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## **CROSSING THE BAR: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DOSTOEVSKIAN ELEMENTS AND INFLUENCES IN JOAQUIN'S FICTION**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper expounds how deep the great Russian fictionist Fyodor Dostoevsky had influenced his Filipino counterpart Nick Joaquin's own works by applying comparative method of research. Sixteen (16) "Dostoevskian" elements and influences are found evident in Joaquin's representative works, which further validate the Russian master's timeless and universal relevance to the literary tradition. Joaquin for his part is already a titan of Philippine Literature, in his own respect, particularly in the English medium. His magnitude, however, can be tested further through the Dostoevskian standard, which is often used in comparison to the creative powers of other writers. By and large, this study contributes to the growth of comparative literature and Philippine studies. More wittingly, it can strengthen the understanding that the creative process of literary art extends to the other spheres of human expression, such as philosophy, history, religion, and psychology, even culture.*

### **Keywords**

Comparative Literature, Culture, Dostoevskian, Influence, Personality, Spiritual, Suffering

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## **1. Introduction**

Tracing the influence of an author and its diffusion to other writers has been considered central to comparative literature (Prawer, 1973), a house with many mansions which is permanently

under construction (Praver in Yu, 2006). Dostoevsky, being the source of influence in this study, contributed much to the growth of literary tradition, not only in Russian letters, but also in world literature. In fact, Dostoevskian elements and influences could be traced from the greatest to the most individual writers across cultures, like the Irish James Joyce, the Jewish-Czech Franz Kafka, the American Ernest Hemingway, the French Jean Paul Sartre, the Portuguese Jose Saramago, and the Japanese Kenzaburo Oe, to name some.

Dostoevsky's influence spans both in literature and in the other disciplines such as philosophy, religion and psychology. For instance, he anticipated many philosophical and psychological ideas, as could be gleaned from Nietzsche's and Freud's works later on.

### 1.1 Research Question

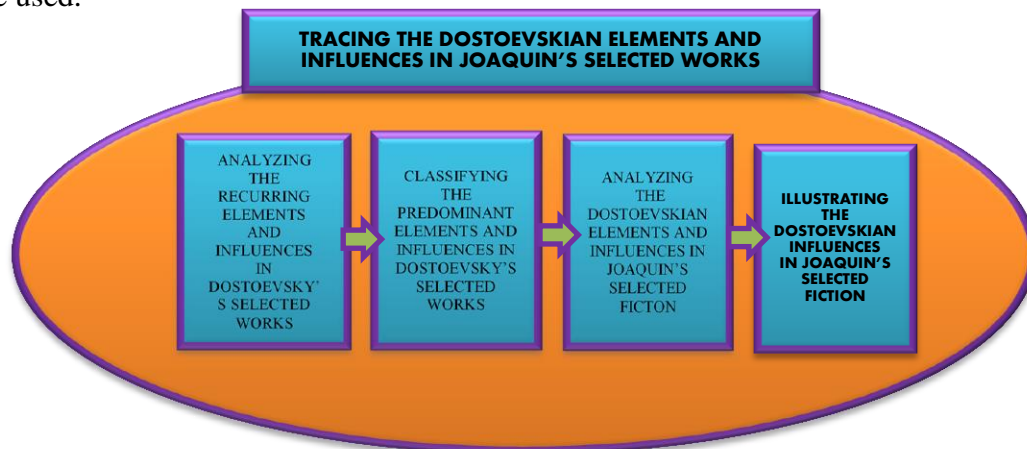
- What Dostoevskian elements and influences resonate in Joaquin's fiction?

### 1.2 Research Objectives

- To probe how deep the great Russian fictionist Fyodor Dostoevsky had influenced his Filipino counterpart Nick Joaquin's own works
- To explore the connection, not only of Dostoevsky and Joaquin, but also of literature with the other areas of knowledge across both time and space

## 2. Methodology

This study focused on content to probe and prove how deep Dostoevsky had influenced his Filipino counterpart utilizing the descriptive analytical method. To achieve this goal, theories and studies on comparative study in literature, primarily Remak (1965), Durisin (1984) and Bassnett (1993) were used.



**Figure 1:** *Conceptual framework*

The recurrent Dostoevskian elements and influences were illuminated based on Dostoevsky's selected works then contrasted with those of Joaquin's, buttressed by critical research, reviews, and critical works mainly some philosophical, historical and psychological constructs. The data used in this study were basically drawn from three novels and twenty short stories from both authors which are listed below.

