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Dance Music and Creative Resilience within Prison Walls: Revisiting Cebu's Dancing Prisoners

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Abstract

Using Foucault's concept of governmentality vis-à-vis Appadurai's "global ethnoscaples" as frames, I argue for a techno-cultural dimension which brought forth the phenomenon of the "dancing inmates," an argument against the charge of Filipino colonial mimicry of a Hollywood popular entertainment. Albeit the inmates' dance routines indeed depict Foucault's "docile bodies" in his analysis of the modern prison, as pointed out by critics, I am inclined to show how the internet mediation through social media networks awakened a culturally imbibed dance and musical character trait vis-à-vis the jolly cultural disposition of Filipinos. Thus, I view these characteristics as existential responses, hence, 'creative resilience,' to the inhuman incarcerating conditions of the prison life through using the art of dance with the aid of media technology. I argue on the role of the internet as the prisoners' avenue to the outside world that was strategically deprived of them as a form of punishment, and the role of the internet as their last frontier to freedom and to realize their human potentials.

Keywords: Colonial Mimicry, Panopticism, Spectacle of Power, Western Gaze, Global Ethnoscaples, Filipino Culture, Bisayan People

Introduction

My initial interest in this topic was propelled by the idea of being able to catch a glimpse of the evolving identity of the Filipino as Filipino, particularly through the detainees of the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (CPDRC). By studying the CPDRC, I wish to depict a portrait of the Filipino as manifested in the CPDRC dance phenomenon. My purpose and intention here are to highlight the cultural side of the Filipinos which is observable and manifested by a community of prisoners located in the southern part of the Philippines.

Further, the capability to enact an effective rehabilitation strategy for prisoners became a long-time puzzle for most prison administrators around the globe. Since prisoners inside the cells are usually convened from all walks of life, administrators are wary that prisoners would rather learn more bad tricks from other inmates rather than being rehabilitated. Neighboring countries, such as, India, China and Thailand, as well as the United States, employ various methods of rehabilitation by incorporating yoga, sports, spiritual and recreational activities, and/or the establishment of Buddhist meditation grounds.¹ In the Philippines, dance is introduced as a form of therapeutic activity for prisoners which has spawned criticisms worldwide. This study henceforth presupposes a background which does not discriminate prison culture. It is conducted to identify underlying criticisms and to ward off normalizing tendencies which can produce moralizing judgments upon the aesthetic dance program of the CPDRC inmates. This study employs the qualitative approach using textual interpretation and conceptual analysis. As my data, I avail of the narratives from the media interviews of the inmates and the prison administrators.

Prior to presenting some of the notable criticisms of the so-called dance rehabilitation program of the CPDRC prison inmates which became a phenomenal hit in YouTube back in 2007, I shall first lay down a narrative of some of the significant details which led to the creation of this world-renowned dancing inmates of Cebu, Philippines. After providing an adequate foreground of the phenomenon, I shall discuss the arguments which lead to the controversial stance against the performances of the dance rehabilitation program, only then I

¹ Lion's Roar Staff, "Buddhism Behind Bars," *Lion's Roar*. <<https://www.lionsroar.com/buddhism-behind-bars/>>.

shall provide counter-arguments based from a cultural understanding of a unique character trait which, I insist, can be observed among most Filipinos, particularly in the Cebuano-speaking regions. Filipinos are largely known for being creative, hospitable and resilient people. This emphasis is achieved by employing Foucault's concept of governmentality and Appadurai's concept of the "global ethnoscaples" as the lenses of the conceptual critique and analysis. While Foucault views media technologies as instruments of surveillance and panopticism, Appadurai, on the other hand, regards media technologies as instruments of global connectivity and multiculturalism. Appadurai focuses on the cultural aspect of globalization which resulted from the democratic use of technology, whereas Foucault maintained the authoritarian aspect of technological control. Both scholars, nonetheless, could provide us with a contrasting yet holistic over-all theoretical picture of the dancing inmates phenomenon despite their varied treatment of technology.

Likewise, this study tackles the practicability of the so-called dance rehabilitation program of then world-renowned CPDRC Dancing Inmates. The paper highlights their story of fame and controversy by taking account the various discourses and their underlying theories. This brings back the narratives of the original CPDRC Dancing Inmates from 2006 to 2010, including its evolution and influence. I proceed by taking into consideration the prison life with the backdrop of the prison culture, Cebuano culture, and *vis-à-vis* the Filipino existential condition of prisoners, and their media representations. I thereby provide counterarguments on the various criticisms raised against the dance rehabilitation program and the CPDRC's participation in the cultural life of the Cebuano people. I further argue that the absence of familiarity to the Filipino 'way of life,' the people, their existential, economic, catastrophic, and judicial-penal experience would tend to produce moralizing judgment to the aesthetic dance program of the CPDRC inmates. Moreover, the paper aims to address these overarching questions: What is the effect of panopticism to the Cebuano prisoners? How does the "dancing prisoners" phenomenon affect the cultural life of the Cebuanos? What are the cultural character traits of the Cebuanos that made them unique subjects of the technological control?

The Inmates' YouTube Fame

Byron Garcia, the man behind the famed "Dancing Inmates" of CPDRC in Cebu City, Philippines uploaded in YouTube upon the suggestion of his son the very first dance video of the inmates on October 1, 2006. Garcia's first attempt, however, received a very minimal response, and did not attract immediate public and media attention.

This dance routine inside the CPDRC has a bit of history. It started with rhythmic exercises aimed solely to enhance the physical well-being of the prisoners.² One day, right at the middle of the open field, a riot suddenly occurred. Hoping to interrupt the rumble, the moderator played on a loudspeaker the song "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen. Frenzied by the music, the inmates started tapping their toes and danced to the rhythm. After that, dances were incorporated in the daily routine exercises. Garcia later described this dance routine as a criminal rehabilitation program aimed to establish collaboration and "reduce gang activity through dance."³ Garcia prides himself as the pioneer and discoverer of this approach, and for having effectively lessen the cases of riots and rumbles.

