy Weather"). By doing so, Hamlin intends to show that "one may retain the New World context and the historicist approach without necessarily committing oneself to the near-dogmatism that seems endemic to colonialist readings" (qtd in Hulme, "Stormy Weather"). Hulme ironically comments on Hamlin's attempt by calling it "in best pluralist fashion" ("Stormy Weather"). Hulme again declares his rigid commitment to postcolonial reading of *The Tempest*. He is reluctant to associate it with other perspectives.

Damrosch in his article "World Literature, National Contexts" accurately predicts such attitudes. Damrosch observes that "t[T]he more committed today's Shakespeareans become to understanding literature within a cultural context, the less likely they are to feel comfortable in comparing Shakespeare and Kalidasa" (515). It explains Hulme's resistance against alternative perspectives. Hamlin's proposal, in contrast to Hulme's idea, reflects and respects the diversity of the classic play. He acknowledges the value of contribution made by different perspectives. Instead of denying or displacing postcolonial reading of the classic play, Hamlin supplements and supports the perspective by relating alternative perspectives to it. Postcolonial reading is reaching outward and is ingeniously correlated to relevant fields. It is not simple integration of perspectives or co-existence of "plural" interpretations. Different perspectives are taken together to illuminate each other for mutual benefit.

Hamlin's idea about how to read the classic play reminds of Damrosch's strategy to combine "hypercanon" and "countercanon." Classics that are dominant may impede the entry of less familiar works into the list of canons. They may threaten the circulation and readership of those less-accessed works. Such situation should be changed. It is especially necessary in this age of world literature. Communication between literatures needs most urgently to break through the closed circle of "canons." Damrosch in his article "World Literature in a Postcolonial, Hypercanonical Age" suggests that we should combine the study of "hypercanon" with that of "countercanon" in world literature studies. To completely overthrow the "hypercanons" seems not feasible and unnecessary. And to recklessly deny the value of classics and traditions also counts as a provincial and parochial gesture. A better way is that we associate the two kinds of canons with each other and establish a reciprocal relationship in between. As Damrosch proposes in the article, "w[W]e should resist the hegemony of the hypercanon, yet as long as it's a fact of life, we should also turn it into our advantage" (50). We can relate widely-acknowledged classics to less-popular literary classics. The "hypercanons" will smooth the way for "countercanons." "Countercanons," therefore, can also be well-received among audience who has not been familiarized with them. The value of less-familiar classics may gain more acknowledgements from expanded geographical areas and academic fields. The traditional classics can also benefit from this kind of communication. New and inspirational interpretation will emerge. Stereotyped interpretations of the classics will be refined and enriched.

Conlcusion

To reduce and restrict a piece of classic to something that deserves only a single

way of interpretation is unreasonable. And to prioritize one particular perspective to perceive a culture is questionable. Thanks to the renaissance of the concept of world literature, recent years witness lively communication between different cultures. Making classics and cultures ghettoized like isolated and scattered islands is not feasible when bridges and tunnels are built in between. We expect and welcome a new "A Tempest" that reveals another inspiring aspect of *The Tempest*. We anticipate a new perspective to contribute to the depiction of the whole picture of China studies. And we applaud alternative thoughts to help disclose the "true face" of Chinese literature and culture. On the other hand, diversity and multiplicity does not wipe out affinities within different classics and cultures. Exclusive differences that are deliberately fabricated should be avoided. Differences do not overwhelm the affinities that enable communication between literatures and cultures. We reach through the tunnel to relate and recognize the affinities. And we overcome the tunnel vision to realize and respect the alternatives.

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Return to the *(M)other*land: Reading Ginu Kamani's "Ciphers" as an Allegory of the Return to the Wound

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Abstract This article is based on the premise that one of the crucial aspects of the diasporic subjectivity is that its negotiation depends on an acknowledgement of the presence of an enigmatic desire to return to the homeland (in the present case, Mother India). This overwhelming desire, if not a compelling need, to return to roots, though, is highly aporetic since it is structured by an urge to reunite with but also, paradoxically, to abandon the *mother*land as an object of desire. To address the literary representation of this enigmatic desire as well as its possible transmutation and ramification in the life of the diasporic subject, the present article reads "Ciphers," the opening story of Ginu Kamani's debut collection of short stories *Junglee Girl* (1995), in the light of the mother/child trope developed within the context of Jean Laplanche's "General Theory of Seduction." It then posits that Kamani's story, if read allegorically, seems to enact not only the enigmatic urge to return to the traumatic wound of the initial departure-as-rupture but also the desperate attempt on the part of the diasporic subject, to re-translate and to suture the trauma of displacement which structures all various modalities of the diasporic subjectivity.

Key words The Indian Diaspora; The Trauma of Displacement; The Enigmatic Signifier; Laplanche's General Theory of Seduction; Ginu Kamani

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Introduction: The Trope of Return

For Diasporic Subjects, despite all attempts to adapt to change, there is always something left to desire: an overwhelming longing to return to the homeland. This desire is, in fact, so deep that a (longing for a) journey back to the ancestral *mother*land—also referred to as (a desire for) "roots-seeking quest" (Hirsch and Miller 16)—is the most common trope of a large section of diasporic short fiction, in general, and Ginu Kamani's "Ciphers," in particular. Undeniably, such a chief preoccupation with the question of return suggests that the desire to recover a lost-yet-not-dead *mother*land, whose enduring "absent presence" (Munos 6)[1] haunts all diasporic subjects, must be placed at the core of any talk of the diasporic experience as well as any attempt to formulate the diasporic subjectivity. Sudesh Mishra, for instance, in his explanation of William Safran's representative model of diasporas, posits that an attachment to an "ancestral homeland as ... [a] true, ideal home" and, typically, an excessive indulgence in a fantasy of return to that original *mother*land is one of the six major definitive markers of all diasporic formations (16-17). Mishra further indicates that in Safran's model a strong desire to return defines not only the first-generation diasporic subjects but also their second-generation descendents who, in order to work through a loss gone unmourned and to satisfy a desire gone unfulfilled, wittingly or unwittingly engage in their ancestors' project of being reconciled with roots.[2] This, however, by no means implies that roots are simply

1 In the present text, the term "absent presence" is used in the sense in which it is exploited by Delphine Munos to refer to the disembodied and haunting presence of absent entities (either concrete or abstract) who/which, despite their absence, are fully present by the intrusion of their memories.

