

Master-Slave Dialectics and the Evolution of the Self in Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*

Met'eb Ali Alnwairan

English Section, Department of Foreign Languages, University of Nizwa, Birkat Al-Mouz, P.O. Box 33, PC 616, Sultanate of Oman

ABSTRACT

This paper is devoted to dissecting the master-slave dialectics in Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* (1947). The paper deals with the dialectics as a depiction of a unique "productive process" and transformation in human societies. Dialectics describes the evolution of the self-conscious human individuality as a foundation of the individual's moral agency. The readings provided in this paper reveal a part of the wide scope of interpretations this dialectics can provide. I argue that the novel represents a historical stance, in which Bulosan's self-consciousness is formed. His journey from the Philippines to America represents the master-slave dialectics introduced by Hegel and adopted by Marx later on. The paper illustrates the role of the dialectics in helping the protagonist to better understand his identity and to overcome his internal conflicts.

Keywords: *America is in the Heart*, Carlos Bulosan, Filipino Americans, Hegel, identity recognition, Marx, master-slave dialectics, self-consciousness

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of identity, identity recognition, and the means to attain that recognition are among the issues that attracted the attention of thinkers and fiction writers alike throughout history. Immigrant novelists, for

example, attempted to come to terms with many challenges of identity recognition in their host communities. Adams (2007) declared that American immigrant writers tended to tackle crucial issues about power and identity more than any other issue in their new communities. The Filipino-American novelist Carlos Bulosan, for instance, is one of the prominent writers who depicted immigration experience in terms of identity-definition and struggle toward recognition.

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E-mail address:

m.alnwairan@unizwa.edu.om

Before diving deep in Carlos Bulosan's novel and exploring the dialectical relationships in it, it is worth pursuing a brief survey of the master-slave dialectics within the works of the two German philosophers, Georg Wilhelm Hegel and Karl Marx. The master-slave dialectics was developed in Georg Wilhelm Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the section entitled "Lordship and Bondage," Hegel (1977) explains the development of one's self-consciousness through the encounter with two forces, master and slave. The purpose of the master-slave dialectics, according to Hegel, is to bring to light a better understanding of the fundamental necessity of human beings, self-conscious. In "Lordship and Bondage," Hegel (1977) argues that humans can acquire freedom by going through a unique dialectical process. This process can only be performed through self-consciousness and knowledge.

In Hegelian dialectics, a struggle for recognition is initiated, which, in turn, escalates to a 'life-or-death struggle'. Hegel explained that both master and slave "must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being for themselves to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case" (Hegel, 1977, p. 114). The result of this struggle is the enslavement of one man by the other, establishing two opposed types of consciousness: lord and bondsman. One of the outcomes of this struggle, according to Hegel (1977), is the recognition (*Anerkennung*) between the master and the slave as both sides realize the interdependent relationship that governs

their lives. In the same way, Bulosan employed similar Hegelian conceptions throughout his novel. Carlos, the protagonist of the novel, went through a fierce struggle against the traditional masters in the Philippines as well as in America. With the progress of actions, Carlos testified Hegel's conclusions as he overcame the obstacles of dependency that faced him. The young man succeeded in confronting the brutality of the Master while reshaping the nature of traditional master-slave dialectics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article used Hegelian and Marxist dialectics to dissect the internal conflict that the protagonist of the novel undertook. Carlos passed through two opposing phases: the slave phase and master phase, which, in turn, represented moving from inauthentic self towards the authentic mode of existence. The novel shows how a self-conscious individual, like Carlos, succeeds in obtaining true and free existence by going through a long struggle against various types of repressive authorities.