**Table 1:** List of selected works from each Novelist for Comparative Analysis

Fyodor Dostoevsky		Nick Joaquin	
Works	Date published	Works	Date published
<i>The Karamazov Brothers</i>	1881	<i>The Woman Who Had Two Navels</i>	1969
		<i>Cave and Shadows</i>	1983
<i>Mr. Prohartchin</i>	1846	<i>The Generations</i>	1937
<i>The Honest Thief</i>	1848	<i>May Day Eve</i>	1947
<i>The Christmas Tree and a Wedding</i>	1848	<i>Candido's Apocalypse</i>	1965
<i>White Nights</i>	1848	<i>Dona Jeronima</i>	1965
<i>A Nasty Anecdote</i>	1862	<i>The Legend of the Dying Wanton</i>	1972
<i>The Crocodile</i>	1865	<i>The Summer Solstice</i>	1972
<i>Bobok</i>	1873	<i>Guardia de Honor</i>	1972
<i>The Meek One</i>	1876	<i>The Mass of Sylvestre</i>	1972
<i>The Peasant Marey</i>	1876	<i>The Order of Melkizedek</i>	1972
<i>The Dream of the Ridiculous Man</i>	1876	<i>The Legend of the Virgin's Jewels</i>	1972

### 3. Literature Review

One of the earliest and boldest critical studies that tried to rationalize the ambivalent themes of Dostoevsky was Freud's Dostoevsky and Parricide (1928), wherein the great psychoanalyst argued that that *The Karamazov Brothers* is the most magnificent novel ever written. In his work, Freud systematized Dostoevsky's disturbing ideas to grasp the often complex psychology of his characters. Perhaps Dostoevsky's greatest contribution to modern psychology lies in the working of split personality with its fairly mild as well as extreme pathological manifestations. Admittedly, the Filipino Nick Joaquin confessed in one of his interviews that he has been roused by Dostoevsky, especially though his magnum opus *The Bothers Karamazov* (San Juan, 2018).

#### **4. Findings**

Evidently, Dostoevsky's influence stretches to the Philippine archipelago through the Filipino novelist Nick Joaquin particularly on the following concepts:

1. The working of the split personality
2. Redemption through suffering
3. The plight of suffering children
4. (Wo)Man's sense of alienation
5. The freedom of (wo)man
6. The problem of evil
7. Destruction and resurrection
8. Oedipal complex
9. Compassion for the criminals, underdog
10. The integration of religion to grasp Christianity better/deeper
11. The sister/brotherhood of (wo)men and the collective nature of guilt
12. The sick and the delusional
13. The antimony of sin and grace
14. A disastrous situation of a world operating without God
15. The scandalous scene
16. Love and reason

These aforementioned concepts were formulated based on the consulted critical researches, reviews and literary commentaries on Dostoevsky probed and validated later on by citing evidences from the Russian novelist's selected works. Then, these Dostoevskian elements and influences were applied to Joaquin's own works to trace the Russian novelist's influences to his Filipino counterpart. Eventually, all these elements breathe in Joaquin's works particularly in both his novels:

##### **1. The working of the split personality**

Dostoevsky is the greatest fictionist that illustrates the working of the split personality in his works. Split personality, or schizophrenia, is a dissociative condition in which one's personality apparently splits into two or more distinctive sub-personalities, each of which may become dominant at different times. People with this kind of disorder suffer from internal chaos, roller coaster emotions and terrible memories (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). Individuals with this disorder has a range of symptoms that include disturbances in content of thought, form of thought, perception, affect, sense

of self, motivation, behavior, and interpersonal functioning. Consequently, they exhibit social cognitive impairment (Yildirim, et al. 2018).

Dostoevsky's earlier works, primarily *The Double* (1846 ) and the *Poor Folk* (1846 ), were found long-winded, lacking in measure, unclear in point of view, and, most importantly, fantastic (Wasiolek, 1964), but Dostoevsky's art has proven its worth and clarity as time passed. In effect, his depiction of the split personality even caught the attention of medical professionals themselves. For instance, European psychiatrists have devoted special studies to Dostoevsky's *The Double* which portrays an incomparable clinical exactitude the case of erotomaniac and paranoiac afflicted by delusions of persecution (Slonim, 1950). In addition, Rice in his book *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art* (1985) even proclaims that more than a hundred (medical) professionals have published their views on Dostoevsky.

No character in Dostoevsky's fiction seems to break out from split personality including those of lesser importance. To illustrate, in *The Karamazov Brothers*, the brothers, despite having distinct values, contradict themselves. In his short stories, Ivan Ilyich Pralinsky in *A Nasty Anecdote* (1862) and the silly man in *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man* (1876) best represent the split personality.

In Joaquin's *Cave and Shadows*, the illustration of split personality could be probed in the recurrent use of "Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde" motif in the dialogs of Pocholo and Jack in the former's confession of maneuvering the conundrum. In fact, Pocholo's utterance even sounds like that of the underground man in Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864).

Fyodor Karamazov, one of the most pathetic, funny, and evil characters in world literature, finds his equal match in Joaquin through Mang Andong. Both of them hold a reputable stand in the society, but tend to appear deliberately foolish before the public, let alone to the conservative eyes of religious authority.