2 In their general introduction to *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*, Janet Wilson, Cristina Sandra, and Sarah Lawson Welsh claim that "the notions of rooting in and routing through are now so widespread in diasporic and postcolonial discourse as to sometimes seem voided of meaning" (4). In the present paper, though, as in the title of the same book, the term is invoked (both in the roots/routes dichotomy and on its own) to mean re-rooting and re-connecting to the past while moving towards new directions.

some fixed entities to be recovered. Rather, any discussion of roots is inextricably bound up with the notion of routes: that is to suggest, reconnecting to the past and moving on towards new directions are the recto-verso of the same sheet of paper.

Diasporic desire to return, thus, can be seen, above all, as the diasporic subjects' Janus-like effort to move forward by taking up new routes via the detour of a return to roots—all done in the hope of embracing an unclaimed history and, if possible, to suture a traumatic wound at the site of the primal injury of having been psychically ripped from the *mother*land. Return, after all, is never a one-way linear movement back to the roots; nor is it necessarily physical or literal. Rather, it is often a roaming about within a psychic liminal space created by the chiasmic back-and-forth movements between the imbricate spaces and the intricate forces of the diasporic existence, on the one hand, and the desire to be reconciled with roots, on the other hand. It is only via an acknowledgement of and a confrontation with the fierce push-and-pull forces of such a dialectic that the first-, second-, third-, and n-generation subjects' struggle to appropriate, to resist, and to negotiate the diasporic subjectivity can be waged. All this implies that any kind of envisioning seems to depend on a number of revisionings: that is, for the hope of a full arrival and complete assimilation in the host community to become even a possibility, there must be on the agenda, first and foremost, a psychic act of return.

The present paper's focus on the trope of return in Kamani's "Ciphers," hence, is neither in its nostalgic sense (like the homesick looking-back of a melancholic subject prevalent in the diasporic narratives of nostalgia) nor in its vicious ghostly compulsive sense (like the phantasmal returns *of* the phantom of an unclaimed past to a distressed and haunted subject prevalent in the diasporic narratives of haunting), but in a very different sense and mode. Rather than being a disguised compulsion-to-repeat of the traumatic loss of the *mother*land; an excessive formation of melancholic attachments to that loss; or an indulgence in "nostalgic fantasies about homecoming" (Hirsch and Miller 11), the present article's trope of return is a figurative or a metaphoric "attempt to return that instead departs" (Caruth, "After the End" 54). In other words, the trope of return, here, is used as a means to an end: a conscious attempt on the part of the diasporic subject to revisit the site of the originary trauma for the purpose of not only decoding a hitherto silenced story of loss but also suturing a/an (transgenerational) untreated wound of departure-as-rupture. It is in the light of this same notion of return that, as we shall shortly see, the present paper aims to utilize Jean Laplanche's translation model of psychic functioning in reading Kamani's "Ciphers"—a text which is marked, above all, by the awakening of a/an c/overt sense of loss, pain, shame, guilt, anxiety, fear,

and otherness in an unnamed narrator who, upon arrival at her cultural and ethnic *mother*land, is impelled to confront the exquisite pain of (un-)belonging to a place now "transformed by ravages of time and transfigured through lenses of loss and nostalgia" (Hirsch and Miller 18).

Re-conceptualizing Laplanche's notion of (de-/re-)translation within a diasporic context, of course, opens the way for a psychoanalytically-oriented reading of diasporic return narratives as represented by Kamani's "Ciphers." More importantly, though, by raising the trauma of the loss of the *mother*land and the ambivalent bond that it fosters between the diasporic subject and the homeland to the plane of metaphor; such a reconceptualization not only expands the theoretical scope of the Laplanchian psychoanalytic theory, but also offers an opportunity for rewriting the diasporic subjectivity in the light of what the present paper comes to call a Laplanchian conception of the trauma of displacement (or the diasporic trauma).[1] As we will witness in the following two sections, it is the same affinity between the ambivalence that structures the diasporic subjects' relation to their absent present *mother*land and the ambivalence that haunts all seductive-yet-traumatizing mother/child relations that endows the present Laplanchian reading of Kamani's "Ciphers" with the power to uncover the infusion of allegory into the fabric of a tale which, as a narrative of return, is encrypted with the desire, if not need, to confront the traumatic wound of departure: the initial moment of being torn asunder from the *mother*land.

It is, thus, the present paper's contention that it is via the allegory of the return to the wound that Kamani's "Ciphers" captures, externalizes, and represents (while simultaneously occluding) the inner turmoil and the compelling need of a female diasporic subject to return to, if not to reunite with, her cultural and ethnic homeland. In what amounts to an attempt to (re-) translate a hitherto de-signified enigmatic message unwittingly implanted at the moment of departure from the *mother*land as the site of the original rupture, the unnamed narrator of "Ciphers" has no choice but to engage with an apparently never-ending process of deciphering "heap[s] of ruins" (Benjamin 232), and layers of confusing signals and emptied signifiers. In order to give a more vivid portrayal of the diasporic subject in the image of such a probing investigator/translator, though, it is best if we start by offering a brief overview of the major axes of Laplanche's work, namely his notion

1 Only recently (especially, since the 2015 refugee crisis) has this particular type of trauma, being fully recognized, come to the forefront of literary-critical discourse. There, thus, was (and still is) no consensus over what it could (can) be called. It has, yet, been randomly called the "diasporic trauma," the "trauma of dislocation," and the "trauma of displacement."

of translation as "a fundamental model of the constitution and functioning of the psychic apparatus" (Scarfone, 552). It is the re-conceptualization of such a notion of translation within a diasporic context which underpins the major line of argument in the Laplanchian reading to be given in the penultimate section of the present paper.

