

**DIALECTICS OF THE AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP: CRITICIZING THE  
REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION OF STEREOTYPICAL PROPAGANDA WRITING  
THROUGH REAFFIRMATION OF AUTHORIAL INTENTIONALISM**

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This thesis hitherto entitled “The Dialectics of the Author-Reader Relationship: Criticizing the Revolutionary Tradition of Stereotypical Propaganda Writing” by Miguel Elvir R. Quitain, in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, is hereby accepted.

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CRITICIZING THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION  
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## ABSTRACT

Propaganda is one of the most apparent avenues of ideological struggle. Amidst the battlefield in the social consciousness, the purpose of this study is to forward revolutionary ideology through intensification of revolutionary propaganda, specifically the pamphlet. It is a crucial step for revolutionaries in the aim to forward their methods of propaganda writing to overcome the illness of stereotypical propaganda writing as described by Mao Zedong. Stereotypical propaganda writing in the practice of progressive propaganda leads to a genesis of a manufactured language characterized by the alienation of the masses from the language of revolutionaries and the alienation of revolutionary-propagandists from the practical experience of the masses. To overcome stereotypical propaganda writing, revolutionary propagandists must have a semiotic framework and a dialectical-materialist understanding of their relationship as Author-propagandists with the Reader-masses. By incorporating modest authorial-intentionalism from E.D. Hirsch and the Model-Reader theory of Umberto Eco into textual relationships, the role and the purpose of the sign as a medium in communicating ideologies can be established. In the process, it poses an alternative against the prevalent post-structuralist view of semantic autonomy and reader-response theory in the field of literary criticism. This paper also uses V.N. Voloshinov's linguistic theory as the framework for semantico-pragmatic linguistic relations and social intercourse as the material base of the sign.

### **On the Social Consciousness**

Social consciousness is the general knowledge and belief systems of the society. It is the collective wisdom of society acquired through generations of social communication and practical experience through interacting with the world. It is the totality of the knowledge, values, and methods of interpreting reality of all the individuals within the whole society.

*The social consciousness is characterized by two contradicting partisan ideologies. All social consciousness within hitherto existing classed societies are characterized by a contradiction of the partisan ideologies of the oppressor and the oppressed. During the slave society, the ideology of the master versus the ideology of the slave. During the feudal society, the feudal-landlord ideology versus the liberal-bourgeois ideology. Thus, during the capitalist society, the neoliberal-bourgeois versus the Marxist proletarian ideology.*

Social consciousness does not exist separate of collective human thought. It is also not specific to a certain field such as religion, science, art, politics, or philosophy but these fields comprise the social consciousness and are also reflections of it.

The social consciousness is therefore never at a constant, it is always subject to and at the state of change. At some point in time, as history has demonstrated, the progressive ideology will prevail. But so long as the ideologies are at war with each other, the individual person is in a crossfire and a combatant in the middle of the battlefield of social consciousness.

There is always a dominant ideology in the social consciousness. In the capitalist society, the social consciousness is a contradiction between the ideology of the proletariat versus that of the bourgeoisie, upon which the ruling ideology is that of the bourgeoisie<sup>1</sup>. The ruling ideology benefits the status quo.

*The ideology of the individual is always the subject of this contradiction within the social consciousness.* The individual is not born with an innate understanding of the world. He is born into the social consciousness and all means of interpreting the world is viewed through the lenses of such contradiction.

Partisan ideology is the conscious or unconscious subscription of the individual into selected systems of belief and method of analysis. Since the social consciousness is itself, a contradiction, the belief systems within the partisan ideology may not necessarily be consistent with one another. It is not necessary that the individual subscribes to a clear-cut ideology of the oppressor or the oppressed. Partisan ideology may be leaning to either of the two but it can never be in the middle (for the middle maintains the status quo and always serves that of the oppressor). As much as the social consciousness is always changing, the partisan ideology of the individual is also, never at a constant. It always changes depending on the influences of the material conditions that the individual is subjected upon.

*The ideology of the individual also takes part in the shaping of the social consciousness.* As the individual contributes knowledge to the social consciousness through accumulated experiences, the contradiction of the social consciousness intensifies and the gap between the ideology of the oppressed and the that of the oppressor widens. Social consciousness cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, K. *The communist manifesto*

progress without the conditions necessary for it to do so. Since it is the direct product of the mode of production, the progress of social consciousness depends on the progression of the mode of production.

The individual is not merely a passive receiver of information but is himself, an active combatant in the battlefield of social consciousness. He is not only born into the crossfire but picks a side and takes part in the battle.

Since “everything ideological possesses semiotic value<sup>2</sup>” and signs are products of social interaction<sup>3</sup>, the characteristics of the sign embodies the characteristics of the social consciousness. The social consciousness is a material collective thought, much dissimilar from a *Zeitgeist*<sup>4</sup> that exists outside the physical realm. It is much similar to Durkheim’s *collective consciousness*<sup>5</sup> but our social consciousness is more diverse and disunified. Social consciousness is made material by social interaction through language. It is language that gives materiality to the social consciousness while at the same time, provides ground for language to flourish.

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<sup>2</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, 10

<sup>3</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, 11

<sup>4</sup> *Zeitgeist*, in the Hegelian sense, roughly translated as “spirit of the age” or “spirit of the times” pertains to an actual existing invisible entity that comes into being into the social transformation and guides the development of epochs of human society.

<sup>5</sup> Collective conscience is Emile Durkheim’s theory which pertains to the set of beliefs, traditions, ideas, and knowledge that is the reason behind the binding together of individuals into collective social groups.

## **Ideology drives propaganda**

“Propaganda is an activity, practice, or phenomenon proliferated systematically and systemically and is a manifestation of a partisan ideology<sup>6</sup>.” It is a political act of shaping the ideology of the masses. Propaganda is driven by ideology and just as much, seeks to influence ideology. It aims to convince the audience to either change sides from one partisan ideology to another or to remain on the side the audience is on. In other words, the goal of propaganda is to challenge or reaffirm the partisan ideology upon which the audience subscribes to.

Signs are not neutral. Because sign is a product of material things, that it is a ‘phenomenon of the external world,’

“A sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality – it reflects and refracts another reality... Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. Everything ideological possesses semiotic value<sup>7</sup>.”

By the property to “reflect and refract,” Voloshinov means that signs, as media of interpreting the world and the only means to communicate and interact with reality, can become a tool for man to understand the reality of the world (*reflective property*) or it can become an instrument of distorting truth and diverting man’s consciousness from the real nature of things (*refractive property*).

The sign, according to Voloshinov, takes form through the primacy of the material world, wherein human rationality is secondary in the signification process. The sign is matter

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<sup>6</sup> Masirag, *On Reactionary Signification and False Consciousness through State Propaganda: A Contribution to the Marxist Study of Verbal Signification*, 4

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 10

determined in the process of communication<sup>8</sup>. This is contrary to the idealist framework that the signification process takes primacy within the individual thought.

Propaganda is bombarded with signs. It is through signs that propaganda manages to influence the agitation and partisan ideology of its audience. Voloshinov asserts that signs do not remain neutral nor isolated. Signs are not isolated because the signification process does not occur at the level of the individual or of two individuals. Language, as a sign-system, is not only composed of the physical, physiological, and psychological spheres of reality<sup>9</sup>; but they must be joined together through the ‘unified sphere of organized social structure.’ The process of signification does not occur within a vacuum. It occurs within social intercourse, through the collective usage of signs within that sign system.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Major Threat to Revolutionary Propaganda**

It is the reflective and refractive properties of propaganda that enables it to become effective instruments of political and social change. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) clearly stated the aim of revolutionary propaganda:

“...to popularize the calls of the Party in order for the masses to understand them, unify around them and carry them out in their own actions. We expound on the basis of the calls, and we also teach the means for carrying them out”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 12

<sup>9</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

<sup>10</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 46

<sup>11</sup> Communist Party of the Philippines, n.d., p. 12

Revolutionary propaganda is thus, any type of propaganda that is aimed at arousing the oppressed masses and directing them to subscribe to the revolutionary ideology and participate in the revolutionary cause.

Revolutionary propaganda uses various vessels or signifiers in conveying its partisan ideology (spoken, written, visual representations, arts, etc.). For this thesis, we will focus primarily on written propaganda. Spoken language would have been the best medium as a subject for semiotic analysis if not for some limitations. In spoken language, the speed at which the process of semiosis occurs is inconducive for study purposes. By this, I mean that the process of signification in a spoken idea (or propaganda) occurs in a very short period of time. There is no, or very limited, sense of perpetuation.

At the same time, spoken language, as the most reliable form of social interaction, occurs very often within a society. As signs become used in society, they become subjected at a very rapid pace to differing contexts and therefore, varying meanings. They evolve much faster within the differing contexts of usage within social interaction. This means that spoken signs themselves transform very quickly. Spoken language, requiring only the ability to speak and an individual or a crowd of audience is disseminated faster than the written language. It does not demand as much pre-requisites for its usage. The written sign, on the other hand, changes its meanings much slower than the spoken language. It demands more time, effort, and resources in order to complete its communication process. It is this characteristic of written language that we will exploit for the purposes of study.

Knowing the fact that written propaganda may also embody various forms (e.g. online journals, social media posts, publications, tabloids, etc.), we deemed it important to examine particularly the leaflet for two main reasons. The first is that the leaflet is the basic propaganda

material common to all revolutionary propaganda and dates back to earlier revolutionary movements. This is because the leaflet reaches a vast number of audiences at a comparatively low cost of production and reproduction. The second is that the Filipino masses, having been composed of a majority of farmers geographically located in countrysides with no immediate and reliable access to modern technology such as the internet, and workers whose hourly-scheduled lifestyle discourage them from the luxury of spending time on the internet or reading long tabloids are the primary audiences for leaflets.

There is also a wide array of what we call revolutionary propaganda. For this thesis, we would be choosing that of the National Democratic left. Firstly, the broad National-Democratic (ND) movement uses revolutionary propaganda in its struggle to change the olden semi-colonial, semi-feudal system through a national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective. Secondly, I am optimistic in the revolutionary potential of the ND movement. Their advocacies, theories, and practices significantly contribute to social change. Third, it is more feasible to gain access to a propaganda material from the ND movement rather than to recover documents from the revolutionary Communist Party (MLM).

Now that we have established the written sign as the subject of our analysis, it must be understood that Marxism is not only the partisan ideology, but the armament of the proletariat masses. All genuine Marxist studies must serve for the interest of the proletariat and seek to further advance the proletarian revolutionary methods of work. We seek to avoid falling prey to all the other Marxist studies that only widen the gap of the exclusivities of mental and manual labor. Marxist theorists and propagandists must therefore, seek to identify what must be done in order to innovate and improve revolutionary propaganda and combat the fast-growing and diversifying bourgeois propaganda. Hence, the aim of this thesis.

