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ABSTRACT. The *Sinulog* Festival is a fiesta that happens annually in the city and island-province of Cebu, Philippines every December-January. It is a massive pilgrimage to the *Santo Niño* or the religious image of Christ figured as a child king and a tourist event full of dancing and festive performances. In this essay, I examine a small portion of this festival or the parade to interpret flow. The concept of flow in academic terms is fluid and multifaceted, having been construed in a number of ways in the social sciences and the humanities. Various studies have also cited flow as an explanation of mobility between transnational places. In this paper, I examine and locate flow not through global and transnational perspectives but within a localized and micro-perspective of performance studies and auto-ethnography. I suggest that flow in the *Sinulog* parade is an engaged participation and witnessing of people emplaced and performing in this event. This form of engaged participation and witnessing reveals a complex sociality by a performing public during a sacred and festive event within Cebu, Philippines.

Examining Flow through Auto-ethnography and Performance Studies

Keywords: flow, cultural performance, Philippine performance studies, engaged participation, witnessing

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In 2013, I participated in the *Sinulog* Festival, an annual event that happens between the last week of December and third week of January in the city and island-province of Cebu in Central Philippines. Sally Ann Ness has investigated the cultural growth of this festival through its performances and choreography in "The 'Sinulog' Dancing" and *Body, Movement, Culture*. Related to this, Julius Bautista has systematically examined the "ethnohistory" of Cebu and the religious materiality of the *Santo Niño*, the central and iconic figure in the *Sinulog* festivities.

According to Ness in *Body, Movement, and Culture*, Bautista in *Figuring Catholicism: An Ethnohistory of the Santo Niño De Cebu*, the festival also refers to a "historical" encounter more than four hundred years ago. In 1521, the fleet of European voyagers led by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was said to have landed on an island somewhere in the vast ocean between the American Continent and Asia. Their arrival was welcomed and celebrated by the people in that island. This was then followed by a Holy Mass and a Christian baptism of the island's leaders Rajah Humabon and Hara Amihan, who then became King Carlos and Queen Juana, respectively. As a symbol of their transformation from "native" heads into rulers with new Western names and religion, they were said to have been given a gift – the iconic statue of the *Santo Niño* or Jesus Christ figured as a child-king.

Despite questions raised by Miguel Bernad on whether such encounter between Magellan's fleet and the rulers of the said island did really occur in an island of Butuan or Limasawa in the Visayas region where Cebu is also located, the festival has been sustained by the religious devotion to the *Santo Niño* and the dominance of Catholicism in the Philippines. Its performances revolve around the worship of and pilgrimage towards the icon, which predates the modern and more commercially touristic acts of the *Sinulog*. The pilgrimage has two major activities: a nine-day prayer-ritual of devotees at the Minor Basilica of the Santo Niño de Cebu and a religious procession around urban Cebu held on the last day of the novena. Millions of devotees from all over the country and overseas partake in these events.

However, according to Ness in *Body, Movement, and Culture*, the festival's contemporary title and meaning derives from "*sinulog*," which means to create or cause flow [from the Cebuano root word *sulog*: flow, a fluid stream, or a current-like movement + the infix "in" that transforms the object into action/actor]. For Ness, flow is encompassed by the dance-rituals incorporated in the religious activities around the *Santo Niño* (157). Additionally, this term was coined by Cebu City's Tourism Council to reinvigorate the city's economy in 1983-1984 as part of the then President Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s agenda (163-173).

During my fieldwork in 2013, informants interpreted *Sinulog* as flow performed through joyous street dancing and revelry, and the very act of worshiping the *Santo Niño* icon by attending and contributing their talent to the success of the activities at various venues.

My study is an examination of flow based on reflections on my participation in this festival. This auto-ethnographic writing is part of my larger project in investigating cultural performances in the Philippines. While flow is directly connected to the meaning of the festival as explained above, I also see it as a useful lens through which to examine performance in this Asian archipelago and in the context of mobility research in a non-Western but globalized cultural setting: postcolonial Cebu in the Philippines.

Firstly, the concept of flow in academic terms has varied and multifaceted interpretation. Oftentimes, it is cited in the study of mobile and globalized contemporary world, notably found in Ole B. Jensen's examination of urban mobility; Julie Cidell's study of flow and pauses; Kaufmann et al.'s notion of mobility as capital; Hannam et al.'s introduction to Mobility Studies; and the more recent reflection by James Faulconbridge and Allison Hui on researching "mobilities". Flow is also theorized by Arjun Appadurai as "global ethnoscapes"; by Manuel Castells as part of "networked and informational city/society"; by Ulf Hannerz as "cultural complexity and global ecumene"; and by Jon McKenzie as "global performance and performativity".

But Stuart Rockefeller suggests that flow should also be reflected by a grounded and more micro-level examination of a cultural event. For him flow is "cobbled together by actors and observers from extremely heterogeneous actions, projects and interactions that occur in many different scales" despite being a result of efficient and globalized movements of agents and agencies (567). This means that a specific cultural location, like the place of the *Sinulog*, also provokes the flow of people, ideas, and materialities, complementing mobilities imagined and performed through larger global scales.