Rerouting Jean Laplanche's Theory of Translation: Return as Re-translation

One of the main axes of Laplanche's work, which will also frame our present reading of Ginu Kamani's "Ciphers," is his "translation" model" of psychic functioning. In order to grasp such a model, though, a basic familiarity with two other deeply interrelated theoretical concepts and ideas discussed in Laplanche's oeuvre seems necessary: firstly, his "General Theory of Primal Seduction"; secondly, his related notion of an "Enigmatic Signifier." It is only after a clear and concise discussion of both Laplanchean terms is conducted that an in-depth analysis of his "translation model of [primal] repression" can then begin.

Laplanche advances his general theory of primal seduction by a return to Freud's by-then discarded theory of seduction. Preferring Freud's pre-1897 trauma-based model of sexuality to his post-1897 more developmental drive-based model, Laplanche underlines the intrusive role of the (m)other in the formation of infantile sexuality, hence putting forward a more (m)other-oriented (rather than a self-oriented) theory of subjectivity. Finding the origin of sexuality and subjectivity in the "exogenous, traumatic, and intrusive" impact of the (m)other (Fletcher 5), he thus develops a more general theory about the formation of human psychic life—a theory which, unlike Freud's theory of primal seduction, is not restricted in its application only to certain psycho-pathological cases where neurotic symptoms are present, but is rather general and universal in a proper sense. This universality, of course, is solidified by Laplanche's insistence that his general theory of primal seduction is, in fact, a general law governing intergenerational relationships and that it is firmly rooted in what he refers to as the "fundamental anthropological situation:" a situation characterized by a state of radical neediness in a human infant born into an adult world to which he/she is inevitably belated (Scarfone 545).

It is, in fact, due to this very belatedness and helplessness that the human infant instantly becomes dependent on a nurturing supportive adult (m)other with a repressed unconscious, a fully-formed ego, a pre-constituted sexuality, and a repressed infantile sexuality all of which are awakened and reactivated by her relationship to the infant. Laplanche describes this child/(m)other bonding in the following excerpt:

> In the primal situation we have, then, a child whose ability to adapt is real but limited, weak, and waiting to be perverted, and a deviant adult (deviant with regard to any sexual norms ... deviant or split with regard to himself) ... given that the child lives on in the adult, an adult faced with a child is particularly likely to be deviant and inclined to perform bungled or even symbolic actions because he is involved in a relationship with his other self, with the other he once was. The child in front of him brings out the child within him ... we have a "Traviata", someone who has been led astray and "seduced." (*New Foundations* 103)

As witnessed by Laplanche's analysis of the child/(m)other mutual dependency, there exists an apparently "fundamental asymmetry in action" between the psychic structures of the two sides of this enigmatic interaction. (Scarfone 553). On the one hand, there is a desiring adult (m)other—a sexual being whose excitation of libidinal desires by the highly-intense experience of tending to the needs of an infant cannot by any means be discounted. On the other hand, there is a little baby whose psychic structure is not yet fully formed—an asexual being who is devoid of both a pre-constructed operating unconscious and a pre-constituted functioning sexual drive. What sharply distinguishes Laplanche's seduction theory from that of Freud's, though, is not simply Laplanche's attentiveness to this fundamental asymmetry, but his insistence on what has been totally absent in the latter's meta-psychological thought about the scene of the primal seduction: that is, the new psychic "reality of the message" (Laplanche, *Essays* 92).

It is this newly-introduced Laplanchian "category of the message" as the "*third domain of reality*" which, as he asserts, fully impacts on the psyche-body of the infant in his/her asymmetrical relation with the adult (m)other (*Essays* 175; 172) This message, though, Laplanche argues, is not just a pure concept ready to be transmitted. Rather, it is a material element (including a gesture, a facial expression, a smile, a grimace, a tone of voice or any other subtle forms of bodily contact like a touch or a look) coming as a kind of sign from the adult-as-transmitter and targeting the child-as-recipient. Despite suggesting that this sign can be both verbal and non-verbal (gestural, tonal, tactile, visual, etc.) though, Laplanche lays the greater emphasis on the non-verbality of the message—what, soon leads him to opt for a more laden term in its stead: the "enigmatic signifier."

To elaborate on his notion of the message, Laplanche thus borrows the term signifier from linguistics and uses it in its semiotic sense, as exploited by (post-) structuralists, to refer to a signifying element (like a word, a gesture, a visual code,

etc.) attempting to deliver a meaning through differentiation. However, unlike his former master and analyst Jacque Lacan who, giving primacy to the notion of the signifier in his theory of subjectivity, exploits the term to mean verbal language tout court; Laplanche uses the term in a much more subtle and fully-fledged manner. For him, a signifier can be obscure, opaque, or "enigmatic" since it "may be de-signified, or lose what it signifies without thereby losing its power to signify (Laplanche, *Foundations* 45). In this famous proposition, Laplanche is, in fact, seizing upon a very subtle and useful distinction between "a signifier *of* [x]—a specific meaning or signified—and a signifier *to* [x]—addressed to and interpellating a specific subject, a subject who may not be able to attribute a specific signified to it but who knows that it is addressed to them" (Fletcher 34). While the former has a conceptual dimension, a meaning, or a signified; the latter is only something that is implemented in a speech act and is addressed to a recipient—what can suggest that a signifier has the capacity to address, target, summon, interpellate, command the attention of, and impact on a recipient without its addressee necessarily knowing what it signifies. A recipient thus sometimes knows that something is signifying but not what is signifying; she/he knows that there is a signifying process going on, but she/he cannot assign it a signified. It is only in the light of such a distinction that Laplanche then outlines his theory of the enigmatic signification in the context of his general theory of seduction.