It is worth mentioning here to refer to the impact of Hegelian dialectics on Karl Marx and his extended philosophical tradition that followed his death. Marx's views of the role of the working class in the social struggle towards establishing a classless society is obviously akin to the Hegelian narrative of the role of bondsman in developing true self-conscious being. Although Marx deviates at a certain point from Hegel, we can still find many parallels between the two. The position of the proletariat in Marxist thought

is similar to the role of the bondsman in Hegelian philosophy. The proletariat acquires the same production value as the slave. Their labor allows them to reevaluate their surroundings and position in this world because of their ability to create value. In the same sense, the capitalists (for Marx) is equal to the Master (for Hegel) as both receive the necessary supplies and make the profit they need from the labor of the proletariat/slave. The worker's dependency on the capitalist master provides the latter with his position as a dominating power over the workers.

Marx was not a mere passive imitator of Hegel's philosophy. He adopted and developed Hegel's dialectics and took it to a more "materialistic" level. Although both Marx and Engels considered Hegelian dialectics as one of the greatest achievements of German philosophy, Hegel's ideas were too idealistic and abstract for them. In *Anti-Dühring* Friedrich Engels writes, "Marx and I were pretty well the only people to rescue conscious dialectics from German idealist philosophy and apply it in the materialist conception of nature and history" (quoted in Carver, 2011, p. 404). In *Capital* (1974), Marx gave more explanations about how he deviated from Hegel. He explained, "to Hegel, the life-process of the human brain ... is the demiurge of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea.'" (Marx, 1974, p. 27). With Marx, the equation is different. For him, "the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought." (Marx, 1974, p. 27).

One of the major quests for Marxist dialectics is resolving class struggle because of its vital role in achieving class consciousness and prosperity. Further, the term "class struggle" was mainly developed by Marxist thinkers to define the dialectical relationship between mental labor (capitalist) and manual labor (proletariat). The struggle between the different social classes is essential for Marxist dialectics to act. This struggle, in turn, takes the oppressed individual to a higher level of self-consciousness. Reading Bulosan's novel through Marx's lens highlights the dynamics of class issues presented in the novel. After their migration to the United States, Carlos and his brother were involved in a more complex dialectical relationship within the American capitalist system. Similarly, in the United States, thousands of Filipino immigrants faced the same exploitation they had faced in the Philippines. On the plantations and in factories of early twentieth-century America, poor immigrants endured the exploitation of merciless masters and were entangled in complex master-slave relationships. The discussion below exposes the hidden dynamics of the master-slave dialects as they appear in different settings in the novel, ranging from the rice fields in the Philippines to the fish canneries in the United States.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We can say that Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* is a good example of a literary text that shows class dialectics in motion.

Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* presents a story of the young Carlos who overcomes the brutality of both feudalism and capitalism and achieves a better understanding of one of the fundamental necessities to human beings, self-consciousness. Bulosan was a Filipino-American novelist, poet, labor organizer, and activist who spent his life struggling for the rights of immigrants and workers in the United States. In 1930, Bulosan immigrated to the United States in search of a better life. In the States, he was one of the pioneering figures in the long struggle for civil rights for Filipino-American people as one of the dynamic components of American society. The novel, from a more general perspective, presents decisive testimony to the role of human struggle in achieving self-consciousness and freedom.

The ties between the work and the author's life experiences are so strong that the novel is occasionally called an autobiography. Bulosan himself was born in Binalonan, a Filipino city on the island of Luzon, to a working-class family. Bulosan spent his early childhood doing manual labor in the rural areas of the Philippines until his late teenage years when he left his homeland to the United States. He first arrived in Seattle, Washington in 1930 and would never return to the Philippines.

Master-slave relationships are so obvious in *America is in the Heart*. The author, intentionally or not, shows us how the different human dynamics/dialectics within the same society are the engine room of the class struggle between the oppressor

and the oppressed as well as means of acquiring self-consciousness and freedom. This includes "human relations" in various frames, both large and small, both on global, political, and personal levels.