Secondly, performance studies, with its interdisciplinary approach in investigating cultural and theatrical events is an ideal lens/field to examine flow within a lived, embodied, micro-level, or grounded experience, supporting my aim of investigating flow beyond or below globalization and mobility research.

I examine and locate flow not through global and transnational perspectives but within a localized and micro-perspective of performance studies and auto-ethnography. I suggest that flow in the *Sinulog* parade is an engaged participation and witnessing of people emplaced and performing in this event. This form of engaged participation and witnessing reveals a complex sociality in a locality by a performing public during a sacred and festive, cultural event.

The Spectacle of the *Sinulog* Parade

On the 20th of January 2013, I attended the street festivity of the *Sinulog*. My informant, Roxanne Omega-Doron or Rox, advised me to arrive at around six a.m. at the vicinity of Osmeña Circle in preparation for the parade. My entry to the Sinulog was enabled by the assistance from members of Bisdak Pride, Inc., a Cebu-based non-government organization established in 2005. Rox, my main informant during this fieldwork and interview (between January 5 and 20, 2013) was the chair of Bisdak's board of trustees. A university colleague of mine introduced me to this organization while I was in Manila preparing for my fieldwork. As a civic-oriented group, Bisdak Pride's main advocacy is on human and reproductive rights; Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgenders, and Intersex (LGBTI) issues; and HIV/AIDS education and prevention. Most of their members are from Cebu. Some of the members of this group who I interviewed during my fieldwork are also devotees and past performers and dancers in the *Sinulog*.

Bisdak Pride Inc., led by Rox, was able to get a permit and become an official part of a parading group. This permit led us to follow an official float, a small decorated truck sponsored by Michelle's Wine, an alcoholic beverage distribution enterprise. Rox and his group advocate for the rights and health of the LGBTI identified young people in Cebu. Their participation, according to Rox, sought to represent his group and their advocacy in a public

Cebuano gathering. In joining their group, I was permitted to be a participant in the parade on the street and travel along the designated route of the parade. Members of the general public were only allowed to watch the passing spectacle from the crowded sidewalks and in designated audience area along the parade's route. This route was heavily patrolled and guarded by volunteers, medics, members of the police, students, and at some point, by the military.

The parade is a massive activity, and thus I am unable to account its every detail nor reflect on how the other participants perceive this cultural moment. In my analysis of this event, I will not be able to expound on its larger social contexts, like its preparation, the politics represented by the parading groups, and other smaller activities experienced by its various spectators. In this essay, my witnessing is limited to exploring the processes by which the parade's human participants become involved with the event through their performance and witnessing, in a way that brings out the quality of flow through frames of performance studies. These include what I saw as movements and performances of objects and people. I also wrote my observations from an insider's position: I was part of a team that had accompanied a float as it made its way around the parade's arduous but festive passage.

The *Sinulog* parade takes place annually on the third Sunday of January. The article "Gwen Garcia Dances…" reports that the grand parade in 2013 had an estimated 1.2 million participants, which included 142 contingents of dancing groups, puppeteers of *higantes* (explained below), bright and colorful floats, and groups of business people, civic organizations, and local government units. The parade is also the second biggest flow of people in the *Sinulog* Festival; the other one is a religious procession of the *Santo Niño* (or the *prusisyon*) that happens before the day of this event. The *prusisyon* involves millions of people moving in organized and solemn flocks and movement around metropolitan Cebu and is organized by the Roman Catholic Church.

As the parade moves forward, it gains in size when large numbers of participants merge in along the way. There is neither a big town square nor a public place where the people can gather before or during the parade. The only way to accommodate such a massive participation of people is for individuals to wait and prepare at the streets, gradually building up into masses as they move within a designated route. The aim of the parading groups is to reach the big Cebu City Sports Stadium, located within the premises of Abellana National High School along Osmeña Avenue. Every year the sports complex becomes an important venue for the *Sinulog* celebration since major events like the parade passes through this site. The stadium also serves as a venue for other *Sinulog* activities like the competition of festival queens, street dancing, and for rehearsals by dance contingents competing in the festival's many contests.

Given the large number of people, the parade needs an efficient organizational and contingency plan. Hence, in 2013, university and high school students in their reserve-military uniforms, security officers, volunteers, and police officers heavily protected the sidewalks and made sure spectators did not go beyond the footpaths. They were very strict with the movement of the people. Bystanders and spectators were requested to stay on the sidewalks and in designated bleachers along the streets. The patrolling guards used stretches of long plastic ropes to barricade the territory between the road and the jam-packed sidewalk. There were many command areas strategically located along the route of the parade. Medics, ambulances, and police

Fig. 1: The Sinulog parade in 2013. A big float shaped like a galleon and decorated with flowers; on top of it was a Santo Niño altar (Photo by Reagan Maiquez).

patrol cars were found in these areas and were ready to respond in any emergency.