Laplanche strongly argues that there is an enigmatic dimension to the transmission of designified signifiers from a caregiving adult (m)other to a helpless infant at the scene of the primal seduction—an enigma which is the outcome of the fundamental asymmetry which, as mentioned earlier, constitutes the core of all (m)other/child relations. It is obviously due to this same biological and psychic asymmetry that a needy new-born baby, unlike a nurturing adult—a fully-fledged sexual being with an unconscious filled to the brim with repressed libidinal desires—can have neither understanding nor any means of decoding the highly libidinally-charged transmitted signifiers (the so-called "compromised message") to which she/he is inevitably exposed (Laplanche, *Essays* 96). This whole process of the transmission of the message from the (m)other to the infant, though, is as enigmatic to the adult (m)other-as-transmitter as it is to the infant-as-recipient: that is to say, in the Laplanchian frame of thought, for seduction to occur, there needs not be a perverted adult consciously involved in the process of seducing an innocent infant. Rather, seduction constitutes the transmission of signifiers as carriers of the pre-verbal affects which, unbeknownst to the adult, target the infant through what is said (or not said) and what is acted-out (or not acted-out). Claiming

that the transmitted signifiers are only unwittingly sent out from the unconscious dimension of the most caring (and not pervert) adult under the most normal (and not pervert) circumstances and in the context of the most normal (and not pervert) relations, Laplanche then contends that it is the repressed sexual unconscious of an adult (m)other, and not any conscious sexual perversion on his/her part, that interferes with the process of mutual bonding. An adult, inadvertently, sends out "a repressed sexual 'contaminant' ... [that] passes through as a stowaway passenger on the carrier wave of the relation of attachment" between him/her and an infant who definitely feels the presence of this "stowaway passenger," but being ill-equipped, fails to understand or appreciate its full presence (Scarfone 550). The infant knows that something is being transmitted, that something is being signified, and that it is summoning him/her in order to do so, but what is being signified to him/her is still opaque, puzzling, and enigmatic at this moment.

This all, however, by no means suggests that the infant can make no sense of the compromised message of the adult (m)other or that he/she can neither process nor interpret it in its entirety since an infant-as-recipient is neither a tabula rasa nor a passive container through whom the enigmatic signification can magically and mysteriously work. Rather, she/he is fully and constantly alert to the presence of what she/he receives as an excess, a surplus excitation, or what Scarfone aptly calls "a communication 'noise'" for which no code is defined (550). Unable to immediately cope with, process, integrate, or bound this provoking and exciting excess of signification into the ego, however, the infant is initially left disturbed and traumatized—what suggests that the process of a premature subject's entrance into a world saturated with highly-charged enigmatic signifiers is deeply disturbing and highly traumatic. Due to this initial vulnerability and openness to the intrusive and traumatic impact of the adult (m)other, the infant is then highly motivated to belatedly (re-)process and psychically (re-)visit, in the course of his/her interpersonal relations in the future, this originary traumatizing moment of impact made by the (m)other at the core of his/her being. Through getting involved in a process of assimilation/expulsion of the once-implanted enigmatic signifiers at some later points in time, the infant thus attempts to decipher the enigmatic structure of meaning involuntarily laid down by the (m)other at an earlier moment. It is by postulating that this belated implementation of the enigmatic signifiers involves the infant in what amounts to a process of translation that Laplanche opens his theory of general seduction to Freud's notion of repression as a failure of translation.

Building upon Freud's combination of the notion of repression and the mechanism of translation in the context of his general theory of seduction,

Laplanche thus reformulates repression as an infant's response to the implantations coming from the adult (m)other. His major contention is that such a response which constitutes, above all, the infant's belated-yet-undying attempt to make sense of the compromised message of the (m)other, to read "the enigma of the [m]other's desire," to bind the enigmatic signifier to its lost signified, and to assimilate what is too over-exciting or too traumatic amounts to an act of translation (Fletcher 2). This suggests that the originary traumatic impact of the implantation of the enigmatic signifier by the adult (m)other never dissolves away; but that, demanding to be known, it belatedly prompts the subject to make attempts at translation. It is in a "visceral defensive reaction" to this belated evocation of what has become "an inner event, an inner 'foreign body,' which now breaks from within the subject" and emanates a surplus of excitation that the act of translation then begins (Laplanche and Pontalis 10).

Being caught off-guard by reactivated highly-charged material, the subject has no choice but to confront it all head-on in the hope of integrating that which once could not have been understood; that which was once obscure, enigmatic, and puzzling. Translation, yet, is always an unfinished business: there certainly exist some easily carried-across, processed and integrated elements, but there are also always some residual "*à traduire"* (to-be-translated) elements which, being too excessive, overexciting, troubling, painful or traumatizing, resist being known or metabolized. Whereas the former (the translated material) contributes to the process of building up "a progressively developing ego" (Browning 1039), the latter (the non-translated remainder) contributes to the formation of the unconscious at a moment of, what Laplanche calls, "primal repression"—a moment when a fixation which will permanently mark the psyche-body is laid down. According to Laplanche, the coming into being of the ego and the emergence of the unconscious (or the internal other) are two sides of the same coin: that is, the by-products of a subject's entry into an interpersonal relationship with an external (m)other who, actively though inadvertently implants, excites, and traumatizes—hence giving rise to a defensive process of either translation or non-translation.

It is such a notion of translation (or failure of it) at the core of Laplanche's general theory of primal seduction that paves the way for a metaphoric conception of the diasporic displacements (in all their shapes or forms) and the structural trauma that frames them in a Laplanchian sense. From the starting-point of leaving (or separation from) the *mother*land and anchoring in the *other*-land, the diasporic subject is forced into an asymmetrical inter-subjective field and is inevitably involved in a long (if not traumatizing) process of translation, de-translation, re-

translation, and non-translation all which are fuelled by the implantation of the enigmatic message by the seductive *mother*land, on the one hand, and by the diasporic subject's constant attempt at metabolizing that message, on the other. A diasporic subject, thus, is consumed from the moment of his/her departure with a never-ending process of translation during which not only is he/she forced to translate the enigmatic message of the *mother*land but that she/he is simultaneously translated by it, hence the need for constant (re-)negotiations of her/his subjectivity-in-process. This all suggests that the diasporic experience—marked by an endless threatening, contesting, and bending of the borders between there/here, then/now, absence/presence, and self/(m)other—leads the subject into a new phase of mental development in which he/she is incessantly provoked by what Laplanche calls "the enigma of the [m]other" (Laplanche, *Essays* 113). It is only within such a Laplanchian frame of thought, that a diasporic subject's literal/psychic return *to* the *mother*land (as exemplified, in what follows, by the return of the unnamed narrator of Kamani's "Ciphers" to India) can be read as an allegorical attempt, on the part of the diasporic subject, to re-imagine, to re-work, and to re-translate his/her relation to the primal seduction by the *mother*land for the purpose of issuing, if possible, new translations of an otherwise de-signified maternal enigma.