Six months after his first upload, jail warden Garcia already had a total of six videos of the dancing inmates to his YouTube channel, all of which failed to catch a bigger audience. On July 17, 2007, Garcia anticipates his lucky day for the unusual alignment of 7 in 7/17/2007 upon the occasion of his birthday, a rare occurrence that can only happen once in every 10 years. He recorded and uploaded that day's dance practice on the tune of Michael Jackson's "Thriller." The video immediately went viral and reached one million views in a span of only four days, such number of views is already considerably a huge impact at that time.⁴

Simultaneous with the video uploads, there was an increasing popular demand to witness for live performances from local and international fans. Thus, by August of the following year, Garcia decided to open its prison yards to live audiences and stage the shows

² Aine Mangaoang, "Dancing to distraction: Mediating 'docile bodies' in 'Philippine Thriller video,'" *TORTURE Journal* 23, no. 2 (2013): 47.

³ J. Lorenzo Perillo, "If I was not in prison, I would not be famous': Discipline, choreography, and mimicry in the Philippines," *Theatre Journal* 63, no. 4, 608. (John Hopkins University Press, 2011).

⁴ Mangaoang, 2013, 44-45.

as one of Cebu province's tourist attractions.⁵ Not long after, different personalities, politicians, and celebrities, both foreign and local, have danced with the inmates as their guest performers. Live reportage and performances were broadcasted live from CPDRC in various television programs and shows. Live audiences consisting of visitors were even allowed and given the chance to take photographs together with the inmates in the prison yard both for personal and documentation purposes. Cinema and documentary films portraying the dancing inmates were written and produced.

Soon after Garcia's resignation as jail warden, the Philippine government installed him as head of the "Ambassadors of Goodwill" program.⁶ He is now joined with twelve of his former dancing inmates that have already been released. Together they tour around the Philippines promoting the dance program to prisons and appearing in local television shows as guests. But even before the dance program became a public policy among Philippine prisons under the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in 2010, there were already eight other prisons in the Philippines that have voluntarily adapted Garcia's dance rehabilitation exercises after its global popularity.⁷ During the 2016 presidential elections, the incumbent Cebu gubernatorial candidate Hilario P. Davide III used the "dancing inmates" to advance his campaign. The inmates danced with huge letters on their shirts that reads "DAVIDE-MAGPALE."⁸ Meanwhile, on October 22, 2018, the Bureau of Corrections celebrated their 24th National Correctional Consciousness Week and showcased the Maximum-Security Inmates of the New Bilibid Prison, which is a national penitentiary located in Muntinlupa City. The Bilibid inmates performed a medley-dance in the tunes of "Boom, Boom" by Momoland, and "Budots," a local dance craze originated in Davao City. The performance was recorded from an overlooking view and was immediately uploaded in YouTube the day after. It is now viewable at the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) Official Facebook Page. Aside from this, the Facebook page also features different dance and music videos recorded from different occasions.

⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Edgar Florita, "CPDRC Dancing Inmates," *YouTube*.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpvpuKpdhgz8&t=43s>>.

The Criticisms

Amidst fame and popularity, Garcia's model of dance as rehabilitation program has not eluded scrutiny. For instance, in an article entitled "'If I was not in prison, I would not be famous: Discipline, Choreography, and Mimicry in the Philippines'"⁹ which appeared in *Theatre Journal* published by The John Hopkins University Press, theatre scholar J. Lorenzo Perillo has argued that even though the CPDRC's dance program was aimed at "reducing gang violence and promoting discipline," it likewise "discourages critical cultural engagement" as it configures the politics of "sexuality and mimicry in new ways, and effectively extends racial and colonial inequalities."¹⁰ Perillo draws from Coco Fusco's concept of "fetishized representations of Otherness" which mitigate anxieties caused by "encounter with difference," typical of a "caged performance."¹¹ Perillo also draws from Michel Foucault's analysis of the modern panoptic prison and penal institutions and argued upon the "camera's role and the actions of prison administrators."¹² Though Perillo's essay limits its analysis only to the "Thriller" video of the CPDRC inmates, its reflections likewise apply to the entirety of Garcia's dance rehabilitation program.

There are three aspects which Perillo have explored, namely; discipline, choreography, and mimicry. For discipline, he argues on the use of dance as an "agentive strategy" for prison administrators to rework disciplinary power.¹³ Perillo also emphasizes that the angle of the camera is maintained in an overlooking position providing an impression of "objectification that reaffirms the viewer's superior position over the inmates" providing wide shots, an "authoritative gaze...above and apart from the objectified inmates."¹⁴ Perillo maintains that "[t]he CPDRC dance rehabilitation program is a 'technology' of power according to Foucaultian principles of visual

⁹ Perillo, 2011, 607-21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 608.

¹¹ See Perillo, 2011, 607; see also Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *The Drama Review (1988-)* 38, no.1, 152. (Spring, 1994) The MIT Press.

¹² Perillo, 2011, 608.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 610.

spatialization (panoptic), temporal control (timetables), repetitive exercises, detailed hierarchies, and normalizing judgment.”¹⁵

For the other two aspects which Perillo examined, namely; choreography and mimicry, he continued to argue on the representation of “Otherness” in two levels, first, in the participation of a cross-dressed Wenjiel Resane, and second, on the neocolonial representation of a Filipino mimicry, particularly on the inmates’ rendition of Thriller.¹⁶ Perillo argued that Resane’s participation is representative of a sexual minority, a “sexualized and gendered Other;”¹⁷ whereas the rest of the inmate, the male majority who danced as zombies capturing Resane at the end of Thriller video, appears to recruit Resane into “homonormativity and heteropatriarchy.”¹⁸ Perillo claims further that the CPDRC’s adaptation of Thriller is characteristic of a skilled “mimicry” of the American culture, and as such it creates an image of the “colonized Other.”¹⁹ Finally, Perillo observes that in contrast to the CPDRC’s claim for rehabilitation, the dance program undermines “ongoing Filipino struggles for self-determination” and instead it revitalizes the colonial desire as it give to colonizers the impression of being rich and superior culture for they have imbibed to Filipinos the commonly shared performance traits.²⁰

In another article entitled “Dancing to Distraction: Mediating ‘Docile Bodies’ in ‘Philippine Thriller Video,’”²¹ which appeared in TORTURE Journal published by International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), music scholar Áine Mangaoang questioned the lack of consent from the prisoners to digitally record and publicize the dance program. Mangaoang argued further on the “violation of prisoners’ humanity and inherent dignity as outlined in international standards governing the treatment of prisoners,” and that such recording and circulation “without proper, prior consent denies non-convicted individuals the right to privacy, as such videos and associated images enjoy an afterlife that far exceeds most jail sentences.”²² Mangaoang proposed that “careful consideration must be

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 616-620.