At around nine-thirty am, the parade officially began. It was a hot day though it was not as humid as in the previous days of the *Sinulog* week. We started walking as we slowly followed our float. There were no other vehicles aside from these floats. The movement occasionally slowed right down when the entire parading line stopped. Both sidewalks and the center-traffic islands along our way were filled with spectators, possibly in their thousands, watching each oncoming spectacle. Many of them stood in one spot, although a greater number of people appeared to be in constant motion, heading in varied directions, moving with the parading flow, or against it.

While there were a million voices, colors, noises, sounds, faces, gestures, directions, and performances that happened on this event, I can summarize a general movement of this mobile activity through what I and other spectators witnessed as locomotion and performances. The major segments of the parade were: floats, marching band, dancing groups, and large puppets or *higantes*.

Floats are decorated vehicles, usually a small or medium cargo or utility truck with the compartment or container at the back removed. Most participating trucks were decorated with synthetic flowers or vibrant ornamental plants. Other floats displayed simple tarpaulin banners with the names of sponsoring businesses printed on them. Some trucks carried speakers that blasted loud pre-recorded festival music. Many trucks, like the one ahead of our group, were designed as ships or galleons and carried a giant *Santo Niño* figure in front of them. The smaller trucks measured around 20 to 30 feet in length while the bigger ones were around 40

feet. These floats were shaped like a giant basket containing a model ship or galleon, perhaps, in reference to the European explorer who arrived in this island centuries ago and as an emblematic signification of the festival. This basket image was made possible by encasing the entire truck in lightweight plywood and plastic material. On top of one of these ship-like moving vehicles, a *Santo Niño* altar was constructed. Unlike in most of the other floats, it was adorned with fresh tropical plants, such as red flowering anthuriums, fortune plants, and chrysanthemums.

I found out that some of the floats, especially those who were carrying *Santo Niño* altars and were designed as galleons, [Fig. 1] were part of the competition for the best float. Also, there was one thing in common among most of the floats that I saw in this parade. They represented a certain product/business, or a group: a public office, a school, or an organization.

For instance, a wine distribution company, Michel's Wine, sponsored the float that I and members of the Bisdak Pride followed throughout the parade. This company, I learned, is an affiliate of the M. Lhuillier Group of Companies, one of the biggest business conglomerates based in Cebu. The float resting on a medium-sized truck had been transformed into a garden-vineyard vehicle, complete with synthetic plastic grapes and vines and two giant bottles of wines. In the middle of this recreated vineyard was a stage painted in gold, which sat on clouds made of Styrofoam and synthetic cotton. Around the plastic grape gardens, samba drums and other musical instruments had been placed. Below the plastic grape decorations, a large tarpaulin banner was hung. The words "Baylo Ta" [Cebuano: Let's Dance] were printed on this banner, as well as photos of what appeared to me as local celebrities wearing gowns and suits. I learned from Rox that the banner was also advertising a popular soap opera being aired on Cebu's local television network.

Later in the parade, I realized the significance of our float design. Several musicians played festive samba music on top of our float as it moved. Some Filipina entertainment personalities joined our float and stood on it dressed in their white flowing gowns as they held bottles of wine and represented Greek goddesses. Their actions suggested revelry and bacchanalia occurring in this fabricated wine garden. For me, the relationship between the wine advertised by the float and the Latin rhythms of Samba music suggested cultural fusion. Latin beat and music are usually associated with this kind of festive event (Mardi Gras), while the Greek reference to winemaking and drinking was of course part of the advertisement tactic of this wine distribution company that sponsored our float.

A marching band, composed of around 20 to 30 teenagers, led another segment of the parade. They played the drums, xylophones or metal lyres, trumpets and bass horns, accompanying the dancing groups. The marching bands provided music for the dancers, known as the *Pit Senyor* or 'Hail the King' music. This music had a rhythmic beat pattern of eight to sixteen counts and three-quarter rhythm following the choreography or rhythm of the dance-ritual or *sayaw.* The standard music came from the drumbeats of large and small drums and was punctuated by metal xylophone, lyre drum, trumpets, trombones, and gongs.

Meanwhile, dancing contingents of around 50 to 60 mostly high school or elementary student-dancers walked and gyrated in pairs – each following the ones in front of them to form organized moving queues. They were dressed in Spanish-influenced attire or in Mardi Gras tropical colors and neon hues. Some of the dancers carried big candles shaped from plastic

material, colored cellophane, or shining foil. Many of them wore shimmering headdresses: tiaras, oversize flowers/bouquets, magician hats sprayed with silver or gold paints, or dazzling bandanas. Most of the shades of their costumes were themed around the festival hues of yellow and red, reminiscent of the Spanish Flag and perhaps in reference to Ferdinand Magellan's fleet. A festival queen led each dancing group [Fig. 2]. She carried the *Santo Niño* icon as if holding a precious child or infant. From time to time I saw her lift the icon in the air while other dancers performed choreographed dances that included swaying, moving in wave-like patterns, synchronized kneeling or worshiping movements. This street dancing, I found out, was to end in a city-sponsored, large-scale dance competition held at the Abellana Sports Stadium.