In Joaquin's other novel, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1969) the concept of split personality is as evident, as it features Connie very much preoccupied with her having two navels that she wants the other one removed. She projects an image of seemingly naiveté and innocence, but she is actually victimizing everyone with her lies.

## 2. Redemption through suffering

The characters of Dostoevsky live through different kinds of suffering – physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. In his works, suffering serves as the way to seek moral redemption to strengthen one's religious faith

Zosima teaches that a person has to contemplate and face the consequence of what he has

done. Such actions can evoke great suffering, but then repentance follows and afterwards reform. As a matter of fact, most of the characters in the novel undergo periods of inner turmoil of suffering in which they painfully, gradually, spiritually develop. A case in point is Dmitri whose suffering has been foreshadowed by Zosima. Later in the novel, Dimitri's epiphany and consciousness of his sins presumably lead to his redemption.

In his short stories, the idea of redemption through suffering could be best appreciated through Emelyan in *The Honest Thief* (1848), Ivan Pralinsky in *A Nasty Anecdote*, the narrator in *White Nights* (1848), and the ridiculous man in *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man*.

Connie, the protagonist in Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, is "one who suffers because of her mother's lies and who herself has lived her own life with pretensions (San Juan, 1998).

As she struggles in search of her identity and happiness, she straddles in hallucinations and contemplations. Through the compassionate Monson brothers, however, Connie is enabled to seek for her redemption that requires a painful acceptance of a harsher reality. Referred to an older priest, Connie is made to realize that she is wrong in passing by the real world to make it to the celestial city.

Joaquin's short stories represent the different kinds of suffering: physical in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton* (1972), emotional in *May Day Eve* (1947), psychological in *Three Generations* (1937), and spiritual in *Doña Jeronima*.

### 3. The plight of suffering children

In most works of Dostoevsky, the suffering of a child or in the character's childhood experience, including the ominous tales of child abuse, could be discerned. Such is the situation of the Karamazov brothers, including the illegitimate Smerdyakov. All of them struggle because of the lack of sense of responsibility coming from their father, Fyodor. Ivan even delivers a diatribe on theodicy: assailing Christianity and faith in God who lets innocent children suffer (Ronner, 2018).

Among the selected short stories, *The Christmas Tree and a Wedding*, *White Nights*, *The Meek One*, and *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man* show accurate portrayal of the suffering of innocent blighted children. In the story *Christmas Tree and a Wedding* (1848), it shows how the destiny of the young girl is manipulated by man's need for material form.

Comparably, among all characters of Joaquin, Connie best mirrors Dostoevsky's theme on the suffering of children. She has struggled since her birth being an unwanted child by her mother. She

could hardly cope with the bitter truths in life, lacking parental guidance which her mother denied her.

The story *Three Generations* clearly shows the suffering of children, as could be discerned from Celo and his siblings' childhood experience. They have struggled under a furious father who demands that they submit their bodies to the call of his whip. Celo, perhaps taking the most of it, relives his struggles whenever he is caught by his father's gaze.

#### 4. (Wo)Man's sense of alienation

In psychology, alienation is the mental change preventing the person affected from leading a normal existence and taking part in social life or simply the feeling of being excluded from the groups available to members of the dominant culture (Larsen & Buss, 2018). To Karl Marx, whose concept of alienation is based on production, it is a transformation of an individual into an object outside of himself, as he becomes a product controlled by a foreign power. Durkheim's idea of alienation, on the other hand, is synonymous to his *anomie* which means the absence of norms or disintegration of norms (Aaron, 1970) that weakens the strand of solidarity of a social group.

Alienation could be tied to the notion of Russian Nihilism as it rejects the traditional, ethical and religious norms that serve as the social binding force. Ivan's character best illustrates the concept of alienation that re-echoes Raskolnikov and the underground man. Ivan challenges Alyosha's religious viewpoint, as he tells the latter the legend of the Grand Inquisitor bolstered with the idea, "everything is permitted."

Comparatively speaking, Joaquin has a horde of alienated characters. Beginning with Jack Henson in *Cave and Shadow*, this character's doubling and perplexed interpretation of events, as he digs into the mystery of his stepdaughter's death, could be a result of his being wronged by a wife who has a dangerous liaison with an American Jesuit priest.

Connie Escobar, on the other hand, a victim of her mother's alienation from her world, where insecure males exploit women by raping or idolizing them, becomes "obsessed with the thought that she has two navels and uses this piquant and tantalizing myth to make her life exceptional."

The concept of alienation likely appears in most of Joaquin's short stories. In the story *Summer Solstice*, for instance, Lupeng's disintegration is spurred by the cult of the Tatarin and Guido's advice to her. She falls into a collective frenzy of naked women that defy the chastity of the Catholic order and the conduct of her ilustrado class.