In the novel, Carlos spends his childhood in an unfair world of rigid traditions and brutal feudalism. The novel's opening provides an overview of the culture of the rural Philippines in the first half of the twentieth century. Plowing the land with water buffalos and using old techniques in farming with other primitive social practices are described. Traditions, like finding out if a bride is a virgin or not, are being challenged by the younger educated generation. This clash between the two generations is clear when Carlos's brother Leon leaves the barrio and moves to Luzon with his wife. The novel clarifies that there is fierce social agitation in the Philippines at that time. The 'estranged' younger generation has initiated a movement for social change and national independence away from old social restrictions and the domination of colonial powers. Throughout the first part of the novel, the author vividly portrays the rural areas which are filled with farmers who work for the *bacileros*, the landowners. Carlos's family works on four hectares of land only. It is a subsistence kind of farming for it is just enough to feed the family. This feudal system is a fertile ground for dialectics to work.

Interestingly, Hegel's master-slave dialectics is situated in the feudal system in the first place as a more accurate translation of Hegel's master-slave relationship is

“lord-bondsman.” In fact, translations that use “master-slave” instead of “lord-bondsman” (like A. V. Miller’s translation of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* 1977) miss the feudal dimension of the equation conveyed in the German terms “Herrschaft” and “Knechtschaft”. Cole suggested that Hegel used the terms *Herr* and *Knecht* for a special purpose. Cole added that, usually, the struggle between lord and bondsman revolved around “land,” and this gives relevance to Hegel’s criticism of feudal dialectics. Cole believed that the dialectical struggle for recognition that led to self-consciousness works perfectly in a feudal system as it was viewed as the specific system within which a better realization of modernity and freedom was accommodated (Cole, 2015).

Feudalism as a rigid system of land ownership and human exploitation is clearly presented in the novel. When brother Macario needed money to finish his schooling, he returned to Binalonan to ask for his family’s aid. The helpless parents had no other choice except to sell the rest of their land to provide Macario with the money he needed. The novel sheds light on the fact that peasants, in the Philippines, have a hard life and are exploited by all other classes in society, exemplified by the usurers, middle class, and the landowners. Here we find the typical dialectical relationship outlined by Hegel. Hegel’s lord-bondsman dialectics was founded upon Hegel’s observations of German feudalism. Cole argued that “there was no capitalism around for Hegel to critique. The truth of the matter is born

from an analogy: what feudalism is to Hegel capitalism is to Marx” (Cole, 2015, p. 814). Bondsmen like Carlos’s father were exploited and mistreated by landlords and moneylenders. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel explained this relationship as one of the earliest stages of history, which participated in the evolution of Man’s spirit and self-consciousness. Because of this struggle between lords and bondsmen, social conditions reach the point where there is a rebellion of peasants breaking out in some rural provinces in the Philippines.

Carlos’s family became more and more entangled in the troubles of the feudal system of the Philippines. Carlos was not disconnected from the surrounding environment in which he lived. Although he was still a young boy, he developed a social awareness because of his family’s loss of land. He became aware and critical of poverty and degradation he experienced. The father, who sold the last hectare he owned, could not acquire land from any other place and hired himself out in many menial jobs as a day laborer. Carlos himself was under the scourge of the harsh society in which he lived. He worked in a project of building a highway from Manila to Baguio.

In the novel, the author wants to bring the truth of feudalism to the surface. It is clear now that Carlos opened his eyes for the first time in a feudal world. The rural areas are filled with farmers who farm the land for the “bacienderos” or the landowners. Using water buffalos and other primitive practices for plowing the land, the family members toil all over the year to save what is enough

for the basics of a living. The main part of the income goes to the landowners. Not surprisingly, Carlos had no childhood at all. Like any other kid living in the rural parts of the Philippines, he must work in the fields or in the local markets at an early age. With almost no skills or education, they go from one menial job to another to make a living. In a subsistence level of life, peasants cannot offer their children a better life.