Another notable parading figure in this street festival was the *higante* or giant effigies. *Higantes* or giants, in the literal sense, are oversized figures that are about eight to 15 feet tall. The tradition of using *higantes* originated from the Tagalog province of Angono, Rizal, where the *Higantes* Festival is annually held. There are two major speculations on the origin of this large festive puppetry, according to an article written by Richard Gappi. One is possibly from a pre-World War II emergence of folk art and protest made by the people of Angono against abusive *hancenderos* or landlords during the annual feast day of its patron saint, St. Clement, as speculated by the oral research made by Ligaya Tiamson-Rubin. Second, according to Gappi, is an explanation made by another researcher, James Owen Saguinsin, an art professor at Far Eastern University. Saguinsin claims that these colourful effigies did not exist before 1945 and the effigies of a husband, a wife, and children or a family in a rural and agricultural setting emerged as a post second world war cultural icon.

William Peterson documents the ubiquity of this puppet figure in his article "The *Ati-Atihan*". He also mentions that such puppets have become widely used in this festivity as organizers and people in the parade have become familiar with these "moving sculptures… reflecting the global distribution of Carnival and masquerade styles that have emerged elsewhere in the Roman Catholic world" (517). In the 1980s, Ness documented the presence of *higantes* at the Sinulog parade (177) showing the spread of this craft/practice of *higantes* in festive event even during the early beginnings of the *Sinulog*.

The original puppets from Angono were made of papier machê (for the head and the dress of the body) constructed around a light wooden or bamboo frame (for the body). A puppeteer hidden inside the puppet controls these *higantes*. The only movable part is its head atop a lightweight body constructed in an upright position or sometimes depicted as proud posturing dancing men and women in rural areas. The *higantes* I saw were similarly posed as the effigies described by Gappi, Peterson, and Ness, with their head raised, proud and upright and their lightweight limbs placed on the sides of the equally lightweight body.

In the *Sinulog* parade, these puppets were part of the competition. I saw several giant puppets that depicted the celebration's common image, which is that of a person dancing and lifting a statue of the *Santo Niño*. The figures and puppets portrayed the common folk or people dressed-up in vibrant rural attire with oversized limbs. One of them was a puppet of a fisherman dressed in a blue and pink shirt and a short trouser. He held a candle in his right hand and fishing net on his left. There was also a *higante* representing a mother holding a sleeping child on her left hand and a candle on her right hand [Fig.3].

However, unlike their counterparts in the original puppets of Angono, the heads of the

Fig. 2: Sinulog street dancers performing the street-dance. In front of this group is a festival queen who performs a lifting of an icon as part of the choreography of the dance.

Fig. 3: A higante in the form of a mother and child holding an infant and a candle

Photos by Reagan Maiquez

puppets in the *Sinulog* were not oversized. They were also portrayed in the act of worshipping or doing the *sulog* (worship) dance as suggested by their holding of a candle. The movements of both the *higantes* in the *Sinulog,* similar to the *higantes* in Angono were controlled by a man who remained hidden from view either underneath the skirt of a woman puppet or between the legs of male puppets. Though big in size, the puppets were light in weight since they were made of nimble materials such as a bamboo frame, paper or plastic cloth. This lightness was intended so that the puppeteer could conveniently control their movements. Some of the puppets had movable hands or limbs. Generally, though, they remained in a stationary pose and could only simulate walking, dancing or spinning as the puppeteers controlled their specific dance movements. During the actual parade, these puppets were seen gyrating along with the music being played either by live drums or heard through loud speakers attached to some of the floats.

Our float arrived at the sports complex around 12.30 p.m. Once inside, we continued to parade in front of the seated waiting audience. In the middle of the sports arena was an oval and a running track. The dancing groups, puppeteers and their puppets were guided by the lines of the running track, which led them to a long stage where they performed before judges. The floats and other delegates were guided towards an elevated audience area, and eventually to an exit located at the other end of the complex. Opposite it stood a long white and aquamarine painted stage purposely built for the occasion. On that stage, the *higantes*, the groups of dancers, and the tableaux performers passed through and performed before an estimated crowd of 15,000 people. Upon entering and walking towards the stage, the puppeteers danced to animate the *higantes*. The dancers did their final performance on the stage, while the floats continued to move across a designated path near an audience who cheered loudly as the floats passed through.

Performers dressed in costume were automatically allowed to enter. They were instructed to wait at one side of the track area before their final stage performance. The program had scheduled each group of dancers, puppeteers, and floats to pass in front of the judges and spectators based on their arrival at the sports complex. After the performance, the performing contingents continued their way outside a big gate of the sports complex. Performers' support teams (directors, choreographers, and stagehands) were allowed to enter the complex but they had to wear proper identification cards around their necks. After their performance, they were also requested to exit from the sports complex through another gate located at the other end of the arena.