By contrast, Currito's disintegration in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton* is caused by the absence or longing for his spiritual solidarity, as he is exposed to the mundane Spanish mercantilist

view of life. Being a soldier sent to Spain's major ports and colonies, he has witnessed its riches and grandeur and succumbs into its worldly grip.

#### 5. The Freedom of (wo)man

Dostoevsky's concept on man's freedom is comprehensively discussed in the episode on *The Grand Inquisitor* in which Ivan claims that the vast majority of mankind cannot handle the freedom given to them and that Jesus has misjudged human nature; for, instead of ensuring men food and shelter by accepting the temptations of the devil, He has given mankind the freedom of choice which cursed them more than have blessed them.

All novels of Dostoevsky, Berdyaev (in Kantor 2015) claims, are composed entirely of human relationships. Dostoevsky's characters are constantly visiting, talking, and delving into the tragic abyss of human destinies. As illustrated in *The Grand Inquisitor*, man begins to rebel in the name of freedom and appears ready for any misery or madness provided by it. Simultaneously, man pursues his quest for the utterance of the final freedom; that is, to have control of his passion, to throw off enslavement of himself and to his environment and the highest desire for freedom of spirit aims at it (Berdyaev, 1967).

Relatively, the concept of man's freedom is as evident in Joaquin's works, primarily *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, in the person of Connie who struggles with her identity. She is initially confined with her own illusions, but able to free herself with the help of the Monson brothers. Connie, clearly an existential character, overcomes her predicaments by having the courage to choose and act responsibly for whatever consequence it brings.

Another character of Joaquin that proves his will to freedom is Chitong in *Three Generations*. Despite the father's strong opposition to reunite his sensual grandfather with his lover, he persists on absorbing the long locked pain held within his father's heart.

A character who strives her will to the extent of sacrificing her personal happiness is Agueda. At the early part of *May Day Eve*, she is described as a freethinking woman challenging the superstition, and as a consequence she is conquered by Don Badoy. Though confined within the patriarchal, conservative authority, she lives with her vow of unrequiting Badoy's love for her until her very death.

#### 6. The Problem of Evil

Admittedly, the problem of evil and of wrongdoing is part and parcel of the problem of freedom. Without freedom, evil is unexplainable; wherever there is freedom there is evil: if there were no freedom then God alone could be responsible for evil (Berdyaev in Kantor 2015). Andrew



Gleeson (in Corder, 2013) describes the existential problem of evil “as a struggle in our hearts between the apparently rival claims of God’s love on one side, and morality, claiming our allegiance in the name of the victims, on the other.”

Fyodor Dostoevsky is one of the few fictionists that grasps this knotty problem, as vividly expounded in *The Karamazov Brothers*. In the novel, Ivan ventures the depths of human evil in his conversation with Alyosha, which spans three chapters and climaxes in the *Grand Inquisitor*.

Dostoevsky could be described as the most “cruel talent” especially in creating characters as diabolic as Ivan, but the Russian literary giant has at the same time immortalized heroes like Zosima, Alyosha, and even Myshkin or Raskolnikov who have emerged victorious from the test of freedom. All of them have known evil and have withstood it into a higher realm. In Zosima’s recollection, for instance, he confesses his evil deeds before entering the monastery. Alyosha, like Zosima, has encountered evil and even lives with it but has never embraced it.

The necessity of evil in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, partly sums up Joaquin’s affirming the heroism of repentance: ‘no sin, no repentance, no upheaval, no transfiguration, no growth of the spirit.’” This formula revokes Ivan’s argument on the evil of man. God has given man unlimited freedom and that he could fully appreciate God by choosing Him. Connie, at the end of the novel, has figured out she cannot have a world both free and good.

In his short stories, Joaquin associates evil in two varied ways. On one hand, he associates evil with the pleasure and vanity of the temporal flesh in *The Three Generations*, *Doña Jeronima*, *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*, and *Candido’s Apocalypse* (1965); on the other, he ties paganism and superstition with evil in his other stories.

## 7. Destruction and resurrection

At the end of *The Karamazov Brothers* Dmitri experiences spiritual resurrection in contrast to Ivan’s moral breakdown. Ivan goes delirious and scathed for his father’s slaughter and Smerdyakov’s suicide being guilty of the motivation of the two ill-fated occurrences. Ivan’s downfall however, may not be considered as a total damnation, as his brother Alyosha comes and prays for him. The younger brother hopes that the older one gives up his desires and lives the rest of his life to serve God.

The clearest evidences of destruction and resurrection in the novel come from Alyosha and Elder Zosima, particularly on the former’s acceptance of the death and unseemly decomposition of the latter. This catalyst makes him realize that being in the world means being physical body subject to death and disintegration (Bill, 2014). Yet, even the characters of lesser importance in the novel undergo a stage of destruction and resurrection that contributes to its effect, like the devout peasant

woman who is so tormented by the death of her three year old son that she decides to leave her husband.