The strongest identified threat to propaganda writing is falling prey to “stereotyped Party writing” (will also be called “stereotyp(ed/ical) propaganda writing”). Stereotyped Party writing is the opposite force of mass-lined propaganda. Mao Zedong, in his work, “Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing”, mentions the importance of combating stereotyped propaganda writing:

“We are fighting against subjectivism and sectarianism, but they will still have a hiding-place to lurk in if at the same time we do not get rid of stereotyped Party writing. If we destroy that too, we shall "checkmate" subjectivism and sectarianism...”<sup>12</sup>

Stereotypical propaganda writing tends to harm the masses, poison the revolutionary movement, and jeopardize the revolution<sup>13</sup>. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism combats subjectivism and sectarianism<sup>14</sup> because these are partisan ideologies of the bourgeoisie. For so long as these two bourgeois attitudes lurk within the revolutionary ranks, there will always be a threat of revisionism<sup>15</sup> and the revolution will ultimately succumb to the same fate that the old Socialist China and the USSR fell to.

On the one hand, revolutionary propaganda draws its strength from being grassrooted to the practical experience of the masses. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that the revolutionary ideology is drawn from the experience of the practical experience of the masses. *Revolution*

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<sup>12</sup> Mao Zedong, *Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Both subjectivism and sectarianism are born from bourgeois ideology. Subjectivism is the analysis of conditions through a one-sided perspective. It is dangerous because it does not employ concrete analysis of concrete conditions. Sectarianism is rooted from bourgeois individualism which is the attitude of giving too much importance on the interest of a particular small group of people resulting into conflict with the interest of the greater majority.

<sup>15</sup> Revisionism is the systematic modification of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism that is recognized as the primary cause of the downfall of socialist revolutions and the decline of revolutionary movements in general.

mentions this characteristic of revolutionary propaganda in “On the Role of Agitation and Propaganda,”

“This kind of agitation is impossible without applying the mass line and without knowing the masses – their experiences, their feelings, their language...it is necessary to learn from the masses in order to educate them.”<sup>16</sup>

### **The Link Between the Ideology and the Text**

The problem of propaganda-writing must be traced back to the study of signs and its relation to human interactions. In the process, we identify its role in ideological production. And where do we find this link between the social consciousness and the text but in the human person? It is only the human being that is capable of subscribing to a social consciousness. Man, as a productive animal, is the only animal capable of producing complex sign-systems and reproduce language in order to further improve its role in man’s productive nature – as Daniel Chandler puts it, *homo significans*. It is only the human being who is capable of authoring by condensing his partisan ideology into a set of signs called a text and also man who is capable of acknowledging when a sign is a sign and interpret and decode the meaning of this sign. We could only find the link between the ideology and the text in the relationship between those who author and those who read – thus the Author-Reader relationship. Through semiotic discourse, we would be able to make this connection.

In correctly identifying the Author-Reader relationship, we will be able to understand the process of communicating ideas between the propagandist and its audience. How does the Author

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<sup>16</sup> On the Role of Agitation and Propaganda

succeed in communicating his partisan ideology? How does the text itself fulfill its purpose in serving as a medium of communication? How does the Reader immerse himself to the text? How can the masses discern truth from falsehood? We must first answer these questions before dwelling into the problem of stereotypical propaganda writing.

Hence, the following will be the breakdown of the contents and the main arguments of this thesis:

In Chapter 2: The Dialectics in the Text, I would be arguing that the relationship of the Author and the Reader is dialectical, that the success of the text lies on the success of the Author and the Reader as based on the intention of the Author. This is a somewhat different take on the Author-Reader relationship as most semioticians would argue that the intention of the Author is insignificant since we must give the Reader the liberty of meaning-interpretation out of a text. I would argue that (1) The Author is not merely a reflection of the existing social narrative but his idea is the synthesis of the contradiction between struggling partisan ideologies, (2) The intent of the Author is not a senseless dead intention but implies a goal-setting of the sign, and that (3) It is this dialectical relationship of the Author and the Reader that determines the success of both parties, and thereby the success of the sign (written text) as well.

In Chapter 3: Stereotypical Propaganda, I would be applying this theory of the dialectical Author-Reader relationship in the practical experiences of the ND movement in the field of propaganda. I will be enumerating the eight manifestations of Stereotyped Party Writing as defined by Mao Zedong and from there, identify whether progressive propaganda falls prey to stereotypical propaganda writing. With this, we would determine the success or the failure of the propaganda material based on the relationship of the Author-propagandist and the Reader-masses.

In Chapter 4: Counter-Arguments, we would lay down possible counter-arguments to this thesis. Such counter-arguments would include mostly to possible criticisms especially in the importance of the intention, my methods of properly identifying the intention, leveling the knowledge of the masses, and on classifying the progressive propaganda as stereotypical propaganda. Lastly, Chapter 5 would contain my conclusion and recommendations to further advance the methods of revolutionary propaganda and our quest in sparking a discourse in a genuine Marxist semiotics.

# THE DIALECTICS IN THE TEXT

## CHAPTER II

In this Chapter, my intention as an author of this thesis, is to identify the relationship between the Author and the Reader. Reader-response theorists have criticized the overpowering role given to the Author and asserted that the Reader must be given greater recognition for his infinite potential to interpret the meaning of a text. This position amassed popularity especially in the field of literature by pointing the attention of literary criticism from the Author but towards the text<sup>17</sup>. Semantic autonomy<sup>18</sup> became the dominant viewpoint in textual analysis and literary criticism, completely denying the Author of all textual responsibility on the meaning of the text and the interpretation of Readers. It is with this context that I would seek to argue that there is a dialectical relationship between the Author and the Reader that contribute to what I will call, the success of the text. This success of the text lies within the success of the Author and the Reader in fulfilling their roles qua Author and qua Reader.

I must clarify that I do not disagree nor seek to argue that the Author plays an almighty role nor that the Reader ought not to interpret the text in a different manner, nor that the text is not open to various interpretations. Instead, I stress the importance of the intention of the Author as determinant to the success of the text as a vessel of communication.

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<sup>17</sup> Hirsch, E. D. "In defense of the author." *Intention and interpretation* (1992): 11

<sup>18</sup> Semantic autonomy is the theory that the meaning of a text is independent of the author's intention – the text is what it is regardless of the intended meaning ascribed by the author.

## Authorial Intentionalism

Authorial intentionalism, as opposed to semantic autonomy, argues that the meaning of the text can be recovered from the intention of the Author. It posits that a text has a property of determinacy<sup>19</sup>, that a written text has a fixed meaning determined by the Author's intention, that there is an *actual* meaning of signs instead of mere *hypothetical*<sup>20</sup> meanings. E.D. Hirsch, Jr. argues against the position of semantic autonomists and reader-response theorists by insisting that meanings are affairs of the human consciousness and not innate in the words. Further:

“The theory of semantic autonomy has forced itself into such unsatisfactory, ad hoc formulations because in its zeal to banish the author it ignored the fact that meaning is an affair of the consciousness and not of words. Almost any word sequence can, under the conventions of language, legitimately represent more than one complex of meanings. A word sequence means nothing in particular until somebody either means something by it or understands something from it. There is no magic land of meanings outside human consciousness. Whenever meaning is connected to words, a person is making the connection, and the particular meanings he lends to them are never the only legitimate ones under the norms and conventions of his language.<sup>21</sup>”

It is from the position of Hirsch as a modest authorial intentionalists where I would begin. But before everything else, I would have to lay the ground from where the Author derives his ideas and intentions. *The Author is not merely a reflection of the existing social narrative but his idea is*

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 13

<sup>20</sup> This refers to the tendency of Readers to assume a *hypothetical* meaning out of a text. To put it simply, the meaning of the text is subjective to the interpretation of the Reader. Hypothetical intentionalism, for one, posits that the best interpretation of the text is that which is closest to the Author's intention. Hirsch, as an actual intentionalist, states that the actual interpretation is that which is intended by the Author while the best interpretation (if it is not the meaning intended by the author) is that of the critic.

<sup>21</sup> Hirsch, E. D. *In defense of the author*. Intention and interpretation. 13.

*the synthesis of the contradiction between struggling partisan ideologies.* Roland Barthes criticizes the ‘tyrannical centrism’ on the author. Barthes, with his *Death of the Author*, is one of the most influential proponents of anti-authorial intentionalism. He speaks of the Author’s mastery of the narrative code as admirable but not his genius<sup>22</sup>. For the most part, I agree with his assertion that the Author’s ideas are highly influenced by external forces. After all, it is not the Author’s so-called “original ideas” that has brought about the creativity, the esteem, or the newness of the text, but it is the social consciousness derived from the historical development of ideologies that served as the material conditions for the ideas of the Author. The work of the Author is but his ideology mirrored in the text.

The Author’s knowledge and therefore, his belief systems, culture and heritage, norms and traditions, methods of work, etc. can only be attained from the pre-existing social knowledge imparted upon through socialization with organizations and institutions. The Author’s knowledge is hereby non-innate, only borrowed and reconstructed from the pre-existing social consciousness.

However, as we have established earlier, social consciousness is not unilateral. It is not an autonomously evolving knowledge system but rather, the Author is subjected upon the contradicting ideologies. Thus, the Author cannot be passive. He is not merely a medium between the text and the ideology he is presumed to represent.

For to accept that the Author is a mere medium between the ideology and the text is to deny that he plays an active role in the modification of sign meanings and an active combatant within the social consciousness. It denies the Author of his power of combining signs into a customized idea – partisan to the ideology he epitomizes. To say that the Author ‘is nothing more

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<sup>22</sup> Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 2

than the man who writes<sup>23</sup> implies that he is no different from the text itself. It implies that he is but a bearer, an empty vessel of an ideology - that the text is the subject of the Author's knowledge is in a similar fashion to that of the Author being the subject of the social consciousness. It assumes that the text contains a meaning within itself, determined by the dynamics of the langue and the parole<sup>24</sup> that has assigned its semantico-pragmatic meanings. Hirsch denies that the meaning of texts is determined solely by context and 'public norms' because "no mere sequence of words can represent an actual verbal meaning with reference to public norms alone" and to accept this is to say that meanings are indeterminate<sup>25</sup>.

"To speak of context as a determinant is to confuse an exigency of interpretation with an author's determining acts. An author's verbal meaning is limited by linguistic possibilities but is determined by his actualizing and specifying some of those possibilities."<sup>26</sup>

It must be understood that the Author is not only the subject of the contradictions of the social consciousness but is himself, a transformer of contradictions. He contributes to the partisan ideology within the reach of his influence. He imposes the contradiction upon the reader, either challenging or reaffirming the pre-existing ideological status quo of the reader.