The theatrical performances on stage were the dance-tableaux formations prepared by the competing contingents. The dances were in the usual *Sinulog* repertoire within a three to five-minute performance. The repertoire performed in front of the stage was the same routine performed (and rehearsed) at various points of the street parade.

The *Sinulog* dance's choreography has evolved since Ness's documentation of it. Ness, a pioneering scholar of this event, extensively documented the making of the *Sinulog*'s street-dancing choreography as well as its performance during the early years of the festival in the 1980s. According to her, while the dances were fabricated and choreographed by the city's Tourism Council and Physical Education teachers in Cebu, they were syncretized from existing forms of embodiment (158-159), such as the worship of the *Santo Niño* and the candle vendors who perform a short prayer-ritual-dance outside the large and historic *Santo Niño* Basilica (92).

One prominent change is the integration of narratives through theatrical scenes containing a mime of the miraculous story of the *Santo Niño*. In the performance that I witnessed, for example, a group began their dancing with the usual movements for about a minute as described by Ness. While the dancers formed elaborate formations through their dancing and clever use of costumes, the highlight of the performance was the worship and prayer-scene. Below the stage, a group of around 25 to 30 musicians played the accompanying music for the dance-performance and tableaux. After a short exhibition of dances, a dance-narrative began, and the only music that was heard was that of a simple melody from a metal xylophone.

In that dance, a young performer dressed in a common folk costume stayed in the middle of the stage, while groups of dancers went to both sides of the stage and paused in a collective weeping position. They remained in this position for about a minute or so while the single dancer performed dance movements that dramatized her distress while searching for an object.

Later on, the young dancer appeared to be in trouble as she danced frantically. She ran across the stage, clutching a small bag or *bayong* made of woven native plant material. Then the stagehands or backstage people wearing bird-like bright costumes rushed towards the center stage to surround her. Their movement seemed like a vivid mist that covered the young woman in distress. The lyre music increased its intensity and occasional drumbeats were heard. Groups of men and women formed a line behind the performer who then acted as if she was lost in the middle of a thick forest. At the same time, at the back of the group of men and women, stagehands dressed in bird-like costumes had gathered, each holding a panel, before the performance began. Each of the stagehands had picked up a panel that measured almost six feet high and around three feet wide. Each panel was made of thin plywood cut to form shapes of flowers, petals, or bells. Some were folded; some were painted on one side with a single color (black or white or red). Once flipped, another painted image was revealed, such as a bell, a *Santo Niño* image, trees, or a petal. The panels became white, black, or multi-colored moving parts of a background behind the performers. They were used to depict more actions on the stage. In the case of this performance that I am describing earlier, the panels served as trees or canopies when they were flipped to reveal an image. Once all of the panels were flipped, the stagehands had moved closer to each other and further revealed the entire picture. That picture was a very vibrant landscape – or in theatre terms, a portion of a cyclorama, a semi-circular or concave background – of swaying trees in a deep forest depicted through colorful cut-outs of currents.

The movement of these stagehands, the panels, and the weeping/praying woman strongly suggested a tragedy of what seemed to me a typhoon or hurricane signified by the swaying images of trees or the cyclorama created by the joining of the panels [Fig. 4]. The swaying of these boards with the images of the forest became more violent as the metal lyre music increased in beat and intensity. Finally, the young woman slumped to her knees in the middle of this violent storm. In desperation, she started searching inside her *bayong*. Finally, she revealed what was inside this hand-woven bag: an icon of the *Santo Niño*. The drum and lyre music played even more loudly, and as the music reached a crescendo, the woman lifted the icon high. The collective voices of the dancers and stagehands were heard. They shouted: "*Santo Niño, luwasa kami gikan sa bagyo!* [Santo Niño, please save us from this storm]"

Fig. 4: A scene during the dance, in which movements of panels, dancers, and an actor on stage portrayed a strong hurricane.

Fig. 5: The choreographed placement of panels and theatre props reveals a post-storm scene. Dancers pose to highlight this joyous and vibrant scenery.

Photos by Reagan Maiquez

Then, the groups from both sides of the stage returned to the middle of the stage and resumed dancing. The music played by the band changed to a more upbeat and festive melody. The calmed movements of the dancers suggested that the people and the young woman were able to survive the storm. After a few seconds, the woman who possessed the icon was seen slipping inside one of the panels. Panels and stagehands were then replaced by new sets of stagehands and with new sets of panels. This new group of stagehands eventually revealed a new picture/ background of a joyful community as they flipped back their panels. The background showed a landscape of blooming flowers. In the middle of this landscape, a giant image of the *Santo Niñ*o made of light materials and surrounded by floating angels was revealed.