¹⁷ Ibid., 618.

¹⁸ Ibid., 620.

¹⁹ Ibid., 614, 620.

²⁰ Ibid., 620, 616.

²¹ Mangaoang, 2013, 44-54.

²² Ibid., 46.

given before rehabilitation programs are disseminated online and become a government public policy.”²³ Finally, Mangaoang observed that the CPDRC inmates “become useful to the states’ requirements, thus enacting the quintessential modernist approach to discipline, producing what Foucault designates as ‘docile bodies:’ bodies that not only do what we want, but do it precisely in the way that we want it.”²⁴ According to Mangaoang, the inmates through their embodied performance “have become Foucault’s subjected and practiced bodies that embody the very essence of ‘docility’.”²⁵

Critiquing the Criticisms

I argue that the global-wide attention that the dancing-inmates videos get is primarily due to the viewers’ curiosity to see an Orientalized version of the already popular and truly phenomenal Michael Jackson dance revolution. I set aside the colonial aspect, as I argue that it is the technological landscape which is responsible for this prison culture revolution.

CPDRC’s Thriller video, the progenitor of their fame, first gained attention outside the Philippines, and then later, in the Philippines’ national audience, before it catches the curiosity among the local viewers, that is, from farthest to nearest rather than its reverse, which is the traditional case of popularity. Such is the amazing ironical capability of the social media to defy what was previously a pattern. The CNN’s interest to feature the prisoners’ story has contributed so much to this fame.²⁶ Hence, the opening of the prison yards to the local audience comes only after it had already gained international attention outside the country. To see prisoners dancing is nothing to enthrall or surprise Visayan folks, especially to the multitude of the multifaceted Cebuanos, where even children as young as four-years-old already participates in the cultural and community activities, such as, cultural street dancing and religious festivals. New York-based deputy consulate-general of the Philippines,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. (New York: Vintage, 1979), 136-137.

²⁵ Mangaoang, 2013, 50.

²⁶ Hugh Riminton, “Together in electric dreams,” *CNN*, August 2007. <http://edition.cnn.com/exchange/blogs/in.the.field/archive/2007_08_01_index.htm |>

Melita Thomeczeck, understood this plainly by saying, “The Filipinos love music and they love to sing and dance. Whatever they are in a natural way, they can continue that habit in prison.”²⁷ As Mangaong acknowledged, the CPDRC “provides a particularly rich history of music traditions that extends pre-Spanish acquisition” and that the “Visayans are frequently stereotyped among Filipinos as the most musical people in the country, due to their bustling calendar of fiestas.”²⁸

One factor that could have contributed to the CPDRC’s fame is the differences in culture and the western reception of seeing ‘prisoners dance’ – two seemingly contradictory concepts; one of free movement, the other of captivity. Filipinos are somewhat lenient when it comes to the fusion of fun, art, innovation and duty. This is what Claribel Bartolome referred to as ‘flexibility.’ According to Bartolome, Filipino creativity is the “impulse to rise above the ordinary approach towards solving problems, the use of alternative strategies and resources in times of emergency and crisis, the ability to shift the functions of objects, the ability to improvise on existing resources, and the openness of mind for new possibilities of doing things.”²⁹ Take a number of classic examples, such as, dancing traffic aides, security guard performing a musical instrument to amuse waiting train passengers, singing cooks and waiters while waiting for the food to be served, smiling and waving to the cameras taking selfies and groupies at the midst of flood, single motorcycle used as *habal-habal* (an improvised and customized motorcycle made to fit and carry up to eight more passengers), among other situations and examples in which the Filipino is already attuned by and does no longer stir of any more surprises.³⁰

In a country regularly visited by catastrophe, such as, typhoon, landslides, volcanic eruption, earthquake, and the suffering of poverty and political turmoil, Filipinos have learned to adopt creative coping strategies. It is the Western upbringing that most likely be scandalized with such unusual view of such coping mechanisms, considering the notion which Edward Said refers to as “Orientalism.”³¹ Thus, an American or Western audience is inclined more to believe that such

²⁷ As cited by Hunte, *ABC News*, August 2007; see also Perillo, 2011, 615.

²⁸ Mangaong, 2014, 49.

²⁹ Claribel Bartolome, “Filipino Conceptualizations of Creativity.” *Philippine Studies* 39, no. 2, 1991, 213.

³⁰ Feeran, *ABC News*, August 2007.

³¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1-7.

prisoners are most likely forced to dance, when it could only be a means of getting off their time.³² According to Niels Mulder, “The western optical illusion of a scientific – thus ‘objective,’ and normative – perspective not only imposes specific cultural products - democracy, basic human rights on others, but also gravely distorts the picture of social life as seen by the native participants.”³³

This unique capacity of the Filipino spirit to transform painful situations into something light and lively can possibly amuse foreigners and outsiders, especially those not familiar of this unique cultural trait. A Filipino or Filipina can be surprisingly lively despite the circumstantial obstacles. S/he has learned to adopt and embrace the given absurdities of life, does not usually complain but learns to go with the flow, has become silent, uncritical, and resilient to her/his surroundings. Art is arguably used to relieve their pain. This is the reason why Garcia loves to call his dance program as “therapeutic.” According to him, “therapeutic music and dance is meant to help prisoners cope with their depression and anxiety, improve their well-being as they go through a transition phase and reintegrate to society.”³⁴ Garcia adds:

Music is a protocol to heal them of emotional and psychological disorders and trauma as the result of the offense or incarceration. Because penology practices make living hell in jails, the tendency is we breed next generation demons when they are discharged. If prisoners are healed while in prison, then we make them better persons when they are released and stay away from crime.³⁵

Inside the prison cells, life could be doubly difficult and absurd. Having been isolated from society and their families, what else would prisoners do if not to engage creatively and productively in hilarious and satisfying activities, such as, dancing? The opportunity to become part of something popular and globally known comes only as an unexpected reward from this necessary existential creativity.