Despite being illiterate, Carlos's father was fully aware of the importance of education in enhancing people's life. Brother Macario, the hope of the family, was attending high school and the father was selling land, one hectare at a time to a moneylender, to afford Macario's education and living expenses. Carlos explained, "My father and mother, who could not read or write, were willing to sacrifice anything and everything to put my brother Macario through high school" (Bulosan, 1973, p. 14). The whole family hoped that Macario would return to Binalonan and started his teaching career to save the family from their miserable life. The intention of the father was to use the income of Macario's teaching career to help pay off the moneylender and to afford his other sons' education. Wesling pointed out, "Education is thus at the center of an exploitative patriarchal, colonial arrangement masquerading as a democratic intervention" (Wesling, 2011, p. 154). Ironically, the family sacrificed almost everything and sank deeper in poverty only to ensure the education of one of its members. Perhaps this 'sacrifice' stems from the family's aspiration for liberty that would bring self-consciousness.

The importance of education and its role in liberating the working class is vital for establishing self-consciousness. According to Wood, the aim of education for Hegel lies in "developing a character which values itself for what it has in common with other people" (Wood, 1998, p. 24). In the same sense, Marxists suppose that education is one of the effective means to liberate the proletariat. In Marxism, the educational system is one component of the superstructure and, as a result, a reflection of the economic reality. Education, as one of the major institutions in any society, reflects the material world and material conditions that produced it. Ferreira and Bittar clarify that for Marx and Engels, education was an important concern due to its role in constructing the individual "whose physical and spiritual potential would be fully developed and not subjugated to the domination of capital" (Ferreira & Bittar, 2008, p. 639). Further, in their *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels called for "Free public education for all children and abolition of all child labor in factories" (Marx & Engels, 1967, p. 125). Here Marx emphasized the idea that the educational system of his time needed a holistic revision to meet the needs of the ever-changing nature of societies. He thought that a lot of false assumptions were taught to people all over the world. He argued that education could bring solutions for the crushed proletariat.

Marx and Engels foresaw that without education, the working class would remain locked in poverty and hardships. It is only

with the education they will gain the chance to create a better life. Therefore, in their *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (1967) argued that education could fight the ruling class. At their time, the bourgeois class was waging war against the feudal powers in Germany and thus enlisted the proletariat as its ally. Because of such a conflict, the proletariat gained education and experience which was used to fight the ruling class (Marx & Engels, 1967). The *Communist Manifesto* proposes that expanding the scope of public education and making it accessible by the working class are among the major demands, and henceforth Marx and Engels found themselves underlining new and revolutionary guidance to the working class and socialist movement in the world.

In the novel, Macario educated his younger brother, Carlos, in the Philippines to prepare him for the future struggle. In the second part of the novel, we discover that even during his stay in Los Angeles County Sanitarium, Carlos spared no time to read and educate himself. He was introduced to many insightful works which shaped his identity and elevated his thought. He took advantage of the new life offered to him to establish a more complex understanding of life and self. This stage in Carlos's life was so decisive that it prepared him to be a social activist whose mission was protecting the rights of his fellow Filipino immigrants on the West Coast.

Class issues are also present in the first few chapters of Bulosan's novel. During his many trips with his mother to sell their products, the young Carlos noticed the

arrogance and pride of the upper class and their attitudes towards the peasants. Carlos was critical of the class differences as his mother,

did not pay too much attention to her work, but was admiring the delicately embroidered dresses of the rich women, their smooth, silk handkerchiefs, and the way they carried themselves in the market. For the first time, I realized that mother, always in rags, noticed how people wore elegant clothes and walked royally in the crowded place. (Bulosan, 1973, p. 37).

Carlos's mother was so affected by her class consciousness. She looked to be obedient when she dealt with women from higher classes. The Mother's character develops what is known as false-consciousness— a mental state developed in the mind of the working class. False-consciousness is a Marxist claim that various processes in capitalist systems are misleading and false to the proletariat, and to other classes. Jost (1995) defined false-consciousness as “the holding of false or inaccurate beliefs that are contrary to one's own social interest and which thereby contribute to the maintenance of the disadvantaged position of the self or the group” (Jost, 1995, p. 400). These processes change the true balance of forces between these classes. False-consciousness keeps the working class trapped in their miserable life, endlessly struggling to make a living day after day.