The *Sinulog* repertoire of dancing followed. Finally, the woman who had earlier animatedly danced in distress was seen in a new costume that matched the ones worn by other dancers. In this new outfit, she emerged from the back of the panel as the festival queen. More dancing followed for about two minutes and the final formation was seen as a depiction of worship and gratitude. The festival queen lifted the *Santo Niño* icon as she stood in the middle of the dancing crowd, and as the final drumbeat faded away, everyone posed in a kneeling position as a form of worship of the icon.

Each performance had the same repertoire – a preliminary dance of the *Sinulog* before a mime or tableaux that communicated a story or a scene, and a final dance. The last dance at the end of each repertoire portrayed worship and showed the *Santo Niño* being held high by the festival queen. In other performances, they depicted enactments around the veneration and miracles of this image, such as those that occurred when a community was struck by an epidemic, or when a community experienced a major fire, or when a rural community was raided by invading pirates. Most of the performances also depicted everyday 'historical' scenarios, the beginnings of the local church or Basilica which was originally a small thatched hut, or everyday scenes of rural life and festive gatherings. There was also a performance that used panels depicting church bells that when flipped revealed various *Santo Niño* images.

Performances lasted for approximately five minutes. Between each performance was a 30- to 40-minute intermission while we waited for the contingents to move through the area. The shortest dances took around three minutes, and these were performed by the *higantes*. The slow moving floats were welcomed with loud cheers by the audience especially if they carried popular entertainment personalities.

Flow in the *Sinulog* Parade

Scholars elsewhere and those I cite in this essay have expounded on processes of transnational flows and how they are changing cultural conditions. Drawing from these works, my focus is to examine and identify flow in the *Sinulog* parade using the paradigm of performance studies and within a micro-level examination of an auto-ethnography. To do that, let me briefly cite studies on flow within performance studies and use these to construct my own framing of this concept within the *Sinulog* parade.

In performance studies, flow is identified as a perception that connects humans to outer-personal levels of stimuli and feelings. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience* argues that flow is "the positive aspects of human experience, such as joy, creativity, and the process of total involvement with life" (xi). Consequently, flow is the basis

for his "theory of the optimal experience", which for him is a state in which people are so involved in an activity like playing musical instruments or being engaged in a creative endeavor that nothing else seems to matter (4).

Victor Turner extensively cites Csikszentmihalyi's flow concept in his own anthropological enquiry on ritual processes. In "Liminal to Liminoid..." Turner emphasizes natural and "social processes" as flows in developing "liminality" (85). Borrowing heavily from van Gennep, Turner then develops the concept of liminality, as a "complex series of episodes in sacred-space and time and may also include ludic and subversive events," and also as an anti-structure process in the performance or analysis of a ritual (59-60).

Erving Goffman borrows Turner's view on ritual and social processes to develop framing, which is another significant work within anthropological and/or performance studies of flow. Experiential "frames" make up the principles of human or social organization, which govern an event (Turner, "Frame, Flow" 489). In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman explains frame as a possible basic unit that may be used to identify the organization of experience from a perspective of an individual performing within a social or natural event (11). These frames mark the way a person understands an event, an occurrence, or the flow and movement of time within natural and social processes.

Flow connects the human subject to a sequence of performances and rituals. Theatre and performance scholars have further developed these frames on ritual, theatrical, and cultural performances. One notable framing is Richard Schechner's theory of performance in *Performance Studies* and *Performance Theory*, which provides ways of understanding the role, processes, and value of theatrical and "performative" genres in the ritual and collective life of societies and cultures. Indeed, in citing flow within the study of ritual and other public events, the researchers mentioned above were able to bridge Csikszentmihalyi's psychological idea of flow to a larger, social, and performative framework in understanding society and culture.

Overall, these various interpretations of flow within anthropology, theatre, and cultural studies contribute to the understanding of flow from multiple perspectives: performative, ritualistic, behavioral, cultural, temporal-liminal or collectively known as an interdiscipline of performance studies.

Within performance research I highlight several ideas that are at the forefront of the development of the concept of flow, including festivals, ritual, and cultural events that draw and frame human participation and engagement into mobile, multi-generic, and public social activities. A key volume is *Festivalising Theatrical Events* published by the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) in 2007. In this book, Vicki Cremona explains "festival flows" as "power," the participation of "people," and the kinds of "community" constructed through theatrical events. Cremona emphasizes that "[t]he festivalising process is very heavily determined by its dimensions (national, regional or local), the type of productions to be shown, and the type of audience(s) it sets out to attract" (8). Finally, she mentions the word flow, in explaining a process [of festivalizing] whereby reality is blurred with fantasy through the spectacular experience performed in this event (12).

In the same volume, Henri Schoenmakers's article "Hybrid Festivals" describes flow as the emotional experience of a festival by an audience manifesting through their communicative interactions with each other (27). This interaction among participants/audience of a festival

develops a sense of "communitas" (190), a concept first developed by Turner. In *The Ritual Process*, Turner describes communitas as a quality, like flow, that bonds people together while they are engaged in specific activities that demand direct or immediate attention (131).