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<sup>23</sup> Barthes, *The death of the Author*

<sup>24</sup> *Langue and parole* – Langue is "language minus speech" and the social part of language established by organizations and institutions. Barthes, in his *Elements of Semiology*, defines Saussure's langue as "essentially a collective contract which one must accept in its entirety if one wishes to communicate." It is the linguistic framework upon which the individual is subsumed upon and restricts the individual from the modification of language. Parole is the "individual act of selection and actualization" of which the individual, in the act of performing a *speech*, utilizes and combines language in order to express a thought. (Barthes, 1964)

<sup>25</sup> Hirsch, E. D. *In defense of the author*. Intention and interpretation. 17

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

## **On Determinacy of the Text**

*The intended meaning of the Author is not a senseless dead meaning but implies a goal-setting of the interpreting of the sign. Hence, the Author's intended meaning is always significant.*

In order to write, the Author must have a will to write. This will is always characterized by reaffirming or challenging the social consciousness. Once he has chosen one, it is his partisan ideology – which may only be a subscription to the ruling or oppressed ideology. With will comes his intention, the notion behind the intended meaning of the text. The intention of the Author is the pathway of his ideological bias towards the text, the enigma that is behind the Readers' doubts of subjective interpretation. For he knows it is only the Author who could provide the correct answers. Intention is the drive that the Reader, consciously or not, seeks to unveil, the material link between the Author and the text that gives essence to the latter. Intention fills in the gap between the ideology of the Author and the act of writing the text. The text is the embodiment, the physical manifestation of the Author's partisan ideology made possible by and only by the intention. Unless the intention of the Author is to purposefully confuse and disorient the Reader from the Author's own beliefs, he will do his best in order to influence the Reader and produce a systematic, well-articulated, convincing text. In short, the meaning of a text is determined by the Author's intended meaning. The intended meaning, on the other hand, ought to reflect the Author's ideologically driven intention. Otherwise, writing is futile. Reading, much senseless.

Intended meaning, as opposed to intention, is the actual meaning of the text as determined by the Author. Intention may or may not be recoverable from the text itself, but intended meaning certainly is. An Author's intention may be to provide entertainment, to agitate, to provoke malicious thought, to immortalize a certain state of mind, or to evoke a sense of awe. Intended meaning, on the other hand, is the semantico-pragmatic meaning of the text-sign as designated by

the Author. Out of all the possible meanings and interpretations of the phrase “dawn of the red East,” the Author’s intended meaning is the one true meaning and correct interpretation.

While intended meaning ought to reflect intention, the process is not infallible. There is a fissure that lies within language - multi-accentuality<sup>27</sup>, which according to Voloshinov, the very thing that makes language a living thing and at the same time, bestows it with its refractive and distortive properties<sup>28</sup>. It is because of multi-accentuality and the multiplicity of meanings that the Author does not always succeed in encapsulating the ideology within a sign system i.e. the text; even if it ought to. In addition to this, multiplicity of meaning and multi-accentuality remains a fissure both in the writing process and the reading process. This gift and curse of language is the property that lends itself to imprecision and misinterpretation. It is the root of the failure of the text. This imperfection is also the reason why it is perfectly normal for the text, the Author, and the Reader to all fail.

This fissure is the rule that requires the Author to have authorial responsibility, that the Author must be explicit of his intended meaning – with or without literally speaking of it. It is the only way to aim for a successful authorship. In the process of reading, the role of the Author is to assert for the partisan ideology upon which he subscribes. The role of the Author is for the Reader to understand his intended meaning. The role of the Reader is either to combat or to subscribe to the ideology presented by the Author, but in order to do this, the Reader must first decode the intended meaning. This is the role of the Reader.

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<sup>27</sup> *Multi-accentuality* - multi-accentuality, for Voloshinov, is the multiplicity of stresses (or accents) that causes the same combinations of words (or signs) in a language to be open to various meanings. This is also because “contexts of usage of one and the same word often contrast with one another.” (Voloshinov, 1973)

<sup>28</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. 23

In any possible scenario (except that to purposefully mislead the Reader), the purpose of writing is to be read and to be understood by a Reader, of which, the Author and the Reader does not necessarily be different entities. An Author may write to immortalize his memory, his idea, or his experience so that there may come a day when the Author himself (or someone else) may become the Reader of his own work. It is to the disappointment of the Author if the text is misunderstood by the Reader.

### **Recovering the Intention**

*It is the dialectical relationship of the Author and the Reader that determines the success of both parties, and thereby, the success of the sign (written text).*

The Author is on the offensive, the Reader defensive. The role of the Author is to convey his partisan ideology towards the Reader. The Reader on the other hand, is to decipher the partisan ideology from the code of the text. The Author encodes, the Reader decodes.

Although understanding the intended meaning is not infallible, the intent of the Author cannot simply be dismissed. In order to fully grasp the text, the Reader must read between the lines and seek to understand the intention of the Author. The only way to do this is for the Reader to transcend the mechanical reading, the reading for the sake of reading, a.k.a the passive reading. It is not enough to stop at the level of deciphering the intended meaning of the text, but the Reader must immerse himself to the text and involve himself with the ideological battle. Understanding the intention of the Author takes the Reader to a whole new appreciation of the text, and therefore the ideology. Prior to reading, the Reader already subscribes to a partisan ideology as influenced by the contradictions within the social consciousness. It is the Author's ideas that attack the pre-

established ideology of the Reader. This is where the difference between passive reading and active reading comes into light. Active reading is when the reader is responsible for the ideas he reads<sup>29</sup>. Passive reading is otherwise. It is only through this immersion acquired through active reading that the Reader's ideology becomes reaffirmed or challenged, and hence, a decisive factor in the fate of the Author's success.

Interpretation lends itself to a readership effect. The moment that the Reader (whether successfully or not) interprets the text, his interpretation may elicit a certain response. The Author has designated an intended meaning and that the game of the Reader plays within the Author's intention. However, in some cases, the Author may not only have designated an intended meaning but also designated a certain intended readership effect (as an intention). This also becomes a factor in the success of the text. Readership effect, an elicited reaction, can only become possible if the Reader transcends the reading for the sake of reading. If the Reader is not immersed and does not find himself within the same realm as the Author's intended effect, the text is subject to failure.

Then again, it lies within the hands of the Author to immerse the Reader. Mechanical reading only arises from mechanical writing. A million pamphlets written mechanically are useless against a few hundred pamphlets written with agitation and grassroots principle. The involvement of the Reader depends on the commitment of the Author. Effective reading is only achieved through effective writing. Since effective writing is measured by the achievement of the Author's success, the Author sets the standard for success. Yet, it is the Reader that determines this fate.

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<sup>29</sup> Fischer. *Printed page*, 205

## The Author's Model Reader

The Author picks his battles. The Author is always subsumed upon the interests of the Reader. He must consider the interest of the Reader upon his work, otherwise, it will likely not be read. The Author must know his audience before he could select a medium of language or the appropriateness of his approach. "The reader is strictly defined by the lexical and the syntactical organization of the text: the text is nothing else but the semantico-pragmatic production of its own Model Reader."<sup>30</sup>

But the characteristics of readers differ across varying social classes and within a specific class. Thus, the Author must select his audience. He chooses his Reader. And this necessity of selecting a particular Reader is also the privilege that puts the Author on higher ground. The Author sets the battlefield. The Reader, in order to read effectively, must play within the rules of the Author.

Eco stresses the importance of portraying a Model Reader:

"To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them."<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the Author cannot recklessly throw signs from random languages and code-switch to his heart's desire. The Model Reader is the Author's selected audience. It is this Reader that the

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<sup>30</sup> Eco. *The role of the Reader*, 10

<sup>31</sup> Eco. *The role of the reader*, 7

text and the Author's intention and intended meaning is dedicated to. The Model Readers are the primary participants in the game of writing and reading.

Is it not the case that the interpretation of the work of the Author is ultimately up to the Reader? Semantic-autonomists would argue that the Author no longer has control over the Reader the moment the process of reading begins. Barthes would say that the Author is dead, the intended meaning does not matter.

But to say as such is to become very lenient on the role of the Author and too liberal on the role of the Reader. Signs, although probably subject to multiple interpretations in the process of reading, is not open to infinite interpretations. It is restricted by the langue of which the Author and the Reader are both subsumed upon. The way the Author selected his words and arranged them via language syntax limits the interpretation. Interpretation requires the Reader to make sense out of the text. The phrase "The man is murdered" can only elicit as much as a hundred or a thousand possible scenarios or interpretations of its meaning but cannot mean that "the galaxy is filled with stars" *ceteris paribus*. As in the words of Umberto Eco, "you cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it. An open text<sup>32</sup>, however 'open' it be, cannot afford whatever interpretation"<sup>33</sup>

The intention of the Author determines the correctness of the interpretation of the Reader. The Reader could be wrong although it does not necessarily matter in the eyes of a post-structuralist semiotician. A written sign that lends itself to vagueness and various interpretations

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<sup>32</sup> An "open text" for Umberto Eco is a text that is subject to multiple interpretations such a creative literature. In contradistinction to a closed text which is relatively rigid and straightforward.

<sup>33</sup> Eco. *The role of the reader*, 9

can only be a successful sign if and only if it is precisely the intention of the Author to cause such confusion or the Author's writing is ineffective, otherwise, I would call it a failure.

To summarize and to reiterate: The role of the Reader is to identify the determined intended meaning of the Author; the role of the Author is to make sure that the Reader interprets the correct meaning based on his own intention; the role of the text is to serve as a vessel. Hence, the success of each of the parties involved – i.e. the Author, the Reader, and the text – is dependent in the success of the whole textual system as a whole.

The following page shows a diagram that depicts the textual system and in relation to the dialectics of the social consciousness.