³² Feeran, *ABC News*, August 2007; Rimington, *CNN*, September 2007.

³³ Niels Mulder, “Filipino Culture and Social Analysis.” *Philippine Studies* 42, no.1, 80, 1994.
<<http://www.philippinestudies.net/files/journals/1/articles/2010/public/2010-2109-1-PB.pdf>>

³⁴ Garcia, as cited by Mangaoang, 2013, p. 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Perillo labels the use of Jackson's Thriller song as a "Filipino mimicry."³⁶ Such astounding label sounds somewhat unpleasant to Filipino ears and an insult to Philippine musicality, considering they have produced artists now enjoying international fame and global recognition, such as, Allan Pineda (Apl.de.Ap of Black Eyed Peas), Arnel Pineda (Journey), Leah Salonga, Charice Pempengco (Jake Zyrus), and many other rising stars. Unluckily, one cannot expect the inmates to come up with their original music since they are not, after all, professional composers or recording artists. As a matter of fact, they had performed a couple of local songs uploaded by Garcia prior to the Thriller video; one is Jumbo Hotdog by Masculados, and the other, Dayang-Dayang, a native Tausog-Muslim dance from southern Philippines, but these videos both failed to catch an immediate global attention. The language barrier had contributed for the songs to lack the remarkable appeal. Nonetheless, one can never deny the influence of Westernized contemporary music to Filipinos. And besides, it's clear that Byron Garcia's motivation will be to gain a wider attention for his newly found rehabilitation method. Dancing in local Philippine folk dances, such as, Tinikling or Kariñosa would not be a smart choice if one aimed for instant world fame and merit, admitting the sad reality that cultural shows are passé and do not attract viewers while pop music and culture do.

Garcia understood very well the capacity of his social media platform YouTube to bring him instant global attention and fame. Upon further attempts, he realized he must start with something compelling, something already globally known, such as Michael Jackson's 'Thriller,' localized it with the CPDRC's performance, then in turn, brought it back to the global audience using the internet. Such dynamic had already been observed recently by media and culture scholars; such as, Jeffrey L. Kidder and Arjun Appadurai. Kidder, for instance, noticed it in the amazing global spread of the phenomenon known as 'parkour' which began as an exclusive military training exercise in France but has spread dramatically worldwide both as a cyber trend and as a hippie culture,³⁷ echoing what Arjun Appadurai had previously referred to as "global ethnoscares."³⁸ For Appadurai,

³⁶ Perillo, 2011, 608, 613-16.

³⁷ Jeffrey L. Kidder, "Parkour, the affective appropriation of urban space, and the real/virtual dialectic," *City & Community*, 11, no. 3, 2012, 231, 242.

³⁸ Arjun Appadurai. "Global Ethnoscares: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology," in *Modernity at large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 48, 65.

the “ethnoscapes,”³⁹ “technoscapes,”⁴⁰ “finanscapes,”⁴¹ “mediascape,” and “ideoscapes,”⁴² are both global and local, or what he referred to as “glocal.” With the rise of the internet and social media technologies, the distinction between what is global and local has blurred as there occurs a changing landscape and an evolving social, territorial, and cultural reproduction of different realities worldwide.⁴³ Appadurai’s claims which are based on his studies of culture and globalization somehow refutes Perillo’s charge of “colonial mimicry” to the dancing inmates phenomenon. Colonial influence is not necessarily a one-way process from the colonizer towards the colonized, but it can also

³⁹ The “ethnoscape” pertains to the global flow of ethnicity, or the movements of peoples, such as immigrants, tourists, refugees, political exiles, overseas foreign workers, seafarers, missionaries, foreign students and entertainers, etc. The interactions between these peoples create a hybrid, transient, and ever-changing communities that seemingly create a transnational, decentered, borderless world that continually affects global economic policies. Business strategist and author Kenichi Ohmae wrote “national borders have effectively disappeared and, along with them, the economic logic that made them useful lines of demarcation in the first place.” See Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*. (New York: Harper Business, 1990), as cited in Janet Ceglowski, “Has Globalization Created a Borderless World?” in *Business Review*, March/April 1998. (Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia), 17. See also Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy,” in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. Edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage Publications, 1990) 297, 295-310.

⁴⁰ The “technoscape” pertains to the global flow of technology, or the circulation of mechanical products and/or software, such as, information and communications technology (ICTs). See Appadurai, 1990, 297.

⁴¹ The “finanscape” pertains to the global flow of money, or the circulation of finances and the fluidity of financial capital. See Appadurai, 1990, 298.

⁴² The “ideoscape” pertains to the global flow of ideas, or the realm of economic and political ideas that freely circulates globally and influence people and the market on how to behave or respond to globally challenging crisis. The “mediascape” pertains to the global flow of culture as mediated by technology and the entertainment industry into producing narratives of “imagined realities” that can rehash existing global realities and can have global influence or popularity. Thus, one can find Marxists, Chinatown, Korean pop-culture, or Game of Thrones fans anywhere in the world. All five “scapes” are interdependent upon each other producing disjunctive multiple interrelations of social reality. See Appadurai, 1990, 299. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso Books, 1991), 5-10.