Replaying the Scene of the Seduction by the *(M)other*land in "Ciphers"

"Ciphers," the first story of Ginu Kamani's *Junglee Girl* (1995), is one of the two stories (out of the eleven tales that together comprise this debut collection of short stories) which directly address the disquieting-but-empowering diasporic experience of the female characters of Indian descent in the U. S. Like the penultimate story of the collection "Just Between Indians," which can be read as an eerie portrayal of a second-generation female diasporic subject's confrontation and reconciliation with her Indian culture via her first spontaneous erotic encounter with an Indian man; "Ciphers" too can be seen as a poignant depiction of the conciliatory effect of a second-generation female diasporic subject's belated return to and (re-) encounter with Mother India. Interestingly, the eerie sexual frisson which marks "Just Between Indians" is also present in "Ciphers," yet in a different way. If there, it is the trope of the *return of* the haunting phantom of a dead-yet-living biological mother that, opening up the dialectic between the death of the *mother*(land) and the desire for her, alleviates the diasporic subject's "so many years of [pent-up] anger" towards her Indian-ness (Kamani 183); here it is the physical act of the *return to* the *mother*land which, rekindling the overflow of a hitherto dormant libido at the site of the originary wound of departure-as-rupture, reconciles a desiring diasporic subject

with her long desired-but-repressed Indian identity. If in "Just Between Indians" it is a displaced version of the mother/child incest which reawakens the desire for the *mother*land, in "Ciphers," it is what amounts to an imaginary libidinal encounter with *Mother* India, a source of ambivalence at the core of any Indian-American diasporic subjectivity, that builds towards the final outbreak of an enigmatic desire (surrounded with certain homosexual undertones) for and reconciliation with the *mother*land.

"Ciphers" is the first-person account of the identity-crisis of a young first-and-a-half generation[1] diasporic woman aboard an Indian train during a return-journey from the U.S. to her hometown after a lapse of ten years. The unnamed narrator is sitting on a Bombay train for the first time since childhood, when she encounters a married Gujarati woman who is the same age as her, but looks older and "more self-important" with her three young children on her side (Kamani 1). This traditionally-dressed young mother, however, not only scowls at the unnamed narrator's outlandish look and outfit (i. e. her "ringless third finger," her "short hair," and her "knee-length dress" [Kamani 2]—all of which quickly distinguish her from all *other* long-haired married women in sari or salwar-khameez), but also starts a guessing game about the narrator's ethnic identity. Despite the narrator's sense of unease and confusion about the game (a sense which bears a close resemblance to Daya's sense of discomfort during the quizzing hot-dog vendor's questions on her ethnic origins in "Just Between Indians"), however, the young curious mother sneeringly and tauntingly continues making random guesses in an effort to locate her fellow Indian.

Yet, upon the sudden realization that the dress-clad short-haired woman sitting before her is also a Gujarati, she, unwilling to accept the truth, expresses not only her disbelief regarding the validity of such a stark revelation but also her rage and repulsion by insisting that it is her and her children, and not the narrator, who "are the *real* Gujaratis" (Kamani 5, emphasis added). It is, in fact, in a desperate attempt to decipher the demeaning gaze and the haughty disdain of her more traditional counterpart or *other* self (the woman she might have become if she had not left India) that the unnamed narrator is then led, through a process of identification, to psychically cross the "invisible line" between Gujaratis and non-Gujaratis for which the inquisitive young mother seems to be a self-appointed guardian (Kamani 7). In a rather dreamy and epiphanic scene by the end of Kamani's story, however, the difference between the two women is reflected upon and challenged, and the invisible line between them is negated and even displaced by the powerful force

1 The term "first-and-a-half generation" is often used to refer to a diasporic subject who has immigrated to the hostland before or during his/her early adolescence.

of an enigmatic desire that overwhelms them both—a desire metonymically represented by the visually stunning and emotionally uplifting sensuality of an Indian woman's long thick dark hair. It is only when this desire, which amounts to an "unsaid and unspoken sexual intimacy" (Diaz 186), takes centre stage that the dividing effect of all other cultural markers (including class, caste, dress, marital status) is offset, hence ending the narrative on a positive note of accord, unity and reconciliation with the *mother*land.

What exactly the essence of this enabling and binding enigmatic desire is, what truly triggers it, how it comes to have an impact on the psyche-body of the narrator, and what ends are to be achieved by its ambivalent presence in the logic of the narrative are to be answered, of course, when the young mother's final gesture, its effect on the narrator, and the whole final epiphanic scene is read in the light of the narrator's earlier attempts to decipher, digest, and relate to her current condition—a condition which is defined, above all, by a sense of diasporic otherness to which she is exposed even in the place she calls home. It is, in fact, in response to what marks her "as other, outsider, oblique" (Kamani 8) that she constantly gets engaged in the process of Benjaminian "constellation": pulling the threads of her present condition through the loops of her absent-present past and vice versa—what is, of course, showcased, from the outset of the story, in the narrator's constant attempts to translate the present events around her in terms of their equivalents in her mythical past. On numerous occasions in Kamai's story, for instance, taking a trip down memory lane through the foggy lens of a sense of nostalgia becomes the only means of filtering the otherwise dead fragments of the present. Thus, in response to the smug mother and her children's silent treatment and prolonged stares, she simply dwells upon the time when she also, as a child, used to stare at strangers "in that same fascinated way, knowing that they were humans like us, but knowing that they were not from our family" (Kamani 2). In another instance, the strange terms of endearment which the young mother uses to address her children propels her back to the time when "English insults: You stupid! You idiot! Fool! Crackpot!" would quickly tire her out, but her "reservoir of delicious Gujarati insults Pig! Monkey! Cockroach! Elephant!" would always elevate her mood and put her in the best of humours (Kamani 3). Still, what best helps her to ease the dull pain of otherness she is made to feel by the inquisitive mother's insistence on pinning down her ethnicity (aggravated by her follow-up rage, scowls, and sneers) is the narrator's tacit identification with her reminiscences of three *other*ed women whom she had a liking for or a physical attraction to as a child.