The encounter with the rich class does not end with this. That particular day had changed Carlos's life forever. Carlos was aware of every single incident or gesture that happened that day. He could look deep inside the manners of people around him. He was mainly concerned with how his mother was dealing with such situations, especially when the young rich girl approached them,

The wonderful creature with the dainty agility approached our booth and noticed my mother's shining curiosity and envy. She stopped abruptly in front of my mother, her lips trembling with contempt. 'What are you looking at, poor woman?' she asked, raising her silk umbrella in her hand. My mother was dumbfounded by her elegance. Suddenly the girls struck the basket of the beans and dashed off, leaving my mother with startled eyes. ... My mother crawled on her knees scooping up the beans into the basket. 'It is all right,' she kept saying. 'It is all right'. (Bulosan, 1973, p. 38).

It was not all right at all for the young boy. His soul was still not infected by the false-consciousness that plagued the other peasants. It was Carlos's first discovery of class clashes in Filipino society. After that day, Carlos had become more familiar with the middle-class social attitudes and their stand on the peasant issues. He had become more aware of their stand regarding national issues, too. Carlos discovered in this striking

moment his actual status in the society. For the first time in his life, he felt alienated. In such a merciless society, peasants are always living in an alienated state of mind since they are deprived of the products and wealth of the country they have produced.

This encounter with the upper class brings to light the Other's gaze and its role in the dialectical relationship between the lord and the bondsman. Sartre argued that it was the "gaze" of the Other which triggered the conflict that governed all social relations. Through the gaze of the Other, the subject experienced alienation from himself/herself because the gaze reduces the subject to a "being-in-itself" rather than a "being-for-itself" and eventually, this relationship threatened the subject's own *freedom*. The other's gaze reduced the person to an object rather than a subject. To complicate the matter more, Sartre explained that in this situation, the subject's becoming "stolen" by the Other. Sartre continued his narration to this dialectical relationship as he claimed "while I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me" (Sartre, 1996, p. 364). As we may tell now, Sartre's argument is derived from Hegel's "master/slave" dialectical relationship I discussed at the beginning of this essay. When Carlos's mother met the rich woman in the market, the two immediately entered into a struggle against each other as each lady tried to overcome the other. The struggle stems from their need to prove and practice their own being; the gaze seeks to

shake off the Other's understanding of her being as a free subject.

Al-Jarrah (2018) built on Lewis R. Gordon's account and presented his perception of the "third self," a particular state between *I* and *myself* (*Me*). He explained "the *I* connotes my subjectivity; as a person of action and agency, the *myself* implies the *I* as an object of my consciousness, whereas the *me* means the *I* as objectified by others" (Al-Jarrah, 2018, p. 258-259). Al-Jarrah added, this *third self* contained two existential forces: the first detached the subject from his/her own self and the second absorbed the subject's feeling of *otherness* (Al-Jarrah, 2018). In *America is in the Herat*, the *third self* was an expected consequence of the identity crisis that emerges from the Other's gaze. The young Carlos found it difficult, puzzling, and even shameful to understand his identity under the Other's gaze.

Gradually, Carlos learnt that under the present feudal system nothing would protect his helpless family from oppression and exploitation. Understanding his situation as a mere object in the upper-class eyes and a tool in the feudal system becomes a priori in Carlos's struggle towards affirming his true self. His father expresses his own criticism of the whole system they live in. After losing the last hectare of land, he told Carlos, "There is something wrong in our country when a man can take away something that belongs to you and your family ... this is the end son" (Bulosan, 1973, p. 54). After that, the social and economic situation in the Philippines declined drastically as

there were more peasant uprisings due to the greedy landlords and their endless ambitions. Carlos observed, "Each year the landlords demanded a larger share, until it became impossible for the peasants to live" (Bulosan, 1973, p. 58).

Carlos, who was aspiring for a positive change in his life, immigrated to the United States in search of better life conditions away from the hardships, poverty, and exploitation which he experienced in his homeland. Mercene pointed out that the first records of Filipino immigration to the United States went back to the sixteenth century (Mercene, 2007). Sterngass stated that small settlements were first documented in the beginnings of the eighteenth century. While the main immigration waves did not begin until the early twentieth century when the Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States in the Treaty of Paris (Sterngass, 2007).