Connie, in Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, extricates herself from destruction and resurrection as she breaks free from the strangles of her illusions and pretensions. To wit, Connie has found the courage to go on living, even in sin. Her awakening makes her conscious of her gift of freedom and the moral responsibility it carries with it (Constantino, 1972).

Presenting destruction and resurrection in *The Cave and Shadows* appears cyclical rather than linear, as seen through the characters' perspectives and their socio-historical locus. To illustrate, someone's death may lead to the birth or rebirth of another, such as Nenita Coogan's destruction which paves the way to the reawakening of the native's arcane knowledge of the cave.

All ten short stories of Nick Joaquin analyzed for the purpose of this paper delve into the concept of destruction and resurrection. To cite, the agonizing pain of Currito's physical body for thirteen days that leads him to his spiritual retribution in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*.

#### 8. Oedipal complex

The use of the psychoanalytic approach in interpreting literature tends to return to Sigmund Freud, its progenitor. Most of his theories could be applied to the works of Dostoevsky as the Great Russian novelist anticipated much of his psychoanalytic ideas. One of these is on the Oedipus complex, which Freud coined after Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

Dostoevsky's *The Karamazov Brothers* richly complements Freud's theory on the Oedipus complex. This novel, along with the tragedies of Sophocles and Shakespeare, touch on the issue of parricide and sexual rivalry for women. The conscious rebellion against patriarchal authority, however, is made more evident in Dostoevsky's novel.

Taking the character Dmitri as standpoint for the Freudian theory, one sees him guilty of physically assaulting his biological father, Fyodor, his adopted father, Grigory, and even Ilyusha's father, Snegiryov. The most obvious allusion of Oedipus complex in Dmitri probably lies in the sexual rivalry with his own father or possessing the voluptuous Gushenka and his accusation of murdering his very own father.

Speaking of the Filipino fictionist under study, of all Joaquin's works, it can be averred that his first great short story *The Three Generations* stands as the most obvious testimony of his understanding of the Oedipus complex, as it presents Celo, a father himself who has repressed hatred of his own old ailing father.

While Celo cannot openly display his rebellion against his father, his very own son Chitong

realizes it against him. The latter openly rebels against his father, though not as violent as Dmitri; first, by entering into priesthood that declines his father's wish for him to become a lawyer, and second, by reuniting the grandfather with his mistress. This three generation motif recurs in Joaquin's *Cave and Shadows* through the Manzanos' pedigree.

The Oedipal feeling is made clearer and more intense, though, in Joaquin through Connie in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*. Since it is angled on a woman, it is referred to as Electra complex. In the story, Connie does not only long for a real father she has not known, but also finds sexual rivalry against her mother in her husband Macho, who happens to be her mother's former paramour. The antagonizing parents in Joaquin's and Dostoevsky's novels are similarly contextualized on the following aspects: first, Concha Vidal and Fyodor Karamazov have been in different relationships and that their siblings are living proofs of their debauchery; secondly, both parents are irresponsible for their children's being, and finally, both parents have strongly hated and distrusted their children.

#### 9. Compassion for the criminals, the underdog

Despite the criminal tendencies of his characters, Dostoevsky never ceases treating them as human beings. To Bellioti (2016), if characters such as Dmitri, Ivan, Katerina and Grushenka were truly representative of the Russians of the era of the nation was, indeed, in dire need of psychologists. All Such querulous inclination of the Russian master also transpires in his short stories like *MrProhartchin*, *The Honest Thief* and *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man*.

Joaquin has his own share of showing compassion for his characters with criminal minds. Connie, for instance, finds refuge in the Monzon brothers who tender her passion and hatred as what Alyoha and Zosima do to Dmitri and Ivan in *The Karamazov Brothers*.

In *Cave and Shadows*, Joaquin never fails vindicating Nenita Coogan by rationalizing her motive. A product of a sinful act and when she has grown, she becomes rebellious to others and her own self as a grown-up. More than just a victim of a crime, like Connie, she becomes a victim of some force of circumstance that transcends Philippine tradition and history.

Pocholo Gatmaitan, the culprit behind the mysterious death of Nenita, is motivated by his own bitterness that apparently makes him a criminal. He expiates his taking part in Nenita's death that covers a whole chapter of the novel which begins with his pathetic upbringing and early struggles in life.

Perhaps the best testimony of Joaquin's compassion for the criminals is shown through the encounter of Currito and Doña Ana in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton* which reminds us of

Zosima/Alyosha and Dmitri, or even Astafi and Emlyen in Dostoevsky. Doña Ana's single gesture of kindness is so profound that it encourages the wasted Currito to exorcize the evil he has lived in him in those thirteen days of physical pain and spiritual struggle.

Though both Dostoevsky and Joaquin may seem different in presenting their characters, Joaquin being more objective, the signs of compassion for the criminals on the works of both authors cannot be disproved either. In fact, both writers having been strongly influenced by the teachings of Christianity remind their readers that man should not be quick in judging the evil of others.