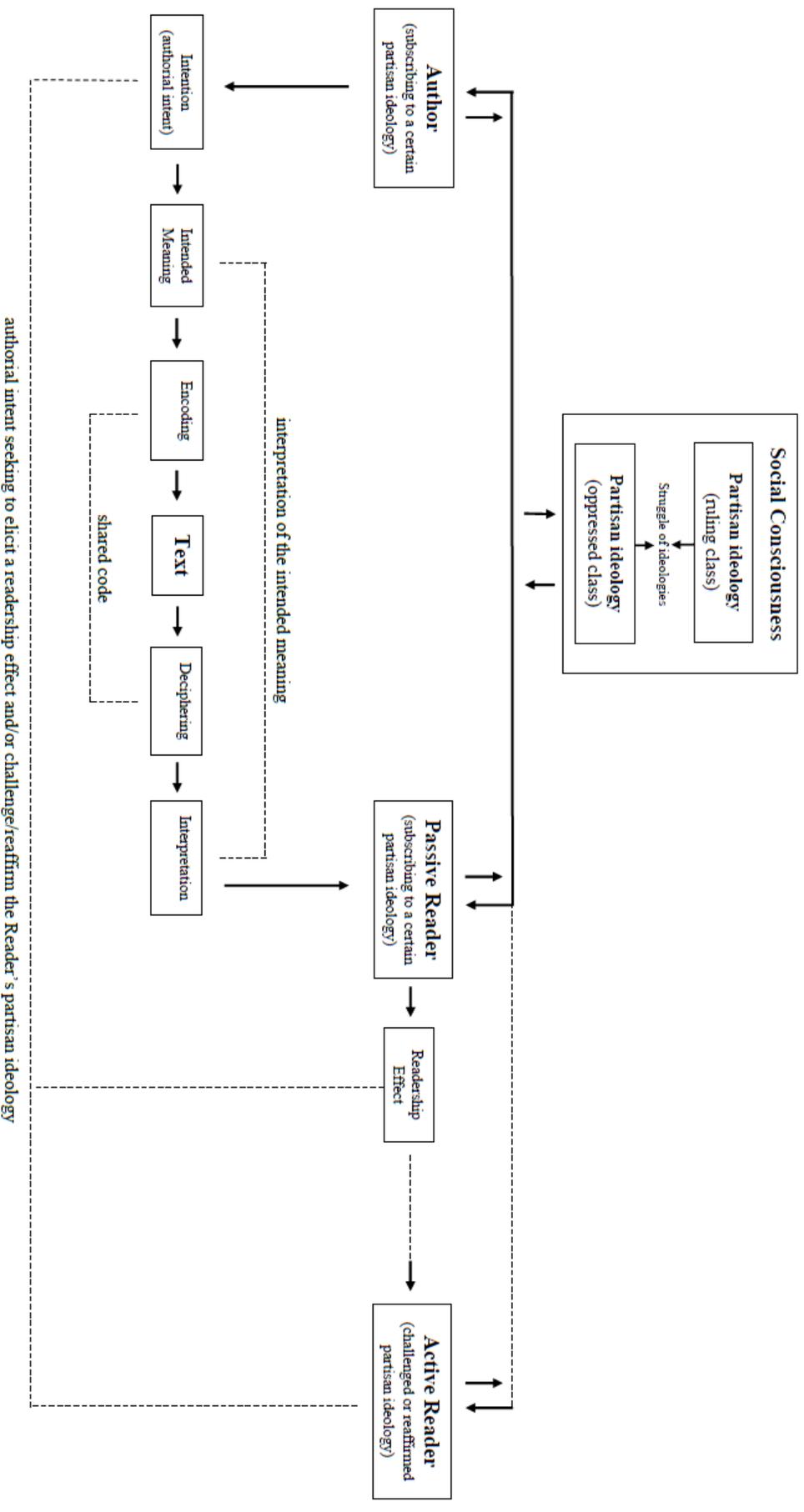


Figure 2.1: Concept map of the textual system in relation to the dialectics of the social consciousness

In Figure 2.1, I seek to illustrate how social consciousness is characterized by the contradiction of ideologies between the partisan ideology of the ruling class and that of the oppressed. This contradiction then manifests into the partisan ideologies subscribed upon by the Author and the Reader while Authors and Readers also contribute in the shaping of the social consciousness.

In the section of the Author-Reader relationship, the arrows from the Intention to the Reader pertain to the flow of the message (which bears the partisan ideology of the Author) when observing from the angle of the process of Authoring. The broken lines connect the crucial points that link the Author-Reader roles i.e.: deciphering with encoding through shared code, interpretation with intended meaning, and authorial intent with readership effect and ideological challenge or reaffirmation. See that the Passive Reader may also transcend towards being an Active Reader through the readership effect as represented by a broken line.

These broken lines also represent the links which are crucial to the success of the Author, the Reader, and the textual system as a whole.

# STEREOTYPICAL PROPAGANDA

## CHAPTER III

### **Stereotyped Propaganda Writing**

There are eight manifestations of stereotyped propaganda writing according to Mao Zedong which I will enumerate here. I will also elaborate on those manifestations that are apparent in the revolutionary movement's propaganda.

*The following are the eight manifestations of stereotyped propaganda writing:*

(1) “The first indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it fills endless pages with empty verbiage.” By “empty verbiage,” Mao means long articles pertaining to meaningless, circular and winding statements. Mao states that the first indictment of stereotyped propaganda writing comes from the attitude of the writer that assumes that the masses (reader) will not read the propaganda materials. Mao believes that long and empty articles, just as short and empty ones, are no good but to strike a pose of intimidation.<sup>34</sup> This takes us to the second indictment of stereotyped propaganda writing;

(2) “The second indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it strikes a pose in order to intimidate people.” For Mao, intimidation is pretentious. It is an obstacle to the propagation of truth and partisan ideology<sup>35</sup>. Mao argues that intimidation is unnecessary for scientific method because truth should speak for itself, and science and the scientific method (of

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<sup>34</sup> Mao Zedong, *Combat stereotyped Party writing*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

which Marxism promotes) is concerned with truth. Intimidation is a tactic used by the partisan ideology of the bourgeoisie and the lumpen-proletariat, not by the proletariat.

(3) “The third indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it shoots at random, without considering the audience.<sup>36</sup>” Mao Zedong provides the example of the usage of Chinese characters. There are some strokes of Chinese characters that can only be understood by certain elite people. What Mao Zedong wants to state here is basically the main point of this thesis: the Author must understand and use the language of the basic masses as target Readers. Language and thereby propaganda, becomes alienating for the Reader if the usage of language is elitist. The Author, hence, must consider the audience when writing propaganda.

(4) The fourth indictment against stereotyped Party writing is its drab language that reminds one of a *piehsan*. *A piehsan is defined by Mao as Shanghai creatures that are “wizened and ugly.” This pertains to propaganda that is dull, ugly, and “mere bag of bones.” The language of the masses has a rich and vivid vocabulary.<sup>37</sup> This vocabulary must be utilized instead of repetitively using a few dull words that eventually die out in intensity of meaning.*

(5) “The fifth indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it arranges items under a complicated set of headings, as if starting a Chinese pharmacy.” Mao analogizes the setting of a very structured set of headings to a Chinese pharmacy in the same way that medicinal cabinets are arranged accordingly.<sup>38</sup> For Mao, this is a very complicated arrangement of flow of argumentation, meant to aid the Author but only confuses the Reader, thereby becoming counter-productive. In an effort to “make sense”, this *Chinese pharmacy* method is counter-productive because it arranges ideas that causes a confusing barrage of loosely related concepts. Instead of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

aiding the flow of argumentation, it disrupts. As of the present resources that I have gathered, there seems to be no propaganda material that is guilty of the fifth indictment of stereotyped propaganda writing.

Indictments 6, 7, and 8 are the consequences of stereotyped Party writing to the revolutionary movements as whole. These are, for Mao, impacts of stereotyped propaganda writing that contribute to corrupting the revolutionary Party from within. 6 states that it is irresponsible and it harms people wherever it appears. 7 states that it poisons the whole Party and jeopardizes the revolution. Lastly, 8 is that its spread would wreck the country and ruin the people.

Stereotyped propaganda writing is a fault, a flaw in the tradition of revolutionary propaganda writing. It is counter-revolutionary and counter-productive.<sup>39</sup> It seeps from the irresponsible attitude stemming from sectarianist and subjectivist opinions of the propagandist and plants itself into the material, slowly and eventually devastating the revolutionary ranks and proletarian ideology from within.

Much like liberalism, it destroys the revolution from within the revolutionary ranks. The attitudinal root of stereotyped propaganda writing is irresponsibility, lack of trust on the masses, alienation from the language and experience of the masses, mechanical performance of revolutionary duties that is not directed towards the fulfillment of revolutionary goals but merely for the end-all-be-all completion of the task of writing a propaganda material. Stereotyped propaganda writing attempts to contribute to the development of an own revolutionary language. But the revolution has no need for its own revolutionary language. It should use the language of

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<sup>39</sup> Mao Zedong, *Combat stereotyped Party writing*

the masses, for the language of the masses is in itself, revolutionary. Dimitrov stated, during the Seventh World Congress of the Second Internationale:

“We must learn to talk to the masses, not in the language of book formulas, but in the language of fighters for the cause of the masses, whose every word, whose every idea reflects the innermost thoughts and sentiments of millions.”<sup>40</sup>

It seems that the core of stereotyped propaganda writing can be found in the third indictment – the usage of the language of the masses. The phrase “using the language of the masses” means that the Author-propagandist must adapt to the language of the Reader-masses. It is in the guiltiness of the propagandist to the third indictment where we would trace the usage of empty verbiage, cheap intimidation tactics, dull vocabulary, and unstructured flow. If the propagandist cannot use the language of the masses, it means that the Author is not immersed with its Reader. For the only way to learn the language of the masses is to become truly immersed into the ‘unified sphere of organized social intercourse’<sup>41</sup> with them. And if the propagandist is not immersed with the masses and cannot use their language, then arises tactics alien to the proletarian mode of propaganda. Correct revolutionary propaganda must draw the line of contradiction and understanding contradiction means drawing from the lessons of the struggles of the masses.<sup>42</sup>

### **Progressive propaganda falls prey to stereotyped propaganda writing.**

Progressive propaganda<sup>43</sup> is guilty of writing long statements with empty verbiage. Take the following as an example. This statement is extracted from a pamphlet authored by BAYAN

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Voloshinov, *Marixsm and the philosophy of language*, 46

<sup>42</sup> *On the role of agitation and propaganda*

<sup>43</sup> Progressive propaganda, in contradistinction with revolutionary propaganda, is propaganda that is in line with or in support of the revolutionary cause but does not necessarily reflect the proletarian line. In the context of the Philippines, propaganda from the national-democratic movement (which is the main subject of criticism of this

Timog-Katagalugan in 2018, entitled “Wakasan ang Rehimeng US-Duterte! Labanan ang Kahirapan at Diktadura! Makibaka para sa Hustisya, Demokrasya, Kalayaan, at Makatarungang Kapayapaan!”<sup>44</sup>

### **LALONG PINALUBOG NI DUTERTE ANG EKONOMYA NG BANSA**



Ang Build Build Build ay bahagi ng neoliberal na estratehiyang Ambisyon 2040. Dito, tuloy-tuloy na binubuksan ang bansa sa mga dayuhan. Ilinasapribado ang mga serbisyong panlipunan at publikong utilities. Ang mga jeep at tricycle ay pinapailalim sa mga korporasyon. Pinararami ang mga engklabo at real estate. Dahil nakaasa sa dayuhang eksport at kapital, ilulubog nito ang bansa sa dayuhang utang, Sinisira rin ang paligid at mga kabuhayan. Halimbawa rin nito ang epekto ng mga proyektong tulad ng mga coal-fired power plant, mega-dam at iba pa.