⁴³ What Appadurai calls as “scapes” are the various points of intersections which are both integral and multidimensional in the global community in the recognition of the overwhelming and multifaceted effects of globalization (glocalization, global capitalism). Appadurai identifies five distinct but interrelated landscapes of globalization that continually affects or influence global intercultural, socio-economic and political interactions. See Appadurai, 1990, 296, 295-310.

transpire in a two-way back and forth direction between the colonized and the colonizer. Akin to what Homi K. Bhabha calls as “ambivalence” in his *The Location of Culture* referring to the duplicity of identities in the colonial discourse, like how the mirror reflects to its source, a return of the “gaze.”⁴⁴

Although I acknowledge that consent is so vital prior to the publication of such videos, and that in the absence of it could indeed mean an intrusion of their private lives and individual dignity, particularly considering that these prisoners are still waiting for their trials, hence they are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. However, a closer look and inspection to these videos reveal that the inmates are enjoying with what they are doing, as manifested in such gestures as shaking hands with prison guests while caught off guard, waving, laughing, smiling, and gladly taking pictures with tourists and visitors, are sure signs and manifestation of merriment, pride and satisfaction. For instance, take the case of Crisanto Nierre whose son is very proud of him being the famous dancer in YouTube. Thus, Nierre is so happy about his son’s recognition of him. This gives him some meaning to continue what he is doing. “It makes me proud that my son is proud of me” said Nierre.⁴⁵ Likewise, Marfury Barberan, also an inmate, said in an interview, “Because our families have seen us on TV and the Internet... [t]hey don't worry about us so much.”⁴⁶

Most Filipino folks whenever they see a camera would love to pose playfully for it, and that it sounds absurd to ask for consent when they voluntarily present themselves to it. The digital camera and the Internet had become the prisoners’ last frontier to freedom and recognition. With the slow pace of Philippine justice, even if not convicted of any crime, waiting for the trial is already as afflicting as the sentence itself.⁴⁷ Thus, the argument on the alleged human rights violation for the lack of inmates’ permission or consultation for allowing television networks to air from inside the prison cells, as well as prior to its broadcast and upload in YouTube may sound a little absurd. Rather than seeing wrong in the rehabilitative prisoner dance

⁴⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 88.

⁴⁵ As cited by Rimington, CNN, August 2007.

⁴⁶ Alexandra A. Seno, “Dance is part of rehabilitation at Philippine prison.” *The New York Times*, January 2008. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/world/asia/15iht-inmates.1.9223130.html?r=2>>.

⁴⁷ See Rimington, CNN, August 2007.

program, what I rather find even more violative to human rights is the unpleasing condition of prisoners being highly vulnerable to the spread of contagious diseases and viral skin infections in a crowded and humid environment of most Philippine detention situated in this tropical country, except unless if the prisoner is part of the country's top elites privileged of having permitted to use air-condition units in prison cells, as well as, cellular phones, television sets, and bamboo tropical huts with jacuzzi.⁴⁸ Other crucial issues include the vulnerability to sexual exploitation of the female visitors and the female prisoners by the jail guards and warden, or by other male prisoners.

In fact, according to the *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (OPCAT) Report which was conducted in 2010, the condition of jails maintained by the BJMP were "extremely overcrowded" stating that the "over-congestion brutalizes life in penitentiaries and in provincial jails" with a total jail population of 114,930 as of 2010. "Herding individuals in cramped spaces is cruel, inhuman, ill, degrading, and unjust punishment. Overcrowding is dangerous to health and to human life," according to the study.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the intensified campaign against drugs and criminality by the Duterte administration adds up to a greater extent on the increasing number of prison population to the already overcrowded prison cells. The overcrowding is so endemic that even the prisoners' sleeping time needs to be arranged in shifting schedules and by placing hammocks all over the cell.⁵⁰ According to Fr. Leonardo R. Estioko, SVD, "[t]he loss of freedom in all living species means suffering. Since freedom is activity of the intellect and will, suffering is

⁴⁸ Lindsay Murdoch, "Life of luxury in Manila prison: sauna, stripper bar, air-conditioning," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 2014. <<http://www.smh.com.au/world/life-of-luxury-in-manila-prison-sauna-stripper-bar-airconditioning-20141229-12fdor.html#ixzz41INIT3e7>>. A much worst scenario is the illegal grant of a premature release from prison of heinous crimes convicts thru "good conduct time allowance" (GCTA).

⁴⁹ People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance (PREDA), The OPCAT Report. The Condition of Philippine Prisons and Jails. *PREDA Foundation*. <<http://www.preda.org/media/research-documents/the-condition-of-philippine-prisons-and-jails/>>

⁵⁰ Ginny Stein, "Philippine prisons overflowing with hungry inmates as Duterte's drug war intensifies," *ABC News*, September 2017. <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-20/philippine-prisons-overflowing-as-war-on-drugs-intensifies/8959448>>.

more mental than physical. We suffer in direct relation to our respective mental and psychological development.... Human beings in prison cells certainly suffer the most.”⁵¹

In lieu of the criticism, I wish to open the chance to identify a distinguishing character trait that is generally observed among Cebuano-speaking communities, if not a common Filipino trait; and use this trait as a possible explanation to the dancing inmates’ origin and existence, as well as the Cebuano’s reception and patronage to the entertainment offered by the inmates, as regards to their gay, festive, lively, and playful portrayal relative to musicality and dance. Also, a living proof to this lively trait are the various music icons who hailed from Cebu, in the likes and caliber of Pilita Corales, Elizabeth Ramsey, the novelty-king duo of Yoyoy Villame and Max Surban, among many other artists. Aside from the natural love for music of the Filipinos, Visayans are also considered for being naturally happy people. According to Jesuit historian, Ignacio Francisco Alcina, the word ‘bisaya’, as Cebuanos are fondly called, literally refers to a “happy” person or one with a “fine and pleasant disposition” due to having very simple desires and satisfaction.⁵² In the same vein, Cebuano historian Trizer Dale Mansueto opines that the term “bisaya” comes from the Malay word ‘saya,’ which means “joyful” or “gay” [*sadya* in Cebuano].⁵³ In Cebuano, as well as in Tagalog, ‘saya’ also refers to the skirt, that attire that is merrily worn by women. The Latin term *sagia* also pertains to the wearing of skirt. Another aspect noteworthy of observation is the Cebuano word for ‘fun,’ that is ‘lingaw,’ is normally used in casual and customary greetings by preferably saying, “Unsa’y lingaw?” (informal, literally, “What’s the fun?” or “What’s entertaining/amusing you at the moment?”) rather than asking “How are you?” These manifest how the Bisayan are fun-oriented people as embedded in their language.

⁵¹ Leonardo R. Estioko, *Gone to the dogs: A phenomenology of dogs*. Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2001.