Interestingly, all three women had been "Junglee girls" (wild, untamed, and

uncontrollable girls/women) who, either for being non-Gujarati or belonging to a less privileged class, were cast as outsiders by the Gujarati community in which they lived. The first *othered* woman whose memories flood back to her is Lajinder, a Punjabi woman married to the narrator's oldest cousin, whose taste in unconventional clothes ("the low-cut blouses, the tightest dresses, and the flimsiest nightgowns") and short hair had long drawn "an invisible line" between her and other Gujarati women to such an extent that her name was changed to Lakshmi and "she was always referred to as 'that Punjabi'" (Kamani 6; 7). The second woman she remembers is her childhood Maharashtrian ayah or bai whose sensual way of wearing the sari had stood in her way of becoming a real Gujarati "no matter that in some Gujarati households the Maharashtrian bais had worked ... for decades and spoke only Gujarati, ate only Gujarati food, and regaled their gods with only Gujarati bhajans" (Kamani 8; 9). At last comes her playmate Radha, a fair-skinned Kashmiri girl who looked "exactly like a doll, a foreign doll"—an "alert but quiet" girl whose exotic pliant body had fascinated the narrator by becoming a source of her childhood sensual pleasure (Kamani 9; 10) It is, in fact, in relation to her reminiscences of these outcast desiring and desirable women in the context of her constant back-and-forth psychic movements between past and present that the narrator gradually comes to realize that her mark of difference from a typical Gujarati woman like the smug mother is not "the unconventionality of her hair and dress, but ... the overtness of her desire" (Bow 21): "being sexual has reshaped my knowledge, my feelings, my very breath. *That is* what fools you; that is what you turn away from in *yourself* when you turn away from me" (Kamani 12).

Nevertheless, no sooner has the narrator identified and acknowledged her overt desire and sexual expressiveness as a marker of otherness in the apparently stigmatizing space she calls home that the young mother's next desirable move or gesture not only subverts the narrator's assessment but also, as we shall see, reconciles her with her Indian-ness, in general, and the young mother, in particular. It is this reconciliation which, by the end of the story, alleviates the narrator's sense of otherness and prepares the ground for the re-negotiation of her subjectivity through what comes close to a belated mourning. What effects this reconciliation, of course, is the enabling mental space made amidst the fierce push-and-pull forces of the dialectic between the pull of roots and the allure of routes. It is in this liminal space, opened up initially by the physical act of return, that the diasporic narrator can then get involved in the high psychic tension between diasporic struggles to be freed from the snares of Indian mores (those like the traditional class-and-caste considerations, the racial discourse, and the repressive sexual codes of conduct) and

a constant desire to be bound up with those same roots—a paradoxical positioning best summed up in the Gujarati mother's ambiguous general attitude towards her: "she has steeled herself against both my strangeness and my familiarity" (Kamani 11). The psychic space of return, hence, will allow the narrator to extol (and even to preach for) an ideally fluid and transnational identity forged beyond the snares of nativism or racism while, paradoxically, enabling her to reconcile, in a final flight of fancy, with her Indian roots. The most potent representation of this simultaneous affiliation with and loyalties towards her "chameleon identity" (Kamani 13) on the one hand and her ethnic (Indian) identity on the other is best embodied in a scene right before the climactic moment of the story, when the narrator's enigmatically sensuous reconciliation with her Indian-ness is, paradoxically enough, preceded by a lengthy ardent rumination on the necessity of living free from the snares of ethnic, regional, national, and linguistic boundaries:

> I could have told the Gujarati woman that I was Brazilian, Mexican, or even Ethiopian, just a few of the identities commonly ascribed to me by hopeful strangers in the U. S. I could have claimed to be Israeli, Egyptian or Turkish; even Italian, Spanish, Portuguese. That is the beauty of being Gujarati. The ports of Gujarat have been active centers of trade for millennia, and have attracted not only Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Persians, Greeks Romans, and Africans, but then later also English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese, all of whose genes have mingled over the centuries with the original inhabitants of Gujarat so that even we Gujaratis are fooled by each other.
>
> I want to take the face of the woman between my hands and tell her gently, so as not to scare her: Don't you know that there are Gujaratis in every country on earth now? Don't you know that there our culture has caused subtle shifts in every community, and in turn, every community is subtly shifting the Gujaratis?
>
> I intensify my stare and try to blaze a telepathic message into her frowning brow: *It doesn't matter anymore what identity I was*. (Kamani 11)

Ironically, it is right after this emancipatory imaginary speech on the significance of (re-) fashioning transnational identities that the young mother, as if in response to the narrator's "telepathic message," "undoes the tightly coiled bun at the nape of her neck ... shakes free her long hair and runs her fingers slowly down the length of it, head bowed to one side" (Kamani 11; 12)—a gesture that, seen through the nostalgic lens of the narrator, "becomes an act of seduction that psychically

reconnects her to the erotic, nostalgic pull of the women of her youth" (Bow 326). It is this same gesture that opens the way for the climactic moment of the story and sets the stage for an epiphanic moment of redemption and reconciliation with the motherland:

> An old familiar longing rushes into my throat, hammering at my vocal chords, drying me out with desire. I know this woman. I know her well. She is part of my recurring dream of coming home to India to be greeted by thousands of women runing down a hill with their long hair swooping behind them like black garlands of welcome, like black birds released from captivity to honor my return. (Kamani 12)

In Kamani's text, then, over a few lines and through what, at least initially, seems like a benign act "the righteous guardian of tradition" turns into "the epitome of sensuality" (Kimak 72) and an otherwise simple act of loosening one's hair becomes an enigmatic scene of seduction brimming with highly-charged signifiers. In what amounts to a replay of a displaced dreamy version of the scene of primal seduction; the now desiring and desirable young mother makes a gesture and murmurs words which, as opposed to her earlier divisive taunts, sneers, and enraged stares, are shockingly consolatory and consoling:

> I am shocked, as I always am to see how sensuality abruptly descends on the sternest of Indian women when they loosen their thick dark hair. With her hair down, this smug judgmental mother of three is suddenly so breathtakingly beautiful that I want to cry. *She looks at me slyly, conspiratorially, savoring the feel of her long tresses between her fingers.*
>
> "Why don't you grow your hair," she murmurs. "Long hair looks so good on *us*, don't you think?
>
> She pushes up her window as high as it will go. The wind lifts her hair around her like a lone hawk suspended on a bank of air. Her hair spreads out, shading her, like the flat top of a solitary boabab tree. If only I could climb into those silken branches. (Kamani 12, emphasis added)

The young mother's alluringly long "thick dark hair"—now a metaphoric stand-in for an overwhelming desire for the motherland—as well as her seductive invitation to the narrator to grow her hair unintentionally rekindle and re-evoke the primal traumatic moment of departure-as-rupture (the moment of psychic severance from

the *mother*land inherent in any act of displacement) when the enigmatic signifiers were implanted on the psyche-body of the emigrating subject. What those enigmatic signifiers meant to signify at the time is, of course, still partly opaque. It is, nonetheless, plainly evident that their belated re-evocation in an auxiliary scene, a scene whose unfolding owes a great deal to the diasporic subject's act of physical and psychic return, offers a space or, as Laplanche sees it, a "hollow" in which the diasporic subject "comes to situate and re-elaborate the hollow of his own originary enigmas" (*Essays* 191).

Laplanche refers to this notion of a "hollow" in his discussion of the two modalities of transference in the analytic situation: 1) *transfert en plain* 'filled-in transference' and 2) *transfert en creux* 'hollowed-out transference.' Distinguishing between the two but specifying their coexistence, he defines the former as that which is associated with the compulsion-to-repeat (i. e. the negative problematic form of repetition of "childhood imagos, scenarios, behaviours and relationships, the positive translations of the past") and the latter as the process of "working through and dismantling, *detranslating* the contents of this 'filled-in' transference" (Fletcher 87). Such a distinction implies, as Scarfone explains, that "if there were nothing but filled-in transference—that is, mere repetition—there would be no resolution in sight" (558). Laplanche's major contention, thus, is that the analytic situation can offer a space or a "hollow" in which the analysand is not always doomed to empty something filled-in (i. e. "his pouch" of compulsive traumatic repetitions) but is rather invited to place another hollow (i.e. "the enigma of his originary situation"). Hollowed-out transference, then, is that modality of transference which facilitates, in the space conferred by the analyst, a re-confrontation with the provoking and traumatizing originary enigma (of the other) in the hope that in the course of such a re-encounter and secondary revision "new translations of the enigma may be issued" (*Essays* 403)

In Kamani's story, also, the significance of the narrator's act of return is not only in reinstating the fundamental enigmatic (m)other/child situation but in providing a mental space in which a re-confrontation with the (m)other's libidinally-charged enigma is facilitated. The narrator, as a diasporic returnee who looks at the present through a pang of nostalgia, forces herself into a state of confused struggle with the push-and-pull forces of the now/then dialectic—a struggle which places her in a state parallel to a state of transference (defined, by essence, as the past/present fusion during which the past moment of rupture comes alive, not in its own terms, but in terms of the present). For her, the young mother's insignificant-but-intense gesture of uncoiling her lush, long, dark hair thus becomes a carrier of an enigmatic

load of excitation which, by creating an intermediary mental hollow, offers a privileged site in which the demand for a renewed attempt at further (re-) translation and possible (re-)integration of the message of the (m)other can be carried out. The young mother's seductive gesture, thus, inadvertently provokes "the enigmatic share in the other's message" (Scarfone 557), thereby reactivating the inassimilable residual *à traduire* 'to-be-translated.' It is in response to such an unintentional provocation in the hollow conferred by the physical/psychic act of return that the narrator then actively, though inadvertently, confronts with the (m)other's enigma and engages with an act of re-translation—an act which, at this point, proves to be reconciliatory and redeeming:

> I feel the slow uncoiling in my groin as *the heat of my many tightly held selves burns through me*. *Resistance I'm not aware of holding suddenly snaps*, and the train compartment, the woman, her sleeping children, the rusted ceiling fan, the tracks, the fields, the hazy sky, spin me so fiercely that I have o lean back and let all rock through me. *The brooding, dreaming girl I had been ten years earlier, wanting to be embraced and ensnared and embodied by these ciphers of women that surrounded me, has become a brooding, dreaming adult, still aching, to decipher, derange, delight. I need to start over:* I require once again a pliant will, a chameleon identity, and the reconfigured time of cycles and sieves that runs me around again and again in a rut of meaningless circumstances, *but then suddenly drops me right down the trap door of surface and superfice into the rushing female river below*. (Kamani 13, emphasis added)

As the ending of the story indicates, the reactivated enigmatic signifiers, whose presence is highlighted and intensified by the young mother's seductive gesture, drive the narrator to ache "to decipher, derange, delight" that which has silently resisted translation in the past ten years. What exactly has resisted metabolization while silently circulating in the psyche of the diasporic subject all those years is, of course, not directly named, but only vaguely hinted at since the enigmatic character of the signifiers has to be maintained at any cost. Such signifiers, yet, regardless of their ambiguous signified, are endowed with such an excessive libidinal force that their reactivation can perceptibly disrupt the narrator's "many tightly held selves" and her hitherto imperceptible "resistance." In a brief but epiphanic moment (triggered by the young mother's gesture of uncoiling her hair) and within a psychic space (located beyond the boundaries of present, past, and future), the narrator thus

has to refashion her subjectivity while experiencing the therapeutic effect of being dropped "right down the trap door of surface and superfice into *the rushing female river below*"—a covert tropological evocation of her Indian-ness on a metaphoric plane. Interestingly, no sooner has the previous dysfunctional translations of the still enigmatic signifiers revisited, reinvestigated, dismantled, decomposed, or, in Laplanche's parlance, "de-translated" that the fault between the self (represented by the narrator) and the (m)other (represented by the young Gujarati mother) is suddenly sutured: "I feel the hair on my head jumping and growing and the hem of my dress lengthening and unfolding, *drawing me closer to home"* (Kamani 13, emphasis added).