Ironically, when Carlos moved to the New World, he went out of the frying pan into the fire. He was so ambitious for a better future. The myth of the American dream had seduced him. In America, Carlos was still young, naïve, lacking the necessary experience in life. When Carlos and Marcelo arrived in Seattle, things did not go the way the young men had planned. They engaged in a card game that ended with losing all of their money. They could not pay the hotel bill and were forced to work in a fish cannery in Alaska. The brothers found themselves trapped again in a more complex dialectical relationship within the American capitalist system. Carlos recalled,

We were forced to sign a paper which stated that each of us owed the contractor twenty dollars for bedding and another twenty for luxuries. What the luxuries were, I have never found out. ... It was the beginning of my life in America, the beginning of a long flight that carried me down the years, fighting desperately to find peace in some corner in life. (Bulosan, 1973, p. 101).

Ironically, Filipino peasants faced the same exploitation in the United States they faced in the Philippines. At the cannery, obviously, there was the same exploitation, and the same kind of master-slave relationship. The work conditions were dangerous, unhealthy, and unendurable. Carlos explained that many fellow Filipino workers were negatively affected by such conditions,

The contractors rapaciously exploited their workers. They had henchmen in every cannery who saw to it that every attempt at unionization was frustrated and the instigators of the idea punished. The companies also had their share in the exploitation; our bunkhouses were unfit for human habitation. The lighting system was bad and dangerous to our eyes, and those of us who were working in the semi-darkness were severely affected by the strong ammonia from the machinery. (Bulosan, 1973, p. 101-102).

America is not what Carlos expected earlier. The poor newcomer faces the greed and exploitation of Capitalism in the United States. Besides exploitation, Carlos faces the ugliest kinds of racial discrimination, too. It was so hard and dangerous to be a Filipino living in the United States in the thirties and forties of the past century. Carlos observed, "it was now the year of the great hatred: the lives of Filipinos were cheaper than those of dogs. They were forcibly shoved off the streets when they showed resistance" (Bulosan, 1973, p. 143). Carlos explained how he was confronted with the extremist hatred of the whites wherever he went. He was not happy with his life in America, but still, he was not ready to give up his hope of freedom and self-recognition. He was still determined to make it work. He was so sure that he must fight against the master's mentality until the bright end came. Here Carlos was more aware of the nature of class struggle as he showed a more sophisticated level of class consciousness which would take him later to a superior level of self-consciousness. Carlos—as a model of the slave in Hegelian dialects—realized the master's dependency on him. It was through this dialectical relationship, Hegel concluded, the slave could acquire his true sense of self-consciousness and freedom. It is at this moment in the novel, and for the first time perhaps, Carlos understood that the capitalist masters were dependent on the labor of the workers and their ability to produce and serve the capitalist system. The young man decided to take action and fought for the rights of the oppressed cannery workers.

Toward the last few chapters of the novel, Carlos became curious to express himself and spoke to the world about his story and struggle against the greed and exploitation of the capitalist society he lived in. In such situations, the oppressed subject has two options of response, inauthentic and authentic responses. To use Sartre's labels, by shifting to inauthenticity (or bad faith), the subject, due to the pressure practiced by the social environment, embraces false values, surrenders to the pressure, and abandons his/her freedom and identity, in other words acting inauthentically. The other option, namely the "authentic" response, requires the subject to gain identity by obtaining the Other's recognition and to develop this identity positively for the good of the subject. For Sartre, authenticity "consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate" (Sartre, 1995, p. 65). In *America is in the Heart*, Carlos proved to be among these rare authentic subjects. When Carlos realized that he could read and write in English well enough to communicate, he became so happy and proud of himself for this achievement because he had the means to obtain the recognition of the Other.