⁵² See Ignacio Francisco Alcina, S. J., *History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands, Part One, Book 1, Volume 1*. Manila: UST Publishing House, 2002, 72-79.

⁵³ Trizer Dale D. Mansueto, “Who is truly the Bisaya?” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 2013.

Foucault, Spectacle and Governmentality

One thing that intrigues me, however, is the constant association of the CPDRC dance program to the Foucauldian ‘spectacle’ of power. Mangaoang, for instance, explores the concept of ‘docile bodies’ giving a picture in which the inmates are forced to rehearse for long hours each day, by which refusal could mean certain punitive consequences.⁵⁴ But through dance and music, the local civic state has successfully created an impression that the dancing activity are done willingly in gaiety by the inmates. Hence, the spectacle is indeed used for the showcase of the state authority’s power by providing entertainment to the public through political subservience at the expense of the prisoners’ incarceration, like the gladiators of the Roman empire. The classic example of the spectacle of power is death in the guillotine, as described by Foucault in the chapter ‘Spectacle of the Scaffold’ in his *Discipline and Punish*.⁵⁵

But what I see in the spectacle of the ‘dancing inmates’ is different. The inmates, despite being the object of the spectacle, hence, the object of power, is, at the same time, communicating something to their viewers, something revolutionary, something which somehow gave them the fame and recognition. The dictum “to see is to know,” or the visibility-knowledge-power equation has worked, or has taken effect, on the opposite way around. Instead of merely being objects of the spectacle of power, they likewise exerted some form of power and influence over their audience, something which amazes the audience and keeps the people from viewing them, that is – the power to change the prisoners’ difficult incarcerated condition. Something the inmates tell us they can do and excel even if they are in prison, which can also give an inspiration to all those who are not in prison; if prisoners can do it, why cannot we? The metaphor of the panoptic prison, we just found, has really had some light and hope, and not entirely gloomy, a sort of a temporary escape – something counter-hegemonic, counter-panoptic. Just exactly what Aldren Tolo, an inmate, told *The New York Times*, “I like dancing. It is a way we get to show the world that even if we ended up in prison, we are not totally damaged people.”⁵⁶

I look at the inmates’ use of Western popular dance music in the way the native Amazonian Indian activists in Brazil “proclaim their

⁵⁴ Mangaoang, 2013, 49-50.

⁵⁵ Foucault, 1979, 33, 195.

⁵⁶ Seno, *The New York Times*, January 2008.

cultural distinctiveness with headdresses, body paint, beads, and feathers,” which were not originally or exactly theirs, but an imposed Westernized conceptualizations of the natives’ culture, and thereby utilizes this inauthentic [mis]representation of themselves to their own advantage to showcase their protest against deforestation in the Amazon riverbanks.⁵⁷ Or, also in the manner the Mayan activists of Guatemala took pride and continually embraced their indigenous identity amidst (not despite of) modernization and globalization, similar to these manner, the Cebu inmates took pride and also embrace their embodied prisoner selves.⁵⁸ Due to a necessity of purpose, meaning, and subsistence, the inmates naively owned an identity which was not really theirs. Another noteworthy example of what I would describe here as counter-panoptic is the case of Guy “Guido” Fawkes who was sentenced of death in the scaffold in Westminster on 1606 for his participation in the Gunpowder Plot that attempted to blow up the House of Parliament in London.⁵⁹ Fawkes’ dead body was quartered, cut into parts and was placed on display in many parts of England for the public to see. The spectacle is supposed to work as a warning for the public. But today Guy Fawkes and his mask has become a symbol of inspiration and courage for revolutionaries. For instance, the notorious activist hacking group (hacktivists), who call themselves as Anonymous, famously use Guy Fawkes’ mask as their official icon. Guy Fawkes, the man on the scaffold has become eternal.⁶⁰ In short, the staged spectacle had worked exactly opposite to its original intention.

Foucault, at one point, praised Nietzsche for initiating the genealogical method.⁶¹ It is good also to mention here what Nietzsche, the philosopher of the ‘will to power,’ has something to say about life

⁵⁷ See Beth A. Conklin, “Body paint, feathers and VCRs: Aesthetics and authenticity in Amazonian activism,” *American Ethnologist* 24, 1997, 711-12.

⁵⁸ See Diane M. Nelson, “Maya hackers and the cyberspatialized nation-state: Modernity, ethnostalgia, and a lizard queen in Guatemala,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11, 1996, 294-95.

⁵⁹ Tom Ough, “Anonymous: How the Guy Fawkes mask became an icon of the protest movement,” *The Independent*, November 2015. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/anonymous-how-the-guy-fawkes-mask-became-an-icon-of-the-protest-movement-a6720831.html>>.

⁶⁰ The Hollywood film, “*V for Vendetta*” (WarnerBros, 2005) graphically illustrates this point.

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Edited by Donald F. Bouchard. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 140.

and dance. In his study of the Athenian tragedy, a classical theatrical drama of ancient Greece, Nietzsche distinguished two essential elements of the ancient art form, which he named after the two sons of the Greek mythical god Zeus, namely, Apollo and Dionysus.⁶² Roughly, the Apollonian represents reason, the rational aspect of Greek life, hence, the elements of form and order.⁶³ By contrast, the Dionysian represents emotion, the irrational aspect of Greek life, hence, the elements of impulse, passion, and instinctive drives.⁶⁴ Nietzsche argues that the fragile balance of these two aspects of life is very important and represents to what he later referred as the 'will to power.'⁶⁵ I argue that it is on this context by which the Chief Administrator of the Directorate of Operations of the BJMP, Patrick Rubio says, "[i]t would be different if they are being forced to dance, I've never known any prisoners being forced to dance. It's normal to dance!"⁶⁶ This is a statement implying that dance is a natural impulse which can hardly be a thing for control. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine dance as an object of external control. If music is the window to the soul, dance is the natural rhythmic expression of life. In the case of the CPDRC inmates, despite being controlled and regulated by the prison rules, they used dancing as their natural expression, their 'will to power.' In an aspect comparable to the one described by Eric Hobsbawn in *The Invention of Tradition*,⁶⁷ the Cebuano people "invented" their own culture, likewise, the Cebu inmates "invented" their own prison tradition. According to Theodis Beck, the President of the Association of State Correctional Administrators, "[a]s correctional administrators, we likewise must strive to find new solutions to old problems. That means we must free ourselves to be absurd every now

⁶² Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Edited by Ronald Speirs and Raymond Geuss. Translated by Ronald Speirs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 14-19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 18; see also Menelito Mansueto, "When Society Meets the Individual, Marx Contra Nietzsche: Antipodal Views on Society, Morality and Religion," *LUMINA: Interdisciplinary Research Journal of Holy Name University* 22, no. 1, March 2011, 151-52. <<http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/mansuetoMar11.pdf>>.