In sum, the narrator's re-confrontation with the enigma of the (m)other (embodied by the young mother's libidinally-charged gesture) within the liminal hollow warranted by the pull-and-push psychic space of return has significant outcomes. Firstly, it forces the narrator to address, if not refill, the lacuna at the core of her diasporic subjectivity by issuing some new translations for the enigmatic signifiers. Secondly, and more importantly, by provoking a hollowed-out transference, it acts as a therapeutic agent which is apt to break the vicious cycles of the traumatic compulsion-to-repeat (non-translation) and to lead, at least temporarily, to a moment of self/(m)other unification (semi-translation) when "the [divisive] geographic, temporal, and class boundaries of Gujarat and India" (Diaz 186) are threatened by a binding enigmatic longing both to mourn and to (re-)belong. What makes Kamani's representation of the return journey to the *mother*land effective, if not therapeutic, then, is its ability to reopen the diasporic subject's relation to the enigma of the (*m)other*land and to prompt, via an auxiliary scene, a re-encounter with that same enigma—an enigma which is the residue of an initial moment of the implantation of enigmatic signifiers at an apparently traumatic moment of departure-as-rupture. What those signifiers had meant to signify at the time, of course, is still opaque: it is, nonetheless, evident that their belated re-evocation in another scene and in another time (a scene and time whose unfolding owes a great deal to the diasporic subject's act of return) can offer an intermediary psychic space in which the diasporic subject can be placed—due to his/her constantly called-for acts of (de-/re-) translation—on the verge of a belated process of working-through and mourning for the (*m)other*land.

Conclusion

In the light of Laplanche's translation model of psychic functioning within the context of his general theory of seduction, Ginu Kamani's "Ciphers" then

constitutes an allegory of the return to the traumatizing maternal enigma which defines and structures every diasporic subject's relation to the absent presence of the *mother*land. It is undoubtedly true that, from within a Laplanchian framework, such a subject seems like "a forever failing translator" (Peeren 6) on the verge of being hoovered back into a state of non-translation. Yet, it must be noted that a diasporic returnee (like the narrator in "Ciphers") is, after all, a privileged translator who—due to her allegorical outlook, her constant engagement in a back-and-forth process of Benjaminian constellation, and her occupation of a liminal psychic space which reopens her relationship to the enigma of the *(m)other*land—is more apt to carry out "comprehensive and more productive" re-translations rather than "simply 'rehash'[ing] old translations" (Peeren 6; 9). This, of course, is not to claim that a physical/psychic return journey to the *mother*land can warrant the achievement of a full translation or the complete deciphering of its enigma to the extent that mourning a hitherto occluded sense of otherness at its core can be made fully possible in an instant. Rather, it is to claim that physical/psychic acts of return, as facilitators of a state of suspended temporality between there/here, then/now, and (m)other/self, carry the seeds of (but not guarantee) the possibility of a belated-yet-fleeting moment of working-through and mourning via the Laplanchian process of (de-/re-)translation.

Mourning, after all, is always looming on the horizon only if the enigma of the partially-translated yet emotionally-charged message of the *mother*(land)—laden with "relations of tenderness affection, attachment, but also, at times, of passion and violence" (Scarfone 563)—is acknowledged, addressed, and encountered: that is, only if (m)otherness, rather than being melancholically appropriated and incorporated at the frontier of self, is confronted on its own terms and in its stark naked entirety. Significance of the diasporic return and its fantasy, then, does not simply reside in the fact that it involves a revival or a reopening of the original trauma at the site of the original displacement. Rather, what makes any act of diasporic return significant is its ability to provide the diasporic subject with an abstract psychic space immune to the spatio-temporal logic (a state similar to that of a Laplanchian hollowed-out transference) in which she/he can then be constantly engaged in a process of (de-/re-)translation—a process which brimming with the possibility of new translations, can amount to a kind of suturing, healing, and thus belated mourning for the diasporic subject.

As sites of "potential catching-up with a message *sent out* from the world of origins and continually *travelling* towards meaning, in a way that intersects with Laplanche's 'translation theory'" (Munos 110), literal/psychic returns thus seem

to offer fertile ground for a subsequent series of re-imagining, re-working, and re-translating of the primal scene of seduction (i. e. of the original implantation, of the enigmatic transmission, and of the primal interpellation) and, hence, for a (re-) negotiation of the diasporic subjectivity-in-process. Despite such a primacy of the enigmatic message of the *(m)other*land in determining the formation and later (re-) negotiations of diasporic subjectivities, though, it should be reiterated that the process of (de-/re-)translating the message is never an easy task and might rather prove to be a sheer impossibility. In fact, it is out of this same impossibility-cum-longing of/for a full translation of the message that the diasporic subject's inclination to nourish the diasporic fantasy of return is born.

Longing to provide the missing signified at the site of the original rupture and hoping to interpret his/her "maladies of belonging" (Patel) to resolve the enigma of his/her being, and to exorcise phantoms of his/her past in relation to that yet-to-come signified, the diasporic subject, thus, restores to the fantasy of a full return as a means of a reunification with the enigmatic message of the (m)other of the primal seduction. As she/he often comes to learn (often through generations), however, this fantasy of fusion is no more than an illusion since return (like the very act of translation) is always incomplete—not fully assimilable. But what if, as Caruth claims in her interview with Laplanche, "the meaning of it [the message] is partially that you can't assimilate the message fully" (*Listening* 70)? What if all that makes the diasporic subjectivity a paradoxical site of an excessive pain and power is its total dependence on an acknowledgement of the irreducible otherness of self on a daily basis? The diasporic subjectivity, after all, proves, better than any other subjectivity, that certain gaps and lacunas are irrevocable; that the enigma of the other is indelible; and that neither any act of exclusion, repulsion, or repression nor any brutal force of homogenization or any one-size-fits-all policy can by any means obliterate or abolish its irreducible otherness—hence its being a crisis for, if not a source of potential threat to, all present-day totalitarian governments.

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