Wilmar Sauter's contribution to the study of festivals as theatrical events offers a very important insight into the feeling of flow resulting from a festival's tight programming and participation. Borrowing Csikszentmihalyi's idea of flow, Sautner describes this as "a heightened state of awareness and involvement" among audience or participants (215). Sauter observes the following condition in a festival that is relevant to my auto-ethnographic descriptions of performances by the crowds of witnessing participants in the *Sinulog*:

> While these distinctions of involvement reflect the spectator's view, it should be noticed that the spectators themselves always risked becoming the 'performers' for other spectators. The transformation from participant to spectator to performer and back again is probably characteristic of festivals and maybe for any social gathering of that type. The shifts between being agent in one situation and onlooker in the next follow each other tightly in an environment, which provokes and enhances human interaction (215).

Sauter's description of an audience brings light to a landscape of witnessing I describe above: a moment when spectatorship is heightened and energized not just by seeing objects and performances, but also in seeing a large body or collectivity of fellow witnesses performing. From my perspective as a moving spectator inside the parade, I was a witness of a thousand witnesses, who patiently waited at a location, or, just like me, were also moving as the parade passed through.

In another edited volume published by IFTR, *The Theatrical Event*, Peter Eversmann in "The Experience of the Theatrical Event" discusses flow as part of the emotional experience of an audience. After analyzing a survey of a group of people who witnessed a theatrical event, he claims that there are many ways to understand the theatrical event through frames of audience reception. These include the ways that aesthetic, ephemeral, ostensive notions in theatre can construct experience (139-142). These constructions are evidenced through emotional, perceptual, and contextual cues, which for Eversmann are major themes in analyzing audience reception of theatrical events (140).

Thus, Eversmann's focus on reception is an extension of the concept of the flow frame that is inclusive of psychological, social, and aesthetic dimensions. Emphasis on reception is also evidenced by Eversmann's major citation of Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, who emphasize flow in their work on creativity in the *Art of Seeing*. On the other hand, these researchers, as explained by Eversmann, argue that the "flow experience" is a major part of the aesthetic experience exemplified by autotelic activities–enactments, in which one is not engaged for the sake of an external result or reward, but rather because of an intrinsically pleasurable experience they provide during a certain moment: playing chess, painting, reading a book, etc. (144-145). Eversmann's observation about the psychological and social engagement of people in an event is developed and extended in this paper, though my emphasis points toward the collective experience rather than the individual's perception or emotions towards an event.

The studies of festivals strike important continuities with the earlier work of performance

scholars on rituals, cultural, and social process, although they might not seem immediately apparent. For instance, Turner's view on liminality is based on his ethnographic work and analysis of rituals in the field. His work was on societies where people acted under the influence of strong social constraints on behavior, with the "coming of age" rituals or rites of passage as striking examples. The festivals of contemporary times, like that of the *Sinulog*, might seem to lack the intense shaping effect upon the individual subject of the rituals of the Nuer, the group researched extensively by Turner, but the submission to a social order is equally apparent. Participants in contemporary festivals are attracted to more than just the individual events of which festivals are constituted. That quality of "festival", of assenting to participation in the flow of the program of events, is equally descriptive of the subject's support and consent for a higher level ratification of the social. Festival participants might see themselves as freely participating, but they are also choosing to join together with fellow festival-goers in submitting to a sequence of shared experiences that resembles the submission implicit in Turner's works on rites of passage.

Indeed, my study of the *Sinulog* draws on my sense that the festival engages participants simultaneously in activities demanding immediate attention, as well as a greater sequence of experiences of which the participant might not be so consciously aware. As reflected by how I described the theatrical and cultural landscape through the performances and witnessing of the *Sinulog* parade, I see flow as another form of sociality and as an engaged participation made by the witnesses of the festival. This engagement is constructed by the very act of performances made in this event and the witnessing made by the crowds and participants.

It is, I believe, another way to think of flow below or beyond notions of transnational fluidity and mobility between global places and borders. It is a form of sociality perceived within the micro-experience of festival, public performances, and a theatrical event. It is an affective force that I felt in seeing a massive crowd produce an energy, noise, atmosphere, forming togetherness in a celebration, an engagement that is motivated by the pleasures of witnessing and experiencing an event following what Csikszentmihalyi and performance theorists suggest as cultural, psychological, and theatrical moments of being "in the zone" through the aesthetic dimension and social experience of theatre and performance.

Hence, flow, in the public moments of the *Sinulog* creates mobility and a complex sociality through possible multiple engagements performed by participants of the festival. Flow, for one, is impelled by the pleasures created by an engagement with the spectacle, or how the witnesses, including me, were attracted by larger-than-life, colorful, grandiose, and meticulously decorated objects and performances: floats, dances, effigies, witnesses. The parade attracts the attention of the entire community including locals and tourists, and floods the community with images and late-capitalistic aspirations and fantasies, luring them to consume products—such as wine—that are advertised within the parade and distracting them from the abject poverty and other issues experienced by Cebuano society. In other words, the parade is full of spectacle and profanities, similar to watching television advertisements or experiencing contemporary leisure either as a resident or tourist.