Excerpt 3.1: “Wakasan ang Rehimeng US-Duterte! Labanan ang Kahirapan at Diktadura! Makibaka para sa Hustisya, Demokrasya, Kalayaan, at Makatarungang Kapayapaan!”

The context surrounding 3.1 is an enumeration of the atrocities of the Duterte administration during the first two years of his service. This particular excerpt speaks of the economic policies implemented by the Duterte regime under the heading “Lalong pinalulubog ni Duterte ang ekonomiya ng bansa”. At first glance, no part of the statement can be considered “empty verbiage.” However, if we scrutinize the statement and take a few striking words from it,

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thesis) can be classified as progressive but not necessary proletarian. Proletarian propaganda is usually characterized by the support of armed struggle and a sharper line of distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat ideologies. Although both progressive and proletarian propaganda can be classified under revolutionary propaganda.

This pamphlet was used throughout the campaign to expose the economic, political, and cultural “sins” of the US-Duterte regime. Tens of thousands of copies of the comprehensive 4-page, booklet form, pamphlet was disseminated all over Southern Tagalog, primarily in the urban areas and concentrations of industrial and commercial workers, urban poor communities, and public places such as markets, intersections, and transport terminals.

<sup>44</sup> This pamphlet was used throughout the campaign to expose the economic, political, and cultural “sins” of the US-Duterte regime. Tens of thousands of copies of the comprehensive 4-page, booklet form, pamphlet was disseminated all over Southern Tagalog, primarily in the urban areas and concentrations of industrial and commercial workers, urban poor communities, and public places such as markets, intersections, and transport terminals.

we find several hifalutin words directly and irresponsibly *tagalized*<sup>45</sup>. These words include “estrategyang” (strategy), “Isinasapribado” (to privatize), “korporasyon” (corporation), “engklabo” (enclaves), “eksport” (export), along with other words which are tagalized. To be fair, the pros of using tagalized foreign words is that it maintains the context of meanings as used in the foreign languages and avoid meaning losing in translation. For example, the word “privatization” cannot be directly translated to any Tagalog word. The closest word, “ina-angkin” does not capture the notion of transferring operations over from public social services to private institutions. In some recovered documents of the left, we find more of these words such as “adbertayser,” “kartel,” “demokratisasyon,” “indyependensya,” “pasibo,” “konserbatismo,” etc.

However, what is problematic with tagalization is that it may not always be the language of the masses. “Estratehiya” and “pribatisasyon,” may technically be Filipino words but they are not part of the ordinary vocabulary of the masses. Tagalized words are sometimes necessary but most of the time, they can be done without. Excessive usage of Filipinized words are a manifestation of irresponsible propaganda writing. It is the product of the laziness of the Author-propagandist to phrase the concept into a sentence structure that is easily comprehensible to the Reader-masses. The Author-propagandist is thinking ideas through foreign language but writes them with local and expects that the Reader will soon learn and adapt this kind of language into their own. But instead of the Author teaching the masses this new kind of language, the Author must learn the language of the masses and interpret these foreign concepts to them using their own language. It is with this that the text becomes filled with “empty verbiage.”

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<sup>45</sup> To convert foreign words into Filipino phonetic alphabet in order to directly translate foreign words to Filipino.

Say for example, I am an ordinary high-school graduate, factory-worker who migrated all the way to the urban and was raised from the countryside in a peasant community. These words are alien to me and mean close to nothing. I can only understand these words if I know their English counterparts and from the surrounding context-clues of other signs within the sign system of the material; but then again context-meaning is indeterminate. A large composition of the basic masses is undereducated of these concepts but these masses are also the target audience of the propaganda-material. This however, does not mean that the basic masses are ignorant of the concepts of privatization or neoliberalism. The masses must have an understanding of these concepts, but not necessarily the sign-text. The propagandist would argue that to say as such is an underestimation of the capacity of the Reader-masses to comprehend and understand these concepts. Yet, I would insist that hifalutin words are foreign to the language of the masses, though they may be the slightest bit comprehensible through context-clues. This is the importance of what Eco calls a “shared code.” If the code of the Author is unfamiliar to the Reader, it is unshared and they become mere meaningless signifiers for the Reader that eventually lend themselves to various interpretations and meanings. It could be dangerously far different from the original intended meaning of the Author. The propagandist cannot afford this to happen because a propaganda material which is very much viable to misinterpretation is an unsuccessful propaganda material. The Author fails. The Reader fails. The propaganda material fails.

For if the masses share the same codes, why then do we hear sentiments from the Reader-peasants and Reader-workers “These words are already written in Tagalog [or whatever their local language] but they are too uncommon for me to comprehend!”

We find another noticeable word in Excerpt 3.1 that is foreign to the language of the masses – “neoliberal.” Examining 10 different pamphlets from the left across Southern Tagalog from

2017-2018, we find 9 pamphlets containing the word “neoliberal,” used at least once in almost similar contexts. We see “neoliberal” in another pamphlet from BAYAN-ST entitled “Labanan ang Tiraniya at Batas Militar ng Rehimeng US-Duterte<sup>46</sup>” released on September 2017.

Pangulong Digong. Sa kauna-unahang pagkakataon, nangyari ang pinakamatagal na serye ng usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng Gubyerno ng Republika ng Pilipinas (GRP) at National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Subalit, ipinakita ng tagal na ito ang pananabotahe ng mga militarista at neoliberal na ekonomista’t pulitiko na pawang masusugid na tagasunod ng US sa loob ng gabinete at “supermajority” sa Kongreso ni Tiranong Digong. Ang kawalang kaseryosohan sa pagtahak ng landas ng kapayapaan ay pinatunayan ng paghinto ng usapang kapayapaan noong Hulyo 2017. Matapos nito, magkasunod na tinanggal ng Committee

Excerpt 3.2: “Labanan ang Tiraniya at Batas Militar ng Rehimeng US-Duterte”

In this example, much similar to the hifalutin words in 3.1, the word “neoliberal” is written out of context. But the term “neoliberal” is outstanding compared to the other words in the statement because it is loaded with meaning. Neoliberalism arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century favoring the ideas of laissez-faire economics and greatly influenced by Thatcherism and Reaganomics. It is characterized by liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of basic social services. Neoliberalism is a response to the post-war Keynesian framework of planned economy<sup>47</sup>.

Going back to 3.2, the term “neoliberal” was used here as an adjective to puppet economists, government officials, and “followers” of US imperialism within the Congress of the Duterte administration. “Neoliberal” must have been intended to be used as a negative term basing

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<sup>46</sup> The context of the material is that it was a massive propaganda offense as a response to the unmasking of the tyrannical face of the US-Duterte regime. It extensively uses the term “Tiranong Digong,” more than 20 times in the 4-page, booklet form, pamphlet. It was distributed in the same manner as 3.1 with particular focus on urban poor communities as being primary targets of the current regime’s drug-war campaign, *Oplan Tokhang*, which already killed more than ten thousand at the time.

<sup>47</sup> Thorsen, *The neoliberal challenge – what is neoliberalism*

on its parallelism with other derogatory terms in the same syntagm such as “pananabotahe” (to sabotage), “tagasunod ng US” (US subservients), and “Tiranong Digong” (Tyrant Digong). From the point of view of an academic and with sufficient knowledge of neoliberalism as an economic framework, we could infer the effort to demonize the notion of neoliberalism and we could see through the attempt to create the myth of neoliberalism as an influence of imperialist relations imposed through US cronies within the ‘puppet government’.

We, as Reader-academics, could see the attempt to popularize the concept of neoliberalism and portray it as non-beneficial to the masses with the way it is regularly being used across various pamphlets. For the basic masses composed of peasants and workers however, this is a highly unlikely inference. However, this type of usage in the sentence or the paragraph is unnecessary. First of all, the theme of the statement is fascism. The surrounding signs in the pamphlet point mostly to killings, human rights violations, martial rule, fascism, and the call for peace and resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. And although we understand that neoliberalism is a direct contradicting force to the national-democratic proposal (which is a state-planned economic framework), for the unfamiliar Reader-masses, the position of the adjective “neoliberal” is out of place. It is isolated from the other signifiers within the syntagmatic plane. This is because of the second point, which is that the term “neoliberal” was presumed by the Author to be comprehensible to the Reader-masses. It violates the “show, don’t tell” writers’ creed by recklessly throwing off words heavily loaded with meaning without consideration of the knowledge-level of the Reader-masses.

There is however, another angle to observe the usage of “neoliberal” in Excerpt 3.2. It seems as though the Author did not originally intend to use the term “neoliberal” in order to educate the masses that the government officials and economists do in fact, subscribe to the

neoliberal economic framework. What then could be the intention of the Author to use such heavily-loaded term but to “strike a pose of intimidation”? For the Reader-masses, “neoliberal” is a ‘big word.’ In the context of Excerpt 3.2, the usage is pretentious because it attempts to popularize neoliberalism but does not explain the slightest effort what neoliberalism is. It is careless because it assumes that the Reader-masses understand the concept of neoliberalism prior to reading but would also admit later on that they do not. It is a use of intimidation, the second indictment of stereotyped propaganda writing. Prof. Sison, in his work, “Ikalawang Kilusang Propaganda” (Second Propaganda Movement) have already warned us of the usage of heavily-loaded ideas and terminologies:

“[One should not] recklessly throw heavy theories and slogans without first knowing the concrete conditions and problems of the masses...It will not work as well for the ilustrado and the petit-bourgeois to lead the propaganda movement through the fluttering of their formal or artificial book-knowledge, or by their bragging about of their bourgeois education.<sup>48</sup>”

Progressive propaganda has bland language. Although we cannot say as much that it is “ugly” or that it “reminds one of a *piehsan*,” it is dull and repetitive with very limited vocabulary. Looking at various titles of pamphlets written by the progressive left across decades, we could immediately see the overuse of terms such as “labanan,” “ibagsak,” “wakasan,” “rehimeng US-Duterte (or US-Aquino),” “tiranya” “diktadura,” “tuta,” etc. are the limits of the vocabulary of the propagandists.

In themselves, these words are not dull, ugly, nor reminding anyone of a beggar (as Mao said it). But the over-repetition of usage coupled with the hifalutin alienation of meaning generates a propaganda material that is long and empty, bland and boring, incomprehensible and mis-

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<sup>48</sup> Sison, *Ikalawang Kilusang Propaganda*. | I have translated the original excerpt from the Tagalog article.

understandable. We have discussed earlier how hifalutin alien words become meaningless signifiers to the Reader when the Reader does not share the code of the Author. When these and more of such unshared codes become repetitively used and combined with each other, we arrive at a text that is an eyesore for the Reader-masses and yet, completely comprehensible for the Author and his fellow propagandists. See the following example:

### **ANO ANG KALALABASAN NG KASALUKUYANG MGA PATAKARANG PANLIPUNAN AT PANG-EKONOMYA NG GUBYERNO?**

Sa nakaraang tatlo't kalahating dekada, ang doktrinang pang-ekonomya ng neoliberalismo ang nanguna sa pagbubuo ng mga patakarang panlipunan at pang-ekonomya ng GRP.