Equipped with the skills to write, Carlos continued his "authentic" struggle against the exploitation and discrimination of Capitalism. He wrote articles for newspapers. He became more aware of the battle going on between the labor force and the dominant capitalist system. Carlos's

friend, José, explained the situation as he said, "It is a long story. This is a war between labor and capital. To our people, however, it is something else. It is an assertion of our right to be human beings again, Carl." (Bulosan, 1973, p. 186). Carlos's activities developed as he started to write a column and helped organize workers to claim their rights. Writing in newspapers supports constructing other Pilipino immigrants' self-consciousness of their rights and their status. Carlos wrote to gain recognition as an individual and as part of the larger American self. He used writing to call for the rights of Filipinos in the country. Carlos was mainly influenced by his friend Pascual who taught him, " 'It is for the workers that we must write,' he said weakly. 'We must interpret their hopes as a people desiring the fullest fulfillment of their potentialities' ". (Bulosan, 1973, p. 187)

Carlos and his friends became social activists with revolutionary ideas. They began their open campaign calling for a new social order based on equality. Carlos dreamed of a new world in which there was no exploitation nor discrimination. Carlos and other Filipino activists established a union called the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) that targeted achieving the full rights of Filipino workers as its primary goal. After that, he participated in an organization called the Committee for Protection of Filipino Rights (CPFR); the major goal of this committee was to obtain full citizenship rights and status for Filipino immigrants in the United States.

According to Marxism, as the dialectics complicates further, the proletariat forms organized unions to protect their rights. It does not take a long time, when the workers understand that their traditional demands—the improvement of wages and working conditions—can only bring temporal benefits. Marx explains the limitations of economic struggle as workers,

Ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. (Marx, 2006, p. 61).

As the economic struggle cannot improve the lifestyle of the workers in the long run, the workers' unions need to turn to a "political struggle." This step can be taken as a sign of self-consciousness progress.

Towards the end of the novel, Carlos developed "political self-consciousness" as an advanced stage in his struggle for freedom and self-recognition. Bignall (2011) declared that resistance of the oppressed "is enabled by the identification of a collective, self-conscious and oppositional subjectivity." (Bignall, 2011, p. 60). Bignall added this "political self-consciousness is asserted through counter-discourse and concrete action" (Bignall, 2011, p. 60), and facing the discourses used to legitimize the subjugation of the oppressed individuals. In a similar vein, Carlos's activities developed as time passes. He held classes, teaching the

workers about democracy and their universal rights. When the Philippines was attacked by the Japanese during World War II, the immigrant Filipinos in the United States wanted to help fight for the Philippines. Carlos and other Filipino activists began a movement to allow Filipinos to join the American army. Eventually, their efforts led to a special proclamation, allowing Filipinos to serve in the armed forces. Carlos considered that as the first victory the Filipinos had achieved in their battle for civil rights in the United States.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper deals with the dialectics as a necessary liberating and productive process in the history of human struggle towards obtaining recognition and freedom. Based on the principles of Hegel's and Marx's dialectics, the paper sheds light on the evolution of the self-conscious, human individuality as a foundation of the individual's moral agency.

Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* presents a story of a young man who overcomes the brutality and exploitation of both feudalism and Capitalism and achieves a better understanding of one of the fundamental necessities to human beings, self-consciousness. Carlos acquired freedom by going through a unique dialectical process performed through self-consciousness and knowledge. Carlos social and economic consciousness increased day by day throughout the novel. First, Carlos, like his father, believed in the value of education as an important means of

freeing the oppressed peasants. The writer showed the great capacities of education in developing human consciousness that valued itself and stood firm to claim its rights. By the end of the novel, Carlos was free of the false consciousness which plagued the other peasants/workers and made them blindly accept the unfair structure of the systems they lived in. Carlos reestablished his new identity as a human being free of exploitation, suppression, and alienation in the new world. Carlos confronted the obstacles of dependency that faced him, established new types of authority over traditional ‘masters,’ and, eventually, gained the power to reverse traditional master-slave dialectics.

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