#### 10. The integration of religion to understand Christianity better/deeper

A Christian element very evident in both Dostoevsky and Joaquin is on the sacrament of penance and reconciliation through confession - an essential and integral part of Christianity. When the apostles meet Jesus after his resurrection, He announces to them:

“Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” – from St. John 20: 22, 23 (The Bible: *Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, 2004)

In *The Karamazov Brothers*, the consequence of confession for the salvation and resurrection of every character recurs. A case in point is Father Zosima's confession before he dies which includes his autobiographical discourse and teachings.

Among Dostoevsky's short stories, the value of confession could be illuminated through Emelyan in the *Honest Thief* and the narrator in *White Nights*. Emelyan, on his deathbed, having sensed his guilt to his friend Astafi who never showed him any sign of denunciation, despite his repeated trespasses, confesses his transgressions.

In Joaquin's narratives, the power of confession could be best perceived in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* and the *Legend of the Dying Wanton*. In the novel, Connie promises to Father Tony that she will confess to him at St. Andrew's monastery. There she finds Father Prior in whom she, after all, confides in him. This spiritual encounter of Connie and the elder priest must have exorcised her sins so as to bring out Connie's courage to brave the real, harsher world.

In Joaquin's short story, *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*, probably the most Dostoevskian of all works of Joaquin, the mortally wounded Currito begs that a priest be brought to him, as he catches his final breath, to “properly confess himself and be absolved.”

Joaquin's other novel **Cave and Shadows** more pointedly shows the value of confession, as Pocholo's expiation of guilt levels the discourse of Ivan and the underground man in length and substance. His argument on social justice, political dilemma and religious insurrection reechoes the

thesis of Dostoevsky's nihilist characters.

#### 11. Sister/Brotherhood of mankind and the collective nature of guilt

In *The Karamazov Brothers*, Zosima repeatedly emphasizes that every man is responsible for all, and must therefore still include an odious an sick lackey who claims that poetry is rubbish and hates all Russia (Cohen, 2014). This dogma relates to what the elder monk teaches that people should not judge others, instead they should practice active love, especially to criminals. His disciple Alyosha has heartily heeded this categorical imperative to the effect that whenever he encounters anyone suffering, he steps in, comes out of his way, better yet, comfort zone, to offer the best help he could possibly provide.

In contrast to Zosima's teaching, Ivan and Smerdyakov appear indifferent to their brother Dmitri. Smerdyakov blows upon Alyosha that he is not Dmitri's keeper, and so does Ivan. Incidentally, Smerdyakov and Ivan's unmindfulness alludes to the dialog between God and Cain. The lesson of this Biblical tale, as Dostoevsky expounds through Zosima, is that each person certainly acts a keeper of the other.

The Russian novelist's vision prevails in the short stories -*Mr. Prohartchin*, *The Honest Thief*, *White Nights* and *The Dream of The Ridiculous Man*, as these Dostoveskian narratives keep a compassionate, guiding character to a lost soul like -Ustinya Fyodorovna to Mr. Prohartchin, Astfi to Emelyan, the narrator to Nastenka or Nastenka to the narrator, and the ridiculous man to the orphan girl.

In Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* Connie's interrelationship with other characters helps her shape her own destiny. As Connie meets real and significant people she gradually builds her own "real" character, away from her hallucination of Minnie and Biliken. Father Tony, one of the guiding lights to Connie, reaffirms the interrelatedness of lives.

#### 12. The sick and the delusional

"Pathological genius", "lover of the abnormal," "mad painter," "poet of madness," were some of the epithets widely circulated in press and in conversation to describe Dostoevsky in Russia between 1900 to 1917 (Slonim, 1950). Because of this penchant for name-calling, almost all works of Dostoevsky were banned for use in the secondary curricula in his own country then. No one literature puts a lot of sick personalities than Dostoevsky, for the fictionist presented more physically ill case than anyone else in world literature (Rice, 1985), or in the rest of Russian literature combined. Mikhailovsky, on the other hand, describes Dostoevsky heroes as mentally sick people in essentially clinical cases whose experience could not further the understanding of the human condition (Slonim,

1950).

*The Karamazov Brothers* was beyond all praise, and its encyclopedic clinical descriptions could scarcely be appreciated without psychiatric expertise (Rice 1985). One of the many examples is the pivotal character of Smerdyakov, who Pompankii (in Rice, 1985) views as “the most complex psychopath in Dostoevsky’s gallery of types.” Smerdyakov mimics the actions of his brothers and their father which eventually leads him to the slaughter of the latter. In the end he accepts his own guilt by crying out in his sleep and by committing suicide.