Sa ilalim ng neoliberalismo, ang malaking kapital, laluna ang dayuhang monopolyong kapital, ay nabibigyan ng kaparaanan upang lubusin ang pandarambong sa ekonomya ng bayan habang tinatangalan ang gubyerno at mamamayan ng kapangyarihang ihinto ito.

Kabilang sa mga patakarang neoliberal ang pagbubukas ng ekonomya sa walang pakundangang pagtambak ng dayuhang produkto at kapital (liberalisasyon); pagbawas ng badyet sa serbisyong panlipunan, at pagsasapribado nito at ng iba pang publikong pag-aari (pribatisasyon); pagtanggap ng regulasyon sa operasyon ng mga pribadong negosyo, at sa kanilang tuloy-tuloy na pagkamal ng tubo (deregulasyon); patuloy na paglusaw sa lokal na produksyon at ekonomya, at pangigingibabaw ng dayuhang kapital (denasyunalisasyon); at

Excerpt 3.3: "Praymer hinggil sa panukala ng NDFP para sa CASER"

This excerpt is taken from BAYAN-ST's 15-page, booklet-form, pamphlet entitled "Praymer hinggil sa panukala ng NDFP para sa CASER (Comprehensive Agreement on Socioeconomic Reforms)" dated July 2018. This primer was mass-distributed in both indoor and outdoor occasions including but not limited to fora, educational discussions, union meetings, mass demonstrations, door-to-door discussions, and public locations in cities where population is concentrated. As said in the title of the primer, it is a thorough and comprehensive discussion of the NDFP's Social and Economic proposal for the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. The excerpt is taken from the second subheading, discussing the current situation of neoliberal economics in the country. By the depth of the discussion, it seems that the intention of the primer is to educate the

member individuals of mass-organizations with the importance of advancing the program of CASER – the Reader-activists. By the mode of distribution, it seems that the primer was also meant to target the Reader-masses.

For the Reader-activist who understands the language of the propagandists, Excerpt 3.3. clearly and sharply defines what neoliberalism is given that the Reader-activist understands the words “dayuhang monopolyong kapital,” “doktrina,” “pagsasapribado” and is knowledgeable of related social and economic concepts. However, for the Reader-masses who know the relations of economic production by the pre-established wage system or the *kasama* system, the primer is bombarded with seemingly endless unshared codes. They seem like blank block letters that disrupt the flow of the reading process in the effort to decode the sign. The added effort to decode the language shared by the Author-propagandist and the Reader-activist is painfully difficult for the Reader-masses. As a result, it becomes boring and disinteresting for the masses. This kind of language that is shared among activists but alien to the masses threatens the principle of grassroots representation.

From the above-mentioned manifestations of stereotyped propaganda writing backed by examples from actual and practical propaganda materials of the progressive left, we see the failure of the propaganda material in the aim to propagate the partisan ideology of the Author to the Reader-masses. Where does this failure of the sign come from?

## **The Failure of Progressive Propaganda**

*The text is rich in the Author's intention but the codes are unshared with the Reader-masses.* For to us, the intention of these propaganda materials is clear: to educate the masses, arouse, organize and mobilize them towards the revolutionary cause. As a written material, the text reflects the partisan ideology, i.e. the national-democratic aspirations of the Author-propagandist. It is intended to expose the flaws in the semi-colonial, semi-feudal system and offer the national-democratic alternative. After all, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan is known for its anti-imperialist stance. The propaganda material is a call-to-action against fascism, dictatorship, and tyranny while promoting the CASER as a socio-economic alternative to the bourgeois neoliberal economics.

In Chapter 2, we have discussed the dialectics of the text – the success of the text lies on whether the Reader could understand the intended meaning and the intention of the Author. This could only become possible if the encoded text is shared by the Reader. However, we have seen that there are certain codes that are unshared wherein the Reader-masses is unfamiliar of such words. Most Author-activists would agree if I say that there are several unshared codes being used in progressive propaganda materials and even in everyday conversations with the masses whether they be foreign or local language. In addition to the words aforementioned: “manipestasyon,” “huwad,” “mapagpasya,” “resolbahin,” “hinggil,” “rehimen,” “kontradiksyon,” “kolektib,” several acronyms such as “IPBK,” “MKMP,” “demsen,” “MK”, and the bombarding use of several isms in a single sentence. And though I am not in the position to say whether these are words comprehensible or not for the masses, these words used every day by the Author-activist are certainly not part of the everyday language of the masses.

The problem arises from two possible causes related to the Model Reader theory: The first is that either the Author does not have a Model Reader in mind or that the Model Reader is too broad. This problem is obvious for the lack of a specific Model Reader results in a text composed of signs from different sign-systems, handpicked from a wide array of possible Model Readers. When the Author-propagandist “shoots at random” without a target in sight, it is sure to miss. The Author-propagandist cannot sufficiently say that the Model Reader is the broad masses for the broad masses is basically everybody else except the ruling class and the activist. The Model Reader is specific, it shares a certain sign-system, a certain background of codes, may it be a certain geographic location (e.g. a certain province, city, or country), line of work (e.g. a particular line-industry, office work, production of a certain commodity) or linguistic framework (e.g. a dialect, jargon, language), etc. The “broad masses,” from the word “broad” itself, do not share a singular language-system.

But the first one cannot be the main problem. BAYAN-ST indeed faces the first problem because, as a multi-sectoral broad formation that aims to target the broadest possible audience, it must have already anticipated the problem of the multiplicity of codes. The second and the most probable one is that the Author does not speak the language of the Model Reader. The Author may have a specific Model Reader in mind but this Model Reader does not exist in reality because there is no such Reader that could both speak such language and belong in the oppressed class. This is mostly caused by the Author not being rooted to the practical social experience, and therefore, the language of the masses. The Author pretends to speak the language of the masses by speaking with the profound Tagalog. This hypocrisy is obvious with the usage of forced mechanical translations of hifalutin words and the bombardment of “ismos (isms).” It is to the denial of the Author-propagandist that his excuse is that there is no direct translation to wholly-encapsulate the notion

of “resetelment” and “awtokratiko” for Filipino (or Tagalog) when the reality is (1) there is no imposed necessity for using *pure* Tagalog language in writing pamphlets, (2) it is impossible that the masses who are embedded in the practical experience of such social conditions cannot articulate these notions, and (3) that the problem lies in the Author thinking in foreign and writing in local. It is not the problem of the masses lacking an articulation of their own social issues but the Author-propagandist not being immersed with the language of the oppressed.

This does not imply that the masses cannot learn this language, for in fact, the Author-activist was once part of the Reader-masses. Eco mentions that the text creates the competence of its Model Reader.<sup>49</sup> Meaning, the text itself could mold its own Model Reader. It is this power of the text that enabled the notions of “fascism,” “imperialism,” and “socialism” to become popularized and comprehensible to the average reader. However, it takes time to become part of the language-game, and the revolutionary usually cannot afford to wait or spend such time until the masses could speak the activist code. Besides, the sign-system ever-evolves as new isms arise in the social ideology.

*The Reader-masses become alienated from the language of the Author-propagandist and vice-versa.* This is the result of successive failures of propaganda. As Author-propagandists pattern their propaganda-texts with failures after failures, the propaganda language slowly becomes a language of its own – a language alien to that of the masses. It becomes the language of phony petit-bourgeois intellectuals whose experiences are derived not from the labour of the land but from the chalkboards, whose hands smell not of metal and sweat but of olden books and pen inks. Whose practical experience of productive work is not shared with the masses but only read or

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<sup>49</sup> Eco. *The role of the reader.* 7

heard from from those who have actually toiled and can only interpret these experiences through the vantage point of a bourgeoisie's ivory tower. In such a way that when the Author-bourgeois-propagandist replicates the experience, it appears not as intended but as a bourgeois-partisan ideology being authoritatively imposed upon the masses. It appears intimidating. And just as the pamphlets they were patterned to, it is necessarily bound to fail. *What happens is there occurs a genesis of a manufactured language.* It creates a language exclusive to activist-propagandists that uses keywords (codes) recognized only by co-Author-propagandists and Reader-activists but not with the Reader-masses; the Reader-masses of whom the pamphlet-texts were supposed to address. This manufactured language is a Frankenstein language – a useless language that comes to being from the stockpile of the dead bodies of unshared codes assembled into a creature of monstrosity which would not long enough, murder its own maker.

*Reading remains passive and does not translate to active reading.* The Author's intention cannot reach the actual Readers because it is not directed towards anybody; in the same way that there is no way for the Reader-masses to reach the Author's intention – a language fissure that disables both parties to contribute to the success of the text. As we may have well noticed in all the examples cited, the texts are not communicative. It speaks of the "mamamayan" (masses or people) as if it observes them from a distance. It is as though the Author-propagandist does not speak to the "mamamayan" neither does it seem like the Author is one of the "mamamayan." And this holds true for most propaganda materials of the progressive left. It speaks in third person, cold and without human touch. And of what impact does this have to the Reader-masses but to see themselves as separate from the "mamamayan?" With this, the masses cannot see themselves as part of a greater social structure, as part of a wider, more systematic oppression and much less do they see themselves as a necessary part of a great action for social change. The Reader-masses,

similar to how it is seen by the Author-propagandist, sees the “mamamayan” as a subject separate from themselves. Reading becomes passive, reading for the sake of reading, without the Reader immersing himself to the text. It is with this that we see how the Reader’s involvement is highly dependent to the commitment of the Author. Without this transcendence from passive reading to active reading, the text remains unsuccessful.

### **Truth Lies in the Practical Experience of the Masses**

Authors may intend to lie.

The importance of being immersed with the practical experience of the masses goes beyond language and signs; more importantly, being immersed guides us in propagating the genuine and legitimate conditions of the people.

Propaganda, being composed of a wide array of signs, are agents of exposition or distortion of truths. It can unveil or mask the reality of states of affairs. The challenge brought about by revolutionary propaganda to the bourgeois class forces the latter to become desperate in controlling the mass ideology and preserving the status quo that serves them. The natural response of the ruling class is to utilize its monopoly of institutions and machineries in order to evolve, intensify, and diversify its propaganda agenda by employing more effective methods and exploring other channels suitable for the purposes of its ideological indoctrination. Most propaganda materials, especially that of the bourgeois, involves several non-truths that derail the Reader-masses away from understanding their real conditions. In other words, it is in the bourgeoisie’s best interest to

propagate false ideology<sup>50</sup> as a response to the growing revolutionary ideology. Where false ideology is the ideology propagated by the ruling class dominating the cognizance of the masses in order to justify the oppressive system<sup>51</sup>. It blinds the proletariat masses from seeing the objective material conditions that ought to sufficiently transform them into socialist workers as a *class-for-itself*.