⁶⁵ Emrys Westacott, "Nietzsche's Concept of the Will to Power," *ThoughtCo*, January 2019. <<https://www.thoughtco.com/nietzsches-concept-of-the-will-to-power-2670658>>.

⁶⁶ Perillo, 2011, 615; Feeran, *ABC News*, August 2007.

⁶⁷ Eric Hobsbawn. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-6.

and then. That means we must espouse ideas that others at first may find laughable. As Albert Einstein once said, “[i]f at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it.”⁶⁸

This unique Filipino creativity which Bartolome refers to as “flexibility” to adopt useful coping strategies towards confronting obstacles and problems plays a vital key role to explain the “dancing inmates” phenomenon, vis-à-vis the backdrop of Cebuano culture of “joyous” dance and musical performances.⁶⁹ The kind of resilience that the Filipinos manifest is somehow different from the way the Japanese, for example, towered their strength to rise on an aftermath of an earthquake or tsunami.⁷⁰ The Filipino brand of resilience is more of an internal determination and initiative, a living spirit, a mental or psycho-spiritual creativity, a natural resilience to life’s challenges, a strong will to live.⁷¹ The inmates, despite their desolate condition, manifest their creative resilience by perfecting their art of dance and social media performance. Thus, this makes the “dancing inmates” essentially a social media phenomenon.

A Way Out of the Panopticon

The concept of ‘spectacle’ as a means for power was explored by the French thinker, Michel Foucault. According to him, the spectacle is used to showcase the state’s invincible ruling power. In the chapter ‘Spectacle of the Scaffold’ in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault highlights death in the guillotine as his classic example of the spectacle of

⁶⁸ Theodis Beck, “President’s message,” in *Corrections Directions: Newsletter of the Association of State Correctional Administrators*, 24, no. 6, 2007, 1-2.

⁶⁹ Bartolome, 1991, 213.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Carola Hein, “Resilient Tokyo: Disaster and Transformation in the Japanese City,” in *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster*. Edited by Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella. (Oxford University Press, 2005), 213-34.

⁷¹ In comparison, there is a very low rate of reported suicide cases in the Philippines, which is relatively low compared to suicide cases in Japan, particularly among teenagers and the youth. For example, in a World Health Organization (WHO) report for 2017, among Asian countries, South Korea got the highest suicide rate of 26.7%, 18.5% for Japan, while the Philippines got only 3.2%. See Yoko Wakatsuki and James Griffiths, “Japan’s youth suicide rate highest in 30 years,” in *CNN*, November 2018. <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/11/05/health/japan-youth-suicide-intl/index.html>>.

power.⁷² Foucault anticipates the emergence of the surveillance society, which is likely the characteristic of modern militia, as well as, obviously, the penal institution. The concept of the 'spectacle' of political power is likewise explored in futuristic literature, such as, the sci-fi novel *The Hunger Games*, which combined it with the overwhelming trend of reality television.⁷³

The panoptic prison, a concept which Foucault borrowed from Bentham, is a metaphor which he used to illustrate a society of surveillance which is a characteristic of our technological society. Pan (*all*) + optic (*seeing*), a condition where nothing to be hidden and that everything else are to be seen and visible.⁷⁴ Jean Paul Sartre's idea of a "looker which cannot be looked at," his parody of God as omniscient, functions psychically in the same manner.⁷⁵ Bentham's architectural design of the Panopticon, a quantification of surveillance, is to structure a prison where each and every cell, and every prisoner, are constantly visible to a central watch tower, though the prisoners cannot actually see whether or not there is indeed a watchman all the time inside the tower, each and every prisoner must consciously believe they are constantly being watched and guarded, reason for them to behave accordingly and to do nothing unusual.⁷⁶ Thus, Foucault highlights the concepts: "gaze," "knowledge" and "power," as more or less synonymous.⁷⁷

The Panopticon, however, is a modernized and updated version of the spectacle, wherein watchers, viewers or audiences may no longer be necessary but only implied through the technology being used, thus an efficient and convenient form of control and punishment.⁷⁸ For Foucault, this "carceral" or prison-like condition is reminiscent from an older savage tradition which he calls as a "spectacle," which is a vulgar display of authoritarian power.⁷⁹ Foucault brings back to mind the old punitive practice in the kingdoms

⁷² Foucault, 1979, 32.

⁷³ Susan Collins, *The Hunger Games*. (New York: Scholastic Press, 2008), 19.

⁷⁴ Dino Felluga, "Modules on Foucault: On panoptic and carceral society." *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. <<http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/newhistoricism/modules/foucaultcarceral.html>>

⁷⁵ Angelina Vaz, "Who's Got the Look? Sartre's Gaze and Foucault's Panopticism," *Dalhousie French Studies* 32, 1995, 33.

⁷⁶ Foucault, 1979, 195, 201.

⁷⁷ Vaz, 1995, 33.

⁷⁸ Foucault, 1979, 32.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

in Europe of death on a scaffold where criminals are beheaded in public through the guillotine, displaying the invincible authority of the king, emperor, or oligarch that represent the State; or, if desired as example, the Roman ruling of crucifixion of criminals of the ancient Jews.

One may dare to ponder, can there be a way out of the panoptic gaze? Can a counter-panoptic movement possible within Foucault's philosophic frame? Can there be a glitch, a glimmer of hope in the panoptic model? In their effort to catch media and government attention, and ultimately, the penal reform they have long sought, what is the fate of the Filipino prisoners as well as a chance of development of penal reform practices in the country in this cunning game called the 'spectacle' of power? It is good to explore the political concepts of Foucault, and hopefully to gain an understanding of the dynamics of power in such a highly politicized country like the Philippines.