Equally, Dostoevsky resolves his characters’ inner turmoil by portraying their physical manifestation, as evidenced in this observation of Alyosha on his brother Ivan’s movement, after the latter delivered to him the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor. Alyosha’s description on Ivan’s foreshadows Ivan’s tendency to break from the inside, despite his stern logic, a fact realized later, as he gets remorseful on his father’s death, on Smerdyakov’s suicide and on Dmitri’s sentence, his innocence, notwithstanding. Besides, he turns feverish and delirious that gradually ends in his lunacy.

Like Dostoevsky, Joaquin has his own herd of sick and deluded characters in his factious novels and short stories, starting with Connie in *The Woman Who had Two Navels* who lives her fantasy in order to avoid the pain and responsibility that the real world brings to her; then, Jack Henson in **Cave and Shadows** who is “relentlessly decentered by the quest and questioning on the ground of existence (San Juan, 1998).” Even the characters of lesser importance in both novels show some streak of madness and delusion like Concha Vidal, Macho Escobar, the Ginoong Ina, Mang Andong and Nenita Coogan.

### 13. The antimony of sin and grace

There is a point in *The Karamazov Brothers*, Gushenka suggests to Rakitin and Alyosha that despite her wickedness, there is still a seed of goodness within her, as she narrates the fable of the spring onion. This fable is so inherent in the whole novel that Gushenka’s story of the onion has shown the generosity of Grace and God’s forgiveness and compassion to those who have sinned. Despite the single meager gesture of kindness she has done in life, the wicked woman in the story is offered eternal bliss from the burning lake, but her innate selfishness restrains her from truly having it.

In his short stories, Dostoevsky recurrently portrays that a sinful man may need only just one step to lead him into the direction of goodness and be rewarded with the grace and forgiveness from God or his fellow man, as shown by Astafi to Emelyan in *The Honest Thief*, the narrator to Nastenka in *White Nights*, Marey to the young Dostoevsky in *The Peasant Marey* (1976) and ridiculous man to

the orphan child in *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man*.

Similarly, Joaquin's selected fiction under study touch the subject of sin and grace which appears more evidently pronounced in the *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* than in *Cave and Shadows*, as the former shows a clearer sign of grace and forgiveness in the end than the latter. Joaquin's short stories are equally rich in the portrayal of sin and grace like in *Three Generations*, *Candido's Apocalypse*, and the most apparent, *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*.

As aforesaid, *The Legend of the Dying Wanton* appears as the most Dostoevskian among all Joaquin's fiction - it is proven further in that it vividly realizes one of the Russian master's main thesis: a sinful man may need just one step to lead him into the direction of goodness and be rewarded with the grace and forgiveness from God or his fellowman.

#### 14. A disastrous situation of a world operating without God

Most likely, Smerdyakov's murderous deed in *The Karamazov Brothers* appears as Dostoevsky's answer to those who believe in the possibility of establishing a virtuous human society without a moral code based on religion. One character who promotes this Nihilist thinking is Ivan when he exclaims to Alyosha about their brother Dmitri's assault on their father.

Ivan reacts in one of the scandalous scenes in the novel in which he thinks aloud that their family will eventually destroy each other. Such thought shows his fatalism and the absence of trust in his fellowmen and in God. Ivan's atheist tendency, however, is countered by Zosima when he argues with the former much earlier in the novel.

Throughout the whole novel, Dostoevsky presents the tragedy of unbridled passions culminating in the undoing of those who defy God and his divine law. Alyosha, the *alpha* and the *omega* of the novel, is the only hero who preserves his positive values by accepting God's universe; and as a whole, represents hope in this maddening world of doubles, murderers, great sinners, men from the underground, refractory objectors, and spiritual convicts.

The diabolic types in the Dostoevsky's works like Emelyan, Ivan, Gushenka, Raskolnikov, and the Grand Inquisitor also appear in Joaquin's through Connie, Mang Andong, Pocholo, Old Monzon and Currito. And just as fair the existence of God subdues their wickedness from domination. Connie's own struggle for existence, for example, has been attended by Father Tony and Father Prior. Mang Andong and Pocholo, in sharp contrast, acting like Ivan and Raskolnikov, even directly challenge and rationalize God's ways and his laws. In the end, however, they are overcome by the mystical powers of the Almighty.

In sum, despite having most of the characters gone astray because of the delinquency of their

own family, such as the Karamazov brothers, Connie, and Lukerya; or callousness of the society, as seen in Ilyusha, the ridiculous man and Bobby, the ultimate homage of God still shines upon these protagonists to save this world from sheer wickedness and its eventual destruction.

#### 15. The scandalous scene

One of the chapters in Dostoevsky's masterwork is *A Scandalous Scene*, in which Fyodor Karamazov creates another infamous scene in the monastery after displaying one earlier in that same place. This time, he breaks into the luncheon of the monks, accuses them of hypocrisy and corruption and demands that his son Alyosha leave the monastery at once.