However, the parade also engages people beyond the profane pleasures of the spectacle as it also involves people in a flow of devotional participation and witnessing. As explained earlier, the *Sinulog* and its parade, according to

my informant, is a form of *panaad* or devotion to the *Senor Santo Niño*. For them, *Sinulog*, as in the Cebuano verb "mag-Sinulog," is a flow performed through joyous street dancing and revelry, and through the very act of worshipping the *Santo Niño* icon by attending and contributing their time and talent to the religious activities at the procession and the church. Worship via the *Sinulog* is the same reason, according to them, why the Festival Queen performs a regular lifting of the icon, since it should be the main attraction of the dance and not the colors or dazzling and sinewy choreography performed by the dancers.

Indeed, echoing studies by Bautista and Braulein, Llana, Alcedo, Dela Paz, and Peterson on Philippine festivals and religious events, *panaad* becomes another undercurrent, flow, or engagement by a crowd in a mobile and public event such as the *Sinulog*. It is an engagement through the witnessing of the performances made by the *Santo Niño* itself through the street-dances, effigies, decorated altars, and theatrical dance-tableaux at the sports stadium. By way of performance, it also becomes a form of *panaad* and flow through worship, devotion, reverence, and performing a talent or a task in front of a crowd and together with the *Santo Niño*. Very similar to this flow or engagement, Patrick Alcedo, in his study of the sacred and queer culture in the *Ati-Atihan* Festival in Aklan, identifies *sadsad* performed by the *agi* or *bakla*, transgender devotees of the said festival. *Sadsad*, just like *panaad* in the *Sinulog*, is a "sacred promise in a form of an embodied prayer, sacred camp and carnivalesque" or publicly dancing in drag costumes to a point of exhaustion in service, honor, and devotion to the *Santo Nino* (114).

Finally, another possible engagement by the participants in the *Sinulog* is induced by the civic duties performed by groups, offices, and institutions of the parade in maintaining peace and order and making sure that the parade achieves its successful passage. While they are compelled by their official responsibilities or by the instruction of their institutions and offices to commit and offer their voluntary or official services for this event, I suspect that many of them fulfilled their task as their own performance of a devotion or *panaad*, as Catholics and members of the police force, or simply as devotees and citizens of Cebu City who were present and offering themselves to the event.

Conclusion

This essay suggests another way of examining flow through performance and a cultural event. From the perspective of a mobile event performed in a locality, flow in the parade and as a micro-level explanation of motion reflects a mobility as complex and intricate as the one experienced between transnational places. To some extent, flow in this study of a parade may also reveal a changing sociality in this age of global Mardi Gras and spectacle. But these changes of social behavior have other causes aside from the major upheavals caused by global modernity, tourism, spectacle, and travel. By understanding flow as an engaged participation of people in a massive and grandiose event, one is also led to examining another possible notion of collectivity through flow.

Paul Carls explains that Durkheim's "collective effervescence refers to moments in societal life when the group of individuals that makes up a society comes together in order to perform a religious ritual. During these moments, the group comes together and communicates in the same thought and participates in the same action, which serves to unify a group of individuals." This

collectivity and its repetition through rituals and ceremony is guided by how people in a culture differentiate the sacred (objects, instances, practices) from the profane or everyday life. Collective effervescence thus refers to moments when the sacred is performed and ritualized as opposed to the ordinary profane moments of people's lives (Carls).

However, in this era of global spectatorship and modernity, I suggest another form of sociality performed during massive and spectacular events such as that of the *Sinulog*. In other words, while there is a profane pleasure gained from the spectacular experience that one may encounter through the witnessing of dazzling objects and performances in this event, there is also a sacred performance that is enacted by the witnesses and performers of the spectacle. There is a collapse of the sacred and the profane, similar to what Alcedo is proposing as a collapse of the sacred and the campy performance in the *Ati-atihan*, in this flow and engaged participation of a people in a festival. Perhaps, this newer form of sociality revealed through performance is another form of collective effervescence, a mobile one that is also a form of social engagement and flow. This flowing/fluid and locomotive sociality should be of interest to scholars who view social and cultural constructs not through static and fixed points of representation but through the always changing, mobile, and performative views on human and ecological lives.

Ultimately, the *Sinulog* Festival and its parade/flow shows that mobility is not only controlled by larger notions of "scapes" or transnational conditions that created a global Mardi Gras culture (Peterson), but are also shaped through what is negotiated and performed in a public gathering of the festival of flows. But this flow is far from being a singular global mobility as it is a form of multiple engagement that collapses multiple forms of witnessing and engagement: from its sacred/religious end to the experience of a pleasurable flow through spectacle, theatre, and festival.

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