*False-ideology is hence, the anti-thesis of revolutionary ideology.* Revolutionary ideology must embody the reality of class antagonisms and reveal the existence of state oppression. While false ideology seeks to cover up this reality, revolutionary ideology must expose it.

State propaganda<sup>52</sup> is notorious with the proliferation of black propaganda – that which is filled with false accusations and malicious content. It claims a true statement from outright lies and falsehoods. But black propaganda only works because it banks on the shaky foundations of shattered fractions of truths that serve as the basis for its truth claim. But there is no room for us to recognize the truth value of these small portions of truths in a state propaganda. These portions of truths were not used to enlighten the masses with the reality of their social conditions but to maintain the dominance of bourgeois false ideology – their truth is contaminated with disgusting fallaciousness.

But one must not be distracted from the point. We speak here of authorial intent. The intention of bourgeois propagandists is not only to proliferate falsehood. In fact, such propagandists are not philosophers who should be concerning themselves with the truth. Their

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<sup>50</sup> “False ideology” as used here, is essentially Marx’s notion of “false consciousness.” I have preferred to use the term “ideology” instead of “consciousness” to avoid confusion with the term ‘social consciousness’ which I have established earlier as a product of contradicting ‘partisan ideologies.’

<sup>51</sup> Marx, K., and Engels, F.. *The German Ideology*

<sup>52</sup> State propaganda is propaganda proliferated by ideological apparatuses especially the reactionary government and its machineries, the police, military, and the supreme court. It is bourgeois propaganda in essence as long as the ruling class is held by the bourgeoisie.

intention as Author-reactionaries is to maintain the status quo as dictated upon by their partisan ideology. Deceit is but a means-to-an-end to their class-preservation, it is only instrumental to their agenda. When state propaganda spreads lies and says that the revolutionary movement uses revolutionary tax to extort from the peasants, that the revolutionaries are nothing but fear-causing terrorists, that they are murdering and purging farmers in the countryside, the intention is to claim that these assertions are true whether the Author-reactionary, as an individual, believes it or not; and the masses' acceptance of these statements as true claims leads them to a negative perception of the revolutionary movement and revolutionary ideology as a whole. And since the revolutionary ideology is the negation of bourgeois ideology, the preservation of the bourgeois both as a class and as an ideology prevails. Hence, the use of lies, whether or not the Author knows of its false value, is also driven by ideology and authorial intent precisely because these lies serve for their interest.

*It is only through speaking of the practical experience of the masses that they would be able to grasp that the radical revolutionary path is the path of human emancipation.* Propaganda becomes effective to the masses if it reflects the reality of poverty, if it enlightens them with their state of oppression. Precisely because revolutionary ideology is the anti-thesis of false ideology. All revolutionary propaganda materials must be a direct assault on false ideology. This only becomes possible if the Author correctly depicts the situation of the masses.

*The Author-revolutionary has no need to use false propaganda.* The revolutionary movement is not incapable of using lies and proliferating falsehood, it understands that bourgeois propaganda is bound to crumble upon the weight of its own deceitfulness. While the means of using dishonesty is available to the revolutionary movement, it must choose to become truthful in its assertions. And while I wish to avoid delving into the discourse of ethics and morality, the

Author-revolutionary must not deceive the masses because it implies taking advantage of them. The masses need be enlightened with the reality of their conditions, they deserve and need no deception. The Author-revolutionary does not need to use the refractive property of signs because the truth speaks for itself, the reality of the oppressive conditions of the masses is sufficient to fuel the revolutionary spirit that would eventually topple down the ruling ideology.

Aside from being unnecessary, the Author-revolutionary should not use deceit because it is counter-productive in the exposition of false ideology. Since knowledge is acquired from social practice and from it alone<sup>53</sup>, sooner or later, the masses will be able to discern truth from falsehood based on the compatibility of the partisan ideology with their social circumstances. Author-revolutionaries could not afford to tarnish the history of the revolution with the intentional use of deceitful propaganda.

Whenever we are faced with the challenge of black propaganda, we are presented with a duty to combat it because black propaganda deceives the people and turns their head away from the revolution. Whenever the revolutionary movement is accused of extortion, murder, and terrorism, we must not avoid discussion. Instead, we must immediately and without hesitation, enlighten the masses with truth and reason.

In other words, combating false ideology is exposing the true conditions of class antagonisms. To quote Mao:

“What is scientific never fears criticism, for science is truth and fears no refutation. But those who write subjectivist and sectarian articles and speeches in the form of Party stereotypes fear refutation, are very cowardly, and therefore rely on pretentiousness to overawe others, believing that they can

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<sup>53</sup> Mao Zedong. *Where do correct ideas come from?*

thereby silence people and "win the day". Such pretentiousness cannot reflect truth but is an obstacle to truth. Truth does not strike a pose to overawe people but talks and acts honestly and sincerely.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mao Zedong. *Combat stereotyped Party writing*

*You are implying that the “purpose” of the textual system is assigned by the Author. By what authority do you have of giving criteria for the success or failure of the sign? The sign is as it is. There is no such thing as “purpose” of a sign.*

First of all, it is not “by my authority” to give criteria for the success or failure of the sign. Although I must argue against the notion that “the sign (text) is as it is” for there can be no such thing as a sign without human interaction. The sign is not a sign if not for the human being perceiving and interacting with the material object that serves as the vessel of the sign. Signs and language therefore cannot have innate meanings for if they do, there would not have been a fissure of multi-accentuality and multiplicity of meanings and there would also be no more debates on the problem of interpretation and intention. It is only human social intercourse that has given birth to signs and their corresponding sign-systems.

“Signs emerge, after all, only in the process of interaction between one individual consciousness and another. And the individual consciousness itself is filled with signs. Consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently, only in the process of social interaction<sup>55</sup>.”

And if sign is produced by social intercourse, then sign must have a purpose that can only be designated by the human being. And in the case of the text as a sign, where do we find the closest trace of human interaction but in the dialectical relationship between the Author and the Reader? It could only be the Author who could designate this purpose because it is him who

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<sup>55</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. 11

designates the intended meaning. Whether or not this designated purpose is achieved is the success or the failure or the sign.

*The nature of writing is not always related to reading; writing does not always imply a necessary reader. The Author does not always have to engage in a relationship with the Reader and hence, debunks the argument that the Reader decides the fate of the success of the text system. The purpose of writing may not always be to be read but just “to write something.”*

I do not mean to philosophize about what the nature of writing is. But instead, I was attempting to dissect the textual system of authoring. I am not trying to define what a text is by saying that a text becomes a text when it becomes a link between an Author and a Reader. No. This is for another thesis. Instead, what I intend to say is that an Author always writes with the assumption that a Reader will come to interpret the text. First, I must clarify that what I am discussing since the beginning is about ideological writing – of which, a better term than “writing” is *authoring* (this is why I have been using the term “Author” instead of simply “Writer”). I have thought of a number of counter-examples that those uncharitable philosophers would likely say. To be clear, I do not mean to include other written signs such as “I was here,” private armchair vandalisms, or scribbles from practice of writing the alphabet. What I mean to discuss are those writings which are significantly affected by the social consciousness, those writings which participate in the battlefield of social consciousness – literature, philosophical articles or books, essays, statements, theatrical play or motion picture scripts, position papers, constitutions, manifestos, song lyrics, textbooks, notes or drafts, and the like. “Wherever a sign is present,

ideology is present too<sup>56</sup>.” But these examples contain very little ideological value compared to that of the latter. They can barely reflect or refract any ideological reality besides their very existence qua signs.

In simple terms, I am discussing about the notion of *authoring* where authoring is the type of writing that reflects the Author’s partisan ideology, whether consciously or not. Authoring is always intended to be read by some Reader, of which, as I have mentioned in *The Dialectics of the Text*, the Reader may be the same person as the Author. Clearly, authoring does not include scribbles, vandalisms, doodles, and other nonsense.

Hence, I maintain that all authorships which are ideological in nature are intended for a Reader.

*In Stereotypical Propaganda, your methodology is questionable because it seems as though your analysis is objective when in fact, you are a Reader yourself. How were you able to deduce the Author’s intention of progressive propaganda? Clearly, asking the Authors about the intention is possible but do Author-activists have one and the same intention? For all we know, to arouse, organize, and mobilize the masses is not the intention of the Author-propagandist. This becomes even more problematic for the intended meaning and not just the intention.*

My deduction of the Author-propagandist’s intention comes from the partisan ideology subscribed upon by the Author-propagandist. One should know that pamphlets of the progressive left are never signed by an individual but always under the name of the organization. This means that the text undergoes collective authorship, editing, and workshop. In the case of all the

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<sup>56</sup> Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. 11

pamphlets used, BAYAN-TK was used as the signatory. The partisan ideology of BAYAN is national-democratic with a socialist perspective. It calls for the dismantling of imperialist, feudal, and bureaucrat-capitalistic social relations through arousing, organizing, and mobilizing the broadest masses while drawing a sharp line of distinction against the ruling comprador and landlord class. It calls for the advancement of the interest of the masses and not only a few elites. Hence, assuming that BAYAN-TK is consistent with its principles, the Author-propagandist's intention for the propaganda material should be in line with the interest of the masses.

The second question is of far greater significance and posits serious implications. I recognize the validity of questioning the correctness of my inductions on the intended meaning (as opposed to intention which pertains more to the Author's intended readership effect rather than the semantico-syntactic meaning of the text) of the Author-propagandist. This is because in the process of dissecting the text, I become subsumed into the role of the Reader-activist and as much as any other Reader, there is no way for me to actually 'know' the intended meaning of the Author and whether or not I succeeded. Although what is apparent here is that whether or not I have correctly interpreted the intended meaning of the Author-propagandist, the point is that the codes used in the text are unshared codes with the Reader-masses. This implies that whatever the actual intended meaning of the text is and whether or not my interpretation is correct barely matters because there is practically no way for the Reader-masses to reach it. The lack of the Model Reader, the excessive usage of unshared codes, and the persistence of passive reading all point toward the failure of the text.

*How sure are you that the words you have mentioned are unshared with the Reader-masses? It was assumed earlier that the masses do not understand the codes used in the*

*propaganda materials but what is your basis for saying that these are not part of the everyday language of the masses?*

I am yet to make a formal study on the language of the basic masses. And as much as I hate to be anecdotal (and probably dismissive) regarding this matter, the only way for us to be able to verify this is to take this argument to the streets and the countrysides, immerse with the speaking language of the toiling masses, and try to speak with them using hifalutin academic jargons. There is a good chance that he will stare blankly (and perhaps even frown) at me if I do so.