Furthermore, Foucault never discounted the possibility that whenever power is exercised, there arise a form of profitability that goes with its exercise, such as, when sexuality is repressed and subjected to norms, it creates other outlets or commodities in other forms like the industry of brothels, contraception, prostitution dens, and the like.⁸⁰ Sexuality has nothing to do with resistance obviously. But to Foucault's mind, how sexuality is repressed and subjected to norms may be likened to how resistance to power is dealt with and governed.⁸¹ Foucault wrote in *The History of Sexuality*, "[w]here there is power, there is resistance.... resistances are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior."⁸²

I propose a distinction between an early Foucault and a later Foucault based roughly from the direction of his works.⁸³ The

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 11.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 94-96.

⁸³ The early Foucault may start from his early career in the 1950's until the publication of his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in the early 1975. The later Foucault may pertain to his project of writing the three-volume work *The History of Sexuality* in which time he also travelled around the world to deliver his public lectures in the late half of the 1970s until his untimely death in 1984. This distinction

Panopticon as Foucault's model is more often the most immediate thing one can associate to his works, specifically, as found in his earlier works, namely, *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault explored in these works the principles of order and control which can be observed mostly in modern disciplinary institutions. There is little emphasis, however, on how the individual will counter-react on such overwhelming manifestations of power. Reason that the individual is left helpless, docile, idle, uncritical and powerless. A further reading on his later works will reveal that Foucault needs to be understood comprehensively and holistically with emphasis on his later works for he was still conceptualizing the wider picture, laying down the foundations in his earlier works, unto which to situate his later works. Foucault's later works, such as, *The Subject and Power* and the two later volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, brings back the power to the individual no matter how much one is subjected to control, surveillance, and punishment. Foucault transfers the locus of power back to the self, in his later works. The dancing inmates' docile participation in a musical performance even if it entails self-sacrifice in the rehearsals could somehow embody Foucault's ideal of power in his later writings. Besides, it is obviously better than succumbing to deadly gang activities inside the cell. For instance, describing the dynamics of power relations, Foucault wrote in *The Subject and Power*:

...a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and *possible inventions may open up*.... In itself the exercise of power is not violence; it is always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action.⁸⁴

is for the purpose only of giving emphasis to the thrust of his later works which are seemingly overshadowed by his earlier works.

⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics 2nd ed.* Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 220 [emphasis mine].

Drawing from the above paragraph, it appears that a genuine exercise of power is only possible through genuine relationship and collaboration, and not as an oppressive, forcible, and authoritarian endeavor. His understanding of power places freedom above all as a precondition. Foucault describes here his concept of governmentality⁸⁵ that has genuine relations of power in these words:

To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. The relationship proper to power would not therefore be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in the area of the singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical.... *Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free.*⁸⁶

In the end, Foucault mocks upon the Panopticon after all, for he writes, "slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint) ... At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom."⁸⁷ Indeed, there is no wonder that (people) power and freedom are the two lofty ideals of Philippine democracy, which are often the uncompromising prerequisites of development.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented the various arguments concerning the practicability of the CPDRC Dance Rehabilitation program. Though the researcher does not provide strong opposing views that will debunk the opposing opinion of scholars, nonetheless, the essay attempts to provide an alternative perspective of looking at the prison culture based from a strictly cultural and existential (self-preserving) background by which the phenomenon, as argued here, is

⁸⁵ In Foucault's concept of governmentality, an active consent and willful participation of the governed in the governance is largely emphasized. The governing state is only one aspect of the government in which it reciprocates to the will and desires of the governed aided with rationality in the conduct of oneself. See Foucault, 1982, 211-226.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 20-21 [italics, mine].

⁸⁷ Ibid., 21.

supposedly rooted. That spectators from the opposite side of the globe need not to worry if a surprisingly ‘third world’ phenomenon will create such a global popularity. After all, in a world highly mediated with technology, anything can be possible that even what was previously thought of as gruesome would suddenly create an excellent artistry. This only proves that there is no such thing as a monopoly of standards in art, that even the ones which are not extravagantly luxurious like Hollywood, such as the performance of the prisoners, also greatly matters.

Undoubtedly, the “dancing inmates” phenomenon is a unique cultural reproduction of an evolving Filipino identity brought about by Filipino cultural adaptation to the ongoing global cultural exchanges and encounters facilitated by the interconnection between Arjun Appadurai’s ethnoscapas, ideoscapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, and mediascapas – and not necessarily an act of servitude in the form of colonial mimicry. Technologization has brought a unique cultural landscape that allows quick and significant global exchanges to occur. The ultimate concern on this “dancing prisoners” model of rehabilitation boils down to the issue relating to the search for the sound methods and approaches in creating effective and sustainable inmate rehabilitation programs that caters to the prisoners’ dignity as human beings and their potentials. As the sepulcher of knowledge of the human person and human behavior progresses, the efficiency of our methods and the approaches to the inmates’ rehabilitation need to be regularly examined and improved. Something that the professionals in this field can delve, such questions which concerns on the right kind of approaches and methods, as well as to its accompanying risks and threats on the welfare of the inmates, and of the human society in general. The growing problems of the conditions of our prison institutions mirrors the wider problems of social ills, such as, poverty, inequality, lack of access to education and health care, as well as, the cultural and moral degeneration of our society, of which criminality is supposedly rooted.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ I am greatly indebted from the following scholars who selflessly shared significant suggestions and comments from an earlier manuscript of this essay: Wendy Luna, an erudite scholar on Foucault; Warren Malhabour, a member of the American Philosophical Association and a theology student of Central Philippine University; Trizer Dale Mansueto, a Cebuano history professor and Church archivist; Jeresa May Ochave, a public administration graduate who specializes in public policy, and the SES-JAP referees for their valuable inputs in scrutinizing this piece of work. A version of this paper was presented during the 8th Social Ethics Society Conference in Punta Isla Lake Resort, Lake

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