This encounter is actually just one of the hundreds, if not a thousand, of scandalous scenes in Dostoevsky's prose that helped him convey his ideas melodramatically. Such scenes brought negative criticism to him, but through Bakhtin's critical interpretation on Dostoevsky's works, the artistic logic of the scandal has been fathomed, since the Russian formalist critic views them as manifestations of "carnivalization". Evidently, all his short stories imbibe scandalous encounters particularly *A Nasty Anecdote*, *The Crocodile*, *Bobok*, *Mr. Prohartchin* and *The Meek One*.

Correspondingly, all narratives of Joaquin, included in this study, embrace offensive scenes. Beginning with *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, Connie shocks everyone, especially the Monzon brothers by claiming that she has two navels. Connie is a product of an illicit affair and even the key characters who contribute to her bewilderment have their own questionable pasts, like Concha, Macho and Dr. Monzon.

Connie's scandalous behavior recurs in Nenita Coogan in *Cave and Shadows*. Like Connie, she strips herself off in public. She is the daughter of a Jesuit priest to a married woman, and has an alleged relationship with the three generations of a political clan. She gets involved into a greater scandal that rocks a nation, its tradition and even its history, as she is found dead on the altar of a sacred cave, seemingly unharmed.

Other particular scandalous scenes in the short stories of Joaquin include: Chitong's bringing of his sick, old grandfather's mistress to reunite her with him, despite the strong order of his father Celso that causes the latter to disfigure his young son's delicate face in *The Three Generations*; Don Badoy Montoya's assault on the young Agueda that results into a bitter marriage in *May Day Eve*; Bobby's gazing on everyone, including his parents, beyond their clothes in *Candido's Apocalypse*; Jeronima's stalking and chase of an archbishop who *once* vowed his love to her in *Doña Jeronima*; the wasted Currito's habitual misconduct in the streets of Manila making him shunned like a leper in *The Legend of the Dying Wanton*; and the domestic Doña Lupeng's taking part in an orgy



of naked women that even causes his patriarchal husband to be beaten up shamefully in public in *The Summer Solstice* (1972).

## 16. Love and reason

Kant claims that pure and practical reason is the ultimate source of moral commitment, while Dostoevsky insists that the moral imperative comes from the heart. In sum, Kant sees that the unconditional is grounded in rationality; while Dostoevsky's ethic is an irrational or anti-rational counterpart to Kantian moral philosophy (Cherkasova, 2009).

The dialect on love and reason encompasses *The Brothers Karamazov*. To Dostoevsky, the heart is a unifying force that harmonizes the tangible and the imperceptible as Cherkasova expounds:

The artist moves beyond many religious and philosophical creeds that postulate radical gap between the spiritual and the bodily, nature, and grace, reason and the heart. From Dostoevsky's novels, we learn to appreciate the heart as a certain in which life dwells, to which God speaks, and which embodies the agony, doubt and resoluteness of moral consciousness.

To illustrate, in the compelling dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha, the rational Ivan even admits before declaring his rebellion to his younger brother. His statement indicates Ivan's future redemption despite his religious rebellion. Ivan's confession will be recollected by Alyosha after his elder brother proclaims unto him the infamous tale of the Grand Inquisitor.

An even more powerful illustration of Dostoevsky's dialectics on love over reason is through Dmitri's reaching his epiphany within the walls in prison:

I am! In a thousand torments – I am; writhing under the torture – but I am. Locked up in a tower, but still exist, I see the sin, and I don't see the sun, still I know it is. And the whole life is there – in knowing that the sun is ... (Dostoevsky, 1994)

Among Dostoevsky's short stories, the discourse on love and reason is sharply demonstrated in *White Nights* and *The Dream of the Ridiculous Man*. In the former story, the narrator tries to rationalize his feeling after being broken hearted Nastenka.

Joaquin suggests in his *Reportage on Lovers* (1971) that love "should have no alternatives; love should be the sole reason for loving; love should spring itself." His works contain mixtures of love, hatred, insecurities, occults, sufferings and redemption in the end which result from his character's rationalization of their predicaments. A case in point is Connie in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* who, earlier, has been ruled by her passions, but later on is vindicated through other persons who have made her realize the real meaning of life and how to face it.

## 5. Discussion

This study revealed sixteen (16) elements and influences illuminated in Russian fictionist's representative works bound within the Filipino fictionists own selected texts. This confluence reinforces leading comparatists belief that that literary phenomenon is a living subject to transformation by history, showing many-sided affinities, with the surrounding historical and social reality, with the artist's cultural background and society with the preceding literary traditions linked to varied branches of art.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The Filipino fictionist has been widely influenced by the Russian master in many literary and philosophical aspects.
2. Distinctive Dostoevskian elements and influences show themselves in the works in Nick Joaquin.
3. Both Dostoevsky and Joaquin have a deep, incisive grasp of the psychological and moral nature of (wo)man.
4. The fictive worlds created by Dostoevsky and Joaquin richly extend to the other spheres of human expression such as philosophy, history, religion and psychology.

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