The gap between the language of the Author-propagandist and the Reader-masses stems from the disparity between the practical experiences of the two. The unshared codes that are under question are usually terms which are exclusively used in the academic space, and the majority of the Filipino masses are bereft of the “*privilege*” (education is still of course, a basic human right) of enjoining the academic discourse. This does not mean that the masses would have no way to understand them, but the proper means is to educate them using their native language; not of the “*privileged*” tongue.

*Stereotypical propaganda writing is a problem mainly on the part of the Author-propagandist. However, if you argue that there is a dialectical relationship between the Author and the Reader, then that means that by your dialectic theory of the Author-Reader relationship, one could infer that the Reader-masses are also to take responsibility for the failure of the text-propaganda.*

As I have mentioned earlier in the *Dialectics of the Text*, the Author sets the standard for success. Had the Author set the standard to be unachievable by its supposed target audience, is the

Reader to be blamed? No. I would much rather point the finger on the social conditions that denied them of the same opportunity that enabled the Author to learn and use such language; but “social conditions” are no human being that could take blame. Hence, it is the Author, being the only other human being involved, whose lack of consideration for his Model Readers’ linguistic capacities caused such problems, that should take responsibility for the text-propaganda.

*Which is more decisive to the success of the text? The success of the intention or the success of the intended meaning? What if the Author successfully achieves his intention but the interpretation of the intended meaning of the text was wrong? Or vice versa, the Reader understands the intended meaning of the text and yet, his reaction is not that of the intended readership effect?*

This is a question of excessive scrutiny. What I have mentioned in the Dialectics of the Text are less of criteria for judging the success of the text but instead, the whole purpose of the text. And there is no clear-cut answer because each text is unique in its own regard. It always depends on the specific intention and intended meaning of a text. The intended meaning and the intention rely on each other. But to entertain the question, I shall explain both scenarios:

If the Reader correctly interprets the intended meaning but failed to achieve the intention, then the text is also, most likely a failure. Authors, Readers, and text-signs do not only communicate signs and ideas. They communicate actions, emotions, practices, referents and denotations, and experiences. Ideas (and signs) in the mind are actualized through the material things they embody. Thus, we can only affirm the sign when we affirm the ensemble of relations that embody the sign. The intended meaning is a bridge to the essence of the text.

If the Author is successful in his intention but the interpretation of the intended meaning of the text was wrong, then the text is also, most likely a failure. It is clear that the Reader was misled. The aim is not only to reach the finish line but to follow the correct path that leads to it. The message of the intention lies in the intended meaning and it is part of the intention to convey this intended meaning.

*You should cease using the term “dialectic” because it is a misnomer to your thesis. Your Author-Reader relationship is not at all dialectic in the Hegelian sense. A true dialectic theory should emphasize on the antagonistic relationship between the Author and the Reader, not in their cooperative roles. It does not even involve a thesis–anti-thesis–synthesis model.*

What absurdity is it to claim an antagonistic relationship between Authors and Readers? Contradictions are not always antagonistic relationships. There is no innate struggle between Authors and Readers and we should not advocate for such. The struggle, and hence the dialectical relationship, lies in the ideological battle that take form through the text – the antagonism of the partisan ideologies between the Author and the Reader. We see the contradiction not in the nature of authoring and reading but in the part that they play in the shaping of social consciousness.

It is dialectical because it recognizes that the social consciousness is always in a state of change. When the abstract becomes negated, it transforms into concrete. The abstract, being the old, ruling partisan ideology; and its negation, the revolutionary ideology. We then apply this opposition into the text and what we find is a text that contributes in the battlefield of social consciousness.

*“It does not matter much if a person produces stereotyped Party writings only for himself to read. If he passes them on to someone else, the number of readers is doubled, and already no small harm is done. If he has them posted up, mimeographed, printed in newspapers or published in book form, then the problem becomes indeed a big one, for they can influence many people. And those who produce stereotyped Party writing always seek large audiences. Thus it has become imperative to expose and destroy it.”*

*–Mao Zedong, Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing*

## **Conclusion**

The battlefield of social consciousness is a battlefield that exists not only inside the individual consciousness as mere struggle of ideas but manifests in all spheres of social discourse with signs and language as a medium to the sensible experience. Struggles of ideologies appear as the rational expression of economic contradictions in the relations of production; with the revolutionary movement as the material force representative of the superior ideology of the oppressed.

Propaganda is an avenue of this battlefield, one of the most apparent, if not the best. Textual propaganda remains the most effective sign-medium for ideological propagation due to its cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and reliability. The revolutionary movement had been extensively utilizing this advantage to mobilize the masses and criticize the bourgeois ideology of the ruling class. Propaganda dissemination of both parties tend to innovate in quantitative and qualitative effectiveness while the ruling ideology attempts to maintain the status quo and the revolutionary movement endeavors to change it.

With this, it is an urgent task for the revolutionary movement to, without cease, advance forward the methods of propaganda writing, but stereotypical propaganda writing stands in the way of this. It is not enough to say that stereotypical propaganda writing is a threat to the propaganda movement for it is already widespread, endemic among the propagandist ranks. It is a cancer destroying the revolutionary movement with the malignance of subjectivism and sectarianism, waiting to be discovered. It should be removed the moment it was detected. Stereotypical propaganda writing is an attitude that consequently fails the text, holding back the revolutionary ideology from reaching the consciousness of the oppressed masses.

Author-revolutionaries must arm themselves with the correct, objective, and concrete linguistic theory to guide its propaganda agenda. With the correct identification of the Author-Reader relationship, the revolutionary propaganda movement would be able to improve its way of writing and counter the fast-adapting bourgeois propaganda. To do this, it must first clash against the prevailing postmodernist reader-response theories and assert for a dialectical-materialist approach to the Author-Reader relationship. Authorial intentionalism should have provided this perspective, but it requires reconciliation with a reader-centric approach in order to attune itself with the fissure of multi-accentuality and multiplicity of meanings. A dialectical theory of the Author-Reader relationship must be born. The basic premises of this dialectical textual relationship are therefore, as follows: (1) The intended meaning of the Author is the correct interpretation of the meaning of the text; (2) The role of the Author is to challenge or reaffirm the partisan ideology of its Readers; (3) The role of the Reader is to identify the correct interpretation of the text and to respond accordingly; (4) The responsibility of the Author is to be explicit of both his intention and intended meaning; (5) The responsibility of the Reader is to transcend the mechanical reading and

engage in active, immersive reading; and (6) the success of the whole textual system depends on the fulfillment of the roles of all parties involved.

With stereotypical propaganda writing consistently failing the textual relationship between the Author-propagandist and the Reader-masses, the material need be sampled and dissected to immediately address the roots of this failure and synthesize the theory with the trenches of revolutionary practice. In observing several pamphlets from the progressive left across the decade and scrutinizing a few during the present year, the following generalizations about the relationship of the Author-propagandist with the Reader-masses are as follows: (1) The Author-activist uses a language that is alien to that of the masses; (2) and the Author-propagandist either does not have a specific Model Reader in mind or he is not truly grassrooted with the masses. These two implications result into (3) passive reading not translating to active or immersive reading; and (4) an impossibility for the Reader-masses to grasp both the intention and intended meaning of the Author-propagandist.

The imperative task of the Author-propagandist is to check its creed of grassroots representation and immerse more into the practical experiences of the masses; closing in the gap between the Author's intention and the experience of the masses. For to participate into the social intercourse with them is the only way to learn and understand their language. The root of textual misinterpretation lies in the fissure of multi-accentuality and multiplicity of meanings, and this challenge magnifies exponentially depending on the usage of language. Thereby creating a viscous cycle of practical alienation (the alienation of the Author-propagandist from the practical experiences of the masses of which he is supposed to propagate) and language disparity (the language of the Author-propagandist being different and meaningless for the Reader-masses). This build up into a crisis of generating a manufactured language – a new language that is exclusive

among Author and Reader-activists – that constructs a language-barrier between the revolutionary and the masses, thereby leading into an inescapable deadlock in the viscous cycle of language alienation and hinders the proliferation of the partisan ideology of the oppressed.

## **Recommendations**

This study of the textual relationship opens new doors to further questions regarding the usage of language and its alienation with that of the masses. In order to fully establish a dialectical theory of the text, we must conduct further studies using the Marxist methods of analysis: objective, concrete, and scientific.

Our first task is to conduct further analysis of the general and particular characteristics of the language of the Filipino masses. Our shallow understanding of their language leads us to speculations and estimations only based on our subjective understandings of practical experiences as Author-academics. The idea is to define the language of the masses, both in their structural patterns (jargons, keywords, phrases, metaphors, epistemologies, grammar, etc.) and pragmatic applications (relations of their language with economic behavior, class antagonisms, power relations, political ideals, everyday discourse, etc.). To do this, the academic must not make the same mistake as the Author-bourgeois-propagandist who observes the masses from a distance and taking note of the words they use but should be truly immersed with their practical way of life.

Our second task is to conduct an analysis of the five decades of revolutionary propaganda in comparison with the historical accounts of the strongest and weakest mass campaigns. With this, we would be able to identify the effectivity of propaganda materials in mobilizing the masses and produce a quantitative assessment of our methods of work. Thus, we will be able to determine

our strengths and weaknesses, our trends and tendencies, the socio-political and ideological impacts, and the overall of significance of our propaganda work.

Our third task is to criticize the idealist view and academic-centered approach of semiotics. Semiotics as a discipline has been highly influenced by many so-called Marxists and Neo-Marxists and yet, was barely applied (or may not even be applicable) to the trenches of revolutionary practice. A large part of prevailing semiotics nowadays, whether structuralist or post-structuralist, relies heavily on immaterial and abstract complications without considering that the test of the pudding is in the eating. If Marx were alive today, he would be complaining yet again on how we have interpreted the world in various ways. Our aim is to establish a genuine Marxist Semiotics, that which utilizes the superiority of dialectical materialism, concrete observations from practical experiences, and scientific method to interpret the true nature of the sign. And in the process, criticize the insincerity of Semiotic Marxism which seeks to reduce ideological exchange and production to the mere level of signs and their structures<sup>57</sup>.

Revolutionary theory and practice remain at the forefront in the battlefield of social consciousness. We are facing a mighty force of bourgeois propaganda, individualist ideals, and false consciousness. Hence our final and most important task: to pursue and intensify our struggle against stereotypical propaganda writing and the hegemony of the ruling ideology through effective and successful revolutionary propaganda that genuinely reflects the state of oppression of the masses.###

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<sup>57</sup> Bergesen, *The rise of semiotic marxism*

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